Lack of control over writing assignments is a common problem encountered by deaf students in college. This lack of control typically pertains to linguistic knowledge and use of correct grammar of the writing assignment. It is known as language objectivity or metalinguistic awareness. However, there is another kind of control deaf writers may already possess that can help gain control of writing assignments and not be discouraged by them. This is the ability to recognize clear versus ambiguous writing. Albertini calls it discourse objectivity. Two factors that affect clarity are coherence and organization. An examination of dialogue journals of deaf writers showed that they applied typical patterns of organization and development in spite of the lack of control over linguistic features of the English language. Albertini suggests that through dialogue journals, teachers can help students recognize their inherent ability to control discourse structure even if they lack the ability to use correct grammar or appropriate words. This awareness is important in helping “insecure and defeated” deaf writers gain control of writing and strengthen their inherent ability in the discourse objectivity and work their way up. The teacher can dialogue with the student regarding the information presented then later on respond to the way the student said something.


An analysis of student-teacher dialogue journals was conducted in order to determine whether or not the students’ and teacher’s language use change as their life experiences are brought into the dialogue. It also aimed at finding out whether or not the expression of different language functions will cause the use of different language structures. The results will have important implications for effective learning and use of language in a language class and reconceptualizing the language curriculum of deaf students. Results indicate that differences in language use changed as new experiences are incorporated in the journal. As far as language structure is concerned, there was no significant difference in the length of the sentences or complexity over time. There was also no difference in the language structure of the journals compared to the students’ written compositions except that the dialogue journals use direct address and questioning. One striking finding, according to the researchers was paragraphing in the dialogue journals which the compositions did not have.

This manual describes the use of dialogue journals with deaf students. It uses processes and examples taken from the dialogue journals project at Gallaudet University. Using dialogue journals is a natural conversational approach in providing deaf students with meaningful and functional reading and writing experiences. These experiences promote the development of communicative competence that supplement classwork in reading and writing. Before starting the dialogue journal, the teacher should decide on a regular schedule for writing the journal entries, the private place where the students can give and retrieve their journals and appropriate size of notebooks that can last the whole year. To start a dialogue journal, the teacher may need to supply the initial topics for conversation, orient the students about the journals and find appropriate ways to respond to the students. The students would also need to understand the importance of the privacy of each conversation in the dialogue journal. The teacher must ask for signed consent from the students and their parents before they can be read or used for research or any other public purpose. Classroom experience at Gallaudet reveal that dialogue journals blended well in the regular classroom routine and the children have taken to writing journals. However, the book identified several questions that might come up when dialogue journals are not working as expected. Questions about one word answers, not responding to questions, not understanding each other, lack of motivation to write, discomfort with dialogue journals and so on and so forth that are important to address. Each of the question was addressed in the book.


This study analyzed the responses in the dialogue journals of deaf college students and their teacher. The researchers wanted to compare their written interaction with previously studied spoken interactions between hearing native and non native speakers. This exchange is known as “foreigner talk”. They wanted to see if the written interaction between the deaf college students and their hearing teacher parallel spoken “foreigner talk”. They also wanted to explore the effectiveness of dialogue journals as a tool for interactive instruction. The researchers found out that the interaction of the deaf students and their teachers indeed parallel spoken foreigner talk. The teacher used communicative devices similar to those used by native speakers when interacting with non-native speakers. With regards to the effectiveness of dialogue journal, the authors report that there were changes in the way the students were responding to the teacher as the journal writing progressed into the semester. Although, the study was too short to apply any measures of statistical significance, even minimally proficient deaf students or those with limited experience in using English are beginning to communicate effectively to the teacher’s elicitations. One other important finding is that in addition to individualizing his responses to the students according to their ability level, the teacher also adjusted his responses according to affective factors such as the student’s motivation to do dialogue journals, interests, learning styles and their willingness to respond to challenging materials.
Since the most pressing need of deaf and hard of hearing students is developing literacy in English, Kendall Demonstration Elementary School and Model Secondary School for the Deaf at Gallaudet University formed a literacy team to identify the major components of a comprehensive literacy program. The team identified nine important parts namely: 1) Reading to Children, 2) Dialogue Journals, 3) Independent Reading, 4) Guided Reading and Writing, 5) Shared Reading and Writing, 6) Other Journals and Logs, 7) Research Reading and Writing, 8) Language Experience, and 9) Writing Workshop. Later, a selected group of teachers all over the country described each component. These components work together as pieces of a puzzle and a successful literacy program makes use of all these components to develop deaf and hard of hearing students who are literate in English.


