Sustained Content Based Instruction for Beginner ESL Writing Classes: A Preliminary Analysis

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Abstract

Based on EAP writing studies by Marcia Pally (1997, 2001, 2002), the outline and practice of a Hiroshima Bunkyo Women's University (HBWU) freshman writing course has been modified and revised to meet the standards of sustained Content Based Instruction (CBI). The academic goals (i.e. grammar development, understanding of genres) from the prior year have been maintained however the lesson plans have been modified and rearranged in a manner which supports the philosophies of sustained CBI. During the writing course, the students will study one discipline for an extended amount of time. The objective is to simplify the learning process by recycling grammatical forms and vocabulary. Writing samples from the current class have been analyzed to determine whether sustained CBI principals are effective for a beginner level writing class. Although sustained CBI has been proven successful in the past with higher level students, there is a lack of publications supporting sustained CBI for beginner level students learning basic grammatical structures as is the case for the freshmen students at HBWU. To quantitatively track the progress, journal entries have been analyzed for written accuracy.

KEYWORDS: sustained content based instruction, ESL writing, beginner level, sentence structure, curriculum

1. Introduction

Sustained content based instruction (CBI) and its curriculum is similar to many other variations of content-based or theme-based teaching. Content-based or theme-based learning programs typically use content as the foundation for curriculum development, and structure language classes around topics or themes (Brinton, Snow & Wesche 1989; Stoller, 1999). Theme based materials are typically adapted from outside sources or teacher generated (Briton et al., 1989). Content based curriculum create a classroom environment where students learn content in the L2 (second language) and develop both language and academic skills in the process (Stoller, 1999). Content-based instructional programs have proven to be successful with ESL students resulting in significantly higher reading proficiency scores, higher pass rates of ESL courses, and higher likelihood of ESL students to perform at native-speaker levels in their following mainstream university courses, higher grades and higher graduation rates (Kasper, 1994, 1995, 1995/96, 1997).

The concepts of sustained CBI begin with content-based ESL, however, unlike content-based/ theme-based instruction, sustained CBI classes focus on a single content or theme for an extended length of time (Pally, 1997). As defined by Macia Pally, what distinguishes sustained CBI from theme-based instruction is the duration of time the students study one subject area. Rather than varying topics frequently throughout a semester, students of sustained CBI will study one discipline for the duration of one quarter or one semester (Pally, 2000, 2001). Sustained CBI creates a context in which students practice academic skills with "scaffolding" (Vygotsky, 1978) provided by the language teacher (Pally, 2001). Within a single discipline, students focus on various aspects of a larger encompassing topic, learning 'transferable' skills in a progressive sequence so that students will build upon earlier concepts and skills in order to 'grasp' later ones (Pally, 2001). Due

to the fact that sustained CBI focuses on a single text (or topic) rather than a series of disconnected themes, learners can frequently recycle of vocabulary and key concepts; this aids students in developing familiarity with the topic (Heyden, 2001; Pally, 2000). Additionally, by extending the study of one discipline, learners are allowed to explore various print and non print sources, exposing the learners to a variety of viewpoints and opinions on the topic. This learning process not only improves language abilities but also facilitates skills related to critical/analytical thinking, evaluation, and comparing and contrasting (Murphy & Stoller, 2001; Pally, 1997, 2001). By recycling vocabulary, information grammatical and rhetorical forms, students are freed from basic linguistic comprehension and allowed to develop expertise and critical thinking in the discipline (Adrade & Makaafi, 2001; Pally, 2001). Finally, sustained CBI curriculum can facilitate ESL students develop academic writing skills such as voice, rhetoric and argumentation (Pally, 1997, 2001; Pally, Perpignan, Katznelson, & Rubin, 2002).

Sustained CBI classes have proven to be effective with intermediate and advanced level ESL learners. After analyzing 13 case studies of written student work, Marcia Pally found that papers written by students who undertook sustained CBI classes demonstrated stronger argumentation, rhetoric and analyzing skills as well as more instances of complex forms in their writing when compared to similar ESL students who did not take sustained CBI (2001). Additionally, Todd Heyden experimented with sustained CBI in an advanced ESL writing class over the duration of a 14 week semester. Heyden reported that the content of the sustained CBI course held the students' interest, increased motivation and student engagement with research and writing process as well as improved writing skills overall when compared to his former classes (2001). Paul J. Camhi also used sustained CBI with advanced level ESL students while teaching meta-cognitive principals to distinguish well-formed

