Beginning Literacies for Adolescent English Learners

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Beginning Literacies for Adolescent English Learners

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Abstract

Beginning Literacies for Adolescent English Learners

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Statement of the Problem

Students who are learning English for the first time are a growing presence in schools across the state of Wisconsin. Some of these students are learning to read for the first time while they are learning a new language. What steps can educators take to effectively teach reading to students who are also learning a new language as they learn to read?

Methods and Procedures

This paper will review the existing educational research on teaching and learning reading and writing. The paper will also examine where the research differs in teaching reading and writing to English Learners. The paper will also review the educational challenges posed by English Learners who enter school as adolescents. The paper will then look at how the existing research can be applied to the creation of an educational program for a student who is both learning English and in the very beginning stages of literacy. The paper will also make recommendations for schools who find they need to teach basic literacy skills to adolescents who are beginning formal education for the first time.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPROVAL PAGE

TITLE PAGE

ABSTRACT

     Phonology and Phonics
     Fluency
     Vocabulary Development
     Reading Comprehension
     Technology

I.   INTRODUCTION

Many animal species communicate with each other through the production and interpretation of sounds. Human language is unique in comparison with these other systems of communication because of its grammatical complexity. Human language is also unique because in many languages it also has a written form. All human cultures have developed spoken language but written language, at least until recently, has not been similarly universal. One distinction of written language is that it needs to be explicitly taught and learned, whereas oral language is naturally acquired through association with a community of speakers.

The earliest records of the phonographic writing, that is the use of symbols to represent the sounds of spoken language are from the Sumerian culture and date back roughly 5,000 years. Since that time, teaching students to read and write has been an essential part of formalized instruction in both western and non-western cultures with written language systems. The ability to read and write the symbols associated with sounds has gradually become less specialized and more widespread in the ensuing millennium. In modern societies, the universal teaching of reading and writing is now considered an essential function of school systems.

While the idea of universal literacy has spread, the methods used to teach reading and writing have come under closer scrutiny for several reasons; brain research has given new insights into how the complex processes of both reading and writing occur, new technologies have made it easier to diagnose individual literacy difficulties, and political programs that demand more precise outcomes have all brought new scrutiny to the teaching of literacy. The debate about literacy instruction methods has at times become politicized. The results of literacy

instruction became an important component of school accountability mechanisms. One other component of modern education that has brought closer scrutiny to literacy teaching methods has been the challenge posed by teaching reading and writing to a growing number of students who are learning the English language for the first time.

The number of students who are learning English for the first time in US schools continues to grow. In 1990, one in 20 public school students was an English Learner (EL). In 2008, ELs were one out of every nine students. Demographic projections indicate that in 15 more years, the number could be 1 in four (Goldenberg, 2008). Learning to read and write in English and gaining academic knowledge in that language while not fully proficient in it places ELs at a greater risk to struggle academically. According to the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress only 6 percent of fourth grade ELs read at or above proficient levels. Only 3 percent of eighth grade ELs read at or above the proficient level.

ELs come into US schools from over 400 different language backgrounds. The majority of elementary age ELs is in fact born in the US, but speaks other languages at home. Immigrant students arrive at US schools with a variety of language skills in their first languages. Some arrive with well-developed literacy skills in languages other than English. These students need to learn how to read and write in English. Others arrive without basic literacy in their first language. These students face a much greater challenge of learning how to read and write in a new language. Among more challenging students are those who arrive at US public schools for the first time as adolescents. These students known as Adolescent Newcomers (ANs) present a particular challenge because of the extremely short window in which to teach them both literacy in English and the academic content needed to make them qualified high school graduates. Some adolescent newcomers because they come from areas of conflict and poverty have limited or

interrupted schooling and maybe well behind age level peers in literacy development and academic knowledge.

This paper is the study of developing English literacy with one such student. Miguel, (a pseudonym) arrived at a small town school system in May of 2013. Miguel was 17 years old, but had never attended school before in his life. Miguel's first language was Quiché Mayan. Miguel also spoke some Spanish and a few words of English. He did not read or write in any of these languages. What should a school do with a student like Miguel? What would his teachers need to know about beginning literacy for a student learning to read and write in his third language? How can schools create effective literacy instruction for students like Miguel who are learning English while learning to read and write for the first time as adolescents?

The purpose of this paper is to review the existing educational research on teaching and learning reading and writing. The paper will also examine where the research differs in teaching reading and writing to English Learners. The paper will also look at the important role of oral language development in a second language and its relationship to literacy development in a new language. The paper will then look at how the existing research can be applied to the creation of an educational program for a student like Miguel, who is both learning English and in the very beginning stages of literacy. The paper will also make recommendations for schools who find they need to teach basic literacy skills to adolescents who are beginning formal education for the first time.

The paper begins by reviewing the work of the National Reading Panel. In 1997, Congress called on the National Institute of Child Development, a part of the National Institute of Health to carry out a meta-analysis of the methods of teaching reading. The National Reading

Panel (NRP) determined that there are five essential elements that should be present in any program of reading instruction. These elements are phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. The report of the NRP established for the first time a coherent research based set of practices that all literacy instruction should be based in. However the Report of the National Panel has several shortcomings. The National Panel did not look at students whose first language is not English. Nor did it examine the teaching of writing as it is related to teaching of reading. The report of the National Panel on reading has served since its publication as the foundational document for any discussion of literacy instruction. The NRP concluded its report by recommending further research on literacy practices with specific student populations.

Two years later a new panel, The National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth was brought together. This group consisted of experts in second language development, cognitive development, assessment, curriculum and instruction, and methodology was convened with the stated purpose of "synthesize research on the education of language-minority children and youth with respect to their attainment of literacy" and in addition to "produce a report evaluating and synthesizing this literature".

The report of this committee was published in 2006, in the form of a book titled *Developing Literacy in Second Language Learners* (August &Shanahan, 2006). In examining the development of English literacy in children who speak other languages, the authors of this report had a much smaller research base to work with. While the second report does note the lack of multiple studies confirming key finding, they were able to identify some important themes in Second Language Literacy education.

One important finding was effectiveness with EL of the same elements of literacy instruction identified by the NRP. While the National Literacy Panel (NLP) report confirms the importance of these same practices, it warns that they are not sufficient in and of themselves with ELs. ELs need literacy instruction that responds to their unique backgrounds and their unique needs as second language learners. Another finding of the NLP was the importance of bilingual education. Students who learn to read and write in their first language initially, or while they are learning to read and write in English, will achieve better outcomes in English literacy than children who do not have an opportunity to develop literacy in their first language. The same result applied to ELs in English immersion or English only programs. This confirms the idea that a child's first language is a resource, not a barrier to developing English skills.

This paper will also review the research on one particular sub-group of ELs, students who arrive in the US as adolescents. Adolescent Newcomers (ANs) pose challenges because they generally arrive without the same levels of academic development as their same age peers, and schools have a limited amount of time to prepare them for graduation. One category of ANs who require special educational programs are Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFEs). These are students, like Miguel, who have limited or non-existent formal education before enrolling in US schools.

Note on language: Within the field of education there is a varied, evolving and unstandardized nomenclature for referring to students whose first language is not English. The legal precedent is "Limited English Proficient" which is not widely used because it implies that these students operate at a deficit. The old fashioned "English as a Second Language" or ESL is insufficient because many students are multi-lingual before they encounter formal education in English. Although ESL is widely recognized as inadequate, it continues to be used officially by

10

the State of Wisconsin both in program designations and in teacher licensing. Educators in the field often refer to ourselves as "Teachers of English to Speakers of other Languages", but apart from our professional organization this term has not gained currency. Other authors and experts in the field refer to "Language –Minority" children or "CLD" as in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse children. More recently the term English Language Learners, or more simply English Learners, have come into common usage. Mainstream educators have objected to these terms because all students, or even all speakers of English, should be life-long learners of the language. For the sake of this paper I will use the term English Learners.

II.   REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1) Research on Learning and Teaching Reading

Before reviewing the research on best practices for teaching literacy to a student like Miguel, it may be helpful to review in general terms how students learn to read. The teaching of reading has been carried out in many different ways. As reading instruction has evolved over time, various explanation of how students learn to read have been offered and debated. In order to design an instructional program, educators need to have a theoretical understanding of what is occurring during reading instruction. Three distinct models of the reading process have been proposed.

One theoretical view of reading starts with the smallest units of text, the letters and the associated sounds. This model suggests that the act of reading consists of decoding letters, transforming them into their sounds and combining these sounds to make words, which are

combined to make larger and larger units of text. This theoretical view of reading is often referred to as the "bottom up reading process model".

Instructional practices based on this model of reading are designed to build sequentially steps from the smallest pieces of information to larger and larger sections of text. Instruction begins with the knowledge of the letters, or letter identification, and then moves to the sounds associated with each letter. This relationship between letters and possible corresponding sounds is known as phonemic awareness. Once students master phonemic awareness, they are able to combine sounds into words and they move to the stage of instruction know as word identification – that is, students become aware of words as distinct units that have distinct meanings. The next step upwards, or stage of reading, is syntactic analysis, this is described as the readers "ability to understand how words fit together in sentences" (Herrera et al., 2012, p.10). As students learn to read they are then able to more above the group of words, or sentence level to an ability to understand or process an entire paragraph or passage.

The bottom up reading process model suggests that as students learn to read they start with the smallest units of text and then sequentially scale up their understanding to combinations of sounds, words, groups of words, sentences and eventually work on understanding large segments of text. This theoretical view of reading is often associated with the many instructional formats that fall under the general name of "phonics". During the often politicized debates of reading instruction that were common in the 1990s and 2000s, this view of the reading process was often associated with more conservative political positions (Reyhner, 2008).

Another theoretical model of the reading process, one that works in almost direct contrast to the bottom up model, is the top down model. This is also referred to as the "whole language"

model. This model of the reading process emphasizes that each reader brings individual knowledge and experience to the act of reading. This storehouse of personal knowledge is referred to as the schema. Each individual brings a personal schema to each text, and this personal schema is the primary tool that is used to make sense of information encountered in the process of reading. Educators who use the top down reading model begin instruction by talking about the larger context of a particular text, allowing readers to activate personal knowledge that may help them make sense of the text. The model assumes that readers will use this topical knowledge to help them make sense of smaller aspects of the text; that learning new words will proceed from this larger context, and that with new word knowledge will come new phonemic awareness and letter identification. "It is important to consider that words by themselves do not have meaning. Rather, the reader constructs meaning from a personal understanding of words, along with the schematic connections that accompany this understanding" (Herrera at al., 2102, p.13).

The top down model of the reading process offers some advantages to instructors working with ELs. First this model allows educators to acknowledge value and build on the prior knowledge that ELs possess and bring to learning. While ELs may start reading instruction in English with little or no knowledge of the English alphabet and the phonemic associations, they do bring knowledge of the world that will serve as a basis for constructing meaning when they encounter reading materials in English. Secondly, this model aligns with an important theory of second language acquisition known as transfer theory. First proposed by Cummins (2000), transfer theory suggests that literacy and language skills possessed by each EL in their first language are a resource that can aid in the development of similar skills in English. A key concept in transfer theory is not just the transfer of literacy skills, but also the incorporation of

background knowledge, both personal and academic, that ELs bring to reading and understanding written English.

