Abstract

The study’s focus aimed to better understand how English learner students might best be supported in their development of the English language conventions necessary for academic and future job-related success. Specific to the area of writing conventions, too many English learners (ELs) have underperformed on local, state, and globally recognized assessments which has impacted their entrance into colleges and consideration for employment. Given this, it became the desire of the researcher to study whether or not a visual text cue of a convention would serve as an adequate support to ELs in the process of acquiring written proficiency, or near-native-like written proficiency, in the English language. Therefore, the question in this study became: “How does providing the Common Core State Language Standards in a visual text format impact elementary English learners’ development of conventional features in writing?” A review of past literature found support for attention to language input and the use of visuals in second language learning. With this in mind, conventions appropriate to students’ grades and language proficiency levels were chosen. A mixed method approach was implemented that sought to analyze student work samples as well as student perspectives. Visual text cues of specific conventions were provided to participants at certain points in the study as they set out to respond to writing prompts. Student interviews were also conducted to understand perspectives on learning and in the final interview, thoughts concerning the visual text cues. The outcomes determined from participants’ writing and interview data underscored the benefits visual text cues offered the study’s ELs as they developed knowledge of English language conventions. Discussion on findings and suggestions for next steps have been included in hopes that conversation continues regarding how ELs can best be supported as they develop the written language skills necessary for educational and professional advancement.
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Chapter 1: The Problem

An introduction prefaces Chapter 1 and encompasses background information that led up to and supported the need for this study. Close examinations of the remaining sections follow and include: information surrounding the problem to be investigated, the research question and hypotheses, the purpose of and justification for the study, and definitions of important terms.

Introduction

The recent adoption of the Common Core State Standards on behalf of many states has placed a heavy emphasis on the four language domains of listening, speaking, reading and writing across all content areas. The expectation for academic achievement in preparation for college and career readiness is high. With changing demographics, it is crucial that stakeholders attend to how students from non-English speaking backgrounds can best be supported in ensuring they achieve academic success. Of particular interest in this study was how educators could best support the growing number of English learners (ELs) present in today’s classrooms as they face the dual challenge of achieving both content area mastery and linguistic competence in Standard English. From observation and practice, the domain that has appeared to present the most challenge to ELs has been the area of writing. Of specific concern within this domain was the area of Standard English conventions. This is not unanticipated, given substantial examination of research concerning second language acquisition.

In primary and secondary education across parts of the Midwest, in order to be considered for exit from Limited English Proficient (LEP) services, one criterion condition states that ELs must demonstrate proficiency on local writing assessments. In preparing for college entrance, colleges frequently require submission of an application that requires prospective students to complete open-ended prompts and to submit standardized assessment scores that
include written measurement components, one being knowledge of conventions, such as those found on the SAT and ACT. The National Commission on Writing for America’s Families, Schools, and Colleges (2003) emphasizes the ability to write well stating, “…writing is a gatekeeper for college admission and a key criterion for hiring and promoting salaried workers” (as cited in Booth Olson, Scarcella, and Matuchniak, 2016, p. 43). The opportunities for higher education and career development depend, in large part, on students’ proficiency in writing. Thus, educators, particularly English Language educators, are challenged to ensure their ELs compose with skill in the rules of language across various genres so as to demonstrate academic likeness to native English-speaking peers. Doing so increases the likelihood for equitable opportunities, both academic and professional.

Over the course of the past seven years, the researcher has observed that, while language proficiency has generally increased in LEP students, many have continued to struggle with mastering conventional features in their compositions, setting them apart from their native English-speaking peers. English learners often struggle with applying conventional features to their writing, even following explicit instruction. Calderón (2011) has claimed that “Writing is the most difficult domain for ELs and their teachers” (p. 105). More specifically, Farooq, Uzair-Ul-Hassan, and Wahid (2012) have noted that “Grammar is the most difficult area for L2 writers. Students face difficulties in the use of correct sentence structure and paragraph development, and in creating a coherent form” (p. 186). Given the significance proficient writing has in advanced opportunities, both academic and professional, an investigation was undertaken to explore what could be done to better support students in their development of Standard English conventions, what students’ perspectives were regarding the evolution of their language skills, and how educators might assist English learners in the process. Could the presence of a visual text cue aid
students in becoming aware and better skilled in a conventional area? This study sought to answer this question in the anticipation that the process for developing Standard English conventions might be better facilitated and supported, affording students improved opportunities to reach their potential.

**Problem to be Investigated**

The problem investigated in this study pertained to English learners’ development of Standard English conventions and what might be done to facilitate and foster students’ development of such standards in the process. Academic and professional demands have underscored the importance of affording English learners the necessary opportunities to achieve advanced proficiency in Standard English.

**Research Question and Hypothesis**

This study sought to research the question “How does providing the Common Core State Language Standards in a visual text format impact elementary English learners’ development of conventional features in writing?” It was hypothesized that a given language standard presented in a visual text format would positively support students’ development of conventions in their writing; the cue directing students’ attention to a specific targeted feature that would provide the necessary reinforced input students needed to incorporate the feature into their own writing. With the visual text cue, the researcher assumed that English learners would offer some attention to conventions in addition to centering on ideas. While ideas are fundamental to writing, the need for English learners to also be cognizant of appropriate language structures in order to clearly express their ideas and develop near-native-like competency was recognized. The significance visuals play in language development was acknowledged and it was assumed ELs’ learning would benefit from exposure to the visual text cue. Furthermore, it was conceived that
by focusing on one conventional feature, English learners’ affective filter would be lowered as attention would be drawn to improving on one area at a time. Finally, the researcher considered that with implementation of the visual text cue and sufficient opportunities to practice a feature, students’ knowledge of the targeted feature would shift from declarative to procedural.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the potential effects language standards in a visual text format might have on elementary English learners’ development of conventions within the context of their writing. The researcher hoped to learn what would transpire when a visual text cue of a given language standard was attached to students’ language journals. Would students attend to the visual text cue and apply the targeted conventional feature more consistently to their own writing? In essence, would provision of a given language standard in a visual text format increase students’ awareness of the conventional feature and thereby increase the likelihood for appropriate inclusion within their own writing? Additionally, students’ perspectives were desired and requested concerning the visual text cues and their potential involvement in the evolution of students’ understanding and application of Standard English conventions.

**Justification for the Study**

This study encourages educators to consider and expand techniques that have the potential to support English language learners’ development of conventions. Visuals have shown to be effective in supporting English learners in developing the target language, so the potential for this study was worthwhile in determining conceivable value visual text cues might serve in supporting acquisition of conventions. Given the demands placed upon students and the rigor entailed to achieve academic content and language competence, attention to rules of
language is increasingly becoming more and more vital. The findings of this study propose a positive relationship among visual text cues and development of conventions and indicate that English learners’ attention to the cues aided in implementation of the conventional features in their writing. Therefore, an implication can be made that visual text cues of language standards have the potential to support other students’ conventional development across grade levels and language backgrounds. Furthermore, this study can offer some insight to other EL teachers regarding their own students’ conventional development.

Definition of Terms

A number of important terms are discussed in this study. These terms include:

**Conventional development**

*Constitutive Definition:* The English Oxford Dictionary refers to the term “conventional” as “following traditional forms and genres.” The term “development” refers to “a specified state of growth or advancement.”

*Operational Definition:* For the purposes of this study, the terms, used collectively, referred to students’ progress in conventional features within the context of their writing.

**Conventions**

*Constitutive Definition:* Defined by Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the term “conventions” refers to “a custom or a way of acting or doing things that is widely accepted and followed.”

*Operational Definition:* For this study, “conventions” referred to the Standard English conventions of the Common Core State Language Standards. The term was occasionally and synonymously referred to as “targeted feature,” “language feature,” or “conventional feature.”
**Elementary student**

**Constitutive Definition:** Generally defined, Merriam-Webster Dictionary denotes “elementary” as “relating to or teaching the basic subjects of education.” The term “student” is defined as “a person who attends a school, college, or university.”

**Operational Definition:** For this study, “elementary student” referred to English learners in first through fourth grades enrolled in Jamletz Public Schools.

**English learners**

**Constitutive Definition:** According to The Glossary of Education Reform, “English learners” are referred to as “those with limited English proficiency.”

**Operational Definition:** In this study, “English learners” included students of varying language proficiency levels who had not yet achieved the following exit protocol in entirety as determined by the State Department of Education: a 4.5 in each language domain and a composite score of at least a 5.0 on the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment, proficiency on a state-approved reading assessment, and proficiency on a locally administered writing assessment. Additionally, “English learners” also included those who had recently met the exit criteria, but continued to struggle with certain conventional features. The term “English learners” was occasionally and synonymously referred to as “ELs,” “English language learners,” or “limited English proficient (LEP)” students.
Language Standards

Constitutive Definition: Generally defined, according to the English Oxford Dictionary, “language” is “the method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way.” The English Oxford Dictionary defines “standards” as “a required or agreed level of quality or attainment.”

Operational Definition: Collectively, for this study, “Language Standards” referred to the guidelines established in the Common Core State Standards that approached the area of conventions for grades first through fourth. Precise language within the standards was appropriately tailored to impart and ensure comprehensibility for learners without jeopardizing the content within the standards.

Rubric

Constitutive Definition: Defined by Merriam-Webster Dictionary, “rubric” indicates “a guide listing specific criteria for grading or scoring academic papers, projects, or tests.”

Operational Definition: In this study, “rubric” referred to a measurement scale, consisting of four levels, that was used to evaluate students’ knowledge and application of selected conventional features within the context of their writing.
Visual text format

Constitutive Definition: According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the term “visual” is specified as “of, relating to, or used in vision.” The term “text” is defined as “something (as a story or movie) considered as an object to be examined, explicated, or deconstructed.” Lastly, “format” is referred to as “the form, design, or arrangement of something.”

Operational Definition: For the purposes of this study, the terms “visual text format” referred to a sticky note placed at the top of students’ language journals that drew attention to a specific conventional feature from the Language Standards of the Common Core State Standards. Conventional features appearing in the “visual text format” were enhanced with bold text and also underlined. Students were asked to use the visual text format to assist them in considering a conventional feature in their writing. The term “visual text format” was occasionally and synonymously referred to as “language reminder,” “visual text cue,” or “cue.”
Chapter 2: Literature Review

In a substantial review of literature, the researcher discovered that directing students’ attention to language input can have the potential to facilitate language development. Likewise, it can be supported that the appropriate use of visuals in language teaching can benefit language learners in their linguistic development. In supporting students’ awareness to and development of language features, literature also pointed out a variety of visual text enhancements that make features more noticeable. However, there is mixed review concerning the level of effectiveness of such enhancements. Finally, in other research, the use of distinct visual text supports has shown to benefit students’ grammatical development within the context of their own writing.

