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FORM AND FUNCTION FOCUSED
LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES AND THEIR EFFECTS
ON STUDENT WRITING IN A SPANISH IMMERSION CLASSROOM

by

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Education.

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Saint Paul, Minnesota

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To Matthew, Mom, Dad, Derrick and Lindsey, and the rest of my family and friends thank you for your endless support and encouragement throughout this process. Thank you to my Capstone Committee: Jason, Amy, and Marina. Your knowledge, guidance, and support were invaluable throughout this project. Lastly, a special thank you to my colleagues, administrators, and all of the immersion educators/researchers that have come before me. You laid the groundwork to this study and I am honored to call myself an immersion educator alongside all of you.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Research Overview

The purpose of this research project is to increase the linguistic quality of student writing in a 3rd grade Spanish immersion classroom through the use of scaffolded grammar activities during independent reading time. Specifically, the research question is: how does implementing (Spanish) form and function focused language activities during independent reading time affect subject-verb agreement and opinion formation in third grade students' writing?

Like learning a new language my interest in this research topic has developed over time. Throughout this chapter I will outline my journey to this research, explain my interest in pursuing this research, and elucidate the significance and rationale of my research for all involved participants and beneficiaries.

My Personal Journey

My journey to conducting this research began in college when I was trying to figure out how my pairing of majors in Spanish and elementary education melded together to form a career. I had heard and began to read about a new bilingual school that recently opened in my hometown. Following further exploration of bilingual education, I lobbied incessantly to convince the director of student-teaching placement to place me in a bilingual classroom somewhere in one of the large urban school districts a few hours from my campus. After much convincing, that bilingual schools did in fact exist and that there was a student teaching option in the metro area, I was placed in my first bilingual classroom setting.

Student teaching. I learned a lot in my student teaching placement. I was placed in a large Midwestern urban school district with a diverse student population. Not only did I discover a lot about my teaching practices, as one should in a student teaching experience, but I also realized a great deal about my Spanish speaking abilities, the various types of bilingual and immersion models, and how much I wanted to be apart of this school district's teaching community. The kindergarten classroom I taught in was based on a transitional bilingual model that I quickly determined I did not believe in. However, this was probably one of my most profound learning moments in relation to bilingual and immersion education. My cooperating teacher also had many reservations about the model, but she taught me that the beauty of teaching is adapting to your students' needs and bending "the model" to do what is right for your students.

Before completing my student teaching experience, I had secured a position teaching at my current school (in the same district) with a model in which I have much more faith, a one-way Spanish Immersion setting. In this model we teach primarily English-dominant students in Spanish all day in Kindergarten and first grade and introduce components of English literacy in grades 2 – 5. However, differing from the traditional one-way model we also have a fair amount of Spanish home language students as well in our program. These students receive additional English Language (EL) supports throughout the day to assist in their English language acquisition as well. Students learn grade level academic content as well as Spanish – a second language for most of our student population. Due to this added layer of second language instruction and acquisition we are expected to include language objectives alongside each of our academic content objectives. With various professional development experiences, it has certainly become clearer to me how

to incorporate language objectives. However, finding meaningful ways to teach syntax and correct verb conjugations to third graders during content instruction can be daunting. Promoting language objectives, especially as they relate to students' Spanish writing, is one of my biggest challenges as a Spanish immersion educator.

My history with grammar instruction. Over the years I have tried many different approaches to incorporating grammar and advanced language components into my lessons. I have played syntax games where students identify the parts of sentences, directly taught conjugations of irregular verbs, and I have designed reading lessons around the differences of present, past, and future tense verbs. All of these activities were successful to some degree, but I still have not been able to find a meaningful way to incorporate language objectives into my content lessons – especially literacy. This all changed in the spring of 2014 when my principal called me into her office and asked if I would consider working with a PhD candidate from a large Midwestern university. I agreed and quickly found myself immersed in new knowledge.

A new approach. My first meeting with the PhD candidate from the university was just what I had been seeking. She was interested in doing her PhD research in my room with a focus on equity and building oral language through the use of form and function focused language activities during various parts of our day. For clarification and common language, 'a focus on form' is the more traditional approach centered on the grammatical rules of language and the acquisition of correct forms (Mohan & Slater, 2005, p. 155). A 'focus on function,' in turn, is centered on the development of the functional content of language within different contexts (Mohan & Slater, 2005, pp 155, 166). Through her PhD research my colleague had discovered strategies for promoting attention to language

during content instruction and together we found ways to incorporate them into my already established classroom structures.

I was very supportive of the ideas the PhD candidate presented because the activities aligned with what I had been looking for to help teach grammatical concepts. Additionally, I was interested in collecting meaningful data about oral language abilities. Essentially, she developed oral-language, or conversational, scaffolds for math and reading that students used during work time with peers. These scaffolds included higher-level academic phrases, verb conjugations, procedural language, and social communication phrases. I facilitated using these scaffolds, encouraged student-use of the scaffolds, and continued with content instruction per usual. The PhD student observed and modified the scaffolds as needed. My role in this project was not that of a researcher, but a teacher. However, I still found myself observing and wondering about the outcomes of her study. I began to notice students using the phrases in other parts of our day such as when we were getting ready for recess. Students also began to correct each other when someone had incorrectly conjugated a verb using the wrong tense. As I watched and reflected with the PhD candidate in our weekly meetings, I began to wonder what effect these same types of activities would have on students' writing in Spanish.

I have noticed in my own classroom experience that my immersion students in general tend to be stronger in reading and auditory comprehension and struggle more with written and oral expression of their second language. I thought about the connection between reading and writing and the transfer of knowledge between the two activities almost immediately. If these scaffolded language activities in math and reading lead to increased oral language proficiency, will they also transfer into changes in the quality of my

students' Spanish writing? My theory is that they will.

Rationale and Significance

How does implementing (Spanish) form and function focused language activities during independent reading time affect subject-verb agreement and opinion formation in third grade students' writing? This research question has the potential to impact many things in my teaching as well as the way my students learn. In an immersion setting it is often complicated to teach the grammatical components of two languages in meaningful and age-appropriate ways. If this research suggests that form and function focused strategies work well for students to learn grammatical concepts applicable to other subjects, it will dramatically change the way I teach. I will be able utilize this technique in other subject areas like math and social studies, not just literacy.

Also, it will provide a framework for my colleagues and I to differentiate language focused instruction based on students' varying degrees of proficiency. My colleagues and I are constantly adapting and translating English language curriculum activities to fit our Spanish language needs.

Outside of my specific school and teaching colleagues, this study is very important to the immersion and language instruction community as a whole. It will add valuable information to a growing body of research on second language acquisition and literacy development, as well as offer immersion and other language instructors research based practices to develop target language proficiency levels.

Professional and language research significance. The topic is professionally significant and important to me because I am devoted to teaching 3rd grade in Spanish. I love teaching in a Spanish immersion setting. Immersion is not a new trend, but there is still a

lot we do not know about the field, especially about the best practices for teaching racially and linguistically diverse learners in an immersion program. This research is a chance for me to give back to the immersion community that has taught me so much already. It is an opportunity to contribute ideas and methodologies for language instructors and immersion teachers to use in the classroom. It is also an opportunity to contribute to the research being done on language acquisition and literacy development.

Immersion educators are a pretty tight-knit group because we rely on one another's ideas and connections. Research like this is vital to the continued success of immersion teachers and programs. Yet, there are relatively few studies conducted each year in immersion settings, and even fewer studies look at students' writing in the target language, for this case – Spanish. My research is an opportunity to contribute to my own field.

I also feel that this research will ultimately make me more aware of other aspects of my teaching and not just improve my ability to incorporate targeted linguistic features into my literacy lessons.

Possible outcomes for my school. This research will affect not only the way I teach, but also how my grade level colleagues approach immersion teaching. As I said earlier, we rely on each other's expertise to inform our own teaching. Some of my colleagues have been teaching at my school since immersion was first brought to our state almost 30 years ago. To be able to share my findings and discuss the implications with them is an invaluable experience. In the end, these findings could affect district policies, such as, the scope and sequence of our Spanish reading and writing units. My district gives us quite a bit of autonomy to make decisions about our pacing and sequencing of units because we

speak and understand the language. If there is a strong correlation and transfer between subject-verb agreement and opinion formation taught in reading carrying over in to writing, then we may need to re-align our reading and writing units to better prepare students for this learning. In a large urban district these “in-house” discoveries can have a lasting impact because of their clear connection to our own specific learners.

Outcomes for my students. Ultimately I hope this research most positively affects my students. They are the reason I continue to evolve and look for new ways to meaningfully connect learning to their everyday lives. In my research I am rooting my study in the literature describing evidence of linguistic transfer between speaking, reading and writing in immersion programs (Brisk, 2012; Cloud, Genesee & Hamayan, 2009; Meyer & Schendel, 2014; Zweirs, 2006). Ideally students will be able to carry over the knowledge learned during form and function focused activities in reader’s workshop to their writing in writer’s workshop. If this holds true, it opens the door to a lot more transfer based activities in my classroom. For the last year or so a major goal of mine has been to remove some of the rigid barriers between subject areas to teach in a more cross-curricular way. Transferring ideas across subject areas would allow for this to happen.

Also, I feel like this project improves students’ overall Spanish language capacity. When their parents and families enrolled students at our school they expected us to teach their children a second language, as well as the elementary school content. This research helps me to make good on that promise, and increases opportunities that afford my students a more advanced understanding of the Spanish language.

True for any educational setting, not just immersion, students come to school with a wide array of linguistic and academic skills and backgrounds. This research project aims

to improve all students' subject-verb agreement and opinion formation in an immersion classroom with a wide range of linguistic proficiency levels in the target language of Spanish. Because of the scaffolds in place for this project all students will ideally be able to improve their target language skills and transfer those new skills across subject areas.

Summary

In brief, it has truly been a journey from my wonderings about bilingual and immersion teaching to where I am today. Along the way I have ascertained a large amount of knowledge about the various bilingual models and how I fit within my specific one-way Spanish immersion model. As my cooperating teacher taught me during student teaching, the guidelines and rules of a model are to be bent and molded to best meet your students' needs. My research will mold the way language instruction is done within my third grade classroom to make it more meaningful for my students.

I did not get to this point in my career alone. Many great teachers and researchers paved the way for me to be able to teach the way I do in my school. Meeting my colleague while she was conducting her PhD research was purely good fortune. Her ideas and research have guided me along my own path to understanding form- and function-focused language activities to improve the quality of my students' writing.

In Chapter Two

In the following chapter I summarize and synthesize various researchers ideas on: the history of immersion and bilingual education, second language acquisition (SLA), the use of form and function focused activities, the improvement of Spanish immersion students' writing, and the transfer of knowledge across languages and subject areas. This research is at times complicated and murky, but I believe it can be simplified and more easily

understood.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

Immersion education is a relatively new educational field. This study seeks to add to that knowledge base and provide implications for the ways that explicit language instruction is conducted, attempting to make it more meaningful for third grade students. Specifically, this project asks: how does implementing (Spanish) form and function focused language activities during independent reading time appear to influence the linguistic quality of third grade students' writing?

For clarification and common language, 'a focus on form' is the more traditional approach centered on the grammatical rules of language and the acquisition of correct forms (Mohan & Slater, 2005, p. 155). A 'focus on function,' in turn, is centered on the development of the functional content of language within different contexts (Mohan & Slater, 2005, pp 155, 166).

An overview. This literature review covers a wide range of articles, books, reports, and other theses pertaining to the history of immersion and bilingual education, second language acquisition (SLA) research, the application and practice of grammatical concepts through form and function focused activities, the improvement of Spanish immersion writing, and the transfer of knowledge across languages and subject areas.

To begin, this literature review will explore the history of immersion education and give insight to where the field of immersion teaching is at today. Immersion teaching is closely related to some key concepts from second language acquisition (SLA) theory since they both study language acquisition. In broad terms this is an area of education that

studies how students, learn second (and multiple additional) languages. In many of the articles reviewed below, there is a call form more research to be done on second language acquisition (SLA) related to immersion education (Gibbons, 2010; Lyster's, 1998).

This research review will then move into an analysis of the research on the application and practice of language development through form- and function- focused activities. Various authors have differing opinions on whether form or function focused activities are more effective. Mohan and Beckett (2003) argue that a focus on function outweighs the benefits of a focus on form.

Whether it is form or function or a combination of the two, writing is just different in an immersion classroom. Bilingual students write differently than their monolingual peers (Velasco & Garcia, 2014). Teacher-developed grammar and language scaffolds, as well as the incorporation of more social interaction help students transfer syntactic knowledge into their writing (Meyer & Schendel, 2014; Zwiers, 2006).

Lastly, this review will analyze the current information available on the transfer of content and linguistic knowledge across subject areas and languages. Ultimately, this project is designed to improve the linguistic quality of third grade writing through the use of scaffolded language activities in reading. For this to be successful, transfer must take place across subject areas. Zwiers (2006), Rodgers (2006), Gibbons (2010), and Beeman & Urow (2013) all illustrate strong links between spoken language proficiency and written language proficiency.

Summary. In the end, there is a more limited amount of research on some of these immersion education topics when compared to monolingual fields of education. Thus, the following review and analyses are vital links to improving the quality of immersion

education. Continued quality research promotes the overall effectiveness of immersion education and bilingualism in the US.

History of Immersion Education

Immersion model and methods. The models for immersion and bilingual education are many and varied. The school where this study will take place is a 90/10 one-way immersion model, where students are immersed in their second language (L2) for the majority of the day. 90/10 refers to the percentages of instruction time in either language, 90% in the target language (i.e. Spanish) and 10% in the first language (i.e. English). The goal of immersion education is for students to learn grade level content, as well as acquiring a second language (Comeau, Cormier, Grandmaison, Lacroix, 1999). There have been many other variations on these models, but for the purpose of this study the research identified will focus on one-way immersion schools as they are most closely related to the classroom setting where this research will be performed.

