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Research Question

What changes in practice are required to support English language development for English learners in second grade within a two-way immersion program?

Context

I teach English language development (ELD) in a Spanish-English two-way immersion elementary school in the Mission district of San Francisco. The program is a 90/10 model in which kindergarten students receive 90% of the instruction in Spanish and 10% in English. Each year another 10% is added to English time, so that by fourth grade the students spend half their day in Spanish and half in English. Objectives of the program include fostering bilingualism, biliteracy and respect for and appreciation of both Latino culture and the Spanish language. The school's population has historically been a majority English dominant speakers learning Spanish as enrichment with a minority of English learners. Over the past ten years, the demographics have changed dramatically. In 1995, 17.8% of our students were designated as English learners (EL), in 2000, 27.9% and in 2005, 56%. The change in demographics has forced school staff to re-evaluate the program, and at the same time, questions are surfacing regarding the experience of our minority students, particularly our English learners. More native Spanish-speaking families, a number of whom are recent arrivals to the United States, have begun to enroll their children in the school with little information about the nature of two-way immersion and the 90/10 program model. Many of these families, as well as other parents of English learners, are worried that their children are not learning English at the rate of their peers in other non-immersion district and private schools, and are concerned about the limited amount of time their children receive instruction in English. Their concerns are valid, and our need to address them is urgent. For 2004-5, only 9% of our fifth grade English learners reached "proficient" level on the English Language Arts section of the California Standards Test (CST), while 55% of our English dominant fifth graders did. At the same time, current research on two-way immersion programs, Collier & Thomas (2004) and Kathryn Lindholm-Leary (2005), suggests that immersion education best meets the needs of English learners over time. This is the context in which we find ourselves at my school.

Rationale

My question originates from my three years of experience as a third grade teacher and currently as the English Language Development (ELD) resource teacher. Our program provides for literacy instruction exclusively in Spanish through second grade. Third grade marks the beginning of formal reading and writing instruction in English. By this year, students are expected to have transitioned into reading and writing in English without explicit English literacy instruction. While some students, particularly native English speakers, do make this transition naturally, many English learners do not. While teaching third grade, I struggled to find a balance between covering the long list of English

Language Arts (ELA) and science content standards for third grade while meeting the needs of many different levels of English literacy, all during the seventy minutes allotted for English class each day.

This year, as an ELD teacher, I worked across the grade levels and had access to English curriculum and classes in grades K-2. My preliminary action research question revolved around bridging literacy from Spanish to English between second and third grades. I began my study by exploring the question of which ELA standards second and third grade teachers should focus on to support students in this transition. The task of examining the extensive lists of ELA standards for both grades and working with teachers to choose which ones fit into the hour (second grade) to seventy minutes (third grade) of daily English instruction seemed overwhelming. I needed a more accessible entry point. During the first semester, I attended a series of meetings for immersion schools hosted by the district's Multilingual Programs, as well as a presentation at University of California at Davis (UC Davis) by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) on "The Effectiveness of Immersion Education for English Learners," (Christian and Genesee, 2004). What I learned at these meetings and presentation helped me frame my work around current research.

At the Multilingual Programs meetings, teachers in district two-way immersion programs met in grade level teams to discuss and plan for transitioning students into English literacy. Most striking to me at the meetings was that no two-way immersion school in the district had a clear answer or policy for literacy instruction in English before the third grade. However, during these meetings, Multilingual clearly laid out four essential components research suggests make for an effective English language development (ELD) class and support the transition into English literacy within bilingual programs, regardless of program structure itself. These four components include: 1) the direct teaching of academic language structures, 2) vocabulary development, 3) a base of phonemic awareness and phonics skills in English and 4) explicit instruction on language transference. I also learned that throughout all of these components, the crucial thread is providing for structured oral language practice on a daily basis in a variety of student groupings.

At the UC Davis presentation by the director of CAL, Donna Christian, on the effectiveness of two-way immersion programs for English learners, attendees including two-way immersion teachers, state and district administrators, as well as graduate students in education, all sought direction on when to begin formal literacy instruction in English within two-way immersion programs. According to Christian, there is no body of research that answers this question. However, she also recommended incorporating the four aforementioned components into planning for an effective ELD class as well as for the transition into English literacy in two-way programs.

Review of Literature

The first component recommended for an effective ELD program, academic language, originates from Cummins' research on the distinction between two different types of

language proficiency, BICS, basic interpersonal communicative skills, and CALP, cognitive academic language proficiency, (Cummins, 1979).

