

TEACHING READING TO A MULTICULTURAL STUDENT BASE

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## ABSTRACT

This paper reviews 30 articles relevant to the effective primary literacy instruction in a multicultural classroom. The history of multicultural teaching in America has shown itself to be a subtractive process, in which there have been attempts to force minority cultures to assimilate to majority values, cultural practices, and language. This is the context into which many students of minority cultures enter into school. Identifying culturally relevant teaching practices is vital to the success of these students. The use of multicultural literature, acceptance by the teacher of a student's use of heritage language and dialects, and specific culturally relevant methods for teaching reading are discussed as ways to engage students and to help all people's children succeed in learning to read.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Statement of the Research Question and Rationale

What are teaching methods that help students from diverse culture and class backgrounds succeed in learning to read? This question is important because classrooms are becoming more and more diverse. According to Willis (2002), the shifting demographics will continue to construct an increasingly diverse American society. Students from minority cultures were approximately thirty six percent of the school population in 2000 (Willis). About sixty three percent of students in schools are Caucasian, seventeen percent are African American, fourteen percent are Hispanic, four percent are Asian American or Pacific Islander, and fewer than two percent are Native American (Willis, p. 151). There is also great diversity among these groups, due to immigrant status, country of origin, and other cultural subgroups. The less than two percent of Native American students alone are comprised of 280 different tribes that "...differ in terms of their language, traditions, economics, and social interactions" (Willis, p. 152). According to Riccio et al. (2001), "the number of Hispanic immigrants in the United States continues to increase... and it is estimated that by 2020, one in four children in U.S. schools will be Hispanic, with even greater proportions in specific regions of the country" (p. 585). Looking at these statistics, it is clear that many classrooms will have on significant percentage of their population consisting of children who are linguistically and culturally diverse.

Teachers have students who come from a variety of backgrounds, and these student groups will continue to grow, and diversify. Differences of race, ethnicity, class, immigrant status, and language of origin are factors teachers have to consider in



determining a student's needs. Since children learn to make meaning through their experiences with their culture, the strategies for teaching reading that work with mainstream students will not necessarily be effective with students from minority backgrounds (Willis, 2002, 150). Treating all students as if they have the same educational needs will normalize the majority. This can leave many students who already belong to oppressed groups even further disadvantaged, creating inequity in the classroom.

The early years of literacy training are some of the most important for the rest of a child's time in school. According to Barone (2003), children's achievement in literacy in the early grades is the best predictor of their future success in reading, and "the quality of instruction in kindergarten and the primary grades is the single best weapon against reading failure" (p. 970). Lane, Menzies, Munton, Von Duering, and English (2005) concur, stating that "if children have not learned to read by the fourth grade, they have an 88% probability of never learning to read, even if intervention is put in place"(p. 21). Considering this phenomenon in the context of the multicultural, multilingual classroom, it is important to find ways to help students from all backgrounds succeed in early reading acquisition.

In order to be effective as a teacher of literacy, it is important to know the background of all students and how cultural factors could affect their learning. It is also important to use these factors as resources and skills rather than as problems to overcome. According to Delpit (1995), "Schools must provide these children the content that other families from a different cultural orientation provide at home. This does not mean separating children according to family background, but instead, ensuring that each

classroom incorporate (sic) strategies appropriate for all the children it confines” (p.30). By using strategies that work for all students in a classroom, a teacher can be confident that success is attainable for all.

The teaching that goes on in most schools reflects middle class norms and values. For students who do not fit this mold, that education will not help them achieve as much as instruction based on their needs. “To provide schooling for everyone’s children that reflects liberal, middle-class values and aspirations is to ensure the maintenance of the status quo, to ensure that power, the culture of power, remains in the hands of those who already have it” (Delpit, 1995, 28). If we want to give students a chance at upward mobility and an equitable chance in life, teachers must provide education that evens the playing field.

Many times teachers recognize ethnicity, culture, and language and use it to stereotype children. While it is important to consider these factors of the student’s identity as resources, it is never acceptable to make assumptions about individual students. For example, some Asian Pacific American students’ “culturally influenced, nondisruptive classroom behavior, along with the teacher’s stereotype of ‘good Asian students,’ ...[can lead to him or] her not receiving appropriate instruction” (Delpit, 1995, p.171). Even though the teacher is assuming the student is more able than he or she is, the student is still being done a disservice because their needs are not met. Conversely, teachers can also use ethnicity, culture, and language to track minority students into programs meant for less able students. For Native American students, “The cultural deficit model continued to drive the engine programming education for students with ‘special needs.’ Many of these children were identified on the basis of their cultures and

languages, not on the basis of their abilities” (Klug and Whitfield, 2003, p.41). This occurs not only for Native American students, but for other minority groups as well. Teachers often attribute limited Standard English production to be a sign of a student not being able or intelligent, and that is not the case in most situations. Similarly, understanding the role dialect plays will help provide new teaching approaches to enhance achievement in African American and other students (Charity, Scarborough, and Griffin, 2004). Many of these students are highly intelligent, and are tracked into special education or vocational programs instead of being given their rightful chance at an education because their language does not match the standard English dialect.

It is important to study the needs and special abilities of the diverse types of students encountered in today’s schools. In order to be effective and equitable teachers, it is necessary to provide instruction in a way that all students have a chance at success. This means recognizing a student’s identity, and using it to empower rather than hold back.

### Definitions

In order to continue, it is important to define the terms used in this paper so we can move forward with a consistent understanding of the author’s meaning.

Emergent Literacy is used here to refer to the early literacy experiences of young people just coming into their abilities as readers. It would refer to the early elementary grades, and deals mostly with ways in which students acquire the ability to read.

Wienczek, Cipielewski, Vazzano, and Sturken, (1998) define emergent literacy as “behaviors that precede and develop into conventional literacy” (p. 1).

Culture is a multifaceted word that we can use to mean many different things. It is not the same as ethnicity, or race, but rather encompasses the norms and values of a specific group of people. Delpit (1995) identified several aspects that make up culture, "...linguistic forms, communicative strategies... presentation of self; that is, ways of talking, ways of writing, ways of dressing, and ways of interacting" (p.25). Religion, country of origin, ethnicity, and many other factors all influence culture.

It is important to identify a distinction, though, between culture and ethnicity. Ethnicity is used here to refer to a person's race. Though race can not be defined genetically, it is a cultural construct that has a history of defining people in this country and in the world at large. It manifests itself in particular physical characteristics common in specific races. I used it here because it is a factor that has grouped people historically and continues to do so today. Race can be attached to culture, but it can also be a less strong influence on the culture of some students who may be part of a minority race, but part of the mainstream culture. There has been a long, unfortunately somewhat effective, history of attempts to eradicate minority cultures by the U.S. government. A teacher must not assume by the color of a child's skin that his/her race is attached to a specific culture we might identify with that race, but rather understand that it might and learn from the child what their culture is.

Different terms were used to describe racial groups. Tatum (1997) preferred to use the terms that the people themselves prefer. The terms Native American, Native, and Indian are here used interchangeably. Many Native Americans use the term Indian or American Indian to describe themselves. Asian Pacific American is used to describe people of Asian descent, as well as the actual nationality when possible, such as Chinese

or Chinese American. For African Americans, the preceding term, or Black, which many African Americans prefer, is used. Hispanic, Latino, or the country of origin is used to describe students from Mexico, Central, and South America, and the descendents of immigrants from these locations.

It was also important to define class. Here it was used to describe a person's socioeconomic status, or their access to monetary resources and the benefits that go along with that. Most teachers today work within a decidedly middle class system, though they work with children from both upper class and students living in poverty, or the poor working class. It is the students in poverty that this paper most concerned itself with. There are students in situational poverty and generational poverty (Payne, 1996). Poverty does not deal only with the presence or absence of money, but with the cultural way people interact in different types of poverty, mainly situational and generational. Situational poverty is a situation in which a person has most of the cultural resources from a middle class background, while a generational poverty situation is one in which the family has been poor for at least two generations. People from different financial backgrounds, including generational poverty, situational poverty, middle class, and wealth, will have much different resources to deal with the difficulties of life. There are ways of handling situations that have to do with financial, emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical resources, as well as relationships/role models to help you deal with problems and hidden rules of interactions for different classes that people from another group may not understand or be able to overcome. (Payne, 1996, p.7). Someone in situational poverty likely knows the hidden rules for the middle class, and has the

resources that come along with it, if not the monetary resources. Often it is easier to escape situational poverty than generational poverty because of these resources.

Another term that may be used in this paper is African American English. This is the term Craig, Connor, and Washington (2003) used for the dialect spoken by many African Americans in this country. There are different terms used for this in different studies, such as Black Vernacular English or Ebonics, but the term African American English, or AAE, is used throughout the paper.

Multicultural literature is also addressed in this paper, and is often defined by “the character’s physical attributes, languages, and status as members of marginalized groups” (Harris, 2002, p. 368). The term can also define the author or illustrator of the book if he or she be of a minority group.

Another subject that comes up often in this research is Phonics and Phonemic or Phonological Awareness. Phonics can be defined as the association of letters (graphemes) with the phoneme (sound) it represents (Morrow, Holt, and Sass, 2002). Phonemic or Phonological awareness is the ability of a student to identify the different sounds in oral words, and manipulate them.

