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California State University

San Bernardino

THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF BILINGUAL STUDENTS:
A STUDY OF LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT AND RECLASSIFIED
STUDENTS

A Project Submitted to
The Faculty of the School of Education
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the
Degree of
Master of Arts
in
Education: Bilingual/Cross-Cultural Option

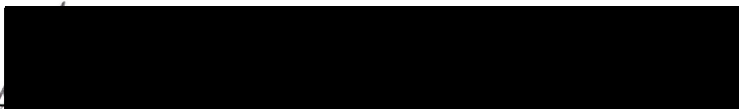
By

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San Bernardino, California

1989

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A STUDY OF LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT AND RECLASSIFIED
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Statement of the Problem

Statistics continue to illustrate how poorly language minority children perform in school. One strategy developed to assist these children with special needs has been bilingual education. (Some critics, however, blame bilingual education for the poor academic achievement of these children. This project was conducted to investigate whether or not the arguments against bilingual education are valid.

In 1986, the Secretary of Education, William J. Bennett, announced that transitional bilingual education was ineffective. As recently as the Spring of 1988, a group of teachers in Los Angeles Unified School district, openly supported an English Only initiative. Their distrust of bilingual education may be due to the fact that statistics continue to illustrate the poor performance of the Hispanic children in school. Current statistics reveal that in 1987 the drop-out rate among Hispanics was 43% compared to 23% for Anglo students. Unfortunately, even though experts have conducted studies which confirm the benefits of bilingual education, negative attitudes prevail.

The purpose for this project was to study in a limited way the long range effects of bilingual education by comparing the performances of two different groups of students originally classified as of Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Students in one group were placed in bilingual classes throughout elementary school. The second group of students were enrolled in non-bilingual classes. The educational experiences of both groups were varied. The second group of students were enrolled in bilingual classes and then placed in non-bilingual classes and received a Bilingual Individual Learning Plan (BILP).

Fourteen students were tracked for this study and were enrolled in the district from Kindergarten through the sixth grade. A comparison on the English academic achievement of the students at the end of the sixth grade was conducted. The students scores were compared in three areas: reading, writing and mathematics.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was accomplished with the support and judicious guidance from my advisor Dr. Helena Stanton. I am also grateful to my family, in particular my husband David, for his advise and patience and to Deborah W. Flores, Principal and Director of Curriculum K-6, who encouraged me to pursue my career in bilingual education.

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BACKGROUND

Lau

The U.S. Supreme Court guarantees language minority children the right to an equal education regardless of whether or not they understand English. The Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, the Equal Educational Opportunities Act, and the Lau v. Nichols U.S. Supreme Court decision (1974) have all provided guarantees protecting the children from discrimination. As stated in the Lau v. Nichols case, the court decided:

". . . There is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education."

Lau

This landmark case began as a class action suit brought on behalf of non-English Chinese speaking students in the San Francisco School District. The Chinese families in the district felt that no special instruction was being provided toward the children's education, particularly in teaching them English as a second language.

The Supreme Court's decision relied on Title VI, of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which bans discrimination based on race, color or national origin in any program or activity receiving financial assistance. The court reasoned that the Chinese-speaking language minority students received fewer benefits than the English-speaking majority students.

Therefore, it ruled that the students were denied an equal education and experienced a form of discrimination.

The Lau decision did not specify any remedies, it stated that all public school systems receiving some form of federal aid had the obligation to ensure that children from non-English speaking backgrounds receive some form of assistance in learning English.

As a result of the Lau decision, school districts were required to design, implement and evaluate instructional programs which provided Limited English Proficient (LEP) students an equal education. The decision required that districts provide LEP pupils with (1) access to the core curriculum equivalent to that provided to students who were native speakers of English; and, (2) benefits from the educational system in spite of a lack of English language proficiency.

In 1976, the first bilingual education program was established in California under the Chacon-Moscone Bilingual-Bicultural Education Act (AB 1329). AB 1329 was the most comprehensive and ambitious law designed to serve the needs of LEP children in California. (This law was later amended by Assembly Bill 507 in 1980. AB 507 required school districts to provide a bilingual program for its non-English proficient students, including the use of native language.) In 1987, after much debate, AB 507 was allowed to "sunset" by a gubernatorial veto of renewal legislation. Although the extension of AB 507 was discontinued, nearly

all districts have continued to offer bilingual education programs even though the districts do not enjoy as much flexibility as they expected (1988).