English sentences from ill-formed ones (2000). The ESL students from this course achieved notably high pass rates of an end-of-semester City University of New York Writing Assessment Test, an accomplishment that Camhi attributes to the students' increased mastery of syntactic structure; the focus of his sustained CBI curriculum (2000). In a qualitative study, Marcia Pally discovered and unexpected by-product of sustained CBI. In a survey including open ended questions, over half of her sustained CBI students reported to have "learned the meaning of learning", i.e, not only learned the specific skills for the subject, but also learned how to approach learning both inside and outside of the classroom (Pally et al., 2002). In sum, there have been numerous published cases proving sustained CBI to be an effective choice of curriculum for upper intermediate to advanced level ESL students. The examples above are case studies taken from ESL students living in English speaking countries, aspiring to enter mainstream English university classes. However, to date, there is a lack of publications reporting on the use of sustained CBI for beginner level ESL classes.   While sustained CBI has proven itself effective for high level L2 students, to date, there is a lack of published research which indicates whether sustained CBI is effective for low level L2 students. The current study aims to fill this void and analyze the effects of sustained CBI on beginner level students by measuring levels of written accuracy.

   The current study applies the principals of sustained CBI to a beginner level English writing class. Unlike the ESL students from the examples listed above, the students who entered the current study struggle with the most basic, fundamental knowledge of English grammar. The students for the current study are in less advanced stages of the language learning process than the formerly introduced sustained CBI examples. Additionally, the students in the current study are enrolled in a university in their native country, Japan, and are not preparing to enter

mainstream university classes in an English speaking country. The purpose of this study is to investigate whether sustained CBI is an effective curriculum choice for students developing basic/fundamental grammar. As a result, the students' written accuracy will be measured in a preliminary study to gauge their progress.

2. Background

The students in the current study are first year university students in an all-women's university in Japan: Hiroshima Bunkyo Women's University (HBWU). The students major in a newly developed program called Global Communications. The Global Communications Department (GCD) was first launched in the Japanese school year beginning in April, 2010. The GCD, an English language intensive program, has recently replaced HBWU's Language Department. To date, the GCD has only been in operation for 2 years. There were 20 students who enrolled into the first cohort for April 2010- February 2011. The following year, 30 students enrolled into the second cohort for April 2011- February 2012. Though the students who enrolled into the program were interested in learning English, their actual proficiency level at the time of enrollment was low/beginner level, e.g., the TEOIC scores at the start of the year for the 2010 and 2011 cohorts averaged at 301 and 309 points respectively.

To date, the GCD program has run for only 2 years. For the current preliminary study, the GCD students from the two cohorts will be compared against each other for their progress in written accuracy during semester 1. The GCD students from both the 2010 and 2011 cohorts have taken similar classes in their first year of university. The students from both cohorts have experienced a weekly schedule of 5 GCD classes: one Reading Strategies class, one Writing Strategies class, one Basic English Communication class, and two General English classes. With the

exception of the writing class, the curriculum for each class has remained the same as the year prior. Additionally, the majority of the teachers and learning advisors have also remained the same from years 2010-2011. The majority of the teachers and curriculum for both the 2010 and 2011 cohorts remained the same. The Basic English Communication classes were assigned the same learning advisors and curriculum. The Reading Strategies course maintained the same curriculum over the 2 years as well as one of the two reading teachers. The 2011 General English class has been run by a different teacher than the 2010 cohort; however, the newly appointed teacher utilized the same curriculum as the year prior. Finally, despite the changes in curriculum for the Writing Strategies course, one of the 2010 teachers remained the same. Overall, the students in the 2011 cohort have undergone very similar academic experiences as the previous students in the 2010 cohort. In consideration of any changes in the GCD students' writing, the most potentially influential factor was the redesigned Writing Strategies curriculum.

2.1 Modifications to the Curriculum

The Writing Strategies curriculum from the 2010 cohort was re-arranged and modified to meet the philosophies of sustained CBI. The students experienced one overlying theme for each semester. Within each theme, the students focused on writing only 2 kinds of written genres (one genre per quarter). The extended study of one theme aimed to provide students the opportunity to recycle vocabulary and grammatical forms. The extended time on a single theme was intended to provide students the opportunity to become accustomed to writing about one topic at a time. The target grammar points and writing genres remained the same as the year prior. Activities and exercises from the prior year's handouts were often used after being adapted to conform to the overlaying themes of semester. The end result was a

curriculum that practiced the same grammatical targets and genres as the year prior; however, presented them in a way in which each lesson drew from information and concepts presented in prior lessons. Grammar was presented throughout the semester in a progressive sequence, so as to prompt students to rely on "transferable skills" learned in prior lessons as is the case with sustained CBI (Pally, 2001). In short, the curriculum for the 2011 cohort was heavily modified and re-arranged to adhere to a single theme, and followed a sequential order of presenting grammar.

