



## Culturally Responsive Talk between a Second Grade Teacher and Native Hawaiian Children during “Writing

J. Timothy Rynkofs

In an old wooden classroom in Leeward O‘ahu, Lincoln, a second grade student, explains to his teacher, Ellen Hino, why he needs to wear gloves to remove the hook from the balloon fish.

**Lincoln:** Da balloon fish hard for take off.

**Ellen:** Oh, to take the hook off. Why?

**Lincoln:** Cause get da stuff on da body.

**Ellen:** Oh, all that pokey thing, right?

**Lincoln:** You gotta grab by da head for take off da hook.

**Ellen:** So what—do you wear gloves?

**Lincoln:** Yeah!

**Ellen:** And then you take the hook out?

**Lincoln:** Only da balloon fish I wear gloves.

**Ellen:** Oh, I see. OK. So who taught you everything you know?

**Lincoln:** My dad. He always go fishing wit’ my uncle.

**Ellen:** And what do you use for bait?

**Lincoln:** Squid, any kine—squid and octopus and shrimp.

**Ellen:** That would be an interesting project, you know, to write about fishing and publish a fishing book. So for somebody who doesn’t know how to fish, they can read your book and they’ll know what they need to take and how to fish and then how to take off the—

**Lincoln:** Hook.

**Ellen:** Hook, yeah, like that!

Since Lincoln has already written several pieces about fishing over the last several months, Ellen suggests he use some of these pieces to publish a book focusing on his fishing adventures. For the next three weeks Lincoln spends part of each school day working on his “fishing stories.” Ellen returns to him several times to help him expand, revise, edit, and publish his book.

The above conversation is one of hundreds from a three-month study I conducted in Ellen Hino’s classroom during writing workshop (Rynkofs, 1993). The major purpose of the study was to look at the ways this native-born teacher responds orally to students who share her own bidialectal background. Most of these students are Native Hawaiian and speak a nonprestigious dialect called Hawai‘i Creole (HC) as their primary language and Standard English (SE) as their secondary language. Not only do these students speak a dialect particular to the Hawaiian Islands, but their classroom interactions can be strikingly different from those of mainstream American culture. This study addresses issues of linguistic and cultural differences in the context of what is called “writing workshop.”

### The Context: Writing Workshop, the Researcher, and the Classroom Teacher

After graduating from college in San Diego, I became a Peace Corps Volunteer. I spent three months training on the Big Island of Hawai‘i before I left for my two-year stay as a Teacher of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) in a small rural village in northern Thailand. After I finished the Peace Corps, I returned to Hawai‘i and got a teaching credential

and a master's degree from the University of Hawai'i. My coursework during those two years emphasized the "language deficit" model that was prevalent in the 60s and 70s, in which the students' native language was something to be devalued and corrected (Bereiter & Englemann, 1966).

I taught a variety of grades at an elementary school on the Wai'anae coast of O'ahu and initially attributed many of the academic failures of my HC-speaking students to their inability to speak "good English." As the years progressed, however, I came to realize that my students were competent language learners; their home language was just different from that of my middle-class mainstream upbringing.

Many years later when I became the writing resource teacher at the same school, I tried to implement writing workshop, a writing process approach (Graves, 1983), in the different classrooms I serviced, but quickly learned that without the teachers' understanding of their students' linguistic competence, any writing program was doomed to fail. Writing workshop was more successful in those HC classrooms where the teacher built on the students' oral language instead of attributing the students' writing problems to their inability to speak Standard English.

In writing workshop, teachers teach writing in a workshop-like atmosphere where students select topics they care about, share their texts with others, and see themselves as authors. Educators such as Graves (1983), Hansen (1987), Murray (1982), Calkins (1986), and Atwell (1987) have made tremendous inroads into promoting the effective teaching of writing. Instead of denying students' experiences, writing process teachers encourage their students to write about their experiences and interests, thus clarifying what it is they know and what it is they need to find out.

Henry Giroux calls this "legitimizing student experiences" (1987, p.178), which empowers both students and teachers. Coupled with the change towards a child-centered curriculum is the way talk is perceived by the teacher, from teacher dominated to teacher supportive, such as the collaborative talk among students and teachers in writing workshop. The heart of writing workshop is the writing conference, where students discuss their writing with their teacher and peers. Both Graves (1983) and his research assistant Sowers (1985) write extensively about this. As children develop their pieces of writing, they get support through responses that are helpful to them as writers. These responses can come in many forms, from just listening to the child read

the piece, or making concrete suggestions to improve the writing.

Farr and Daniels (1986) write about the teaching of writing to speakers of nonstandard English dialects. Among the key factors on their list for effective writing instruction is teacher awareness and understanding of the linguistic competence that students come to school with, and "positive expectations for student achievement" (p. 45). Farr and Daniels state that even the best teaching methods will fail unless teachers appreciate the language knowledge that their students already possess. Teachers must not make their students feel that their native language is somehow inferior by overcorrecting their students' errors, as well intentioned as these corrections might be.