> Thus, conversational abilities often develop relatively quickly among immigrant second language learners because these forms of communication are supported by interpersonal and contextual clues and make relatively few cognitive demands on the individual. Mastery of the academic functions of language, on the other hand, is a more formidable task such uses require high levels of cognitive involvement and are only minimally supported by contextual or interpersonal cues.
> (Cummins, 2000, 68.)

This distinction is important as academic success depends on students' academic language, not their interpersonal communicative skills. While teachers at my school have a general understanding of this distinction, we have not had guidance in planning for explicit instruction of academic language. Through the California Reading and Literacy Project (CRLP), many schools across California have had access to professional development and training on the teaching of academic language. Susana Dutro, through her work for the CRLP, in <u>A Focus Approach to Frontloading English Language Instruction</u> (2003), recommends frontloading language for reading and language arts when teaching English learners.

> We analyze the language demands of the upcoming lesson and determine the language skills essential for students to be able to participate through listening, speaking, reading and writing. We teach these language skills in an up-front investment of time to render the content understandable to the student. This frontloading not only refers to vocabulary, but also to the grammatical forms or structures of language needed for receptive and expressive engagement with the content. (Dutro, 2003, 1.6.)

Vocabulary development, the second component, is a critical piece of language frontloading, as research on second language learners shows that it is the single best predictor of academic achievement across content areas, (Saville-Troike, 1984). Cummins, in a speech on language minority education, summarizes research on vocabulary development and its connection to reading comprehension.

> After the initial grades, reading comprehension is predicated primarily by the amount that students actually read; extensive reading provides access to a wide range of vocabulary which has consistently shown to be the strongest predictor of readability; psychometrically, vocabulary knowledge is virtually indistinguishable from reading comprehension.
> (Cummins, 2001, II.5)

Cummins continues to discuss supporting language minority students in acquiring literacy. "The most effective approaches to developing initial reading skills (decoding) combine extensive and varied exposure to meaningful print with explicit and systematic

instruction in phonemic awareness and letter-sound correspondence," (Cummins, 2001, II.2). Phonemic awareness and phonics instruction in English, the third component, has traditionally begun in third grade at my school, yet research recommends that this happen much earlier. In a paper presented at the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs, Durgunoglu and Öney write, "Turning to phonological awareness, there is extensive evidence to support claims that this is a skill that can and should be included in early literacy instruction," (Durgunoglu and Öney, 2000, 86).

The fourth and final component, explicit instruction on language transference, is discussed in Cummins' book, Language, Power and Pedagogy (2000). In his conclusions for instructional implications for bilingual programs he states, "the development of critical language awareness should be fostered throughout the program by encouraging students to compare and contrast their language (e.g. phonics conventions, grammar, cognates, etc.) (Cummins 2000, 23)." Explicit instruction on language transference has often been deemed unnecessary by teachers in two-way immersion programs, as they have assumed students will naturally absorb and learn about languages' similarities and differences. For example, talking about language two during instruction in language one has generally been regarded as "breaking the immersion model." This way of thinking about immersion education has created great disadvantages for students, particularly English learners. Instruction of language transference applies across the previous three components, and can be addressed in a variety of contexts in the classroom. In addition, knowledge and study of language transference fosters the development of metalinguistic abilities, shown by research to promote facility in learning additional languages (Cummins, 2000, 37).

Data collection

The first tool I used in collecting data was a questionnaire for parents of English learners. The comments from the questionnaire led me to develop one for the staff as well. Later, my data became more connected to the time I spent with a second grade English class. I began to take notes both at planning meetings with the second grade team, and during and after small group instruction in a second grade English class.

I also collected data by taking direct transcriptions of student language from three second graders at the beginning of the year, and on two separate occasions during the second semester in order to both view their language through the lens of the language levels assigned by the state through the CELDT (California English Language Development Test) and to assess the changes in my teaching practices in my attempt to support English learners.

Data Round One- Parent and Teacher Questionnaires

My first piece of data was the parent response to a questionnaire I gave to families of English learners during one of our monthly Latino parent meetings, formally called the "English Language Advisory Committee" (ELAC). In the questionnaire I asked parents to rank concerns, ask questions and make recommendations for potential topics of

exploration and discussion at our subsequent ELAC meetings. Many concerns and questions surfaced about the "lack of structure" during English time, about when and how formal reading and writing begins in English and about the need for direct guidance from the administration on what instruction teachers were expected to provide for English reading and writing before second grade. (See Table 1.)