Immersion education – 1960 to now. Immersion programs were first instituted in Canada (in French) in the 1960s and began in the United States (in Spanish) in the 1970s (Chamot & El-Dinary 1999). Today immersion programs are very common across much of North America. Cunningham and Graham (2000) reported that in Canada alone nearly 300,000 students are enrolled in immersion programs each year and in the United States there are immersion programs in about half of the 50 states (p. 37). A more recent study by Lenker and Rhodes (2006) found immersion programs in 33 of the 50 states in the US, totaling 310 one-way (total) immersion programs nationwide (p. 2). This does not count two-way bilingual programs, which are counted separately. Of these programs 43% were in Spanish, 29% in French, and other large sub-categories (less than 10% each) in

Hawaiian, Japanese, Mandarin, and German (Lenker & Rhodes, 2006). Over the last 35 plus years immersion schooling has steadily increased in popularity in the United States. Lenker and Rhodes (2006) attribute this rise in immersion programming to five reasons: pressure from parents for quality language programs; an increased interest by parents in multicultural education; greater school choice in general which means immersion is another option; a solid collection of published research on the effectiveness of immersion schooling; and a growing understanding of Americans' need to be proficient in other languages (p.5).

Effectiveness of immersion education programs. As Lenker and Rhodes (2006) point out above, one of the main reasons for such a large increase in immersion programs in the US is the solid evidence of immersion education's effectiveness. This was not always the case. In the 1960s and 1970s parents, researchers, and even teachers wondered whether immersion was going to be effective or possibly even disadvantageous to students' native language and literacy development (Comeau et al., 1999). Many studies have been done since those early years. Consistently, the research shows that immersion education is effective and advantageous for students in both their native language and the language of instruction (Comeau et al., 1999; Chamot & El-Dinary, 1999; Cunningham & Graham, 2000; Tabari & Sadighi, 2014).

History of immersion education summary. The history of immersion education is critical to successfully researching the question: how does implementing (Spanish) form and function focused language activities during independent reading time affect subject-verb agreement and opinion formation in third grade students' writing?

Lenker and Rhodes (2006) assert that increasing the number and quality of immersion

programs is how this country can increase the number of second language proficient people. This in turn makes the US a more globally competent and competitive country when compared to many other nations whose populations largely learn two or more languages. Therefore, the education immersion teachers provide to students must be of the highest caliber possible.

Over the past four decades researchers, parents, and teachers have established and verified the effectiveness of immersion education (Comeau et al., 1999; Chamot & El-Dinary, 1999; Cunningham & Graham, 2000; Tabari & Sadighi, 2014). Now this research project seeks to continue that improvement of immersion education in hopes of new understandings and the further promotion of foreign language instructional programs.

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Theory and Research

While immersion educators do not necessarily have as large of a research pool as standard classroom educators, they do, however, benefit from more focused research theories. Second language acquisition (SLA) is one of the most prominent theories within the fields of immersion and bilingual education. Within the SLA research community a number of themes exist including: the relationship of the sociocultural learning theory, the study of phonological processing, the development of metalinguistic awareness for second language learners, contrasting theories, and ultimately the need for more research on SLA.

A brief overview of SLA theory. Over the years, the research perspectives on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) have shifted with the changing needs of today's learners and advancements in language research. SLA draws on ideas within the fields of anthropology, sociology, and cultural psychology to explain how children and adults

learn second languages (L2) (Swain & Deters, 2007, p. 821). Gibbons (1998) shares that much of the early work in SLA focused on learning grammatical rules and language forms, resulting in greater understanding of the L2 acquisition of morphology and syntax (p. 99). More recently, there has been less of an emphasis on the word “second” in SLA and more of an emphasis on being bilingual. Martin-Beltrán (2010) reports that previously SLA instructional research focused on the development of the first language (L1) and second language (L2) as separate entities, instead of “continuous bilingual language development” (p. 255). There definitely exists a need for more research development.

Sociocultural theory of SLA. Constructivist ideas developed by Vygotsky have played a large role in the recent developments in SLA, especially in the area of sociocultural theory (Swain & Deters, 2007, p. 821). Sociocultural theory views second language learning as a process that relies on social interaction within a cultural context (Martin-Beltrán, 2010; Serna, 2009). Various empirical studies found positive correlations between students’ opportunities for interaction and the development of their second language (Martin-Beltrán, 2010). Logically speaking, this makes sense. The primary years of L1 acquisition are based almost entirely on interactive and culturally relevant oral language experiences. Humans learn language through interactive oral language experiences. There is a growing body of research that points to the importance of oral language skills in learning to read (Jared, Cormier, Levy, & Wade-Woolley, 2011, p. 119). Therefore, to create truly bilingual students, the L2 learning experience should also be rich with interactive oral language opportunities.

“Bilinguals do not have simply an L1 and an L2, but *one* linguistic repertoire with

features that have been socially assigned to constructions that are considered ‘languages,’ including academic ones,” (Velasco & Garcia, 2014, p. 8). This quote from Velasco and Garcia (2014) encapsulates the modern blending of SLA and sociocultural theory. Tabari and Sadighi (2014) share that the origins of the debate over L1 use in L2 learning situations can be linked as far back as the nineteenth century to the ‘Reform Movement’ (p. 311). Today, sociocultural theory proposes that students in bilingual and immersion schools should be simultaneously learning both languages in order to truly become bilingual. However, Jared et al. (2011) caution that bilingualism is achieved more easily when both languages are socially valued languages (p.120). Therefore, the classroom environment must be set-up in a way that values the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of all the students (Serna, 2009, p. 79).

The role of phonological processing and phonological awareness in SLA. In addition to valuing the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students, phonological processing, or the phonics of language learning, plays a very big part in second language acquisition (SLA). This is the same in the learning of one’s first language (L1). When two languages (i.e. English and Spanish) share similar or the same alphabetic systems there is a lot of phonological transfer at play in the phonological awareness of both L1 and L2 (Comeau, Cormier, Grandmaison, & Lacroix, 1999; Jared et al., 2011; Laurent & Martinot, 2009). As with the L1 development, SLA (L2 development) requires students to learn both the phonological structure of the L2 as well as the syntactic structure of the L2 (Laurent & Martinot, 2009). In more detail, students must learn the sounds of letters and letter groups (phonological structure) as well as the parts and order of sentences within a language (syntax).

In various studies bilingual students who have attended bilingual schooling for a number of years (usually 5 or more) demonstrate greater control and ability when solving phonological problems when compared to their monolingual counterparts (Laurent & Martinot, 2009; Velasco & Garcia, 2014). These results indicate that SLA improves overall phonological processing tasks when students have been taught in a bilingual or immersion setting for a number of years.

The role of metalinguistic awareness in SLA. The transfer of some phonological processing skills is not meant to imply that all phonological and syntactic skills are transferable across a native language (L1) and a second language (L2). Language learners must be able to think about and question their language learning, especially the relationship between their L1 and L2. This process is called metalinguistic awareness.

Learning an L2 can be very different than that of an L1 for many reasons. Römer, O'Donnell, and Ellis (2014) explain that L2 learners must construct and reconstruct (deconstruct) the L2 because of the large role the L1 “learned attentional biases” play in the learning process of the L2. Essentially some phonological processes and syntax rules learned in the L1 interfere with the understanding of the L2 because they appear to be similar, but are wholly different.

Metalinguistic awareness has been found to be an effective learning tool for L2 learners as young as first grade (Chamot & El-Dinary, 1999, p. 82). In an attempt to identify what skills strong language learners possess, Chamot and El-Dinary (1999) found that strong language learners were adept at monitoring and adapting strategies (metalinguistic awareness), whereas weaker language learners repeatedly utilized the same ineffective strategies (p. 83). To be successful in SLA students must be able to

think about their language learning and analyze strategies for their effectiveness.

Martin-Beltrán (2010) found that metalinguistic awareness could be developed through both peer-peer interactions as well as teacher-student interactions (p. 270). Leaning on Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), Martin-Beltrán (2010) explains that teacher-designed scaffolds work well to encourage peer-peer metalinguistic learning. It is also important for the teacher to demonstrate, encourage, and facilitate metalinguistic opportunities. Martin-Beltrán (2010) goes on to explain the benefits of teacher-demonstrated metalinguistic inquiry (within one language or across languages) as well as teacher-mediated metalinguistic awareness for students (p. 270). Thinking aloud about language, like a teacher would about a reading strategy, and encouraging students to do the same are excellent ways to build metalinguistic awareness.

Variations on SLA: Cognitive linguistics and systemic functional linguistics (SFL). In contrast, but not direct opposition to second language acquisition (SLA) theory there exists two other prominent theories: Cognitive linguistics/grammar and systemic functional linguistics (SFL).

Cognitive linguistics/grammar. There are many aspects of cognitive linguistics that are similar to the sociocultural theory within in SLA. Cognitive linguistics says that language can be attributed to cognitive processes, instead of being its own separate action that happens in the brain (Taylor, 2002). Ultimately, this is an approach where the researchers agree that the structures of language emerge from language use.

Systemic functional linguistics (SFL). Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) focuses on the connection between language and context (Brisk, 2012). The theory pulls largely from *register theory*, which tells how the grammar and language choices of a written or

spoken piece of language account for different variables including: “field, tenor, and mode” (Gibbons, 2010, p.101). Brisk (2012) explains the terms field, tenor, and mode, “different situational and disciplinary contexts call for different language choices based on the topic addressed (field), the relationship between the writer and audience (tenor), and the channel of communication being used: oral, written, or multimodal (mode)” (p.447). In many ways this theory seems quite complicated for everyday classroom use. However, the theory brings about valid arguments especially in terms of writing. In SLA learners must understand the appropriate use of forms (verbs) and vocabulary appropriate to that situation. For example, a persuasive text requires very different language and grammar use than an autobiographical memoir text. Students must be explicitly taught these differences in most cases. In the end, these variations on second language acquisition enrich the overall pool of knowledge on language learning.

Second language acquisition (SLA) summary. Over the years the focus of SLA has shifted greatly from a focus on grammatical rules and language forms to a more functional approach of how students learn a second language contextually and socially (Gibbon, 1998).

Second Language Acquisition plays an important part in this research project. The sociocultural theory views second language learning as a process that relies on social interaction within a cultural context (Martin-Beltrán, 2010; Serna, 2009). As well, various studies found positive correlations between students’ opportunities for interaction and the development of their second language (Martin-Beltrán, 2010). Therefore it seems necessary for students to be able to interact out loud more, in an effort to improve the linguistic quality of their writing.

Metalinguistic awareness was also found to be an essential piece to making this research project successful. Chamot and El-Dinary (1999) found that strong language learners were adept at monitoring and adapting strategies (metalinguistic awareness), whereas weaker language learners repeatedly utilized the same ineffective strategies (p. 83). To be successful in their writing students must be able to think about their language learning and analyze strategies for their effectiveness both during reading and writing.

Finally, there are variations on SLA including cognitive grammar and systemic functional linguistics (SFL) that highlight other pieces of the linguistic puzzle. However, in the end, all of these pieces put together still point back to one thing: there is a great demand for more research in this area. (Chamot & El-Dinary 1999; Gibbons, 2010; Leider, Proctor, Silverman, Harring, 2013; Lyster 1998).

Form and Function Focused Approaches to Language Learning

If there was a magical tool that made all the grammatical pieces of language easy to teach and learn, most teachers would already be using it. Form and function focused language activities are two broad categories that teachers of language commonly use. For clarification and common language, ‘a focus on form’ is the more traditional approach centered on the grammatical rules of language and the acquisition of correct forms (Mohan & Slater, 2005, p. 155). A ‘focus on function,’ in turn, is centered on the development of the functional content of language within different contexts (Mohan & Slater, 2005, pp 155, 166). Teachers and researchers tend to favor one approach over the other, but some attempt to balance the use of both.

Form focused instructional approach. A focus on form is an important and necessary piece to language learning. Römer, O’Donnell, and Ellis (2014) explain that cognitive

linguistics, construction grammar theory, and psycholinguistics research all explain linguistic form slightly different, but in synthesis all three agree that a focus on form is a focus on the ground rules of grammar and the structures in place to help convey meaning through language. Second language learners must understand the semantics, or meaning of words, as well as the syntax for how those words are put together.

Rodgers (2006) shares that immersion students tend to focus more on understanding content (semantics) than on understanding the linguistic forms (syntax), especially lower achieving students (p. 373). Students are learning the academic content necessary for standards based assessments, but are failing to truly acquire all of the syntactic components of their second language. There is a clear need for the understanding and application of linguistic forms in SLA. Rodgers posits that teachers can improve students' syntax knowledge and ability by assisting them in focusing on their written and oral language output instead of just understanding the semantics of incoming language (2006, p. 373). Students develop more expressive language skills when they are prompted to do more syntactic language processing in the classroom (Rodgers, 2006, p. 374).

Expressive language skills are necessary for linguistic learning, as well literacy tasks, like reading and writing. Serna (2009) identifies 'communicative forms' to be one of the important building blocks children incorporate in their writing (p. 88). Laurent and Martinot (2009) agree that for students to truly understand the intricacy of written language they need to be aware of the phonological rules, as well as, syntactic structure, or form (p. 436).

For second language learners these differences in form need to sometimes be purposefully taught in an effort to highlight differences in native language (L1) and

second language (L2). For example, a student who's L1 is English should understand that in English, verbs are accompanied by a preposition (go into), and when their L2 is Spanish the verb form does not need a preposition (entrar) (Römer, O'Donnell, & Ellis, 2014). A focus on form for an example like this would not necessarily be covered in a reading or writing lesson because semantically the student understands entrar means to go into. However, if these form focused activities are overlooked, students' ability to express themselves suffers because they can't necessarily produce the language independently. Rodgers (2006) summarizes that there are benefits to analytically teaching language, where meaning is the primary intent and a focus on form exists for troublesome linguistic features (p. 385).

Function focused instructional approach. Advocates of a function focused approach tend to offer planned syntactic instruction around student dialogue and interactive experiences in an effort to increase their functional language in different contexts (Mohan & Slater, 2005). Correcting grammatical errors is not the primary goal. Often times students in immersion programs develop grammatically correct methods for expressing themselves, but which lack the linguistic depth to illustrate bilingualism (Brisk, 2012). A focus on function allows teachers and students to improve linguistic complexity and clarity (Mohan & Beckett, 2003, p. 424). Mercer (2010) shares, "classroom education cannot be understood without due attention to the nature and function of talk...(because) meanings are continually renegotiated through talk and interaction" (p. 3).

Gibbons (2010) explains with the register theory, a piece of writing can be grammatically correct, but the author must also think about whether their piece adequately expresses field (the subject matter), tenor (the relationship between the reader

and writer), and mode (how writing is being expressed). This would be crucial knowledge for many writing pieces. For instance, expressing grammatical person in writing is often times dependent on genre and is created differently across languages (Brisk, 2012, p. 447). Focusing on function increases the likelihood that students will systematically concentrate on the clarity, complexity, and appropriateness of their expressive language.