Wanting to learn more about the teaching of writing, I took a one-year sabbatical on the mainland, which led me to stay there for two more years in pursuit of my doctorate. After completing my coursework, I returned to my position as the "writing teacher." As I tried to decide on a research topic, I naturally turned to what I knew best: writing workshop. On the surface, the most noticeable characteristic that made our writing workshop in Hawai'i different from other writing workshop classrooms in the nation was the children's oral language, the fact that they spoke Hawai'i Creole. I believed that by looking more closely at the children's oral language I would come to understand some of the connections between their oral and written languages. I was also interested in the teacher's role in supporting the children's writing development, so I approached Ellen Hino to gain access to her room for the research.

Ellen also believed that oral language was important and was willing to audiotape herself while talking with her students during writing workshop. I asked Ellen to try to get her second-grade students to talk as much as possible during writing workshop. We taped Ellen in whole-group discussions and in small-group and individual conferences. When I listened to the tapes, I noticed that Ellen's fine-tuned listening skills enabled her to respond in a variety of ways to what the students said and wrote. Also, some students needed more support than others and Ellen seemed to sense which students needed the most.

Ellen believed that her students needed to be the authorities when it came to selecting writing topics. Thus she encouraged them to write from their own experiences and had class discussions about topics they might be interested

in. Often the children would suggest topics during class discussions and Ellen would follow up with them, but she also brought up topics that they might be interested in, such as their experiences at the beach, fishing, going to the swap meet (flea market), riding bikes, playing football, and the like. She believed that what the students knew about and talked about, they could also write about.

### **Hawai‘i Creole and Culturally Responsive Talk**

Ellen Hino structured the interactions with her Native Hawaiian students in culturally responsive ways during writing workshop. This in turn helped the students to communicate in ways that were congruent with their culture, which fostered oral communication in the classroom and helped the students’ development as writers. There are several ways Ellen used talk to accomplish this throughout the writing period: (1) she promoted the use of “talk-story” (Au, 1980) in whole class discussions; (2) she supported individual students in whole class settings; (3) she answered questions about her writing processes; and (4) she asked direct questions of individual students.

### **Talk-Story in Class Discussions**

Ellen Hino first used the talk-story participation structure in her small group reading discussions when she joined the KEEP (Kamehameha Early Education Program) at the school in 1981. In that talk story approach, the teacher encourages spontaneous discussion among students. Hino found her reading discussions were more lively and produced a higher level of participation by the children than her more traditional way of directing the discussion had allowed. She told me,

KEEP gave us (teachers) a good background. They shared their anthropological and sociological studies that they did and they made sure that in our training we did the talk-story. . . . We had to be sure that we gave the kids time to interact and talk. They made me realize that you had to be more accepting of what the kids brought with them (Personal Communication).

“Giving the kids time to interact and talk” or “talk-story” meant that the Native Hawaiian children “engaged in joint performance, or the cooperative production of responses” (Au & Mason, 1983, p.149). Thus the children often co-narrated a story line with overlapping speech where one idea was started by one child, continued or reinforced by

another, and possibly embellished or finished by a third.

Since talk-story had proven successful in her small-group reading lessons and was part of the children’s home culture, Ellen eventually encouraged it in her lessons, discussions, and conversations with the children throughout the school day, including writing workshop. Ellen permitted and encouraged the use of the talk-story participation structure in whole class mini-lessons, and small group discussions when other students added their own comments and experiences to the conversation, and in her conferences with individual students.

In her teaching, Ellen sought out topics for whole class discussions, knowing that some students would use them in their writing while other students wouldn’t. In the following discussion Ellen is leading a whole-class discussion about skateboarding. The preceding day during a lunch conversation with her students, Carlton brought up this topic and here Ellen capitalizes on it by using it for her writing mini-lesson. The children are all seated on the floor and Ellen is sitting in front of them with a large piece of chart paper taped to the chalkboard so she can make a web for the children’s reference.

**Ellen:** Lincoln, I heard you say a word.

**Lincoln:** *Ollie.*

**Tuafili:** *Ollie*, that’s what I said.

**Ellen:** Can you guys explain that?

**Tuafili:** Get ollie.

**Ellen:** What’s that?

**Tuafili:** Ollie, you gotta lift da back—get da back going up like dat (Tuafili demonstrates with his hands) and you gotta press da back and da ting gonna go up.

