

2000

## **Emergent literacy and second language development : a case study of six English language learners in a Structured English Immersion kindergarten**

Katherine Dixson-Clark  
*California State University, Monterey Bay*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps\\_thes](https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes)

---

### **Recommended Citation**

Dixson-Clark, Katherine, "Emergent literacy and second language development : a case study of six English language learners in a Structured English Immersion kindergarten" (2000). *Capstone Projects and Master's Theses*. 228.

[https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps\\_thes/228](https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes/228)

This Master's Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ CSUMB. It has been accepted for inclusion in Capstone Projects and Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ CSUMB. Unless otherwise indicated, this project was conducted as practicum not subject to IRB review but conducted in keeping with applicable regulatory guidance for training purposes. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@csumb.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@csumb.edu).

EMERGENT LITERACY AND SECOND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT:  
A CASE STUDY OF SIX ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN A  
STRUCTURED ENGLISH IMMERSION KINDERGARTEN.

By  
Katherine Dixson-Clark

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts  
in Education (Multicultural/Bilingual Studies)

California State University, Monterey Bay

December 2000

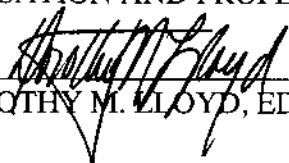
© 2000 by Katherine Dixson-Clark. All Rights Reserved

EMERGENT LITERACY AND SECOND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT:  
A CASE STUDY OF SIX ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN A STRUCTURED  
ENGLISH IMMERSION KINDERGARTEN

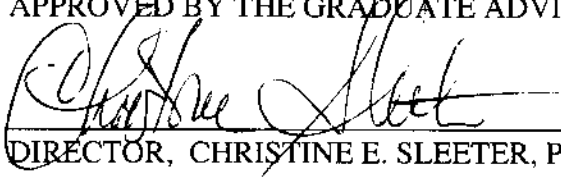
BY

KATHERINE DIXSON-CLARK

APPROVED BY THE DEAN OF THE CENTER FOR COLLABORATIVE  
EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
DOROTHY M. LLOYD, ED.D. 12/22/00  
DATE

APPROVED BY THE GRADUATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
DIRECTOR, CHRISTINE E. SLEETER, PH.D. 12-22-2000  
DATE

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
THESIS ADVISOR, MARGARET C. LAUGHLIN, ED.D. Dec. 21, 2000  
DATE

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
CAPSTONE ADVISOR, KANI A. BLACKWELL, ED.D. 12-22-2000  
DATE

## **Abstract**

**Emergent Literacy and Second Language Acquisition:  
A Case Study of Six English Language Learners in a Structured English  
Immersion Program.**

**By  
Katherine Dixson-Clark**

This case study attempts to examine the literacy development in English of six young ELLs in a SEI kindergarten over the course of one academic school year. Since the passage of Proposition 227, young children who enter school with little or no English are expected to become literate in their non-native language within one to two years, progressing at the same rate of literacy acquisition as their English only counterparts. The purpose of this case study is to examine how six English Language Learners (ELLs), not yet literate in their first language, develop as emergent readers and writers in their second language within one academic year of kindergarten in a Structured English Immersion (SEI) program. This study looks at the patterns of their literacy development and determines whether these students are indeed ready for the rigors of an English-only at the conclusion of the school year.

## **Acknowledgements**

First, thank you to the families of the students who granted me permission to work with their children.

Many thanks to Dr. Kani Blackwell and Dr. Peggy Laughlin for their guidance and professionalism in helping me write this thesis.

Special thanks to my partner teacher, Karen Vanderveen and our instructional assistant Rose Hernandez. You are BOTH true professional educators.

And finally, and most importantly, thank you to my Portuguese love, Doug for your support and never-ending optimism.

# Table of Contents

<b>Chapter I.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Introduction.....	1
Statement of the Problem/Purpose.....	1
School Background.....	2
Definition of Terms.....	4
Background to the Study.....	6
Limitations.....	7
Overview of Project.....	8
<b>Chapter II.....</b>	<b>10</b>
Literature Review.....	10
<i>Second Language Acquisition</i> .....	11
<i>SEI Program Models</i> .....	12
<i>Second Language Literacy and Young ELL Students</i> .....	14
<b>Chapter III.....</b>	<b>17</b>
General Research Design.....	17
Setting.....	17
Overview of the SEI Program and SEI Teacher.....	18
Research Participants.....	22
Data Collection.....	26
Data Analysis.....	27
<b>Chapter IV.....</b>	<b>29</b>
Data Analysis.....	29
<i>Participant A</i> .....	29
<i>Participant B</i> .....	32
<i>Participant C</i> .....	34
<i>Participant D</i> .....	36
<i>Participant E</i> .....	38
<i>Participant F</i> .....	41
Summary of Findings.....	43
<b>Chapter V.....</b>	<b>49</b>
Discussion, Conclusions, Recommendations, and Areas for Future Studies.....	49
<i>Discussion</i> .....	49

*Conclusions*.....50  
*Recommendations*.....51  
*Areas for Future Studies*.....53  
Final Reflections.....54

**References**.....56

**Appendixes**

**A**.....60  
**B**.....62  
**C**.....63  
**D**.....64

# Figures

Bilingual Syntax Measure scores  
(September 1999 and May 2000)

	Page:
Figure 1: Participant A.....	30
Figure 2: Participant B.....	32
Figure 3: Participant C.....	35
Figure 4: Participant D.....	37
Figure 5: Participant E.....	39
Figure 6: Participant F .....	41



# Chapter I

## **Introduction**

In June of 1998, California's public schools were challenged with the passage of Proposition 227. This proposition, based on the assumption that children should learn English by being "immersed" in English, mandates that all Limited English Proficient (LEP) children be placed into Structured Immersion in English (SEI) classes where they will be instructed "overwhelmingly in English", a term yet to be defined by the law, for one year before entering into English only classrooms the following school year. These children who enter kindergarten with limited or no spoken English, are required to learn to read and write in English by a process determined solely by the school district. The Proposition places these young language minority students into English-only programs with a view to competing academically with native English speakers by first or second grade. Without the benefits of first language literacy the concern thus arises as how to best guide these students in second language literacy so that they will be ready for the rigors of English-only programs.

## **Statement of the Problem/Purpose**

The purpose of this case study is thus to examine how English Language Learners (ELLs), not yet literate in their first language, develop as emergent readers and writers in their second language within one academic year of kindergarten in a SEI program. Focusing on six ELL kindergarten students

enrolled in a SEI program, the project will summarize the academic program developed by the Structured English Immersion teacher who is also the researcher and author of this paper and examine the patterns of each child's emergent literacy in English. There will also be a discussion on how the case study participants perceive themselves as readers and writers in English and what kinds of insights their responses may provide us when developing and implementing SEI programs throughout our schools.

The study will address the following questions:

- What does emergent English literacy development look like for English Language Learners (ELL) in a Structured English Immersion (SEI) program?
- How do children in a SEI program demonstrate knowledge about English literacy concepts?
- How do ELL students perceive themselves as readers and writers in English?
- How is the core curriculum being delivered? (What kinds of implications does this have on what a SEI program should look like?)

### **School Background**

This case study was conducted over the 1999-2000 academic school year at North Elementary School. Located in the Central Valley of Salinas, California, North Elementary has been serving the local population since 1935. Originally built for a student population of 500, North Elementary served close to 900

students during the time frame of this case study. The diversified student population was broken down into 69% Hispanic, 17% white, 3% Filipino, 5.7% African American, 3.2% Asian and 1% of multiple ethnicity. Approximately 43% of the student populations were classified English language learners with Spanish being the primary language of these students. As a school-based Title I school, Santa Rita's students were all eligible for extra services in the area of reading and over 70% of the student population qualified for the free and reduced lunch program.

Traditionally, North Elementary School offered two different programs at the primary K-3 level; bilingual and English-only. Since the passage of Proposition 227, North School implemented a third program, Structured English Immersion (SEI). Within the time frame of this case study, the SEI program at North School had yet to be defined by a Board-approved curriculum. The only ELD materials and/or curriculum provided for the SEI teachers was an English language development kit from Hampton Brown. Each SEI teacher was also given the district adopted literature program in English yet most ELL teachers pointed out that these materials and lessons were too advanced for students learning to read and write in their second language. Consequently many of the SEI teachers had to draw on other resources to complete their program.

The make-up of students in the SEI classes is worth noting here. In the past, the bilingual programs at North Elementary at the K-3 level always had a group of English-only or Fully English Proficient (FEP) students enrolled in the same class. These students received their content instruction in English yet

were exposed to Spanish as a second language and also served as English speaking role models to the ELL students. Since the implementation of SEI, SEI classes are filled exclusively with students from non-English speaking backgrounds, creating segregated classrooms based on English language proficiency. In addition to segregated classes, during the time of this study, North School District had not yet reduced its kindergarten class sizes to 20 and below as in many other districts around the area. Consequently, the SEI kindergarten had an average of 29 ELL students enrolled the whole year with the teaching staff being the primary English-only role model available during the school day.

