HOW CAN USING MINI LESSONS TO TEACH 6 TRAIT WRITING IN A WRITER’S WORKSHOP IMPROVE STUDENT MOTIVATION TO WRITE AND WRITING PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

of

HOW CAN USING MINI LESSONS TO TEACH 6 TRAIT WRITING IN A WRITER’S WORKSHOP TO IMPROVE STUDENT MOTIVATION TO WRITE AND WRITING PERFORMANCE

by

Stacia M. Gumm Symanski

This paper presents an exploration of the way mini lessons used to teach Six Trait Writing improves student motivation to write and writing performance. The approach of mini lessons is proven to be rather efficient for providing relevant opportunities for students to write. Essential arguments from empirical research are presented in order to support the major assumption about the usefulness of mini lessons in the contemporary classroom. For the purpose of the paper, the researcher combines both quantitative and qualitative research methods, reflecting in the use of surveys, detailed observation checklists, and semi-structured interviews. There are 20 participants in the study, as they are identified as students from a second-grade classroom. The major research finding of the conducted study is that the implementation of mini lessons to teach Six Trait Writing contributes to increased motivation and self-efficacy of students to write. The paper also includes certain recommendations for improvement of the teaching method and for future practice.

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Date

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION
Background

Writing represents the fundamental basis upon which educators can evaluate students’ learning, aspects of motivation, orientation toward a future career, and overall intellect. Individuals are enabled with a relevant opportunity to demonstrate who they are as persons in the ongoing and flexible process of writing. By making students’ thinking visible, writing appears quite important for fostering better communication between students and educators, and people in general, as writing allows people to express their thoughts and communicate (Fletcher & Portalupi, 1998). Moreover, students constantly demonstrate their intellectual flexibility and maturity through writing, as well as they clearly understand how truth is established in a certain context.

Children are open to learning important skills at different developmental stages, as Piaget (1972) claims. According to the cognitive theory of Piaget, children think and reason in a different way depending on the different periods in their lives. In fact, an essential component of Piaget’s developmental theory of learning and thinking relates to the idea that the mentioned processes involve the active participation of the learner. From this perspective, students actively participate in writings assignments on a regular basis. Students tend to construct and reconstruct efficient knowledge, and thus they continuously advance their writing skills (Piaget, 1972). Therefore, it is important to indicate that Piaget’s approach to learning, in particular writing skills, can be identified as
a readiness approach. A readiness approach implies that children may have more
difficulty learning certain concepts before they reach the period of maturation.

Another significant contribution in the literature on children’s learning is that of
Vygotsky, who presents interesting ideas about the way children develop and learn at the
same time. Vygotsky presents a solid belief that true education reflects the development
of children’s learning abilities (Vygotsky, 1978). Based on the assumptions of his theory,
students can think clearly and creatively in the process of their writing, as well as they
can implement effectively their plans and communicate their understanding of important
concepts related to writing (Vygotsky, 1978). By providing children with appropriate
cultural tools for thinking and creating, they can apparently achieve their full potential,
including in their writing performance.

Learning to write is a challenging activity that requires sufficient efforts on the
part of teachers and students, as well as patience to explore different concepts of writing
and willingness to progress over time. The aspect of motivation as it relates to learning
writing is extremely important because students definitely progress in their writing if they
are motivated (Cameron, Pierce, Pierce, & Cameron, 2002). Therefore, contemporary
educators pay significant attention to motivate students to engage more regularly in
writing activities. An important strategy used by teachers is to praise the relationship
between writing activities and writing outcomes especially in the long term (Daniels,
2001). Motivation that is associated with learning writing is both intrinsic and extrinsic,
as the first type of motivation refers to emotional expression, whereas the second type is
focused on satisfying others.
The application of Writer’s Workshop in the classroom can increase motivation in the process of teaching and learning. The mentioned concept presents the importance of innovative instruction on writing in the sense that traditional class lessons are quite brief and entirely focused on practical writing challenges and issues (Harris, Graham, & Mason, 2006). Emphasis is placed upon sharing written projects with the class, peer conferencing, and editing. In this way, students have a viable opportunity to improve their writing skills and overall performance. Writing performance relates to numerous assessments initiated by teachers, as in the context of California, educators comply with California Standard Tests’ requirements for 4th grade students (Harris, Graham, & Mason, 2006). In grade four, students are required to produce different types of writing such as narratives, summaries, information reports, and appropriate responses to literature.

These requirements are important for establishing and maintaining proper standards in writing for 4th grade students. At the same time, the process of writing is associated with various relevant, technical procedures maintained by students. In general, teaching an appropriate set of writing skills includes six distinct traits such as content, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions (Mills, 2007). It is apparent that Six Traits Writing emerges as an extremely important systematic approach in attempts to improve student motivation to write and writing performance. Considering the fact that writing is a complex and challenging activity, making the decision to utilize Six Traits Writing is an efficient approach (Cameron, Pierce, Pierce, & Cameron, 2002).
In this way, students have a viable opportunity to break down writing tasks in certain components, and thus obtain a better understanding of writing rules and aspects.

The complex activity of writing can definitely become quite manageable as result of the implementation of Six Traits Writing. In addition, the mentioned approach helps students learn how to be more critical regarding their own work. The six traits enable both students and teachers to use a common vocabulary that reflects in effective discussions about writing (Daniels, 2001). Therefore, the implementation of specifically designed mini lessons can facilitate student motivation to write (Atwell, 1987). In mini lessons, educators teach important dimensions of writing, as a significant requirement for successful communication between students and teachers is that such lessons should be interactive in nature. It is important to allow students an opportunity to share ideas and examples throughout the creative process of writing (Calkins, 1994). Mini lessons usually emerge with potential to address students’ writing needs, whether in small groups or whole classes.

Teachers generally design mini lessons in certain categories including writing process, writing conventions, or writing time management. In the writing process, students learn relevant details about the proper way to plan, edit, and revise writing assignments (Pinnell & Fountas, 1998). Writing conventions represent the importance of spelling, punctuation, structure of sentences, and paragraphs. Writing time management refers to the practical use of writing resources and writing workshops procedures. Undoubtedly, the development of enhanced writing skills depends on sufficient time, resources, and planning (Atwell, 1987). The use of mini lessons to teach Six Traits
Writing not only improves student motivation to write but also contributes to greater and qualitative production of learners.

In fact, mini lessons can be identified as small components in the writing workshop framework. The regular implementation of mini lessons can apparently contribute to the formation of better writing skills of students that comply with high academic standards and expectations (Rickards & Hawes, 2006). Likewise, mini lessons represent a short-focused delivery of intense instruction, as educators can introduce a single lesson or a series of lessons that are based on teaching particular skills and strategies. Placed at the beginning of writing workshops, mini lessons generally function after extensive planning activities by teachers.

Mini lessons include an appropriate statement of purpose, relevant associations with previous knowledge and methods of learning, as well as demonstration and active student involvement (Fletcher & Portalupi, 1998). It is apparent that students play a key role in this process especially by paying significant attention to the aspect of practice, as writing performance noticeably improves with practice. By being short and to the point, mini lessons can effectively focus on the specific writing aspects to teach in a particular writing session. It has been demonstrated that mini lessons’ briefness brings out quite successful outcomes in terms of student motivation to write (Pinnell & Fountas, 1998). Learners find a series of short lessons more useful than one longer lesson. For that reason, educators are persistently encouraged to implement mini lessons in the process of teaching writing.
Statement of the Problem

The problem under consideration in this paper includes the appropriate use of mini lessons as a sustainable tool to teach Six Traits Writing. Below are the major questions posed throughout the study and relevant sub-questions.

- Research Question: How can using mini lessons to teach Six Traits Writing improve student motivation to write and their writing performance?
- Sub-question 1: What are the practical implications of using mini lessons to teach writing skills?
- Sub-question 2: Has students’ writing performance improved as result of the implementation of mini lessons?
- Sub-question 3: How will mini lessons be implemented in the classroom?

The complex activity of writing requires the implementation of a quite flexible approach that can correspond to students’ abilities and academic needs (Calkins, 1994). The purpose of this paper is to explore how the use of mini lessons to teach Six Traits Writing improves student motivation to write and their writing performance. In this exploratory process, the researcher will focus on major aspects pertaining to mini lessons and the Six Traits Writing approach. In this way, individuals can enrich their understanding of relevant writing components and procedures (Fletcher & Portalupi, 1998). It is important to pay attention to the proper selection of mini lessons that should correspond to the developmental stages of literacy and personal characteristics of students, so that the paper can share different ways to incorporate mini lessons in the language arts classroom.
Another important factor in the implementation of mini lessons to teach Six Traits Writing is that of complying with state and local standards in terms of a specific grade level of curriculum and entire orientation of the teaching process (Mills, 2007). The guiding idea in this research project should represent solid efforts to make writing workshops with students rather successful. It is essential to ensure diversity of instruction and content when it comes to the implementation of mini lessons in the classroom (Rickards & Hawes, 2006). Educators need to consider the option of teaching various mini lessons depending on students’ level of comprehension and writing skills. This paper is based on a relevant theoretical framework that relies on the principles of integrity, coordination, and flexibility.

Furthermore, the present research project is focused on the planning capacities of mini lessons, as they should be based on ongoing student assessment, student conferencing, and regular observation of learners including their writing practices (Calkins, 1994). In this way, the level of educators’ enthusiasm and effectiveness can reflect in students’ writing behaviors. Likewise, lessons focused on writing conventions should be included in mini lessons in order to improve students’ writing skills by considering the importance of certain rules.

**Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study reflects in the exploration of Six Traits Writing and how it can be applied in the dynamic classroom in order to generate substantial success in students’ motivation to write. This paper can present various practical implications so that students’ writing process can generate quite successful outcomes reflecting in
properly designed writing workshops. It is also important to note that the researcher is concerned with promoting the idea of the collaborative nature of writing (Rickards & Hawes, 2006). This implies that working with a partner in the writing process can significantly improve student motivation to write and thus boost their writing performance. There are various ideas to support the proper implementation of mini lessons to teach Six Traits Writing, and this paper demonstrates a serious concern to explore the impact of the method on students’ efficiency and productivity in writing.