**Ellen:** So your skateboard has to be a certain shape?

**Tuafili:** D back—

**Lincoln:** Da back goes up.

**Ellen:** The back has to be kinda like a wave.

**Tuafili:** Yeah.

**Ellen:** OK.

**Tuafili:** So you gotta press ‘om down, den da ting gonna go up.

**Raoul:** And den gonna stop.

**Ellen:** So if you lean your weight on that back thing—

**Tuafili:** Your leg gotta go.

**Ellen:** Put your leg on that back part and then what, Tuafili?

**Tuafili:** *Fly up.*

**Lincoln:** *Da ting gonna fly up but.*

**Ellen:** The front will lift up—

**Lincoln:** Even da back.

**Raoul:** And den you gonna stop.

**Ellen:** And that's what you call an ollie.

**Lincoln:** Not only da front gonna lift up, da *back too*—

**Tuafili:** *Da back too.*

**Raoul:** Da back gonna lift up straight.

This episode shows how Ellen and the children use some talk-story participation structures as they jointly define the term *ollie*. Tuafili and Raoul, both hesitant to speak earlier when called upon, now have much to volunteer and are quite dominant in the discussion, as is Lincoln. The children co-narrate their responses as they “piggyback” each other to explain how to ollie. To an outsider these rapid exchanges might appear to be somewhat chaotic and unfocused, but in fact they are highly orchestrated and the children seem to be quite aware when they should or should not contribute to the discussion. The children seldom raised their hands and Ellen only once called directly on a student, Lincoln, so he could elaborate his response.

This skateboard discussion continued as the children told Ellen about their experiences jumping ramps, and doing a 360 maneuver, and how they sometimes got hurt riding skateboards. This discussion lasted for thirteen minutes. Although the boys, especially Tuafili, Lincoln, and Raoul, dominated much of the discussion, there was a high level of involvement from the class as they were anxious to tell what they knew about skateboarding and some of their own experiences. Even those children who did not say much were interested in the topic and enjoyed hearing about their classmates' experiences.

Ellen is quite adept at leading this kind of talk-story discussion and commented to me afterwards how much she enjoyed it and how much she learned about skateboarding.

By placing the children in the situation where they were teaching their teacher what they knew, Ellen helps the children discover the implicit knowledge that is a part of their experience and their language. Ellen's use of talk-story demonstrates that the children could be active participants in a discussion, given the right set of circumstances, including relinquishing some control of the turn taking and letting the children co-narrate their responses. Following this lengthy discussion, Tuafili and Lincoln went off together to write about their skateboarding experiences. Dwayne began some illustrations of making a skateboarding ramp, which Ellen later helped him make into a book. LaShawn started a skateboarding piece the following day.

### Supporting Individual Students in Class Discussions

Studies by Boggs (1972, 1985) have argued that Native Hawaiian students do not like to be asked direct questions; however, they do talk willingly and capably when they are able to initiate the conversation or can have the support of their peers, as just shown in the talk-story skateboarding example. But the talk-story participation structure could not always be used in the classroom, especially when one child was the focus of attention. When children shared their pieces of writing from their notebooks in an all-class meeting, some of them were reluctant to answer questions other children asked them even though they had volunteered to share. In these instances Ellen had to support the individual student being spotlighted or that student could “shut down” speaking or “feel shame” (embarrassment), as the children expressed it.

Tuafili is one of the students Ellen had to support in the whole class meetings when the spotlight was on him. In the skateboarding discussion Tuafili is the most dominant speaker in the class as he initiated many of the ideas about skateboarding and shared the “floor” throughout the discussion with his classmates. But Tuafili was often hesitant to speak when he was the focus of attention. For example, on a particular day Tuafili volunteered to share a piece of writing about his trip to the mainland during Christmas vacation. After Tuafili finishes reading, the children raise their hands and respond.

**Ginger:** You said you went to your grandma's to visit.

**Shanelle:** I heard you was playing with your cousins.

**Cherish [adding]:** Football.

**Napua:** I heard that you was playing with your cousins.

**Shanelle:** I already said that already.

**Keoni:** Football.

**Carlton:** With his cousins.

At this point Ellen steps in as the children begin to argue about what has and has not been said, what Boggs (1985) refers to as the “contradictory routine.” This was quite prevalent in the classroom as verbal disputes were an important part of the classroom culture. By having the students “tell Tuafili what we heard,” Ellen places the emphasis on listening to the writer and responding in a positive way. Ellen believed it was threatening enough for some of the children just to share their writing without the extra burden of having their classmates being too critical of the written text.

Next Ellen takes the spotlight off of Tuafili, who is feeling uncomfortable, and controls the sharing by asking the class a series of direct questions based on Tuafili’s trip to the mainland. Notice how Ellen uses a sentence completion technique so many students can respond all at the same time.

**Ellen:** So what’s Tuafili trying to tell us in this story?

**Keoni [responding quickly]:** Football.

**Ellen:** He went for a visit to the—

**Class:** Mainland!

**Ellen:** What was the big change for him up there?

**Joshua:** It was cold.

**Ellen:** It was—

**Class:** Cold!

**Ellen:** And he had to use—

**Several students:** Jackets! Blankets!

**Ellen:** Blankets to keep him warm, yeah. So on the last day he went to buy pants and other clothes, right, to bring back with him.