The modifications to the curricula for the Writing Strategies classes are demonstrated below in the course outlines from the 2010 class and the rearranged 2011 class. Figure 1 represents the curriculum for the 2010 cohort. There are a total of 15 weeks per semester. The students from this cohort studied in a framework which explored a new topic each class. The grammatical focus changed each week, without sequential order. Many of the grammar points were the focus of more than one class (e.g., adjectives, comparatives, superlatives, adverbs and conjunctions); however, they were disconnected by lengthy lapses of time. For example, adjectives were the grammar focus of week 3, and 14 in semester 1, and again brought to grammatical focus in week 22 during semester 2. Unlike sustained CBI, this outline represents a curriculum in which students are exposed to new topics and grammatical focus each class, and are not often compelled to draw upon previous classes to grasp new ones.

2010 Cohort Course Outline

Semester 1

Week	Topic	Grammar Focus	Writing Output
1	Introduction	Parts of Speech	
2	Basics 1	Subject Verb Agreement	Journal
3	Basics 2	Adjectives	Journal
4	Friends	Grammar Review	Descriptive Paragraph, Journal
5	Conference	Because, Punctuation	Journal
6	Physical Description	Imperatives, Simple Past	Descriptive Paragraph, Journal
7	Birthday	Adverbs of Frequency	Narrative Paragraph, Journal
8	Obon	Grammar Review	Narrative Paragraph, Journal
9	Conference	Past Continuous	Journal
10	What Were You Doing?	Countable, Uncountable Nouns	Narrative Paragraph, Journal
11	How much? How many?	Comparative	Expository Paragraph, Journal
12	High School & University	Superlatives	Expository Paragraph, Journal
13	Where Do You Live?	Grammar Review	Expository Paragraph, Journal
14	Conference	Adjective Review	Journal
15	Music and Writing	Parts of Speech	Short Story

Semester 2

Week	Topic	Grammar Focus	Writing Output
16	Welcome Back!	Grammar Review	
17	Homework	Adverbs and adjectives	Argumentative paragraph, journal
18	City or Country?	Transitions	Argumentative paragraph, Journal
19	Big family or small family?	Adverbial Conjunctions	Argumentative paragraph, Journal
20	Conference	Grammar Review	Journal
21	Cafeteria	Preferences	Persuasive writing, Journal
22	Movies	Adjectives	Persuasive writing, Journal
23	Age of adulthood	Reported Speech	Persuasive writing, Journal
24	Conference	Grammar Review	Journal
25	Volunteering	Comparatives	Expository writing, Journal
26	Part-time jobs	Superlatives	Expository writing, Journal
27	Volunteering vs. part-time jobs	Comparatives and superlatives	Expository writing, Journal
28	Conference	Grammar Review	Journal
29	Conference	Grammar Review	Journal
30	Fun lesson		

Figure 1. **Course outlines from 2010 cohort, semester 1 and 2.**

The curriculum for the 2011 cohort used most of the grammar focus and written genres as outlined in the 2010 course outline. However, there were a few major modifications. To start, semester 1 and semester 2 were each assigned a single overlaying theme. For semester 1, the theme was "people". The grammar practiced in classroom activities and student handouts remained focused on the topic of people from class 4 to the end of semester 1. The two genres set up for study were descriptive, and narrative (with topics intended to keep the focus on describing people and social situations). The actual themes and topics in semester1 were intended to be exceedingly simple, in order to allow students to focus on sentence structure, grammar, and building written accuracy. For semester 2 the topic was the natural world. The first half of the semester focuses on thinking critically about the natural world, the second half of the semester focuses on energy resources and its relationship with the environment and people. Though grammatical study is still a part of the curriculum, there is less focus on grammar and more focus on content and longer written passages. As was the case in semester 1, the students focus on two written genres for semester 2.   The students write a persuasive paper on the best/ worst place in the world to live for the first quarter and an exposition on nuclear energy for the final quarter of the year.

In addition to overlaying themes, the grammar focus was arranged to follow sequential progression. The students began the semester with the most fundamental grammar points, and built their sentence structure knowledge slowly and systematically throughout the semester. A great deal of the drills and activities from the 2010 handouts were reused in the 2011 handouts after modifying the subjects and topics to match the overlaying themes.