#### Statement of Purpose

The goal of this paper was to find the strategies for teaching early literacy to students of a variety of cultural backgrounds. It explored studies that sought to illuminate the needs of different student groups and methods that teachers of emergent readers and writers could use to equitably teach all their students. By creating a bank of resources with these needs and methods, I hope to provide a chance for equity in the classroom where a teacher can give all their students an even chance at success.

### Limitations

The topic of race, culture, and class is huge. This paper is limited to the study of major ethnic, cultural, and class groups in the United States, and studies that help illuminate strategies that support literacy development for these groups. The focus was on strategies for emergent literacy development, and I focused an age range of grades from pre-kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade, with an emphasis on Kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Some older students (late elementary and early middle school) are still acquiring the primary literacy skills that are the focus in the early years of elementary school, and some strategies for helping these students may be included as well, but are not a major focus of this paper. Some studies with older subjects may also have implications for students of all ages, and a few of these are included as well.

### Controversies

#### The National Reading Panel Report

The National Reading Panel released a report in 2000 detailing the best practice for teaching reading. It considered only experimental and quasi-experimental studies. The panel justified this action, because the report could turn into mandates for schools and the relationships between method and result needed to be very clear. The report was used as the basis for the Reading Excellence act instituted by George W. Bush and Secretary of Education Rod Paige in 2001 (Shanahan, 2002).

The panel found that there were six major elements to effective reading instruction, including conducting phonemic awareness activities, implementing systematic and explicit phonics instruction, using guided oral reading, encouraging

children to read, using incidental and direct vocabulary instruction, and teaching children comprehension strategies (Shanahan, 2002).

Some in the educational community feel that the National Reading Panel left out important aspects of reading acquisition in the study. The report considered only studies of experimental design, but there is a large body of research that was left out of the study simply because it was of a different design (Hiebert & Adler, 2002). Qualitative and descriptive data was not considered (Shanahan, 2002). This research could be used to guide practice, but was not considered by the panel, and thus is not in the official government recommendation for teaching reading (Hiebert & Adler).

According to Hiebert and Adler (2002), the panel also failed to look into different types of instruction, such as the literature based reading instruction which is used in a majority of schools (p. 119). The panel also did not address the teaching of English to students who did not already know it, one of the most challenging and important jobs for a reading teacher. Because of the aspects of emergent literacy instruction that were left out of these studies, it is important to look to other sources for a more well rounded idea of strategies that work.

Because the panel did not differentiate their research for different types of students, the recommendations they make are based on the needs of the majority, which disadvantages minority students who may have different needs. By focusing on only quantitative studies, the panel is not considering the benefit using other types of research might have for students inside and outside the mainstream U.S. culture. By leaving out study on how to teach students who are language minority, the panel devalues their worth in the school system. Finding methods that work for all students, or including all



students in its recommendations, would be a more equitable proposal than the one put forth by the National Reading Panel.

### Color-Blindness

Another controversy in teaching multicultural students is the issue of being so called color-blind as a teacher. Treating all children the same in order to treat them fairly seems sensible, but in reality all students have different needs and some believe that treating them all one way disadvantages minority students. “Teachers [have] tried to become ‘color-blind’ in their classrooms in order to treat students equally. In doing so, they devalued the positive influences of the students’ natal communities” (Klug and Whitfield, 2003, p.41). Delpit (1995) states that when teachers attempt to not treat children differently based on race, they do their students a great disservice. Because the race of the child is not being recognized, the child may infer “that there is something wrong with being black or brown, and that it should not be noticed? I would like to suggest that if one does not see color, then one does not really see children.” (p. 177). Some contend that teachers must recognize a student’s ethnicity, culture, and class as frame of reference, a resource, and something to be honored. If any of these things is ignored, a student’s education will suffer. In the struggle to treat all children equitably, some assume we must treat them equally, but many teachers who work with minority communities recognize that treating all children the same disadvantages minority students.

### Summary

In review, because of current levels of diversity and a continuing trend towards even greater diversity, it is important to consider the needs and unique abilities of non

majority students in order to have equitable schools where all students learn. If there is no consideration for culture, schools will leave more and more children behind as classrooms continue to diversify. The early years set the stage for all later schooling, so it is important for teachers of primary literacy take these needs into account. Teachers who attempt to be color blind, and not treat minority students differently, only further disadvantage students who will not succeed when treated the same as majority students. Teachers sometimes disadvantage students by overestimating or underestimating their abilities based on stereotypes.

The goal of this paper is to help teachers find methods of teaching a diverse student base that will provide resources for all types of students that a teacher can use in order to provide equitable education to all their students. The next Chapter will explore the history of schooling in America in relation to methods for teaching reading and the experiences diverse cultural groups have had in public schools. Since cultural differences have caused conflict and misunderstandings in the classroom throughout history, it is important to keep in mind our purpose here, to find ways to help all children succeed. In order to help children of different cultures to learn as much as they can, it is important for teachers to understand the history that culture has experienced.

## CHAPTER II: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### Introduction

Since projections show that schools will continue to become more diverse, it is important to learn how teachers can provide equitable education to all groups of students. One important way to do this is to look at the historical experiences of diverse peoples within the schooling system in America that may affect the way a cultural group views public schooling. The following is a brief history of reading instruction in America, as well as a look at the experiences of diverse peoples in the American schooling system, which can help us understand how cultural groups as a whole may view schooling in light of their historical experiences. Also discussed is the historical promotion or devaluation of different languages and dialects, the use of multicultural literature in the history of the American school system, and a history of differentiation in relation to races and cultures.

### Reading Instruction in the United States

“Puritan influence on the schools in New England ... endowed American schools with many of the values incorporated even today in the nations schools” (Klug and Whitfield, 2003, p.30). There has been a history of using schooling to strip students of their native culture in order to create one unified culture in America. Ethnicity and culture have not been seen as resources, but something to change into the dominant Anglo Saxon Protestant way of living, from the time of colonization by the Europeans. In many situations throughout the history of schooling in America, minority students have been forced to study with racist or stereotypical material, left out of the curriculum, and pushed to try to succeed in a system that is geared toward the needs of the majority, in America’s case White Anglo Saxon Protestants.

In general, most minority cultures have been put through subtractive schooling, a process in which the aspects of their cultures are taken away rather than used as resources in their education. Their cultural and linguistic abilities have not been valued or nurtured by schools. In many ways, there has been an attempt to eliminate these resources (Valenzuela, 1999, p.26). Spring (2005) called this deculturalization, detailing how Anglo Americans attempted to destroy the unique culture of Native Americans, African Americans, Mexican Americans, and immigrants from other Latin American, European, and Asian countries. He summed up this phenomenon saying the hidden message in all this was “be like us... and we might accept you” (p.183).

In Colonial America, people thought that in order to achieve salvation, one must be able to read the Bible (Monaghan, Hartman, and Monaghan, 2002). The first law requiring reading to be taught was in Massachusetts in 1642. In 1647, another law was passed in Massachusetts requiring towns over 50 families to pay for a public school teacher. These early schools used the alphabet method to teach reading orally. It was a part to whole approach in which the students read each letter sound, each syllable, and then the entire word. The New England Primer and the Bible were the most common books used for instruction during the time period (Monaghan et al., p. 224-25).

After the Revolutionary War, America was a new nation with many different cultures coming together as one. Post revolutionary leaders “rejected the idea of a multicultural society and advocated the creation of a unified American culture” (Spring, 2005, p.44). Anglo Saxon Protestant traditions took the dominant role in this unified society. Schools reflected this trend, in effect pushing cultural minority students to assimilate to a unified American culture.

An example of this press for the use of Anglo Saxon Protestant values as the general American culture can be seen in the schooling controversies in Pennsylvania in the late 1700s over language and culture in the schools (Spring, 2005). Many Anglo Saxon Protestants were concerned over the high numbers of German immigrants in the area. There was an effort by Benjamin Franklin and others to make English the official language of schools. Charity schools were established, in which English was required as the language of instruction, even though two thirds of the students spoke German. Though there was a large uproar from the German community that caused these schools to fail, this attempt to Anglicize cultural minorities foreshadowed attempts to normalize the cultures of other groups in the country's future.

During this period, Noah Webster penned the first American literacy textbooks that included a speller, a grammar, and a reader. The reader's were for older children who could already read. It was not until later that simplified texts were provided for young children to read. These early basal readers had subscripts to indicate vowel pronunciations, the intention being to generate a national pronunciation. By eliminating regional pronunciations, Webster hoped to unify the new country with a national dialect (Monaghan et al., 2002, p 225).

The Common School movement (1830s and 40s) had many purposes, but one of the main goals was to ensure the unification of the country through a common culture based on Protestant Anglo Saxon values. The moral power of the school was based in the Protestant Bible, though the morals of different religions and cultures were not represented, and so possibly devalued, in schools. The movement, "was, in part, an attempt to halt the drift toward a multicultural society" (Spring, 2005, p.102).

Despite the shift toward acceptance of a multicultural society America has made since the country's early years, recent legislation has moved us back toward the unified culture the common school strove for. The No Child Left Behind act of 2001 mandated that bilingual education be used only as a transition into English. What was formerly named the Office of Bilingual Education was changed to Office of English Language Acquisition, Language enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient (Spring, 2005, p.462). The goal here was to provide for learning English without consideration of how to help the child maintain their first language. By requiring standardized tests, the law also ensured that curriculum is generalized for mainstream students, helping "to ensure that a single culture would dominate the school" (Spring, p.461).

