2005

The Truth of English Language Acquisition

Dinah R. Rucker
Ouachita Baptist University

SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors thesis entitled

"The Truth of English Language Acquisition"

written by

Dinah R. Rucker

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for completion of the
Carl Goodson Honors Program
meets the criteria for acceptance
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

Dr. Jeanna Westmoreland, Thesis Director

Sharon Cosh, Second Reader

Dr. Nancy Hardman, Third Reader

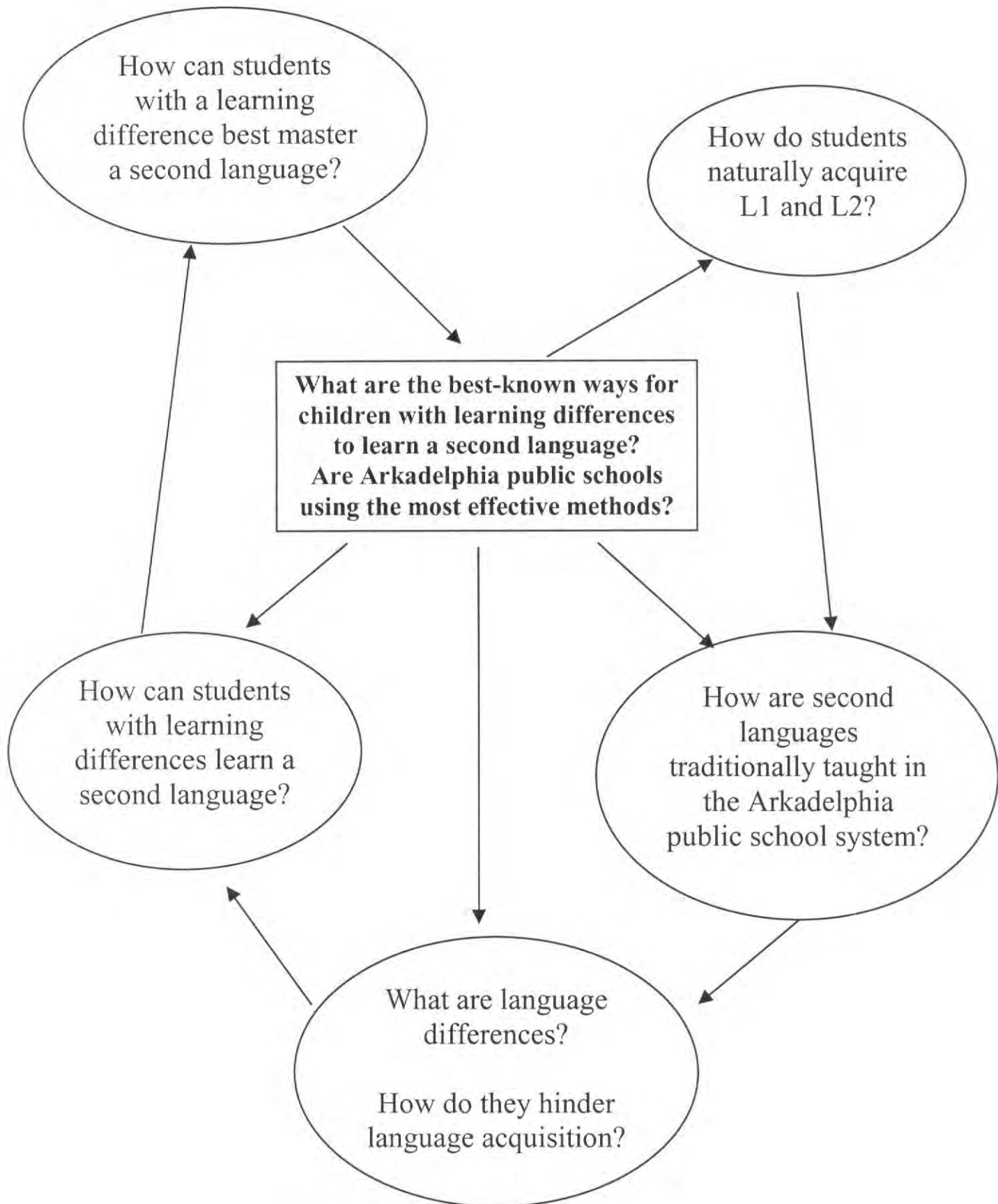Dr. George Keck, Honors Program Director

December 1, 2005

Table of Contents:

Introduction:

Every year, over 1,221,000[i] immigrants come to this country without any English background knowledge in English and are immersed in the public school system. The approximate net international immigration rate of Arkansas is approximately 4500 people annually. Most students that come at a young age must immediately adjust to American life as they go to a new school with a foreign language with strange people and customs. What happens to the students that have language differences, the ones that don't grasp the language easily and continue to struggle through their education and in their careers? How do we know which children are struggling in school because of learning differences and which ones are struggling because of a language and cultural barriers? How does their culture play a part in the education of these students?

The purpose of this study is to discover what the best-known way for children with learning differences to learn a second language are, and if Arkadelphia Public Schools are using the most effective methods. Secondary questions explored through this study are as follows: How do students naturally learn their first language? How do students naturally learn their second language? How is English taught as L2 in the Arkadelphia public school system? What are learning differences and how do they hinder language acquisition? And lastly, what are the best methods to teach students with learning differences in L2?

How can students with a learning difference best master a second language?

How do students naturally acquire L1 and L2?

What are the best-known ways for children with learning differences to learn a second language? Are Arkadelphia public schools using the most effective methods?

How can students with learning differences learn a second language?