Instructional activities based on the top down model of reading are often known as "whole language" activities because teachers who employ them work to make of reading meaningful both on the word and sentence level and also constructing meaning by using the text to relate to and expand each reader's personal knowledge, or schema. During the politicized debates of reading theory, the whole language approach to teaching reading was often associated with more liberal political positions.

As the process of reading and the stages of learning to read, have come under greater scrutiny, some researchers have decided that both of these models are inadequate. Researchers have proposed that the act of reading is complex enough that both decoding and comprehension through schematic connections can happen simultaneously. A third model of the reading process, the interactive reading process model has emerged that acknowledges simultaneous top down and bottom up actions within the reader's mind. Acceptance of the complexity of reading as both a decoding and comprehension construction activity has important for the education of ELs. While all students may engage in both activities when reading, literacy instruction for EL may need to place greater emphasis on one aspect of the process (Lesaux, 2012).

The report of the National Reading Panel:

As the debates about how to best teach reading ebbed and flowed among educators, and increasingly among non-educators, Congress moved, in 1997, to create a National Reading Panel. The panel's mission was to "assess the research-based knowledge, including the effectiveness of various approaches to teaching children to read." The panel was also assigned to

produce a report with its conclusions, including an "indication of the readiness for application in the classroom of the results of this research", and, "a strategy for rapidly disseminating this information to facilitate effective reading instruction in schools" (National Reading Panel, 2000, p.1). The panel consisted of leading scientists in reading research, reading teachers, educational administrators and parents. While the original mission of the panel was supposed to be completed by the following year, it soon became apparent that it would require much longer to accurately review the voluminous research on reading (over 100,000 studies of reading have been published since 1966). A progress report was published in 1999. A final series of reports was published in 2000, including the Report of the National Reading Panel and the Reports of the National Reading Panel: Reports of the Subgroups.

The Report of the NRP, although it is now more than a decade old, continues to be the most comprehensive review of research on the process of learning to read. The report, especially its section on Findings and Determinations, continues to be the foundational document for an examination of reading. In its thorough review of research related to various methods of teaching reading, he report identifies five key elements of reading instruction that have a solid basis in research and that should be present in all programs that aspire to successfully teach reading. These five areas are; phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, fluency, and comprehension, which has been approached as two separate areas, vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension strategies.

The report of the NRP can also be noted for what is not included. By presenting its finding as an analysis of what elements should be included in effective reading instruction, the panel was able to step away from the contentious debates on how reading should be taught. By focusing on the research basis of what elements should be included in all reading teaching, the

Panel sidestepped the heated conflict over which methods, materials and approaches are most effective with emergent readers. A second notable issue that is not addressed in the NRP report is an analysis of learning to read as related to students who are learning English as a new language. Questions about how teaching reading to ELs was similar to or differed from regular reading instruction would have to wait until a further comprehensive review of the available research was published five years later by the National Literacy Panel.

Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic Awareness Instruction is the first necessary element for all reading program based on the NRP's review of reading research. Phonemes are the smallest units of sound composing a spoken language. Phonemes are different from letters are associated with the phonemes in written words.

Instruction in phonemic awareness involves showing learners how to focus on and manipulate phonemes, or elements of sound, at the syllable and spoken word level. The NRP cautions that Phonemic Awareness Instruction (PA) is often confused with phonics instruction. The key difference is that phonics involves teaching students awareness of the relationship between letters and sounds, and then using this awareness in both reading and writing. Phonemic awareness instruction may work with the sounds in relationships with letters, but may also be taught how to blend and segment sounds without any relationship to letters. Focusing on distinct sounds within a language is important as learners distinguish between words that have similar spellings but distinct meanings. Examples of such pairs, known as "minimal pairs" when meaning is distinguished by a single sound are shirt and short, or this and his.

The NRP review concludes that the evidentiary basis for teaching PA is very strong. Instructional programs that included teaching children to manipulate phonemes in words helped students to become better readers than instructional programs that lack any attention to PA. "The findings were replicated repeatedly across multiple experiments and thus provide converging evidence for causal claims." The NRP also points out that this practice was "highly effective…with a variety of learners across a range of grade and age levels" and that "the effects on PA instruction on reading lasted well beyond the end of training" (NRP, 2000, p.7). Although the NRP does not specifically address the importance of phonemic awareness as it relates to literacy instruction with ELs, it is not difficult to imagine the importance of learning to segment and blend the sounds within a new language. Nor is it difficult to see how this awareness of sounds would be related to expanding literacy in a new language.

Phonics Instruction

A second essential element to all successful reading instruction programs is Phonics instruction. Phonics is a way of teaching reading that places primary emphasis on learning the relationships between letters and sounds, and using these correspondences in both reading and spelling. A main focus of phonics instruction is to help beginning readers understand how letters are linked to sound phonemes. These letter sound associations can then form the basis for reading and writing.

The report of the NRP addresses the difficulty of evaluating the existing research on phonics because so many distinct practices share the term "phonics". In analytic phonics, students are taught whole word units followed by linking the specific letters with their respective sounds. Synthetic phonic uses direct instruction teaching phonics components and then providing

practice opportunities in limited contexts marked by controlled vocabulary. Incidental, or embedded phonics, in contrast uses less controlled texts and teaches phonics as opportunities arise. In order to evaluate the evidentiary basis and determine the efficacy of phonics, the NRP established methodology criteria and looked at studies where control group comparisons were available.

The NRP concluded that systematic phonics instruction produces significant benefits for students in kindergarten through 6th grade, and for students having difficulty learning to read. Some of the findings on the benefits of systematic phonics instruction were contradictory; first graders were better able to decode and spell, and showed significant improvement in their ability to comprehend text. Older students using similar techniques showed analogous gains in their ability to decode words and to spell, but did not show significant improvement in comprehension. A noteworthy finding was that phonics instruction benefits students with learning disabilities and "significantly more effective in improving low socioeconomic status children's alphabetic knowledge and word reading skills" than instructional approaches that did not include systematic phonics (NRP, 2000, p.9). This is a significant finding because of the persistent achievement gaps associated with low socioeconomic status children. It is also important because many ELs, especially long term ELs come from low socioeconomic status backgrounds (Freeman & Freeman, 2009, p.5).

While the report of the NRP labels phonics instruction a valuable and essential part of a classroom reading program, it also warns that "there is a need to be cautious about giving a blanket endorsement of all kinds of phonics instruction." Too often phonics has been seen as the silver bullet that can resolve all reading difficulties. As is the case with any element within an effective instructional program, the goal of phonics in not knowledge of phonics in itself, but the

larger goal of reading and writing. The NRP cautions that "educators must keep the end in mind and ensure that children understand the purpose of learning letter sounds" (NRP, 2000, p.10).

Fluency

A third research-based element of reading instruction that should be present in successful programs is Fluency. Fluent readers are able to read orally with speed, accuracy and oral expression. The NRP warns that fluency is often neglected in classroom and that the neglect of this particular reading skill has negative effects, particularly for struggling readers. "If text is read in a laborious and inefficient manner, it will be difficult for the child to remember what has been read and to relate the ideas expressed in the text to his or her own background knowledge" (p.11).

Reading practice is widely recognized as a contributor to reading fluency. The repetitive nature of practice unsurprisingly leads to increased familiarity with words repeatedly encountered. Each reader develops a sight vocabulary of words frequently encountered in print. Sight vocabulary refers to words that are recognized quickly by the reader and no longer need to be decoded. Research shows that for almost all readers, increased reading leads to gains in reading fluency based on word recognition (Kame'enui & Simmons, 2001, as cited in Helman, 2009).

Two types of practice, both expressive oral reading and independent silent reading, have both been linked to gains in fluency. A significant number of studies showed that guided oral reading practice, with feedback from teachers, classmates or family members, had a positive impact on fluency and has demonstrable benefits to related reading skills such as word recognition and comprehension. The positive benefits of oral reading practice extended across

ages and grade levels and applied to both regular and special education settings. The NRP also cites evidence that the benefits of oral reading practice apply to good readers and to those having difficulty learning to read.

The other practice associated with gains in fluency is independent silent reading. It is more difficult to establish the evidentiary basis for the success that has been associated with this practice. The NRP warns that "literally hundreds of correlational studies find that the best readers read the most and that poor readers read the least." This strongly suggests a link between sustained practice and increased skill. However the correlation does not prove a direct causality, and "it is also possible that better readers simply chose to read more" (p.12).

The problem of establishing a solid evidentiary basis for the relationship between independent silent reading and increased reading skill lies partly in the research conducted. Very few of the hundreds of studies on the benefits of independent reading practice could meet the methodological criteria establish by the NRP. A met-analysis of those studies that did meet the criteria could not be performed because the methodology of these studies varied widely. The panel concluded that "even though encouraging students to read more is intuitively appealing, there is still not sufficient research evidence obtained from studies of high methodological quality to support the idea that such efforts reliably increase how much students read, or that such programs result in improved reading skills" (p.13).

Comprehension

Comprehension of text is an essential reading skill, and one that allows the reader to learn in all academic subject areas. Text comprehension skills benefit readers who continue learning by reading outside of school and remain useful far beyond a student's school career. The NRP

found three consistent themes in its review of the research literature on reading comprehension. The first important theme is that reading comprehension is a complex cognitive process that is innately linked to vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension can be linked to vocabulary development instruction. A second theme in the research on comprehension is that reading comprehension is a thoughtful, at times reflective, interaction between the reader and the text. A third theme in the research on reading comprehension is that classroom instruction on comprehension strategies, and the preparation of teachers to implement these strategies, can be a crucial element in enhancing reading comprehension.

Comprehension: Vocabulary

Vocabulary, or knowledge of words, is a crucial component of reading comprehension. The NRP notes that there are two types of vocabulary, oral and print. When a young reader encounters an unknown word in print the reader can sound it out, and if that word is a part of the reader's oral vocabulary they can then make sense of it in the print context. If the new word is not part of the reader's oral vocabulary, they will need to try to establish its meaning by other means, if that is possible. Therefore, the more word knowledge a reader has, both oral and print word knowledge, the easier it will be for them to understand the text and master the reading process.

The NRP examined more than 20,000 research citation on vocabulary development. Some research was discounted because it focused on learning disabilities or second language students and was not relevant to the NRPs mission. The NRP was not able to create a meta-analysis of the studies that they did select because there was so much variation in the how the

studies were conducted. The panel did choose to review a smaller number of high quality studies and was able to publish a section of findings and determinations.

The evidence reviewed by the NRP strongly suggested that vocabulary instruction does lead to gains in reading comprehension, but that the methods must be appropriate for the grade level and reading level. Several beneficial types of vocabulary instruction were identified. Computerized vocabulary building was found to be more rewarding than some traditional methods. Incidental vocabulary instruction, carried out in the course of reading was found to be helpful. Pre-reading vocabulary development, used in conjunction with a specific text, was also found to be effective. Repeated exposure to words in varying contexts and word substitutions were also helpful.