In the mid 1800s reforms to the traditional forms of instruction started popping up. Johann Pestalozzi, a Swiss educator, believed that learning occurred through concrete experiences, and promoted moving away from rote learning. His theories influenced those in the American education field. Spelling books were also rejected for the fact that they contained words students could not understand or use. The readers used in schools were attacked for their adult themes and wording. All the reformers promoted a stronger emphasis on meaning (Monaghan et al., 2002). Instead of memorizing words and pronunciations, the emphasis was shifting to making meaning of writing rather than just decoding the words.

The *McGuffey Eclectic Readers* were a series of textbooks created in this time period to teach children reading. These books were now being used with all levels of readers, not just the students with more advanced ability to read. The stories still had a

religious, moralizing overtone. By the end of the century, the moralizing became less blatant than it had been in the past, but still was present in most texts used for school. The most popular themes included “honesty, courage, hard work, self reliance, patriotism, and temperance”( Monaghan et al., 2002, p. 226). It was common for these books to contain the gender stereotypes of the time.

Starting in the 1870s and through 1940, the progressive education movement moved toward the word method of reading instruction, where whole meaningful words were taught rather than the letter components (Monaghan et al., 2002). Reading for meaning was encouraged, and fairy tales and myths were used for lower level readers. These were chosen for their representation of the beliefs of so called primitive peoples. This was a move away from the patriotic writings and bible stories found in earlier reading texts that portrayed mostly Anglo Saxon Protestant ideologies. During this time there was also a move toward more silent reading by children and the beginning of testing in reading.

In the 1940s, the intrinsic phonics method was used, in which phoneme grapheme correspondence was learned by inferring the relationship from previously known sight words (Monaghan et al., 2002). We see this in William S. Gray’s Dick and Jane series. Controlled, repetitive vocabulary gave children a chance to learn sight words, and phonic knowledge was derived from these words. Meaning was of primary importance at the time, and children relied on context and illustrations to comprehend the stories. The content of reading texts also moved toward realistic family settings, though the content consisted of “...beautifully illustrated stories...filled with white, middle-class, suburban families, mothers in aprons, foolish little sisters, and problem-solving older brothers”

(Monaghan et al., p. 228). Though the content may have been real life to some children, for the most part gender stereotypes were common place in these stories, and content excluded depictions of people in poverty or children of different races.

In the 1955, the professional consensus on the word method was attacked by Rudolf Flesch in his book *Why Johnny Can't Read—and What You can Do About It*. He claimed that the phonics approach was more effective, though the professional community did not agree. Even over the professional community's objections, reading texts started moving toward systematic phonics approaches (Monaghan et al., 2002). In 1964, Bond and Dykstra tried to find the best method for reading instruction, "...and concluded that there was more variation within methods than between them and that no one method was superior" for teaching reading (Monaghan et al., p. 229).

In the late 1980s, the whole language approach appeared, positing that reading acquisition both occurred naturally when a child was surrounded by authentic materials, the language arts were integrated into other curriculum, and the child was able to use their imagination and individual abilities to their fullest extent (Monaghan et al., 2002). This approach made the reading textbooks less desired and promoted a more extensive publishing of trade books for children.

The embedded phonics approach of this method upset parents, who viewed it as anti-phonics since the instruction was not explicit. The political climate shifted and some states started passing laws that required teachers to use systematic and explicit phonics instruction. The Right to Read organization and many parents have pushed for more systematic approach to teaching phonics, which is the current climate in many schools (Monaghan et al., 2002). In 2000, sixty three percent of kindergarten and first grade



teachers surveyed said they thought phonics instruction should be taught systematically and explicitly to beginning readers (Morrow et al., 2002).

#### Education of Students of Minority Religions

During the nineteenth century, the Irish Catholics were despised by the Protestant majority for many reasons, including religion and job issues. They were treated hostilely in the schools, were required to read texts that were dominated by Protestant values and contained anti Catholic material, and were compelled to read from the Protestant Bible. The Catholic community wanted changes in the curriculum, but the powerful Protestant culture ignored their complaints. The Catholics asked for money from the common school fund to fund their own schools, but they were turned down and as a community decided to fund private schools that accepted their culture. Because they were not willing to send their children to schools in which their culture and religion were devalued, Catholics were doubly taxed, first to pay for the common school fund through taxes, and secondly to pay for their own schools where another religion was not pushed on their children. Even into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, “many Catholics would refer to public schools as Protestant schools” (Spring, 2005, p.108).

#### Education of African American Students

During times of slavery in the South, there was little formal attempt to teach slaves coming from Africa to speak English, though this of course happened eventually. Some learned to read and write, but in most cases this was done covertly. Slaves had to hide their attempts to learn to read, or their ability to read, from their masters or other whites. It was actually illegal to teach a slave to read. Many slaves were punished severely if it was found out that they had learned to read. At the start of the Civil War,

about “5 percent of slaves had learned how to read” (Spring, 2005, p. 114). Abolitionist societies that worked to end slavery also worked to educate the slaves who had been freed.

In the late 1700s, communities in Massachusetts were required to provide grammar school to children. No law said black children could not attend, but many were unable to for economic reasons (they were needed at home to work and help provide for the family). The children who did go were mistreated in the schools by whites. Black parents, in order to protect their children, actually tried to get a separate (segregated) school system for their children. This dream was made a reality with the help of white philanthropists. By the 1820’s, African Americans realized that an inferior education was the consequence of segregation. Public schools created their own version of the segregated school on the premise that this school would be more equal to that of white children. Abolitionist David Walker argued that “the inferior education blacks received in schools was designed to keep them at a low level of education” (Spring, 2005, p.113).

Until 1954, schools were segregated by race. Separate but equal conditions created schools that were not actually equally funded. They did, though, provide African American students with African American teachers who understood their needs and provided role models from their culture (Spring, 2005).

During the 1960s, the civil rights movement prompted a review of the existing reading texts for racist content (Monaghan et al., 2002). There were recommendations to print texts in African American English. There has been controversy in the professional community over the validity of Ebonics, or African American English (LeMoine, 2002). There are three different theories about the origins of this dialect. First, English-origin

theorists propose that African American English is a natural dialect of English, and uses the same grammar structure as English. The second theory is that of the Creolists, who suggest that the origins of African American English come from the simplified languages used to communicate by enslaved persons in West Africa and the Caribbean (LeMoine , p. 167). Lastly, African- origin theories suggest that African American English is not a dialect of English at all, but rather derived from African languages from the Niger and Congo areas. African- origin theorists stipulate that the underlying grammatical structures of African American English are from these African languages, and not English. "...All three perspectives agree that Ebonics is governed by a system of linguistic rules (grammatical, syntactical, morphological, pragmatic, and semantic)...features" (LeMoine, 167), making it a valid language however one believes it developed.

African American English is a different dialect than the Standard English that is spoken in most American schools, and this can cause difficulties for students trying to traverse back and forth between their home and school dialects. Though there have been many increases in the opportunities for education for African Americans in recent years, these students are still struggling to be recognized for their full potential. Hosp and Reschly (2004) report information from a previous study that shows that, at least for African American and Hispanic students, differences in achievement between these groups and Caucasian students show themselves as early as kindergarten. They are overrepresented in special education and underrepresented in gifted and talented programs (Elhoweris, Mutua, Alsheikh, and Holloway, 2005).

## Education of Native American Students

Early treaties with Native American peoples provided accommodations for the schooling of Native children. The education provided attempted to transform the culture of the Indians into the mainstream culture of the United States. Educators tried to teach the children to stop being nomadic and instead become farmers. This was an attempt to civilize the native people, which to whites meant to make the Indians' cultures more like their own (Klug and Whitfield, 2003, p.31). There were schools for Cherokee people that taught women to sew and men to use farm equipment. Thomas Jefferson and many others thought that to get Indians to assimilate to the dominant culture, it was "important to teach Indians a desire for the accumulation of property and to extinguish the practice of cultural sharing" (Spring, 2005, p.116).

Following the Civilization Act of 1819, schools were formed to educate Native American children. Under the guidance of Superintendent of Indian Trade Thomas L McKenney, attempts were made to convert the Native culture of these students into the Protestant mainstream in only one generation. "These Presbyterians could accept nothing less than the total rejection of the tribal past, and the total transformation of each individual Indian" (Spring, 2005, p.124).

Sequoyah, a Cherokee Indian, created a Cherokee alphabet that he wanted to use to help preserve Cherokee culture. Missionaries had only seen this as a way to transfer Indians into Anglo culture. Sequoyah's alphabet had 86 symbols that all represented a sound from the oral language of the Cherokees. It was somewhat easy to learn, because these symbols represented all the sounds in their spoken language. Using this Alphabet, the Cherokee nation put out a written newspaper, the Cherokee Phoenix, in 1928 (Spring,

2005, p.126). They were able to use the alphabet, a concept they had learned from settlers and missionaries, to maintain their own culture.

In the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> Century “Both Choctaw and Cherokee classroom materials were written in English and the Native languages...Students in the Choctaw and Cherokee schools demonstrated literacy rates approaching nearly 100% and many youths attended colleges in the east” (Klug and Whitfield, 2003, p.31). According to Spring(2005), the high literacy rates were much higher than whites in Texas and Arkansas (p.129). This threatened many whites, since language was being used in the context of Native culture and was not being used to translate ideas and transition the Native culture to Anglo American.