Definition of Terms

**Creativity in Writing**: relying on students’ imagination to produce original writing pieces

**Mini Lessons**: represent brief and focused lessons on teaching essential writing concepts; a mini lesson usually lasts no more than 15 minutes

**Motivation**: indicates a particular reason an individual is acting in a certain way

**Self-efficacy**: reflects an individual’s capacity to attain specific goals

**Sentence Fluency**: the coherent use of various sentence patterns in a writing activity

**Six Traits Writing**: an analytical model for assessing and teaching writing, as it comprises of six qualities such as ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions

**Writing Conventions**: specific practical rules used in the process of writing, as they mainly relate to grammar, style, word order, and paragraph construction

**Writing Time Management**: sufficient and ample time ensured for writing purposes in the classroom
Writing Workshop: a framework for writing instruction and extensive practice in the classroom

Limitations of the Study

The study presented certain limitations that need to be explored for attaining a better understanding of the research process. The specific nature of the study implied a certain difficulty to ensure proper generalizations. In other words, the sample size of 20 children was not sufficient for making such generalizations. Moreover, due to the age of the children, the data obtained from the pre and post surveys were quite limited. A series of questions required persistent repetition by the researcher so that the majority of the participants could answer them. The complexity of some questions was evident, which means that the researcher did not comply with the requirement to maintain a culturally and age relevant study. Another limitation of the present study related to the lack of a control group. For that reason, the researcher found it difficult to determine whether the Writing Workshop model was a persistent reason for students’ improvement in the writing process.

Organization of the Thesis

Chapter One provides a relevant Background to the explored issue, followed by a clearly presented Statement of the Problem, Significance of the Study, Definition of Terms, and Limitations of the Study. In Chapter Two, the researcher presents an extensive review of the literature on essential topics pertaining to the approach of Six Traits Writing and the use of mini lessons in the classroom. Chapter Three focuses on the methodology implemented, as the researcher will identify the participants in the study,
consent form, treatment, data collection, and data analysis. In Chapter Four, the results of this study are presented. Chapter Five introduces a relevant discussion and summary of the results, as well as conclusion and effective recommendations for practice.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Literature on the relationship between instruction and students’ writing skills has focused on various aspects pertaining to the way in which students learn writing. Students can definitely learn rather important practices of the writing process and have shown considerable gains in these skills. Learners are expected to perform on relevant classroom assignments and on various standardized tests. Mini lessons that teach Six Traits Writing encourage students to interact with their own writing, as researchers show in relevant studies on the explored issue (Willis, 2001). Yet literature shows that the teaching of writing skills has changed throughout the years. For instance, educators did not teach writing skills in the past, but they rather focused on the procedures of assigning and correcting writing tasks (Graves, 1983). Teachers considered the importance of the final product of writing instead of emphasizing the process of writing.

In this literature review, the researcher focuses on important areas associated with the subject explored in the present study. Initially, the researcher presents relevant information on brain research and motivation in order to discuss certain interconnections of various motivational aspects of learning. Another extensive concept that has been covered in the literature review relates to the idea of the Writing Workshop. Likewise, the researcher extensively explores different studies on the use of mini lessons to teach Six Traits Writing, as well as on writing performance of students. These major concepts have
been found relevant to the purpose of this study that aims at clarifying the use of mini
lessons for writing activities in the classroom.

Brain Research and Motivation

Brain research has focused on essential neurological components that affect
motivational processes related to the process of learning (Franken, 2002). Motivational
theorists presented the assumption that there is a significant cause for every action,
including that of learning. It appears that similar motivational causes can be reduced to a
certain neurological component where chemical and electrical processes interact in the
brain (Dreisback & Goschke, 2004). From this perspective, a general principle pertaining
to psychology and brain research on motivation is that individuals are motivated to
perform particular actions that lead to quite positive feelings. Therefore, brain research
theorists claimed that such a positive effect enables individuals with an opportunity to
learn effective adaptive behaviors that are necessary in the process of acquiring essential
writing skills (Franken, 2002; Kalat, 2004). Adaptive behaviors are important for writers
because the writing process clearly indicates elements of adaptation and arrangement of
different writing strategies and methods.

Topical research on the aspects of motivation has emphasized the process of goal
setting, as well as situational motivation and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1995). According to
the principles of behavioral management theory, contingent rewards appear as significant
forces that drive writing performance of students. This implies that motivation is
perceived as a category influenced and moderated by certain brain systems and functions
(Dreisback & Goschke, 2004). It is clear that the human memory system interact with
other functions within the brain in order to determine value of certain behaviors and expected outcomes as pertaining to the process of writing.

By the 1970s, the focus in teaching writing had significantly changed, as the direct result reflected in the establishment of the process writing movement (Willis, 2001). The process writing approach, introduced by Graves in 1983, presented focus on instruction so that teachers could help students brainstorm certain ideas and revise their work (Graves, 1983). The mentioned type of writing process observably provided learners with essential opportunities to practice and analyze pieces of writing. Student motivation emerges as an extremely important aspect in the process of learning writing skills. Likewise, students’ sense of agency and aspects of mastery and control over the writing activity affect motivation (Cameron, Pierce, Pierce, & Cameron, 2002). At the same time, student motivation pertaining to writing is associated with a sense of competency, autonomy, and relatedness. This means that a sense of self-worth and self-determination are essential in performing writing assignments (Daniels, 2001). Therefore, educators consider the importance of providing sufficient opportunities to students to reinforce their motivation to interact socially with others and write. One of these opportunities is associated with the promising concept of the Writing Workshop.

The Concept of the Writing Workshop

The Writing Workshop developed by Calkins (1986) clearly indicates the importance of the writing process and conferencing. Calkins (1986) divided the writing process into four distinct subtopics such as rehearsal, drafting, revising, and editing. Rehearsal refers to the practice of gathering relevant ideas and materials that will be used
in the process of writing (Graves, 1983). It is essential to note, some young writers tend to use the technique of rehearsal through drawing, as in this way, to convey important messages. Moreover, students are free to construct relevant meaning from their life experiences (Baghban, 2007). Yet learners should consider that this option can be used only for a limited time, as they apparently need to progress further their writing skills and performance.

Calkins (1986) argued that educators should be quite attentive to look for signs when drawing is no longer identified as an efficient form of rehearsal. Teachers hold the responsibility to guide learners away from their drawings and involve them in other, more appropriate activities such as brainstorming, creating outlines, reading literature, and interacting with other students (Kletzien & Hushion, 1992). It becomes clear that the practice of rehearsal prepares learners for writing and drafting, whereas the actual writing process reflects in students’ efforts to put their thoughts on paper. The process of drafting is associated with reconsidering certain points of writing the major ideas, or in other words, students may return to the respective pieces of writing in order to make particular corrections (Rickards & Hawes, 2006).

In the stage of revising the written projects, Calkins (1986) recommends educators to encourage students to consider the content of their first draft and later focus on spelling details. Simply because educators adhere to the importance of editing issues, they persistently place an emphasis on student involvement in the editing process (Avery, 1993). Clearly, students are continuously engaged in different steps of the writing process, which implies that teachers present their important observations and interact
with students’ relevant ideas pertaining to teaching writing skills, in particular Six Traits Writing. It is crucial that students discover meaning and build on aspects of their previous knowledge (Atwell, 1987).

The final aspect of the Writing Workshop is sharing, which reflects in students’ initiative to share their writing pieces to others in the classroom (Parry & Hornsby, 1985). In fact, sharing is a specific form of group conferencing that enhances audience awareness because of the extensive emphasis on feedback from peers. Teachers consider the significance of this stage in writing so that they can help students improve their writing skills through listening and responding to their peers in a meaningful dialogue (Atwell, 1987). Furthermore, it is important to mention that publication (the display of written projects in the classroom) emerges as another essential form of sharing (Parry & Hornsby, 1985). Scholars in the field argue that publishing increases students’ motivation to write because learners have important personal reasons for revising and editing their writing pieces (Rhodes & Dudley-Marling, 1996).

This approach relies on the implementation of peer conferencing, which functions to assist in the entire organization and practice of the writing process. Calkins’ Writing Workshop ensured a quite flexible approach identified as modeling, as this allowed students to work on their own writing pieces and share them through different forms of publishing. In this context, Calkins (1994) presented the importance of making the Writing Workshop “predictable and simple” (p. 183), which would prompt students to plan their own writing.
The Writing Workshop model emerges as an entire philosophy and can be perceived as an efficient way to manage the classroom (Zimmerman & Pons, 1986). The basic format represented by each Writer’s Workshop is the following: a mini lesson focused on a particular topic that students need to be clarified, status of the class, writing time, and sharing. Even though the basic structure of this workshop does not change, there is a quite high level of flexibility. For instance, educators make sure to discuss that all sections except the section of the writing time are optional (Harris, Graham, & Mason, 2006). The incorporation of a mini lesson in the structure of the Writing Workshop is rather effective because it focuses on brevity and authenticity. The most proper mini lessons are based on real things that writers need to know. In the Writing Workshop, teachers do not test students on every new writing concept that they teach, and thus such instruction is identified as flexible.

The Writing Workshop model that incorporates mini lessons to teach Six Writing Traits is more reliable and effective compared to the traditional format of instruction. Students apparently have an opportunity to incorporate their learning in an authentic manner, as they demonstrate newly acquired skills in the process of writing (Cameron, Pierce, Pierce, & Cameron, 2002). The approach of mini lessons is also beneficial for slower students who need more time in obtaining knowledge about new concepts in writing. In addition, experts in the field are unanimous that the discussed approach allows sufficient time for writing rather than being entirely focused on administering different tests (Kantor, 1984). In this way, students spend less time on worksheets and repetitive drill work, but they spend more time on writing and sharing.
The Writing Workshop model ensures concerns about the status of the class especially in the way that students work on different writing assignments at different rates (Calkins, 1994). Likewise, this status can be done in various ways, as the simplest form is to require that students present accurate information about the writing piece they are working on and where they are in the writing process (Harris, Graham, & Mason, 2006). It is important that educators are rather confident about the status, writing potential, and skills of their students.