How are second languages traditionally taught in the Arkadelphia public school system?

What are language differences?

How do they hinder language acquisition?

The act of learning and becoming fluent in a language other than one's native tongue is known as second language acquisition (SLA), a field of study developed by S. D. Krashen in the 1980s. Learning differences, such as dyslexia impairs one's ability to gain new knowledge or skills. Students with a first language other than English often are misunderstood. Often language difficulties and learning differences can be confused. In a classroom, teachers may mistake the reason for the child's English language developmental delay.

This study will look at how an L2 student learning English may be inadvertently identified with a learning difference when their impairment could be due to language deficiency; furthermore, how an identified learning impairment in a first language might hinder the process of acquiring a second language, or L2. Then it will attempt to find bridge-building methods teachers may use to help such a student acquire a second language.

Definitions:

First language acquisition (Referred to as L1) is becoming fluent in the first or native language(s) that a child is surrounded by between birth and 9 months old.

Second language acquisition (Referred to as L2) is gaining linguistic ability in a second language that is not native to the child during his first 9 months.

Language: is a symbolic system in which a series of sounds make words to represent an idea, an object, or a person, and eventually becomes the medium through which we think.

English Language Learners (ELL) are students who are becoming proficient in English as L2.

Literacy is the ability to read and write in a language at a level where one can carry out practical tasks of everyday life, such as communication by sending and receiving simple messages.

Learning Difference is any cognitive or physical (including sensory) challenge that inhibits learning. It includes but is not limited to: Down syndrome, deafness, dyslexia, impaired cerebral (brain structure), and physical impediments (such as oversized tongue or malfunctions in the face).

Multiple Intelligences is a theory by Howard Gardner in 1999 that says that intelligences vary among logical-mathematical, musical, bodily kinesthetic, spatial, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. These independences complement each other as they are used together by people developing skills or solve problems. Other intelligences have been suggested.

Dyslexia is a condition resulting from neurological, maturational, and genetic causes, which leads to specific reading problems evidenced.

Code Switching or Code Mixing is language alternation or switching between two or more codes: that is languages. It is commonly used in bilingual speakers during the second and third stage of becoming fluent in L2 and subconsciously when moving between two different language groups.

Affective Filter: is an imaginary wall that is placed between a language learner and his or her ability to acquire knowledge. If the filter is raised, input is blocked. The filter is raised when anxiety is high, self-esteem is low, or motivation is low. Low anxiety environments are more effective for language acquisition.

Language Transference is the ability or inability to transport information from the native language to the second language, or the cross-linguistic influence that two or more languages may have on each other.

Dual Immersion is combining language minority and language majority students in the same classroom to provide content instruction in both the minority and majority language so that all students can reach high levels of academic proficiency, bilingualism, and self-esteem as well as developing positive cross-cultural attitudes.

Language Acquisition Device (LAD) is Chomsky's idea that children are born with a mechanism in their brains that enables them to recognize the universal rules that underlie all languages and the structure or grammar of their native language.

English as a Second Language (ESL) is a technique of teaching ELL (English language learners), which includes the main components of listening, speaking, reading, writing, pronunciation, content specific vocabulary, and cultural understanding. ESL instruction is usually completely in English with little use of native language.

Bilingual Education is an approach to teaching ELL's by relying heavily on the native language of the speaker, maintaining the theory that a strong sense of one's culture and language is necessary to acquire another language and culture.

Scaffolding is an instructional technique whereby the teacher models the desired learning strategy or task, then gradually shifts responsibility to the students. Scaffolding includes modeling and clear, detailed directions so that students have a strong foundation on which to build knowledge.

Review of the Literature:

L1 acquisition:

There are several philosophical views of primary language acquisition held by Chomsky, Piaget, B.F. Skinner, and Vygotsky that are found in *Child and Adolescent Development for Educators written by Judith L. Meese*, which describes how these philosophers have developed understanding L1 acquisition.

Behaviorist, like B. F. Skinner believed that language development depends entirely on nature, mechanisms, imitation, and operant conditioning. Children learn language through grammar, phonology, syntax, semantics, lexicon, and pragmatics by breaking each system down to its smallest part and then developing rules for combining the parts. Others, like Chomsky, believed that we are biologically programmed. In their opinion, language acquisition development, language structure, or syntax is merely inherited. If certain internal or external conditions related to language development are missing, then a child will never be fully able to acquire language. This is the "critical period hypothesis" related to social interaction. Lenneberg, one language theorist, believed that the greatest critical period in infancy is from birth to 18 months, when the two hemispheres of the brain begin to specialize. At that point the brain is somewhat "plastic" until puberty. He believed that if language were not part of the normal functions of the brain at this time, it would never be.

Piaget believed that both nature and nurture are important. His theory of language acquisition is that many factors such as social, linguistic, and cognitive factors interact

and are dependent on each other. Instead of a cognitive view of language development, Vygotsky theorized that the social environment and surrounding culture are critical factors that motivate children's development in all areas, including the realm of language. Thought comes before language development and they are subsequently independent of each other. Social speech begins within the mind of the child before he or she interacts with the world around him or her. Babbling is the first sign of social speech. Imitation is important in learning language and vocabulary, but not important to the child's learning of syntax, or the primary way of language development. Most children learn vocabulary through systematic reinforcement or positive feedback where syntax and grammar must be taught, not only imitated.

Somewhere in the midst of all these theories, we realize that there are important biological, cognitive, and social aspects to language learning that occurs in a young child. Today, the preferred theory of L1 acquisition is a combination of nature and nurture. People are born with the innate desire and usually the ability to communicate in some way. Children learn language through exposure to the sounds and meanings of verbal and nonverbal communication. Language and literacy can be taught or practiced through a variety of methods, such as visual, verbal, and physical cues that convey meaning.