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, Native American children were removed from their families and sent to boarding schools where they were stripped of their culture and language. Isolation from their families removed the connection to tribal customs and culture, while teaching English and Anglo customs was emphasized in this removed context. Students were punished for speaking in their native tongue. Spring(2005) called these “acts of cultural and linguistic genocide” (p.189). Students were also forced to study and practice Christianity, and forbidden from practicing their native religion or spiritual practices (Wikipedia, 2006).

The Puritan ideals that these schools were run on were almost directly opposite those of Native Americans.

The list of these Puritan ideals included respect for authority; postponing immediate gratification; neatness; punctuality; responsibility for one’s own work; honesty, patriotism, and loyalty; striving for personal achievement; competition;

repression of aggression and overt sexual expression; respect for the rights and property of others; and obeying rules and regulations. These principles were anomalies for native peoples who lived in communal settings and had practiced skills for cooperative survival on this continent for thousands of years. (Klug and Whitfield, 2003, p.30)

To this day, many Native Americans do not trust public schools, referring to it as the white man's education. There is a negative attitude about these schools in the Native community (Klug and Whitfield, 2003).

After the verdict was handed down in the case of Brown vs. The Board of Education in 1954, children living on reservations were able to attend public schools off the reservation. Here Native children were a minority and their needs were largely ignored in these schools. Many children were placed in classes for mentally retarded children, because their language, not their ability, targeted them as unable to learn (Klug and Whitfield, 2003, p.40). Native American children are still disproportionately placed into special education.

During and after World War I, intelligence tests were used to place students. According to Spring(2005), these tests "seemed to confirm the racial superiority of the English and Germans. Also, they seemed to confirm to Anglo- Americans that Native Americans and African Americans were inferior races" (p.298). These tests were not culturally sensitive in any way. By giving everyone the same test, which was normed for Anglo Americans, "IQ testing became a new way of segregating students in public schools, this time on the basis of 'intellectual ability'" (Klug and Whitfield, 2003, p.40). According to Delpit (1995), "when a significant difference exists between the students'

culture and the school's culture, teachers can easily misread students' aptitudes, intent, or abilities as a result of the difference in styles of language use and interactional patterns" (p.167).

#### Education of Hispanic and Hispanic American Students

After conquering territory in the southwest after the Mexican American War, Anglo pioneers made many attempts to dominate and subjugate Mexicans who remained in the area. In 1855, California decided that all classes would be taught in English. According to Valenzuela(1999), schooling has traditionally been a subtractive process. The transition of students into English from their native language, or English as a second language (ESL) "neither reinforce[s] their native language skills nor their cultural identities" (p.26). The tradition of these types of English only or ESL programs has failed to appreciate Spanish from the start, and continues to undervalue it today.

Puerto Rico is a commonwealth of the United States. Before voting to become a commonwealth in 1951, many Puerto Rican's resisted the control of the United States, especially in the schools. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Americanization policies were enacted in the schools, requiring texts and curriculum to represent the United States' culture rather than the local culture, and requiring all classes be taught in English. Teachers who could not speak English, or who did not use it to instruct, were fired (Spring, 2005, p.237). Instead of using the language abilities and capitalizing on their cultural resources, the attempt was made to transition the culture of the students into mainstream American culture from their native Puerto Rican culture. After becoming a commonwealth, Spanish was restored as the official language of the schools (Spring).

### Education of Asian Pacific American Students

In the beginning, it was not that Asian Pacific Americans' (APA) culture as not respected in schools, the problem was that they were not allowed to attend schools at all. In 1884, San Francisco passed a resolution prohibiting schools from accepting APA students. The Supreme Court ruled in 1885 that schools must provide education for APA students, and segregated schools were established.

Assumptions by teachers have also hurt APA students. Many Asian Pacific American students are assumed to be exceptionally smart and successful in school. Even when they do not display these characteristics, the teacher may not even notice because they often quietly do their work. This is a stereotype that causes many APA students to not get the support they need in the classroom. The teacher assumes the students are doing well instead of really making it his or her business to know if this is true (Delpit, 1995, p. 170-171).

### History of the Production and Use of Multicultural Literature

The majority of the literature used to teach reading has reflected predominantly Anglo Saxon Protestant characters and values. Often, when a minority is portrayed, they are a secondary character, they are stereotyped, or they are represented in skin color only and the character reflects white mainstream culture. This is reflected not only in trade books for children, but also in the textbooks used in schools (Harris, 2002).

Research has shown that students may be more engaged and comprehend more when they read literature that reflects their home culture. Reyhner (1986) cites information from the U.S. department of education claiming that "students read passages



more deftly when the passages describe events, people, and places of which the students have some prior knowledge” (p. 14).

After the civil rights movement and the women’s movement in the 1960s and 1970s respectively, most literacy textbooks were reviewed for racist and sexist content, which led “to recommendations for change, such as printing readers in African American English” (Monaghan et al., 2002, p. 229)

In the past few decades, some improvements have been made in the published literature used in classrooms, but there is still a lack of consistently culturally relevant literature for use with students of color and with all students. Harris (2002) states that though multicultural literature is being used in schools and libraries in many ways “one overlooked site for inclusion is in series created for reading or language arts instruction”(pg. 372). Some teachers do not see the necessity of using multicultural literature with white students (Harris, 2002).

One reason for a struggle to use multicultural literature in classrooms is the fact that publishers are primarily concerned with turning a profit, and “many books categorized as multicultural sell less than 5,000 copies” (Harris, 2002, p. 369). Questions have also arisen as to whether literature with minority characters, but written by a white author, can be relevant or count as multicultural (Harris, 2002).

#### History of Heritage Language Development and its Use in Schooling

Some researchers and teachers have more recently found that helping children to develop their language abilities in their native language helps more with their acquisition of a new language more than an English only approach does (Kondo-Brown, 2002). It is also difficult for schooling to be effective when conducted in an unfamiliar language, as

it takes an average of 5 to 7 years for a person to learn all the complexities of academic English, the language of schooling (Kondo-Brown, 2002). A person might be able to converse in English in under a year, but the foundation in the academic language needed for school, because it takes longer to master, may not be available to students until the upper grades. By then they may have missed many of the important foundations for this later study.

America has historically had a subtractive/ additive policy when it comes to language (Kondo-Brown, 2002). Schools attempted to transition students from their native language into English only, and then attempted to teach students a new language in foreign language classes. There is little attempt to maintain a student's native language unless it is English. Often the family is the only resource to maintain bilingualism for minority language students. Adults who have come from minority language backgrounds have talked of their "reluctance to use their heritage language due to negative external reactions" ( Kondo-Brown, p. 221).

Because students do not understand the language, the only resource they have is a graphophonic cueing system. Without the ability to understand the words they read, there is no way to use context, syntax, or semantics to understand what they are reading. Students who enter school with prior knowledge of Asian languages have also had problems in school, because of the need to transition between characters to an alphabetic system. These students have to learn the concept of graphophonics in a whole new way. (Kondo-Brown, 2002).

## History of Differentiation in Schooling Based on Socioeconomic Status

In the 1960s, the U.S. government instituted a War on Poverty. This legislation wanted to help the poor get a better education, so that human resources were not being wasted. Head Start was established to give poor children equal footing as middle and upper class students upon entering kindergarten. The idea was to “attack the very social structure that caused poverty” (Spring, 2005, pg.390). Walter Heller was appointed to create a report on poverty, entitled “The Problem of Poverty in America”. This report claimed poverty and poor education were linked, blaming the workers for their low wages rather than the system that paid such low wages (Spring, 2005). The report states “it is difficult for children to find and follow avenues leading out of poverty in environments where education is deprecated and hope is smothered” (Spring, 2005, pg 391). Title I of the Educational Opportunities Act helped to “provide financial assistance... to expand and improve... educational programs by various means...which contribute particularly to meeting the special educational needs of educationally deprived children.” (Spring, 2005, pg 392), while Title II provided monetary resources to school libraries and for textbooks.

### Summary

To review, the history of American schooling has been one of attempting to create a unified culture. There have been attempts to bring students from diverse backgrounds together, but rather than creating an amalgamation of cultures, there have been attempts to bring minority cultures into the fold of Protestant Anglo Saxon values. Students may come to school with a specific feeling or attitude based on the history people in their culture have experienced in public schools in the past.

Examples of this effort to create a unified culture include attempts public schools have made in the past have Catholic students use Protestant books and reading materials to study from, leaving them little choice but to create private schools so their culture could be valued in schools.

African American students were not provided education in the countries early years, and many believe the inferior schooling provided in separate schools was a way to keep them uneducated and powerless. The attempt to eliminate Ebonics, which linguists view as a valid dialect, devalues African American culture and makes them feel unappreciated in schools.

Native American's were taught English early on, but were able to use the alphabetic system to further their Native culture and language. When the attempt to Christianize Native Americans and bring them into the mainstream culture did not work, whites in power removed Indian children from their families and sent them to boarding schools where they were stripped of their language and culture. Many Native American's still refer to public schooling as the White Man's schooling, and have deep distrust of schools. Native American students continue to have a disproportionate representation in special education classes, as do with African American and Hispanic students.

