

THE READING TOGETHER™ CROSS-AGE TUTORING PROGRAM AND ITS  
EFFECTS ON THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND READING  
ACHIEVEMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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This dissertation provides research and data based on a study of cross-age tutoring and its effects on English language proficiency and English reading achievement of English language learners. The subjects for the study included native Spanish-speakers enrolled in third-grade bilingual classrooms in four elementary schools. The research study focused on the implementation of Reading Together™, a cross-age tutoring program published by The Learning Together Company. The 30-session tutoring program is designed to help English-speaking students progress from decoding words to reading with fluency and comprehension through older students tutoring younger students in a one-to-one setting. This highly structured program is used to provide supplemental instruction to second and/or third-grade students.

This study utilized a quantitative approach to compare the results of English language learners who participated in the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program and English language learners who did not participate in the program. A quasi-experimental design was used in the research study. In this design, the treatment group and the control group were selected using specific criteria. Both groups took a pretest and posttest, but only the treatment group received the intervention. The study also determined if there was a relationship between initial language levels and reading gains.

The study concluded the following:

1. Cross-age tutoring might possibly be an effective instructional strategy to assist English language learners in improving their oral language proficiency in English.
2. Even though third-grade participants in the cross-age tutoring program did not demonstrate significantly different reading levels from students not participating in the program, cross-age tutoring may still be an instructional strategy to be used with English language learners to assist them in second language reading.
3. Students' initial English oral language proficiency level does correlate to the students' English reading level.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This dissertation provides research and data based on a study of cross-age tutoring and its effects on English language proficiency and English reading achievement of third-grade English language learners whose native language is Spanish. The research study focused on the implementation of the Reading Together™ cross-age tutoring program (The Learning Together Company, Greensboro, NC, [www.learningtogether.com](http://www.learningtogether.com)). The 30-session tutoring program is designed to help English-speaking students progress from decoding words to reading with fluency and comprehension through older students tutoring younger students in a one-to-one setting. This highly structured program is used to provide supplemental instruction to second and/or third-grade students. The Reading Together program is currently being used in 41 school districts across 22 states including Alaska, California, Maryland, North Carolina, Nevada, Florida and Texas (N. Baldwin, personal communication, April 20, 2004).

This research study was designed to determine whether or not the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program is an effective method for closing the performance gap in reading achievement and English language proficiency between native English speakers and English language learners. The subjects for the study included native Spanish speakers enrolled in third-grade bilingual classrooms in four elementary schools. Chapter 1 includes background of the study, the research questions, significance, an overview of the methodology, limitations and key terms used for the study.

## Background of the Study

The Hispanic population in the United States has grown by nearly 60% since 1990 and more than 80% of Hispanics in this country reside in 10 states: California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois, Arizona, New Jersey, New Mexico, Colorado, and Nevada (President's Advisory Commission, 2003). In 1990-1991 just over 1% of students enrolled in Texas schools were classified as limited English proficient (LEP) (National Clearinghouse, 2003). By 2000-2001, in one decade, the numbers of LEP students enrolled in Texas schools increased 84.1%. Of these LEP students, 94% were Spanish speakers. As the population of language minority students grows and higher levels of literacy are expected for all students, concerns about the performance gap in reading achievement between language-minority learners and children whose first language is English have become prevalent. According to Grant and Wong (2003), "more must be done to help English language learners achieve educational parity with native English speakers" (p. 386).

Despite the growing number of English language learners in schools, little attention has been devoted to developing a research base to understand second language reading. Much of the information on this topic has instead been shaped by anecdotal data and lacks quantifiable data (Grant & Wong, 2003; President's Advisory Commission, 2003). According to a study by Bernhardt (1994), textbooks and journals in reading methods and language arts provide little information on how to teach second language reading. Fitzgerald (1995), in a research review of findings from studies on English-as-a-second-language (ESL)

reading instruction in the United States, states that the reviews have “considerable breadth, but little depth” (p.141).

### Research Questions

The research study was developed to determine if the Reading Together, cross-age tutoring program, designed for English speakers, is effective with Spanish-speaking students. The study was designed to answer the following research questions.

1. What is the effectiveness of the Reading Together cross-age tutoring model as an intervention for improving English language proficiency of English language learners?
2. What is the effectiveness of the Reading Together cross-age tutoring model as an intervention for improving English reading levels of English language learners?
3. Is there a relationship between the beginning language proficiency score of English language learners and the reading achievement of the learners?

The study addressed three null hypotheses to answer the research questions listed above. The null hypotheses were:

1. There is no significant difference in the IDEA Oral Proficiency Test<sup>®</sup> (Ballard & Tighe, Brea, CA, [www.ballard-tighe.com](http://www.ballard-tighe.com)) language scores of tutees who participated in the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program and students who did not participate.

2. There is no significant difference in the Flynt-Cooter English-Español Reading Inventory for the Classroom (Prentice-Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ, [vig.prenhall.com](http://vig.prenhall.com)) reading levels of tutees who participated in the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program and students who did not participate.
3. There is no relationship between language proficiency and the reading gains of English language learners.

#### Professional Significance of the Study

Pressures to prepare highly literate students have prompted state and national leaders to focus on effective teaching strategies. Yet, research indicates that English language learners still lag behind in achievement and drop out of school at a staggering rate. One of every three Hispanic Americans has dropped out of high school (President's Advisory Commission, 2003). This present crisis not only threatens to leave behind another generation of Hispanic children and youth, but will also limit their mobility in the workforce. This could ultimately threaten the country's economy. As the fastest growing population group in the United States, Hispanics will soon become the second largest segment of the labor force. However, the group's lagging rates of educational attainment will limit their upward mobility.

Increased emphasis on the academic performance of Hispanic students is necessary due to the recent implementation of state and federal regulations. The accountability system for Texas public schools (Texas Education Agency, 2002) and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (P.L. 107-110) measure performance of

LEP students as a subgroup. That is, a school cannot meet state or federal performance standards unless LEP students perform well in the state’s academic testing system. Peregoy and Boyle (2000) found that English language learners, as a group, score among the lowest in reading achievement nationwide.

Donahue, Finnegan, Lutkas, Allen, and Campbell (2001) found that 37% of fourth-grade students perform below basic levels of proficiency in reading. For children who belong to minority groups and who also live in poverty, the rate nearly doubles. Estimates are that 30% to 40% of school age English language learners fail to reach acceptable levels of English reading by the end of their elementary schooling (Grant & Wong, 2003). Table 1 illustrates that the state of Texas is not exempt from this educational crisis.

Table 1

*2002-2003 Texas Reading Performance*

Grade	State % Met Standard	Hispanic % Met Standard	LEP % Met Standard
Third	89.6	85.1	77.4
Fourth	85.9	80.8	65
Fifth	80.0	73.4	48.5
Sum 3-10	85.6	79.8	61.7

*Note.* Texas Education Agency, 2002.

Table 1 shows the percent of students who met state standards in reading for all students, Hispanics, and LEP students on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills. The reading performance of the Hispanic and LEP groups lags behind the state’s overall performance. Hispanics are quickly becoming the

largest minority group in public schools in this country, creating the impetus for federal and state entities to identify strategies to improve the language and reading proficiency of these students.

Finding effective educational innovations is difficult because there is a paucity of scientific evidence showing that one kind of innovation is clearly superior to another (O'Neil, 2000). For years, little attention has been given to "research" evidence on methods, materials, and programs (Allington, 2001). With the passage of the Reading Excellence Act (REA) has come increased demands for scientifically based research on the effects of a program on student performance (Office of Elementary and Secondary Education [OESE], 2003). The REA is an effort by the federal government to reshape reading instruction in America. The REA defines scientifically based reading research as "the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain valid knowledge relevant to reading development, reading instruction and reading difficulties" (Allington, 2001, p. 12). In order to be identified as "scientifically-based research" a study must:

1. employ systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment;
2. involve rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn;
3. rely on measurements or observational methods that provide valid data across evaluators and observers and across multiple measurements and observations; and

4. have been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective, and scientific review. (pp. 12-13).

One strategy that has proven to be effective in improving the achievement of students is tutoring (Cohen, Kulik, & Kulik, 1982; Juel, 1996; Morris, Shaw, & Perney, 1990). The United States Department of Education (1997) reports that research consistently shows that a well-structured tutoring program that utilizes nonprofessionals as tutors can be effective in improving children's reading skills. Students show significant gains in reading skills when compared with similar students who do not participate in high-quality tutoring programs. Cross-age tutoring is one type of tutoring that has also shown gains in student achievement (Cook & Urzua, 1993; Gartner & Riessman, 1994; Juel, 1991; Kreuger & Braun, 1999; Labbo & Teale, 1990; Leland & Fitzpatrick, 1994; Taylor, Hanson, Justice-Swanson, & Watts, 1997; Urzua, 1995;). However, the research in these areas is based largely on anecdotal data and seldom meets the requirements of "scientifically-based." The research is also sparse in the area of cross-age tutoring as an intervention for English language learners.

This research study is the first to utilize the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program as a tool for examining its effect on improving English language proficiency and English reading for native Spanish-speaking students. The goal of the study was to add to the literature of scientifically-based research on cross-age tutoring and English language learners in a manner that would meet the criteria to be considered scientifically-based research, as well as to provide

educators with a successful intervention approach for improving English language proficiency and English reading of second language learners.

### Overview of Methodology

The study utilized a quasi-experimental design to evaluate the effectiveness of the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program as an intervention for improving language proficiency and reading levels of English language learners. The treatment group for the study was third-grade students enrolled in bilingual education classes who had been selected as tutees of the Reading Together program. Students were selected for the cross-age tutoring program by school personnel based on English language level and English reading ability. Third-grade students enrolled in bilingual education classes were selected for the control group using the same selection criteria as the treatment group. The control group received language and reading instruction in their regular classroom and was not served by the Reading Together program.

Pre and posttest design was used wherein gain scores on both English language proficiency and English reading levels of the treatment and control group were noted and compared using descriptive statistics. Repeated measures analysis of variance (RM ANOVA) was used to determine the statistically significant differences between the groups.

A bivariate correlation (Pearson  $r$ ) was used to analyze the relationship between language proficiency scores and reading gains. This information was used to determine if students with initially higher language proficiency levels achieved greater gains in reading than students with lower language proficiency



levels (i.e., Do limited English speaking [LES] students achieve greater reading gains than non-English speaking [NES] students?). A full discussion of the methodology of the study is discussed in Chapter 3 of the dissertation.

### Limitations

Some limitations of the study should be noted. The first limitation involved the administration of the testing. It was not feasible to have the same administrator for the reading assessments or language proficiency tests because the study involved four different schools. The Flynt-Cooter English-Español Reading Inventory for the Classroom (Flynt-Cooter) was administered by the classroom teacher or the Reading Together program coordinator on each campus. The IDEA Oral Proficiency Test (IPT I-Oral) was administered by paraprofessional teaching assistants. Both the Flynt-Cooter reading inventory and the IPT I-Oral test had scripted directions for the test administrator. The differences in test administration could have created discrepancies in the reading scores of the students.

A second limitation of this study was that it was limited to four schools within the same school district, and the population was limited to native Spanish speakers within these schools. Therefore, the generalizability of the study can only be made to populations which are similar to the one from which this study draws upon.

A third limitation was that the bilingual education classroom instruction for the control group and for the treatment group varied from school to school and from teacher to teacher. Teachers varied in their knowledge, experience, and

ability to teach ESL, reading, and language. In an educational study such as this one, much of the learning depends on the learning environment and the teachers' level of teaching. Even though there are district and state expectations in place, teachers designed their own ESL lessons within the bilingual classroom. Due to the shortage of certified bilingual teachers, some students were instructed by a non-certified or alternative certified teacher. In this study 2 of the 14 bilingual education teachers were enrolled in an alternative certification program. This difference in teaching knowledge, experience, and ability may have affected the achievement gains of students.

#### Definition of Terms

The following terms have been defined as they relate to the study.

Tutoring: Giving assistance for the purpose of learning.

Tutor: The student who is the academic helper, offering support and reinforcement to the tutee. In this study the tutor was the fifth-grade native Spanish-speaking student working in the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program with the third-grade students enrolled in bilingual education classes.

Tutee: The student who is receiving academic help from the tutor (Cohen et al., 1982; Hedin, 1987). In this study the tutee was the third-grade student, enrolled in a bilingual education class, being served by the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program.

Cross-age tutoring: Tutoring in which the tutor is older than the tutee.

Peer tutoring: Tutoring in which the tutor and the tutee are the same age. However, in some research the term is used interchangeably with cross-age tutoring.

English language learners: Children, born in the United States or in other countries, who are from homes where the primary language spoken is not English. These students may have limits to their comprehension of speaking, reading, and/or writing of English. Limited English proficient (LEP) has also been used to describe these students (Grant & Wong, 2003).

Trade books: Individual books leveled by text difficulty and published in a form designed for the general public. Trade books are written in a variety of genres such as fiction, informational, realistic fiction, and traditional literature.

Bilingual education classroom: A classroom taught primarily in the students' native language. In this study the students' native language was Spanish.

Alternative certified teachers: Teachers who receive their teaching certification from a regional service center or school district instead of a university.

## Summary

The fast increasing number of non-English speakers enrolled in our public schools has created an educational issue that must be addressed. Programs designed to promote English language proficiency and English reading are essential if educators are to be certain "no child is left behind." Educators must assure through rigorous analysis of the achievement of LEP students that

language is not a barrier to acquiring an education. Developing programs that encourage strong learning contexts that are supported by culturally responsive teaching and instruction are necessary for all school districts if they are to meet the demands of higher performance set by our state and nation.

Despite the fast growing number of English language learners in our nation, little research has been devoted to what methods are most effective in improving the English reading levels and English language levels of these learners. Much of the research that has been conducted lacks control and is based more on anecdotal data than quantifiable data. Few studies were identified that focused on the English language learner. Educators must determine what methods of instruction are most effective in order to close the performance gap between native English speakers and native Spanish speakers. Determining effective methods of instruction that yields success for LEP students is also necessary to eliminate the high number of Hispanic dropouts. This educational crisis threatens to unravel the essential fabric of our society.