Table 1

FROM QUESTIONNAIRE GIVEN TO PARENTS OF ENGLISH LEARNERS

Figure: Out of 27 parents who filled out questionnaires, 26 marked "English Program" in top four choices for educational workshops or informational meetings.

Parent quotes from questionnaire:

"Mi hijo quiere comenzar a leer en inglés pero necesito herramientos de aprendizaje en inglés." (My child wants to begin reading in English but I need the teaching tools to do this in English.)

"Por qué no dejan que las clases de inglés estén más estructuradas?" (Why don't the English classes have more structure?)

The questionnaire results led me to develop two presentations for parents on the structure of our English program. At both presentations, I walked families through our program grade by grade and was able to answer questions about grouping, content and individual class structure. While these meetings helped parents gain clarity about English class, the unanswered questions about how to support English learners in transitioning into English literacy guided me in framing the rest of my study. They also directed me in formulating a questionnaire for teachers about our English program.

In the teacher questionnaire, I asked grade level teams to comment on how the district's newly-adopted ELD program for 2005-6, "On Our Way to English," was working in their English classes. More specifically, I asked them to write how they felt they were meeting the needs of English learners during English time. The teacher remarks and our conversation after responding to the questionnaire echoed parent concerns and expressed the desire for direct guidance from the administration on the question of literacy instruction in English. (See Table 2.)

Table 2

FROM QUESTIONNAIRE GIVEN TO TEACHERS
Teacher quotes from questionnaire and from subsequent staff conversation:
"We need to know whether or not we should encourage students to be writing in English in first grade." (K-1 teacher)
"*Rigby* (the district-adopted ELD program) calls for both reading and writing in English in Kinder and first grade. We can't implement half of the program, if we are not supposed to teach reading and writing!" (K-1 teacher)
"The science curriculum we developed for English time engages the students much more than *Rigby*, and we already spent a year connecting it to the ELD (English Language Development) standards!" (2nd grade teacher)
"My English learners need help and *Rigby* is not the answer!" (5th grade teacher)

Data Round Two- Action in a Second Grade Classroom

After analyzing the questionnaires and attending the meetings through both the district and CAL, the Center for Applied Linguistics, I started working with the whole staff on professional development related to our school-wide English program, and more intensively with the second grade team on finding ways to begin incorporating the aforementioned components into our English class time: 1) the direct teaching of academic language structures, 2) vocabulary development, 3) a base of phonemic awareness and phonics skills in English and 4) explicit instruction on language transference.

The second grade team and I used these components in conjunction with the California Science standards, the English Language Development (ELD) standards and the English Language Arts (ELA) standards to augment what and how we were teaching English during the allotted hour each day. We had started the year using only the district's new ELD program, "On Our Way to English," under the direction of our principal, setting aside the science content developed through a previous grant in which the second grade team had incorporated the ELD standards into the science instruction. Mid-way through the first semester, with the permission of our principal, and by focusing on academic language, vocabulary development, phonemic awareness/phonics and language transference, we returned to Science as our instructional content, much to the relief of the second grade team, as they felt we could most effectively incorporate these four components through this rich and hands-on content. At the same time we would be able to address the second grade science standards, which we had given up in implementing the district-adopted ELD program.

Our principle areas of focus became incorporating phonemic awareness and phonics instruction into our daily routine as well as planning how to provide for academic oral

language practice. We reformatted the hour of English class each day and provided Centers time with teacher-guided centers focused on structured academic oral language practice, or frontloading (Dutro, 2003), and phonemic awareness/phonics activities. We decided to begin studying a consonant each week with the whole class and in independent centers, focusing on the consonants that do not transfer directly from Spanish to English and engaging students in discussion about their similarities and differences. Finally, we practiced science vocabulary in whole groups, teacher-guided and independent centers through experiments, science journaling and reading fiction and non-fiction books related to our science themes. As I worked with the second grade team, it became clear that I needed to choose one of these components for my action with second graders during English time. I decided to concentrate on academic language with particular attention to facilitating oral language practice among students in pairs, small groups, individually and with the teacher as a model.

