A CASE STUDY OF HISPANIC MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN AN
ESL CLASSROOM: DISCOURSES IN ACADEMIC READING INSTRUCTION

by

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ABSTRACT

HORACE ANDREWS. A case study of Hispanic middle school students in an ESL
classroom: Discourses in academic reading instruction.
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This case study examined student teacher interaction that took place in one ESL middle school classroom with 29 Latino/a students learning to read in English. Observations in classrooms and interviews with teachers were conducted over a ten month period, one complete school year. Students were also tested in their reading comprehension in Spanish at the beginning of the school year. These results were compared with results on English entrance exams and with the results on English reading tests at the end of the school year. The important and main themes were those of the ESL teachers' preparation of the students in reading and writing throughout the school year for the spring term project and a juried poster presentation, and the students' self-reflection contained in responses to teacher initiated prompts. The principal artifact mediating learning was the interactive computer software programs provided by the school. The qualitative results suggest that students' strong identification with family and the immigrant circumstances may provide discourse dissonances that interfere with motivation and the development of self-directed learning. The results of testing showed that a student's year-end results in English reading were predicted by the beginning level of English reading skills. A lesser, but still significant finding, was that L1 Spanish reading performance was a predictor of L2 English reading performance.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Larger Problem and the Research Problem

The academic achievement gap between linguistic minority groups and other students is a persistent problem for the American public school system. (Thernstrom and Thernstrom, 2003). The pattern of underachievement and a high school dropout rate for Hispanic/Latino students among immigrant groups is particularly pronounced (Wong Fillmore & Meyer, 1992). In 2003, the National Center for Education Statistics listed 79% of English Language Learners as coming from Spanish-speaking homes. Of the school-aged English Language Learner (ELL) population, 73% come from Spanish language backgrounds (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002), and their test results in reading are of particular concern as literacy skills are the building blocks for academic achievement. The gap between the test scores of Hispanic/Latino students and white students is a well-documented phenomenon, existing throughout grades K-12 in both reading and mathematics (National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2003). According to the NCES (2000), 44% of foreign-born Hispanics fail to complete high school. A much lower percentage of those born here, 15%, fail to complete high school. Hispanics lag behind their fellow white and Asian American students in reading and math (Braswell, Daane, & Gregg, 2003; NCES, 1992,2007). Using average scale scores from The National Assessment of Educational Progress, known colloquially as "the nation's report card," reports that the gap in reading and math is 25-27 points. Reviewing similar results from 1992, the comparable substantial gap is 26 points, indicating that the gap has not closed with time. According to the report, this is true in both the fourth and eighth grades.

The difficulty in the acquisition of academic English, the English needed for testing, appears to be a principal cause for the deficit (August & Hakuta, 2005; August & Shanahan, 2006; Bielenberg & Wong Fillmore, 2004; Cummins, 1979, 1986; Wong Fillmore & Meyer, 1992)

The mismatch between the needs of the ELL (English Language Learners) population and the number of qualified ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers is yet another cause. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2002), fewer than 13% of teachers nationwide have the professional qualifications necessary to teach LEP (Limited English Proficiency) students, and therefore, closing the reading gap before the end of middle school is a significant problem. It becomes critical when one realizes that the support systems, such as ESL programs in middle school and content courses with tailored instruction to aid LEP students, are marginally available in high school where content courses are the central focus (Thomas & Collier, 2002). If the larger problem is the high dropout rate for Hispanic students at the high school level, learning to read academic English in middle school has been identified by one educator as the single most important shortcoming, which leads to this result (Valdez, 2001).

This study aims to create one picture of an ESL classroom, and, drawing from that detail, to present some preliminary conclusions on where teachers should be going with classroom instruction. What ESL teachers actually do to help LEP students learn is a central focus in this study; how the program of study is organized; how the students respond , and the artifacts that are employed; the role culture plays; the role that content courses play. This is a mixed methods case study of an explanatory nature (Creswell, 2003; Goldenberg, Gallimore & Reese, 2005; Marriam, 1988; Stake, 2000). Following

the classroom practices and processes in one ESL classroom in one middle school during a full school year is this case. A mixed methods study, such as this, combines both qualitative and quantitative aspects of the particular case, but in this study the qualitative aspect takes priority over the quantitative. The main qualitative research tools are classroom observations and teacher interviews. Testing for native language reading skills gives a more complete picture of the Latino/a student than observations alone (Goldenberg, Gallimore & Reese, 2005). The qualitative portion creates a framework into which the quantitative portion fits, not so much as a piece in a puzzle, but as an addition of an associated dimension. As a researcher I am hoping for a convergence of the findings students' literacy experiences on the one hand and their literacy development on the other. The purpose of this study is to suggest avenues to pursue to improve the teaching of Hispanic LEP students who speak Spanish as their native language. Questions involve looking for the artifacts that mediate learning and discourses in and out of the classroom, exploring the role of Spanish, and searching for a pedagogical process underlying instruction.

The topic and substance of this dissertation evolved from my own journey from languages and linguistics training through my graduate education. When I first enrolled in this graduate program in education, the introductory course required students to complete an independent research project. I chose to examine Spanish use in the ESL classroom, observing native Spanish-speaking teachers and how they worked to find a balance between the demands of teaching English and using their language skills to support the students. In 2005-06, I conducted classroom observations of ESL instructors' middle school classrooms in a large metropolitan school district that was conducting a

pilot project preceding the introduction of SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol), a popular program for teaching language through content. These observations were part of an independent research project for my PhD in Curriculum and Instruction at UNC Charlotte. During one session, I happened to see a background folder on one of the new Latino students. The small amount of information and the modest amount of detail surprised me. The teacher informed me that this was customary. Most students arrive in class without much evidence of formal education in their native country and seldom a transcript. Besides name, age country of origin and date of entry into the school system, only the scores on the state-mandated English language tests indicated anything about level of education and literacy competence which might provide some clue as to appropriate instruction.

I asked an educator who is a teacher by training and a school principal whether it was feasible to test reading in Spanish at the same time students were being tested in English. She indicated that if you test in Spanish, then you would have to test in French, Vietnamese, Arabic, Hmong, and so forth. The cost and the time burden on the school system would just be too great. You need to show that testing affects outcomes in some significant way, she added. The quantitative segment of this dissertation is the outcome of that conversation. A way to do this was to test middle school Hispanic/Latino students who are enrolled in ESL (English as a Second Language) at the beginning of the school year in Spanish with a test designed to measure their ability to read in their native language. I constructed my own tests out of model tests given similar school-age students in Guadalajara Mexico where I was studying Spanish language and education. I believed these would conform better to tests students might have had in their country of origin,

than the one administered by a nationally recognized Spanish language test in the United States, the Woodcock-Muñoz test. Measuring their performance on both these tests had the potential to produce results with some cultural significance should the Guadalajara tests measure up to the professional one. At the end of the school year, these results would be compared against results in English language tests to determine whether those that do well in Spanish reading later do well in English reading.

There exists a gap in the qualitative and qualitative studies on LEP children's performance in school as noted in both the 2006 report of the National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children, "Developing Literacy in Second language Learners," and in the earlier Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education National Research Council report of 1997, "Improving Schooling for Language-Minority Children." The nature of the gap, according to the panel of experts involved, lies in that the quantitative studies tell little about the nature of the children in the studies, while the qualitative studies omit outcomes, that is, how students did on the tests.

Literacy for ELLs is complex (Bialystock & Herman, 1999; Gonzales, 1994; Snow et al., 1998). Elements that constitute the framework of this complexity include sociocultural, linguistic, and classroom instruction. One needs only to consider the difficulty in simultaneously learning to read, write and speak a foreign language, particularly one where the sounds of the language do not correspond to the words on the page, while absorbing a new culture, to appreciate that this is a daunting task. The research literature shows too that reading success is limited by second language vocabulary development (Garcia & Jensen, 2007;Gottardo, 2002; Proctor et al., 2005). Vocabulary building depends, in turn, on reading. While Cummins' (1979, 1984) theories

of a common underlying proficiency between an L1 (the first language) and the

acquisition of an L2 (the second language) are supported by research (Jimenez et al.,

1996; Royler & Carlo, 1991; Thomas and Collier, 2002), L1 literacy cannot be presumed.

Many Hispanic students come to school with limited L1 reading ability. Therefore,

Spanish cannot be assumed to be available to bridge the vocabulary gap in English. In

addition, Cook (2008) points out that L2 students lack the schemas, or cultural

knowledge, which is part of the background knowledge needed for academic reading.

The applicability to this study of Cummins' (1979, 2004) well-known and widely-

accepted distinction between BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills) what one

associates with conversational communication, and CALP (Cognitive Academic

Language Proficiency), those skills such as reading and writing, which take much longer

to develop, lie in understanding that the rather comfortable, everyday fluency that

Latino/a students display in conversational English often masks their rudimentary skills

in reading and writing.

For a variety of reasons, researchers are reluctant to test middle school children

for the impact of the L1 reading skill level on the skills in reading in English (Riches and

Genesee, 2006). First, as these children are young (ages 11-13 in the majority of cases), it

is argued that their cognitive abilities are not yet sufficiently developed to draw any

meaningful conclusions from their test performance (Proctor et al., 2005). Secondly,

these children are, for the most part, newly arrived in the United States and therefore

subject to a variety of cultural and motivational pressures, as well as the unfamiliarity

with English and the American school system, that make them unlikely subjects for

testing. When middle school children have been tested, it is usually as part of a

longitudinal study beginning in elementary school. The problem with testing only students engaged in bilingual programs to measure the efficacy of bilingual education, is that of confusing the results coming out of bilingual instruction, which are always superior, where a control group of English-only is measured against the bilingual group. The real test of how they are doing is to test them against their monolingual peers (August, Calderon & Carlo, 2002;Nakamoto, Lindsey & Manis, 2007).

Confounding the L1 and the L2 influences is another risk (Bernhardt & Kamil, 1995). If students are studying two languages, the knowledge of both languages is growing apace. We must then ask the question, what is driving the success in the L2? Is it L1 knowledge or the growth of L2 knowledge? In addition, it is assumed that at the school-entry point, knowledge of English is essentially non-existent. One cannot assume this without testing. As researchers have noted, progress in English due to instruction may be a greater contributor to success on English language reading tests than the skills transferred from Spanish (Dressler & Kamil, 2006). Support is mixed for Cummins' interdependence theory (1979, 1991), which contends that a student's level of L2 competence is, to a major degree, a function of his L1 ability. We cannot control for native ability in language, or for motivation to learn, but by testing early in middle school, and in the absence of a bilingual program of instruction, we can control for some of these confounding educational variables since our goal is to isolate the L1 effect, in this instance, in Spanish. An additional confounding variable is the teacher. Many of these students are the children of immigrants or refugees and have had little or no exposure to the American public school system.

The Spanish-speaking teacher in the ESL classroom can soon ascertain the level of native language literacy, as well as English knowledge that may not have been revealed in testing due to nervousness and confusion. One experienced Latina remarked that it takes her no more than a couple of minutes to figure out where the students rank in both languages. The monolingual ESL teacher has more difficulty. Given the minimal amount of information available on students, the majority of the teachers who are monolingual have trouble early on, identifying the language level at which their instruction reaches students. I have conducted observations in classrooms where the instructors were non-Spanish speakers and in classrooms with native Spanish instructors. Even in the same school system, with the same textbook and with the same audio and visual teaching tools, the instructor's language competency makes a difference in the approach to something as basic as the lesson plan. During this study, monolingual ESL teachers, when faced with student difficulties in comprehension, either chose to continue with the scripted lesson regardless, or to abandon it altogether for another pedagogical tool, such as computer-generated word identification program. Spanish-speaking ESL teachers tended to introduce modifications and supplements to the lesson plan, particularly the use of the Spanish-English dictionary and comparisons with Spanish using cognates to build vocabulary, yet maintained continuity in the pattern of instruction. They often draw from as many as three books at a time, two lesson planners and a grammar book, to make a particular point. These teachers focus on English grammar and vocabulary building as the more important segments of lesson content. There is also the risk that not enough content instruction is taking place. Wong-Fillmore (1991) states that these two processes, the linguistic and the cognitive, together with

active student participation in the social processes of the classroom, represent the three components of successful instruction in a target language. Meaning is constructed from print by drawing on prior language, as well as from established cognitive routines.

Successful second language teachers do not have to be fluent in both the native language and the target language. It may be that one of the most successful ESL professionals in the school does not speak or read Spanish, even though almost 100% of her class has Spanish as an L1. Mastery of key instruction strategies, such as differentiated instruction, scaffolding instruction, and sheltered instruction, to take into account the different language skill levels in the classroom, will produce positive outcomes .Group learning sessions that are clearly task-oriented and well-supervised so that they do not devolve into a Spanish chat room, will produce positive results as well. Too much Spanish in the classroom may retard the development of English language skills, which is a potential risk in classrooms of native Spanish-speaking teachers (Wong Fillmore & Meyer, 1992). On the other hand, the bilingual teacher understands cultural patterns. This is a distinct advantage in getting the attention of the students and indispensible for contacting parents and guardians.

The Problem of Language and Learning to Read.

Spanish in the classroom: Spanish in the classroom is a sensitive topic. Resistance to bilingual education is strong. There are many reasons for this negative attitude toward Spanish and other languages other than English in the classroom. The role of our educational system is to provide an English-language education, particularly to those who do not know it, and as fast as possible (Bennett, 1999). Bilingual education has become politicized and confused with attitudes aimed at promoting cultural diversity, and has

failed to deliver its promise of better test scores (Ravitch, 1992). These positions are not uncontested among the proponents of bilingual education (Freeman & Freeman, 2007; Riches & Genesee, 2006; Thomas and Collier, 2002). Others argue that the failure of minority language students is not simply an academic or school matter, but carries deep social and societal implications. They believe that use of Spanish in the classroom is a positive force for Hispanic students whose home language is Spanish and that school and curriculum reform must include the student's home cultural experience (Cummins, 1986; Estrada, Gómez & Ruiz-Escalante, 2009; Wong Fillmore & Meyer, 1992).

There are less-reasoned, but very practical objections to Spanish in the classroom. It is estimated that two-thirds of the limited-English-speaking students are not receiving the language assistance needed to succeed (Valdes, 2001). An increasing number of children are being placed in mainstream English classrooms before they are ready and with marginal ESL support. This compounds the challenge for immigrant children as they attempt to fit into a new society. It is not difficult to find the reasons for these failings. First, the unprecedented influx of Latino/ Hispanic students into classrooms throughout the country is placing a real strain on the public school system (Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). Second, few teachers are fluent in Spanish, including most of the ESL teachers, who are charged with the duty of instructing Hispanic children in English. Third, in the highly exacting world of standardized testing, there is little consensus on how much English is enough to enable children to participate in courses taught in English (Solorzano, 2008). Even pro-bilingual education professionals question why these children in both bilingual and monolingual classrooms

are not learning "the language they need for the test," to use the phrasefrom the title of a recent article by Bielenburg and Wong-Filmore (Bielenburg & Wong Fillmore, 2004).

The story of bilingual education in American classrooms over the past 40 years is one of disappointment and frustration. The word, "bilingual," in its ordinary sense, is neutral in import. It means, simply, fluency in two languages. In the context of the American educational system, it has come to mean instruction in standard school subject matter in the native language, predominantly Spanish, for a number of years in the belief that once basic concepts are firmly rooted, the transition to English language proficiency will be easier and more complete. In its origins, the bilingual phenomena was mainly a California model as a supplement to ESL instruction (Faltis, 1997). Bilingual education began in earnest with the Supreme Court decision in *Lau v. Nichols* in 1974. The Court ruled against the San Francisco school system for failing to provide English language classes for eighteen hundred non-English speaking Chinese students, and directed the schools to prepare special language programs for non-English speaking children. The so-styled "Lau remedies" were designed and put into place in 1975 by a task force of educators. The Lau commission decided that non-English speaking students should receive education in the primary grades in their native language and culture. This determination was in line with the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 (Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary education Act) as amended in 1974. Three years after the amended Title VII went into effect, the results of a four-year study commissioned by the Department of Education were presented to Congress. The study sampled 286 Spanish/English classrooms to test whether bilingual programs were helping with English language skills and competence in other classroom skills. Both in language and content

the study found that the children tested poorly (Ravitch, 1983). Another Title VII amendment was passed, this time mandating more supervision. Yet, the program continued to be viewed by its opponents as advancing cultural separation while not delivering the goods in English. "Too often the main point of bilingual education turns out to be preserving a child's original language and culture, rather than helping her adapt to new ones" (Bennett, Finn, & Cribb, 1999, 625). Yet by 1980, thirteen states had mandated bilingual education. As bilingual education moved forward, it contained a mixture of cultural identity goals and goals of linguistic competence that created confusion and resentment, due to the impression that learning English was not of primary importance (Wong Fillmore & Meyer, 1999). Proposition 227 put an end to bilingual education in California in 1998. Two other states have followed suit, Arizona in 2000 and Massachusetts in 2002. California, the cradle of Lau, now has a transitional bilingual, or early-exit bilingual system where the minority language is used alongside of intensive English for slightly over a year, with transition to mainstream classes thereafter.

In perhaps the largest nationwide longitudinal research study, Thomas and Collier (2002) tracked ELL performance from kindergarten through eleventh grade. They examined program choices between all-English and bilingual. Those students that received an early-on and sustained quality bilingual program were able to substantially close the achievement gap. However, these programs were few. Bilingual programs that were limited or early-English only programs did not close the gap.

Presently, there are two competing theories of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) that relate to the issue of transfer from the L1 to the L2. One has been termed, by Butler and Hakuta (2004), the Cognitive and Functionalist school of SLA. It is also

referred to as the Cognitive and Rationalist school (Greeno, Collins, & Resnick, 1996) or the progressive school (Thorne,2005 and Gibbons, 2006). This school holds that abstract mental representations in the form of schema invariably cause relationships to evolve across cultures. While the student of a foreign language is required to learn the entire system of linguistic and social patterns that govern behavior in that language community, the Cognitive and a Rationalist School believes that the "input" or linguistic data is manipulated by prior language patterns, coupled with cognitive processes that synthesize that input into a grammar they can use (Butler & Hakuta, 2004;Wong Fillmore, 1991).

Among the most often cited longitudinal studies about bilingualism, cognition and second language learning is that of Peal and Lambert (1962), who measured academic achievement of bilingual and monolingual ten year olds in six schools in Montreal, Canada. Peal and Lambert found a significant relationship between bilingualism and cognitive ability as exemplified in standard testing results. The study is noteworthy for the efforts made to control confounding variables such as I.Q., language impairment, and socio-economic status. It also is noteworthy as the first study to refute the then widely-held belief that the L1 acts as an impediment to acquisition of the L2. Objections have been raised to the generalizing from the study as both languages, English and French, are viewed as languages of prestige in Canada, whereas that is not the case with Spanish in the US (Carreira, 2000; Bernhardt & Kamil, 1995; Shannon, 1995). Significant recent longitudinal studies of English literacy acquisition that are Spanish bilingual studies (August, Carlo, Caldron & Proctor, 2005; Laija-Rodriguez, Ochoa & Parker, 2006) have emphasized various combinations of English and Spanish language instruction, but results have been mixed in their findings about bilingual instruction. The superior results

of bilingual instruction have been achieved after participation in a program for many years (Riches & Genesee, 2006; Thomas & Collier, 2002; Ramirez, 1992). Other researchers have tested the threshold hypothesis of second language mastery (Clarke, 1980; Schooen, Hulstijn &Bossiers, 1998). Both of these studies concluded that lack of language specific knowledge in the L2 (e.g. vocabulary and reading comprehension) will limit or short circuit that transfer of reading skills from the L1 to the L2.

The competing view, the Sociocultural view, taking its principal inspiration from the works of Vygotsky, holds that language learning is a form of cultural learning involving social practices and patterns of discourse that are unique to a culture (Lantolf, 2006; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Tomasello, 1999, 2003). Thorne (2000, 225) states that Sociocultural theory emphasizes language as " socially constructed rather than internally intrinsic," and that language is a reflection of social reality, rather than individual accomplishment.