A plan for implementing a dialogue journal project with deaf and hard of hearing students is described. The plan was based on a study conducted on dialogue journals with deaf and hard of hearing students. Teachers can use the project to encourage deaf students to write in a realistic situation with their hearing peers. By using dialogue journals, deaf students can engage in a personal and reflective exchange of ideas, experiences, feelings and interests with hearing students of the same age and at the same time build their communication skills. The teacher serves as a facilitator of the project and sets it up with a partner class that is willing to correspond with the students. The teacher monitors the students as they write, assist those who are having difficulty writing their entry, pass on the journals to the hearing cooperating class and gets them back to the deaf students. The project should also have the support of department chairs and supervisory staff who are “sympathetic to innovative projects and special populations (p. 51). Other issues that are important to consider in doing the project are strategies in matching deaf and hearing students, logistics planning, starting the journal writing, and problems with responding to the journals. Strategies such as simple interest questionnaires or specific matching by age and gender were suggested. In terms of logistics, proximity of the classrooms of deaf and hearing students is important as well as larger populations of deaf students and careful planning of schedules at the start of the project results in more successful project implementation. Supplying an initial topic can help the students start making their journal entries while problems with responding consistently to the journal entries and in time can be addressed by by careful matching at the onset of the program and by encouraging the students to write in a “conversational’ manner.

Deaf and hearing writers participated in a research on whether or not dialogue journals can be an effective way for developing social relations between students of similar age level. The students were aged 10 to 18 with at least third grade reading level. A total of 127 journal entries were analyzed through a discourse analysis approach. Coding revealed initiation or maintenance of topics, type of topics written about and degree of interpersonal involvement between the students. Limited results showed the social and emotional benefits of dialogue journals. “As the relationship progressed over time, the writers became more interested in each other (from the abstract)”.


A cooperative project between college students studying to become teachers of the deaf and deaf elementary students was conducted to find out the effect of scaffolding in journal writing on the deaf students’ writing skills. The teachers in training were paired with the students and asked to write journals with them regarding Luft, P. (1997, March). Using electronic dialogue journals to model whole language procedures. In Windows-97 on the New Standards. Monograph of Collected Papers from the Annual Conference of the Association of College Educators - Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Santa Fe, NM. (EDRS No. ED 406 780)


More than being an instrument or tool for developing communicative competence in writing, the dialogue journal can be used as an assessment tool for reconceptualizing the language curriculum in ways that will be responsive to students’ needs. Staton proposed that dialogue journal be used to reflect on the development of individual students and teachers as they are affected by the curriculum and the teaching practices. This idea developed from reconceptualist notion in curriculum theory and practice that looks at the lives and stories of students and teachers through “extensive writing and discussion (p.6)” The interactive nature of the dialogue journal makes it an ideal venue for discussion, reflection, feedback and for revising the curriculum. By responding to each other’s stories through the dialogue journals, the students and teacher can examine and/or evaluate their own assumptions, belief systems and other personal experiences as they relate to the classroom experience in general and the language program in particular.