At present, districts are adhering to federal laws and guarantees for educating the LEP population. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act is a law which districts cannot ignore. In California, school districts with high numbers of LEP students are following the general framework derived from the vetoed AB 507. Although not legally required, districts feel that it serves as a guide for meeting the needs of the growing number of LEP students. Most districts are also following the State Program Quality Criteria which are used for State Program Quality Reviews. The reviews are designed so that districts which receive categorical funds demonstrate in their school plans how they are providing LEP students high quality learning and equal access to the core curriculum of schools.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Demographics

Although there is minimal political support for ~~the~~ bilingual education, the LEP student population continues to grow. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the nation's Hispanic population grew by 30 percent between 1980 and 1987, a rate of increase five times that of all other racial and ethnic groups combined. The total number of Hispanic Americans reached 18.8 million in 1987, up from 14.6 million counted in the 1980 census.

California Tomorrow, in a Policy Research Report (1988), documented the results of a study on immigrant students and found that, in 1986, one in six students (16%, of the public school enrollment) is foreign born. The study also found that 5.3 million Californians, 20% of the state's population, are foreign born. The immigrant population in California has increased two and a half times in the past decade and is expected to grow at the rate of 5-7% per year.

The Report also found that over half of the LEP students interviewed in the study reported having difficulty understanding English after five or more years in this country. This was most significant when studying the California Assessment Program (CAP) Achievement Test Scores. The project analyzed the 8th and 12th grade 1986 CAP scores and found that most immigrant LEP students scored below the

norm in all subject areas. The Southeast Asian and Hispanic students being at greatest risk.

The U.S. Bureau of the Census also reported on the number of Hispanic students pursuing higher education. The 1987 Census reported the median number of years of schooling completed by Hispanics, 25 years of age or older, was 12.0 in 1987, up from 10.8 in 1982. Yet, in California, after a decade of effort, Blacks and Latinos remain underrepresented in the University of California system (Mathews 1987). Statistics indicate that Mexican-American high school graduates are much less likely to be enrolled in college than are Anglos.

In 1983, only 4.9% of Hispanic students were eligible for Freshman Admission to the University of California in comparison to 15.5% of Anglo students. At the same time, 15.3% Hispanic students were eligible for Freshman Admission to the California State University in comparison to 33.5% of the Anglo group (Figueroa 1985). Additionally, demographer H. Hodgkinson (1986) stated in his California Profile report that over half of all Hispanic high school graduates in California who achieved the grades required for admission to the State University, failed to take the tests necessary to assure their eligibility. Obviously, the high schools were not advising the students about the opportunities to pursue a higher education.

Hodgkinson (1986) also reported that many Hispanic students who are qualified for the University of California

system, enroll in the State University system, which has lower requirements, and if eligible to enroll in the State University institutions, many enroll instead in the Community Colleges which have lower requirements yet. Asian students, on the other hand, enroll at the highest institutions for which they are qualified. Many Hispanic students are not aware of the mechanics required in enrolling in the University system nor are they confident enough to pursue a higher education at the University level.

Nationally, one in four students entering the eighth grade drops out of high school before receiving a diploma. Most recent statistics cited in EdSource (1988) indicated the drop-out rate of students from different ethnicities. They found the drop-out rate between the 9th and 12th grades of Native Americans is 46%, Hispanics is 43%, Blacks is 43%, Whites is 23% and Asians is 15%. These statistics continue to indicate how poorly the educational system is addressing the educational needs of its minority students.

Socio-cultural Factors

A book entitled Beyond Language, published by the California Office of Bilingual Education (1986), contains a collection of research studies. The research focuses on socio-cultural factors which influence the schooling of language minority students. In this book, the authors discuss the complex and changing relationships between

ethnicity and education, and attempt to define the educational and societal contexts within which students of similar backgrounds succeed or fail.

Socio-cultural factors which characterize the community life of minority students are emphasized since such factors influence the educational experiences of the students. Each LEP student arrives in school with a diverse socio-cultural and socio-economic background which influences his/her performance in school. Teacher attitudes and expectations of their students determine the outcomes of the students' performance in class, as explained in the text Beyond Language.