Hispanic peoples, who have lived in the southwest since before Europeans landed on the east coast, were compelled to public schooling that devalued their language and attempted to transfer them to mainstream language and cultural practices. They continue to be subjected to so called subtractive schooling under No Child Left Behind, in which their native language skills are not respected and are not developed into further skills, but

rather seen as something that needs to be transferred into mainstream language and culture.

Early Asian settlers were first not allowed to attend public schools, and then were relegated to separate schools. Now that schools are integrated, teachers often misjudge the abilities of Asian Pacific American students because of stereotyping and differences in communication styles between cultures, and many do not receive the assistance they need to succeed.

The materials used to teach in many American classrooms have not been culturally relevant, and continue to have flaws that keep minority students from seeing themselves represented in the materials of their classrooms. Since there has been little attempt to maintain native languages of students, this can also cause problems in reading acquisition because students cannot comprehend, even if they can decode, in a foreign language.

It is essential to keep in mind the experiences different cultural groups have had when assessing their success in school. Since some minorities, for example Native Americans, have had negative experiences with public schooling as a group, they may place a different amount of importance on success in schooling. Also, understanding what has happened in the past can help us see a big picture when looking at the current research, and give a broader context when attempting to find ways to help children from all cultural backgrounds succeed in a more and more diverse classroom. We can see from the past that the idea of a melting pot of American citizens has not left minorities in this country with an equitable education. We must start looking at our classrooms as a mosaic in which each piece is different, but all are equally important and valuable. The

next Chapter will look at studies that have explored different methods used to enhance the reading development of children from many different cultural and class backgrounds.

## CHAPTER III: INTEGRATIVE, CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Introduction

Schooling has historically not considered the possible educative value of including native culture and languages and has instead emphasized integration into the mainstream, with the result that many cultural minority students may not be achieving the success they might otherwise achieve. In many cases, their families have come to mistrust public school. Given this situation, this Chapter will critically review research studies that help to identify practices to help cultural minority students achieve while utilizing the resources of their home culture and language.

#### The Effect of Tracking and Stereotyping by Teachers

A study by Elhoweris et al. (2005) sought to find out if a child's ethnicity affected whether or not his/her teacher would refer them for gifted and talented programs. Two hundred and seven teachers in a large Midwest school district were given a short vignette about a student who possessed gifted characteristics. Ninety two percent of the teachers were female, and 83% were white. One third of the vignettes revealed the student in question was white, another one third revealed the student was black, and one third gave no racial information as a control group. The teachers were randomly assigned to one of the 3 groups. The teachers were asked to decide if the student should be referred to a gifted and talented program. Ethnicity had a significant effect, ( $p \leq .05$ ), on the teacher's decision. Even though all the information about the student was exactly the same except for the ethnicity, the African American student was rated the lowest of the three groups.

This study (Elhoweris et al., 2005) is not as generalizable as it could be because it was conducted only in the Midwest. Racial attitudes vary around the country, and may

actually be more severe in some places, and less severe in some places. I think also this could be applied to other minorities. It would be interesting to compare the rates for different minorities' referrals, especially Asian students, who are typically assumed to be model students, even when they do not display the characteristics of such a student.

Hosp and Reschly (2004) investigated the connection of race and ethnicity to placement in special education programs, rather than the gifted and talented programs Elhoweris et al. (2005) looked at. Hosp and Reschly looked to discover what the predictors for the overrepresentation of minority students might be besides race, and so factored academic achievement in to the equation as well as demographic information (race and ethnicity) and economic information.

The researchers (Hosp & Reschly, 2004) looked at the rate of five different ethnic groups of students being assigned to special education, African American, Native American, Asian Pacific Islander (APA), Hispanic, and Caucasian. Programs for students with mental retardation, emotional disturbance, and learning disabilities were analyzed. African American students were shown to be overrepresented in classes for the mentally retarded as well as programs for students who are emotionally disturbed. Native American's were overrepresented in classes for the learning disabled. Less APA students are identified in all three categories than would be expected considering their percentage of the general population. As Ruan (2003) found, teachers often overestimate the abilities of APA students due to stereotyping, which can disadvantage Asian students who do need the extra help but are not identified and given intervention. Hosp and Reschly (2004) also reported that African American, Hispanic, and Native American



students do not make up a proportion of the students in gifted and talented programs that would be expected given their proportion of the general population.

For this study (Hosp & Reschly, 2004), data on the demographics of students enrolled in special education programs was collected. The ratio of the percentage students in programs for each of the three disability categories to the percentage of each ethnicity in the general population was compared to the same ratio for white students to figure out the relative risk ratio. Achievement statistics were gathered from school districts and their websites. Data that was compatible with the design came from only 16 states, but the researchers stressed that these 16 states represented all the major regions of the United States. For the study, “due to the large number of comparisons, an alpha level of  $p = .005$  was used” (Hosp & Reschly, 2004, p. 190).

For each of the three groups, mental retardation, learning disabilities, and emotional disturbance, the variance for all the racial groups was 32.8 %, 24.4%, and 30.1% respectively (Hosp & Reschly, 2004). Economic factors were stronger in determining special education membership than race was, but in some ways it was found to correlate with race, so it is difficult to differentiate the causality coming from one or the other. The academic consideration was a strong influence for only 2 of 12 categories (categories consisted of percentage of students in special education in relation to the number in the general population of the school for each racial group compared to the ratio for white students, for each of the three special education types). The other ten categories, it “accounted for a significant amount of variance for six of the models... [but] for the remaining four models, the academic block did not contribute a significant amount of unique variance” (Hosp & Reschly, 2004, p. 192).

The findings report that for mental retardation special education classes, economic factors were the strongest influence out of economic, demographic, and academic achievement categories (Hosp & Reschly, 2004). The variance was .27 for African American students, .21 for Hispanics, .246 for APA, and .162 for Native American,  $p < .005$ . For emotional disturbance, race (demographic) was the most statistically significant influence (variance = .193 for African American students, .313 for Hispanic, .140 for APA, and .259 for Native American students,  $p < .005$ ).

Academic performance most affected referral and membership in programs for the learning disabled (Hosp & Reschly, 2004). Results were an independent variance of .228 for African American, .031 for Hispanic, .137 for APA students, and .078 for Native Americans.

APA students had the strongest predictor as race in all three special education categories, while the majority of cultural minority students seemed to have significant influence from all three student identifiers (race, income, and achievement) (Hosp & Reschly, 2004). For all the racial groups, academic performance seemed to affect membership in the special education groups less than economics or race, but was slightly stronger in affecting placement in classes for mental retardation.

Racial demographics were stronger for African American and APA students than for Hispanic or Native American students (Hosp & Reschly, 2004). While the academic predictor was the weakest overall, it did contribute significantly to the placement of students in 8 of the 12 groups.

The study (Hosp & Reschly, 2004) eliminated small districts from the sample that only had a few minority students. This was because in a district with under a certain

number of students of a specific ethnicity, officials are not allowed to report test scores to the public, because the pool of students is so small the confidentiality of reporting it does not meet privacy standards. It is much easier to figure out who is who out of a group of 5 students than it is to identify one student out of 50 or even 500. This was necessary because they could not obtain the information, so thus there was no way the researchers could include it in the results. The study is thorough for the information attained, but since small districts could not publish the information, it does not paint a complete picture. Patterns of enrollment may be different in different types of districts. It could be that in these rural districts with few minority children that there is even less culturally relevant teaching that provides a chance at success for these students.

A critique of the study is also addressed by the researchers (Hosp & Reschly, 2004). The fact that the research was done far removed from any individual student's achievement makes it hard to identify exactly where students who should not be in special education are being enrolled in these classes. The researchers suggest that "research needs to be extended to the individual level" (p. 196). The fact that the individual students were not assessed by researchers seems problematic, because they could not assess student's in the same way teachers could, they only looked at a few factors that may well be, unfortunately, associated with race. By not assessing any students themselves, we as readers cannot tell whether race or class alone, and not academic performance, was what drove the teachers to assign a student to special education classes.

To summarize, ethnicity has a negative effect on whether a teacher will refer a student to gifted and talented program, even when all other factors are the same

(Elhoweris et al, 2005). Conversely, it has been shown that African American students are referred to classes for the emotionally disturbed more than white students, and low socioeconomic status was a strong factor in recommendation to classes for the mentally retarded (Hosp and Reschly, 2004).

#### The Effect of Class and Socioeconomic Status on Teaching and Learning

Craig, Connor, and Washington (2003) found that African American students from low income families who attended state funded preschools performed better in their oral language and cognitive skills by the time they reached third grade than middle class African Americans who did not attend these preschools. In the Detroit school the study was conducted in, seventy five percent of the students were African American. All subjects spoke African American English (AAE). Fifty students were involved in the study; 30 boys and 20 girls. Half were in kindergarten and half were in the preschool class. The middle class students who started in kindergarten did not attend preschool.

The researchers (Craig et al., 2003) pre-assessed the children for oral language and cognitive skills when they first arrived at the school, and conducted formative assessments along the way. The assessments were conducted by African American female examiners. These examiners spoke African American English with the students during the tests, which were audio recorded to check for reliability. Assessments used were subtests of the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children and samplings of students use of expressive language in describing pictures. Samples were scored by segmenting responses into communication units and analyzing them for complexity of syntax, diversity of vocabulary, and mean length of each unit. The computer program Computerized Language Analysis was used to evaluate the responses.