It is important to mention that Atwell (1987) adapted the discussed Writing Workshop to middle school children by establishing a relevant classroom environment in which learners can have sufficient time to reconsider the various stages of the writing process. The Writing Workshop classroom has been also shown to rely on the contributions of literature (Calkins, 1994). This means that educators ensure significant efforts to provide quality children’s literature to students so that they can make important connections to their own lives. For instance, students can select a particular writing style of one of their favorite authors and try to imitate it in their writing pieces. Teachers are concerned with the idea whether their lessons make explicit connections between the processes of reading and writing.

The Use of Mini Lessons to Teach Six Traits Writing

In teaching the Six Trait Process, educators definitely move in a direction of developing greater confidence and independence among students. In other words, teachers promote a flexible and innovative understanding of the writing process in the sense that students take responsibility for their own learning of writing concepts (Kantor,
184). At the same time, teachers spend less time in correcting written papers of students, which allows educators an opportunity to work with learners individually and in small groups. The process of planning is rather simplified because mini lessons are brief and focused on certain writing concepts (Daniels, 2001). The fact that lessons are well targeted is indicative for the greater chance of success.

Yet the aspect of the writing time emerges as the most important component developed in mini lessons. Teachers promote a reinforcing learning environment in which they write with students (Ammon, 1985). In this way, teachers extensively motivate students to write and considerably improve their writing performance over time. Moreover, teachers present the importance of conducting mini conferences with individual writers, as maintaining a frequent, close interaction with students is quite helpful to promote writing on different topics (Graves, 1985).

Scholars who have explored the relevance of mini lessons to teach writing skills claim that mini lessons focusing on content appear quite efficient in the long term (Wagner et al., 2001). In this type of lessons, students obtain appropriate ideas from things with which they are familiar and concerned about. Educators tend to model the specific sources for obtaining ideas, which help learners adjust their writing style (Wong-Kam & Vasquez, 2003). Such a modeling technique pertaining to the use of mini lessons facilitates a solid connection with students that further reflect in authentic, creative writing. One of the most important goals demonstrated by teachers in the process of teaching Six Traits Writing is that effective writing extensively depends on relevant background knowledge of a particular subject.
The importance of creativity and open communication in teaching writing is crucial. Mini lessons focus on a certain level of inquiry that needs to be established and challenged on a regular basis (Rhodes & Dudley-Marling, 1996). The persistent focus on building skills and structure in teaching writing appears ineffective, and thus contemporary educators become more concerned with the significance of creativity in writing. In terms of teaching Six Traits Writing, teachers not only assess and score writing assignments of students but also ensure a certain way of teaching the respective traits (Wagner et al., 2001). In this extensive process, educators demonstrate an assumption that students need to apply everything they learn in the Six Traits to various genres. What has been shown in the literature is that all writing activities actually exhibit these traits, and thus students are prompted to improve their skills in both fiction and nonfiction.

Specific curriculum guidelines clearly determine the genres selected to teach to students, which implies a high level of teachers’ preparedness and planning in order to convey important messages (Mills, 2007). Once educators decide on using a particular genre, they move onto collecting professional and student written examples that can be implemented as models in the mini lessons. Another basic step in this process relates to the thorough analysis of certain pieces of writing that are valid for the Six Traits. Model brainstorming emerges as a means to teach Six Traits Writing, as both teachers and students demonstrate an opportunity to think aloud and share important insights about writing assignments (Parry & Hornsby, 1985). Thus, the prewriting stage of mini lessons is quite important to facilitate quality writing of students. Furthermore, researchers in the
field pay attention to the practical step of model drafting, which reflects in the organization of the written paper (Baghban, 2007). Students are instructed to consider the application of the lead, essential transitions and conclusions, as well as the overall text structure.

Teaching mini lessons in the traits depends upon the precise selection of objectives based on a particular curriculum and students’ academic needs. Therefore, teachers tend to ask learners to apply the aspects of their learning within the produced writing pieces (Dionisio, 1991). Mini lessons allow for teaching of various important concepts including grammar, word choice, and spelling. In this way, mini lessons turn into a powerful tool to improve student motivation to write. At the same time, scholars indicate that mini lessons can be used to teach students efficient ways to evaluate their own writing using the Six Traits.

This can definitely bring them into a higher level of organizing and analyzing their writing, as an important assumption is that writers are those individuals making the decisions in the practical process of writing (Richgels, 2003). Although mini lessons provide a highly structured instruction focused on teaching the traits, students can demonstrate a high level of freedom and flexibility in writing. Mini lessons can be comprehended through the prism of their facilitating function in terms of supporting students to improve their writing and critical thinking skills (Wagner et al., 2001).

Researchers point out that Six Traits Writing provides a common language structure, consistency in assessment, and practical ways for revising the writing pieces (Morgan, 2010; Rickards & Hawes, 2006). Therefore, educators are more likely to teach
the relevant concept first in the design of mini lessons (Graham & Perin, 2007). The utilization of mini lessons to teach Six Traits Writing appears helpful because of teachers’ orientation to share both strong and inadequate examples from written works, which serve as indicators of certain writing aspects. In addition, the use of mini lessons to teach Six Traits Writing has been shown to increase student motivation to write, simply because teachers ensure a well designed and specific approach toward understanding the academic needs and expectations of students (Morgan, 2010).

In general, educators who rely on the use of mini lessons to teach Six Traits Writing are concerned with demonstrating clarity. In other words, they show a tendency of clarity related to indicating the aspects that make sense in the process of writing (Wong-Kam & Vasquez, 2003). In terms of focus, teachers discuss the relevance of a narrow and manageable size of students so that they can pay greater attention to the individual and specific needs of learners. Writing is a process that ensures a clear and focused message (Dionisio, 1991). Therefore, the maintenance of instruction acquires a certain direction of providing sufficient details on the prewriting stage, keeping journals, and moving from broader in focus subjects to quite narrow ideas (Read, 2010). Mini lessons allow both educators and students an opportunity to observe and plan the learning process carefully (Morgan, 2010). By demonstrating relevant knowledge of the purpose for writing, teachers and learners move into a stable phase of improvement. At the same time, students are quite motivated to improve their writing skills because they are constantly challenged.
In the design of mini lessons, teachers tend to present particular activities to students in order to help learners select ideas. From this perspective, the process of free writing emerges as appropriate in the described context because it provides students with an opportunity to share important ideas and assumptions they have (Kletzien & Hushion, 1992). Students are encouraged to respond to various questions in order to challenge their critical thinking and organizing skills. As it has been indicated, the development of narrow topics regularly takes place in mini lessons that are designed to teach Six Traits Writing (Wagner et al., 2001). Likewise, the approach of mini lessons has been demonstrated to have a positive impact on building the internal structure of written papers (Kletzien & Hushion, 1992). This implies that educators pay significant attention to the following concepts: an inviting opening paragraph, logical sequencing, linking words and expressions, pacing, and an effective conclusion. Although these points constitute technical details in writing, students accept their importance with readiness to explore the conveyed messages in writing, to draft and edit their own work, and analyze their writing pieces.

The creation of organizational structures that balance the important dimensions of the written composition is evident upon the introduction of mini lessons. In fact, the development of mini lessons targets an improvement of student motivation to write (Morgan, 2010). Effective written communication has become a focal point of interest in the context of contemporary education, and thus mini lessons ensure focus on the development of such communication (Read, 2010). Yet motivating students to engage in the writing process turns out a significant challenge (Dionisio, 1991). In order to make
writing instruction more practical and efficient for students, teachers need to design appropriate mini lessons that teach Six Traits Writing accordingly.

It is important to underline that writing is an ongoing and flexible process in which students adhere to a specific set of procedures for planning, drafting, and revising their writing pieces. The general idea pertaining to the use of mini lessons to teach Six Traits Writing reflects in the practice to present a brief instructional session that demonstrates a particular aspect of writing (Kletzien & Hushion, 1992). In order to obtain a relevant understanding of the approach of Six Traits Writing, it is essential to consider the relevance of each trait that can be presented in a mini lesson. Content is the first trait and actually appears the heart of the written paper because it indicates what the writer needs to convey (Calkins, 1994). Important requirements for the construction of the content relate to the significance of a certain topic and its size, which should be small enough so that students can explore the content in a relevant manner. One of the primary purposes of teaching a mini lesson on content is to express the ideas clearly, so that readers can understand the conveyed meaning (Rickards & Hawes, 2006).

In the design of a mini lesson on the second writing trait, organization, educators are more likely to adhere to the rule of helping students organize the paper in such a way that systematically directs readers (Morgan, 2010). Therefore, this mini lesson is focused on the importance of a strong lead that can capture readers’ interest from the beginning. Experts in the field are unanimous that an appropriate organization of the paper is marked by good transitions from one important idea to another one (Kletzien & Hushion, 1992;

In attempts to explain the writing trait of voice, teachers use a mini lesson to teach that the process of writing needs to include a sense of flavor and a unique style. In this way, readers have the persistent feeling that the writer is talking directly to the reading audience (Blase et al., 2003). Educators emphasize that students need to commit to the writing by adhering to the important principles of honesty, conviction, determination, and creativity. The writing trait of voice makes a paper unique in terms of a certain style, a mode of expressing ideas, and overall organization.

Furthermore, scholars in the field pay ample attention to the use of a mini lesson for teaching word choice (Blase et al., 2003; Morgan, 2010). In fact, word choice constitutes one of the most important parts of written projects. Thus, teachers consider the importance of teaching appropriate word choice to students especially by focusing on verbs and their frequency of usability (Calkins, 1994). At the same time, it is essential to note that proper verbs used in the process of writing should be active and powerful so that writers can have an opportunity to convey a relevant message. The selection of the right words is crucial because of the necessity to make the writing process quite natural and specific (Wagner et al., 2001). The introduction of a mini lesson on word choice implies that teachers have realized the importance to discuss the exactness to details in order to help students use such words that constantly challenge readers’ mind and imagination.

