

Exploring Teachers' Beliefs and Knowledge about English Writing and Their Writing Instruction in ESL Context

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Given that various classroom contextual factors influence the nature of writing instructional practices, it would be worthwhile to explore these factors to generate better environment for learning to write. Among many factors, this study examined teachers' beliefs and knowledge, which would operate as a very influential contextual factor in that changes in principles and methods of teaching writing would be the results of their underlying beliefs and knowledge related to teaching writing. Three professional teachers who teach second- and third-grade English language learners (ELLs) were interviewed, and the analysis of teacher interviews was conducted. The research findings indicated that basically all of the teachers perceived the role of writing in second language learning as very important, sharing the belief that the ultimate goal of teaching writing is to have their students gain fluency in writing and that some of instructional methods such as integration of writing and other language aspects, content-based writing, and providing scaffolding are important. In addition, some beliefs that two ESL teachers shared included the importance of ample and continuous opportunities to write, vocabulary knowledge, and explicit instruction about writing. Other beliefs, including the importance of creating a comfortable writing environment and opportunities for writing for varied purposes and genres were represented.

[teacher's beliefs/teaching writing]

I. INTRODUCTION

Various contextual factors embedded in classrooms influence the writing development of English language learners (ELLs). Their composing processes and development of L2 writing are influenced by classroom writing contexts which would vary in terms of teacher's beliefs and knowledge about the teaching of writing, teacher's quality of writing

instruction, social interaction among other L2 writers during the processes of writing, and the demand of the government standards for learning or the required school curriculum for teaching writing (Ellis, 1994).

One of the key factors that influence writing instruction in classrooms is teacher's beliefs and knowledge about the teaching of writing, which in turn significantly shapes the nature of writing instructional practices. For example, instructional methods that the teacher would employ, opportunities for writing and the types of writing tasks that students would engage in, and the nature of writing assessment that the teacher would use are all derived from teacher's underlying views and knowledge about the teaching of writing (McCarthy, Garcia, Lopez-Velasquez, Lin, & Guo, 2004).

The important issue is to examine teachers' pedagogical beliefs and professional knowledge related to teaching writing, because changes in principles and methods of teaching, curriculum design, ways of interacting with students, and so on, would be all the results of their underlying beliefs and knowledge about teaching writing. Teachers would incorporate what they believe or what they know is best for their students into their writing instructional practices. Thus, among various classroom contextual factors, a teacher's beliefs and knowledge about teaching writing play as a fundamental role of generating good environment for learning to write for ELLs.

Such considerations of the issue led to the research question guiding this study—*What are the beliefs of second- and third-grade ESL and content classroom teachers regarding writing instruction for English language learners?* The purpose of the study is to investigate teachers' beliefs about teaching writing. This study will contribute to an understanding of what experienced teachers believe and know about learning and teaching of writing, which would operate as a very influential contextual factor that generates good writing environment that helps promote ELLs' writing development. In addition, it will provide chances for the current Korean English teachers who underestimate the role of writing to reflect their beliefs about English writing and their writing instruction.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

An understanding of what contexts might be most effective in promoting ELLs' writing development would be one of the crucial issues to consider as important in that the classroom contextual factors influence ELLs' writing development.

Many researchers have suggested that classroom context and quality of instruction are tremendously critical for ELLs' development as L2 writers (Gutierrez, 1992; McCarthy & Garcia, 2005; McCarthy et al., 2004; McCarthy, Guo, & Cummins, 2005; Valdes, 1999). McCarthy et al. (2005) confirmed that the amount and quality of writing opportunities in

English in a variety of genres had influenced ELLs' writing development. Among the five upper-elementary Asian students (i.e., three Chinese and two Taiwanese) in this study, four students demonstrated dramatic progress in writing in terms of grammar and punctuation, sentence complexity, rhetorical style, and voice; this progress was attributed to their many opportunities to write in English in various genres. The failure of the Taiwanese student to improve his English was attributed to few opportunities to write in English provided in his school.

In the McCarthy et al. (2004) study of writing opportunities, ELLs received content-based ESL instruction in which they engaged in multiple writing opportunities, including writing summaries of content in subject matter areas (e.g., science), keeping logs of observations, working on worksheets in the content areas, journal writing of topics of their own choice, writing summaries or reports of books they read, etc. Although the ELLs in the study had many meaningful opportunities to write, these writing chances mostly feature connecting writing to content and led ELLs to display what they had learned, read, or experienced in their writings through writing summaries. The ELLs' writing experiences included limited chances to engage in personal writing with more consideration of audience, individual voice, or personal experience. McCarthy et al. (2004) suggested that we need further research on ways to promote ELLs' writing development (e.g., what types of writing assignments would be effective for promoting ELLs' writing abilities).