2011 Cohort Course Outline

Semester 1

Week	Topic	Grammar Focus	Writing Output
1	Introduction		
2	Basics 1	Countable & Non-countable nouns	Journal
3	Basics 2	Countable & Non-countable nouns	Journal
4	People & Classmates	Adjectives	Descriptive (research), Journals
5	Friends & Family	Comparatives	Descriptive (outlines), Journal
6	Who do you respect?	Superlatives	Descriptive (first draft), Journal
7	Who do you respect? (peer review)	Review	Descriptive (final draft), Journal
8	Submit Final Paper	Adverbs	Journal
9	Daily Journals	Review	Journal
10	Story Telling	Past Simple	Narrative (research), Journal
11	Story Telling	Past Simple and Adverbs	Narrative (outlines), Journal
12	Embarrassing Moment	Past continuous	Narrative (first draft), Journal
13	Embarrassing Moment (Peer review)	Past Simple vs. Past continuous	Narrative (final draft), Journal
14	Submit Final Paper	Review as needed	Short Stories
15	Fun Class!	Review	Student Feedback

Semester 2

Week	Topic	Grammar Focus	Writing Output
16	The Natural World	Review	Journal
17	Japanese Landscapes	Intro	Journal
18	Cherry Blossoms	Some, any, none, all	Journal
19	The Desert	Transitions	Persuasive (research), Journal
20	The Desert Debate	Transitions	Persuasive (outline), Journal
21	Review	Review	Persuasive (first Draft)
22	Self Reflection & Peer Review	Review	Persuasive (final Draft), Journal
23	Energy & the Natural World	Reported Speech	Journal
24	Nuclear Energy (cons)	Reported Speech	Journal
25	Nuclear Energy (pros)	Review	Exposition (research), Journal
26	Debate: Nuclear Energy	Review	Exposition (outline), Journal
27	Review	Articles	Exposition (first draft), Journal
28	Self Reflection & Peer Review	Grammar Review	Exposition (final draft), Journal
29	Short Story Contest	Review	Short stories, Journal
30	Last Class!	Review	

Figure 2. **Course outlines from 2011 cohort, semester 1 and 2.**

Overall, the Writing Strategies class for 2011 practiced most of the grammatical focus and written genres from year 2010. Additionally, the expected written output for the students was similar for both cohorts; students from 2010 and 2011 were assigned weekly journals and periodic high stake papers. The weekly schedule and topics were rearranged to meet the philosophies of sustained CBI. This modification was the single largest change in the semester 1 GCD curriculum; therefore making it highly probable that any differentiation in written work between the two cohorts are likely to be attributed to the sustained CBI modifications in the Writing Strategies course curriculum.

The current preliminary study focuses on semester 1 for cohorts 2010 and 2011. Due to the fact that semester 1 focused on developing grammar at a sentence level, the students' written work from both cohorts have been analyzed and compared for written accuracy.

3. Methods

To quantitatively measure written accuracy, the students' journals were analyzed for frequency of errors. Written accuracy was measured by counting total words in a single journal entry and dividing it by the total amount of mistakes (including grammar, spelling and punctuation). Once calculated, each journal was numerically labeled by its word per error count (i.e, a journal entry of 100 words total with 20 mistakes would be 5 words per error). Thereafter, the words per error for all journal entries written were averaged together to give a representation of the average frequency of errors for each cohort.

Journal entries were collected from the start end of the year from the 2010 cohort (April, 2010 and January, 2011 respectively). The 2010 cohort and its journal entries were used as a control group and compared in a preliminary analysis with the first semester of the 2011 cohort. The journal entries from the 2011 cohort were collected at the start and end of the first semester (April, 2011 and July, 2011).

Samples from student journals were collected from all students from the 2011 cohort from their first journal submissions in April, 2011, and again in July, 2011 at the end of semester 1. Within the first semester, 2 students dropped out of the 2011 cohort. A total of 29 journal entries were collected from April 2011 (N=29) and a total of 28 journal entries were collected from July 2011 (N=28). Fewer journals from the 2010 cohort were able to be collected and analyzed. The 2010 cohort journal entries were collected from students who were both willing to participate in the study and saved their journals had saved from the year prior. Of the first batch of journals submitted in April, 2010 nine entries were collected and analyzed (N=9). And for the final journals collected at the end of the school year in January, 2011, ten entries were collected and analyzed (N=10).

For extra measure the journals were also quantitatively analyzed for complexity and sentence length. To this end, the journal entries were individually run through the TextAlyzer program (hosted by Lexicool.com website http://www.lexicool.com), in order to compute a Gunning Fog Index grade of readability and average sentence length. For each journal entry, the first 100 words (approximately) were uploaded. The actual word counts varied slightly to avoid cutting off written passages mid-sentence. Finally, all numerical data collected from the journals were run through the PASW Statistics 18 software for statistical analysis and to determine significant difference (Norusis, 2011). Results which scored a P value less than .05 were determined to be significantly different.