### **Definition of Terms**

In order to understand the philosophy behind second language acquisition and its implications for our language minority students, a definition of the current terminology is necessary. The following are frequently used acronyms or terms used when discussing programs and classifications for students who come from non-English speaking backgrounds.

**ELL:** English Language Learner. The current name for language minority students who are not yet fully proficient in English.

**FEP:** Fully English Proficient. A classification for those students whose home language is not English yet still test at a fluent level in English (Oral fluency for young students and both oral and written fluency for older students).

**NEP:** Non-English proficient. Now replaced by the term ELL, NEP indicates a child who enters school with no English speaking skills.

**LEP:** Limited English proficient. Also replaced by the term ELL, LEP indicates a child with limited English speaking skills.

**BSM:** Bilingual Syntax Measure. The BSM is one of many oral and written assessment tools used by school districts to determine first and second language levels of all in-coming students. The oral assessment is scored 1-5. A score of 1 indicates a NEP student; a score of 2 or 3 a LEP student and a score of 4 or 5 indicates fully English proficient.

**CLAD:** Cross-cultural Language and Academic Development credential. This certification provides training in second language acquisition and learning and also qualifies the classroom teacher to work with ELL students.

**SEI:** Structured English Immersion. An educational program for language minority students to acquire English as a second language. Teachers of this program require special certification (at least a CLAD credential or certification), which ensures training in the philosophy and methodology of second language learning and acquisition. Under the current Proposition 227, SEI classes must be

taught virtually all in English but with a curriculum that is designed for children who are learning the language.

***Bilingual Education:*** This term encompasses a wide variety of models, including dual immersion, late-exit and early exit/transitional programs. Some program models are as follows:

- **Dual Immersion program:** This program requires equal numbers of students who speak the minority language and native or fully proficient English speakers. Instruction is divided equally between the two languages with all students learning in their primary and secondary language.
- **Late-Exit bilingual program:** This program ensures primary language development throughout the student's schooling with increasing levels of second language development occurring over time.
- **Early Exit/Transitional bilingual program:** This program develops the primary language until the second language is acquired. Once a student is able to perform both orally and academically in the second language, there is little if any primary language support.

### **Background to the study**

The importance of examining the emergent literacy of second language learners is key to establishing solid Structured English Immersion programs for young language minority children in our schools. According to Clay (1991) emergent literacy is the process by which children become aware of print in their surroundings. But what does this look like for children who may not speak the

language of their surroundings? Since the passage of Proposition 227, young children who enter school with little or no English are expected to become literate in non-native language within one to two years, progressing at the same rate of literacy acquisition as their English only counterparts. There has been much research on how second language learners develop as readers and writers in their second language. In a summary of recent research on emergent literacy and second language learners, Hsu (1995) concluded that children learn to read by reading and to write by writing through authentic language experiences. Research conducted by Perotta (1994) determined that second language acquisition is not a linear process but must be presented in a meaningful context. Thomas and Collier (1997) in their continuing longitudinal study to determine how much time is needed for language minority students to reach and sustain on-grade level achievement in their second language report on the importance of strong cognitive academic development in both the primary and secondary language as an indicator of school effectiveness. Several researchers also stress the importance of recognizing the home culture and language of second language learners as they are instructed in their non-native language (Cornell, 1995; Perez, 1996). It is from such studies that this case study is developed; how do beginning ELLs become literate in English?

### **Limitations**

This study is limited to a specific group of kindergarten students in one school in California. The type of program structure and assessment procedures

indicates some limitations. First, the kindergartners used as case study participants were chosen solely based on their language scores on the Bilingual Syntax Measure (BSM). Each of the case study students scored only a 1 on the BSM, signifying beginning ELL student. However, kindergarteners are typically given the assessment the first two weeks of school, which can be an extremely overwhelming period for those students with little or no previous pre-school experiences. As a result, a kindergartner may not speak to the person administering the test, guaranteeing a score of 1 and thus preventing the teacher from knowing the true English language level. Another limitation to the study was the level of participation of the researcher. As the author of this paper was both the researcher and classroom teacher, it was difficult to find time to conduct observations of the students engaged in various literacy activities.

### **Overview of Project**

In light of Proposition 227 and the establishment of the SEI program in our schools, the question of literacy in a second language is a concern as parents make conscious decisions to place their children in SEI programs. The establishment of SEI programs, defined by Proposition 227 to be taught "overwhelmingly in English", leaves little guidance as to the structure and implementation of such programs. This study will attempt to examine the development of six young ELLs in a SEI program over the course of one academic school year. In Chapter II, there will be a discussion of current research on emergent literacy, second language instruction and acquisition as



well the kinds of SEI models already in existence. Chapter III will describe the methodology of qualitative research conducted in the classroom while Chapter IV will examine the findings. The concluding Chapter V will focus on the conclusions, recommendations and implications of the findings on our young language minority students in SEI programs.

## Chapter II

### Literature Review

With the advent of a new millennium, California's schools are experiencing an ever-increasing population of English language learners in its public school. According to the California Department of Education Language Census, the number of ELL students has increased from 986,462 in 1990-91 to over 1.4 million students in the 1998-99 school year (Spring Census Bureau, 1998). Along with this increase continues the political debate on how best to educate these language minority students. With much of the research on bilingual education pointing to the success of late-exit programs in producing truly bilingual and biliterate students (Cummins, 1989; Collier, 1995; Cornell, 1995), the current political climate of California unfortunately does not allow full fruition of students in solid bilingual programs. In contrast to research that advocates late-exit bilingual programs, California's voters passed Proposition 227 in June 1998. In Article 2 of the proposition, entitled English Language Education, the law mandates the following:

"...All children in California public schools shall be taught English by being taught in English. .In particular, this shall require that all children be placed in English language classrooms. Children who are English learners shall be educated through sheltered English immersion during a temporary transition period not normally intended to exceed one year..Once English learners have acquired a good working knowledge of English, they shall be transferred to English mainstream classrooms" (California Education Code, Chapter 3, Article 1. Section 305).

However, with the passage of Proposition 227, significant problems and many uncertainties that may affect the success and future of California's 1.4 million ELL students surface. This literature review will thus discuss relevant research findings on the following issues:

- Second Language Acquisition
- SEI Program Models
- Second Language Literacy and Young ELL Students

### **Second Language Acquisition**

The political trends behind the passing of Proposition 227 raises the question of whether students, after one year of instruction in a SEI program are adequately prepared to enter English-only classrooms in such a short time as mandated by the new law. At the heart of the debate on second language acquisition is the difference between oral and academic proficiency.

Conversational success in a second language does not guarantee academic success in that language. There is much second language acquisition research concluding that conversational language acquisition takes from three to five years while acquisition of academic language can take up to five to seven years (Cummins, 1989, Hakuta et al. 2000). Mitchell and colleagues (1999) reconfirmed evidence that full academic fluency does, in fact, take up to seven to eight years. Collier (1995) also found that "...in U.S. schools where all instruction is given through the second language (English), non-native English speakers of English with no schooling in their first language take 7-10 years or more to reach

age and grade-level norms of their English speaking peers”(p. 7). However, the current assumption of Proposition 227 is that a child who speaks English with “reasonable fluency” is thus cognitively prepared for mainstream English-only classes. Although the proposition allows districts to determine when and how each ELL student will be mainstreamed, language minority students realistically may need up to four to five years in SEI programs in order to attain the cognitive skills needed to function in mainstream English-only classrooms. This leads to potential segregation of students as students not yet “reasonably fluent” in English must then continue time in SEI classrooms with other ELL students for an indefinite amount of time, a phenomenon that is common for many immigrant language minority students (Valdes, 1998).

### **SEI Program Models**

One glaring weakness since the passage of Proposition 227 concerns the program definition and implementation of SEI in public schools. Unlike bilingual programs, Structured English Immersion programs have yet to be clearly defined, an oversight that may prevent ELLs from succeeding academically in their second language. In a recent study by Gandara et al. (2000) analyzing the effects of Proposition 227 on the instruction of limited English students, schools found that districts across the state are defining and implementing very different SEI programs, leading to teacher frustration and confusion over the lack of clear guidelines. Such nebulous wording of the new law as “reasonable fluency in English”, “overwhelmingly in English”, and “temporary transition period” has forced California’s public schools to implement Structured/Sheltered English

Immersion classrooms as a quick program solution in which students from non-English speaking backgrounds are placed (Quezada, Ramirez & Wiley, 2000). However, if language minority students are to successfully acquire their second language orally and cognitively, solid and educationally sound instruction will be required, not "quick fix" programs that are not yet defined.

So what exactly is SEI? Within the guidelines of the new law, SEI programs in the public schools must not only develop oral fluency in the second language, but also must concurrently seek to develop the cognitive and academic skills of ELL students in order for language minority students to be prepared for the rigors of mainstream English-only programs. However, at the current time, there seems to be a lack of program models on which to base SEI programs. Porter (2000), an active proponent of Structured English Immersion for ELL students, defines an appropriate English-immersion model as either a "...total immersion program (the California model) with substantially separate classrooms for one year" (p. 6), or the Newton Program from Massachusetts. According to Porter (1990) this Newton program places children from non-English speaking backgrounds for part of the day in classes with other ELLs and part of the day in mainstream English-only classrooms. Baker (1998), another SEI proponent, admits that there are few developed and tested SEI programs. He reviews a few studies that point to SEI's success. Gersten (1999) also states that there is limited research in the area of English language development for ELL students but does provide some generalized instructional principles for teachers. However there are yet to emerge studies on the variation and

successes of particular SEI programs that could provide solid program models for California's public schools.

