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nglish as a second language (ESL) and for-eign language immersion classrooms seem different on the surface, but are connected in interesting ways. For one, the number of students served by these programs (i.e. second language learners) is growing in the United States. From 1995 to 2006, the total primary and sec-ondary enrollment increased by 3.7%, while the per-centage of English language learners increased by 57% (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acqui-sition, 2006). In 2007, 20% of children ages 5 to 17 spoke a language other than English at home (Planty et al., 2009). In addition, more students are receiving instruction through a foreign language at school. Ac-cording to the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), in 2006, there were approximately 612 recorded schools in the United States with foreign language immersion programs (partial, total, or two-way immersion models) (CAL 2006; CAL 2010). These numbers have grown considerably from the three recorded foreign language immersion programs in 1971. These upward trends in numbers of second language learners, both those in ESL and immersion programs, have greatly influenced the beginning of my teaching career.

The Beginning of My Journey as a Second Language Educator

My journey began while working for a local sum-mer migrant education program throughout college. I live in West Michigan where every year many Latino families move to work in the numerous nurseries and orchards from the spring to the fall. In the winter, the families move to warmer climates for the harvest, and they move back to Michigan when it gets warmer. This continual moving can fragment children's education, so many local districts have several-week programs in the summer to help migrant students build their English skills and fill in some of the curricular gaps they have missed.

In my first years with a local summer migrant pro-gram, my teaching was very skills-based. Being bilin-gual in Spanish, I worked with students who had the lowest English proficiency, and I taught them the Eng-lish alphabet through memorization, and we reviewed sight word flashcards. As my knowledge of language acquisition and teaching language arts developed, so did my pedagogy. Eventually, my students reread bilin-gual poetry for fluency, practiced comprehension strat-egies with self-selected books, wrote bilingual family stories, listened to books on tape in Spanish followed by English, and created individualized Spanish-English dictionaries. These practices spanned my time with the summer migrant program to my eventual position as an elementary teacher in a nearby district with many Spanish-speaking English language learners.

After a couple of years, I was given a new position in the district – Spanish immersion teacher. My dis-trict was beginning a partial immersion program where English-speaking students would learn math, science, and social studies completely in Spanish. In first grade, they would learn to read and write in English. In second grade, they would learn to read and write in Spanish too. While there are many types of immersion programs, the goal for all types is that students become academically proficient in both their native and second languages (Met, 2008). In these programs, immersion students are learning content in the foreign language; they are not memorizing conversational vocabulary. This format gives students the ability to talk about a variety of ideas in meaningful ways, which makes immersion programs successful in language acquisition (Met, 1991).

Now, I was not helping my students learn English as a second language, but rather, I was helping them learn Spanish as a second language. One would think the methods would be the same since the goal was language learning, but I was conflicted. In immersion education, subjects such as math, social studies, etc. are taught completely in the target, or second language. While this method is successful for immersion students, why is the submersion method in English as a second language (ESL) where students are placed into English-only classes and expected to sink or swim so detrimen-tal to English language learners? I also wondered how the methods for teaching reading in Spanish would compare to those for teaching reading in English. They

are two different languages, so one would imagine the pedagogy would reflect that.

ESL Methods Versus Immersion Methods

In immersion programs, teachers are required to teach subjects almost entirely in the target language so that students can learn content and build their language skills in the second language. Instructing only in the target language creates the same kinds of conditions that are present for first language acquisition (Genesee, 1985). However, this differed from my methods when I worked with English language learners. I did not solely teach in the target language (i.e. English). I always tried to provide translation in Spanish whenever possible because providing instruction in students' first language helps them access skills they already have in their first language and transfer that knowledge to their second language. This transfer is part of Cummins's (1980, 1981) Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) or linguistic interdependence model. In this model, individuals' first and second languages share common functions, processes, and literacy-related aspects. Once students have developed skills and knowledge in one language, students can transfer that knowledge to subsequent languages as long as they have adequate motivation and exposure to the second language. If exploiting the commonalities of languages and helping students transfer knowledge from one language to another is so important, then how can it be successful to teach students entirely in a new language, as in immersion programs? What makes these programs so different from teaching English language learners entirely in English?