4. Data

The data collected from the journals show positive results for sustained CBI. Written accuracy improved significantly for the 2011 cohort during semester 1. For the 2011 cohort, the average words per error were significantly higher in July,

2011 (M=12.19, SD= 7.23) than they were in April, 2011 (M=8.5, SD=6.46; F=4.13, P value=.047). In contrast, the written accuracy for the 2010 cohort declined over the school year. However, the average words per error were not significantly lower in January, 2011 (M=6.26, SD=2.06) than for April, 2010 (M=9.19, SD=6.1; F=.419, P value=.169). Both cohorts started the year with similar frequency of errors in their journals; the 2010 cohort with a slightly more favorable rate. The average words per error in April journals were 9.19 words per error for the 2010 cohort, and 8.5 words per error for the 2011 cohort. By the end of semester 1, the 2011 cohort improved significantly to 12.19 words per error; a considerable improvement in written accuracy. In comparison, by the end of the school year, the 2010 cohort's written accuracy rate dropped to 6.26 words per error. A representation of the levels of written accuracy over time is illustrated below in figure 3.
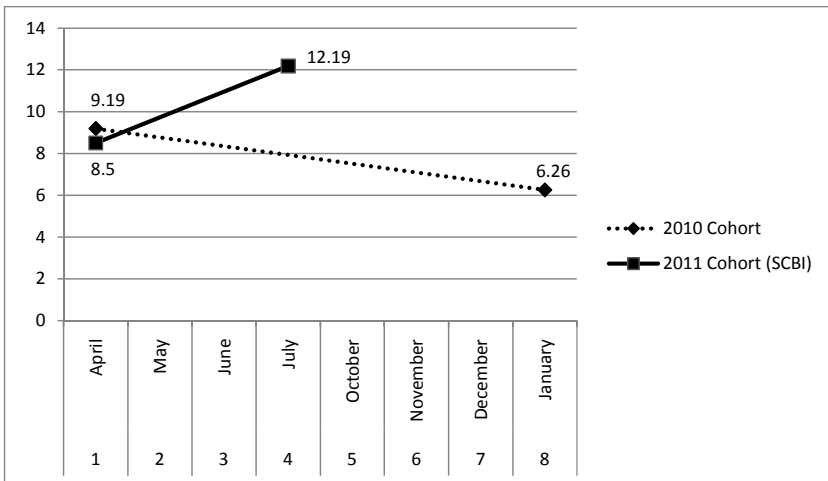
Figure 3. **Timeline of words per error documented from student journals.**

In addition to written accuracy, the 2011 cohort journals also increased in sentence length. At the start of the school year the journals from the 2011 cohort averaged 7.19 words per sentence, shorter than the previous cohort in 2010 with 7.73 words per sentence. By the end of the semester, the 2011 cohort averaged 8.42 words per sentence whereas the 2010 cohort averaged 8.02 words per sentence by the end of the school year. While both cohorts improved sentence length, the 2011 cohort displayed a greater improvement in a shorter span of time. By the end of semester 1, the 2011 cohort was producing lengthier sentences than the 2010 cohort at the end of the school year. The average sentence length increased significantly for the 2011 cohort from April, 2011 (M= 7.19, SD= 1.74) to July, 2011 (M= 8.4, SD= 2.09; F= 5.83, P value= .019) but increased without significant difference for the 2010 cohort from April, 2010 (M= 7.73, SD= 1.23) to January, 2011 (M= 8.02, SD= 2.14; F= .13, P value= .725). The timeline below in figure 4 depicts the improvements in sentence length for both cohorts.
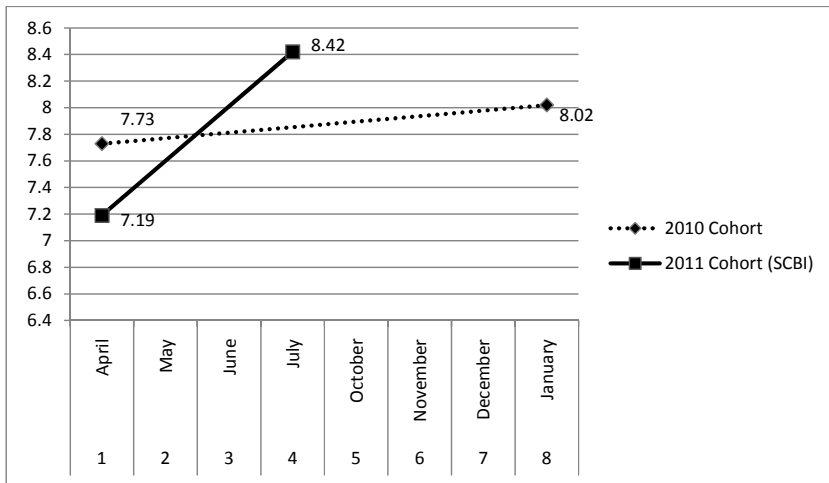