The lack of exposure to writing and writing instruction could be one of the factors that cause ELLs to experience writing difficulties. As Valdes (1999) indicated, many ELLs who were exited from ESL programs and entered mainstream classrooms often faced writing difficulties because the primary focus of ESL instruction lay on language structure rather than mechanics and organization. Such limited exposure to writing itself was in contrast to English monolingual students, who probably had received a great deal of exposure to texts of all different kinds. Thus, it would be important to take into account whether writing problems are due to language problems or to insufficient exposure to writing and writing instruction.

The nature of the writing task is another contextual factor for writing development, influencing students' written text production. Peyton, Staton, Richardson, and Wolfram (1990) investigated what kinds of writing contexts and tasks would be most effective for writing development of students learning English. Twelve sixth-grade ESL students were engaged in four different writing tasks, that is, unassigned dialogue journal writing and three types of teacher-assigned writing tasks (i.e., writing a letter to a teacher, an essay, and a letter to a friend, with the content of writing provided). Measures of quantity, complexity, topic focus, and cohesiveness showed that the dialogue journal writing is the most effective tool for L2 writing development, considering the findings that the features of more practice opportunities, greater amount of writing, more use of various clause connectors, and better

cohesive relations were found in the informal journal writing but not in the other types of tasks.

Among many different types of writing tasks, informal journal writing has been recognized as an effective tool for L2 writing development (Emig, 1977; Peyton et al., 1990; B. Weissberg, 2000; R. Weissberg, 1998). Informal writing considered as "talk written down" (Lanski & Johns, 2000, p. 47) has advantages of promoting L2 learning in a variety of ways. The engagement of informal writing allows ELLs to focus on language forms and have opportunities for testing hypotheses about the target language, as well as be devoid of stress from spontaneous oral conversation (B. Weissberg, 2000). Thus, informal writing offers an excellent risk-free environment for students to practice their writing of the target language in that they do not need to worry about being judged or graded for the errors they make in writing. In addition, informal writing helps learners identify their thoughts and feelings, whereby they can reach a deeper understanding of what they are reading. While they have opportunities of thinking about a certain topic to write their responses informally, they can form ideas or opinions and construct meanings of texts. At the same time, practicing writing contributes to the improvement of their writing fluency.

In addition to the nature of writing tasks, the use of instructional methods can be another influential contextual factor for quality writing instruction and writing development as well. First, integration of writing and reading are considered as effective for second language learning (Grajdusek, 1988; Hu, 1995; Huie & Yahya, 2003; Wolff, 2000). As Wolff (2000) proposed, a reading-for-writing approach fosters the close developmental relationship of L2 writing competence to L2 reading competence and thus stresses the significance of L2 reading experience for L2 writing development. Moreover, it provides L2 writers models for vocabulary, language use, rhetorical patterns from reading selections (Huie & Yahya, 2003) as well as authentic contexts to teach various aspects for writing (Grajdusek, 1988). In addition, reading is used as a springboard for discussion in writing. When students write about what they have read, they can have some topics to think and write about. Summarizing and responding to reading selections in writing had been frequent types of writing tasks, which can be done at any stage of language learning.

Second, incorporating scaffolding into L2 writing processes is one of the efficient ways to help ELLs accomplish given tasks and ultimately foster their language development. Defined as "a process that enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted efforts" (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976), scaffolding can be provided to help with background knowledge or vocabulary development (Watts-Taffe & Truscott, 2000). Scaffolding background knowledge in three main areas such as "content (topic schema), language (linguistic schema), and text structure and organization (text schema)" (Watts-Taffe & Truscott, 2000, p. 261) may be supportive for L2 writers. Vocabulary knowledge is also as a crucial means of interacting

with texts. It is directly linked to the production of written texts in that L2 writers browse an appropriate word or phrase to express their ideas in writings. Moreover, scaffolds can be offered to alleviate L2 writers' limited English language proficiency. As Boyle and Peregoy (1990) suggested, incorporating the notion of literacy scaffolds into L2 writing allows L2 writers to focus on the production of a certain written language pattern.

Given that quality instruction is important to ELLs' writing development, the teachers' role would be paramount in optimizing appropriate instruction to ELLs. Especially, the teachers' beliefs and knowledge about learning and teaching would be realized in their practices, shaping a set of characteristics of writing instructional practices. There might be the complexity of teachers' beliefs and practices given that their practices can be constrained to meet the certain government standards as well as requirements of the school curriculum for teaching writing. However, the ways of generating effective environment for the learning and teaching of writing would be fundamentally based on what the teachers believe and what they know about teaching English writing.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed qualitative methodology to describe the teachers' beliefs about writing instruction for ELLs. The researcher interviewed teachers, and the interview data were collected over December in 2005 at an elementary school (grades K-5) in the Midwest in the U. S.