The purpose of this research study was to evaluate a cross-age tutoring program designed for English speakers and to determine its effectiveness with Spanish-speaking students. The study evaluated the program's effects on the English language proficiency and English reading achievement of the English language learners. The organization of the study includes the review of related literature, the methodology, the analysis and interpretation of the data, and the conclusions and recommendations.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A review of literature on cross-age tutoring, English language acquisition, and second language reading provides the basis for this study. This chapter examines the historical background of tutoring, as well as the theoretical and empirical research related to cross-age tutoring and literacy acquisition in a second language.

#### Historical Background

The roots of peer and/or cross-age tutoring can be traced to societal needs to educate children in necessary tasks that guarantee continuation of the group (Ehly & Larsen, 1980). Ehly and Larsen also report that “children teaching other children has occurred throughout the recorded history of mankind” (p. 10). Cross-age tutoring is “as natural as sibling relationships and occur(s) whenever...an older student instructs a younger one” (Rekrut, 1994, p. 356).

Andrew Bell, one of the pioneers of cross-age tutoring during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was an Anglican clergyman and superintendent of a school for orphans (Allen, 1976). According to Allen’s historical account, Bell experienced frustration in his efforts to teach the students. In an attempt to successfully educate the students, Bell devised a system which had the older students teaching the younger children. The system not only succeeded in providing effective instruction, but it also brought about a positive change in the behavior of students.

Joseph Lancaster, a Quaker schoolmaster, read a report of Bell's system and embellished the idea of using children as teachers by creating the monitorial system (Allen, 1976; Rekrut, 1994). In this system, one schoolmaster had responsibility for a large number of children, so the older students were taught and trained to teach what they had learned to younger students. These students in turn taught another group of even younger students (Allen, 1976). Lancaster's schools were founded on the principle that children learn most efficiently from each other.

The educational theory used to support the practices of Bell and Lancaster was provided by William Bentley Fowle (Allen, 1976). Fowle believed that children who taught were better able to learn. Instead of memorizing information, they learned by reviewing materials. He believed that students had the ability to communicate effectively with one another in a learning environment. Fowle also believed that children could be better teachers than adults could because they were more likely to consider their partner's feelings and capacities. This teaching style was labeled as "learner-focused."

Popularity of the system of children teaching children diminished during the 19<sup>th</sup> century for several reasons. The basic weakness of the schools appeared to be the low standard of teaching by untrained children, who were often 8 or 9 years of age (Allen, 1976). In addition, teachers were not effectively trained in the techniques of how to implement this system. Interest in the system also decreased as states began to provide money for public education. There was no longer a pressing need to find low-cost methods of educating children.

The growth of professionalism among teachers also contributed to the decline of tutorial schools. Teachers looked upon the idea of untrained students with disdain. Their contention was that untrained students could not perform the teaching duties of a skilled professional.

Recent decades have shown a resurgence of children teaching children. Cross-age tutoring reappeared in the 1970s as a way to stretch thinning teacher resources during a period of scarcity in the United States (Rekrut, 1994). This revitalization of cross-age tutoring also prompted research into various aspects of cross-age tutoring such as training of tutors, effective combinations of students, and content effectively taught by students. Cross-age tutoring continued to surge during the 1980s as school districts looked for cost-effective ways to serve students during tight budgeting times.

Cross-age tutoring is currently one application of the central principle of collaboration: students in control of their own learning (Rekrut, 1994). Schools have seemingly returned to the beliefs of Bell, Lancaster, and Fowle that children learn most efficiently from one another. Theories as to why this approach is effective can be found in the literature.

### Theoretical Underpinnings of Cross-Age Tutoring

#### *Importance of Peer Relationships*

Children's interactions with other children are qualitatively different from their interactions with adults. Children's interactions with other children provide opportunities for practicing social skills and for developing interactive competencies with relative equals. Constructive peer relationships contribute to

social and cognitive development as well as to socialization (Benard, 1990; Johnson & Johnson, 1987). In order for peer relationships to have constructive influences on the developing child, they must promote feelings of acceptance, belonging, support and caring. Johnson and Johnson (1987) ascertain the following to be some of the more important consequences and correlates of peer relationships.

1. Through modeling and reinforcement, peers shape a variety of social behaviors and attitudes. Through interactions with peers, children learn values, skills, and information they cannot get from adults. Children mimic the actions of their peers and identify with friends whose competencies they admire.
2. Through interactions with peers, children learn appropriate social behavior. It is through these interactions children learn that one helps, comforts, assists, and gives to others.
3. Through interactions with peers, children learn to view situations and problems through the eyes of others. There is a loss of egocentrism as this perspective expands. This is one of the most critical competencies for cognitive and social development.
4. Children need relationships with peers with whom they can share thoughts, ideas, feelings, hopes, and dreams.
5. Through peer relationships, children are able to develop a frame of reference on how they perceive themselves. They become aware of



similarities and differences between themselves and others. These relationships allow them to find a sense of self.

6. Cooperative interaction with peers has a powerful effect on productivity. Greater achievement is found in collaborative settings where peers work together than in situations where children work alone. The amount of effort put forth in achievement situations is also affected by supportive peer relationships.
7. Student educational goals and dreams may be more influenced by peers than any other school influence.

The concept of role relationship builds on Johnson and Johnson's (1987) theoretical platform and is an important variable in shaping the success of cross-age tutoring. In cross-age tutoring interactions, children take on the role of tutor or tutee. Based on role theory, the success of tutoring depends upon the effectiveness of the role enactment of each participant (Foot, Shute, Morgan, & Barron, 1990). Allen (1976) states, "It is a basic tenet of role theory that enactment of a role produces changes in behavior, attitudes, and self-perceptions consistent with expectations associated with the role" (p.114). In cross-age tutoring it is likely that an affective relationship will develop. This emotional element may be an important factor in the tutee's learning. The tutee may also be more comfortable communicating with someone closer in age than communicating with an adult. As a result the tutee would likely learn the material more efficiently. The relationship may also produce beneficial consequences in terms of socialization. Younger students naturally look up to and respect older

students. The older student can also represent the level of achievement the tutee aspires to reach. The interactions between the tutor and tutee provide the tutee with a look into the future stage of the life cycle, which enables the tutee to anticipate future social and academic behaviors.

### *Understanding How Children Learn*

Johnson and Johnson's (1987) ideas echo the theory of thought and language expressed by Vygotsky, a well-known Russian psychologist. Through a review of the work of Vygotsky, an understanding of how peer interactions influence learning and language acquisition becomes evident (Forman & McPhail, 1993; Hatano, 1993; Schütz, 2002; Wink & Putney, 2002). Vygotsky viewed learning as a sociocultural process. His theories include the view that a child's cognitive skills and patterns of thinking are the outcome of interactions with his/her immediate social and cultural environments. Vygotsky theorized that cognitive development is interwoven with language development; active use of language changes thinking, and thinking and actions change language. From Vygotsky's perspective, language is crucial to determining how a child will learn to think because advanced forms of thought are transmitted to the child through words. Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective hypothesized that all learning is first accomplished through the language that flows between individuals (Schütz, 2002). According to Wink and Putney (2002), a classroom from the Vygotskian perspective has teachers and learners working together through exploration and collaboration.

One essential tenet in Vygotsky's (1978) theory is the "zone of proximal development." The zone of proximal development is defined by Vygotsky as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p.86). In other words, the zone of proximal development is the distance between what children can do alone and what they can do in collaboration with a more skilled individual. Vygotsky viewed the key mechanism of cognitive development as scaffold learning through social and cognitive interaction with a more skilled, competent person. Children benefit from these interactions because they are able to accomplish tasks that would otherwise go beyond their cognitive abilities. Effective teaching occurs within the zone of proximal development because it enables children to be reasonably challenged so they are neither bored by tasks that are too easy nor frustrated by tasks that are too difficult (Wasik & Slavin, 1993). However, based on the views of Vygotsky, teachers face the daunting task of meeting the needs of all children because the learning systems of children, although similar, cannot be identical due to differing social experiences (Wink & Putney, 2002).

Vygotsky's (1978) theories, especially the zone of proximal development and scaffold learning, lie at the heart of cross-age tutoring. Cross-age tutoring allows for the individual needs of students to be met and is beneficial to teachers and children as an instructional strategy. Cross-age tutoring also allows older, more competent peers to work collaboratively with children in an interactive

environment in order to assist them in becoming independent learners. Cross-age interactions are likely to expand the repertoire of social skills available to children and assist in appropriate behavioral adjustments (Foot et al., 1990). Children will adapt their social skills and behaviors to accommodate the differences in age. These interactions are not just desirable for cognitive growth but are deemed a necessary condition.

By explaining human language development and cognitive development, Vygotsky's (1978) theory provides a foundation for modern trends in applied linguistics. Vygotsky's theory lends support to a more natural, communicative, and experiential approach to second language learning. His theory points toward the importance of real-world human interaction in second language learning (Schütz, 2002).

### *Understanding How Children Acquire a Second Language*

Since 1960, the knowledge of how children learn language and how people use language has exploded. Children are language learners by virtue of being born into human society. Children are actively involved in acquiring language naturally through their interaction with others (Chomsky, 1972; Goodman, 1978; Krashen, 1988, 1995).

Krashen (1988, 1995, 2003), a current second language researcher and theorist purports five hypotheses which make up the core of current theory on language acquisition. The first is the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis. This hypothesis states that learners develop language ability through acquisition and learning. Language acquisition is a subconscious process while language

learning is a conscious process. Language acquisition requires no work, is effortless, and is involuntary. Language acquisition occurs when people receive messages they understand. In contrast to language acquisition is language learning, which is a conscious process. Language learning involves learning the rules and grammar of language.

Krashen's (1988, 1995, 2003) second hypothesis, which he calls the Natural Order Hypothesis, aligns with earlier research by Chomsky (1972). The research by both Krashen and Chomsky demonstrates a common order of acquisition of syntactic structures. In other words, second language learners acquire the parts of language in a predictable order. Some parts of grammar are acquired at earlier stages than others. The natural order is not based on any obvious features of simplicity or complexity, and it cannot be changed. The natural order cannot be altered through drills, explanations, or practice exercises.

Krashen (1988, 1995, 2003) also posits a monitoring mechanism in second language acquisition, which he calls the Monitor Hypothesis. The "monitor" is a function of conscious learning. Language is normally produced using our acquired language. The monitor utilizes learned language rules to edit the acquired language production. In order for the monitor to be used successfully, the acquirer must know the rule, must be thinking about correctness, and must have time. Krashen believes the monitor is weak but not entirely useless. Even though acquisition is mostly responsible for fluency and accuracy, there are some aspects of language that must be learned. Over-

monitoring can cause the learner to produce language much more slowly and deliberately, thus disrupting conversation.

Krashen's (1988, 1995, 2003) Monitoring Hypothesis supports earlier theories by Chomsky (1972), who theorized children learn a complex system of rules as they acquire language. These rules are internalized from what is heard and are used as children create their own sentences. Chomsky's theory claims that children are not just repeating fragments of what they have heard, but they are continually constructing and revising their language production according to grammatical rules.

Krashen's (1988, 1995, 2003) language acquisition theory also includes the concept of the learner's exposure to comprehensible input, the Input Hypothesis. The Input Hypothesis claims that language acquisition takes place during the course of human interaction. It says learners acquire language by "going for the meaning" first, and as a result structure is acquired. Second language learners are able to acquire language by receiving and understanding input that is one step beyond their current level of competence. Based on this hypothesis, speaking fluency is not taught directly, but instead it emerges over time after acquired competence has been built up through comprehensible input. Chomsky's (1972) earlier work also supports the theory that children are not "taught" language in any formal manner, but they acquire it naturally through exposure to input from the environment.

Krashen (1988, 1995, 2003) also believes there are certain affective filters that can block or facilitate acquired competence in the second language. These

affective filters include attitude, self-image, and motivation. These filters or “blocks” do not allow input to reach the part of the brain responsible for language acquisition. Krashen’s fifth hypothesis, Affective Filter Hypothesis, explains why two students can receive the same comprehensible input, yet one makes progress and the other does not. One student has “blocked” the input with an affective filter and the other has not.

### *Understanding Second Language Acquisition and Reading*

A review of present research surrounding second language acquisition and reading suggests several theories of literacy development of English language learners. First, the experiences and skills children bring to school influence literacy development (Anderson & Barnitz, 1998; August & Hakuta, 1997; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Children with more exposure to print, knowledge of print and its functions, and knowledge of letters and sounds are more likely to be successful in becoming literate and succeeding in all academic tasks. A child’s cultural and/or socioeconomic background influences their experiences and knowledge that they bring to school. These influences in turn affect literacy development of English language learners (Anderson & Barnitz, 1998; Foorman, Goldenberg, Carlson, Saunders, & Pollard-Durodola, 2004).

Second, direct, explicit instruction of basic and more advanced literacy skills promote academic and language development of English language learners (Anderson & Barnitz, 1998; Fitzgerald, 1995; Gersten, 1996). Complete assessments, opportunities to practice emerging skills, strategies that enhance student understanding, and incorporating students’ experiences are all

associated with higher levels of academic achievement for English language learners (Au, 1993; August & Hakuta, 1997).

Third, providing opportunities for reading pleasure and using language for real communication are also important in the literacy development of English language learners (August & Hakuta, 1997; Sutton, 1998). Books can provide children something to talk about by providing a shared experience (Allen, 1989). Self-selecting books for voluntary reading time is also found to be a successful strategy in the literacy development of English language learners (Krashen, 2003). Literacy input provides English language learners the opportunity to hear the language of stories and to explore illustrations.

Some of the most pressing questions in research on second language reading revolve around the learner's oral proficiency in the new language in relation to reading. One central question often asked is "Should we wait to teach reading in the new language until students have developed some optimal level of oral proficiency in the new language?" Barriers to English language learners' effectiveness in tasks such as reading are sometimes masked by their relatively faster acquisition of conversational language and mastery of decoding skills in reading. Fitzgerald (2003) suggests two competing theories of how oral language processes and reading processes might be related. First is the General Factory Theory in which one generic set of language sub-processes undergirds a student's learning of different areas of the new language. These sub-processes may include syntax, phonology, semantics, and pragmatics. The General Factory Theory is built upon the concept that once a sub-process is learned it can be



used in any form of language usage be it reading, writing, listening, or speaking. This theory allows for students to learn reading in a new language at the same time they are learning to speak the language. For example a student could learn syntactical structures through listening and speaking, and then apply and use this understanding in reading and writing.