The key for a learner is to master "communicative competence" in a language (Hymes, 1972). This involves not only language knowledge, properly constructed sentences, but also the ability to use the language, what linguists refer to as semantics and pragmatics. Thus, if learning means participating in a specific cultural dialogue, by inference, negative transfer is a problem for those unfamiliar with the patterns of discourse in a target language and its culture of knowledge and learning (Oldin, 2005). For Socioculturalists, transfer is the process of generalization, or transformation of knowledge from lower to higher levels, based on a developmental process involving mentor and peer interaction (Beach, 1999;Donato, 2000; Hall & Verplaetse, 2000).

The Rationale of the Study and the Research Questions

An underlying premise in choosing this topic and the research that it involves is that communication in the classroom exhibits patterns that can be observed, recorded and learned. These take a variety of forms, especially written forms, such as homework assignments and reflections, in a wide variety of writing (e.g. free writing exercises, personal reflections, class projects). Interactive software programs can also be a new and important form of discourse for students.

Discourse as it is used in this work is defined broadly as the use of spoken or written language in a social context. Fowler (1996) states that when language is viewed as discourse, it is linked to the communicative context. In this work, each classroom situation is grounded primarily in text, and secondarily in speech; the subjects are Latinos who have difficulty in English, the medium of the various written and verbal discourses.

Crystal (2007) states that two main approaches have emerged in how we approach discourse: (1) discourse analysis (Gee 1996, 2006) and (2) text analysis (Halide 1994). Both involve language in use. Discourse analysis, based primarily on the structure of the spoken word, is outside the scope of this study. Text analysis is used in this work regarding student writing.

"Classroom discourse" is a term that is used frequently in the academic literature to indicate the oral interaction between teachers and students and among students (Hall & Verplaetse, 2000). In this composition this term has been used minimally because the important discourses are all written; vocabulary to a specific task and protocols for analysis of text are examples of instruction in the field of student's discourse.

In the context of this ESL classroom, the distinction between the official forms of discourse in the classroom and the unofficial forms of discourse of the home (Gallego, Cole & the Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition, 2001) favors text analysis, as we have limited access to the home. The culture of the school features models that follow the written language tradition—decontextualized teaching tools that are linguistically complex. The culture of the home is rooted in the oral tradition involving casual, context-oriented patterns to language development. Crystal (2007, 260) characterizes this arena where these discourses intersect as a dynamic social and interactive phenomenon. Knowledge students share about each other and about their world outside the classroom meet in the school setting.

The theme behind the qualitative research is an exploration of these classroom discourses. This is the primary site for constructing curriculum knowledge and English language development. The research questions explore what artifacts are used to construct knowledge in the classroom. How students use their native language is important, as well. Teachers' approach to the use of Spanish in the classroom is an important element. Whether it is a crutch or a teaching device and what signals are employed to cue the student when Spanish usage needs to be moderated are difficult but important decisions. To construct knowledge, or to "mediate learning" means here the interaction with a material or immaterial objects to develop a skill or to form connecting links to facilitate skill building, and it means to engage in actions toward that end (Wertsch, 1998, 24). A good example of this mediation of learning is the wide-spread use of interactive software in the schools.

There are curriculum plans and lesson plans that lie behind the flow of lectures and reading material. Whether there is a process that is taking place that is more than simply navigating the school system and its requirements, that can be identified as actively promoting reading progress and enrichment is a key research question. Does this process develop self-confidence and academic competence? Perhaps the process may tend to get short-circuited. This is also one of my research questions.

Measuring reading skills in Spanish and making inferences from such information is an important factor that cannot be observed, nor can it be inferred via interviews, but to measure this serves two important purposes. First, it addresses an issue posed so frequently in academic educational theory and applied research; namely, do Hispanic students with Spanish reading skills have a head start in learning to read by the nature of the patterns they have in their heads over their peers, who do not have these skills? Secondly, as mentioned earlier, in reference to the extensive report of the Center for Applied Linguistics on LEP language learning, testing in Spanish fills a gap that exists in applied research. In their study August and Shanahan (2006) conclude,

> As noted, a fundamental problem with much of the experimental research reviewed here as that the authors provided too little information about the English language learners, their context, and the nature of the instruction being provided. Future research should report children's level of literacy or language attainment in the native language and second language so it is possible to make sense of the variations in effectiveness (pp. 361-62).

The research questions that guide this work have an anthropological focus as well, one goal of which is to describe whether a culture of learning emerges in the classroom. Perhaps a sense of the cultural impact of "home" in the lives of these students and how that influences their lives at school will emerge from their writing. The research hopes to paint a picture of the culture and discourses of the ESL classroom and to draw some tentative conclusions about the process of reading instruction. Students draw from many sources to construct their world in the classroom. What evidence is available on how they do this? The results serve to promote more flexible instruction in the classroom, encourage more collaboration between ESL teachers and content teachers in math, science and social studies, and stimulate the school to push for more parental involvement in their children's educational experience by encouraging attendance at school functions and by promoting reading in Spanish at home.

Embedded in my third research question, what evidence is there that reading development is shaped or modified by Spanish reading ability, are three propositions or hypotheses. As set forth more fully in the *Methods* section, I propose that there is a statistically significant correlation between scores achieved on a Spanish reading test at the beginning of the school semester and the English test scores given at the end of the semester. Those students that demonstrate a higher level of reading skills in Spanish demonstrate a better command of English reading at the end of the semester. More specifically, 1) a high correlation exists between the two Spanish language tests: the Guadalajara blended reading tests and the Woodcock-Muñoz reading test. 2) Results on the two Spanish language reading tests administered at the beginning of the school year are significant predictors of the results on the English language tests administered at the

end of the school year. 3) Reading scores in English at the beginning of the school year are a statistically significant predictor of reading scores in English at the end of the school year.

Research questions:

1. *What are the artifacts that students use to mediate their learning?*

2. *What are the patterns of discourse that take place inside and outside the classroom between the teacher and the student and between the student and his home and family?*

3. *What evidence is there that reading development is shaped by a first language? More specifically, is there evidence that language transfer takes place between the L1 (Spanish) and the L2 (English)?*

4. *Is there evidence that a process or a plan is in place to develop English language reading skills and, if so, how can that process be described?*

While this paper is about the challenges in the classroom, many pressures exist outside the classroom. Challenges can be identified also as involving distinctive discourses, which have their own dynamics (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995). The following concept diagram (*Figure 1*) that I have designed identifies the forces at work both inside and outside the classroom that influence their lives and influence their activities at school. Illustrated in *Figure 1* schematically, Garcia & Jensen (2007) and Goldenberg, Gallimore & Reese (2005) are discussed in greater detail.

Students are subject to pressures that both contribute to and conflict with successful outcomes in school. These are shown in the diagram as the following: family identity, the complex nature of two languages, sheltered language instruction in school in

the ESL classroom and the unsheltered instruction in content classes. Méndez Newman (2007) describes this challenge as negotiating the two "contact" zones. The contact zone of the classroom is where "el maestro siempre tiene razón" (the teacher is always right) but the contact zone of the home is where "el padre como el primer maestro del niño," (the father is in charge of the child). Frequently, the demands of the family authority conflict with the demands of the academic authority. *Figure 1* is an idea map of how these two worlds, or contact zones, interrelate. By comparing those whose first language is English with ESL Latinos the number of competing discourses multiply. For example, language patterns within families differ considerably. Some students speak English among siblings, but Spanish only with the parents and grandparents. With other students, it is Spanish only in the family circle. Content classes present their own discourse difficulties as the course vocabulary and concepts may prove difficult to master, even if the student possesses good conversational English capability. These precise difficulties surfaced during my observations in two content classes—a sixth grade science course and an eighth grade math course. According to research studies cited by Saunders & O'Brien (2006), achievement in the classroom is positively correlated with how much English is spoken in the home; better as a predictor than language used with peers or language in the classroom. Yet, this is a complex relationship, since at higher levels of literacy development English use in the school appears to be the critical factor.

Compounding the difficulties is content class size. While an ESL class contained typically eight to ten students, the science course held sixteen and the math course, twenty-five. Latinos were in the minority in each content class and seldom spoke up unless addressed directly by the teacher.

Figure 1: Middle School Challenges for Hispanic Students at Washburne
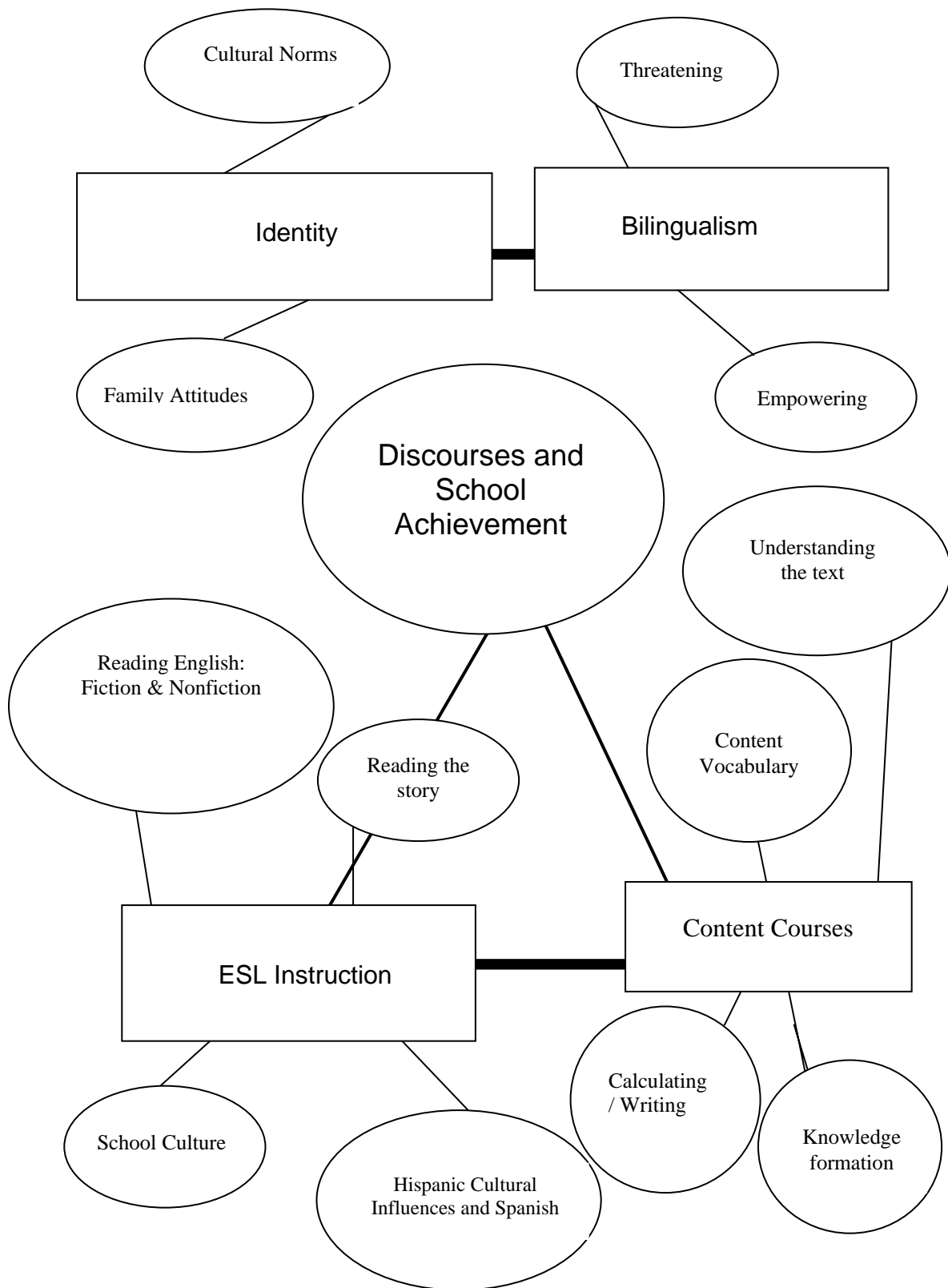
Philosophical Position and Limitations of the Study

My philosophical position, or what Maxwell (2005, 36) terms, "connecting with a research paradigm, "is pragmatism. Pragmatism, as presented by Creswell (2003), is a philosophical bent toward, "what works" and is the approach taken throughout this research. Denzin & Lincoln (1994, 579; 2000, 10) point out that researchers' accounts of what takes place are increasingly being viewed, not as mirrors, but manufacturers of reality, constructing "verisimilitude," the ability to produce the real for the educated reader, and should be judged on whether their findings ring true and advance our collective knowledge. Following along this same line of reasoning, Lincoln and Guba (2000, 180) state that 'authenticity" should be a guide to validity. Wolcott (1990) puts it slightly differently. He contends that the goal of qualitative research is to understand what is going on and verify processes and results in the eyes of the reader. In a mixed methods dissertation, this is the motivation of the researcher's filter through which data is collected and processed. It affords a certain freedom for inquiry. Reality is highly determined by context and is dependent by situation. Reality is also a reflection of the goal of the researcher, which in this case is determining what works in ESL instruction and what is missing, and their implications. Of the 1,000 hours available in the middle school year for instruction, observations for this study did not cover even 100 hours. The reality observed is structured, first by the school curriculum and the teaching methods of the instructor, and, secondly, by the observer and interpreter.

While the following issues involved in second-language pedagogy are important, widely-debated in academic and educational circles, and are discussed at length in Chapter 2, this dissertation does not contain the merits and the disadvantages of bilingual

education or the debate between the Cognitive and the Sociocultural schools of SLA development. These issues are thoroughly discussed by well-recognized authorities in an entire supplement of the *Modern Language Journal* dedicated to the subject (Focus issue, 2007); particularly, the wide-ranging and informative articles by Larsen Freeman (2007) and Swain and Deters(2007) in that issue. Additionally, the conflicting ontologies between the two schools, the separation of language and learning (the cognitive school) versus the interaction of language and learning viewed from the perspective of the Sociocultural School, are discussed at length in Zuengler and Miller (2006).

The superiority of one teaching technique in SLA reading instruction over another is discussed, but forming a conclusion on this point is not an aim of this work. The complex issues involved and the relevant research are discussed at length in the June, 2007 supplement in *Language Learning*; Koda's (2007) article in that issue is comprehensive both as regards theory and applied research.

This task, however is a more modest one: to report on observations of the classroom, to report on the results of the relevant reading tests, and to interpret what might be significant.

The sample is small—30 students. The sample for statistical purposes actually got smaller during the year due to two drop outs and a parent's reluctance to allow her daughter to participate. We finished with a sample of 27. This is only one middle school out of many. We know little of the home life of an individual student or the level of literacy of the parents and caregivers and knowledge of student motivation, a key ingredient in success, is also hard to ascertain. Quality of instruction in the classroom is always a variable. However, all students participate in the same instructional

environment, as the teachers were not provided the results of the Spanish language tests until the end of the semester. Both native English teachers and Spanish-speakers are represented among the ESL teachers. For this reason a mix of pedagogical practices occur. Each classroom is not 100% Spanish speakers, which make classroom observations somewhat more complex. Due to the recession in home building and new construction projects in general in the state of North Carolina, and due to increased vigilance by the authorities to thwart illegal immigration into the United States, I was concerned that some of the students who tested in September might not be in the school system the following April. Drop outs did not turn out to be a significant factor. State-wide English language tests are now administered before the school year begins, and again given near the end of March or beginning of April in the following calendar year. Rather than measuring the increase in reading comprehension after an entire calendar year, the tests will be measuring progress achieved in English reading only after ten months (August -May). Most of the longitudinal studies cited in this dissertation have measured performance for a significantly longer period. There is little instruction in reading and writing in Spanish taking place during the school year, either in the family or in school that can be measured accurately. Some of the students in the study do take Spanish in school or perhaps participate in weekend classes in Spanish. The Middle school observed does not provide formal bilingual instruction.

Immigrant Hispanic families in Charlotte move frequently based both on personal experiences and those of the ESL teachers interviewed. Often they have not moved, but have decided to take the family back to their native country for an extended visit and take the children out of school when they do. When students are absent from school, parents

and guardians are often difficult to contact. It is the teacher who bears the brunt of this fluid classroom dynamic. The researcher, too, should have a stable sample to observe and test. Accommodations must be made and, where a reduction in the beginning sample of students occurs, it will be noted and explained.

The School and the ESL classroom. This is a study of one classroom at a school I have called, *Washburne*. Washburne is a medium-sized middle school of approximately 750 students in grades sixth, seventh and eighth. Roughly 35% of the students are Hispanic, 60% African American and the remaining 5%, white and Asian American. The larger site for this research is a large school district in a metropolitan area in the South Eastern United States. This school district contains both urban and rural schools. There are more than 100,000 students in all grades, with Middle school accounting for approximately one third of the total. Hispanic students comprise roughly one third of total school enrollment. Washburne is one of the smallest middle schools in a district that serves urban, suburban and rural communities as most middle schools in the area take in 1,000 students or more. From its location, far from the central city core, one would consider Washburne a suburban school. Yet from its ethnic composition it is more typical of an urban school in the district.

The school name and all teachers and students have been given pseudonyms to protect their privacy. The English Language Learners (ELLs) students are Hispanic/Latino/a students between the ages of 11 and 14 years. Surprisingly, after gaining some experience in observing the ESL classroom and getting to know the students, I discovered that ten Latin American and Caribbean countries were represented

in the class. I had expected Mexico to be dominant as it had been in my previous ESL

class observations. There were more ESL students at Washburne from El Salvador.

By concentrating on a single classroom in a single school I hope to identify more

clearly the important variables at play, and how they impact an ESL program in

preparing students for the all-important end-of-grade tests. By employing a mixed

methods study, that involves testing in addition to observations and interviews, I hope to

discover something more than quantitative or qualitative methods alone would reveal.

The scope of my inquiry involves *input* in two senses of the word (Larsen Freeman,

1985). First is the process of learning in the classroom setting, exploring the influences of

the learning environment on Latinos competence in reading in the L2. Here the input and

the interactions are largely controlled by the teacher. Turning the focus to the learner, this

study hopes to reveal what the students bring to the classroom in the form of prior

knowledge and how culture may play a part in school activities.

There is a big stake in addressing these questions. It is the larger issue of the

limitations and disadvantages that accompany failure to acquire academic language. This

affects not only continuing access to education, but it contributes to continuing cycles of

poverty, prejudice and oppression.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The Role of Theory in Learning and Transfer. Two theoretical propositions are in contention presently in the academic debate over how students come to know what they know. One school, the Cognitive Rationalist, posits that cognitive skills are innate and that individuals construct knowledge based on the interaction with the world that they encounter. The other, the Sociocultural, believes that interaction with others, society's sociocultural processes create these cognitive skills (National Research Council, *Improving Schooling for Language Minority Children*, 1997; Tomasello, 1999). Researchers aim to influence educators to improve classroom instruction often with an emphasis on employing the "right " teaching methods, grounded in appropriate theory. Educators favoring the former of these two schools, the Cognitive Rationalist, tend to support bilingual education for LEP students, while socioculturalists favor classroom environments where English is the only language of instruction (Greeno, Collins and Resnick, 1996).

It is appropriate to explore the theories that frame the debates on how to organize instruction and this includes the Behaviorist school that is no longer supported intellectually, but which is important historically as its tenants framed the early debate on language transfer. Language transfer and its implications are a key area of underlying contention between the Cognitive Rationalist and the Sociocultural Schools. Differences center on epistemology or the debate over how school children learn. (Lado, 1957;

Larsen Freeman, & Long, 1999). In Second Language Acquisition (SLA), behaviorism is

linked with Lado's theory of language transfer, or his contrastive analysis hypothesis.