Knowledge of L1 acquisition is imperative when diagnosing an ELL student's problem. ELL students typically experience problems associated with learning a second language, such as poor understanding and articulation, limited vocabulary, and common grammar and syntax errors. This frequently results in ELL students being inaccurately diagnosed and referred for special services. If a student, in fact, has a learning difference,

the difference will occur not only in L2 but also in L1. Therefore, the first language should be reinforced and developed as L2 comprehension increases.

Early Stages of Language Acquisition [ii]

Age	Developmental Milestone
Birth to 6 Months	Cries and cooes (open vowel sounds
	Recognizes human voices
	Responds well to high-pitched, melodic vocalizations
	Can distinguish d from b
	Varies cries to signal pain and distress
	Begins babbling (vowel-constant sounds)
6 to 12 months	Imitates voice patterns and sounds
	Uses voice to get attention
	Says first words
	Waves bye-bye
	Understands more words than can say
	Uses holographs
12 to 18 months	Uses gestures to convey meaning
	Shakes head to mean "no"
	Understands simple commands
	Begins to use me, you, I
18 to24 months	Uses two-word phrases ("Mommy go")
	Refers to self by name
	Uses telegraphic Speech
	Uses correct word order
	Knows 50 word phrases
24 to 36 months	Enjoys songs, rhymes, and rhythms
	Uses simple pronouns
	Continues to expand vocabulary
	Telegraphic speech declines
	Uses strategies to begin conversations
	Uses adjectives and adverbs
	Speaking vocabulary may reach 200 words
	Can articulate m, n, f, p, t, d, w

L2 acquisition:

L2 acquisition is a consistently growing field of study. The research articles available about this topic give a broad perspective of L2 linguistic and literate acquisition and how it develops. Some common similarities and differences exist in first and second language acquisition. Similarities are that in first language acquisition there is a silent period; likewise in second language acquisition, the child listens and does not speak right away. In acquiring both English and Spanish, "easier sound forms and words are acquired before more complex forms, labels are acquired first, and it is common for errors to occur in learning L1 and L2 (Brice, 2002, p 46)." The differences that have been noted in L1 and L2 acquisition are "avoidance of topics, tenses, words, situations; children learning a first language do not avoid certain syntactic tenses, morphological constructions, or word choices; Spanish-English-speaking children may also use social and cognitive strategies not typically used by monolingual children; children learning a second language can often experience certain psychological barriers such as fatigue; If Spanish is not maintained while English is being acquired, then Spanish may atrophy and be lost (Brice, 2002, p 46)." These characteristics are more prevalent in ELL.

Any language learned after nine months is stored in a different area of the brain to a language learned before nine months, thus distinguishing a child's L1 from his L2 (Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2003). Research shows that literacy in L2 is more successfully acquired with greater gains and faster results if the students are instructed in bilingual

settings where they increased L1 skills while acquiring L2, such as dual immersion programs.

All over the world many people are multilingual, but few are mulitiliterate. Literacy is to involve the ability to function appropriately in a literate environment, which necessarily includes reading, writing, and thinking skills (Roberts, 1994). L2 is not learned faster by only speaking L2 at home. "Conditions for language learning include: the need to communicate, access to speakers from the language; interaction; support and feedback from speakers form that language; and time (Brice, 2002, p 45)." Research shows that a person without a learning difference can easily learn conversational skills in any language in 2 years. However, gaining academic proficiency in that language would take anywhere from 5 to 11 years of study. In our public schools, when a child reaches the ability in English to begin the academic study of English, they no longer qualify for ESL in most states (Drucker, 2003).

Interaction with other speakers for the purpose of communicating in the target language is necessary for L2 acquisition. Because of more advanced cognitive skills, older children acquire a second language at a more rapid rate than do younger children (Brice, 2002). Language develops best in a variety of settings that promote talk and interaction. Through talking and listening to one another and working on activities involving reading and writing, learners are able both to develop increasing facility in all language modes and increasing control over social interaction, thinking, and learning. Literacy is a part of language; thus reading and writing can develop alongside speaking and listening.

L2 development consists of various stages: Stage I being preproduction: a silent period where the child needs a stress free environment to absorb language. Stage II being early production: where speakers use 1 or 2 words or key terms. Students need to have correct responses modeled without calling attention to their error, which can raise their affective filter, or the stress level of the learner. An educator's goal is to maintain a low affective filter by helping the student feel comfortable in his or her learning environment. They may use the ELL's favored learning style, intelligence, or help incorporate aspects of his or her culture into the learning experience. The child may also show signs of fatigue. State III being speech emergence: where small group activities are needed and lessons should be taught on key concepts. Stage IV being Intermediate fluency where students engage in conversation. They see reading and writing as a way to acquire and process new information. Teachers should celebrate the successes of the students and challenge them to always continue to learn, as there is always more to conquer in a language (Ernst-Slavit, 2002). In true L2 acquisition, a person adopts some of the values associated with that language and culture (Potowsky, 2004). Some signs of true L2 acquisition involve assimilating into the culture around them, dreams occurring in L2, the understanding of idioms or cultural norms, effective nonverbal communication skills, and healthy social interaction with those around them.