1. School Context

The researcher used purposeful sampling to select the school and the teachers for the study. The selected school was renowned for its multilingual/ multicultural programs for students who come from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Moreover, there was a multilingual director or ESL coordinator in the school who directs the ESL instruction of other schools in two districts and puts on professional workshops for teachers working on teaching ELLs in this school.

The school had a free-standing type of ESL classrooms for ELLs who came from a variety of nationalities, generating much linguistic and cultural diversity in classrooms. According to the year 2005 Illinois School Report Card, the school had a K-5 student population of 324 composed of Black (59.9%), Asian/Pacific Islander (20.4%), White (12%), multi racial (5.9%), and Hispanic (1.9%). The Limited English Proficient (LEP) rate of this school, in which ELLs are included, was 32.1% during the 2004-2005 school year, which was much bigger than that of the district (5.5%) or the State (6.6%).

ELLs received daily 90-120 minutes of ESL programs separately across grade levels. They had two years of ESL instruction on average before they were ready to transit to regular classrooms. For those who had two years of ESL instruction but still had difficulty in dealing with English that prohibited their full transit to regular classrooms, the school provided a program called *Transition Reading/Writing Program*. This transition program, offering about 40 minutes' daily instruction, mostly concentrates on writing.

2. Participants

Participants for the study were three teachers from three different classrooms that contrast in terms of grade levels and types of classroom settings—a second-grade ESL teacher, a third-grade ESL teacher, and a third-grade teacher from a regular content classroom.

The selection of these three focal teachers was purposefully made in that first, they showed much enthusiasm in cooperating with the data collection. Second, several pilot observations confirmed that their instruction contains a variety of types and forms of writing practices and that their classrooms are composed of a large number of ELLs, 100 percent of ELLs in ESL classrooms and approximately 47 percent in the content classroom. In addition, the teachers had been certified or educated for the theory and methodology of second language acquisition and had many years of experience in teaching ELLs.

3. Data Collection

The researcher conducted open-ended interviews with the three teachers, twice for each teacher. Interviews were held in their own classrooms during their break time after the morning classes ended, audio-recorded, and transcribed verbatim. The interview was held on December 21, 2005 and January 17, 2006 for the second-grade ESL teacher; December 20, 2005 and January 18, 2006 for the third-grade ESL teacher; December 15, 2005 and January 4, 2006 for the third-grade teacher from a regular content classroom. Each interview lasted approximately between 45-60 minutes, during which teachers were encouraged to speak at length about questions asked.

The purpose of the interviews was to explore teachers' beliefs and perceptions about writing as well as their own writing instructional practices. First, questions focused on teacher demographic data and their general background information regarding their teaching experience, educational background, and opportunities for professional development. Next, the focus items included questions about teachers' underlying beliefs or philosophical orientation toward the teaching and learning of writing, their principal views about ELLs-specific concerns (i.e., their learning goals or needs, the roles of writing played

in learning English as L2, challenges faced in teaching them, and the influence of the state assessment or district/school policy on writing instruction), and descriptions about their own writing instructional practices for ELLs (i.e., opportunities for writing, instructional approaches employed in writing program, allocation of time to various writing activities, instructional materials used for writing, and writing assessment). Appendix A presents the interview protocol used.

4. Data Analysis

Each of the recorded teacher interviews was completely transcribed and annotated for specific information related to the research question of the study. Each segment of teacher's turn of the talk was summarized, and significant information was annotated and organized with headings. The annotated transcripts of teacher interviews were examined in order to look for primary themes and particular information that would represent each teacher's beliefs about teaching writing.

For example, under the heading of teacher's beliefs about teaching writing, the relevant parts of teacher's talk were annotated with information on teacher's stance or emphasis related to teaching writing, such as fluency in writing, motivation to write, comfort in writing, love of writing, content-based writing, etc. In addition, phrases or sentences among the transcripts of teacher's talk which could be potentially quoted as data in the next chapter were highlighted as boldface.

One of the trustworthiness criteria of the qualitative inquiry, credibility, was achieved by implementation of peer debriefing. Peer debriefing occurred informally during the study through discussions with research colleagues who were in the same field of study. One colleague, in particular, became the researchers' peer debriefer for most of the study's duration. He reviewed a part of interview transcripts (the first half part of interview transcript of each teacher), had time for discussion over what recurring themes with regards to the research question were found in the interview transcripts, and provided insightful comments throughout the data collection and analysis phases.

For triangulation, teachers' writing instruction had been observed for a five-month period in 2005 to investigate how their beliefs and knowledge about teaching English writing are represented in their writing instructional practices. In short, the teachers' beliefs about teaching writing appeared to be consistent with the current SLA theory and research. Most of their beliefs about teaching writing were represented in their writing instruction; however, a few of their beliefs were not. Due to the limit of paper length, the findings with regards to both teachers' beliefs and their representation in actual classrooms could not be discussed in a single paper. If you want to see further details on the nature of their writing instruction, please refer to Kim's (2006) paper.