**Cherish:** And shoes!

**Shanelle:** Not shoes!

Although Ellen’s primary emphasis in all-class sharing was to give the children an opportunity to read their writing and have the class respond to what they heard, she also felt it was a time for the children to ask each other questions about

their drafts. Ellen next asks the class, “Is there anything more you’d like to know about Tuafili’s trip to the mainland?”

**Raoul:** Who did you play football with?

**Several children [impatiently]:** His cousins!

**Raoul:** You only said you played with his cousins football, but he didn’t say who he played with. I wanted to know the names.

**Ellen [intervening]:** Oh, you want to know the names. [To Tuafili] So these cousins were from the mainland or they went up with you?

**Tuafili:** From the mainland.

Here Ellen buffers Raoul’s inquiry of the names of the cousins by asking Tuafili where his cousins were from and then closes the sharing session. Raoul would often criticize his classmates’ drafts, but Ellen controls this, again feeling that she wanted the children to feel safe to share. The children’s interactions with each other, such as the “contradictory routine,” could get out of hand in a sensitive situation where the child was sharing with the class, and Ellen would intervene. Ellen also has to be sensitive to the child’s feelings and be careful when asking questions or determining how many questions the other students can ask of the writer.

## The Children Question Ellen About Her Writing Processes

On occasion Ellen would model her own writing processes—retelling the experience she was drawing from, writing a first draft, and asking feedback from the children. These occasions gave the children opportunities to make comments and ask questions about their teacher’s processes. It also placed Ellen as the focus of attention, thus alleviating the “shame” that some of the children felt when they answered their classmates’ questions and modeled for the children how to respond to comments and questions.

In the following discussion Ellen has just finished sharing with the children a long account of her family’s fishing experience the previous summer at a trout farm in Lake Tahoe, California. In her account, Ellen uses a six-inch metal pipe to kill the trout her son caught.

**Keoni:** Wow! That’s a long story.

**Roylynn:** Was funny one.

**Ellen:** Was funny? What do you mean was funny? What part was funny?

**Roylynn:** When you wen whack 'om, da ting still moving and den you whack 'om again and da ting go still moving. Eve'ytime you wen whack 'om, da ting go \* \*. [\*\*Two words, unclear on tape.]

**Ellen:** Yeah cuz we don't do that in Hawaii, right?

**Children [loudly]:** No!

**Ellen:** When you catch, you just unhook it and you throw 'om in the bucket.

**Joshua:** Da ting still moving but.

**Ellen:** It still kinda moves but we just throw it in the bucket, right? Isn't that how you guys fish?

**Children:** Uh-huh!

**Ellen:** Just unhook it and throw it in a bucket and it'll die.

**Roylynn:** Oh, we no \*. [\*One word, unclear on tape.]

**Raoul:** Gonna be dead.

Ellen chose to tell the students and write about her “trout fishing” experience with her family at Lake Tahoe because of her students’ interests in fishing, just as she chose to bring up skateboarding in the talk story example. She draws on their knowledge of fishing so they can better understand what it might be like to go fishing at a trout farm, and then lets the children respond to and question her about it. When Roylynn responds “Was funny one,” Ellen receives her words “Was funny,” and then asks Roylynn, “What do you mean was funny? What part was funny?” asking Roylynn to elaborate. Ellen also asks for the children’s verification of how they fish—“We don’t do that in Hawaii” and “Isn’t that how you guys fish?”—which again keeps them involved. Later in the discussion Lincoln asks Ellen “Big pond?” and Ellen compares it to the size of the classroom and then compares her trout fishing experiences with the children’s experiences with fishponds at carnivals.

This episode shows that the children felt comfortable questioning their teacher in a formal classroom situation, and that Ellen responded to them in an informal or almost conversational way, respecting their comments and questions, drawing them into the conversation and making connections to their own experiences. Because the children’s own culture

expected some distance between persons of authority and themselves, the ease with which Ellen and the children talk with each other in this classroom exchange is all the more striking. Ellen helps the children move beyond their ways of talking, specifically in questioning her, and the children respond capably and enthusiastically.

### Direct Questions to Individual Students Can Work (Most of the Time)

The children responded better in whole-class discussions when they had the choice of joining or not joining the discussion. When Ellen called on them directly, when they did not volunteer, they would often not respond or respond minimally. Even when some children asked to be called on in an all-class discussion and Ellen asked them to elaborate, they had very little to say. In the following discussion, Ellen is with the entire class on a Monday morning asking the children to share what they did over the weekend to help them find new writing topics. Ashley shares that she went to the Swap Meet (flea market) and Ellen asks the class if any of them go to the Swap Meet to sell things. Napua, who is usually quite verbal, is hesitant to talk once Ellen spotlights her.