*Figure 4.* **Average sentence length documented from student journals.**

For additional measure the journals were also analyzed for complexity with the Gunning Fog index as represented in below in figure 5. The grades for the Gunning Fog index represent the amount years of education required (by U.S.A. standards) to comprehend a written passage (Gunning, 1968). Again, the 2011 cohort started the year with slightly lower scores than that of the 2010 cohort. In April, the 2010 cohort averaged a grade of 4.89 whereas the 2010 cohort started with the average grade of only 3.75. However, by the end of the semester 1, the 2011 cohort improved to an average grade of 4.81, while the 2010 cohort's average grade decreased to 4.38. The data indicates that the 2011 cohort improved significantly from April 2011 (M= 3.75, SD= .94) to July, 2011 (M= 4.81, SD= 1.0; F= 17.07, P value= .00) whereas the 2010 cohort decreased in complexity with no significant difference from April, 2010 (M= 4.89, SD= 1.74) to January, 2011 (M=4.38, SD= 1.69, F= .419, P value=.526).
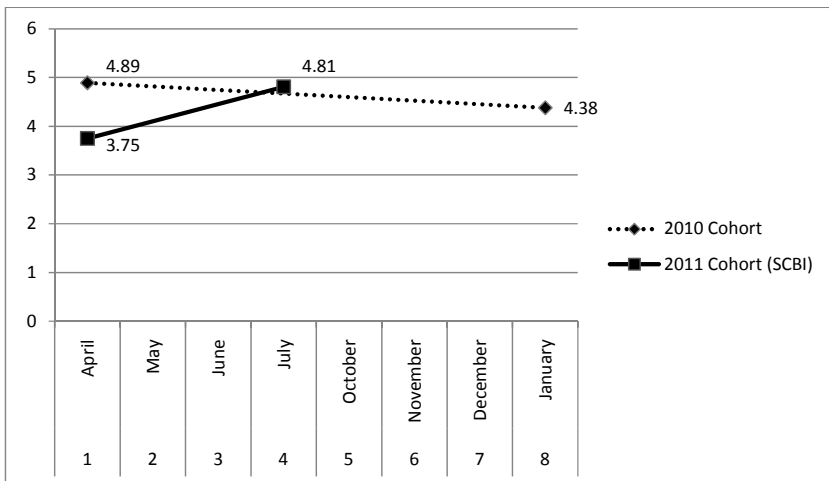
Figure 5. **Average Gunning Fog Index grade level.**

Finally, the overall length of the journal entries were also taken into account. The 2010 cohort started the year with journals which averaged a total of 134 words in April, 2010 (M= 134, SD= 58.17) and finished the year in January 2011 with journal entries which averaged 163 words (M= 163, SD= 72.93; F= .93, P value= .35). The 2011 cohort started and finished semester 1 with fewer words. Journal entries averaged 109 words in April, 2011 (M= 109, SD= 47.73) and 116 words at the end of July, 2011 (M= 116, SD= 35.64; F= .387, P value= .537). While both cohorts display an overall increase in journal entry length, neither cohort proves to have significantly more words per journal.
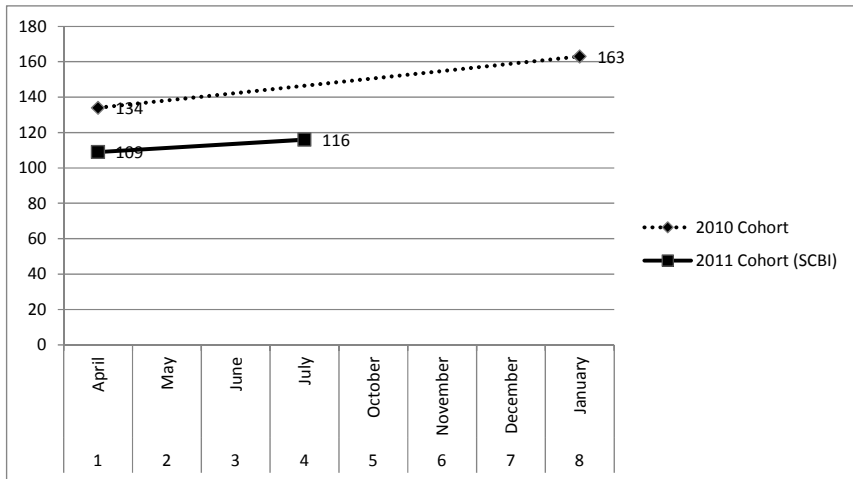
Figure 6. **Average words per journal entry.**

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Written Accuracy

In comparison to the 2010 cohort, the 2011 cohort showed numerous significant improvements over the span of one semester. Most importantly, the 2011 cohort significantly improved in written accuracy. The 2011 journals improved from 8.5 words per error at the start of semester 1 to 12.19 words per error at the end of the semester. In one semester, the 2011 GCD students improved in written accuracy by 43%. These results indicate that the students' command of English grammar significantly improved. In contrast, the 2010 cohort's written accuracy declined over the school year. Despite the fact that both cohorts started the year with similar error frequency levels, and underwent similar academic experiences, the results of written accuracy were only favorable for the 2011 cohort. With regards to written English work, the single most significant variation for the GCD students was the re-designed Writing Strategies curriculum, thus making it highly probable that the improvements in writing for the 2011 GCD students were due to the sustained CBI curriculum.