Based on its review of the literature, the NRP made several recommendations for vocabulary instruction as a part of reading instruction. The panel suggests that vocabulary should be taught both directly and incidentally. Multiple exposures to new words, including in rich contexts and via technology can enhance vocabulary acquisition. Direct instruction in word knowledge should include substitutions and other activities that depend on students' cognitive engagement. The panel also suggests that multiple methods of vocabulary instruction will be more effective than any single method (NRP, 2000, p.14). While the panel's report acknowledges that much is known about the importance to vocabulary to successful reading instruction, there is still little comparative research on the best methods or combination of methods for growth in word knowledge.

Text Comprehension Instruction as an Interactive Thought Process

A second important theme in the research on reading comprehension is the idea that comprehension can be defined as an interactive thought process where meaning is constructed between reader and text. In this view, readers build comprehension when they both decode the text, and also link the text to specific thinking activities such as problem solving or relating the ideas in print to their own lives and experiences. Comprehension can be increased by teaching students to use specific thought processes or cognitive strategies as they read. The teaching of these specific comprehension strategies is especially beneficial when students become automatic users of comprehension tools when they encounter obstacles it understanding a text.

In reviewing the research the Panel reports that many readers are able to develop comprehension strategies informally to some extent. However, formal instruction in the use of comprehension strategies is shown by research to be highly effective in enhancing understanding. Instruction in the use of comprehension strategies usually takes the form of a teacher modeling or demonstrating a particular thought process known as a strategy until students are able to carry out this though process independently.

The NRP reviewed 481 studies and identified a sound research basis for seven types of comprehension instruction. Some of these forms of instruction are valuable when used individually, but many were more effective when used in combination. The first type of instruction identified is simply comprehension monitoring; where students learn to be aware of their own understanding of the text, and equally importantly, an awareness of when they are not fully understanding. Another fairly straightforward strategy is question answering; where students respond to questions about the material and are able to get immediate feedback on their

understanding. Building off of question answering is question generation; where students ask themselves questions about the text. Two similar strategies are the use of graphic and semantic organizers, including story maps; where readers depict the story visually to aid understanding, and process called "Story structure" where students learn to use the structure of events in a story as a means of helping them recall and analyze the content of what they've read. Another technique that readers can be taught to use is summarization; where ideas from different parts of the text of linked together and generalization about the message of a text can be made. A final effective comprehension strategy that can be taught is cooperative learning; where students share personal understandings of reading to create enhanced overall understanding. The NRP notes that all of these strategies can improve results on comprehension tests. The NRP also cites evidence that comprehension strategies work particularly well when used in combination.

Teacher Preparation and Comprehension Instruction

Teaching students to use reading comprehension strategies is multifaceted. An additional challenge identified in the research reading comprehension was preparing teachers to effectively incorporate comprehension strategies in the classroom. The NRP points out several challenges: "Teachers must not only have a firm grasp of the content presented in text, but also must have a substantial knowledge of the strategies themselves, of which strategies are most effective for different students and types of content and of how best to teach and model strategy use" (NRP, 2000, p.16). This challenge is multiplied when research shows that reading comprehension strategies are most effective when several strategies are deployed simultaneously. In addition, successful use of comprehension strategies requires that students receive feedback. Not only do teachers need to provide feedback, they must be able to respond flexibly to different levels of understanding that students may demonstrate.

The NRP reviewed hundreds of studies on preparing teachers to use comprehension strategies and techniques, but very few of them met the Panel's methodology criteria. Two distinct ideas in preparing teachers to effectively use comprehension strategies identified by the Panel are Direct Explanation and Transactional Strategy Instruction. Direct Explanation focuses on the teacher's ability to clearly explain the reasoning and the mental processes involved in successful reading comprehension. Teachers help students think about reading as a problem solving task that requires strategic thinking. They also help students learn to think strategically in terms of problem solving when confronted with comprehension issues and questions. Transactional Strategy Instruction is similar in that it is also based on the teacher's ability to provide explicit explanations of thinking processes. In addition, this approach stresses the teacher's ability to facilitate student conversations. The aim of these targeted conversations is to co-construct deeper understanding both of the text, and of the mental steps taken to arrive at understanding.

Studies of teacher preparation for Comprehension Strategy Instruction show that to be effective, teacher need extensive training in various aspects of these methods. Teachers need instruction in what they will be teaching, in modeling the cognitive processes, in encouraging student inquiry and in maintaining student engagement. While using cognitive strategies that enhance reading comprehension has proven effective, well defined teacher training is required to employ these strategies as a part of reading instruction.

The report of the National Reading Panel synthesized the extensive and varied research on the teaching of reading. The report established the clear scientific basis for five key elements of reading instruction. These are Phonemic Awareness instruction, Phonics instruction, Fluency, Vocabulary and Comprehension. The NRP establishes that all reading instruction programs

should include these five scientifically based best practices. However the NRP did not include in its report a review of the research on teaching reading to English Learners. The NRP did identify this as a pressing area for further research. A comprehensive review of that research would appear five years later in the Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth.

2) Research on developing literacy in Second Language Learners

Following on the work of the NRP, and its recommendations for further research on specific student populations, the federal government established a panel of experts to review and synthesize the research literature on literacy instruction for students who are learning English as a new language. This report, published by the National Literacy Panel (NLP) in 2006 under the title "English Language Learners: Developing Literacy in Second-language Learners" was co-authored by Diane August and Timothy Shanahan (hereafter August & Shanahan). The purpose of the NLP report was to "synthesize research on the education of language-minority children and youth with respect to their attainment of literacy, and to produce a comprehensive report evaluating and synthesizing this literature" (p.3).

There are three published versions of the August and Shanahan report. The initial report published in 2006 by Lawrence Earlbaum Associates. While this volume was invaluable because of its content, it was criticized for its extensive methodological language, a feature that made it difficult to access by non-expert readers. A revised version with less technical language and greater clarity of its conclusions and recommendations was published in 2008. In the introduction the authors state that the goal of the second volume is "intended to be accessible to

general readers" and may be more useful to teachers and other school practitioners. This revised edition is a joint publication of Routledge, the Center for Applied Linguistics and the International Reading Association. There is also a very brief Executive Summary of the August and Shanahan report published by the Center for Applied Linguistics available online. In this paper I have relied on the 2008 publication. A number of critical reviews and commentaries have also been published. Particularly helpful for this paper is the review published by Escamilla, (2010).

The panel of experts who worked on the NLP report decide to focus on five domains of investigation: 1) the development of Literacy in Second-Language Learners, 2) Cross-linguistic relationships in Second Language Learners, 3) Sociocultural Contexts and Literacy Development for Language Minority students, 4) Instructional Approaches for Educating Language Minority Students, 5) Language and Literacy Assessment of Language-Minority Students. The report focuses on literacy development, particularly in K-12 contexts. Most of the research studied came from English speaking countries (the US, Britain, Australia and Canada), but additional research on second language literacy was also reviewed from Finland, Israel and the Netherlands.

The Development of Literacy in Second Language Learners

The first section of the NLP report examines the research on how literacy is developed among second language students. In order to better organize the existing research on this topic, the report breaks it down into five sub-questions: 1) What are the similarities and differences in literacy development between native speakers of the societal language and language minority

students? 2) What are the profiles of those language minority students having literacy difficulties? 3) What factors have an impact on the literacy development of language minority students? 4) What is the relationship between English oral proficiency and word-level skills? 5) What is the relationship between English oral proficiency and text-level skills?

The available research revealed strong parallels between second language (L2) literacy development and monolingual literacy development. The authors state that "Instruction that provides substantial coverage in the key components of reading- identified by the National Reading Panel- as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension— has clear benefits for language-minority students. Focusing on these key components of reading has a positive influence on the literacy development of language-minority students, just as it does for native English speakers. Likewise, writing instruction has clear benefits for language-minority students, as it does for native English speakers" (August & Shanahan, 2008, p.28). While there are strong parallels between monolingual literacy development and L2 literacy development, and using the research proven elements identified by the NRP is important to building L2 literacy, it in itself is not sufficient. The research suggests that simply replicating literacy programs that work for monolinguals may not be enough for ELs, for example students whose first language is Spanish will benefit more from phonemic awareness instruction that focuses on English sounds that do not exist in Spanish than they would from general phonemic awareness instruction.

August and Shanahan point to research that shows proportionally there are similar numbers of EL and native English speakers who are classified as struggling readers. This suggests that a student's first language background, either English or language minority, is not the dominant factor in reading difficulty.

One measure of literacy development where ELs are able to develop similar skill levels to monolinguals in Word Reading, which is also defined as word reading accuracy. "With sufficient exposure to second-language reading, word reading skills appear to develop to a level equivalent to those attained by monolingual students" (p.37). This is confirmed by several studies. While this is an important similarity in literacy development, August & Shanahan warn that EL can develop similar levels of word reading accuracy while simultaneously performing more poorly on other measures such as oral language and vocabulary.

Another similarity between monolingual literacy development and that of ELs is in the area of Spelling. Many studies show that ELs have similar developmental patterns and similar abilities to monolingual children. August & Shanahan conclude that …"over time, English language learners can accomplish levels of English spelling proficiency equivalent to those of native speakers" (p.41). The authors remark that it is not coincidental that these two areas (word reading accuracy and spelling) are both areas where ELs can achieve similar levels as monolinguals. The two areas are highly related and the skills used for spelling; phonemic awareness, letter knowledge, and orthographic writing overlap with the skills used in accurate word reading.

While language-minority children may achieve similar skill levels in word reading and spelling, and these skills develop similarly to first language skills there are areas of difference. One area cited by the authors is Reading Comprehension. Many studies show that language minority students underperform monolingual peers. The basis of this underperformance has been difficult to isolate because reading comprehension is dependent on individual factors such as word knowledge and fluency and textual factors such as discourse style and syntactic variation.

Much of the research reviewed by the August and Shanahan (2008) report confirms the important link between oral language development and literacy development. The studies reviewed by the authors demonstrate a strong correlation between second language oral language and L2 literacy development. Strength in L2 oral language development is especially linked to strong achievement in reading comprehension.

The authors report that language minority children may have word level skills (spelling, decoding) that can be assessed at levels similar to monolingual English speakers, while at the same time having text level skills (reading comprehension, writing) that are significantly lower. Troublingly, the authors note that these text levels skills of ELs rarely reach the same levels of monolingual English speakers (p.278). The research reviewed suggests that this discrepancy between word level skills and text level skills can be linked to oral language development in English. "The crucial role of oral language knowledge in reading comprehension was demonstrated in four studies…" (p.46). These studies covered a variety of ages. ELs who have strong oral language skills are the same students who demonstrate higher levels of reading comprehension and higher achievement in writing. These findings help explain while ELs can maintain pace with monolingual English students while instruction is focused at the word level, but fall behind when instruction moves to comprehension and writing.