A combination of form and function focused approaches. There are also plenty of researchers and teachers that believe in the effectiveness of a combination of form and function focused language instruction. Day and Shapson (2001) purport that teaching grammar is primarily ineffective when it comes to students acquiring the knowledge subconsciously and this in turn holds back their fluency in the language (p.53). This illustrates a need to find a way to teach grammar concepts in a meaningful way that students can digest and utilize in various linguistic contexts.

In their study combining formal, functional, and communicative approaches to grammar, Day and Shapson (2001) found an overall improvement of students' written and oral grammar skills. They believe that the use of cooperative learning combined with formal instruction and functional scaffolds for grammatical components helped increase students' overall grammar performance (Day & Shapson, 2001, p. 76). Day and Shapson (2001) go on to say that immersion programs must begin to recognize the need for systematic long-term planning (as it relates to grammatical instruction) for long-term student success (p.77).

Form and function focused approaches summary. In summary, researchers and teachers are largely divided about whether form or function focused instruction is more

effective in grammar instruction in immersion programs.

This research study seeks to answer the question: how does implementing (Spanish) form and function focused language activities during independent reading time affect subject-verb agreement and opinion formation in third grade students' writing?

A focus on form is necessary for students to be successful writers and language learners in general. As Rodgers (2006) highlights, students tend to seek semantic understanding and often lack syntactic knowledge in immersion. This in the end will stunt students' linguistic growth. This study seeks to improve students' grammatical and linguistic growth in writing. To be successful in writing students must understand the 'communicative forms' of language and be aware of the phonological rules and syntactic structure. (Laurent and Martinot, 2009; Serna, 2009).

Likewise a focus on function is very important to students' syntactic and written growth and development. As Mohan and Beckett (2003) explained, a focus on function does not require students to fixate on the rules of a form, but to focus on developing their potential for making meaning. A focus on function allows teachers and students to improve linguistic complexity and clarity (Mohan & Beckett, 2003, p. 424).

Perhaps, most grounded in it's understanding of both approaches is Day and Shapson's (2001) viewpoint that form and function focused approaches can be combined and utilized effectively together. Form and function each serve a purpose in second language acquisition – structural and syntactic rules and expressive complexity that inform the meaning of language. It is therefore only logical to combine both ideas instead of fighting to modulate both pieces in a separate unconnected manner.

Improving Writing in Spanish Immersion Classrooms

Without a doubt writing can be a difficult subject area to teach and learn in any school setting. In immersion, writing in a second language can be especially hard for students to express themselves and their ideas clearly. This research study aims to improve the linguistic quality of third grade students' writing through the use of form and function focused language activities. The previous paragraphs identify definitions and possible uses for form and function focused language activities, where as this section seeks to explain and understand the elements, difficulties, and possible improvements to writing in immersion classrooms.

Development of writing skills. Writing development is one of the major focuses in elementary education. The basic progression from letters to words to sentences and ultimately paragraphs is true for almost all elementary schools. There are two main stages in writing development: transcription – letter formation, spacing, and spelling; and text generation – lengthening written expression and developing writing skills related to craft, genre, etc. (Truckenmiller, Eckert, Coddling, & Petscher, 2014, p. 532). The first stage, transcription, is the focus of primary grades (kindergarten through grade two) and the second stage, text generation, is primarily focused on in grades three through five (Truckenmiller et al., 2014).

Although these general developmental progressions in writing are widely recognized, writing curriculums and teaching methods vary greatly from school to school and state to state (Truckenmiller et al., 2014). In part because of these vast differences, as well as other factors, “72% of fourth-grade students, 74% of eighth-grade students, and 73% of twelfth-grade students could not write at the proficient level for their grade level” (Truckenmiller et al., 2014, p. 532). More specifically, within immersion there is an

extensive push to improve students' oral and written grammar (Day & Shapson, 2001).

Bilingual learners just write differently. Bilingual learners are similar and different in many ways compared to their monolingual peers. In their analysis of various studies on bilingual writers, Velasco and García (2014) discovered that bilingual writers just solve writing problems and express meaning differently than monolingual writers (p. 10). In her research Serna (2009) uncovered that bilingual students were sometimes labeled as “weak” writers by their teachers because of poor spelling and punctuation, but could actually organize and produce complex sentences on par with the teacher-identified “strong” writers (p. 81). Immersion educators cannot overlook the need for correct spelling and punctuation; however, they must discern where a student's strengths and weaknesses are in writing. Weakness in one area does not equate overall weakness in writing.

Velasco and García (2014) further explain several examples of how bilingual writers write differently including; back translations – when bilingual writers translate across languages; rehearsal – when bilingual writers try out different words looking for the right fit for a word they cannot remember; and postponing – when bilingual writers write down the word in another language with the idea of coming back and translating the word at the end (Velasco & García, 2014). These are skills that when nourished and supported can greatly increase students' writing fluency.

Scaffolds and feedback to increase linguistic quality and fluency. In their research on strategies used by effective and weaker immersion students in reading and writing, Chamot and El-Dinary (1999) found that students used twice as many strategies in reading as writing (p.326). During writing students relied heavily on metacognitive

strategies such as planning, but interestingly students did not rely on their background knowledge, language knowledge, or translation skills (Chamot & El-Dinary, 1999). What is fascinating about this report is that students have the necessary strategies and are able to access them during reading, but for some reason do not during writing.

In separate studies, Meyer and Schendel (2014) and Zwiers (2006) found that students are successfully able to transfer the above-mentioned skills between writing and reading portions of the day. The teachers scaffolded literature circles, reflective journals, and peer-to-peer discussion activities incorporating both reading and writing skills. They found that the skills students learned carried over into both areas (Meyer & Schendel, 2014; Zwiers, 2006). Scaffolds like this guide students through their own learning and allow them to push one another forward in their learning in ways that cannot always be done on a teacher-student level.

Peregoy and Boyle (2013) elucidate the need for peer-peer social interaction for successful second language acquisition (SLA). Conversation allows for trial and error and gives students opportunities for feedback and clarification with more proficient language partners (Peregoy & Boyle, 2013, p. 137). It is on immersion teachers to create opportunities for these social interactions to take place.

Scaffolding is another great way for immersion educators to create conversation opportunities, as well as meet students' language needs where they are each at individually. Scaffolding is a constructivist term meaning, "temporary support or assistance, provided by someone more capable, that permits a learner to perform a complex task or process that he or she would be unable to do alone" (Peregoy & Boyle, 2013, p. 138). Scaffolding can be used in conversation to elaborate or expand language

use; in literacy to expand students' understanding and develop or model complexity; in routines to encourage more complex behaviors and learning tasks; (Peregoy & Boyle, 2013, p. 138) and in teacher recasts (restating) of students' statements (Mohan & Beckett, 2003, p. 427). A recast is a wonderful way for a teacher to restate a student's dialogue to make it more concise, grammatically or lexically correct, or more elaborate (Mohan & Beckett, 2003, p. 427).

Oral language and writing. Oral language development and interactive conversations amongst students are essential to language learning, as evidenced in this chapter's section on second language acquisition SLA. Studies have found positive correlations between students' opportunities for social interaction and the development of their second language (Martin-Beltrán, 2010). There is also research that points to the importance of oral language skills in learning to read (Jared, Cormier, Levy, & Wade-Woolley, 2011, p. 119).

In addition to learning to read, written language develops out of oral language (Brisk, 2012). Grades three through six are important transitional development years. Students move from strong oral language skills to more complex written abilities that reflect capabilities in oral language (Brisk, 2012, p. 446). For students in grades three and four writing can be much slower and more difficult than speaking (compared to students in grades five and six) (Brisk, 2012, p. 446). Consequently writing at the third and fourth grade levels must be scaffolded in such a way that students can utilize their oral language competencies in writing. Day and Shapson (2001) substantiate this claim with the results of their research, "the improvement of immersion students' oral and written grammatical skills can be achieved through curricular intervention that integrates formal, analytic with

functional, communicative approaches to language teaching” (p. 76).

Improving writing in Spanish immersion classrooms summary. As Truckenmiller et al. (2014) and Day and Shapson (2001) pointed out, there is a definite need for the improvement of writing instruction. This research study aims to improve subject-verb agreement and opinion formation in third grade students’ writing through the use of form and function focused language activities. The information presented here is imperative to the success of this study.

It should first be recognized that bilingual students write differently than monolingual students (Serna, 2009; Velasco & García, 2014). Therefore, special attention must be given to the way bilingual writers write.

Supporting students’ language development can also be done through scaffolds (Meyer & Schendel, 2014; Peregoy & Boyle, 2013; Zwiers, 2006). Scaffolding can be used to elaborate or expand language use; in literacy to expand students’ understanding, develop complexity, and even in routines to encourage more complex behaviors and learning tasks (Meyer & Schendel 2014)

Perhaps most important and sometimes overlooked to the improvement of bilingual students’ writing is the use of social interaction and oral language development. As Peregoy and Boyle (2013) shared, conversation allows for trial and error and gives students opportunities for feedback and clarification with more proficient language partners. Written language develops out of this oral language practiced in social interaction with peers and adults (Brisk, 2012).

All in all, for bilingual students to be successful writers teachers must pay special attention to the way bilingual students write and scaffold socially interactive oral

language practice connected to the themes and concepts grammar of writing.

Transfer

In an immersion classroom the language with which content is taught varies by the grade level, current unit, and type of immersion school. In any of these settings, the transfer of knowledge across languages and subject areas is essential to successful bilingualism for the students. There are two main types of transfer: cross-linguistic and cross-curricular. Cross-linguistic transfer refers to the reapplication of knowledge learned in one language (Spanish) to a similar learning situation in another language (English). Simultaneously, transfer may refer to cross-curricular transfer, or the reapplication of knowledge learned in one particular subject (reading) and its reapplication in another subject area (writing) within the same language.

Transfer: across languages (cross-linguistic). Applying knowledge learned in one language to similar academic situations in another language is one of the fundamental underpinnings of immersion education. For immersion to be effective in the US, students must learn in the language of instruction (Spanish for this research) and still read, write, and communicate proficiently in English. There is a need for cross-linguistic transfer, which is widely credited as occurring for English and Spanish bilingual students (Leider, Proctor, Silverman, & Haring, 2013, p. 1463).

In their study on the transfer of phonological processes across languages Comeau, Cormier, Grandmasion, and Lacroix (1999) explain that there is both direct and indirect evidence suggesting cross-language transfer (p. 31). Students' phonological awareness and Spanish word recognition were found to connect to their ability to recognize invented English words as well as English sight words (Comeau et al., 1999, p. 31). Jared,

Cormier, Levy and Wade-Wooley (2011) extend this research on phonological awareness and promote the correlation between Spanish phonological awareness and English decoding (p. 121). Phonological awareness is one of the major keys to literacy proficiency. Laurent and Martinot (2009) agree that some reading skills are transferred from one language to another, especially phonological awareness (p. 438). For immersion students it is thus crucial to develop a sound phonological awareness in the language of instruction (L2), in order to also ensure proficiency in the native language (L1).

In addition to phonological awareness as an indicator of second language acquisition (SLA) success, Martín-Beltrán (2010) found that students in a dual-language classroom “were able to create linguistic bridges,” where they were able to creatively compare and combine problem-solving strategies from both languages (p. 273).

In the end, Leider et al. (2013) put it best, “it would seem promotion of Spanish development should be favorable, especially if there is potential for cross-linguistic transfer” (p.1479).

Interference of the second language? Critics of immersion education have long questioned whether or not second language acquisition in bilingual settings negatively affects the student’s native language. Tabari and Sadighi (2014) say that the dispute about the role one’s native language should play in second language acquisition (SLA) has been dated back to the Reform Movement in the late nineteenth-century (p. 311).

Studies have shown that literacy development in a second language did not adversely affect students’ first language; in fact it contributed in a positive way to the development of their first language and students were able to differentiate between the two languages (Serna, 2009, p. 80). The student’s native language can play a positive role in the

development of his or her second language (Tabari & Sadighi, 2014, p. 311).

This is not to say there are not any initial disadvantages for children in an immersion setting. Bilingual children develop two vocabularies simultaneously. When compared to monolingual children, bilingual children initially have lower vocabularies when tested in the language of the monolingual children (Laurent & Martinot, 2009, p. 437). By fourth grade, and on into fifth grade, bilingual students outperformed their monolingual peers, especially in the area of solving phonological tasks (Laurent & Martinot, 2009, p. 448). It appears that children concurrently learning two languages, begin with more limited vocabularies and lower phonological knowledge, but this eventually surpasses that of monolingual children and continues to increase.

Limitations of transfer across languages for this study. Jared et al. (2011) point out that not all things transfer across languages: “the development of lexical or morphosyntactic skills in first and second languages are autonomous processes” (p. 120). In essence, their research explains that grammatical rules (morphology) and structures (syntax) are learned independently within the study of each independent language. Jared et al. (2011) continue to highlight possible limitations of cross-linguistic transfer, saying that there is not clear proof in the research that a student’s first language grammatical ability produces an ability to recognize grammar structures and read in other languages. As a result, it seems illogical for this research project to employ cross-linguistic transfer (English to Spanish) in an effort to increase the linguistic quality of third grade students writing.

Transfer: across academic subjects (cross-curricular transfer). With the aforementioned limitations to cross-linguistic transfer for this study, it would seem that

transfer across subject areas (cross-curricular transfer) is a more viable option for this particular research study. Cross-curricular transfer is the reapplication of knowledge learned in one particular subject (reading) and its reapplication in another subject area (writing) within the same language.

Zwiers (2006) performed research on English Learner (EL) middle school students' abilities to improve writing and thinking skills through scaffolded communication and language activities during history lessons. Zwiers (2006) found that both historical thinking skills and language instruction transferred to students' writing. This demonstrates the benefits of focusing on language and grammar in all subject areas, not just during a writing period.

Transfer between oral language and writing. Long before students begin to read and write they are speaking. Writing develops for most students out of this oral language (Brisk, 2012, p.446). Grades 3 – 6 are crucial developmental years in the changes between spoken and written language, in which, writing can be especially challenging to third grade students (Brisk, 2012, p.446). Oral language and writing are distinct elements of language and should not be confused as one in the same. Ideally students move from oral language where there is common context between the speaker and audience, to oral language where the audience and speaker do not share context, to writing where there may be differing contexts between the audience and writer (Brisk, 2012, p. 447).

