PRIMARY LANGUAGE WRITING IN A SPANISH/ENGLISH DUAL-LANGUAGE BILINGUAL PROGRAM USING THE 6+1 TRAIT® WRITING PROGRAM

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PRIMARY LANGUAGE WRITING IN A SPANISH/ENGLISH DUAL-LANGUAGE BILINGUAL PROGRAM USING THE 6+1 TRAIT® WRITING PROGRAM

A Thesis

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Department of Bilingual/Multicultural Education
Abstract

of

PRIMARY LANGUAGE WRITING IN A SPANISH/ENGLISH DUAL-LANGUAGE BILINGUAL PROGRAM USING THE 6+1 TRAIT® WRITING PROGRAM

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Statement of the problem

This year-long case study examines the writing development of four Spanish-speaking kindergarten students, in their native language of Spanish, over eleven months in an attempt to describe how well the students incorporated the 6+1Trait® Writing program. Specifically, this study looked for evidence of the program’s writing strategies in the participants’ journal entries and monthly writing samples. The kindergarten students attend a 90/10 Spanish-English dual-language bilingual program located in the greater Northern California region.

Recent anti-bilingual legislation, such as California’s Proposition 227 and NCLB, have swayed public opinion in viewing bilingual education as a hindrance for EL students. The current sentiment is that bilingual education does not work; therefore, it should be minimalized to unstructured classes that do not provide educational equity to EL students who are rushed through the process of acquiring proficiency in English. This encompasses the four domains of English acquisition: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Sources of Data

Students’ journal entries and monthly writing samples were collected and assessed each trimester using a modified rubric from the 6+1 Trait® Writing program.
The traits which had been taught up to the time of the assessments were scored. By the end of the year, all six traits had been assessed.

**Conclusions Reached**

Research concludes that through a writing program, such as the 6+1 Trait® Writing program, students begin to lay a concrete foundation in becoming good writers in their primary language. This concrete foundation in the student’s primary language is advantageous in aiding the student in achieving proficiency in English.

__________________________________________, Committee Chair

Albert S. Lozano, PhD

________________________

Date
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I would like to thank everyone who had a hand in making my dream of becoming the first in my family to receive my Master of Arts in Education a reality. First, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Albert S. Lozano, and my second reader, Dr. Nadeen T. Ruiz, for guiding me through this tumultuous journey. The two of you provided me with the necessary tools to complete my journey. I would like to extend a special thank you to my wonderful kindergarten students, without whom this study would not be possible. To the mujeres in my cohort; it has been an honor and a pleasure to have met you and shared this rollercoaster of a journey with you. Thank you to my family, without your love and support this journey would have been unbearable. Last, but certainly no least, a heart-felt thank you to my amazing husband, John. You were the fuel which fed my desire to complete this journey. Your love, patience, and support grounded me and for this I thank you from the bottom of my heart.
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

There are numerous writing programs readily available for school districts to ponder and incorporate into the curriculum which they are currently using. What sets one writing program apart from another? What makes the chosen program more appealing to a school district for them to hand over thousands of dollars to the publisher, and to have the teachers incorporate it into their daily school routine? Is there a significant difference between writing programs such as The WRITE Institute, Step-Up to Writing, or The 6 +1 Trait® Writing? The basic principle of these programs is the same: to get students to write using rich, academic language. However, the differences between these programs are the strategies which they utilize to aid students in mastering the writing skills being taught. Some of the strategies which are being utilized may include, but are not limited to: the types of graphic organizers suggested, recommended teacher transitions, students’ use of a graphic organizer in their actual writing, assisting students in choosing more academically rich language in their writing samples, or the terminology used for each section of the writing process. For example, one program might use the term “ideas and content” while a different program may use the term “the big picture” when covering the concept of writing about a clear and focused topic. Furthermore, the impact of writing programs on the performance of California’s English Learner population, comprising almost a quarter of the state’s public schools, is another essential factor to consider when comparing instructional approaches and materials.
Using the questions noted above as a starting point, this study examines the writing development of four Spanish-speaking kindergarten students, in their native language of Spanish, over eleven months in an attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of the 6+1Trait® Writing program. Specifically, it looks for evidence of the program’s writing strategies in their journal entries and monthly writing samples. As students progress through their education, whether they are taught in English or in their primary language in a dual-immersion program; they are, in fact, acquiring a language known as academic language. Oral proficiency in English, also known as social language, may take approximately three to five years; however, oral proficiency in English, also known as academic language, may take approximately four to seven years to develop (Hakuta, Goto Butler, & Witt, 2000). In informal settings while in school, such as at recess and during lunch, students will use a different type of language, a more lax language known as social language. Cummins (1999) described this language as basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS), or social language. Students use a cognitively undemanding language, in layman’s terms, when speaking with friends in a less structured setting. On the other hand, while in a formal setting such as in a classroom, students use the language being taught and modeled by the teacher. Cummins (1999) described this language as cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), or academic language. Students learn to manipulate this complex language in a sophisticated manner as a tool for learning while in a formal setting such as in the classroom. It is an individual’s ability to skillfully manipulate language which will distinguish them as an individual whom is viewed by society as an exceptional writer.
Background of study

Over the past five to seven years the educational staff at Bear Palace Elementary School\(^1\) has noticed a downward trend in the students’ writing ability. This trend has been identified as an academic weakness in the quality of the students’ writing. As a member of the staff, I have been part of staff meetings where this topic has been discussed at length. Writing was designated as an area of concern by the staff because in order for an individual’s voice to be heard he or she must be published. When an individual is published then his or her words will be disseminated to and read by the public. In order for a writer to be published, and be taken seriously, he or she must write at an exceptionally high standard. This is especially true if the writer is an individual from a minority group such as Latinos or African Americans. But what if the teacher’s expectations of her students are low due to the color of their skin? Teachers sometimes base their expectations for student achievement on student ethnicity, with teachers expecting more from European American and Asian American students than from their Latino and African American peers (McKown & Weinstein, 2008). Typically in a child’s young life their first publication is done by a classroom teacher during their elementary school years. These early publications may not inspire a young child of color to have pride, confidence, and the desire to continue to write and improve upon their writing capability if the teacher, whom children typically look up to, has low expectations of them.

\(^1\) All names of participants, school site, and school district have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.
During the 2009-2010 academic year the staff at Bear Palace Elementary School decided to implement a writing program that they felt would fill in the holes that the state mandated curriculum of Houghton-Mifflin has in the area of writing. As a staff, we felt that the state mandated curriculum did not place enough emphasis or rigor in the area of writing, even though it is heavily emphasized by society. In meetings the staff discussed how many students in Grade 4 through Grade 6 were unable to write a response to literature that was more than two paragraphs long and was little more than a retelling of what happened in the story. It was evident that the staff was frustrated at the amount of scaffolding, outside the state mandated curriculum, which they felt they had to develop in order to give their students the writing skills that were essential for them to master the skill being taught. The teachers whose students must take the state standardized exams have all voiced their concerns on how poorly most of the students have scored in the past on the writing strategies portion of the exam. As a staff we agreed that we must find a writing program that would have built-in scaffolds to ensure student success. We opted for the program named 6 +1 Trait® Writing and its implementation would be from kindergarten through Grade 6. This program is designed to provide a common language for teachers and students to communicate about the characteristics of writing and establishes a clear vision of what good writing looks like (Education Northwest, 2010). The characteristics of the writing program are broken down into six categories: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. Each category is taught separately, but spirals back to the previous categories in an attempt to show students how all the categories intertwine to develop good writing. The finished product,
or the writing sample, is published by the teacher and presented by the student to his or her audience. By publishing the student’s writing it validates them as being a good writer not only to themselves, but to their audience as well.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to determine if the implementation of the 6 +1 Trait® Writing program that is currently being utilized at Bear Palace Elementary School, where I teach, is a teaching strategy which the students will be able to utilize in becoming good writers in their native language of Spanish. Kindergarten today is a very different place than the kindergarten of ten years ago. The academic progress currently being demanded of four and five year old children is quite astonishing. The passing of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (Bush, 2001) has increased the rigor of the standards (or benchmarks) in most of the content areas being taught in each grade level in the public school system in the United States (U.S.) nationwide. However, there are some content areas in the curriculum that the NCLB Act minimally addresses. Although NCLB has focused attention on improving reading and math achievement, little attention has been given to other subjects including writing (McCarthey, 2008). If teachers are not instructing students on how to maneuver through the writing process\(^2\) because it is scarcely mentioned in a mandated federal law, then how are students supposed to learn the process of becoming good writers? The NCLB Act has done very little to support educators in public schools in reaching, let alone exceeding the standards set forth by it.

\(^2\) The writing process are the steps one follows in order to produce a piece of writing. Typically the steps are as follows: prewriting, writing, revising, editing, and publishing.
McNeil (2009), referencing her earlier work, states that “as students disengage from enthusiastic involvement in the learning process, administrators often see the disengagement as a control problem. Then, they increase their attention to managing students and teachers rather than supporting their instructional purpose” (p. 390). Instead of giving teachers the creative freedom to engage students in the learning process, the teachers and students are being micromanaged into conforming to a one-size-fits-all learning environment which starts as early as kindergarten. Accountability [under the NCLB Act] works as a panoptic system of surveillance that teaches people [teachers and administrators] to comply and to press others into compliance (Lipman, 2009).

Kindergarten is no longer the fun environment where children learn the basic skills such as the names of body parts, the names of colors and shapes, and orally counting numbers up to thirty. Previously, there was also an emphasis on teaching the social skills which students may lack due to their maturity level such as: sharing materials, following one to two simple directions, listening attentively, or being able to resolve a conflict with another individual by verbally expressing their feelings. Today kindergarten children need to acquire these skills and a plethora of other skills that were once acquired in Grade 1. Kindergarten students must learn how to read and write by the end of the year (California Department of Education, 2010). Many kindergarten students do not walk into the classroom on the first day of school already knowing the pre-skills needed such as letter-sound correlation, how these correlations are constructed for reading and deconstructed for writing, and that there is a correlation between spoken words and written words, which are needed to learn how to read and write. These
concepts are also known as the alphabetic principle, which is fundamental in the acquisition of a language. Readers [and writers] must first understand that words can be divided into sounds and that the same basic set of letters can be combined in a great variety of ways (Cecil, 2003). Once this principle has been mastered students have the solid foundation they need in becoming exceptional writers.

In the Bear Cave Joint Unified School District students are required to demonstrate that they are able to read and write before they are promoted from kindergarten to Grade 1. In order to accomplish these benchmarks, students must know the letter names and the letter sounds of the entire alphabet. This is no small feat for a four or five year old child and it becomes more complicated when the student is diagnosed with a learning disorder. Some of the contributing factors that may determine the success or failure of learning how to write in kindergarten for some students may be their level of maturity, family support, educational support, the quality of instruction and the curriculum being used in the classroom, developmental disability, or having a safe and secure environment to learn in, just to name a few. According to Krashen’s (1981) Affective Filter hypothesis, if students are “on the defensive” they may understand an input, or information, the teacher is giving them; however, they may feel high anxiety and will have a filter, or a mental block, preventing the information from reaching the brain and helping them to fully utilize the input (information) in language acquisition. For example, a student may understand the input of the silent e at the end of a word produces a long vowel sound as in the word hope. If the student’s affective filter is high, or the student has a mental block due to high anxiety, he or she may write hop instead of hope.
because the student is not accessing the information the teacher has given them and is; therefore, not utilizing the input to acquire the language.

Definitions of Terms

*Academic language* = Refers to the ability to manipulate language using abstraction in a sophisticated manner; it is better understood as the ability by students to think in and use a language as a tool for learning in a formal setting such as in the classroom. In Jim Cummins’ early work this term was known as Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Wikipedia, 2011).

*Alphabetic Principle* = This principle refers to the relationship between letters names, letter sounds, symbols, and the spoken and written words used in a society to communicate (Wikipedia, 2011).

*Area 3 Writing Project* = A professional development network for California teachers and administrators established in 1981 that follows the writing project teachers-teaching-teachers model. This project is one of many nationwide and was established locally at the University of California, Davis (UCD).

*Dual-Immersion Program* = Program that integrates native English speakers and speakers of another language, in this case Spanish, providing instruction in both languages for all students. Dual-immersion programs promote bilingualism and biliteracy, grade-level academic achievement, and positive cross-cultural attitudes and behaviors in all students (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2011).

*English dominant* = Latinos who read and speak in English most of the time, but have a limited ability to read or speak in Spanish.
English Learner (EL) or English Language Learner (ELL) = Individuals whose primary language is not English.

English Only (EO) = Individuals whose primary language is English.

Language Acquisition = The process by which humans acquire the capacity to perceive, produce and use words to understand and communicate with others which involves the picking up of diverse capacities including syntax, phonetics, and an extensive vocabulary.

Program Improvement (PI) = A school which receives Title I funding that does not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for two consecutive years in the content areas, English-language arts or mathematics school wide or for any numerically significant subgroup, or on the same indicator (Academic Performance Index [API] or high school graduation rate) through state standardized tests.

Six Traits of Writing Strategies = A system that is designed to teach students the craft of quality writing. The system is structured around six traits which supply a framework in which teachers can provide focused and detailed feedback while instructing the students (Education Northwest, 2010).

Social Language = Refers to the basic communicative fluency achieved by all normal native speakers of a language; it is better understood as the language used by students in an informal setting such as the playground or in the cafeteria during lunch. In Jim Cummins’ early work this term was known as Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) (Wikipedia, 2011).
Think-Pair-Share Strategy = A strategy used by teacher to allow students time to THINK of a response to their question, then PAIR up with a fellow student (usually assigned by the teacher), and finally to SHARE their thoughts with the assigned student. This is a strategy often used with language learners.

Word segmentation = the process of breaking up a word into its individual phonemes. For example: cat = /c/ + /a/ + /t/.

Research Questions

This study was driven by the following research questions:

1. Are kindergarten Latino/a students able to incorporate the strategies from the 6+1 Trait® Writing Program to write complete, grammatically correct sentences in Spanish in their writings?

2. Is there evidence in the students’ interactive journals of the strategies which the 6 +1 Trait® Writing Program teaches?

Limitations

This research study was limited due to the fact that the four participants from my classroom were randomly selected for this case study and the sample is not large enough for the results to be generalized to the public at large. Therefore, the results should be viewed as individual successes or failures within the classroom. Limiting factors which include the teacher are: experience in the classroom, area of expertise, and the level of comfort in utilizing this program. Limiting factors which include the students are: actual level of ability, perceived level of ability, background experiences, students’ ability to
express themselves (both verbally and in writing), motivation to write, and the parental support given in the home.

Significance/Importance of the Study

It requires a trained professional to appreciate the difficulty of the process of learning to write, unless you have had the distinct pleasure of teaching these skills to young children. The participants in this case study were being taught to write in their primary language of Spanish. Learning the alphabetic principle of a language is a process that takes years to master. By giving the students at Bear Palace Elementary School a solid foundation in their primary language, they were acquiring writing skills which they will be able to draw from when they begin to delve into acquiring English writing skills. Academic language in a students’ second language may take seven to twelve years, and sometimes the duration of acquisition is longer. Collier and Thomas (2001) state that the process for acquiring academic language in a student’s second language takes time because students are annually tested to measure cognitive growth as well as vocabulary and concept knowledge in English. Collier and Thomas (2001) further state that in order for these students (English Language Learners) to eventually close the educational gap between themselves and English-only students, they must accomplish more than one year’s achievement for six years in a row. It would behoove society as a whole if the child’s first language is utilized in assisting them in acquiring a second language, especially if the two languages are closely related such as Spanish and English. Even the strongest, most effective school programs require five to six years to close this large [educational] gap (Collier & Thomas, 2001). Yet we pressure students who migrate to the
United States to acquire a second language as soon as possible; and if they do not acquire it in what society deems to be a timely manner, these individuals are assumed to have a learning disorder or a learning disability. When a student’s culture and linguistic characteristics are perceived as *deficiencies* rather than as *differences*, there is a tendency to blame the student for lack of success, rather than to question the effectiveness of the curriculum or instruction (Ortiz & Ramirez, 1988). Therefore, it may be the teacher’s first response to refer these students to a special education program instead of inquiring if there is a program that better suits the student’s needs such as a bilingual program or a dual-immersion program that takes into account the students primary language to support their acquisition of the second language of English.

Bilingual education teaches academic content in two languages: the native language, Spanish in the case of Bear Palace Elementary School; and the ambient language, English in the United States. Henceforth, in our Spanish-English dual-immersion program we utilize a student’s first language to instruct the students through academic content while they gradually acquire English. Since the percentage of English instruction is gradually increased as the students move through the grades, the majority of instruction in the primary grades is done in Spanish to ensure that the students understand complex academic concepts to mastery and, with guidance from the teacher; the students are able to transfer the skills they mastered in their first language to the skills they must master in English instruction to increase the odds of academic success. By the end of sixth grade, the students in our program are placed in an English-only academic setting in
which they must be capable of accessing their primary knowledge on their own, usually with little to no guidance from the teacher.

In English-only schools young children who are labeled as English Language Learners are being pressured to master skills that they may not be ready to master due to their level of maturity or their lack of linguistic skills. Are we setting a solid educational foundation for these children to build upon and become good writers, or are we impeding their educational growth by pressuring them to master skills that they are neither prepared to nor able to acquire and becoming poor to mediocre writers? There is truth in the adage that knowledge is power, but do we not want the foundation of that knowledge to be as structurally sound as possible and not riddled with holes and instability?