Stages of L2 Development and Cultural Adaptation[iii]

Stage I:	**Preproduction**
Linguistic considerations	Student…
	• communicates with gestures, actions, and verbal formulas
	• is building receptive vocabulary
	• is recycling learned language practice
	• benefits from listening comprehension activities (e.g., tape player)
Cultural Considerations	• Silent period
Suggestions for teachers	• Create a stress-free environment
	• Provide support and encouragement
	• Avoid asking direct questions
Questioning techniques	Appropriate questions include...
	• Find the...
	• Point to...
	• Put the ( ) next to the ( ).
	• Do you have the ( )?
	• Who did ( )?
	• What is his/her name?
	• What is this (concrete object)?
	• Who is he/she?
	• Who has the ( )?
Effective activities	• Face-to-face conversation
	• Simple demonstrated directions
	• Participation in art/music/PE

• Puzzles/games, real objects/manipulatives

• Picture books

• Encouraging drawing

Stage II	**Early Production**
Linguistic considerations	Student...
	• intuitively understand that English is a system
	• label and categorize
	• encounter L1 interference
	• *use one-and two-word responses and chunks of* language
	• can say "I don't understand"
Cultural considerations	• Adaptation fatigue
Suggestions for teachers	• Monitor error correction (i.e., use modeling)
	• Use anticipation guides
	• Use list of key terms for previewing
	• Use audiotapes of readings and lectures
	• Use graphic organizers
Questioning techniques	Appropriate questions include...
	• questions that require a yes/no answer
	• questions that ask either/or
Effective activities	• Low-level questions
	• Retelling a story
	• Picture books with simple texts
	• Simple written responses
	• Copying words and sentences
	• Recipes
	• Oral reading

• Written practice

Stage III	Speech Emergence
Linguistic considerations	Student... • uses language purposefully (e.g., to clarify, refuse) • produces complete sentences
Cultural considerations	• Tension between assimilation and acculturation • Recovering from previous frustration and fatigue
Suggestions for teachers	• Use frequent comprehension checks • Design lessons focusing on concepts • Introduce expanded vocabulary • Use models/charts/maps/timelines
Questioning techniques	• Open ended; why or how questions • Specific questions • How is it that ( )? • Tell me about ( )?
Effective activities	• Demonstrations • Simple oral presentations • Answering higher-level questions • Hands-on activities • Small group work • Word sound symbol production • Simple writing • Computer lessons • Play and role-playing • Choral reading

Stage IV	**Intermediate Fluency**
Linguistic	Student...
considerations	• can produce connected narrative
	• can use reading and writing incorporated into lesson
	• can write answers to higher-level questions
	• can resolve conflicts verbally
Cultural considerations	• Cultural adjustment
Suggestions for teachers	• Validate students' languages and cultures
Questioning techniques	Appropriate questions include...
	• What would you recommend or suggest?
	• How do you think this story will end?
	• What is the story about?
	• What is your opinion on this?
	• Describe/compare/contrast
	• How are these the same or different?
	• What would happen if ( )?
	• Which do you prefer? Why?
Effective activities	• Content/subject explanations
	• Paragraph writing
	• Reading for information in content areas
	• Summaries, outlines, book reports
	• Explanations of new ideas/concepts
	• Workbooks/worksheets, tests
	• Lecture discussions
	• Literary analysis of plot, character, setting
	• Simple report writing

Learning differences:

Becoming literate in a second language can be very difficult for any individual, especially those with learning differences. The research and articles about learning differences such as dyslexia reveal that students with learning differences can become successful bilinguals (Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2003). The majority of research on learning differences was found on dyslexia, although some other physical and cognitive differences were mentioned.

"Dyslexia knows no boundaries, neither geographic nor ethnic nor intellectual." All parts of the globe use alphabetic and logographic languages. Research shows that there is no significant difference in boys and girls having dyslexia. Boys are identified more easily as their rambunctious behavior draws attention to their difficulty. Girls tend to be overlooked because of their quiet manner (Saracho, 1990). Dyslexia has been found to run in families (Shaywitz, 2004). Compensated dyslexics, or those dyslexics that do learn to read and even to excel in academics despite their disability have been known to do as well as nondyslexics on tests of word accuracy. They have learned how to decode or identify words, thereby gaining entry to the higher levels of the language system, but they do so at a high cost. Decoding remains very laborious for compensated dyslexics. They are neither automatic nor fluent in their ability to identify words. "Many dyslexics have told us how tiring reading is for them, reflecting the enormous resources and energy they must expend on the task (Shaywitz, 1996, p 7)." In a dyslexic student, there is a significant discrepancy between intellectual ability and reading performance without any apparent physical, emotional, or cultural cause (Harrie, 2003). Learning a

20

second language doesn't increase dyslexia, as some may think but dyslexia does cause extreme stress and frustration to a child. "Acquiring billiteracy skills means more time at the challenging tasks that may be an overwhelming burden in just one language, let alone two or more (Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2003)."

Another difference that affects language acquisition is a child's developmental delay or a lag in development, not any specific condition causing that lag. "It is possible that a child with a developmental delay who receives services will not develop a disability; whereas if the same child did not receive services, the delay would become a disability (Valdivia, 1920).

In the case of every learning disabled child, one can become bilingual, however parents will need to devote extra time in the child's L2. Insufficiently developed phonological specialization is blamed for dyslexia. If this is true, then other consequences of impaired phonological functioning should be apparent. "Phonological deficits are the most significant and consistent cognitive marker of the dyslexic child (Shaywitz, 1996, p 6)." Therefore, caretakers will need to work on improving phonemic awareness in both L1 and L2 with a dyslexic child. With children that have Down Syndrome, the child will need to lead his own pace in ELL. In all children, a stable and secure environment is needed. Moving to a new culture and place, like many Spanish-speaking students in the United States, adds more intense difficulties (Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2003).