Transfer between reading and writing. Reading, writing, and speaking all fall under the general umbrella of literacy in schools. However, in classrooms all three are taught separately. This leaves a common disconnected feeling between all three areas.

Social learning practices, like literature circles and reading response journals, have

been found to promote transfer of skills between reading and writing (Meyer & Schendel, 2014, p. 22). When students are socially connecting about their literacy learning, they are able to incorporate their oral language skills in an effort to better transfer learning cross-curricularly.

Transfer summary. Transfer is an essential component for immersion and bilingual education. As evidenced in this section, transfer can refer to both cross-linguistic transfer and cross-curricular transfer. Skills have been widely shown to transfer across languages, especially phonological awareness and vocabulary recognition (Comeau et al., 1999; Jared et al., 2011; Laurent & Martinot, 2009; Leider et al., 2013; Martin & Beltran, 2010). However, Jared et al. (2011) found limitations to what can be transferred across languages. They explained that syntax and morphology skills do not transfer across languages (Jared et al., 2011). So for this study that focuses on improving the linguistic quality of writing (including morphology and syntax) that does not seem to be the best approach.

The research on cross-curricular transfer appeared to be more useful for this particular study. As Brisk (2012), Zweirs (2006), and Meyer & Schendel (2014) reported, transfer also happens across subject areas within one language. This includes, but is not limited to the transfer from history lessons to writing, oral language to writing, and reading to writing.

Transfer both cross-linguistically and cross-curricularly will continue to be one of the keystones to immersion and bilingual education. There is an abundance of research pointing to the many benefits of transfer in language learning. Ultimately, transfer will play a large part in this research study.

Review of the Literature: Conclusions

This literature review brings together ideas and research in an effort to better address this research study's focus: increase subject-verb agreement and opinion formation in third grade students' writing.

The research gathered here predominantly supports the goals and hypotheses of this study. For this study, there were some missing pieces or areas lacking a quantity of different research examples. Much of that is most likely due to the fact that there is just not as much academic research being done on immersion education. And as with anything there were researchers with contradictory viewpoints, but that ultimately sharpens the research focus.

To begin, the review underscored a need for more attention and refinement to this country's way of teaching writing. With 72% of fourth-grade students and 73% of twelfth-grade student not writing at grade-level proficiency levels, this country has a huge ways to go in writing (Truckenmiller, 2014, p. 532). Within immersion classrooms there is the same need for improvements in writing and possibly a bigger need for more research. Velasco and Garcia (2014) found that bilingual writers just simply write differently than their monolingual peers (p.10). Writing in one's second language of course may cause more hurdles for a bilingual student. This study seeks to add to this writing research and clarify approaches that are effective for bilingual writers.

The need for improvements to writing instruction across the country, but especially in immersion classrooms has been made evident. The ways in which this can be accomplished are many and varied. This study seeks to use a combination of form and function focused activities in reading to improve subject-verb agreement and opinion

formation in third grade students' writing. A focus on function is necessary in tandem with a focus on form because both highlight important pieces of SLA, but alone they are more or less ineffective and not engaging (Day and Shapson, 2001).

Student engagement is a crucial piece to quality teaching. Scaffolds and oral language practice are two effective ways to engage students in learning the grammar and structural forms of a language. Meyer and Schendel (2014) and Zwiers (2006) found that students could successfully transfer language knowledge and other concepts cross-curricularly when the activities were scaffolded to meet learners' varying needs. The scaffolded activities guided the students through socially interactive learning and allowed them to push one another forward in their learning.

This peer-to-peer social interaction is an absolute must for student engagement in SLA (Peregoy & Boyle, 2013). Conversation in an immersion classroom allows for trial and error and gives students opportunities for feedback or clarification from their possibly more proficient language peers (Peregoy & Boyle, 2013). The social interaction students are partaking in is increasing their oral language skills. For most students writing develops out their oral language skills (Brisk, 2012). The research explained that there is a critical developmental period when students learn how to transfer their oral languages skills to written expression and that begins in third grade – the grade-level for this study.

So, form and function focused language activities during reading should be scaffolded for various language and learner needs and rely on social interaction that builds oral language skills. The research did not specifically mention how the combination of teacher scaffolds and socially interactive activities would affect student's oral and written language, but the evidence gathered suggests that it may be positive for immersion

learners.

The last component studied in this literature review is essential to this study's success – transfer. Cross-linguistic and cross-curricular transfer refer to the reapplication of knowledge learning in one language or subject to another language or subject.

This review uncovered mountains of information on the effectiveness of cross-linguistic transfer like Spanish to English (Comeau et al., 1999; Jared et al., 2011; Laurent & Martinot, 2009; Leider et al., 2013; Martin-Beltrán, 2010; Tabari & Sadighi, 2014). Everything from phonological awareness to word recognition was found to transfer across languages. However, this research study is not about cross-linguistic transfer. It is about cross-curricular transfer and the improvement of writing.

The literature contained far fewer sources with solid evidence of cross-curricular transfer, demonstrating a need for more research in this area. Transfer across subject areas seems to be a more viable option than across languages because Jared et al. (2011) pointed out that grammatical rules (morphology) and language structures (syntax) do not transfer across languages. They must be learned independently in each language. As previously mentioned, Meyer and Schendel (2014) and Zwiers (2006) found that students could successfully transfer language knowledge and other concepts across subject areas. This is pretty much where previous research on cross-curricular transfer stops and this research study begins, attempting to verify if students can successfully transfer knowledge from reading to writing.

Summary. All in all, this literature review brought together the ideas and work of many different researchers and teachers. The research supported the need for an improvement in writing and grammatical knowledge for SLA. Many articles, theses, and

books were analyzed and overwhelmingly they advocated for the use of scaffolded form and function focused activities in a social setting to improve oral language skills and the linguistic quality of students' writing. Cross-curricular transfer will play an essential role in this study because the activities will be done during independent reading time in the hopes that concepts transfer cross-curricularly to students' writing. The research discussed in this review supports and leaves room for more research the main themes of this research question.

In Chapter Three

The reviewed research has highlighted and supported various methodologies that this research study can now utilize. In chapter three there is first an explanation of the research setting and overview of the participants involved. From there, the research paradigm, research methodology, and research methods are all explained. Lastly, there is an explanation of how the data was analyzed.

CHAPTER THREE

Methods

Introduction

The teaching methods used to instruct in a Spanish immersion classroom are intuitively very similar to standard English speaking classrooms. However, certain aspects of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) require an acute sensitivity to immersion students' unique needs and language development. This research study specifically examined the development of subject-verb agreement in Spanish immersion students' writing through scaffolded language activities in reading. The study asked: how does implementing (Spanish) form and function focused language activities during independent reading time affect subject-verb agreement and opinion formation in third grade students' writing?

Summary of the literature review. The reviewed research supported the need for an improvement in writing and grammatical knowledge for SLA. Many articles, theses, and books were analyzed and overwhelmingly they advocated for the use of scaffolded form and function focused activities in a social setting to improve oral language skills and the linguistic quality of students' writing. Transfer played an essential role in this study because the activities were completed during independent reading time with the expectation that concepts would transfer cross-curricularly to students' writing. The reviewed research supported the concept of transfer between reading and writing modes, however they also emphasized the need for more research.

An overview of chapter three. The teaching methods for this study were unique to one classroom, based on widely accepted strategies, but adapted for a Spanish immersion

context. This chapter first describes the research setting and provides an overview of the participants involved. From there, the research paradigm, research methodology, and research methods are all explained. Lastly, there is an explanation of how the data was analyzed.

Setting and Participants

Setting. The setting for this research study was a third grade Spanish immersion classroom in the upper Midwest. The classroom was part of a kindergarten through fifth grade elementary school. The entire school was a one-way Spanish immersion magnet school. In this model students are primarily native English speakers (i.e.: only English is spoken at home), or English dominant if there is more than one language spoken at home. There are some students that are Spanish home-language as well, shifting this one-way model a bit. One-way immersion means that students were taught entirely in Spanish in grades kindergarten and one. In grades two through five, English literacy is introduced and expanded slightly as the grades increase. The school was a magnet school meaning that students throughout the district could receive bussing, as opposed to a neighborhood school where students were all from that local community or neighborhood.

The elementary school was part of a large public school district and had 30 years of Spanish immersion history. With its magnet status and strong history of immersion education, the school was very popular among parents in the region. In grades K-5 there were approximately 730 students and the school employed approximately 60 staff members. The student body was quite diverse: 23% African American, 47% Hispanic, 26% Caucasian, and less than 2% of students that were American Indian or Asian. Approximately 23% of students were English Learners (EL) and just over 6% received

special education services. The school qualified for Title I funding with over 56% of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch.

Participants. The participants in this study were third grade students in one of the four and a half third grade classrooms (one class was a split class of third and fourth graders) in the (afore mentioned) Spanish immersion elementary school. There were 23 students in the class that participated in this study – 11 identified as female, and 12 identified as male. The class was similar to the school-wide profile with 26% of the participants labeled as EL and 4% receiving special education services. The racial make-up was also similar to the overall school: 17% African American, 35% Caucasian, and 48% Hispanic.

This classroom had a higher proportion of EL and special education students than other third grade classrooms because these students were clustered in classes so that the special education and EL teachers could push into the classroom and teach alongside the classroom teacher. It was designed to create a richer classroom experience for these students, but also presented some challenges to the teacher. Since there is such a wide range of student needs, the teachers had to differentiate student-learning experiences on various levels for many activities.

Research Paradigm

The research paradigm used in this study included the mixed methods approach. According to Mills (2014, p. 7), there are three kinds of mixed-methods approaches. This study made use of the QUAN-qual model where there was a mix of quantitative and qualitative data gathered, but the study favored the use of quantitative data with some qualitative data gathered as well (Mills, 2014, p. 7).

History and rationale. Creswell (2014) explained that mixed methods research is

relatively new and its popularity only dates back to the 1980s (p. 14). The paradigm purports that all models and methods have inherent biases or faults, so by combining qualitative and quantitative methods a researcher can minimize the risk for bias or faults in design (Creswell, 2014, p. 15). This triangulation is ultimately why mixed methods will be used for this research study. When used together in a mixed methods paradigm, quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used to check the accuracy of each set of data, to reiterate the findings of one method, and to explore further questions for possible research.

Human Subject Committee and District Approval

In order to conduct this study, I had to obtain approval from both my university and school district. The university required a Human Subject Committee to review all research paradigms and methods to ensure the least risk possible for all student participants. They also made sure that the study was of a sound ethical practice and as objective as possible. I began this process in July and was tentatively approved by the university's Human Subjects Committee awaiting approval from my district and school principal.

My school district had a similar process for research conducted in classrooms with student participants. In addition to ensuring no harm to the students or their education and being ethically conducted, the district required that the study have the potential to make a contribution to the education profession or the district. My particular district's process was a lengthy process and actually required me to push back my study's start date. This meant my research study was conducted sandwiched around winter break.

Lastly, I received permission from the students' parents for them to be able to

participate in the research and for me to use data about their work. Parents received a letter of informed consent and returned a signed agreement if they gave permission for their child to participate. A sample letter can be found in Appendix A.

Implementation

In an effort to answer my research question, I scaffolded students' language use through form and function focused activities during independent Spanish reading time. These activities included the use of *Spanish language cards* in a peer-to-peer reciprocal teaching setting. A sample *Spanish language card* can be found in Appendix B.

A week before we began our Spanish book recommendation writing unit, I gave students *Spanish language cards* (laminated sheets of cardstock) with language scaffolds and sentence frames. The sentence frames and vocabulary were organized around the main themes of a book recommendation: summarization and opinion statements. Students used these cards while partner reading and while participating in book groups throughout the course of this study.

Partners within the classroom's Spanish reading groups used the *Spanish language cards* to visually see linguistically correct and more complex sentences frames, with the intention of advancing both form and functional language knowledge. They used the cards to not only have visual language scaffolds, but also to keep track of the words, phrases, and sentence frames they used that day.

Students used the *Spanish language cards* taking on "student" and "teacher" roles. One student pretended to be the "teacher" for a page of reading and the other student (doing the reading and giving the responses) was the "student" for the page of reading, setting up a reciprocal teaching model. Each role had a list of optional phrases they could

use before, during, and after reading. The “teacher” spoke first, inviting the “student” to read and the “student” would respond. Then the “student” would read a page of their text and receive a complimentary phrase from the “teacher” to which they would respond with a variation on “thank you.” Finally after reading, the “teacher” asked the student to either give a summary of what they had read or state an opinion about what they read. The “student” would oblige and use one of the sentence frames to share their piece.

At first, I thought the option of being able to summarize or give an opinion would be good for students, but a few days into the study I realized it was too much information for students. So I modified the Spanish language card and made two more: one for just summaries and one just for opinions (See Appendix B for all three samples). We then spent a week with just summaries, followed by a week with only opinions. After feeling comfortable with both formats, some groups also chose to use the original card with both options on one sheet.

The study participants were also asked to fill out a *Spanish language card – reflection* at a three points throughout the study. (See an example student reflection sheet in Appendix C.) Originally I had intended for this to be a daily reflection, but quickly realized with my students that it was very time consuming and students did not enjoy filling them out. The form asked students to fill in some vanishing cloze sentences with past tense preterit verbs, as well as to reflect on their use of the *Spanish language cards* and progress of their Spanish language learning with opinions, summaries, and past tense subject verb agreement.

Transfer and form instruction. In addition to the use of the *Spanish language cards*, students were specifically instructed about transferring knowledge across subject areas

and played short form-focused games reinforcing subject-verb agreement. This study relied on the use of cross-curricular transfer. Students should have hopefully transferred their knowledge learned through the language cards and conversations about language during reading to their Spanish writing in writer's workshop.

A couple weeks into the study I realized that students were still making subject-verb errors with past tense verbs, specifically in the summaries of the pages they were reading. Students were often confusing third person verbs with first person subjects. So, when time allowed, we would quickly play a subject-verb sentence game practicing the form of their language. We played this before reading lessons and sometimes at the start of a writing lesson. On their whiteboards students would copy down three to five sentences I had written on the board with various errors: capitalization mistakes, missing periods, incorrect spelling, and subject-verb errors with preterit verb forms. Student had to fix all the errors in each one as they copied it onto their whiteboards. Subject-verb agreement was the main goal, but the other previously studied skills were included and helped increase student confidence in their ability to fix my mistakes. It was also a way to differentiate the learning. Students found errors at their level (not always the subject-verb mistakes), but eventually they became more adept at noticing the subject-verb agreement errors.