IV. RESULTS

1. The Second-Grade ESL Teacher

1) General Description of the Classroom, Students, and Teacher

The second-grade ESL class, which met 12 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. everyday, was composed of 18 ELLs who came from different language and cultural backgrounds. The second-grade ESL teacher (Barbara) was an American teacher who had numerous years of teaching experience—29 years of being an elementary teacher and 5 years of teaching ESL students. Based on her educational background and professional development history, she appeared to be qualified and passionate about teaching ELLs and developing her professional expertise.

Barbara had her ESL endorsement, and until the time of interview, she had constantly participated and made presentations in a range of conferences (e.g., the No Child Left Behind conference, the National Association for Bilingual Education conference, the Illinois Education of Multilingual Multicultural Association conference, etc.) on topics associated with teaching ELLs and writing with ELLs. Throughout her continuing interest and involvement in the professional field as she participated in conferences and met other professionals in the same field, she would have had the latest information and ideas on teaching English for ELLs, which might help refine her writing instructional practices to be more effective for ELLs.

2) Barbara's Beliefs About Writing Instructional Practices

Most importantly, Barbara believed that environment for writing plays a crucial role in fostering ELLs' writing development, in particular, the writing environment where they can feel comfortable with and not be afraid of writing. She provided the example of a Korean student in her class, who was a zero English writer when he had come to this school and showed huge progress in his ability to write, confirming that the environment for writing serves as an influential factor in promoting the development of writing. The student had been in the ESL class for approximately one year at the time of interview. At the beginning of the year, he had a hard time being social in class and wouldn't even talk. It was really difficult for the teacher to get him to write anything. He wouldn't write but rather fought writing, and even writing one sentence seemed painful. All he wanted to do was drawing. In contrast, he now talks and writes totally on his own. He writes in his ESL journal and constructs sentences and paragraphs with no help. Even his handwriting has changed to be very neat.

Barbara believed that feeling comfortable with writing is very important to get them students to write, probably because it provides a basis for motivation to write, positive attitude toward writing, and confidence with writing. The teacher stated,

until the kids are going to feel comfortable, they are not going to write...Not only do they have to feel comfortable, they also have to feel that I'm not going to look at what they've done and just totally....I correct their mistakes, but I don't make a big deal of it. I just...show them, but I don't make a big deal, let's say, okay we're writing this again, again, again, and again.

Barbara suggested that one of the ways of generating the writing environment in which ELLs feel comfortable in writing would be to consider writing errors they make not as a big problem but rather as a developmental stage that they go through. Therefore, she corrected their writing mistakes to show them what was wrong but did not make a big deal of the errors. She believed it was more important to provide them with ample and continuous opportunities for writing to promote their writing ability. The teacher shared her reminiscence of how she grew up hating writing because of her writing teacher, who had made harsh and humiliating comments on her writing, saying "That's terrible. How could you write that?" It really stuck in her mind for a long time, so she wanted her students to be more comfortable when they write and make them have a love of writing.

The teacher's ultimate goal of teaching writing was to make the students become fluent in their writing, although she admitted that fluency in writing is very hard for them to achieve. Along with fluency in writing, she added the importance of word choice in writing, using more exciting words instead of common words such as *good* or *sad*.

Barbara revealed her beliefs with regards to the importance of certain instructional methods, including the integration of writing and other language aspects, writing connected to content areas, explicit instruction about writing, balanced exposure to various genres (i.e., narrative and expository texts), and the significant role of scaffolding such as repetition, modeling, and ability grouping. Next, her belief in each instructional method will be discussed along with the transcripts from the interview.

Barbara believed that engagement in writing is very important for second language learning and that teachers should integrate writing into everything they have in their lessons. That is, the use of writing should be tied to other aspects of language (i.e., speaking, listening, reading) and other content areas (i.e., science or social studies). Therefore, she believed in providing many opportunities for writing even though they were at the early stages of language learning. She stated,

I think writing is the hardest part especially as a second language. It's easy to learn the oral part because you want to talk to people, so you have motivation there. And reading, you can pick up easier. But writing is the hardest to pick up. It's the hardest for the kids. So, I've tried to build writing into a lot of different things....I try to do different types [of writing], and I try to do some writing every day whether even with my second graders it's still...very simple writing more of just writing sentences or journal writing or writing with words. There is always something they do [write] everyday.

Barbara believed in the importance of explicit instruction about writing and that it should start at the early stages of language learning. During the interview she highlighted that students have to receive explicit instruction to learn something. Although she admitted that the prevalent teaching method primarily centers around the whole language approach or the integrated approach to language learning, she pointed out that this may not be the best method, based on her personal experience about her own children having learned grammar and writing in school. She found that a lot of grammar aspects had not been learned because teachers tended not to teach grammar separately any more, and that the lack of grammar skills was apparent in her children's writing. Thus, she believed that explicit instruction could be more effective than an implicit approach in teaching ELLs and Native English Speakers (NESs) as well. She stated that the prevailing whole language approach may not be the best approach for all aspects of learning for all students.