The fifth writing trait, sentence fluency, is extremely important in the writing process, which means that teachers are concerned with the development of a proper mini
lesson to teach this essential trait. It appears that there are various ways to write sentences in a correct manner, but students should consider that certain correct versions sound better compared to other options (Kletzien & Hushion, 1992). Therefore, educators teach significant skills of recognizing sentence fluency, thinking critically and analytically, as well as using flexible choices of sentences. Students use both long and short sentences, as they adhere to the specific topic of the paper and its overall context (Rickards & Hawes, 2006). Sentence fluency refers to a persistent sense of rhythm with the sentences, which additionally creates a smooth flow of the represented ideas.

As mentioned previously, the writing trait of conventions should not be ignored as well, which prompts educators to demonstrate a high level of competence and preparedness to teach students important language rules in a particular mini lesson (Baghban, 2007). Good writing undoubtedly relates to the use of proper grammar, punctuation, spelling, and a relevant structure of the paragraphs. In this way, the written projects become quite easy to read and understand (Theriot & Tice, 2008). Even though this is a quite mechanical writing trait, it helps students strengthen their editing and proofreading skills (Rhodes & Dudley-Marling, 1996). In this way, they acquire greater confidence and motivation to analyze their own writing pieces.

Mini lessons also give students an opportunity to work independently or in cooperative groups depending on the specific educational situation. Teachers organize these lessons around the idea to encourage free flow of information that would help learners reach a satisfactory level of their writing skills (Blase et al., 2003). The use of mini lessons in the classroom reflects in the presentation of various lessons, and thus
obtaining feedback can take different forms, emphasizing a different writing trait and learning style. The fact that mini lessons are quite brief is indicative of the high level of motivation and interest among students (Morgan, 2010). Mini lessons provide an exciting and creative way to move students through the curriculum regarding Six Traits Writing.

The major goal of teachers who use mini lessons to teach Six Traits Writing in the classroom is to make students rather confident and independent writers. The approach of mini lessons is creative and interactive at the same time, as educators rely on the advantages of technology in order to motivate students to write (Willis, 2001). Such an approach to teach writing skills implies that students learn and practice the importance of a whole set of skills such as drafting, revising, rehearsal, and editing (Gilbert & Graham, 2010). In the design of mini lessons, teachers consider students’ preferences and interests so that lessons can be based on the specific context of learners’ own writing (Pinnell & Fountas, 1998). Therefore, it is important that educators provide an opportunity for students to select topics of personal interests, as in this way they can improve their motivation to write and writing performance (Graham & Perin, 2007). By learning the conventions and mechanics of the writing process, students become confident in their own writing potential to create professional writing pieces (Kletzien & Hushion, 1992).

The ideas for developing mini lessons to teach Six Traits Writing regularly evolve, as this indicates teachers’ concern to respond to the different needs of students by careful exploration of their written projects (Wagner et al., 2001). Effective mini lessons emerge as multidimensional, short, focused, and responsive to the academic needs and expectations of students (Cutler & Graham, 2008). It has been shown that learners who
master the content of the mini lesson are more likely to apply the learned skills and knowledge during the respective writing workshop (Calkins, 1994). Those students who encounter certain challenges with comprehending the mini lesson would need additional support on the part of teachers through extensive writing procedures, relevant assignments and student-teacher conferences.

In teaching Six Traits Writing through mini lessons, educators rely on students’ active role especially during conferencing (Wagner et al., 2001). Calkins (1994) argues that conferencing appears a “magnetic force between the writer and the audience” (p. 232). After certain questions are asked, students will be prompted to search for meaning and present their reflections in a proper written form (Hillocks, 2002). At the same time, the approach of Six Traits Writing actually demonstrates a model that emphasizes common language used in the processes of revising and editing written projects (Morgan, 2010). Such common language between educators and students is extremely important to enhance conferences and make them quite efficient.

Writing Performance of Students

The presented assumptions and conclusions from the literature review point out that the researcher paid significant attention to reliable and valid evidence regarding teaching practices on writing and writing performance. Likewise, the reviewed scholarly articles provided a relevant theoretical framework for the present study that focuses on the importance of mini lessons to teach Six Traits Writing. Mini lessons therefore emerge as a significant, powerful tool to teach essential writing skills to students in contemporary classroom.
Moreover, Writer’s Workshop classrooms entirely focus on presenting practical writing skills to students. In this type of classrooms, teachers use certain reinforcing techniques to increase students’ motivation to write (Calkins, 1994). One of the most common techniques in this relation is that of sharing, as teachers write with their students and share their own written papers. This markedly appears a reliable way to improve motivation and self-worth levels of students so that they can engage more actively in the writing process (Cameron, Pierce, Pierce, & Cameron, 2002). It is important to emphasize that the writing workshop setting allows students to perceive themselves as writers who can make a difference and who are free to share their thoughts and emotions with different audiences (Applebee & Langer, 2011). Therefore, researchers in the field pay significant attention to the thorough organization of a writing class, with the assumption that students are encouraged to write quite regularly (Daniels, 2001; Harris, Graham, & Mason, 2006).

In the studies by Graves (1983) and Calkins (1994), the focus has been on the way children develop into writers, as well as on environmental and situational factors that have a significant impact on this development. In a longitudinal study, Graves (1985) points out at the specific sequences of writing development in children and indicates that teachers should present culturally relevant approaches to correspond to the evolving academic needs of learners. Graves (1985) mentions, “major blocks occur when teachers require or expect information that has little to do with the child’s intention or knowledge base” (p. 13). In other words, pedagogical practices need to reflect students’ comprehension of certain concepts.
The work of Kantor (1984) additionally illustrates how particular pedagogical features interact with writing experiences of students. This study of high school students from various backgrounds explored the aspects of teacher-student interaction in terms of writing. Kantor (1984) presented an important finding that the reinforcing and nondirective attitude demonstrated by the teacher proved quite efficient in improving students’ motivation to write. The study also showed the relevance of an encouraging classroom that actually functions as a community of writers, as this enabled students with an opportunity to establish a proper relationship with their teacher (Applebee & Langer, 2011). Moreover, this encouraged learners to take certain risks in the process of developing their writing skills, and thus they gradually became more confident in writing.

It is apparent that a classroom that succeeds in establishing a reinforcing environment for writing can serve as a relevant source of motivation for students to write. Therefore, contemporary educators tend to demonstrate various appropriate roles such as encouraging, motivating, and coaching roles (Ammon, 1985). The utmost goal is to ensure an open, flexible, and transparent interaction with students in the classroom so that learners can be encouraged and motivated to participate in different writing assignments. In the highly interactive and dynamic process of writing, students also illustrate their important role as writers (Ammon, 1985). Teachers regularly provide students with numerous opportunities to write and advance their writing skills. The type of instruction students’ receive definitely affects the way in which they write and foster their writing development (Reither, 1985). Educators generally show a positive attitude toward the continuous developmental process pertaining to learners so that they can grow as writers.
The promotion of writing has become a central point of research interest in the contemporary classroom (Applebee & Langer, 2011). Regardless of differences on interactions, dynamics, and teachers’ styles of introducing learning materials, it is important to promote the flexible process of writing and avoid teacher-dominated routines in the classroom (Harris, Graham, & Mason, 2006). In the context of establishing meaningful content in writing, both teachers and students perceive the importance of interacting regularly and openly with one another in order to achieve success in terms of students’ writing performance. In a study of students learning English as a second language, Ammon (1985) focused on these learners’ ability to write English. The researcher argued that these children had significant possibilities to learn English as a result of the implementation of efficient instruction that was “rich in opportunities for exposure to, production of, and reflection on English discourse…with guidance and feedback on topics of personal interest” (p. 82). The aspect of personal interest emerged as quite important for maintaining a high level of learners’ motivation to engage in regular writing activities in the classroom.

Furthermore, some scholars like Reither (1985) explored students’ distinct attitudes and perceptions about the process of writing, including the composing strategies they tend to employ when assigned to certain writing tasks. By investigating students from different classrooms, the researcher was categorical that different instructional styles of teachers reflected in different attitudes of students regarding writing. For instance, one classroom presented the dominance of product and mechanical accuracy, whereas another classroom emphasized the crucial importance of writing in a meaningful
way for relevant purposes and audiences (Reither, 1985). A significant argument illustrated in this study was that the establishment of an encouraging environment for learning writing, can additionally motivate students to improve their writing.

It is important to ensure awareness of various contextual factors that affect the process of writing in the classroom. In fact, writing involves multidimensional steps as introduced by Reither (1985):

> Writing and what writers do during writing cannot be artificially separated from the social-rhetorical situations in which writing gets done, from the conditions that enable writers to do what they do, and from the motives writers have for doing what they do. (p. 621)

This quote highlights the multidimensional aspects of the writing process. Therefore, researchers in the field considered the importance of exploring relevant emotions and attitudes pertaining to writers and their evolving development in writing (Reither, 1985). These scholars (Daniels, 2001; Reither, 1985) initiate their exploratory studies with an attempt to acquire a better understanding of the individual learners by recognizing that learning to write is a rather complex task. It is evident that the continuous process of learning to write actually represents a new way of knowing.

A similar new way of knowing is associated with the implementation of mini lessons to teach writing to students (Applebee & Langer, 2011). This also indicates significant progress in teachers’ instructional styles in the sense that they start abandoning their traditional role as knower, but they rather demonstrate numerous possibilities for students to maintain a genuine exploration of relevant writing issues (Daniels, 2001). In this way, educators ensure their commitment to understand the
specific factors affecting students’ writing performance. Participation with students in their own exploration of different writing rules, norms, and topics is crucial for establishing a trustful and encouraging environment for writing (Kutz, 1986). When teachers ask appropriate questions about students’ writing practices and skills, educators are more likely to investigate their own teaching methods (Graves, 1985). By asking such questions, teachers can undoubtedly achieve a higher level of clarification in terms of writing tasks and processes in the classroom (Langer, 2011).