5.2 Complexity

In addition to improvements in written accuracy, the 2011 GCD students also produced lengthier sentences and utilized higher level-vocabulary. As indicated in *figure 3,* the average sentence length for the 2011 cohort significantly increased by 1.23 words per sentence in one semester whereas the 2010 cohort insignificantly increased by .29 words per sentence by the end of the year. The 2011 cohort achieved greater improvements in sentence length in a shorter duration of time. Moreover, according to the Gunning-Fog Index, the 2011 cohort improved to a higher grade level (from grade 3.75 to 4.81) during semester 1 with an undisputable significant P value of

.00. These results indicate that the journals from the 2011 cohort were not only using longer sentences, but a wider range of vocabulary with longer syllable counts as well. In contrast, the 2010 cohort dropped by half a grade, from 4.89 to 4.38 from the start to the end of the year, respectively. In sum, the 2011 cohort achieved greater results in written complexity than its preceding 2010 cohort. Therefore the comparably higher levels of written accuracy for the 2011 cohort were not due to students selecting simple journal topics. To the contrary, the 2011 cohort advanced to higher levels of complexity and accuracy than the foregoing 2010 cohort.

5.3 Fluency vs. Accuracy

The overall length of the journal entries increased insignificantly for both cohorts. The average journal increased by 7 words in semester 1 for the 2011 cohort and by 29 words for the 2010 cohort by the end of the school year. The results for both cohorts fail to be considered significantly different; however, it is worth noting that the 2010 cohort increased by an amount proportionally greater than that of the 2011 cohort. These results could be indicative of the 2011 cohort's tendency to focus on accuracy before fluency during semester 1 of the program.

6. Conclusion

Sustained CBI is effective for beginner level writing students learning fundamental grammar. The practice of recycling topics, vocabulary and building up grammatical knowledge in a sequential order proves to have positive effects on beginner level ESL writing students in terms of developing written accuracy and complexity. The 2011 beginner level Writing Strategies course produced significant improvements in written accuracy and complexity when utilizing sustained CBI in the curriculum. The improvements in accuracy and complexity are all the more noteworthy when

compared to the preceding 2010 cohort, whose accuracy and complexity actually suffered by the end of the school year. This preliminary study proves positive results for semester 1 of the GCD Writing Strategies program.

However positive the results are for semester 1 of 2011, further research on the topic is necessary for a more complete analysis. The data collected and analyzed from the 2010 cohort did not represent the progress over semester 1, rather the progress over the entire year. There could be additional factors influencing the students and their commitment to university during semester 2, i.e. motivation, or increased work hours outside of school. A final analysis comparing the same time frame for both cohorts would provide a fairer comparison of progress.

Nonetheless, this study is potentially useful to other second language teachers of low/beginner level students. If utilizing sustained CBI for beginner level writers has proven to be effective in learning fundamental grammar and developing language complexity, there are certainly possibilities of sustained CBI being effective for other aspects of second language learning as well. The potential of sustained CBI for beginner level ESL students could be greater than formerly considered. Further practice and research of the topic has potential to benefit educators create and design yearly curricula in future L2 classes.

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Acknowledgements

Appendix

Data from 2010 Cohort's Journal Entries April, 2010					
	Total Errors Per Entry	Total Words Per Entry	Words per Error	Average Words per sentence	Gunning Fog Index
Journal 1	10.0	93.0	9.3	7.2	2.9
Journal 2	10.0	97.0	9.7	6.5	3.5
Journal 3	29.0	276.0	9.5	9.3	4.2
Journal 4	37.0	109.0	2.9	5.8	7.4
Journal 5	36.0	143.0	4.0	8.8	6.9
Journal 6	18.0	90.0	5.0	9.3	5.2
Journal 7	13.0	118.0	9.1	7.4	3.4
Journal 8	5.0	119.0	23.8	8.1	3.7
Journal 9	17.0	161.0	9.5	7.3	6.8
Total	175.0	1206.0			
Average	19.4	134.0	9.2	7.7	4.9