Summary

An individual’s ability to skillfully manipulate language in order to convey their message is the determining factor of being viewed as a skillful and exceptional writer, or being viewed as an ineffectual and mediocre writer. School districts are constantly being bombarded with products which state that they are the most effective in accomplishing this goal; however, when these writing programs are stripped down to their essentials they are all basically the same. Their ultimate goal is to get writers to write using rich academic language. How they obtain this goal is where their paths deviate. One area of concern for the staff at Bear Palace Elementary School has been students’ writing ability. This study examines the writing development of four Spanish-speaking kindergarten students in their native language of Spanish using the 6+1 Trait® Writing program.
Specifically, it looks for evidence of the program’s writing strategies in various student writing samples.

**Organization of the remainder of the study**

The succeeding chapters of this study are outlined as follows: Chapter 2 is where I present and analyze the current literature review on bilingual education which provides the foundation for the study and its design; Chapter 3 is an explanation of the methodology used in this study. It includes the setting of the study, general participant information, the design of the study, and the procedures used within the study; Chapter 4 entails of the analysis of the data collected in this study; and Chapter 5 consists of the conclusion drawn from the data analysis and future recommendations.
Chapter 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The topics in this literature review are important to understanding why it is fundamentally essential for children to be literate in their primary language when embarking on their journey of acquiring a second language in English. The topics covered will be a brief history of current anti-bilingual education legislation in the United States, the importance of bilingual education for Spanish-speaking English Language Learners, the benefits of a dual-immersion program in acquiring English, the advantage of a child being literate in their primary language, and the use of the 6+1 Trait® Writing program in the process of acquiring literacy in a child’s primary language.

The Recent History of Bilingual Education Legislation in the U.S.

The relationship between bilingual education and the U.S. has been a tumultuous affair since its inception. Though English expanded as the dominant language (early in its history), many immigrants were schooled in and maintained their native language when they arrived here (Lessow-Hurley, 1996; Purcell, 2002). The pendulum of this love-hate relationship swings as the perception of the public shifts in regard to bilingual education. One moment some of the public is enamored with and accepts bilingual education as a resource in aiding non-English speaking immigrants in acquiring English and assimilating them into the dominant culture’s perception of the status quo. The next moment the pendulum swings and the public becomes disenchanted with the notion of bilingual education because it validates a second culture which is different from the
dominant culture’s own. Olsen (2009) states that “immigrants are, by definition, ‘outsiders,’ and the diverse cultures, languages, and perspectives they bring as they cross borders have the potential to threaten and destabilize dominant cultural norms, as well as the economic and ideological status quo” (p. 818). Olsen (2009) further states that “in response, waves of language oppression and anti-immigration policies have alternated with periods of policies aimed at inclusion” (p. 818). In recent history, the public has become disenchanted with bilingual education and views it as a hindrance in aiding non-English speaking immigrants in acquiring English. This shift in public opinion has led to anti-immigration and anti-bilingual education legislation being drafted and passed into law.

In California one such anti-bilingual education legislation drafted and passed into law was Proposition 227 in 1998. This initiative attempts to reduce bilingual education and replaces it with “special classes” where limited English proficient (LEP) students are enrolled until they obtain “a good working knowledge of English.” These special classes should typically not last longer than one year (Ballotpedia, 2011). Proposition 227 does not specify a number of issues regarding these “special classes.” Some issues that this initiative does not address are: (1) How should these “special classes” be configured in order to uniformly ensure educational equity across the state of California for LEP students?; (2) What curriculum should be utilized in aiding LEP students in acquiring “a good working knowledge of English” and what is meant by “special materials”?: (3)
Would the curriculum entail a writing component in English along with reading, listening, and speaking components in English?; (4) Who decides what is “a good working knowledge of English” or how to measure it?; (5) What exactly are LEP students suppose to be proficient in: speaking, listening, reading, or writing in English or all four by the end of that one year?; and finally, (6) Who should instruct these “special classes” and what, if any, credential(s) should they hold? The verbiage in Proposition 227 is vague in this regard and leaves the answers to these questions open to interpretation. By open to interpretation I mean that how one school district chooses to interpret the verbiage of the initiative may be different than how another school district chooses to interpret the verbiage of this legislation. For example, some configurations of these “special classes” may be more beneficial in aiding LEP students in acquiring English than others. In addition, each school district decides the qualifications necessary for ELs to be reclassified as English proficient, often employing different benchmarks from the same standardized tests. This undoubtedly leads to an inequitable education for LEP students and may prolong the length of time needed for them to acquire “a working knowledge of English.”

One aspect of Proposition 227 is very clear: limit the amount of time LEP students have to acquire English to no more than one year. This places a considerable amount of pressure on young non-English speaking individuals to acquire and to master a complex language in an unrealistically limited amount of time. Hakuta, Goto Butler, and Witt (2000) estimate that it can “take up to ten years before students are fully proficient in English, i.e., are fully competitive in the academic uses of English with their age-
equivalent, native English-speaking peers” (p. 1). If it takes nearly a decade for LEP students to become as academically proficient in English as their counterparts, then legislation, such as Proposition 227, which in essence eliminates two resources (usage of primary language and time) for LEP students to acquire English does not make sense. Studies (Collier & Thomas, 2001; Hakuta, Goto Butler, & Witt, 2000) agree that the notion of acquiring proficiency of a language (within a year or two) is not only unrealistic but an absurd idea.

At the federal level, the NCLB Act was signed into law in 2001 and officially set the stage for the dismantlement and abolishment of bilingual education nationwide. NCLB guidelines have imposed a monolingual English framework of instruction and assessment tools on schools while official support for bilingual education has been withdrawn (Harper, de Jong, & Platt, 2008). Furthermore, by officially withdrawing support for bilingual education NCLB is implying that English should be the only language used for content instruction, and that any other language is inferior and unnecessary. One failure of NCLB is recognizing that the instructional needs of ELL students may differ from students who are fluent English speakers, and that teachers must be capable of mediating these differences regardless if they speak the student’s first language or not. A second failure is that NCLB ignores the role of the specialized teaching skills needed to render content area instruction more accessible to ELLs, who must simultaneously learn new concepts through a new language as well as learn a new language itself (Harper, de Jong, & Platt, 2008). Bilingual education is one way to capitalize on the instructional needs of ELL students in assisting them in becoming
proficient in English. In order for teachers to have the capability to provide the
instructional needs of ELL students they must have a special certification attached to
their teaching credential which states that the prospective teacher is fluent (in reading,
listening, speaking, and writing) in the target language. In California this special
certification was called the Bilingual Cross-Cultural Language and Academic
Development (BCLAD) credential.

One moment bilingual education is accepted by some of the public as a resource
for ELL students in becoming proficient in English. The next moment it is viewed as a
hindrance to ELL students becoming proficient in English. Recently the public’s view of
bilingual education is that it hinders ELL students from obtaining proficiency in English.
Legislation such as Proposition 227, which passed in California in 1998, and NCLB
passed in 2001, are noteworthy outcomes of this mindset. The current sentiment is that
bilingual education does not work; therefore, it should be minimalized to unstructured
classes that do not provide educational equity to ELL students who are rushed through
the process of acquiring proficiency in English.

Bilingual Education

Alanís and Rodríguez (2008) cite the National Center for Education Statistics
stating that in 2004 the number of school-aged children who speak a language other than
English reached approximately ten million. People immigrate to other lands for different
reasons (political asylum, religious freedom, a better way of life, etc.) and some view the
USA as the “promise land” where anybody can come to realize their dreams with a little
hard work. Immigration into the USA is not likely to cease any time soon; therefore, the
number of school-aged children in US schools who speak a language other than English will more than likely continue to increase. Alanís and Rodríguez (2008) further state that educators are facing challenges to provide effective language programs with quality instruction for students who are linguistically and culturally diverse. Bilingual education, particularly a two-way immersion program, would be an ideal language program which validates and maintains the child’s first language and culture by utilizing it throughout the curriculum being taught.

Alanís and Rodríguez (2008) explored factors which may have contributed to one dual-language program’s success and sustainability. Three data sources (observations, staff interviews, and state standardized tests scores for five years) were triangulated and analyzed. Although Alanís and Rodríguez obtain three data sources their main focus is one data source, the state standardized test scores; therefore, it is difficult to say if the data sources were truly triangulated. Alanís and Rodríguez only looked at the test scores for one cohort of students in the program (the program’s first cohort of kindergarten students who were in their last year) which indicated that the students in the two-way immersion program outperformed their counterparts, within their district and state, in all test areas over the five years except in the second year of test scores. There were no reasons suggested for the decline in test scores in the second year. Since the test scores which were analyzed were from one cohort, and each cohort of students is different from each other, it is difficult to generalize their success in the program to the rest of the cohorts. Nevertheless, the intent of this study was to explore factors within a dual-language program which contributed to their students’ academic success.
It should be no surprise that teachers who teach in bilingual education programs must be competent in the process of how language is learned so that they are well equipped in aiding students in becoming literate, not only in their primary language, but also becoming literate in the second language being taught. Bilingual teachers need to understand the nature of language and how languages are learned so that they can create appropriate [and optimal] learning environments for second language learners (Lessow-Hurley, 1996).

Bilingual education programs are defined as educational programs which use two languages, one of which must be English [in the U.S.], for teaching purposes. Bilingual education programs have taken many forms; however, two goals are common to all: (1) to teach English and (2) to provide access to the core curriculum through the home language while students are gaining English language proficiency (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). The utilization of the students’ primary language within a bilingual program depends on the purpose of the program. The two goals mentioned earlier are a common thread which runs through all bilingual programs; however, the end goal of the individual programs may differ. For example, at one end of the spectrum you have some bilingual education programs whose goals are to have students become proficient in English, to cease the utilization of their primary language in instruction, and to assimilate them to the “status quo” of the dominant culture as quickly as possible. These programs are
considered to be subtractive bilingual programs\(^4\). Some examples of these programs are: transitional/early-exit bilingual programs and newcomer programs. On the opposite end of the spectrum you have bilingual programs whose goal is to guide English Language Learners in utilizing their primary language in obtaining proficiency in English and to assimilate them to the “status quo” of the dominant culture as quickly as possible. All the while these programs simultaneously refine and develop the student’s primary language and culture. The overarching goal for these programs is to produce individuals who are bilingual and biliterate in two languages. These programs are considered to be additive bilingual programs\(^5\). Some examples of these programs are: maintenance bilingual programs, immersion programs, and two-way or dual-language immersion programs.

One misconception regarding bilingual education programs is that the curriculum which is utilized is inferior to the mainstream, or English-only, curricula. According to Gonzales (2005) “bilingual [education] curricula are just as demanding as mainstream curricula. Effective bilingual education programs help LEP students achieve high levels of English proficiency, maintain subject-matter knowledge through the use of the native language, develop a positive self-concept, and complete more years of schooling” (p. 164). These programs cater to language minority students by validating the linguistic and cultural differences through the curriculum utilized between language minority students.

\(^4\) Subtractive bilingual programs are programs which attempt to assimilate individuals who do not speak English into the American culture as quickly as possible while invalidating the individuals own culture by not encouraging the individual to identify with their own culture.

\(^5\) Additive bilingual programs are programs which attempt to assimilate individuals who do not speak English into the American culture as quickly as possible while validating, maintaining, and developing the individuals own culture.
and their English-only peers. Within bilingual education programs language minority students feel vested because their potential is not questioned due to a language barrier.

Research by Willig (1985), Ramírez (1991), Greene (1997), and Slavin and Cheung (2003) all indicate that instruction in a child’s first language is more beneficial than English only programs because the task of learning both oral English and English reading [and writing] may become overwhelming to a large number of ELL students, which may decrease their success in becoming proficient in English. Willig (1985) conducted a meta-analysis\(^6\) of a number of studies which attempted to determine the effectiveness of bilingual education. Twenty-three studies on bilingual education were included in the meta-analysis. The findings which emerged from this meta-analysis indicate that there is a positive effect on children who participated in a bilingual program. However, Willig states that bilingual education had been poorly examined in available research because it makes inappropriate comparisons of children in bilingual programs (experimental group) to children who are dissimilar or not in a bilingual program (comparison group) for a number of reasons. For example: (1) participants are not randomly chosen; and (2) in an attempt to equate the language of the two groups, researchers match students from one group to the other and looked at where their state tests scores overlapped. However, in doing so the scores obtained from the experimental groups were often students who were not able to advance out of the bilingual programs, whereas ELs in the control groups were students who had benefitted from bilingual education.

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\(^6\) A meta-analysis is a systemic and statistical aggregation of research findings. This type of data analysis is one technique used in an attempt to reduce the ambiguity and inconsistency in reviews of research literature. In its simplest form, this is normally by identification of a common measure of effect size, for which a weighted average might be the output.
education and advanced to English only instruction. In essence, studies were using the success stories of bilingual education programs against bilingual education. Finally, bilingual education programs are categorized together without regard to distinctions in each individual program such as program design or quality of program. Results indicate that although there may be many discrepancies in results of bilingual education studies, native language instruction for ELs yield at minimum some benefit in acquiring English proficiency.

Ramírez (1991), in what is known as the Longitudinal Study, tracked the individual progress of students over a four-year period enrolled in three different classroom environments. The study sought to compare the effectiveness of early-exit, or transitional, bilingual education with two other program models: all English immersion and late-exit, or developmental, bilingual education. Ramírez went to great lengths to ensure that the comparison groups were carefully matched by paying close attention to the consistency of program labeling and selecting the best examples of each approach in an attempt to minimize the effects of program implementation. Information from the study revealed that students in bilingual classrooms outperformed their peers in immersion classrooms and that those whom scored highest were not only tested in English, but they were enrolled in the late-exit programs which conducted most of their instruction in Spanish. These preliminary findings came as a shock to opponents of bilingual education, whom held the belief that the more English children were exposed to in school the faster they would progress in English. Once the final report was released, the Ramírez study did not provide the clarity which was highly anticipated. Results
showed minor differences in achievement between students in immersion classrooms and early-exit bilingual classrooms. However, the Ramírez study did show that students enrolled in late-exit bilingual classrooms excelled academically.

Due to the fact that none of the districts which offered late-exit bilingual programs also offered all English immersion or early-exit bilingual programs, Ramírez (1991) was unable to make direct comparisons among all three programs. This means that some of the schools in the study did not have students in a controlled group; therefore, direct comparisons between the three programs were impossible. Ramírez drew indirect comparisons by analyzing growth curves of student achievement progress against national norms. In his analysis, Ramírez found that students’ academic progression in all English immersion classrooms and early-exit bilingual classrooms slowed down by third grade. By contrast, students’ academic progression in the late-exit bilingual classrooms followed a steeper learning curve. Although it appears that this analysis favors increased use of native language instruction, one should be cautious when interpreting the findings.

Greene (1997) also conducted a meta-analysis; however, his meta-analysis consisted of the literature review presented by Christine Rossell and Keith Baker in 1996, which ultimately supported the passing of Proposition 227 into law in California in 1998. The passing of Proposition 227 reduced native language instruction for EL students throughout the state. Greene took the seventy-five studies on bilingual education which Rossell and Baker deemed “methodologically acceptable” and following the guidelines established by Rossell and Baker dwindled the studies down to eleven which qualified based on the criterion. Like Willig (1985), Greene struggled with the lax definitions of
bilingual education in the studies, which prompted him to apply clarified standards to some (such as the definition of a bilingual education program). Greene, like Willig (1985), noted that random assignment of students to the experimental and control groups was a higher quality experimental design in evaluating the effectiveness of native language instruction because it greatly reduced the possibility of omitted variable bias. 7 Greene states that when looking at the studies with the higher quality research design there is more significantly positive benefits from native language instruction, or bilingual education programs.

Slavin and Cheung (2003) present a report which reviews studies of reading programs for ELLs where they focuses on comparisons of bilingual and English-only programs, and more precisely on replicable models which were evaluated with ELLs. Slavin and Chueng use what they call a quantitative synthesis method called the best-evidence synthesis 8. The purpose of their review was to examine the evidence in studies regarding reading programs for ELLs to establish if there is a scientific basis for competing claims of effects of various language programs. In short, Slavin and Cheung were comparing bilingual and English approaches used with ELLs in reading instruction in elementary grades to see which one is more beneficial. Their findings correspond closely with the findings of Greene’s meta-analysis indicating that most methodologically

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7 In the field of statistics, omitted-variable bias (OVB) occurs when an experimental model is created which and leaves out one or more important causal factors. The “bias” is created when the model over- or under-estimates one of the other factors in an attempt to compensate for one the missing factor.

8 Best-evidence synthesis seeks to apply consistent, well-justified standards to identified unbiased, meaningful information from experimental studies. Each study is discussed in great detail while pooling the calculated effect size across studies in substantively justified categories. The method is similar to meta-analysis; however, it adds an emphasis on narrative description of each study’s contribution.
adequate studies are those which randomly assign its participants to groups and favored bilingual approaches over English-only approaches utilized for teaching ELL students how to read in English.