In this context, the contribution of Bandura is quite significant, as this scholar set essential principles of social learning theory that has practical implications in teaching writing to students (Bandura, 1985). One of the major principles of this theory relates to learning through observation in the sense that individuals learn by observing behavioral patterns of others. Likewise, cognition plays a crucial role in the process of learning, as certain expectations of future reinforcements or punishments can have a major impact on the specific learning styles adopted by students (Kantor, 1984). Bandura presented the assumption that the imitated behavior leads to reinforcing consequences. For instance, a student could observe how performing interactive writing activities is a quite rewarding experience, and then this student may consider regular involvement in the writing process (Langer, 2011).

Both reinforcement and punishment demonstrate indirect effects on learning in the contemporary classroom (Bandura, 1985). It is important to note that reinforcement and punishment actually affect the precise extent to which students exhibit a particular behavior that has been learned throughout instruction. Bandura also argued that attention
plays an important role in learning particular writing skills, and thus attention is closely associated with motivation (Bandura, 1985; Harris, Graham, & Mason, 2006). At the same time, Bandura pointed out that attention is affected by the specific expectation of reinforcement. This researcher makes a relevant distinction between learning through observation and the process of imitating what has been learned (Bandura, 1995). Learners in the modern classroom emerge as active seekers of knowledge. In the process of learning certain writing skills and strategies, the role of self-regulation processes is quite important (Graham & Perin, 2007).

Conclusion

This literature review provided strong foundations of the specificity of student writing and motivation to improve their writing performance. The researcher presented reliable and valid information from numerous peer-reviewed articles and books on major concepts associated with teaching writing. In the extensive literature review, four main concepts were thoroughly discussed such as brain research and motivation, the idea of the Writing Workshop, the use of mini lessons to teach Six Traits Writing, and writing performance of students. This will be relevant and necessary to develop the project and its methodology to be explained in the next chapter of this thesis. The third chapter the researcher will provide a practical application of the explored theoretical concepts.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this paper was to explore the precise extent to which the use of mini lessons to teach Six Traits Writing improves students’ motivation to write and writing performance. The key questions used in the thesis were the following: how can using mini lessons to teach Six Traits Writing improve student motivation to write and their writing performance; what are the practical implications of using mini lessons to teach writing skills; has students’ writing performance improved as result of the implementation of mini lessons; and how will mini lessons be implemented in the classroom.

According to Glanz (2003), the implementation of both qualitative and quantitative research methodology is important for the proper exploration of the research process. In this way, the researcher can have an opportunity to focus on different data source and data collection methods so that the respective outcomes can be quite valid and accurate. Therefore, a mixed method research design was employed in this study that incorporates both quantitative and qualitative analysis. From the perspective of a mixed method approach, the researcher could closely examine various aspects of multiple data (Mills, 2007). This data was in the form of pre and post Likert surveys, semi-structured interviews, rubrics, and detailed observation checklists. Likewise, this chapter will present relevant information on the participants, the consent form, treatment, data collection, and data analysis.
Participants

Twenty participants were selected and invited to participate in an afterschool writing intervention by this researcher. The group consisted of 8 boys and 12 girls. The students selected on recommendation of the classroom teachers. The criteria used included reluctance to write stories and unfamiliarity with the use of mini lesson instruction within the Writers Workshop. The use of The 7 and 8-year-old participants in the study were members of 3 separate second grade classrooms and generally demonstrated quite high academic scores in other major subjects taught in the classroom, including reading, handwriting, and mathematics. The students selected to participate in this study are classified according to race as follows: 7 participants are African Americans, 8 participants are Caucasian, 3 participants are Asian American, and 2 participants have a East Indian origin (see Graph 1). This implies the presence of a high degree of cultural diversity in the classroom.

Graph 1

Participant Ethnicity and Gender
Consent

The age of the participants in this study required that the researcher introduce a consent form that had to be signed by the children’s parents for the researcher to be able to use the results (See Appendix A). The consent form included details on the study to be conducted, including methodology and treatment. Participation was voluntary and not tied to a grade in the classrooms.

Treatment

Mini lessons were identified as a useful tool to teach Six Traits Writing because of the extensive focus on specific areas of writing. One individualized skill or writing trait was introduced as an important part of the approach of Six Traits Writing. Once the skill was introduced for the respective mini lesson, the next relevant step was associated with integrating this skill to the workshop writing activities (Fletcher & Portalupi, 1998). Major topics amounted to writing a draft, revising by using the technique of peer conferencing, editing, and proper writing skills including grammar. Likewise, upon the conclusion of the mini lessons used in this study, the actual writing workshop started in order to focus on efficient strategies to improve student motivation to write and writing performance (Calkins, 1994). It is important to mention that the researcher implemented six mini lessons in this treatment, as each mini lesson lasted 20 minutes, three times a week. Every week a new mini lesson was introduced, as the researcher also considered the importance of providing sufficient time for students to comprehend the taught writing concepts in practice.
In day first of the treatment, the researcher presented the writing trait of ideas with the intention to help students generate relevant concepts. This first writing trait was presented with a brief lecture that introduced the importance of selecting topics for writing. Initially, the teacher talked about this writing trait and its specific characteristics, while students listened in order to assimilate the taught material. There was an ongoing interaction between the teacher and the students so that learners could ask appropriate questions related to the writing trait of ideas. Some students asked about which important ideas to include in their writing process. The prompt was to select a topic about things with which the participants of the study were familiar. For instance, the participants were informed that they could write about things that happened to them in the past. The participants presented the following ideas: meeting a new friend, starting a swimming lesson, learning to ride a bicycle, going to the countryside, playing an interesting game with friends, etc. The initial session on teaching writing took 20 minutes, as this time was considered sufficient for presenting certain information on the first writing trait.

In the second day of the treatment, after the prompt, the researcher read the short story *Aunt Flossie’s Hats* by Elizabeth Fitzgerald Howard to the participants. The idea was to let the students think about certain objects in their homes that tell a distinct story, and thus they can generate appropriate ideas that can be used in the writing process. The students recorded their ideas on topic lists. In this second day of the treatment, the participants were encouraged to think extensively about three or four objects they have at home and memories associated with them. This was connected to the first day in which
certain theoretical aspects were introduced, whereas in the second day, the researcher paid greater attention to the practical application of these concepts.

The short story **Aunt Flossie’s Hats** served as a model of thinking about topic ideas and objects of writing, and this was thoroughly explained to the participants. Based on these reflections, the participants in the study selected one of these objects to write about, as the writing process was projected to finish in the next several days. Some objects chosen to write about included wardrobe, night lamp, umbrella, raincoat, etc. By listening to the contents of the mentioned short story, the participants enhanced their imagination to provide relevant ideas for further development. The second day of the treatment also took 20 minutes, which actually indicates the expected duration of a mini lesson.

In the third day of the treatment, the researcher introduced the second writing trait, organization, as the researcher initially focused on the importance of selecting an appropriate title when writing a story. The expected outcome of this third mini lesson that took 20 minutes to be conducted related to increased competence among students to select relevant titles that adhere to the descriptions made in their stories. The participants in the study were informed about the major assumption that the title should be selected in such a way to capture people’s interest in the respective book. Examples of titles included, “My Trip to Jordan,” “Our Cute Puppy,” and “My Adventure in the Forest”.

The students were taught to generate their titles by using a name of a main character or indicative setting. A practical activity during this mini lesson was to ask the students to categorize titles of different books. The goal of this activity was to improve
students’ recognition of different categories of titles, as this can significantly enhance their writing over time. Here is a list of the books that were categorized in terms of a title: The Adventures of Taxi Dog by Debra and Sal Barracca, Dear Max by Sally Grindley, Fox and His Friends by Edward Marshall, and Painted Dreams by Karen Lynn Williams.

A creative way to present the different sources of titles was to add them on a chart. Moreover, in this mini lesson, the researcher paid attention to the aspects of writing a good beginning for the story and writing a good ending. The researcher helped the students attend to these concepts by modeling certain elements of writing. The models of writing a good beginning and a good ending of a story were written on a board so that the learners could visually strengthen their understanding of the material presented in this mini lesson. Important examples of the elements to be present in a story’s beginning were introduced, as they were based on the ideas of telling who and where, character talking, action, and asking the reader a question. The researcher presented the following examples:

- Mark and Lisa lived together in a small, wooden house in the forest. – Telling who and where
- “I have baked a delicious cake; please taste it,” said Mary. – Character talking
- There was a strange noise coming from outside. Then I saw many people running fast. – Action
- Have you ever heard the tale of the fox and the grapes? – Asking the reader a question
By focusing on the idea to include similar aspects in the beginning of their stories, the participants had a clearer notion of the structure of a good beginning. In order to write a good ending of a story, the researcher let the participants explore a chart on different types of endings classified as happy ending, surprise ending, as well as sad and true ending.

The fourth mini lesson focused on enabling the participants with an opportunity to put voice in their writing, as this lesson took 20 minutes. In this mini lesson, the researcher discussed two books by James Marshall and Harry Allard, The Stupids and Miss Nelson is Missing in order to help the participants identify special, distinct characteristics of the authors. It was important to understand how the trait of voice is being constituted. By reading excerpts of these books, the participants could make the conclusion that they sound silly and make them laugh. Therefore, the students could state that such books have a silly voice. For instance, the researcher emphasized an episode from The Stupids, where this family always sleeps under the bed instead in it.

Likewise, the participants practiced certain examples of voice, as the researcher asked them to differentiate among various evoked emotions such as joy, sadness, fear, etc. The students extensively practiced strategies for identifying a different voice in writing. They used a chart representing different types of voice and based on this chart, they created several sentences with a joyful and sad voice. After writing the sentences, the participants read them aloud in order to understand the specificity of the used voice more clearly. In the process of reading different examples of voice, the students had an
opportunity to correct and complement each other’s writing, as in this way, they adhered to the principle of cooperation in writing activities introduced in the classroom.