**Ellen:** Who goes there to sell things?

**Several children:** I do. Me.

**Napua [very loudly]:** My grandma do.

**Ellen:** Grandma goes to sell. Do you go with her? You help her? What?

**Napua:** I just watch.

**Ellen:** You just sit and watch grandma and what happens? Do people come? [Napua nods her head yes.] And?

**Napua:** Buy.

**Ellen:** They buy and you help your grandma set everything up? Make it all nice. [Napua nods her head yes.] Oh, how interesting.

**Napua:** She just sell flowers, dat's it.

**Ellen:** Oh, your grandma sells flowers and where does she get the flowers from?

**Napua:** From her garden.

**Ellen:** OK, she cuts all the flowers from her garden and she

takes it to the Swap Meet and sells it there and you help her set it all up and people come and buy.

**Napua:** Yeah!

Even though Napua spoke louder than the other children in order to be recognized, once Ellen asks Napua to elaborate (“Do you go with her? You help her? What?”) Napua responds minimally (“I just watch”). Again, Ellen asks Napua to expand (“And what happens? Do people come?”), but Napua only replies “buy” leaving out any specific details of the event. In episodes like this, when the children asked to be recognized and then had very little to say, Ellen tended to supply the details and asked for verification from the children, as she does with Napua. Even though Napua had very little to share about the Swap Meet, she still began a piece of writing that day about her experiences there, which was eventually published into a book.

Ellen also held individual writing conferences with her students where they were expected to speak and answer Ellen’s questions, which could be difficult for some children in the classroom. Boggs (1972) writes, “It is my hypothesis that it is basically unpleasant for a Hawaiian child to have a question directed to him by an adult, even if it is an attempt at friendly conversation” (p. 307). Boggs collected his data in classrooms similar to Ellen’s, but he reported on the children’s interactions with the adult observer in the classroom rather than the classroom teacher.

Most of the time the children responded to Ellen’s inquiries because they were usually talking about topics they initiated and cared about, which facilitated their use of language in the conference. Here Ellen is conferring with Dwayne about a piece of his writing. Notice what a willing conversationalist Dwayne is.

**Dwayne:** I don’t know what else I can write.

**Ellen:** What have you done so far, Dwayne?

**Dwayne:** I finish wit’ dis one.

**Ellen:** What is this one about?

**Dwayne:** My dad—me and my dad playing.

**Ellen:** Playing what?

**Dwayne:** Ball and all kine games.

**Ellen:** Today?

**Dwayne:** Da 29.

**Ellen:** Oh, this happened already. [Ellen then reads his piece.] You were happy because your dad was going to stay home. He didn’t have to work and he was going to play Nintendo.

**Dwayne:** He play Nintendo wit’ me.

**Ellen:** OK, so what—tell us.

**Dwayne:** And den after we was pau [finished] playing Nintendo and den we went in da parlor play games, all kine games, like you know, da sticky ball.

**Ellen [referring to Dwayne’s illustration]:** Oh, this thing in your hand, the big glove and then you throw it and the velcro’s on it or something.

**Dwayne:** And den my dad take me outside and den we play t’row t’row (catch).

Like Dwayne, most of the children in the classroom were very willing to discuss in individual conferences with Ellen the topics they wrote about, and Ellen’s conference style made the children feel comfortable so they could answer her direct questions.

## Culturally Responsive Talk

In summary, Ellen was culturally responsive to the participation structures of her Native Hawaiian students in whole-class and small-group discussions and in individual conferences with her students. First, Ellen supported their use of talk-story, which gave them occasion to use oral language in a culturally familiar way. Second, she curbed their cultural tendency to contradict each other. Their natural talk patterns were not appropriate for situations when a child shared a piece of writing with the class so Ellen had to redirect their talk in order for the child in the spotlight to feel safe. She was also aware that some children “felt shame” when they were in front of the class so she acted as a buffer between the class and the child. Third, she set up situations for them to question her, an authority figure. This is not customarily done in Native Hawaiian culture. Fourth, she asked direct questions to individual students with awareness that direct questions are not common in her students’ culture.

The children’s use of Hawai’i Creole in no way deterred them from participating in class discussions or conferences. However, Ellen worked hard to help the children “make meaning” (Wells 1986) in their native dialect, encouraging

---

them to tell her more, interpreting what they said, and providing new vocabulary words when appropriate. Ellen's main emphasis during writing workshop was on the writer and not so much on the writing, although that was important too. Ellen believed that the key to improving her students' writing was through oral language so she strove to give her students opportunities to talk about their interests and experiences. By placing her emphasis on oral language and not the text, Ellen's talk in the classroom was more of a conversation with a writer than a scripted writing conference; it also was in tune with the children's culture. The payoff for Ellen was that the children had ample opportunities to discuss with her their various interests and experiences, some of which the children wrote about and some of which they did not. Even though much of the teacher-student talk did not end up in the students' writing, it still gave these students an avenue to talk about their own experiences. This was no small matter for these bidialectical students, who spoke in one dialect and wrote in another.