The second theory, which competes with the General Factory Theory, is the Oral Precedence Theory (Fitzgerald, 2003). A major tenet of this theory is that oral language proficiency in the new language forms the basis for reading and writing processes and development in the new language. Some researchers argue that it is extremely difficult to learn to read in a language that is unfamiliar in its sounds and meanings, and therefore, a certain threshold of oral English proficiency must be acquired before English language learners are taught English literacy skills. Not acquiring a certain level of English proficiency before beginning English literacy can undermine the child's chance to view literacy as a powerful form of communication "by knocking the support of meaning out from underneath the process of learning" (Snow et al., 1998, p. 237). The Oral Precedence Theory is based on a student acquiring listening and speaking skills as the foundation for reading and writing in that language. To the extent that a reader is limited in English proficiency, the ability to make sense of a text written in English is likewise hindered (Peregoy & Boyle, 2000).

There is mounting research that suggests that oral language proficiency is not a prerequisite to reading development in the new language (Fitzgerald, 2000). This supports the General Factory Theory. Reading in the new language

can actually assist oral development in the new language (Anderson & Roit, 1996; Fitzgerald, 1995; Gersten, 1996). In some instances, children's reading in the new language may actually outpace their oral development in the new language. Due to the increasing diversity among the United States school-age population, it is no longer conceivable or equitable to wait for second language oral proficiency to develop before beginning to read in the new language (Anderson & Roit, 1996). Literacy learning is a part of language learning, and therefore, English proficiency should be seen as a goal, not as a prerequisite to becoming literate (Au, 1993). Supporters of this theory would recommend involving students in literacy from the beginning, whether or not they are proficient in English.

One way to reconcile the different positions is to treat reading as a developmental process (Foorman et al., 2004). Particularly significant for English language learners is that the relationship between reading and language changes as they progress through the developmental stages. Beginning reading places an emphasis on phonological processes which may be relatively easy for beginning English language learners to comprehend. Even in the early stages of acquiring English, students can also identify and understand many forms of environmental print (Sutton, 1998). Later reading stages rely more extensively on vocabulary and syntactic knowledge of the language which takes longer to develop than phonological awareness (Foorman et al., 2004). The correlation between reading proficiency and oral language proficiency among English language learners increases at higher grade levels, suggesting that reading and

oral language proficiency become more closely related as students advance in their reading development (Fitzgerald & Noblit, 2000). Studies by Peregoy and Boyle (1991) and Peregoy (1989) support the theoretical perspective of a positive correlation between oral language proficiency and second language reading. That is, students who scored high on oral language also scored high in reading comprehension. In contrast, students low in oral language proficiency scored lower in second language reading.

Learning to read in the new language also provides a reciprocal relationship between oral language proficiency and reading ability in the second language. Barrera (1983) asserts that learning to read in the second language assists in developing oral language proficiency, while increasing oral language proficiency improves reading ability in the second language.

Research clearly points to a relationship between second language oral proficiency and second language reading. Whether or not one supports the Oral Precedence Theory or the General Factory Theory, educators must realize that English language learners have the formidable task of catching up with their native English-speaking peers. With proper instructional methods, English language learners can learn strategies that will enhance their reading ability in the new language while increasing oral proficiency (Anderson & Roit, 1996).

Sound educational theory lays the foundation for instructional planning and pedagogy. The theoretical underpinnings of cross-age tutoring are found in theories about peer relationships, cognitive learning theory, second language acquisition, and second language reading. Research on cross-age tutoring has

provided insight for educators in regards to effective interventions for literacy and language learning. This growing body of empirical research on cross-age tutoring builds upon the theoretical foundations of researchers such as Johnson and Johnson (1987), Vygotsky (1978), and Krashen (1988, 1995, 2003).

### Research Studies on Cross-Age Tutoring

Throughout the United States tutoring programs have been designed to accommodate the individual needs of students. Researchers have studied these programs in an attempt to determine the effects of the tutoring on student achievement. One such study by Cohen et al. (1982) consisted of a meta-analysis of the research on tutoring. Meta-analysis utilizes a statistical analysis of a large collection of results from individual studies for the purpose of integrating the findings. In the meta-analysis conducted by Cohen et al., 65 studies were used. The types of tutoring programs studied were structured or nonstructured, cross-age or not, tutoring as supplement or substitute for classroom instruction, and tutors trained or not. All 65 studies described effects of tutoring programs on both tutors and tutees in three major areas: student achievement, student attitudes toward subject matter, and student self-concept. Of the 65 studies, 52 reported results on academic achievement of the tutee, nine reported on self-concept, and eight reported on attitude toward subject matter. In 45 of the 52 studies on achievement, students who were tutored performed better on examination than students not tutored. Nineteen of the comparisons reported a statistically significant difference in students tutored versus those not. The average tutee scored at least 16 percentile points higher than the average student in the control group. The meta-analysis indicated tutoring effects were

larger in more structured programs and in tutoring programs of shorter duration. Programs ranging from 0-18 weeks had a larger effect size than programs ranging from 19-36 weeks. Cohen et al. reported that the results of the studies were consistent at a level for them to conclude that tutoring programs had a positive effect on the tutees' attitude toward the subject matter being taught. They did not find enough evidence in the studies to conclude that the tutoring had a positive impact on the tutee's self-concept. The meta-analysis also indicated that cross-age tutoring programs had a greater effect on student achievement than tutoring programs that were not cross-age in design.

Cross-age tutoring programs are one type of tutoring that has gained attention during the past decade (Giesecke & Cartledge, 1993; Newell, 1996). Researchers have found that the successful engagement of students helping one another supplements classroom instruction for both tutors and tutees. Through purposeful engagement, cross-age tutoring also provides students with an authentic reason for practicing in order to improve their reading performance (Juel, 1991). In the area of literacy, successful cross-age tutoring programs have demonstrated a positive impact for tutees in sight vocabulary, reading accuracy, and comprehension (Cook & Urzua, 1993; Gaustad, 1992; Juel, 1991; Kreuger & Braun, 1999; Leland & Fitzpatrick, 1994; Slavin & Madden, 1989; Taylor et al., 1997).

### *Cross-Age Tutoring in Reading*

In a research synthesis conducted by Slavin and Madden (1989), published literature, technical reports, government reports, and other sources were reviewed in their search for instructional programs that were effective for

servicing at-risk students in the elementary grades. Through their study they identified three broad categories of instruction: prevention, classroom change, and remediation. Instruction in the area of remediation fell into two program categories: remedial tutoring programs and computer assisted instruction. The remedial tutoring programs found by Slavin and Madden to be most effective were those that used older students and/or volunteers. One such program, The Training for Turnabout Volunteers, is a cross-age tutoring program utilizing tutors from grades 7 through 9 to work with students in grades 1 through 6 in reading and math. In this program students are tutored 40 minutes per day, four days per week. Volunteer tutors receive in-service training on day five. The program compared the gains of tutees working with trained tutors to those working with tutors who did not receive continuing supervision. After one year, tutees working with trained tutors showed an effect size of  $+0.93$  on the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT) in math and  $+0.51$  on the MAT test in reading.

Slavin and Madden (1989) also reviewed the Success Controlled Optimal Reading Experience (SCORE), another cross-age tutoring program for grades 1 through 6. This program uses highly programmed materials and very specifically structured tutoring sessions. Older students or adult volunteers tutored students in the SCORE program 15 minutes per day. Tutees in this program showed an effect size of  $+0.5$  to  $+0.7$  on the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) and  $+0.5$  on the Gilmore test. A limitation of this data was that the effects were on word recognition only. No data on reading comprehension were provided. From their studies, Slavin and Madden concluded that one-on-one tutoring programs are an effective instructional method in the remediation of at-risk students.

Topping (1989) also asserts that one-to-one peer tutorial relationships are a powerful tool for effective literacy learning. Topping utilized the Paired Reading technique, which allows for tutees to be supported by a peer tutor in reading texts of higher readability levels than they would be able to read independently. Tutees are allowed to choose any book that is within the competence level of their tutor. As the tutee reads, the tutor promotes understanding by discussion and questioning. On sections of the text that are too difficult for the tutee, the pair read aloud together. The tutor adjusts to the tutees reading rate and corrects errors as needed. Topping suggests an initial six-week program consisting of a minimum of three tutoring sessions per week for 15 to 30 minutes is optimum. Topping reports that in programs structured to maximize tutor participation, gains tend to be greater for both the tutor and tutee. Topping reported on 10 projects in which the tutees ranged in age from 8 to 14 years and the tutors from 8 to 18 years. During the intensive period of these projects, the tutees gained in reading age at 3.8 times “normal” rates (assuming one month of reading age gain in one chronological month to be “normal”). In projects where the tutors were considerably older and more able than the tutees, Topping found the tutees tended to perform better than in other projects. Baseline or control group data were reported for 6 of the 10 projects.

In Mesquite Texas, a cross-age tutoring program involving first and fourth-graders showed a positive impact on the tutees in several areas of literacy learning (DeRita & Weaver, 1991). DeRita and Weaver designed the program to include tutorial activities, subject matter acquisition activities, reading and

creative dramatics activities, and writing and book making activities. Based on anecdotal information, DeRita and Weaver reported the tutees developed listening, sight vocabulary, oral reading skills, and comprehension through the cross-age tutoring activities.

Two other cross-age tutoring studies were designed to teach sight word vocabulary to students. In the first of these studies, Barbetta and Miller (1991) examined the effectiveness of the Tugmate program. Six elementary school students in first through third grade were selected as target students from 25 elementary school students participating in the Tugmate program. Twenty-five high school students were randomly assigned to tutor each elementary school student in the program. All students participated in the tutoring sessions, but data were collected for the six targeted students only. The tutoring sessions were conducted four days a week for six weeks. Each session lasted 30 to 45 minutes. The sessions consisted of three main segments: sight word practice, assessment, and practice or review of other academic skills. The tutors received training two days prior to the program's start. The researchers used a variation of a multiple probe baseline to analyze the effectiveness of the cross-age tutoring program. Independent observers recorded data on an average of 76% of the sessions across the six targeted students. Results indicated all students acquired and maintained a substantial number of new sight vocabulary words after tutoring.

Giesecke and Cartledge (1993) conducted a sight word study similar to the study by Barbetta and Miller (1991). Eight students, 4 third-grade and



4 fourth-grade, were selected as subjects. The third-grade students participated as tutees and were tutored by the 4 fourth-grade students. No control group was identified. The six-week tutoring program included one week of training for the tutors and five weeks of 30-minute tutoring sessions. Each tutoring session was broken down into four segments: tutor talk, site word practice, review games, and assessment. The tutees did not attend the tutor talk portion of the session. A multiple baseline design across word sets was used for each tutee. A pre/posttest procedure was used to assess the effects of the tutoring program on the sight-word gains. An independent observer was present during 26% of the tutoring sessions along with the researcher. The researcher and independent observer reviewed learned sight words with each tutee in order to ensure the tutor's accuracy in scoring. Results indicated gains in increasing sight word knowledge for all four tutees.

A study by Leland and Fitzpatrick (1994) provided anecdotal data indicating that cross-age tutoring also builds enthusiasm for reading and writing. Their project paired sixth-grade students with kindergarten children for weekly 45-minute reading and writing sessions. The duration of the project was flexible; as long as it appeared to be building enthusiasm for reading and writing in both the tutor and the tutee, the project would continue. The sixth-grade students received training on specific strategies to use with the kindergarten students prior to beginning the tutoring program and throughout the project. The tutors also met as a group to debrief after each tutoring session. The program, which lasted from

October to June, included activities such as tutors reading to tutees, story mapping, story illustrations, and writing original stories with the tutees.

Standardized tests were not used to measure success because the focus of the program was on enthusiasm for literacy activities. Instead, Leland and Fitzpatrick (1994) collected measures of enthusiasm through surveys and attitude inventories from the students, their parents, the teachers, and the school librarian. The kindergarten tutees indicated through their survey an enthusiasm for reading and writing with a partner. Of the 27 children involved in the program, 25 indicated positive feelings about making books with a partner; none expressed negative feelings. Twenty-one of the tutees expressed positive feelings about reading books together, and 11 indicated they enjoyed reading alone. Toward the end of the school year and the tutoring program, tutees also demonstrated an increase in the number of stories they illustrated and dictated to the teacher or other students capable of writing. Tutees followed the modeling of the tutors and were willing recorders for other kindergarten students. The tutees made picture books and were eager to share them. Parents reported an increase in self-initiated literacy activities at home as well. As a result of their project, Leland and Fitzpatrick emphasized the need to connect skills and strategies to real-life contexts so they become real and relevant to the students, thus creating lifelong learners.

Cross-age tutoring programs have also been used as an extension of other reading intervention programs. Taylor et al. (1997) designed a study to explore the results of cross-age tutoring as a supplement to students engaged in

other reading intervention programs. The authors first designed a seven-week intervention class offered by the building's reading coordinator for second-grade (7- and 8-year-olds) struggling readers. For some of the children this class was supplemented with a cross-age tutoring program using 9- and 10-year-olds as tutors. Other students were placed in the intervention class only, and some students received no intervention.

The reading coordinator taught the intervention class for 45 minutes each day for seven weeks. The class included reading books individually and with partners, sentence writing, and discussion. The students also participated in language development and research skills. Students participating in the fall intervention class and in the cross-age tutoring program left their regular classroom twice a week for 25 minutes to participate in the supplemental tutoring program. At the end of the seven-week intervention class, students continued in the cross-age tutoring program through mid-April.

The tutors were provided training on effective strategies to work with the younger students. They were also provided with time to debrief the tutoring sessions. The tutoring sessions consisted of reading books used in the intervention class as well as picture books selected by the tutors. Discussions about the stories and vocabulary were also components of the tutoring program.

In May, 75% of the students in the intervention plus tutoring group, less than 30% in the intervention only group, and none in the control group could read a passage from the second-grade basal with at least 90% word recognition accuracy. A Yates-corrected chi-square test revealed that significantly more

children in the intervention plus tutoring group than in the control group were reading on grade level by the end of the second-grade ( $X^2 = 11.38, p < .001$ ). A comparison of student scores on the Metropolitan Achievement Test 7 (MAT7) in the fall of grade 2 and the fall of grade 3 also indicated a significant difference among the three groups, with the intervention plus cross-age tutoring group scoring the highest.