A recent study on the achievement among three generations of Mexican-American high school students indicates that socio-economic status is positively related to achievement for all children (Buriel and Cardoza, 1988). The study found the first and second-generation students have high aspirations for success and do not find their non-English background as a limiting factor in their education. Whereas (third generation students are likely to find themselves in low-income environments (ghettos or barrios) in which they are bilingual and Spanish is spoken quite readily. Students in the ghetto/barrio environment do not possess the same high aspirations for economic mobility as their first and second-generation counterparts. Their self-concept and confidence is not as pronounced. The study is

an additional indication of how socio-cultural factors and language influence the performance of Hispanic students.

Bilingualism, Second Language Acquisition and Bilingual Education

There have been a variety of programs designed to promote the education of language minority students. In studying the effects of these programs, some issues have become evident. Among these areas of interest, we have the very nature of bilingualism, the manner in which languages are acquired, and methods of teaching bilingual education. The nature of bilingualism has been studied by Jim Cummins and Kenji Hakuta. The development of second language acquisition has been investigated by a number of researchers, such as Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrell. Bilingual Education has been researched by educators such as Dorothy Legarreta, Merrill Swain, Stephen Diaz and many others.

Bilingualism

Cummins (1981) theory on language proficiency and its relationship to academic and cognitive development, as many know by now, best describes how language minority students develop their oral and literacy skills. He identifies the two major dimensions of language proficiency as "communicative language skills" also termed as Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and "academic language skills" termed as Cognitive Academic Linguistic

Proficiency (CALP). Academic achievement is influenced by the degree to which the students primary and second language are developed. Because language is a complex configuration of abilities, the language used for conversational purposes (BICS) is quite different from language used for school learning (CALP).

He explains that all normal human beings acquire proficiency in at least one language in order to complete familiar cognitively undemanding tasks. Cummins defines BICS as the language ability most children develop by the time they enter school. A student's normal BICS includes a mastery of basic sound and sentence patterns, a speaking vocabulary of approximately 2500 words and the functional communicative abilities needed for interaction. It is cognitively undemanding.

Second, the ability to complete academically less familiar, cognitively more demanding, tasks varies greatly among the general population, depending on the level of cognitive development for each individual. He defines this skill as CALP, or the cognitively demanding language of the student. It is the language needed to succeed in academic situations while in school, to solve problems, and to carry out inquiries. CALP is essential when working with context-reduced, abstract language and involves high level thinking skills.

Cummins (1981) further expands the concept of bilingual proficiency through his model called the Common Underlying

Proficiency (CUP). Strong CALP in the primary language transfers to the second language and facilitates both learning and language acquisition. Once a child has developed his cognitive skills, these skills may be used in any language. Therefore, bilingualism occurs with native or near-native proficiency much more easily. Aspects of bilingualism which influence cognitive growth are unlikely to come into effect until the child has attained a certain threshold of proficiency in the second language (Cummins 1981).

The question of whether or not children who are good at manipulating contextualized (social) language are also good at decontextualized (academic) language is being studied. This is of special concern since the language used in academic learning in schools is of the decontextualized variety. In the book, Mirror of Language, Professor K. Hakuta (1986) cites a study conducted by C. Snow where Snow describes two functions of language which develop relative independently. Snow claims that a skilled conversationalist in a contextualized language task is not necessarily good at decontextualized language use, and vice versa. Snow also has found that academic tasks transfer across languages, if students are good at decontextualized tasks in English they are also good in the same tasks in French. The same thing happens with the contextualized tasks. Her findings have implications for bilingual education.

In the past, American scholars have felt that bilingualism implied the mixing of two languages. This, it was believed confused the child and prevented him/her from learning. In the early 1900's, it was felt that low intelligence test results among immigrants was due to their bilingualism. Hakuta (1986) cites the example of an analyzes conducted by Carl C. Brigham in 1923 entitled "A Study of American Intelligence", where Brigham illustrates low intelligence performance among new immigrant groups. Brigham did not recognize that attitudes toward testing and other cultural factors influence test results. He assumed that test-taking ability is part of native intelligence.