Students in preschool tested lower when they first started school, possibly because they were younger, and showed no significant improvements at the end of first grade (Craig et al., 2003). But by the end of third grade, the lower SES preschool students had surpassed the children who started in kindergarten and did not attend preschool in reading comprehension skills, the slope difference in the improvement between the groups was 6.68 ( $p < .001$ ). The study found that coming from a family with low socioeconomic status affected a student's reading acquisition less than an early diagnosis of reading difficulties. Students who had had their special needs addressed a year earlier were at a better place by the time they reached third grade regardless of their socioeconomic status than students who may have had these issues addressed a year later.

The study (Craig et al., 2003) concluded that with proper intervention, social class should not make a major difference in a student's success. One critique of this study is the fact that students were tested upon their entry into school, the lower SES group a year earlier when they went into preschool. Comparing the students at different stages in their development may not make for accurate contrast of the two groups, since with age oral language develops, especially distinguishable in young people,. However, testing all students a year before kindergarten started, or testing all students at the inception of kindergarten and comparing them this way would be more accurate.

Wienczek, Cipielewski, Vazzano, and Sturken, (1998) investigated the literacy activities and teaching methods that prepared low income students for success in first grade. A morning and an afternoon group of kindergarteners were included in the study. The two classes were taught by two different teachers who shared the same classroom in a Midwestern school district. The morning class had 23 students and was mostly

Caucasian, with 1 African American student, and had 1 special education student who was mainstreamed into the class. The afternoon class was attended by 21 children, and consisted of mostly Caucasian students with 2 African American students. The morning class had a majority of children who came from middle class income level families. The afternoon class was considered more low income. This socioeconomic status division was caused by bussing and children attending school with children from their own neighborhoods. No information on the gender of the students was given.

The researchers (Wiencek et al., 1998) observed the types of literacy activities going on in each class. They described these activities, the social context in which they were enacted, the presence or absence of scaffolding, and teacher and student roles. Data was collected one day a week by observations and its resulting field notes. Teacher assignments and student work were also collected. This data was collected by one of the researchers and two graduate research assistants. The study states that in several instances, the researcher and student assistant collected data at the same time to validate their observations. The report only says on several occasions data was collected simultaneously and does not give data for how often that happened or if the notes were similar when it did. This information is important for the reader to assess the validity of the observations, and it is omitted here. Quantitative research was collected by assessments of alphabet recognition, concepts of print, phonological awareness, and ability to read. The names of the assessments were not included. This information was collected by all the researchers in October and in April, at the beginning and the end of the study.

The literacy activities that occurred were often not those that emergent literacy research suggests are essential to early learning in this area (Wiencek et al., 1998). The study found that many of the literacy activities in the two classrooms were more appropriate for upper class students who had more experiences with literacy at home. Children who came from low income homes often needed more time to explore books and concepts about print, as well as work with phonemic awareness and phoneme grapheme correspondence. They found that many children had limited small group or one on one teacher interaction, and had little chance for teacher scaffolding. In this method, the teachers found that the students who demonstrated higher levels of ability at the beginning of the study (who were often children of middle income families) kept their high ability, but the students who had come in low did not catch up to these students. They compared this to a rich get richer and poor get poorer situation, where those who can read get better at it and those who cannot find it difficult to ever catch up.

The district and teachers supported a developmentally appropriate view on early education, wherein students will learn literacy when they are ready (Wiencek et al., 1998). This approach leaves out literacy activities which are equally important in other views of literacy acquisition. For example, emergent literacy research shows it is important to do a variety of literacy activities, including active engagement, development of phonological awareness and alphabetic awareness, and encouraging an interest in reading and books. “Developmental appropriateness is often a [sic] like a trap for lower socioeconomic children who need opportunities to explore and develop knowledge of literary concepts and written language” (Wiencek et al., 1998, p 11). Since the teachers planned together and their teaching styles were not analyzed in the results, there was little chance for

comparison between the 2 classes. The design makes the ability to transfer study to other classrooms possible. Perhaps comparing one of these classrooms with one that did incorporate the Emergent Literacy principles might have been more illuminating as to strategies that work for students from all socioeconomic backgrounds.

The study (Wiencek et al.,1998) also does not address the possibility that because kindergarten is optional in this district, some of the emergent literacy skills that are taught in kindergarten in most districts may indeed be covered in first grade in this district. If children do not have to go to kindergarten, the first grade teachers probably will not expect them to know all that teachers in a district that requires kindergarten would.

To summarize, Craig et al. (2003) showed that with proper intervention, such as state funded preschools for low income students, social class should not make a difference in reading achievement. Wiencek et al. (1998) showed that many literacy activities in the kindergarten classrooms studied were more beneficial to middle income students than low income students, who need more support in exploring books and concepts about print that they might not receive at home.

#### Effective Methods for Teaching Hispanic Students

Carlisle and Beeman (2000) studied the effect of the language of instruction on the literacy acquisition of students for whom English was a second language. The researchers studied two first grade classrooms during successive years at the same school. Because the school was shifting its bilingual language policy from teaching mostly in English (eighty percent English and twenty percent Spanish), to mostly in Spanish (eighty percent Spanish and twenty percent English), the researchers were able to study 2 successive years of first graders, one in the predominantly English program and the next



year in the predominantly Spanish program. The English Instruction (EI) group consisted of 17 children, 9 boys and 8 girls. The Spanish Instruction (SI) group had 17 children, 9 boys and 8 girls. Most of the families in both groups spoke predominantly Spanish at home, and 80% qualified for the free lunch program for low SES children.

After receiving instruction in Spanish or English, the students were evaluated on Spanish listening, Spanish reading, English listening, and English reading using subtests of the Woodcock Johnson Psycho Educational Battery in Spanish and English and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Carlisle & Beeman, 2000). There were also nonstandard measures to assess listening and reading comprehension and writing skills. The researchers also used literature in Spanish and in English by the same author, then used a short multiple choice and fill in the blank test to assess comprehension.

For the EI class, English listening was significantly correlated with Spanish listening ( $r=.53$ ,  $p<.05$ ), but English and Spanish reading were not significantly related ( $r=.26$ ) (Carlisle & Beeman, 2000). For the SI class, the correlations were not significant ( $p=.35$  for English and Spanish listening,  $p=.16$  for English and Spanish reading). The SI class was as strong as the EI class on measures of English reading and writing but was significantly stronger for measures of Spanish reading and writing. The researchers found that instruction in Spanish made a significant contribution to the development of Spanish reading comprehension (Carlisle & Beeman, 2000, p.346).

The EI students performed better in the oral language of their language of instruction, but this did not transfer to written language (Carlisle & Beeman, 2000). The hypothesis was that the children taught in English did not develop strong reading skills. The study did not share a reason for the differences in reading skills, simply stating that if

they could not decode the words, comprehension strategies were useless. The study did not address the possibility that if children did not know English well, decoding words would not make a difference if the child did not know them in the first place, or that when learning a new language, oral language comprehension comes before writing. Since the children did not get writing instruction in the language they already knew, their development in this area may have been suspended until they gained proficiency in English enough to comprehend the written part. Children who learned to read in Spanish did not have this hurdle to overcome in their reading development, and were able to start decoding familiar words earlier. There was no significant difference between SI and EI for English writing, but in Spanish writing, the SI group performed better than the EI group.

The study lacks reliability in that there were different teachers teaching the SI and EI groups. This may have impacted students' abilities, even more than the language of instruction. A teacher's approach, expectations, abilities, and influence could have been enough to affect the results given the small sample. Perhaps if the study was expanded to have many teachers for Spanish and English instruction, that would be less of a factor. But with only two classrooms, a lot of the difference could be attributed to the effect of the teacher. There was more than one variable in this case, not just the language of instruction, but also the purveyor of instruction.

There are a large number of Hispanic students in schools today that are learning English, with Spanish as their native language. Some school districts have Bilingual education programs, as did the district in the Carlisle and Beeman's (2000) study. Denton, Anthony, Parker and Hasbrouk, (2004) also investigated strategies that work in

bilingual programs. They attempted to discover whether the Read Well or Read Naturally programs helped bilingual students in three different areas: word identification in lists, word attack (phonemic decoding), and passage comprehension.

The participants in the study were 93 students ranging from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> grade in five different schools in one Texas district (Denton, et al., 2004). All the students were learning English as a second language (ESL). All the participants in the study were Hispanic and spoke Spanish as their first language. Participants in the study included 48 males and 45 females. The students were in bilingual classrooms. The school used a transitional bilingual program, so in second grade the teachers used mostly Spanish as the language of instruction, and by the time the children reached 5th grade, the language of instruction was predominantly English, with instruction gradually shifting to English over the elementary years.

Students' pretest scores on the word attack subtest of the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test- Revised placed them into one of two groups (Denton, et al., 2004). These groups were emergent decoding and established decoding in English. The students were placed in matched pairs based on these test results. There was an attempt to have the pairs be from the same classroom if possible. 1 comparison/control group for Read Well and 1 for Read Naturally groups consisted of the matched pairs of students. There were 2 experimental groups that studied with either Read Well or Read Naturally. These programs were not compared with each other, but with their own comparison group. Due to attrition, nineteen of the students who finished the study were in the Read Well treatment group and fourteen were in the Read Well comparison group. Thirty-two were in the Read Naturally treatment and twenty eight were in the Read Naturally comparison.