### *Cross-Age Tutoring and English Language Learners*

Although reports which attest to the validity of cross-age tutoring as an instructional practice are plentiful, there is a noticeable void (or lack) of research on cross-age tutoring with English language learners. The studies reviewed uniformly cited results for programs involving native English speakers. In bilingual programs, cross-age tutoring is often used to engage English language learners in conversations that lead to enhanced literacy and language acquisition (Crandall, Jaramillo, Olsen, & Peyton, 2001). However, the effectiveness of this instructional practice has not been documented in the literature.

Kreuger and Braun (1999) found that one-on-one tutoring of a younger student by an older student produced positive results in The Books and Buddies: Peers Tutoring Peers program designed for second and third-grade students. Seventy-nine percent of the students were English language learners. The main objective of the tutoring program was to increase and improve reading fluency and comprehension among the English language learners. The teachers involved in the program had watched for years as second language learners struggled concurrently with reading and language acquisition. Books and Buddies was an

attempt to find an instructional method that would help speed up both processes in order to prevent the English language learner from lagging behind their first language peers. Second-grade students in the program were paired with third-grade students for a 10-week period, during which time students participated daily in a 30-minute structured routine. The routine consisted of activities involving spelling words and reading stories together. In addition to the daily tutoring routine, students wrote letters to their buddies for homework and worked together on two science units. Prior to the beginning of the 10-week tutoring session, third-grade students received training on specific tutoring skills in order to provide assistance to their second-grade buddy. At the end of the 10-week sessions buddies were reassigned and routines were changed accordingly. The results of the program showed second-grade students averaged a gain of 1.5 years in reading fluency and comprehension on the Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty Oral Reading subtest from pretest to posttest. Twenty-seven percent of the second-grade students read at grade level on the pretest, while the posttest showed 55% at grade level. The students also showed gains in spelling on the Wide Range Achievement Test 3 (WRAT 3). The second-grade students began the year with 14% spelling on grade level and by June increased to 55% on level. These students showed an overall average gain of 1.45 years in spelling for the year.

The Literacy Club in Stockton City Unified School District, California, is another example of cross-age tutoring with English language learners (Cook & Urzua, 1993; Urzua, 1995). Urzua believes the tutoring program is the core of

empowering student-centered learning and not just a frill to be included only if time allows. The primary goal of the Literacy Club is to help the younger students acquire literacy. In the Literacy Club sixth-grade students assume the responsibility of reading to first-grade students twice a week for 30 minutes. The sixth-grade students are trained in ways to talk about books, identify good books to read, how younger students learn to write, and how to write lesson plans. The tutors are also required to keep a log, called field notes, on each of the tutoring sessions. The students are paired as much as possible with students who share their primary language to allow for translations if needed. Cook and Urzua determined that benefits for the tutees include one-on-one attention with someone who will listen, understand, and make learning fun. Anecdotal reports indicate tutees have also demonstrated an improved attitude towards reading and improvement in writing skills.

Juel (1991) reports academic gains for first and second-grade tutees (including special education students and English language learners) involved in a cross-age tutoring program with university student athletes as tutors. In this program each tutor worked one-on-one with his/her tutee for 45 minutes twice per week on reading and writing skills. The tutors attended a class at the university once a week where they discussed topics in literacy acquisition and ideas for tutoring. During the first tutoring program in 1990, 20 first-grade students, all of whom were in the lowest reading group in their classes and at-risk for retention, were tutored by the university student athletes. At the end of the program, 18 of the 20 tutees had moved to a higher reading group and only 2 of

the 20 had to be retained. In 1990-1991, 27 first-grade students were tutored from September to May. These students had a mean score at the 26<sup>th</sup> percentile on the Metropolitan Readiness Test (MRT) administered by the school in September. In April the mean score of the 27 tutees on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) reading comprehension subtest was at the 41<sup>st</sup> percentile. Fifteen first-grade children not participating in the cross-age tutoring program had a mean score at the 46<sup>th</sup> percentile on the MRT administered in September and a mean score at the 16<sup>th</sup> percentile on the ITBS administered in April. Teachers at the school also reported a boost in the self-esteem and attitude toward reading of the tutees.

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program (VYP), created in 1984 by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA), is an internationally recognized, cross-age tutoring program that focuses on dropout prevention. VYP identifies Hispanic junior high and high school students at risk of dropping out of school and enlists them as tutors for Hispanic elementary school students also struggling in school. The tutors are given class credit and a stipend for their efforts. Since its inception in San Antonio, Texas, in 1984, VYP has spread to 24 cities across the United States and is presently used in 13 cities in Brazil. In 1989 a longitudinal, quasi-experimental research study was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. Results from the quantitative and qualitative data collected on the tutors showed that the VYP had a statistically significant impact on the dropout rate, reading grades, self-concept, and attitudes toward school (IDRA, 2004).

Researchers evaluating the VYP used only subjective data to assess the tutees' improvement. The researchers claimed that confounding variables made it too difficult to objectively assess the tutees. The researchers maintained that testing of young children tends to yield unreliable results, and it was difficult to compare tutees' progress to that of a control group because tutors sometimes worked with children in the assigned classroom who were not selected as tutees. The subjective data gathered included before and after surveys of the tutees' teachers and the researchers' independent observations of the tutee progress. This data indicated an improvement in tutees' self-esteem and social interaction, as well as academic gains (Gaustad, 1992).

*Research Studies of Reading Together™ Cross-Age Tutoring Programs*

The Learning Together Company (Greensboro, NC, [www.learningtogether.com](http://www.learningtogether.com)), publishers of the Reading Together™ cross-age tutoring program, conducted evaluations of their program for the purpose of refining the program and for documentation of the effects on students' reading achievement. One study of the program was conducted in 2000-2001 in 13 schools in North Carolina. The schools used the Sunshine Assessment Kit to measure reading fluency and to compare post-intervention achievement of second-grade tutees and control group peers who were matched on pre-intervention reading fluency scores. Prior to intervention the treatment group and the control group were performing at similar fluency levels. After the tutoring intervention, the treatment group outperformed the control group in reading fluency. Data indicated that 42% of the treatment group increased their fluency



level by 10 or more levels compared to 23% of the control group (Bridges-Cline, 2003).

The Learning Together Company also conducted studies in Maryland in two consecutive school years, 2000-2001 and 2001-2002. These studies, like the one in North Carolina, focused on second-grade fluency levels. In 2000-2001, 22 schools were involved in the study. Students being served by the Reading Together program were matched with their control group peers on demographic characteristics and pre-intervention reading scores. The study utilized results from district-administered assessments and from the statewide end-of-year reading test, Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS). Results were disaggregated by student subgroups defined by race/ethnicity, as well as poverty status (Bridges-Cline, 2003).

Data from the district-administered assessments indicated that across all subgroups, greater percentages of students who participated in the Reading Together program achieved or exceeded the benchmark level of reading fluency for second grade as compared to the control group. Eighty-three percent to 91% of the race/ethnic subgroups who participated in the cross-age tutoring program met or exceeded the end of year proficiency standard in fluency compared with 68% to 88% of the control group. Tutees from poverty-level families and those with English language learning needs also met or exceeded the end-of-year benchmark for reading fluency. These percentages ranged from 83% to 85% for the tutees compared with 43% to 77% for the control group (Bridges-Cline, 2003).

Data from the statewide test indicated similar results. Students in both the treatment group and control group were scoring below grade level on district reading assessments in fall 2000. The district performance standard for second-grade students in the spring was the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile or above on the CTBS. According to results from the Learning Together Company, 41% of second-grade Reading Together participants scored at or above the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile compared to 18% of the control group. Disaggregated subgroup data also indicated that across all student subgroups, the treatment group outperformed the control group. The race/ethnicity scores for the treatment group ranged from 33% to 57% scoring at or above the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile on the CTBS compared with 14% to 33% for the control group. Based on poverty levels of the treatment group, the scores ranged from 38% to 44% scoring at or above the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile on the CTBS compared with 18% to 21% for the control group (Bridges-Cline, 2003).

In 2001-2002, 43 schools in Maryland participated in the Reading Together program. The same matching procedure was used as in the 2000-2001 study. Results for this study were reported in terms of students in grade 2 who were able to meet a more rigorous benchmark, which was reading with fluency and with adequate comprehension. Students who met this benchmark were able to read fluently with at least 90% accuracy and provide written responses to explicit and implicit questions that indicated understanding of what was read (Bridges-Cline, 2003).

Students in this study were identified by three groups, Early Emergent (significantly below grade level), Upper Emergent, and Early Fluent (marginally

below or about a year below grade level). Upper Emergent and Early Fluent groups differed only in the difficulty of level of text they were able to accurately read; both groups had low comprehension scores in fall 2001. Findings for the Upper Emergent and Early Fluent groups indicated significant differences in favor of the treatment group; 12% to 15% more of the treatment group met proficiency standards in fluency and comprehension than the control group. Findings for the Early Emergent group did not produce significant results (Bridges-Cline, 2003).

### Summary of the Literature

The review of literature on cross-age tutoring with English language learners reveals a need for more controlled studies in this area. Much of the research is anecdotal in nature and highly theoretical. Of the studies which report on specific, cross-age tutoring programs, few involve English language learners, and the majority report only soft evidence of the effectiveness of the program. Even the studies which are quantitative in nature seem to lack control groups or sophisticated data analyses to validate claims of the program's effectiveness. The new federal definition of scientifically based research provides a strong impetus to conduct carefully designed quantitative studies in the areas of reading and cross-age tutoring. Table 2 provides a brief overview of the cross-age tutoring programs reviewed in this chapter.

Table 2

*Summary of Cross-Age Tutoring Programs*

References (Date)	Participants	Description	English Language Learners	Program Evaluation
Slavin & Madden (1989)	Tutors: Grades 7-9 Tutees: Grades 1-6	Reading and Math; 40 min./day; 4 days per week	No	Positive gains; Quantitative; Compared trained tutor groups to untrained tutor groups; No control group to compare to tutored vs. non- tutored students
Slavin & Madden (1989)	Tutors: Older student/ adults Tutees: Grades 1-6	Reading; 15 min/day	No	Positive gains; Quantitative; no control group
Topping (1989)	Tutors: ages 8-18 Tutees: ages 8-14	Reading; 15-30 min/3x per week	No	Positive gains; Quantitative; Control group in six of 10 projects
DeRita & Weaver (1991)	Tutors: Grade 4 Tutees: Grade 1	Reading and Writing	No	Positive gains; Anecdotal data; No control group
Barbetta & Miller (1991)	Tutors: High School Tutees: Grade 1-3	Sight Word Vocabulary; 30- 45 min/4x per week	No	Positive gains; Quantitative; No control group
Giesecke & Cartledge (1993)	Tutors: Grade 4 Tutees: Grade 3	Sight Word Vocabulary; 19, 30 minute sessions	No	Positive gains; Quantitative; No control group
Newell (1996)	Tutors: Grade 4 Tutees: Grade 2	Computer Literacy; 10, 30 minute sessions	No	Positive gains; Observations; No control group
Leland & Fitzpatrick (1994)	Tutors: Grade 6 Tutees: Grade Kindergarten	Reading and Writing; 45 min/week	No	Positive gains from surveys; No control group
Bridges-Cline (2003)	Tutors: Not given Tutees: Grade 2	Reading	No	Positive gains; Quantitative; Control group
Bridges-Cline (2003)	Tutors: Not given Tutees: Grade 2	Reading	Yes-one Subgroup	Positive gains; Quantitative Control group
Kreuger & Braun (1999)	Tutors: Grade 3 Tutees: Grade 2	Reading; 30 min/day	Yes – 79%	Positive gains; Quantitative; No control group
Cook & Urzua (1993)	Tutors: Grade 6 Tutees: Grade 1	Reading; 30 min/2x week	Yes	Positive gains; Anecdotal data; No control group

(continued on following page)

Table 2 (continued)

References (Date)	Participants	Description	English Language Learners	Program Evaluation
Juel (1991)	Tutors: College athletes Tutees: Grades 1 and 2	Reading and Writing; 45 min/2x week	Yes-number not given	Positive gains; Quantitative; Control group
Taylor, Hanson, Justice-Swanson & Watts (1997)	Tutors: ages 9-10 Tutees: ages 7-8	Reading; Supplemental Program; 25 min/2x week	No	Positive gains; Quantitative; Control group
Intercultural Development Research Association (2004)	Tutors: Junior high and high school Tutees: Elementary	General Studies: 4 hours per week	Yes	Positive gains; Tutor results: Quantitative and Qualitative data; control group Tutee results: Subjective data

Throughout the literature researchers refer to several components of cross-age tutoring which appear in programs that generate positive achievement for tutees. These factors are:

1. Tutoring training: Tutors should be provided structured, systematic training in interpersonal, management, and content skills. This training occurs prior to the first tutoring session and is ongoing (Barbetta & Miller, 1991; Benard, 1990; Cook & Urzua, 1993; Gaustad, 1992, 1993; Giesecke & Cartledge, 1993; Juel, 1991; Kreuger & Braun, 1999; Leland & Fitzpatrick, 1994; Mavrogenes & Galen, 1979; Newell, 1996; Rekrut, 1994; Slavin & Madden, 1989; Taylor et al., 1997).
2. Ongoing supervision and support for tutors: One type of support used in several programs is tutor “debriefing.” Tutors are provided the opportunity to meet with the tutoring coordinator and other tutors to reflect and discuss the tutoring session. Tutors can learn from each other as well as from staff suggestions for handling problems. During

debriefing sessions tutors are given the opportunity to talk out frustrations and share success stories (Benard, 1990; Cook & Urzua, 1993; Gaustad, 1992, 1993; Giesecke & Cartledge, 1993; Juel, 1991; Leland & Fitzpatrick, 1994; Mavrogenes & Galen, 1979; Newell, 1996; Rekrut, 1994; Taylor et al., 1997).

