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Background Information

Joe is a ten year old, fourth grade student. He began attending school in the U.S. in April of 2004 – he has completed one year of learning English at school in the U.S. Joe and his family came to the U.S. from Tokyo, Japan, where he was born. The family has made this transition because of his father's work. While Joe will be returning eventually to Japan, there is not a set date for the return at this time.

Prior to coming to this country, Joe regularly attended school Monday through Friday in Japan where the language of instruction was Japanese. The family had not made any major moves prior to coming to the U.S, so there had not been any other major disruptions in Joe's schooling. Joe came to the U.S. with no knowledge of the English language. All of the English Joe has acquired has been during the last year at school in the U.S. In addition to going to regular school Monday through Friday, Joe attends Japanese school on Saturdays. He does this to maintain his Japanese. Right now Joe is learning at a lower academic level in English but he is steadily making progress.

Joe's parents are both college educated. His father is a professional who works at a business in a neighboring suburb. Joe has an older sister who attends another school. Outside of school Joe speaks Japanese with family and friends – he only has the opportunity to practice English when he is at the U.S. school. While Joe fits in and is well liked by his peers at the U.S. school, most of his friends are friends of the family.

Purpose of Assessment

The purpose of this assessment is to determine Joe's where he stands right now as a writer of the English language – within the WIDA framework. The assessment will also help guide writing instruction for Joe in the future. This assessment serves the purpose of helping to determine what Joe needs to help him move forward as a writer in English. This assessment will also serve as a benchmark for future assessments – to show his growth as a proficient English writer.

This assessment connects to the WIDA standards for a third – fifth grade student based on the large-scale framework for the social and instructional category. This assessment will also determine which of the WIDA standards where the student currently performs. The standards are: compose using pictures, labels, and phrases; compose using phrases and simple sentences; compose using expanded sentences with some complexity; compose using a variety of sentence lengths and levels of complexity; and compose using a variety of sentence lengths and levels of complexity with clear meaning.

Context of Situation

Joe created his writing sample during his normal his thirty minute ESL sessions. The ESL session is held in his mainstream classroom where he receives individual instruction. The session usually occurs at a table in the corner of the classroom. The main instructional strategies used during the ESL time are guided reading and vocabulary development. There is writing instruction but the time spent working on writing is very small. For this assessment, however, there was Joe did not do any reading, so there was a slight change in his normal routine.

Explanation of Measure

The writing sample was obtained when Joe described a picture of Buckingham Fountain in Chicago in writing. The steps for obtaining the sample are as follows:

1. View a picture of the picture.
2. Generate several ideas about the events occurring in the picture using a graphic organizer (a web).
3. Finally, write about the picture using his ideas from the web. Writing to the prompt, “Describe what is occurring in this picture. Describe the setting and people.”

The web is a tool that Joe has used in the past to create writing samples.

Copy of Measure

A copy of the measure is attached.

Writing sample and prompts

A copy of the writing sample and graphic organizer are attached. The prompt that Joe was asked to write to: “Describe what is occurring in this picture. Describe the setting and people.” A prewriting activity and a first draft were the only parts of the writing process that was completed for this assessment.

Rating Scale

The rating scale used for the writing sample is the IMAGE Writing Summary Rubric. This rubric can be found in the Language Summary Handbook.

Other Assessments

The only other assessment used to determine this student’s English language level was the LAS test – the scores for this test range from one to five. This assessment was first administered for this student was at the end of the 2003 – 2004 school year where he scored one for the language level. The LAS test was administered again this May for Joe. After this test was administered Joe’s language level moved to threes and he is considered a limited English speaker. He was tested on three of the four language proficiencies. For the writing test he

scored two – the scores he received for LAS are consistent with the score he received for this assessment on the IMAGE rubric.

Criteria and Standard for Performances

As stated above the rating scale used for the writing sample was the IMAGE Writing Summary Rubric. The IMAGE rubric measures the student's language production, focus, support/elaboration, organization, and mechanics. All of the categories except for mechanics are rated from one to six with one meaning there is no proficiency and six meaning the student is proficient in that category. Or the student's work is the same as native English speaker with the same educational level. The mechanics category has two ratings – one and two, with one meaning there is no or very little proficiency and two meaning the student is proficient or very close to proficiency.