As discussed in the first section of this literature review (The Recent History of Anti-Bilingual Education in the U.S.) the ultimate goal of legislation such as Proposition 227 is to place EL students into mainstream, English-only classrooms as quickly as possible; however, by taking away two vital resources (support of a student’s first language and time) from EL students the opposite desired effect is not what many intend. In short, how the legislation intends for EL students to progress in becoming English proficient and how EL students are actually progressing, without the support of bilingual education programs, in becoming English proficient are polar opposites. Crawford (1998) states that bilingual education programs which emphasize a gradual increase of English instruction over time, while at the same time offering native-language instruction which decreases over time, provides a continuity in a child’s cognitive growth and lays a foundation for academic success in the second language. Crawford (1998) further states that by contrast, the English-only approach and quick-exit bilingual programs may interrupt a child’s cognitive growth at a crucial stage with negative effects on academic achievement.

Crawford (1998) wrote an article for the Center of Applied Linguistics webpage (www.cal.org) where he describes the ten most common fallacies about bilingual education. The ten most common fallacies about bilingual education Crawford listed are, in descending order: (1) English is losing ground to other languages in the U.S.; (2)
newcomers to the U.S. are learning English more slowly now than in previous
generations; (3) the best way to learn a language is through “total immersion”; (4)
children learning English are retained too long in bilingual classrooms, at the expense of
English acquisition; (5) school districts provide bilingual instruction in scores of native
languages; (6) bilingual education means instruction mainly in students’ native
languages, with little instruction in English; (7) bilingual education is far more costly
than English language instruction; (8) disproportionate dropout rates for Hispanic
students demonstrate the failure of bilingual education; (9) research is inconclusive on the
benefits of bilingual education; and (10) language-minority parents do not support
bilingual education because they feel it is more important for their children to learn
English than to maintain their native language. Crawford’s analysis indicates that
although popular and often cited reasons against bilingual education, none of them are
substantiated by data.

**Synopsis of bilingual education**

There are many different types of bilingual education programs that utilize a
student’s primary language, to varying degrees. The curriculum in a bilingual program is
as rigorous and challenging as the curriculum in a mainstream, English-only classroom.
A bilingual education teacher must be competent in the process of language acquisition,
as well as being bilingual and biliterate in the languages of instruction. This is vital to the
academic success of children in bilingual programs.
Two-Way or Dual-Language Immersion Programs

Lindholm-Leary and Genesee (2010) state that “the rationale for two-way immersion is based on theories and research findings concerning both first- and second-language acquisition” (p. 334). The four rationales given by Lindholm-Leary and Genesee (2010) are that: (1) research indicates that academic knowledge and skills acquired through one language pave the way for acquisition of related knowledge and skills taught through the medium of another language; (2) research indicates that English is best acquired by language-minority students with limited or no proficiency in English after home-language skills are fully established; (3) immersion programs for language-majority students (native speakers of English) enables them to develop advanced levels of proficiency in the second language without compromising their academic achievement or home-language development; and (4) many researchers and educators believe that language is learned best by all students when it is the medium rather than the exclusive focus of instruction. In a two-way or dual-language immersion program all four rationales are incorporated into the program to ensure academic success for all students.

Lindholm-Leary and Genesee (2011) point out that there are alternative educational programs available for ELLs, which are more beneficial to them than traditional mainstream monolingual English programs. These alternative educational programs are bilingual programs, particularly developmental bilingual and two-way immersion programs. Lindholm-Leary and Genesee state that through these programs ELLs gain cognitive and cultural advantages associated with high levels of bilingual proficiency which could ultimately enhance their career opportunities. Lindholm-Leary
and Genesee report three trends from bilingual education research: (1) acquisition of oral language skills in a second language is an extremely complex process which takes time; (2) the majority of ELLs educated in an English mainstream classroom in California lack the academic language skills needed to be reclassified as English proficient after ten years of English instruction; and (3) ELLs in a dual-language program attain the same or higher levels of oral proficiency in English as ELLs in English mainstream classrooms. Lindholm-Leary and Genesee state that there could be a cross-linguistic influence (i.e., Spanish to English) which could facilitate their acquisition of English reading and writing skills. ELL’s preliteracy skills in their first language progress more quickly and successfully into English literacy skills than do ELLs who do not develop their preliteracy skills in their first language. Research indicates that ELLs in dual-language programs attain the same or higher levels of academic success in all domains than students in English-only programs.

Two-way or dual-language immersion programs are one type of bilingual education program which caters to language minority students, but language majority students also enjoy the benefits of these programs. The opportunity for students to become bilingual is increased by the dual-language bilingual approach. ELs benefit from retention and development of their native language while acquiring English, and English speakers enjoy exposure to real speakers of the foreign language (Alanís & Rodríguez, 2008). In English monolingual schools the English speaking students are the language model for EL students; however, in a two-way or dual-language immersion program Spanish speaking students become the language models for the English speaking
students. Lindholm-Leary and Genesee (2010) state that “because the students in two-way immersion programs are all native speakers of one of the two second languages being promoted, it follows that native-language models are available in the classroom for both groups of second-language learners” (p. 335). The power of language is no longer predominantly in the hands of English speaking students, and in a dual-language immersion program the power of language begins with the Spanish speaking students and is gradually distributed between the two languages.

Lessow-Hurley (1996) defines a two-way immersion programs as programs where English-only [and English-dominant] children are immersed in a second language alongside limited English proficient children who are native speakers of the second language. She also states that English is gradually introduced until it comprises approximately fifty percent of curriculum instruction, which makes the model a combination of maintenance bilingual program and an immersion program. At the beginning of the program it is a maintenance bilingual program for students whose primary language is the minority language (for example Spanish) and an immersion bilingual program for students whose primary language is the dominant language (English). This bilingual education model is considered an additive bilingual program because it aims for all students involved to become fully bilingual [and biliterate] by the time they exit the program (Lessow-Hurley, 1996). This is opposed to other bilingual programs (transitional/early-exit) which utilize the child’s primary language as a tool in acquiring English, but is not maintained throughout the program. Once the child is deemed proficient in English, the child’s primary language ceases to be utilized or
incorporated in an educational setting such as the classroom. These programs are viewed as subtractive bilingual programs.

Lessow-Hurley’s (1996) book is intended to be text for teachers in training regarding bilingual education. She touches on numerous topics related to bilingual education and she states that the book is “necessarily superficial”; however, she does annotate suggestions for further readings at the end of each chapter for the reader to pursue their particular interests in depth. Lessow-Hurley states that one essential goal for a dual-language teacher is to include language as a variable in all aspects of planning, or as a tool to be manipulated for instructional purposes. A dual-language teacher must understand how language works in an educational setting for educational purposes. For example, language learning is difficult and can be frustrating. It is a slow process that takes time, which in our post-modern era where we are obsessed with speed yields impatience with educational programs that do not produce results overnight. Lessow-Hurley attempts to provide an objective review of dual-language instruction, but emphasizes that dual-language instruction is beneficial for all children.

In a two-way immersion program as the students move through the grades the percentage of instruction in each language shifts until they are evenly utilized. For example, in kindergarten the minority language can be utilized for ninety percent of the instructional day for educational purposes, while the dominant language is utilized for only ten percent of the instructional day for educational purposes. In Grade 1 the utilization of the minority language is decreased to eighty percent, while the utilization of the dominant language is increased to twenty percent. These shifts continue until both
languages are balanced evenly where fifty percent of instruction is in the minority language and fifty percent of instruction is in the dominant language; however, the two languages are not used simultaneously. The two languages (Spanish and English) are used separately for instruction, to develop high proficiency in each language (Collier & Thomas, 2001). Collier and Thomas focus on the validation of educating linguistically and culturally diverse students. They wrote that rich oral and written language will develop naturally when students are allowed to connect to their prior knowledge. Collier and Thomas cite studies which show that students who strongly develop their first language while acquiring their second language tend to outperform their monolingual counterparts on academic tests. They state that students who attend a two-way bilingual program are at an educational advantage to close the achievement gap because the language skills they acquired through their first language become an extremely important knowledge base and foundation for the development and acquisition of their second language.

By isolating each language for instructional purposes and by having students develop high levels of proficiency in each language, the dual-language program designates the importance of the two languages within the school and the surrounding community at large. Dual-language instruction does not simply give ELL students access to the curriculum in their first language; it also supports ELL students in obtaining proficiency in English, both orally and academically, through the students’ first language. Dual-language instruction also exposes English speaking students to the curriculum
through a minority language, but it also exposes them to a culture which is different from their own.

**Summation of two-way or dual-language programs**

Two-way or dual-language bilingual programs are designed to cater to both language minority and language majority students. EL students benefit from the retention and development of their primary language, while acquiring proficiency in English. However, language majority students also benefit from the program. A two-way or dual-language bilingual program increases the probability of students becoming bilingual and biliterate in two languages.

**Bilingual Education: Cognition and Empowerment**

A two-way or dual-immersion bilingual program is not solely interested in maintaining the primary language of ELL students or exposing native English speakers to a second culture; it strives to produce critical thinkers whom do not simply follow the status quo, but learn to think outside the proverbial box. In “a Spanish-English dual-language bilingual program, Spanish instruction that develops Spanish reading and writing skills (for either Spanish primary language (L1) or second language speakers (L2)) is not just developing *Spanish* skills, it is also developing a deeper conceptual and linguistic proficiency that is strongly related to the development of literacy in the majority language [English]” (Cummins, 2005, p. 187). Cummins presents a framework which attempts to understand the causes of minority students’ underachievement in schools and recommends directions to reverse this pattern. He argues that the causes are historically rooted in the coercive relationships of power between the dominant and
oppressed groups. Cummins states that in order to reverse these coercive relationships of power, educational structures and the role of educators must find ways that do not limit ELL students’ possibilities for learning and for developing a strong sense of cultural identity. One way to accomplish this is through bilingual education. Developing these skills in a student’s primary language affords them a deeper understanding of the concepts being taught and literally shows them the connection between the skills they learned in their primary language and the skills they are being taught in English.

Lindholm-Leary and Genesee (2010) state that unlike monolingual students whom speak only English and, therefore, can utilize only one language as a reference; EL students have twice the number of resources which they can reference: their first language and English. Through a two-way immersion program EL students may develop two languages they can utilize as resources which will aide them in their academic success. This means that EL students may gain proficiency in both languages and have twice the possibility at academic success. In contrast, EL students in a monolingual English-only school will develop only one language (English) they can utilize as a resource. In monolingual English-only schools EL students will develop one language (English) and possibly have a chance at academic success while typically sacrificing their first language, or they do not develop one language nor develop their first language and have little to no chance of academic success. Lindholm-Leary and Genesee (2010) reference large-scale studies (August & Hakuta, 1997; Francis, Lesaux, & August, 2006; Genesee, F., Lindholm-Leary, K., Saunders, W., & Christian, D, 2005; Genesee, F., Lindholm-Leary, K., Saunders, W., & Christian, D., 2006; Greene, 1997; Rolstad,
Mahoney, & Glass, 2005; Slavin & Cheung, 2003; Willig, 1985) which indicate that there is a benefit in first language instruction through a bilingual program such as a two-way or dual-language bilingual program over English-only instruction because EL students who participate in a bilingual program for the duration of the program tend to outperform EL students who receive only short-term instruction in their first language or no instruction in their first language.

Collier and Thomas (2001), Cummins (2000) and Nieto (2004) state that using an individual’s first language as a foundation for future learning will enforce and empower language minority students to succeed academically because a student’s first language is an extremely important knowledge base for second language development. Collier and Thomas (2001) report that when ELL students are allowed to talk, read, and write about their life experiences, whether good or bad, this leads them to a deeper cognitive, academic, and linguistic development. They state they we all have a story to tell and are eager to tell it; however, ELL students tend to lack an avenue to do so. Cummins (2000) bridges theory, research, policy, and practice in order to contribute to the improvement of educational practices regarding ELLs. By bridging these four categories together, Cummins hopes to generate critical and constructive dialogue between educators and policy-makers to shed light on the coercive relationship of power which ELL students find themselves caught in the crossfire of on a daily basis. Cummins argues that bilingual education opens doors to the global economy through the utilization of two languages which, according to Cummins, is frequently expressing the need for multilingual individuals for its work force. Nieto (2004) provides insight on some ELL students
educational experiences using case studies and snapshots (shorter versions of case studies) to describe how social and educational structures affected their learning and to identify ways of providing high-quality education. Nieto utilizes research to look for ways to improve teaching practices as well as ways to help understand what happens in the classroom with implications for improving education for ELLs through bilingual education. She explores the meaning, necessity, and benefits of bilingual education which lays the foundation in the first language for the acquisition of a second language.

A bilingual program strives to produce critical thinkers who are leaders and not followers, learners who can think outside the proverbial box and ask inquisitive questions. It empowers students to be proud that they speak two languages and, therefore, have two resources they can access to aid them in academic achievement.

*Writing in the Primary Language (L1)*

When two languages are closely intertwined as Spanish and English, then it makes sense to utilize one language as an aid or support system when developing proficiency in the other language. Nieto (2004) states that when one thinks of language development as the concrete foundation of a building, then it makes sense that the foundation needs to be strong in order to sustain the stress of many tons of building materials which will be placed on top of it. The “tons of building materials which will be placed on top of” is the information the student gains while acquiring proficiency of a second language and for the participants of this study the second language being acquired is English. For a second language learner the “concrete foundation” is the development
and maintenance of their first language which they can then utilize, such as their prior knowledge and experiences, which are laid within this foundation.

Studies (August, et al., 2006; Culatta, Reese, & Setzer, 2006; Gorman & Gillam, 2003; Nieto, 2004) indicate that nurturing literacy skills, such as writing, in the student’s first language are usually easily transferred to a second language; however, oral proficiency in the first language is not sufficient for this relationship to exist. August et al., (2006) examined studies which investigated the development of literacy skills in elementary Spanish-speaking second-language learners. Their findings indicated that there is a cross-language relationship between Spanish and English which students could use as a resource when acquiring English. However, in order for this relationship to exist, students must have first language literacy; oral proficiency in their first language will not suffice. Culatta, Reese, and Setzer (2006) attempted to determine the effectiveness of an early literacy program which embeds skills-based instruction into meaningful contexts. Culatta, Reese, and Setzer also found that there is a cross-language relationship between Spanish and English; and emphasized that phonological awareness is one of the important literacy components which transfer from one language to another. Culatta, Reese, and Setzer focused their study on the implications this cross-language relationship has on reading, yet they imply that this relationship is not unidirectional. They imply that this relationship may exist for writing as well. Gorman and Gillam (2003) synthesize research recommendations on improving ELL’s phonological awareness in Spanish, which will be beneficial when developing their literacy in English. Gorman and Gillam focus their study on reading implications for phonological awareness, but they do touch on the
implications of phonological awareness on writing. They state that since Spanish is considered to have a nearly one-to-one correspondence between letters and sounds, students have an advantage because this correlation leads to conventional spelling in their writing. Gorman and Gillam assert that through a process known as forward transfer, students who learn the cue system of their first language may apply those cues to their second language: *agua fria* = water cold instead of cold water.

If students have a solid foundation in writing in their first language, then when they are taught to write in a second language they will be able to pull from that fountain of information which they already possess to aid them in acquiring the second language. Once a student has acquired the concept of directionality (script can be right-left, left-right, or vertical top to bottom) in their first language, that student knows to look for the pattern of directionality in the second language (Collier & Thomas, 2001). Of course, not every language follows the same patterns of directionality. For example, some patterns of directionality in Arabic differ from patterns of directionality in English. In Arabic composers write from right to left and from top to bottom: however, in English composers write from left to write and from top to bottom. Yet, when you are talking about two languages which are closely related, such as Spanish and English, it makes sense to explicitly show, encourage and expect students to use these correlations for their academic advantage.

Culatta, Reese, and Setzer (2006) state that “before children can understand the significance of letters and written words, they must know that sounds are represented by letters that can be combined to make up words” (p. 68). Once students make the
connection that letters have sounds and these sounds can be strung together, or blended, to form words as well as separated, or segmented, to form words; then, and only then, do students have the foundation to begin to understand how to communicate through written language. Even though Spanish and English are closely intertwined, this does not mean that there are not significant differences between the two languages which are termed language-specific skills\(^9\) which must be taken into account and implicitly taught when teaching English language learners. At first glance it seems as though the alphabet in Spanish and English are very similar: they both have five vowels and there is only a difference of a few letters. The Spanish alphabet is comprised of twenty-nine letters while the English alphabet is comprised of twenty-six letters; moreover, most of the consonant sounds are the same in both languages. Gorman and Gillam (2003) point out that the Spanish language has five constant vowels whose sounds do not change and diphthongs\(^10\). In contrast, the English language has five vowels with many different sounds and diphthongs. For example, when writing in English, some students may have a difficult time distinguishing if a word should have a silent e at the end of the word to produce the long vowel sound, such as in the word *hide*, or if there is no need for the silent e to produce the short vowel sound, such as in the word *hid*. Then there are those

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\(^9\) Language specific skills are skills which must be taught in certain language and that do not transfer to another language. For example, in a Spanish-English Dual-Language Immersion program examples of these skills would be the silent E at the end of a word to produce a long vowel sound in English and the silent letter H in Spanish.

\(^10\) Diphthongs, which are also known as a gliding vowel, refer to two adjacent vowel sounds which occur within the same syllable. Some examples in English are: *loud, loin, and lair*. Some examples in Spanish are: *radio, fuego, and viuda*. 
sounds which are exceptions to the rules such as the schwa (/æ/) sound which the letters Ee or Aa can produce.