Role of Attention to Input in Second Language Acquisition

Numerous researchers studying the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) have accepted that learners need clear and comprehensible input when it comes to developing their language proficiency (DelliCarpini, 2012; Fernández, 2011). However, the role attention to input plays in facilitating language development has been an area readily debated and in need of further research. Gilakjani (2011) and Jin (2011) offered various perspectives concerning attention to form, including those of both Krashen and Schmidt. In their separate articles on the role of consciousness in learning, they imparted Krashen’s belief that exposure to comprehensible input is essential, but that it is unnecessary to provide direct instruction to facilitate the noticing of language rules which are believed to develop through exposure. Opposing views were also examined that called for the support of conscious learning and its function in developing a new language. Unlike Krashen, Schmidt has underscored awareness of comprehensible input as requisite for learning the targeted language (Gilakjani, 2011; Jin, 2011). Jin (2011) has reported on Schmidt’s understanding, however, that all theories have limitations.
Concerning consciousness, McLaughlin et al. (1983), as cited by Jin (2011), remarked on learners’ ability to direct attention and process information within their current capacity. The call for further research has been requested so as to better understand the role of attention to input in L2 development (Jin, 2011; Svalberg, 2012). Spada (2010) likewise acknowledged the incomplete research available, specifically in regard to whether some features over others might benefit learners by means of focused instruction. Consequently, she conducted a meta-analysis, inclusive of 41 studies, where participants ranged from children to adults. She was interested in investigating whether or not attention to forms was better expended on certain features versus others, and whether knowledge of language differed when attention to simple and complex forms was implicit versus explicit. The findings were significant in regard to the debated role attention to input has played in second language development. Through a synthesis of the studies that analyzed learners’ knowledge and application of simple and complex features via controlled and free response measures, results revealed that explicitly directing students’ attention to forms, both simple and complex, and providing an understanding of how language works was more successful than inattention to features and a lack of language rule instruction (Spada, 2010). Specifically, Spada and Tomita (2010) found in their analysis that students who had their attention explicitly drawn to language forms in instruction exhibited the largest outcome for knowledge of complex features when constructing free responses on post-tests. These results are significant with regard to Gilakjani (2011) and Jin’s (2011) discussion on the role of consciousness; specifically, with regard to Schmidt’s belief that explicit attention to form is crucial and supports second language learning. Afforded opportunities for learners to have exposure to input have also been studied in materials intended for use with language learners. In a study on textbook analysis, Fernández (2011) has recognized the importance of providing input
activities that encourage learners to notice and connect form with meaning. Her study analyzed how six major college-level Spanish textbooks tackled grammar and whether the methods coincided with current viewpoints that input is vital as are opportunities to process it. The research was evaluated on two measures—the manner of instruction regarding the preterite tense and the examination of corresponding activities within each textbook. It was found that all texts afforded students mostly explicit rule instruction. Fernández (2011) discussed the debated role of explicit instruction in the teaching of grammar, reporting that while some researchers believe it may interfere with learners’ ability to process meaning, others support directing students’ attention to language features in the hopes of facilitating acquisition. Findings in the study noted that controlled opportunities to practice the feature in production activities were prominent, while the number of input-based activities was minimal. The reduced number of input-based activities was disconcerting considering that Fernández (2011) noted strong agreement among researchers in SLA that opportunities to notice input and authentically interact with it are critical for language development. While these findings reflect current grammar presentation in major Spanish textbooks, there are limitations. This study was not able to evaluate the instructional presentation and activities of all Spanish textbooks or of all grammar points. The author discussed the hope that educators try more techniques that support what is known regarding the critical role input plays in syntactical development as well as integrate approaches that direct learners’ attention to language features in meaningful ways (Fernández, 2011).

Impact of Visuals and Second Language Development

Visuals have proven to facilitate linguistic input for language learners and their use in English language teaching has been suggested across numerous reports and studies (Blagojevic, Logue, Bennett-Armistead, Taylor & Neal, 2011; Macwan, 2015; Kausar, 2013; Wright, Eslami, McTigue, & Reynolds, 2015; & Britsch, 2012). In their article detailing ways in which
educators could support language learners through the use of visuals, Blagojevic et al. (2011) discussed the significant reassurance the presence of visuals could offer to learners who might feel inundated with language or information that is unfamiliar to them. The authors suggested that visuals can be paired with language and replaced with text-only once students become more comfortable and capable with the language. Similarly, Britsch (2012) cited a study by Cortazzi and Jin (2007) in which seven 8-year-olds were provided with picture prompts and asked to retell a narrative story that was read aloud earlier to them in English and in their first language, Gujarati. Results illustrated that the visuals supported students by providing the necessary input that allowed for better organization to their responses when compared to key word prompts alone (Britsch, 2012). The visuals offered a support to the language input, and their intentional pairing revealed success. Results from Ghaedsharafi and Bagheri’s (2012) research further evidence the benefits of language and visual pairing on students’ learning potential. The researchers conducted a study that included 45 advanced Iranian adult learners who were acquiring English. Participants were randomly divided into an audiovisual, audio, or visual input presentation group. Ghaedsharafi and Bagheri (2012) were interested in examining learning outcomes after exposure to one of the three input presentation formats. Three topics were chosen for the study. Each group was asked to compose a pre-writing piece on each issue prior to exposure of the treatment. During the treatment, the audiovisual group viewed and listened to films on the three chosen topics, while the other two groups—audio and visual—received only one source of input. The audio group was exposed solely to the listening of films, and the visual group provided only the viewing of scripts (Ghaedsharafi & Bagheri, 2012). The results from analysis of post-writings on the topics illustrated that the audiovisual group outperformed both the audio and visual groups (Ghaedsharafi & Bagheri, 2012). Text-only visuals, as illustrated in this study,
might not always provide sufficient input or support on a topic. As can be noted, students benefited more positively when provided with visual and language pairing. Macwan (2015) correspondingly acknowledged the potential learning benefits that emerge when language and visuals are paired. She further remarked on how visual use can offer stability to the learning process, supporting learners who need a cue to continually reference or attend to as they consider what was previously communicated (Macwan, 2015). Aside from the actual investigated benefits visuals offer to support language input, a study conducted by Kausar (2013) analyzed 100 university students’ perspectives regarding the use of audiovisual aids. A questionnaire was developed that sought learners’ opinions on the use of audiovisual aids and whether or not they viewed them as useful in acquiring English. Students overwhelmingly supported the use of audio and visual aids, with 90 percent of students asserting their opinion that they provided a benefit to the language learning experience (Kausar, 2013). Studies have revealed that not only can visuals facilitate and attend to input, but students prefer their usage in language learning. Furthermore, given the potential visuals have in attending to and supporting language input, Wright et al. (2015) was interested in discovering strategies educators could implement when designing or using visuals with their own language learners. Wright et al. (2015) cited a survey conducted by Zohrabi, Sabouri, and Behroozian (2012) in which language acquisition teachers were inquired with regard to difficulties they faced in using their current materials. The findings illustrated that teachers felt their current texts offered ineffectual visuals or graphics that further contributed to students’ confusion of language input. The researchers became interested in analyzing their own textbook to help determine approaches fellow educators might consider to ensure visuals were used effectively with their own students. This analysis, along with existing research, led to the presentation of five inquiries that the authors hoped could be used and
reflected upon by educators when assessing the effectiveness of the visuals used in their own teaching—ensuring they were facilitating language input rather than impeding or complicating the process (Wright et al., 2015). While studies of visual use have shown to support language learners in their understanding and learning of language, and have established approval among many language learners, it is evident that if they are not used with care, they may cause more confusion to the language learning process than intended.

**Visual Enhancement to Text in Support of Awareness to and Development of Linguistic Features**

An enhancement made to text, with the intent of drawing students’ attention to a language feature in input, can also function as a type of visual support and is an approach that has gained the interest of many researchers (Mayén, 2013; Birjandi, Alavi, & Najafi Karimi, 2015; & Svalberg, 2012). Mayén (2013) conducted an experimental study where nineteen children, aged 7 to 9, were assigned to one of three groups—control group, input enhancement group, or input enhancement plus visual prompts group. Over the course of 14 weeks, each group received instruction once a week on present tense regular and irregular verbs in Spanish via one of the three methods. Students’ learning outcomes were measured via assessments that asked them to read and pair sentences with corresponding visuals, construct the correct conjugation of verbs, write in response to a visual prompt, respond to questions asked via an interview, and orally translate statements. Mayén’s (2013) findings revealed that students who had participated in the input enhancement plus visual prompts group performed better not only on the reading and translation tasks, but demonstrated an overall constant attention (more focal awareness) to the input across activities as revealed in the group-reported percentages for each task. It was further suggested that these results could indicate that continued exposure to such manipulated input could provide the necessary support learners may need to realize intake (Mayén, 2013). Similar results exposing the benefit of visually enhanced input have been issued.
by Birjandi et al. (2015). The researchers conducted a time series quasi-experimental study that explored the effects unenhanced, enhanced, and elaborated input had on learners’ understanding of phrasal verbs. One university class, consisting of 46 Iranian students majoring in English, was studied. Students were given a pre-test to gauge prior knowledge of the verbs, and then participated in the three separate input treatments. Ten different verbs were presented during each treatment via two texts, with a total of six texts used in the study. Immediately upon completion of each treatment, a post-test was administered that evaluated participants’ comprehension of the focused verbs. Results indicated that students achieved superior outcomes from elaborated textual support, with enhanced input support ranking a close second (Birjandi et al., 2015). While textual elaboration surpassed visual text enhancement concerning effects on student learning, enhancements nevertheless were effective in comparison to unenhanced techniques. Contrasting the findings from both Mayén (2013) and Birjandi et al. (2015), Svalberg (2012) reported differing results. The researcher cited a meta-analysis conducted by Lee and Huang (2008) that analyzed 16 experimental and quasi-experimental studies regarding visual input enhancement. A synthesis of Lee and Huang’s (2008) findings, as reported by Svalberg (2012), revealed that very little effect was noted in students’ learning outcomes on both receptive and productive tasks after they’d had exposure to varying visual input enhancements. While evaluation of these studies presented minor results concerning the use of visual input enhancements, Svalberg (2012) conveyed limitations within the studies analyzed. It was reasoned that the duration of many treatments was brief and that participants consisted of students from similar backgrounds. Svalberg (2012) agrees with requests made by Lee and Huang (2008) in their report that further studies are needed regarding the use and effects of visual input enhancements on learners’ language development.
**Visual Text Support to Facilitate Learners’ Development of Language Features in Writing**