Second Language Acquisition

Stephen Krashen (1981), a linguist and Professor at the University of Southern California, explains how language acquirers have two distinct ways of developing language abilities. Addressing the issue of bilingualism, he describes two processes by which an individual develops competence in a second language. The individual acquires the language or he/she learns it. A student who learns a language through formal knowledge and explicit presentation of rules will consciously know the grammatical structure of the language, in this form he "learns" the language. Acquiring a language is a more subconscious process. The focus is on communicating and comprehending messages in the

new language. Krashen advocates that we acquire language when we understand it. He points out that "translation is one way to understand and says the 'route' to achievement is definitely through the first language.

However, comprehension is not likely to take place if the student feels intimidated or unmotivated. Negative feelings which limit comprehension, and, therefore acquisition, are called the affective filter or block of the message. This means that if a student feels anxious and/or lacks self-confidence and self-esteem, acquisition will be impaired. A student needs to be taught with low anxiety and a high degree of motivation. Students who are acquiring a language first go through a "silent period" where the student is listening and building up his self-confidence and competence before he begins to speak. During this period many teachers, especially at the elementary level, may misinterpret the students' silent period as lacking intelligence and desire to progress. They, at times, recommend these children to special education classes, speech therapy or for retention.

The research outlined in a recent study produced by California Tomorrow, a non-profit organization based in San Francisco, and Beyond Language indicate that recent immigrant students are highly motivated to learn English. These students are pressured to learn English quickly since the parents rely on them to help with translations. The parents view education as a step toward upward mobility and

success. Because of this, they encourage their children to learn English quickly.

Bilingual Education

Bilingual Education provides limited English proficient (LEP) students the opportunity to study subject matter in their primary language while acquiring English. This type of program allows the non-English speaking child to "keep up" with the academic studies of the English speaking children in class and not fall behind intellectually.

The language minority child must receive instruction in his native language so that he may continue to develop his cognitive academic skills. Instruction has to be meaningful to avoid the student becoming lost, frustrated and disinterested in school. As LEP students develop their English fluency skills, English language content is increased. This may be provided in the form of "sheltered English." Sheltered English, also described as sheltered content, is instruction which is comprehensible or meaningful for the LEP student.

Minor teaching modifications must be adhered to in order to conduct sheltered English lessons. The instructor must use more visuals, apply various questioning techniques, use structured vocabulary building, repeat for clarification, use slower paced speech, and may teach with peer tutoring and cooperative learning strategies.

Receiving instruction which is clear and meaningful is of particular importance for students placed in the upper grades and who receive instruction in subject-areas which are more abstract and complex.

Students who are classified as non-English speaking should receive English instruction in subjects that require a lesser amount of language, such as math, P.E. or art. Later, as students become more proficient in English, they can be taught in subjects which contain more language (social studies, history, science) and receive sheltered English instruction. This provides the student with comprehensible messages and with content they can understand, without focusing on the rules of the language. According to Kenji Hakuta (1987), subject areas which include cognitively demanding exercises with little contextual support should be taught in the primary language while less demanding materials can be taught with more contextual support (such as sheltered English).

The described methodologies have been recommended by experts as providing the optimum settings for academic development. As mentioned earlier, the Cognitive Academic Linguistic Proficiency (CALP) is necessary in order for the LEP student to function well in academic settings which involve comprehension skills and applications. CALP is essential when placed in context-reduced activities which are abstract and conceptually more challenging. Yet, it takes from five to seven years to develop the cognitive

✓ agree

✓ not agree

in not all cases

skills needed to be academically successful in school, especially in the upper grades.

Unfortunately, many school districts concentrate on developing the Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS), which is context embedded language, and, in many instances, ignore the student's primary language, even in some bilingual classes. The student usually receives English as a Second Language (ESL) or is immersed in English. Many instructors feel the LEP student should begin receiving English instruction as quickly as possible. Although a student may begin speaking English within a short period of time, he needs additional time to develop the comprehension skills needed for reading and writing.

If ~~an~~ LEP student is reclassified too soon, as English proficient, it may lead the student toward academic failure. A student who lacks CALP in both languages does not learn either language well. He is a victim of what Cummins has termed as "subtractive bilingualism". Students who do not receive primary language instruction or higher level thinking activities cannot develop their cognitive skills properly. LEP students who are placed in classes which include English only curriculum beyond their level of comprehension, are likely to fail. This inability to grasp the subject matter often leads to frustration, especially at the secondary level. Eventually, the LEP student may drop out of school.