In weekly planning meetings with the second grade team, we chose the functions of "Describing," "Sequencing" and "Cause and Effect" as integral pieces of the expressive and receptive language platform for a science unit on natural resources. These functions are part of the English Language Arts (ELA) standards for second grade, and we felt that their use in Science would support development of English literacy. While we planned for these functions to be taught in whole group activities, I planned for my small group center to be focused on oral practice of different language structures related to each function. My guide in planning the center activities was the California Reading and Literature Project's (CRLP) handbook, <u>A Focused Approach to Frontloading English Language Instruction</u>, (Dutro, 2003). The handbook provides sample language structures, or sentence frames, for each of the five CELDT (California English Language Development Test) language levels for all of the language functions listed in the ELA standards. (See Table 3 for a description of CELDT language levels.) From the handbook, I chose and modified between three to five sentence frames for each language function I taught to "Beginner" to "Intermediate" English learners, as this particular class was made up of students from these levels (See Tables 4-6). I planned for different ways in which the students could orally practice the structures. During the twenty to twenty-five minutes of Centers time four days a week, I met with two groups of four to five students for about ten minutes, working with each group of students twice a week.

Teaching the Functions of "Describing," "Sequencing" and "Cause and Effect"

For the first week of "Describing," I worked with the students on drawing and describing each other and objects in the room. The second week, I used a big book with photographs of natural resources. First, the students brainstormed words to describe the resources while I recorded them. Then, they chose from three different sentence frames written out on sentence strips. (See Table 4.) Students were able to apply these structures throughout the rest of the year, making them more complex syntactically and semantically. They often returned to the basic structures at the beginning of new units, building on them as they grew comfortable with the content.

We worked on "Sequencing" for three weeks with the focus on the use of transitional words and phrases. For the first week, we used the transition words, *first, then, after and last*, and reviewed life cycles of butterflies and frogs, content from a previous unit. The second week I added new transition words and phrases- *to begin, second, third, fourth* and *finally*. Students worked in pairs, one student orally describing the water cycle, our current study, while the other drew pictures in a graphic organizer, and vice versa. The third week we worked in pairs sequencing any part of our day using the same graphic organizer, but incorporating new transition words. (See Table 5.)

For the first week of "Cause and Effect," I told children stories about my life focusing on causal structures while they helped identify the effect. Then, they worked in pairs telling their own cause and effect stories. For example, "*Adrián is mad because Shawna pushed him at recess.*" We used a graphic organizer to draw pictures of the causes and effects for the stories the students and I told. The second week, we applied the language structures to the topic of deforestation after having read several books on the topic with the whole class. (See Table 6.)

Table 3

CELDT LEVELS	Descriptions of English Levels adapted from <u>A Focused Approach</u>, (Dutro, 2003, 2.9-2.15)
BEGINNING	• Comprehend high frequency words / basic phrases. • Produce learned words and phrases using common nouns and verbs. • Use gestures to communicate.
EARLY INTERMEDIATE	• Comprehend sequence of information on familiar topics. • Produce basic statements and ask questions in informal exchanges on familiar and routine subjects.
INTERMEDIATE	• Comprehend information on familiar topics. • Produce sustained conversation on expanding variety of general topics. • Comprehend main ideas and basic concepts in content areas.
EARLY ADVANCED	• Comprehend detailed information on unfamiliar topics with fewer contextual clues. • Initiate and sustain spontaneous language interactions using circumlocution when necessary.
ADVANCED	• Communicate effectively with various audiences on a wide range of familiar and new topics to meet social and academic demands. • Comprehend concrete and abstract topics, and recognize language subtleties in a variety of communicative settings.

Table 4

DESCRIBING THINGS	
Descriptions of expectations for oral language at different CELDT levels	
Beginning	Common nouns and adjectives
Early Intermediate	Simple sentences with the verb "to be," using common nouns, pronouns, articles (the, a) and adjectives
Intermediate	Elaborated sentences has/have/had or is/are/were with nouns and adjectives.
Structures/Sentence Frames taught:	
Beginner	It is _____. He/ she is____ . They are _____ .
Early Intermediate	The ____ is / are _____ and _____ .
Intermediate	The ____ is / are _____ _____ .
The ____ has/have _____ _____ .	
*Adapted from A Focused Approach, (Dutro, 2003, 3.3)	

Table 5

SEQUENCING	
Descriptions of expectations for oral language at different Celdt levels	
Beginning	Single words in response to past tense questions
Early Intermediate	Simple sentences with present and past progressive verb tenses
Intermediate	Simple and compound sentences with regular and irregular past tense verbs and basic signal words (first, next, then)
Structures/Sentence Frames taught:	
Transition words: first, second, third, fourth, then, after, next, last, finally, to begin	
(I introduced four transition words the first week, three the next and two the last week.)	
*Adapted from A Focused Approach, (Dutro, 2003, 3.17)	