Building off the research presented in August and Shanahan (2008) that links English oral language to increased text level skills, Escamilla (2010) points out that this is one area where the needs of ELs are distinct from the literacy instruction recommended by the National Reading Panel. In her review of August and Shanahan, Escamilla argues that oral language development must also be incorporated into literacy instruction. "Extensive oral English development must be incorporated into successful literacy instruction. The most promising

instructional practices for language-minority students bear out this point: Literacy programs that provide instructional support of oral language development in English, aligned with high-quality literacy instruction are the most successful" (Escamilla, 2010, p.5).

Cross language relationships

The fourth chapter of the report deals with the development of skills across languages, a concept also known as transfer. There are several questions related to the concept of transfer; do oral skills in one language transfer to the development of oral skills in another language? Do oral skills in one language, particularly skills related to literacy, transfer to the development of literacy skills in another language? Do literacy skills attained in the first language transfer to the development of literacy skills in the next language?

The authors conclude that there is clear evidence that first language skills, both oral language skills and first language literacy can serve as a basis for developing literacy in English. Studies reviewed in this section provide evidence of several levels of language transfer, and some cases where there is no evidence of language transfer. Limited oral language development in a student's first language will not limit their eventual level of literacy in English. There is evidence that first language oral proficiency influences second language patterns of speech and language production. When a student has well-developed phonological processing skills such as rhyme, segmentation and blending sounds in their first language, they are a strong predictor of word reading skills and spelling skills in English (p.72). There is evidence that L1 literacy is related to literacy growth in English in areas as diverse as word reading, reading strategies, reading comprehension, spelling and writing. Cognitive skills associated with complex language in a student's first language can transfer to the development of similar skills in English, "there is

evidence that language-minority students are able to take advantage of higher order vocabulary skills in the first language, such as the ability to provide formal definitions and interpret metaphors, when speaking a second language" (August & Shanahan, 2008, p.71). Research also shows that students who are able to read strategically, in their first language are also able to do so in their second language (p.79). There is evidence that language minority students who are literate in their L1 are likely to be more advanced in developing English literacy. This evidence extends across grade levels (p.78).

The broad evidence for the transfer of language skills has implications for the design of instructional programs. Political initiatives have limited bi-lingual educational programs in many states. While the authors are careful not to step into any policy debates they do conclude that "studies demonstrate that language-minority students instructed in their native language and in English perform, on average, better on English reading measures than language-minority students instructed only in English" (p.171).

Sociocultural Contexts

August and Shanahan dedicate another chapter to reviewing the empirical evidence related to sociocultural factors that may affect literacy development in language minority students. A large number of broader cultural factors that may impact literacy development have been suggested. These include factors such as immigration, both immigration status and literacy development in different generations of immigrant families; the influence of discourse structure and possible differences between home language and school language; the influence of language status and prestige; the influence of federal, state and school district policies. Near the start of the chapter the authors warn readers that "the review that follows may appear to reflect skepticism

about the influence of sociocultural factors on educational outcomes for language minority students. This skepticism is in reality aimed at claims that are made but not yet justified by existing research" (p.100).

The authors could not find any evidence that immigration status has an impact on literacy. While refugee and immigration journeys may be traumatic in nature, they cannot be said to impede literacy achievement in new languages. Although immigrants can be shown to shift home language use away from their first language and towards English across generations, this shift did not have a relationship on reading in English.

It has been suggested that minority children are socialized in a particular style at home, and that greater learning gains could be made in school if schools made efforts to make replicate social styles used at home. One study found that culturally compatible lessons had a positive impact on the reading lesson engagement of native Hawaiian children, but there was no measurable outcome of this higher engagement.

August and Shanahan (2008) reviewed many studies that point to cultural differences between culturally-diverse students and classrooms that are not prepared to recognize their cultural background. These studies provide examples of the alienation experienced by students when no effort is made to assimilate them into the classroom. A related group of studies demonstrate how teachers can integrate the cultural background of students; by allowing them to write about personal topics, by using their first language in class, by validating cultural topics related to literacy, and by building home school connections. These studies provide example of culturally responsive teaching, but they do not link these practices to measurable literacy outcomes (p.108).

Another important set of sociocultural studies are those that look at the role of parents and families. In general home literacy experiences are associated with higher literacy outcomes. Also, measures of parental literacy often predict eventual student literacy attainment. Many studies have linked parent literacy behaviors with student literacy outcomes, but August and Shanahan warn that in the study of second language literacy, the findings are not consistent. The only conclusion the authors are willing to make is that "schools should look for ways to engage parents in children's' literacy development (although what language parents should be encouraged to use is far from clear" (p.109).

Another area that has generated much speculation has been the impact of federal, state and local policies, particularly policies that prioritize the learning of English, and implicitly devalue a child's first language. August and Shanahan point out that there has been much speculation but surprisingly few empirical studies and that "the research basis is inadequate to permit firm conclusions" (p.114).

Another way in which relative value may be placed on a student's first language is in through the actions of the teacher. As was reported in the first section of the report, higher levels of achievement in first language literacy correspond to higher levels of literacy attainment in English. Teacher attitudes may play a role in how the student's first language is viewed. "When teachers show they value the student's first language, the language tends to be accepted by students in class, but when teachers fail to value it, other students may take on negative attitudes" towards this language. August and Shanahan prudently note that the value placed on the first language is just one variable and "may be insufficient to promote first language literacy" (p.115).

The paucity of empirical evidence leaves August and Shanahan skeptical of most claims made about sociocultural factors in the development of second-language literacy. However there does seem to be one exception. An area where there is evidence that teacher choices can have a positive impact on student learning was in the use of culturally relevant materials. There are several studies that show how culturally familiar materials can boost student comprehension and conversely how unfamiliar materials can interfere with comprehension and literacy growth (p.106).

Instructional Approaches for Literacy Instruction

August and Shanahan conclude their evidentiary chapters with a look at instructional practices related to the development of second-language literacy. This chapter presents research findings on bilingual versus monolingual instruction, classroom and school practices related to language-minority literacy growth and the role of the teacher in second language literacy development.

The efficacy of bilingual vs. English immersion programs for ELs is a subject that has been frequently debated. August and Shanahan compare the effects of these two program models by creating a meta-analysis of 15 studies that met their methodological criteria. Most of the programs included in the analysis were elementary programs, where most literacy instruction occurs, but two of them were secondary programs. The conclusion was that "children in bilingual programs not only developed facility with English literacy to the same extent as their peers taught in English, but also developed literacy skills in their native language. Thus, they achieved the advantage of being bilingual and biliterate" (p.140).

In addition to reviewing the evidence on program models, the authors review research on the five primary elements of literacy instruction identified by the National Reading Panel. In all five areas of literacy instruction August & Shanahan found that similar benefits for ELs, (although with a much smaller number of studies than those conducted monolingualy). ELs showed greater reading growth than native English students when exposed to vocabulary instruction. ELs showed lower growth than monolinguals with instructional experiments in reading comprehension strategies. The authors link this lower growth finding to the importance of oral language and its clear relationship to reading comprehension. These finding make it clear that instruction in the primary literacy elements help ELs develop English literacy in the same way they help monolinguals. However, the authors warn that this "does not mean that there is no need to adjust these instructional approaches to make them effective with ELs" (p.146).

Assessments and Literacy Development of ELs

August and Shanahan conclude their review of Literacy research on ELs with a small section that reviews Assessment practices within the field. There is scant research to review. The authors conclude that current assessment tools used to measure the emerging literacy of monolinguals may not be sufficient to measure the growth of ELs. However new assessment tools that can separate literacy skills from language knowledge have not yet been developed.

Conclusion

The report of the National Literacy Panel on Developing Reading and Writing in Second-Language Learners is an exhaustive review of research on literacy development for ELs. The authors present several important conclusions for practitioners. Given sufficient time and exposure, ELs can obtain achievement similar to monolinguals on word level tasks such as word

reading accuracy and spelling. The same basic elements of literacy instruction identified by the NRP are all valuable for literacy development with ELs. However, these elements are not sufficient for literacy development with ELs. Examples of how literacy instruction can be modified to meet the needs of ELs include using culturally relevant materials to enhance comprehension, additional phonemic awareness instruction based on needed awareness of English phonemes, the use of first language oral knowledge to promote vocabulary development in English, and the explicit inclusion of English oral language instruction, which is important because this skill is closely linked to higher levels of reading comprehension. Another important conclusion is that language skills, and in particular literacy skills transfer from language to language. The transfer of literacy skills provides a way to understand the efficacy of bilingual programs. The research reviewed by August and Shanahan shows that these programs have a positive effect on reading outcomes in English.

III.   IMPLEMENTING A LITERACY PROGRAM FOR AN ADOLESCENT NEWCOMER

1)   Adolescent Newcomers and Students with Interrupted Formal Education or SIFEs

Data from the 2000 US Census indicates that more than 50% of ELs are not immigrants, but are instead born in the US. Of the ELs who are immigrants, a high percentage entered school before or during the elementary years (Francis, et al, 2006). A much smaller group of ELs are those who enter US schools for the first time as adolescents. Although a statically smaller group, these students present big challenges for schools, in part because they have a limited amount of time to complete their education. Adolescent newcomers are a diverse group. Some arrive with

extensive formal school experiences in their previous residences and with high degrees of literacy in their first languages. Others, like Miguel, arrive with limited or interrupted formal schooling, and with limited literacy in their first language.

Unfortunately much of the published work on serving adolescent newcomers is of limited relevance to a student like Miguel, in this his first year of attending school. Publications like Research-Based Recommendations for Serving Adolescent Newcomers (Francis, et al., 2006) focus on the development of academic language in core classes as a key component of school success for Adolescent Newcomers. As Francis states "It is not possible to overstate the role that langue plays in determining students' success with academic content" (p.6). While this is undeniably true and relevant for almost all newcomers, the focus on developing academic language in the content areas is less relevant for a student like Miguel, where the first challenges are developing basic literacy and enough oral language to participate in regular education classrooms.

Adolescent Newcomers arrive with varied education backgrounds. One group of ANs with higher educational needs are Students with Interrupted Formal Education, or SIFEs. These are students who find themselves far behind grade level because they have had limited access to education during parts of their childhood. SIFEs may arrive from conflict zones or from backgrounds of extreme poverty where education was not an option. Not only do these students need to learn English and often need to learn how to read and write, they may also struggle with cultural adjustment and identity issues (Spaulding, Carolino & Amen, 2004).

A primary concern is building adequate literacy and academic knowledge in the briefer educational time available to SIFEs who arrive as adolescents. "These learners require

instruction in the basic concepts and skills such as how to study and take notes" (Dicerbo & Loop, 2003). SIFEs may experience high degrees of frustration. The initial excitement of attending school and the hopefulness that accompanies this event may be undermined by the observation that he is far behind his same-age peers. Another potential problem is that SIFEs are at heightened risk for dropping out of school. Robertson and Lafond (2008) point out that "at-risk Hispanic teens who judged themselves as not speaking English well were four times more likely to drop out of high school then were their peers who spoke English well."