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agree

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agree

yes

In March 1987, the General Accounting Office (GAO) in Washington D.C., conducted a study to review the effects of bilingual education. The study found that transitional bilingual education had positive effects on the achievement of the students' English language competence. The success seemed to come from the fact that the children received native language support at the same time that they acquired English. These findings supported the notion that once children understand the meaning of concepts in one language, such as Spanish, they easily transfer that knowledge to the second language, English. This is the Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) model which Jim Cummins refers to in his research and discussed earlier.

Previous studies, such as those conducted by Dorothy Legarreta (1981), explain the relationship between the transferability of academic skills from the primary language to the second language. Poor readers in the primary language do not read well in the second language. Strong native language support enhances the students ability to learn English more easily and faster. Most of the learning that goes on in the native language transfers to English. Legarreta strongly supports native language instruction in bilingual classes, especially in all subject areas such as math, science, or social studies.

Stephen Diaz, Luis Moll and Hugh Mehan (1981) research on student performance and the sociocultural resources in education, discovered that without collaboration between

people and the community and teachers and students, the language minority student is denied the opportunity for greater advancement. School failure cannot merely be explained as caused by the student's language or cultural background but also by the social organization of schooling. Schools are not presently designed to take advantage of the skills the LEP children bring with them to school, rather the children are forced to perform in a system too rigid to change. The children's capabilities are underestimated and are forced to receive instruction which does not promote the students "educational and intellectual advancement".

English-Only Programs

Students who are not placed in bilingual programs are often placed in English-only classrooms with students who are proficient in English. Such settings are usually identified as "submersion" classes or "sink or swim" models. There is little, if any, support for the LEP student's native language. These classes are normally taught by teachers who may be new and inexperienced and do not understand or speak the student's primary language. Students placed in English-only settings or "submersion" instruction either fail or succeed by chance. Unless the student arrives with some knowledge of English and a strong CALP in his native language, the student usually feels unprepared and begins to fail in school.

It doesn't correct work

Problem

True in many states

These LEP students are often treated as limited in intellectual and academic ability when they do not perform in English at a pace comparable to their English-speaking peers. They are often recommended for special education, speech therapy support, or retained due to lack of progress in reading, language arts, or basic concept development. Additionally, a lack of understanding of the LEP student's primary language and cultural background leads to poor teacher expectations. Cummins (1979) pointed out that children in submersion or English-only programs are often made to feel acutely aware of their failure since they cannot comprehend the language that is being taught in the classroom.

IMPLICATIONS

From the literature reviewed in the previous pages, one can make a number of generalizations.

Transfer from one language to a second language is easier if the concepts are well developed in the native language. The LEP student who receives cognitive demanding instruction in his native language should be able to transfer this knowledge to the new language. Receiving instruction which is meaningful and motivating allows the child an opportunity to learn and this in turn facilitates the acquisition of the second language.

As students become more proficient in English and have developed their communicative skills, sheltered English instruction may begin. Sheltered English is used in order to make the subjects taught meaningful/comprehensible for the LEP student. Using sheltered English for older students is important since they receive more abstract and advanced problem solving concepts. In the beginning, sheltered instruction provides students with English instruction in subjects that require a lesser amount of language, or context embedded subjects such as mathematics, physical education or art. As students advance in their knowledge of English, they can begin to receive sheltered content instruction in the more advanced subjects, or context reduced subjects, such as science, history, and language arts.

Acquisition of the second language must be comprehensible and motivating in order for the child to be able to communicate and understand the second language. The student's progress should be monitored to guarantee maximum output and interest. An LEP student can develop English proficiency skills if proper instruction is applied.

Students who receive high levels of cognitive academic skill development (CALP), in their primary language, transfer the same skills to the second language. It takes at least five to seven years for the cognitive skills to develop. Once they are developed, these skills may be used in any language, they do not need to be relearned. Transitioning students too early, e.g., before their CALP is developed, creates what Cummins terms as "subtractive bilingualism." The result is a student who does not develop cognitive skills in either language.