Barbara believed that it is important to use children's books of various genres, including both fiction and nonfiction, to raise their genre awareness. In particular, considering that students tend to love nonfiction or informational texts, it would be another method of fostering their motivation to write by using reading selections they like. The following excerpt from the teacher's interview provides evidence confirming that the use of nonfiction books would be beneficial for the development of writing.

It's been very interesting because the students love nonfiction. And I never used to use very much nonfiction. I always used fiction books. And they love the nonfiction, and so now I've tried using probably more nonfiction a lot than I have regular fiction. And they love it. And in fact a lot of books they choose to read on their own are the nonfiction books....They really have enjoyed writing about nonfiction. They've done a lot of nonfiction writing associated with journal because we've done a lot of reading along with science. But it just works so well. In the last I think probably five years there's been a flux and an explosion of nonfiction books for kids. That really helped. And plus I've been to a lot of workshops, and they bring up

nonfiction a lot, using nonfiction for writing, using nonfiction for reading. And I think that's really helped. That's made a big difference, too.

In addition, she thought that both genres of reading materials, fiction and nonfiction, can be effectively linked as a set if they contain a common topic or content. While dealing with a book of one genre, students become familiar with the topic or content of the book so that they feel more comfortable and motivated reading and writing about another book of the other genre.

According to Barbara, repetition plays a critical scaffolding role in teaching writing to ELLs at early stages of language learning. Her experience of teaching ELLs conveys an important message that they may need more structure and more repetition of the same kind of writing task until they grasp the idea of how to do it. The following interview excerpt revealed the teacher's insightful suggestion on the need of repetition in teaching ELLs.

The one thing I noticed with English language learners is they need more...repetition in the same type of thing....We do the first part together, and then they do the second part by themselves, and then it gets to where they can do all by themselves. I tried to do where we do it together, then not so much help, then no help at all, because they need more structure and more repetition of the same type of thing over and over again, so they get the idea how to do it.

The importance of modeling as fundamental guidance or scaffolding for ELLs especially who are at the early stages of language learning, has been highlighted by the teacher as follows:

They (English language learners) need more modeling....You know just good teachers mean good modeling and so that kids get really understand, then they have confidence to do it. If you just say "I want you to write this" and they don't know what to do. You're not helping them at all. You're not helping them with self-esteem. You're not helping their ability to write....They need practice. They need to see it.

In addition, Barbara emphasized the significance of ability grouping and varying the assignment as a way of differential instruction as follows:

I'll try to put them into groups as far as who needs more help. Specially with the zero speakers, because they need it, we'll do more together than

what I'll do with the rest of the class. So probably I'll separate them into groups. A lot of times what I'll do is vary the assignment depending on the ability. Like, okay, this group I want you to write sentences from these verbs. This group I want you to choose five words and write a story using five words. So I'll vary the assignment. So I'll do one of those things either vary the assignment or separate them into groups so that they're working more what their level is.

2. The Third-Grade ESL Teacher

1) General Description of the Classroom, Students, and Teacher

The third-grade ESL class met everyday from 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. in the morning. The total number of students in the class was 16 ELLs who came from culturally and linguistically various origins, including Arabic, French, Korean, Mandarin, Spanish, etc.

The third-grade ESL teacher (Mary) was an American teacher. She had spent numerous years in teaching students—3 years of teaching ESL students for second, third, fourth, and fifth grades, 6 years of teaching a summer ESL program for junior college students, and 10 years of teaching kindergarten. She had an educational degree in early childhood education and took credits in special education and early childhood education to have a teaching certificate. While she had faced many opportunities for dealing with ESL students, she found herself in need of training on educating ELLs, resulting in her taking correspondence and summer intensive courses to get an endorsement in ESL. Until the time of interview, she had been constantly taking classes to develop her teaching methods. Also, she was taking classes called *6 Traits Writing*, which had provided her with useful information on how to use writing for children specifically and all kinds of new activities to do to get children to write. The 6 Traits Writing model has been known as a way to assess and teach writing for elementary students, focusing on six qualities seen in outstanding written works—ideas, organization, voice, sentence fluency, word choice, and conventions.

2) Mary's Beliefs About Writing Instructional Practices

Mary believed that for ELLs, writing is a safe place to be, especially when they were facing difficulty in talking to people because they had a little or no English. Writing was considered as not as threatening as talking, enabling ELLs to be comfortable enough to deal with the target language. At the same time, she acknowledged that writing seemed to be one of the most difficult language skills and that teaching writing should be carried all the way from the early stage of learning English.