The answers lie in the amount of teacher scaffolding validation given to students, and teachers' hidden assumptions. Cummins (1979) and Cohen and Swain (1976) explain that students learning English as a second language are placed in classrooms containing a wide range of English abilities. Often their teachers cannot communicate in students' first languages and do not know students' cultural nuances. Instruction is usually not in students' first languages, so it is communicated to students that their first language is not as prestigious as English.

Additonally, in these situations, teachers see students' first languages as the reason for their academic and linguistic difficulties. Therefore, teachers continually see students' deficits, and they attribute students' difficulties in school to what students do not have or cannot do (Gay, 2000). Valencia (1997) terms this deficit thinking where educators believe that students struggle or fail in school because of internal deficiencies

In contrast to students learning English as a second language, Cummins (1979) and Cohen and Swain (1976) state that students in immersion or other foreign language learning classrooms are for the most part all learning the second language for the first time together. Teachers praise students for any approximations they can make in the target language and see this as growth. Also, teachers in immersion or foreign language classrooms know students' first language background and culture. That is, the teachers can help students make the transition better to a new language. Additionally, students in immersion classrooms see the importance of their first language because school subjects are eventually taught in that language, so they never experience negative perceptions or shame regarding their first language.

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These opposing practices and assumptions create a double standard that affects students' success. As Cohen and Swain (1976) point out, "[p]eople applaud a majority group child when he can say a few words in the minority language and yet they impatiently demand more English from the minority group child" (p. 51). It seems that success depends on validating languages and backgrounds and on changing perceptions to value growth. To overcome the aforementioned discrepancies and promote childhood acquisition of two languages, Escamilla (1994) provides four recommendations: (1) that both languages have equal status, (2) that the target language is spoken by an individual who is an important figure for the child, (3) that the larger environment around the school demands the use of both languages, and (4) that teachers provide ample social opportunities and contexts to speak both languages.

These recommendations benefited José during my work with the summer migrant program. Originally, José, a second grader, had been shy and disengaged with reading activities, but when he was allowed to respond to stories in both Spanish and English, José blossomed. He actively listened to stories and wanted to share frequently. He even became frustrated when he was not called on to share every single time that he raised his hand. Valuing both languages and providing opportunities to speak Spanish and English helped José engage in the classroom. Escamilla's four recommendations are important for any multilingual environment, whether it is an ESL class, a Foreign

Language in the Elementary School (FLES) program, an immersion program, or a general education classroom with students of varying English proficiency.

Teaching Reading in Spanish Versus Teaching Reading in English

Validating home languages and students' approximations in second languages is the first step in second language acquisition. However, to be fully bilingual, one must be able to speak, read, write, and listen in a language. I had taken many classes about how I should teach reading in English, but for my new position, how would I teach reading in Spanish? I was interested in methods for teaching reading in Spanish because it was a part of my curriculum, but it is important knowledge for all educators with native Spanish-speaking students in their classrooms so that they can connect their methods to the ways students learned Spanish, thus helping students realize Cummins' Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) model.

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Historically, there have been many methods for teaching reading in Spanish, as described by Freeman and Freeman (2006) and Thonis (1976). These have ranged from the alphabetic method (el método alfabético), where students say the names of each letter in the word and then pronounce the word, to the lexical and generative words methods (el método léxico y palabras generadoras).

The latter methods are very similar and involve students visually memorizing a word, listening to the word, looking at an illustration of its meaning, pronouncing the word, and eventually recombining the word's syllables to generate new words. However, Freeman and Freeman (2006) and Thonis (1976) state that the most widely used method for teaching students how to read in Spanish is the syllabic method (el método silábico) because Spanish naturally divides into syllables. In this method, students learn the sounds of the five vowels, which they combine with consonants to make syllables. They use these syllables (e.g. ma, me, mi, mo, mu) to create sentences (e.g. Mi mamá me ama). Each lesson adds a new consonant and builds on the previous lesson. While the syllabic method is the most popular to teach students how to break words into parts in order to read them, there is very little mention of using connected texts in any of the methods. This has led to theoretical trends that have moved toward whole language.

A Brief History of Teaching Reading in Spanish.