Another publication which provided some valuable guidance for understanding the needs of Students with Limited Formal Education is "Best practices for Immigrant Students with Limited Formal Education" published by edsupport.org (Spaulding et al. 2004). This document does not claim to be research based, but does suggest "HS programs that adhere to conventional four year timelines for students to meet graduation requirements limit opportunities for late-arrival immigrant students". This need for flexibility was very apparent in Miguel's case, where although he was seventeen when he entered school, he was not linguistically prepared to work in most academic classrooms and would never accumulate enough credits to graduate even he were to stay in school for four years.

Another issue related to second literacy development and age is personal motivation. Age may affect willingness to engage in L2 instruction. Jia and Aarnson (2003, cited in August & Shanahan, 2008, p.270) show how Chinese immigrant children under the age of ten and eleven switched toward dominance in English relatively quickly, in part because their access to literacy in Chinese was still quite limited. Slightly older immigrants who has mastered full literacy in Chinese and who had more autonomy selected Chines focused activities at a much higher rate, choosing to read Chinese books, watch Chinese movies and associate with Chinese-speaking

peers. Needless to say, their progress in English was slower than that of the younger immigrants but their maintenance of Chinese was much greater.

A question about ANs and especially about those with limited literacy is if they are capable reaching L2 literacy outcomes equal to children who began literacy at a young age. August and Shanahan find research that students who become L2 literate later in life have lower achievement, but cannot link this entirely to age. "Age of onset of second language learning is widely thought to influence second language outcomes, but its impact cannot be disentangled from other age related factors such as motivation and access to social contacts" (p.280).

The issue of age and how well adolescents can achieve L2 literacy still lacks solid study. In Miguel's case, he is at risk to achieve at a lower level because he is starting to become literate so late in life. On the other hand he is a very motivated learner and this may offset any age related factors.

2) Who is Miguel: Personal Background

Miguel is a student who brings unique challenges to the process of becoming literate in English. Miguel arrived at school in May of 2013 as an illiterate 17 year old, who was attending school for the first time in his life. Miguel is from Guatemala, where the most commonly spoken language is Spanish, but many people, especially in smaller towns and rural areas, speak many regional variations of Mayan, a Native American language that has survived the conquest and the resulting spread of Spanish. Miguel's first language is Quiché. This is one of the largest, both in geographic range and in number of speakers, of the more than two dozen Mayan languages spoken by the indigenous people of Guatemala. Other Mayan languages are also spoken in southern Mexico, Belize and Honduras. There are between 1 and a half to three million speakers

of Quiché, about a third of whom are monolingual. Miguel had never learned to read and write in his first language. He grew up in a rural area where opportunities for formal schooling were limited. Instead he began working in agriculture at the age of seven, earning roughly two dollars per day. Like millions of other Central Americans in recent decades, he decided to take his chances looking for better paying work in the US.

Miguel's second language is Spanish. Miguel came to the US at the age of thirteen, with a friend from his village who also spoke Quiché. However the friend was quickly deported and Miguel found himself alone in an immigrant subculture that consisted of Spanish speakers. Miguel found shelter with a family of Mexican immigrants who began to teach him to speak Spanish. He also learned Spanish at work on construction crews with immigrant co-workers and Hispanic managers. Miguel's Spanish reflects his status as an illiterate second language learner in an immigrant sub-culture. His control of inflected verb tenses is limited and he does not always distinguish between the gender of nouns and related adjectives, a basic syntactical function in Spanish. He has observed that there is a lot of variation in the Spanish spoken by immigrants in the US; the Uruguayan family he now lives with have both different pronunciation and different vocabulary that his previous roommates, a group of guys from Nicaragua, and their Spanish was distinct from the Mexicans and Hondurans he lived and worked with previously. Miguel has a younger brother who still lives with the family in the remote village in the mountains of Guatemala. This younger sibling is now attending school and learning Spanish. When Miguel speaks to his family on the phone, they converse in Quiché. Miguel has mentioned more than once that it's hard to talk to his little brother in Spanish because the Spanish that he is learning in school there is so different from the Spanish that Miguel has acquired conversationally here in the US.

Despite living and working in the US for four years, Miguel had learned very little English. When he came to school he knew only a few words. It was necessary to show him around and orient him to the daily routine of the school in Spanish. Miguel is a diligent student who is excited to have an opportunity to attend school. After first arriving, at the end of the school year in May, he came to school every day over the summer. He has made clear his desire to learn how to read and write. The adults in his life, both the immigrant family with whom he now resides with and his adult co-workers, have encouraged him to take advantage of this opportunity to learn. Teaching an adolescent to read and write, while simultaneously teaching them English and showing them how school works is a challenge. But, like all ELs, Miguel does not enter the process as a blank slate. He, like all ELs, brings a unique personal background to the literacy process and his knowledge can serve as a basis for effective instruction.

3) Who is Miguel: Reading Resources

Hilman (2009) suggests that an important part of the reading experience is what resources and knowledge each individual brings with them to the process of learning to read. Understanding the learner and their personal relationship to language is imperative for educators who hope to peruse the most effective route to literacy. For the purpose of analyzing what a student brings to the reading process. Hilman divides a student's individual reading resources into four categories: linguistics, sociocultural, psychological, and educational frameworks. Two of these areas are less relevant to this paper; those are the psychological and educational frameworks. Miguel has no formal educational background, so there isn't much material there to present. Miguel is culturally uninclined to talk about himself and his own needs. Presenting a psychological framework related to his literacy development would be pure speculation on my

part. Instead we will examine what linguistic and sociocultural resources Miguel brings to the process of literacy development.

Linguistics resources

Each aspiring reader brings knowledge from their first language to the process of becoming literate in English. The linguistic knowledge can be analyzed in several areas; phonology, morphology, vocabulary knowledge, syntax and socio-linguistic norms. Phonology refers to the collected sounds within a language. Research shows that when students are confronted with sounds in English, that are not present in their first language, student have trouble distinguishing how those sounds are represented in text (Palmer, et. al. 2007; Helman, 2004, as cited in Helman, 2009). Morphemes are the segments of words that contain meaningful information. The word cat contains one morpheme because it refers to a hairy four-legged carnivore. The word cats has two morphemes because it contains both cat and the letter s, which conveys the meaning of plural. In Spanish the word "gata" contains two morphemes – the first three letters suggest the meaning of cat and the final letter specifies the female gender of the cat under discussion. A study of Spanish speaking ELs found that students were better able to determine the meaning of words in English, when the words followed similar morphological patterns to their first language (Hancin-Bhatt & Nagy, 1994, as cited in Helman, 2009). Certain features of English morphology such as the use of the letter s to mark third person singular verbs and plural nouns, and also the formation of past tenses, can be problematic for ELs. Vocabulary knowledge is important to the literacy development of ELs because word knowledge can play a role both in reading comprehension and in writing expressively. Students whose first language shares cognates with English will bring an obvious advantage to learning English vocabulary. Each English Learner brings a set of linguistic knowledge, based in their first language, or

43

languages, to the process of learning English. Syntax refers to the rules used within a language for putting words in larger phrases and sentences. All languages create sentences using subjects, objects and verbs. But each language will have its own internal logic and rules about which elements can occur in which part of a sentence and in what combinations. Students with syntactical knowledge of their first language face a challenge adapting to the syntactical structure of English. A Canadian reading development study that compared ELs and native English speakers showed ELs having greater difficulty choosing a grammatically correct word to fill in cloze passages (Lipka & Segal 2007, as cited in Helman, 2009). This personal linguistic knowledge is a resource and can transfer to learning a new language, but may also cause confusion as the student works to understand English phonology, morphology, syntax and vocabulary.

The linguistic background that Manuel brings to the literacy process is his knowledge of Quiché and Spanish. This personal language background aided and hindered Manuel in learning English. It has been difficult to evaluate how his first language knowledge contributes to learning English because so little is known about the Quiché language and resources have been hard to find. Miguel's knowledge of Spanish has been an asset, particularly in areas where Spanish is similar to English, but also presented challenges.

In phonological terms it was apparent that certain English vowel sounds were not part of the Miguel's sound inventory. This is often the case with Spanish speakers who learn English because Spanish utilizes a less complex phonology for vowel sounds. Interestingly, Quiché does possess some of the more diverse vowel phonology of English and this has certainly helped Manuel. For example Spanish has a single phoneme for the letter o, which corresponds to the English long o, as in "phone". Quiché has a second o phoneme that corresponds to the English

short o sound, as in "spot". A third o phoneme in English, where the tongue is in a lower position, as in "shorts" (Miguel's preferred clothing for much of the year) has been difficult for him to learn, both in oral production and when sounding out text.

Miguel's first language uses a morphological system that is utterly distinct from both Spanish and English. It should be noted that Quiché also seems to have a more flexible morphology where individual morphemes, or sound segments that contain meaning, can move from one word to another depending on the complexity of the sentence (Mondloch, 1978). English and Spanish both use morphemic contractions (is not = isn't), but do not move morphemes from word to word within a sentence. A striking example of how first language morphology can impact learning a new language was Miguel's construction of plurals. Although Miguel has four years of oral language development in Spanish, he had not yet learned one important morphological marker in both Spanish and English, the pluralization of nouns by adding the letter s. It quickly became apparent when we began reading, in both Spanish and English, that he was unaware of the significance of the added s on the ends of nouns. At one point we were reading a simple picture book about rabbits and Miguel was not making either the textual or comprehensive distinction between "rabbit" and "rabbits". He taught me that the Quiché word for rabbit is "mooltcsh", and when it became clear that I wanted to also understand the plural, he produced " E mooltsch" and clarified in Spanish that this meant "varios conejo" – which corresponds to the English "various rabbits" with the plural s marker conspicuously absent from the noun conejo. The pattern in Quiché seemed to be placing a numerical modifier before the noun to indicate plurality, without changing the morphology of the noun at all. Miguel had carried this pattern over to his second language and was pluralizing Spanish nouns by altering the article before noun or adding a numerical modifier without altering the noun itself. As he has

become aware of the similar morphological pluralization in English and Spanish, the addition of the letters s or es, and the sounds associated with these letters, he has become more adept at employing these patterns in both languages.

Quiché syntax, like its morphology, seems to be more flexible than either Spanish or English. As a language teacher, I have not noticed how first language syntax has effected Miguel's Spanish or his emergent English. I have noticed that he often omits the subject of a sentence, and this is probably a carryover from Spanish where verbs are inflected to show the subject. This almost complete omission of subject pronouns makes it difficult at times to follow his spoken language. It is not clear of Miguel's omission pronouns is a product of first language influence.