Lado held that the major source of difficulty in second language learning is the tendency

of the learner to transfer the habits or structure of the native language to the foreign

language to be acquired. The prime cause of error and problems in foreign language

learning is interference from the native. Behaviorists hold that children acquire or have

associations between ideas. Learning is response. Stimuli, such as a parent's or a

teacher's instruction, triggers a response. The name associated with this school of thought

is B.F. Skinner (1957). In the American structuralist tradition, the name most closely

linked to behaviorism is Leonard Bloomfield (1933). The Chomskian revolution in the

study of linguistics in the 1950's, when Chomsky proposed that all individuals have

syntax, or grammar, independent of language use, began the unwinding of Lado's

hypotheses. Chomsky argued that all humans possess an LAD (Language Acquisition

Device) that allows them to acquire their native language (Chomsky, 1982). Humans also

possess UG (Universal Grammar) that permits them to judge correct and incorrect

sentence structures in their language (Chomsky, 1985). Therefore, grammar of a

particular language is a selection from possible forms allowed by UG (Spolsky, 1990),

and UG becomes a model for L2 learning through tapping into the reservoir in the L1

(Cook, 1994). Chomsky's attack on the tenants of behaviorism led to the eclipse of

Lado's theories of second language acquisition. In their place, linguists began to study

learner's errors and the interlanguage that emerged as a learner made progress in

language acquisition (Gass & Selinker, 2001).

Particularly important in this changing landscape in language transfer was the

longitudinal study by Peal and Lambert (1962) of Canadian school children engaged in a

dual language English/French program. Peal and Lambert's study operationalized these new ideas in the realm of second language acquisition. There appeared to be a certain positive feedback loop to the L1 that was created by exposure to the L2 which emerged as a result of their study. A surprising result was that English children in Quebec did better in English as a result of studying in French. The earlier conceptual unity of the study of linguistics and learning gave way to a split that influenced the issue of transfer in language and learning (Larsen Freeman, 2007). A debate centered on whether innate ability in the two interacting languages produced a more advanced cognitive strategy, or whether the distance between two languages is not primarily linguistic, but sociocultural, since language is a cultural product; real knowledge of the second language can only occur in the society where it is native (Cook, 1985). The sociocultural side was reinforced further by the work of Dell Hymes in the field of anthropology. Hymes (1974, 1992, 2001) argued that more attention should be placed on competence in language usage, or competence in communication, rather than language competence as structural and grammar-centered as Chomsky had suggested (Kamberelis & Demitriades, 2005). This reinforced the impetus to study language as it is practiced in real time patterns of dialogue and interaction, rather than language as a formal system. With the growing influence of Vygotsky's teachings a new interest emerged in how people perform with language, or how they use it, and in what settings. The classroom research of Ann Brown and her colleagues at the Center for the Study of Reading at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, aimed at investigating whether group problem solving influences individual learning, is noteworthy as it has been influential not only in educational circles in general, but as an applied application of sociocultural theory (Lantolf & Thorne, 2009). Out of their work (Brown & Palinscar, 1989; Brown & Campione, 1994) emerged the

collaborative learning devices of, "reciprocal teaching," the 'jigsaw" method of cooperative learning and "guided discovery." A teacher trained in these techniques guides groups of students who take turns leading discussions about a topic, exchanging ideas and making predictions based on group summaries. The jigsaw method involves the assignment of parts of a classroom topic to various students who, having completed their research, bring their results to the group to be fit into, or integrated into the bigger picture. These teaching methods are reflected in the epistemology underlying the Sociocultural School.

Transfer and the Cognitive Rationalist School

Both the Cognitive Rationalist often referred to as the positivist, and the Sociocultural schools of the psychology of reading in the second language context agree that the reading comprehension process involves an established schemata, or set of interrelated concepts on the part of the reader (Gibbons, 2006). They differ on what constitutes the source and composition of schemata's related attributes: cognitive development, language knowledge, background knowledge and cultural values and beliefs (Mikulesky, 1990). The Sociocultural school believes that language knowledge is embedded in cultural values and beliefs. The progressive school holds that language knowledge is an aspect of cognition and cognitive skills and can stand apart from a particular culture.

One of the fundamental assumptions underlying bilingual education is that skills developed in a native language will transfer to the acquired language and that the interplay between the two languages will strengthen the development of each (Cummins 1983; 1984). The concept that skills transfer across languages was put forth by Cummins in his Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis (1979). Cummins has argued that

language skills among bilinguals are interdependent and that in some aspects appear to be expressions of a common underlying proficiency (CUP) (Cummins, 1984, 1991). CUP represents the ability to manipulate language in de-contextualized academic situations. Cummins' theses have provided the intellectual foundation for the positive rationalist school in SLA in the present era.

The principal theorist of child development influencing the thinking of the cognitive rationalist school is Jean Piaget. The stages of active child mental development according to Piaget, occurs when he passes from the sensory motor age where his speech is egocentric and shows no signs of communicative intent (2-4 years old) to socialized speech that emerges at ages 5-6 (Piaget, 1956). Piaget believed that egocentric speech was, for the most part, purposeless. For Piaget, this is the period of pre-operational thought, the period of most rapid language development. During the middle school years (i.e. ages 11-15 years) cognitive abilities reach the stage where the child is able to think abstractly, test mental hypotheses and engage in more sophisticated problem solving (Piaget, 1963). Here begins the actual exchange of information with others, evidencing communicative intent. For Piaget, the importance of this stage is that abstract thinking and the syntactic structures of thinking take form. Schema, or concepts and mental categories that form the background for cognitive structures, emerge (Piaget, 1952). Mental actions are transformed into operational systems. The implications of Piaget's theoretical stages of development for language is that it is an innate mental quality, accessible for transfer to a variety of tasks given an appropriate stage of development, and thus available for transfer to another language.

Sociocultural Learning and the Negotiation of Meaning

Social practices of communities (e.g. a school community), embedded in historical and cultural forces, develop language as a communication device and as a problem-solving tool (Dunn & Lantolf, 1998). Language development is knowledge of how to participate in the social practices and the evolving patterns of discourse. Socioculturalists believe that knowledge, of which language is a part as well as a medium, is co-constructed between student and teacher (Gibbons, 2002). Language learning comes not from within, but from association with others within a social setting, such as a classroom. In its strongest form, sociocultural thought answers the question, "Is there a separation of language from culture?" in the following manner: "…such things as linguistic symbols and social institutions are socially constituted and so could not conceivably have emerged full blown at once in human evolution; social interactive processes must have played some role in their creation and maintenance," (Tomasello, 1999, 204). Lantoff and Thorne are the leading proponents of sociocultural theory as it relates to applied linguistics and research in second language acquisition in the United States. Gibbons is a leading proponent of the implementation of sociocultural theory in the classroom for LEP children (Gibbons, 2002; Lantoff, 2007; Thorne, 2005).

Socioculturalists take their inspiration from the teachings of developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky, who died at an early age in 1934, and whose work didn't impact the West until their translation in 1962 and 1978 (Cook, 2008). Lantolf (2007) explains how Vygotsky's approach to cognitive development through language differs from the progressive school,

The innatists argue that our unique mental abilities can be accounted for primarily in terms of genetically specific properties of the human brain. The social constructionists, on the other hand, maintain that the explanation resides in discourse and social interaction. (p. 695).

The most important area of social interaction outside the family is the school. Sociocultural theory enters the classroom by way of Vogotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). According to Vygotsky, the ZPD is the learning space where instruction, learning and development intersect. The zone is the student's ability range. The teacher assists the student to do with external support what he could not accomplish without it. Vygotsky (1987) captured this critical relationship between assisted and self-regulated performance with his distinction between spontaneous and scientific concepts. Spontaneous concepts are the everyday concepts one forms from simply being alive. Scientific concepts (learned concepts) are those that abstract from the everyday, give a generalized structure to thought and provide the foundation for problem solving.

The developments of scientific and spontaneous concepts take different paths, although they are mutually dependent. The domain of scientific concepts begins in the domain of conscious awareness and volition, and grows downward toward the sphere of experience and the empirical. The spontaneous concepts begin in the domain of the concrete and empirical. This is the link of the zone of proximal and actual *development* (p. 211).

Vygotsky was primarily interested in psychological development, not education per se. He used the example of education because it was the best and most easily

explainable example of how development of the mind requires a move away from

the concrete to the abstract, and the ability to influence outcomes in new

situations by introducing general principles learned in the classroom. Teacher

interaction with the student in the ZPD is most often associated with his findings.

Although Vygotsky did not use the specific term "scaffolding," his discussion of

learning and the student teacher relationship makes it clear that learning involves

apprenticeship wherein the master molds the apprentice through a form of support

and example, creating the scaffold (Gibbons, 2006).

Social interaction and cognitive rationalism are two key strands in SLA

research (Greeno, Collins & Resnik, 1996; Larsen Freeman & Long, 1991).

While it would be an exaggeration to equate quantitative data analysis with the

cognitive rationalist school and qualitative analysis with the sociocultural school,

there is a paradigm difference that pushes researchers in one direction or the

other (Larsen Freemen & Long, 1991). The sociocultural school posits a

dynamic reality that needs to be uncovered by observation and instruction in the

particular school context, while the cognitive rationalist school posits a stable

reality that requires testing to reveal its properties.

Another way of distinguishing the progressive school from the sociocultural

model is to examine the differences in emphasis and approach in leading texts that serve

as guides for instructors teaching second language learners. Freeman and Freeman,

English language learners: *the Essential Guide* (2007) is an example of instruction based

on the progressive model. Gibbons' (2002), *Scaffolding language scaffolding learning*:

Teaching second language in the mainstream classroom is an example of the

sociocultural model. Both books emphasize active collaboration between teacher and

student, and also emphasize the integration of language and content centered on a lesson plan. As both texts explain, students in today's classrooms do not first learn language and later learn how to use it (Gibbons, 2007; Freeman & Freeman, 2007). The most striking difference between the texts lies in the area of bilingual education. Freeman and Freeman are strong proponents of bilingual education; they devote an entire chapter to the subject. Reviews of the research on bilingual education, they state, consistently show bilingual education is the best model for educating ELLs.

Gibbons (2002) does not mention bilingual education. Gibbons emphasizes that the classroom students,

> have learned to use their mother tongue, but a much more restricted range of contexts in *English…*it is hardly surprising that without focused English language support they may start to fall behind their peers who are operating in a language they have been familiar with since birth (p.5).

Freeman and Freeman favor a scripted lesson plan as the foundation of ESL instruction, much as the majority of the ESL teachers I have observed. Gibbons, on the other hand, appears to favor dialogue, a position supported by a considerable body of research (Riches & Genesee, 2006)

Vygosky (1987), observing how the acquisition of a foreign language creates a clarification of one's own language, gives support to the existence of a feedback loop like what Peal and Lambert (1962) found in their research with English Canadian school children in French immersion in Quebec,

> With a foreign language, it is the higher, more complex characteristics of speech that develop first; those that are associated with conscious awareness and intention … *Furthermore, the strength of the child's*

foreign language is the weakness of his native language…The child's use of the grammatical forms is impeccable. He does not, however, have conscious awareness of the use of these forms… in the foreign language, however … from the outset, he has conscious awareness of the proper declinations and grammatical modifications (p. 221).

Vygotsky would appear to provide a foundation for endorsing bilingual education. An alternative reading of what Vygotsky has written would allow for the interpretation that language instruction is but one example among many occurring in the ZPD of the dynamic interplay, under the guidance of an experienced teacher, between the concepts from everyday experience and the more abstract concepts of the classroom. Glassman (2001) points out that Vygotsky viewed language and language instruction as a key to students' development of conceptual thinking. This suggests that an alternative interpretation of this quote might be support for scaffolded instruction through the medium of foreign language instruction.

Selected Studies in Transfer in the Classroom

Solorzano (2008) and *The Report of the National Literacy panel on Language-minority Youth* (2006) contain lists of the many studies relating to LEP students and their classroom environment. A dominant theme in these studies is the advantage of bilingual instruction. However, in two studies, Bernhardt and Kamil (1995) and Laija- Rodríguez, Ochoa, and Parker (2006), researchers found that combining reading in Spanish and English either was not the key predictor of competence, or, at best, showed a weak predictive relationship. There is a less-dominant but growing body of research that focuses on the positive effects of interactive instruction and tends to focus on the broader

social context in which students learn (Riches and Genesee, 2006). Differences in situation may explain differences in outcome in these testing environments. Qualitative measures, such as parental involvement and home validation of the school experience, are not being measured (Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education National Research Council, 1997), and quality of instruction may differ substantially. Furthermore, the choice of treatment group and control group in many of these quasi-experiments may be artificial, or highly-controlled. Hispanic participants in an ESL class usually a mixture of national origins, of grades, of levels of language ability. Heath (1999) admonishes the researcher in education to accept the "messiness" of what is being studied in order to strive for authenticity. In short, "research that has the intention of taking into account dimensions of diversity, variability, and particularities across cultures, situations, and their institutions must pay attention to what may seem to be admittedly chaotic, but nevertheless socially realistic, situations," (p. 219). The studies that I have listed in cross-linguistic transfer for Spanish and English in the classroom are among those most often cited in the research literature. I have included one study reflecting the results of interactive instruction. There are few studies that address Latino/a student discourse. Paratore, Hindin, Krol-Sinclair and Durán (1999) and Bernal, Alemán and Gavarila (2009) both address the issues of identity formation and school participation. Both studies are informative in that they explore the issue of home and school discourse mismatch.

Hakuta and Diaz (1985) tested whether degree of bilingualism is related to cognitive ability. Their subjects were kindergarten and first grade students enrolled in bilingual classes, one half born in the United States and one half in Puerto Rico. The

treatment was the Peabody Picture Vocabulary test in both Spanish and English. Researchers concluded that bilingualism did foster cognitive development.

Gonzalez (1986) tested Cummins' interdependence thesis and his common underlying proficiency thesis. His subjects were sixth grade students in a bilingual program, one half born in the U.S. and one half born in Mexico. The treatment was the C.T.B.S. Spanish test and the Stanford reading test. The Mexican-born and schooled group outperformed the US-schooled group in both Spanish and English reading. School instruction in Spanish in Mexico confirmed the interdependence thesis and the underlying proficiency thesis.

Bernhardt and Kamil (1995) tested Cummins' linguistic interdependence hypothesis. Their subjects were Air Force cadets of three levels of competence in Spanish. The treatment was the Adult Basic Learning Exam. They concluded that that linguistic knowledge in English was a more powerful predictor of success in Spanish reading than literacy in the L1 (Spanish).

August, Calderon and Snow (2002) tested for the transfer of reading skills from Spanish to English. They performed a longitudinal study of students in a bilingual program from the second through the fourth grade. Half were instructed primarily in English and half primarily in Spanish. The treatment was the Woodcock Language Proficiency Passage Comprehension. The Spanish-instructed students scored higher than the English-instructed students.

Proctor, August, Carlo and Snow (2005) sought to determine which of the components of the L2 made the strongest contribution to reading comprehension. The subjects were Spanish-speaking elementary and fourth grade children of intermediate English level capability enrolled in various urban schools. The test instruments were the

Woodcock Language Proficiency Battery and the Academic Assessment System (Sinatra and Roger). Outcomes demonstrated that English vocabulary knowledge was the most important predictor of English reading success, if the ability to decode written material was in place.

Laija-Rodríguez, Ochoa and Parker (2006) tested Cummins' threshold hypothesis. Measuring CALP in both English and Spanish using the Woodcock and Muñoz-Sandoval language Survey for reading comprehension was their research method. The subjects were second and third grade students in transitional bilingual classes. The researchers discovered that the cross-linguistic relationship, while significant, was weak.

Saunders and Goldenberg (1999) studied the effects of interactive instruction and Literature Logs on the academic performance of Hispanic students in Grades four and five. One group of students who wrote about their story experiences got limited teacher instruction, but wrote in their learning logs largely independently. Students in the interactive group got teacher clarification of elements of the story before they wrote in their log books. There was a third, control group that had no interactive instruction. Those ELLs benefitting the most in story comprehension were those that had received the interactive discussion.

Bernal et al. (2009) organized Latino/s college freshmen to serve as mentors for elementary school Hispanic students during two school years under the auspices of *Adelante*, a college preparedness and awareness program in the state of Utah. The goal of this group of researchers was to analyze educational discourses, structures and practices to reveal to the college students their hybrid identity in navigating the world of the dominant American/ English-based culture and the subordinate Latino culture. Researchers hoped that during the mentoring process "decolonizing" discourses would

take place. Conclusions drawn were (1) strong family and community ties were valued and reinforced, although tensions developed over the frustration the subjects had with their families adaptation of the dominant cultural themes. (2) mentoring freshmen longed for a separate, college-sponsored Latino space in their first year of college as a sign of official recognition.

Paratore et al. (1999) sought to explore bridging mechanisms for teachers and Hispanic parents in the context of parent-teacher conferences. Parents were asked to create, "literacy portfolios" of their children's' work in order to collaboratively explore differences in the home discourses and the school discourses. Four participating parents met with two bilingual teachers at each conference. The conferences were frequently for a limited period of time and all discussions were in Spanish. Attendance by parents was high. Researchers concluded that (1) the home literacy portfolios were a good vehicle for promoting free discussion. (2) While no major changes in classroom instruction resulted, it was believed that affirmation of the students' work at home contributed to an atmosphere of "wholeness" in the classroom. (3) Examples of "family literacy" were hard to find. School-like learning tasks tended to dominate the family literacy portfolios.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction. This case study analysis serves as the vehicle to understand how a specific system, an ESL class works, and from that to develop insights that can be constructed into tentative hypotheses (Merriam, 1998).

A mixed- methods approach is the research design. Anfara (2006) argues for more mixed-method research in middle school to look beyond the dichotomy of qualitative and quantitative, aiming at what is best suited to answer the questions that confront us today. Heath (1992) states that it is the research questions and the conceptual framework that determine the relevant analytical approach. Brown (1992) believes that the mixed methods approach fits better with the complexities of the issues arising in the middle school classroom.

Both Creswell (2005) and Anfara (2006) counsel that in any mixed methods design, the researcher should provide a more detailed description of the work to be done than would be the case with a purely qualitative or quantitative design. The description needs to include: (1) a rationale for the design, (2) the qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and types of data, (3) the connection to the research questions and (4) the sequencing of the work.

(1)   The rationale for a quantitative segment in what would otherwise be a qualitative design is that testing is the only way to determine Spanish language reading skill levels. These results may have a statistically

significant effect on the ability to deal with academic English reading tasks that confront Latinos in the classroom. There is one research question out of four directed specifically at this issue.

(2)   The qualitative methods of data collection are classroom observations, teacher interviews and documents created both by the students and by the school and the teachers. Teacher interviews are transcribed and yield texts to be analyzed. Field notes derived from the classroom observations provided another text set. References from unofficial and official documents are analyzed. The quantitative method involves administering Spanish reading tests at the beginning of the school year in the fall and comparing these results with English reading competency tests given in the fall and similar tests results in the spring of the following year.

(3)   The three qualitative research questions are aimed at illuminating the process of teaching middle school children how to read and understand school texts. The quantitative question is aimed at exploring the hypothesis that Spanish reading skills will positively transfer to English reading.

(4)   There is not a sequencing pattern of first qualitative then quantitative or vice versa. There is no dependent relationship in the flow of data gathering activities between the two methodologies. Testing occurs at the beginning and at the end of the school year. Observations and interviews are continuous during the school year. The objective of the dissertation is to use one ESL classroom to illuminate issues that might confront other similar classrooms. Thus, the design is not aimed at exploring and

resolving conflict, but to provide clarity. The quantitative and the qualitative portions are complimentary.

How I gained entry. After having received permission to conduct research within the school system, and having been given a short list of possible middle schools, I began interviewing school principals. I quickly found Ms. Benning at Washburne to be welcoming and supportive. She introduced me to the head of ESL, Ms. Bunin, and, right away, I sensed that Ms. Bunin and I could work together. I was drawn to Washburne also because it was a newer facility, with better lighting that some of the other schools, and with a large library and media center that I found inviting. The first order of business was to send out consent letters to the Latino/a parents to allow their children to participate in Spanish language testing (Appendices B and C). Ms. Benning sent out the first letter in English, but we got response from only four parents. The second and third letters went out from Ms. Benning and Ms. Bunin in Spanish. With many follow-up phone calls, the permissions were received; one mother would not allow her daughter to participate, so my sample quickly dropped from 30 to 29. I had the great good fortune to not have any further drop outs or new entrants to the class during the school year.