In addition to visual input enhancement of text, other forms of textual support have shown to be useful in supporting students in the process of developing their knowledge and skills of language, particularly with regard to the area of writing (Annable, 2012; DelliCarpini, 2012; & Myhill, Jones, Lines, & Watson, 2012). Annable (2012) was interested in introducing metacognition strategies in her classroom to assist students in the process of developing their English grammar. In her classroom study, Annable (2012) asked her students to think about the common errors they were making in their writing by analyzing their own work that she had previously marked, but not corrected. As students focused their attention on their mistakes and then shared them, the researcher created a visual text table that detailed the most common syntactical errors students had reported making (Annable, 2012). She then later shared the visual text table with students and asked them to reflect on the errors they each struggled with in their writing and to share the potential reasons why they supposed they were making those errors. After conducting mini-lessons and providing opportunities to practice the syntactical features, students were questioned on how they would implement what they had learned as they set out to write future pieces. Students’ responses included examining their work upon completion, referring to written notes on the syntactical features with which they struggled, and using reference tools such as spell check when typing out their work. She found that students became much more capable and autonomous writers when their attention was drawn to their syntactical mistakes and the created visual text table and when they were also provided with opportunities to improve their grammar through mini-lessons and practice (Annable, 2012). In a similar study, DelliCarpini (2012) found that her undergraduate students were struggling with how to instruct their field work students on areas concerning grammar. After considering research regarding grammar and whether or not it should be taught, she advocated for implementing techniques that
could support English language learners without resorting to decontextualized grammar instruction. A survey of nearly 100 former undergraduate students was conducted that sought views pertaining to areas that had posed problematic when instructing field students on grammar. DelliCarpini (2012) analyzed students’ responses and synthesized the findings into four challenge areas. One such challenge involved determining areas of focus as many of the language learner field students had struggled in multiple areas of language syntax. Her solution entailed a form of textual support that could aid students in their grammar development as they set out to write. She first suggested limiting the scope of focus and incorporating those focused language areas into students’ writing ahead of time by making them aware of what they were to concentrate on regarding the rules of language. The researcher then suggested implementing a visual rubric regarding syntax to support students in the writing process (DelliCarpini, 2012). In another study, Myhill et al. (2012) saw success in students’ experimentation with language when visual grammar cues were implemented. The study’s focus was on employing techniques to support grammar in a contextualized fashion and to see if contextualized grammar instruction would positively support students’ writing development (Myhill et al., 2012). The year-long study included 744 children from 31 schools, all of whom were in grade 8. While the same objectives were used in the intervention and comparison groups, both randomly assigned, the intervention group had their attention drawn to grammatical features within the context of topics taught in the units while the comparison group did not (Myhill et al., 2012). Prior to the treatment, students in all groups were administered a narrative prompt that would serve as a source of comparison to students’ post-writing prompt. Teachers analyzed the post-writing to remark improvements in the rules of language. In the evaluation of students’ post-writing narrative, it was found that explicit grammar instruction and opportunities to practice and
experience the language positively supported students’ syntactical outcomes within the context of their own writing (Myhill et al., 2012). Additionally, the researchers conducted interviews with teachers upon completion of the study. It was found that teachers saw benefit in providing students with visual cues of syntactical features as it allowed students the opportunity to consider the cues when experimenting with the language. As construed from the aforementioned studies, appropriate supports provided to learners that direct their attention to specific, targeted conventional features in ways that are meaningful have the potential to facilitate the development of language rules. Furthermore, suitable supports can provide students opportunities that will support them in becoming independent monitors of their own learning.
Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter has made clear the mixed method approach undertaken to carry out this study and has provided a description of its participants. Additionally, explanations have been provided with regard to the five instruments employed to measure data. Outlined procedures follow with detailed steps taken to carry out the investigation. Two sources of validity have been communicated to discuss limitations and the measures taken to overcome, or at the very least, reduce them. Finally, a brief overview of the statistical techniques has been imparted, making clear the utilization of technology in the study.

Description of Research Design

The researcher sought to identify a change in practice that might increase students’ learning outcomes. Specifically, the potential impact visual text cues would have on ELs’ development of conventions was explored. In the study, the researcher designed lessons with and without visual text cues so as to explore any differences. A mixed method approach was implemented which included a quasi-experimental design, specifically, an equivalent time-samples design and student interviews.

According to Tuckman and Harper (2012), “the equivalent time-samples design suits situations when only a single group is available for study” (p. 160). Given the small sample size in this study, all ELs in the sample, described below, were exposed to uniform procedures. This method was chosen because it allowed for the introduction of a treatment, in this case a visual text cue, and then reintroduction of it at different points throughout the experiment. When students were not exposed to the treatment they were then provided with the absence of a visual text cue. In this study, Segments 1 and 3 were similar in that they lacked treatment of a visual text cue, while Segments 2 and 4 were similar as students were provided with a visual text cue
The quasi-experimental design utilized an initial writing sample from each participant prior to the instruction of the targeted features in this study. This initial sample would later facilitate the remarking of any development in students’ post-writing after the instruction and practice of the language features. A rubric was used to assign four separate scores to students’ initial piece, one score for each standard to be taught in each segment of the study (Appendix 4). Standards, specific to students’ grade level, were then taught via mini-lessons and activities (Appendix 1). In order to gauge students’ ability to practically apply the targeted language features within the context of their writing, four prompts were constructed for each EL grade-level group (Appendix 3). Within each prompt, a specific language feature was to be examined. For the purpose of evaluating students’ level of knowledge concerning the conventions and mechanics, the rubric used to evaluate students’ initial writing sample was again used with all four post-writing prompt samples. The researcher looked for students’ usage of a particular feature in the context of their writing and evaluated the level of accuracy using the designed rubric. A score was then assigned to each writing piece that reflected students’ level of attainment. Students’ outcomes were evaluated to see if any potential disparities existed when there was absence versus presence of a visual text cue. Additionally, to see if results fluctuated among students of varying language proficiency levels, careful analysis looked for whether or not there appeared to be differences in attainment between participants in the same group. More detail on the visual text cues, rubric, standards, and prompts is provided below, under Instruments.

To compensate the data analysis based on students’ writing, the interview method was also employed in this study. Tuckman and Harper (2012) have declared that interviews “allow investigators to measure what someone knows (knowledge or information), what someone likes
and dislikes (values and preferences), and what someone thinks (attitudes and beliefs)” (p. 244). Through the interview method, the researcher wished to examine students’ thoughts toward the learning and the visual text cues. It was hoped that students’ responses would provide insight to the researcher regarding usefulness of the visual text cues. More detail on student interviews is provided under Instruments.

In this study, the data collection therefore consisted of two student interviews (Appendix 5) in addition to four student writing samples. It was hoped that this readily available data would provide for a more adequate analysis and would help to substantiate clearer results. Essentially, it was hoped that the two data collection pieces would add validity to the results of the study.

Description of the Sample

The participants in this study included first through fourth grade male and female English learners as well as some formerly limited English proficient students. Participants came from various language backgrounds and had varying proficiency levels in English. Languages spoken among the students included: Spanish, Chinese, Gujarati, Punjabi, and Dinka. Additionally, participants consisted of refugees, asylees, immigrants, and students born in the United States. All participants were enrolled in Jamletz Public Schools and attended either James Elementary or Luna Elementary. The study began with ten participants which depended, in part, on the enrollment of English learner students across both buildings in the fall of 2015. Additionally, it depended upon students’ willingness to participate. Nine participants remained upon completion of the study.
Description of the Instruments Used

As mentioned in the research design of the study, Segments 1 and 3 were similar (lacked visual text cue) and Segments 2 and 4 were similar (included visual text cue). Five instruments were employed in this study.

The first instrument involved the conventions chosen by the researcher from the Language Standards of the Common Core State Standards.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment 1</th>
<th>Segment 2</th>
<th>Segment 3</th>
<th>Segment 4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Capital letters to start a sentence</td>
<td>Punctuation to end sentences</td>
<td>Use verbs to convey past tense</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Complete sentence structure (S+V or S+V+O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Punctuation to end sentences</td>
<td>Comma use in a letter and series</td>
<td>Capital letters for holidays, people’s names, and the names of places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Contractions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Comma use in addresses</td>
<td>Comma use and quotation marks in dialogue</td>
<td>Adverbs to describe how something happens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Adjectives to describe someone or something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Complete sentence structure (S+V or S+V+O)</td>
<td>Prepositions to show location, time, and direction</td>
<td>Form and use the progressive verb tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Coordinating conjunctions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four conventional features were chosen for each EL grade level group. Language features were selected that were comparable in terms of complexity and also appropriate considering students’ grade and proficiency levels. These conventions allowed the researcher areas with which to focus on when analyzing students’ writing data. In each of the four segments of the study, each grade level received instruction and practice on a particular conventional feature.

The second instrument used was the Evaluation Rubric, created by the researcher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proficiency Levels</th>
<th>Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Master-3</td>
<td>Use of targeted language feature is consistently employed accurately. One error may be present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprentice-2</td>
<td>Attempts targeted language feature often, but 2-3 inaccuracies may exist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novice-1</td>
<td>Rarely attempts targeted language feature. OR Attempts targeted language feature often, but 4 or more inaccuracies may be present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not yet-0</td>
<td>No use of targeted language feature.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This rubric allowed for the analysis of students’ initial writing sample and their four post-writing samples with focus on the inclusion and appropriate application of a given language feature. Its
use was essential in this study as it allowed the researcher the ability to track student
development of a language feature from initial writing sample to a given segment’s post-writing
prompt. It also enabled the researcher with the ability to note whether or not differences in
achievement existed when there was intervention versus no intervention. Each prompt was
analyzed for a targeted language feature and then assigned a score.

The third instrument consisted of the visual text cues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Segment 2</th>
<th>Segment 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>I can use ., !, ? to end my sentences.</td>
<td>I can write complete sentences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I like ice cream, I love ice cream! Do you like ice cream?</td>
<td>Outside to play → We went outside to play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>I can use commas when making lists.</td>
<td>I can use an apostrophe to shorten my words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sugar, eggs, milk, butter, and flour</td>
<td>She didn’t go with me to the park. She isn’t feeling well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I can use commas in greetings and closings of letters.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dear Mr. Tower,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Love,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sara</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>I can use , and “” in my writing to show dialogue.</td>
<td>I can use adjectives to describe someone or something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My mother whispered, “Goodnight,”</td>
<td>My old cat is very hairy. She is black and white and has crazy whiskers!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The world is a very big place,” the teacher explained.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>I can use prepositions to show location, time, and direction.</td>
<td>I can use a comma to join two sentences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The book is on the shelf below the window.</td>
<td>I want to buy that beautiful dress, but the price is too high.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I have too much homework, so I won’t be going to the mall today.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The visual text cues served as visual text support of specific language standards under study.

They were the intervention implemented to learn whether or not differences existed in students’
writing when they were employed versus omitted. Before students set out to respond to prompts
in Segments 2 and 4, the researcher placed a visual text cue of a given convention at the top of
their language journals and called their attention to it.

