Deaf Learners Want to Write: We Can Help Them!

Best Practice in Mainstream Education of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students

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My Theoretical Framework

- **Sociocultural theory: 5 Major Tenets**
  - Learning is inseparable from the larger social and cultural context
  - *Participation* in authentic activities and *meaningful interactions* with others (teachers and peers) are the driving forces behind learning and development
  - Learning and development are viewed as students’ *changing participation* over time in the instructional activities of the classroom
  - Novice learners gradually move from being observers (“peripheral participants”) in a particular instructional activity to being fully involved and assuming roles and responsibilities
  - The social organization of classroom activity shapes students’ learning and development

Research Evidence

- The corpus of research on teaching writing to deaf and hard-of-hearing students is small, fragmented, and dated
  - We lack a strong research base for instructional practices (Strassman & Schirmer, 2013; Williams & Mayer, 2015)

- This presentation also draws from the corpus of research on teaching writing to hearing students

- The primary goal of the presentation is to describe instructional practices for which we have research evidence
  - evidence-based practices
  - research-based practices
Overview of the Presentation

- Two primary approaches to writing instruction
  - Writing Workshop
  - Cognitive Apprenticeship
- Explicit Instruction
- Feedback on Students’ Writing
- Collaborative Writing
- Social Interaction
- Strategy Instruction
- Mentor Text Technique
- Technology and Writing
(1) Writing Workshop (A Process Approach to Writing)

- Teach students how to engage in the recursive steps of the *writing process* (PCFRE):
  - Plan
  - Compose
  - Feedback (from teachers and peers)
  - Revise
  - Edit

- Provide students daily, extended periods of time to engage in those five processes
  - and start in kindergarten!
Writing Workshop

- Provide *explicit instruction* on the “Significant Six” through mini-lessons:

  - (1) Text structure
    - Teach students the structure of each genre
      - Narrative (“story grammar”): setting, characters, problem episodes (a series of events / problems and attempts to solve the problem), consequences, and characters’ reactions
      - Expository:
        - Informational
        - Persuasive
        - Explanatory
        - Opinion

- Provide exemplars for students to use as models
  - supports *planning* and *composing* (PCFRE)
Writing Workshop

(2) Coherence
- Teach students how to write a logical, coherent paragraph
  - Each proposition within a paragraph should be followed by a logically-related proposition
  - New propositions are introduced in new paragraphs

(3) Summarization
- Related to text structure
- Teach students how to …
  - determine main ideas and supporting details
  - bring together the important ideas to make a coherent, yet shorter, version of their source text
- Summarize narratives first, then move to expository texts
Writing Workshop

(4) Sentence combining
- Teach students how to combine two or more simple sentences into a single, more complex and sophisticated sentence
- *Avoid* teaching parts of speech though diagramming sentences, which has had a negative impact on learning

(5) Micro-level skills:
- Spelling, writing conventions

(6) Purpose of the Paper
- Explain the objectives for each writing assignment
  - Explain? Persuade? Tell a story? State an opinion?
  - Clear objectives help students *plan* and *compose* (PCFRE) and focus their attention on particular elements of their writing, including genre
Writing Workshop

- Use student–teacher conferences to provide *feedback* (PCFRE) on students’ writing

- The most effective feedback is:
  - specific, descriptive, and nonjudgmental
  - addresses how well the writing adhered to the genre
  - offers direction for how to improve the writing
  - addresses grading criteria / rubrics
    - with teacher instruction on those criteria / rubrics
  - builds on the student’s current writing abilities
  - takes into account the student’s language skills
Writing Workshop

- When teachers provide effective feedback, students are more likely to engage in revision (PCFRE)
  - written comments are particularly helpful because after the student-teacher conference, students can study the feedback before revising

**Editing** feedback (PCFRE) is more effective when students are required to first *self-edit* their writing

- Peer feedback and peer conferencing are only effective when the teacher ...
  - explicitly teaches feedback strategies
  - models how to give feedback

- Beach & Friedrich, 2006
In an effective Writing Workshop, students have ownership over process and product (within the demands of the writing curriculum):

- Choose their writing topics
- Write for authentic audiences (real people)
- Share and publish their work
- *Collaborate with peers*

See Berent, et al., 2007, 2009; Graham & Perin, 2007; Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006
Collaborative Writing

- For many students, working with a peer changes the dynamics of writing to make the experience more enjoyable
  - Especially true for young children and students who find writing tasks to be challenging

- Pair students with similar writing abilities who have established a positive relationship
  - small to medium range of writing ability

- Keep the same pairs working together over an extended period of time
  - To develop collaborative writing methods, as well as their working relationship
Collaborative Writing

- Teach students the basic rules needed to write collaboratively
- Convey the goals of writing assignments, as reflected in the writing curriculum, so students know what is expected
- Give students space to work autonomously (while you observe and assess)
  - Too much teacher intervention may deprive students of opportunities to become problem solvers
- Balance time spent on collaborative writing, individual writing, conferencing, and small / large group instruction in order to provide opportunities for various kinds of social interaction*