I administered and graded Spanish language tests toward the end of the calendar year in which they registered for school, in August/September, 2008. I had been given their scores on the start-of-school English reading tests and, later, was given the end-of-school English reading tests.

Background: The ESL Classroom. The First block at Washburne Middle school begins at eight o'clock. There are five blocks during the day and each runs 90 minutes. Homework discussion and work with Plato Learning, an interactive software program, act as a "warm up," since sometime around 8:30 an announcement will be made

on the loud speaker that it is time for the pledge of allegiance, followed by closed circuit television announcements of the meal for the day, results of sports events and other announcements like the time of yearbook photos.

The two ESL classrooms are side by side, each measuring 34 by 18 feet, as the two smallest classrooms in the building. Desks, or chair desks, which appear to be the oldest type of chairs in the school and unique to ESL, accommodate the small bodies of these students. I found them difficult to navigate. The furniture arrangement in both rooms is similar. Besides the 13 desks, there is one small table with a projector, a copier and two bookcases—one with textbooks and dictionaries and multiple copies of the two working texts, *The Hatchet* and *The Cay*, two sixth grade level readers, and the *Visions* textbook grade level reading series approved by the school system. The teachers find that while *Visions* is well-designed, with good lesson plans, it doesn't hold the students' attention, and copies sit on the shelves unused. Another small steel cabinet is locked and contains the laptops.

The writing surface of each desk is fixed to the chair, so that they have sort of an old-fashioned look. These desks are small, but so are the students. They work nicely in the cramped space and are handy in 9th block (the remedial class from 10:00 to 11:30) where students work with Plato Learning (see Appendix A) on line on class laptops. Notices cover the walls admonishing students to study hard. For example, a study guide, "Word Wall," features vocabulary related to segments of a central theme:

Concepts

Sequence	*Comparison/contrasts*	*cause and effect*
1st, 2nd, 3rd	like, less than, more	because, since
before, after; finally	on the other hand	consequently

In each classroom Ms. Bunin, the head of ESL, and Ms. Dimas, her assistant teacher have dedicated important wall space to recognition of the nations represented by the students. Ms. Bunin displays a photo of each student with a small national flag and nearby a world map with a pin stuck in the appropriate country's spot. Ms. Dimas has a board in her room with paper country flags with the student's name and country written on each. A large number of Latin American countries are represented among the students. The three largest are El Salvador with eight students, Mexico and Honduras with six a piece, and one representative from Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Peru, Uruguay and the Dominican Republic. In my experience, this is unusual, both in the number of countries represented and the lack of a majority from Mexico. The majority of students in the greater school district, who are listed as Hispanic, claim Mexico as the country of origin. The 29 Latino/a students are divided roughly equally between boys (15) and girls (14). Of the three grades, 16 are in the Eighth grade, 8 in the Seventh and 5 in the Sixth. There are two Vietnamese girls, very quiet and very capable. They spend most of their time in Ms. Dimas's class; often they are looked to by the Latinos to explain difficult reading passages.

Qualitative Research: Methods of Data Collection and Analysis.

I attended classes at Washburne two to three times a week, on average three and one half hours per day. The schedule was arranged with Ms. Bunin, the head of ESL, via

Sunday night email exchanges preceding the week in question. In class I sat silently in the back of the room and took notes. After a couple of days students paid no attention to me. Everything that caught my eye or ear ended up in my notes, but the foci of my observations were on the lesson plan of the day and those activities associated with it; I was particularly drawn to the transparences shown with the overhead projector. One of these, the Plot diagram, is reproduced in *Figure 2*. The specifics of my data collection were the following: classroom observations, teacher interviews, both formal and informal, and a review of a variety of key documents as primary sources.

My observation notes were arranged in three parallel columns: time, action and comments. I often spilled over into the "comments" section as there was much to observe. At the end of each week I pulled together my field notes. Classes began at 8:30 and I usually observed two blocks of 90 minutes, sometimes three, per day, with a library break at some point to organize my field notes. My observations were conducted in one ESL class, two adjoining classrooms, over a period of four months. This is the same class that took the Spanish reading tests in the fall. I took detailed field notes of my observations and wrote analytic summaries as appropriate.

Interviews were both formal and informal. Interviews with Ms. Dunlin, the media specialist, were frequent, but informal. Informal teacher interviews occurred throughout the semester as questions on lesson plans, teaching philosophy, and many questions on the behavior and attitudes of the students themselves.

Interviews with Ms. Bunin, Ms. Dimas, her co-ESL teacher, and with Ms. Garcia, the biology teacher, were formal. Verbatim notes were taken for later quotes. For these formal interviews, the following protocol was used: a set of typed questions were delivered in advance of the interview, answers were recorded in long hand on the day of

the interview, and a fresh set of the typed questions and answers were distributed to the

interviewee for correction (see Appendix D for the interview plan). While aiming for at

least an hour, the average interview lasted 30/40 minutes. I tried to ask open-ended

questions to allow for discussion. This was very useful with Ms. Bunin. We had some

extended discussions beyond the formal interview, especially about her background in

ESL. One informal interview with her lasted for more than one hour. With the other

teachers the sessions were shorter and the responses more guarded. I cross-checked the

interviewee responses to see if responses differed on the same or similar questions. The

important differences related to teaching style and teaching philosophy. These interviews

provided key information to answer the research question concerning the existence of a

pedagogical plan guiding the classroom assignments. Teaching to the tests, an approach

that I had seen in many classrooms, represents the absence of a plan for cognitive

development. I hoped to find something better at Washburne.

At the end of the school year, in May, my teacher interviews took place. These are

described here in some detail, as methods were used to allow for conversations that fairly

and accurately represented valid points of view on important topics. ESL teachers, as

well as content teachers interviewed, were given the interview areas of interest in

advance (Appendix D). They had the opportunity to correct errors in the transcripts. No

audio taping of any classroom sessions or of the teacher interviews occurred, as I felt this

has the potential to intimidate and to impede the free flow of the interview. Interview

summaries were not prepared. Richness, and thus the value, of the interview answers can

often be lost in the effort to be succinct. To quote liberally from the teacher interviews

adds authenticity, so that I took down verbatim what the teacher said and checked with

them later. Also, when I had informal conversations in the classroom, hallway, or library,

I wrote down as close to verbatim as possible what had been said. No interviews with parents or students took place. Key interviews took place with the two ESL teachers, Ms. Bunin and Ms. Dimas, as well as Ms. Garcia, the sixth grade science teacher. These were supplemented with an interview with the media specialist Ms. Dunlin and with Ms. Moorlock, the eighth grade math teacher. These teachers had the most contact with the students on a daily basis. It was understandable that interviewees would be concerned about the confidentiality of their responses and therefore guarded in expressing opinions that might be construed in a negative way.

The teachers have been quoted liberally to provide an authentic flavor to the issues that emerged and became central to answering the research questions. For example, the detail on the preparation and content of the Eighth Grade Reading Project, aimed at responding to the specific research question investigating whether there is a plan or process in place to guide learning, is liberally punctuated with quotes from Ms. Bunin. To respond to the question aimed at exploring the influence of Spanish on classroom behavior and the question of reading transfer from the L1 to the L2, there is a discussion in this chapter on how these tests came to be and how they were administered.

Documents. Key documents reviewed for this study included the documents at the Welcome Center where all students from abroad were processed. These included the Educational Profile for Perspective LEP students and booklets of instruction for the English language tests given in four categories: listening, speaking, reading and writing, and the W-APT English testing regime. The booklet of instructions for administering the Woodcock Muñoz reading test was important reading so that I could administer that Spanish reading test correctly. The North Carolina Standard Course of Study for the Language Arts is a very important document as it guides the lesson plans for the

instruction in ESL. It sets out a week-by-week classroom teaching schedule. The classroom ESL lesson plans had to conform in large measure to the language arts format. Another key document examined, shown by Ms. Bunin, was the Personal Journals of the students

The online tests that the students take related to chapters in their readers, *Hatchet* and *The Cay*, (see Appendix A), as well as the remedial comprehension tests that Ms. Dunlin administers in the library, were fun and instructive to take. What resulted was a hands-on feel for how learner- supportive these programs are. This was one example to respond to the research question concerning the artifacts that mediate learning.

Analyzing the information. Time spent in the process was a key element in organizing and analyzing the information collected. Patterns, or areas of concentration, emerged this way. Second, answers to the interview questions, the documents reviewed from the Welcome Center and observations in the classroom formed a chronological sequence of steps, beginning with entry English testing in the Fall, classroom instruction and projects during the year, and exit English testing and EOG testing in the Spring. Chronological sequence provides a framework for organization data; the focus of analysis naturally turns to the high points along the road of preparation for final testing in the spring. This was especially helpful in answering the research question related to the plan of study. Patterns, themes and their interconnection naturally emerged from the material gathered (Maxwell, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Major themes. A case may tell its own story, but, it must be recognized that it is the story teller who decides what the case's own story is. This involves choices (Stake, 2000, 440). Miles and Huberman (1994) emphasize that, even before a researcher begins to observe and to conduct interviews, much analysis and selective choices have been

made. They call this, "data reduction" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, 429). Having chosen the conceptual framework, the research questions and the case itself, the emergence of major themes is not simply a case of collected data telling its own story. For example, the discovery of a pedagogical plan in the classroom is not unanticipated given a research question on this specific point. Yin (1998) points out that in an explanatory case study, explanations are constructed by a convergence of data that appear to explain the outcomes. Both setting the stage and the convergence of data are active in my choice of major themes. Yet, surprise discovery, in the form of the students' personal journals, influenced my choices. Two major areas of focus emerged during the course of discovery of recurrent thematic relationships (Merriam, 2001). First, the emerging narrative of Ms. Bunin, the head of the ESL group, and her efforts to encourage and motivate her students to develop cognitive and metacognitive skills in reading English, captured my attention. It answered, positively, the research question of whether there was process evident in the instruction. I admired her direct teaching methods and her detailed lesson plans. She transmitted this approach to her younger colleague, Ms. Dimas, who taught the sixth and seventh grade students.

Second, it was necessary to give voice to the Latino/a students, who remain silent in the majority of research studies. The reader may reasonably ask whether this is an "objective" representation of what went on. For example, homework could have been a focus of the project. After reviewing their class binders, it was apparent that some did their homework fairly regularly, while some did not. Most of this type of work was done in class and on line where the software graded the results. These were then reported to the teacher and entered into her grade book, with no paper trail. The Personal Journals of the eighth graders represented a real "find." They gave voice to one of the most important

written discourses of all, that conversation with oneself about one's world and what it means to the self. Examples from the sixth and the seventh grade Personal Journals, which turned out to be so meaningful from students in the eighth grade, were not available. For the most part, these students were hesitant to express themselves in English and this held true with their journals. Ms. Dimas had to cancel her attempt at a project similar to the Eighth Grade Reading Project since students did not do any work at home, which was a key element in the preparation. As a substitute, she had each student write a haiku poem of their composition which she posted in the hallway outside her door to give them a sense of accomplishment. Haikus, by their nature, are very short. Since Ms. Dimas corrected all the spelling and grammatical errors, there was little to analyze.

Quantitative Design Component: The Reading Tests

For this study, two Spanish language reading tests were administered to measure native language ability. These were given toward the end of the fall semester to coincide with the first state-mandated English tests given to my group of ESL students. Correlation and regression analyses were used to measure whether there was a positive correlation between literacy levels in Spanish and the acquisition of English and whether that correlation has statistically predictive capacity. For this research, I conducted a variation on a correlated group's design in which no control group was used (Vogt, 1999). The school ESL enrichment program is the only formal in-school treatment all students received. Such treatment did not fully explain the variations in student scores on the year-end English reading tests. A working hypothesis was that a significant relationship exists between the L1 reading and L2 reading and that that relationship is positive in outcomes on tests and progress in language acquisition. One goal of this study is to arm the ESL teacher with an additional piece of information about the incoming

students. This tool might form the basis for more differentiated instruction. Students likely to struggle the most with academic reading could receive more thorough and thoughtful language instruction, while those more advanced might receive flexible instruction tailored to the written material in their content classrooms where they may experience difficulty keeping up. My observations in previous school situations in the ESL classrooms had been disappointing in this regard. While the school was making an effort to address LEP students' language learning problems, there was no formal understanding where individual students ranked in their native language, so that the whole area of 'prior knowledge, " considered to be so important by educators (Freeman & Freeman, 2007) was a blank slate.

A principal test that was used is the *Woodcock-Muñoz Language Survey-Revised*. (WMLS-R), which is a group of foundation tests of Spanish containing elements that measure cognitive academic language proficiency (Alvarado, Ruef, & Schrank, (2005). The WMLS-R is based on Cummins' (1984) distinctions between BICS and CALP. Both English and Spanish versions of WMLS-R come with a test manual that provides information regarding reliability. WMLS-R reports a range of $I = 0.84$-0.87 for the 11-13 age group for the Spanish language comprehension test used for this study. They also report a correlation coefficient of 0.89 for grades 5-7 when relating applied language proficiency on their tests to school achievement in reading. The test has been reviewed positively in Mental Measurements Yearbook (Brown & Ochoa, 2007). The Woodcock-Muñoz tests have been adapted from the Woodcock Johnson English language tests and have been used in a number of studies (Solorzano, 2008) such as this, in which the reading part of the language comprehension test was used to measure the extent of lexical

ability. The Woodcock-Muñoz test is a cloze test where students identify and supply the appropriate missing words in a sentence or a short passage.

Two additional reading tests were administered. Thanks to the help of a retired mathematics professor at the University of Guadalajara and a middle school teacher in the public school system, also associated with the University, 30 previously-administered Spanish language tests were obtained, covering the US equivalent of grades six-nine, the sixth year of *La Primaria* and the three *grados* (levels) of *La Secundaria*. The two used for this study, as well as most of the others, are available at a bookstore, *La Casa del Maestro,* in Guadalajara.

Spanish language tests are administered in the Mexican school system to children of ages similar to those at Washburne. The tests at the sixth level of *La Primaria*, for ages 11 and 12, which is the graduation point to *La Secundaria*, or our equivalent of middle school, are comprehensive and cover mathematics, the natural sciences and four aspects of the Spanish language: grammar, text comprehension, and cognitive reasoning ability and writing skills. A typical course of study for a student in public school at this level in Guadalajara is divided into six segments: Spanish, Biology and human reproduction, geography, mathematics, History of Mexico and civics, principally Mexican history and the Mexican Constitution. It is interesting to compare this with a typical schedule for an LEP student at Washburne: Language Arts (ESL), social studies (history of North Carolina and the United States), math, science (geography and population), arts, and other electives. The major difference is the emphasis on the Spanish language in Guadalajara and the absence of any explicit English language grammar instruction at Washburne, even in ESL. Sample questions from reading tests from this study were checked against two accredited Mexican practical guides for students at this level (Guía

Práctica 6, 2007; Guía XXI 6, 2003). Based on these guides the main goal was to choose tests on basic language foundation and comprehension skills. These covered (1) the basics of written language, the alphabet and the parts of speech, (2) syntax and qualifying adjectives and prepositions, (3) interpretation of text, involving a short informative text followed by questions centered around, "What is happening?" "Who is doing it?" and "What are they doing?" (4) identification of what doesn't belong in a semantic grouping, and (5) words in context. Because the Guadalajara tests would be given early in the semester and to the whole ESL class, where the students would know that the results didn't count, their attention span was assumed be short. So, the tests needed to be not more than 45 minutes. In addition, questions were checked for Mexican cultural bias, and around fourteen were removed as a result. Many other Spanish-speaking countries were represented in the class. The grades on the two tests were combined to yield the number of correct answers. The Woodcock-Muñoz Spanish reading test (WMLS-R) was given unaltered as directed in the WMLS-R test booklet. The test emphasizes reading comprehension and correct word identification and the test is administered individually.

 A brief explanation of the English language tests follows as it is easy to confuse the acronyms and what they represent. In the fall of 2008, the IPT (Idea Proficiency Tests of Ballard and Tighe) were being phased out by the school system in favor of the W-APT (WiDA English Language Proficiency Standards of the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin). The 2008-09 school year was a transition year for the school system on testing. In fact, two of the ESL students in this study who had taken their English language tests early, took the IPTs. Scores on the IPTs were adjusted where necessary, to conform to those on the W-APTs.

The ACCESS tests administered for the first time at Washburne in the spring of 2009, are comprehensive annual assessments of English language progress, while the W-APTs are typically only administered to incoming students and last only one hour. The ACCESS scores are machine scored by MetriTech, Inc. and the tests last 2.5 hours. The W-APT results are scored by the administrator of the tests on provided scoring sheets. Raw scores on both the W-APTs given at the beginning of the school year in August/September and the WIDA consortium," ACCESS" tests given toward the end of the school year in March/ April were provided. They were used in the statistical analysis. English language W-APT tests and the ACCESS tests produce scores ranging from 1-6. The scores fall into six categories, of which, roughly, 1-2 indicates beginner, 3-4 intermediate and 5-6 advanced. These scores are supplied to the teachers and the parents with detailed explanations.

Two statistical analyses were performed: First, a correlation analysis to determine whether the results on the Guadalajara tests and the results on the Woodcock-Muñoz test were highly correlated. This addressed the question of whether the Guadalajara tests are valid. Had this not been the case, the results on each test would have been` analyzed separately to attempt to explain the differences. Second, a step-wise multivariate regression with several indicators was performed to determine whether Spanish reading test outcomes at time 1 (year- end 2008) are predictive of English reading scores at time 2 (spring of 2009). The independent variable was Spanish test scores, while the dependent variable was the English reading scores in the spring, 2009. A corollary of the multivariate regression was to ascertain if the results of the English W-APT at time one are predictive of the ACCESS English reading test results at time two.

During the beginning of the observations, there were 30 Latino/a students in the two ESL classes. The number dropped to 29 during the year as a family moved and took their daughter out of the school. The group remained at 29. However, for analysis, two of the tests were discarded, as odd results on these two tests were observed. The answers to part one of the Guadalajara Combined were almost identical and mostly correct by comparison to the results of other students, but they made no attempt to answer part two. The two students in question were pals and often sat together. Most likely they had collaborated in their efforts. Thus, my sample for statistical analysis was 27.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introductory remarks: The purpose of this study was to observe and to
investigate the process of teaching academic English in one ESL middle school
classroom. This research, suggests some ways to improve the teaching process. Data has
been collected from: 1) classroom observations, 2) teacher interviews and post-
interviews, 3) computer software educational programs, 4) an analysis of school and state
documents, 5) an analysis of student-generated documents and 6) a collection and
analysis of English reading test scores. Ninety percent of my time was spent in the natural
setting of the school, its classrooms and its library. The remaining 10% was mostly spent
in the Welcome Center for Foreign Students where incoming students take medical
exams and the shots required under North Carolina law are given. English language oral
and written tests are administered at the Welcome Center where test results are collected
and reviewed. It is where the process of admitting a new student to the school system
takes place. Attended a sixth grade science class and several sessions of a seventh grade
math class, since these were on the schedules of some of my ESL students, gave me a
broader view of the school.

The Four Themes

Four main themes emerged from data organization and analysis. These major themes are:
(1) Classroom Readers, (2) Personal Journal, (3) Eighth Grade Reading Project and (4)
Spanish Language Testing. Each relates directly to the research questions concerning
artifacts, patterns of discourse, planned development of reading skills, and language
testing. These were chosen for the following reasons:

(1) More time was spent in the classroom on some aspect of the Classroom Readers than on anything else. Field notes demonstrated this clearly. They were an example of the teachers working creatively within the structure of the Language Arts Program to build cognitive tools and vocabulary.

(2) The Personal Journal presented a unique opportunity to hear students to speak about their selves.

(3) The Eighth Grade Reading Project was also a natural choice from the aspect of time spent, but, additionally, had the elements of process and planning desired while researching.

(4) The Spanish language test results and their analyses flow directly from the program set forth in the chapter on Methodology.