### Shifting Between Two Codes: Talking in HC and Writing in SE

Like most children of lower- or middle-class ethnic minorities in Hawai'i, the second grade students in Ellen's classroom all spoke with some features of Hawai'i Creole. The degree to which they spoke HC varied considerably, but it was the most dominant language for most of the students, especially when they talked among themselves. Since HC was the language of their upbringing and the community, it was only natural that it would also be their language in the classroom.

Ellen never discussed with her students the fact that they spoke HC as she did not want to make them feel self-conscious or inferior about their language. Ellen's main focus in the classroom was to enable her students to communicate in any way possible, as demonstrated by the talk-story discussions, by the children's use of HC, and by Ellen's own occasional use of HC as a culturally appropriate response. Furthermore, Ellen never told her students that she expected them to write in Standard English. Codeshifting between the oral language of Hawai'i Creole and the more formal written language of Standard English was primarily done by the children themselves. The students developed this expectation for written language in SE by hearing stories read aloud to them, reading stories themselves, encountering varieties of print in SE, and watching teachers demonstrate writing.

Even though the students' primary spoken language was HC, there was very little evidence of Hawai'i Creole in the students' writing. Even those students who spoke extensive HC with Ellen in the classroom still wrote primarily in Standard English.

For purposes of comparison, I will first present the oral language of Lincoln, one of Ellen's students, and then present the written text that Lincoln wrote after his conversation with her. In the oral interchange Ellen sits down next to Keoni and Lincoln for her first writing conference of the day. Keoni is telling Ellen about playing with his friend's battery-driven, four-wheeler racing car and Lincoln joins in the conversation.

**Keoni:** She get four wheeler—you know da kine \* \* \*.  
[\*\*\*Three words, unclear on tape.]

**Lincoln [interjecting]:** Oh! I wen ride da four-wheeler before.

**Ellen [to Keoni]:** It has a battery in it?

**Keoni:** Yeah, one big battery.

**Ellen [to Keoni]:** Right, and the back tires are real huge, kinda big. You can ride on the sand.

**Lincoln [excitedly]:** I wen ride 'om, one blue one. Me and my cousin jump da hill, get one track go like dat [demonstrating with his hands], one big one. Den my oder cousin came on and had us t'ree on top. My cousin wen try jump 'om. We got stuck and den we had to give up and push 'om and den we had to go.

**Ellen [laughing]:** In the sand. What do you mean you made a track?

**Lincoln:** No, da oder people did for ride four-wheeler.

**Ellen:** OK, what do you mean?

**Lincoln:** Dey made 'om out of da sand.

**Ellen:** Oh, so you pile up the sand and make a couple of hills.

**Lincoln:** Yeah and den just go around, good fun.

**Ellen:** So you guys were on the track too?

**Lincoln:** Yeah! It was my mom's birthday and we was camping.

[Here Keoni briefly tells about his own birthday party].

**Ellen [to Lincoln and Keoni]:** So what are you gonna get started on?

**Lincoln:** Oh, I gonna write about da sand one, da four wheeler.

**Ellen:** The four-wheeler getting stuck—yeah, that’s funny.

This conference between Ellen and Keoni and Lincoln was typical of most in this classroom, where Ellen engages her students in open talk. Both boys had just finished a piece of writing the day before so Ellen sat down next to them at the beginning of writing workshop. As Keoni and Ellen are conversing about Keoni’s four-wheeler toy, Lincoln recalls his experience at the beach riding a four-wheeler and tells about it. In a conversational manner, Ellen gives Keoni and Lincoln an opportunity to talk about their experiences with the knowledge that this might trigger a writing topic and her belief in the importance of oral language, whether any specific writing emerges from it or not. Both Lincoln and Keoni use many features of Hawai’i Creole in their conversation with Ellen, who makes no effort to correct their speech patterns. Instead, by allowing the boys to talk, Ellen helps to make them aware of all the knowledge embedded in these experiences, and how much they have to write about.

Before I present Lincoln’s writing, I will first take a closer look at Lincoln’s oral discourse and the features of HC in it. After Lincoln first interjects his topic (“I wen ride da four-wheeler before”), he gets the floor four turns later and lunges into an extended discourse about his experience at the beach. Here is Lincoln’s complete monologue separated into sentence fragments for purposes of closer analysis.