Best Practices of assessing L2:

The most difficult aspect of helping a delayed second language learner is to discover what is delaying the process of developing that child's L2. Many articles have been written about assessment of a child becoming bilingual. Learning differences and disorders could be easily over or under diagnosed.

For example, if a child has a learning difference it will be in both languages. Since it is not possible for a child to have learning differences in only one language, the bilingual child must be assessed in both languages. The child needs to be assessed in comparison to children of their similar economic, cultural, and linguistic background. Language alternation allows the bilingual speaker to combine the pragmatic, synaptic, and motor phonological dimensions of both languages. Code switching may indicate high-level language skills in both L1 and L2, it does not automatically mean that a student has a language disorder (Brice, 2002).

Language proficiency assessment is very subjective. In one study for example,. The teacher's were questioned about their students' language proficiency. In their 10th grade classes, they concluded that there were about 97,000 ELL students. Alternatively, the students' viewed their own language proficiency very differently. 256,000 students considered themselves to still be acquiring English (Ernst-Slavit, 2002). What does this say about the teachers' perception of their ESL students? In a recent test by Shawitz, "less than 1/3 of the children who were reading below their age, ability, or grade level were receiving school services for their reading difficulty. This strongly suggested undiagnosed problems (Saracho, 1990, p 30)." In fact, in one third grade classroom in

Arkadelphia there is a Hispanic girl that obviously is not proficient in English. She lacks

confidence to speak above a whisper and constantly asks questions about directions and

words that she does not understand in reading. To her dismay, no modifications or

services are offered for this child. According to ESL teachers in Arkadelphia, a student

must qualify for services by state required standardized tests. Once students reach

minimum English proficiency, they must fend for themselves in the classroom. The

teachers questioned in this school district claim to make no modifications for ELL.

Assessments for bilingual children with learning disabilities are so unreliable that

"80% of students could be labeled language disordered" and children placed in special

education based on their achievement in these tests may be the same as those in regular

class rooms. Children should stay in mainstream classrooms unless they need specialized

instruction (Mattes, 1984).

When assessing dyslexics, they should be given modifications such as extra time

and context clues. If at all possible, multiple-choice shouldn't be used when testing

dyslexics (Shaywitz, 1996). Instead, gathering assessment data from a variety of sources,

considering both the process and product of children's writing and recognizing the factors

outside teacher controls such as weather or illness that may influence student

performance. Portfolios for example are much better assessment tools than standardized

reading tests (Roberts, 1994). When not pressured to come up with words or phonemes,

dyslexics can successfully deliver an oral presentation. In reading, they need context to

help them identify specific words (Shaywitz, 1996).

"Families of children of diverse cultures may not identify a certain series of

behavior or symptoms as being descriptive of a delay or disability." The cultural

implications of the developmental delay category underscore the importance of having a broad array of tools for assessment and instruction as well as a good understanding of the child's culture (Valdivia, 1920)." For example, studies have characterized the cognitive style of Mexican-Americans as more field-dependent than that of Anglo-Americans. Meaning that Mexican-Americans tend to favor group and exploratory experiences while Anglo-American students favor independent work and impersonal, direct instruction. In general, "Mexican-American students are more global, while Anglo American children are more analytic (Saracho, 1990, p4)." Since cognitive style is related to psychological and intellectual qualities, these studies have educational implications (Shaywitz, 2003).

Techniques and strategies for teaching L2:

After the source of the difficulty of a student is identified, the next question to an

educator is how to help that child reach high scholastic achievement. Several articles and

books provide valuable resources for educators on how to best help their students learn an

L2 in an environment foreign to them.

Research shows that rather than age or maturity, it is reading instruction that leads

to better reading, not only early intervention (Saracho, 1990). Students need to be

motivated to use language accurately, appropriately, and coherently. Teaching students

how to interact and support one another's academic and linguistic development is

essential for immersion program success (Potowsky, 2004). When teaching English as

L2, provide a context for children before they are asked to read a challenging text. "Start

by making a few statements and asking some rhetorical questions that hook the student's

interest." Then, introduce the passage the students will be reading, allowing the students

to pull out their prior knowledge of that subject including vocabulary and meaning

(Drucker, 2003, p.23).

Choral Reading

Give the students opportunities to engage in choral reading with motions and

repetition. Any reading that is done at the same time with the whole class is choral

reading. This is a quality technique that can be used with any students from Kindergarten

to sixth grade. Students may also read with a teacher or repeat after the teacher.

However, students should never be asked to read aloud in front of peers. The traditional

"round robin" style of reading has been proven to be ineffective through research. Students struggling with L2 decoding and pronunciation should never be expected to read unrehearsed text aloud as it can be humiliating to that child and discourage his or her learning.

Shared Reading

Shared reading is done with large print on a large board of some kind that can easily be seen by each student, or reading along while listening to audiotape stories. The best way to incorporate multiculturalism is letting the students engage in reading books from their own cultural background, such as folk tales. In any classroom, texts should be introduced from the respective culture of every student in the class.

Language Experience Approach

The Language Experience Approach (LEA) is where the teacher allows each student to interact as she writes a poem, story, or even facts on the board. The teacher will guide the students to give thoughts or statements about a certain topic. She will write each of the comments on the board in a grammatically correct way. After combining several ideas from the students, she will read it all aloud. Then the students will join in reading the thoughts, story, and/or ideas on the board. This approach works best in mainstream or combined classrooms (Drucker, 2003). LEA is a quality holistic technique.

