

# ED303046 1988-12-00 Children's Writing in ESL. ERIC Digest.

ERIC Development Team

[www.eric.ed.gov](http://www.eric.ed.gov)

## Table of Contents

If you're viewing this document online, you can click any of the topics below to link directly to that section.

Children's Writing in ESL. ERIC Digest.....	1
WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "WRITING"?.....	2
WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT HOW ESL CHILDREN DEVELOP AS WRITERS?.....	2
WHAT SHOULD SCHOOLS DO TO PROMOTE ESL CHILDREN'S WRITING?.....	3
HOW SHOULD ESL CHILDREN'S WRITING BE ASSESSED?.....	3
RESOURCES.....	4
REFERENCES.....	4



**ERIC Identifier:** ED303046

**Publication Date:** 1988-12-00

**Author:** Hudelson, Sarah

**Source:** ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics Washington DC.

## Children's Writing in ESL. ERIC Digest.

THIS DIGEST WAS CREATED BY ERIC, THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER. FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ERIC, CONTACT ACCESS ERIC 1-800-LET-ERIC

This "Digest" is based on the ERIC/CLL "Language in Education" series monograph entitled "WRITE ON: Children Writing in ESL," written by Sarah Hudelson. The

monograph describes how children develop as writers in English as a second language. It will be available in early 1989 from Prentice Hall Regents, Mail Order Processing, 200 Old Tappan Road, Old Tappan, NJ 07675, or by calling 1-201-767-5937.

Children whose native language is not English are present in ever increasing numbers in elementary schools in the United States. Educators, therefore, must provide opportunities for these learners to develop English-as-a-second-language (ESL) skills and to learn school content-area material. In elementary schools, particular emphasis has recently been placed on helping ESL learners become more proficient writers of English to ensure their academic success in English language classrooms (Allen, 1986; Rigg and Enright, 1986; Urzua, 1987).

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "WRITING"?

For the purpose of this discussion, writing is defined as the creation of original text using the individual's intellectual and linguistic resources, rather than copying someone else's text, using a prepared list of words to create sentences or stories, filling in the blanks, or practicing handwriting.

## WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT HOW ESL CHILDREN DEVELOP AS WRITERS?

In the last fifteen to twenty years, elementary education researchers and educators have learned a tremendous amount about children's native language writing development. Examinations have revealed that, from early childhood, children work to make sense of written language. Children make predictions about how written language works and create texts based on these predictions. As the child's understanding of and predictions about written language change, so do the child's texts (Bissex, 1980; Harste, Woodward, and Burke, 1984). The perception of the child as creator has been confirmed in studies of classrooms in which writing has been taught as a process of drafting and revising (Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983).

Studies of the writing development of native speakers influenced other researchers to investigate the writing development of second language learners. The most general conclusion these examinations have reached is that the process of writing is similar for first and second language learners. More specifically, the following conclusions may be made about ESL children's writing development (Edelsky, 1986; Hudelson, 1986, 1987; Samway, 1987; Urzua, 1987): (1) ESL learners, while they are still learning English, can write; they can create their own meaning. (2) ESL learners can respond to the works of others and can use another learner's responses to their work to make substantive revisions in their creations. (3) Texts produced by ESL writers look very much like those produced by young native speakers. These texts demonstrate that the writers are making predictions about how the written language works. As the writers' predictions change, the texts change. (4) Children approach writing and develop as writers differently from one another. (5) The classroom environment has a significant impact on

ESL children's development as writers. (6) Culture may affect the writers' view of writing, of the functions or purposes for writing, and of themselves as writers. (7) The ability to write in the native language facilitates the child's ESL writing in several different ways. Native language writing provides learners with information about the purposes of writing. Writing ability in the native language provides second language learners with both linguistic and nonlinguistic resources that they can use as they approach second language writing. In addition, second language learners apply the knowledge about writing gained in first language settings to second language settings.

## WHAT SHOULD SCHOOLS DO TO PROMOTE ESL CHILDREN'S WRITING?

Children develop as writers when they use writing to carry out activities that are meaningful to them. Teachers need to provide time for writing on a regular basis; they need to encourage ESL children to write; they need to promote writing by responding to the content of the text rather than to the form; and they need to provide multiple opportunities for writers to engage in writing for reasons that are real and important to the individual writer.