### **Second Language Literacy and Young ELL Students**

Another issue that arises from the implementation of Proposition 227 is that of second language emergent literacy of young children and how English literacy can be best developed in students from non-English speaking backgrounds. Essentially when ELL children are placed in SEI classrooms, they are expected to learn to read and write in their second language.

Before reviewing the literature on emergent literacy and young second language learners, a definition of emergent literacy is necessary. For the sake of this study, emergent literacy will be defined according to Marie Clay's (1991) definition in her book, Becoming Literate: the construction of inner control. A child in the emergent literacy stage is beginning to notice his/her print rich environment. The child should have a preconceived notion of what reading and writing is, depending on his/her previous experiences with print. Children enter at varying levels, depending on the kinds of literacy experiences.

Thus when a child enters kindergarten for the first time, he/she brings a wealth of individualized information as to exactly what it means to read and write. With the beginning of kindergarten, teachers must assess what a child knows and does not know as a starting point to instruction and use this knowledge as a basis from which to start more formalized instruction about rules and structure of language. Teachers must also be in tune with the stages that children pass

through on their journey to becoming readers and writers in order to provide instruction that will guide students through these stages. A variety of assessments should be administered that determines various literacy skills as well as observations of students actually engaged in literacy activities.

In relating emergent literacy to language minority students placed in SEI programs, several studies have found that ELL students also pass through the similar phases of emergent literacy in their native language. Perez (1996) in her review of emergent literacy studies from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds, states that "...[m]any similarities in the process of literacy development were found across languages and writing strategies" (p. 158). This means that children being taught in their second language will naturally use what they have experienced outside the classroom as a starting point for their literacy acquisition, including using their primary language as a way of making sense of their world. Both Perotta (1994) and Hsu (1995) in their review of several studies, conclude that young children from non-English speaking backgrounds are able to become literate in English as their second language providing that reading and writing are taught in meaningful contexts, using the experiences and knowledge that each child brings to the classroom. Awareness of this reliance on the primary language and its influence on second language acquisition may aid in developing SEI programs yet the uncertainty however remains whether second language literacy can occur within one academic school year as specified by the new law.

This uncertainty thus provides the impetus and need for this study. How do young beginning English language learners enrolled in a Structured English Immersion classroom become both orally and academically proficient in English ready to enter mainstream English only classrooms in the first grade and is this an achievable reality for our language minority students?



## Chapter III

### General Research Design

The research design of this project was a case study. Throughout an entire academic year, six kindergarten English language learners (ELLs) enrolled in a Structured English Immersion (SEI) classroom were assessed, observed, and interviewed to determine each child's development of second language literacy.

### Setting

The participants in this case study all attended North Elementary School, located in the California's Salinas valley during the 1999-2000 school year. During the time frame of this case study, North Elementary served approximately 43% English Language Learner (ELL) students from kindergarten through fifth grade. The six ELL kindergartners who participated in this case study were enrolled in the SEI program during their kindergarten year. The classroom consisted of an average of 29 ELL students of varying oral English levels under the direction of the SEI teacher, her partner teacher and a three-hour paraprofessional, all of whom were bilingual (Spanish/English). The SEI students attended classes during the morning kindergarten session while a primary language class (known at the school site as the "bilingual" class) was held in the afternoon. Because of the use of both English and Spanish within the

same classroom, all printed materials displayed in the classroom were color coordinated to help the children discern between English and Spanish writing. Labeling or classroom display writing in English was done in blue while anything in Spanish was written in red.

### **Overview of the SEI Program and SEI teacher at North Elementary School**

A discussion of the SEI program implemented by the kindergarten teacher (also the researcher and author of this study) involved in this case study is necessary to clarify the environment of the classroom in which the case study participants were instructed.

Although the ultimate goal of the teacher for her students was oral and cognitive English proficiency, the SEI program in her classroom was conducted orally using both the students' first and second language. This oral bilingualism was conscientiously used as a means of validating her ELL student's home culture. Freire and Macedo in their book Literacy: reading the word and the world, state that,

*“ [Educators] need to use their students' cultural universe as a point of departure, enabling students to recognize themselves as possessing a specific and important cultural identity” (Freire and Macedo, 1987. p.127).*

With this in mind, the SEI teacher attempted to stay attuned to the background knowledge and experiences that each child brought to the classroom. She considered that helping students use what they knew and what

they were familiar with provided them with the safest and most successful means of becoming orally and academically proficient in their second language.

Gonzalez and Yawkey (1994) in their study on how reading comprehension in the first and second language is influenced by sociocultural, cognitive and linguistic factors state that there is a lack of research about how children focusing on reading comprehension in their second language are influenced by cognitive, linguistic and sociocultral factors from the home culture. For this reason, the SEI teacher, in her usage of both the students' first and second language, was recognizing these potential influential factors in the manner in which she was implementing her SEI program.

In terms of how each section of the day was organized and implemented and which language was used depended on the goal of the lesson, especially at the beginning of the year. For example, during the Opening Circle, the teacher emphasized English language development, thus the majority of the songs, poems, and exercises were conducted in English. However during the initial Morning Message lessons where concepts of print were taught and reinforced through guided writing, much of the explanations were done in Spanish as the goal was to emphasize the concepts used in reading and writing and not English language development. So the children would learn why periods were used at the end of sentences in Spanish, but they would learn the actual vocabulary word in English. The use of Spanish by the teacher declined slowly over the course of the year as the children's understanding of spoken English improved, but the

children were always free to express themselves in whatever language they chose.

Much of the more individualized academic instruction took place during the station rotation period of the day. Each child was placed in a heterogeneously leveled group and rotated through four activities every day. During this time, each child would also come together in a small homogeneously leveled reading group which would meet with the teacher for directed and guided readings on a daily basis. For these reading groups, the teacher created a series of leveled books that emphasized sight word recognition, new vocabulary, and varied levels of sentence structure, depending on the academic level of each group.

Below is a breakdown of the daily schedule and the language of instruction used when applicable. The classroom schedule remained basically the same throughout the course of the year and was designed to allow children multiple occasions to interact with literacy, whether through reading and writing or both.

**7:55-8:10** Free book choice (Children could chose Spanish and/or English books)

**8:15-8:45** Opening Circle (Primarily conducted in English)

- Attendance
- Songs and poetry
- Movement (dance, Zoo Phonics, stretching, etc.)

**8:50-9:00** Morning Message (Guided and Shared Writing; vocabulary in English, concepts introduced in Spanish): This is where the children learned and participated in the writing process with the guidance of the teacher.

**9:00-9:50** Station Rotation and pull-out reading groups

- Station 1: Journals (Children were free to draw and write about any topic they chose)
- Station 2: Art/Computers (Activity was explained in English with clarification done in Spanish)
- Station 3: Letters (stamps, poems, handwriting, chalkboards, felt boards, etc; English used when teacher worked at the station with students.)
- Station 4: Math (Primarily taught in English with Spanish used only for clarification)

**9:50-10:00** Author's chair

**10:00-10:15** Calendar (Primarily in English)

**10:15-10:30** Snack

**10:30-10:40** Story (Storied read in English and/or Spanish)

**10:45-11:05** Recess

**11:05-11:20** Closing Circle

### **Research Participants**

The research participants were chosen based on their enrollment in the SEI classroom and on their oral score on the BSM test administered by the school's bilingual resource teacher in September 1999. Each of the case study participants scored a "1" on the Bilingual Syntax Measure (BSM) test, indicating that each child was at a beginning level of oral English development. From these scores, eight students were targeted and were narrowed down to six students based on their academic performance by the end of the school year in June 2000. Three boys and three girls were chosen; one high achiever, one middle achiever and one low achiever. The research participants' names have not been used to protect them and their families' anonymity. The following is a description of the six case study participants.

*Participant A* Participant A, a female, born in May 1994 was the middle child. Her older sister attended the same school in the second grade while her younger brother was still a toddler. Her family had a tradition of migrancy thus qualifying Participant A for county migrant services. She had attended migrant pre-school and summer school prior to beginning kindergarten in the Fall of 1999. Academically strong, Participant A entered kindergarten already beginning to read in her first language, Spanish although she rarely conversed freely with the teachers or her peers in either Spanish or English.

*Participant B* Participant B, also a female and a middle child in a family of four children, entered school extremely shy. Born in February 1994, she had never attended pre-school prior to the 1999-2000 school year. The family lived with the grandparents of her father, who had passed away just three years before.

Participant B often drew her father in family portraits. She seemed to have a difficult time making friends and often chose to play exclusively with her cousin who was also in the class. She struggled at the beginning of the year with the kindergarten curriculum, but seemed to progress quickly by the end of the year.

*Participant C* Participant C, a female, also entered school with no pre-school experience. Born in September 1994, Participant C was the oldest daughter in her family with a younger two-year old sister. She enjoyed socializing and chatting with friends although she seemed to struggle with the academic expectations of the kindergarten curriculum.