As set forth in Chapter 1 of this document, no theory is guiding this research. The analytic strategy set forth in *Table 1* below emerged from a variety of sources. During the course of this study, the Review of the Literature, the Cognitive Rationalist School and the Sociocultural School of SLA theory all developed as sources of potential analysis. In this regard, leading proponents of each school, Jim Cummins and Pauline Gibbons respectively, have been chosen. Background knowledge in education and in Linguistics provided the other two lenses: A leading theorist in self-directed learning, Albert Bandura, and M.A.K. Halliday, recognized for his work in structural linguistics. These are the lenses used to help draw out and analyze the key conversations. The term "conversations," has been chosen as an umbrella terminology to emphasize that what is taking place is dialogue and exposition of underlying meaning from an expert panel discussing a piece of student work.

The teachers and the students who are the actors here are introduced first. Then, the elements of the conversation will be described and analyzed within the context of my observations. Finally, the relevance to the research questions is addressed.

Table 1: Elements of the Conversations		
Conversation	**Analytical Strategy**	**Theoretical Lens**
Classroom Readers	Learning through the Social dimension	Gibbons-Sociocultural
The Personal Journal	Text analysis	Halliday-Stylistics
Eight Grade Reading Project	Deconstructing the process of confidence building	Bandura-Self-regulated Learning
Spanish reading testing	Statistical correlation and regression	Cummins-Cognitive Rationalist/Transfer

For reference the research questions are restated:

1. What are the artifacts that students use to mediate their learning?

2. What are the patterns of discourse that take place inside and outside the classroom between the teacher and the student, and between the student and his home and family?

3. What evidence is there that reading development is shaped by Spanish as first language? More specifically, is there evidence that language transfer takes place between the L1 (Spanish) and the L2 (English)?

4. Is there evidence that a process or a plan is in place to develop English language reading skills, and, if so, how can that process be described?

Introducing the Teachers and the Students

A "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) allows readers to experience what the ESL two classrooms and their teachers and students are like and how they fit into the larger school framework is essential in qualitative research. This section introduces the teachers, who guide and control the school lives of their students, and the students themselves.

ESL is tucked into the Language Arts Program and subject to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. No special place in the curriculum has been set aside for it and tailored to its needs. The goal of the Language Arts Program is to prepare for the EOGs (End of Grade tests). The Standard Course of Study is organized to empower the student to pass the language arts section of the EOGs. The lesson plans are organized on a week to week basis to prepare the students for the test reading passages and questions that follow. Lesson plans are designed around the four test categories or test goals: Cognition, Interpretation, Critical Stance and Connections. Ms. Bunin and Ms. Dimas, the ESL teachers, who operate inside the confines of the Standard Course of Study, are allowed by Ms. Benning, the principal, to follow the rules in a flexible way.

Ms. Bunin. Ms. Bunin is the head of the ESL department at Washburne and a thirteen year veteran ESL teacher. This is her second year at the school, but she has been a teacher for thirty-three years. She was born in an Eastern European country into a working class family, where she was the first to get a degree from a Teacher's College. "I was good at languages, she told me, and my uncle was a teacher. I liked to help and share from a young age. So, there was a natural inclination to teach." Her teaching experience in the United States began on the West Coast where she taught for four years young

adults trying for their GED. Next, she moved to ESL for nine years. She misses the more

informal atmosphere of her earlier ESL experience in that she had more freedom from

curriculum restrictions that comes with the North Carolina course of study. "We could

dream up great projects. I liked the opportunity to translate a project from English into

the native language and display the results for everyone, including the parents." She feels

that having a class comprised of students from different countries of national origin, for

example Russia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Singapore and Latin America, gives a teacher more

power since there is only one common language, English, the language of instruction.

Here at Washburne the majority in her class is Latino/a, the dominant varieties of the

Hispanic culture, and the language is Spanish. She is quick to point out that she is strict in

not allowing Spanish in the classroom. She states, that sometimes the students are

ambivalent and don't know which way to go, yet her students are very respectful of the,

"no Spanish in the classroom" rule. Since most of her students are in the eighth grade,

their spoken English is quite good, which as I learned can be deceptive. For example,

Luis is a natural presenter, very gregarious and outgoing. He talks a lot. I discovered that

he and his pal, Miguel, are the two weakest readers in the class.

     Ms. Dimas.   The other ESL teacher is Ms. Dimas. This is her first year at the

school and her first year in this educational system, but she does have one year's teaching

experience in an adjoining state. In college, she concentrated in Journalism and Spanish.

"I didn't get interested in teaching until 2005-06," she told me during our formal

interview. "Since I was interested in the workings of the human mind and good at

Spanish, ESL was a natural spot for me." Ms. Dimas follows that instruction patterns and

the course of study set by the Language Arts Program of which ESL is a part. Her

students are mostly sixth and seventh graders and their English is less well developed. While she favors group discussions of problems and language issues, she recognizes that most of the time, the students are whispering to one another in Spanish. One of her favorite expressions in these situations is "estudiando o hablando (are you studying or just talking)?" It is hard for Ms. Dimas not to use Spanish because she is quite fluent,

> "I probably should have been stricter on the use of Spanish
>
> earlier in the year. Spanish is helpful for cognates and to make
>
> connections. I use Spanish with the kids outside the classroom,
>
> say on the way to lunch. We laugh at my mistakes. I am kind of
>
> an example."

Ms. Dimas follows the plan of study set out by Ms. Bunin. However, she isn't afraid of taking some detours from the proscribed course of study for Language Arts and does use small discussion groups. For example, her students enjoyed her lectures on Haiku poetry and how they differed from the limericks they were used to composing. They collaborated in composing their own Haikus that Ms. Dimas displayed these in the hallway outside her classroom door. Ms. Bunin restricts Spanish in the classroom, while Ms. Dimas is more liberal. Spanish is the language in Ms. Dimas' classroom when students don't understand her lectures or questions, or they simply want to chat.

Ms. Garcia, the sixth grade science teacher, also is part of an informal network that developed at Washburne to offer help to struggling Latino/a students. Ms. Garcia, whose family background is Puerto Rican, grew up in New York City and spent ten years as an elementary school teacher there. After college, she worked in a science museum and science became her major area of interest. Her informal role is that of a counselor to

the Hispanic students, and a communicator to the parents of these students. During our interview Ms. Garcia explained, "Often I get called in to contact the parents even though their teacher may know Spanish. It's not just the language, but a need to culturally relate. If I tell the parents that they need to come to school for a conference, they come. You have to understand that many of them work two jobs and it is difficult to find the time." These informal networks are important at Washburne. Substantial needs exist outside of the formal English language programs for Spanish speaking students. Of the 700 students at Washburne, approximately 189 are listed as Hispanic. No more than 50% of these students test on or above grade level in reading and math, yet the total LEP designated population is only 61. Of this group, 9 are labeled as "monitored," meaning that their English is considered good enough so that they qualify out of ESL. An additional 16 are not in ESL as their parents have chosen not to enroll them and enrollment is optional. This leaves an ESL population of 36, of which 29 are Latino/a.

Ms. Dunlin.   While Ms. Bunin and Ms. Dimas are the ESL instructors, Ms. Dunlin, the media specialist, who is a long-time employee of the school system, first as a librarian and now as the media specialist, is part of an informal network that identifies students struggling with English reading. She is the guardian of the sanctity of the library, especially proper student conduct on her premises, a task of endless frustration as students using the library have difficulty avoiding talking out loud and often. At this juncture, it is appropriate to introduce the library since the ESL students spend so much time there, enjoy it, and are required to use its resources to prepare for the Eighth Grade Reading Project, a creation of Ms. Bunin and the culmination of the year's work. The shelves in the library are full of books, and on the walls hang the flags of many countries.

Sections are divided into fiction and non-fiction and the two banks of facing computers
are the ones that all the students in the school prefer to use, since the computer lab is a
large, cold, undecorated, warehouse–like structure that students associate with timed-
testing. Signs on the wall invite students to "Escape into reading. Be a lifelong learner.
Read, read, read. See your LA (Language Arts) teacher for details." There is a large
poster of the well-known actor Antonio Banderas featuring a quote from him, "Lee!
Apoya a las bibliotecas de América" (Read! Support the libraries of America). The
library is large, but it is cozy and Ms. Dunlin is the mother hen of her domain. The school
principal often has Ms. Dunlin give reading tutorials to struggling readers. These
students, she tells me, can read a passage out loud quite well, but, in fact, understand very
little of what they have read. Her instruction/remediation approach is noteworthy.

First Conversation: Classroom Readers

Ms. Bunin and Ms. Dimas navigate the North Carolina Standard Course of Study,
while emphasizing what they feel is important for the students to learn. In order to further
understand the classroom reader's idea, the concept will be demonstrated with a narrative
account of the actual classroom process.

Ms. Bunin writes the day's agenda on the board: literacy elements of the story
being studied, *The Cay*, by Theodore Taylor, a story of shipwreck, survival and self-
discovery. "Analyze the plot, characterization, mood, tone and what is the effect a
'flashback.' Homework will be discussed and there will be a practice test- a review of
terms and definitions and a discussion of chapters 9 & 10 in *The Cay*."

Ms. Dimas turns on the projector in her classroom, using a
transparency showing the plot diagram in the form of a pyramid in *Figure 2;*

the plot diagram figured prominently in ESL class discussions. This study guide was used when analysis of the parts of a story and synthesis involving the resolution of the conflict in the story were in question. She begins to analyze the structure of the story of Sae Young, a Korean woman who buys a dry cleaning store in Cleveland, gets robbed, and finds a new life and friends in gardening, in a small book of courageous stories by Paul Fleischman entitled *Seedfolks.* She points out the five parts that make up the two slopes of the pyramid diagram: Initiating conflict, rising action, climax, a fall in action and resolution, indicating that they are to be used to analyze the story. Next, she explains the pyramid diagram in simpler terms: "First there is the Introduction, or how it all begins. We find out whom the main characters are and if there is a major conflict. Next, the Rising Action is how the characters begin to solve the major conflict. The Climax is the turning point in the story, and the Falling Action is how the problem is finally solved. Finally, the Resolution is the feeling that the reader is left with after the story is finished. Ms. Dimas tells me,

> We follow the standard course of study for Language Arts. There is a pacing guide. There is some freedom as I can teach in any order. Focus is optional. For example, the poster work that the students are doing now meets many of the course of study objective at the same time. Creativity is somewhat bounded by the language Arts plan. I would like to plan an ESL curriculum to meet the different levels and different needs of the children.

She tried to emulate the Eight Grade Reading Project exercise in her class, but gave up as it was too much pressure for her sixth and seventh grade students.

Ms. Bunin, using the same diagram in her classroom, with *The Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen, an adventure story of survival and personal growth, moves back and forth between language structure and story plot, between the syntax and moral lesson. The students are quiet and somewhat confused. Her instruction on the reading stresses issues of moral conviction, survival and personal growth, or what one might classify as matters of story content and values. At the same time, she introduces language form, and genre, which are structural elements. This mixture is driven largely by the demands of the Language Arts Program. Ms. Dimas emphasizes the development of comprehension skills: the literal (What happened?), the inferential (Did events or responses occur as expected?), and predicting the outcomes. In Ms. Bunin's class, she attempts to clarify the diagram as it pertains to *The Cay*, a story of survival on a desert island and a blinded boy's realization of the worth of a black man he had not respected. She opens with questions to the class. "Tell me," she starts, "how does it begin? Whose point of view do we get? How does Philip begin to solve the major conflict? Compare *The Cay* to other stories you have read." Silence. Perhaps the students just see a large pyramid. It is clear from their answers to that night's homework questions that their attention is drawn to scenes of action and conflict, and what in the story they tend to relate to their personal experiences and not to the lesson plan. For example, Ms. Bunin puts the following question on the homework assignment, "describe the difference between conversations with the mother and the father, and relate it to its place in the story."

One student writes, "I love the way Phillip and his father hide their conversation because that's how a dad and son relationship has to be. I don't like when the mother interrupted the conversation between the dad and the son because the son (Phillip) had to know what is happening around the island." Another student writes, "Philip gets blind and Timothy dies." (This is factually correct, but happens much later in the story). There is no reference to the pyramid (*Plot Diagram*) or any of its particulars.

The teachers' direct instruction approach to the classroom contains its own social dimensions in individual homework, homework correction, and discussion. This is not the same social dimension that the sociocultural approach envisages.

Figure 2: Plot Diagram

The Sociocultural instructional approach. Gibbons (2006), as with all socioculturalists, is highly influenced by Vygotsky and his Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This relates to bridging discourses in an ESL classroom directly as the student, laden with a different cultural overlay, is required to acquire academic English in the classroom. Gibbons calls upon the teacher to create the bridge by scaffolding knowledge within the ZPD in order to raise student awareness to a higher cognitive level. Both Ms. Bunin and Gibbons agree that the interpretation and understanding of written text requires English language knowledge and academic language learning. If the classroom readers are the artifacts that mediate learning in this ESL classroom how might the approach of the teacher and the academic differ? In contrast to direct instruction, learning with interactive instruction is mediated by social interaction. Ms. Bunin views *Hatchet* and *The Cay* primarily as vehicles for analytic and synthetic learning, but Gibbons may view them as important in themselves. Additionally, "progressive discourse" (Gibbons, 2007, 713) requires that certain conditions be met involving exchanges that encourage student participation in problem-solving and an alteration in the power relationships in the classroom in a distinct move away from directed learning. Finally, there are the personal, perhaps moral lessons that can be drawn from the text, where Gibbons and Ms. Bunin agree.

Culturalization, for Gibbons, is the foundation upon which learning is based. This involves bridging the conflicting discourses of the home culture and the school culture. The teacher is still in charge, but assumes a more collaborative role with the student to accomplish this goal. Ms. Bunin's method of direct instruction, with constant attention devoted to keeping her students on task, does not equate to Gibbons' model. Ms. Bunin

would probably not agree that discourse itself is learning (Gibbons, 2006). There is a

good deal of support in the research literature for Gibbons' point of view (Riches &

Genesee, 2006). One of the key points often made is that ELLs have limited exposure to

reading outside of schooling and therefore need instruction that aims at teaching reading

in a broader context. On the other hand, there is the opinion of Wong-Fillmore (1985)

that the most successful ESL classrooms were those which made the greatest use of

teacher-directed activities.

At this point, it might be helpful to revisit the research problem that guides this

dissertation. Before discussing the observations in the content classes that relate directly

to this discussion we need to reiterate that underlying the research questions is the goal of

exploring what teachers actually do in the classroom and to discover the difficulties and

issues, they encounter in the process and how they go about solving them. My

expectation before beginning this research was that good teaching practices would be

identifiable in some clear way. My observations in the content classes of Miss. Garcia's

sixth grade science class and Ms. Moorlock's eighth grade math class convinced me that

this expectation was too simplistic for the reality in the classroom. These are two highly-

regarded teachers in the school. Each faces a different class situation. Observations have

shown that it is the class situation that drives teaching style as much as the teacher's

person pedagogical stance. Different teaching approaches may be appropriate considering

the academic situation encountered.

Eighth Grade Math. Ms. Moorlock is preparing 25 eighth grade students for the

end of grade test in math, one of the two tests (reading is the other) that will determine

whether a student moves on to high school or gets held back. This is a high-stakes

situation and to address it Ms. Moorlock uses a direct, demanding style of instruction.

She even uses a whistle in class from time to time to command attention and keep

students in their seats and focused. Her students are on task almost all the time. For

example, she poses a problem to an individual student in the area of fractions, decimals

and percents drawn from the homework or a new example. That student and the whole

class are required to use their calculators to solve the problem. The student then answers

or stays quiet, and the class then discusses the correct answer. "Don't pay attention to the

charts on the walls or what is on the blackboard," she instructs them, "that's just for

visitors. Focus on solving the problem. Raise your hand if you understand, raise it if you

don't. Work smart, work hard, always improve, give help and get help, be honest." She

gives many "flash" quizzes and drills her students, reinforcing learning of formulas by

repetition.

Sixth Grade Science. Ms. Garcia is facing quite a different situation. She is

introducing fourteen sixth graders to processes in the natural world, when tests and

grades at this point in their middle school lives are not that important. She also hopes to

introduce students to the processes of critical thinking. The population explosion is an

early topic. First, she gives a slide show to illustrate how advances in medicine,

sanitation, and technology have led to longer lives. To illustrate the rapid growth in

population from 1 billion in 1800 to 7 billion in 2009, students gather around a

"population circle," labeled "Earth." One student enters for pre-1800. Then 2 more jump

in for 1930. Finally, seven jump in for 2009. Now all the students are in the circle and

sense the phenomenon of population crowding directly as they bump into one another

and do some pushing and shoving. Students then break into small groups to discuss what they have learned.

The class research project is *Researching and Presenting the Biomes of the World*. Parents and students are required to sign a contract that Ms. Garcia has drawn up, indicating support for the project. Each student is required to conduct and present his or her research, but much of the class work is done at home. In class critical thinking skills are promoted by behaviors that are reinforced intermittently. For example, each class there is something new on the bulletin board entitled, "Scientists at Work." Discussion of these and the animal posters on the walls takes up a great deal of class time. This is difficult for students this age and there is much lost class time. Ms. Garcia makes up for this with one-on-one conferences with the students and also by invitations to parent-teacher conferences to discuss problems.

Latinos reacted quite differently to these two teaching styles. In Ms. Moorlock's math class, Latinos were quite vocal. Some understood the drill that she was subjecting them to, adopted it and participated actively in the questions and answers. Others appeared lost; one student even said in Spanish, "no puedo" (I can't) out of frustration over some aspect of the work. On the other hand, in Ms. Garcia's class Latinos tended to be quiet in class. They knew that they could approach her privately with questions and avoid embarrassment. In addition, she emphasized vocabulary appropriate to each subject and gave them vocabulary lists to help them with the large volume of new vocabulary development.

The content classes of Ms. Moorlock and Ms. Garcia were the surprises that a researcher hopes for. Good teachers can use quite different teaching styles and still be

effective. The academic literature, as discussed in Chapter 2, *The Review of Literature*, cites research studies to support bilingual education (Lindholm-Leary & Borsato, 2006) to increase academic achievement. Other substantial research is marshaled to support a focus on interactive instruction (Genesee & Riches, 2006). The teaching situation itself needs to be taken into account before making any determination of what works best.

The list of artifacts to mediate learning in this ESL classroom, should include the readers, *Hatchet* and *the Cay*, *The Plot Diagram* in Figure1 and the interactive software quizzes. The dialogue between teacher and student and between student and student, stressed by Gibbons, are more subtle artifacts that mediate learning.

Second Conversation: Personal Journal

Ms. Bunin created the student Personal Journal. Ms. Bunin intended these for the individual student's reflection, something of their own creation in a school world where they were constantly required to respond to the demands of others. She intended them as an opportunity for self-discovery, prompting her students with small homework exercises with themes like, "my ten most favorite things," "I am a poem," "a letter to my teacher," and "What I would like to be." Even though she made it clear that there was no grade involved, and maybe because of that, many did not respond, or only responded once or twice, there quite a few empty portfolios. Thirteen students had some entries in their personal journals. Four of the thirteen wrote so little that they provided only fragmentary information about themselves. Many of the thoughts in the nine journals under consideration are typical of any school children of middle school age, such as, "the day my little dog died," or "my first visit to Carowinds" (a local amusement park with roller

coasters and other daredevil rides), or "I will try to get to class on time and not talk to my neighbor."

Larsen Freeman and Cameron (2008) point out that tests, like the Spanish language tests the students took in the Fall, cover only one, formal dimension of language, in this instance, reading, and miss the social dimensions of language, or what Hymes and Cazden (1980) call the narrative use of language, or listening to the narrative voice. I set out to find frequently-mentioned themes. Two frequently-mentioned themes were "family and the evening meal" (five out of nine possible mentions) as one and "arriving in the US and moving" (eight out of nine possible mentions) as another. Here was an opportunity to listen to that narrative use of language. The students mentioned below had comments in both categories. Even though misspelled words and grammar problems were corrected by Ms. Bunin and Ms. Dimas, these excerpts are presented as they were written, with some missing periods supplied for easier reading. I have chosen four students out of the group to quote. They are different personalities, yet, surprisingly, their choice of examples and expression of feelings are very similar. One can feel the intensity of the emotions these kids are experiencing in their writing.