Methods

Since this study utilized a QUAN-qual mixed methods paradigm the methods used were both qualitative and quantitative in nature with more of the data collected being quantitative in nature. To begin, I used a quantitative approach and recorded student data from initial student writing samples. At the end of the study these results were compared

with post writing samples to verify the impact of the form and function focused language activities.

In an effort to employ qualitative methods during the research, I acted as an active participant observer and recorded my own observations about students' behavior and language use. I also recorded student pairs using the *Spanish language cards* to have a view into how they used the cards. Another qualitative method I implemented was collecting the students' reflections three times throughout the study. This qualitative data was analyzed in conjunction with the quantitative data to highlight trends and themes of this study. As mentioned before, the triangulation of the quantitative and qualitative research methods helped ensure the collection of the most accurate data possible.

Data analysis. The information collected in this study was a mix of quantitative and qualitative data and therefore required multiple means of analysis.

The quantitative data collected from pre and post writing samples about the linguistic quality of students writing was analyzed using Brown's (1973) *Obligatory Occasion Analysis* method as outlined by Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005). *Obligatory Occasion Analysis* compares the forms students used with targeted language objectives to see how thoroughly students have learned the specific feature, subject-verb agreement (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). Using this method I was able to record subject-verb agreement occasions for present, past preterit, past imperfect, and future tense verbs.

My observation and recoding data were analyzed chronologically to show student growth and change over the course of the study, however the results also informed instruction during the course of the research. This data provided an anecdotal story to how this study was conducted and the impact of the study on language learning.

The last piece of data that was analyzed was a mix of qualitative and quantitative data. I collected the students' Spanish language reflection cards three times during the course of the research. I recorded how students filled in preterit verbs in cloze sentences. The qualitative data I received from these student reflections sheets are the students' thoughts on how they used the *Spanish language cards*, how their Spanish had improved, and what things they felt like they were still working on. The combination of these two data sources connected and helped explain the previous quantitative and qualitative data sets.

Summary

In conclusion, change in the immersion classroom and trying new things is the only way we are going to successfully tackle persistent immersion issues, such as subject-verb agreement for second language learners. This chapter shared information about the third grade Spanish immersion classroom, the school, and school district where this study was conducted. A Quan-qual Mixed Methods paradigm was used in an effort to most accurately collect and triangulate data sources. This hopefully helped to eliminate some of the inherent bias and subjectivity involved in this data collection.

The data collected in this research study was collected in three primary methods: pre and post writing samples evaluating subject-verb agreement, participant observer notes and student recordings, and lastly student reflections on the back of their *Spanish language reflection sheets*.

Ultimately, the data analysis procedures determined the degree to which students' language improved with the help of these scaffolds and social learning opportunities. I analyzed the data using Brown's (1973) *Obligatory Occasion Analysis* method as outlined by Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005). This cross-analysis of quantitative and qualitative data

proved to be the most effective method for producing objective and reliable data to use for future instruction.

In Chapter Four

Chapter four contains a chronological overview of the data collected, analysis of the different data points, and interpretation of the results. The chapter will include graphic representations of the data collected intermixed with anecdotal information from student participants and the teacher researcher. Chapter four explains all there is to know about the results of this research study.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Introduction

The need for improvements in students' writing is apparent no matter the language of instruction. Truckenmiller, Eckert, Coddling, and Petscher found that “72% of fourth-grade students, 74% of eighth-grade students, and 73% of twelfth-grade students could not write at the proficient level for their grade level” (2014, p. 532). More specifically, within immersion there is an extensive push to improve students' oral and written grammar (Day & Shapson, 2001).

One of the challenges to improving oral and written grammar is finding unique ways to get students engaged in the language, especially oral language practice. Various empirical studies found positive correlations between students' opportunities for interaction and the development of their second language (Martin-Beltrán, 2010). The results within this chapter add to this research base and help answer the research question: how does implementing (Spanish) form and function focused language activities during independent reading time affect subject-verb agreement and opinion formation in third grade students' writing?

Summary of methods, implementation, and data analysis. Chapter three explained the methods, implementation, and data analysis tools and models used to conduct this research study. The study was rooted in the idea of triangulating data points through use of the “QUAN-qual model” where there was a mix of quantitative and qualitative data gathered, but the study favored the use of quantitative data with some qualitative data gathered as well (Mills, 2014, p. 7).

Throughout the study, students wrote pre and post writing samples, used *Spanish language cards* (See Appendix B) in partners during independent work time during reading, and participated in form-focused language activities during mini-lessons in an effort to increase subject-verb agreement in preterit (past-tense) verb conjugations. Along the way, some changes were needed to better differentiate the scaffolds to ensure student success with the research, but all in all the research was implemented with fidelity.

I analyzed the quantitative data collected from pre and post writing samples about the linguistic quality of students writing using Brown's (1973) *Obligatory Occasion Analysis* method, as outlined by Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005). In addition to this quantitative data analysis, I used participant observer notes: my own notes plus student recordings during student work time during reading, and student reflection sheets: their own reflective statements about the process as well as cloze sentence practice with subject-verb agreement.

This cross-analysis of quantitative and qualitative data should be the most effective method for producing objective and reliable data to use for future instruction in immersion teaching.

An overview of chapter four. This chapter begins with a chronological overview of the data collected, followed by an analysis of the different data points, and lastly an interpretation of the results. The chapter will include graphic representations of the data collected and analytical interpretation of those results mixed with anecdotal information from student participants and the teacher-researcher.

Qualitative Analysis & Chronological Overview of the Data Collection Process

Prewriting sample. This research began with the pre-writing sample. I asked students

to write a book recommendation about a book they had recently read (independently or as a part of their book group). The students had engaged in conversations about book reviews the week prior to this writing sample. As a part of that day's mini-lesson they self-generated a list of the parts or characteristics they should include in their book review: introduction, summary, opinion, and conclusion.

Even though they had previously talked about book reviews and read sample book reviews, the pre-writing sample was not easy for most of the students. Frustration levels seem to run high with most students in class. I reminded them to focus on retelling the main idea of the story and sharing an opinion. They were allowed to use their books for the retell portion of the recommendation, which also created a trouble spot, as two students started copying phrases directly from the books. I spoke with these students and omitted any phrases that were copied from the book.

When I analyzed their pre writing samples I noticed some patterns and trends. Most students made errors of form, as I had suspected. There were a lot of subject verb agreement errors especially in the preterit (past tense) form. On the pre writing sample, 91% of students made some sort of error with preterit tense subject verb-agreement. As well, students did not seem to know when it was appropriate to use which tense. They went between present and past tenses throughout their writing seemingly without much attention to either form. In addition, there were some troubles with spelling, a fairly common third grade issue. The last glaring pattern was the lack of accents in their writing. Students almost entirely did not use accents except on very common sight words like mamá (mom).

Introduction of Spanish language cards. The day following our pre-writing sample, I

gave students *Spanish language cards* (See Appendix B), The *Spanish language cards* were laminated sheets of cardstock with language scaffolds and sentence frames organized around the main themes of a book recommendation: summarization and opinion statements. Students used these cards while partner reading and while participating in book groups throughout the course of this study, with the intention that the cards would advance students' form and functional language knowledge related to writing a book summary. They used the cards to not only have visual language scaffolds, but also to keep track of the words, phrases, and sentence frames they used that day – checking off the phrases as they used each one.

The students utilized reciprocal teaching concepts with their *Spanish language cards*, taking on “student” and “teacher” roles. One student pretended to be the “teacher” for a page of reading and the other student (doing the reading and giving the responses) was the “student” for the page of reading. Each role had a list of optional phrases they could use before, during, and after reading. The “teacher” spoke first, inviting the “student” to read and the “student” would respond. (See Chapter Three for more information.)

From the first day using the *Spanish language cards* there was a noticeable difference in the room for Spanish reading work time. In my participant observer notes I recorded on day one, students enjoyed checking things off on their *Spanish language cards*, kids asked for help as needed, and students were perhaps the most engaged of any readers workshop time yet to date. I recorded that students sustained Spanish language use more than I had heard before, talked with only their partner, remained in their areas (without typical distractions like going to the bathroom or getting a drink), and methodically read their book page by page while using the *Spanish language cards*.

There were a couple challenges as well. With all students reading and speaking in pairs, the noise of the room escalated quite a bit. Also, in order to ensure students understood their roles and were following through with expectations I did not meet with reading groups for a couple days and circulated about the room. By day three, I wrote that it continued to seem like students were doing their best reading and were the most engaged of any reading activity this year.

Modification of Spanish language cards. At first, I thought having the option to summarize or give an opinion on the same card would be beneficial for students, but a few days into the study I realized it was too much information at once. I kept hearing and watching students interchanging the opinion and summary statements. A couple students even said to me, “I am not sure which to do” and “this is too hard. I do not know what to do” (as in which sentence frames to use). Also, I noticed my lower Spanish oral language and reading groups struggled with the complexity of some of the phrases. So I modified the *Spanish language card* and made two more: one for just summaries and one just for opinions (See Appendix B for all three samples). Both had more options of varying complexities to offer attainable options to the lower oral language and reading groups. We then spent a week with just summaries, followed by a week with only opinions. The same students that had complained the previous week said things like: “I get it now” “this is like what we do in writing sometimes” “I like this a lot!” After feeling comfortable with both formats, some groups also chose to use the original card with both options on one sheet.

Mid-way through the research period, I noticed students, especially lower readers, continued to struggle using some of the prompts with the correct verb forms. I did my

best for a few days to draw their attention to the subject-verb conjugation mistakes they were making. I did not, however, see much progress. After talking with a colleague about my concern, I decided to play a game during reading and some writing mini-lessons. I wrote phrases onto the board with grammatical, as well as subject-verb agreement errors. Students had to copy the phrases down onto their whiteboards correcting any mistakes as they went. The students loved this activity and would ask to play it during other free periods in the day when we had a few extra minutes. In my notes, I recorded that students raced to the floor with their white boards to begin copying and correcting the sentences and seemed to take pride in correcting my mistakes at the board, with smiles stretching wide across many of their faces. I differentiated the activity by including present and preterit (past) tense verbs, as I had noticed that my some of my lower students still struggled with simple present tense conjugations. I also elected common summary and opinion verbs (e.g.: ir (to go), decir (to say), estar (to be), ver (to see), poner (to put or place), opinar (to express your opinion), gustar (to like), encantar (to like a lot /love), etc.) since the overall goal was to improve their language in their book review pieces of writing.

Student language card reflections. At three different stages of the research study, students filled out *student language card reflection* sheets (See Appendix C). In my review of the literature I discovered that metalinguistic awareness, or thinking about your own language learning, has been found to be an effective learning tool for second language learners as young as first grade (Chamot & El-Dinary, 1999, p. 82).

Students were asked how they thought their Spanish use had improved with the *Spanish language cards*, what they thought they still needed to work on, and to tell a

short summary of their day thus far (in an effort to practice past preterit verb forms).

They also, filled in missing verbs in cloze sentences. As a scaffold for lower learners, I included options of verb forms under the line, all with correct accent markings. Accents were an issue throughout this study. Even with the written examples below the missing line students would omit accent marks in the verb that they wrote. In Spanish this can completely change the meaning of a word and is a very necessary feature of many preterit past tense verb conjugations. The summaries of their days to that point also reflected this same pattern. Students almost entirely did not use accents (except for common sight words like mamá and papá), but did know to use preterit tense verbs to retell their morning - an improvement from their pre writing samples.

Römer, O'Donnell, and Ellis (2014) would explain that this is a natural progression with learning a second language because most of the students are not exposed to accent marks in their native language. They assert that students must construct and reconstruct (deconstruct) their second language because of the “learned attentional biases” in their first languages (Römer, O'Donnell, & Ellis, 2014). Essentially some phonological processes and syntax rules learned in the students' first languages interfere with the understanding or development of their second language because they appear to be similar, but are wholly different. In this case, it is accent marks. In English they do not change meaning, nor are they an important feature, whereas in Spanish they are essential to meaning and showing tense for verb forms.

In the second and third reflections students' daily summaries improved and used primarily preterit tense verbs as needed and were conjugated correctly. Students however continued to have issues omitting accents on their words. Their summaries grew in length

and complexity to some degree over the three reflections.

Students filled out the reflection questions most thoroughly the first of the three occasions that they filled out the *student language card reflection* sheets. Many students said the *Spanish language cards* had helped them learn more Spanish vocabulary, encouraged them to speak more Spanish than before, and helped them retell stories better. Some challenges students mentioned: “they don’t help me at all” (two students); “it hasn’t changed my Spanish” (one student). All in all, the comments were positive.

On the question of how they could still improve, students tended to not understand the question or not relate it specifically to the improvement of their Spanish language skills. Many wrote things off topic or simple generalizations like, “get better at reading.”

In the end I relied on Martin-Beltrán’s (2010) theory that metalinguistic awareness could also be developed through both peer-peer interactions as well as teacher-student interactions (p. 270).

Post writing sample. I conducted the post writing sample day as similarly to the pre writing sample as I could. Again, I asked students to write a short book review on a book they recently read or a book from their Spanish book group. The day of the post-writing sample we had just finished a fiction book re-aloud as a class. I gave them the option to use that book as their book of choice since we had just read it together. We also regenerated the list of the parts or characteristics they should include in their book review: introduction, summary, opinion, and conclusion.

We had just finished our book review stories in writing a few days before this post sample writing day. So most of the students seemed more secure and confident in their abilities writing the post sample versus the pre. However, some students still felt like it

was a quiz or high pressure situation and I had to talk them through their anxieties and reminded them that I just wanted to see their best writing possible. It did not have to be perfect, but it did have to be their best effort.

As I analyzed the post writing samples, I noticed some trends and patterns. First, it was obvious that students had learned vocabulary from the *Spanish language cards*. Many students replicated almost exact sentence structures as some of the phrases on the language frame cards. Students also wrote a considerable amount more in the post samples than the pre. There was one surprise pattern as well. Students used the present subjunctive tense a lot more in the introductions and conclusions of their post writing samples. It was not a form we focused on specifically, but it was a tense they saw and used in their recommendations with such phrases like, “Espero que leas...” (I hope you read...).