Journals

Using journals allow the students to write experiences down where the teacher can read it and the students can review it over and over again. Dialogue journals can allow the students write back and forth to each other in a meaningful way to express pictures and writing. Using journals allow making language significant and fun in the classroom.

Basal readers

Avoid Basal readers or use them as one of many literacy tools, not as complete instruction Instead, use quality children's Literature that is interesting and meaningful and increases cultural knowledge and vocabulary. Identify problems discussing solutions, change endings, role-play, and find related stories. Use Reading and writing with quality texts in all content areas in the classroom (Roberts, 1994).

Reader's Theatre

Older kids can write and produce plays based on the literature they read. Younger children can produce plays based on literature that have already been written. They will receive parts, practice parts, and then read the play with motions together as a team.

Vocabulary

"Many of the standard vocabulary teaching approaches have been ineffective for ESL learners (Drucker, 2003, p 27)." Instead, teach vocabulary by using new meaningful words integrated with text. Write word meanings on labels around the room and put

margins in notes and journals for students to go back and put in definitions later. Have a print-rich environment by using road signs, advertising, print media and labels. Also have print materials in the mother language of your children.

Total Physical Response

Singing with sign language or using actions when telling stories are a technique known as total physical response (TPR) that has been proven to work well.

Learning Styles

As shown through Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, each child learns differently. Some of the intelligences indicated by Gardner's study include musical, logical-mathematical, special, kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. An effective teacher will include a variety of learning activities and incorporate knowledge of student's learning styles through variety and choice. When students are allowed to show what they know in a way that is comparable to their learning style, the affective filter is lowered and more learning is achieved. Teachers should strive to always use visual, auditory, and tactile teaching techniques in every concept taught. The more senses that are used in a lesson, more students are likely to be reached.

Dual Immersion

"Dual language programs are frequently the best choice for language minority and majority students. However in districts with few non-native speakers of English or those with students of less common languages or those where there simply is no public or

educational support for such a program, it is possible to develop literacy skills in English without recourse to the L1 (Roberts, 1994). Well run dual immersion is more successful long-term for heritage Spanish speakers to develop higher levels of L1 and L2 proficiency than in a bilingual program and studies show that the L2 students also learn more Spanish (or another language) than they would have in just taking Spanish courses. Dual immersion does not mean students will choose to communicate in the language that is being taught in that instruction time (Potowsky, 2004).

Success in L2 may not just depend on the program but in the development of the identity and opportunities to participate in ways acceptable to them in the target language, such as at home (Potowsky, 2004). It is better to speak both languages at home and at school. "Conditions under which English is likely to be an additive process include: learning both L1 and L2 in the social context bilingualism is promoted at home, a well developed L1 before learning English; ample opportunities to interact with English speakers; the English speakers know the language well enough, learners receive appropriate instruction (Brice, 2002)." "Children who live in literature-rich home environments, regardless of whether it is in L1 or L2, develop the necessary prereading skills and literature orientation skills that result in successful reading. Reading in L1 is not detrimental to reading in L2 (Brice, 2002).

Language learning is not simply a skill that is acquired with hard work and dedication, but a complex social practice that engages the identities of language learning in ways that have received little attention in the field of SLA, students are affected by

how they are perceived as well-behaved students or as popular and funny and if they received praise at home and at school (Potowsky, 2004).

No matter the method, all children must be taught alphabetics, comprising phonemic awareness and phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and strategies for reading comprehension taught systematically, comprehensively, and explicitly. Most importantly, teachers must remember that texts must be at a level appropriate to the students' English reading ability. The material that they read should be interesting and relevant to their daily lives. Reading is the best way to improve reading. Teachers must read aloud and give their students multiple opportunities to read independently everyday (Drucker, 2003).

No matter the language being learned, the same strategies are successful in every classroom. In order for ELL to perform adequately, students must be taught in a variety of methods, increasing literacy in both languages. This study will take into consideration which techniques were used to teach English and evaluate which ones were most successful.

Method of Research:

<u>Subjects</u>

Four students were selected for this case study. They are juniors or seniors in Arkadelphia High School at the time. They were selected because of their common age and background. For the purpose of this study we will refer to them as Carlos, Blanca, Juan, and Alejandra.

Carlos:

Carlos is a 17-year-old senior. He was born in Mexico but has lived in the United States for 16 years. He moved to the U.S. with his mother and 3 younger siblings to join his dad. His mother's education reached the 6th year in Mexico and his father's reached the 9th year. Both parents desire for Carlos to have a good education so that he can have a better future. His father has average conversational English skills while his mother has very little. Spanish is the preferred language at their home.

Blanca:

Blanca is a 17-year-old senior. She was born in Mexico City but has lived in the states for 11 years. She is 3rd of 8 children. She had a difficult time acquiring English but had an older sister in school that helped her obtain language skills.

Juan:

Juan is a 17-year-old junior. He was born in Michigan and has lived in the United States all his life. He is the youngest of three children in his household. His family moved to the U.S. almost 25 years ago. His father has good conversational English skills while his mother speaks only Spanish. Juan had the advantage of hearing English at a young age because he was born and raised in the States with older brothers and sisters who were learning the language for school.

Alejandra:

Alejandra is a 17-year-old senior. Her mother has conversational English skills and is actively pursuing greater literacy. Her father has no English skills. Spanish is the only language spoken in her home. She moved away and unfortunately was not able to participate in this case study.

Method

The method used was a case study approach. A case study is an in-depth investigation of one person or of a small group of individuals. In this case a small group of Hispanic friends in Arkadelphia High School. This method is appropriate for this type of study because it has been successfully used through history to record developmental progress in children. Theorists such as Darwin, Freud, and Piaget have recorded emotional, cognitive, and language development.