The socio-linguistics aspects of learning and using a new language can be difficult when they are not just learning a new language, but learning how to use it within a new culture. Miguel's journey from rural poverty and racial discrimination to adolescent immigrant, a Quiché speaker in a Spanish speaking immigrant subculture, to first time student and English Learner have influenced how he uses language in various contexts. Although I have traveled to Guatemala three times and spent time in rural Mayan villages, my idea of how Miguel grew up is more guess-work than knowledge. I do know that traditional Mayan culture emphasizes politeness and helpfulness to others over personal achievement. This reflects a traditional view that group cohesion and survival are of greater importance than individual expression. Miguel reflects this cultural background in his speech. He uses the formal second person grammar with the Uruguayan immigrant family who he lives with. One similarity between Quiché and Spanish is that both languages have distinct second person singular pronouns to reflect the distinction between familiar and more formal speech. One aspect of Miguel's personal socio-linguistic

background is the contrast between politeness and respect he demonstrates to all around him and the crudeness of much of his Spanish vocabulary. One day, near the start of Miguel's school career, we had a conversation with the school principal. Afterwards, he asked me how I would refer to her, and I said "la directora" or "the director" of the school and I also mentioned that she was the "encargada" or the person "in charge of" the school. I asked Miguel how he would refer to a person in a position of authority like this and his version would be translated to English as "the big f---er". With 45 million Spanish speakers, from gang members to a Supreme Court Justice, there are many socio-linguistic varieties of Spanish spoken in the US. It is ironic that Miguel, a Guatemalan, came to the US to learn Spanish. Unfortunately, the Spanish most available to him, the profane construction worker variety, is so in contrast with his personal and cultural inclination towards respectful politeness.

Sociocultural Resources

Another group of factors that play a role in developing literacy with ELs are sociocultural factors such as the individual student's background and how it meshes with the culture of the school and the educational system. One of the largest factors that will affect learners is whether or not their linguistic and cultural background is acknowledged and valued. A school or teacher may say that they value the cultural diversity that an EL brings but insist on following patterns of interaction that are not natural within the student's culture. Another way in which the student's background becomes a factor is the relative prestige given to the home language in comparison to English. Miguel often refers to his own language as "dialecto" or dialect which implies a slightly inferior status to a language. At the same time, given the wide regional differences within the Quichean language group, including differences between speakers in his village and those in the larger city about 15 miles away, it is not unreasonable to refer to the speech of his

47

village as a dialect. It would be in keeping with the racially discriminatory treatment of Guatemala's Mayan people to refer to their languages simply as dialects. However the word dialect be sued simply as a technical term for regional variation within the language. Whichever is the case with Miguel referring to his own language as "dialecto", at school we have encouraged him to use one of the other Spanish words for language "lengua", "lenguaje" or "idioma" when referring to his own tongue.

The sociocultural view of learning suggests that individuals develop the skills that are needed to become functional in social groups. The sociocultural perspective on language learning proposes that individuals gain levels of language competency that will help to integrate them into social groups. A specialized set of language, such as that used by the legal profession, isn't learned by many people, but the ability to manipulate this language is requirement to participate successfully in the social sub-group that is the legal profession. A second and related idea of sociocultural theory is that within society distinction are made that value and devalue particular competencies, or in this case, particular language skills. How teachers value or de-value the linguistic skills of ELs can play a role in successful instruction.

In Miguel's case, he was competent within his own language community until leaving home at the age of thirteen. All of that changed when he needed to fit into a new language community, a mix of Latino immigrants from various nations who communicated in Spanish. In order to survive within this language community, Miguel learned Spanish. To someone who has been trained in the type of grammar-based Spanish programs common in US universities, the grammatical shortcomings of Miguel's Spanish are noticeable. When I work with Miguel and hear grammatical errors in his Spanish, I have to keep in mind that we pursued Spanish with differing ends in mind. In my own case, I studied Spanish in order to graduate from the

University and find employment as a Spanish teacher, and I developed a level of language competence that would help me reach those goals. In Miguel's case, the purpose of his Spanish was to survive within the immigrant subculture and most importantly to obtain and maintain employment so he could send money home and pay off the people smuggler who had brought him to the US. Miguel learned the Spanish that he needed to know to work competently in a variety of settings; restaurants, farms and construction sites. His emergent oral competency in Spanish has allowed him to become a part of a community of speakers. In the absence of Quiché speakers the Spanish speaking immigrant community has become his linguistic home. While his English has grown considerably while enrolled in school, his personal identity is still aligned with this group of Spanish speakers. This is a group with whom he shares a personal narrative of immigration even if it is shared in his second language.

The most effective language instruction for students like Miguel will be instruction that values the linguistic resources they bring to the learning process and understands how they were developed.

4) Creating an instructional program for Miguel

The creation of an effective instructional literacy program for Miguel was not an easy task and has not always unfolded smoothly. One major initial obstacle was the lack of knowledge in our school district about second language literacy development. As in many school systems, early elementary grade levels teachers incorporate a great deal of monolingual literacy instruction into their daily routines. Reading specialists who work with small groups of struggling readers and online intervention programs provide supplemental literacy instruction for students up until 10th grade. The majority of English Learners in our district have entered school

in the early grade levels and EL regularly benefit from all of these programs. None of our basic literacy teaching infrastructure or our experience prepared us for a student like Miguel. None of the teachers in our district were familiar with the research basis for creating basic literacy instruction for an adolescent EL.

Another obstacle to creating an effective instructional plan was the lack of knowledge about what a plan should include. Knowledge about basic literacy instruction generally resides with the classroom teachers and reading specialists who work at the early grade levels. Teachers who work with ELs have historically worked with younger students entering school, where EL teachers provided a reinforcement and supplement instruction. The traditional division of labor has been to leave a large part of the mechanical aspects of reading to the classroom teachers and the reading specialist and the use EL teacher time to expand vocabulary and oral language. ELs entering our school system in Kindergarten, would, like all students who saw a reading specialist teacher, bring home a daily book bag with a leveled reader inside. The literacy work done by the reading teachers was of phonetic in nature and the books were selected from phonics based evaluations. Often, the role of the EL teacher would be to re-read the same leveled text with the student with the intention of moving beyond the mechanistic reading development generally practiced by the reading teachers. ESL teachers work with the same reading material, but use the leveled reading text as a platform for expanded oral discussion. The expanded discussion of an already familiar text is carried out with the goals of increasing vocabulary knowledge and increasing comprehension by making connections between the content of the book and other sources of knowledge such as other readings, classroom content, and other texts. While ESL teachers in our district have experience working to expand both the oral language skills, the literacy levels and the academic language of ELs, there was no relevant experience teaching

from the absolute beginning stages of literacy. Similarly, the most experienced teachers of early literacy, early age classroom teachers and reading specialists, were not in a position to provide much help because their professional assignments were within elementary buildings and their experience was overwhelmingly monolingual in nature.

As it became clear that ESL teachers without experience teaching beginning literacy would be responsible for teaching Miguel to read and write, these teachers sought out a deeper understanding of what a basic literacy instructional process would look like. The initial stage of building instruction was really as search for information, ideas and materials. We were in communication with our peers within the district who do this kind of work. We also reached out to colleagues through electronic networks such as Department of Public Instruction's ELLlist.

Based on the information received and the shared experience of colleagues, an individualized literacy program began to take shape. The program would have to build off of what is known about beginning-stage literacy development in monolinguals, and for practical purposes would rely on both borrowed knowledge and borrowed materials from reading specialists in the district. The basic literacy instruction plan widely followed by monolinguals in our district would have to be modified in a couple of important ways to meet Miguel's individual circumstances. Firstly, because Miguel entered school with very little English word knowledge, there would have to be an enormous amount of vocabulary development in English. Without this expanded word knowledge, the mechanical side of reading would risk becoming sounding out words without knowing the meaning. Secondly, the phonemic side of decoding would have to take into account the Miguel's personal phonemic background knowledge, which would be distinct from that of other ELs. Given that Miguel needed to become functional in both oral and written English, the most efficacious literacy plan would be one that overlapped literacy with

functional oral language. A final important component of the literacy plan would be to build off of Miguel's existing oral language skills. We would need to develop a bilingual, and eventually trilingual, literacy program so that his oral knowledge of Spanish and Quiche would become a resource for literacy development. Perhaps the most important principle that we wanted to build into Miguel's plan was the idea of repetition and overlap. Many students need multiple exposures to new words in order to learn them, and if we could overlap phonetics with word learning and useful oral language, then Manuel could make simultaneous progress in multiple areas of learning English.

Two additional parts of the educational plan for Miguel, while not initially related to literacy, ended up having a positive impact on language development. One goal for Miguel was for him to become comfortable in the school environment. Achieving this goal would depend on fostering positive peer relationships. While Miguel lacked sufficient oral language skills to engage in the normal teenage friendships, many positive peer interactions and relationships developed, and continue to develop when other students work as tutors with him. (The school offers graduating seniors a graduation with distinction when they complete 60 hours of community service work, and work tutoring can count towards that achievement.) An additional goal in Miguel's educational plan that has proven useful for literacy development is the incorporation of technology. Miguel owns and uses a smart phone, and we wanted to use his familiarity with this platform as a resource for language development. He currently uses his phone for several language learning applications and net-based programs. His familiarity with this technology has led to the use of iReady, a sophisticated learning intervention software, which has become one of the primary means of assessing his literacy progress.

The most important way that Miguel's instructional program would be unique would be that his literacy instruction would aim towards bi-literacy, and if possible, tri-literacy. Based on the research that validates cross language transfer of literacy skills and his comparatively much larger oral knowledge of Spanish and Quiché, it would be logical to try to develop literacy in those languages as well as in English.

Of the two languages that Miguel brought to the learning process, it was much easier to facilitate literacy activities in Spanish. I am a licensed Spanish teacher. I have experience teaching the phonemes and phonetics of Spanish and have access to resources for beginning level texts. Miguel's facility with literacy has quickly outpaced his literacy growth in English. Miguel is currently enrolled in two Spanish classes at the High School and the teachers of those classes work with him on basic reading and writing tasks. The formalized grammar instruction of the Spanish as a Foreign Language curriculum has been beneficial to Miguel, who's acquired Spanish was not always syntactically correct.

Using Miguel's first language, Quiché, as a resource for emerging literacy has been a greater challenge. Miguel does speak to his family in Guatemala on the phone, but we have not found any Quiché speakers locally to help with instruction. Similarly it has been difficult, but not impossible, to find materials in this language. The first resource we encountered was a book donated by a local Guatemalan woman. This is a bilingual book of poems in both Spanish and Quiché by the celebrated Guatemala poet Humberto Ak'abal. There is a great deal of regional variation among Quiché speakers and the author of this book does not always use the same language as Miguel would choose. Nevertheless, we were able to read poems in Spanish to establish the meaning and then Miguel would switch to the Quiché version and sound out the lines of text. It was an emotional moment for both of us when he was first able to read in his own

language. Since that time we have added two other resources for learning Quiche. One is a 1903 Spanish language publication on teaching the Quiché to read their language. Originally published by a Biblical Society in Los Angeles, California, there is a copy in the University of California Library System. This copy was saved digitized to make it available to other libraries. By working in the University of Wisconsin system library in Madison, I was able to download a pdf. of this book and then print it out at school to use with Miguel. The other Quiche resource we are using is also from the University of Wisconsin system and is an English language manual for learning Quiché written by Mondlach (1978). This book has been less accessible to Miguel because of its presentation in English. It has however been a valuable resource for me to learn about the Quiché language and will serve Miguel as he is able to read more English.