Score

Language Production = 3.

Focus = 3.

Support/ Elaboration = 3.

Organization = 3.

Total = 12 and Average = 3.

Mechanics = 1.

Analysis and Evaluation

Analysis:

Language Production = 3. I gave Joe a rating of three for language production because he had word order and grammar errors that occasionally impeded understanding. For example, he wrote, "This park or Buckingham Fountain whatever it is police in." The intended meaning

of the phrase was, “The police are at the park or Buckingham Fountain.” Other word order errors can be found throughout the rest of his writing. Sometimes the meaning is affected by the word order error and sometimes these errors don’t have a large effect on the meaning of the piece. Whether or not there is a huge effect on the meaning, the reader of the piece does need to take their time reading and rereading the piece.

Focus = 3. I gave Joe a three for focus because it is clear from his writing that he is writing about Buckingham Fountain but it is unclear exactly what he wants to convey. After reviewing what he wrote it seems like Joe just wrote down a list of facts that he knew the English words for about the picture. He wrote a list of features for the picture. He needs to pick something about the picture and then elaborate.

Support/ Elaboration = 3. I gave Joe a three for Support and Elaboration because most of what was written was general. He did not elaborate on specific points in the essay. There could have been more description and details about the different points in his essay. For example, he described the water jumping in the fountain. This is a point, which could have been the focus of the essay, and then there could have been more elaboration and detail. Joe still has a very limited vocabulary so this may be one reason why there is not much elaboration in his writing. For this activity Joe chose to write about everything that he saw in the picture with very little description.

Organization = 3. I gave Joe a three for organization because there is a noticeable plan to his essay – his writing moves from one topic to the next. The area where there is some trouble is the division of paragraphs. He wrote two paragraphs but one of the paragraphs discusses a couple of different items. Joe may have done better in other areas if there were distinct paragraphs divisions because he would have had to elaborate on the ideas in his essay.

Mechanics = 1. I gave Joe a one for mechanics there were many grammatical errors. There were also areas in the essay where Joe wrote incomplete sentences – especially towards the end of the essay. He was adding a list of items to his essay.

Evaluation:

After reviewing the scores from the rubric and Joe’s written sample, the stage or category of second language acquisition in writing for him is currently in the Developing Stage. This stage comes from the WIDA “Performance definitions for the K –12 English language proficiency standards.” While Joe did not make very many phonological mistakes in his writing, there were syntactic and semantic errors in his writing that occasionally impeded understanding. The reader really does need to pay close attention to every word written to ensure his/her understanding. The writing sample that Joe completed for this assessment was similar to other writing samples he has completed recently. At the beginning of the year Joe’s written responses were one or two words or short phrases. He has made consistent progress since the beginning of the year and is now writing complete sentences in his essays. He occasionally reverts to one or two word sentences but this is becoming rare.

The WIDA standard for the large-scale framework where Joe is currently performing at specifically for writing is “composes using phrases and simple sentences.” Joe writes sentences with word order errors and occasionally he will write phrases. As stated above, sentences that are one or two words long is becoming rare.

Recommendations

The main instructional strategy used for during the ESL time is guided reading. While reading instruction is important, the other language proficiencies do need to be addressed during the ESL instructional time. There are two main areas that I think that Joe need to work on so that

he can move towards writing essays at his grade level. He needs to work on his elaboration and grammar skills. The activities that I would use with Joe to help him move to the next level with his writing are a dialogue journal and LEA (language experience activities). The dialogue journals would be used to help Joe improve his grammar. The basic structure of the dialogue journal is: the student writes about a topic of their choosing and the teacher responds to the student's entry. This strategy would be a subtle way of teaching correct grammar. Joe would see correct grammar for his chosen topic in his teacher's response. This type of journal writing is often used with in primary grades. The LEA activities would help with elaboration, grammar, and vocabulary development. Joe's elaboration in his writing may be because of his limited vocabulary, so the use of the Frayer model graphic organizer would help him with vocabulary development. The main areas where this graphic organizer would be used would be in reading, social studies, science, and mathematics. Finally, the prompt that Joe was asked to write to could have had better scaffolding. That is, Joe should have been prompted to pick one to three things in the picture to focus on in the web and add more description to the web and then write about the picture.