Table 6

CAUSE AND EFFECT	
Descriptions of expectations for oral language at different Celdt levels	
Beginning	Non-verbal responses and/or one-word answers to cause/effect questions
Early Intermediate	Simple sentences with present and past tense verbs
Intermediate	More elaborated sentences with past, present tense verbs and coordinating conjunctions (*because, so*) and *would*
Structures/Sentence Frames taught:	
Beginner	____ is _____.
Early Intermediate	____ is _____ because _____ .
____ is _____, so _____ .	
Intermediate	Because_____ , ____ is/are_____.
If _____ , then _____ .	
*Adapted from A Focused Approach, (Dutro, 2003, 3.47)	

The Final Piece of Data- Assessment

During the first month of school, I administered the CELDT, California English Language Development Test, to English learners in grades 2-5. For the speaking section of the test, I typed on my laptop while students spoke, taking direct transcriptions, for the purpose of studying the language samples and sharing information with teachers about errors students were making at each grade level. While this methodology was not a formal transcription from a recording, I felt it useful for my goal of looking at common grammatical errors in large numbers of students in each grade. While typing, I focused on complete sentences, descriptive words and grammatical errors related to students translating directly from Spanish to English. Although I began my action research after administering the test, I used the language transcriptions from three second-grade English learners in my English class to gain a better grasp of what student language looked like at different state-assigned levels. I then compared these language samples with samples taken from the same three students using the same methodology on two other occasions during the second semester. I did this to assess student progress in their use of complete sentences, descriptive words and transitional words or phrases. In the first of the spring assessments, I specifically evaluated use of descriptive words and in the second assessment, use of transitional words or phrases. Although the spring assessments were different in nature than the CELDT assessment in the fall, both required examination of student language in terms of complete sentences, describing actions and sequencing events.