Mary's underlying philosophy of teaching writing centered around the importance of constructing ideas through writing, focusing on creativity and communication as goals of teaching writing, which was revealed from her statement from the interview excerpt of the following:

I always tell them that when I read their papers, I love hearing their ideas. And I want them to write things that are exciting and interesting to me that I don't want to fall asleep when I read their papers. And I think sometimes when they focus on that rather than focusing on, "Oh! I need to have this word and that word and that word," [that is,] when they focus on creativity of it and communicating something exciting and wonderful and new, then if you gear them not to worry so much about the words, just get the idea down on their paper, then we can work with it. Because I think English as second language learners have great fear of doing it wrong or not doing it right. I don't want them to worry about that all. I just want them to get it down on their paper. And I think it works for me.

Along with the focus on constructing meaning to express ideas in writing, the teacher sought to provide opportunities for encouraging the students to use the language as much as they can. Rather than explicitly teaching the conventions of language forms, she had them build on the words what that they had known, teach how to use them appropriately, and write to use these words, no matter whether it was sentence writing or paragraph writing. The following interview excerpt demonstrates her teaching philosophy centering around the importance of the use of language.

I usually just try to get them to put using the language they know. So we start there. Whatever language they know, I try to get them to use as much as they can. Some of them are writing a paragraph, or maybe others are writing sentences. That's because they only have enough words for sentence writing. So we just try to use the words they know and then to teach them to use those properly and then build on them. So I don't teach grammar as grammar...I show them how to use those words, how to organize them. I found that especially with third grade, it's not very effective to teach grammar as grammar.

In addition, Mary believed in the need of teaching writing for different purposes for ELLs, enabling the students to see how words can be used appropriately depending on writing with different purposes. For example, she had them write for various purposes,

including writing to communicate something with her in their journal, writing to show her their understanding of certain concepts, and writing to learn about words. She seemed to use writing for evaluating her students' extent of understanding, according to her statement that "it is through writing that I can see what they understood about what they were doing."

To become a good writer, she highlighted that vocabulary plays a huge fundamental role and that the students need to know the meaning of words and really understand them before they are able to use them. For example, if they were required to deal with specific terminology in a science unit, she taught the words for the concepts in advance.

In light of instructional methods, Mary revealed her beliefs in a content-based approach for teaching writing and the importance of repetition. She believed that content-based approaches in teaching English, mainly integrating science or social studies into English language teaching, are beneficial, as shown in the excerpt of her interview as follows:

Right now in our programs they're learning something in science, and I try to teach them the same thing in science....What I'm asked to do is to teach science or social studies to my children through literacy, which is kind of a big job....It means that when we read and when we write, it's usually about science or social studies....I think it's a good idea because they're learning things...that they actually learn and they're interesting. Science is engaging and active....I think it's much better than just dry grammar [or] workbook.

Mary drew attention to the importance of repetition, especially when teaching writing to ELLs. She believed that because they would need a longer time learning to write than regular native students, it is evident that repetition plays a crucial role of scaffolding for ELLs to develop their writing ability. She emphasized the need of repetition in the conversation during the interview as follows:

I have a term called *double dipping*. Like with an ice cream cone, you have like a chocolate coating. You put it in once, and you put it in again. I think they need a lot of exposure over time to the same thing. Right now in our programs in their classroom they're learning something in science, and I try to teach them the same thing in science. So that they hear once in their classroom, they hear once with me again.

3. The Third-Grade Content Classroom Teacher

1) General Description of the Classroom, Students, and Teacher

This class was the third-grade regular classroom in which ELLs received instruction together with NESs. It was composed of 19 students which included 9 ELLs and 10 NESs, resulting in the composition of 47% of ELLs. These ELLs came from various native language backgrounds, such as Arabic, French, Kiswahili, Luo, and Korean, and they all had limited English proficiency.

The teacher (Sarah) for this class was an American with a B.A., M.A. with a minor in ESL, and Ph. D. Her majors were elementary education, curriculum and instruction, and educational organization and leadership for each degree, respectively. She also had many years of teaching experience, including 15 years as an elementary teacher teaching second- and third-grades and five years of teaching preschool. She had taken university classes, if needed, which were geared for teaching ELL students or other regular students in general.

2) Sarah's Beliefs About Writing Instructional Practices

Sarah believed that writing is very important and that writing can be used efficiently because various instructional practices can go with writing. Her primary goal of teaching writing was helping her students to like writing. She put special emphasis on the love of writing, consisting of her perspective that writing is fun. In particular, she stressed the significance of creative writing in teaching writing and its originality and creativity stemmed from these opportunities for creative writing. However, her belief in creative writing seemed to be not fully represented in her writing practices due to her limited time in which she could barely cover what she was supposed to teach based on the school curriculum and the testing requirements. She expressed her perceptions of writing during the interview as follows:

I think there is a time to have free writing where you're not so, "This is wrong, this is wrong." I want them to be more creative. But I think with the testing situation that we've had, we've become less creative in our writing and more structured....In some ways it's not [good] because I'm thinking it kind of takes away from them becoming a little author or wanting to the love of writing....I have to admit when I first started teaching, I did more creative writing than I do now. With testing we just don't have time for it. I felt it's kind of sad because I think creative writing is good for them. When I was young, we did a lot of creative writing, and I loved that. But now I

think we still push us to tests....We're writing for a purpose. Everything has to be writing for a purpose now.