3. Support by teachers and administrators: Teachers and administrators who understand and believe in a program's potential to help children are generally firm supporters. Some cross-age tutoring programs require tutors to be pulled from their regular classroom to participate as a tutor in the program. The classroom teacher must be supportive of this effort and understand the purpose of the program (DeRita & Weaver, 1991; Gaustad, 1992, 1993; Kreuger & Braun, 1999; Leland & Fitzpatrick, 1994).
4. Well-structured tutoring sessions: Structured tutoring programs may include tutor training, specific tutoring times, and a structured curriculum. Structured tutorial programs have demonstrated higher achievement gains than unstructured programs (Cohen et al., 1982; Wasik & Slavin, 1993).
5. Reinforcement: Reinforcement for both the tutor and tutee occurs in successful programs. The tutee receives consistent feedback and support from the tutor. The tutor receives support from the supervisor, the classroom teacher, and from a positive relationship with the tutee.

In some instances tutors have received class credit or monetary awards (Gaustad, 1992; Juel, 1996; Mavrogenes & Galen, 1979).

The Reading Together cross-age tutoring program which was used in this research study incorporates several of the elements referred to by researchers in successful programs. Tutors in the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program studied were provided 12 hours of training along with ongoing training prior to each tutoring session and were provided the opportunity to debrief after each tutoring session. Tutors were also provided with a well-scripted tutoring manual to be used with their tutee. Reinforcement was provided to the tutee in the Reading Together program through constant monitoring and feedback by their tutor. The tutor received reinforcement from the Reading Together coordinator and through appreciation certificates provided by the Reading Together company.

Review of literature also revealed several theories that produce interesting parallelism when applied to cross-age tutoring and second language acquisition. For example, Krashen's (1988, 1995, 2003) theory of language acquisition and Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory are based on the concept of interaction with other people. Human interaction (i.e. peer relationships) plays an integral role in students' learning, development, and acquisition of language (Allen, 1976; Chomsky, 1972; Johnson & Johnson, 1987; Krashen, 1988, 1995, 2003; Schütz, 2002; Vygotsky, 1978). Also, Krashen's Input Hypothesis and Vygotsky's concept of zone of proximal development are based on input that is one step beyond the students' current stage of competence.

Cross-age tutoring provides students the opportunity to receive comprehensible input through interaction with older, more competent students, which Vygotsky (1978) and Krashen (1988, 1995, 2003) posit to be an effective instructional method to produce language and learning in children. The cross-age tutoring program also provides students the opportunity to read or be read to, in English, on a regular basis, which provides a source of comprehensible input that can have a significant impact on the overall development of oral language proficiency. The peer relationships that develop through cross-age tutoring can also assist in removing the affective filters which could create a learning block for the students. Cross-age tutoring provides for functional communication and relationships which create an environment for language development to occur.

The literature also reveals various theories and concerns in regards to students acquiring a second language and learning to read in that language (Anderson & Roit, 1996; Barrera, 1983; Fitzgerald, 1995, 2000, 2003; Fitzgerald & Noblit, 2000). Should students be proficient in a new language before learning to read in that language, or can the language and reading be learned simultaneously? This is a question that requires further study.

Educators must continue to study and conduct research on instructional methods and strategies to meet the needs of the ever-growing Hispanic population. Studies regarding English language learners and their ability to become proficient in English language and in English reading are of utmost importance if the achievement gap between native English-speakers and native Spanish-speakers is to be closed.



In this study, the effects of cross-age tutoring as an instructional method for improving English language proficiency and English reading of native Spanish-speakers were examined to address limitations of existing research. The following chapter describes the methods and instruments used in the study.

## CHAPTER 3

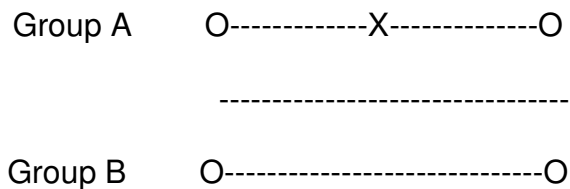
### METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology used in the research study, as well as descriptions of the location, time frame, and participants included in the study. Information regarding the instruments, data collection, and data analysis used to answer the research questions are also included.

#### The General Perspective

In fall 2003, 14 schools in the Irving Independent School District (Irving ISD) implemented the Reading Together™ cross-age tutoring program (The Learning Together Company, Greensboro, NC, [www.learningtogether.com](http://www.learningtogether.com)). Four of the 14 schools implemented the program, designed for use with native English speakers, as a tool for teaching English to third-grade native Spanish speakers enrolled in bilingual education classrooms. The third-grade bilingual education students in these four schools were the population of the study. Each of the four schools provided me data in order to determine the effects of the cross-age tutoring program as an intervention for English reading achievement and English language proficiency. I did not have contact with the students involved in the tutoring program. Access to the schools was granted by the Division Director of Evaluation and Research for Irving ISD after I received approval from the Institutional Review Board. In May 2004, data from the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program were provided by the campus Reading Together coordinator.

This study utilized a quantitative approach to compare the results of English language learners who participated in the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program and English language learners who did not participate in the program. A quasi-experimental design was used in the research study. In this design, the treatment group and the control group were selected using specific criteria. Both groups took a pretest and posttest, but only the treatment group received the intervention. The study compared the language and reading levels of the groups in order to determine if the cross-age tutoring program was an effective intervention for improving English language proficiency and in improving reading ability in English. The study also determined if there was a relationship between initial language levels and reading gains. To compare the reading levels and language proficiency of the two groups a nonequivalent (pretest and posttest) control-group design was utilized:



In the paradigm above, O = observation (pretest and posttest) and X = treatment.

The study addressed three null hypotheses regarding English language learners:

1. There is no significant difference in the IDEA Oral Proficiency Test<sup>®</sup> (Ballard & Tighe, Brea, CA, [www.ballard-tighe.com](http://www.ballard-tighe.com)) language scores of tutees who participated in the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program and students who did not participate.

2. There is no significant difference in the Flynt-Cooter English-Español Reading Inventory for the Classroom (Prentice-Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ, [vig.prenhall.com](http://vig.prenhall.com)) reading levels of tutees who participated in the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program and students who did not participate.
3. There is no relationship between language proficiency and the reading gains of English language learners.

### The Research Context

The study took place in four elementary schools in the Irving ISD during the 2003-2004 school year. Irving ISD is a diverse, suburban district located between Dallas and Fort Worth and has a student enrollment of 31,423 pre-kindergarten through grade 12. The ethnic distribution of Irving ISD is African American 12.71%, American Indian .42%, Asian 4.85%, Hispanic 57.65%, and Anglo 24.37%. Irving ISD has been rated by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) as a Recognized district during the school years from 1999-2003. The ratings are based upon student performance in reading, writing, and mathematics on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills; attendance; and dropout data. Within each subject, test scores are evaluated in the following categories: all students, each ethnic group, and economically disadvantaged (Irving Independent School District, 2003).

The four elementary schools included in the study are in the south central part of Irving ISD. This area of the district has a high concentration of Hispanics. These schools were selected because of their decision to use the Reading

Together program as a tool to teach English to selected third-grade Spanish-speaking students. All four schools are kindergarten through fifth-grade and house English and Bilingual programs. Information regarding the schools enrollment, TEA accountability rating, and demographics can be found in Table 3. The school names have been coded to protect their identity.

Table 3

*School Profiles*

School	Enrollment	TEA Rating	% Free/ Reduced Lunch	% African American	% Anglo	% Hispanic	% Asian
Br	850	Acceptable	79.83	3.7	15.5	78.8	1.6
Go	850	Recognized	81.93	4.2	8.0	85.8	2.0
Ke	768	Recognized	86.39	5.2	6.5	83.5	4.1
Li	847	Recognized	68.01	4.9	26.5	66.3	1.7

*Note.* Texas Education Agency, 2002.

As seen in Table 3, the four schools are all above 50% free and reduced lunch which classifies them as Title 1 schools. The data also indicate that all four schools are primarily Hispanic, followed by Anglo, then African American. Academically, all four schools are performing at the Acceptable level or higher based on TEA standards.

The Research Participants

*Treatment Group*

Sixty third-grade students enrolled in bilingual classrooms participated as tutees in the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program on four campuses in

Irving ISD implementing the cross-age tutoring program as an English language intervention for Spanish-speaking students. The tutees on each campus were chosen by coordinators of the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program based on their English reading levels and English language proficiency levels. Students selected as tutees were non-English speakers (NES) or limited English speakers (LES) according to their IDEA Oral Proficiency Test (IPT I-Oral) scores from spring 2003 and were reading in English on at least a kindergarten level, but not on a third grade level, according to the Flynt-Cooter English-Español Reading Inventory for the Classroom (Flynt-Cooter) administered in fall 2003. Fifty-four of the 60 participating tutees met all the criterion and were selected as the treatment group for the research study. Six tutees were excluded from the treatment group because they did not meet the criterion according to the IPT I-Oral language test and/or attendance requirements. The 54 participants selected represented 21% of the total third-grade bilingual student population of the four campuses involved in the research study.

#### *Control Group*

In May 2004, the Reading Together program coordinator from each of the four campuses participating in the cross-age tutoring program provided me an unidentifiable student list of those eligible for the control group. The criterion for selection was the same as that used for the treatment group. Students were native Spanish speakers of Hispanic origin and enrolled in a third-grade bilingual classroom. These students were NES or LES according to their IPT I-Oral test scores from spring 2003 and were able to read on at least a kindergarten level,

but not on a third grade level, based on the Flynt-Cooter English reading assessment administered in fall 2003. These students did not participate in the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program. Seventy-seven students met the selection criteria for the control group. I randomly selected 60 students from the unidentifiable student list as the control group, which represented 23% of the total third-grade bilingual student population across the four participating schools. Parent permission for access to the student data was obtained. A copy of the parent letter can be found in Appendix A.

Students in the control group received their English-as-a-second-language (ESL) instruction throughout the school year from their regular classroom teacher. The ESL lessons were taught through instructional strategies recommended by the school district for all bilingual classrooms. These strategies included guided reading, vocabulary instruction, and listening and speaking activities. Students received approximately 60 minutes of ESL instruction per day. Students in the treatment group received the classroom instruction in addition to the Reading Together program. Neither group of students was involved in any other English intervention program.

### Reading Together Program Descriptions

#### *The Learning Together Company Description*

The Reading Together program is a 30-session cross-age tutoring program published by The Learning Together Company. The program is designed to help English-speaking students progress from decoding words to reading with fluency and comprehension through one-to-one tutoring. The

Reading Together tutoring program is based on 18 years of research and brain studies and is designed to provide supplemental instruction to second and/or third-grade students. The program is divided into three distinct phases. Phase I is comprised of 15 highly structured lessons, which lasts 8 to 10 weeks. In this phase, tutors are provided with trade books to use as read-alouds in order to model fluent reading. During this phase, the tutee engages in short reading passages with the tutor, who encourages and supports the tutee. Questions from the tutor during this phase focus on building comprehension through predicting and retelling. The tutee also has the opportunity to reread the passage and carry out a post-reading activity with the tutor.

Phase II of the Reading Together program consists of 12 lessons, which last six to eight weeks, and is significantly different from Phase I. During this phase, tutors and tutees take turns reading from trade books. The goal of this phase is to prepare the tutee to become an independent reader by providing opportunities for silent reading during the tutoring session. This is followed by independent reading in class or at home. At the end of the tutorial the tutor and tutee work together on a post-reading activity.

Phase III of the Reading Together program is made up of three lessons and lasts two to three weeks. Phase III further develops the concept of the tutee as an independent reader. This phase focuses on the school's media center. The tutor models appropriate behavior and selection of media center books. The goal of these lessons is to teach the tutee how to select appropriate books from the media center and read them on their own.



The Reading Together tutorial sessions are supervised by a campus coordinator. The coordinator provides training for the tutors as specified by the Reading Together program. Phase I training consists of nine 1-hour sessions. Training for Phases II and III consists of two 1-hour sessions. The coordinator works with the tutors twice a week to plan the tutorial sessions. The coordinator also oversees the tutorial sessions which take place twice a week for 45 minutes. After each tutorial session the coordinator conducts a debriefing session with the tutors.

Tutors follow lessons designed by The Learning Together Company through each phase of the program. Tutors are provided with a second or third-grade guidebook of highly scripted lessons with clearly stated directions. The tutors are also provided with a personal journal to record thoughts about how each lesson worked with their tutee. The tutee is provided with a workbook to use during each phase of the program. The Reading Together program is equipped with all necessary books and supplies. Throughout all phases of the program the tutee is supported by trained tutors, who in turn are supported by the Reading Together coordinator.

#### *Irving ISD Description and Implementation*

Implementation of the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program began in fall 2003 at 14 elementary schools in Irving ISD. The four schools identified for the study implemented the program with third-grade English language learners enrolled in the bilingual program. To ensure effective implementation of the program, a Reading Together coordinator was selected by

each school principal. The Reading Together coordinators were required to attend two training sessions conducted by the Learning Together Company, publishers of the Reading Together program. The first training session was held in September 2003 and covered Phase I of the tutoring program. The second training session was held in December 2003 and covered Phases II and III of the tutoring program.

Reading Together coordinators were responsible for scheduling the 30-tutoring sessions for their campus. The weekly schedule included two 1-hour sessions for tutor preparation and two 45-minute tutorial sessions. Each tutorial session was followed by a 15-minute debriefing time for the tutors with the coordinators. The preparation days and tutoring days alternated. Reading Together coordinators were also responsible for maintaining attendance records and test data.

The Reading Together coordinator also had the responsibility to select, train, and supervise the tutors and tutees. Reading Together coordinators began implementation of the program by selecting and training students to serve as tutors. The tutors were fifth-grade native Spanish-speaking students of Hispanic origin. The students were enrolled in one of three types of classrooms on their campus: bilingual (lessons taught in English and Spanish), transitional (lessons taught in English with Spanish support provided as needed), or an English classroom (students who had exited the bilingual program). The tutors were able to read in English on at least a fourth-grade level according to the Flynt-Cooter reading assessment given to all fifth-grade students in fall 2003. The tutors were

selected based on teacher recommendation and an interview process with the Reading Together coordinators. Parent permission for participation in the cross-age tutoring program was obtained for all selected tutors. A sample of the permission letter can be found in Appendix B. After receipt of parent permission, Reading Together coordinators began nine 1-hour training sessions with the fifth-grade tutors. During these sessions the coordinator introduced general concepts of tutoring and engaged tutors in role-playing activities designed to help them understand the frustrations and challenges their tutee may encounter. The sessions included concepts such as before-reading activities, modeling good reading, predicting story content using pictures and title, helping tutors identify mistakes and how the corrections should be made, giving positive feedback, learning questioning strategies, expectations for journal writing, and warm-up chats with tutees.