The fourth instrument employed in this study comprised the post-writing prompt topics
chosen for each EL grade level group.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment 1</th>
<th>Segment 2</th>
<th>Segment 3</th>
<th>Segment 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Describe to a loved one what you do each day in school.</td>
<td>Write a letter to your friend telling about your weekend. Ask what he or she did.</td>
<td>Describe your best day ever. What did you do? Who were you with?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Think about one field trip you had away from school. Write about where you went and what happened on your trip.</td>
<td>Write a letter to your first grade teacher telling him or her about 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; grade. Who is your teacher? What are you learning? What do you like? What do you miss?</td>
<td>Think about your favorite holiday and why it is your favorite. Tell about a time you celebrated it. Who celebrated it with you? Where did you go? What did you do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Address envelopes to at least three family members or friends that will later be used when inviting them to a party.</td>
<td>You and your best friend are lost. Create a story telling where you are and what you say to each other as you try and find your way to where you need to go.</td>
<td>As the students entered the room, something strange happened. Each student became smaller until they were only 12 inches tall. Now tell about what happened the day you became only 12 inches tall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Everyone has had a day he or she will never forget. Think about a special day. Now write a story about what happened on your special day.</td>
<td>Think of your favorite object in this school. Tell someone who is located in the office why it’s your favorite and how to get to it. Does it hold a memory? What clear directions might they need?</td>
<td>You meet an old friend on the street. He or she asks you, “so what are you up to these days?!” How do you answer?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher needed a vehicle from which to gauge students’ development of the conventions taught. The writing topics therefore provided the context for which the conventions could authentically be applied and measured. Prompts were chosen for each EL grade level group and were administered upon completion of each segment.

The fifth, and final, instrument used in this study consisted of two student interviews. The researcher needed a method from which to obtain students’ perspectives about their learning and the visual text cues. The first interview involved two questions that varied in mode. The first question required a fill-in response. Students were asked, “Can you share one thing we’ve been working on the past two weeks that can help us become stronger writers?” The wording of
this first question was intentionally restricting so as to limit students’ responses and to maintain applicability to the study. Following, a response-keyed question was then asked where a student’s response determined which subsequent free-response question, out of two possible question choices, would ensue. Students were asked, “Did you use (response given from Question 1) today in your writing?” Depending on how a student responded, one of the following two questions ensued: “If yes, how did you use (response given from Question 1)?” or “If no, why do you think you didn’t use (response given from Question 1)?” Prior to the data collection, and to assist in making scoring more efficient, precoded response categories for the free-response item were developed. These precoded response categories were not seen by students but were available to the researcher on the interview form as the interview was conducted. To discourage coding unreliability, students’ free response to the question was recorded next to the category “Other” when it did not fit into the precoded categories. The second interview consisted of the same two questions but included two additional questions related to the visual text cues. The third question was a response-keyed question where, once again, a student’s response determined which subsequent free-response question, out of two possible question choices, would ensue. However, unlike the second question, the third did not have precoded response categories. The researcher hoped to examine students’ individual opinions on whether or not they found the visual text cues useful. Therefore, students’ unstructured responses were recorded verbatim. Students were asked, “Was the language reminder at the top of your language journal helpful to you?” Depending on how a student responded, one of the following two questions ensued: “If yes, how did it help you?” or “If no, why do you think it wasn’t helpful to you?” The fourth and final question on the second
interview sought a categorical response to the question, “Would you like to continue using language reminders in your language journal?”

The first two inquiries on both interviews sought to measure students’ learning of a targeted language feature and the potential application of it to their writing. The third question explored whether or not students had interacted with the visual text cue and sought further explanation of how and why. The final inquiry requested students’ preference for continued use of the cue in their language journals.

**Explanation of the Specific Procedures Followed**

The research project was explained to each parent or guardian in March, either in-person during a home visit or by telephone. Translators were offered and provided as needed or desired by Linguistics Co., located in the Midwest. Opportunities for parents and guardians to inquire about aspects of the study were afforded to ensure all were aware of its purpose and that safeguards would be in place to assure privacy of student information and confidentiality in all reported findings. Additionally, consent forms were either presented for parents and guardians to review and sign during the home visit, or were mailed with a stamped, return-addressed envelope upon completion of a phone call *(Appendix 7).*

The experimental study began in April of 2016 and concluded in June of 2016. The experiment took place during students’ regularly scheduled language blocks, occurring two or three times a week, depending on the group, for 30 minute periods. To commence the study, a writing sample from each participant was collected from general classroom teachers at the beginning of the fourth quarter. This initial writing sample provided a starting point that would allow for the evaluation of students’ development of conventions and mechanics over the course of the research. Using the Evaluation Rubric, students’ initial prompt received four initial
scores, one score for each convention on which students would later be instructed. In this experiment, four conventional features were chosen for each EL grade level group. The data collection was qualitative in nature in that, throughout the study, four writing samples from each participant were gathered and then later examined. A specific targeted feature was assigned to each writing sample and in each piece the researcher looked for the correct inclusion of the learned conventional feature. The research was conducted over the course of eight weeks and was organized into four segments, with two weeks comprising each segment. Following are detailed procedures of what transpired in each segment of the study for all EL groups.

**Segment 1**

In the first two weeks of the study, students were instructed on their first targeted conventional feature via a mini-lesson and then provided with standard opportunities for guided practice. At the end of the second week, participants were administered their first post-writing prompt. Each grade-level EL group had their own unique prompt. The prompt was read aloud to participants by the researcher and also posted for them to see. Students were given an uninterrupted 25 minute block of time in which they were able to respond to the prompt. Students have always been encouraged to check their work and thus were allowed five additional minutes to make any desired changes to their writing or to add any last minute thoughts.

Segments 2-4 followed the same format as Segment 1. However, the intervention of a visual text cue was implemented into Segments 2 and 4. Before participants set out to respond to their prompt, their attention was drawn to the visual text cue which was read aloud by the researcher. The researcher desired to learn if differences existed when there was no treatment of a visual text cue versus when there was treatment. Additionally, a student interview took place after completion of the post-writing prompt in Segments 1 and 4. Interview 1 sought students’
ability to articulate their learning and to communicate if and how they used their learning in their writing piece. Interview 2 sought the same information, but it also included inquiry into students’ perspectives regarding the treatment of the visual text cues used in Segments 2 and 4. Please consult the following chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Segment 1</th>
<th>Segment 2</th>
<th>Segment 3</th>
<th>Segment 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mini-lesson</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing prompt without visual text cue</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing prompt with visual text cue</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion of Internal Validity**

As with all research experiments, limitations present themselves requiring the researcher to consider techniques to overcome them, or at the very least, limit them. In all research, it is important to consider and maximize two sources of validity—internal and external. Tuckman and Harper (2012) have explained that there is the presence of internal validity when the “outcome is a function of the program or approach being tested rather than the result of other causes not systematically dealt with in the study” (p. 5).

Given that the researcher was directly involved in the study as students’ EL teacher, expectancy might have appeared to be a factor that potentially could have affected the internal validity of the study. For instance, on the student interviews, it could be said that students might have responded to inquiries that sought their reflections in a way that would be pleasing to the researcher. To control for this, students’ responses were analyzed to see if they were comparable to what was noticed and recorded in students’ actual work samples and whether or not inclusion of the conventional feature was realized.

Furthermore, since participants included ELs in first through fourth grade, some might argue that older students or students with higher proficiency levels would be more likely to
achieve success in the study. However, to control for this, standards and prompts were chosen for each grade-level group that took into account group’s grade and proficiency levels. ELs of varying proficiency levels were included in the study. To help determine the impact of the visual text cue, students’ inclusion of a feature was not compared across grade levels or other participants, but instead analyzed exclusively within students’ own writing samples. All writing samples were examined to see if inclusion of a feature was more likely when there was presence versus absence of a visual text cue. While the impact of the visual text cue was analyzed and concerned with individual inclusion, to further control for internal validity, participants were stratified according to language proficiency levels to see if those with higher levels of language proficiency achieved differently than those with lower levels of language proficiency. This occurred after the researcher had analyzed the data separately for each student, looking specifically at the impact the visual text cues might have had on inclusion and development of features.

In no way did students’ participation or results affect their grades. Students were not compelled to participate, nor were they treated differently if they or their parents chose not to participate in the study. Data collection and the measurements used to analyze data remained constant across the study. The intentions of the experiment were not made known, thereby reducing the likelihood that students would behave in a way that might influence the results in favor of the hypothesis.

Discussion of External Validity

Of equal importance to internal validity in any research study is external validity. Tuckman and Harper (2012) have emphasized that, “A study has external validity if the results obtained would apply in the real world to other similar programs and approaches” (p. 6). While
this particular study analyzed the potential impact language standards in a visual text format had on ELs’ development of Standard English conventions, to reduce interaction effects of selection bias, the study included an EL population that was broad and representative of the larger population. Students ranged in language proficiency levels and language backgrounds. Additionally, students consisted of refugees, asylees, immigrants, and students born in the United States. Because this study was limited in number of participants, the magnitude of the results were quite limited. However, it is very possible that this study could easily be replicated on a much larger scale, across varying grade levels, populations, and settings. Moreover, the visual text format could also lend itself to other content areas and language domains.

Description of the Statistical Techniques

Statistical techniques utilized in this study included Microsoft tables and Excel spreadsheets to organize and diagram student data. Microsoft tables were organized by segment and grade level and held individual student data from writing samples and interviews (Appendix 6). From the Excel spreadsheets, bar graphs and charts were created to illustrate initial writing sample data, post-writing sample data from each segment, and student interview data.

This study’s mixed method approach considered the impact of visual text cues on participants’ development of conventions within the context of their writing. The data collected from this study’s nine participants over the course of eight weeks was fundamental in determining whether or not such a relationship existed.
Chapter 4: Data Sets and Data Analysis

The research question that served as a catalyst for this study asked, “How does providing the Common Core State Language Standards in a visual text format impact elementary English learners’ development of conventional features in writing?” Careful analysis of the data collected to answer the research question found support for the original assumption that ELs’ learning would benefit from exposure to a visual text cue. This chapter is organized into “Data Sets” and “Methods of Data Analysis.” The methods of analysis outline steps taken to evaluate data. Data summaries with visual representations include students’ initial writing sample data, post-writing prompt data, interview data, and the post-writing prompt data stratified by English language proficiency levels.

Data Sets and Methods of Data Analysis

Analysis of student writing and interview data was undertaken to determine the effectiveness of the visual text cues. Before starting the analysis process, each student was assigned a number in place of his or her name. Utilizing the number assigned to each participant, data was recorded individually to determine potential inclusion of conventional features as well as preference for visual text cues; however, all results were reported as group findings, not individual conclusions. Data was not examined until the end of the study to ensure unbiased analysis.