Phonology and phonics

The initial stage of teaching reading language is to learn the written symbols and the sounds that they represent. When Manuel first arrived, I was unaware of the National Reading Panel report and the distinction that it makes between Phonemic Awareness and Phonics as discrete areas of reading development. Lacking this knowledge, we began with phonics based instruction with the letters of the alphabet and their associated sounds. To build off of Miguel's oral knowledge of Spanish, (and because his English was so limited that Spanish was the default language of instruction), we worked on learning the Spanish alphabet and phonics first. Miguel was unaware of the terminology associated with learning such as "letter", "word" and "alphabet". Despite these shortcomings, he rapidly grasped the idea and sound letter correspondence. An impressive early moment in learning the sounds associated with the letters was when, within his first few days attending school, he sounded out the letters of his name and his face lit up with surprise. This was probably his first reading experience and was an emotional

experience for him and for his teacher. Miguel rapidly grasped the idea of sound letter correspondence in both languages and has a small level of reading fluency in both languages. There are however still limits to his production of sounds in both English and Spanish. In Spanish he does not distinguish between the /r/ and /rr/ phonemes, especially in the word initial position. In English Miguel is still working to master r-controlled vowel sounds such as "ear" and "door". In is logical to assume that these are not part of his L1 phonemic inventory.

Fluency

The National Reading Panel made clear the importance of fluency as a component of literacy programs. Fluency is built on automaticity with letters and words. Without automatic, emergent readers are stuck on the mechanical side of reading and cannot devote cognitive resources to comprehension. The report of the NRP identified two ways to increase fluency; oral reading with feedback and sustained silent reading practice. In building a literacy program for Miguel, we have found ways for him to develop fluency through both of these methods.

As has been described, Miguel is a highly motivated learner and now that he has moved beyond basic decoding of simple words, he practices reading, in both Spanish and English at home. It is not clear how many hours of reading practice he has daily, but he does practice on a daily basis. Miguel also does daily oral reading with feedback, either with teachers or student tutors.

The primary source of early reading books for Miguel, in both Spanish and English, has been books printed from the licensed literacy site, Reading a-z. These are paper books and Miguel now has a personal library of several dozen books. The earliest ones were simple books with a picture and one or two words per page. These served both for early phonics instruction

and thematic vocabulary building (foods, clothing, etc.). Miguel has now progressed to English books with a full sentence or two per page, and Spanish books with six or eight sentences per page. On a weekly basis we re-read some of his earliest books, both as a vocabulary review and as a fluency exercise. Books where a couple months ago each word was laboriously decoded, he now moves through with some, but not perfect speed. August and Shanahan (2008) confirm the relationship between oral language and reading comprehension. In Miguel's case there is an observable relationship between oral language and reading fluency. Although Spanish is Miguel's second language, he had a much greater oral vocabulary in Spanish than in English. This is reflected in the relative ease with which he reads in Spanish. He demonstrated increased speed in oral reading in Spanish within the first weeks of reading, while he was still struggling to decode each word in English. He also needs fewer practice readings of a text in Spanish and more in English in order to pick up speed reading a book aloud. This demonstrates how a more developed oral vocabulary can lead to greater automaticity in word reading and thus to greater fluency.

Vocabulary

August and Shanahan (2008) make the distinction between learning to read a second language and learning to read <u>in</u> a second language. Miguel is in fact learning to read in his second and third languages. In developing English literacy Miguel is learning to read while learning all the words simultaneously. Vocabulary development is an area of the literacy program where we have tried to build in overlap. A great deal of effort can go into learning new words. These same words can serve as the basis of phonetic reading practice, oral conversational development and vocabulary knowledge. We have used three primary and overlapping vocab strategies so far with Miguel. The first is the use of picture word cards. The words represented

can serve as phonics reading and writing practice. The next step is for these cards to serve as the basis for simple conversation. The National Reading Panel suggests word substitutions and categorizations as example so games that can strengthen vocabulary knowledge. These are activities that we can do with vocabulary picture cards: Miguel, do you eat a _____ (pizza, a van, a dog)? Another vocabulary building strategy has been to read high frequency word books. Many of these books contain words that are verbs, subjects or conjunctions that are not easily represented visually (his, them, go). A final strategy has been to use Spanish to help clarify what words mean in English. This has been especially helpful with the large number of cognate words between English and Spanish. The effectiveness of this strategy is validated research reviewed in National Literacy Panel report (pp. 76, 77). Using Spanish is direct and efficacious, but it has limitations, both because Spanish is Miguel's second language and because words may be outside his cultural frame of reference. One of the early books we read in both English and Spanish was about fruits. The book came in two editions, one in each language, but with the same illustrations in both. One word that Miguel did not recognize was cherry, we turned to the Spanish edition but he was still unfamiliar with the word "cereza" and the picture of the fruit.

Comprehension

In order for reading to occur, two simultaneous processes must occur. A child who cannot decode cannot read; a child who cannot comprehend cannot read either. Literacy- reading ability- can be found only in the presence of both decoding and comprehension (Gough, Hoover & Peterson, 1996, cited in Kaufman, 2007, p.151).

The challenge of reading comprehension with a student like Miguel involves two simultaneous challenges related to the simultaneous processes of reading comprehension. An emerging reader needs to translate printed symbols into sounds in an accurate and efficient manner and at the same time constructing meaning out of what is being read. As Miguel has made real progress in his first six months as a reader, his decoding skills have moved from word to sentence to text level. It is important that his comprehension skills keep pace. This is particularly important for his reading development in English because August and Shanahan (2008) point of the many ELs develop word levels skills like decoding that are similar to native English speakers, but fail to reach similar levels of achievement in text level skills such as comprehension (p.272).

One problem with creating reading comprehension activities for Miguel is the lack of evidence on what strategies work. The National Reading Panel examined 205 studies on the benefits of reading comprehension activities that met its methodological criteria. August and Shanahan could find only three studies that covered the same area in relation to work with ELs, and these offered mixed results (August & Shanahan, 2008, p.145). Given the pressing need for reading comprehension growth with ELs, and following the general recommendation that literacy activities that work with monolinguals also benefit ELs, August and Shanahan endorse the use of evidence based comprehension strategies with ELs. All of the major works on literacy development for ELs that were read in preparation for this paper (August & Shanahan, 2008; Helman, 2009; Cloud, Genesee & Hamayan 2009; Calderón, 2007; Kaufman, 2007; Herrera, Perez & Escamilla, 2010) propose reading comprehension strategies that are similar or identical to ones used in monolingual classrooms. In some cases the implementation of the strategy is

varied for use with ELs. None of the authors propose entirely new comprehension strategies aimed specifically at ELs.

One crucial component of reading comprehension, as identified in August and Shanahan (2008) is the development of oral language. This is apparent when we look at the two languages that Miguel has begun to read in, Spanish and English. His comparatively much larger oral knowledge of Spanish has allowed him to consume larger segments of more complex text in this language without comprehension issues blocking his progress. He is reading leveled readers at levels G and H, while reading at levels B and C in English. Miguel has mastered most of the phonetic production of English words, but, vocabulary knowledge and comprehension issues slow his progress in English. This observable link between oral language, vocabulary knowledge and comprehension reinforces the view that literacy in both componential and cumulative.

One important reading comprehension strategy cited by the NRP is comprehension monitoring, or helping students become more aware of when they are not fully understanding the text. Miguel is encouraged to employ this strategy, especially when using printed paper books, by marking with a highlighter pen words or sections of text that he doesn't understand. We have employed this strategy for reading in both English and Spanish. From a teacher's perspective, comprehension monitoring is an important strategy, but the initial results have been somewhat mixed. Miguel is willing to mark only limited sections of text, often single words that he doesn't understand. When we reverse the marking, and have him highlight the areas he feels he does understand, he marks almost the entire text. He is clearly overestimating his comprehension, and this is revealed in follow up conversation about what he has read. Hopefully the conversations about comprehension will help him to fine tune his monitoring. It is unrealistic to expect him to be totally self-aware during reading, an activity which is relatively new to him. We believe that

comprehension monitoring is a valuable strategy that he can improve in and one that will help him develop as a reader in both languages.

Research from English dominant readers shows that making connections is a valuable comprehension strategy. When a reader is able to relate what is being read to other aspects of their life, they come to a more lasting and more profound understanding of the text (Kaufman, 2007, p.65). The main way that we have been able to employ this strategy with Miguel is through oral questioning, particularly relating a part of the text to his own life. For example, while reading a book that features different animals, we may stop to ask "Do you have a dog/horse/pig? Is there a dog / horse /pig at the farm? (where Miguel works) Is there a dog /horse/pig in Parraxtut? (Miguel's village in Guatemala). This kind of conversation in English helps link what we are reading both to his own life and to the larger world. In general education classrooms the strategy of enhancing comprehension by making connections is generally carried out on three levels; text to self connections, text to world and text to text. This final kind of connection, one made between two reading selections is not one that we have made yet.

Another research based comprehension strategy frequently used in monolingual classrooms is summarization. Re-stating the key contents of a text has benefits in that it reinforces key language items from the reading, and it has been linked to increased understanding. One obstacle to post reading conversation, both story re-telling and summarization, has been Miguel's limited oral development in English. We tend to have conversations about what he has read in Spanish, even when the text itself is in English. Using Spanish to develop comprehension in English is endorsed by Tankersley (2005). Drawing on cognitive resources available through a first language to enhance understanding in English is also supported by research (Cloud, Genesee & Hamayan, 2009, p.83).

Kaufman (2007) also suggests one additional comprehension strategy, reading aloud to ELs. Listening free some of the cognitive resources form the process of decoding and allows ELs to focus on constructing meaning (p.87). Calderon (2007) also endorses this practice to increase comprehension, but warns that it can be taken too far, and when extensive reading aloud occurs, teachers are depriving ELs of the act of reading (p.52). We have employed this idea with Miguel, initially in both languages, but now almost exclusively in English. This activity has the added benefit of modeling oral language and expressive reading.

Much of the research on comprehension strategies reviewed by the National Reading Panel was on the topic of modeling comprehension thought processes for students so that they can become independent users of these same strategies. This type of comprehension activity has been difficult to employ with Miguel. He does not yet possess or understand the language associated with cognitive processes. We have tried, in a very limited way to build toward an awareness of how he thinks about particular readings. All of these conversations are carried out in Spanish and then move to an imitative form of the same conversation in English. An example of this type of conversation might be "Is this book easy or difficult? Is this page easy or difficult? Is this word easy or difficult? While this is not really modeling a comprehension strategy, it is hopefully beginning an awareness of evaluating a text while reading it.

One final comprehension strategy is re-reading. This has obvious benefits for fluency and word recognition. By improving these areas and by re-visiting a topic ELs may also increase comprehension (Kaufman, 2007, p.93). This is a strategy that is used regularly with Miguel. Our hope is that with advancement in his English vocabulary, he can return to books he hasn't read for a while and they may make even more sense to him when he approaches them with increased vocabulary knowledge.