I wen ride ‘om, one blue one	1
Me and my cousin jump da hill	2
Get one track go like dat, one big one	3
Den my oder cousin came on	4
And had us t’ree on top	5
My cousin wen try jump ‘om	6
We got stuck	7
And den we had to give up and push ‘om	8
And den we had to go	9

Lincoln’s speech patterns are representative of many HC speakers. He uses *wen* plus the simple form of the verb to indicate past tense in lines 1 (*wen ride*) and 6 (*wen try jump*). The use of *wen* as a past tense marker is probably the

most common indicator of HC speech. Lincoln uses *‘om* as an unmarked pronoun in lines 1 (*wen ride ‘om*, referring to the four wheeler), 6 (*wen try jump ‘om*, referring to the track) and 8 (*push ‘om*, referring to the four wheeler). Lincoln also uses *one* as the indefinite article in lines 1 (*get one track, one blue one*) and 3 (*one big one*). Lincoln uses the HC feature of *have* or *get* as compared to “there be” in Standard English in lines 3 (*get one track go like dat*) and 5 (*had us t’ree on top*). These are just some of the features of HC that Lincoln uses in this short passage. Notice that Lincoln does not speak exclusively in HC; he also uses some SE, as in the sentence *we got stuck*; in HC Lincoln would have said *we wen get stuck*. Thus his speech is a combination of both HC and SE, as it is with most HC speakers. Lincoln also speaks in the rapid manner associated with HC and his pronunciation of certain sounds is representative of HC speakers (*den* for then; *dat* for that; *oder* for other; and *t’ree* for three).

Following this brief conversation with Ellen, Lincoln began a detailed drawing of his camping experience at the beach, focusing his drawing on riding the four-wheeler. The next day Lincoln finished his drawing and began to write his draft in his notebook, a project that took two more writing periods.

Below is Lincoln’s complete draft; following it is the transcription.

On the weekend we went to the beach. It was my mom’s bitherday. and my uncle ask hes frined to ride has fourwheeler at the beach. My cousine pack me he tokek me to the tsrk the frsc time we jump the heoho but when my ohrhr cousin was on we criedt to clime the hooho igan but we diat maek it so we had to pohoh it back down then we went to the tant. Then my uilolu pack my gramam. When my uilolucame back he pack my mom to. Then I went to somme when I gat out my cilsn pack me igan but tess time went irod the trak we went irod ti tioes.

On the weekend we went to the beach. It was my mom’s birthday. And my uncle ask his friend to ride his four-wheeler at the beach. My cousin pack me. He took me to the tracks. The first time we jump the hill but when my other cousin was on we tried to climb the hill again but we didn’t make it so we had to push it back down. Then we went to the tent. Then my cousin pack my gramma. When my uncle came back he pack my mom too. Then I went to swim. When I got out, my cousin pack me again but this time we went around the track. We went around it twice.

Even though Lincoln's speech has many features of Hawai'i Creole, his written text is almost exclusively Standard English. The only grammatical difficulty Lincoln has with Standard English in his text is that he does not include the *-ed* ending on the simple form of the verb to indicate past tense (*ask* instead of "asked," *pack* instead of "packed," and *jump* instead of "jumped"). This is not surprising when you consider HC speakers form the past tense by using *wen* plus the simple form of the verb (*wen ask, wen pack, and wen jump*). Nevertheless, Lincoln is still able to use the correct form of the irregular verbs *go* (*we went to the beach*); *take* (*he took me to the tracks*); *come* (*when my uncle came back*); and *get* (*when I got out*).

When you compare how Lincoln talked about the heart of the experience—riding the four-wheeler—and the manner in which he wrote the incident, you can see how well Lincoln codeshifts between talking in HC and writing in SE. Here again is part of Lincoln's oral text telling Ellen and Keoni about his experience at the beach.

Me and my cousin jump da hill/  
Get one track go like dat, one big one/  
Den my oder cousin came on/  
And had us t'ree on top/  
My cousin wen try jump 'om/  
We got stuck/  
And den we had to give up and push 'om/

Yet, when Lincoln writes about his experience he is able to codeshift to the formal written English with little difficulty. Here is part of Lincoln's written text presented in the same kind of sentence fragments as his oral text.

My cousin pack me (carried as a passenger).  
He took me to the tracks.  
The first time we jump the hill.  
But when my other cousin was on,  
we tried to climb the hill again  
but we didn't make it  
so we had to push it back down.

Lincoln is able to write about his four-wheeler experience with his cousins in some detail as he codeshifts into written Standard English, no mean feat when you consider

this second grader was not expected to do this nor had he been taught how to do it. Nevertheless, he accomplishes it with relative ease mastering most of the complexities of written English. The text itself has an opening statement (On the weekend we went to the beach. It was my mom's birthday); a central theme (riding a four-wheeler); and supporting details (who rode and what happened). It is quite a complete piece of writing.