Initial Writing Sample Data and Post-Writing Prompt Data

Four post-writing prompts were assigned over the course of the study. Each was compared to participants’ initial baseline writing sample to learn the conventional development of a specific language feature. A rubric with four assigned measures was used to analyze both the initial writing sample and each post-writing prompt. Writing results were recorded into
Microsoft data analysis tables for each grade level via the researcher’s password-protected computer. Upon completion of the study, participants’ outcomes from all four segments were recorded into a comprehensive table to assist in the interpretation of results (Appendix 6). In this way, data was displayed in a straightforward manner in terms of analysis. To better understand the effectiveness of the visual text cues, data was further analyzed to learn whether differences in conventional development existed when there was absence versus presence of a visual text cue. Therefore, as explained in the research design, writing data from Segments 1 and 3 were grouped together as they lacked treatment of a visual text cue, and writing data from Segments 2 and 4 were grouped together as they involved the treatment of a visual text cue. Outcomes between the two groups were then compared. To illustrate students’ conventional development across all four segments of the study, data from the Microsoft analysis tables was input into Excel spreadsheets and then transfigured into bar graphs and charts. Refer to the data sets below.

**Absence of Visual Text Cue**

Analysis of initial writing samples revealed that 56% of the participants had not yet mastered their conventional feature of focus planned for instruction in Segment 1, while 44% had obtained a rubric score of 1, positioning them as a Novice (See Graph 1A and Chart 1A). Overall, all participants demonstrated introductory levels of understanding.

**Graph 1A**

![Graph 1A](image-url)
At the end of Segment 1, students were administered a post-writing prompt so as to gauge their level of progress on their first conventional feature of focus. Forty-four percent of participants obtained a score of 1, assigning them as a Novice, while 56% scored a level 3, naming them a Master of their targeted language feature (See Graph 1B and Chart 1B). Of the four participants who had obtained an initial score of 1, Novice, only one showed improvement. The other three remained at a level 1, continuing to make too many errors in their writing concerning their targeted feature. Overall, only 67% of participants showed advancement in levels using the Evaluation Rubric.

**Graph 1B**
In Segment 3, data from initial writing samples indicated that 89% of the participants had not yet mastered their conventional feature of focus planned for instruction, while 11% had obtained a rubric score of 2, Apprentice level standing (See Graph 3A and Chart 3A). Overall, 89% of participants demonstrated introductory levels of understanding.

Graph 3A

Post-writing data from Segment 3 indicated that 11% of participants remained at the Not Yet level on the Evaluation Rubric, showing no use of the feature in the assigned prompt. As for the other participants, 56% moved ahead one level and achieved Novice standing, 11% moved
two levels and gained *Apprentice* ranking, and 22% reached *Master* level, with one participant moving a full three levels and the other moving ahead one (See *Graph 3B* and *Chart 3B*). Overall, 89% of participants showed advancement in levels using the *Evaluation Rubric*; however, the majority of participants, 67%, received scores that placed them at one of the two beginning levels.

**Graph 3B**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Rubric of Targeted Feature in Student Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Participants Distribution for Post-Writing Prompt 3--Feature 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Yet-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novice-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprentice-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chart 3B**

Participant Rubric Scores by Percentages—Post-Writing Prompt 3 (Feature 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Yet—0</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novice—1</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprentice—2</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master—3</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Presence of Visual Text Cue**

At the beginning of Segment 2 in the study, analysis of initial writing samples informed that 67% percent of participants had not yet mastered their conventional feature, 11% had scored at the *Novice* level, and 22% had already mastered their targeted language feature (See *Graph 2A* and *Chart 2A*). Overall, 78% of participants demonstrated introductory levels of understanding regarding their feature to be studied.
Post-writing prompt data from Segment 2 showed that 22% of participants obtained a score of 2, assigning them the level of Apprentice, while the other 78% scored a level 3, naming them a Master of their targeted language feature (See Graph 2B and Chart 2B). This time, participants had been provided a visual text cue of their language feature studied. Data revealed that 78% of participants had made progress in their targeted language feature while 22% stayed at the same level, Master. While the 22% of participants who had initially obtained a score of 3, Master, had no room to move up on the rubric, they nonetheless showed improvement through increased usage of their studied feature. Of the six participants who started at the beginning level Not Yet, four moved the three levels to Master, while the other two moved ahead two levels to Apprentice. The 11% that had started at Novice level also moved to level 3 on the Evaluation Rubric. Overall, all participants scored in the upper two levels on the Evaluation Rubric and showed growth in their newly acquired language feature.
Prior to the start of Segment 4, the final segment in the study, initial writing samples were evaluated to learn participants’ introductory levels of understanding concerning the targeted language features to be studied. Of the nine participants, 44.4% scored Not Yet, 22.2% scored Novice, another 22.2% scored Apprentice, and 11.1% demonstrated Master level understanding (See Graph 4A and Chart 4A). Overall, six of the nine participants demonstrated introductory levels of understanding regarding their feature to be studied.
A final post-writing prompt was administered with treatment of a visual text cue. Data showed that 89% of participants moved to Master level on the Evaluation Rubric. The participant that began the final segment already a Master still showed improvement through increased usage of the language feature. Overall, all nine participants showed improvement and scored at the highest level on the Evaluation Rubric (See Graph 4B and Chart 4B).
Student Interview Data

As an additional piece of evidence, and to add validity to the results, two student interviews were analyzed to determine if results from responses matched students’ post-writing prompt data. Prior to input of the data from student interviews, students’ responses were transcribed by the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all original student interviews were shredded. Interviews were analyzed by examining each question separately and recording findings into Microsoft and Excel data analysis tables.

Identification of Language Feature

The first question on both interviews sought students’ knowledge of what was studied. Could participants identify their language feature of focus? Responses were marked one of two ways—yes or no. In both interviews, one upon completion of Segment 1 and the other at the conclusion of Segment 4, all participants evidenced awareness of their language feature under study (See Graph 5A and Chart 5A as well as Graph 5B and Chart 5B).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Yet—0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novice—1</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprentice—2</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master—3</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 4B
Participant Rubric Scores by Percentages—Post-Writing Prompt 4 (Feature 4)
Graph 5A

Segment 1 Interview--Language Feature Identification

| Identified language feature | 9 |
| Did not identify language feature | 0 |

Chart 5A
Participant Language Feature Identification Percentages—Segment 1 (Interview 1)

| Identified language feature | 100% |
| Did not identify language feature | 0% |

Graph 5B

Segment 4 Interview--Language Feature Identification

| Identified language feature | 9 |
| Did not identify language feature | 0 |

Chart 5B
Participant Language Feature Identification Percentages—Segment 4 (Interview 2)

| Identified language feature | 100% |
| Did not identify language feature | 0% |
Use of Language Feature

The second question on both interviews inquired about participants’ use of the targeted language feature under study. Did students use their targeted feature in their writing? Again, responses were tallied as ‘Used’ or ‘Didn’t Use.’ Students’ response to this inquiry also determined the subsequent free-response question which investigated how, if at all, participants used their language feature in their writing. Precoded response categories afforded ease in terms of scoring, and outcomes were recorded in accordance to these categories. When responses did not fit a category they were noted and recorded under the category ‘Other,’ with elucidations included.

In Interview 1, in response to the question, ‘Did you use (response given from Question 1) today in your writing?’ 89% indicated they had used the targeted language feature in their writing, with 78% stating they had incorporated the feature during the writing process while the remaining 11% shared inclusion had taken place after the piece had been written by going back and making additions and changes to their writing. Only one participant denied language feature use, stating, “I still need more time to learn how to use these things” (See Graph 6A and Chart 6A). While all participants could correctly identify the language feature they were studying and 89% reported using their language feature, only 56% obtained mastery of the skill in Segment 1. The other 44% scored at the Novice level. At this point in the study, participants had not yet been introduced to a visual text cue.
During Interview 2, in response to the question, ‘Did you use (response given from Question 1) today in your writing?’ all participants indicated they had. Sixty-seven percent stated they had incorporated their language feature during the writing process while the remaining 33% shared they had included their studied feature both during the writing process and after, going back and making additions and changes to their piece (See Graph 6B and Chart 6B). All nine participants obtained mastery of their language feature under study in Segment 4 (See Graph 4B and Chart 4B). This is significant given that students had, at this point, been introduced to a visual text cue in the hope that it would support them in their development of conventional features within the context of their writing.
In addition to the first two questions, the second interview also contained two additional questions that examined students’ thoughts on the visual text cues. Whereas Interview 1 had been conducted after Segment 1, prior to the treatment of a visual text cue, Interview 2 took place upon completion of Segment 4, when students had already been exposed to a visual text cue on two occasions.

Valuableness of Language Reminders

The third question explored participants’ opinion concerning the usefulness of the visual text cues. Did students find the visual text cues to be helpful? Totals were calculated for those that found the cues helpful and for those that found them unhelpful. Additionally, explanations as to how the cues helped or didn’t help were noted when conveyed by participants and can be
found in the ‘Findings’ section located in the following chapter. Of the nine participants, seven acknowledged their placement as beneficial (See Graph 7 and Chart 7).

**Graph 7**

![Segment 4 Interview--Valuableness of Language Reminders](Image)

**Chart 7**
Participant Perspective on Value of Language Reminders by Percentages—Segment 4 (Interview 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspective</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language reminders helpful</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language reminders unhelpful</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Desire to Use Language Reminders in Future Compositions**

The final question queried participants about their desire to use visual text cues in future compositions. Would students like to continue using language reminders? Responses were tallied and reported for those in favor and for those opposed to their future inclusion.

Additionally, explanations as to why they favored or didn’t favor continued use of the language reminders were noted when conveyed by participants and can be found in the ‘Findings’ section located in the following chapter. Data overwhelming indicated that all nine participants wished to continue using the cues (See Graph 8 and Chart 8). The two participants who had shared they did not find the visual text cues to be helpful (previous question and section) did, however, state a desire to use language reminders in their future compositions.
Participant Perspective on Continued Use of Language Reminders by Percentages—Segment 4 (Interview 2)

Conventional Development and English Language Proficiency

Data analysis concluded with a return to the comprehensive writing sample data organized in the final Microsoft table. The researcher studied participants’ achievement based on their assigned rubric score for each post-writing prompt and considered their language proficiency levels. Scores were examined to see if variances existed among those with high and low levels of English language proficiency.

Discoveries of Conventional Development When Stratified by Proficiency Level

In referencing Graphs 9-12, it was evident that students’ levels of success did not correlate with higher levels of English language proficiency over lower levels. Participants at higher proficiency levels (levels 4 and 5) could attain introductory levels of conventional understanding just like participants at proficiency levels 1 and 2. Furthermore, students with
both higher and lower levels of English language proficiency could demonstrate mastery of a feature.

**Graph 9**

![Graph 9: Stratification of Participants by EL Proficiency Level--Post-Writing Prompt 1](image)

**Graph 10**

![Graph 10: Stratification of Participants by EL Proficiency Level--Post-Writing Prompt 2](image)
Analysis of the data from student writing samples and student interviews revealed a number of findings. In addition to what participants actualized in their post-writing prompt pieces, their voice concerning the learning and the treatment of a visual text cue was valuable. These findings have been interpreted in greater detail in the subsequent chapter, and conclude with a discussion on what can be postulated for potential future study.
Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion

The final chapter reveals the findings of the research which include advancement in students’ development of conventions, the influential impact of visual text cues on students’ conventional development, students’ desire to use visual text cues, and discoveries of conventional development regardless of English language proficiency level. To conclude are discussions on these findings and suggestions for next steps.