Gorman and Gillam (2003) further state that due to the fact that Spanish vowels are easily distinguishable, Spanish speakers can identify them with 97% accuracy in isolation and 99% accuracy in context. Because of the strong vowel cues in Spanish, Spanish speaking students tend to rarely omit vowels when writing. However, due to the fact that English vowels may produce many different sounds English speakers are able to identify vowels in isolation only 58% of the time and 83% of the time in context. English vowel sounds tend to cause difficulty for English speakers who are more likely to omit them in their writing. If English speakers are having difficulty with the English vowel sounds, both in isolation and in context, then it should be no surprise that Spanish speaking students have an even more difficult time. Statistically, Spanish speakers are at a higher percentile when identifying Spanish vowel sounds in isolation and in context than English speakers who are identifying English vowel sounds in isolation and in context; therefore, it makes sense to teach Spanish speakers to write in their first language in order to support their instruction of writing in English. The writing skills Spanish-speaking students acquire in their primary language will become a resource for them as they apply writing skills in English; however, their application of writing skills in English may be basic and not as sophisticated as their writing skills in their primary language (Edelsky, 1982). If ELLs do not have a solid foundation in their first language where they can utilize the prior knowledge they obtained in regard to writing, then these skills may seem overwhelmingly impossible for them to master.
Edelsky (1982) presented a report where she investigated the relationship between writing in Spanish and writing in English. More specifically, Edelsky searched for evidence of Spanish writing skills, if any, that were being applied to writing in English given that the text was written by the same student. When analyzing the writing samples, Edelsky looked at the following categories: (1) code switching or switching from one language to the other; (2) spelling inventions; (3) nonspelling conventions such as segmentation and punctuation; (4) structural features such as beginnings, endings, links between propositions, etc.; (5) content features such as characters, settings, etc.; and (6) raters’ subjective impressions of attributes of quality in the content. Edelsky’s results indicate that there are general writing process universals, or language-general skills, which will appear in writing regardless of the language being used, such as the usage of past visual aids to assist students in forming their ideas for writing. However, there are also language specific skills that the students must be aware of if they are writing in a specific language. For example, in Spanish there are tildas and accents, which English writers do not need to be concerned with. Of the six traits in the 6+1 Trait® Writing Program, Edelsky looked at four of the traits (ideas, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions), but she did not include two (organization and voice), nor students in kindergarten in her study.
Just as there are language-specific skills, there are also language-general skills\textsuperscript{11}. Hélène Deacon, Wade-Woolley, and Kirby (2009) introduce the term language-general skills as “cross-linguistic transfers”. Francis (2000) introduces the term language-general skills as “cross-linguistic influences. Many studies (Culatta, Reese, & Setzer, 2006; Calderon & Minaya-Rowe, 2003; Gorman & Gillam, 2003; Hélène Deacon, Wade-Woolley, & Kirby, 2009; Lindholm-Leary & Genesee, 2010) name phonemic awareness as being a skill which can be cross-linguistically transferred from a child’s primary language (Spanish) to a second language (English). Francis (2000) conducted a study in central Mexico which assessed students’ literacy skills in Spanish and Náhuatl. Francis replicated a study that compared reading and writing skills in Spanish and Náhuatl. Therefore, the language of instruction was primarily in Spanish. Francis was particularly interested in assessing the degree to which students used comprehensible skills and discourse competencies outside of school in their native language of Náhuatl. Francis described Cummins (1991) linguistic interdependence model and cautioned that it was too simplistic an explanation for such a complex process. When the data was analyzed he concluded that he needed to elaborate on Cummins’ model. Francis stated that cross-language influences may not “transfer” from one language to another. Francis’ findings remind us that certain traits, which were identified as transferable may not be as transferable as previously thought. For example, the trait of conventions may be viewed as a transferable skill because students need to understand that a sentence starts with a

\textsuperscript{11} Language general skills are skills which can be applied between two languages. These language skills can be taught in one language, such as Spanish, and then they can be transferred to a second language, such as English, without having to be taught a second time in the new language.
capital letter and ends with a period. However, there are certain aspects within the trait of conventions that do not transfer, such as tildas and accents in Spanish. As a kindergarten teacher, I introduce the traits of the writing program to the students. It is up to colleagues in future grades to make these distinctions.

Hélène Deacon, Wade-Woolley, and Kirby (2009) examined whether orthographic processing\textsuperscript{12} would transfer from one language to another in reading when two writing systems (such as in bilingual education) under acquisition are closely related. Hélène Deacon, Wade-Woolley, and Kirby felt that orthographic processing is believed to be a language-specific skill; however, the authors discovered evidence in their study that supports the idea that orthographic processing is language-general if the two languages are closely related, when the languages share several features such as the same alphabetic basis, similarities in sounds, letter patterns, and specific cognates much as Spanish and English do. Calderon and Minaya-Rowe (2003) developed a guide which provides an examination of the basic components within bilingual education programs, particularly a two-way bilingual program. The guide has three sections: section one provides the information the authors feel is needed to start a two-way bilingual program with an example of a successful program; section two provides what the authors deem as effective instructional strategies for implementation; and section three offers ways to involve teachers and parents in the process such as suggestions for developing

\textsuperscript{12} Orthographic processing is the ability to form, store, and access orthographic representations (or spelling patterns). Orthography is often used synonymously with spelling; spelling is only part of orthography.
comprehensive professional development programs and learning communities for teachers, as well as positive suggestions to promote parent involvement.

Phonemic awareness is generally associated with reading and reading comprehension; however, phonemic awareness also incorporates separating words into its distinct phonemes, or learning to spell. Learning to spell is a skill which is essential for young writers of any language and which then can be transferred to a second language. Lindholm-Leary and Genesee (2010) reference several studies (Howard & Christian, 1997; Howard, Christian, & Genesee, 2004; Howard & Sugarman, 2007; Serrano & Howard, 2003) which found EL students made good progress in both English and Spanish and developed high-level writing skills in both languages, meeting or exceeding grade-level norms and narrowing achievement gaps in English.

Calderon and Minaya-Rowe (2003) and Lindholm-Leary and Genesee (2010) agree that teachers in a two-way bilingual program should read a variety of English and Spanish literature aloud to all students so that they become acquainted with the structure of different writing modes. By reading literature in English and in Spanish two things simultaneously occur: (1) students will be exposed to well-written, high-interest literature in both languages which provides them with models of good writing, and (2) literature in both languages will be validated and shown as carrying equal weight in the education of the students.

Bilingual writing summary

A concrete foundation in a Spanish-speaking student’s primary language affords them an advantage when they are acquiring proficiency in English. When an EL student
learns to write in his or her primary language, they are able to internalize the writing process and transfer some of the (language-general) skills to English such as phonemic awareness and directionality. Because of the transferability of these skills from Spanish to English, it is unnecessary for these skills to be retaught in the second language. Therefore, the student’s acquisition of proficiency in English is accelerated.

6+1 Trait® Writing Model

Baker and Hornberger (2001) state it best when they wrote that “students who are empowered by their school experiences develop the ability, confidence, and motivation to succeed academically” (p. 179). The 6+1 Trait® Writing Model enables and encourages students to take advantage of opportunities to empower themselves by providing students with the ability to utilize the writing skills they are developing, the confidence to take risks as they develop their writings, and the motivation to improve upon their writing skills. The 6+1 Trait® Writing Model does not simply tell students how to become good writers, but it shows students how to become good writers by encouraging teachers to introduce each trait by reading a story which showcases one of the six traits being taught to the students, which are ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions (Blasingame & Bushman, 2005). By reading a story which showcases the trait or traits being taught, the teacher is implicitly showing students how to apply the trait or traits being emphasized into their own writing. The lack of attention to explicit features of writing can result in students from diverse backgrounds being denied access to power (McCarthey, 2008). Students from diverse backgrounds are being taught that becoming the author of something written gives them power over what the person is
reading or what is being read to an audience. Many curricular materials such as Six Traits have been adopted to teach aspects of good writing such as ideas, organization, voice, and conventions within specific genres (McCarthey, 2008). By utilizing books to emphasize, or showcase, the trait or traits being taught the students are being exposed to the connection between what is being written and what is being read. Through this process students from diverse backgrounds are also being taught that there is a process which must be mastered in order to become a good writer.

A powerful way to motivate students to become a good writer is to encourage authentic writing or a writing sample which is developed by the students themselves. Authenticity is the heart and soul of writing because children write to communicate their purpose: they write to be published, they write to be read, they write to make their readers laugh, they write to scare their readers, they write to tell a story, they write to relive a significant experience, and so on (Lindfors, 2008). In order to produce authentic writing samples young writers must be given ample time to become comfortable in their role as writers. Writing [is] enhanced for younger writers when they had time to write, were encouraged to write more text, were exposed to well-written literature, and allowed to conference with teachers and peers (McCarthey, 2008). The 6+1 Trait® Writing Model affords young writers these essentials in order to encourage and foster their writing skills through authentic writings. Implementations of writing programs vary depending on a teacher’s understanding of writing and the classroom contexts; however, teachers have expanded their writing programs, but lack sufficient time to teach writing given competing curricular demands and a focus on test preparation rather than a focus on
authentic writing experiences (McCarthey, 2008). How are students, specifically second language learners, supposed to become good writers when there is not an emphasis placed on teaching good writing skills?

Program summary

The 6+1 Trait® Writing Model enables and encourages students to take risks in their writings, which fosters confidence in their writing abilities. It shows students how to become good writers through literature and motivates students through authentic writings such as journals and creative stories of their own. The 6+1 Trait® Writing Model empowers young writers to tell their stories while fostering their writing skills through authentic writings.

Summary

This literature review focused on topics such as a brief view of the anti-immigration legislation passed in the USA, the importance of bilingual education for a second language learner, the advantage of a dual-immersion program for second language learners, the benefits of learning to write in one’s first language and using that knowledge towards becoming proficient in a second language such as English, and how the 6+1 Trait® Writing Model gives students the confidence and motivation in becoming good writers.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Setting of the Study

Bear Palace Elementary School is located on the boundary between a highly affluent neighborhood and an impoverished neighborhood. There are roughly 475 students currently enrolled and the school is considered overcrowded. Of the 475 students, 86% of them receive free or reduced lunch. The school is comprised of 83% Latinos, 14% Caucasians, and 3% other. The school district is entering its Program Improvement Year 3, while the school is entering Program Improvement Year 5. The school runs a Spanish-English Dual-Immersion Program that prides itself on being a family-centered school which fosters academic and social development within the community. Because the dual-immersion program at the school blends two languages and content, parents must sign a waiver stating that they understand that they have the option of enrolling their child in an English-only school; however, they are choosing to enroll their child or children in our program. Most of the families who live in the affluent neighborhood have opted to enroll their child or children in other schools in the area. The English-only speaking families who have opted into the dual-immersion program are not solely Caucasian families; they are a mixture of Caucasian families, second generation Latinos that have lost or are losing their primary language, and families from other regions of the world such as India, France, and China. These families see the value a

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13 Program Improvement is a label given to a school which receives Title 1 funding from the government that did not make AYP or API for two consecutive years in content areas for ELA or math through state standardized tests.
dual-immersion program offers the families which they serve and have specifically requested that their child or children be enrolled at Bear Palace Elementary School. Before the parents sign the waiver allowing their child be enrolled at the school, they are informed that they must be an active participant in their child’s education. They are required to volunteer a minimum of ten hours to the school and/or their child’s classroom. This can be accomplished in a number of ways: participating on fieldtrips, taking home prep work to assist the teacher, making copies of homework packets or the material that the teacher will use in the classroom, and volunteering in the classroom or in the school office.

The school operates an 80/20 dual-immersion model. This means that in kindergarten the students receive 80% of their instruction in Spanish and the remaining 20% of their instruction is in English. As the students advance through the grades, the percentage of their instruction in Spanish is reduced and the percentage of their instruction in English is increased, until they are balanced with 50% of their instruction in Spanish and 50% of their instruction in English. The percentages for the remaining grades are as follows: Grade 1 is 70/30; Grade 2 is 60/40; and Grades 3 – 6 are 50/50. The goal of the school is to provide Spanish-speaking students a solid foundation in their primary language, while simultaneously learning the content of the state adopted curriculum. As they are affirming their foundation in Spanish, they are learning the content in their grade level; and as they move through the grade levels the two languages are blended together more intricately, which will assist them in accessing the core curriculum in English. A goal of the school is to also guide English-only or English-
dominant students through the state adopted curriculum while acquiring a second language, in this case Spanish. As they are acquiring their second language, whether Spanish or English; students are shown how closely related these languages are to each other through strategies such as cognates\textsuperscript{14}. Cognates enable students to acquire a large amount of vocabulary in both languages, regardless if the student is a beginning learner, an intermediate learner, or an advanced learner. The over-arching goal of the school is to produce students that are bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural in both languages by the time they exit our program and are promoted to middle school.

\textit{Participants}

Bear Palace Elementary School serves a primarily Latino/a student body. This research will be a qualitative case study of four participants. The participants were randomly selected from the Spanish speaking students in my classroom. The participants’ names are: Nelson, Carmen, Alex, and Stella. I individually spoke with at least one of the parents for each participant. I explained this study to the parent, answered any questions they had, and asked for their consent (Appendix A) to have their child participate in this study. I also spoke with the each participant. I explained (in simple terms) what their participation in the study would entail. I answered any questions they had and I asked them to sign a consent form (Appendix B). All four participants come from a home environment where Spanish is the primary language spoken by their parents or by their

\textsuperscript{14} Cognates are words, in this case in Spanish and English, which look alike and have the same meaning. For example, important and \textit{importante} are cognates.
care provider. Nelson’s, Carmen’s, and Stella’s parents speak little or no English, while Alex’s parents are English dominant.

Nelson is the older of two siblings. He is quite shy and speaks very little English. At times, he will speak so low that his response can only be heard by students closest to him. At the beginning of kindergarten, Nelson could say roughly half of his letter names and letter sounds, but he could not identify them by sight. Thus he was unable to combine letter sounds to blend words. Due to his lack of knowledge, and perhaps confidence, Nelson would often become nervous when it was time to write. By mid-year, Nelson knew all his letter names and letter sounds. He struggled with segmenting words for most of the second half of the school year.

Carmen is the oldest of three children in the family. She is very soft spoken, but is not shy in responding when questions are being asked. At the beginning of kindergarten, Carmen knew most of her letter names and letter sounds; and she showed traces of understanding that by combining letters one could form words. She was able to hear the beginning or the ending sounds of words and would, therefore, only write the beginning or ending letters of the words. By mid-year, Carmen knew all her letter names and letter sounds and was well on her way to segmenting words in order to write a complete, grammatically correct sentence.

Alex is the older of two siblings. He was extremely shy and would only speak if he could not avoid it. Although Alex’s parents are English dominant, Alex came into kindergarten as Spanish dominant. This is due to the fact that Alex spends most of his time outside of school with his maternal grandmother, who is a Spanish-speaker with
limited English language skills. At the beginning of kindergarten, Alex knew very few letter names or letter sounds. It took Alex most of the year to identify the letter names and the letter sounds. By the end of the school year he was still struggling with word segmentation; and was, therefore, also struggling to write a complete, grammatically correct sentence.

Stella is the oldest of three children. She is quiet and soft spoken, and she will not volunteer to answer questions. At the beginning of kindergarten, Stella knew very few letter names or letter sounds. Because Stella is so quiet, it was difficult to informally observe if she understood the skill that was being taught until she was observed in a small group or an individual setting. It took Stella a little over mid-year to learn her letter names and letter sounds. By the end of kindergarten, Stella was on her way to writing a complete, grammatically correct sentence.

Researcher

I am a Latina in the field of education. I come from a Spanish speaking household. I was once labeled as “one of those students” who spoke very little English. I understood more English than I was able to orally express. Due to my limited proficiency in English, it was difficult to communicate with my teachers and English-only counterparts. I attended an English-only school and I struggled with the curriculum on a daily basis for many years. However, I was fortunate enough to have understanding teachers who went out of their way to assist me as much as possible. My school also had a pull-out program that assisted me in completing my course work and exams by using my primary language, Spanish, whenever possible. I was also given in-depth, meaningful
lessons to develop my skills (both orally and written) in the English language. I am a first generation graduate student and I teach at the site where the present study described above is located. The school runs a Spanish-English dual-language immersion program located in a small town in the greater Northern California region. I completed my student teaching requirement for my credential program at Bear Palace Elementary School and I have been employed as a teacher there for the past four years.

Design of the Study

This qualitative, year-long case study occurred during the 2009-2010 school year at Bear Palace Elementary School. In order not to segregate the participants of this case study from the class as a whole, all the students in the kindergarten classroom received the same writing instruction and assessments in the target language of the dual-immersion program, Spanish.

Procedure

The students were assessed using a district-approved assessment at the beginning of the school year (within a month of the start of the school year) to ascertain a baseline of their knowledge on phonics. The students were assessed on identifying the letter names and the letter sounds of the Spanish alphabet. Once their scores were determined the students were placed in small, flexible homogeneous groups of four to six students. There were five groups in total. Every day one to two small groups were pulled to a kidney table at the back of the classroom in the morning during the same block of time. They were given direct and explicit instruction using the segmentation section of the Estrellitas reading program, small whiteboards with markers and erasers, and alphabet
Two of the research participants, Nelson and Carmen, were placed in the advanced group because of their score on the exam. The results showed that they knew at least twenty of their letter names, but knew less than ten letter sounds. The majority of the time spent in the small group for Nelson and Carmen was focused on letter sound activities. Alex and Stella were placed in the group that needed extra support because of their scores on the exam. The results showed that they knew fewer than two letter names and no letter sounds. The time spent in the small group for Alex and Stella was a combination of activities in identifying letter names and producing the letter sounds.