The LEP student receiving at least six years of primary language support will have a greater opportunity to achieve academically. Bilingual classes have been developed to ensure that LEP students will receive equal access to the curriculum. Therefore, bilingual instructors are taught to provide instruction in the students' native language while at the same time developing the students' English proficiency skills.

Along with promoting the LEP students' academic skills, the students' self concept must also be developed. Immigrant students arrive with traditions, habits and

Strongly disagree

but they don't

customs which are different from the U.S. culture. The circumstances for immigrating vary, and the cultural and socio-economic backgrounds of the students differ. The experience of adjusting to a new culture varies with each student, especially among older students.

It is the intent of this project to determine if there is a pattern of success for the LEP students who were enrolled in bilingual classes and for those students who were placed on BILPs and/or reclassified. The test scores of the students in the bilingual classes were compared with the students who were placed in bilingual/non-bilingual classes.

PROCEDURE

A total of 317 sixth grade Limited English Proficient (LEP) students were screened from the district LEP student list. From the list, 101 students were selected which met the criteria for the study. Finally, fourteen Spanish-speaking students were chosen for the project.

Thirteen of the students were enrolled in the district from kindergarten through sixth grade. Only one student was selected who was enrolled from the first grade through the sixth. All of the students were initially classified as Limited English Proficient. Students' achievement scores were gathered from the CTBS-U Achievement Test which is administered at the end of each school year. The highest test score is recorded in each student's CUM from year to year. All of the students for this study were promoted to the seventh grade.

All fourteen students were enrolled in bilingual classes. One group remained in bilingual classes from kindergarten through the sixth grade, whereas, the second group ^{was} were placed in non-bilingual classes after the first, second or third grade. This was partly due to the fact that not all schools meet the criteria for bilingual classes in the upper grades. Therefore, those students placed in non-bilingual classes received an Individual Learning Plan, also identified as a Bilingual Individual Learning Plan (BILP). A BILP guarantees that an LEP student will receive native

language support and ESL while enrolled in a non-bilingual class.

Six students were enrolled in bilingual classes from beginning of their school year through the sixth grade. One student transferred at the end of the fifth grade and was enrolled in a non-bilingual sixth grade class. Seven students were enrolled in bilingual classes and later were placed on an Individual Learning Plan. Once a student is classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP), the student is not reclassified as English Proficient (EP) until he/she passes all three sub-tests (reading, writing and mathematics) of the CTBS-U Achievement test. A percentile score ranging in the 36th percentile or above is a passing score. An exception is made for students who may have been in school long enough to be reclassified; if the student receives a score of 31 percentile or above in all three sub-tests, he/she will receive a passing score and qualifies for reclassification. Yet several discrepancies were found, since one student was classified as English Proficient (EP) even though he had not passed all three sub-tests and another student had passed all three sub-tests and was still classified as LEP.

It was difficult to match the students by their oral fluency classification status. An attempt was made to identify each group with the least number of variables as possible. In reviewing the students' files, it was discovered that most were reclassified at different grade

levels. Three of the bilingual students were reclassified in the sixth grade and one student, referred to above, should have been reclassified since she had passed all three competencies and remained classified as LEP. The remaining three were still classified as Limited English Proficient. Only two of the students on BILPs were reclassified as English Proficient, one in kindergarten and the other in fifth grade; the remaining five students were classified as Limited English Proficient.

As mentioned before, students were either placed in a bilingual or non-bilingual class, i.e., a student could enroll in a bilingual class if it was available at the assigned school site. One student was placed in non-bilingual classes in the primary grades and bilingual in upper grades. A few switched from bilingual to non-bilingual, then back to bilingual. Some transferred from bilingual schools to a school that did not have bilingual classes. Of the fourteen students studied, nine were still classified as LEP in the sixth grade.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

For purposes of identifying the two groups in this study, the students who were enrolled in the bilingual classes are identified as Group A, and the students who were enrolled in bilingual classes and placed on a BILP are identified as Group B. Fourteen students were selected and were divided equally among the two groups, seven in each group.

When a child first enrolls in the district and speaks a language other than English at home, the student is given a language assessment test in his/her native language and in English. The students in this study were tested in both their native language (Spanish) and English. They were classified as Fluent Spanish Speaking (FSS), Limited Spanish Speaking (LSS) or Non-Spanish Speaking (NSS). The students were also classified as Fluent English Speaking (FES), Limited English Speaking (LES), or Non-English Speaking (NES).

