Report of the National Literacy Panel for Language Minority Children and Youth

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English Language Learners in Head Start Programs

• 28% of Head Start families speak a primary language other than English at home.

• Approximately 140 different home languages represented nationwide in the EHS/HS population

• About 80 percent are from Spanish-speaking homes

Source: Head Start Program Information Report for the 2003–2004 Program Year
Children who Speak a Language Other Than English at Home

![Bar chart showing the number of children who speak a language other than English at home for years 1979, 1989, and 1999. The chart indicates a significant increase in the number of children speaking a language other than English from 1979 to 1999.](chart_image)
Demographics

• Proportion of Latinos in the U.S. child population is expected to reach 28% by 2050 (Harwood, Leyendecker, Carlson, Asencio, & Miller, 2002).

Latino families continue to be over-represented among America’s poor (Suarez-Orozco & Paez, 2002)

• The number of Latino children served by EHS/HS can be expected to further increase over the coming decades.
Learners with reading difficulties

Language minority learners

Learners from low-income backgrounds
Purpose of a National Panel

• Develop an objective research review methodology
• Analyze and synthesize the existing evidence about the development of literacy for language minority learners
• Develop a final report with recommendations for research
Support for the Panel

- Institute of Education Sciences
- Additional support
  - National Institute for Child Health and Development
  - Office of English Language Acquisition
Panel Process

- US Department of Education constitutes the panel
- Five panel meetings, several subgroup meetings, and numerous, ongoing conference calls
- Five working groups each focused on a different domain
- Seven electronic searches and hand searches of key journals
- Criteria established for inclusion
- Coding of all studies in a file-maker database
- Manuscript development
- One internal round of review and 2 external rounds of review
- Extensive editing and revisions
Panel Members

- Diane August, Principal Investigator
- Timothy Shanahan, Chair
- Fred Genesee
- Esther Geva
- Michael Kamil
- Isabelle Beck
- Linda Siegel
- Keiko Koda
- David Francis
- Claude Goldenberg
- Robert Rueda
- Margarita Calderon
- Gail McKoon
- Georgia Garcia

Senior Research Associates
- Cheryl Dressler
- Nonie Lesaux

Senior Advisors
- Donna Christian
- Catherine Snow
- Frederick Erickson
Parameters for Research Synthesis

- Language minority children
- 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 1980-2002
Topics

• Development of literacy
• Relationship between second language oral proficiency and second language literacy
• Cross-linguistic relationships
• Socio-cultural factors that influence literacy
• Schooling: Effective instructional practices and professional development
• Assessment
Development: Research Questions

• What are the differences and similarities between LM and native speakers in the development of various literacy skills in the societal language?
  • What factors have an influence on the literacy development of LM students?

• What are the profiles of those LM students identified as having literacy difficulties?
  • Prevalence of difficulty
Development of Literacy Skills

- Precursor literacy skills
  - Understanding of print, phonological processing
- Word-level skills
  - Word Reading
  - Spelling
- Text-level skills
  - Reading comprehension
  - Writing
Methodology Specific to Development Review

- Studies conducted with LM learners acquiring the societal language
  - English, Dutch
- Relevant literacy outcome measures
- Quantitative measurement and analysis
Precursor Literacy Skills

• Phonological processing skills (L1 or L2)
  • Phonemic awareness
  • Rapid naming
  • Phonological memory
• Concepts of print
• Print awareness

  • e.g., Bialystok, 1997; Chiappe & Siegel, 1999; Cisero & Royer, 1995; Chiappe, Siegel, & Wade-Woolley, 2002; Jackson, Holm, & Dodd, 1998
Main Findings: ELLs vs. Monolinguals

- Converging evidence that LM learners and monolinguals have *equivalent* word recognition and decoding skills
  - Diverse linguistic backgrounds (Asian languages, Arabic, Italian, Portuguese, Punjabi, Turkish, Urdu)
  - Diverse demographic contexts (Canada, the Netherlands, UK, US)
  - Combination of cross-sectional and longitudinal studies
  - Varying ages (K through 8th grade)
Reading Comprehension: ELLs vs. Monolinguals

- Limited amount of research that investigated the development of reading comprehension skills for LM learners

- 5 studies that compared LM learners and native speakers
  - LM learners’ generally performed at lower levels than native speakers
    - Aarts & Verhoeven, 1999; Droop & Verhoeven, 1998; Hacquebord, 1994; Verhoeven, 1990, 2000

- Multiples studies used a within-group design to examine factors that influence reading comprehension of LM learners
Predictors of Reading Comprehension

- Individual-level factors
  - e.g., vocabulary, background knowledge, motivation, strategy use
- Contextual factors
  - e.g., home literacy practices
- Text factors
  - Story structure
Reading Difficulties

- The reading difficulties of LM learners reading in their second language resemble reading disabilities as identified in research with native speakers.

- Similar presentation and prevalence of difficulties related to foundational skills:
  - Phonological awareness, word reading, spelling.
  - Abu-Rabia & Siegel, 2002; Chiappe & Siegel, 1999; Da Fontoura & Siegel, 1995; Chiappe, Siegel, & Wade-Woolley, 2002; Everatt, Smythe, Adams, & Ocampo, 2000; Limbos & Geva, 1999; Miramontes, 1987; Wade-Woolley & Siegel, 1997.
Implications to consider…

• Sources of low achievement not limited to disability
• Early screening for intervention services must include measures of vocabulary and oral language
• Typical classroom curriculum not enough to promote low-income ELLs’ vocabulary
• Candidates for early intervention programs that focus on oral language;
  • retention without intervention not likely to be effective
Future Directions for Research

• Readiness
  • Preschool and kindergarten predictors of later outcomes
  • Effects of preschool attendance

• Rates and predictors of growth in oral language and reading abilities

• Component skills of reading comprehension
  • preschool to 12
Future Directions for Research

• Replication and extension of previous research
  • Design, assessments, samples
• Longitudinal studies
• The influence of contextual and demographic factors on development
  • Neighbourhood characteristics, socioeconomic status
  • Instruction
  • Age of arrival
• Two-group design: Comparative lens is crucial