Because my second grade English class was composed of "Beginner," "Early Intermediate" and "Intermediate" level English learners according to scores from the current school year's CELDT test, and I wanted a representative sample of this group, I chose a "Beginning" boy, "Emilio," an "Early Intermediate" girl, "Ana," and an "Intermediate" boy, "Miguel," who is beginning to read and write in English (see Table 3 for descriptions of CELDT levels). Emilio joined our program this year and is a newcomer to the U.S., while Ana and Miguel started our program in Kindergarten. In Tables 7 and 8, I compared their language samples from the beginning of the year with the samples I took during the second semester while assessing two of the English language arts functions I taught, "describing" and "sequencing." For samples of student language from each assessment, see Tables 9, 10, and 11. Table 12 shows student quotes related to metalinguistic awareness.
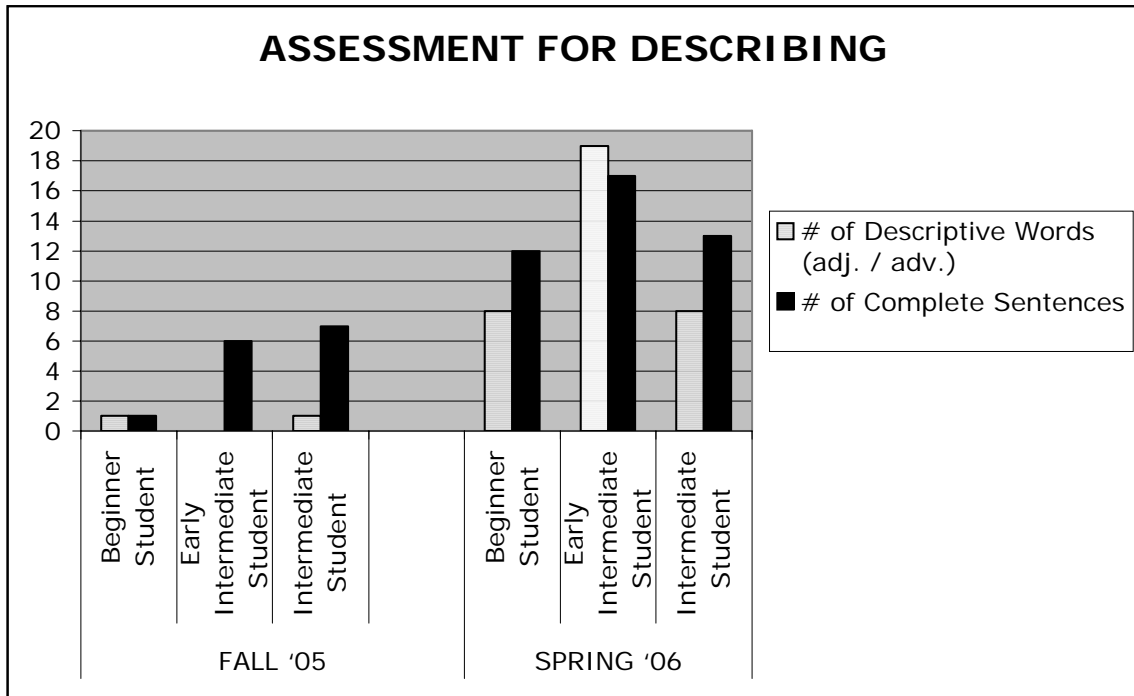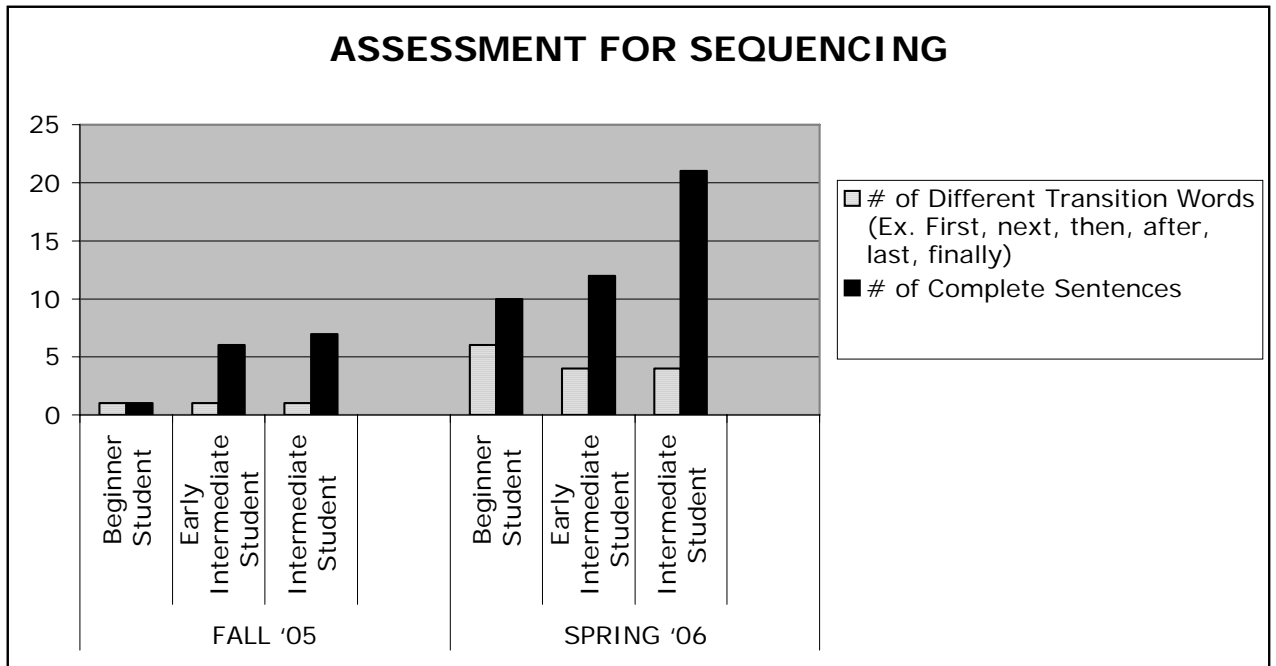
Table 7

ASSESSMENT FOR DESCRIBING

Table 8

ASSESSMENT FOR SEQUENCING

Table 9

Assessment	Emilio (Beginner): Quotes During Assessment
Fall- CELDT test (Picture narrative of children visiting library.)	"And the boy like…um, the story…"
Spring- Describing (Description of photo of forest.)	"The soil is black and a little brown."
Spring- Sequencing (Sequence of paper-making.)	"First, we need to cut it in little pieces."

Table 10

Assessment	Ana (Early Intermediate): Quotes During Assessment
Fall- CELDT test (Picture narrative of children visiting library.)	"The man was reading a book to the children, and then man showed pictures to the children."
Spring- Describing (Description of photo of forest.)	"And the trees, um, they're so tall that I can't see the branches."
Spring- Sequencing (Sequence of paper-making.)	"And then, on the last part, you put it outside and it evaporates."

Table 11

Assessment	Miguel (Intermediate): Quotes During Assessment
Fall- CELDT test (Picture narrative of children visiting library.)	"One girl was reading a book, and if she likes it she will take it."
Spring- Describing (Description of photo of forest.)	"The tall trees…if you chop one, all the trees, the animals will die because some of them lives on the trees."
Spring- Sequencing (Sequence of paper-making.)	"Then you put it in a machine that makes sounds and is loud (blender)."