*Participant D* Participant D, a male, born in January 1994, was a lively boy who to seemed to have a difficult time transitioning to the structured routine of kindergarten. He also had never attended pre-school. However, once he understood the rules and consequences of the misbehavior or disruption in the classroom, he responded well to positive affirmations and blossomed both academically and socially. He was a quick learner.

*Participant E* Participant E, a male, born in January 1994, was a middle child in a family of three children. He never attended pre-school. He had a difficult time making close friends and preferred to socialize with his female cousin who was also in the class. He was a quick learner who enjoyed orally playing with language; he often made up silly rhymes and words in English.

*Participant F* Participant F, a male, born in February 1994, had attended migrant pre-school the previous year. The oldest child of two, he had a tendency to fight with other students when excited. He was also constantly concerned with the behavior and actions of others. His behavior and academic progress improved during the winter months when his mother was not working, but he seemed to struggle to control himself at other times during the year. He was a sensitive child and responded well to positive reinforcement.

### **Data Collection**

Once each of the participants was chosen, the parents of these students were approached during parent-teacher conference week during October 1999. The research project was explained, including the kinds of assessment tools to be used, why their children qualified for the study and how their child's participation would help the researcher (also the classroom teacher) in her instruction. The researcher also explained the rights of the parents to not consent to participation or to withdraw from participation should they not feel comfortable with any part of the research project.



The following assessments from Marie Clay's An observational survey of early literacy achievement (1993) were used for all students enrolled in the class:

- *Letter Identification Score Sheet* (in English): This assessment tests each student's letter recognition, both capital and lowercase letters and sound knowledge.
- *Concepts about Print* (in Spanish): This assessment is used to gauge how each student has learned or is learning about the way languages are printed.
- *Writing Vocabulary Observation Sheet* (in English): This assessment allows each child to use what they already know or are learning about how language is written.

The Letter Identification and Concepts of Print assessments were completed in September 1999 and again in May 2000 to provide a beginning and end-of-the-year comparison. The Writing Vocabulary assessment was started in January 2000 and given to the participants on a monthly basis until May 2000.

Classroom writing samples were also completed and collected on a monthly basis as well as writing samples from their daily journals. These writing samples and assessments guided the majority of this project as they seemed to provide the most information when examining how the case study participants were developing as readers and writers. The case study participants were also observed during reading and writing activities on an average of about one time a week in approximately two to four minute blocks of time. However these

observations, used to gauge how the children were developing as readers and writers in English when not receiving direct instruction from a teacher represented only a minor tool in this research project.

Interviews were also administered to each case study participant towards the end of the academic school year. The first interview occurred in May 2000. The children were interviewed about their feelings as a reader and writer in English. Each of the case study participants were asked the following questions in Spanish:

1. Te gusta leer? Que tipos de cosas te gusta leer? Do you like to read?  
What kinds of things do you like to read?
2. Prefieres leer en espanol o en ingles? Porque? Do you prefer reading in Spanish or in English? Why?
3. Te gusta escribir? Que tipos de cosas te gusta escribir? Do you like to write? What kinds of things do you like to write about?
4. Prefieres escribir en espanol o en ingles? Porque? Do you prefer writing in Spanish or in English?
5. Piensas que eres un buen lector? Un buen escritor? Do you think you are a good reader? A good writer?

The second interview took place in June 2000. Each of the case study participants was asked to discuss his/her favorite journal writings. As the children

were showing the researcher their favorite writings, the researcher asked the following questions in Spanish and in English:

1. Enseñame el cuento favorito que escribiste en tu diario. Show me your favorite story you wrote in your journal.
2. Porque es este tu cuento favorito? Why is this your favorite story?
3. De que se trata este cuento? What is this story about?
4. Leame tu cuentito. Read your story to me.

The final assessment was the BSM in June 2000. This assessment was given to compare the final oral English level of the case study participants at the conclusion of their academic school year.

### **Data Analysis**

The data amassed from this case study required analysis and descriptions of a variety of qualitative research tools used.

First, Letter Recognition, the Concepts About Print, and Writing Vocabulary were compared since each of these assessments provided a beginning or middle-of-the-year and an end-of-the-year score.

In addition to these scored assessments, each case study participant's writing samples were examined to indicate trends in the literacy development of ELLs learning to read and write in their second language. Samples from different days and months were analyzed to show what emergent literacy looks like for

ELLs and how each participant internalized the process of learning to read and write in English.

Observations of the case study participants took place primarily during the journal writing time and author's chair. Observations focused on each child's writing and reading topics in order to examine the skills and techniques used when freely engaging in literacy activities. As was mentioned earlier, these observations only played a minor role in the data collection for this case study.

Finally, the answers to the interview questions asked of the case study participants towards the end of the academic year in a SEI program were examined to determine how each individual ELL perceives him/herself as a reader and writer in English.

Organization of the participants' assessments, writing samples, observations, and responses were filed in individual folders per child. Data collection ended at the termination of the school year in June 2000.

## Chapter IV

### Data Analysis

The presentation of data collected is organized by case study participant. A comparison of beginning and end-of-the-year assessments is completed as well as a detailed examination of their growth as readers and writers in their writing samples and daily journal writings. The answers to the interview questions are also summarized when the information pertained to the theme of this case study.

### Participant A

Participant A showed growth on all oral and academic assessments administered over the course of the school year.

Her oral English improved from her initial score of 1 out of a possible 5 points on the Bilingual Syntax Measure (BSM) to a level three in May 2000, officially reclassifying her at an intermediate English Language Learner (ELL) although she rarely conversed with peers or teachers.

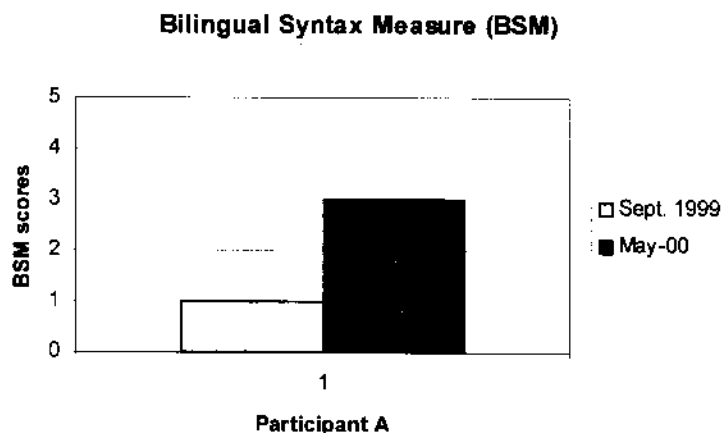


Figure 1

In her score on the Letter Identification assessment, administered in September 1999 and again in May 2000, she went from a 19 in Spanish-only letter recognition to a perfect score of 54 in English letter recognition by the end of the year.

On the Concepts of Print assessment, she scored a 7 out of 24 in September 1999 to a 16 out of 24 in May 2000. This was an improvement of 9 points.

Her initial Writing Vocabulary assessment in January 2000 shows that Participant A was able to write seven words (the names of the people in her family and three sight words). Her writing vocabulary increased over the remainder of the school year until she was able to confidently write 18 words (three names and fifteen sight or sound out words) in English by May 2000, showing an increase of nine words.

Participant A's writing development became quite complex toward the end of the year. In January, 2000 when the students began writing in Daily Journals

Participant A began with detailed pictures. After one mini-lesson, during this time, when the teacher showed the students how to use the Sounds Chart to help them write beginning sounds of words they wanted to write down, Participant A immediately began writing beginning sounds in her Journal, eventually writing two sounds to represent each word. By March of 2000, she was beginning to write down full sentences, using the sight words she had learned but also attempting more complex words such as "pumpkin" and "chocolate ice cream", using very appropriate sound-spelling patterns. By the end of April 2000 and beginning of May 2000, Participant A was easily writing two to three sentences in some Journal entries with varied sentence structures, including an occasional sentence in Spanish.

When asked during the June 2000 interview about which of the stories she had written in her Journal was her favorite and why, Participant A showed the researcher an April 2000 journal writing about a house and a "smiley face". According to Participant A, she chose this particular page because the picture she had drawn was pretty and she liked "smiley faces". She was able to successfully read her story to the interviewer and each word in her story had either been correctly written or had been approached with skilled estimated spelling patterns.

In the May 2000 interview when the participants were asked about their feelings as readers and writers in English, Participant A responded that she preferred to read in English yet also added that she preferred to write in Spanish because she wanted "...to understand". This response suggests that for her,

writing required understanding when creating one's own stories while reading did not.

### **Participant B**

Participant B also demonstrated improvement on the same scored literacy and oral assessments yet was somewhat timid in her abilities. Her initial score of 1 on the BSM increased to a 2 at the conclusion of the school year.