Findings

Achievement in the development of conventions

The gathering, analyzing, and comparing of data from participants’ baseline sample to each of their four post-writing prompts indicated that the majority of participants were able to develop their knowledge and application of the targeted language features. In Segment 1, 67% advanced a level or more on the Evaluation Rubric. While progress was made by six of the nine participants, four of the nine continued to have limited understanding of their conventional feature under study, scoring at the Novice level on the Evaluation Rubric. In Segment 2, all participants scored in one of the upper two levels on the Evaluation Rubric, showing a more developed understanding of their conventional feature studied. Data revealed that 78% of participants had made progress in their targeted language feature while 22% stayed at the same level, Master. While the 22% of participants who had initially obtained a score of 3, Master, had no room to move up on the rubric, they nonetheless showed improvement through increased usage of their studied feature. In Segment 3, 89% of participants showed advancement in levels using the Evaluation Rubric. However, while eight out of the nine participants showed some improvement, the majority of participants, 67%, received scores that still placed them at one of the two beginning levels, indicating limited understanding of their conventional feature under
study. In Segment 4, 89% of participants moved to Master level on the Evaluation Rubric. The participant that began the final segment already a Master still showed improvement through increased usage of the language feature. Overall, all nine participants showed improvement and scored at the highest level on the Evaluation Rubric, indicating complete understanding and proper use of the conventional features studied. All four segments of the study showed some advancement of knowledge and application of the language features taught, studied, and practiced. Therefore, attention to and explicit instruction on language features appeared to provide a benefit to many of the study’s participants.

Influential impact of visual text cues on students’ conventional development

While some advancement of conventional development was seen across all segments of the study, the researcher was interested to learn whether differences existed among post-writing prompt data when students had experienced treatment of a visual text cue as opposed to when they had not. Notably, data revealed that participants did perform better in Segments 2 and 4 of the study. The researcher found greater conventional development and increased application of language features to writing pieces when participants were provided access to a visual text cue in their language journals. In Segment 2, two of the nine participants scored at the Apprentice level, while the majority, seven, scored at the Master level. In Segment 4, all nine participants scored at the Master level. Additionally, since Interview 2 was given upon completion of Segment 4, data from the interview was analyzed to see if it reflected what the researcher had found in participants’ post-writing prompt 4. Data from Interview 2 revealed that all nine participants expressed using their studied language feature in their writing. Not only could students report using the feature, but their usage was accurate as evidenced in their final post-writing prompt. All students obtained mastery of their studied language feature upon completion of Segment 4. Unlike the findings from Interview 2 and post-writing prompt 4, data from
Interview 1 and post-writing prompt 1 revealed that while 89% reported using their studied language feature, only 56% obtained mastery of the skill. The other 44% scored at the Novice level indicating that although most reported using the feature, many truly still had a superficial understanding of how to correctly use the language feature within the context of their writing. These findings are significant when considering the fact that all participants were able to achieve one of the top two rubric scores when they were provided the use of a visual text cue. While students’ initial knowledge of the language features seemed to be more varied in Segments 2 and 4, all showed advancement to the top two levels on the Evaluation Rubric, whereas upon completion of Segments 1 and 3, some participants remained at introductory levels of understanding and usage. This study sought to research the question, “How does providing the Common Core State Language Standards in a visual text format impact elementary English learners’ development of conventional features in writing?” It was conjectured that a given language standard presented in a visual text format would positively support students’ development of conventions in their writing. The findings of this study support a positive relationship among visual text cues and development of conventions and indicate that English learners’ attention to the cues aided in implementation of the conventional features in their writing.

**Students’ desire to use visual text cues**

As mentioned earlier, the second interview contained questions that sought students’ perspectives concerning the visual text cues. The researcher found a strong appreciation and preference for the language reminders. A few participants expanded on how they found the visual text cues helpful or unhelpful and some also shared, in greater detail, their thoughts concerning the use of visual text cues in future compositions. As the data indicated, seven of the nine participants conceded the use of language reminders as valuable. One student expressed,
“If this was not here, I would not know what to do.” Another shared, “It was [sic] example and helped me write my own sentence.” However, two of the participants did not find the visual text cues to be of help. One participant stated, “I didn’t look at it. I had my own ideas and I know how to use apostrophes now because I’ve been practicing at home.” The other participant declared, “I forgot to look at it, but I did check my work at the end when you said, ‘5 more minutes.’” While two participants seemed to find minimal value in the visual text cues, the overall majority did see value; in fact, some expressed their placement as essential in knowing what to do. Data from the second interview also overwhelming indicated that participants wished to continue using the cues. All nine participants expressed a desire to use them in future compositions. This was of great significance to the researcher considering two students had shared they did not find the visual text cues to be helpful. While they didn’t find them to be helpful, they did exhibit a desire to use them in future compositions. One stated, “Sometimes they help me. I guess I used it sometimes, but sometimes I already know.” The other inquired, “Maybe we could practice them more?” While these two students hadn’t necessarily seen the value in the visual text cues at that given moment, they did exhibit an interest or desire to continue experimenting with them. The participants who had found the cues to be beneficial also expressed a desire to continue experimenting with them in writing. One shared, “We might do more writing and it’ll help me learn more about writing so I can get better at it.” Another stated, “It’ll help me remember what to do.” A third participant explained, “Because they help me improve my writing, [sic] makes me a better writer.” A fourth exclaimed, “I would love to!” The merit of students’ voice in their own learning is evidenced given the fact that not only did 78% of participants find their placement as beneficial and 100% desire their use in future compositions, but participants also reached higher marks when provided a visual text cue. In this
case, the value students found in the visual text cues was further supported in their post-writing prompt data. Participants showed more accurate usage of their language features when there was the presence of a visual text cue. In other words, students’ perspectives were substantiated by their success on post-writing prompt data that had undergone treatment of a visual text cue. In analysis of student work, 100% of participants in Segments 2 and 4 reached the top two levels on the Evaluation Rubric, as opposed to 56% in Segment 1 and 33% in Segment 3. In general, these results, coupled with students’ opinions on the valuableness of the language reminders and their desire to continue using them in their writing indicate that with continued exposure to and practice with visual text cues students’ development of conventional features may be supported.

**Conventional development across English language proficiency levels**

In interpreting students’ post-writing prompt data, language proficiency levels did not seem to be an indicating factor of success concerning development of conventional features. It was evidenced that students with higher levels of English language proficiency did not outperform students with lower levels. In fact, students with both low and high levels of English language proficiency could obtain introductory levels of understanding concerning a conventional feature just as they could also reach mastery of a language feature. Looking deeper, it is significant to note the levels of success on post-writing prompts in Segments 2 and 4 of the study. Participants of all language proficiency levels achieved higher results when there was the presence of a visual text cue. This discovery further substantiates students’ responses on Interview 2 with regard to the benefit visual text cues offered. It was learned that students of varying English language proficiency levels not only found benefit in the visual text cues, but that all scored higher because of their use.
Discussion

The study revealed four major findings. It found that students showed improvement in their knowledge and application of conventional features, conventional development was greater when students were provided a visual text cue, students preferred using the visual text cues and found them to be useful, and students across varying language proficiency levels benefited from visual text cues.

Aside from the content of students’ writing, a grasp of Standard English language conventions is essential in order for students to experience continued educational and professional opportunities. Baker et al. (2014) and Tropp Laman (2013) support and recommend that educators analyze students’ writing regularly to pinpoint one or two conventional features in need of attention, execute a mini-lesson, and then follow with opportunities for guided practice. The research design of this study drew a parallel to their recommendation. By limiting the focus to one writing skill, students were able to concentrate on improving that one technique instead of trying to tackle many aspects in need of improvement. This process can support learners and teachers alike in that the focus shifts from creating a flawless piece of writing to supporting students in their current place of development concerning their writing skills in a new language.

Conventional features were chosen prior to the commencement of this research. It can be recommended that, should an individual wish to replicate this study, conventional features be chosen based on students’ most current writing sample. This could be of benefit to educators when deciding how to plan instruction and support students with varying needs. In this way, students with similar needs could receive targeted instruction that would best support them in their current state of conventional development. Additionally, it can be suggested that future researchers adjust the duration of time dedicated toward developing specific language features.
A two week time frame was chosen for each segment of this study; however, students develop knowledge and make improvements at varying rates.

In addition to limiting the scope of focus concerning conventions, considerable literature has found that visual text support can be useful and can positively facilitate students’ development of language in the area of writing. Baker et al. (2014) as well as Tropp Laman (2013) have encouraged language-based supports in the writing process so that students can be supported as they develop those conventional features and writing qualities necessary for academic success. Without such supports, they warn those grammatical conventions and abilities necessary for academic writing will likely remain elusive to EL students, and quite possibly, to non-ELs. In this study, the treatment of a visual text cue harmonized with the authors’ recommendation of using language-based supports. It can be concluded that the visual text cues positively supported the participants of this study, providing them the necessary input to be able to accurately apply their language feature of focus into their own writing. This discovery is meaningful to learners who strive toward improving their writing skills in a new language. Furthermore, the outcomes of this investigation can provide insight to other EL educators concerning the conventional development of their own students and can contribute to current practices that strive to accommodate English language learners. To better understand the impact of visual text cues, it is urged that future researchers employ and study visual text cues across varying content areas, grade-levels, and with other ELs as well as those who are native English speakers.

Of equal importance to finding supports that aid English language learners is how students feel about the tools provided to them. Tuckman and Harper (2012) imparted that “certain information can be obtained only by asking” (p. 245). When participants were asked
their perspectives on the visual text cues, results showed the majority of participants used the cues and that all desired their use in future compositions. This was significant given that all participants performed better in the two segments of the study where treatment of a visual text cue was given. Therefore, students’ input on what they saw as beneficial complemented what they produced, their output. This exhibits the power in student voice for parents, teachers, and students alike. Hearing what works and seeing the results can help educators provide students the support necessary and desired to reach success. Equally, knowing what works as a learner can help students to take charge of their own learning and to utilize resources that benefit them. It is urged that educators continue to seek student perspective through brief questionnaires, surveys, or other methods in order to help guide their planning, instruction, and assessment to best meet their learners.