Freeman and Freeman (2006) and Bellenger (as cited in Freeman & Freeman) explain that Spanish was taught originally using a synthetic, or part-to-whole, approach where instruction began with letters, then syllables, followed by words and sentences. This continued until the late 1880s, when analytic, or whole-to-part, approaches were used, which began with words or sentences that were broken into their parts. However, in the 1960s, Braslavsky, a prominent Argentinean literacy researcher, published *La querella de los métodos en la enseñanza de la lectura* (The Debate of the Methods for Teaching Reading). This book gave primacy to synthetic methods of teaching reading and was similar to Chall's 1967 book Learning to Read: The Great Debate, which supported learning to read through phonics versus sight words.

Freeman and Freeman (2006) describe how in the 1980s, Spanish-speaking countries began moving towards a more constructivist view of teaching reading which mirrored the United States's 1970s paradigm shift. During this time, Goodman's book *What's Whole in Whole Language* was translated into Spanish and was in great demand. Braslavsky also published *La escuela puede* (Schools Can) in 1992 which advocated constructivist methods for teaching reading, a contrast to her 1960s book *La querella*. As Freeman and Freeman (2006) state, constructivist reading programs should help students value reading and see themselves as readers. They should include a variety of genres for read-aloud and self-selected reading. Students should always regard reading as making meaning, and they should have opportunities to talk and write about their reading, thus allowing them to connect reading and their experiences.

Currently, the literacy initiatives of Spanish-speaking countries such as Mexico, Spain, and Argentina reflect this constructivist view of reading. (These countries were chosen as representatives because many Spanish-speaking students come to the United States from Mexico. Argentina has generated much of the Spanish reading research, led especially by Braslavsky. And Spain was the colonizing country of Latin America. It also offers a geographic alternative since it is part of Europe, while Mexico and Argentina represent North and South America.)

The goal of Mexico's *Programa Nacional de Lectura* (The National Reading Program) is to establish communicative environments in schools for students to reflect on the significance of what they read, critique it, enjoy reading, and form their own reading preferences (Secretaria de Educación Pública, 2009). Similarly, Spain wants its students to be proficient in comprehending, enjoying reading, using various types of texts, and

selecting and applying purposes for reading that will allow them to interpret, comprehend, organize, and self-regulate their comprehension and knowledge (Ministerio de Educación, n.d.). Finally, Argentina's Plan Nacional de Lectura (National Reading Plan) seeks to create teachers who are passionate about reading and can transmit that passion to students. Argentina also wants teachers to view reading through a cultural lens to link students' social experiences with what they learn in school (Dirección Nacional de Gestión Curricular y Formación Docente, 2008). Mexico, Spain, and Argentina's literacy objectives show the prevalence and impact of the constructivist view on Spanish reading pedagogy today.

Whole Language Methods for Teaching Reading in Spanish.

In the end, teaching reading in Spanish is very similar to teaching reading in English as long as one follows a whole language approach. Goodman (1990) explains that whole language methods integrate reading and writing into the curriculum because students learn language better and faster when language skills are integrated and in their natural context. Children must be in charge of their learning and feel that what they do is useful and interesting so that language use becomes authentic and meaningful. Freeman and Serra (1997) expand on these ideas by explaining that in whole language, reading and writing are an enriching part of learning, not a process of skills to learn. Students also integrate all of the language arts during reading and writing because they listen to the teacher read, read with the teacher, and talk and write about what was read.

While the concept of whole language is essentially the same for teaching Spanish and English, both languages have fundamental differences. Goikoetxea (2006) explains that Spanish is a very regular orthographic language – i.e. that its letters almost always produce the same sounds. For example, Spanish has 29 letters to represent 25 phonemes, while English has 26 letters to represent 40 phonemes. In addition, Spanish more naturally divides into syllables than into sounds or onsets and rimes as in English (Freeman and Freeman, 2006). Therefore, Condemarín (1980) states that Spanish must be taught with a focus on phonics because Spanish has such a regular orthography, and once students learn the phonetic rules, they can easily use them to decode new words. However, Condemarín cautions that even with a focus on phonics, comprehension should not be ignored, and texts should not be reduced to rule-based words that do not reflect how children speak.