Furthermore, the fifth mini lesson was dedicated to encourage the participants to consider word choice in their writing. The lesson lasted 20 minutes and the goal was to improve students’ awareness of selecting right words in the process of writing. A sufficient strategy employed by the researcher related to having the students brainstorm words in order to let them think of possible alternatives. For example, the researcher presented the following statements: I had a very bad argument yesterday; She could not say if it was a mean dog; They cannot stand me anymore. In this way, the students were thoroughly occupied in choosing the right words. If they found the words were not appropriate in the specific context, they replaced them with some alternatives. In addition, the researcher implemented the strategy of modeling word choice in the sense of modeling the researcher’s own writing process in front of the participants. The students also made word posters in the two practice sessions following this mini lesson. Major words included in these posters were: good, bad, sad, mad, said, mean, etc. The intention for transfer of this knowledge was to demonstrate a practical application of selecting different words and to differentiate among various nuances of word choices in writing.

The sixth mini lesson, which took 20 minutes, focused on the development of sentence fluency, as the researcher shared two versions of the same story. The expected goal related to enhancing students’ ability to construct smooth and well-ordered sentences that clearly express the writing ideas. The students were carefully listening and
taking notes when this activity was going on. It is important to indicate that this mini lesson was more informative. The story was the following:

1. We went to the forest. It was dark and gloomy. It felt cold. We were afraid.
   Someone may chase us.

2. We spent a dark, gloomy day at the forest. The weather was cold and we were quite afraid that someone might chase us.

The participants in the study were asked to select which version of the story sounded more proper in terms of sentence fluency. The students were taught that an important rule to make the writing pieces interesting is to write proper sentences that sound different from each other. It was presented that some sentences can be short and others long, as in this way, the participants could ensure balance and greater sentence fluency in the writing process. Likewise, the researcher used the strategy of modeling sentence fluency by writing a story in front of the participants. The story was identified as “My Brave Friend”. Writing aloud for the students allowed them to focus on the length of the sentences and on the way they begin sentences.

In order to transfer this to their writing, the researcher introduced another mini lesson in the seventh day of the treatment that lasted 20 minutes. The goal was to improve students’ skills in writing fluently a short story on a topic that they have previously selected. Based on the learned from the sixth day of the treatment, the students produced a story in which they focused on the aspect of sentence fluency. They were careful to arrange the words and the sentences in such a way that conveyed their ideas relevantly.
In the eight day of the treatment, the researcher introduced the 20-minute mini lesson of teaching conventions. The researcher presented a page of writing in order to demonstrate certain technical rules in writing. By initiating a relevant discussion with the students on writing conventions, the researcher could capture their attention to technical details while writing a paper. For instance, the students were asked to circle words that they considered misspelled in the process of writing. In the days following up this mini lesson, the participants extensively practiced on the ways to use writing conventions accurately. They practiced on using capital letters and punctuation marks. The students were asked to create a short dialogue on the topic of best friends in order to practice the use of quotation marks.

In the process of students’ writing, the role of the researcher was to observe the children and how they reacted to writing prompts. At the same time, the participants in the study had an opportunity to hold peer conferences in which they could discuss relevant topics pertaining to the writing process. They were told to do it after every mini lesson in order to exchange certain ideas about writing. In the first week of the study, mini lessons focused on certain strategies to develop a writing draft. Upon the conclusion of every mini lesson, the students were prompted to compose a particular draft with regard to a rubric.

The rubric developed by the participants’ school system focused on each writing trait so that students can generate a more complete writing process, paying significant attention to all aspects of writing (Wong-Kam & Vasques, 2003). The mentioned rubric can be found in the Appendices section of this thesis, as it is designated as Appendix B.
The rubric was used to evaluate each student’s progress in the process of writing and realize his or her potential and readiness to utilize each of the six writing traits in practice.

The development of the mentioned rubric took place in order to support equally teachers and students so that they can establish a vision for good writing. In this way, the skills necessary to write can be sufficiently developed in a flexible, ongoing process of collaboration. Students are taught what rubrics are and the specific way in which to use them in order to become efficient writers (Wagner, Nott, & Angnew, 2001). It has been emphasized that this rubric reflects upon essential aspects of writing, including reading, thinking, listening, and planning (Wong-Kam & Vasques, 2003). It is apparent that the rubric encourages a creative process of writing, as students have a viable opportunity to demonstrate various writing talents.

The rubric was used as the method of evaluation of the study. The rubric used a four-level system of assessing personal and fictional narratives produced by the students. The students, who succeeded in demonstrating one clear, focused central idea and in developing the setting, characters, objects, and events with well chosen details were evaluated with 4 from the rubric. The measurement of 3 was for the participants' writing pieces that had one focused central idea and described the setting, characters, objects, and events with relevant details. Writing assignments that presented a clear idea with limited sensory details and were slightly off topic were graded with 2, whereas pieces that had an underdeveloped idea were graded with 1.
In terms of evaluating organization, the researcher assessed writing pieces that demonstrated logical and easy to follow sequence and structure with 4. Sequence and structure that are being identified as present in the writing pieces produced by the students were graded with 3. When the aspects of sequence and structure were found confusing, the researcher graded them with 2, while pieces in which sequence and structure were not evident were graded with 1. The other four writing traits (voice, sentence fluency, word choice, and conventions) were also evaluated in accordance with the presented four-level system of assessment made by the researcher. This evaluation took approximately two weeks, as the scorer was the researcher, which obviously compromises the reliability of the scores. More details about the writing traits of voice, sentence fluency, word choice, and conventions can be found in the Appendices section of this thesis (see Appendix B).

Data Collection

The researcher implemented quantitative analysis, which is identified as a specific approach to ask questions that can be properly answered by collecting and interpreting certain numerical data. In this study, the researcher used a descriptive research approach (Glanz, 2003) by introducing important observations and questionnaires. Surveys that are administered in the form of questionnaires represent quite valuable tools to collect necessary data because of the convenience to analyze information (Glanz, 2003). For the purpose of the present study, the researcher introduced one pre-writing survey, which was administered before each participant was enrolled into relevant mini lessons that teach Six Traits Writing (see Appendix C for more details).
The pre and post surveys presented a series of important closed-ended questions that explored students’ attitudes toward the process of writing. Each survey was designed to measure not only students’ attitudes but also their motivation levels to write by using a four-point Likert scale. In this way, the researcher tried to achieve content validity by exploring relevant concepts (Patton, 2005). In order to avoid a response set, the researcher demonstrated the relevance of positive and negative questions.

In this way, internal consistency of reliability can be illustrated at every stage of the research process. However, the researcher should consider that participants in the study might struggle to attain an appropriate understanding of the statements used in the surveys. Another descriptive quantitative approach used in the present study was that of systematic observational research. This type of observations refers to an ongoing and flexible process of collecting important information (Glanz, 2003).

Furthermore, it is essential to note that the researcher provided a realistic time frame to collect necessary data, in particular a period of two months. This timeline was considered sufficient for collecting writing assignments produced by the students and for analyzing these writing pieces. The researcher collected writing pieces of the participants, as they closely adhered to the requirements in the rubric on Six Traits Writing. The collected writing assignments were totally 160. The all 20 participants in the study produced one writing piece after every mini lesson that took place (the exact number of mini lessons was 8, as previously indicated). Therefore, the researcher had approximately 2 months to analyze the collected writing pieces and evaluate them according to the rubric that was previously discussed. Each participant provided a certain piece from his
or her own writing prior to the intervention of introducing mini lessons to teach Six Traits Writing. Yet the final piece of writing was presented after the intervention took place, as the researcher evaluated this piece by using an appropriate rubric. In Six Traits Writing, each of the writing traits adheres to specific rubric making expectations and to the conferencing occurring between students and teachers.

It appears that action research places crucial importance on the benefits of qualitative approaches. The basic assumption related to qualitative research methodology is that it relies on extensive verbal descriptions by the participants. Therefore, the researcher in this study considered the importance of understanding participant experiences and various perspectives (Glanz, 2003). The researcher used the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews, which appears an efficient tool of data collection. The researcher implemented relevant information from student interviews when presenting the conclusions of this study as an inseparable part of the qualitative data analysis.

Some of the questions present in the semi-structured interviews related to exploring the students' ideas about mini lessons, to their perceptions of writing before and after using the approach of mini lessons to teach writing skills, and to the students' descriptions of the writing traits in which they still struggle and need further assistance by the teacher. The participants were also asked to identify the factors that motivate them to participate more regularly in the process of writing. Other examples of semi-structured questions can be found in Appendix D in this thesis.
In terms of ensuring a framework of the study, the researcher aims at making a difference in students’ writing as result of the implementation of mini lessons to teach Six Traits Writing. Therefore, the framework of the present study complied with the requirement to increase students’ confidence in their writing skills. The mini lessons were held on a weekly basis, several times a week for a period of 20 minutes. During this time, students were thoroughly involved in the writing process. The introduction of writing topics depended on information obtained from personal journals. This implies that each writing workshop started with a relevant mini lesson.

Data Analysis

In the process of analyzing the data obtained from the treatment, the researcher used coding techniques to interpret the participants’ answers to the questions presented in the survey. This means that the researcher carefully selected major writing concepts shared by the students and analyzed them for fluency, clarity, and consistency. In analyzing the writing pieces produced by the students as result of the implementation of six mini lessons on the major writing traits, the researcher used the Six Writing Trait rubric for a specific model of evaluation. The development of the rubric adhered to the objective of the present study. In this way, the researcher analyzed whether the students demonstrated relevant ideas. In terms of organization of the papers, the adequacy of a story’s beginning and ending was considered. The researcher also looked for voice in the students’ writing pieces, as it was important to underline certain words and sentences that can give the respective writing voice. An analysis of the students’ writing explored relevant examples of appropriate word choice and sentence fluency. In addition, the
researcher analyzed the participants’ understanding of the concept of conventions and the specific range of conventions they used in the produced writing pieces.