As a final point, the researcher found that visual text cues have the potential to benefit learners of varying language proficiency levels. When provided a visual text cue to support the learning and application of conventions, students across all proficiency levels realized higher levels of success. Given this, the justification for further studies is warranted. Educators who find their classrooms populated with ELs at varying levels of English language proficiency can find value and applicability in this study. How can they best serve all their ELs in their conventional development? While instructional supports such as language reminders can benefit beginning ELs, they can also help those at intermediate to advanced stages of language development. Visual text cues can allow educators to focus in on the varying needs of all their students and they can also provide for an easy and effective aid to learners. It is suggested that educators attempt visual text cues with their students of varying language proficiency levels and target in on the conventional areas where their learners appear to have the most difficulty.
When it comes to language development, with writing an essential component, Robertson (2016) has discussed the concern that too many educators believe EL students will acquire proper language after time and exposure and that intervention will only encourage diffidence to the new language. Evidence disseminated by the National Center for Education Statistics (2012) revealed that the average 2011 NAEP writing score for an English language learner in Grade 12 was 96 as compared to a non-English language learner who averaged 152. The report stated that a score of 173 is needed in order for a student to be considered proficient in writing. In view of these outcomes, sitting back and waiting simply will not do. Expecting that correct language will develop in ELs without intervention can no longer be an acceptable belief or practice. Educators and policymakers have a long way to go in bridging the gap that exists between ELs and non-ELs in the area of writing, and that work can and should involve interventions that encourage and positively support students in the language learning process. It is hoped this study can serve as a guide and or example to future studies. The researcher recommends fellow educators undertake further investigations with regard to effects visual text cues may have on ELs’ development and application of conventional features in their writing. A larger sample of participants, additional conventions taught and studied, and a longer study could provide for a more comprehensive understanding of the impact and could also help to contribute a better understanding of how English language learners can be supported in their linguistic development, particularly in the area of conventions and writing.
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doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0261444810000224.


doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0261444812000079.


Appendix: Research Resources
Appendix 1—Language Standards Chosen for Study

First Grade:

1. Capital letters to start a sentence
2. Punctuation to end sentences
3. Use verbs to convey past tense
4. Complete sentence structure (S+V or S+V+O)

Second Grade:

1. Punctuation to end sentences
2. Comma use in a letter and series
3. Capital letters for holidays, people’s names, and the names of places
4. Contractions

Third Grade:

1. Comma use in addresses
2. Comma use and quotation marks in dialogue
3. Adverbs to describe how something happens
4. Adjectives to describe someone or something

Fourth Grade:

1. Complete and more detailed sentence structure (S+V or S+V+O; descriptive language)
2. Prepositions to show location, time, and direction
3. Form and use the progressive verb tense
4. Coordinating conjunctions
Appendix 2—Visual Text Cues Chosen for Treatment

First Grade:

Segment 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I can use . ! ? to end my sentences.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like ice cream. I love ice cream! Do you like ice cream?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Segment 4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I can write complete sentences.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outside to play → We went outside to play.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Second Grade:

Segment 2:

| I can use commas when making lists. sugar, eggs, milk, butter, and flour |
| I can use commas in greetings and closings of letters. Dear Mr. Tower, |
| Love, |
| Sara |

Segment 4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I can use an apostrophe to shorten my words.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She didn’t go with me to the park. She isn’t feeling well.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Third Grade:

Segment 2:

I can use , and “” in my writing to show dialogue.
           My mother whispered, “Goodnight."
         “The world is a very big place,” the teacher explained.

Segment 4:

I can use adjectives to describe someone or something.
My old cat is very hairy. She is black and white and has crazy whiskers!

Fourth Grade:

Segment 2:

I can use prepositions to show location, time, and direction.
The book is on the shelf below the window.

Segment 4:

I can use a comma to join two sentences.
I want to buy that beautiful dress, but the price is too high.
I have too much homework, so I won’t be going to the mall today.
Appendix 3—Post-Writing Prompts

First Grade:

1. Describe to a loved one what you do each day in school.
2. Write a letter to your friend telling about your weekend. Ask what he or she did.
3. Describe your best day ever. What did you do? Who were you with?
4. Describe your favorite animal. What does it look like? What does it do? Why is it your favorite?

Second Grade:

1. Think about one field trip you had away from school. Write about where you went and what happened on your trip.
2. Write a letter to your first grade teacher telling him or her about 2nd grade. Who is your teacher? What are you learning? What do you like? What do you miss?
3. Think about your favorite holiday and why it is your favorite. Tell about a time you celebrated it. Who celebrated it with you? Where did you go? What did you do?
4. Describe your favorite thing or place. Use your senses to help you—see, touch, taste, feel, hear.

Third Grade:

1. Address envelopes to at least three family members or friends that will later be used when inviting them to a party.
2. You and your best friend are lost. Create a story telling where you are and what you say to each other as you try and find your way to where you need to go.
3. As the students entered the room, something strange happened. Each student became smaller until they were only 12 inches tall. Now tell about what happened the day you became only 12 inches tall.
4. Describe your favorite room in your house. Why is it your favorite?

Fourth Grade:

1. Everyone has had a day he or she will never forget. Think about a special day. Now write a story about what happened on your special day.
2. Think of your favorite object in this school. Tell someone who is located in the office why it’s your favorite and how to get to it. Does it hold a memory? What clear directions might they need?
3. You meet an old friend on the street. He or she asks you, “so what are you up to these days?” How do you answer?
4. You pass a door every day. It is always locked. One day you pass the door and it is unlocked. You open the door and walk inside. Write to tell what happens when you open the door and walk inside.
Appendix 4—Evaluation Rubric of Student Writing Sample

Targeted Language Feature: _________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proficiency Levels</th>
<th>Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Master-3</td>
<td>Use of targeted language feature is consistently employed accurately. One error may be present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprentice-2</td>
<td>Attempts targeted language feature often, but 2-3 inaccuracies may exist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novice-1</td>
<td>Rarely attempts targeted language feature. <strong>OR</strong> Attempts targeted language feature often, but 4 or more inaccuracies may be present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not yet-0</td>
<td>No use of targeted language feature.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 5

Student Interview 1
Student No. ____

1. Can you share one thing we’ve been working on the past two weeks that can help us become stronger writers?

_____________________________________________________________________

2. Did you use __________________ today in your writing?    Yes  No
    (response from question 1)

If yes, how did you use __________________?    (response from question 1)
    ____while I was writing
    ____when I finished writing to check my work
    ____Other: ________________________________

If no, why do you think you didn’t use ______?    (response from question 1)
    ____I don’t know how to use it yet
    ____I forgot
    ____Other: ________________________________
Student Interview 2
Student No. ____

1. Can you share one thing we’ve been working on the past two weeks that can help us become stronger writers?
______________________________________________________________________________

2. Did you use ____________________ today in your writing? Yes____ No____
   (response from question 1)
   If yes, how did you use ________________?
   ____while I was writing
   ____when I finished writing to check my work
   ____Other: ____________________________
   If no, why do you think you didn’t use ________________?
   ____I don’t know how to use it yet
   ____I forgot
   ____Other: ____________________________

3. Was the language reminder at the top of your language journal helpful to you?
   Yes____ No____
   If yes, how did it help you?
______________________________________________________________________________
   If no, why do you think it wasn’t helpful to you?
______________________________________________________________________________

4. Would you like to continue using language reminders in your language journal?
   Yes____ No____
Appendix 6—Data Analysis Tables

Segment 1—No visual text cue

Writing Sample

Grade ______  Conventional Feature of Focus ___________________________ Segment____

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student No.</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Proficiency Level</th>
<th>Prompt</th>
<th>Rubric Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>05</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*There will be 4 sheets per group as I will be collecting 4 total samples per participant

Interview 1—Data analysis of feature use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student No.</th>
<th>Identified targeted feature</th>
<th>Used targeted feature</th>
<th>During writing</th>
<th>After writing</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Didn't use targeted feature</th>
<th>Doesn't know how</th>
<th>Forgot</th>
<th>Other</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Used targeted feature—Other categories:

Didn’t use targeted feature—Other categories:
**Segment 2—Visual text cue**

Writing Sample

Grade ______ Conventional Feature of Focus ________________________ Segment_____

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student No.</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Proficiency Level</th>
<th>Prompt</th>
<th>Rubric Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Segment 3—No visual text cue**

Writing Sample

Grade ______ Conventional Feature of Focus ________________________ Segment_____

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student No.</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Proficiency Level</th>
<th>Prompt</th>
<th>Rubric Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
Segment 4—Visual text cue

Writing Sample

Grade ______ Conventional Feature of Focus ______________________ Segment_____

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student No.</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Proficiency Level</th>
<th>Prompt</th>
<th>Rubric Score</th>
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Interview 2—Data analysis of feature use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student No.</th>
<th>Identified targeted feature</th>
<th>Used targeted feature</th>
<th>During writing</th>
<th>After writing</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Didn't use targeted feature</th>
<th>Doesn’t know how</th>
<th>Forgot</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Did’t use targeted feature</th>
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Used targeted feature—Other categories: Did’t use targeted feature—Other categories:

Interview 2—Data analysis of visual text cues

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Student No.</th>
<th>Visual text cue helpful</th>
<th>Visual text cue not helpful</th>
<th>Preference for future use of visual text cue</th>
<th>Visual text cue was helpful…:</th>
<th>Visual text cue was not helpful…:</th>
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### Comprehensive Writing Sample Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student No.</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Proficiency Level</th>
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Appendix 7—Consent Forms

Parental/Guardian Consent Form

I am currently working on my final research for my Master’s Degree in the Art of Teaching at Aquinas College. I am sending you this form to request your consent to allow your child to be a participant in my research project titled “How does providing the Common Core State Language Standards in a visual text format impact elementary English learners’ development of conventional features in writing?” The purpose of this study is to understand if and how visual text cues support students in their writing, particularly when it comes to learning the rules of the English language. I also wish to obtain students’ thoughts about the use of visual text cues in their language journals and whether or not they find them useful. It is hoped that students’ mastery of English language conventions will be improved because of this study. Additionally, I hope to understand how to better support English learners in their language development. Findings in this study will be used to better understand and possibly support the linguistic development of English language learners.

For this study, I am working under the supervision of Dr. Carol Winkle who is an Associate Professor at Aquinas College. The study I wish to conduct will take place over the course of eight weeks, and include approximately ten participants. The potential participants in this study will include English learners and former English learners in grades first through fourth. The study will take place during students’ regularly scheduled language blocks, occurring two or three times a week, depending on the group, for 30 minute periods. I have chosen four English language conventions for each EL grade level. The study will be completed in four parts. Each part will last two weeks. During each part, I will conduct a mini-lesson on the targeted conventional feature and provide opportunities for guided practice. At the end of each part, I will read aloud a prompt to students. However, during Segments 2 and 4, I will also direct students’ attention to a sticky note at the top of their language journals. The sticky note will provide a visual text cue of the conventional feature studied. The visual text cue will be read aloud to students before they respond. I will collect and analyze students’ writing samples throughout the study to explore their use of conventions and to see if outcomes vary when students are provided a visual text cue. Additionally, during Segments 1 and 4, I will conduct individual student interviews seeking students’ use of the features and, in Segment 4, their use and thoughts regarding the visual text cues.