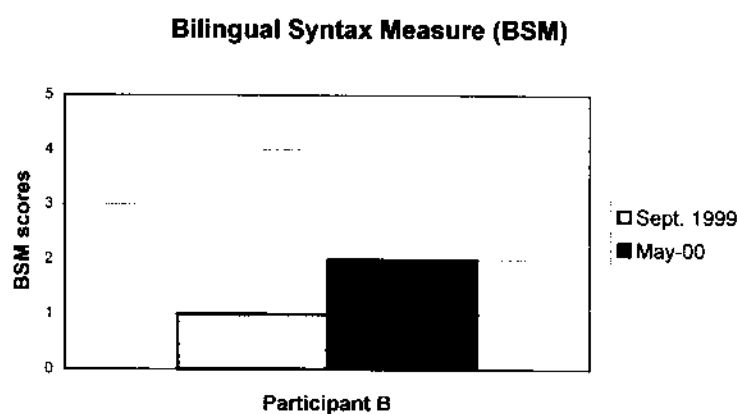


Figure 2

Her score on the Letter Identification assessment increased dramatically from two letters recognized to a perfect score of 54 out of 54.

Her October 1999 Concepts About Print assessment showed her scoring a 9 out of 24 with an increase to 13.5 out of 24 in May 2000, which indicates an improvement of 4.5 points.

The Writing Vocabulary assessment scores increased over the course of the school year as well. Her initial word writing capacity indicates that she could only write five words (her name, a cousin's nickname, "mama", and two sight



words) in January 2000, decreasing to only three words in February 2000, but with a total of 11 words (her name and ten sight words) by May 2000.

Participant B also showed signs of development as a reader and writer in English although she seemed afraid of taking chances. The beginning entries in her Daily Journal showed Participant B drawing detailed pictures, sometimes spending up to three days on the same picture. Some of her pictures contained letter strings as she attempted to “write” a story although she was unable to “read” back her writing to her peers or teacher. Even after the mini-lesson on how to use the Sounds Chart when writing, she still chose not to write any letters. Late in January 2000, Participant B began to turn to print she knows how to read in her choice of books during the free reading time. In one particular classroom observation, Participant B proudly showed the researcher in several different books where she had found the sight words “I”, “my” and “the”. In February 2000, Participant B began to attend to the print around the classroom in her Daily Journal. Her classmates’ names began to appear in her writing as well as words copied from bulletin boards. She also began to write the same random sight words that she was finding in books although she did not use the words to write stories or sentences. By March 2000, Participant B was beginning to use her knowledge of sight words to form simple constructed sentences although when faced with the task of having to write an unknown word on her own, she seemed unable to use appropriate strategies to put her ideas on paper; in one entry, she successfully wrote “I love” and attempted to write a third, unknown word but could not read the word back when asked. At the end of the school year,

Participant B was filling up her pages of her Daily Journal with letter strings, complete with spaces between the words and punctuation indicating that she was beginning to internalize how to write a sentence yet she was still unable to use the sound-letter strategies to write down her ideas in a comprehensible way to the reader.

In the June 2000 interview with Participant B, when asked to show the researcher her favorite journal entry, she chose an entry from April 2000 about a house and rain. According to Participant B, she chose this particular entry because she likes the rain. When asked to read her story, Participant B touches the letter strings and reads, "It is raining on the house". Despite the fact that she knew and recognized the sight words "is" and "the", these words did not appear in her writing. This indicates that Participant B was unable to connect what she knew how to read with writing.

In the interview with Participant B about her feelings as a reader and writer in English, she indicated that she preferred reading in Spanish although she was not receiving any formal instruction in Spanish in school. When asked why she preferred to read in Spanish, she answered that it was easier for her mother to understand stories in Spanish.

### **Participant C**

Participant C's growth over the school year showed improvement in some literacy areas and less improvement in others.

Her initial score of 1 on the BSM increased to a score of 3, also reclassifying her from Beginning English language learner to Intermediate ELL.

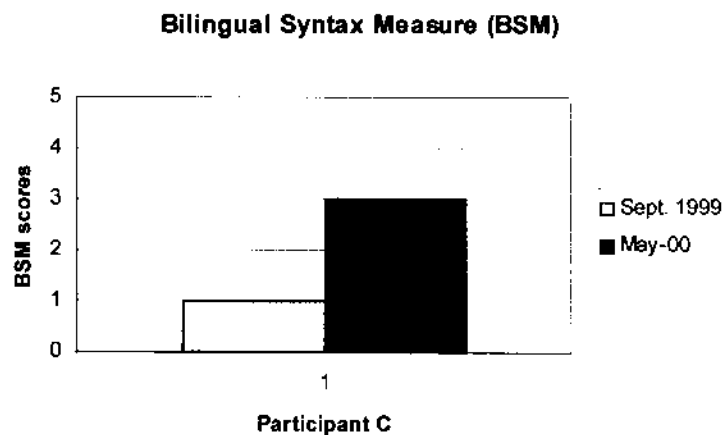


Figure 3

Her scores on the Letter Recognition and Concepts About Print assessments also demonstrate her growth with score of 0 out of 54 increasing to 19 out of 54 letters recognized, and a score of 7 on the Concepts About Print assessment out of 24 increasing to 12 out of 24 by May 2000, a jump of five points.

However, her Writing Vocabulary growth remained somewhat stagnant over the course of the school year. In January 2000, she was able to write three words correctly (her name and two sight words) yet by the May 2000 assessment, although she filled the assessment with letter strings, she again only wrote three words correctly (her name, a friend's name, and one sight word).

Participant C's reading and writing abilities over the course of the year were somewhat limited to writing letter strings and "reading" stories simply by looking at the pictures in books. In her beginning Daily Journal entries,

Participant C either drew pictures with no letter writing or pure letter strings without any pictures to accompany the writing. Even after the mini-lesson on using the Sounds Chart, she continued to either write or draw in each entry, not combining the both of them until March 2000 where her writing began to fill the lines. Her one sight word that she knew at this point, "I", appeared in almost all of her writing, followed by letter strings without spaces. Participant C was observed once during February during Author's Chair "reading" her story to her classmates. She "read" her story in Spanish. Yet in a subsequent Author's Chair observation later on in the year, she began reading her letter-string stories in English, including the use of the word "I", her one sight word that she recognized at that point. This suggests that she was beginning to attach meaning to her writing and was slowly realizing that words were actually represented by letter strings.

During the May 2000 interview about how each student perceived him/herself as a reader and writer in English, Participant C's responses indicated that she was not yet comfortable with her English. She answered that she preferred to both read and write in Spanish, despite having spent almost eight months learning these skills in English.

### **Participant D**

Participant D showed marked growth, both academically and orally over the course of the school year. His September 1999 score of 1 on the oral BSM increased to a 3 in May 2000, reclassifying him from Beginning English language

learner to Intermediate ELL. He seemed to be extremely confident in his English skills as well. During one observation during the teacher's reading of a familiar book in Spanish, Participant D orally translated every page into English.

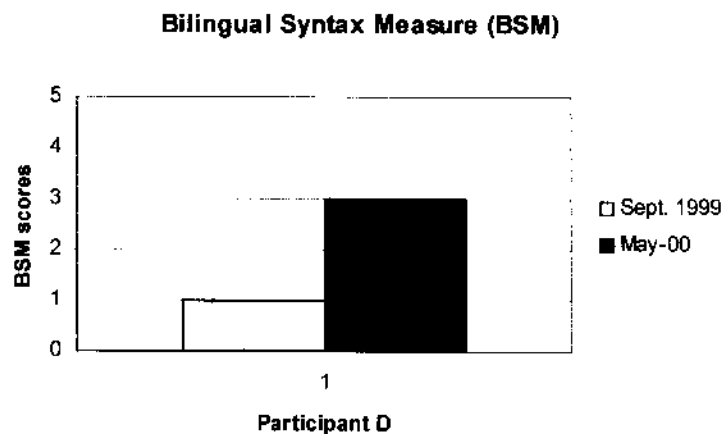


Figure 4

On his initial Letter Recognition and Concepts About Print assessments administered in September 1999, Participant D scored a 1 out of 54 and a 7 out of 24 respectively. By May 2000, Participant D could recognize all 54 letters shown to him. He also scored a 15 out of 24 on the May 2000 Concepts About Print assessment, indicating an increase of eight points.

There was also significant progress in his ability to write words from memory. On the initial Writing Vocabulary assessment, Participant D wrote three words independently (his name, his best friend's name, and one sight word). By May 2000, he wrote 15 words correctly (his name, his best friend's name, his brother's name, and twelve sight and/or sound out words).

Participant D, over the course of the school year, made significant gains as a writer in English. His initial January 2000 journal entries showed him

drawing pictures with no print. He also spent an entire week drawing the same picture with only slight variations in the color used. However in February 2000, he began to write words that corresponded to his picture, using the entire word “mama” and an invented spelling of “house”. Random sight words also began to sprinkle his entries with his first sentence appearing in April 2000 where he wrote and drew about two dinosaurs fighting. This same story appeared for several days and Participant D chose not to use the lines for writing but instead wrote directly next to his picture. The dinosaur theme (which was also the classroom theme) continued on through the beginning of May 2000 where Participant D’s writing topic took on the new character of Digit. In the June 2000 interview about his story writing, Participant D chose his first story about Digit. According to Participant D, he chose that particular entry because he was able to “invent” all the character’s energy.

In the May 2000 interview, Participant D, despite his growth over the course of the school year in both oral and academic English, admitted that he did not enjoy reading in English. Although he responded that he did not find English difficult, he claimed that reading in English was a lot of work. He also responded that he preferred writing in English because he did not know how to write in Spanish.