The students in the treatment groups received tutoring with undergraduate university students using either the Read Well or Read Naturally program. They were tutored three times per week for 40 minutes each session over a ten week period. There was some individual tutoring, and some students were in small groups of two, three, or four. Groups were formed based on scheduling constraints within the school.

The Read Well program was found to help with students' decoding, but not with comprehension in comparison to the control group (Denton, et al., 2004). The tutoring focused on the parts of pronunciation that are different in Spanish and English, so the students could use their prior knowledge of the Spanish language to learn how the languages differed. Students who were tutored with Read Well gained 4.06 points on average in decoding. Only context free reading was improved. Word identification was the only factor that showed statistically significant gains ( $f=5.70$ ,  $p=.023$ ). Word attack showed a mean gain of 5.16, though the comparison group gained 2.35, and in comprehension the mean gain for the treatment group was 1.58, only .01 more than the control group. After completing tutoring with this program, students were able to read English words in that they could pronounce them fluently, but they could not understand what they meant.

Using the Read Naturally program, there was no significant difference from the control group on any of the criteria. Word attack had a mean gain of -.22, and word identification had a mean gain of only 1.12 (comparison group gained 1.75, more than the treatment). The highest gain for this group was only a 2.13 point improvement for the treatment group on passage comprehension (the control group also improved .71 of a point on the same measure).

One problem with the internal validity of this study is that the way groups were chosen was not elaborated beyond the constraint of scheduling within the schools. Students groups varied greatly; from six students who received one on one tutoring to groups of two, three, and four students. I would say that a student who is tutored for 40 minutes one on one will have a much greater amount of progress than a student who receives 40 minutes of instruction in a group of four. The tutor can not attend to the child's individual needs as much in a larger group. Also, there is no information given as to the tutoring group size for the two experimental treatments. Did Read Well and Read Naturally treatments have similar student to teacher ratios? Additionally, there was no information given on what students were missing in class to participate in the treatment. Were they missing the literacy block in their classroom? This could have had an effect on why, in some instances, the control groups surpassed the treatment groups in their mean gain in scores on the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests.

De la Colina, Parker, Hasbrouck, and Lara-Alecio, (2001) also explored the use of Read Naturally on students learning to read in Spanish. Their subjects were in a school district in Texas that provided bilingual instruction for students in kindergarten through fifth grade, in an attempt to transition them into English speaking and reading. This is done out of the belief that students learn to read in a second language more easily if they are fluent in their first language.

A review of the literature showed the researchers (De la Colina et al., 2001) that aspects that improved English speaking children's ability to read with automaticity were rereading the same passages, modeling by a teacher, and the students' ability to monitor their own progress.

Materials from the Read Naturally program were translated for the students (De la Colina et al., 2001). The program entails students repeatedly reading the same passage, listening to tapes of the passage and reading along, and then notifying the teacher when they are ready to test.

Subjects for the study included first and second graders from four different classrooms (De la Colina et al., 2001). All students chosen had to be able to read between 30 and 60 words per minute in Spanish, or be able to read between 50 and 100 sight words to qualify for the study.

Students were split into three groups, one received instruction for a 12 week period, one received instruction for 10, and the last received instruction for only eight weeks (De la Colina et al., 2001). Each group met three days per week for 45 minutes. Small groups, mixed by engagement level as well as classroom assignment (to control for teacher affects) were formed to receive the intervention. One problem with this design may be that the groups were staggered so the first group started two weeks before the second, and in another two weeks the third group started. The researchers admit that students in the later groups may have gotten competitive and worked harder in order to catch up to the growth of their peers who started first. A way to fix this problem could be to simply start all the groups at the same time, and stop instruction for the shorter term groups earlier. Instead of starting the eight week treatment on week four, start them on week one and terminate their treatment at week eight.

Students' engagement level was determined by the number of stories they read each week (De la Colina et al., 2001). This was not a reflection of reading level, because lower level stories were simpler and shorter, so they could be read faster. Highly

engaged readers read a mean of 5.8 readings per week, and low level readers read only a mean of 2.6. These groups were both comprised of both high and low reading level groups.

Results of the study found that highly engaged students improved much more than lower engaged students, regardless of the amount of weeks they were tutored for (De la Colina et al., 2001). Two of the lowly engaged groups performed worse as the intervention went on. For the 12 week intervention, low engagement students did not have any statistically relevant improvement. The improvements that were made were somewhat modest, and could have been due to the regular classroom teaching and were similar to progress that may have occurred, even without the intervention (De la Colina et al., 2001). Ten of the 12 groups did improve over the course of the study, and those who were highly engaged improved between two and four times as much as students who were less engaged.

I find that this study (De la Colina et al., 2001) to be transferable to the extent that a student's engagement, regardless of language, may affect their progress. I think the results are not as credible as they could be. The design was flawed by the effects of students working hard to catch up to their classmates, and the fact that the length of time intervention was received provided little difference is not explained. It is possible that floor effects in the ability of the program to help students improve caused the similarity of results among groups, and this should have been attended to.

Riccio et al. (2001) also worked with students learning to read in Spanish. They recognized the importance of phonological awareness in beginning reading acquisition,

and the goal of the study was to investigate correlations between phonological awareness and Spanish and English reading ability.

Participants for the study (Ricchio et al., 2001) attended three different Texas elementary schools. The school district had a bilingual education program. One hundred and forty nine participants were recruited, including 71 girls and 78 boys. All of these children were classified by their parents as Hispanic. The ages of subjects ranged from 5 to 11 years, they attended kindergarten through fifth grade. The majority (126) of the subjects were in bilingual classrooms, while 6 children moved back and forth between bilingual and English only classrooms during their day, and 17 were in classrooms conducted entirely in English.

Examiners who administered the tests to students were all bilingual (Ricchio et al., 2001). Four measures were found to be especially important, and subtests from the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processes (CTOPP) were used to measure English phonological awareness in initial sound matching, ending sound matching, rhyming, and deletion. The Conciencia Fonologica en Espanol (CFE) was created by the researchers and reviewed by a panel of experts in the bilingual education field and bilingual Hispanics from different cultural groups. This test also measured the ability to distinguish and match initial and ending sounds, identify words that do and do not rhyme, and the ability to delete phonemes. Students were also asked to read a short passage for one minute in each language. The Spanish version came from Read Naturally, and a doctoral student/translator translated it into English. The report did not clarify if the students received a different passage or the same translated passage in each language. Having the same passage would have affected the results, because whichever one the



students read first, they would be familiar with the content, even if the second time it was in another language. The background knowledge is there the second time and it is easier to guess the word.

In a multiple regression analysis, it was shown that three of the CFE subtests (initial, ending, and rhyming sounds) “accounted for 25% of the variance in reading fluency in Spanish and 20% of the variance in English reading fluency” in first and second grade (Riccio et al., 2001, p. 596). For older students (third through fifth grades), these numbers were lower, at 17% for Spanish and 14% for English.

The study (Riccio et al., 2001) found that the ability to identify initial and final phonemes and rhyming sounds, and to delete phonemes on the CTE Spanish test was related to both Spanish and English fluency.

One challenge to the reliability of this study (Riccio et al., 2001) could be its use of the CFE, the *Conciencia Fonologica en Espanol*. The test was created for the study, and it was a pilot version. Though great care was put into the creation of the assessment tool, it is possible that there were flaws we might not see in a small scale study. It should be tested for reliability and revised. It is important for these assessments to be developed, but it may have affected the results of the study.

Chiappe, Siegel, and Wade-Woolley (2002) investigated the development of literacy skills for ESL students of a variety of ethnicities. The authors (Chiappe et al., 2002) cited important differences in the phonemic structures of different languages, as well as differences in the syntax of the languages that can cause confusion for ESL students learning to read. Until students have learned the phonemic rules for a new language, they are interpreting everything they hear in terms of their native language.

When there are factors that do not match, many things may be missed or misconstrued. Also, the power to predict words in a sentence is diminished when students are not familiar with syntax. It is suggested that this language barrier may delay the development of English reading abilities in ESL students and put them behind their native English speaking peers. This study sought to find what the effects these literacy skills had on the reading performance in kindergarten and first grade.

A total of 858 subjects, students from the North Vancouver (Canada) school district, coming from 30 different schools completed the study. (Chiappe et al., 2002). Most of the students lived in middle class areas. The sample included 727 students who spoke English as their native language, and 131 more who were learning English as a second language and spoke other languages with their families. Of these ESL students, 38 spoke Chinese, 23 spoke Farsi, Korean, Japanese, and Spanish all had seven speakers, and Tagalog had 6 speakers. There were also several other languages spoken by between 1 and 3 students, “Arabic, Bulgarian, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hindi, Italian, Kurdish, Norwegian, Polish, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Serbocroatian, and Swedish” (Chiappe et al., 2002, p. 374). Obviously, the classrooms were very linguistically diverse in this sample.

The classrooms in the schools included both systematic phonics instruction and an emphasis on phonological awareness (Chiappe et al., 2002). Extra help was given to at risk students in these areas. Most teachers in the district also used whole language activities, including “journal writing, Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) time, leveled books, read alouds, the use of big books, lively discussions, alphabet songs, and cloze activities to foster growth in literacy and oral language skills”( Chiappe et al., 2002, p.

374). Because special ESL classes are not available until students are older in this district, all the children in the study were in classes with English speaking children in English only classrooms.