Five of the seven students in Group A who were placed in bilingual classes were classified as FSS in Kindergarten and one in the first grade. Only one student was classified as LSS in Kindergarten. Four of the seven students in Group B were also classified as FSS, two were LSS and one student had no Spanish test scores (Table 1).

One student in Group A was classified as FES in the first grade, two in the third grade and one in the sixth

Table 1
LEP Students' Language Proficiency
and Classification Status +

Group A									
Student	Spanish Status			English Status			Classification		++
	NSS	LSS	FSS	NES	LES	FES	LEP-1	LEP-2	
Ana			K			3	X (6)		
Rose			K			3	X (6)		
Betty			K		2			X	
Jimmy			K	3				X	
Tony		K				1		X	5
Martin			K		3			X	5
Luz			1			6	X (6)		

Group B									
Carmen			K		2			X	5
Alice			K		2			X	3
Al		K		2				X	3
Elisa	no scores				K		X (K)		3
Marta			K			4	X (5)		3
Juan			K		2			X	3
Jesus		K		2				X	3

Note: The student names have been changed for anonymity purposes.

+ The coding under each category indicates the grade when the student was tested.

++ LEP-1 indicates the student has been reclassified as English Proficient.

The number next to the X indicates the grade when the student was reclassified.

LEP-2 indicates the student is still classified as Limited English Proficient and has passed one or two of the achievement sub-tests.

(Under the heading BILP, the number indicates the grade when the students were placed on a BILP. The two students in Group A were placed on the BILPs beginning in the fifth grade although they were enrolled in bilingual classes through the sixth grade.)

grade. One student was identified as LES in the second grade and another in the third. Only one student was still classified as NES as of the third grade. In Group B, only one student was classified as FES in the fourth grade and another was identified as NES in the second. Four were classified as LES in the second and one student was classified as LES in kindergarten.

Of the fourteen cohorts, five were reclassified as English Proficient (Table 1). As mentioned earlier, two discrepancies were discovered. One student in Group B had not passed the reading sub-test but was reclassified as English Proficient and one student in Group A had passed all three sub-tests and had not been reclassified yet. Three students in Group A and two in Group B were reclassified from LEP to EP status.

Reading, Writing and Math Achievement Performance

Based on the CTBS test scores, the results of this project found more bilingual students (Group A) passing the reading (comprehension) sub-test than the students who were placed on BILPs (Group B). Most of the students who did not pass the reading test did not pass the writing test with the exception of two (Group B) students. They did not pass the reading portion, scoring 23% and 29%, but passed the writing portion, scoring 38%. All fourteen students passed the math sub-test. The majority of the students passed with above average scores, eleven out of fourteen scored at or above the 50th percentile. Five students scored in the 90th percentile or above, which is quite an achievement (Table 2).

Two Group A students who did not pass the reading sub-test were a couple of points below passing. Five of the seven Group A students who passed the reading test scored from the 42nd to the 69th percentile. The Group B students who were transitioned and on BILP's performed poorly in the reading sub-test. Six out of the seven (Group B) did not pass the reading sub-test and scored from the 1st to the 29th percentile. The one (Group B) student who passed the reading sub-test received an above average score, 76th percentile.

Table 2

 LEP Students Receiving Bilingual Instruction
 Group A

Student	Academic Achievement + (Percentile Scores)		
	Reading	Writing	Math
Ana	60	46	90
Rosa	49	43	73
Betty	44	57	89
Jimmy	42	29	88
Tony	35	24	45
Martin	33	29	49
Luz	69	79	98

 LEP Students Receiving Bilingual/BILP Instruction
 Group B

Carmen	29	30	97
Alice	26	29	63
Al	23	38	98
Elisa	29	38	89
Marta	76	68	97
Juan	17	19	62
Jesus	01	01	49

+ 36 percentile or above is a passing score.

The scores were more even in the writing test. Four students in Group A and three in Group B passed the writing sub-test, for a total of seven LEP students. It was also discovered that three students in Group B did not pass the reading test but passed the writing test.