Data from 2010 Cohort's Journal Entries January, 2011					
	Total Errors Per Entry	Total Words Per Entry	Words per Error	Average Words per sentence	Gunning Fog Index
Journal 1	17.0	145.0	8.5	8.5	4.2
Journal 2	32.0	189.0	5.9	10.1	4.5
Journal 3	15.0	136.0	9.1	7.1	2.8
Journal 4	24.0	211.0	8.8	8.5	3.8
Journal 5	10.0	57.0	5.7	4.4	3.2
Journal 6	46.0	331.0	7.2	8.0	4.5
Journal 7	35.0	106.0	3.0	8.8	5.7
Journal 8	35.0	149.0	4.3	11.1	8.3
Journal 9	25.0	135.0	5.4	9.0	4.5
Journal 10	37.0	175.0	4.7	4.7	2.3
Total	276.0	1634.0			
Average	27.6	163.4	6.3	8.0	4.4

Data from 2011 Cohort's Journal Entries April, 2011					
	Total Errors Per Entry	Total Words Per Entry	Words per Error	Average Words per sentence	Gunning Fog Index
Journal 1	14.0	69.0	4.9	7.1	3.5
Journal 2	4.0	50.0	12.5	5.6	2.2
Journal 3	29.0	115.0	4.0	7.0	3.7
Journal 4	20.0	161.0	8.1	9.0	3.6
Journal 5	14.0	167.0	11.9	7.8	3.6
Journal 6	15.0	108.0	7.2	10.2	4.5
Journal 7	34.0	100.0	2.9	8.2	5.0
Journal 8	8.0	114.0	14.3	4.4	2.3
Journal 9	14.0	99.0	7.1	5.1	2.5
Journal 10	9.0	65.0	7.2	6.1	3.2
Journal 11	15.0	96.0	6.4	8.1	3.7
Journal 12	19.0	131.0	6.9	10.6	4.2
Journal 13	9.0	45.0	5.0	5.9	3.4
Journal 14	6.0	106.0	17.7	4.8	2.8
Journal 15	21.0	130.0	6.2	8.3	3.8
Journal 16	11.0	109.0	9.9	5.1	2.0
Journal 17	31.0	254.0	8.2	9.4	3.7
Journal 18	24.0	62.0	2.6	5.2	2.8
Journal 19	18.0	101.0	5.6	7.6	3.0
Journal 20	25.0	123.0	4.9	7.2	3.3
Journal 21	2.0	73.0	36.5	7.5	5.0
Journal 22	32.0	198.0	6.2	8.5	4.3
Journal 23	25.0	79.0	3.2	6.7	4.9
Journal 24	19.0	158.0	8.3	9.0	4.7
Journal 25	11.0	70.0	6.4	6.1	5.7
Journal 26	6.0	57.0	9.5	6.4	3.4
Journal 27	13.0	172.0	13.2	5.6	4.5
Journal 28	14.0	88.0	6.3	10.3	4.6
Journal 29	22.0	84.0	3.8	6.1	4.8
Total	484.0	3184.0			
Average	16.7	109.8	8.5	7.2	3.7

Data from 2011 Cohort's Journal Entries July, 2011					
	Total Errors Per Entry	Total Words Per Entry	Words per Error	Average Words per sentence	Gunning Fog Index
Journal 1	10.0	68.0	6.8	8.3	5.2
Journal 2	4.0	118.0	29.5	7.1	5.4
Journal 3	12.0	109.0	9.1	7.1	4.2
Journal 4	7.0	72.0	10.3	8.3	5.2
Journal 5	16.0	143.0	8.9	11.7	5.1
Journal 6	29.0	85.0	2.9	7.8	4.6
Journal 7	18.0	134.0	7.4	6.8	4.4
Journal 8	7.0	104.0	14.9	9.8	5.3
Journal 9	13.0	98.0	7.5	9.8	4.4
Journal 10	5.0	103.0	20.6	8.3	5.2
Journal 11	10.0	181.0	18.1	13.3	6.5
Journal 12	7.0	102.0	14.6	5.9	3.3
Journal 13	27.0	116.0	4.3	5.7	4.6
Journal 14	14.0	102.0	7.3	6.1	5.0
Journal 15	12.0	76.0	6.3	7.0	2.8
Journal 16	7.0	106.0	15.1	12.0	5.6
Journal 17	30.0	143.0	4.8	11.1	5.4
Journal 18	16.0	127.0	7.9	6.8	3.6
Journal 19	12.0	110.0	9.2	7.2	3.7
Journal 20	9.0	98.0	10.9	8.4	5.1
Journal 21	13.0	121.0	9.3	6.3	4.8
Journal 22	9.0	108.0	12.0	10.3	5.0
Journal 23	10.0	130.0	13.0	6.9	5.9
Journal 24	9.0	130.0	14.4	12.1	7.3
Journal 25	21.0	251.0	12.0	9.0	5.2
Journal 26	3.0	100.0	33.3	8.4	5.1
Journal 27	6.0	138.0	23.0	7.5	3.0
Journal 28	12.0	96.0	8.0	6.9	3.8
Total	348.0	3385.8			
Average	12.4	116.8	12.2	8.4	4.8