During the process of tutor selection and training, Reading Together coordinators also began selecting native Spanish-speaking third-grade students in bilingual classrooms to be tutees in the tutoring program. In order to determine the participants for the cross-age tutoring program the coordinators reviewed language scores from the IPT I-Oral proficiency test which was administered to all bilingual students in spring 2003, and the Flynt-Cooter English inventory reading scores which was given to all third-grade bilingual students in fall 2003. Selection criteria included students scoring NES or LES on the IPT I-Oral proficiency test and at least a kindergarten level on the Flynt-Cooter reading inventory. From this information, the Reading Together coordinators selected

15 third-grade students at each campus to participate in the cross-age tutoring program. Random selection was used on campuses where more than 15 students were identified as eligible for the program. Permission letters were provided to parents for consent to participate in the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program. A sample of the parent letter is provided in Appendix C.

Once the tutors and tutees were identified and parent permission obtained, the fifth-grade tutors on each of the four campuses were randomly matched with their third-grade tutee. Dyads consisted of boy/girl, girl/girl, and boy/boy combinations. Phase I of the cross-age tutoring program began after dyads were formed. This phase consisted of 15 tutoring sessions and followed the lessons provided in the second grade guidebook of the Reading Together program. The second grade guidebook was selected for use because the tutees were NES and LES. The second grade book was more appropriate for the language levels of the students than the third grade guidebook. At the end of Phase I the tutors received training on Phase II and III from the Reading Together coordinator. The students then worked with the tutees in Phase II for 12 sessions followed by Phase III for an additional three sessions. These sessions also followed the lessons provided in the second grade guidebook of the Reading Together program. Tutoring sessions are supervised by the Reading Together coordinator.

#### Instruments Used

Two instruments, the Flynt-Cooter English-Español Reading Inventory for the Classroom (Flynt-Cooter) and the IDEA Oral Proficiency Test (IPT I-Oral),

were used in the data collection process. These assessments were selected for the study because they are administered to students as a requirement of the school district. I preferred information on the effectiveness of the cross-age tutoring program based on the district assessment protocol already in place.

*Flynt-Cooter English-Español Reading Inventory for the Classroom*

The Flynt-Cooter assessment is an informal reading inventory intended for determining the Spanish or English reading levels from preprimer through grade 12. In Irving ISD the Flynt-Cooter inventory is administered in the fall and the spring to students in grades 3 through 5. The assessment is composed of three sections: sentences to determine initial passage selection, the reading passages themselves, and the accompanying assessment protocols. The assessment portion of the Flynt-Cooter reading inventory is also divided into four forms: A, B, C and D. Form A was administered in the fall as a pretest, and Form B was used in the spring as a posttest. Forms A and B consist of narrative passages ranging from the pre-primer level through level nine. The passages vary depending on the form used. Passage difficulty was determined using a combination of the Fry Readability Graph, the Harris-Jacobson Readability Formula, teacher input, and the authors' judgment. Forms A and B follow the same assessment protocols. Reliability and validity of the Flynt-Cooter inventory is not available because it is considered an informal reading inventory, which has not required reliability and validity tests. A revised, more comprehensive version of the Flynt-Cooter reading inventory is expected to be released in 2006 and will

contain reliability and validity information to conform to Reading First federal requirements (R. B. Cooter, Jr., personal communication, April 8, 2004).

The assessment protocols of the Flynt-Cooter reading inventory include an introductory prereading statement, comprehension questions, a miscue analysis grid, a section for analyzing results and determining whether or not to continue testing, and a listening comprehension assessment. Following the reading of initial sentences to determine the first passage to be read, students are given a passage to read silently and then retell. Students are then asked to read the story aloud, while the teacher conducts an analysis of miscues including mispronunciations, substitutions, self-corrections, insertions, teacher assistance, repetitions, and omissions. After completion of the assessment protocols, test administrators are able to determine the reading placement level of students and develop appropriate classroom instruction.

#### *IDEA Oral Language Proficiency Test I - English, Forms C and D*

State legislation and federal mandates require that measures of oral language proficiency be administered to students whose primary language is other than English in order to determine the adequacy of these students' English skills. The IPT I-Oral proficiency test is the instrument used by Irving ISD to comply with the legislation and mandates. The IPT I-Oral test is used as a diagnostic tool that determines a student's level of oral language proficiency. The IPT I-Oral test is a process whereby the student responds to controlled stimuli, both verbal and visual. The instrument assesses the general areas of syntax,

morphology, lexicon, and phonology. It is organized by developmental levels of difficulty.

The IPT I-Oral proficiency test originated in 1979 with Forms A and B. Thousands of students throughout the United States have been tested using these forms. In 1989, the publisher asked the original authors and expert educators to review and revise Forms A and B. Forms C and D are the revised, updated versions of Forms A and B. The skills assessed in Form C are the same as those assessed in Form D. Different test items are used in the two forms. In the winter of 1990 initial pilot tests of the IPT I-Oral proficiency test, Forms C and D were conducted. Two hundred sixty-six students participated in the pilot test. A field test norming study including 1,054 students was conducted in spring 1990 in 21 school districts and eight states. The data from the field test norming study were used to determine the reliability and validity of Forms C and D. The study demonstrated high internal consistency, consistency between measures, and accuracy of the tests.

#### *Data Collection*

The Reading Together coordinator provided me with data from each school in May 2004. I provided a data collection form which requested the following information for each participant in the treatment group and control group: gender, ethnicity, Flynt-Cooter reading inventory pretest and posttest scores, IPT I-Oral pretest and posttest scores, number of participation days in the program, and other English language interventions. A sample form is found in Appendix D. Names of students were coded to maintain anonymity. Due to the

individual diagnostic nature of the assessments, I converted the reading levels of the Flynt-Cooter inventory to a nominal scale of 0-5 and converted the language levels of the IPT I-Oral proficiency test to a nominal scale of 1-6 for the purpose of data analysis.

### Data Analysis

The data for hypotheses one and two were analyzed using repeated measures analysis of variance (RM ANOVA). The analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) design was considered for analyzing hypotheses one and two; however, it was determined not to be the best statistical method for the study because the ANCOVA is not used with intact groups. A bivariate correlation (Pearson  $r$ ) was used to analyze hypothesis 3. The University of North Texas Center for Interdisciplinary Research and Analysis assisted me in analyzing the data using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software.

#### *Hypothesis 1*

To analyze the effects of the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program on the English oral language proficiency of the treatment and control groups, RM ANOVA was used. The dependent variable in this design was oral language proficiency as measured by the IPT I-Oral test. The single independent variable was the cross-age tutoring program with two treatment levels: the treatment group and the control group. Table 4 illustrates this design.

The spring 2003 IPT I-Oral test scores were used as a pretest for language proficiency with the spring 2004 scores from the IPT I-Oral test being



used as a posttest. The IPT I-Oral test was administered by trained non-professional personnel at each campus.

Table 4

*Research Design (Hypothesis 1)*

Treatment Levels	Pretest	Posttest
Treatment Group	IPT I-Oral	IPT I-Oral
Control Group	IPT I-Oral	IPT I-Oral

*Hypothesis 2*

To analyze the effects of the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program on the English reading achievement of the treatment and control groups, RM ANOVA was used. The dependent variable in this design was the reading level as measured by the Flynt-Cooter reading inventory. The single independent variable was the cross-age tutoring program with two treatment levels: the treatment group and the control group. Table 5 illustrates this design.

Table 5

*Research Design (Hypothesis 2)*

Treatment Levels	Pretest	Posttest
Treatment Group	Flynt-Cooter	Flynt-Cooter
Control Group	Flynt-Cooter	Flynt-Cooter

The Flynt-Cooter inventory Form A was utilized as the pretest, and Form B was utilized as the posttest. The Flynt-Cooter inventory was administered at each campus to all third-grade students enrolled in a bilingual classroom by the classroom teacher or the Reading Together coordinator. Both the classroom

teachers and the Reading Together coordinators were professional personnel, trained by school district coordinators in the administration of the assessment. Form A was administered in fall 2003, and Form B was administered in May 2004.

### *Hypothesis 3*

The relationship between the students' initial language level and the students' gains in reading was analyzed through the use of a bivariate correlation (Pearson  $r$ ). The IPT I-Oral test scores from spring 2003 were correlated with the reading gain scores (i.e., posttest scores-pretest scores). This information was used to determine if students with initially higher language proficiency levels achieved greater gains in reading than students with lower language proficiency levels (i.e., Do LES students achieve greater reading gains than NES students?).

### *Program Attendance*

Treatment dosage was taken into consideration in the analysis of data for all three hypotheses by categorizing the attendance of students participating in the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program. Categories included Phase I, which consisted of 15 sessions, and Phase II and III combined, which also totaled 15 sessions. Students who dropped out, moved, or attended less than 10 days in either category were excluded from the study.

### Summary of the Methodology

This chapter described the procedures used in the implementation of this study, inclusive of selection of participants, instrumentation, procedures, data collection, and data analysis procedures. The following chapter presents the results obtained from implementation of these procedures.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

This research study was designed to determine if the Reading Together™ cross-age tutoring program (The Learning Together Company, Greensboro, NC, [www.learningtogether.com](http://www.learningtogether.com)), intended for English speakers, was an effective intervention for improving English language proficiency and English reading levels of native Spanish-speaking students. A quasi-experimental design was used in the research study. The study focused on native Spanish-speaking students enrolled in third-grade bilingual classrooms in four elementary schools. Pretests and posttests in English oral language proficiency and English reading were administered to third-grade students in the treatment group and in the control group in the four schools participating in the study. This chapter reports the results of the data analysis.

#### Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 states: There is no significant difference in the IDEA Oral Proficiency Test® (Ballard & Tighe, Brea, CA, [www.ballard-tighe.com](http://www.ballard-tighe.com)) language scores of tutees who participated in the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program and students who did not participate. This hypothesis was designed to answer the research question: What is the effectiveness of the Reading Together cross-age tutoring model as an intervention for improving language proficiency of English language learners?

Descriptive statistics were conducted based on the IDEA Oral Proficiency Test (IPT I-Oral) scores which ranged from 1-6 on the pretests and posttests of the treatment group and the control group. These results are noted in Table 6.

Table 6

*IPT I-Oral Proficiency Test Descriptive Statistics*

Treatment Levels	<u>Pretest</u>		<u>Posttest</u>	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Tutoring Group (n = 54)	3.48	.926	4.52	1.255
Control Group (n = 60)	3.08	.907	3.68	1.186

A repeated measures analysis of variance (RM ANOVA) was utilized to analyze the effects of the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program on the English language proficiency of the treatment group and the control group. The analysis employed a single independent variable (cross-age tutoring) with two treatment levels (treatment group and control group). The dependent variable was the language levels of the IPT I-Oral proficiency test. The IPT I-Oral test Forms C and D were administered as pretest and posttest. The RM ANOVA analyzed the statistically significant relation between the treatment group and the control group. Table 7 illustrates the data results for research question 1.

As seen in Table 7 the results within the language levels of the treatment and control groups indicated an  $F$  value of  $(1, 112) = 4.595$  which is a statistically significant difference at the .05 level ( $p = .034$ ) according to the Wilks' Lambda (.961). An analysis of the main effect within the treatment and control groups'

Table 7

*Analysis of Cross-Age Tutoring and Language Acquisition*

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between Subjects		113			
Groups (1, 2)	21.62	1	21.62	12.46	.001*
Error (between)	194.37	112	1.74		
Within Subjects		114			
Prepost	38.08	1	38.08	64.47	.000 <sup>a</sup>
Group*prepost	2.71	1	2.71	4.60	.034 <sup>a</sup>
Error (within)	66.16	112	.591		
Total	322.94	227			

<sup>a</sup>  $p < .05$

pretest and posttest on the IPT I-Oral test using the Wilks' Lambda (1 - .961 = effect size) indicated an effect size of +.04. Wilks' Lambda effect sizes can range from 0 to 1. Although the effect size is relatively small, there is still a statistically significant difference in the language proficiency of the treatment and control groups.

Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices was conducted and analyzed to determine whether the covariances matrices of the dependent variable (IPT I-Oral proficiency test) were equal across groups. Box's test indicated a statistically non-significant difference between the covariances at a level of .085 ( $p > .001$ ).

## Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 states: There is no significant difference in the Flynt-Cooter English-Español Reading Inventory for the Classroom (Prentice-Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ, [vig.prenhall.com](http://vig.prenhall.com)) reading levels of tutees who participated in the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program and students who did not participate. This hypothesis was designed to answer the research question: What is the effectiveness of the Reading Together cross-age tutoring model as an intervention for improving reading levels of English language learners?

Descriptive statistics were conducted based on the Flynt-Cooter English-Español Reading Inventory for the Classroom (Flynt-Cooter) scores which ranged from 0 - 5 on the pretests and posttests of the treatment group and the control group. These results are noted in Table 8.

Table 8

### *Flynt-Cooter Reading Inventory Descriptive Statistics*

Treatment Levels	<u>Pretest</u>		<u>Posttest</u>	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Tutoring Group (n = 54)	1.65	.588	2.87	1.166
Control Group (n = 60)	.52	.676	1.43	1.294

A repeated measures analysis of variance (RM ANOVA) was utilized to analyze the effects of the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program on the English reading achievement of the treatment group and the control group. The analysis employed a single independent variable (cross-age tutoring), with two treatment levels (treatment group and control group). The dependent variable

was the reading levels of the Flynt-Cooter inventory. The Flynt-Cooter Reading Inventory Forms A and B were administered as pretest and posttest. The RM ANOVA analyzed the statistically significant relation between the scores of treatment group and the control group. Table 9 illustrates the data analysis for research question 2.