* Chung & Walsh, 2006; see also Graham & Perin, 2007
Importance of Social Interaction in Learning

- Vygotsky believed that all learning appears twice:
  - First socially, between people (inter-psychological)
  - Later individually, inside the learner (intra-psychological)

- Vygotsky’s proposition makes a strong case for the importance of *social interaction during instruction*
  - Talking with teachers and peers about writing—before engaging in an individual writing task—is highly beneficial to learning

- Teachers operating from a Vygotskian perspective engage students in *Cognitive Apprenticeships* in writing prior to independent writing time
  - Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57
(2) Cognitive Apprenticeships in Writing

- Designed to *apprentice* students in writing through *highly interactive lessons*
  - seamstress, carpenter, tailor

- Students and teachers collaborate to co-construct a text
  - Lots of *interaction* as they generate ideas, plan, and discuss the text to be written
  - *Interaction* makes teachers’ and peers’ thinking overt and accessible, so students can use it later to support their own writing

- Teachers *model* the writing process (PCFRE) as they write

- Teachers *think aloud* as they write to make covert writing processes overt
Cognitive Apprenticeship

- Each lesson includes *explicit instruction* pertinent to the text as well as *composing strategies*

- Throughout the lesson, the teacher responds to students’ comments, questions, and instructional needs

- Teacher scaffolding is gradually withdrawn as teachers transfer responsibility to students for writing the text

- Over time, students learn how to engage in the writing process (PCFRE)

- Students learn the *composing strategies* that were taught and use them to support their independent writing

  - see Englert, Mariage, & Dunsmore, 2006
Strategy Instruction

- Explicit strategy instruction has had the strongest impact on students’ writing performance

- Students who are taught specific strategies for writing tend to:
  - know primary processes for planning
  - know the elements of each genre (e.g., narrative, persuasive, informative) and include more of those elements in their writing
  - write higher-quality papers (informative and persuasive)
  - write lengthier manuscripts
Strategy Instruction

- Three major types of writing strategies should be taught:
  - Spelling strategies
    - Primarily taught in K-2
  - General composing strategies
  - Genre-specific strategies
    - Narrative
    - Expository
      - Informational
      - Persuasive
      - Opinion
      - Explanation

- Strategies are often taught using *procedural facilitators*
  - Harris, Graham, Mason, 2006; Harris, et al., 2012; see also Graham & Perin, 2007
Strategy Instruction

- Procedural facilitator for Opinion Papers
- TREE
  - T: Topic sentence
    - Tell what you believe. What is your premise?
  - R: Reasons!
    - Give 3 or more. Why do you believe this?
  - E: Elaborate
    - Provide examples of your premise
    - Or, explain why you refuted a counter premise
  - E: End
    - End your essay by restating your topic sentence
Strategy Instruction

- Procedural facilitator for Persuasive Papers
- **DARE**
  - **D**: Develop a position statement
  - **A**: Add supporting arguments
  - **R**: Report and refute counter arguments
  - **E**: End with a strong conclusion
Strategy Instruction

- Procedural facilitator for Persuasive Papers

- **DEFEND**
  - **D**: Develop a list of idea words
  - **E**: Evaluate the importance of those ideas
  - **F**: Find even more ways to convince my readers
  - **E**: Encourage myself through self-talk
  - **N**: Now write with clear ideas, sharp sentences, and great impact
  - **D**: Decide if I met my writing goals

- **DARE to DEFEND**
Strategy Instruction

- Procedural facilitator for Narratives
- *A good story includes:*
  - **SPACE**
  - **S:** Setting elements
  - **P:** Problems
  - **A:** Actions
  - **C:** Consequences
  - **E:** Emotional reactions
Strategy Instruction

- Procedural facilitator for Narratives
  - *Steps for writing a good story:*

- **LAUNCH**
  - **L**: List ideas / idea words for my story
  - **A**: Ask if my ideas will meet my writing goals
  - **U**: Use encouraging self-talk
  - **N**: Now write with million-dollar words, sharp sentences, and lots of detail
  - **C**: Challenge myself to develop more good ideas
  - **H**: Have a close look at my paper for mistakes

- **SPACE LAUNCH**
Strategy Instruction

- Procedural facilitator for Narratives
- 5W-H

  1W: *Who* is the main character / other characters?
  2W: *What* does the main character / other characters do?
  3W: *When* does the story happen?
  4W: *Where* does the story take place?
  5W: *Why* did the main character / other characters do what they did?

  H: *How* does the story end and how do the characters feel about it?
Strategy Instruction

Procedural facilitators for general writing:

- **POW!**
- Pick my ideas
- Organize my notes
- Write!

- **POWER**
- Plan
- Organize
- Write
- Edit
- Revise

**Hamburger Paragraphs**
- Top Bun = *Introduction*
- Meat = *Detail sentences*
- Bottom Bun = *Conclusion*

Cheri’s = PCFRE
Strategy Instruction: *Rehearsal*

- Students work independently or in pairs to *rehearse* orally or in sign language each sentence of their composition.