The advantage to case studies is that they provide useful, in-depth information about a certain type of development, in our case L2. The disadvantage is that it only gives us information about the small group of people that participated in this study. Cause-effect relationships cannot be concluded in a case study and they are more susceptible to bias that the researcher may have because she has emphasized on one aspect of development and left other areas neglected. However, the case study method provides valuable in depth information about the Hispanic population in Arkadelphia that another method may not be able to conclude.

<u>Instrument</u>

The instrument used in this study was observation of language development over time through peer interaction outside of the school setting, and oral dialogue based on interview questions with the students, caretakers of the students, their English teachers, and special educators in Arkadelphia that work with the Spanish speaking community in Arkadelphia schools. The research stated previously was taken into consideration as the known factors that affect ELL's and the variables that might affect each student. The following questions were reviewed with other language and cultural specialist until refined to the following list.

1. Student:

    a. How long have you lived in Arkadelphia?

    b. Where did you live before you moved here?

    c. What are some differences in teaching techniques you remember from your former school?

    d. How well did you perform there? What was your biggest struggle?

    e. Are you enjoying your education experience?

    f. How difficult is schoolwork for you?

    g. What are the hardest things you encounter in school?

    h. Who helps you with your schoolwork?

    i. Do you understand your teachers when they instructs you?

    j. Do you understand the assignments your teachers give you?

    k. How does your teacher challenge you?

l. Do you feel like the teacher involves you in the class like the other students?

m. Do you ever put your head down in class and stop paying attention? When? Why?

n. Which language is your favorite? Why?

o. When you dream, what language(s) do you dream in?

p. Do you ever switch back and forth between languages in conversation? Why?

q. What was the most helpful thing to you when you were first acquiring English?

r. What do you remember most about the time when you were first acquiring your second language?

s. How well do you feel like you understand spoken English (reading and writing)?

t. Where do you read most? Why?

u. Do you read at home? What? How much?

v. Do you struggle in Spanish ever? If yes, then how so?

w. Have you ever been tested for any kind of language disorder? If yes, then what did they find?

x. If you were tested, what language were you tested in?

2. Caretaker(s):

   a. How long has your family lived in Arkadelphia?

   b. Where did you live before that?

   c. How well did your child perform in his previous school? What did they do differently that helped or hurt your child's language?

   d. How long have you been in this country?

   e. Do you recall how easily your child learned Spanish as a child (see chart)?

   f. What is the language that is generally spoken in your home?

   g. Can you help your child with his/her homework? Why or why not?

   h. Which language does your child prefer to speak at home?

   i. Does your child read at home? What? How often?

   j. Do you encourage him to read? How often?

   k. Which language does your child prefer to speak with his/her friends?

   l. Does your child struggle in any way with Spanish? If so, then how?

   m. Have you ever tested your child for learning differences? Why?

   n. Have you ever wanted to test your child for any kind of learning difference? If yes, then why?

3. General Educator

   a. What training have you received for second language learners?

   b. How do you use that training in your classroom for this student?

   c. How has your student responded to learning how to speak and being spoken to in English?

d. Does he/she primarily socialize with English speaking or Spanish speaking students?

e. Do you think this student's difficulty with language has affected other areas of his/her education? How so?

f. What struggles does your student have with in school?

g. How do these struggles affect his/her overall achievement?

h. Do you make any special modifications for this student?

i. How has he/she improved throughout the year?

j. What techniques/modifications have been the most successful for this student in his/her language development?

4. Special Educators:

a. What training have you received for second language learners?

b. How do you use that training in your classroom for your students?

c. How long does your training/certification last?

d. Why do your students come to you?

e. How many do you have? Is that number flexible or do you have a maximum number of students you can work with?

f. How often do you help your students? How do you decide how much time to spend with whom?

g. What activities or services do you offer your students in and out of school?

h. What progress have you seen your student make?

i. What is the best success story you have? Why do you think this student did so well?

j. What have been the most helpful methods and techniques that you have used while working with your students?

k. Do you think this student's difficulty with language has affected other areas of his/her education? Which ones and how so?

l. What do you think is the primary cause for ELL's difficulty in school?

m. Do you offer any services to the parents of your students? If so what are they and how often?

n. Do you offer any services to the classroom teachers of your students? If so what are they and how often are they provided?

Procedure

After deciding on a case study method because of the limited population and resources in Arkadelphia, four students were selected who were willing to participate in this study. The students who were chosen have spent most if not all of their school age years in Arkadelphia and were about 17 years old at the time of the study. Each of the participants has graduated high school.

The guardians of the subjects were asked to give permission for his or her child to be used in the study. The guardians gave permission for the students to be observed, questioned, and for any pertinent assessments or records to be viewed. The students were observed over time in several social and educational environments, in and out of school. Then they were questioned along with their parents and some of their teachers. After all the information was collected, it was synthesized and reviewed so that the most pertinent information could be found to help educators of ELL.

Results:

Each of the students studied are now fluent in English because of their hard work and years of schooling. Those students with siblings and other close relatives in the schools do much better because English is used more often at home. Conversational English will always be easier than literacy. These students still struggle with grammar and vocabulary commonly in both languages, especially vocabulary in context.

The students in this survey received ESL in elementary school such as tutoring and pull out programs. Blanca specifically remembers pictures being helpful by connecting meaning to text, which is proven by research. However, these students did not receive any extra help from the school, class, or district by the secondary level.