The classroom writing block was from 2:00 to 2:50 in the afternoon right before the students went home; therefore, there was no conflict with the morning groups. The first six weeks of instruction were half days which means that students were in school from 8:15 in the morning to 12:30 in the afternoon. Once the regular school schedule commenced the students received writing instruction Tuesday through Friday in the afternoon, but not on Monday because the students were dismissed at 1:35 in the afternoon due to staff meetings or grade level collaborations. It is important to clarify that the page layout for the children’s writing was kept consistent through each semester (see appendix C) regardless if the students were writing in their Journals, during their daily writing block, writing their monthly samples, or taking the district assessment. The first

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15 The alphabet tubs are small, plastic tubs which contain items whose names all start with the same letter. The capital and lowercase letters are shown on the lids of each alphabet tub.
official day of writing instruction began on September 29th and it lasted for a week.

During this week the students were given a lesson on the four different stages of writing. In this lesson the students and the teacher discussed which of the four different writing stages students may possibly be in; such as precommunicative (scribbles and/or pictures), prephonetic (scribbles mixed with letters and numbers), phonetic (resembles writing with some legible words), and transitional (writing legible with some words spelled phonetically) (Cecil, 2003). The teacher did not use the technical terms for the four different stages of writing when discussing them with the class as a whole, but instead she used simplified terms that the students could understand.

The teacher sectioned off a thirty by twenty four inch sheet of chart paper into four squares. In each square the teacher described one of the individual stages using child friendly terms. As the teacher went through the four different stages she would number each box to illustrate the order of the stages. She would describe one stage in each square: first she would tell the students what the writing of the stage looked like and then she would show the students what that stage looks like. Finally, the teacher wrote a word under her “writing sample” to describe the writing. For example, for the first stage the teacher wrote scribbles (garabatos in Spanish) underneath the picture she drew. After the first stage the teacher would review the previous stages as a reminder to the students that it was acceptable if they were in one of the previous stages.

It was extremely important for the teacher to take the time to go through the four different writing stages with great detail with the students because once she announced that they would be learning how to write, many of the students displayed a look of fear
and panic on their little faces. The teacher needed to take the time to reassure the students that regardless of which writing stage they were currently in they would all be taught how to write by the teacher. Then the teacher showed the students the sheet of paper they would be using to write. The teacher modeled and explained why it was important that the first thing the students do was to write their name on their sheet of paper. Then the teacher modeled how she would choose her topic using the think aloud strategy and she drew her topic in the box provided on the sheet of paper. The teacher modeled writing about her topic using the lines provided under the drawing box. The teacher encouraged students to do the best they could and to take this opportunity to explore their writing ability.

As the students began their writing endeavor, the teacher placed the chart paper with the different writing stages on the large whiteboard at the front of the classroom so that the students could reference it when, and if, they needed to do so. As the students finished their first writing task the teacher called them to the kidney table at the back of the classroom so that they would dictate to her what they wrote. The teacher would then write what the students dictated at the bottom of the page. This became the students’ first monthly writing sample and a baseline informing the teacher of the students’ writing abilities. For the remainder of the week the students took this time to explore their writing abilities.

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16 A think aloud is a teaching strategy where the teacher models what she/he is thinking in a clear voice so that students understand the process to accomplish a task.
**Journals**

The teacher introduced the students to the journals on September 30th in the morning before the students were dismissed to their table groups. The journals were a part of their morning center rotation; therefore, each table group wrote in their journal once a week for the remainder of the school year. The teacher showed the students the cover of one of the journals and showed them what they would find within their journal: the student’s name on the cover, the title page with the icon of the child writing in a journal and the title: “My writing for the first semester” (*Mi escritura del primer semestre* in Spanish), and the journal pages where the students would write. The teacher flipped back to the first page and told the students that this would be the first page that they would write on and that all the pages were the same (see appendix C). The teacher emphasized that the students would write on only one page each time and that the whole class would be writing in their journal in the morning until the centers began the following week. The teacher also reminded the students of the four different writing stages by pointing out the chart paper on the wall detailing each stage.

Once the students had finished writing in their journals they were to stack them neatly on the kidney table at the back of the classroom. In the beginning the teacher would call the students, individually, to the kidney table at the back of the classroom so that they could dictate what they had written in their journal and the teacher would write it at the bottom of the page. By the third week of center rotation the students would read what they wrote to the teacher. On October 5th the morning center rotation started and the teacher would only call those students who wrote in their journals individually, after she
had finished with her morning literacy groups. This became the routine for the remainder of the school year.

Writing Program

The students were instructed using the 6+1 Trait® Writing program from October 5th through to the end of the school year. Each section of the program took approximately three weeks to complete. Some sections required a longer time frame due to the time allocated for report card assessments, parent-teacher conferences, and school breaks. The writing materials were not published in Spanish; therefore, the teacher translated the materials she used in the lessons, as well as any materials the students used after the lesson. The students’ writing samples were assessed using a modified version of the rubric from the writing program (see appendix D). The rubric was modified to a simpler version because the program is intended for secondary grades, fourth through sixth, and higher. At the end of each quarter the students were only assessed on the traits which they had been instructed on up to that point and they were also given the district benchmark assessment for writing in Spanish. It is important to keep in mind that the program is not a curriculum, that is to say that it does not have a scope and sequence that unfolds from year to year (Culham, 2006). But rather the program is a tool which the teacher may use to assist in her writing instruction.

The first trait taught to the kindergarten students was the trait of ideas. This is an important trait because it sets up the message, or the purpose, for the writing. From October 5th through October 9th and from November 9th through November 20th the class worked on the trait of ideas. The teacher introduced this concept by leading the students
through a brainstorming session on possible ideas which the students could use when writing. On a sheet of chart paper the teacher labeled it “Ideas for writing” (ideas para la escritura in Spanish). Using teaching strategies such as Think-Pair-Share and popsicle sticks with the students’ names the class generated examples of ideas which could be used when writing. The teacher wrote these ideas on the chart paper as bullet points and drew a simple picture as a visual prompt for the students.

After the brainstorming session the teacher located the chart paper with the examples of ideas on a wall where students could reference it if they needed assistance generating an idea to write about. Then the teacher modeled how to use the list to choose an idea to write about using the strategy of a think aloud. The teacher modeled how to draw the idea using as much detail as possible so that she would not forget what she was writing about. Then the teacher modeled what she was going to write using an alphabet sound chart\(^\text{17}\) from the Houghton-Mifflin curriculum that was provided to the students. She pointed out the chart paper with the four different writing stages as a reminder to the students of which writing stage they may be in. When she was finished modeling the writing strategy she handed the students a sheet of paper so that they could practice choosing an idea to write about. She reminded students that they could use one of the ideas on the list they generated earlier or they could choose one of their own.

The expectation was for the students to choose an idea and to attempt to write a complete sentence. In the beginning as the students finished, the teacher would call them

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\(^\text{17}\) Houghton Mifflin provides an alphabet sound chart that shows the animals or objects, or alphafriends, associated with the letters in an attempt in assisting students in remembering what sound the letters make. For example, the letter “Aa” is associated with Andy Apple emphasizing the short a (ă) sound.
to the kidney table at the back of the classroom where they would dictate what they wrote and the teacher would write the dictation at the bottom of the page. By the third day the students would “read”, to the best of their ability and with guidance from the teacher, what they wrote. This process advanced more quickly because it was a daily activity as opposed to a weekly activity like the journals in the morning routine. As time progressed the students were able to write two to three syllable words as well as the high frequency words that the students had learned.

The second trait taught to the kindergarten students was the trait of organization. This is an important trait because it establishes the flow, or sequence, of the writing. From November 30th through December 17th the class worked on the trait of organization. The teacher introduced this concept by showing the students three pictures that showed a child waking up in the morning, brushing her teeth, and going to school. The teacher showed the pictures out of order and told a short story. The teacher guided the class through a discussion of how important organization was when writing and used her short story to emphasize this point. The teacher drew a spider graphic organizer on a sheet of chart paper. She explained to the students that this graphic organizer would assist them in organizing their thoughts before they began to write. She revisited the trait of ideas, and emphasized how important it was to first choose a topic to write about. The teacher modeled how to pick a topic to write about using the think aloud strategy and the list of ideas generated by the students from the brainstorming lesson. Once the topic was

18 A spider graphic organizer is an instructional tool used to organize thoughts. There is a circle in the center of the sheet of paper for the topic. Lines protrude from the circle to write words or phrases that pertain to the topic.
chosen, the teacher modeled how to complete the spider graphic organizer by drawing a picture, writing a word or a phrase on each of the protruding lines coming out of the circle where the topic was written. As the teacher modeled how to fill in the protruding lines she ensued to utilize the resources in the classroom such as the alphabet sound chart, the word wall which contained the high frequency words studied thus far, and the chart papers created within the current lesson and those created in previous lessons. After the lesson it was time for the students to practice this skill.

The third trait taught to the kindergarten students was the trait of voice. This trait conveys to the audience a writer’s unique sense of self through their writing. From January 11th through January 29th the class worked on the trait of voice. The teacher introduced this concept by guiding the students through a modified version of author’s chair. Typically students read their work to the class, but since the teacher was introducing the trait of voice, she wanted to make sure that the students heard a “bland” voice when listening to the writing being read. To keep the author’s identity secret the teacher blocked out the author’s name and chose an earlier writing. This process can be quite lengthy; therefore, the teacher would typically read two or three papers within the writing block.

The teacher drew a spider graphic organizer with six lines protruding from the circle on a sheet of chart paper. In the circle at the center she wrote the word voice. On each of the lines she wrote the words “who?”, “what?”, “when?”, “where?”, “how?”, and “why?” The teacher explained that when writing you must answer these questions in order to add voice to your writing. As the teacher read each sample the students would be
listening to see if the author had answered the questions on the graphic organizer. The students would evaluate the sample by holding up their fingers from one hand. If the student held up a fist it would represent zero and would indicate that there was no voice in the sample, if the student held up one finger it would indicate that the writer answered one of the questions, if the student held up two fingers it would indicate that the writer answered two of the questions, and so forth up to the number six.

The fourth trait taught to the kindergarten students was the trait of word choice. This trait helps the reader visualize what he or she is reading. An author’s choice in words may bring their writing to life by showing the reader what the author is attempting to convey, not just telling them. From February 1st through March 26th the class worked on the trait of word choice. The teacher introduced this concept by having the student close their eyes and visualizing what was happening while she read the book Good Night Moon (Buenas Noches Luna) by Margret Wise Brown. Afterwards the class discussed what they visualized. Then the teacher re-read the book as she showed the students the pictures in the book. After the second reading the class discussed if they were able to visualize what the author was attempting to show them.

The teacher took earlier writing samples from a few students and wrote them on sentence strips. She would take one student’s writing sample at a time, per day. The teacher would then put it in an oversized pocket chart and would emphasize that the writing needs to start with an indentation (sangría in Spanish). The students would choral read the writing sample with the teacher. Then, the teacher would lead a discussion of how to change some words in each sentence in order to enrich the writing. At this point
the teacher guided the class through editing the writing sample and would cut up the sentence strips to take out or “delete” a word and replace it with a “juicier” word. For example, she would “delete” the word big (grande in Spanish) and would replace it with the word gigantic (gigante in Spanish). Afterwards the students would write the paragraph on a sheet of paper.

The fifth trait taught to the kindergarten students was the trait of sentence fluency. This trait focuses on sentence fluency and helps the reader move through the text. The writer does not want the reader to stop to try and figure out what he or she is trying to tell the reader and, therefore, loose the meaning of the text. From April 5th through April 14th the class worked on the trait of sentence fluency. The teacher introduced this concept by using the concept of super sentences. The teacher drew two columns on a piece of chart paper. She labeled the left column “Simple Sentences” and she labeled the right column “Super Sentences”. Then the teacher wrote a simple, but complete sentence on the right column such as “I went for a walk.” The teacher guided the students through a discussion of how they could change this “simple sentence” into a “super sentence” by referring back to the spider graphic organizer for voice. The students needed to evaluate if the author answered the “who?”, “what?”, “when?”, “where?”, “how?”, and “why?” questions.

The teacher took earlier writing samples from a few students and wrote them on sentence strips. She would guide the students through one writing sample at a time, per day. The teacher then put the sentence strips in an oversized pocket chart and would emphasize to the students that the writing needed to be indented (sangria in Spanish).
The teacher had the students Think-Pair-Share with a partner how they could convert the simple sentence into a super sentence. At this point the teacher guided the class through editing the simple sentence “I went for a walk.” by cutting the sentence strip where words needed to be added or words could be changed for “juicier” words. For example, the simple sentence of “I went for a walk.” was converted into the super sentence of “Yesterday, my mom and I went for a long walk to the park.”

The sixth trait taught to the kindergarten students was the trait of conventions. This trait focuses on the mechanics of a sentence. In order not to detract from the meaning of the writing, the author must ensure that his or her sentences are grammatically correct. From April 26th through May 14th the class worked on the trait of conventions. The teacher introduced this concept by revisiting the previous traits as she modeled how to write about a topic. After she was done modeling how to write about a topic using the previous traits she introduced a check-off list (see appendix E) that the students would use to ensure that they checked for capital letters, periods at the end of sentences, spaces between words, and high frequency words spelled correctly in their writing.

The teacher’s check-off list was on a large nine inches by eighteen inches sheet of white construction paper that was laminated for continuous use. The teacher modeled how to use the check-off list as she evaluated her own writing sample. If there was something on the list that the teacher could not check-off, then she would go back to her writing sample to correct it. As the students finished their own writing sample they were
given a smaller, laminated version of the check-off list to use to evaluate their own writing.

The “+1” of the 6+1 Trait® Writing program is the presentation aspect where students are able to practice sharing their writing with others and receive feedback. It is not an essential aspect of the writing program and is, therefore, optional. The teacher used the presentation aspect of the program intermittently throughout the school year, but used it more frequently while teaching the trait of voice. At first the teacher would read a student’s writing sample to the class as a whole, and later in the year the students would read their own writing sample and the teacher would take on more of a facilitator’s role. Due to the fact that this is a kindergarten class the presentations were kept relatively simple. After the writer presented his or her work, the students would complement the writer on something they did well. This was typically followed by something the writer could improve upon. During the presentations the teacher would encourage the students to use the chart paper with the spider graphic organizer for voice: where the students were looking to see if the writer answered the “who?”, “what?”, “when?”, “where?”, “how?”, and “why?” questions.

Assessment Tools

The monthly writing samples were assessed using a modified rubric from the 6+1 Trait® Writing program (see appendix D). However, even though all six traits were listed on the rubric, not all six traits were assessed from the onset of instruction of the writing program. Only the trait or traits which had been introduced up to the time of the
assessment window\textsuperscript{19} for report cards were assessed. The other traits were assessed during a later assessment window after they were introduced to the students. The monthly writing samples were scored solely by the homeroom teacher. The teacher would read the writing sample once through without the rubric, a cold read\textsuperscript{20}, and then she would read the writing sample a second time through with the rubric. The rubric has a numeric scale from one to four; a one is the lowest score and a four is the highest score for each trait. Once more than one trait was assessed the scores were averaged out to obtain the score recorded on the report card.

The first assessment window for report cards was from October 12\textsuperscript{th} through October 30\textsuperscript{th}. The writing samples assessed were written in the month of October and became the writing sample scored and recorded on the report card. The only trait introduced up to this point and, therefore, the only trait assessed was the trait of ideas. Due to the fact that the students’ instruction on how to write had begun approximately a month prior to assessing, the teacher assessed the picture the students drew as their writing idea. The scoring for the trait of ideas was relatively straight forward. If the student scored a one (the lowest score) on the rubric, then they would score a one (below basic or not meeting grade level standards) on the report card; if the student scored a two on the rubric, then they would score a two (basic or meeting most grade level standards).

\textsuperscript{19} Assessment window for report cards is the duration of time in which a teacher assesses the students in his or her classroom in order to determine if they have mastered, somewhat mastered, or need assistance mastering the grade level standards set by the state. These scores are then recorded on each individual student’s report card. This duration of time was typically three weeks.

\textsuperscript{20} A cold read is when the reader reads a piece of writing for the first time.
and if the student scored a three or a four on the rubric, then they would score a three (advanced or meeting grade level standards) on the report card. The journals were not typically assessed, but rather they were used to provide students an uninhibited place where they had the opportunity to explore their growing understanding of the writing process. However, for the purpose of this thesis the interactive journal writing samples were collected the last week of the report card assessment window and assessed using the modified rubric, except they were not recorded on the report cards. The assessment of the journals were utilized more to see if there was any evidence of the writing strategies taught through the 6+1 Trait® Writing Program in the students’ free writing.

