

Effective Literacy Instruction for English Learners

Timothy Shanahan
University of Illinois at Chicago
www.shanahanonliteracy.com

The Need for Research

- Literacy levels are stagnant since 1971
- ELL population has grown dramatically in U.S. schools over past 15 years
- 5.5 million English-language learners in public schools
(~11% of public school enrollment)
- ELLs lag behind English-proficient peers in reading
- Schools are trying hard

Federal Response to Need

National Literacy Panel for Language Minority Children and Youth

*Developing Literacy in
Second-Language
Learners*

WWC Practice Guide

*Effective Literacy and
English Language
Instruction for English
Learners in the
Elementary Grades*

National Literacy Panel for Language Minority Children and Youth

Mission:

To conduct a comprehensive review of the research literature on the development of literacy among Language Minority Children and Youth

Context

- 1998-2000 the National Reading Panel determined what worked in literacy for the U.S. Congress
- NRP did not look at data on second-language students

Support for the Panel

Institute of Education Sciences

Additional support from

National Institute for Child Health and
Human Development

Office of English Language Acquisition

NLP Responsibilities

- Develop an objective research review methodology
- Search the research literature on the development of literacy for English language learners
- Analyze the research literature
- Develop a final report with research findings and recommendations for research

Members of the NLP

Diane August, Principal Investigator, Center for Applied Linguistics,

Timothy Shanahan, Chair, University of Illinois at Chicago

Isabel Beck, University of Pittsburgh

Margarita Calderon, Johns Hopkins University

David Francis, University of Houston

Georgia Earnest Garcia, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Esther Geva, O.I.S.E./University of Toronto

Members of the NLP (cont.)

Fred Genesee, McGill University

Claude Goldenberg, California State University

Michael Kamil, Stanford University

Keiko Koda, Carnegie Mellon University

Gail McKoon, Northwestern University

Robert Rueda, University of Southern California

Linda Siegel, University of British Columbia

Panel Subcommittees

Relationship Between Oral Language Proficiency and Literacy: Fred Genesee and Esther Geva

Relationship Between First and Second Language Literacy: Michel Kamil

Development of Literacy: Linda Siegel and Keiko Koda

Instructional Practices and Professional Development: Timothy Shanahan, Isabel Beck, Diane August, Margarita Calderon

Social and Cultural Context: Claude Goldenberg and Robert Rueda

Assessment: Georgia Garcia and Gail McKoon

Search Criteria

- Language minority children and youth
- Ages 3-18
- Acquisition of literacy in their first language and the societal language
- Empirical research
- Peer-reviewed journals, dissertations, technical reports
- Research published between 1980 and 2002
- Additional subpanel criteria

Review and Selection of Studies

- Sought references in major reviews (August & Hakuta, 1997; Demmert & Towner, 2003; Fitzgerald, 1995a, 1995b; Garcia, 2000; Gersten & Baker, 2000a, 2000b; Greene, 1998; Kamil, et al., 2000; Rossell & Baker, 1996; Willig, 1985)
- Conducted six searches using on-line abstracting services including ERIC, PsycInfo, LLBA, Sociological Abstracts, MEDLINE, MLA Bibliography
- Hand-searched key journals
- Located 1,800 potential research studies that met Panel criteria

Overview of the Report

Introduction

Development of Literacy (second language oral proficiency and second language literacy, sociocultural context)

Cross-linguistic Relationships (first and second language oral proficiency, first language oracy and second language literacy)

Sociocultural Contexts (Immigration, family, discourse patterns, etc.)

Instruction and Professional Development (language of instruction, effective literacy teaching, school and classroom practices and contexts, special education, professional development)

Assessment of Literacy (assessment, standardized assessments)

Conclusions

Comparing NRP and NLP

NRP

- Congressional Report
- First-language only
- K-12
- “What Works” questions
- Experimental studies only

NLP

- IES Report
- Second-language only
- PreK-12
- Wide range of questions
- Wide range of research evidence appropriate to the questions

Development of Literacy

1. What are the differences and similarities in the development of literacy skills in societal language between language minority and native speakers?
2. What is the relationship between second language oral proficiency and second language literacy?
3. What is the influence of social and cultural factors on literacy attainment of language minority learners, in their native language and the societal language?

Development of Literacy (cont.)

- 107 studies were accepted for inclusion in the review (of 578)
- Criteria: published in a refereed journal since 1980, in English, focused on children ages 3-18, pertinent to questions
- For some of the questions the subjects could be acquiring any societal language; for some it had to be English

Development of Literacy (cont.)

Some findings:

- Word reading and spelling skills of L2 can be equivalent to the word reading skills of L1 students (after some amount of instruction)
- Fewer studies on the development of text level skills (reading comprehension=7, writing=0)
- Non-equivalence of performance evident in text skills

Cross-Linguistic Relationships

Some findings:

- Small to moderate positive relationships between English oral language proficiency and word recognition skills or spelling skills in English
- English oral language proficiency is closely associated with reading comprehension skills in English (even when students have adequate word reading skills)

Sociocultural Contexts for Literacy Attainment

How do the following influence the attainment of L2 literacy outcomes?

- Immigration
- Discourse and interactional differences
- Other culturally or socially rooted factors
- Parents and families
- District, state, and federal policies
- Language status or prestige

Sociocultural Contexts for Literacy Attainment (cont.)

- Studies could be correlational, experimental, comparative, ethnographic, observational, or case study (quantitative or qualitative)
- Only about 50 studies even met these parameters
- Reviewers characterize it as a weak data base (both in terms of size and quality)
- Few interventions and those that exist often did not have literacy outcomes or were not clearly sociocultural in nature
- Fair to say the results of this analysis is to arrive at hypotheses

Sociocultural Contexts for Literacy Attainment (cont.)

