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## **A Case Study of an ESL Student Learning Singular Plural Nouns with Matching Verbs**

### **Introduction:**

I chose the topic "singular plural nouns with matching verbs" in basic sentences. This topic is a first-grade Common Core Standard in writing. In the first grade classroom, we focused on nouns and matching verbs. For example, when students write about what they did over the weekend, it should be in the past tense, such as "I played with my dog." The student I chose to focus on is a six-year-old male originally from Columbia. This student's primary language at home is Spanish/Castilian.

In order to prepare for the test, I worked with the whole group class and emphasized matching our singular plural nouns to our verbs. Starting with whole group instruction, I wrote on a piece of large chart paper what I did over the weekend. I made sure to include some mistakes, specifically with my plural nouns and verbs. For example, on my chart paper, I had, "I shopping on Sunday for groceries." After I finished writing on the anchor chart, I asked the students to read it to themselves and put their fingers on their noses if they saw any mistakes. We then read it together as a class, fixed the errors, and made our singular plural nouns match our verbs. I made comments such as, "does it make sense if I say "I am shopping" even though I did that over the weekend? The students immediately realize that it is not correct and help me mark up my writing. After the whole group instruction, I scaffolded students by writing a sentence

starter on the board that said, "This weekend I...". The students were then asked to write independently about what they did over the weekend.

For the Pre-Test, I invited the student over to my table in a small group setting with other English Language Learners. While they were here, I had them bring over their weekend writing journals. I asked the students to write about what they did this past weekend. I prompted them with the question if you did something this weekend, is that present tense or past tense? They all agreed it was past tense. I let the students write freely for 15 minutes. The student I chose to focus on wrote the following in his notebook "This weekend I play games with my grands it was os fun." Attached below labeled is what he wrote.

### **Discussion:**

The student has very neat handwriting and good spacing skills. This student particularly needs help matching his singular plural nouns to match his verbs. For example, this was written about what he did last weekend. He used the verb "play," which is not past tense. By this student writing, "I play games" he is stating that he plays them currently. I am looking for, "This weekend, I played games with my friends. It was so fun."

In order to help this student, I worked in a small group setting with him to focus on singular plural nouns with matching verbs. Instead of having the student free write for weekend writing, I explored a different route. When calling the student back over to the small group setting, I started the small group out by discussing when we use certain suffixes such as -ed and -ing. I reminded the students that past tense means we have already done something. Instead of having the student go directly to weekend writing, I created a worksheet that has the student circle the correct verb to match the sentence. I ask the students to read through the sentences to see which word makes

sense and sounds correct. The student was hesitant when completing the first one, but once I explained the directions a second time and we did the first one as an example, it seemed as though the student was made aware of what he was supposed to do, resulting in him getting them all correct. The worksheet is attached below.

After completing the worksheet with the students, I then continued my lesson about weekend writing. I showed the students my example on a piece of paper. On the paper, I made sure to add a few verb errors, which can be seen below. As we did the week before, I asked the students to look for any mistakes they saw. We corrected a few of the verbs, such as playing to played and run to ran. I noticed that the other ELL students and the student I was studying were quick to find out what was wrong with my weekend writing. After fixing my weekend writing with the students, I asked the students to use the next fifteen minutes to write about what they did over the weekend. This time, I reminded the students that they should be thinking about the correct form of their verbs. This time, when the students were writing in their journals, I noticed the student I observed looking over at the verb paper that we had just completed. The student then began writing and was able to start with the sentence, this weekend; I played with my brother."

**Conclusion:**

I noticed after my pre-test that the student needed a little extra help when it came to singular plural nouns with matching verbs. Instead of just talking through my weekend writing each week, I think it was necessary to incorporate something else with which the student could work hands-on. Scaffolding is a method in which the teacher supports students to work beyond the level he could achieve on his own (2015, May 8). By modifying the lesson and adding a

worksheet, I provided procedural scaffolding. Procedural scaffolding is using tools and resources to support students. For this modified lesson, I was able to provide a sentence frame to support the discussion (Hult, 2022). The layout of the worksheet, as seen below, has a sentence that is already started, and the student has to circle the correct matching verbs. I also included a little picture that went along with what the sentence was mainly about. Language used in instruction is made more understandable by the display of drawings or photographs that allow students to hear English words (Here & Jordan, 2020). This activity allowed the student to have a starting point that included scaffolding in a multitude of ways and was different than weekend writing, which was completely independent.


Another way I scaffolded the student was by verbal scaffolding, which is information that is presented or explained to the students during instruction (Hult, 2022). I slowed down my speech and reinforced the crucial parts of verbs and nouns when giving directions. I found it essential also to reinforce when the student was choosing the correct answer and asking questions like, "why does this word not make sense?" This way, the student has to think about what they have learned and use new knowledge to construct their ideas (Mairia, 2022). When giving the pre-test and talking about verbs, I did not go as into depth as I did for my modified lesson. When I did the lesson with the worksheet provided, I made sure to explain the content multiple times in a few different ways. This way, I was certain the student would understand the concept and grasp the information (Maria, 2022). With this particular student, I notice frustration in a whole group setting. I believe the frustration comes from not being able to understand the directions the first time through. When in a smaller group setting, I was able to repeat directions and change the wording to help the student thrive.


Overall, I think scaffolding was an excellent technique to help this student complete his weekend writing correctly. Vygotsky defines the zone of proximal development as the difference between the current level of cognitive development and the potential level of cognitive development (Kurt, 2020). With the pre-test, I was able to see where the student was cognitively. The student was not able to use the correct tenses for his weekend writing. While scaffolding and working more closely with the student, I was able to see the potential level he had. When he used the correct tense in his new weekend writing, this potential level soon became his actual level. This case study was a prime example of how using different techniques of scaffolding can benefit the ESL learner in your everyday classroom. The great thing about scaffolding is that there are so many different ways to do it, and you can personalize it to each child's needs.

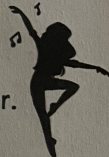
## Artifacts


This weekend I play  
games with my fran  
it was os fun


Pre-Test

1 The dog run/runs down the street. 

2 The cat plays/played with her toy yesterday. 

3 Yesterday, I danced/dancing with my sister. 

4 On Friday, I shops/shopped with my mother. 

5 This weekend, I swam/swimming in the pool. 

Verb Worksheet from Modified  
Lesson

This weekend I played  
with my brother. It was  
fun.

Post Modified Lesson

## References

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