The second assessment window for report cards was from February 8th through February 26th. The writing samples assessed were written in the month of February and became the writing sample scored and recorded on the report card. For this assessment window the traits being scored were ideas, organization, and voice. The next trait, word choice, had just been introduced the week before and, therefore, it was not assessed during this time. For the three traits being assessed, the scores were averaged out in order to obtain a whole number score which was recorded on the student’s report card. When the scores were averaged out if the number after the decimal was zero through four the score was rounded down to the nearest whole number, if the number after the decimal was five through nine the score was rounded up to the nearest whole number. The same

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21 The journals were utilized as “free writings” where the students would write about a topic of their choice with little to no assistance from the teacher. Once they had completed their writing they would sit with the teacher on a one-on-one basis. For some students this interaction was more to review of their journal entry, for others it became more of a “conversation” between the student and the teacher.
procedure was followed for the writing samples from the Journals which were taken from the journal the last week of the assessment window.

The third assessment window for report cards was from May 17\textsuperscript{th} through June 4\textsuperscript{th}. The writing samples assessed were written in the month of May and became the writing sample scored and recorded on the report card. Due to the fact that all the traits had been taught up to this point they were all scored on the modified rubric. The scores were averaged out in order to obtain a whole number score which was recorded on the student’s report card. When the scores were averaged out if the number after the decimal was zero through four the score was rounded down to the nearest whole number, if the number after the decimal was five through nine the score was rounded up to the nearest whole number. The same procedure was followed for the writing samples from the journals which were taken from the journal the last week of the assessment window.
Chapter 4
DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

This study examined the writing development of four Spanish-speaking kindergarten students, in their native language of Spanish, over an eleven month period in an attempt to discuss the effectiveness of the 6+1 Trait® Writing program. Specifically, this study looked for evidence of the programs’ writing strategies in the students’ monthly writing samples and journals. This chapter presents the analysis of the writing samples collected throughout the eleven months of this study. The rubric utilized to evaluate the writing samples is a modified rubric from the 6+1 Trait® Writing program (Appendix D). The rubric has a scale of one to four: a score of one indicates that the student is experimenting with how the trait or traits are incorporated within their writing; a score of two indicates that the student is emerging, or starting to make the connection of how the trait or traits are incorporated within their writing; a score of three indicates that the student is developing a clearer understanding of how to incorporate the trait or traits in their writing; and a score of four indicates that the child understands how to effectively incorporate the trait or traits within their writing.

When compared to Cecil’s (2003) descriptions of the developmental stages, the rubric’s categories would align as follows: (1) experimental would be categorized as precommunicative, which means that the student is using scribbles and/or pictures to attempt to communicate what they have “written”; (2) emergent would be categorized as prephonetic, which means that the student is using letter strings with possibly some
numbers to attempt to communicate what they have “written”; (3) developmental would be categorized as phonetic, which means that the student is attempting to write words as they sound (or phonetically) but may only correctly spell the high frequency words they have been taught in an attempt to communicate what they have “written”; and (4) capable would be categorized as transitional, which means that the student is able to spell words correctly except for unfamiliar words which they spell phonetically.

*Trimester 1 (September 29, 2009 – October 30, 2009)*

This first section will present the analysis of writing samples from the onset of the writing instruction, in late September, through to the time frame utilized to assess the students for the first report card. It is vital to remember that the students in this study are in kindergarten, which means that they are four- and five-year old children, and to reiterate that when the writing instruction commenced this was the first exposure to writing for most of the students. It is also vital to remember that the first six weeks of instruction were half days where the students were excused from school at twelve noon; therefore, there was no writing instruction established as of yet. It is also important to take into account that it was essential to establish classroom procedures and routines during these first six weeks of school before official instruction could begin, which includes writing instruction.

*Ideas*

In writing, the trait of *ideas* is intended to convey the main message to the reader. The writer is encouraged to “show”, or form an image in the reader’s mind, instead of “telling” the reader what the author’s main message is. Due to the time frame, during
Trimester 1 the trait of *ideas* was the only trait taught, therefore, it was the only trait which was assessed. Also due to the time constraint there was two monthly writing samples collected and assessed before the writing sample used for report cards was collected and assessed. Therefore, the picture the students drew before “writing” was taken into consideration when scoring each writing samples. The journal writing samples were used as a formative assessment.

*Journal Writing Samples*

Nelson’s writing scores suggest that he was able to transition some of the writing strategies from the 6+1 Trait® Writing program to his journals entries early on. Nelson consistently scored a two (emergent writer) on the writing rubric, which indicated that he was emerging in his ability to show his readers the main message of his writings, but still needed practice in creating a clear vision of his message. Carmen’s writing scores suggest that at the beginning of the writing instruction she was attempting to maneuver through the writing strategies taught in the program, but was unable to transition these writing strategies from an instructional context to her journal entries. Carmen consistently scored a one (experimental writer) on the writing rubric, which suggests that there was little to no evidence of the writing strategies to her journals. However, towards the end of the trimester, Carmen’s writing scores progressed to a score of two (emergent writer) on her last journal entry, which implies that there was some evidence of transitioning the writing strategies to her journal entry.

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22 A formative assessment is typically used throughout a unit of study as a diagnostic tool. Formative assessments are used to gage student learning and provide feedback on students’ work.
Alex’s writing scores suggest that he was unable to transfer the writing strategies from the 6+1 Trait® Writing program to his journal entries. Alex consistently scored a one (experimental writer) on the rubric which indicates that there was little to no evidence of the writing strategies in his journal entries. There was one journal entry where Alex scored a two (emergent writer) suggesting that he may be in the early stages of transitioning the writing strategies to his journal entries; however, Alex regressed to a score of one (experimental writer) on the remainder journal entries. These findings suggest that Alex was unsuccessful in transitioning the writing strategies from an instructional context to his journals. Stella’s writing scores suggest that she was also unable to transition the writing strategies from the program to her journal entries. Stella consistently scored a one (experimental writer) on the rubric, which indicates that there was little to no evidence of the writing strategies in any of her journal entries.

**Monthly Writing Samples**

Due to the time frame there were only two monthly writing samples assessed for Trimester 1. The monthly writing samples were used as a summative assessment23. Nelson’s monthly writing scores in the months of September and October were consistent with those of his journals. Nelson scored a two (emergent writer) on both monthly writing samples, which shows that there was evidence of the writing strategies from the 6+1 Trait® Writing program. Moreover, the consistency in Nelson’s writing scores indicate that he did not progress in developing his main message to his readers, and his

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23 A summative assessment is typically used at the end of a unit of study as an evaluative tool. Summative assessments are used to assign students a unit or assignment grade.
progress remained stagnant. Carmen’s monthly writing scores indicate that there was some evidence of the writing strategies from the 6+1 Trait® Writing program in her writing. Carmen’s first monthly writing sample would support this finding, except that her next (journal) writing sample showed that her writing score regressed to a one (experimental writer). By the end of the semester, Carmen’s scored suggest that she had successfully transitioned some of the writing strategies from an instructional context to her writings.

Alex’s monthly writing scores indicated that there was little to no evidence of the writing strategies from the 6+1 Trait® Writing program in his writing samples. The findings suggest that Alex was not able to transition the writing strategies from an instructional context to his monthly writings. Stella’s monthly writing scores indicate that there was some evidence of transitioning the writing strategies from the program in her first monthly writing sample. This finding would support that Stella was able to transition the writing strategies from an instructional context to her own writings; however, her second monthly writing sample shows a regression in her score suggesting the transition was unsuccessful. Alex and Stella’s scores are indicative that they both may require intensive intervention strategies which would afford them more time and practice with the writing strategies on the concept of ideas.

**Overview of Trimester 1**

It is not surprising that the scores for Trimester 1 were low on the writing rubric. This could be explained by the fact that Nelson, Carmen, Alex, and Stella may have not been exposed to formal writing instruction before this time. They needed to begin to lay a
concrete foundation (Nieto, 2004) before they would be able to transfer the writing strategies from the 6+1 Trait® Writing program from an instructional context to their own writings. Part of the process of laying this concrete foundation is in understanding that words can be made up by combining letter sounds (Culatta, Reese, & Setzer, 2006). The connection between letters, letter sounds, and combining the letter sounds to form words is called the alphabetic principle (Cecil, 2003) and is a process which may take time to decipher. This could be a factor as to why there was little to no change in the participants’ writing development between the journal entries and the monthly writings.

Another factor that may have contributed to the low writing scores could have been associated with Krashen’s (1981) Affective Filter hypothesis. Nelson’s, Carmen’s, Alex’s, and Stephanie’s affective filter, or anxiety level, may have been high when all of the information (or the building blocks needed to lay their foundation such as acquiring letter names and letter sounds, phonemic awareness strategies, the alphabetic principle, and the writing strategies from the program) was being received. Therefore, they may have understood how the information, or building blocks, fit in the context it was being introduced; however, they were unable to completely transfer the information from the instructional context to their journal entries.

Trimester 2 (October 5, 2010 – February 26, 2010)

This second section will present the analysis of writing samples from the beginning of Trimester 2 through to the end of Trimester 2. During this period of time the traits of ideas, organization, voice, and word choice were taught and assessed using the modified writing rubric from the 6+1 Trait® Writing program.
Ideas

The trait of Ideas is intended to convey the main message of the writing to the reader. The trait of ideas was the trait which the students had the most exposure to thus far.

Journal Writing Samples

During Trimester 2, Nelson’s journal writing scores for the trait of ideas reflect his writing scores from Trimester 1, which indicated that he was still attempting to maneuver through the trait of ideas. One factor for the lack of progress on this trait could be the introduction of more traits. Nelson’s scored a two (emergent writer) on all his journal entries for this semester. This suggests that Nelson had been unable to convey his main idea for his writing to his readers with more clarity; therefore, his scores remained stagnant. For example, in one of his journal entries Nelson wrote: Yo fui afuera para camina (I went outside to walk.) Although Nelson wrote he went outside to walk, he did not tell where he walked (i.e., in his front yard, at the park, to a friend’s house). It was not until the last journal entry where Nelson’s writing score regressed to a one (experimental writer). For this last journal entry Nelson regressed to write letter strings with some recognizable words such as “yo”, “es” and “la” (“my”, “is”, and “the”). Carmen’s journal writing scores showed that her progression from the end of Trimester 1 was not coincidental. Carmen continued to score a two (emergent writer) throughout the first half of Trimester 2. The findings indicate that Carmen had steadily been able to transfer the writing strategies from an instructional context to her journal writings. Approximately two weeks before the third monthly writing sample, Carmen’s writing scores progressed
to a score of three (developmental writer). The findings for the second half of Trimester 2 show a progression in Carmen’s ability to convey a clearer idea of her written message to her reader. For example, in one of her journal entries in January, Carmen wrote “Me gusta jugar con mis amigas“ (I like to play with my friends). This journal entry received a score of three, instead of a four, because Carmen did not write what she liked to play with her friend; therefore, her idea was not “narrow and focused” as per the writing rubric.

During Trimester 2, Alex’s journal writing scores for the trait of ideas remained consistent from Trimester 1. The findings for the first part of the trimester indicate that Alex was still in the process of negotiating how to convey a clearer message of his written meaning to his reader. It was not until after the long winter break, which possibly allotted Alex time to process the information he had received thus far, where Alex’s writing scores progressed and stabilized at a score of two (emergent writer). In one journal entry Alex wrote “Yo (ilegible) mis amigos en el parque” (I (unreadable) with my friends at the park). This indicates that after the winter break Alex was able to transfer the writing strategies from an instructional context to his journal entries because there was some evidence of the writing strategies within his journal entries. Stella’s journal writing scores for the trait of ideas fluctuated from scoring as an experimental writer to an emergent writer. At times Stella would revert to writing letter strings and the reader would need her interpretation of what she wrote as they referenced her drawing. At other times Stella wrote a complete sentence which would convey an idea that was not fully developed such as “Me gusta ver el sol” (I like to see the sun). These findings indicate that Stella is negotiating through how to transfer the writing strategies taught through the
6+1 Trait® Writing program to her journal entries; however, she was not able to successfully transfer these strategies from an informational context to her journal entries with consistency.

Monthly Writing Samples

Nelson’s monthly writing scores in the months of November, December, January, and February mirror those of his journal entries for Trimester 2, except for his second journal entry where his score regressed from a two (emergent writer) to a one (experimental writer). For this monthly writing sample Nelson was supposed to write a letter to one of his parents thanking them for something. Nelson repeatedly wrote the salutation, at times changing the name from dad to mom to grandma. It seems as though Nelson was attempting to thank his family, but ran out of space to write before he could get to his main message. The findings suggest that Nelson was still negotiating how to convey his written message clearly. This could be contributed to the anticipation of the long winter break. Carmen’s monthly writing scores mirror her journal scores for the first half of Trimester 2. Carmen progressed from an emergent writer to a developing writer by the end of Trimester 2. The findings suggest that there was evidence in her writings that Carmen had been able to successfully transfer the writing strategies from an instructional context to her writing. Carmen had been able to convey a clear written message to her reader through the trait of ideas.

Alex’s monthly writing scores consistently categorized him as an experimental writer, which indicates that he was unable to clearly convey the main idea for his writings to his reader. The findings suggest that Alex was still negotiating how to convey a clear
message of his writings to his reader. However, after the long winter break Alex’s scores progressed to a two (emergent writer), which mirrors the progression of his journal entries. The findings suggest that Alex had been able, in part, to transfer the writing strategies from an instructional context to his writings. Stella’s monthly writing scores did not mirror her journal scores in fluctuation; on the contrary, she consistently scored as an experimental writer for her monthly writing samples. These finding suggest that Stella was unable to transfer the writing strategies for the trait of ideas from an instructional context to her writings and may need intervention to allot her more time and practice with these strategies.

Organization

In writing, the trait of organization is the internal structure of the writing. The writer must organize his/her writing in a pattern and sequence which makes sense to the reader, so long as it fits the main idea of the writing. Students were introduced to a graphic organizer, the flat spider, which was intended to assist them in organizing their thoughts before beginning to write. The trait of organization was introduced on November 30, 2009 and continued through to December 17, 2009.

Journal Writing Sample

The writing scores for the journal entries indicate that all four participants (Nelson, Carmen, Alex, and Stella) were unsuccessful in deciphering the graphic organizer to aid them in organizing their writings in a pattern and sequence which made sense. The only participant who initially showed a slight ability to transfer the information from his graphic organizer to his writings was Nelson. In the beginning,
Nelson’s journal entries scored a 1.5, which indicates that he was in between an experimental writer and an emergent writer; however, his scores regressed to that of an experimental writer early on. This suggests that all the participants were unable to transfer the writing strategies from an instructional context to their writings. For instance, Nelson wrote, “Me gusto. Me gusto ir a caminar” (I like. I like to go for a walk).

**Monthly Writing Samples**

In writing, the writing scores for the monthly writing samples in the months of November, December, January, and February mirrored those of the journal entries for all four participants (Nelson, Carmen, Alex, and Stella). This means that the writing scores for the monthly writing samples corroborate that the participants were unable to transfer the writing strategies using the graphic organizer from the instructional context to their writings. These findings suggest that all four participants required additional time to practice the trait of *organization*. For example, Alex wrote, “Yo vivo en Woodland. Woodland.” (I live in Woodland. Woodland.).

**Voice**

In writing, the trait of *voice* is the writer coming through the words they chose for their writing. This is where the author conveys the message that a real person is speaking to the reader. The writer imparts their personal tone which makes the writing unmistakably theirs. The trait of *voice* was introduced on January 11, 2010 and continued through to January 29, 2010.
Journal Writing Samples

Nelson and Carmen scored a two (emergent writers) on the writing rubric for their journal entries, which indicated that their voice was beginning to come through in their writing. Although Nelson’s and Carmen’s personality did not completely come through their writing, their scores suggest that they were able to transfer the writing strategies used for the trait of voice from an instructional context to their journal entries by giving the reader a glimpse of their personality within their writings. In one journal entry Nelson wrote “Yo jugué con Albert fútbol” (I like to play soccer with Albert). Nelson gives his reader a glimpse of one of his favorite afterschool activities and his drawing shows him smiling as he plays with his friend, but Nelson does not elaborate on his emotions as to why he enjoys playing soccer.

On the other hand, Alex’s first writing score in his journal entry indicated that he was unsuccessful in transferring the writing strategies used for the trait of voice from an instructional context to his writings, until halfway through Trimester 2. Alex progressed from scoring as an experimental writer to an emerging writer. The findings suggest that toward the end of Trimester 2, Alex was able to transfer some of the writing strategies to his own writing. In one journal entry Alex wrote “Estoy jugando Nintendo” (I am playing Nintendo) giving the reader a glimpse of something he enjoys doing. However, prior to these journal entries Alex would write letter strings with some discernable words. These words were typically the high frequency words studied in class such as “yo”, “gusta” and “en” (“me”, “like”, and “in”). In contrast, Stella’s writing scores fluctuated between scoring as an experimental writer and an emergent writer in the trait of voice. The
findings suggest that Stella was in the process of negotiating how to transfer the writings strategies from the 6+1 Trait® Writing program to her own writings.

Word Choice

In writing, the trait of word choice is the use of rich, academic language that communicates not only in a functional way, but moves and enlightens the reader. Strong word choice is characterized by the skill of using language well in one’s writing. The trait of word choice was introduced on February 1, 2010 and continued to February 5, 2010. There was a break in instruction for this trait to allot for report card assessment, parent-teacher conferences, and spring break. Instruction in this trait continued from March 8, 2010 to March 19, 2010.