The Students. The following short sketches of student personalities are taken from impressions formed over six months of observation, checked with those of their teachers. **Carmen** is serious and studious. She is the best student in the ESL class. In the Battle of the Books, in honor of Dr. Seuss's birthday, she scored second in the entire school. She is often described by the teachers as highly motivated. **Claudia** is vivacious and well-liked by the girls. She is upper middle as a student and appears to be an attentive listener in class. **Ramon** has a good conversational grasp of English, yet he always seems

to behind in his homework. He is full of excuses. He wants to succeed and be viewed as a good student, but somehow he falls short. He is often discouraged and has to be prodded to participate in class. His reading is not up to median level in the class. He is moody and often feels the need to call his mother during class. He needs to feel connected to his family. **Silvia** and her cousin are both ESL students. They mostly keep to themselves. Writing is difficult for her. Although she struggles as a student, she displays a positive attitude toward class and school. **Veronica** is taciturn. One senses that she is struggling with difficult family issues and she struggles with issues related to her weight. She does not participate fully in the class and it is difficult for Ms. Bunin to draw her into discussions. **Miguel** is the most vivacious member of this eighth grade class. His conversational English is the most fluent. Miguel would like to be best friends with all the boys. When he can he moves around the room engaging students in conversation and often has be instructed to sit quietly in his seat. His reading is poor and he scores low on the English reading tests, which seems such a surprise given his oral language skills. **Andres** is a quiet, average student. He seems very attentive, yet is not a contributor in class. He does not seek out friends among his classmates in ESL, although I see him in the corridor with other Latinos.

Carmen Why *my* Dad left Honduras. Because he was in a lot of problems with people everywhere when he was really young. He got a job in a bakery that they just pay 5 dollars an hour. That's how he bring all of us. First his uncle, then his brother. Then they bring my older brother. Then in 1998 my mother and me when I was just 4 years. Next was my second brother. I get more problems than any other member of my family, because I wasn't that strong like my brother or my parents. I didn't run that fast and

immigration caught me, but later let me go. When I was in Honduras all my family eat together. Here, we never eat together except on weekends. I really love when we all eat together. Used to eat dinner at 10 pm, but I eat at 7 pm. All the family have to eat together at the same time. *My* life was so good in my beautiful country, Honduras. Very happy with my great-grand-parents and my grandmother. But one day I got the baddest news of all my life. Have to separate from my family in Honduras and move to the USA.

Claudia: My experience and my family's experience. "I remember the most that we moved a lot. I lived in the house on Mango Streets (here the reference is to an autobiography by Sandra Cisneros entitled, *The House on Mango Street*. All the girls in the class had read this book either in Spanish or in English, although it was not required reading. The first chapter of the book is about moving from place to place in Chicago in the author's youth and finally settling into a memorably-described, dilapidated house on Mango Street). We didn't have to pay the rent. Dinner in my house. Family eats together on the weekend but on the weekdays we can eat anytime. Sometimes I eat by myself because sense I'm the last one to get home from school when my Mom is finished cooking the food we eat. And we don't really call it dinner because for me dinner is when you have dinner together with your family. I am a happy Mexican girl. I dream that someday my brother would come alive and I could be with him. My brother calling me far away up in the sky to come with him. I see myself in the mirror being prettier than others. I want to be the only perfect girl that gets boy's attention. My reflections on school- I would pay attention more. I will also read more books. I would bring all my materials to class and don't forget my class work. And I will also follow the rules. And not try to talk to much with my friends in class.

Ramon: Coming to America. I flew with my Mom from Ecuador. Then my father met us rented a van in Miami. We stayed at my uncle's for a week. Another uncle called and said Charlotte was great. It was cheap. Move into an apartment save money for a house. After 3 years-bought a house. And my dad started to buy everything knew for the house. Then my dad brought my sister and my mothers grandparents from Ecuador. Now there are 8 people in my family." Dinner. The process. Brothers and sisters set the table. My Dad serves. Main dish is ceviche. Call the family-grandmother, grandfather, Dad, Mom, little brother. Children take turns doing the dishes. Were supposed to eat together and the same thing, but we don't Mom eats milk and bread. Dad eats meat. Me and my brother eat ceviche."

Silvia: one year ago, I moved from Rhode Island. For me it was sad because I was moving from my hometown. I couldn't let go to everything because I knew everything was gonna change on that time. I couldn't imagine the last day in Rhode Island I cryed and everybody did. I only remembered when my new neighboor move into the old apartment were we lived for 11 years. I remembered that he gave me a flower for a good bye. That was sad, but in that moment I grabe a book and say, "this flower will go with me were-ever and when we get to NC I will put it here inside this book to remembered you as my friend." Every weekend old friends from RI (Rhode Island) visit us + other friends. My dad and the rest of the mens are cooking. The women are talking about the good old times in RI. When my mom is cooking I like to help her do a traditional soup for Honduras-Sopa de Caracol."

The Personal Journal is our only substantial glimpse of a private world with an influence on behavior in the ESL classroom. Here is an important example of dialogue,

which was written, taking place inside the classroom as a class assignment, illuminating the student's life—a verbal and emotional discourse taking place in a student's head linked to a life outside of the classroom. This represents a partial answer to the research question concerning a review of the students' discourses. Ely (2001, 418-419) describes what these students have written as the "narrative mode of decontextualized language." These are stories giving linguistic expression to first-hand experience, in this case about past events, wherein the storyteller seeks to order and to make sense of his experiences.

Halliday, in *Language as a Social Semiotic* (1978, 108-109) refers to such messages as "texts", defining text in the following way, "Let us begin with the concept of *text,* the instances of linguistic interaction in which people actually engage: whatever is said or written, in an operational context, as distinct from a citational context like that of words listed in a dictionary." For Halliday, the discourse level of any texts, such as the ones set out above from the ESL students, is equal to its message. The ties that bind a text together, Halliday refers to as its cohesion. Yet, to decode the message one must examine the functions of language specific to the text (Halliday, 1993). This he divides into three parts: The *Textual message*, or the unity of what is written; *the Ideational message*, the theme as seen in the representation of the writer's experience; and *the Interpersonal*, or the roles of the speaker and the audience. A complete text has been formed out of two separate entries in the personal journal of each student. The two distinct pieces do not fit together awkwardly; each student's *textual message* seems to hang together. While the surface messages about moving, the home country, and family are different, the deeper message encoded in each is the same. On the surface, the *interpersonal message* here is between the teacher, who suggested the exercise, and the

student who writes it. Yet, the author is not reaching out to the teacher or beyond her to the reader. Beyond the "I" and "we" pronouns, there is no "you." This text is a monologue, akin to a diary entry.

In these student discourses, it is the *ideational message* that dominates. Each student participant is structuring his or her experience in terms of the loss or absence of something. Silvia regrets the move from her first home in the US to Charlotte. Ramon is sad because he misses the closeness of the family evening meal. Claudia mourns the loss of her brother. Carmen mourns the loss of her beautiful Honduras.

These are inner dialogues and intra-family dialogues. They enable the Latino/a students to express a deep ambivalence about their place in this world, and it is arguable that neither student interviews nor parent interviews would have been as revealing as these passages. There is longing expressed in these texts for lost country and for family left behind. One of the important purposes of this case study is to try to paint a picture of these students as individuals. These excerpts from their Personal Journals help to provide at least one side of that. One has to recognize that another explanation of the *ideational message* for these texts is anger, not sadness. However, if it were true, evidence of a message to someone, to some audience that might right this wrong may have presented itself.

Third Conversation: The Eighth Grade Reading Project

Ms. Bunin describes the eighth grade reading project in the following way:

> Research is driven by the demands of the high school, emphasized Ms.
>
> Bunin, and the need for rigor. Students with limited English proficiency
>
> always fear such an exit project, but they can do it. In spite of the initial

resistance in the classroom, they put a lot of energy into the project. Until the writing stage, students had to do a lot of work at home. Each student picked an adult at the school that would evaluate their work and guide their efforts. This outside help was given very generously. The really weak moment was the pre-delivery practice. They wanted to memorize the whole presentation. I noticed in their, "reflections" that time management had been a big problem. They have trouble setting dates. But, for example, Carmen blossomed from the process, while Luis is a natural presenting on his feet as he gets a lot of practice in his church. I would love to do it again. How else will they develop these skills?

An additional weak moment for the students was getting started and choosing a topic. Resources, reference books, such as an Encyclopedia, an Atlas or the World Almanac, had to be identified in the library, and the difference between a biography and an autobiography had to be explained. In the beginning, students simply picked up the books and leafed through, looking at the pictures.

Since each presentation was to involve a poster presentation to display the research, another issue was how to create a poster. These posters are tri-fold display boards, 36 by 48 inches, with the main and central panel 24 inches wide. In addition to gathering some representative pictures and some pertinent quotes, Ms. Bunin drilled each student on how to identify the issue or problem, the background, a graph to emphasize the extent of the problem, what the critics say, and whether there is a solution, or a conclusion. They needed this on their poster which would be put on the wall in the library for the whole school to see, and in their short speech, presenting their work to a jury of

faculty members. These are the topics of each student and their central topic sentences for their posters:

> Carmen: *Muhammad Ali.* "After being called "the greatest" in boxing Muhammad Ali is now fighting for his life against Parkinson's disease. Ali has also become one of the best-know athletes in the world."
>
> Miguel: *Wildfires*. "Wildfires are driven by variable environmental conditions fuel load, wind, weather, topography.
>
> Verónica: *Alcoholism*. "Alcohol abuse causes extensive damage to your health, your loved ones and society"
>
> Claudia: *AIDS*. "Aids is a virus caused by a virus called HIV"
>
> Luis: *Illegal immigration*. "Many illegal immigrants come to the United States to get a better life for themselves, and their families. I chose this topic because I am interested in learning about illegal immigration."
>
> Silvia: *Obesity of Young People*. "Obesity causes heart disease, type II diabetes and different types of cancer."
>
> Andrés: *UFOs*. "Unidentified flying objects have been seen all over the world."

Each presentation poster had six or seven pictures, one graph, the thesis statement and perhaps a cartoon or other visual aid. After the presentations, Ms. Bunin asked each student to write their "Reflections," on the project and the process and what they thought they got out of it. Only three of the seven responded which could be interpreted in many

ways, perhaps lack of interest in the process or the feeling that the project was finished. Of the three, Claudia, who had chosen to research AIDS, was the most forthcoming. "It was a learning experience, she wrote, because I got to look back and remember some parts. I believe that I did well when I was showing the pictures. To the question, "What would you do differently?" she answered, "I would of tried to look at the people more often and tell them more details and be more into my project." Carmen, who had chosen Muhammad Ali, responded, "This project was really valuable for me because I learn a lot of things and will be prepare. I think I really got into the topic. I learn how to pronounce new words and they're meaning." Finally, Silvia wrote, "I learn that you need to be active and don't eat junk food, so you won't become obese."

The Eighth Grade Reading Project represents an affirmative answer to whether a process or plan for English literacy development exists in the ESL program. In the three other middle schools of my observations of ESL instruction there never was a plan in operation for the year's course of study; constant change and innovation to try and capture the attention of the students was the order of the day. Coming at the end of the year at Washburne, the project represented the completion of a structure of cognitive building blocks put in place earlier in the year. This structure provided a foundation for the beginning to the transition to self-directed learning. Ms. Bunin observed that self-directed work is very hard, even with extensive coaching. Concentration is hard to sustain, especially in the absence of a plan. While she was generally very pleased with the work, her "biggest disappointment was their lack of curiosity." One cannot help but notice that the topic sentences for most of the posters are literal statements of fact, lacking any interpretation. However, Carmen emphasized the unfolding drama and irony

of fame and deteriorating health in the story of Muhammad Ali, while Luis gave his explanation of why he chose illegal immigration as a topic. This, too, is evident in the "reflections" of the students. Only Carmen observed that the project gave her preparation for future work. Not even half bothered to respond at all.

  This Eighth Grade Reading Project is an example of what Jacobs (2006, 113-135) calls, "mapping active literacy." There are a number of stages to this mapping process once the topic has been chosen: first, determining the essential questions that the topic poses; next, exploring the content; then, determining what skills and materials will be required to complete the project; finally, assessing what the reporting of the project (written or oral) means, including the editing of the student's work. Eggen and Kanchak (1996, 244-247) explore the same process in the following five step sequence: (1) present the question and form a hypothesis, (2) gather the data, (3) display the data in an organized form, (4) analyze the data, (5) conclude by examining the hypothesis and generalize, if possible, as a means of closure. Ms. Bunin, in her fashion, is following the advice of experts.

  Self-Regulated Learning and the Eighth Grade Reading Project. Theory is a bridge between research and findings. Bandura's (1986) theory of Self-Regulated learning as it has been refined and expanded on by Zimmerman and Schunk (2001) and, Zimmerman (2002) to guide me in analyzing The Eighth Grade Reading Project. Self-regulated learning is the ability in the school context to do independent work, and Schunk (2001) has defined this in the following manner:

    Self-regulated learning (SRL) refers to learning that results

    from students' self-generated thoughts and behaviors that

are systematically oriented toward the attainment of their

learning goals (125). Paris & Paris (2001) in their definition

of self-regulated learning focus on the metacognitive

aspects of the behavior: "Self-regulated learning (SLR) as

the three words imply, emphasizes autonomy and control

by the individual who monitors, directs, and regulates

actions toward goals."(89).

According to Zimmerman, self-regulated learning involves three clear phases: planning

and forethought, the efforts to act in a self-regulated way, and self-reflection to complete

the cycle and prepare for the next new effort. Scaffolding that teachers employ in the pre-

self-regulated learning phase gives way to advice and correction of error once self-

regulation has been achieved.

Bandura and Schunk (1981, 595) conducted a study of the ability of school

children to solve math problems. They found that real interest in solving the problems

could be stimulated by setting out proximal goals. "Children who set themselves

attainable sub-goals progressed rapidly in self-directed learning, achieved substantial

mastery of mathematical operations, and heightened their perceived self-efficacy and

interest in activities that initially held little interest for them." Ms. Bunin's exhibits an

understanding of the importance of setting proximal tasks for self-regulated learning, so

as to create small victories and to not overwhelm students with the distant goal of the

final presentation. For example, for each student engaged in The Eighth Grade Reading

Project, she provided a step–by–step model:

(1) explain the background of the issue problem

(2) decide what is the nature and extent of the problem and illustrate it with a graph

(3) Restate the problem and show what the critics have said

(4) Refute what these critiques have said, stating your responses

(5) Is there a solution and,

(6) What are your conclusions? Now, formulate a topic sentence to set the stage for your presentation.

At the beginning of the school year with the adventure stories, *The Hatchet and the Cay*, Ms. Bunin forced her students to analyze and deconstruct these texts, attempting to lay the groundwork for procedures and cognitive tools to attack the year-end work. It would be fanciful to say that Ms. Bunin has created a class of self-regulated learners. Using a metaphor relating to preparing an airplane for flight, she has gotten her class out of the hanger, but they are only barely on the runway.

Self-efficacy is a theory of motivation developed by Bandura (1997) to explain the importance of focusing forward on goal setting, maintaining focus and evaluating progress are in the arena of academic achievement (Schunk & Miller, 2002). Bandura defines self-efficacy in the following manner, "Perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs on one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (p. 2). Ms. Bunin's frustration with her students' lack of intellectual curiosity—their passive and unmotivated approach to the leaning process— might be explained by the absence of a feeling of self-efficacy. "Only Carmen," she said wistfully, "blossomed from this process." Using the information from the student's

personal portfolios, and applying the concept of self-efficacy as a key to motivation, one can speculate that this might be a factor holding them back, or at least, one of the factors, besides language, that is holding them back.

The research question addressed here is whether there is evidence of a plan or process in place to develop English reading skills. The process can be described as a step-by-step developmental process aimed at equipping these ESL students for the demands of high school and developing self-efficacy within the larger goal of self-directed learning. Zimmerman (1998) contends that two sources are always present in the developmental process of academic self-regulation: (1) social support, provided by adults such as teachers and parents, and peers or classmates and (2) self-directed practice. The Eighth Grade Reading Project exhibits both of these features for which Ms. Bunin provided modeling, corrective feedback, and monitoring. Each poster presentation and its preparation provided the necessary self-directed practice. She made sure that students perceived it as both an individual and a class effort thus engendering a spirit of collective responsibility and motivation.

Fourth Conversation: Spanish Language Testing and the Statistical Analysis

The Access end-of-year English language tests that were administered at Washburne and elsewhere in the school system are part of the WIDA (World-class Instructional Design and Assessment) English Language Proficiency Standards program, developed under the auspices of the University of Wisconsin Center for Education. The State of North Carolina became a WIDA state in 2008, but the full WIDA program was not in effect in the 2008-2009 school year. The heart of WIDA is its proficiency standards, linking language knowledge and content knowledge in five levels of English language

proficiency, ranging from Entering to Bridging. The final level six, called "Reaching," is

the gateway to full English language proficiency. The WIDA ACCESS test results from

the spring of 2009 are the ones analyzed in this dissertation.

A correlation and regression analysis of four reading skills tests, two English and two

Spanish, designed to identify the reading skill levels of middle school students. The W-

APT basic skills English reading test was given in August/September of 2008, while its

successor test, the "ACCESS" test of the WIDA consortium adopted by the school

district during the school year, was given in March/April of 2009. The English language

tests were supervised by the school administration, but graded at a test headquarters' site.

The Guadalajara Combined and the Woodcock Muñoz Spanish language tests were given

in November, 2008. They were administered and scored by this researcher. As indicated

in Table 1 there is a significant correlation between the two Spanish language tests

(r=.60).

As indicated in Table 2, a Pearson correlation was calculated for the relationship

between the Combined Guadalajara Tests and the Woodcock Muñoz test. A strong

positive correlation was found (r (25) =.596, p<.01) indicating a significant linear

relationship between the two variables. A scatter plot depicting this relationship is shown

in Figure 3. Each data point, on the scatter plot in Figure 3 represents a student's scores

simultaneously. A scatter plot reveals the presence of an association between the two

variables. The more the data points cluster about an imaginary straight line, the more

powerful is the relationship. The data points, collectively, take on an elliptical form,

which suggests that, as a general rule, the values of one test are "associated" with the

values of the other. This result suggests that the Guadalajara Tests exhibit construct
validity (Vogt, 1999).