### **Participant E**

Participant E scores on the oral BSM assessment showed marked improvement in the oral production of English over the course of the school year.

His score of 1 (beginning ELL) increased to level 4 by May 2000, reclassifying him as a Fully English Proficient student (FEP).

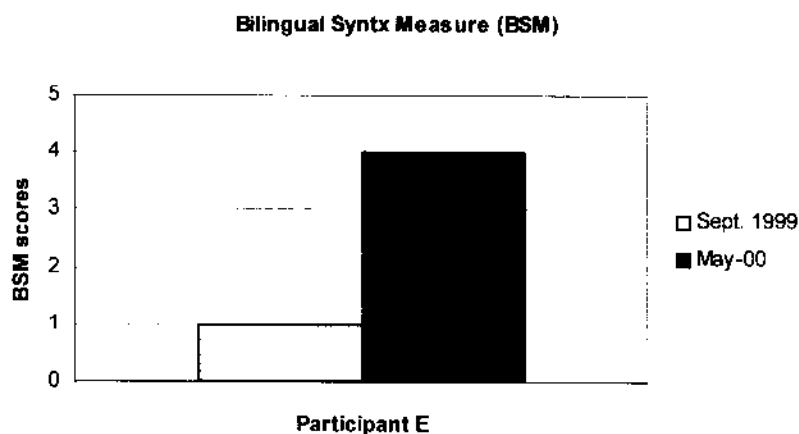


Figure 5

Participant E's literacy growth over the course of the school year demonstrated significant improvement. His September 1999 score on the Letter Recognition assessment indicated that he recognized 0 out of 54 letters, increasing to a score of 52 out of 54 at the conclusion of the school year. This was an increase of 52 points.

His Concepts About Print scores jumped 11 points; in September 1999 he scored a 3 out of 24 while his final assessment in May 2000 showed an increase to 14 out of 24.

There was improvement in his Writing Vocabulary assessments. In January 2000, he was able to write five words independently (his name, his younger brother's name and three sight words). In May 2000, he wrote 11 words (again his name and his younger brother's name as well as nine sight words).

His literacy development as a writer in English began primarily with pictures with no print attached. As he began acquiring a sight word vocabulary, he started using these words in his writing yet they appeared randomly without being attached to the theme of his illustrations. In March, his writing was scattered around the page with no regard to the location of the writing lines on the page. It was in May 2000 that Participant E's writing began to standardize itself. He seemed to suddenly become aware of certain concepts about print. For example, in one entry, the words of his sentence were divided by a hyphen as if to help his audience know that words are separated by spaces. His sentences became more complex as he moved away from his dependency on sight words and began to use a variety of words.

In the May 2000 interview with Participant E, his responses indicated an uncertainty with his oral language skills. He claimed that he preferred to both read and write in Spanish because it was easier for him to understand.



## Participant F

Participant F also showed marked improvement in his oral production of English over the course of the school year. The September 1999 score of 1 on the BSM increased to a score of 3 in May 2000, also reclassifying this student from a Beginning English language learner to an Intermediate ELL at the end of the year.

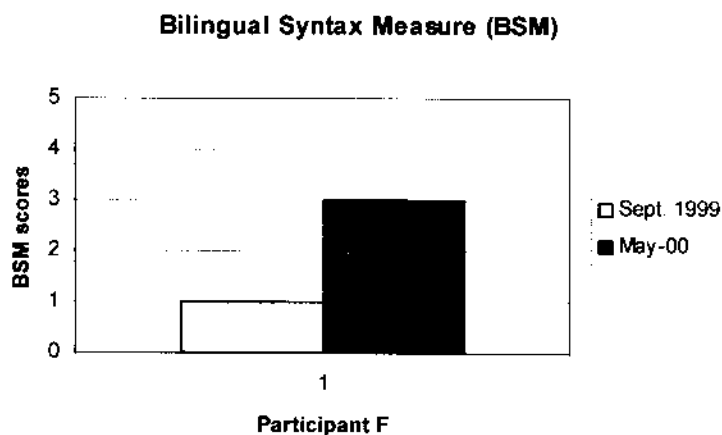


Figure 6

Participant F 's scores also improved on the beginning and end-of-the-year assessments. On the September 1999 Letter Recognition, he scored a 3 out of 54 with a May 2000 score of 50 out 54. His Concepts About Print score increased 8 points with a score of 4 out of 24 in September 1999 and a score of 12 out of 24 in May 2000.

Participant F's writing vocabulary also improved. In January 2000, his writing vocabulary consisted of only four words written independently (his first and last name and two sight words) while his May 2000 sample showed that he

was able to write nine words (his first name, a friend's name, six sight words, and Pokemon).

Participant F's development as a writer in English was somewhat limited to what he felt comfortable with. He seemed unsure of how to put down on paper what he was able to say in English. Most of his journal entries in January and February are just pictures with little or no print attached. As he acquired a sight word vocabulary, he grasped onto his knowledge and used the same words in subsequent writings with little attention to meaning. The words "I", "like", "my" and "this" are often randomly written in several of his entries in April and May. The same theme also appeared throughout his journal. He is fascinated with Pokeman and thus drew the same character over and over again. He was able to find the word Pokeman from the environmental print wall display and this word appeared on random occasions. However, in the June 2000 interview where he was asked to show the researcher his favorite story from his journal, he chose one of his many Pokeman drawings that contained only random sight words. When he "read" his story, he used the word "Pokeman" without it actually appearing in his writing. This showed that he was still not connecting writing with meaning and instead relied on pictures to determine what was happening in a story.

In terms of how Participant F perceived himself as a reader and writer in his second language, he seemed confident in his developing abilities. He responded that he preferred to read and write in English because he wanted to learn it. This positive attitude about English was also evident when

communicating with peers. He worked hard at speaking only in English even when addressed in Spanish although he would often end his longer thoughts and sentences in Spanish.

### **Summary of Findings**

Did this case study actually answer the guiding questions? The following is a brief overview of each question and how results of this study may address or not address the guiding questions.

- *What does emergent English literacy development look like for English Language Learners (ELL) in a Structured English Immersion (SEI) program?*

Even though each one of these participants entered Structured English Immersion kindergarten with little or know knowledge of English letter names, some knowledge in their primary language of what makes up a book, and little to no English writing vocabulary, all made some improvement in these areas by the end of the academic year. The results of the assessments indicate that each ELL case study participant improved remarkably in letter and sound recognition in English, scored higher on the Concepts About Print assessment, and increased his/her written word vocabulary over the course of the year. These would be similar expectations for an average native English speaker after one year of kindergarten.

The difference however is the use and support required in the primary language. The young ELLs involved in this case study still relied on their primary language as a preferred means of expressing themselves. Their preference to communicate in Spanish indicated that these beginning ELLs were still uncomfortable speaking the language in which they were being taught to read and write. When asked the May 2000 interview questions about their perceptions of themselves as readers and writers in English and the June 2000 interview about their journal writing, all six case study participants used Spanish to express their ideas. Although some of the participants were able to read and write simple stories in English at the end of the year, this did not necessarily transfer over into their oral language use as they chose to speak Spanish when interacting with their peers and teachers. The primary language seemed to be a constant support and reference point for these ELLs in their second language learning.

- *How do children in a SEI program demonstrate knowledge about English literacy concepts?*

The case study participants in this study all improved in some way on the basic assessments administered during the course of the school year yet how the children used this knowledge in their writing showed the variation of how each child internalized this process. Each of the case study participants

developed at different rates. Each participant began his/her journal using primarily pictures to represent stories as is common with many children learning to express themselves through writing. Some of the case study participants began using sight words and initial letter sounds to represent words while others relied solely on the small sight word vocabulary as their means of putting words down on paper. Some of the more advanced case study participants began writing whole sentences, using very advanced estimated spelling of unknown words while others seemed to avoid taking risks and continued to write only those words they knew how to write. This indicated that although each child improved on all literacy assessments, how they used their literacy knowledge did not necessarily transfer over into their written expression. It seemed that certain case study participants did not connect what they knew how to read and write within the context of their own attempts at being an author while others were able to make up simple stories using the skills and concepts taught on a daily basis.

- *How do ELL students perceive themselves as readers and writers in English?*

The self-perceptions of the case study participants as reader and writers varied. Despite the formal instruction in English, three of the case study participants still felt more comfortable as Spanish readers and writers although Spanish reading nor writing were ever formally taught. Although each child's oral

English development improved with all but one of the case study participants scoring a 3 or higher on the Bilingual Syntax Measure, it still seemed hard for certain kindergartners to visualize themselves as English readers and writers.

At least two of the participants however responded that they preferred to write in English and another two said they preferred reading in English. This variation in self-perceptions may be based on their perceptions of what it means to them to read and write. Those who preferred to read or write in the primary language responded that it was easier to understand both at home and at school while those who preferred English responded that they did not know how to read or write in their primary language.

The language of choice once again becomes an issue when addressing the self-perceptions of these young ELLs as readers and writers in English. Throughout most of the year, each of the participants chose to speak with their peers and teachers in their primary language with occasional code switching occurring when they used vocabulary taught in English. Despite their oral improvements in the second language, it was interesting to note that most of the case study participants still relied on their primary language as a means of communication amongst themselves and with the teachers.