Journal Writing Samples

It is important to note that due to the fact that this trait was introduced right before the end of Trimester 2; only one journal entry was assessed using the modified rubric from the 6+1 Trait® Writing program. Nelson’s, Alex’s, and Stella’s writing scores indicate that their use of vocabulary in their writing sample was limited and did not capture the reader’s attention. Nelson, Alex, and Stella consistently repeated the same sentence patterns such as “Me gusta” and “Yo fui” (“I like” and “I went”) and did not deviate. The findings indicate that all three participants were unable to transfer the writing strategies for this trait from an instructional context to their journal entries. The findings suggest that Nelson, Alex, and Stella required more time to negotiate through the trait of word choice. Carmen was the only participant who scored as an emerging writer for this trait, which indicates that there was evidence that she was able to transfer some of
the writing strategies from the program to her writing. This is not surprising considering that this was the last trait introduced before the end of Trimester 2; therefore, it is logical to surmise that Nelson, Alex, and Stella needed more time to negotiate through this trait.

*Monthly Writing Samples*

As previously discussed the trait of *word choice* was introduced in the months of January and February, right before the end of Trimester 2 and thus only one monthly writing sample was assessed using the modified rubric from the 6+1 Trait® Writing program. The writing scores of Nelson and Carmen showed progression from an experimental writer to an emergent writer, which suggests that there was some evidence of the writing strategies from the program in their writing. However, since there was only one monthly writing sample assessed before the end of Trimester 2 it was difficult to ascertain if the progress shown by Nelson and Carmen was due to the fact that they were starting to comprehend how to use vocabulary to capture their reader’s attention or if they were negotiating how to transfer the writing strategies from the 6+1 Trait® Writing program to their writings.

Alex and Stella showed no progression in their writing scores which suggests that their use of vocabulary was limited and that they did not capture their reader’s attention. One factor could be attributed to the limited time which they had to negotiate how to transfer these writing strategies from an instructional context to their writings.

There may have been stressors which could have contributed to this regression (Krashen, 1981) such as the anxiety of incorporating all the traits (*organization, voice,*...
and word choice) which had been introduced up to that point into his writings and being anxious to start the long break which began at the end of the day.

**Overview of Trimester 2**

By the end of Trimester 2, Nelson, Carmen, Alex, and Stella were attempting to maneuver through the process of acquiring their primary language in an order to establish a concrete foundation (Nieto, 2004); which will, in the future, aid them in acquiring proficiency in English. However, much like every new concept introduced in an academic setting time is essential to give students the opportunity to hone their skills (McCarthey, 2008). Young writers such as Nelson, Carmen, Alex, and Stella need to be allotted the opportunity to practice the skills they are acquiring in order to successfully navigate through the process of understanding how to utilize language to communicate their ideas. The journal entries and the monthly writing samples provided similar information on the students’ writing development.

**Trimester 3 (March 8 – June 4, 2010)**

This third section will present the analysis of writing samples from the beginning of Trimester 3 through the end of the academic school year in June. During this period of time all of the traits (ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency and conventions) were taught and assessed using a modified rubric from the 6+1 Trait® Writing program. The trait of word choice continued to be studied at the beginning of Trimester 3. There was a break after the introductory week because of report card assessments, parent-teacher conferences, and spring break. The traits of sentence fluency and conventions were introduced during this last trimester.
Ideas

The trait of ideas is intended for the author to convey the main message of their writing.

Journal Writing Samples

Since the onset of the writing instruction Nelson consistently scored as an emergent writer in the trait of ideas. This indicates that there has been little evidence of the writing strategies from the 6+1 Trait® Writing program in his writings. Nelson had not been able to clearly convey the main message of his writing to his reader. It was not until the latter part of Trimester 3 that Nelson progressed to a developing writer in the trait of ideas, which suggests that Nelson had developed the main message of his writing.

At the end of Trimester 3, Carmen was scoring as a developing writer in the trait of ideas; however, her writing scores regressed from a developing writer to an emergent writer. This indicates that Carmen was not transferring the writing strategies for this trait as she was at the end of Trimester 2.

At the end of Trimester 2, Alex’s writing scores were as an emergent writer, which means that there was evidence of his main message to the reader. However, at the beginning of Trimester 3, Alex’s writing scores regressed to that of an experimental writer. It was not until the middle of Trimester 3 where Alex progressed as an emergent writer. This indicates that he was once again transferring the writing strategies from the program to his journal entries. By the end of Trimester 3, Alex’s writing score further progressed to a developing writer. This means that Alex was able to develop and communicate his main message to his reader. Stella’s writing scores for the trait of ideas
fluctuated from the beginning. In some journal entries Stella would write a sentence such as “Me gusta colorear (palabras ilegibles) (I like to color (indiscernible words)). It was apparent that Stella was attempting to communicate what she liked to color, but without her input it would be difficult to interpret her meaning. This suggests that Stella is still attempting to negotiate the strategies for this trait and that at times there were some evidence of the writing strategies in her writing; however, this evidence was not consistent enough to conclude that Stella is able to convey a clear message to her reader.

Monthly Writing Samples

Nelson’s and Carmen’s monthly writing scores in the months of March, April, and May show a progression from emergent writer to developing writer, which mirrors their journal scores. This suggests that Nelson and Carmen were able to convey a clear main message to their reader while transferring the writing strategies from a learning context to their writings. For example, Carmen wrote “Me gusta bailar” (I like to dance). Alex’s monthly writing scores also mirrored the regression and then progression from his journal scores. This suggests that there was little to no evidence of the writing strategy of the trait of ideas from the 6+1 Trait® Writing program in his monthly writing samples at the beginning of Trimester 3; however, the evidence became more evident as the semester continued. By the end of the trimester Alex showed that he was able to develop a clear main idea for his reader. Stella’s monthly writing scores mirrored her journal scores in fluctuation. Her scores regressed indicating that she was not able to clearly convey her main message to her readers using the writing strategies from the program. The last monthly writing score shows that Stella progressed as an emergent writer, which
indicates that she was using the writing strategies from the program. However, due to the fluctuations in her scores throughout the year it is difficult to conclude that Stella had developed a concrete foundation (Nieto, 2004) in the trait of ideas.

Organization

The trait of organization is the internal structure of the writing. The writer must organize their writing in a pattern and sequence, which makes sense to the reader, so long as it fits the main idea of the writing.

Journal Writing Samples

The writing scores for the journal entries for all four participants (Nelson, Carmen, Alex, and Stella) indicated that they were unsuccessful in deciphering the graphic organizer to aid them in organizing their writing in a pattern and sequence which made sense. For instance, Carmen wrote, “Yo quiero para mis regalos (palabras ilegibles) con pinturas. Y cuando porque me gusta mucho pintar. (For my presents I want (unreadable words) with paints. And when because I like to paint a lot.). In Trimester 2, Nelson was the only participant who fluctuated between scoring as an experimental writer and emergent writer. In Trimester 3, Nelson’s scores regressed to scoring as an experimental writer. Carmen was the only participant in Trimester 3 who fluctuated between scoring as an experimental writer and an emergent writer. Alex’s and Stella’s journal entries consistently scored as emergent writers on the trait of organization. This suggests that all four participants were unable to transfer the writing strategies from an instructional context to their writings.
Monthly Writing Samples

The monthly writing scores in the months of March, April, and May mirrored those of the journal writings. This means that the writing scores for the monthly writing samples corroborate that the participants were unable to transfer the writing strategies from the 6+1 Trait® Writing program using the graphic organizer from the instructional context to their writings.

Voice

The trait of voice is the writer coming through the words they chose for their writing. This is where the author conveys the message that a real person is speaking to the reader. The writer imparts their personal tone which makes the writing unmistakably theirs.

Journal Writing Samples

Overall, Nelson’s and Carmen’s writings scored as an emergent writer which indicates that their voice, or personality, started to emerge from their words. This suggests that there was evidence of Nelson and Carmen transferring the writing strategies from the program to their writings. For example, Nelson wrote, “Me gusta caballos” (I like horses). On the other hand, Alex’s and Stella’s writings scored as an experimental writer indicating that there was little to no evidence of their voice coming through their words at the beginning of Trimester 3. Alex wrote, “Me gusta leer” (I like to read). By the end of Trimester 3, Alex’s and Stella’s writing scores indicated that their voice started to emerge from their words.
**Monthly Writing Samples**

Nelson’s writing scores March, April, and May show that he regressed from Trimester 2 from an emergent writer to an experimental writer. However, his scores progressed back to an emergent writer by the end of Trimester 3. This suggests that Nelson was negotiating how to bring his voice forth through his words. Carmen’s writing scores mirrored her journal scores which indicated that there was some evidence of her voice emerging from the strategies used in the writing program in the words she used in her writings.

Alex’s and Stella’s writing scores began as experimental writers, which indicated that there was little or no evidence of their voice coming through their words. However, by the end of Trimester 3, both Alex and Stella progressed in their writings to score as emergent writers, which indicated that there was evidence of their voices coming through their writings using the strategies from the writing program.

**Word Choice**

The trait of *word choice* is the use of rich, academic language that communicates not only in a functional way, but moves and enlightens the reader. Strong word choice is characterized by the skill of using language well in one’s writing.

**Journal Writing Samples**

Nelson’s and Carmen’s writing scores for the trait of *word choice* fluctuated between an experimental writer and emergent writer in the beginning indicating that they used limited vocabulary which did not capture the reader’s attention; however, by the end of the trimester their scores stabilized and progressed to an emergent writer which
indicates that they commenced to capture the reader’s attention. At times Nelson and Carmen would use the same sentence pattern of “Me gusta” or “Yo fui” (“I like” or “I went”), however, at other times they would use complex sentences such as “Yo hice un campo con mi mamá y me encontré un perrito perdido y el fin” (I made a picnic with my mom and I found a lost dog and the end). These findings suggest that they were negotiating how to use the strategies from the program to choose richer, academic language for their writings.

Alex’s writing scores indicate that he was using limited vocabulary, which would not capture his reader’s attention in his writings at the beginning of the trimester, but by the end of the trimester Alex used vocabulary which commences to capture the reader’s attention. These findings suggest that there is evidence that Alex is using some of the strategies from the program in his writings. For most of the trimester Alex consistently used the same sentence patterns such as “Me gusta”, “Yo fui” and “Yo tengo” (“I like”, “I went” and “I have”); however, by the end of the semester Alex was using sentences such as “En kinder me gusto hacer educación física” (In kinder I enjoyed doing physical education). In contrast, Stella’s writing scores indicate that she used limited vocabulary which would not capture her reader’s attention in her writings throughout the trimester. Stella consistently used the same sentence frame (“Me gusta” or “I like”) throughout her writing. These findings suggest that there is little to no evidence that Stella is using the strategies from the program in her writings.
Monthly Writing Samples

Nelson’s, Carmen’s, and Alex’s monthly writing scores in the months of March, April, and May mirrored their journal scores, which indicated that they were using limited vocabulary in their writings which would not capture their reader’s attention at the beginning of the trimester. By the end of the trimester all three’s writing scores progressed to show that they commenced to use vocabulary in their writings which may capture their reader’s attention. These findings suggest that there was evidence that Nelson, Carmen, and Alex use some of the strategies from the 6+1 Trait® Writing program in their writing. In contrast, Stella consistently used limited vocabulary in her writings which would not capture her reader’s attention. This suggests that there is little to no evidence that Stella used strategies from the program in her writings. For instance, Stella wrote, “Me gusta el arcoíris” (I like the rainbow).

Sentence Fluency

In writing, the trait of sentence fluency is the rhythm and flow of the language in one’s writing. When looking at sentence fluency, one must ask oneself: how does it sound when read aloud? The trait of sentence fluency was the second to last trait which was introduced on April 5, 2010 and continued through to April 23, 2010.

Journal Writing Samples

Nelson’s writing scores in the trait of sentence fluency indicated that there was structure in the sentences he wrote; however, there was no variety in the sentences which could interrupt the rhythm and flow of his writings. For example, Nelson wrote, “Me gusta jugar fútbol” (I like to play soccer). Carmen’s and Alex’s scores indicated that
there was little to no structure to their sentences in the beginning, but they progressed to having a structure towards the end. In the beginning, Carmen and Alex wrote sentences that lacked some structure. For example, in one of her journal entries Carmen wrote “*Yo fui al I me pintar*” (I went to the and I paint). It is clear that Carmen was attempting to communicate that she went somewhere to paint, but her meaning was lost in the lack of structure of her sentence. Their sentences had little to no variety which could interrupt the rhythm and flow of her writings. Stella’s sentences had little to no variety in her writings throughout the trimester, which interrupted the rhythm and flow of her writings. The findings suggested that by the end of the trimester, there was evidence that Nelson, Carmen, and Alex utilized strategies from the program in their writings; however, there was little to no evidence that Stella utilized strategies from the writing program in her writings.

*Monthly Writing Samples*

The participant’s monthly scores in the months of April and May mirrored those of their journal entries. Nelson’s, Carmen’s, and Stella’s scores suggested that there was little to no evidence of them using the strategies from the program at the beginning of the trimester; however, by the end of the trimester there was evidence that some of the strategies were being transferred to their writings. Stella’s monthly scores suggest that there was little to no evidence of her transferring the strategies from the writing program to her writings. Because Stella did not deviate from the sentence pattern she used “*Me gusta*” (“I like”), there was no flow to her writing and it was unlikely that she would
capture her reader’s attention or interest. For example, Stella wrote, “Me gusta jugar con mis hermanitas” (I like to play with my little sisters).

Conventions

In writing, the trait of conventions is the mechanics of writing: spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar. The trait of conventions was the last trait which was introduced on April 26, 2010 and continued through to May 14, 2010.

Journal Writing Samples

Nelson’s, Carmen’s, Alex’s, and Stella’s journal scores indicated that there were some grammar errors such as spelling, capitalization, spacing, and punctuation, which could have needed the writer’s interpretation to understand what was written. The findings suggest that there is evidence of Nelson, Carmen, Alex, and Stella utilizing strategies from the program in their writings. For example, Stella wrote, “En kinder me gusto megusto serlaspalabras.” (In kinder I liked I liked doing the words). In this example Stella’s message could have been lost to the reader due to some convention errors such as grouping words together. Because Stella wrote the words as “serlaspalabras” (doing the words) instead of separating the words with spaces so that it looks like “ser las palabras” (doing the words), the reader may need her interpretation to understand what she wrote. In this case she was attempting to communicate that she enjoyed going to the center where she was able write the high frequency words on the small whiteboards. This was typically the center she chose when she had completed her work in class.
Monthly Writing Samples

Nelson’s, Carmen’s, Alex’s, and Stella’s monthly scores in the month of May mirrored that of their journal scores, which indicated that there were some grammar errors which could have needed the writer’s interpretation to understand what was written. By the end of the trimester, Carmen’s and Alex’s scores show that they were close to progressing to being capable writers. The findings suggest that there is evidence that the participants are utilizing the strategies from the 6+1 Trait® Writing program. The findings also suggest that Carmen and Alex are progressing in their writing by having less spelling, capitalization, and punctuation errors which could interfere with understanding their writing.

Overview of Trimester 3

Nelson’s, Carmen’s, Alex’s, and Stella’s progression through the different traits of the 6+1 Trait® Writing program lasted through one academic school year. During this time they were not only learning to maneuver through the strategies within the program to help them become good writers, they were also learning other aspects of writing which would aid them in becoming good writers. Nelson, Carmen, Alex, and Stella also incorporated phonemic awareness strategies, such as word segmentation or spelling, which are an essential skills for writers (Lindholm-Leary & Genesee, 2010). They also negotiated through language-specific skills (Hélène Deacon, Wade-Woolley, & Kirby, 2009) such as accents, when to use the silent \( h \), etc.
Conclusion

Navigating through the process of learning to write is not an easy task, especially for writers as young as four- and five-year old kindergarten students. It is important to consider the age of the student. If the student is not developmentally ready to receive the information introduced, then they will be unable to process and apply said information. When a student’s affective filter, or anxiety level, is high they may understand how to utilize a strategy in an instructional context. However, when asked to utilize that strategy on their own, such as in a journal entry, the student may not be able to retrieve the information he or she needs to transfer that knowledge (Krashen, 1981). Therefore, it is essential to establish a concrete foundation (Nieto, 2004) which the students may access (i.e., prior knowledge) to aid them in understanding how to apply the new information being introduced.

Table 1 Average Scores: Trimester 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ideas</th>
<th>Average Journal</th>
<th>Average Monthly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nelson</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmen</td>
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<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stella</td>
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Table 2 Average Scores: Trimester 2

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<tr>
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<th>Average Monthly</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>Stella</td>
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Table 3 Average Scores: Trimester 2

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<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stella</td>
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<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 4 Average Scores: Trimester 2

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</thead>
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<td>Carmen</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
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<td>Stella</td>
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Table 5 Average Scores: Trimester 2

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</thead>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmen</td>
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<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
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<td>Stella</td>
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Table 6 Average Scores: Trimester 3

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</thead>
<tbody>
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Table 7 Average Scores: Trimester 3

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<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
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<td>Stella</td>
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Table 8 Average Scores: Trimester 3

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Table 9 Average Scores: Trimester 3

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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
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<td>Stella</td>
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Table 10 Average Scores: Trimester 3

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<td>Carmen</td>
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<td>1.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
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<td>Stella</td>
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Table 11 Average Scores: Trimester 3

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<td>Carmen</td>
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<td>Alex</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stella</td>
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Chapter 5

OVERVIEW, DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this study was to determine if the 6+1 Trait® Writing program was an effective tool in aiding four Spanish-speaking Latino/a students in becoming good writers. The goal was to ascertain if there was evidence of the writing strategies from the program within the participants’ journal entries and monthly writing samples.