When completing the interviews, students will be asked to share their learning as well as their opinion regarding the materials used in the study. To ensure students feel comfortable, I will begin the interview by letting students know that their responses will not be graded nor shared with others. Additionally, I will ask questions in a way that is inviting and will reframe any questions as needed to ensure students feel comfortable providing their responses. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and no penalty will be given at any time to those who choose to discontinue participation or who choose not to participate. There is no medical risk involved in this study, nor will any remuneration be provided.

This study will value, respect, and protect to its maximum extent the confidentiality of its participants. While anonymity cannot be ensured as I will be working directing with
participants, no names of any participants will appear on research documents and all results will be reported in terms of group findings, not individual conclusions. Additionally, to secure the confidentiality of participants, numbers will be assigned in place of participants’ names. All research documents will be kept secure in a locked cabinet in my office as well as on a password-protected computer. Upon completion of the study, all consent forms, student writing data with name identification, student to number assignments, and interviews will be destroyed via a shredder to ensure participants’ right to confidentiality.

I am hopeful my research study will provide insight into improved instructional techniques and best practice for supporting English language learners. Should you have any questions or should you desire a copy of the study, please feel free to contact me at hoffmlei@aquinas.edu. Questions may also be directed to the professor overseeing my research, Dr. Winkle, at winklcar@aquinas.edu. Thank you in advance for your assistance in my research study.

Leigh Ann Hoffman

Signature on this Consent Form indicates I have read, understood, and agreed to have my student participate in the study titled “How does providing the Common Core State Language Standards in a visual text format impact elementary English learners’ development of conventional features in writing?”

Parent/Guardian signature for participation of participant: ______________________________

Parent/Guardian printed name for participation of participant: ____________________________

Date: ______________

Participant’s Name: _____________________________________________________________

Date: ______________
Formulario de Consentimiento para Padres y Guardianes

Le estoy mandando este formulario para pedir su consentimiento para que deje que su hijo/a sea un/a participante en mi proyecto de investigación titulado, “¿Cómo hace el suministro de los estándares de lengua estatales principales comunes en un texto visual formatea el impacto a los principiantes ingleses elementales en el desarrollo lingüístico de la escritura?” Actualmente estoy trabajando en mi investigación final para mi poseedor de una maestría de maestro en el Arte de Enseñanza en el Colegio Aquinas. Este estudio pretende entender el impacto potencial que las señales de texto visuales pueden tener en la escritura de los estudiantes, expresamente su dominio de convenciones. Como una parte complementaria del estudio, también espero obtener las perspectivas de los estudiantes en cuanto a la inclusión de señales de texto visuales en sus diarios de lengua y si ellos los encuentran útiles. Es esperado que el dominio de los estudiantes de convenciones de lengua inglesa sea mejorado debido a este estudio y que la perspicacia pueda ser dada en cuanto a técnicas que apoyan el desarrollo de lengua de los principiantes ingleses. Las conclusiones en este estudio serán usadas mejor para entender y posiblemente facilitar el desarrollo lingüístico de principiantes de lengua ingleses.

Para esta investigación, trabajo bajo la supervisión de doctor Carol Winkle, que es una Profesora Asociada en el Colegio Aquinas. El estudio que deseo conducir ocurrirá sobre el curso de 8 semanas, e incluirá a aproximadamente 10 participantes. Los participantes potenciales en este estudio incluirán a principiantes ingleses en grados primero por cuarto. El estudio ocurrirá durante los bloques de lengua con regularidad previstos de los estudiantes, ocurriendo dos o tres veces por semana, según el grupo, durante períodos de 30 minutos. He elegido cuatro convenciones de lenguas inglesas para cada nivel de grado. El estudio será realizado en cuatro segmentos, con dos semanas comprendiendo cada segmento. Durante cada segmento, conduciré una mini-lección típica en el rasgo convencional apuntado y proporcionaré oportunidades estándares de la práctica dirigida. Al final de cada segmento, administraré un plazo limitado de narrativa que será leído en voz alta a estudiantes. Sin embargo, durante Segmentos 2 y 4, también dirigiré la atención de los estudiantes a una nota pegajosa en lo alto de sus diarios de lengua que proporcionarán una señal de texto visual del rasgo convencional estudiado. La señal de texto visual será leída en voz alta a estudiantes antes de que ellos intenten responder. Coleccionaré y analizaré las muestras de escritura de los estudiantes sobre el curso del estudio para explorar su uso de convenciones y ver si los resultados varían cuando proporcionan a estudiantes una señal de texto visual. Además, durante Segmentos 1 y 4, conduzca entrevistas de estudiante individuales buscando el uso de los estudiantes de los rasgos y, en Segmento 4, su uso y pensamientos en cuanto a las señales de texto visuales.

Completando las entrevistas, a estudiantes les pedirán compartir su aprendizaje así como su opinión en cuanto a los materiales usados en el estudio. Para asegurar la sensación de estudiantes a gusto, comenzaré la entrevista dejando a estudiantes saber que sus respuestas no serán clasificadas, ni compartidas con otros. Además, estructuraré preguntas en un camino que es atractivo y enmarcaré de nuevo cualquier pregunta como necesario asegurar que los estudiantes sienten el suministro cómodo de sus respuestas. La participación en este estudio es completamente voluntaria y ninguna pena será dada en cualquier momento a aquellos que deciden discontinuar la participación o quienes deciden no participar. No hay ningún riesgo médico implicado en este estudio, tampoco cualquier remuneración será proporcionada.
Este estudio valorará, respetará, y protegerá a su grado máximo la confidencialidad de sus participantes. No puedo garantizar el anonimato porque voy a trabajar directamente con los participantes. Sin embargo, para proteger la confidencialidad de participantes, ningunos nombres aparecerán en documentos de investigación y todos los resultados serán relatados en términos de conclusiones de grupo, no conclusiones individuales. Además, para asegurar la confidencialidad de participantes, los números serán adjudicados en el lugar de los nombres de los participantes. Voy a guardar bajo llave todos los recursos de la investigación. Serán protegidos adentro del armario en mi oficina. Sobre la finalización del estudio, todos los formularios de consentimiento, las muestras de escritura estudiantil con nombres, designaciones de nombres estudiantiles a números y las entrevistas serán destruidos vía una trituradora de papel para asegurar el derecho de los participantes a la confidencialidad.

Espero que mi estudio de investigación proporcione la perspicacia en técnicas educacionales mejoradas y mejor práctica para apoyar a principiantes de lengua ingleses. Si usted tiene cualquier pregunta o si usted desea una copia del estudio, por favor siéntase libre de ponerse en contacto conmigo en hoffmlei@aquinas.edu. Las preguntas también pueden ser dirigidas a la profesora que supervisa mi investigación, doctor Winkle, en winklcar@aquinas.edu. Gracias de antemano por su ayuda en mi estudio de investigación.

Leigh Ann Hoffman

La firma en este formulario de consentimiento indica que he leído, entendido, y llegado a un acuerdo que mi estudiante puede participar en este estudio titulado “¿Cómo hace el suministro de los estándares de lengua estatales principales comunes en un texto visual formatea el impacto a los principiantes ingleses elementales en el desarrollo lingüístico de la escritura?”

Firma de Padre/Guardián para participación del participante: ______________________________

Nombre en letras de imprenta de Padre/Guardián para participación del participante: ______________________________ Fecha: __________________

Nombre del participante: ______________________________ Fecha: __________________
同意书

这份同意书是关于您是否同意您的孩子参与我的研究主题利用“视觉语言的学习方式”（也就是使用小提纲，概要）来帮助学生们学习英语和正确的语法，写作的能力，发掘学生在写作方面的才能，特别是对他们在语法上的掌握。作为这项研究的一部分，我希望通过这项研究主题来了解学生们对于利用“视觉语言的学习方式”是否可以帮助他们来提高写作的能力并且更好的学习英文，并且让学生们提出意见与建议，“视觉语言的学习方式”是否帮助他们更好的学习英语。我希望通过这份研究能够让学生们的英语可以得到很大的改善，帮助英语学习者提高他们的语言和写作能力。此外，通过这项研究还将让我们找到一些更好方法来帮助那些英语学习者，提高与发展他们的语言能力。

我现在正在攻读硕士学位在阿奎那大学，并且在副教授卡罗尔·温克尔博士下学习。我希望该项研究的将会进行八个星期，其中大约包括了十多名参与者。这份研究的第一潜在对象是对那些就读于 XXXXXXXXXX 小学和 XXXXXXXXXX 小学的学生，每周大约定期在两到三次，取决于时间，并且每次课程大约三十分钟。我将英语能力分为四种不同的等级，并且该研究将分为四个阶段完成，每个阶段为两个星期的课程。在每个阶段中我们将会有关性的迷你课程，来帮助提高学生在英语方面的能力，并且提供了特别的指导与实践的机会。在每一个学期末，我们将会布置一份作业给学生。并且在第二和第四的学习阶段，我将会在写作前先把注意力集中在提纲和概要上，让他们对于自己的文章有一定的轮廓、思路。在学生写作的时候，我们将使用它来对学生们的作文进行分析，并且看看使用提纲前和使用提纲后，对于学生们的写作方面上是否有不同的情况。另外，在第一和第四的学习阶段我还将让学生总结“视觉语言提醒”是否在写作方面上对他们的学习提供了帮助。

在访谈中，学生将会分享他们的学习成果，并且谈论他们对于“视觉语言提醒”这项研究的想法。为了确保学生安心，我们不会将他们的文章与他人分享。为了确保学生们对此感到舒服，他们的回答将不会被分级或者分享给他人。此外，我还会询问学生一些关于这份研究的问题，这些问题并不会涉及隐私。参与这项研究完全是出自自愿的，对于那些没有或不想参与的人我们不会有任何的惩罚。这项研究将不会有任何的风险，并且不会得到任何的报酬。
This research will cherish, respect, and protect to the greatest extent possible the confidentiality of participants. While I will not disclose the name of any participant, I will not work with or guide any participant. Participants’ names will not appear in the final research report, all results will be presented in a group format and not as individual conclusions. Furthermore, to ensure participants’ confidentiality, numbers will replace participant names and be assigned. In addition, all research documents will be kept in a locked cabinet in my office, as well as on a password-protected computer. Once the research is completed, all consent forms, student writing, and participant identifiers, student data numbers, and interviews will be shredded to protect participants’ confidentiality. To ensure participants’ rights, I provide the maximum confidentiality.

I hope that this research will better illuminate and improve teaching methods to provide the best support and help for students. If you have any questions or need a copy of this research report, please contact hoffmlei@aquinas.edu. Some questions may also be directly conveyed to my instructor, Dr. Winkel, at winklcar@aquinas.edu. In advance, thank you for your support of my research work!

Leigh Ann Hoffman

This consent form signature indicates that I have read, understood, and agreed to allow my student to participate in the theme of “How to provide research in the Common Core National Language-Standard Utilize Visual Language to Help English Learners’ Language Development and Writing?”

Parent/Guardian’s name: ______________________________

Parent/Guardian’s signature: ______________________________

Date: ________________

Student/participant’s name: ______________________________

Date: ________________