The students in Ellen's classroom also worked out for themselves how their written text might better conform to Standard English norms. This was accomplished without any direct prodding from Ellen but more as a matter of what is acceptable written English by the individual student. Here is an example from LaShawn, an emergent writer who is writing about her dog. Ellen has written for LaShawn on the second page of her story (SHE [the dog] RAN AWAY. SHE RAN OUT OF THE GATE.) On the third page in her booklet LaShawn has written AND MY BROTHER WAS HAPPY, getting help with the spelling from the other children seated at the table. In the writing conference, Ellen asks LaShawn why her brother is happy that the dog ran away and LaShawn shares that her brother is scared of dogs. Ellen suggests to LaShawn that she add to her draft why her brother is happy and leaves LaShawn on her own to do the writing. After the conference, LaShawn wrote the following—*because he is sad of ouy hang dog* (because he is scared of any kind dog). "Any kind" is an HCE idiom referring to "all kinds" or "every kind," such as "Get any kind candy in dat box" (Carr, 1972). But when LaShawn read over her sentence "because he is scared of any kind dog," she added *of so* that the text now read "any kind of dog." The following day when LaShawn read this sentence to Ellen she read it as "because he is scared of all kinds of dogs." Again, the progression LaShawn made is as follows:

MY BROTHER WAS HAPPY BECAUSE HE IS SCARED OF—

1. first reading—*ANY KIND DOG*
2. rereading out loud to herself—*ANY KIND OF DOG*
3. rereading to Ellen the following day—*ALL KINDS OF DOGS*

In this example LaShawn is able to codeshift from the HC expression *any kind dog* to closer approximation of Standard English *any kind of dog* and, upon still another

reading the following day, comes up with the Standard English expression *all kinds of dogs*, even adding the plural “s” to “kind” and “dog.” Although this is a very complex task, LaShawn’s careful rereadings and her own sense that something is amiss enables her to codeshift from Hawai‘i Creole to written Standard English.

## Conclusion

The transcripts show that Ellen talked to her bidialectal students in ways that were uniquely responsive to the Native Hawaiian culture; she encouraged the use of “talk-story” in group discussions, and in no situation did she curtail their use of Hawai‘i Creole. Ellen’s writing conference style was conversational in nature, which was compatible with Native Hawaiian culture. The relaxed social interactions in the classroom allowed the children to converse about their writing in a lively manner, especially in the student-teacher conferences. Although the children spoke with many features of Hawai‘i Creole, they wrote primarily in Standard English. Their use of HC helped them articulate their knowledge about their personal interests, which in turn facilitated their interest in their writing. In other words, the children’s use of Hawai‘i Creole positively influenced their writing, which was in Standard English.

As a nation of great ethnic and cultural diversity, it would seem that we need to support a pluralist position where students are allowed to retain their native dialect, yet also become literate in Standard English. This position allows students to maintain their ethnic identity without having to make them feel that their speech is somehow inadequate, but also acknowledges that students should be able to read and write in Standard English. Now, more than ever, teachers need to be responsive to the social, economic, and linguistic differences of all students, especially minorities.

## REFERENCE

- Atwell, N. (1987). *In the middle: Writing, reading and learning with adolescents*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Au, K. H. (1980). Participation structures in a reading lesson with Hawaiian children: Analysis of a culturally appropriate instructional event. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 11 (2), 91–115.
- Au, K. H., & Mason, J. M. (1983). Social organizational factors in learning to read: The balance of rights hypothesis. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 17 (1) 115–152.
- Bereiter C., & Englemann, S. (1966). *Teaching disadvantaged children in the preschool*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Boggs, S. T. (1972). The meaning of questions and narratives to Hawaiian children. In C. Cazden, V. John, & D. Hymes (Eds.) *Functions of language in the classroom*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Boggs, S. T. (1985). *Speaking, relating and learning: A study of Hawaiian children at home and at school*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Calkins, L. (1986). *The art of teaching writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann
- Farr, M., & Daniels, H. (1986). *Language diversity and writing instruction*. New York: ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education.
- Carr, E. (1972). *Da kine talk: From pidgin to standard English in Hawaii*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Giroux, H. (1987). Critical literacy and student experience: Donald Graves’ approach to literacy. *Language Arts*, 64, 175–181.
- Graves, D. (1983). *Writing: Teachers and children at work*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Hansen, J. (1987). *When writers read*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Murray, D. (1982). *Learning by teaching*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.
- Rynkofs, T. (1993). Culturally responsive talk between a second grade teacher and Hawaiian students during writing workshop. Ph.D. dissertation. University of New Hampshire.
- Sowers, S. (1985). Learning to write in the workshop: A study of grades one through four. In M. Farr (Ed.), *Advances in writing research: Children’s early writing development*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Wells, G. (1986). *The meaning makers: Children learning language and using language to learn*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.