Table 12

STUDENT QUOTES RELATED TO METALINGUISTIC AWARENESS
"Here I said *last,* but you could say *fourth* and *finally*." Ana
"She said *then* every time. She didn't say *next* or *after*." Miguel

Data Analysis

My data suggests that there is a starting point from which to explore parent and teacher concerns related to English learners' transition to English literacy for. Learning about the four components of an effective ELD program and planning for them with the second grade changed my focus as I moved from being overwhelmed at the prospect of sorting out how to cover the ELA standards during the short period of English each day, to feeling confident about supporting English learners and preparing them for reading and writing in English. The data I collected from parents and teachers also paved the way for the process of articulating the school's ELD program. My work with the second grade team pushed me to begin facilitating work with the whole staff on this articulation, and I was able to use what I learned in second grade in my work with English learners across all grade levels.

The data I collected in the questionnaires regarding parent and teacher concerns about expectations for reading and writing instruction in English within two-way immersion are compelling and pressing as we struggle to close the achievement gap between English learners and their English dominant peers at our school site. It seems high-stakes testing has played a large role in directing us to formally address achievement at our school site. Beginning in second grade, long before students are expected to read and write in English, the state requires them to take the California Standards Test (CST) in English. And in third grade, there is an enormous amount of pressure on students to perform at "proficient" level on the CST, again, long before immersion research suggests that English learners become truly proficient in English (Collier & Thomas, 2004). The state and district evaluate our school and draw conclusions about two-way immersion based on our test scores, and it's possible our school could eventually be formally monitored by the district or state if we do not meet the required testing score benchmarks. At the same time, I see how No Child Left Behind has forced schools to address differences in learning outcomes for different groups of students, and I believe my work as a bilingual teacher to be intricately connected to meeting the needs of all students, particularly those of English learners. The issues of accountability we are facing as a school reinforce the notion that we must be explicit in our planning and implementation of ELD, and this explicitness needs to be transparent to students, their families, the school community and the district if we are to expect continued support of two-way immersion.

The changes in my practice for teaching English to second graders, particularly in teaching academic language, gave me clear direction for instruction each week. As I became more familiar with "frontloading" academic language, the more focused I was

during planning meetings, and the more able I was to plan for facilitating student oral language through guided conversations. I also began to systematically address the English Language Arts (ELA) standards for second grade for the first time. I found I was answering my original question about which ELA standards to teach during English time as I discovered how to connect them to the science content. In addition, I learned how the ELA standards taught during Spanish language arts could be transferred to English time without re-teaching lessons and with different content.

The data I gathered in the three assessments I administered showed significant progress, but not in the ways I had predicted. Although all three students showed notable growth over the course of the year, their language did not move in the linear fashion I had imagined it would. I was struck by how Emilio's use of complete sentences increased greatly over the course of the year, moving from one to twelve complete sentences in his language sample. On the spring assessment for "describing," he used only one less complete sentence than Miguel, a student labeled two levels higher according to the CELDT. The number of descriptive words Ana uses jumps from the fall to the spring assessment on "describing," from zero descriptive words to nineteen. What surprised me most, however, were the results of the spring assessment on "sequencing" as Emilio outperformed his peers in use of different transition words.

One of the most important factors underlying the assessments is the way in which I explained the tasks to each student. On the CELDT test, I asked the children to use complete sentences and describe what was happening in a series of pictures. However, on the spring assessments, I was much more concrete with them in my expectations for their language as I told them I was evaluating how they described or sequenced, and directed them to think back on the oral language practice we had done in small groups. In the assessment for "Sequencing," I tested Miguel first. In my prompt, I asked him to sequence the steps of making paper, and was disappointed that he used so few transition words (four). When I tested Emilio and Ana, I first asked them to brainstorm all of the transition words they could remember, and specifically told them I would be listening for their use of these words. Being this explicit with Emilio might have led him in using more transition words than his peers. At the same time I wondered why Ana, even when I prompted her to use different transition words, mainly used the familiar phrase, "and then." The outcomes seem to depend on the students' understanding of the task and the explicitness of the task itself. Other factors that potentially affected outcome include the assessment environment (my office versus the classroom) and student metalinguistic awareness.