In this chapter, I discuss major findings in relation to the research questions. Secondly, I provide recommendations for future studies on instruction in primary writing through the 6+1 Trait® Writing program in a dual-language bilingual program. Lastly, I offer final thoughts on bilingual education and primary language writing.

Discussion

The analysis of the data found that there was evidence of strategies from the 6+1 Trait® Writing program in the participants’ writing samples. The writing samples were from journal entries and monthly writing samples, which were collected in Trimester 1, Trimester 2, and Trimester 3. A modified rubric from the program was utilized to assess the writing samples. Only the trait or traits that had been introduced prior to and within the trimester were assessed. Ultimately all six traits (ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions) were assessed by the end of Trimester 3.

Trimester 1 (September 29, 2009 – October 30, 2009)

The trait of ideas was the only trait introduced and, therefore, the only trait assessed in Trimester 1. Trends indicate all of the participants were in the process of
negotiating how to transfer the writing strategies from the program in an instructional context to their own writings. One participant, Nelson, was semi-successful in transferring the trait of ideas from an instructional context to his writings. He consistently scored a 2 (emergent writer) on the writing rubric. Another participant, Carmen, scored a 1 (experimental writer) at the beginning of the assessments; however, she progressed to a score of 2 (experimental writer) by the end of the trimester. The remaining two participants (Alex and Stella) were not as successful. Alex’s and Stella’s scores fluctuated between a 1 (experimental writer) and a 2 (emergent writer). Overall, Alex and Stella predominantly scored as experimental writers. Some factors that could have contributed to the scores were that the writing instruction commenced late in the trimester, which did not afford the participants sufficient time to practice the skill of transferring the writing strategies to their writings. Due to this factor, the students’ affective filter, or anxiety level, (Krashen, 1981) could have been high, which interfered with the transfer from an instructional context to real world application in their writings.

Trimester 2 (October 5, 2010 – February 26, 2010)

The traits were continuously revisited as new traits were being introduced, which increased the exposure of the participants to the trait or traits, and afforded them more time to negotiate through the trait. Most of the participants made steady progress of showing some evidence of the strategies from the program in their writings. The trait of organization proved to be the most troublesome for the participants, as indicated by their writing scores. One factor for this could be that when organization was introduced, the students were now negotiating through two traits (ideas and organization) as well as
deciphering how to transfer their information from a graphic organizer to their writing sample. Another factor could have been the manner in which the graphic organizer was introduced to the students. If one aspect of the process of transitioning the information from the graphic organizer to their writings was not explicitly modeled by me, the teacher, then the transition of information would not be a smooth process. The traits of voice and word choice were introduced in the latter part of the trimester. Stella and Alex were the only participants who had difficulty transferring the trait of word choice from an instructional context to their writings. This difficulty is indicative of their scores, both scored as 1 (experimental writer) in this trait. One reason for this may be that this trait was the last trait to be introduced, which did not afford them enough time to practice the skill before they were assessed.

Another reason the participants did not score beyond emergent writers may be that I did not take the activity of editing words from students’ prior writings for “juicier” words to the next level. I guided the students through reading the sentences from some of their prior writings and editing the writing by taking out or “deleting” a word or phrase, and then replacing it with a “juicier” word. For example, the word chistoso (funny) would be replaced with the more “juicier” cómico (comical). One way I could have challenged the students more with the trait of word choice would have been to model how to “delete” and replace words in the beginning of the lesson, and then to provide the students with the opportunity to manipulate the sentence themselves. This last step would have given the students a read world application of how to replace what may be considered as “boring” words with “juicier” words.
Trimester 3 (March 8 – June 4, 2010)

By the beginning of Trimester 3, most of the traits had been introduced. The remaining two traits which needed to be introduced were sentence fluency and conventions. As these two traits were introduced, the previous four traits (ideas, organization, voice, and word choice) were briefly revisited. At the end of Trimester 3, for the trait of ideas, most of the participants (Nelson, Carmen, and Alex) scored a 3 (developmental writers). Stella’s writings scores fluctuated between an experimental writer and an emerging writer. One strategy I could have used with Stella was giving her a sheet of paper with sentence starters to aid her in communicating her ideas more clearly.

For the trait of organization the findings showed that once again it was problematic for the participants. Some factors which could account for this: (1) the negotiation of transferring information from a graphic organizer to writing was ongoing; (2) the introduction of new traits and the application of the previous traits may have been overwhelming for the participants; and (3) the graphic organizer, the flat spider, may have been too confusing for the students to use. In this I take responsibility because the decision to use the graphic organizer was mine. A graphic organizer that showed the transfer of information, such as a mind map, may have been simpler.

For the trait of voice, three of the participants moved from a score of 1 (experimental writer) to a score of 2 (emergent writer). Carmen was the only one who consistently scored as an emergent writer. One reason for Carmen’s stagnant scores was that she was a very quiet and soft spoken individual. I needed to find a way to bring her
personality out in her writings. For the trait of word choice and sentence fluency, three of the participants (Nelson, Carmen, and Alex) progressed from a score of 1 (experimental writer) to a score of 2 (emergent writer). Stella consistently scored a 1 (experimental writer). One way to cover these two traits is to use the lesson of deconstructing and reconstructing sentences using a pocket chart (as described for the trait of word choice in Trimester 2). Had I used this scaffolding technique, I would have allowed the participants the opportunity to manipulate words and sentences with their hands and they might have better understood how word choice affects sentence fluency.

For the trait of conventions, the final trait introduced, all the participants scored a 2 (emergent writer) or a 2.5 (in between an emergent writer and a developing writer). One reason the students scored relatively high (as compared to the introduction of the other traits) may be due to the check-off list that was provided to the participants, which reminded them of the three main points for conventions: (1) remember to start your sentence with a capital letter; (2) remember to put spaces in between your words); and (3) remember to put a period at the end of your sentence. For next year, one of the components I would change on the check of list would be the component for 3 (punctuation). Instead of only listing the period as a form of punctuation, I would add an exclamation point and a question mark. By making this change, students be reminded that there are at least three different ways to end their sentence. Which one they use will depend on what type of sentence they are writing.

Overall, the 6+1 Trait® Writing program was an effective tool in aiding all four participants (Nelson, Carmen, Alex, and Stella) in writing complete, grammatically
correct sentences in their native language of Spanish. There was evidence, ranging from slight to obvious, of the writing strategies from the program in their writings.

Recommendations for Future Research

Whereas this study was limited to four Spanish-speaking kindergarten students, a study on a larger scale may uncover trends in the negotiation of transferring writing skills from an instructional context to real world applications (authentic writings) that were not reflected in this small sample. However, for the purpose of this study there are recommendations that could be beneficial and enhance future research in the field of bilingual education, more specifically writing in primary language. The recommendations are as follows: (1) keep a journal where the researcher writes anecdotal (or observational) notes, record if the participants are having a difficulty applying the treatment or is the treatment seems to be working according to plan; (2) conduct interviews with the participants before treatment, during treatment, and after treatment. Coupled with the anecdotal notes and the writing samples, the data would be triangulated to gain a clearer understanding of any prevailing trends; (3) extend the length of the study to see if as participants move through the grade levels, are they able to transfer the strategies from the program with more sophistication to their writings, as they negotiate the six different traits (ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions); (4) confirm that the staff at the school site are utilizing the same writing program across the grade levels, which will build on the knowledge the students acquired in kindergarten; and (5) ensure that the staff understands and is able to distinguish between language-general skills (directionality, phonemic awareness, etc.) and language-specific skills
(such as tildas, accents, etc. for Spanish; and silent e, the different sounds the vowels make in English). All language skills need to be taught; however, by making this distinction more time may be allocated to the language-specific skills, which must be explicitly taught.

In society’s current mindset of pushing students to attain more academic success at an earlier age, it would behoove us as a society to keep in mind that children in the emergent stage of writing greatly depend on their drawings and talk to convey their message. Therefore, a child may have good “ideas”, “organization”, and “voice” in their drawing and oral descriptions, but not in his/her written text. This is an important developmental stage to take into consideration when analyzing a young writer’s text.

**Conclusion**

Two major conclusions can be made from this study. The first conclusion is that bilingual education can be beneficial to all enrolled, but specifically to the language minority students it caters to; more commonly categorized as EL students. Bilingual education lays a concrete foundation for language minority students to successfully navigate through rigorous instruction of the state mandated curriculum in their primary language. This accomplishes two things: (1) maintenance and (2) development of their primary language, which becomes an invaluable resource in their acquisition of proficiency in English.

The second conclusion is that through programs such as the 6+1 Trait® Writing program students are being exposed to and obtain skills that are attributed to good writers in their primary language. The exposure of these skills to young kindergarten writers in
their primary language may help ease the anxiety of learning a foreign writing system, such as English. Of course, it is important to remember that not all of the writing skills will transfer (tildas, accents, etc.); however, those that do (directionality, phonemic awareness, etc.) form a solid foundation from which to start.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

Consent to Participate in Research

Dear Parent,

I am currently enrolled in the Master’s Program at California State University in Sacramento in the hope of receiving my master’s degree in multicultural education. I am asking for your permission to use your child’s writings throughout the 2009-2010 school year to analyze for my thesis. I assure you that your child’s identity will be kept in the deepest confidence: your child’s name, the school’s name, and the district’s name will be changed in order to ensure your child’s identity remains confidential. I have only chosen 4 students to participate in this thesis in order to keep it manageable.

The information that I gather will not be shared with any past, present, and/or future teachers; nor will it be shared with other persons. There are 2 reasons why I am doing this research: (1) to examine the specific writing program being used; and (2) to examine my own teaching strategies. There will be no negative consequences to your child should you agree to give your permission to allow your child to participate; nor will there be any negative consequences to your child should you not agree to give your permission to allow your child to participate.

I would like to thank you in advance for your consideration in allowing me to use your child’s writings for this past school year. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me. I can be reached by email at elizaberth.lorda@wjusd.org; by telephone before or after school at (530) 662-1769; or by appointment. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Albert Lozano, at (916) 278-6864.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Elizabeth Lorda

________________________________________________________________________

Please check one:

_______ I agree to allow you to use my child’s writings for the 2009-2010 school year.

_______ I decline to allow you to use my child’s writings for the 2009-2010 school year.

Child’s name: _______________________________________ Date: _______________

Parent/Guardian Signature: __________________________________________
Consentimiento para participar en la investigación

Estimado padre,

Estoy asistiendo al programa de maestría en la universidad del estado de California de Sacramento en la esperanza de recibir mi maestría en educación multicultural. Le estoy pidiendo permiso para usar la escritura de su hijo/a del año escolar 2009-2010. Me gustaría analizarlos la escritura de su hijo/a para mi tesis. Le aseguro que la identidad de su hijo/a se mantendrá en la más profunda confianza: se cambiará el nombre de su hijo/a, el nombre de la escuela y el nombre del distrito para asegurar que la identidad de su hijo/a no se descubra. Sólo he escogido 4 estudiantes a participar en esta tesis para poder mantenerlo manejable.

La información que deduciré no será compartida con maestros/as del pasado, presente, o futuro; ni será compartida con otras personas. Hay 2 razones por lo cual estoy haciendo esta investigación: (1) para examinar el programa de escritura que estamos usando en la escuela; y (2) para examinar mis estrategias como maestra. No abra consecuencias negativas para su hijo/a si usted decide dar su permiso para la participación de su hijo/a.

Me gustaría darle las gracias antemano por su consideración en permitirme usar las escrituras de su hijo/a este último año escolar. Si tiene alguna pregunta o preocupación no dude en comunicarse conmigo. Se puede comunicarse conmigo por correo electrónico a elizabeth.lorda@wjusd.org; por teléfono antes o después de clase (530) 662-1769; o haga una cita conmigo. También puede comunicarse con mi asesor, Dr. Albert Lozano, por teléfono (916) 278-6864.

Sinceramente,

Maestra Elizabeth Lorda

Favor de indicar uno:

_______ Sí doy permiso que use las escrituras de mi hijo/a del año escolar 2009-2010.
_______ No doy permiso que use las escrituras de mi hijo/a del año escolar 2009-2010.

Nombre del estudiante: __________________________ Fecha: __________
Firma de padre/guardia civil: __________________________
APPENDIX B
Permission to Use My Writings

Dear Student,

I am taking some classes at California State University in Sacramento. I am asking if it is okay to use what you write in class from the beginning of school in August to the end of school in June. I promise that I will change your name, the school’s name, and the district’s name so that nobody knows that I am talking about your writing. I will only choose 4 students to help me in my class and you are one of the four students.

I will not share any of the information with anybody. I will be looking at 2 things: (1) to see if the program we are using to teach you how to write is working; and (2) to see if I am doing a good job teaching you how to write. You will not be hurt if you chose to participate, nor will you be in trouble if you decide that you do not want to participate.

I would like to thank you for talking with me and for making the choice to saying it is okay for me to use your writings during this school year. If at any point you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to come and talk with me.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Elizabeth Lorda

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Please check one:

_______ Yes, you can use what I write this school year.

_______ No, you cannot use what I write this school year.

Student’s name: ________________________________________________________________

Student’s Signature: __________________________________________________________
Permiso para usar mi escritura

Estimado/a Estudiante,

Estoy asistiendo a algunas clases en la universidad en Sacramento. Te estoy pidiendo tu permiso para usar tu escritura (o lo que escribes en mi salón) desde cuándo empieza la escuela en agosto hasta que se termina la escuela en julio. Te prometo que cambiare tu nombre, el nombre de la escuela, y el nombre del distrito para asegurarme que nadie podrá saber que estoy hablando acerca de tu escritura. Solamente escogeré cuatro estudiantes de mi salón y tú eres uno/a de los cuatro estudiantes elegidos.

No voy a compartir esta información con otros. Voy a estar viendo 2 cosas: (1) si el programa de escritura que estamos usando está funcionando; y (2) si estoy haciendo todo lo que me dice el programa para que aprendas a escribir. Nada malo te pasara si decides participar en esta investigación; tampoco tendrás consecuencias malas si decides que no quieres participar.

Me gustaría darte las gracias por darme el permiso de usar tus escrituras durante este año escolar. Si en algún momento tienes una pregunta o una preocupación, favor de hablar conmigo.

Sinceramente,
Maestra Elizabeth Lorda

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Favor de indicar uno:

_______ Sí, doy mi permiso para que use mis escrituras durante este año escolar.

_______ No, doy mi permiso para que use mis escrituras durante este año escolar.

Nombre del estudiante: _____________________________________________

Firma del estudiante: _______________________________________________
## APPENDIX D

### 6+1 Trait Writing Model: Beginning Writers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>4 - Capable</th>
<th>3 - Developing</th>
<th>2 - Emerging</th>
<th>1 - Experimental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IDEAS</td>
<td>Idea is narrow and focused <em>(well developed picture: details &amp; labels)</em></td>
<td>Idea is developed <em>(developed picture: some details, little to no labels)</em></td>
<td>Idea is not fully developed <em>(picture: few details, no labels)</em></td>
<td>Idea is not developed <em>(picture: minimal details, no labels)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORGANIZATION</td>
<td>Definite beginning</td>
<td>Beginning works well</td>
<td>Simple beginning</td>
<td>No beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sequencing is clear and logical</td>
<td>Basic sequencing</td>
<td>Some sequencing</td>
<td>No sequencing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transitions add interest</td>
<td>Few and simple transitions</td>
<td>Little/no transitional words</td>
<td>No transitional words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Definite ending</td>
<td>Ending works well</td>
<td>Simple ending</td>
<td>No ending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOICE</td>
<td>Author strongly comes through</td>
<td>Author comes</td>
<td>Author sort of comes through</td>
<td>Author does not come through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORD CHOICE</td>
<td>Uses vivid words and phrases that draw a picture in the reader’s mind</td>
<td>Uses vivid words and phrases, but are used inaccurately or seem overdone</td>
<td>Uses words that communicate clearly, but lacks variety, punch, or flair</td>
<td>Uses limited vocabulary, does not communicate ideas or captures reader’s interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENTENCE</td>
<td>Sentences are well-constructed with varied structure</td>
<td>Most sentences are well-constructed with varied structures</td>
<td>Most sentences are well-structured, with similar structure</td>
<td>Sentences lack structure and appear incomplete or rambling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLUENCY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONVENTIONS</td>
<td>No grammar or spelling errors distract from content</td>
<td>Few grammar or spelling errors distract from content</td>
<td>Some grammar or spelling errors distract from content</td>
<td>Grammar or spelling errors distract from content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neatly written</td>
<td>Neatly written w/few distracting errors (dark cross-outs, words written over)</td>
<td>Writing generally readable, but reader may need the writer’s assistance</td>
<td>Many words are unreadable or many several distracting corrections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No capitalization or punctuation errors</td>
<td>Few capitalization or punctuation errors</td>
<td>Some capitalization or punctuation errors</td>
<td>Capitalization or punctuation errors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E
Check-off list

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Me gusta</th>
<th>Me gusta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Me gusta ir al parque</td>
<td>Me gusta ir al parque</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Me gusta</th>
<th>Me gusta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Me gusta ir al parque</td>
<td>Me gusta ir al parque</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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