Reading comprehension is an essential element of all literacy programs. Many strategies that work with monolingual students will also be beneficial for ELs. ELs also have cognitive resources accessible through their first language that may add comprehension in English. The lack of research on the topic specific comprehension activities designed for ELs have not yet been proven.

Technology

The only available evidence of the efficacy of using technology in literacy development is from the National Reading Panel (2000). This report cites evidence of vocabulary development through software programs. Even without broader evidence we have found that personal technology appears to be beneficial to Miguel's growth as a reader. The use of technology offers two advantages, it is motivating to use and it expands the time of day available to literacy activities.

As personal technology becomes increasing integrated to more aspects of daily life, more language is used through technology. An example of this is the fact that Miguel uses his phone to text co-workers about who will cover which shifts at the dairy farm, while he had never had any instruction in reading or writing. The same technologies that we use to communicate can also serve as learning devices, particularly when a student is motivated to use them outside the school day. Miguel arrived at school as an illiterate who used his smart phone to text co-workers about who would cover which shift at the dairy farm. When Miguel gave up working to attend school, he did not always have activities to occupy his afternoon and evening time. Although a struggling reader, he would diligently work through as many books as we could provide him. This was especially true with books in Spanish. His greater knowledge of Spanish oral language

allowed him to move through Spanish language texts with greater ease than English. He was also willing to practice language learning at home via the technology available to him.

Over the summer, the school's computers were not in daily use and Miguel was able to take an iPad home for daily language practice. There were several free programs and applications that Miguel was willing to use. Some of these programs focused on phonics, others on vocabulary development and others, primarily aimed at non-English speakers learning the language, mimicked common oral language. Miguel was willing to practice on whatever programs we loaded. One problem was that with dozens of programs available, it was difficult to evaluate all of them and decide which ones were most efficacious.

When the school year began Miguel iPad was needed in other classes. But he continued to use web-based literacy and language programs at home on his phone. Because it was difficult to decide which programs were truly useful, the number of programs in use was scaled back. Since that time we have concentrated on 4 programs; Busuu, Duolingo, Reading a-z and iReady.

These programs fall into two broad categories. Busuu and Duolingo are similar in that they incorporate oral language with pictures and a variety of native speaker voices. They are similar to the Rosetta Stone software model, but are in part user generated and interactive. This means that a user who identifies themselves as a native Spanish speaker and decides to learn English will also be asked to converse with and evaluate the work of a user who is learning Spanish and this interaction may be added to the site's amassed information and used in future learning interactions. The content of these sites is not limited by the content created within the software company. The disadvantage of these sites is that when native speakers of a language interact globally, they will disagree about the correct way to say something. Miguel has had

many rewarding experiences with both Busuu and Duolingo, but at times he has arrived at school perplexed by a word or expression in English, often proposed by some global user, that does not reflect what he has already learned in Wisconsin. Another drawback of these sites, while they do incorporate visuals and oral language, is that they assume users are literate in their first language. The language learning component is often supported and comprehensible, but the instructional side of the platforms is often language heavy and not always accessible to Miguel. One positive side of these sites is that they are based on oral language that is commonly in use, as corrected by real users. Another positive is that they are multi-modal, offering instruction in vocabulary, spelling and listening. They also offer immediate feedback. Perhaps the greatest drawback is that they are not in any way systematic and do not offer any long range tracking of language growth.

The other two online programs that Miguel uses regularly, Reading a-z and iReady, are both used via licenses purchased by our school district. They are much more systematic in their development of discrete skills. Reading a-z is an online leveled reading curriculum service. We also use this service to print many of the leveled reading books that Miguel reads in both English and Spanish. The online component allows him to read other richly illustrated simple books, similar to the ones we've printed. The user is also able to listen to books online. These additional repetitions of familiar input have helped with fluency and vocabulary development. The other program used via purchased license, iReady, is one of the most sophisticated learning programs available.

One way that we were able to increase Miguel's exposure to oral English was to use the voice recording function of his phone. I use this feature of the phone to record the text of leveled reading books that Miguel was reading in school. Miguel practices reading at home while listening to the recording of the same book. The primary benefit of this process has been his

pronunciation in English of words that he has not yet become fully familiar with. This process has added to the speed with which he can gain fluency reading a particular text.

IV.   SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

1)   Summary

Literacy is both componential and comprehensive. English Learners who are becoming literate in English, or becoming literate for the first time need direct practice in specific skill areas, such as phonics and vocabulary, but they also need practice that blends multiple skills by using real language. Drills aimed at particular skill sets can help EL develop the building blocks of literacy, but they are not the ultimate goal. ELs also need to practice using real language to communicate meaningfully. Functional communication, not discreet skills should always the goal of literacy development.

Literacy developmental practices that work with monolinguals also work with ELs. The five research proven elements of literacy instruction identified by the National Reading Panel should be part of any literacy program designed for ELs. Explicit phonics instruction that benefits emerging monolingual readers also benefits ELs (Goldenberg, 2008). Vocabulary development curriculum that incorporates both direct instruction and multiple opportunities to use words increases word knowledge of both ELs and regular education students. Comprehension strategies such as interactive discussions of the text, summarizing and making connections are useful for monolinguals and also seem to aid EL in the important task of constructing meaning while reading.

Literacy development activities that work for monolinguals are not sufficient on their own for ELs. Teachers need to be aware of what skills and what needs students bring to the literacy project. How instruction is modified will depend on the needs of individual learners. Two areas where it is critical to modify literacy instruction for all ELs are in the development of oral language and reading comprehension.

Higher levels of oral language skills have been linked to increase in reading fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. Oral language development is a broad area that can include phonology, vocabulary, syntax and even pragmatics, (the social skills associated with language use in certain settings) and particular discourse styles. Oral language skills are associated with the decoding side of reading and are also the foundation of more advanced language skills needed for comprehension (Cain & Oakhill, 2008).

Reading combines both decoding and meaning making. Low socioeconomic status children and EL (many of whom are low SES) fall behind peers because they lack the knowledge base to comprehend more advanced text (Lesaux, 2009). It is not clear that many ELs ever close the comprehension gap. Many comprehension activities that work for monolinguals appear to help ELs too. There is however very little evidence on comprehension activities that are most beneficial for ELs. Given the persistent gap in reading comprehension, it is critical for EL literacy instructors to consciously include the construction of meaning in literacy activities. Without this constant push toward the construction of meaning ELs reading will be a primarily mechanistic activity and ELs won't realize the full educational and personal benefits of reading.

There is broad evidence that multilingual instruction is effective for literacy development and even enhances reading outcomes in English. Educators would be negligent to

not use existing literacy and/or oral language skills that ELs bring to the literacy project. Each student's unique existing language inventory is the foundation for their personal literacy development. Effective educators will be aware of and utilize this language inventory.

Technology can be incorporated into literacy instruction. Evidence from the NRP shows that computer based vocabulary development is effective. Software programs and online platforms appear to allow Miguel to expand his familiarity with oral language in English, and some are genuinely interactive. Literacy curriculum delivered online can expand the daily hours of instruction and can provide valuable diagnostic feedback on specific skill areas. A student's familiarity or lack of familiarity with certain technological platforms may increase of decrease the efficacy of particular technologies.

Incorporating broad school and community support for literacy can improve motivation. Integrating learning into social interactions makes communication functional. School and community support can help adolescents believe in their own ability as effective learners, which has been linked to higher literacy outcomes in English (August & Shanahan, 2008). Affective support provided by peers can help resolve identity issues of adolescent learners.

Effective literacy programs for adolescent ELs will build off of known practices that work for monolinguals, but will modify instruction based on the specific language needs and the existing language inventories of the participants. Oral language development and reading comprehension instruction are important components of EL literacy programs. Technology use and community support will also play important roles in creating an effective literacy program for ELs.

2) Recommendations

Miguel has made progress, in some particular areas, dramatic progress, in becoming literate in the seven months that he has attended school. He has learned the alphabet in both Spanish and English, he knows the names of the letters and the sounds associated with each letter in both languages. He has made great progress in decoding printed words in both languages and now reads at the coherent and related sentences in English. His reading has moved to an even higher level in Spanish and he is reading whole books, both children's and adult literature, and magazines in Spanish. He has also taken the first steps towards reading in his first language. He is sounding out text and searching for meaning in written words and sentences. Progress in this area is slower because of the lack of materials and knowledgeable instructors. Miguel has also expanded his knowledge of words, in both English and Spanish. He has greatly increased his oral language skills in English. He has some meta-knowledge of what language is, how it works and knows the terminology for component parts of language. He has begun to write in both Spanish and English. His writing in English is still at a preliminary stage and involves copying or using templates. His writing in Spanish has expanded to the point that, with spelling and composition assistance, he has written a letter to his family detailing his life as a student.

Based on this progress, we can make some recommendation for other schools or educators who find themselves in a similar situation.

Firstly, understand who the students are and what language resources they bring to the literacy process. Knowledge, even limited knowledge, of the student's language experiences will

help teachers understand the literacy resources of the student and their needs. This understanding of the literacy needs and resources should be the basis for instruction.

A second recommendation is to set goals. We were successful in creating an instructional plan for Miguel when all involved agreed on what our aims were. One teacher in our program, early in our work with Miguel, decided on their own initiative that it was important for him to learn to write in cursive. This was frustrating for other instructors and probably was confusing for the student. Students themselves can help shape goals and having a conversation about goals can help students take ownership of achievement, but learning goals also need refinement from educators familiar with literacy process and materials.

Another important recommendation is collaboration: School districts should use the varied expertise of ESL teacher, literacy instructors at lower grade levels, classroom teachers, student volunteers, and home resources. With clear goals and adequate coordination, each can play a role in cumulative literacy development. In Miguel's case, much of the work in Spanish literacy has been moved to the Spanish language classrooms. This allows more ESL teacher time for English growth. We are able to share ideas and materials. However coordination is important. If we want to foster the same skills and abilities and not just work in two separate langue tracks. We have not always been coordinated about what conversations to have with Miguel about his view of how he was progressing. It may well have been that we were engaged in a successful learning strategy or process in one language without sharing the specifics, and the potential for similar growth in the other language.

One recommendation to the makers of literacy materials is for more low language demand comprehension building tools. It is not that Miguel is incapable of complex thought, but

the language demands of engaging in existing comprehension activities and processes makes many of these activities inaccessible. Perhaps it is possible to build off the work done designing language neutral IQ tests. These tests are able to measure thinking processes with very low language demands. Beginning literacy teacher could make use of similar materials that could guide student with visual cues, or very low language demands, through a text, making the reader more aware of their own thought process and deepening understanding.

3) Conclusion

Written language, unlike oral language, requires special training to master. Reading is a complex process that involves both decoding the written symbols and constructing meaning. Both processes must function for the act of reading to be successful. Teaching reading is a complex undertaking, but research has identified key elements of this process. The process of teaching and learning to read is similar, but distinct in some ways when the student is learning English at the same time as they are learning to read. Adolescents who are learning to read for the first time bring unique individual resources to the learning process. Educators can create instructional literacy programs for adolescent ELs based on what is known about teaching and learning to read.

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