Table 9

*Analysis of Cross-Age Tutoring and Reading Achievement*

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between Subjects		113			
Groups (1, 2)	93.75	1	93.75	63.78	.000 <sup>a</sup>
Error (between)	165.17	112	1.47		
Within Subjects		114			
Prepost	65.01	1	65.01	142.88	.000 <sup>a</sup>
Group*prepost	1.33	1	1.33	2.92	.090
Error (within)	50.96	112	.455		
Total	376.22	227			

<sup>a</sup>  $p < .05$

As seen in Table 9, the results of the analysis within the reading levels of the treatment and control groups indicated an  $F$  value of  $(1, 112) = 2.916$  which is a statistically non-significant difference at the .05 level ( $p = .090$ ) according to the Wilks' Lambda (.975). An analysis of the main effect within the treatment and control groups' pretest and posttest on the Flynt-Cooter reading inventory using

the Wilks' Lambda ( $1 - .975 = \text{effect size}$ ) indicated an effect size of  $+.03$ , which is relatively small. Wilks' Lambda effect sizes can range from 0 to 1.

Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices was conducted and analyzed to determine whether the covariances matrices of the dependent variable (Flynt-Cooter reading inventory) were equal across groups. Box's test indicated a statistically non-significant difference between the covariances at a level of  $.006$  ( $p > .001$ ).

#### Gain Scores for Language Proficiency and Reading Levels

Descriptive statistics were conducted to determine the gain scores in oral language proficiency and reading levels on the pretests and posttests of the treatment group and the control group. These results are noted in Table 10. The data in Table 10 are consistent with the results within the RM ANOVA which indicated a statistically significant difference in the language scores of the treatment and control groups but not in the reading scores of the two groups.

Table 10

#### *Mean Gain Scores of Treatment and Control Groups*

Treatment Levels	<u>IPT I-Oral</u>		<u>Flynt-Cooter</u>	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Tutoring Group (n = 54)	1.03	1.258	1.22	1.058
Control Group (n = 60)	.6000	.90573	.9167	.84956

Null hypothesis 1 states there is no significant difference in the IDEA Oral Proficiency Test (IPT I-Oral) language scores of tutees who participated in the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program and students who did not



participate. Based on the results of the RM ANOVA and the descriptive statistics, null hypothesis 1 is rejected. Null hypothesis 2 states there is no significant difference in the Flynt-Cooter English-Español Reading Inventory for the Classroom (Prentice-Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ, [vig.prenhall.com](http://www.prenhall.com)) reading levels of tutees who participated in the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program and students who did not participate. Null hypothesis 2 is supported.

### Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 states there is no relationship between language proficiency and the reading gains of English language learners. This hypothesis was designed to answer the research question: Is there a relationship between the beginning language proficiency score of English language learners and the reading achievement of the learners?

A bivariate correlation (Pearson  $r$ ) was utilized to analyze the relationship between the students' initial English language level and the students' gains in English reading. The IPT I-Oral test scores from spring 2003 were correlated with the reading gain scores (i.e., posttest scores-pretest scores) from the Flynt-Cooter reading inventory.

The results of the Pearson  $r$  indicate scores on the IPT I-Oral test have a low to moderate positive correlation with reading gains on the Flynt-Cooter inventory for the treatment group ( $r = .216$ ), control group ( $r = .141$ ), and all students combined ( $r = .208$ ). In other words, the higher the initial IPT I-Oral test scores, the higher the reading gains. The treatment group saw a higher

correlation in beginning language level and reading gains when compared to the control group. Based on these results hypothesis 3 is rejected.

### Summary

The data analysis presented in this chapter indicate that a statistically significant difference in English language proficiency scores exist between students in the treatment group and students in the control group. The results also indicate that there is not a statistically significant difference in the English reading gains of students participating in the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program and students who did not participate. The statistical analysis also indicates a low to moderate positive correlation between students' initial English language levels and their English reading achievement. A more detailed summary and discussion of the results are presented in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to analyze the effectiveness of the Reading Together™ cross-age tutoring program (The Learning Together Company, Greensboro, NC, [www.learningtogether.com](http://www.learningtogether.com)) as an instructional strategy for improving the English language proficiency and English reading levels of native Spanish-speakers. The methodology employed was a quasi-experimental design utilizing pretests and posttests for oral language proficiency and reading levels from the treatment group and control group. The research questions investigated were:

1. What is the effectiveness of the Reading Together cross-age tutoring model as an intervention for improving language proficiency of English language learners?
2. What is the effectiveness of the Reading Together cross-age tutoring model as an intervention for improving reading levels of English language learners?
3. Is there a relationship between the beginning language proficiency score of English language learners and the reading achievement of the learners?

The information in this chapter is reported in the following ways: a summary and discussion of the major findings related to research questions 1, 2, and 3; conclusions; implications for practice; and recommendations for further study.

## Summary and Discussion of Major Findings

### *Research Question 1*

Research Question 1: What is the effectiveness of the Reading Together cross-age tutoring model as an intervention for improving language proficiency of English language learners? Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the IDEA Oral Proficiency Test<sup>®</sup> (Ballard & Tighe, Brea, CA, [www.ballard-tighe.com](http://www.ballard-tighe.com)) language scores of tutees who participated in the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program and students who did not participate.

The data collected and analyzed for research question 1 indicated a statistically significant difference in the English language proficiency scores of the treatment group and control group. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Students in the treatment group demonstrated greater gains in their oral language proficiency than the control group based on the pretest and posttest scores on the IDEA Oral Proficiency Test (IPT I-Oral). The analysis also indicated a relatively small, yet positive effect size (+.04). The effect size could possibly be a result of several factors such as the short time frame of the treatment, the language levels of the tutors, or as a result of the first year of implementation of the program. The statistical difference and the positive effect size suggest that the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program may be an effective instructional strategy for improving the English oral language proficiency of native Spanish-speakers.

These results coincide with studies that have demonstrated cross-age tutoring as an effective model for positively impacting tutees (Barbetta & Miller,

1991; Bridges-Cline, 2003; Cohen et al., 1982; Cook & Urzua, 1993; DeRita & Weaver, 1991; Giesecke & Cartledge, 1993; Intercultural Development Research Association, 2004; Juel, 1991; Kreuger & Braun, 1999; Leland & Fitzpatrick, 1994; Newell, 1996, Slavin & Madden, 1989; Taylor et al., 1997). The Reading Together cross-age tutoring program included elements which have previously been shown as effective. Tutors were carefully trained (Barbetta & Miller, 1991; Benard, 1990; Cook & Urzua, 1993; Gaustad, 1992, 1993; Giesecke & Cartledge, 1993; Juel, 1991; Kreuger & Braun, 1999; Leland & Fitzpatrick, 1994; Mavrogenes & Galen, 1979; Newell, 1996; Rekrut, 1994; Slavin & Madden, 1989; Taylor et al., 1997) and used a structured lesson format (Cohen et al., 1982; Wasik & Slavin, 1993). Tutors were also provided ongoing supervision and support (Benard, 1990; Cook & Urzua, 1993; Gaustad, 1992, 1993; Giesecke & Cartledge, 1993; Juel, 1991; Leland & Fitzpatrick, 1994; Mavrogenes & Galen, 1979; Newell, 1996; Rekrut, 1994; Taylor et al., 1997). Both tutors and tutees received reinforcement throughout the tutoring program (Gaustad, 1992; Juel, 1996; Mavrogenes & Galen, 1979).

The results for this research question also support Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and his "zone of proximal development" theory. Vygotsky viewed the key mechanism of cognitive development as scaffold learning through social and cognitive interaction with a more skilled, competent person (Wasik & Slavin, 1993). In this study fifth-grade students worked collaboratively through the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program with third-grade native Spanish-speaking students. The interactions with older, more competent tutors

allowed the tutees to accomplish tasks that would otherwise have been beyond their cognitive abilities. This concept parallels Krashen's (1988, 1995, 2003) Input Hypothesis theory which posits second language learners are able to acquire language by receiving and understanding input that is one step beyond their current level of competence. The Reading Together cross-age tutoring program implemented in this study supports both of these theories by pairing an older, more skilled student with a younger student.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory hypothesized that all learning is first accomplished through the language that flows between individuals (Schütz, 2002). The Reading Together cross-age tutoring program incorporates a specific "warm-up" chat time for the tutor and tutee along with the oral interaction that takes place as the students read and discuss the stories and books with each other. This flow of language is also what Krashen would call "comprehensible input." Language acquisition occurs when people receive messages they understand (Chomsky, 1972; Krashen 1988, 1995, 2003). The Reading Together cross-age tutoring program afforded students a natural, communicative, and experiential approach to second language learning. This approach allowed the tutees to be actively involved in acquiring language naturally through their interaction with others (Chomsky, 1972; Goodman, 1978; Krashen, 1988, 1995).

The tutor and tutee in the cross-age tutoring program most likely developed an affective relationship (Allen, 1976). The tutee may also have been more comfortable in communicating with someone closer to their own age than with an adult tutor. Younger students naturally look up to older students and often

try to mimic the actions of their admired, more competent peer. As a result the tutee would likely learn the material more efficiently than a student working directly with an adult. These positive aspects of the peer relationship between the tutors and tutees may have eliminated affective filters that can block competence in acquiring a second language (Krashen, 1988, 1995, 2003). Instead of blocking the language, the peer relationship may have actually facilitated the acquisition of the second language.

The Reading Together cross-age tutoring program may also be an effective method of increasing oral language proficiency because it is literacy-based. Each tutoring session is centered on the tutor and tutee reading and discussing various stories and trade books. Books can offer children something to talk about by providing a shared experience which gives English language learners the opportunity to hear the language of stories (Allen, 1989). Learning to read in a second language can actually assist in developing oral language proficiency in the new language (Anderson & Roit, 1996; Barrera, 1983; Fitzgerald, 1995; Gersten, 1996).

The Reading Together cross-age tutoring program provided the tutees with a comfortable environment where language was not taught in any formal manner. The language was taught through informal conversation and reading with older, more competent peers. This natural environment provided the tutee the opportunity to receive and understand comprehensible input in the form of literature and language.

Previous studies have examined cross-age tutoring with English language learners in the area of reading (Bridges-Cline, 2003; Cook & Urzua, 1993; Intercultural Development Research Association, 2004; Juel, 1991; Kreuger & Braun, 1999) but none have examined cross-age tutoring as a method for improving oral language proficiency. Therefore, this study on the effectiveness of cross-age tutoring and oral language proficiency adds new information to the body of research on cross-age tutoring with English language learners.

### *Research Question 2*

Research Question 2: What is the effectiveness of the Reading Together cross-age tutoring model as an intervention for improving reading levels of English language learners? Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the Flynt-Cooter English-Español Reading Inventory for the Classroom (Prentice-Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ, [vig.prenhall.com](http://vig.prenhall.com)) reading levels of tutees who participated in the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program and students who did not participate.

The data collected and analyzed for research question 2 indicated a statistically non-significant difference in the English reading levels of the treatment group and control group. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. Students in the treatment group did not demonstrate significantly greater gains in their English reading levels than the control group based on the pretest and posttest scores on the Flynt-Cooter English-Español Reading Inventory for the Classroom (Flynt-Cooter). The study also indicated a small, but positive effect size (+.03). This evidence does not necessarily mean that the



Reading Together cross-age tutoring program is an ineffective method for teaching reading to native Spanish-speakers. The lack of significance in the reading scores between the treatment group and control group needs to be examined given that cross-age tutoring procedures have previously demonstrated success in improving reading achievement of English speaking students (Barbetta & Miller, 1991; Bridges-Cline, 2003; Cook & Urzua, 1993; DeRita & Weaver, 1991; Giesecke & Cartledge, 1993; Intercultural Development Research Association, 2004; Juel, 1991; Kreuger & Braun, 1999; Leland & Fitzpatrick, 1994; Newell, 1996; Slavin & Madden, 1989; Taylor et al., 1997). The effect size, though relatively small, was positive. Other variables could have affected the outcome.

First, perhaps the Flynt-Cooter reading inventory was not sensitive to the learning taking place. This assessment is an informal reading inventory, which has not been required to produce reliability and validity tests (R. B. Cooter, Jr., personal communication, April 8, 2004). Due to the fact that the tutees were on four different campuses, the Flynt-Cooter reading inventory was not administered to all students by the same examiner. Even though the assessment is scripted, some subjectivity on the part of the examiner could have occurred and created differences in the reading scores of the students both at the time of the pretest and the posttest.

Secondly, the non-significant results could have occurred due to differences in the implementation of the treatment on each campus. Each campus had its own Reading Together program coordinator which could have

created variances in procedures. The Reading Together program coordinators participated in the same training sessions and used the same materials; however, differences in the interpretation of lessons, differences in the amount of support and training provided to tutors, and differences in reinforcement to both tutors and tutees could have contributed to the results.

A third consideration for the lack of a statistically significant difference in the reading scores of the treatment group and control group revolves around the question often asked by educators and researchers, “Should we wait to teach reading in the new language until students have developed some optimal level of oral proficiency in the new language?” Two theories must be considered when examining the data results.

The Oral Precedence Theory is based on the assumption that oral language proficiency in the new language forms the basis for reading and writing processes and development in the new language. Researchers argue that it is difficult to learn to read in a language that is unfamiliar in its sounds and meanings (Fitzgerald, 2003). The tutees and tutee control group in this study were non-English speakers (NES) or limited English speakers (LES). If one supports the Oral Precedence Theory then the lack of significance between the two groups is understandable. Neither group had the foundation of language in English to make great strides in reading.

However, the General Factory Theory asserts that students can learn to read in a new language at the same time they are learning to speak the language (Fitzgerald, 2003). This theory is based on the assumption that there is one

generic set of language sub-processes that provides the foundation to students' learning in different areas of the new language. The tutees in this study did make gains in reading, just not gains that were significantly different from the control group. If one supports the General Factory Theory, the lack of significance between the two groups is not an important factor. Supporters of the General Factory Theory would recommend English language learners be involved in literacy learning and language learning at the same time because of the reciprocal relationship between oral language proficiency and reading ability in the second language (Barrera, 1983). This study was designed to provide native Spanish-speakers the opportunity to improve their English oral language proficiency and English reading ability simultaneously. Both areas saw improvements but at different levels of statistical significance.

### *Research Question 3*

Research Question 3: Is there a relationship between the beginning language proficiency score of English language learners and the reading achievement of the learners? Hypothesis 3: There is no relationship between language proficiency and the reading gains of English language learners.