- *How is the core curriculum being delivered? (What kinds of implications does this have on what a SEI program should look like?)*

This question was perhaps the most difficult to address and in fact goes beyond the scope of this project. According to the Education Code, instruction in a SEI classroom is meant to occur “overwhelmingly in English”. Provided with only a simple Hampton Brown English Language Development kit, the teacher thus had to develop and implement her own SEI curriculum in an attempt to develop a balanced program that would not only expand the English language skills but also build the literacy skills of her students. As a result she used Spanish as one of her tools to introduce new ideas and explain concepts as a means to validate what each child brought to the classroom. It was hoped that the use of Spanish made the students feel more comfortable learning English and helped them understand those cognitive concepts that may have been too difficult to explain using second language techniques. However, it could be questioned that the students used her ability to communicate with them in their primary language as a crutch. Thus, how the teacher’s decision to use Spanish at certain times of the day either helped or hindered the case study participants’ development as readers and writers in English was however too difficult to address within the realm of this study.

From the results of this case study, it is evident that learning to read and write is more than just learning letter names and sounds, especially in a second

language. The six case study participants who entered the SEI program as beginning ELL students all progressed in some way both in English language development and in acquiring some basic literacy concepts. However whether these students actually felt comfortable and confident in their second language abilities is questionable and should be considered when deciding to transfer them into English only programs after only one year.



## Chapter V

### **Discussion, Conclusions, Recommendations and Areas for Future Studies**

#### **Discussion**

This case study was thus an attempt to address the issue facing public schools; what is the best and most effective way to educate language minority students? Under Proposition 227, limited English children are expected to transition to English only programs after only one year of instruction in Structured English Immersion programs. Yet there is a lack of guidance as to what a SEI program should look like, consequently forcing California's public schools to create and define quick-fix programs in an attempt to comply with the law. This case study thus examined more specifically one kindergarten program model created and defined by the classroom teacher as a teacher/researcher and investigated how six beginning English Language Learners developed over the course of an academic year as readers and writers in their second language. The data collected from this project demonstrates that second language learning and literacy requires more than just test scores to determine whether ELLs are ready for the rigors of English only programs; educators and school administrators must examine each individual child before deciding on the appropriateness of mainstreaming these students to English only programs.

### **Conclusions**

From this case study, it is evident that the six participants all entered kindergarten with previous exposure to literacy based on home or pre-school experiences yet each child brought different kinds of knowledge to the classroom. Over the course of the school year, as the children were formally introduced to and instructed in the English language, each child acquired knowledge about a variety of literacy concepts in their second language. This knowledge was freely constructed in their Daily Journal writing where the children used what they knew about literacy to develop and share stories with their peers. All of the case study participants started their journals with pictures, eventually moving to beginning attempts at writing with letter strings and/or beginning letter sounds to represent words. Some but not all of the case study participants were writing full sentences by the end of the year, using very advanced estimated spelling techniques to write unknown words.

However, despite spending an entire year learning to read and write in English, their second language, several of the case study participants were not yet confident in their development as readers and writers in English. Even though the participant made significant growth on the literacy assessments administered at the beginning and end-of-the-year, the preferred language of choice by each of the case study participants was consistently Spanish when communicating with each other. Some of the case study participants also responded that they preferred reading and/or writing in Spanish, although they had not received any formalized instruction in their primary language. All of the

participants managed to become for the most part Intermediate ELLs by the conclusion of their first year in a SEI program, yet it still seemed hard for some of them to visualize themselves as English readers and writers.

Through literacy and language assessments, classroom observations, writing samples and interviews with the case study participants, the data collected from this case study demonstrates that second language literacy goes far beyond simply learning letter names and how to write words in the second language. There is also a process by which children need to feel comfortable as speakers, readers and writers in their second language in classrooms that recognize and celebrate their primary language. The results of this case study do not imply that young ELLs are incapable of becoming proficient readers and writers in English, but that this process is more complicated than is recognized by the current law in effect at this time.

### **Recommendations**

Understanding how California's language minority students learn, whether it is in the first and/or second language, has significant implications on how schools should set up Structured English Immersion programs. This case study has shown that ELLs do indeed need more than one year in a SEI program in order to fully become both orally and cognitively proficient in their second language. Part of this proficiency requires that California's ELLs have many opportunities to interact with and use their second language in meaningful contexts but this is difficult when schools such as the participating school in this study are forced to establish very segregated and impacted programs lacking

appropriate instructional materials. Such an environment is not conducive to learning or teaching a second language.

In addition, SEI programs must be carefully planned and implemented with qualified and experienced teachers willing to invest the time and energy in working with language minority students. Understanding the needs of ELLs goes further than just second language teaching techniques. This understanding must include the culture of the students, their families and the kinds of struggles these language minority face in public schools. These same teachers must be given the time to reflect with and learn from their colleagues and other professionals who work with language minority students to discuss and reflect on their current teaching practices. As more and more ELLs are inevitably mainstreamed into English only programs, professional development that deals with second language learning and understanding the culture and experiences of language minority students must be a priority for ALL teachers in public schools.

The findings of this case study imply that school administrators, teachers, and parents must recognize and understand the process of second language acquisition and literacy when establishing programs that deal with English language learners. Language minority students do not deserve to be placed in quick-fix programs that are implemented without vision and are not based on sound research in the area of second language learning. Without understanding the needs of these students, many of California's ELLs will continue to struggle within the educational institution.

### **Areas for Future Study**

The results of this case study opens the door for further studies that may help understand what our language minority students need. One interesting phenomenon that occurred at the conclusion of this case study was the decision of all six case study participants' families to switch their children into bilingual classrooms the following year. Understanding why parents of ELL children choose certain programs over others may help schools address the fears or concerns that parents may have, and help parents understand the process and limitations of acquiring a second language. Further, examining the impact of program switching by parents on the academic progress of English language learners would help parents understand the importance of committing to one educational program.

Another area for future study that would benefit ELLs and program implementation is to examine how ELL children progress in subsequent grade levels, especially those who are placed into mainstream English only classrooms after one year in a SEI classroom. It is important to gauge these students' progress as they move up through the grades in order to understand their struggles and successes. Using this information thus could guide districts when hiring and training new teachers and reinforce the need for qualified and experienced second language teachers to teach not only in bilingual and SEI programs but also in "English only" classrooms in which ELLs will be forced to transition.

### **Final Reflections**

To conclude this case study, I would like to discuss what working on this project accomplished for me on a personal level as both the SEI classroom teacher and researcher/author of this case study. I had the unique opportunity to examine the learning patterns of my ELL students and reflect on my own teaching practices in a detailed manner. Creating the time in my instructional day to observe in closer detail how my second language learners interacted with each other, the teachers, and my curriculum allowed me greater insight into the impact of my role as an educator. Regardless of whether or not I philosophically believe in the concept of Structured English Immersion, all language minority students need to feel comfortable and accepted in their classroom environments with teachers who strive to understand the language, the experiences, and the culture of their students, regardless of the program in which these students are placed.

Finally, Proposition 227, with all its faults, did actually contribute something positive to the field of education. With its passage in 1998, the issue of how best to meet the needs of our language minority students was brought to the forefront of public education. Its passage has opened up a dialogue within schools to address the problems and challenges of language minority students. I started this project, angry that a "simple" change in the law could create such havoc in the lives of young students. Indeed this was the case just two years ago when students, parents and school districts were struggling to figure out the most appropriate and legal way to recognize and follow the law. However two

years later, having stood in front of 29 limited English speakers in a SEI classroom with the intent to instruct them to read and write in their second language, I realize that this law is here to stay, at least for the time being. Consequently it is in the best interests of all of us to reflect and collaborate on creating both bilingual and Structured English Immersion programs that work to meet the linguistic, social and academic needs of our students. We owe it to the children.

## References

- Attinasi, J. (1998). English only for California children and the aftermath of Proposition 227. Education, 119.
- Baker, K. (Nov. 1998). Structured English immersion: breakthrough in teaching limited English proficient students. Phi Delta Kappan, 80.
- Bartolome, L. (1998). The Misteaching of Academic Discourses. Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Bialystok, E. & Hakuta, K. (1994). In Other Words: The Science and Psychology of Second Language Acquisition. New York, N.Y.: Harper Press
- California Department of Education (1998). Growth of English learner (EL) students. Language Census. Retrieved September 26, 2000 from the World Wide Web:  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/demographics/reports/statewide/redes98.htm>
- California Education Code (1998). Chapter 3, Article 1. Section 305. Retrieved October 1, 2000 from the World Wide Web:  
<http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/calawquery?codesection=edc&codebody=&hits=20>
- Clay, M. (1991). Becoming literate: the construction of inner control. Heinemann.
- Clay, M. (1993). An observational survey of early literacy achievement. Heinemann.
- Collier, V. (1995). Acquiring a second language for school. Directions in Language and Education, 1.
- Cornell, C. (1995). Reducing failure of LEP students in the mainstream classroom and why it is important. The Journal of Educational Issue of Language Minority Students, 15. Boise State University
- Cummins, J. (1989). Empowering Minority Students. Ontario, CA: CA Association for Bilingual Education.
- Cummins, J. (1992). Bilingual education and English immersion: The Ramirez report in theoretical perspective. Bilingual Research Journal, 16.