- Little evidence that immigration, refugee experience, or language prestige impedes literacy achievement
- There is little evidence that discourse and interactional differences influence literacy outcomes, or that instructional accommodations to discourse differences improve outcomes
- Evidence that language minority parents are motivated to help in their children's schooling and that schools can successfully encourage this (but little evidence of the impact on learning)

What Works for Improving Literacy

- A. What should the language of instruction when teaching English as a second language?
- B. Do children who come to English as a second language benefit from the same literacy teaching practices that help native English language students?
- C. What else can be done to improve the literacy attainment of children and adolescents who are learning English as a second language?

What Works (cont.)

Language minority students acquiring literacy in English as a societal language or literacy in their first language.

Studies Assigned: 319

Studies used to answer Question A: 15

Studies used to answer Question B: 18

Studies used to answer Question C: 23

Language of Instruction

Comparison of the impact of:

English immersion (submersion to structured)

vs.

Bilingual Education (transitional, dual, alternative immersion)

Language of Instruction

Previous Reviews

- Baker & de Knater (1981): no difference
- Willig (1985): bilingual effective
- Rossell & Baker (1996): no difference
- Greene (1997): bilingual effective
- Slavin & Cheung (2004): bilingual effective

Language of Instruction

- Compared bilingual with English only
- Random assignment or pretesting/matching
- Control groups
- Any studies, that met criteria, and were done since 1980 or were from the previous reviews
- Only English (not other languages)
- At least 6 mos. of instruction
- In school studies of language-minority students in English speaking countries

Language of Instruction

- 15 studies (71 effect sizes across 26 samples)
- Effects sizes for all studies (.18)
- Effect sizes for 5 RCT studies (.39-.45)
- Same as for phonics
- 9 of 26 sample effect sizes favored bilingual, 4 favored immersion, the rest were equal

Language of Instruction

- Biggest effect sizes for best studies
- Bilingual education has a positive impact on English reading outcomes (small to moderate)
- However, the successful bilingual programs introduced English early
- Not just primary grades

Teaching Reading First Elements

- Does enhanced teaching of literacy elements improve literacy for ELL students?
- National Reading Panel found that teaching native speakers phonemic awareness, phonics, oral reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies
- But what about ELL students?

Teaching Reading First Elements

Criteria

- Students (ages 3-18) had to be learning English as a societal language
- Published in peer reviewed journal (or doctoral dissertation or technical report) since 1980
- Used experimental, quasi-experimental, multiple-baseline design without serious confounds

Teaching Reading First Elements

Numbers of studies

	<u>NRP</u>	<u>NLP</u>
Phonemic awareness	51	--
Phonics	38	5
Oral reading fluency	16	2
Vocabulary	45	3
Comprehension strategies	205	3
Writing	---	4

Teaching Reading First Elements

- Studies of elements of literacy suggest that the types of instruction that help in L1 are advantageous for L2 as well
- Effect sizes are lower, except for vocabulary
- Effect sizes always smaller if comprehension included
- Adjustments are needed, but these were rarely described in any detail

Other Strategies for Improving Literacy

- Encouraging reading and writing (6)
- Reading to children (3)
- Tutoring and remediation (2)
- Success for All (3)
- Instructional Conversations (3)
- Other interventions (6)

Other Strategies for Improving Literacy

- Many of the innovations helped, but too little evidence on any to draw definitive conclusions (need for replication)
- Lowest effect sizes when comprehension included
- Encouraging reading in English helped, reading in home language did not help

Conclusions

1. Effective instruction for English learners emphasizes essential components of literacy
 - Phonemic awareness
 - Phonics
 - Oral reading fluency
 - Vocabulary
 - Comprehension
 - Writing

Conclusions

2. Effective instruction for English learners is similar to effective literacy instruction for native speakers
 - Instruction vs. curriculum
 - Programs (Reading Mastery, Corrective Reading, Jolly Phonics, Read Naturally, Success for All, etc.)
 - Instructional routines (such as those for teaching vocabulary)

Conclusions

3. Effective curriculum and instruction for English learners must be adjusted to meet their needs
 - Strategic use of first language
 - Enhanced instructional procedures
 - Adjustments for differences in knowledge
 - More explicit modeling and explanation
 - More use of pictures

Conclusions

4. Effective literacy instruction for English learners is comprehensive and multi-dimensional.
 - The whole curriculum
 - Substantial amount of instruction
 - Monitoring of learning
 - Etc.

Conclusions

5. Effective literacy instruction for English learners develops oral English proficiency.
 - Knowledge gap between English learners and native speakers (comprehension)
 - Power of vocabulary instruction
 - Limits of simple vocabulary instruction

Conclusions

6. Effective literacy instruction for English learners is differentiated.
 - Generally, these students do not have learning problems (same incidence as in L1)
 - Different languages, different amounts of experience with English, individual differences in success with various reading variables

Conclusions

7. Effective literacy instruction for English learners requires well-prepared teachers.
 - Recruitment of qualified teachers
 - Professional development in literacy and language instruction
 - Maintaining a well-trained teaching force

Conclusions

8. Effective literacy instruction for English learners is respectful of the home language.
 - Bilingual approaches
 - Use of home language to teach English

National Panel on Language Minority Children and Youth

August, D., & Shanahan, T. (Eds.). (2006). *Developing literacy in second-language learners*. New York: Routledge.

August, D., & Shanahan, T. (Eds.). (2008). *Developing reading and writing in second-language learners*. New York: Routledge.

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