Traditional approaches to writing acquisition applied to hearing children have been used for deaf children with frustrating results. These approaches have generally encouraged rote learning and mechanical production of correct sentences rather than meaningful language use. There is therefore a need to replace these methods with natural approaches that emphasize the meaningful use of language like engaging in dialogue journals. Gallaudet University started using dialogue journals in 1982 under the leadership of Dr. William Stokoe. They were used not only at the elementary and high school levels but also faculty members at the University used it in writing and other academic courses. The project analyzed the benefits of using dialogue journals with deaf children across age levels. This report presents findings in the first three years of project implementation. The researchers, however, warn that the dialogue journals were not used apart from regular teaching methods and the students have significant control over the topic of the conversations so results would be different for each child and would be unpredictable.

The first area of analysis dealt with initiating functional use of English. Positive acceptance and ease with dialogue journal use was readily noted even with elementary students as well as growth in English syntax. Although deaf students from deaf families were initially proficient in journal communication, the rest caught up by the end of the year, freely introducing their own topic, elaborating, adding and using a variety of other language functions. Using dialogue journal contributed to considerable improvement in functional written English but in conjunction with the exposure to natural language rich environment of signing and reading and writing activities. The next area of analysis looked at the development of understanding and rapport. This is the most common reason teachers gave as one benefit for engaging in dialogue journals. The students on the other hand commented on their relationship with their teachers, the openness in which they can express themselves, be comfortable with the teacher and the sense of trust that developed. Finally, the researchers analyzed the development of cognitive skills mediated by the dialogue journal. Because students’ and teachers’ thoughts are laid out visibly through writing in dialogue journals, students developed cognitive skills such as evaluating, comparing, giving examples and other higher order skills as they thought together with their teachers.


This monograph is a manual for developing dialogue journals in secondary and postsecondary classes for deaf students. Dialogue journals are used as written conversations with student. These written conversations give them opportunities to practice language in a meaningful and unthreatening way. The journals also promote “... focused, reasoned thinking about the subject matter of a course (p. 2)”. In addition, it promotes writing as a functional tool for real life situations. Time and organization is the first concern with dialogue journals. In addressing this issue, the teacher should consider the students writing readiness and motivation to do the activity. The teacher might have to introduce the concept to the class and explain its purpose and emphasize respect for privacy. The form of the journal whether bound notebooks or spiral or electronic is also important to consider since it is going to be the tangible representation of the journal exchanges. The manual also listed strategies for successful journal writing. Strategies such as finding and maintaining interesting topics, becoming involved with the discussion, asking few, sincere questions and encouraging arguments and complaints were suggested. Part of the manual included personal experiences of the teacher’s with dialogue journals. They described the benefits of using dialogue journals with their class. Among these benefits are finding personal voices, finding confidence in oneself, stimulating interesting writing, assessing strengths and weaknesses in reading, and building better relationships.


The author developed an interactive model of teaching reading when she taught reading to deaf preparatory and freshman college students. She applies Moffet’s (1982) principle on the teaching of composition to the teaching of reading. Moffet argues that the disorder in a students mind teaches the writing of a composition. The challenge posed by sorting out the student’s thoughts, organizing and finally writing them down results in learning how to write. The same could be said about teaching reading according to Walworth. Creating meaning from disordered thoughts, which Moffet calls mediation by mind, helps the student process his own knowledge and thereby learn. Writing dialogue journals can become the medium by which the student can mediate by mind what he is understanding or not understanding as he reads


Writing dialogue journals was used with college deaf students in order to help them make the transition from basic skill reading and writing to content focused reading and writing. The author wanted to assess the reading level of the students’ and how they can be guided effectively through the process. In this conversational and non-threatening way of approaching reading, the teacher was able to gain insight into the students’ strengths and weaknesses and guide them in the appropriate direction. She was also able to
track their progress. The students on the other hand gained a better understanding of what they are reading and how they are approaching their reading assignments. It helped them identify effective ways to read and write without the typical judgemental feedback. The use of dialogue journals in reading has great potential as a teaching tool.