The four Group A students who passed the writing sub-test averaged higher scores than the Group B students. They scored from the 42nd to the 69th percentile. Four Group B students who did not pass the reading test also did not pass the writing test. The writing skills usually develop before reading skills; therefore, it is not uncommon to find students passing the writing test and not the reading test. Two students in Group B did not pass the reading test but did pass the writing test. On the other hand, one Group A student passed the reading but did not pass the writing sub-test. Yet, all of the remaining Group A students who passed the reading also passed the writing sub-test.

Conclusion

Although this study was limited to a small number of students, it illustrated the performance of Spanish-speaking LEP students who received continuous instruction in bilingual classes. The study was able to compare the academic performance of students who were placed in bilingual and bilingual/non-bilingual classes. The results of this study found that the students in the bilingual classes (Group A) out performed the students who received BILPs (Group B). It also illustrated that the reclassified students in the bilingual classes performed better than the reclassified students in the non-bilingual classes. The students in Group A were better prepared in making the transition to English instruction.

The most significant difference between Group A and Group B was the passing scores in the reading achievement sub-tests. The students who received native language support, in the bilingual classes, outscored the students who were placed on BILPs. Five of seven students in Group A passed the reading sub-test and only one of the LEP students in Group B passed the reading sub-test (Table 3).

Cummins theory on language proficiency (the Common Underlying Proficiency Model) (Cummins, 1981) suggests that a Limited English Speaking child will not perform well in the second language unless the cognitive skill in the native language is fully developed. At the same time, the student should not be transitioned or reclassified as English

Proficient until the oral language skills are well developed in both the first and second language. The review of the literature presented in this project contained empirical research which supports Cummins' theory on bilingualism and bilingual education. Yet, a language minority child can only achieve academically as long as the bilingual program is consistent and motivating for the student. Instruction must be meaningful and comprehensible once the student transitions to English instruction.

Table 3
Overall Student Performance

The students performance is illustrated by indicating a Pass (P) or No Pass (NP) scores in the three competencies (reading, writing and mathematics):

Group A Students				
	Classification	Reading	Writing	Math
1.	Ana (EP)	P	P	P
2.	Rosa (EP)	P	P	P
3.	Betty (LEP)	P	P	P
4.	Jimmy (LEP)+	P	NP	P
5.	Tony (LEP)+	NP	NP	P
6.	Martin (LEP)	NP	NP	P
7.	Luz (EP)+	P	P	P
Group B Students				
1.	Carmen (LEP)	NP	NP	P
2.	Alice (LEP)	NP	NP	P
3.	Al (LEP)	NP	P	P
4.	Elisa (EP)	NP	P	P
5.	Marta (EP)	P	P	P
6.	Juan (LEP)++	NP	NP	P
7.	Jesus (LEP)	NP	NP	P

English Proficient (EP)
Limited English Proficient (LEP)
+ Retention
++ Special Education Referral

Although Group A performed better than Group B, a small percentage of Group A students passed all three achievement tests. Additional study is needed to learn why the LEP students are not passing the reading and writing sub-tests and why the students who pass the reading and writing sub-tests after seven years of instruction score at or below the 50th percentile.

Another important finding was the number of students classified as LEP after five to seven years of instruction. Bilingual programs and BILPs are designed so the LEP student may become proficient enough in English to pass the achievement tests after five to six years of instruction in ESL. The goal is to instruct the student so he/she may be ready to be reclassified by the fourth or fifth grade. By the third or fourth grade (depending on each student's progress) the students should begin transitioning into English reading. As mentioned before, the students in Group A were much closer to passing the achievement tests than the students in Group B.

Although the students did not succeed as well in reading and writing, they performed exceedingly well in mathematics. All fourteen cohorts passed the mathematics sub-test, many receiving above average scores. Their scores were exceptional. Clearly it takes a child with good logical thinking skills to be able to score as well in the mathematics sub-test as the students in this study did. The results of this project imply that the Spanish-speaking

language minority children possess high cognitive, problem solving skills which are needed in order to perform well in context reduced, cognitively demanding subjects.

Further study is needed to confirm that LEP students who receive consistent bilingual instruction perform better. The students background, home environment, and socio-economic influence also affects the learning and achievement of each student. Data describing the curriculum, the teaching methodologies and teacher attitude is needed to reaffirm the importance for bilingual education.

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