As one of the crucial roles that writing plays, Sarah contended that writing is effective and helpful for the students to be able to organize their thoughts in a meaningful way. For example, teaching a five paragraph writing would allow them to organize their thoughts as they come up with topic sentences and put details and ideas into each paragraph. What they think of ways of organizing their thoughts relating what is the main idea. what I am writing about?, or how I can make it more specific can be the basis of their writing.

Sarah also believed in the importance of early exposure to writing and the teacher's role of scaffolding especially when students were at the very early stage of writing development. Her attention to the importance of early experience of writing was delineated during the interview. She thought that,

sometimes we think kids are too young to do a certain thing....I think that faster they are exposed to writing and more we've talked about, it's better for them....Like I told you the scripted out writing especially at the beginning, if they can say something to me but they can't write it down, I have no problem with writing it out and then them writing it down. I think that's really important.

Among factors that influence writing development, Sarah pointed out the influence of personality in that her students' progress in the development of writing varies, depending on their personality. For example, among her ELLs who just started schooling, there was a type of students who did not want to be as adventurous as they needed to be with learning. They did not want to make a mistake and be embarrassed by the mistake. Such a big concern for making a mistake appeared to slow down their development of writing and speaking, too. In contrast, the opposite type of students was really daring. They were not afraid of making a mistake, resulting in their faster progress in the development of writing ability. Although the teacher saw the former type of students learning and making progress, it just took them a little longer learning to write than the latter type of students.

With regards to instructional methods, Sarah expressed her beliefs in the significance of exposure to varied genres of reading, the integration of writing and reading, and the benefits of sharing students' writing. Her opinion on the use of varied genres of reading and the benefit of connecting reading and writing is expressed in the following interview excerpt:

I try to do [use] fiction and nonfiction. If it's science, I try to do some that is a nonfiction literature teaching material, and then I try to use other literature type stories that's more creative and get them to think. And a lot of literature stories that are fiction that have to do with science or social studies, they still have some factual basis in them, which is good. So, I think reading is a great way. I love to read to them, and I think it's a way to get them to thinking about writing.

V. DISCUSSION

Teachers' beliefs about teaching writing were derived from the analysis of teacher interviews. Table 1 summarizes teachers' underlying beliefs about the teaching of writing in general and their beliefs regarding instructional methods. The shared beliefs among all of the three teachers are followed by the superscript^a, and the beliefs shared between two ESL teachers are followed by the superscript^b.

TABLE 1
Summary of Teachers' Beliefs About Writing Instructional Practices

Beliefs	Barbara (2nd ESL)	Mary (3rd ESL)	Sarah (3rd content)
Underlying beliefs in general	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Writing is important for second language learning^a 2. Goal of teaching writing: fluency in writing^a 3. Providing many opportunities for writing is important^b 4. Importance of vocabulary knowledge in writing^b 5. Environment for writing is crucial (e.g., environment where students feel comfortable with writing) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Writing is important for second language learning^a 2. Goal of teaching writing: constructing ideas through writing (creativity, communication)^a 3. Opportunities to use language in writing is important^b 4. Importance of vocabulary knowledge in writing^b 5. Writing is a safe place, not as threatening as speaking 6. Writing for different purpose 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Writing is important for second language learning^a 2. Goal of teaching writing: love of writing, creative writing (originality, creativity)^a 3. Writing helps organize thoughts in a meaningful way 4. Influence of personality in writing development
Beliefs in instructional methods	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Integration of writing and other language aspects^a 2. Content-based writing^a 3. Scaffolding: repetition, modeling, ability grouping^a 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Integration of writing and reading^a 2. Content-based writing^a 3. Scaffolding: repetition^a about writing^b 4. Explicit instruction 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Integration of writing and reading^a 2. Writing connected to content areas^a 3. Scaffolding: modeling^a 4. Exposure to varied genres of writing

4. Explicit instruction about writing ^b	5. Sharing students' writing
5. Structured writing	
6. Exposure to varied genres of writing	

Note. ^a Beliefs about writing instructional practices shared by three teachers. ^b Beliefs about writing instructional practices shared by two ESL teachers.

Basically, all of the teachers perceived the role of writing in second language learning as very important. The three teachers shared the belief that the ultimate goal of teaching writing is to have their students gain fluency in writing so that they can construct ideas and communicate thoughts through writing. Moreover, they shared their beliefs in the importance of some of instructional methods, such as integration of writing and other language aspects, content-based writing, and providing scaffolding.