- Cunningham, P. & Allington, R. (1994). Classrooms that work: they can all read and write. N.Y. Harper Collins College Publishers.
- Ewart, G. (1996). Literacy learning in two grade one French immersion classrooms: A case study of the teachers' pedagogical practices. M.A.thesis, University of Manitoba, Canada.
- Flood, J. & Lapp, D. (1996/97). Literacy instruction for students acquiring English: Moving beyond the immersion debate. The Reading Teacher, 50.
- Freire, P. & Macedo, D. (1987). Literacy: reading the word and the world. Connecticut: Bergin and Garvey.
- Gandara, P., Maxwell-Jolly, J., Garcia, E., Asato, J., Gutierrez, K., Stritikus, T. & Curry, J. (2000). The initial impact of Proposition 227 on the instruction of English learners. *University of California Language Minority Institute*. Retrieved October 1, 2000 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.lmtinet.ucsb.edu/RESDISS/prop227effects.pdf>
- Gersten, R, Taylor, R., Woodward, J., and White, W. (1984). Structured English immersion for Hispanic students in the U.S.: findings from the fourteen-year evaluation of the Uvalde, Texas program. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA. April
- Gersten, R., Woodward, J., & Moore, L. (1988). Alternative educational models for language minority students. Equity and Excellence, 23(4). 14-16.
- Gersten, R. (1999). The changing face of bilingual education. Educational Leadership, 56, p. 41.
- Gersten, R. (1996). The double demands of teaching English language learners. Educational Leadership, 53, p. 18.
- Hakuta, K., Butler, Y. & Witt, D. (2000). How long does it take English learners to attain proficiency? *University of California Language Minority Institute*. Retrieved October 1, 2000 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.lmtinet.ucsb.edu/RESDISS/hakuta.pdf>
- Hsu, Y. (1995). Emergent Literacy and Young Children. The University of Memphis.
- Krashen, S. (1999). Condemned Without a Trial: Bogus Arguments Against Bilingual Education. Portsmouth, N.H: Heinemann Press.

- Mitchell, D., Destino, T., Karam, R. & Colon-Muniz, A. (1999). The politics of bilingual education. *Educational Policy*, 13.
- Mitchell, M. & Myles, F. (1998). *Second Language Learning Theories*. New York, N.Y.: Arnold Publishers
- Okagaki, L., Frensch, P. (May 1995). Encouraging school achievement in Mexican American children. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 17.
- Okagaki, L. & Frensch, P. (Nov. 1996). Mexican American children's perceptions of self and school achievement. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 18.
- Perotta, B. (1994). Writing development and second language acquisition in young children. *Childhood Education*, 70.
- Porter, R. (2000). The benefits of English Immersion. *Educational Leadership*, 57, 52.
- Porter, R. (1990). The Newton alternative to bilingual education. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 508.
- Porter, R. (1997). The politics of bilingual education. *Society*, 34.
- Quezada, M., Ramirez, D. & Wiley, T. (2000). How the reform agenda shortchanges English learners. *Educational Leadership*, 57, 57
- Ramirez, D. (1986). Comparing structured English immersion and bilingual education: first-year results of a national study. *American Journal of Education*, 95.
- Salvador, H. & Ochoa, R. (1995). Appraising curriculum and instruction practices of bilingual programs in elementary schools varying in effectiveness: A qualitative and quantitative comparison. *The Journal of Educational Issue of Language Minority Students*, 15.
- Schiff-Myers, N., Djukic, J., McGovern-Lawler, J. & Perez, D., (1993). Assessment considerations in the evaluation of second-language learners: A case study. *Exceptional Children*, 60.
- Schneider, M. (1994). Evaluation of second language acquisition in a German-American kindergarten. M.A. thesis, San Jose State University.

- Thomas, W. & Collier, V. (1997). School effectiveness for language minority students. *National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education*.
- Thomas, W. & Collier, V. (1997). Two languages are better than one. Educational Leadership, 55.
- Trochesset, T. (1997). The acquisition of English as a second language due to participation or non-participation in an ESL or bilingual education program. M.S. thesis, University of Houston.
- Valdes, G. (1998). The world outside and inside schools: Language and immigrant children. Educational Researcher, 27.
- Van Lier, L. (1996). Interaction in the Language Curriculum: Awareness, Autonomy, and Authenticity. New York: Addison Wesley.

## Appendix A

### Sample of Human Subjects Form in Spanish

CSU Monterey Bay, Maestría de la Educación  
Forma de consentimiento

Título del proyecto: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Descripción del papel que su hijo/hija tiene en este proyecto, incluyendo lo que voy a pedirle hacer, cuanto tiempo va a tomar las actividades, las preguntas que le voy a preguntar, como voy a mantener su privacidad, y los riesgos y beneficios que podrían ocurrir.

Yo, \_\_\_\_\_ (nombre del padre) afirmo que tengo más que diez y ocho (18) años y que quisiera participar en el proyecto de la investigación conducido por **Kate Dixson** (nombre de la investigadora).

En el caso de un menor, soy el padre de \_\_\_\_\_ (nombre del hijo/hija). Por la presente, doy mi consentimiento para mi hijo/hija a participar en el proyecto de investigación conducido por **Kate Dixson** (nombre de la investigadora).

Reconozco que **Kate Dixson** (la investigadora) me ha explicado completamente los riesgos de este tipo de investigación y la necesidad de la investigación; que me ha informado que me puedo quitar de participación en cualquier tiempo sin perjuicio; que me ha ofrecido a contestar mis preguntas sobre los procedimientos que va a seguir; que me ha informado que recibiré una copia de esta forma de consentimiento.

En el evento que creo que he sufrido daño como resultado de mi participación en el programa de investigación, me puedo contactar la Coordinadora del Programa de Maestría, la Dra. Christine E. Sleeter al número (831) 583-3641.

(al otro lado)

Voluntariamente y libremente le doy a mi hijo/hija el permiso de participar en el proyecto de la investigación.

Yo

Si, quiero revelar mi identidad y doy mi permiso a la investigadora usar mi nombre o el nombre de mi hijo/hija en su proyecto.

No, no quiero revelar mi identidad y entiendo que un nombre ficticio o un nombre asumado usará en lugar de mi nombre o el nombre de mi hijo/hija en este proyecto.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma del participante o del padre  
en caso de un menor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma de la Investigadora

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

# Appendix B

## Letter Identification Score Sheet

**LETTER IDENTIFICATION SCORE SHEET**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Recorder: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

TEST SCORE:

STANINE GROUP:

	A	S	Word	I.R.		A	S	Word	I.R.
A					a				
F					f				
K					k				
P					p				
W					w				
Z					z				
B					b				
H					h				
O					o				
J					j				
U					u				
C					a				
Y					c				
L					y				
Q					l				
M					q				
D					m				
N					d				
S					n				
X					s				
I					x				
E					i				
G					e				
R					g				
V					r				
T					v				
					t				
					g				
<b>TOTALS</b>									

**Confusions:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Letters Unknown:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Comment:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Recording:**  
 A Alphabet response: tick (check)  
 S Letter sound response: tick (check)  
 Word Record the word the child gives  
 IR Incorrect response: Record what the child says

**TOTAL SCORE**

## Appendix C

### Concepts About Print Score Sheet

CONCEPTS ABOUT PRINT SCORE SHEET			
			Date: _____
Name: _____	Age: _____	TEST SCORE: <input style="width: 50px; text-align: center;" type="text" value="/24"/>	
Recorder: _____	Date of Birth: _____	STANINE GROUP: <input style="width: 50px;" type="text"/>	
PAGE	SCORE	ITEM	COMMENT
Cover		1. Front of book	
2/3		2. Print contains message	
4/5 4/5 4/5 4/5		3. Where to start 4. Which way to go 5. Return sweep to left 6. Word by word matching	
6		7. First and last concept	
7		8. Bottom of picture	
8/9		9. Begin 'The' ( <i>Sand</i> ) or 'I' ( <i>Stones</i> ) bottom line, top OR turn book	
10/11		10. Line order altered	
12/13 12/13 12/13		11. Left page before right 12. One change in word order 13. One change in letter order	
14/15 14/15		14. One change in letter order 15. Meaning of ?	
16/17 16/17 16/17 16/17		16. Meaning of full stop 17. Meaning of comma 18. Meaning of quotation marks 19. Locate M m H h ( <i>Sand</i> ) OR T t B b ( <i>Stones</i> )	
18/19		20. Reversible words <i>was, no</i>	
20 20 20 20		21. One letter: two letters 22. One word: two words 23. First and last letter of word 24. Capital letter	

## Appendix D

### Writing Vocabulary Observation Sheet

WRITING VOCABULARY OBSERVATION SHEET			
Name: _____	Age: _____	Date: _____	
Recorder: _____	Date of Birth: _____	TEST SCORE: <input type="text"/>	
(Fold heading under before child uses sheet)		STANINE GROUP: <input type="text"/>	
COMMENT			