Carlos was expected to translate for other ELL students that were at lower levels of L2 understanding. This might have helped his language and the other students as well, but it also caused stress and frustration in his education. Teaching is the best way to learn, however his teaching held him back as he couldn't do his work or extend his thinking because others were depending on him to help them catch up.

Blanca and Juan were both involved in sports and other extracurricular activities while Carlos and Alejandra were surrounded only by activities that only involved their cultural group outside of school. Blanca and Juan both showed characteristics of a high level of English language fluency and comprehension while Carlos and Alejandra are less confident in their linguistic, social, and academic abilities.

In the case of these students, as with many L2 students, their parents all had very low levels of education and experienced life in the developing world. The parents cared very much for their children to receive a quality education so that their children would

have a "better life" than they. These students were lucky to have a morally supportive home even when they couldn't help academically. Their home support fostered self-motivated learners.

Conclusions:

One main conclusion that can be drawn from this case study is that ELL can rise above and beyond all the challenges that they face and can succeed in Arkadelphia schools. However, success may not start to show until upper elementary or junior high. If it takes 5-11 years of intensive study to master L2, then these students will not be on the same level as the other students were in kindergarten and first grade until about 5th grade. This is of course for students who begin L2 development in the first few years of their education. Older students who begin ELL in Jr. High or older are struggling to learn content as well as the language at the same time. With appropriate support in the schools and motivation, ELL's can master the language and the skills required in school, however they will always have to work to overcome obvious cultural and language boundaries with or without a specific learning difference.

Although the students in this case study were average successful High School students, this study shows that Arkadelphia public schools are not equipped nor are they making modifications to help ELL's succeed within the classroom and the community. Many teachers were interviewed who did little to no modifications or accommodations that are proven to be effective through research. Primary schools tend to use more effective literacy techniques that improve language acquisition for all students; however no cultural accommodations are made. Students must qualify for ESL through testing, but often the tests are not comparable to ELL's needs. At the secondary level no academic or cultural accommodates were found in this study other than the few services offered for those who qualify. The subjects in this case study did not qualify for ESL services.

As students contribute effort to completely acquire L2, they should be encouraged to become involved in sports and activities like soccer have higher levels of fluency because of the amount of English used outside of the classroom in social interactions. Many Spanish-speaking students have time-consuming jobs that help them contribute to the family, a cultural expectation in most high school Hispanic students, especially males over the age of 15. Students who choose to work in situations where both languages must be used adapt much more early to a variety of cultural situations.

Educators must work together to help these students throughout their education by making modifications in their classroom for these students. They should incorporate some of the best practices mentioned in this paper, which will not only be efficient for ELL but all other students in their classes. Teachers should also find out what resources for L2 students have from the state, district, and school. Often translators and tutoring services are available during and after school hours.

Standardized tests pose a weakness for ELL's because of the language barriers they must overcome. Since students must qualify for special help and services from the school, the State Board of Education should consider these factors as they modify qualifications for a student to be considered ESL. One-on-one or small group interaction with a trained ESL teacher amplifies the ability for that child to acquire L2 and succeed in the schools.

Bibliography

Brice, A., (2002). *The Hispanic Child: Speech, Language, Culture, and Education.* New Jersey: Ally & Bacon.

Drucker, Mary J., (2003). *What Reading Teachers Should Know about ESL Learners. The Reading Teacher, 57(1),* 22-29.

Ernst-Slavit, G., Moore, M., & Maloney, C. (2002) *Changing lives: Teaching English and Literature to ESL Students. Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 46(2),* 116-129.

Garner, Howard (1993) Frames of Mind: The theory of multiple intelligences, New York: Basic Books.

Harrie, R.., & Weller, C., (2003) *What is Dyslexia: 1984 Digest.*

Krashen, S., (2000). *What Does it Take to Acquire Language. ESL Magazine, 3(3),* 22-23.

Mattes, L. J., & Omark, D. R., (1984). *Speech and Language Assessment for the Bilingual Handicapped.* San Diego: College-Hill Press.

Meece, J. L., (2002). *Child & Adolescent Development for Educators.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Potowsky, K,, (2004). *Student Spanish Use and Investment in a Dual Immersion Classroom: Implications for Second Language Acquisition and Heritage Language Maintenance. The Modern Language Journal, 88,* 75-101.

Roberts, C. (1994). *Transferring Literacy Skills From L1 to L2: From Theory to Practice. The Journal of Educational Issues of Language Minority Students 13,* 209-221

Saracho, O., (1990). *Cognitive Style and Early Education: Cognitive Style and Mexican American Children's Perceptions of Reading.* New York: Gordan and Breach Science Pub.

Shaywitz, B., & Shaywitz, S., (2004) *Reading Disability and the Brain. Educational Leadership, 61(6),* 6-12.

Shaywitz, S., (1996). *Dyslexia. Scientific American. 1196,* 2-13.

Shaywitz, S., (2003). *Overcoming Dyslexia: A New and Complete Science-Based Program for Reading Problems at Any Level.* New York: Alfred a Knopf Inc.

Tokuhama-Espinosa, T. (Ed.). (2003). *The Multilingual Mind: Issues Discussed By, For, and About People Living with Many Languages.* Prager:Greenwood Publishing Group.

Valdivia, R., (1920). *The Implications of Culture on Developmental Delay.* (Report No. EDO-EC-99-17). Washington, DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement. (ERIC Digest, E589).

---

[i] Based on US census record from July 1, 2003-July 1, 2004
http://www.census.gov/popest/international.html
[ii] National center for Infants, Toddlers, and families (1995); National institutes of Mental Health (1995).
[iii] *Changing lives: Teaching English and Literature to ESL Students* (2002).