There were some beliefs that two ESL teachers shared but the content classroom teacher did not express. Admitting that writing is one of the hardest aspects of language learning and requires a long period of time to acquire, the ESL teachers asserted that ample and continuous opportunities to write should be provided from the earliest stage of language learning. Moreover, they underscored the importance of vocabulary knowledge in writing and the need of reinforcing vocabulary knowledge to foster their writing ability. In terms of beliefs regarding instructional methods, they emphasized that explicit instruction about writing is important so that they can explicitly learn about effective writing skills and strategies to use in their writing.

Among other beliefs that the teachers revealed, the second-grade ESL teacher believed that creating a writing environment in which ELLs can feel comfortable with writing lays the basic foundation for the early stage of young L2 writers. She stated that feeling comfortable with writing tends to increase motivation to write, foster a positive attitude toward writing, and build confidence with writing. The third-grade ESL teacher felt that writing seems to be a safe place to practice language for ELLs, because it is not as threatening as speaking. She also stressed the importance of writing for different purposes. The content class teacher expressed that writing is beneficial in organizing thoughts in a meaningful way and stressed the influence of personality in writing development. Lastly, the second-grade ESL teacher and the content classroom teacher believed that exposure to varied genres of writing (i.e., narrative and expository writing) is important for the balanced genre development in writing.

The findings of the study contribute to an understanding of what professional teachers believe and know about teaching writing to ELLs. However, there are several limitations of the study. First, because the study was conducted to interview teachers who worked in one school, the findings of the study may include school-specific features. Individual school may have varied curriculum in terms of teaching a second language for ELLs.

Likewise, the number of interviewed teachers may be limited, so the findings may be case-specific in a sense that different teachers may have varied underlying beliefs or knowledge with regards to teaching writing and generated unique characteristics in designing writing curriculum design or using instructional methods. If a greater number of teachers were used as participants in the study, the data could be more comprehensive and rich in exploring teachers' beliefs in teaching writing for ELLs.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study examined the teachers' beliefs about teaching English writing, and it had significance in that it told us about how the teachers view the role of writing in language learning. Writing proficiency is hard to attain because it requires much time and effort compared to other language skills; however, it is definitely one of the significant aspects of language proficiency to achieve in order to be a successful English language learner both linguistically and academically.

Given that considerable attention has been paid to the teaching and learning of English writing in ESL contexts, we should have a chance to reflect how educators in EFL contexts view the role of writing in learning English and how well their beliefs about writing are realized in their writing instruction if they have strong beliefs about the importance of incorporating writing instruction into their English classes. Based on the solid belief in the importance of writing and writing instruction for English language learning, some of the suggestions EFL teachers attempt to employ may include using various ways of scaffolding (e.g., modeling, repetition, ability grouping, or graphic organizers) throughout the writing processes of EFL learners, connecting writing to reading by having learners write about a text read, providing exposure to varied genres of writing including fiction and nonfiction for their balanced genre development, and importantly, providing ample opportunities to write whereby they can have chances to experiment the target language.

Thus, it would be critical for researchers and teachers to have sound belief and professional knowledge about teaching writing and think of ways to promote ELLs' writing proficiency with adequate use of writing tasks and instructional methods based on the teachers' beliefs and knowledge. It is an essential task to continue to examine and rethink what teachers believe and know about teaching writing and their writing instructional practices for creating a good environment for learning to write as well as for improved instructional practices to ELLs.

Since writing is one of the elements of language proficiency, it should be considered as one important modality for language learning. Based on the view of writing as a primary

means of facilitating the development of language proficiency, teaching writing can be considered as crucial at all levels of language learning.

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APPENDIX

Interview Protocol

- A. General information of teachers
- Years teaching the target grade and other grades
 - Total years you spent as an elementary teacher
 - What kind of teacher education program led to your elementary certification?
 - What are the opportunities for professional development in the field of second or English language learning?
- B. Teacher beliefs/philosophical orientation toward the teaching and learning of writing
- Tell me about your writing program in your language arts curriculum.
 - What is your philosophy, goals, or objectives of teaching writing?
- C. ELLs-specific concerns
- What are the learning goals or needs of ELLs?
 - How do you approach the instruction of writing to meet the needs of ELLs?
 - What roles do you see writing playing in second language learning?
 - What challenges do you face in teaching ELLs?
 - In what ways has your writing instruction been influenced by the state assessment system or district or school policy?
- D. Writing practices
- What types of writing do ELLs do?
 - What types of instructional approaches do you employ in your writing program?

- c) How much time do ELLs engage in writing?
- d) How do you make decisions about allocation of time to various writing activities?
- e) What instructional materials do you use for writing?
- f) How do you assess their writings?

Examples in: English**Applicable Languages: English****Applicable Levels: Elementary/Secondary**

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