Students improved some with accent marks from the pre writing samples, but this continued to be one of the biggest challenges in the students’ post writing samples. It also seemed like students relied more heavily on words or forms without accents in the post sample than they did in the pre. They used words like fue (went) and dijo (said) that do not have accents. Also, students that were native Spanish speakers incorrectly used the letters b and v when spelling words, which in many Spanish oral language varieties make the same or very similar sounds.

Summary of the analysis. In analyzing the entire process many of the predicted issues with second language acquisition were apparent. Students did not seem to have an awareness or attention to form in their writing, especially within the genre of book review writing. It was especially apparent that students did not understand the importance of

accent marks for Spanish past tense verb conjugations.

As the research progressed, so too did the students' interest in form and function of past tense Spanish verbs. The form sentence game was one of their most enjoyed experiences throughout the study and they couldn't seem to play it enough times. Students begged to play it at the start of literacy lessons and one student commented, "this game is so much fun because we get to find *your* mistakes." Over time students' use of accents improved some, but continued to be a troublesome area. This is perhaps developmental to the age group like some of the spelling concerns (b versus v in Spanish), but nonetheless with some attention to form students improved with the use of accents. Also, students came to better understand differences in subject-verb agreement in Spanish and how using the incorrect conjugation of a verb can greatly alter the meaning of a sentence. Perhaps the most surprising thing though was students' increased use of present tense subjunctive in their post-writing samples. It is a part of book review writing, but is a fairly advanced language skill that I did not expect students to intuitively understand and then use correctly on their own. In the next section we will continue to explore the findings of this report in more detail and look at actual student gains as a class and by various subgroup categories.

Interpretation of the Results

In this section I will review, compare, and interpret the quantitative data collected before, during, and after the research was conducted in the classroom.

Student language card reflection results. At three different stages of the research study, students filled out *student language card reflection* sheets (See Appendix C). In addition to the reflection question students were asked to fill in the missing verbs (conjugated

correctly) in cloze sentences. Students were given two or three options below each word and the sentences and verbs changed each time. For each card there were a total of five cloze sentences they had to fill in the missing preterit tense verb.

On the initial student language reflection card students averaged 3.04 points out of 5.00 points (see Table 1 – Student Language Card Reflection: Cloze Sentence Data). Students were given five sentences in which they selected the correct verb for a blank based on the subject(s) in the sentence. I scored each of their answers as either entirely correct or incorrect for a total possible score of five on each reflection.

By the second round of cloze sentences they averaged 3.52 points out of 5.00. All but three students increased their scores or remained the same as their initial score. The

<u>Student</u>	<u>Reflection 1</u>	<u>Reflection 2</u>	<u>Reflection 3</u>
A	4	4	3
B	3	5	5
C	3	2	2
D	1	4	4
E	3	5	3
F	2	4	3
G	4	4	4
H	3	3	2
I	2	2	3
J	4	4	2
K	4	4	3
L	4	2	5
M	3	3	3
N	4	4	3
O	2	4	3
P	5	2	2
Q	4	4	4
R	3	3	3
S	4	4	2
T	2	4	4
U	2	4	2
V	0	2	2
W	4	4	4
Class Average	3.04	3.52	3.09

Avg. Points Change	0.48	-0.43
Avg. Percent Change	9.57%	-8.70%
<i>Note.</i> Scores out of possible 5 points.		
Table 1		

results were a little more perplexing on the third round of reflections. Some students went up and others went down by a point or two. A lot of students struggled conjugating the informal you (tu) and formal you (usted). These forms were included in the other reflections as well. The first two reflections were closer together than the second and third. It's possible that students retained more between the first two reflections.

In the end, this data set did not serve as the most useful tool for data analysis. The data set was small and remained more or less the same (around three average points out of five) over the course of the study. One possible explanation for the unclear results could be explained by Rodgers' (2006) theory that immersion students tend to focus more on understanding content (semantics) than on understanding the linguistic forms (syntax), especially lower achieving students (p. 373). In this case students understood the semantic meaning of the sentence and therefore may not have paid as much attention to the linguistic forms.

Pre and post writing samples. The pre and post student writing samples may present a more accurate depiction of student growth because there is more depth to the writing. This helps to ensure a student is not guessing, but has actually improved and has gained a deeper understanding of subject-verb agreement in preterit tense verbs.

I analyzed the pre and post writing samples using Brown's (1973) *Obligatory Occasion Analysis* method as outlined by Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005). I compared the forms students used with the targeted language objectives to see how thoroughly students had learned the specific feature, subject-verb agreement (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005).

Using this method I was able to record subject verb agreement occasions for present, past preterit, past imperfect, and future tense verbs and whether they were written correctly (conjugation and accentuation). I chose to include occasion analysis for all four forms because they were all possibly necessary occasions for this genre and I wanted to see if students' attention to form changed beyond just the area of focus on preterit verb forms.

In the pre-sample students were the most successful with present tense verb forms, scoring a class average of 68% (correct subject-verb agreement/total occasions) (see Table 2 – Pre Writing Sample Class Results (All Sub-Groups)). This makes sense, as present tense verb forms are the most common forms taught in early Spanish immersion curriculum. Preterit and imperfect tenses followed by quite a bit with 19% and 13% average accuracy rates for the class. These low accuracy scores underline the importance of this research study and the need to improve students' accuracy rates with preterit and imperfect past tense verb forms. In the pre writing samples, students used present tense subjunctive forms with 0% accuracy.

Student	Gender	Race	Pre: Present			Pre: Preterit			Pre: Imperfect			Pre: Subj.		
			(correct)	(total)	%	(correct)	(total)	%	(Correct)	(Total)	%	(correct)	(Total)	%
A	F	African American	4	6	67%	3	5	60%	4	4	100%	0	0	0%
B	M	White	6	9	67%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
C	F	Hispanic	8	8	100%	3	12	25%	0	1	0%	0	2	0%
D	M	White	4	6	67%	0	0	0%	3	4	75%	0	1	0%
E	M	Hispanic	3	4	75%	1	4	25%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
F	M	Hispanic	3	3	100%	0	6	0%	0	2	0%	0	1	0%
G	F	African American	6	7	86%	4	5	80%	0	2	0%	0	0	0%
H	M	White	5	6	83%	0	0	0%	0	3	0%	0	0	0%
I	M	African American	2	4	50%	0	1	0%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
J	M	Hispanic	0	1	0%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
K	F	White	6	7	86%	0	3	0%	1	2	50%	0	0	0%
L	F	Hispanic	3	3	100%	1	5	20%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
M	F	White	2	3	67%	2	7	29%	1	3	33%	0	0	0%
N	F	White	5	6	83%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
O	M	White	1	2	50%	3	8	38%	1	6	17%	0	2	0%
P	M	African American	3	5	60%	0	0	0%	0	4	0%	0	0	0%
Q	F	Hispanic	4	6	67%	0	3	0%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
R	M	Hispanic	6	9	67%	4	6	67%	1	7	14%	0	0	0%
S	F	Hispanic	2	7	29%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%	0	1	0%
T	F	White	6	7	86%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
U	M	Hispanic	10	10	100%	1	1	100%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
V	M	Hispanic	0	0	0%	0	4	0%	0	2	0%	0	0	0%
W	F	Hispanic	5	7	71%	0	2	0%	0	0	0%	0	2	0%
Average Change Pre to Post			4.09	5.48	68%	0.96	3.13	19%	0.48	1.74	13%	0.00	0.39	0%

By the post writing samples students still had the largest percentages of accuracy in present tense verb forms, but improved in all three other forms. In the area of focus for this research study, preterit tense verb forms, students increased their average accuracy percentage rates by approximately 22 percentage points. From the initial class average of 19% accuracy, students improved to 42%. With such a substantial increase of 22 percentage points it can be discerned that cross-curricular transfer is a viable option in immersion teaching. It supports and adds to the research done by Meyer and Schendel (2014) and Zwiers (2006) that found students are successfully able to cross-curricularly transfer skills between writing and reading portions of the day.

Students also made gains in past imperfect verb forms, increasing approximately seven percentage points. With subjunctive verb forms, a complex form for third grade immersion students they increased by 17 percentage points. In their writing samples,

students used the subjunctive form to help them express opinions and requests or hopes for the reader to read the book they were recommending. Mohan and Beckett would explain this unforeseen improvement as a result of a focus on function, promoting students to improve their linguistic complexity and clarity (2003, p. 424). Books reviews rely on functional language to express opinion and reflection and these skills were practiced often with the *Spanish language cards*.

Student	Gender	Race	Post- Present (correct)	Post- Present (total)	%	Post- Preterit (correct)	Post- Preterit (total)	%	Post- Imperfect (Correct)	Post- Imperfect (Total)	%	Post- Subj. (correct)	Post- Subj. (Total)	%
A	F	African American	0	1	0%	1	3	33%	1	4	25%	0	0	0%
B	M	White	21	25	84%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
C	F	Hispanic	21	26	81%	18	25	72%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
D	M	White	4	5	80%	0	5	0%	0	0	0%	1	1	100%
E	M	Hispanic	11	13	85%	7	10	70%	1	3	33%	0	0	0%
F	M	Hispanic	13	13	100%	2	4	50%	0	1	0%	0	0	0%
G	F	African American	4	5	80%	4	8	50%	4	6	67%	1	1	100%
H	M	White	9	13	69%	0	8	0%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
I	M	African American	9	9	100%	4	5	80%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
J	M	Hispanic	0	4	0%	0	2	0%	0	4	0%	0	4	0%
K	F	White	25	30	83%	8	18	44%	0	0	0%	0	2	0%
L	F	Hispanic	10	12	83%	14	21	67%	1	3	33%	0	0	0%
M	F	White	4	5	80%	11	11	###	3	4	75%	0	0	0%
N	F	White	10	10	100%	2	2	###	0	0	0%	1	1	100%
O	M	White	1	2	50%	22	25	88%	2	2	###	0	1	0%
P	M	African American	6	12	50%	0	1	0%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
Q	F	Hispanic	8	13	62%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
R	M	Hispanic	13	18	72%	5	24	21%	1	3	33%	0	2	0%
S	F	Hispanic	0	4	0%	0	1	0%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
T	F	White	14	15	93%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%	1	1	100%
U	M	Hispanic	3	5	60%	2	3	67%	0	0	0%	0	0	0%
V	M	Hispanic	1	3	33%	5	10	50%	3	7	43%	0	0	0%
W	F	Hispanic	10	17	59%	4	6	67%	1	3	33%	0	0	0%
Average			8.57	11.30	65%	4.74	8.35	42%	0.74	1.74	19%	0.17	0.57	17%
Change														
Pre to														
Post			4.48	5.83	-2%	3.78	5.22	22%	0.26	0.00	7%	0.17	0.17	17%

Table 3

This research was done in a large urban school district. Since there is very little written specifically about immersion education and equity in large urban schools, I decided to break the results down by race and gender as well to see if there were any patterns and trends within those subgroups.

The African American student group was my smallest subgroup of student participants with only four students identifying as African American. Due to the small sample size the

data may not be as easily extrapolated to other groups. However, African American students started higher than the class average for preterit and imperfect verbs and statistically almost even for present tense verbs. From pre to post, African American students went down in present tense verbs by eight percentage points and increased by six percentage points in preterit tense verb forms. It was a much smaller increase than the class average, but these students also started almost 16 percentage points higher than the class average. Overall, African American students performed on par or slightly better than their White and Hispanic peers with preterit subject-verb agreement, the ultimate focus of this research study.

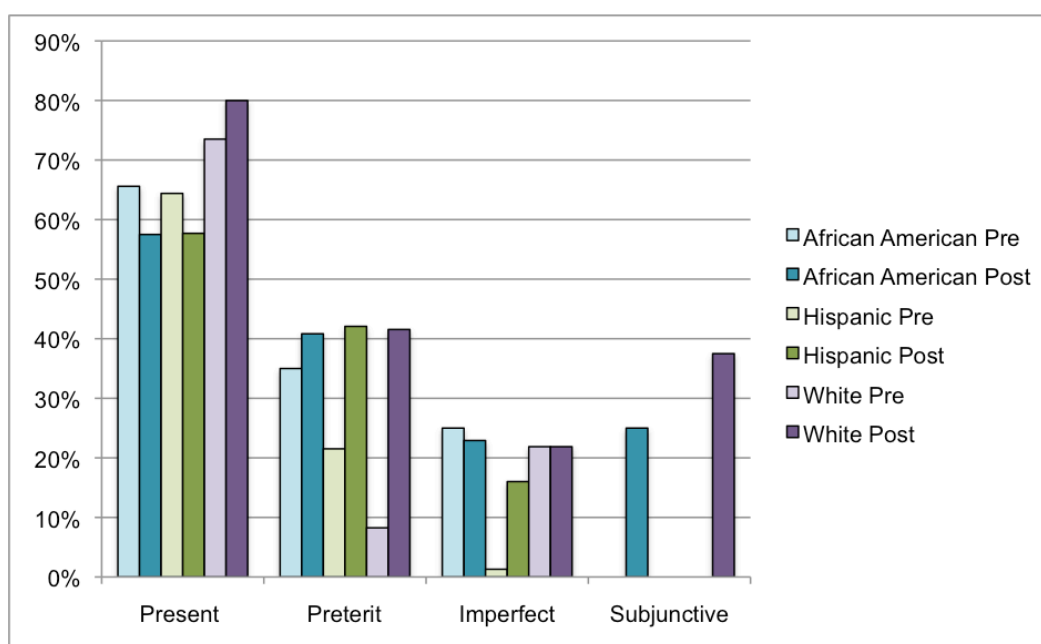


Figure 1. Pre and Post Data by Race. This figure shows pre and post data for each of the three racial groups in this class.

White students comprised the middle-sized subgroup with eight student participants. Again, it was a fairly small sample size, similar to the African American student group. On the pre writing sample White students averaged a higher rate of accuracy with present

tense verbs compared to the class average (74% compared to class average of 68%) and scored lower than the class average with preterit tense verbs (8% compared to the class average of 19%). From pre to post White students were the only sub group to increase on their accuracy of present tense verbs, if only by 6%. In preterit verb forms White students increased their average percentage of accuracy to 42% from the very low initial percentage of 8%, making the largest gain of any subgroup for this study's area of focus.