FIGURE 3: Scores on two Spanish reading tests

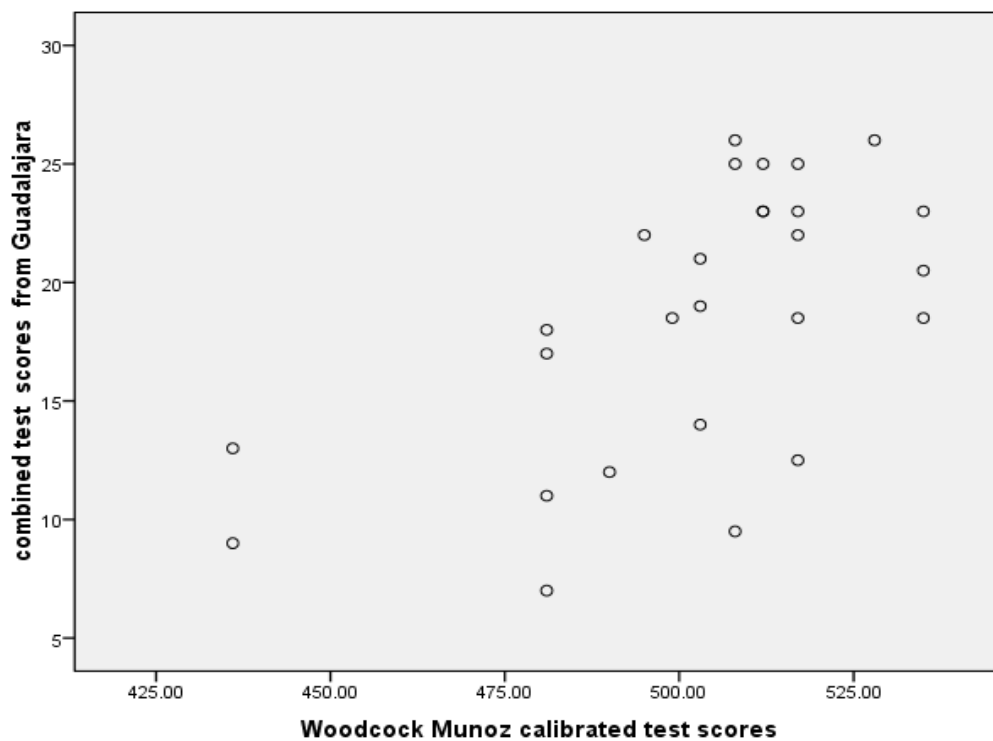TABLE 2: Intercorrelations in ESL Tests in Spanish and English (n=27)

Variable	1	2	3	4
Combined Guadalajara		.596**	-.019	.327
Woodcock Muñoz			.201	.384*
W-APT				.630**
Access				

*p<.05   **p<.01

TABLE 3: Means and Standard Deviations

	M	*SD*
Combined Guadalajara	18.59	5.70
Woodcock Muñoz	502.48	24.92
W-APT	14.00	6.24
Access	351.07	25.14

A standard multiple regression was calculated predicting scores on the Access tests based on the Spanish language tests, Guadalajara combined, Woodcock Muñoz, and the W-APT English test. A significant regression equation was found (F (3, 23) = 8.181, $p<.001$) with an adjusted R^2 of .453. A further hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed (Table 4) with the Access test again as the dependent variable. In step 1 below the W-APT raw scores (the first English reading test) was entered as the independent variable. The adjusted R^2 was .372. In step 2 both W-APT and the Combined Guadalajara tests were the independent variables. The adjusted R^2 was .471. Overall, the full regression equation would explain roughly 50% of the variance in ACCESS scores. Further examination of the standard coefficients shows that two of the variables, W-APT scores ($p<.001$), and the Guadalajara combined test ($p<.05$) are a significant predictor of Access scores. The partial correlation coefficients indicate that a unit increase in the first reading test scores would result in a 0.63 unit of increase in the ACCESS scores. Descriptive statistics of means and standard deviations are supplied in Table 3. The large size differences in the test scores require the transformation to standard scores for the multiple regression analysis.

For this sample, the hypothesis that the Guadalajara and the Woodcock Muñoz tests would be highly correlated was confirmed. However, the hypothesis that the Spanish language tests administered at the beginning of the school year would be a significant predictor of outcomes at the end of the year did not turn out to be entirely correct. The Guadalajara combined was significant, but the Woodcock Muñoz was not. However, the regression analysis did indicate that a student's English reading skill level at the beginning of the school year was by far the most significant predictor of his or her reading scores at the end of the year.

TABLE 4: Stepwise Estimates of Coefficients for Multiple Regression on Access

	B	SeB	β	T	P	Partial	Part
Step 1							
Raw scores on first	15.825	3.906	.630	4.052	<.0001	.630	.630
Reading test							
Step 2							
Raw scores on first	15.987	3.587	.636	4.457	<.0001	.673	.636
Reading test							
Combined Guadalajara	8.530	3.587	.339	2.378	<.05	.437	.339

Implications of testing results.

Because the sample in the English and Spanish testing is small (*n*=27), it is easy to look at the two significant findings in more detail, on a case by case basis. The first major finding is that the scores for English achievement at the beginning of the school year are a very strong predictor of the scores at the end of the year (Beta=.64). Taking the lowest scoring students at the beginning of the year and comparing them to the lowest scoring students at the end of the year, one would expect a significant match. In fact, that

is the case. Six scores were used; there is a good cut-off at that point before a jump to the

next highest set of scores. Of the six students, four, or 66%, were low on the first English

test and low on the second. Of the other four (two on the first and two on the second were

not the same); two students maintained their English reading skill position, while two

improved significantly. All of the students began the year in the lower three proficiency

levels (Novice low-Intermediate Low) based on the following W-APT six categories used

to measure literacy proficiency levels:

1. Novice Low

2. Novice high

3. Intermediate low

4. Intermediate high

5. Advanced

6. Superior

It is interesting to match the six students on the first test with their scores on the

Guadalajara Combined Spanish test. Three of the six scored at the bottom in Spanish

reading. However, two scored near the top and one was in the middle. This result

indicates that one must be cautious in assuming that good reading skills in Spanish can

overcome weak English language skills.

The second significant finding, that the scores on the Guadalajara Combined

Spanish tests are a good predictor of success on the end-of-year English reading tests

(Beta =.34), can be observed in more detail by taking the top five performers on the

Guadalajara tests and examining how they did on the Access tests at the end of the year,

adjusting for their performance at the beginning of the year. Again, the results are

revealing. One student was "Superior" at the beginning of the year, scored very high in

Spanish, and finished near the top of the Access range (shown below) with a 5.0. A

second student, who was a "Novice High" at the beginning of the year, scored the same

on Access at the end of the year, showing no progress. The other three, including one

Latina who scored "Intermediate Low" on the first test, did very well on the Access test.

She scored 3.8. The remaining two scored 4.0 and 5.0 respectively. This represents a 60%

positive result for Spanish proficiency as an indicator of reading success in this slice of

the sample.

Proficiency Level for Access

1.0 Entering

2.0 Beginning

3.0 Developing

4.0 Expanding

5.0 Bridging

Cummins' two principal hypotheses as they relate to this statistical analysis are

the interdependence hypothesis (Cummins, 1991) and the threshold hypothesis

(Cummins, 2000). The interdependence hypothesis states that there is a common

underlying proficiency between languages that allows for transfer from an L1 to an L2

to take place, given that there are certain levels of competence achieved in the L2. The

results here seem to support both hypotheses. A Spanish language reading test,

Guadalajara Combined, was a significant predictor of English reading scores. In

addition, those students who were weak in English at the beginning of the school year

turned out to be weak at the end of the year. They had not reached Cummins' threshold.

Genesee, Giva, Dressler and Kamil (2006) discuss at some length these two Cummins'

hypotheses in light of the research literature. They conclude that the test literature

reflects mixed results on Cummins' claims. As an example of how complex this issue is,

Royler and Carlo (1991), in a test situation more sophisticated but similar to this, which

sought to test the validity of Cummins' hypotheses on language transfer, found results

similar to the results in this study. The subjects were Puerto Rican students enrolled in a

transitional bilingual program and the researchers set out to test what would be the best

predictor of English reading skills in the sixth grade for students tested a year earlier in

their fifth grade year. Testing was in English and Spanish reading and in English and

Spanish listening skills. Spanish reading skill in time one was the best predictor of

English reading skills in time two. Interestingly, English reading skill in time 1 was not a

significant predictor, quite the opposite from the findings of this study.

The research question addressed here is whether there is evidence of transfer from

the L1 (Spanish) to the L2 (English). Statistical analysis has found such evidence. But, it

would be wrong to infer that good and even superior Spanish reading skills equate to

superior English reading development. In fact, the greatest predictor of success in

English reading is not good Spanish, but a good head start in English reading ability.

One can infer that poor English reading skills can hold back a student significantly.

Based on classroom observations at Washburne, fluent English speaking skills can mask

a student's surprisingly low performance in reading.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter will explicate the results of the study and what they mean in the ESL classroom. This study explored an ESL classroom using a case study as the method of analysis, what Stake (2000) describes as an *instrumental case study*. While the analysis of the ESL classroom at Washburne has an intrinsic importance as an in-depth look at the practices in one middle school ESL program, its purpose is to highlight issues in ESL instruction with implications for differentiating instruction in the classroom in order to prepare middle school students for the demands of high school. Classroom observations and teacher interviews were the principal data sources. An in-depth description of the teachers, the ESL class and classroom setting was presented to give a rich description of what was observed and to establish the foundation for the results. This summary will touch briefly on the issues that emerged in the Review of Literature and how differing theoretical stances can be accommodated in the classroom. Next, the research questions are addressed in regards to what have we learned that adds to our knowledge. Finally, the longer-term issues that are perhaps most interesting—the reading gap and the classroom/home cultural divide—are discussed at greater length.

Research into the academic literature reveals a split in best teaching practices in ESL classrooms into two schools, the Cognitive Rationalist and the Sociocultural, a split essentially over epistemology, or how students come to learn. The Cognitive Rationalist School emphasizes one's first language as the natural bridge to the second

and favors bilingual instruction. The Sociocultural school views language learning as embedded in the culture of the target language and favors classroom discourse as a means of transmitting of language and knowledge. This study shows that the dichotomy does not survive the exigencies of the classroom.

These research findings involved four subject areas: the role of the Classroom Readers, the Eight Grade Reading Project, the Personal Journal and the results of the Spanish reading tests. Chapter 4, *Findings*, contains the interpretations and analyses of each though the lens of a theory appropriate for each subject area: *Sociocultural theory*, *Self-efficacy and Self-directed learning*, *Stylistics* and *Cognitive Transfer*. The key findings lie in two areas: (1) evidence of cognitive transfer from Spanish reading to English reading; knowledge of an L1 may well be enhanced by knowledge of an L2 and (2) support for the proposition that the home, family and linguistic and cultural and the school can present barriers to integration into the school community

Implications from the Research Questions

1. *What are the artifacts that students use to mediate learning*?

Computer software as a reciprocal teaching device, overall, is the most obvious artifact that mediates student learning. Plato Learning and the software tests attached to the classroom readers, *Hatchet* and *The Cay* are the main computer-based tools in the classroom; other computer tools, such as Accelerated Reader, are used extensively in the school library (Appendix A). Students spend as much time both in the classroom and in the library working with the interactive programs available to them for quizzing their understanding of books as they do in lecture time from the teacher. This is much more the case with the eighth grade students than with the younger students. As Ms. Bunin

remarked, there is a real question as to whether this furthers the goal of better reading comprehension relative to the time spent.

2. *What are the patterns of discourse that take place inside and outside the classroom between the teacher and the student and between the student and his home and family?*

Between the teacher and her students, instruction in the English language and in academic English reading skills is organized primarily around the interpretation of the classroom readers. The preparation and accomplishment of projects such as writing a haiku poem for the sixth and seventh grade students or the Eight Grade Reading Project and Presentation for the older students is an example of a distinctive discourse organized around the communicative aspects of language. We get a small glimpse with the Personal Journal of another primary discourse.

Interviews with Ms. Garcia give a glimpse of how, in the hands of a Latina teacher, there can be more of a three way discourse with parents, student and teacher involving school and individual academic issues. Yet barriers, not only language barriers, but parents' and teachers' time constraints, put a severe limit on this kind of discourse.

The remedial discourse Ms. Dunlin engages in with struggling students focusing on English grammar, while unscheduled, is important as her kind of dialectic is the only opportunity many students have to explore the structure of the language they are trying to learn. Ms. Dunlin runs the various book reading projects in school and oversees testing for comprehension with Accelerated Reader from Renaissance Learning (Appendix A). There are 2,000 books in its database, including all of the 200 books available to students at Washburne. She is in charge of a sixth grade media course, and often works with

seventh and eighth grade students that are referred to her tutorial by their teachers or by

the principal. She knows all the ESL students quite well. "Students lack experience

reading, she says. Many don't like to read, so there is no background on which to draw in

Spanish or in English." For her tutorials, Ms. Dunlin relies on the pretest/post-test

tutorials found on the Texas Center for Academic Excellence (TxCAE: see Appendix A).

While there is an extensive menu of tutorials in language skills to draw from at TxCAE,

the two she relies on to give her insight into a student's reading problems are

"Cause/Effect," and "Author's Purpose and Point of View." First, the student either

answers a series of questions or reads a passage and answers the questions that follow.

Answers are graded by the program and Ms. Dunlin goes over the mistakes with the

student. The student takes a post-test, and, again, a review of mistakes follows.

According to Ms. Dunlin, conjunctions and short phrases, like, "because," "despite,

"without," and "to (in order to)," tend to give Latino/a students difficulty. Bielenberg &

Wong Fillmore (2004) express a similar opinion when referring the difficulties that may

lurk inside a simple math problem,

> The most important information is contained in a conditional
>
> construction (*given that*) that English language learners are quite
>
> unlikely to have encountered before…Prepositional phrases are
>
> also difficult for English language learners (47).

Ms. Dunlin is using a bottom-up processing strategy (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain,

2000) with her reading tutorials and the development of specific word-in-context

language knowledge. She is teaching language knowledge, such as grammar and

vocabulary, as well as reading strategies, since her aim is to get them to attack the

written text with understanding. The ESL teachers, on the other hand, driven by the demands of the Language Arts Program, are using authentic texts, in this case fifth and sixth grade widely-recommended reading books, and deconstructing them to meet the requirements of the program. Teachers are imparting discourse knowledge, linking it to prior knowledge, while keeping student interested by imparting a purpose for reading. Their end goal is not only to prepare their students for the end-of-year tests, but to help them to interpret and understand text. This is more of a top down process. Joining these two approaches together more formally would seem a logical blend. Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, (2000, 119) suggest that this, in fact, is happening in education research, if not yet in schools, "More recently, approaches that take an interactive view of reading require an integration and combination of both top-down and bottom-up approaches to describe the reading process."

Ms. Dunlin's reading comprehension routine seemed very constructive and well-organized. It is a shame that such exercises are ad hoc and organized on the periphery of the instructional program. One cannot help but ask whether reading instruction could have been better organized and implemented for the ESL students. Finding that they are having difficulties when the final testing occurs is rather late. It is more beneficial to stop and take a hard look at progress with the aid of some well-thought out indicators at intervals during the semester.

> 3. *What evidence is there that reading development is shaped by Spanish as first language? More specifically, is there evidence that language transfer takes place between the L1 (Spanish) and the L2 (English)?*

There is evidence of transfer from the L1 to the L2 in the statistical results of correlating the Spanish and the English reading tests. Skill in Spanish reading is a solid, but not overwhelming predictor of success in English. English reading levels at the beginning of the school year are a much stronger predictor of English reading accomplishment at the end of the year.

Spanish language use is limited in the classroom both by fiat and by convention; fiat as the ESL teachers do not permit it, and convention in that the students with a better speaking command of English in the eighth grade appear to take pride in using English to solve school problems. No code switching was observed within sentences or strings of sentences. Here code switching is being defined in a restrictive manner as speakers switching from one language to another within the space of one conversation. Myers-Scotton (1993) would not make this restrictive distinction. In her opinion, the line of demarcation in code switching is drawn where language is introduced in a non-customary manner, as a signaling device to participants that change in customary behavior is desired. Fishman (1972), on the other hand, adheres to a 'binary–choice" model that requires that for certain topics, certain groups of interlocutors will require that only one of the available languages be used. Kells (2004) believes that code switching is a function of identity and social solidarity. Perez and Torres-Guzman (2002) identify the forms of code switching as reflections of norms operating within a speech community. Gumperz and Hernandez-Chevez (1972, 94) come the closest to the dialogue observed in concluding, "English serves to introduce most new information, while Spanish provides stylistic embroidering to amplify the speaker's intent."

Specifically, the use of Spanish in the classroom and in the library took three distinct forms: (1) exclamations, commands, or short phrases. Examples of these are: "Ya voy" (I'm coming); "Cuidado" (Watch your step [meaning that you could get in trouble]); "Esa mera" (That one! [pointing]);" Bájate ya (Get down right now); "Ponlo allí" (Put it over there). (2) switching of codes among eighth grade students exhibiting a formal order structure, as indicated above; for the discussion of classroom work, English, for the discussion of personal matters, Spanish. (3) the sixth and seventh grade students. Because the Woodcock Muñoz Spanish reading test is administered on a one-on-one basis the administrator of the test has the opportunity to talk to each of these students for at least 30 minutes. Most possess a good command of spoken English. Yet, they use this ability in a very limited way in the classroom, almost always to respond to a teacher's question or to ask for further explanation of a lesson point. There is a language confidence that the eighth grade students possess that their younger peers do not. It would be interesting for academic research to explore further the dimensions of this divide and what implications it might have for instruction.

4. Is there evidence that a process or a plan is in place to develop English language reading skills and, if so, how can that process be described?

There is a process at work in the ESL classroom at Washburne aimed at developing reading and comprehension skills. It consists in the artful adherence to the dictates of the Language Arts Program mandated by the school system while preparing students to use the key analytic and language tools they will need in High School. The Eighth Grade Reading Project is the key artifact that brings this into focus, mediating the skill of

learning how to read the English of the classroom. The plan that Ms. Bunin has instituted in her classroom and transmitted to Ms. Dimas is aimed at creating the beginnings of self-directed learning in her students and a motivation to explore reading as a joy and a cognitive tool. This is accomplished by blending the demands of the Standard Course of Study with procedural prompts to help students generate questions about narrative texts like *Hatchet* and *The Cay*. These prompts as to setting, characters, problems and problem resolution, and theme provide the tools to tackle the Eighth Grade Reading Project. This process or plan reflects Miss Bunin's philosophy of teaching, which is teaching via direct instruction. Eggen and Kauchak (1966, 186) describe the Direct-Instruction Model as "…a teacher-centered strategy that uses teacher explanation and modeling combined with student practice and feedback to teach concepts and skills." They believe that the key to success for direct instruction is guided practice with clear-cut goals that the students understand. Ms. Bunin's students are on task the whole class, either listening to her lectures on the content and structure of stories they are reading, or in direct, one on one conversation with her about homework. Online quizzes using Plato, an interactive software program of graded responses, are part of the daily routine. She is a great believer in the use of the library and its resources and of the computer as a teaching tool. "During the week to celebrate Dr. Seuss' birthday my students were challenged to read 60 books in the library during the competition." Ms. Dunlin, the media specialist, checked their comprehension by the number of successful answers to questions posed on Accelerated Reader, an interactive computer program with access to all the books they were reading. "The computer is a big help. It is really indispensible," Ms. Bunin emphasized. "For example," while referring to Plato Learning (Appendix A),

"vocabulary gets immediately penalized via the computer. They have to correct it right away." Then she added somewhat wistfully and with a tone of doubt in her voice, "of course, this is the world they live in and they must be familiar and comfortable with the computer. But, does this enhance their English learning enough given the time committed to it?" There was never a "pull out "group of her students working on a problem. She demonstrates a belief that group discussion takes up valuable time that could otherwise be utilized in a more constructive manner. One can question rigid adherence to this style. On the one hand, there was little wasted time in her classroom, which is a major achievement in a classroom. However, there might have been greater class participation and class learning if small-group collaboration had been organized and encouraged.

Implications for ESL

What Ms. Dunlin, the media specialist at Washburne was working on in her remedial instruction is the reading gap. Research results suggest that there may be a substantial reading gap between what Latino/a students can do in English reading and the levels of their monolingual English peers that develop over the primary grades. What was observed at Washburne may be the result of a process that began before middle school. The reading gap lies on the periphery of what this study is about, yet there are implications in the results of Spanish reading testing that touch closely on this issue.

In a longitudinal study of 261 Spanish-speaking students progressing from the first through the sixth grade, Nakomoto, Lindsey and Manis (2007), measured word decoding and reading comprehension skills as they developed. While the group's word decoding skills remained on a par with their monolingual counterparts, reading comprehension began to fall behind in the third grade. "Our findings demonstrate that

ELLs who initially show reading comprehension abilities in the normative range may not necessarily remain in the normative range throughout elementary school."(p. 711). The researchers advise that in order to improve reading comprehension, training on comprehension strategies, and oral language skills should be a focus of attention.

The statistical analysis of the English and Spanish language tests indicates, surprisingly, that the level of English language reading skills at the beginning of the school year is the strongest predictor of reading skills at the end of the year. It tends to reinforce the finding of Schoonen, Hulstijn, and Bossers, 1998, Clarke, 1980 and Cummins, 2000) that there is a threshold competence that may be required in order to benefit from classroom instruction, and that it is possible to short circuit the whole process of language acquisition without it. A student with low skill levels entering the year may show little progress by year's end. Capability in Spanish is shown to be a significant predictor of year-end outcomes in English, which would tend to support the transfer thesis of Cummins (2000, 2001) that L1 skills transfer to L2 learning. But, other research suggest that Bernhardt & Kamil (1995) may be correct in proposing that it is impossible to disentangle English and Spanish as contributing factors to the gaining of language competence when examining progress in English reading acquisition after several years of school

Table 5 presents a summary in tabular form of this discussion and the research findings on transfer. The table is organized around the concept of "at risk" for reading success.