Conclusion

This chapter provided thorough information on the methodology used by the researcher in order to correspond to the stated goals of the study. Details on the participants and the necessary consent form that was obtained from their parents were introduced. Moreover, treatment procedures related to the presentation of eight mini lessons were described, along with data collection and data analysis procedures. The methods used to collect data related to administered surveys and semi-structured interviews conducted with the students. The method to understand such data was associated with the introduction of specific coding techniques that allowed for a clear interpretation of the participants’ answers to survey items and interview questions. These techniques mainly presented a content analysis of the participants’ written responses. The reliability of this measure relates to its stability. In the next chapter, the researcher will share the results of this study.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

The 20 students participating in this study completed a survey initially and at the end of the research process. The researcher used the results of the pre and post surveys in order to determine students’ attitudes toward the process of writing, as well as to measure the level of their motivation to write as result of the implementation of mini lessons in the curriculum. As it has been mentioned in the methodology’s section, the researcher used a four-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=neither agree nor disagree) to measure students’ responses to the surveys’ items (See Appendix C). Based on the students’ answers and their writing pieces, it was argued that the use of mini lessons to teach Six Traits Writing improved student motivation to write and their writing performance.

Results

Research Question: How can using mini lessons to teach Six Traits Writing improve student motivation to write and their writing performance?

Information obtained from the pre and post surveys revealed that the majority of the participants (15 participants) indicated a higher level of satisfaction and enjoyment with the writing process after the implementation of mini lessons by the teacher. Fifteen students shared their enthusiasm and increased motivation to participate in writing activities more often by considering their own responses on the semi-structured questions. As expected, the participants showed a high level of enthusiasm to embrace
the idea of mini lessons that thoroughly focus on teaching each of the Six Writing Traits. It is important to note that the pre surveys’ results showed that the number of the participants that perceived writing as an easy and interesting activity was quite small (7 participants). Other essential indicators of students’ motivation to write used by the researcher in the surveys were the following: freedom and willingness to select writing topics (8 students), proper use of words (5 students), a tendency to share their writing (3 students), a perception of students as good writers (7 students), and being knowledgeable of the different steps in the writing process (3 students). In the pre surveys, the participant’s demonstrated insignificant willingness to select writing topics (12 participants) compared to their answers in the post surveys (only 5 participants demonstrated insignificant willingness to choose certain topics for writing). The results from the pre and post surveys were similar to the other survey categories as well. This implies that the use of mini lessons as an important tool to teach Six Traits Writing definitely increased students’ motivation to write, which reflected in better writing performance.

The results from the pre and post surveys showed a significant increase in the enjoyment of writing among students (See Table 1). At the same time, the information obtained from the pre and post surveys supported the outcomes of the researcher’s observation and interviews with the participants. Based on the data from the pre and post surveys, students’ experience of mini lessons was rather positive because it created substantial enthusiasm in terms of engaging in relevant writing activities. After the introduction of the respective mini lessons, the majority of students demonstrated
persistent willingness to schedule this type of lessons more often, as they found them quite effective in improving their motivation to write.

In attempts to evaluate the six traits of writing, the researcher used pre treatment versus post treatment writing prompts, as the results are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1
Pre Treatment VS Post Treatment Writing Prompt
Total Rubric Score Points in the 6 Traits of Writing
As shown in the table, students’ scores on each of the six writing traits differed from the pre and post treatment. In the first writing trait of ideas/content, students in the pre treatment demonstrated a score of 73% on the writing prompt, but the score in the post treatment increased to approximately 80%. In the second writing trait of organization, the participants in the pre treatment presented a score of 70%, which slightly increased at the post treatment stage, in particular to 76%. In terms of voice as another essential writing trait, students indicated a quite obvious difference in the pre and post treatment results. In the pre treatment, students’ score on the writing trait of voice amounted to 74%, whereas this score increased to 89% in the post treatment. Another significant difference in students’ scores in the pre and post treatment was presented on the fourth writing trait of sentence fluency. In the pre treatment, students’ score on sentence fluency was 74%, while the same score rapidly increased to over 90% in the post treatment. In the writing trait of word choice, the difference in students’ scores in the pre and post treatment was insignificant, similarly to the scores on ideas/content and organization. In the sixth writing trait of conventions, students presented a score of 80% in the pre treatment, whereas the score increased to approximately 95% in the post treatment.

In terms of detailed observation checklists, the researcher presented essential information on the participants’ utilization of certain writing concepts and rules. A major conclusion of these observational practices was that students were more likely to demonstrate quite efficient writing behaviors after the implementation of mini lessons. Compared to the pre treatment writing process, the participants demonstrated a higher
level of independency in writing, as well as a greater interest in writing activities. In addition, students engaged in rewriting and editing activities more often in the post treatment writing process.

Another significant component of the researcher’s observational checklist related to the participants’ application of spelling patterns in their written works. As result of the implementation of mini lessons in the classroom, students were more likely to apply phonics rules and important spelling patterns in their writing pieces, as well as they used resources to spell unknown words when needed. In the post treatment writing process, the researcher presented the important observation that students tended to write more clearly and effectively. The participants observably used the different steps in the writing process such as pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and sharing. The researcher observed that students’ adherence to the various steps in this process helped them become more focused when producing writing pieces. In this way, the participants improved their knowledge and concentration in the process of writing.

Likewise, the researcher used semi-structured interviews to obtain more relevant information from the participants on their practical application of Six Traits Writing (See Appendix D). In these interviews, the researcher thoroughly listened to the participants’ perspectives and ideas about the writing process. One of the questions asked during the interview process was the following, “What do you think of the mini lessons?” The majority of the participants (16 students) pointed out that the implemented mini lessons helped them clarify significant concepts about the process of writing, including each of the Six Traits of Writing. Three students presented the response, “Mini lessons help me
concentrate more on writing.” Other two students answered, “I think that mini lessons motivate me to write more regularly.” Then the researcher introduced a follow-up question that was linked to the previous question, “How do your ideas of the mini lessons compare to the ideas you had before?” In this way, the researcher obtained appropriate information on students’ understanding of the writing process in all of its dimensions due to the high number of students (18 participants), who increased their motivation to write when the concept of teaching Six Traits Writing was introduced through mini lessons.

The participants shared important insights about their experience with Six Traits Writing, as they were categorical that the focused instruction within the structure of mini lessons helped them attain a better understanding of the writing process. One participant in the study shared, “Mini lessons focused on teaching conventions, and I was able to understand clearly the basics of writing well.”

Significant to note is while rubric 1 was achieved in the Six Traits of Writing in pretreatment, rubric 1 was further identified and elaborated in post-treatment results. The scores for rubric 2 in the Six Traits of Writing both in the pretreatment and in the post-treatment writing prompt indicated significant differences. The number of students for rubric 2 was 13 (ideas/ content and organization) in the pretreatment writing prompt, whereas the same number decreased to 9 students (ideas/ content) in the post-treatment writing prompt.

The number of students for rubric 3 was 12 (ideas/ content) in both the pretreatment and post-treatment writing prompt. The most obvious difference was presented in rubric 4, where the number of students was varying from 2 to 3 students in
each of the writing traits, in the pretreatment writing prompt. However, this number considerably increased in the post-treatment writing prompt to a varying number of 5 and 9 students for the respective writing traits. In order to illustrate the rubric scores for the number of students in the Six Traits of Writing in the pre and post treatment, the researcher presented these results in the following Tables 2 and 3:

Table 2
Pre Treatment Writing Prompt
Rubric Scores for the Number of Students in the 6 Traits of Writing
Table 3
Post Treatment Writing Prompt
Rubric Scores for the Number of Students in the 6 Traits of Writing

Sub-question 1: What are the practical implications of using mini lessons to teach writing skills?
It became important to discuss the practical implications of using mini lessons to teach writing skills. The results that have been discussed showed that the researcher made extensive efforts to use efficient methods in collecting and analyzing data from the pre and post treatment. In this way, the researcher had an opportunity to compare important results prior and after the implementation of mini lessons to teach Six Traits Writing in a second-grade classroom. The results from the pre and post treatment confirmed important findings in literature on student motivation and mini lessons perceived as a powerful and innovative tool to promote students’ motivation to write (Ammon, 1985; Calkins, 1994; Kutz, 1986; Rhodes, & Dudley-Marling, 1996). In order to measure student motivation, the researcher considered the evaluation based on the rubric, which is presented in Appendix B. The use of this rubric was maintained to check the specific level of students’ motivation in the process of mastering each of the Six Writing Traits. The assessment of student writing pieces on each of the six writing traits yielded important information on the degree of motivation among students to write certain topics.

Findings from the participants’ writing pieces showed that the researcher could analyze the relevance of each of the writing traits. Therefore, based on the presented scores on the Six Writing Traits (ideas/content, organization, voice, sentence fluency, word choice, and conventions), it can be argued that the participants in the study acquired increased and essential writing skills as result of the implementation of a flexible approach of teaching writing concepts and rules.

Sub-question 2: Has students’ writing performance improved as result of the implementation mini lessons?
Based on measuring students’ responses to survey items and their writing pieces, the intervention seems to be a successful practice for this group of second graders. The different rubric scores in each of the writing traits showed that prior to the implementation of mini lessons the participants were not that confident and effective in their writing. In the pretreatment writing prompt, students demonstrated inadequate responses in their written communication, which was marked by broad and ineffective ideas, inconsistent organization with ineffective beginnings and endings, uneven developmental ideas, overused words, quite mechanical sentences, and insufficient control of standard writing conventions. The participants were more likely to use underdeveloped and repetitive transitional mechanisms of writing in the pretreatment writing prompt.