Suggestions for specific classroom activities include the following:

- Use diaries or journals to promote fluency in writing and to help students see writing as one means of self-expression (Kreeft et al., 1984).
- Utilize personal narratives and writing workshop techniques to help learners become comfortable with the craft of drafting, sharing, and revising their pieces (Samway, 1987; Urzua, 1987).
- Make the reading-writing connection by exposing ESL learners to a wide variety of literary forms in reading and then provide opportunities for learners to construct their own forms to share with others (Allen, 1986; Flores et al., 1985).
- Incorporate various writing activities into content-area units so that ESL learners will experience the kinds of writing that will be expected in disciplines across the curriculum.

## HOW SHOULD ESL CHILDREN'S WRITING BE ASSESSED?

Assessments are important to the learners themselves, to their parents, to teachers, and to educators beyond the classroom or building level. Therefore, it seems important to advocate and promote assessment based, as much as possible, on daily classroom activity, that is, based on the observation and documentation of what children are doing in authentic writing situations in their own classrooms (Genishi & Dyson, 1984; Graves, 1983).

Classroom-based assessment may take many forms. Learners' progress may be documented through a systematic collection of children's work in writing folders, and checklists and anecdotal records may be used to note and analyze changes in writing over time. Teachers may carry out periodic observations of individual children, recording the individual child's writing behaviors and strategies within the context of the classroom. Children themselves may be asked to compare samples of their writing so that they may comment on their own progress.

At the school or district level, writing competence should be evaluated using holistic assessments of writing samples rather than standardized tests (Myers, 1980). Such assessments of actual writing come closer to reflecting the changes in teaching practices that are being advocated for both native speakers and ESL learners.

## RESOURCES

TESOL, Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, has an Interest Section (IS) devoted to ESOL in the elementary schools (ESOL in Elementary Education). Members of TESOL may elect to receive the IS newsletter that provides many practical tips about ESL children's language development.

The National Clearinghouse on Bilingual Education provides computerized searches on topics such as ESL literacy development, and a Teacher Resource Guide Series that includes titles on second language literacy.

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics provides computerized searches on topics related to this Digest and is publishing a monograph by Sarah Hudelson on ESL children's writing development. The title of the monograph is WRITE ON: Children Writing in ESL; it will be released in early 1989.

## REFERENCES

Allen, V. (1986). Developing contexts to support second language acquisition. "Language Arts," 63, 61-66.

Bissex, G. (1980). "GNYS AT WRK: A child learns to write and read." Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Calkins, L. (1986). "The art of teaching writing." Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Edelsky, C. (1986). "Writing in a bilingual program: Habia una vez."

Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Company.

Flores, B., et al. (1985). "Bilingual holistic instructional strategies."

Chandler, AZ: Exito.

Genishi, C., and Dyson, A. (1984). "Language assessment in the early years."

Language and learning for human service professions monograph series.

Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Company.

Graves, D. (1983). "Writing: Teachers and children at work." Exeter, NH:

Heinemann.

Harste, J., Woodward, V., and Burke, C. (1984). "Language stories and literacy lessons." Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Hudelson, S. (1986). Children's writing in ESL: What we've learned, what we're learning. In P. Rigg and D.S. Enright (Eds.), "Children and ESL:

Integrating perspectives." Washington, DC: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.

Hudelson, S. (1987). The role of native language literacy in the education of language minority children. "Language Arts," 64, 827-841.

Kreeft, J., et al. (Eds.) (1984). "Dialogue journal writing: Analysis of student-teacher interactive writing in the learning of English as a second language." National Institute of Education (NIE-G-83-0030). Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 252 097).

Myers, M. (1980). "A procedure for writing assessment." Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 193 676).

Rigg, P., and Enright, D.S. (Eds.) (1986) "Children and ESL: Integrating perspectives." Washington, DC: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other

Languages.

Samway, K. (1987). "The writing processes of non-native English-speaking children in the elementary grades." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Rochester, NY.

Urzua, C. (1987). "You stopped too soon": Second language children composing and revising. "TESOL Quarterly," 21, 279-304. ----- This report was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. RI88062010. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI or ED.

---

**Title:** Children's Writing in ESL. ERIC Digest.

**Document Type:** Information Analyses---ERIC Information Analysis Products (IAPs) (071); Information Analyses---ERIC Digests (Selected) in Full Text (073);

**Descriptors:** Children, Classroom Techniques, Elementary Education, English (Second Language), Second Language Instruction, Writing Instruction, Writing Skills

**Identifiers:** Dialogue Journals, ERIC Digests

###



[\[Return to ERIC Digest Search Page\]](#)