

Hawai'i International Conference on Education, January 2003

Title: Crossing Cultures, Crossing Generations: A Task-based Cooperative Literacy Project

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Abstract: Recent research indicates that cross-age reading encourages student motivation and performance on standardized reading and writing measures (Leland and Fitzpatrick, 1994; Trimple, 1996) and further that providing instruction in cooperative learner strategies and helping behavior (Klingner and Vaughn, 2000) facilitates acquisition of reading skills. In addition, second language research shows that the use of task-based communicative activities helps second language learners of all ages to acquire and practice language skills. This abstract discusses a pilot research and materials development project to be implemented in Fall 2002 in Honolulu, Hawaii. The project involves two student populations: a group of elementary school children from a local school in Hawaii, and a group of international college students from TransPacific Hawaii College, a non-profit, private two-year college dedicated to providing international students from Asia with an American Associate in Arts degree (AA). Incoming TransPacific students complete an intensive six-month ESL Program before beginning the AA Program. While in the ESL Program, students focus on acquiring and practicing the academic skills they will need to succeed in the AA Program. An integrated-skills approach is used, with all students attending reading/writing classes for sixteen hours a week as one part of their English proficiency requirements. These two student populations will participate in a children's literature reading and writing project.

The educational objectives of this project are 1) to provide meaningful communicative reading activities for both groups of students, 2) to provide a meaningful communicative writing task for the international ESL students through which they can

practice and learn academic language skills, including process writing, product orientation, and basic narrative structure in writing, 3) to encourage the reading and writing literacy skills of both groups, 4) to provide authentic reading materials and promote reading appreciation for the elementary students, 5) to provide a sense of product and contribution for the ESL students, 6) to give the elementary students a voice and place that they can be the "expert," 7) to introduce both groups to the concepts of "juried" product and product marketing, 8) to foster a sense that reading and writing can be fun, 9) to facilitate connection and dialogue between international university-level students and primary school students in the Hawaii community, and 10) to continue TransPacific's educational and service-oriented mission in the community.

The methodology for this project is designed to facilitate a cooperative approach to improving reading and writing literacy skills, while at the same time addressing the independent educational needs and goals of each group of learners. TransPacific students will be introduced to basic concepts required to understand and produce successful children's literature. They will select age-appropriate reading material and practice reading the stories with their classmates. The ESL college students will then meet and develop rapport with the elementary school students by reading children's books in small groups. The elementary school students will also read stories aloud to the group. Each group will engage in post reading discussion to ascertain which stories were most popular and why. In the weeks following these reading activities, the ESL students will write, illustrate, and bind an original children's story using an academic process approach to writing.

The finished products will be assessed by the elementary school students through a standardized evaluation form. The pilot will be evaluated by the research coordinators through student and faculty survey, interview methods, and pre and post questionnaires on the effect of learner attitudes toward reading and writing. Success of the project will be evaluated in part by improved student motivation toward learning through the proposed cooperative cross-generation learning methods. Efficacy will also be determined by the ease of implementation.

The anticipated outcomes of this project are multifaceted. The college students will gain practice in reading aloud, pronunciation, and prosodic features of story telling in English. They will also be introduced to and have the chance to practice process writing skills. Additionally, TransPacific students will be introduced to the concepts of writing for specific purposes and a "target" audience. The elementary school students will gain practice in reading aloud, pronunciation, and prosodic features of story telling in English. They will also learn how to give feedback, make connections between author and

finished product, and learn basic assessment mechanisms. Finally, the research coordinators hope to create a practical, user-friendly, curriculum unit which encourages a continuum of English reading and writing competency development through generations and across cultures.