Conclusion

I organized my findings into three categories: explicitness, metalinguistic awareness and assessment. Fundamental to all three are parent communication, and teacher support and planning, both of utmost importance as we attempt to address some of the universal concerns surrounding two-way immersion and supporting English learners in their transition into English literacy at our school site.

Explicitness

The more explicit I was in both planning for and facilitating student conversation through the use of sentence frames and modeling, the richer and more complex student oral language became. At the same time, by being explicit in planning, I was able to address the ELA standards, a process that early on had seemed daunting and overwhelming. The theme of explicitness is also highlighted in the assessments I gave my three target students. Although I gave each student the same general prompts, their outcomes varied on the assessments according to the way I prepared them for the task, responded to their comments and encouraged them to elaborate. The more direct I was in communicating to them what I was looking for in my evaluations, the more successful they were. Alongside directness in communication with students, I found that being explicit with parents, leading them step-by-step through our English program, and even outlining for them our struggles and concerns, gave them a higher level of comfort with both the English program itself and with how we were examining the program to address challenges inherent in the limited amount of time scheduled for English.

Metalinguistic Awareness

I found that guiding student conversation in structured ways led them to talk their own language and that of their peers. This awareness was an unexpected outcome of my work with them, yet it seems significant in the results of my evaluations. On the two spring assessments, I expected students to monitor their use of language structures while conveying what they had learned in a particular content area. I wonder if student performance as reflected in the comparison graphs was related to student ability to attend to these two different tasks simultaneously. If so, then a more active teaching role in facilitating this awareness of language use might enhance student performance on language evaluations regardless of language level. It leads me to the goal of examining how I provide opportunities for students to think and talk about language structures before, during and after guided language practice. Metalinguistic awareness is also directly related to issues of language transference, the final recommended instructional component for ELD programs and the transition into English literacy (Cummins, 2000, 37-40). A metalinguistic grasp of the nuances of a particular language in relation to a second seems essential to success in developing bilingualism and biliteracy.

Assessment

The assessments show that the students were incorporating some of the academic language structures taught into their oral language, not always at the rate or manner in which I expected them to do so. This implies that language does not develop in an orderly fashion and brings questions to mind about how to use the state-assigned language levels of the CELDT test. Students' assigned CELDT levels should be used as a guide and a tool, rather than a box into which they fit. "Beginning" level students should not be limited in either their exposure to language structures or in teacher expectations for their oral language. Furthermore, these assigned levels must be understood through the lens of learner growth in a variety of contexts and through a complex web of social relationships.

In the assessments I administered to second graders, I spent long amounts of time working individually with students and analyzing their language samples. I had the time to do this as my role as a resource teacher allows me the freedom to incorporate this type of work into my daily schedule. Classroom teachers are more limited in their time, and rarely have moment in the day for this kind of deeper study. Teachers need support and time in both administering language assessments and using the data gathered to inform their instruction. At the same time, our school site needs to both communicate with parents, particularly parents of English learners, about their children's progress in language development and give them direct and regular access to information about program structures and practices. A concrete step in this direction would be to re-structure our parent-teacher conferences, providing time for parents to meet with their children's English teachers, as currently, teachers only meet with the parents of the students they teach in Spanish.

Policy Implications

For the 2006-7 academic year, San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) received 1,400 applications for 500 open spaces in two-way immersion programs. The district should take advantage of this interest in immersion education, particularly at a period in which families are leaving the school district as seen in our dwindling student population and current school closings. Additive programs, like two-way immersion, offering more than just language arts and math, should be supported and maintained with the financial assistance of the district and the guidance of its Multilingual Programs. Instead of individual immersion programs seeking funds through the efforts of parents and teachers seeking five-year Title VII federal grants, or gaining financial aid when test scores become low enough (through the STAR process), SFUSD should be involved in funding and research efforts across all two-way programs in the city. In addition, the district needs to support two-way immersion programs by guiding them in articulating and bettering their English programs in order to support English learners and to close the achievement gap in performance on state standardized tests in English.

Since 1990, two-way immersion programs in California have increased by 272% (California Department of Education, 1999). State educational policy needs to better support these programs through funding and research and to promote biliteracy as a benefit and value to the state. The change in demographics across California and the growing number of students whose native languages are other than English should be looked upon as an opportunity and an advantage for the state, and the development of programs that best serve these populations is crucial. Teacher preparation programs should have mandatory training in second language development, and teachers certified in bilingual education should be offered incentives to teach in two-way immersion programs. This recommended shift in policy and perspective could transform negative attitudes toward bilingual education and place California among the leading states in innovation and progress.

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