- Students rehearse each sentence as many times as necessary until satisfied and ready to commit it to print.
  - rehearsal is easier than revision.

- Rehearsal allows students to impose syntactic and linguistic coherence, as well as structure and style, on their pre-written thoughts by using the resources of spoken or sign language (which are typically stronger than written language resources).

- Rehearsal serves as a bridge between the spontaneous talk students use to generate ideas and the more structured nature of written language.

  - Myhill & Jones, 2009
First Example of a Cognitive Apprenticeship

- Writing apprenticeship for young children (PreK-2)

- Also helps children acquire the **alphabetic principle**
  - the understanding that sounds of spoken language are represented by letters of the alphabet
  - acquisition of the alphabetic principle is *crucial* to children’s learning to read and write

- Can be adapted for use with deaf and hard-of-hearing children
  - (see Williams, 2011)

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**Interactive Writing**

Andrea McCarrier
Gay Su Pinnell & Irene C. Fountas

*How Language & Literacy Come Together, K–2*

Example from First Grade

September

A baby fox is called aKit.

April

This is what we know about the Bengals.

The Bengals are football players.

They take the ball and sometimes they win.

They tackle hard.

They are great football players.
Second Example of a Cognitive Apprenticeship

- **Strategic and Interactive Writing Instruction (SIWI)**
  - Designed especially for deaf and hard-of-hearing students who use ASL or contact sign to communicate

- Teachers use a **two-easel approach** for the co-constructed text
  - 1\textsuperscript{st} easel is the ASL “holding zone” / 2\textsuperscript{nd} easel is for the English text
  - Student contributions offered in ASL are written on the ASL easel and then translated into English before being written into the English text
  - **Contrastive analysis**: The two-easel approach allows teachers to make distinctions between ASL and English (while honoring both), compare grammars, and explicitly teach specific linguistic aspects of each language
Strategic and Interactive Writing Instruction (SIWI)

- Procedural facilitator for SIWI
  - POSTER
  - Plan
  - Organize
  - Scribe
  - Translate from ASL to English
  - Edit
  - Revise

- “NIP-it” lessons
  - Notice grammar errors in students’ writing
  - Instruction that explicitly addresses the issue
  - Practice the new strategy/skill during guided writing
Mentor Text Technique

- Teachers use the writing of professional authors as a Mentor Text to explicitly teach literary devices.
- Using a document camera or overhead projector, teachers highlight specific examples of an author’s use of a literary device and discuss the effects the author is trying to achieve.
- Then, the teacher and students collaboratively compose paragraphs using the literary device that was examined.

Examining Mentor Texts helps students to:
- develop knowledge of how accomplished authors craft their texts
- transfer knowledge of literary devices in Mentor Texts to their own writing
- develop a conscious awareness of the literary choices they make while writing independently

- Corden, 2007
This closet is abandoned – it has no purpose, no name. It’s the perfect place for me.

I’ve been painting watercolors of trees that have been hit by lightning. I try to paint them so they are nearly dead, but not totally.

A little kid asks my father why the man is chopping down the tree. “He’s not chopping it down. He’s saving it. Those branches were long dead with disease. But cutting off the damage, you make it possible for the tree to grown again.”

**Literacy device?**

**Symbolism**
I stand in the center aisle of the auditorium, a wounded zebra in a *National Geographic* special, looking for someone, anyone, to sit next to.

Ninth grade is a zit-cream commercial before the Feature Film of Life.

April is a warm, moldy washcloth of a month.

He sees me. And wolf smiles, showing oh granny what big teeth you have. BunnyRabbit bolts, leaving fast tracks in the snow.

*Literacy device?*

*Metaphor*
Technology and Writing

- Most students prefer writing with technology rather than on paper due to greater ease for composing, revising, and editing
  - as well as opportunities to produce multi-modal texts
- Use of technology is ideal for collaborative writing
- Public nature of the screen invites interaction and helps sustain writing-related talk
  - Students tend to narrate their own actions while writing with technology
  - Peers read the text displayed on a classmate’s screen and offer comments / feedback about the writing
    - also volunteer information about or assistance with the technology
      - often leads to discovery of another function of the technology
Technology and Writing

- Developing keyboarding skills and familiarity with basic word-processing functions will be necessary for some students.

- Students with poorer keyboarding skills typically can sustain text production for 10 – 15 minutes.

- For younger children, writing samples composed with pencil and paper are generally longer than those composed with a word processor.

  - Chung & Walsch, 2006; Van Leeuwen & Gabriel, 2007
Technology and Writing

- Don Johnston
- Version 6 offers writing templates that can be adapted / edited for different genres of writing
- Especially designed for students who struggle with writing
Technology and Writing

WriteOnline App
touch, write, succeed!

- **Crick Software**
- Wordbar feature enables teachers to create word bars with content-specific vocabulary
- Students tap a word on the wordbar to add it to their paper
- Wordbars support vocabulary knowledge and facilitate the use of new vocabulary in students’ writing
Questions?

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References