Hispanic students were the largest subgroup with 11 student participants. On the pre writing sample Hispanic students scored very comparably to the class averages with present and preterit tenses, but performed far lower than the class average on imperfect past tense verbs (1% compared to class average of 13%). From pre to post Hispanic students decreased similarly to African American students by seven percentage points on present tense verb accuracy. In relation to the focus area of preterit tense verb forms, Hispanic students achieved similar results to the class average increasing to 42% accuracy with a gain of 21 percentage points. Hispanic students also increased with imperfect verb forms from 1% to 16% accuracy by the post writing sample.

In summary, for the study's area of focus on preterit tense subject-verb agreement students increased to approximately the same level of proficiency across racial subgroups. However, it was surprising to see African American and Hispanic students' rates decrease for present tense subject-verb agreement. Also, Hispanic students, primarily Spanish home language students, did not make the same growth with imperfect and subjunctive tenses as did White and African American students.

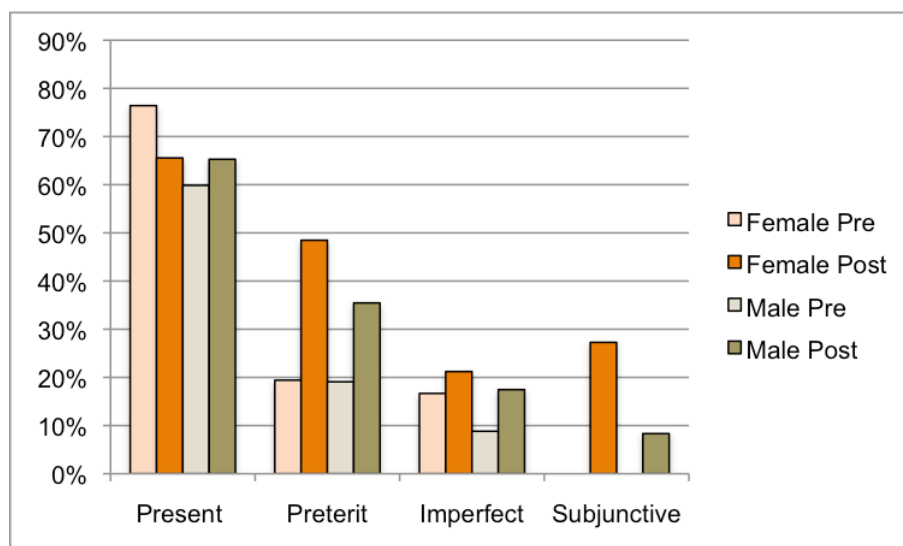


Figure 2. Pre and Post Data by Gender. This figure shows student results divided by gender.

In regards to gender, female-identifying students performed better than male-identifying students on the post writing samples for preterit, imperfect, and subjunctive verb forms. However, female-identifying students decreased on accuracy with present tense verbs compared to a slight increase by male-identifying students.

Summary of the results interpretation. When you look at all of the quantitative data collected for this research study you it appears that form and function focused activities during reading can increase students' subject-verb agreement with preterit tense verbs in writing. As a class the students increased 22 percentage points. Although the final accuracy rate for the class was only 42%, the increase is what ultimately demonstrates the amount of learning and cross-curricular transfer occurring in the classroom. Additionally, and perhaps most important to the need for equity in urban schools, subject-verb agreement increased for preterit tense verbs across all racial and gender subgroups. However, there were clear inconsistencies in the growth across racial sub-groups for the other three verb forms analyzed.

Summary

Similar to this study, Day and Shapson (2001) found an overall improvement of students' written and oral grammar skills when they combined formal, functional, and communicative approaches to grammar. They also believed that the use of cooperative learning combined with formal instruction and functional scaffolds for grammatical components helped increase students' overall grammar performance (Day & Shapson, 2001, p. 76). This research study did just that and expanded upon the results trying to answer the question: how does implementing (Spanish) form and function focused language activities during independent reading time affect subject-verb agreement and opinion formation in third grade students' writing?

Students utilized their scaffolded *Spanish language cards* in partnerships throughout the study. They practiced both form and function with preterit and imperfect verb conjugations to opinion formation and rationalization. Participant observer notes reported significant increases in student engagement during reading. Students primarily shared the same sentiment: "I use more Spanish and know more Spanish words (because of the *Spanish language cards*)."

Quantitatively speaking, student writing results also primarily showed improvement. Students remained more or less the same on formative cloze sentence assessments throughout the study. Many of the mistakes were form related and it seemed clear that students were still functionally adept in linguistically expressing themselves. Comparing pre and post writing samples provided firm data points upon which to prove cross-curricular transfer of form and function focused activities. Students increased 22 percentage points on the area of focus with preterit subject-verb agreement. In addition,

students improved in their use of imperfect and subjunctive verb forms, which were not a part of this study's main focus.

The results analyzed here purport that when used in combination with reciprocal teaching methods form and function focused language activities used in reading partnerships increase subject-verb agreement for preterit tense verbs and opinion formation in third grade students' writing.

In Chapter Five

In chapter five, the overall process of this study, connections of the results to the literature review, possible implications for future studies, and the impact this study may have on immersion instruction will all be discussed.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

Research Overview

This research study has been over a year in the making and been by far the largest and most profound project I have ever worked on. It began as a simple idea: how can I improve my students' Spanish writing and grammar knowledge? From there I researched and spoke with colleagues, eventually settling on my research question: how does implementing (Spanish) form and function focused language activities during independent reading time affect subject-verb agreement and opinion formation in third grade students' writing?

Throughout this chapter I will reflect on my personal journey through this research process, the rationale and significance of the project results for the larger immersion and education communities, and look forward to possible next steps for this research and beyond.

My Personal Journey

My connection to this research has always been very close, as I have been both the classroom teacher and researcher. As I explained in Chapter One, I came to be an immersion teacher somewhat serendipitously. However, since becoming an immersion teacher I have studied and worked very hard to learn all that I can about immersion pedagogy and improve my immersion teaching skill set.

This research study was a natural extension to my personal improvement journey as a Spanish immersion educator. My first exposure to the idea of form and function focused language activities was when a PhD student preformed her own research project on oral

language development through scaffolded cooperative language activities in my classroom. It was a fascinating new area of study that fueled my interest in this research project.

Along the way there were new discoveries, both expected and unexpected. As both the classroom teacher and researcher I knew it was going to be an interesting challenge to wear both hats at the same time successfully. I feel like I did manage to balance both roles well enough, but I did not understand how challenging it would be. The researcher in me wanted the environment to be just right in order to get an accurate depiction of what was happening every step of the way. However, the educator in me knew that the students needed to be engaged in learning the standards already set forth, improving their Spanish (and English) language skills, and working on all the other social and emotional pieces to being a third grade student. My colleagues, administration, advisory committee, and friends and family were great supports along the way.

I have always enjoyed learning new things, which is probably part of the reason I am a teacher, but along the way of my research journey I discovered some new things about myself. First, I found that I really enjoy research and synthesizing various research points together to make a cohesive narrative. The literature review was initially the most daunting part of this process, but in the end was probably one of the most enjoyable parts for me. A number of times throughout the process I said, “If I wasn’t in teaching, I would probably have some sort of a career in research.” Second, I reaffirmed my love of writing throughout this project. It may take me a couple minutes to get into it, but I love writing and this research study has been a wonderful affirmation of that love of writing. And third, perhaps most importantly, I learned that my voice and the voices of other

immersion educators, as well as our students' voices, are what drive the continued success of immersion education. Initially in immersion education, I passively accepted research put forth in conferences and workshops and did my best to use what I could. This project has taught me that not only do I need to continue trying new things and learning, but I too must include my voice and experiences in the collective pool of immersion knowledge.

Rationale and Significance of My Research

In addition to all of the personal significance and things I have come to learn about myself, this project adds significant information to a burgeoning field and has the potential to inspire more research in the future. Before I could begin my own research I was charged with first analyzing and interpreting the research out there on immersion education, form and function language activities, transfer, and the way elementary students learn to write. Through my research I learned that the tenets of my study have been investigated in various way, but the whole of my study is fairly new and innovative for immersion education.

Connection to the literature review and analysis. As I reflect on this research project as a whole, I would like to take a moment to make some connections between my review of the literature and my own research study.

One of the first overarching trends I noticed was a call to action for more research on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and immersion teaching. Articles new and old from Gibbons' (2010) to Lyster's (1998) called for more research in order to better understand students' language acquisition processes and pedagogical improvements for the language teacher. From there the need to improve students' writing was very apparent. Perhaps the

most startling statistic was Truckenmiller's (2014) finding that nearly three-quarters of fourth-grade and twelfth-grade students were below proficiency standards in writing (p. 532). To this same token Velasco and Garcia (2014) reported that bilingual writers simply write different than their monolingual peers (p. 10). These ideas all resonated with me in my years as an immersion educator. Subjectively I felt like my students struggled the most with written and oral language tasks in Spanish.

At that point in the research the need for improvement for immersion students' writing was clear and evident and the question turned to what to do about it. Rodger (2006) found that immersion students tended to focus more on meaning (function) than syntax (form). Whereas Day and Shapson (2001) argued one couldn't successfully have a focus on form or function without the other because it would be ineffective and not engage students in learning. Ultimately my own experiences echoed the most with Day and Shapson; boring grammar exercises on worksheets or lectures are not helpful, nor engaging for students.

Peregoy and Boyle (2013) and Brisk (2012) reminded me of the important role oral language practice and peer-to-peer interaction have in all learning, but especially for engaging immersion students in the language of instruction. This ultimately led me to the reciprocal teaching idea where students worked in pairs to talk about their reading summaries and opinions. It included both form and functional approaches while engaging the students in Spanish dialogue.

By combining many of the ideas argued above, I believe my research results expand the knowledge about form and function activities and the opportunity for cross-curricular literacy transfer in the immersion classroom. Through cooperative dialogue around form and function focused language activities, students improved 22 percentage points on

subject-verb agreement with preterit (past) tense verbs during just the six weeks of this research study.

However, in the three other verb forms analyzed, but not the main focuses of this study, there were inconsistencies in growth based on race. In the post writing analysis White students scored higher percentages of accuracy than African American and Hispanic students with present tense verbs. This is a clear area for more research, analysis, and possible methodology changes.

In my review of the literature available there were very few reports done on transfer across curricular areas of study. Transfer across languages is well documented and very thoroughly researched in comparison to cross-curricular transfer. The studies done by Meyer and Schendel (2014) and Zwiers (2006) were just two of a small handful of studies purporting cross-curricular transfer was a viable tool to rely on in the classroom. The methods and results of this study help amplify that sampling of research studies. The form and functional oral language work done with partnerships in reading transferred cross-curricularly to students' writing. It's a concept I think we assume or hope is happening often as educators, but my results help prove that it can in fact occur.

In the end it was very comforting to know that my research supported many of the same themes and patterns I uncovered in my review of the literature. Research has value either way, but I am much happier knowing that I was able to expand upon ideas put forth in the immersion literature in a successful way in my own Spanish immersion classroom.

Significance to education and immersion education communities. Whether we like it or not, part of being a good immersion educator is advocating for immersion education. It takes research like this and the many that have come before it to reveal the value in

immersion education and continuously improve this great education model. My study helps augment the valuable knowledge and research around immersion education: form and function focused activities during reading can increase students' subject-verb agreement accuracy with past tense preterit verbs in Spanish writing.

Research strongly argues that immersion education is quite different from mainstream monolingual classrooms (Gibbons, 2010; Lyster, 1998; Velasco & Garcia, 2014). Therefore it requires specialized research to help understand the unique context and validity of applying well-established educational theories. I hope to share my research with as wide of an audience as possible to share my findings and learn from others who have tried similar or different methods.

I plan to share these results with my building colleagues and other district immersion teachers so that they too may see the benefits of language scaffolds (frames), reciprocal teaching during literacy, and focuses on form and function can have in the classroom. In addition, I would like to publish these results and present them at conferences to open a wider dialogue to the benefits of engaging immersion students in dialogue and motivating them to learn the necessary grammar components of their language of instruction.

Future Research

Looking ahead at possible research opportunities I think I would like to further study form and functional language activities and ways to engage students in the metacognitive aspects of second language acquisition. It would be helpful for future research to replicate this study on a larger scale (perhaps a whole grade level or multiple classrooms in various schools). This would provide a larger sample for the data analysis and further ensure this study's reliability.

There were also some surprises in this study that would be interesting to research in more depth. In relation to a focus on form for the Spanish language, my students struggled throughout the study with accent marks. Perhaps this is just a developmental milestone of learners at this age. It could also be that there are similar methods to this study that call students' attention to the linguistic form of accentuation and through communicative practice students could improve on the use of accents. The other surprising outcome was how much students improved in the use of the present tense subjunctive form. It's a form I use when speaking with my students, but it was not a part of the language scaffolds implemented in this research and yet it increased. For me this highlights the importance of functional language activities improving the complexity of language (Mohan & Beckett, 2003). The subjunctive tense is a complex verb form for many Spanish language learners, but essential to various functional language contexts. It would be important to further study how form and function focused language activities promote overall language growth and are not just necessarily focused on one form or tense, but across various aspects of a language – a more functional focused approach.

Perhaps most meaningful to me in my research is the continuation amongst immersion and non-immersion educators to talk about the importance of scaffolded language instruction for our learners. Day and Shapson (2001) purport that immersion programs must begin to recognize the need for systematic long-term planning (as it relates to grammatical instruction) for long-term student success (p.77). I couldn't agree more. For these changes to truly be successful I think we must see change pre-kindergarten through college level courses in the way we approach teaching language, especially grammatical form concepts in literacy.

Summary

Over a year ago, I set out to answer my research question: how does implementing (Spanish) form and function focused language activities during independent reading time affect subject-verb agreement and opinion formation in third grade students' writing? And I now feel strongly that form and function focused language activities promote cross-curricularly transfer and can improve students' subject-verb agreement in writing. However, I also recognize the complexity of this topic and that my study was performed with a rather small sample size.

It has been a demanding, extended, and very rewarding research experience. I have transformed both personally and professionally throughout this process. My love of learning and research has deepened and I am beginning to find my voice in the field of immersion education.

Ultimately, there is always more research to be done and it's my hope that my research study inspires someone to change their practices, even if just slightly, or to conduct their own research. Expanding our knowledge of effective immersion education techniques and practices is how we best teach and engage the most important part of this education equation: our students.

