

# Study Guide



This study guide is intended to help guide a discussion of the reading, not to check comprehension. Through conversations we share our understanding of the reading and enrich each other's ideas. In these conversations, you can clarify your reading of the chapters, connect the reading with your personal experience as a learner, challenge the author's positions and recommendations, and reflect on your own practice. While there are many ways to structure a study group, it is important to foster a climate in which readers feel free and safe to participate in ongoing conversations and the exchange of ideas. Guidelines can make book study more productive. Here are a few things you might consider:

- ◆ **Watch group size.** Often the optimal number is four or five to ensure there is time for all to exchange ideas. The larger group can reassemble at the end to debrief.
- ◆ **Form a group with members with diverse backgrounds and balance the group with different abilities.** Readers with different learning, teaching, linguistic, cultural, or social backgrounds can offer rich and different perspectives in reading discussion. We each bring a personal text to a shared text when we read, and together we can create another text through our discussion.

- ◆ **Time management.** Make sure every member gets equal time to speak and that everyone has a chance to express her/his opinion. No one person should be dominant or put on the margin silently. Someone in the group should be selected to manage the time.
- ◆ **Stay focused on the topic.** It is easy to drift from the focus of a reading discussion. A group leader should be chosen to keep the conversation on track.
- ◆ **Celebrate learning.** Everyone is a learner in the book discussion; nobody is an expert or knows better than the others. Make sure you take time to enjoy one another and celebrate your learning.

The following questions relate to the content in each chapter and offer suggestions, concepts, and ideas for discussion. Enjoy!

### **Chapter 1: My Decade's Work with ELLs**

1. Who is the audience for this book?
2. In what way does this book contribute to the teaching of ELLs and research on ELLs?
3. In what way does this chapter remind you of your own experience in learning to write in a second language?
4. What is the author's experience working in schools? How does this experience help the author understand ELLs?
5. How many different types of ELLs does the author discuss? How are they served in U.S. public schools?

### **Chapter 2: ELLs' Writing Development**

1. Have you been taught to write in a language other than your native one? If so, how would you describe your experience? If not, please interview an ELL about his/her experience with learning to write in English.

2. What is the relationship between first-language literacy and second-language learning? Have you noticed the difference in learning between an ELL with strong first-language literacy and an ELL with weak first-language literacy?
3. How do Xuhua's writing samples help you understand the four stages of ELLs' writing development defined in this chapter?
4. In what way does the author's definition of writing stages differ from that of others?
5. What is your response to the author's definition of ELLs' writing stages?

### **Chapter 3: Native Language Writing in ELLs' Writing Development**

1. What is the role of first language in ELLs learning to write in English?
2. Reflect on your own experience of writing in a new language (if you have any). Did you think or draft in your first language?
3. Try to compose something in a foreign language you have learned.
  - a. For your first try, use *only* your second language: don't allow yourself to use your first language to think.
  - b. For your second try, write a story using your first language to draft, and then translate it into your second language.
  - c. Analyze the writing process, your feelings, and products of these two experiments.
4. What is the importance of letting ELLs write in their first language while learning English?
5. Do you think that ELLs have to develop their English oral language proficiency before they learn to write in English? Explain.
6. What is the relationship between content area reading and writing?

7. What have you learned about the ELLs by reading the (translated) work they did in their native language? Does this understanding of their L1 writing and literacy ability help you to teach them better?
8. What suggestions does the author give for working with the ELLs who are not able to read and write in their first language?
9. How does the author propose that teachers who don't understand their ELLs' first languages teach them to write, try to understand their work, confer with them about their writing, include them in every component of a writing workshop, and assess their work and progress as writers?
10. What challenges could teachers face in teaching ELLs to write following the author's recommendations? What is your position in teaching ELLs in the No Child Left Behind era?

#### **Chapter 4: Transitional Stages in ELLs' Writing Development**

1. What is code-switching? Do you use code-switching? If so, under what circumstances?
2. Usually when people talk about code-switching, it is a phenomenon in the oral language of a bilingual or multilingual person. Have you read any study or discussion about code-switching in written language? If so, do you recall any examples?
3. What do you think of allowing ELLs to code-switch in their writing?
4. Are there any advantages to allowing ELLs to use code-switching in their writing? Are there any disadvantages?
5. What is your view of inter-language: is it first language interference or a natural stage of language development for ELLs?
6. What suggestions does the author give in helping ELLs move from the inter-language stage to standard English?
7. In what way do the examples of the two beginning ELLs' work help you understand their progress in learning to write in English?
8. What did their teachers do to enable these two ELLs to make steady progress as writers and English language learners?

9. If possible, please track two ELLs with different native language backgrounds to understand their development as writers in English.
10. What is the difference between the ESL teacher Betty and bilingual teachers in their approaches to helping ELLs to develop as writers and language learners?
11. What does “nonlinear progress in ELLs’ writing development” mean?
12. How does the author recommend assessing the ELLs’ writing development as they move back and forth between the four writing stages?

### **Chapter 5: Teaching ELLs to Write**

1. What is the primary challenge secondary teachers encounter in teaching ELLs to write in English?
2. What is the connection between reading and writing in content-area learning for ELLs?
3. What would be a solution when textbooks used at the secondary level are too difficult for ELLs to comprehend?
4. As an experiment, try to use multiple books in teaching a social studies topic as the author suggests rather than using just one textbook.
5. What other genre of writing (besides essay type) should secondary ELLs engage in?
6. When we require students to write frequently we need to read their work frequently. What are the author’s suggestions to make our work manageable?
7. How can we help ELLs to improve without correcting every error they make in their writing?
8. Give an example to explain the statement: “Teach writers before teaching writing.”
9. Why is it important for ESL and regular classroom teachers to collaborate in teaching ELLs?

10. What are the models of ESL programs? What are their advantages and disadvantages based on your own experience?
11. What made Amy and Renee's collaboration work for their ELLs?
12. Is it possible for you to collaborate with other teachers in your school as Amy and Renee did? What support would you need from your school administrators?
13. What do you think were important factors that enabled Xuhua's progress as a writer and language learner within a year?

### **Chapter 6: Language Instruction Through Writing**

1. Describe how to teach speaking skills, reading skills, and other language skills through writing as recommended by the author.
2. Try teaching language skills—grammar, vocabulary, spelling, word choice, and oral language communication—through writing with your own students. Share the results of your work.
3. Search for wordless books with topics that are age-appropriate for your students.
4. Try to use pattern books to learn a new language yourself and see how you feel as a language learner.
5. How does the language learning cycle for ELLs differ from that for native children?
6. What should we look for in ELLs' writing to learn the language skills they need?
7. How did Betty, the ESL teacher, systematically teach her ELLs language skills based the students' work rather than on textbooks?
8. What concepts from this chapter do you think could be applicable to your teaching?

### **Chapter 7: Becoming Bilingual Writers**

1. What is your understanding of ELLs becoming bilingual writers when they are learning to write in English?

2. Discuss these terms: *monolingualism*, *anglophone worldview*, *multilingualism*, and *multicompetency*.
3. What do you think ELLs bring to our classrooms as resources for our curriculum?
4. In what way might this book help you change your teaching to unleash the potential of your bilingual students?