Teachers can heed Condemarín's (1980) warning by incorporating the popular syllabic method within a whole language framework. The syllabic method gives students tools for breaking apart words, and the whole language approach provides a meaningful context for learning. This combination of the syllabic method in a whole language classroom is evident in Flores-Dueñas's (2005) case study of an exemplary Spanish teacher, Maestra (Teacher) Miriam. While Maestra Miriam uses the traditional syllabic method she learned in Mexico, she also encourages students to talk and write about their daily and family experiences. She includes silent reading time, personal journal writing, whole- and small-group reading, literature-based instruction, shared reading, and multicultural/multiethnic literature. As Maestra Miriam reads, she rarely asks low-level questions and allows students to answer their questions themselves.

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This helps students construct their own meaning, think deeply about texts, and develop higher-level thinking skills. By incorporating all of these types of reading and literacy opportunities, Maestra Miriam builds the framework for students to enjoy reading—an important part of becoming a lifelong reader as supported by Solé (1995) and echoed in the educational objectives set forth by Argentina's government (Dirección Nacional, 2008).

Often, bilingual and multicultural texts play a large role in helping language learners become lifelong readers. Katie, one of my Spanish immersion first graders, repeatedly checked out the picture book I Love Saturdays y domingos (Ada, 2002) from the library after I read it aloud. Katie and the class loved the book's bilingual structure, the blending of English- and Spanish-speaking cultures, and the inclusion of the birthday song "Las Mañanitas" which we sang in class. For Alejandra and middle school students in the summer migrant program, the coming-of-age novel The Jumping Tree (Saldaña, Jr., 2001) resonated strongly. The novel told the story of a pre-teen boy growing up in a Texas town bordering Mexico. Unfortunately, Alejandra missed half of the novel when she had to leave the program early to help her family through babysitting. However, at her request, she and her adult mentor checked The Jumping Tree out of the library and finished the book on their own. These examples testify to the power of finding and reading books with relatable themes to help students become readers. All of the above methods are extremely effective for teaching reading in English and in Spanish. However, there is one final method that while it is important for teaching reading in both languages, it is especially important in a multilingual or immersion class-

room—using language experience approach (LEA) texts in instruction. For a LEA text, a child tells a story, and an adult writes it down for the child to practice reading. Van Allen (1970) explains that this approach values and accepts children's ideas and language. It shows children that they can talk about something, have it written, and be able to read it. The language experience approach creates materials that reflect the real language of children, which is important for all developing readers, regardless of their first language. However, using LEA for students learning a second language is important because as Met (1991) explains, these students may have a very limited knowledge of their second language, and using the language experience approach makes sure that reading tasks connect to their experiences. As an added advantage, teachers and students can create class stories in the second language based on science, math, or social studies lessons for the class to practice reading. Topics for LEA stories in my Spanish immersion class have ranged from descriptions of landforms, concepts of motion, a class carnival, making a paper caterpillar, retelling a favorite science movie, and a summary of a favorite book Froggy Aprende a Nadar (London, 2001). These experiences and stories not only give students background knowledge for comprehension and reading the words, but they also give students an opportunity to express and internalize the target language.

Concluding Thoughts

In the end, ESL and immersion classrooms are not that different, but how teachers approach them has a great impact. Whether a teacher works in an immersion setting, a Foreign Language in the Elementary School class, a general education class with multilingual students, or in an ESL classroom, language learners have the same basic needs. They need to:

- Learn how to connect knowledge in their first and second languages whether it is through language experience approach texts or other meaningful learning experiences.
- Have their teachers see and celebrate their linguistic growth versus their deficits.
- Learn language in meaningful contexts where students construct their own knowledge.

However, even with these conclusions, my journey has not ended. I need to continue to refine my teaching so that I am effectively using constructivist practices for teaching reading in Spanish. My colleagues and I also need to work together so that insights from immersion and ESL research can benefit all second language students, including children such as José, Katie,

and Alejandra. Therefore, let us continue the conversation and journey started by Cummins, Cohen, and Swain over 30 years ago. As both the numbers of English language learners and immersion programs grow, let us use our knowledge from both areas to help all of our students succeed on their educational journeys.

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