The results in the rubric scores in each of the writing traits seemed to change in the post-treatment writing prompt due to the implementation of brief, focused, and student-centered mini lessons. In an analysis of the participants’ writing pieces, the researcher argued that the intervention of mini lessons was associated with a crucial improvement of students’ motivation to write, which reflected in a better writing performance. The latter was represented by better clarity and focus in the writing process, as well as by sufficient control over topic development and organization. Students explored the topic using appropriate details by ensuring an inviting beginning and an appropriate ending.

Moreover, due to the impact of mini lessons, the participants demonstrated a tendency to use carefully selected words and construct proper sentences. The interaction
between the writer and the reader was committed and significantly improved. In the post-pretreatment writing prompt, students illustrated effective use of various conventions with fewer grammatical and stylistic errors compared to the rubric scores in the pretreatment writing prompt. Therefore, the implementation of mini lessons can be perceived as an efficient tool to improve students’ motivation to write and writing performance.

Conclusion

The researcher presented the results obtained in this study, as an important argument that has been thoroughly discussed is that the implementation of mini lessons to teach Six Traits Writing can definitely increase students’ motivation to write and improve their writing performance. By comparing results of pre-treatment and post-treatment, the researcher concluded that the students significantly improved their writing process in the post-treatment due to the use of brief, well-designed, and focused mini lessons. In the next chapter, the researcher will present relevant information on summary of the study, general conclusions, and recommendations for practice.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

In attempts to present a summary of the study’s findings, the researcher mainly indicated the usefulness of mini lessons as an innovative approach to teach Six Traits Writing in a second-grade classroom. Based on the surveys’ results, the detailed observation checklists, the semi-structured interviews, and the writing samples of students, the researcher encouraged the use of mini lessons in order to help students improve motivation to write and writing performance. Likewise, the implementation of mini lessons in the classroom led to increased independence and enjoyment of the writing process. The Writing Workshop approach integrated within the structure of mini lessons contributed to the establishment of a positive writing environment that encourages learning of important writing concepts and rules. Therefore, the study demonstrated essential details on the benefits of implementing mini lessons to teach Six Traits Writing to students. Based on the participants’ high scores of over 80% on the writing assignments, the researcher showed that students were more confident and independent in selecting what they preferred to write, and thus their motivation was rather high.

The design of mini lessons definitely helped the teacher to promote the distinct steps of the writing process, as this was indicated in previous research (Graves, 1985; Parry, & Hornsby, 1985). It has been assumed that mini lessons are quite motivating for second graders, as the students wrote more often and seemed and stated they were interested in the writing process. Their writing improved in each of the six areas of the
rubric. Likewise, the participants in the present study showed greater enthusiasm and improved motivation to learn the specific conventions of writing in more practical details. The topic of each mini lesson was based on extensive observations on the part of the researcher of students’ academic needs in terms of writing. For instance, in the pretreatment writing process, the researcher observed that many second graders have the habit of not using periods when they end sentences. However, this writing convention of using punctuation in writing was taught and clarified in a properly designed mini lesson, as in this way, the teacher demonstrated the crucial importance of punctuation and that students need to be aware of certain punctuation principles in order to build more coherent writing pieces. It is essential to note that peer and teacher conferencing also enabled the participants with an opportunity to apply efficient knowledge learned from the mini lessons to their writing.

Conclusion

The present study contributed to promoting a greater commitment to the writing process. The intent of the researcher was to help students become more independent and confident writers. Thus, it can be argued that the study fulfilled this purpose by paying increased attention to the benefits of mini lessons. The number of students that expressed persistent willingness to participate in mini lessons designed to teach Six Traits Writing continuously increased because students found it a quite positive and rewarding experience. Undoubtedly, in the process of understanding the specificity and purposes of writing, students became more confident with the approach of mini lessons and thus their motivation to write was extensive. One of the most positive outcomes of this study was
that students expressed enthusiasm for writing because they asked for more time to be scheduled for writing activities. The participants were disappointed if such time was not scheduled. At the beginning of implementing mini lessons to teach Six Traits Writing, students were not engaged nor motivated and confident in selecting topics for writing. They also experienced a significant difficulty in getting started in the process of writing. Nevertheless, with the progress of the implementation process, the participants become confident and independent in writing, as they demonstrated the ability to initiate writing tasks more quickly and efficiently.

The model of mini lessons has proven to be a quite effective and reliable instructional approach to teach Six Traits Writing to second graders in the contemporary classroom. This instructional method helped the participants acquire relevant skills such as choosing proper writing topics, revising and editing drafts, and sharing their written projects. At the end of the present study, the participants demonstrated increased skills to work independently in the process of writing and help each other add sufficient details on writing topics through the method of student conferences. The researcher also pointed out that students’ extensively enjoyed the process of sharing their writing pieces with peers. In this way, they presented a strong sense of recognition and appreciation, which emerge as important aspects of motivation and self-efficacy.

Recommendations for Practice and Further Study

Important recommendations for improving students’ outcomes in terms of writing relate to the aspect of better sharing of writing pieces. It is essential that educators teach students how to make constructive comments to their peers. Individuals need to be
especially aware of what to expect during the process of sharing (Calkins, 1986). The approach of Six Writing Traits can definitely eliminate certain problems in the writing process. Likewise, when commenting on others’ written works, students should imply that such comments are only suggestions. Clearly, writers are not required or obliged to make the changes requested by readers because it is important to keep the writing process flexible, free, independent, and open. Teachers should also conduct regular small group sessions, as this would let students’ share and practice quite constructive comments. Moreover, students should be encouraged to consider certain informal revision plans that are based on feedback obtained from sharing (Dionisio, 1991). Learners can be further motivated to write when teachers interfere less in correcting their writing pieces. Students should learn to correct their own writing pieces alone so that they can enjoy the entire writing process more completely.

Future Research

The conclusions obtained from this study presented important information on the interrelations between mini lessons and students’ motivation to write. It has been shown that teachers who adopt the approach of mini lessons to teach Six Traits Writing are much more successful in their instruction compared to teachers who rely on traditional pedagogical practices. Future research can focus on additional factors that contribute to a better application of mini lessons in the classroom. It is essential to consider various perspectives of students, educators, parents, and other members in the community in order to ensure a more holistic approach toward improving modern education. Future research needs to look at motivation and its link to writing.
Dear Parents,

During the next 6 weeks I will be conducting a writing intervention study with your child focused on the 6 traits of writing. Participation is voluntary and will not influence your child's grade in his/her general classroom. The goal of the study is to increase student motivation to write while also improving your child's overall writing. Your signature acknowledges acceptance of your child’s participation in this intervention study. Please feel free to contact me for further information.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Symanski

______________________
Child

______________________
Classroom Teacher

______________________
Parent Signature

______________________
Date
# APPENDIX B

## Grade 2 – Personal and Fictional Narrative Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Six Traits</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **IDEAS/CONTENT** | • Has one clear, focused central idea  
• Develops the setting, characters, objects, and events with well-chosen details | • Has one focused central idea  
• Describes the setting, characters, objects, and events with relevant details | • Has a clear idea with limited sensory details  
• May be slightly off topic | • Has an underdeveloped idea |
| **ORGANIZATION** | • Sequence and structure are logical and easy to follow | • Sequence and structure are present | • Sequence and structure are confusing | • Sequence and structure are not evident  
• Writing is very difficult to follow |
| **VOICE** | • Voice is appropriate for topic and audience and is expressive and engaging | • Voice shows awareness of audience and beginnings of personality | • Voice is inconsistent or weak with limited sense of audience | • Voice and awareness of audience are not evident |
| **SENTENCE FLUENCY** | • Sentences flow  
• Sentence length, structure, and complexity is varied | • Sentences flow  
• Sentence structures are varied | • Sentences are fragmented, run-on, and/or confusing  
• Sentence structures are limited in variety | • Sentences are incomplete and/or unclear |
| **WORD CHOICE** | • Uses exceptionally descriptive language  
• Word choice is precise  
• Reader can begin to visualize the story | • Uses descriptive language and precise words to enhance writing  
• Story is clear to the reader | • Uses limited, common or repetitive language with little variety or description | • Uses vocabulary that is extremely limited or confusing |
| **CONVENTIONS** | • Has exceptionally strong spelling, capitalization, punctuation and grammar  
• Writing is easy to read and understand | • Has general control of spelling, capitalization, punctuation and grammar  
• Grade-level appropriate high-frequency words are spelled correctly | • Has frequent errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation and grammar  
• Some grade-level appropriate high-frequency words are spelled correctly | • Has significant errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation and grammar |
APPENDIX C

Pre and Post Treatment Student Survey

The researcher used a series of closed-ended questions in surveys administered in the pre and the post-treatment writing process. The use of a four-point Likert scale was justified in order to evaluate students’ responses to the surveys’ items. Below are the closed-ended questions:

1. Do you need more clarification on each of the Six Writing Traits?
2. Which of the Six Writing Traits is most challenging to you?
3. Shall we continue using mini lessons that focus on the presentation of the writing traits?
4. Are mini lessons interesting and enjoying?
5. Do you see writing as an easy process as result of the implementation of mini lessons?
6. Do you prefer to share your writing pieces with other students?
7. Can you perceive yourself as a good writer?
8. Do you enjoy peer revision conferences?
9. Do you enjoy peer-editing conferences?
10. Is the teacher enthusiastic in teaching different writing concepts?
11. Are you practicing more often?
APPENDIX D

Student Interview

In the semi-structured interviews conducted by the researcher, appropriate questions were used in order to obtain relevant information from the participants. Below are these questions:

1. What do you think of the mini lessons?
2. How do your ideas of the mini lessons compare to the ideas you had before?
3. How do you see your writing before and after using the approach of mini lessons to teach writing skills?
4. Can you describe the writing traits in which you still struggle and need further assistance by the teacher?
5. Can you explain what motivates you to participate more regularly in the process of writing?
6. What can you say about the teacher’s contribution in the writing process?
7. What suggestions do you have for improving the mini lessons?
8. Which types of writing activities are most exciting to you, and which types are more challenging?
REFERENCES