APPENDIX A

Sample Letters of Informed Consent

December 7, 2015

Dear Parent or Guardian,

I am your child's third grade teacher and a graduate student working on an advanced degree in education at [REDACTED]. As part of my graduate work, I plan to conduct research in our classroom for approximately 5 weeks in December and January. The purpose of this letter is to ask your permission for your child to take part in my research. This research is public scholarship. The abstract and final capstone will be cataloged in [REDACTED], a searchable electronic repository and it may be published or used in other ways.

I want to study the effects of form and function focused oral language activities on students' Spanish writing – subject verb agreement. Form and function focused means that the language activities will be scaffolded for students to learn specific grammatical and language concepts, in an effort to increase the complexity of their Spanish language use. The plan for this research is to introduce *Spanish Language Cards* to partners in reading groups in December and January. Student pairs will use the Spanish language cards during independent reading time to practice using correct subject verb conjugations for past tense verbs and more complex vocabulary and phrases related to book reviews and opinions. I will assess and analyze students' writing prior to and after the study. I will also observe students' interactions and language use during the study. Lastly, I plan to collect student reflections about their own language use and this activity four to six times throughout the study.

There is little to no risk for your child to participate. All results will be confidential and anonymous. I will not record information about individual students, such as their names, nor report identifying information or characteristics in the capstone. Participation is voluntary and you may decide at any time and without negative consequences that information about your child not be included in the capstone.

I have received approval for my study from [REDACTED]. The capstone will be cataloged in [REDACTED], a searchable electronic repository. My results might also be included in an article for publication in a professional journal or in a report at a professional conference. In all cases, your child's identity and participation in this study will be confidential.

If you agree that your child may participate, keep this page. Fill out the duplicate agreement to participate on page two and return to me by mail or return the electronic form in an email to me by no later than Monday, December 14, 2015. Page three is a duplicate agreement for you to keep. If you have any questions, please email or call me at school.

Sincerely,

Sr. Brian Rice



Informed Consent for Child to Participate in Graduate Research
Return this portion to Brian Rice (Señor Rice)

I have received your letter about the study you plan to conduct in which you will be assessing students' writing, observing their language use and interactions, and collecting six reflections about the use of *Spanish Language Cards* during independent reading work-time. I understand there is little to no risk involved for my child, that his/her confidentiality will be protected, and that I may withdraw or my child may withdraw from the project at any time.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Researcher Copy
Please return this portion to Brian Rice (Señor Rice)

Informed Consent for Child to Participate in Graduate Research
Keep this full page for your records.

I have received your letter about the study you plan to conduct in which you will be assessing students' writing, observing their language use and interactions, and collecting six reflections about the use of *Spanish Language Cards* during independent reading work-time. I understand there is little to no risk involved for my child, that his/her confidentiality will be protected, and that I may withdraw or my child may withdraw from the project at any time.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Participant Copy
Keep this full page for your records.

7 de diciembre 2015

Estimados Padres y/o Tutores:

Soy el maestro de tercer grado de su hijo y estoy haciendo mi post-grado en educación en la Universidad [REDACTED]. Como parte de mi trabajo de post-grado, planeo realizar una investigación en mi clase, la cuál durará aproximadamente 5 semanas durante los meses de diciembre y enero. El objetivo de esta carta es para solicitar su permiso para que su hijo pueda participar en mi investigación. Esta investigación es una beca pública. El resumen y la tesis final estará archivada en la [REDACTED], la cuál podrá ser encontrada electrónicamente y podría ser publicada o usada de otra forma.

Mi propósito es estudiar como la forma y la función en el lenguaje oral afecta e influye las actividades de los estudiantes en la escritura española – por ejemplo la concordancia sustantivo-verbo. El enfoque de la forma y la función significa que las actividades lingüísticas serán introducidas en etapas apropiadas, en las cuales los estudiantes aprenderán conceptos gramaticales y lingüísticos, con el objetivo de incrementar la complejidad del uso del español. Durante esta investigación se incorporará *Spanish Language Cards* durante los grupos de lectura en los meses de diciembre y enero. Los grupos de estudiantes usarán estas tarjetas durante su lectura independiente y así practicarán el uso correcto de la concordancia sujeto-verbo usando el pretérito y con un vocabulario más complejo, para escribir la reseña de libros. Analizaré la escritura de los estudiantes antes de comenzar el estudio y después del estudio. También observaré las interacciones orales del lenguaje usado durante este periodo. Por último usaré las reflexiones de los estudiantes sobre su propio desarrollo del lenguaje de cuatro a seis veces durante este periodo.

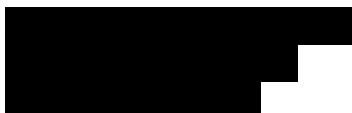
Hay un riesgo mínimo en la participación de su hijo. Todos los resultados serán confidenciales y anónimos. No guardaré datos sobre estudiantes específicos, como sus nombres, ni reportaré información puntual o características de los mismos en la tesis final. La participación es voluntaria y usted puede decidir en cualquier momento, y sin consecuencias negativas, que la información de su hijo no sea incluida en la tesis final.

He recibido la aprobación de mi investigación del [REDACTED]. La tesis estará archivada en la [REDACTED] la cuál podrá ser encontrada electrónicamente. Mis resultados pueden ser incluidos en un artículo de una revista profesional o en una conferencia profesional. En todos esos casos, la identidad del estudiante y su participación en el estudio será totalmente confidencial.

Si usted acepta que su hijo participe en este estudio, por favor conserve esta carta. Complete el duplicado del acuerdo para participar en la investigación de la página dos y devuélvame lo con su hijo o por correo electrónico antes del 14 de diciembre 2015. En la página tres hay un duplicado del acuerdo para que usted lo guarde. Si usted tiene alguna pregunta, por favor llámeme o mándeme un correo electrónico.

Sinceramente,

Sr. Brian Rice

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.A black rectangular redaction box covering a line of text.

Consentimiento Para la Participación de su hijo en la investigación de post-grado

Devuelva este formulario al Sr. Rice

He recibido su carta para la investigación/estudio que usted planea realizar en la clase, en la cuál usted estará evaluando la escritura de los estudiantes. En este estudio se analizará el uso del lenguaje y sus intenciones, y además se incluirá seis reflexiones sobre el uso de las Spanish Language Cards durante el tiempo de lectura independiente. Entiendo que puede haber un riesgo mínimo para mi hijo; que su confidencialidad será protegida y que puedo decidir no participar en la investigación en cualquier momento.

Firma del padre y/o tutor

Fecha

Copia para el investigador

Por favor devuelva este formulario a Brian Rice (Sr. Rice)

Consentimiento Para la Participación de su hijo en la investigación de post-grado

Guarde este formulario para sus récords.

He recibido su carta para la investigación/estudio que usted planea realizar en la clase, en la cuál usted estará evaluando la escritura de los estudiantes. En este estudio se analizará el uso del lenguaje y sus intenciones, y además se incluirá seis reflexiones sobre el uso de las Spanish Language Cards durante el tiempo de lectura independiente. Entiendo que puede haber un riesgo mínimo para mi hijo; que su confidencialidad será protegida y que puedo decidir no participar en la investigación en cualquier momento.

Firma del padre y/o tutor

Fecha

Copia para los participantes/padres

Guarde este formulario para sus récords.

APPENDIX B

Student Spanish Language Cards

Tarjeta de Lenguaje *Resúmenes*

Nombre: _____

Fecha: _____

Maestro

1. Antes de leer

Lee la página, por favor.

A ti te toca leer.

Léelo, por favor.

¿Lo puedes leer ahora, por favor?

¿Podrías leer por favor?

Te pido que leas, por favor.

2. Durante leer

Leíste muy bien.

Estupendo.

Fabuloso.

Fenomenal.

Maravilloso.

Formidable.

Me encantó como leíste.

Sensacional.

Bien hecho.

Lo hiciste muy bien.

Impresionante

3. Después de leer

Resúmen

Dime lo que pasó en esta parte.

En orden cronológico cuéntame lo que pasó.

¿Me lo resúmes, por favor?

¿Podrías resumir esta parte del cuento por favor?

Quiero que me digas lo que pasó en orden cronológico.

Estudiante

1. Antes de leer

Por su puesto.

Claro.

Sí, leo.

Con mucho gusto.

Claro que sí.

Lo leo ahorita.

2. Durante leer

Gracias.

Muchísimas gracias.

Mil gracias.

Te lo agradezco.

Muy amable.

Gracias por el complemento.

3. Después de leer

Resumen

Sí, te lo cuento...

En orden cronológico...

En resúmen...

Lo que pasó...

***Primero, Después, Luego,
Más Tarde, Al final***

_____ ¿Quién?

_____ ¿Qué hizo?

_____ ¿Cómo, dónde,
por qué?

Tarjeta de Lenguaje *Opiniones*

Nombre: _____

Fecha: _____

Maestro

1. Antes de leer

Ahora tu lees, por favor

Lee la página, por favor.

Léelo, por favor.

Léelo para ver que opinas.

¿Podrías leer por favor?

Te pido que leas, por favor.

2. Durante leer

Leíste muy bien.

Que chévere .

Fabuloso.

Que padre.

Increíble.

Formidable.

Me encantó como leíste.

Sensacional.

Bien hecho.

Lo hiciste muy bien.

Impresionante.

3. Después de leer

Opinión

¿Qué opinas de esta parte?

¿Tú, que crees?

¿Después de haber leído esta parte, qué te parece?

¿Qué piensas de esa parte?

Estudiante

1. Antes de leer

Sí, a mi me toca leer.

Por su puesto.

Sí, lo leo.

A ver que opino leyendo esta parte.

Claro que sí.

Lo leo ahorita.

2. Durante leer

Gracias.

Muchísimas gracias.

Mil gracias.

Te lo agradezco.

Muy amable.

Gracias por el complemento.

3. Después de leer

Opinión

En mi opinión...

Creo que...

Me parece...

Pienso que...

Razonamiento

Creo eso porque...

Pienso eso porque...

La razón la que creo/pienso eso es que...

Tarjeta de Lenguaje *Opiniones y Resúmenes*

Nombre: _____ Fecha: _____

Maestro

1. Antes de leer	2. Durante leer	3. Después de leer <u>Resúmen</u>
Lee la página, por favor.	Leíste muy bien.	Dime lo que pasó en esta parte.
A ti te toca leer.	Estupendo.	En orden cronológico cuéntame lo que pasó.
Léelo, por favor.	Fabuloso.	¿Me lo resúmes, por favor?
¿Lo puedes leer ahora, por favor?	Fenomenal.	¿Podrías resumir esta parte del cuento por favor?
¿Podrías leer por favor?	Maravilloso.	Quiero que me digas lo que pasó en orden cronológico.
Te pido que leas, por favor.	Formidable.	<u>Opinión</u>
	Me encantó como leíste.	¿Qué opinas de esta parte?
	Sensacional.	¿Tú, que crees?
	Bien hecho.	¿Después de haber leído esta parte, qué te parece?
	Lo hiciste muy bien.	¿Qué piensas de esa parte?
	Impresionante	

Estudiante

1. Antes de leer	2. Durante leer	3. Después de leer <u>Resumen</u>
Por su puesto.	Gracias.	Sí, te lo cuento...
Claro.	Muchísimas gracias.	En orden cronológico...
Sí, leo.	Mil gracias.	En resúmen...
Con mucho gusto.	Te lo agradezco.	Lo que pasó...
Claro que sí.	Muy amable.	<i>Primero, Después, Luego, Más Tarde, Al final</i>
Lo leo ahorita.	Gracias por el complemento.	<u>Opinión</u>
		En mi opinión...
		Creo que...
		Me parece...
		Pienso que...
		<u>Razonamiento</u>
		Creo eso porque...
		Pienso eso porque
		La razón la que creo/pienso eso es que...

APPENDIX C

Sample Student Daily Reflection

Tarjeta de Lenguaje (Versión 1)
Reflexiones

Nombre: _____

Fecha: _____

1. ¿Cómo ha mejorado tu español con el uso de esta tarjeta y estas frases?

¿Qué necesitas mejorar todavía?

2. Hazme un breve resúmen de tu día, hasta este momento.

3. Llena los espacios con el verbo correcto debajo de la raya

- a. Ayer, yo _____ a la tienda para comprar zapatos.
(fui / fue)
- b. Hace 2 semanas, mi mamá y mi papá me _____ una bicicleta.
(compró / compraron)
- c. El año pasado Raúl se _____ en el hielo.
(caí / cayó)
- d. Después de la fiesta el martes pasado, nosotros _____ mucho pastel.
(comió / comimos / comieron)
- e. ¿Luego, tu _____ la puerta, no?
(abrió / abriste)

*¿Algo más para contarme? Escríbelo aquí. ☺

Tarjeta de Lenguaje (Versión 2)
Reflexiones

Nombre: _____

Fecha: _____

1. ¿Cómo ha mejorado tu español con el uso de esta tarjeta y estas frases?

¿Qué necesitas mejorar todavía?

2. Hazme un breve resúmen de tu día, hasta este momento.

3. Llena los espacios con el verbo correcto debajo de la raya

- a. Ayer, nosotros _____ al parque.
(fueron / fuimos)
- b. Hace un mes, mi tío José me _____ un Xbox.
(compró / compraron)
- c. La semana pasada yo _____ en el autobús.
(dormí / durmió)
- d. Después de escuela el martes pasado, ellos _____ muchas galletas.
(comió / comimos / comieron)
- e. ¿Después, tu _____ la puerta, no?
(cerró / cerraste)

*¿Algo más para contarme? Escríbelo aquí. ☺

Tarjeta de Lenguaje (Versión 3)
Reflexiones

Nombre: _____

Fecha: _____

1. ¿Cómo ha mejorado tu español con el uso de esta tarjeta y estas frases?

¿Qué necesitas mejorar todavía?

2. Hazme un breve resumen de tu día, hasta este momento.

3. Llena los espacios con el verbo correcto debajo de la raya

- a. Ayer, yo _____ al zoológico.
(fue / fui)
- b. Hace dos semanas, mis abuelos _____ a mi casa .
(vino / vinieron)
- c. La semana pasada él _____ una carta a Sr. Rice.
(escribimos / escribió / escribí)
- d. Después de escuela el jueves pasado, Sra. Medina _____ a Sra. Ryan.
(llamé / llamó)
- e. ¿Después, tu _____ a la clase, no?
(regresaste / regresó)

*¿Algo más para contarme? Escríbelo aquí. ☺

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