Table 5 **At Risk Matrix for English Reading Success**

		Proficiency in English	
		High	Low
Proficiency in Spanish	High	A	B
	Low	C	D

A) This is likely to be an almost empty quadrant. If the Latino/a student falls into this quadrant, he or she probably ought not to be assigned to ESL in the first place. There was one such student in the sample. The risk here is low.

B) The results of the research show that this quadrant is unlikely to hold unqualified promise of success in reading progress in English during the year. In the sample there was evidence that low skill levels in English reading, unlike medium range levels, cannot be overcome by competence in Spanish. The risk here is complex and may be high.

C) The comment here is much the same as in A. No students fell into this quadrant. The risk here is low.

D) There was a strong correlation in this research with membership in this quadrant at the beginning of the school year and poor performance on English reading at the end of the year. Many students fell into this group. The risk here is quite high.

Based on the academic research cited, it is likely that the high risk of serious reading difficulties that emerged in my study of middle school Latinos is the result of a reading gap or reading deficit that began and widened in the elementary school years.

Low scores in English reading at the beginning of a middle school year are not simply an indicator that those students need to work harder and need extra attention, but that serious remedial work in reading fundamentals is required in addition to, or in place of, the standard course of study in ESL.

The Sociocultural Dilemma.

Given the entries in the students' Personal Journals, the pull from family, language, and native culture is strong. These are revealing monologues that represent a type of hidden dialogue with self that might interfere with their success in the classroom. There is a strong sense of community and shared experience that one senses among the students, as they know one another and share much in common. Many of them take the same bus to school and ride together on the same bus at the end of the school day. They regard their classroom, and Ms. Bunin and Ms. Dunlin, as "su rincón," their nest. This protective feeling of belonging coming from outside the school into the ESL classroom creates a collective warmth which may act to insulate from membership in the school community. How to accommodate and build on the positive aspects of this phenomenon, yet to integrate these Latino/a into the greater school community, is a challenge without an easy answer.

Goldenberg, Gallimore, and Reese (2005), and Goldenberg and Gallimore (1995), in a milestone study on Latino parents' values and beliefs about their children's education, have done extensive research into factors influencing Latino children's literacy development. Their research indicates that Latino families are not passive, nor negatively inclined to their children's school education. Families want their children to get ahead in life, yet many lack the educational background to be of much help with

homework or with school assignments. Paratore et al. (1999), in a study cited in the

Review of Literature, demonstrate the difficulties associated with engaging Hispanic

parents in the school lives of their children. The implication is that the process of

involvement may be outside the time demands and the language capabilities of the ESL

teacher. Goldenberg, Gallimore and Reese (2005) point out that in the Latino cultural

schema, *Educación* is a broader concept than the American concept of formal education

in school. It means that one must become a good person before doing well in school, and

observations in other middle schools reinforce this finding. Native Spanish ESL teachers

accept as part of their job that parents expected them to teach their children good

manners and proper conduct, including and beyond school requirements. Teachers from

a non-Hispanic background tend to resist this as an additional burden on their time. It

may require the active intervention of the school administration with a Spanish-speaking

staff member charged with the duty to close the gap.

Grammar

What was not found is worthy of mention. The absence of explicit instruction in

grammar at Washburne was the biggest surprise. It is frustrating as a researcher to find a

missing element, since a threshold question for any researcher is, did one observe it, did

one test specifically for it? If the answer is no, then everything that follows is educated

conjecture. However, the finding in this study that the Guadalajara Combined test results

were a predictor of success in English, while the Woodcock Muñoz were not, at least

opens the issue of grammar instruction at Washburne for discussion. The Mexican test

questions in the Guadalajara Combined are weighted heavily toward grammar, while The

Woodcock Muñoz cloze test format assume that a knowledge of grammar will be

exhibited in the ability to answer correctly. This may explain the difference in their predictive value for English reading development.

Asking Ms. Bunin why there was no overt instruction in grammar, she replied, "Not enough time. I wish we had done more of it." From looking over their homework, students write well what they write. While there are misspellings, missing capital letters and tense errors, they show a good command of the past tense of irregular verbs, which is supposed to be difficult for English language learners. What is unsettling is what they don't use in their writing, especially in the area of helping verbs. In their conversations in class, they use, "would of," "could of," and "should of" frequently. They may not recognize these as would have, could have and should have when they encounter them in their reading. If one probed more deeply about what they don't know when they read, that you can hear in their daily conversation, would be eye-opening. These modal auxiliaries can act as examples because it is likely that targeted grammar instruction would help explain what can be quite tricky in English to ferret out on one's own. These auxiliaries, unlike *to be* and *to have*, have no infinitive form, nor a third person singular form. There is no pattern into which one can fit them, no hooks to which they may attach. The following modals have only two forms: can/could, may/might, will/would, shall/should. 'Must' and 'ought to' only have one (Jackson, 1990). So, without instruction, a student will not understand them when meeting them in text, much less use them. Larsen Freeman (2003), in *Teaching Language, from Grammar to Grammaring*, writes to dispel the notion that grammar is a static set of rules and exceptions. She proposes that grammar, properly understood, can guide us in transforming our thoughts into words and establishing our identities in a more powerful way.

Limitations of the study and Concluding remarks

The sample size of this study is small, containing only 29 students, and the time frame is only a short nine months. A three-year longitudinal study following the sixth grade students through to graduation would carry much more weight. Two schools to study, rather than just one, would have provided more students and allowed for the opportunity to compare and contrast findings. Students' results on the EOGs, the state-mandated achievement tests in Language Arts and in Mathematics were not available. It would have been interesting to have compared the Language Arts results with those on the ACCESS English language tests. I operated with absolute scores on English reading. It would have been informative too, to have studied grade-adjusted scores on the two tests had they been available on a consistent basis. An eighth grade student should be expected to know and accomplish more than a sixth grade student.

A case study such as this one occurs in a natural setting, which has its advantages. However, organizing a study around different types of interventions could bring a sharpened focus to some of the major issues. For example, one might construct a study where a control group of students receive no grammar instruction and a test group does. More than one researcher, including a researcher with credentials inside the school system in which the selected school(s) operate would be preferable to a lone researcher from outside the system. One must recognize that any social system, such as a school, has its own culture and ways of operating. Knowing these in advance would, at the very least, save considerable time.

After observation, it is obvious that the ESL program is a somewhat of an orphan in the larger school family. Their classrooms are the smallest in the school. Their chairs

are outdated. It is difficult to believe that this is simply by chance. The ESL students take

content classes, but as Ms. Garcia, the biology teacher, remarks, coordination with ESL

to address language problems encountered in these classes is sporadic at best. Integration

into the larger school system is not easy, and there seems to be a general resignation that

integration will likely not occur. Maybe this is why many of the Latino parents opt out of

ESL for their children, even though their children score on the lower ranges of the

English language tests and could use the instruction. Perhaps there is some shame

associated with ESL. The school and the school system struggle too with how to provide

for the incoming Latino/a student population. For example, in a flyer in Spanish sent out

to Hispanic parents of incoming students explaining the English language testing

requirement, after pointing out that ESL is an available option for students scoring below

the norm, it states that parents don't have to sign up for it. There is no recommendation

that it could be not only beneficial but perhaps necessary. Missing too is any suggestion

that further discussion with the school on the subject might be in order. Success in

reading and in math by scoring at or above grade level on the end of year tests is the goal

of each school for each student. However, many of the Hispanic students have not been

in the North Carolina school system two full years and are not eligible to take these tests,

and, as they tend not to seek help, little information for their guidance is available.

Albert Bandura's (1979, 1995) models of self-regulated learning and self-efficacy

helped me integrate my observations. The unique set of students, with different languages

and different levels of prior knowledge, facing each ESL teacher each year presents

challenges for preparation for self-directed learning and motivation. This study suggests a

shift in focus in ESL instruction from the standard lesson plan derived from a Language

Arts Program, to a more flexible set of pedagogical tools that recognize this complexity.

As Heath (1999) counsels us, in the business of educational research results are often

messy, that the results, if accepted for what they are, often leave the researcher without a

feeling of closure, which was certainly true for this study. A certain bond with each of the

Latino/a ESL students was formed; I did watch them closely day after day, although

scarcely exchanging more than a word or two with any one of them, except when I gave

them the Woodcock Muñoz Spanish reading test which is done on a one to one basis. A

few students, like Carmen, who tested at the top in Spanish reading and in English

reading, blossomed during the year. The majority made progress but less than what one

would have hoped for. A substantial minority seemed to be marking time, not moving

forward with their English reading comprehension. Further research is needed to identify

the size of this "substantial minority." My biggest disappointment was my inability to

find whether a culture of belonging existed in the classroom. Certainly, Ms. Bunin and

Ms. Dimas made great efforts to foster a classroom culture of inclusiveness. There were

never any serious disciplinary problems and the atmosphere in the classroom was never

anything that one could identify as tense or unpleasant. All the students were on free or

reduced lunch, so there were no socioeconomic differences that might have caused

divisions. It is also important to assess adolescent belonging in a situation such as an

ESL classroom. One can sense that it has an important impact on academic performance

(Heath & Magnolia, 1982). There is a need to consider the impact of school practices on

individual students as well as groups of students which suggests that a system of student

mentoring could be valuable.

Where does all this information and discussion lead us? The prognosis is that Hispanics will soon grow to be the largest minority in the United States. Their number now is over 40 million and the 2010 census will give us a better fix on that number. The diagnosis is that unless sound educational programs are utilized, LEP Latinos and Latinas will be undereducated. One must worry that many will continue to drop out of high school as soon as they are legally able to do so with predictably negative long-term results for them and for our society. The three years of middle school remain the last chance to turn around this sad prognosis. Correcting the orphan status of ESL programs in school is the first step and another is experimenting with different approaches to academic English instruction.

There are SLA researchers (Swain, 2000 (French); Bongartz and Schneider, 2003(German)) who have concluded that task-based instruction, which we have labeled here as direct instruction, exhibited by Ms. Bunin in the ESL classroom and Ms. Moorlock in the Math classroom at Washburne, should be combined with the collaborative dialogue, labeled as "discourse," by Gibbons (2006, 2007) and utilized by Ms. Garcia in Biology, to promote and enhance the learning of a second language. Brown and Campione (1994) have called this *Guided Discovery in a Community of Learners.* Introducing this mixed pattern of instruction into the ESL classroom will be a hard sell to educational authorities as it will be difficult to manage and will require skilled teachers. The penalty to our society for continued no improvement in Latinos' literacy is a heavy one.

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APPENDIX A: COMPUTER SOFTWARE INSTRUCTION

Students at Washburne have at their disposal numerous educational software products. A number of them are linked to books that they are reading the classroom and in the library. They represent the single most-used artifact for learning. They are listed below:

- o An adventure story. Theodore Taylor, *The Cay* (2002). New York: Random House. Graded chapter response: http://www.mce.K12.net/survival/cay/cay.htm

- o An adventure story. Gary Paulson, *Hatchet* (1999). New York: Simon & Schuster. Graded chapter response: http://www.mce.K12.net/survival/hatchet.htm

- o Plato Learning, Inc.: www.plato.com/Content Library.aspx
  A large variety of English language reading and comprehension tests.

- o Texas Center for Academic Excellence: www.shsu.edu/~txcae Tutorials in English grammar and concept formation in a pretest/posttest design.

- o Accelerated Reader from Renaissance Learning: http://www.renlearn.com/ar/
  Quizzes to test comprehension of books read in the library. Washburne has 200 books in its library that are in the Renaissance data base.

APPENDIX B: LETTER OF PERMISSION IN SPANISH

Horace Andrews
353 Hillside Avenue
Charlotte, NC   28209

Otoño 2008

Estimado/Estimada padre/madre, abuelo/abuela o guardián/guardiana,

Estoy estudiando para mi doctorado en la Universidad de Carolina del Norte en Charlotte. Actualmente estoy haciendo investigación para mis estudios futuros en la Educación. Me interesan las dificultades que los hispanohablantes encuentran al aprender el inglés en la escuela. Como parte de mi investigación, quiero darles a los estudiantes un examen de lectura en español al comenzar la escuela en septiembre. Le/les pido su permiso para que su hijo/hija (nombre del/de la estudiante) _____ participe. Le/les explicaré todo.

Estoy juntando información sobre niños hispanos en los grados sexto al octavo de la «middle school» quienes están entrando al sistema de Charlotte Mecklenburg por primera vez. El estado de Carolina del Norte requiere que su hijo/hija tome exámenes de inglés. Además me gustaría que tomara unos cortos exámenes de lectura en español. Estos exámenes serán lecturas apropiadas para la edad de su hijo/hija. Estos exámenes han sido usados antes con éxito. Los resultados de los exámenes les ayudarán a los maestros de su escuela a preparar un apropiado plan de estudio para su hijo/hija. CMS ha aprobado mi pedido. Este estudio se llevará a cabo en la escuela de su hijo/hija. El examen durará aproximadamente una hora.

La información sacada del examen se usará como parte de mi investigación para mi doctorado. Como parte de mi investigación la escuela de su hijo/hija me proveerá los resultados de ambos su examen de inglés tomado a prinicipios del año escolar y el dado a fines del año escolar. Ningún otro trabajo además de los exámenes de español se le pedirá a su hijo/hija. Cualquier información sobre su participación o la de su hijo/hija se protegerá. Ni su nombre ni el nombre de su hijo/hija se usará en mi informe. Ninguna referencia a la escuela aparecerá en mi trabajo. Los resultados del examen se guardarán en un lugar seguro. Su escuela y UNCC supervisarán mi trabajo.

Espero que Ud. permita que su hijo/hija participe en mi estudio. Sin embargo, no hay ningún castigo si Ud. decide no participar. Su hijo/hija es voluntario/voluntaria. La decisión de participar es completamente suya. Ud. puede dejar de participar en el estudio en cualquier momento. Su hijo/hija se tratará igual si quiere dejar de participar después de haberlo empezado.

No hay ningún riesgo al participar en este estudio. Sin embargo, quizás haya riesgos no previstos. Estaré pidiéndole a su hijo/hija que firme una carta de permiso también. Véase la copia incluida.

Si tiene cualquier pregunta o preocupación acerca del examen, favor de ponerse en contacto conmigo al (704)372-1512 o _____ en la escuela. Puede también ponerse en contacto con la oficina de Research Compliance de UNC Charlotte al (704)687-3309.

Gracias.

Pariente responsable _____   Fecha _____

Horace Andrews _____   Fecha _____

APPENDIX C: LETTER OF PERMISSION IN ENGLISH

Horace Andrews

353 Hillside Avenue

Charlotte, NC 28209

Fall, 2008

Dear Parent, Grandparent or Guardian,

  I am a doctoral candidate at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC). I am presently involved in research for my future studies in Education. My interest in Education is the difficulties Spanish-speaking students experience in school with English. As part of this program, I wish to test students in reading Spanish as school begins this September. I am requesting your consent for your child [insert the name of the student] to participate. I will explain the procedure.

  I am collecting information on Latino/Hispanic middle school children who are entering the Charlotte Mecklenburg System (CMS) for the first time. Your child is required by the state of North Carolina to take English language tests. In addition, I would like your child to take some short Spanish reading tests. These will be reading tests appropriate for the age level of your son (daughter). The tests have been used before with success. Test results will help teachers at your school to prepare a proper course of study for your child. CMS has approved my request. Testing will take place at your child's school. The test will last approximately one hour. There are two middle schools (names) involved in this study.

  The test information and my findings will be used as a part of the research for my dissertation. As part of my research your child's school will supply me with the results from your child's English language entrance exam and the English exam given at the end of the school year. No additional work beyond the Spanish tests will be required of your child. Any information about your participation or that of your child will be protected. Neither your name nor that of your son or daughter will be

used in my report. No reference to the school will appear. Test results will be kept in a safe, secure place. Your school and UNCC will be supervising my work.

I hope you will allow your child to participate in my study. However, there are no penalties if you choose to not participate. Your child is a volunteer. The decision to participate is completely up to you. You may withdraw your consent at any time. Your child will not be treated any differently if your child wants to stop once he or she has started.

There are no known risks for participation in this study. However, there may be risks which are currently unforeseeable. I will be asking your child to sign a consent letter as well. A copy of that letter is included.

If you have any questions or concerns about the test, please feel free to contact me at (704) 372-1512, or ------- at the school. You may also contact the University's Research Compliance office at (704) 687-3309.

Thank you.

Responsible family member-------------   date-------

Horace Andrews -----------   date-------

APPENDIX D: A PLAN FOR TEACHERS' INTERVIEWS

Plan for an interview with Ms. Bunin, ESL Department Chair, at Washburne Middle School, April 30, 2008: Topic areas and questions

1. *Background*

    How did you get interested in teaching? How many years have you taught? How many years in this school system? How many years as an ESL teacher and at Washburne? Tell me something about your role here and how it compares with your previous roles teaching ESL. I know you have had extensive experience and I would be interested in similarities and contrasts.

2. *Differentiation of instruction*

    I understand that you and Ms. Dimas divided up the LEP students into two groups. You took all the students that had a proficiency level of superior, advanced, intermediate high on the English tests and she took intermediate low, novice high and novice low. Give me the background on that decision. Did that decision effect the course of study for each group? From my observations, the course of study for each has been about the same.

3. *Eight Grade Research Project*

    I was very impressed with the results of the project. I thought that the building block approach of library research, collection of data and synthesis, leading to the presentation was excellent. Do the students appreciate what they have achieved? Was it worth the time you put into the exercise? What did you learn from the whole effort that might change you instruction in the future?

4. *Spanish in the classroom*

    You don't permit it and the students cooperate with this. Is that just because you are not a Spanish speaker or do you believe that it helps with the process of learning? If you don't mind my saying it, you exhibit a definite air of authority in the classroom. Is that important to keep Spanish conversation to a minimum? The children are pretty well behaved. Is that cultural in your point of view?

5.   *Curriculum and the plan of study*

> Does the school give teachers a template and you work from there? The plan of study I observe does not seem scripted. What is the role of Ms. Bennett(the principal)? Describe the process to me? Given the time limitations, what you include means that some things are left out. I have observed that there is very little work on grammar. Do students get that skill through their reading?

6.   *Computers*

> Software programs like Plato are important teaching devices. In Ninth Block (remedial work session) the students work almost exclusively on the computer. Of course, this is the world they live in and they must be familiar and comfortable with the computer. But, does this enhance their English enough given the time committed to it?

7.   *Goals and targets established for measuring progress*

> LEP kids have so many tests to take that measure their progress. From your standpoint, which are the most important? Which are the most important by which your skill as a teacher is measured? Are they the same? I have in mind the EOGs (end of grade state tests), ACCESS (end of school year English language tests) and school finals. Are there any other?

8.   *Contact with the parents and contact with the content teachers*

> I know that you don't operate in a vacuum in the ESL classroom. There are other groups that impact what you do. I am picking out the two that come to my mind. How often do you meet with parents? How often do you meet with the content teachers to discuss particular student problems? Is there any formal process involved? Would anyone ask you what you have done in this regard?

9.   *Non-Hispanic students in class*

> I notice that her are two Vietnamese children in class. Are they at a disadvantage in the classroom with Spanish-speakers so dominant? How do you compensate for this? How are they doing?

10. *Is there anything else that I should know to do my research that we haven't touched on?*

Thanks so much for your time and thoughtfulness. Please correct what I have written as your answers where they are wrong or you want to add or change something. Please add whatever you think I should know and didn't ask. Finally, could you explain the term that came up in #7-NCCLAS (this is an alternate assessment for students who have been in an American school for less than two years)

[Note: the teacher will receive the questions with their responses before the responses are used]