The data collected and analyzed for research question 3 indicated a low to moderate positive correlation in the beginning oral language level and reading gains of the treatment group, control group, and all students combined. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. These results support the studies by Peregoy and Boyle (1989) and Peregoy (1991), which indicate a positive correlation between oral language proficiency and second language reading. In

these studies students who scored high on oral language also scored high in reading comprehension. On the other hand, students scoring low in oral language proficiency scored lower in second language reading. The results of this study also indicate that students with higher language scores have higher reading levels.

The correlation between reading proficiency and oral language proficiency among English language learners increases at higher grade levels, suggesting that reading and oral language proficiency become more closely related as students advance in their reading development (Fitzgerald & Noblit, 2000). Further review of the data in this study indicates that the treatment group saw a higher correlation in beginning language level and reading gains when compared to the control group, which could indicate more advanced reading development than the control group. The data comparing the reading levels of the Flynt-Cooter inventory of the treatment group and control group did not indicate a statistically significant difference between the two groups; however, when coupled with the data from the bivariate correlation, one could make the assumption that the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program did have a positive impact on the reading levels of the tutees.

The correlation between the oral language proficiency levels and reading gains of the treatment group and control group also provides further information to consider when deciding whether to support the Oral Precedence Theory or the General Factory Theory (Fitzgerald, 2003). Supporters of the Oral Precedence Theory would claim that since students with higher language proficiency levels

made greater reading gains their theory is further substantiated. Supporters of the General Factory Theory would claim that the gains in reading in the new language actually assisted in the oral development of the language (Anderson & Roit, 1996; Fitzgerald, 1995; Gersten, 1996).

### Conclusions

The results of this research study were consistent with existing research findings in certain areas. In other areas, the results provided information where no information was available. The study concluded the following:

1. Cross-age tutoring might possibly be an effective instructional strategy to assist English language learners in improving their oral language proficiency in English. Even though there was a statistically significant difference between the treatment and control groups, the effect size was relatively small. Therefore, a strong conclusion of effectiveness cannot be drawn; however, the possibility cannot be dismissed.
2. Even though third-grade participants in the cross-age tutoring program did not demonstrate significantly different reading levels from students not participating in the program, cross-age tutoring may still be an instructional strategy to be used with English language learners to assist them in second language reading. The results did show an effect size similar to that of the oral language results and a gain in reading levels, just not one of significant difference between the two groups.
3. Students' initial English oral language proficiency level does correlate to the students' English reading level.

## Implications for Practice

Although one research study cannot provide a sound basis for implementing an instructional strategy, the results of this study, and other studies with similar findings, suggest that cross-age tutoring is effective. This study utilized the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program, designed for English speakers, with native Spanish-speakers in order to improve their English oral language proficiency and their English reading ability. As has been shown, this program may be beneficial in improving the language proficiency of the students. Reading gains were made but were not statistically significant. As educators look for ways to assist the English language learner, this study provides information on one strategy that should be considered. The effect size for both the IPT I-Oral proficiency test and the Flynt-Cooter reading inventory are small, yet positive. The small gains could be a result of the short time frame of the study, the language levels of the tutors, or the result of first year implementation of the program. Further studies need to be conducted which take these elements into consideration in order to determine a more definite conclusion as to the effectiveness of the Reading Together program with English language learners.

Educators can also use the information from this study as they decide when to begin teaching a native Spanish-speaker to read in English. The study showed that students with higher levels of language proficiency are more likely to make greater gains in reading in the new language than students with lower levels of language proficiency. However, the results also support simultaneously

learning to speak in a new language and learning to read in a new language. Educators must decide the best approach for individual students.

### Recommendations for Future Study

The following suggestions for research should be considered in this field of study:

1. Design a study using native English-speakers as tutors and native Spanish-speakers as tutees.
2. Design a follow-up study using the tutees in this study as the tutors for a new group of tutees.
3. Continue this study for a second year using the third-grade materials with the tutees to determine if length of time spent with the treatment affects the outcome. Assign the same dyads from this study to analyze the effects of a two-year relationship.
4. Design a study using the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program to study the attitudes of both the tutee and tutor towards learning and peer relationships.
5. Design a study using the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program to analyze the gains in oral language proficiency and reading achievement of native Spanish-speaking tutors.

These suggestions are not, of course, exhaustive. However, they serve to demonstrate that additional research is needed in order to better refine cross-age tutoring as an intervention for English language learners.

APPENDIX A  
PARENT DATA CONSENT FORM



May 1, 2004

Dear Parent,

This year selected third-grade bilingual students participated in the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program. I am conducting a research study to determine if this program has been effective in improving the English language levels and English reading levels of the students. In order to conduct this study I need your permission to use your child's scores from his/her IPT – I Oral test from spring 2003 and spring 2004. I also need permission to use your child's scores from his/her Flynt-Cooter reading assessments given in the fall of 2003 and in May of 2004. I will then compare the scores of the students who participated in the Reading Together program with students who did not participate in the program.

There should be no risk involved for your child in this process. Your child's identity will not be used in the study. Students will be given a code number by the campus before any information is provided to me. The data provided by the campus will be kept confidential and used only for research purposes.

This study will provide useful information to the Irving Independent School District. The results will help us determine if the Reading Together cross-age tutoring program is an effective instructional tool for teaching English to English language learners.

This study has been approved by the University of North Texas Committee for the protection of Human Subjects and by the Irving Independent School District. The UNT IRB can be contacted at (940) 565-3940 with any questions or concerns regarding this study. You may also contact me at (972) 215-5030 or your campus principal with any questions regarding this study.

Thank you for your assistance in this study.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Jennings  
Division Director of Elementary Teaching and Learning  
Irving ISD

You are making a decision about whether or not to have your child's data used in this study. Your signature indicates that you have decided to allow this information to be used and that you have read or have had read to you the information provided in the Consent Letter and that you have received a copy of the Consent Letter.

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Signature of Parent or Guardian

---

Date

---

Signature of Witness

---

Date

---

Signature of Principal Investigator

---

Date

1 de mayo, 2004

Queridos padres,

Este año un grupo selecto de estudiantes bilingües del tercer grado ha participado en un programa de tutoría entre diferentes edades llamado *Reading Together* (Leyendo Juntos). Estoy llevando a cabo un estudio de investigación para determinar si este programa ha sido efectivo para el mejoramiento de los estudiantes en los diferentes niveles de su comprensión y lectura del inglés. Para llevar a cabo este estudio necesito su permiso para usar las calificaciones de la prueba IPT- la prueba oral que se le administró a su hijo/a la primavera de los años 2003 y 2004. También necesito su permiso para usar los resultados de las evaluaciones de lectura de la prueba *Flynt-Cooter*, que se le administró en el otoño del 2003 y en mayo del 2004. Entonces compararé los resultados de los estudiantes que participaron en el programa *Reading Together* con los de los estudiantes que no participaron en el programa.

Este proceso no representará ningún riesgo para su hijo/a. La identidad de su hijo/a no será usada en el estudio. Los nombres de los estudiantes serán sustituidos por códigos antes de que esa información llegue a mis manos. La información prevista por el campus se mantendrá confidencial y será usada solamente para los propósitos de este estudio.

Este estudio proveerá información útil para el Distrito Escolar Independiente de Irving. Los resultados nos ayudarán a determinar si este programa de tutoría entre diferentes edades *Reading Together* es una herramienta educativa eficaz para los estudiantes que aprenden inglés en nuestras escuelas.

Este estudio ha sido aprobado por el comité para la protección de las personas como sujetos de investigación de la Universidad del Norte de Texas y por el Distrito Escolar Independiente de Irving. Si tiene alguna pregunta o preocupación acerca de este estudio, usted puede comunicarse con el IRB de la Universidad del Norte de Texas al número (940) 565-3940. También puede comunicarse conmigo al número (972) 215-5030 o con el director/a de la escuela de su hijo/a con cualquier pregunta relacionada con este estudio.

Gracias por su colaboración en este estudio.

Atentamente,

Cheryl Jennings

Directora del Departamento de Enseñanza y Aprendizaje en las Escuelas Primarias  
Irving ISD

Usted está tomando la decisión de si quiere o no que la información sobre su hijo se use en este estudio. Su firma en este papel indica que usted ha decidido permitir que esta información sea usada y que usted ha leído, o se le ha leído, la información provista en esta Carta de Autorización y que usted ha recibido una copia de la misma.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma del padre o encargado

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma del testigo

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma del investigador principal

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

APPENDIX B  
PARENT PERMISSION LETTER – TUTOR

# IRVING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Where Children Learn to Succeed

Sam Smith  
Principal

Sandy Jones  
Vice Principal

Bill Johnson  
Vice Principal

Susan White  
Instructional Specialist

To the parents of «First» «Last»,

We are pleased to notify you that «First» has volunteered to participate in a tutorial program and to act as a tutor for a third-grader who would like to improve their reading abilities. This tutorial program, Reading Together, was developed jointly by the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, the Guilford County Schools (NC) and the National Council of Jewish Women Research Institute for Innovation in Education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

The program includes a series of tutorial sessions. «First» will meet four times a week during the course of the school year. Supervision and guidance will be provided by one of the teachers who are in charge of the Reading Together program in our school.

We hope that you will approve of «First»'s decision to participate in Reading Together. The program offers participants an opportunity to develop leadership and communication skills. We feel sure that the program will allow «First» to contribute to others and to develop their own talents.

If you have any questions, please call 972/555-5555. Thank you for your help and support in our academic endeavors.

Sincerely,

Susan White  
Instructional Specialist



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\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I give my permission for «First» to participate in the Reading Together program. My signature also indicates that my child may be photographed or videotaped.

---

Signature

Date

«Teacher»

# IRVING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Where Children Learn to Succeed

Sam Smith  
Principal

Sandy Jones  
Vice Principal

Bill Johnson  
Vice Principal

Susan White  
Instructional Specialist

A los padres de «First» «Last»,

Tenemos el gusto de informarles que «First» se ha ofrecido a participar en un programa de tutorías como tutor de un alumno de tercer grado que necesite mejorar sus habilidades de lectura. Este programa de lectura, Leyendo Juntos, ha sido desarrollado por la Universidad de Carolina del Norte en Greensboro, el Condado Escolar de Guilford y el Instituto de Investigación para la Innovación Educativa del Consejo Nacional de Mujeres Judías en la Universidad Hebrea de Jerusalem.

El programa incluye una serie de sesiones de tutorías. «First» se reunirá cuatro veces a la semana durante el año escolar. Los participantes recibirán supervisión y orientaciones por parte de uno de los maestros encargados del programa Leyendo Juntos en nuestra escuela.

Esperamos que ustedes estén de acuerdo en que «First»'s participe en Leyendo Juntos. Este programa les ofrece a sus participantes la oportunidad de desarrollar sus destrezas de liderazgo y comunicación. Estamos seguros que este programa permitirá que «First» contribuya al desarrollo de sus talentos y el de otros al mismo tiempo.

Si tiene alguna pregunta, favor de llamar al 972/555-5555. Gracias por su ayuda y su apoyo en nuestros proyectos académicos.

Atentamente,

Susan White  
Especialista en Instrucción



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\_\_\_\_\_ Sí. Doy mi permiso para que «First» participe en Leyendo Juntos. Mi firma también indica que mi hijo(a) puede ser fotografiado y grabado.

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Firma

Fecha

«Teacher»

APPENDIX C  
PARENT PERMISSION LETTER – TUTEE



# IRVING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Where Children Learn to Succeed

Sam Smith  
Principal

Sandy Jones  
Vice Principal

Bill Johnson  
Vice Principal

Susan White  
Instructional Specialist

To the parents of «First» «Last»,

We are pleased to notify you that «First» has been selected to participate in a tutorial program that puts 3<sup>rd</sup> graders working with 5<sup>th</sup> graders to improve their English reading abilities. This tutorial program, Reading Together, was developed jointly by the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, the Guilford County Schools (NC) and the National Council of Jewish Women Research Institute for Innovation in Education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

The program includes a series of tutorial sessions. «First» will meet twice a week during the school day over the course of the school year. Supervision and guidance will be provided by one of the teachers who are in charge of the Reading Together program in our school.

We hope that you will approve of «First»'s decision to participate in Reading Together. The program offers participants an opportunity to develop leadership and communication skills. We feel sure that the program will allow «First» to develop their talents and reading skills.

If you have any questions, please call 972/555-5555. Thank you for your help and support in our academic endeavors.

Sincerely,

Susan White  
Instructional Specialist



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\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I give my permission for «First» to participate in the Reading Together program. My signature also indicates that my child may be photographed or videotaped.

---

Signature

Date

«Teacher»

# IRVING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Where Children Learn to Succeed

Sam Smith  
Principal

Sandy Jones  
Vice Principal

Bill Johnson  
Vice Principal

Susan White  
Instructional Specialist

A los papás de «First» «Last»,

Tenemos el gusto de informarles que «First» ha sido seleccionado para participar en un programa de tutorías que agrupa estudiantes de tercer grado con estudiantes de quinto grado para así mejorar sus habilidades de lectura. Este programa de lectura, Leyendo juntos, ha sido desarrollado por la Universidad de Carolina del Norte en Greensboro, el Condado Escolar de Guilford y el Instituto de Investigación para la Innovación Educativa del Consejo Nacional de Mujeres Judías en la Universidad Hebrea de Jerusalem.

El programa incluye una serie de sesiones de tutorías. «First» se reunirá dos veces a la semana durante el día por el resto del año escolar. Los participantes recibirán supervisión y orientaciones por parte de uno de los maestros encargados del programa Leyendo Juntos en nuestra escuela.

Esperamos que ustedes est'en de acuerdo con la decision de «First»'s de participar en Leyendo Juntos. Este programa les ofrece a sus participantes la oportunidad de desarrollar sus destrezas de liderazgo y comunicación. Estamos seguros que este programa permitirá que «First» contribuya al desarrollo de sus propios talentos y el de otros a la misma vez.

Si tiene alguna pregunta, favor de llamar al 972/555-5555. Gracias por su ayuda y su apoyo en nuestros proyectos académicos.

Atentamente,

Susan White  
Especialista en Instrucción



\_\_\_\_\_. Sí, doy mi permiso para que «First» participe en Leyendo Juntos. Mi firma también indica que mi hijo(a) puede ser fotografiado y grabado.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

\_\_\_\_\_  
«Teacher»

APPENDIX D  
DATA COLLECTION FORM



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