Children were tested at the beginning of kindergarten using several different assessments (Chiappe et al., 2002). They were tested using the Wide Range Achievement Test-3 to test letter recognition of capital letters and words that ranged in difficulty. They were also given an exam to identify all 26 lowercase letters in random order, and then asked to spell their names and a few simple words. Students were also examined on their ability to reproduce pseudo words using the Sound Mimicry subtest of the GFW Sound Symbol Test.

Phonological awareness was assessed in four different ways, using subtests of the Phonological Awareness Test (Chiappe et al., 2002). First, a rhyme detection assessment from the where students picked a word that rhymed with the first word, then the Syllable Identification exam that asked students to identify the last syllable. The Phoneme Identification subtest asked students to say the last sound, or phoneme, instead of the whole syllable. Lastly, children were asked to delete a phoneme from a word with the Phoneme Deletion subtest.

Children were also assessed on their ability to do word retrieval, where they were not asked to read at all but rather were shown pictures of objects and had to say the name for them (Chiappe et al., 2002). There is no information given on whether the ESL students were allowed to say the word in their native tongue, this information was left out by the researcher. Though a subject might know the word for something in their own language and be able to retrieve the word from their memory banks, they might not know

the word for it in English. It would provide more clarity if the researcher gave this information. I assume they were allowed to respond only in English, and in such case, obviously this assessment would not be one in which students who do not know English would find as much success as they would in their native language.

To assess the students' familiarity with English syntax, a sentence with a missing word was read and students were asked to provide a word that fit (Chiappe et al., 2002). Students were also asked to repeat sentences to assess their verbal short term memory. Finally, students were given pictures of signs and logos to assess their familiarity with environmental print.

First grade students were tested on decoding and spelling, as well as other measures using subtests of the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test (Chiappe et al., 2002). These included word attack for pseudowords and common and uncommon word identification. Students were also asked to spell ten real words and ten pseudowords. Any phonetically plausible combinations of phonemes were accepted for the pseudowords, so multiple letter patterns were accepted as correct, as long as there was a precedent. First grade students were also assessed on pseudoword repetition, phoneme deletion and substitution, awareness of English syntax, and verbal short-term memory.

Children were tested at the beginning of kindergarten (in October and November), and in March and April of their first grade year (Chiappe et al., 2002). Kindergarten examinations lasted about 30 minutes, and for 40 minutes in first grade. Children were separated into at risk and not at risk for reading failure groups in each category of native English speakers and ESL students.

The study (Chiappe et al., 2002) found that in kindergarten "the interaction

between language group and reading skill was... significant,  $F(1, 831) = 2.23, p < .05$ , indicating that differences between At-Risk and Not-At-Risk children were greater for NS [native English speakers] than ESL children” (Chiappe et al., 2002, p. 380). In comparing the two groups, ESL children struggled more with the rhyme identification assessments,  $f = 11.64, p < .001$ . Overall, there was not a huge difference between English speaking and ESL students in the ability to process phonemically in English. There were greater differences in at risk and not at risk students than the language groups in phonemic awareness.

The native speaking children performed better on oral cloze tasks (repeating deleted words) than ESL learners ( $f = 7.71, p < .001$ ) (Chiappe et al., 2002). Though the results were not statistically significant, English speaking students were able to use their short term memory to repeat more of a sentence than ESL students. Perhaps because they were more able to rely on syntax, they were more able to remember the sentences as more than a meaningless string of sounds, which may have been the case for students with little proficiency in English.

In first grade reading scores and pseudoword repetition, it was found that language was not a significant factor (Chiappe et al., 2002). The only thing that would predict the reading performance in first grade from kindergarten would be membership in at risk or not at risk groups. Native English speakers did perform better than ESL student on the oral cloze measure, just as they had in kindergarten. It was statistically significant,  $f = 50.80, p < .001$ . The study also found that the difference between at risk and not at risk group was more for students in the ESL group. Additionally, ESL students performed

worse than their counterparts on remembering and repeating sentences, though the result was not statistically significant.

Between the two grades, ESL students grew more than native speaking counterparts ( $f=5082$ ,  $p<.05$ ) in reading skills (Chiappe et al., 2002). The researchers note they were still slower at word retrieval, which was the test where the students were asked to say a word for an illustration.

Native speaking children scored higher on providing a missing word (oral cloze) than ESL students ( $f=34.04$ ,  $p<.001$ ) (Chiappe et al., 2002). The differences between ESL and native English speakers were larger in first grade than they were in kindergarten. The study also found that native English students were stronger in their short term verbal memory, but that both groups grew at a similar rate. The study found that for ESL learners, phonological skills and letter knowledge in kindergarten, but not verbal memory, were related to the ability to read and decode individual words in first grade.

The study also reports ESL students caught up to native speakers in phonological processing, but not on syntactic awareness and short term memory of words (Chiappe et al., 2002). In fact, the gap actually increased between the two assessments for ability to use English syntax, showing that ESL students did not grow as fast as native English speakers.

The researchers (Chiappe et al., 2002) cite that “ESL students were decoding at the same level as their NS peers despite differences in their oral language skills” (Chiappe et al., 2002, p. 394). The final conclusion (Chiappe et al., 2002) was that students of all

language backgrounds can find success in decoding with explicit and systematic instruction in phonics and phonemic awareness.

The researchers state “these results suggest that systematic and explicit instruction in phonological awareness and phonics will benefit children from diverse language backgrounds” (Chiappe et al., 2002, p. 393). The validity of this statement could be challenged, as there was a balanced classroom approach that included other methods to teach literacy as well, which may have been more helpful in teaching students reading skills. Just because phonics was used, there were many other methods as well, and there is nothing presented to prove that the improvements were not based on the story reading, silent reading time, or other whole language activities that were said to be present in the classrooms. It could also be argued that the researchers have seemed to neglect reading comprehension in their study. The ability to decode is important in learning to read, but it is incomplete without the ability to understand what had been read. The decision not to assess on any comprehension skills is a disappointing omission by the researchers.

Gunn, Smolkowski, Biglan, Black, and Blair, (2005) studied the effects of supplemental reading instruction on struggling Hispanic and non Hispanic readers over a period of four years. Subjects were chosen from 14 schools in four Oregon communities. From a population of 4,004 students, 359 families were recruited after an assessment of reading difficulties or social skills problems. 60 subjects dropped out of the study for various reasons. 299 participants, 159 of whom were Hispanic and 140 of whom were not Hispanic, completed the study. There were 161 boys in the study and 138 girls. There were 51 kindergartners, 87 first graders, 90 second graders, and 71 third graders. The information about ethnicity and language use came from parent interviews. 94% of

Hispanic students were from Mexico, the rest from Central America or other Latin American countries. 9% of the Hispanic students were born in the United States and 85% were born in Mexico. Eighty four percent of the Hispanic families spoke only or mostly Spanish at home. Parents were paid to participate in the study (Gunn et al. 2005), \$30 to complete a parent questionnaire at the end of each year, and \$15 for providing information on the social behavior of their children at the beginning of the study, the end of year two, and the end of year four.

Subtests of the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of achievement and the Walker-McConnell Test of Social Skills were given to the subjects (Gunn et al. 2005). Students in each social skills category were grouped in matched pairs by ethnicity, starting with the pair of least skilled readers, then assigned randomly to a condition: either intervention was provided or not. Supplemental instruction was provided 30 minutes daily, as well as parent training and social skill intervention for students in the experimental group.

Half the students received 6 months of supplemental reading instruction in the first year of the study, and received supplemental instruction for the entirety of the second year (Gunn et al. 2005). At the beginning of the first year, all students were assessed using the Woodcock Johnson Tests of Achievement, and then were again assessed at the end of the year for 4 years. Assessors were not aware of the children's membership in control or intervention groups. Supplemental instruction was only provided for the first two years, but testing continued to assess if there were long term effects of the supplemental instruction.

Students were pulled for supplemental instruction during times that did not interfere with classroom instruction (Gunn et al. 2005). The instruction was conducted in



their home rooms. Nine instructional assistants worked with the students in small groups of two to three. For supplemental instruction, Reading Mastery was used for first or second grade students. The program consists of phonemic awareness, phoneme and grapheme correspondence, and decoding. Corrective Reading was used when the students reached third and fourth grades. This program is for older students who do not have the primary skills. It covers the same components as Reading Mastery, with topics interesting to older students, and moves at a faster rate. No information was given as to the program used with kindergarten intervention subjects. These groups usually spent five to seven minutes on phonics, 10-15 on word reading and spelling, and the rest of the session on reading passages to build fluency and accuracy.

Contingencies for Learning Academic and Social Skills and Dina Dinosaurs Social Skills and Problem-Solving Curriculum were used to help students in the intervention group improve their social skills (Gunn et al. 2005). These programs are designed to reinforce positive behaviors and help children reduce inappropriate behavior.

Gunn et al. (2005), concluded that intervention students gained much faster ( $p=.0052$ ) than controls, who started at the same place at T1. Though at T3 there was not a significant difference between groups ( $p=.0887$ ), the students letter- word identification did grow faster than control group ( $p=.0092$ ). At T5 (the end of the fourth year), showed that even two years after the end of intervention, these students were still significantly ahead of the control group in word attack ( $p=.0346$ ). The group was no longer improving at a greater rate than the control group ( $p=.5461$ ), but they still scored above the control group on the assessment.

Word attack scores showed that students in the intervention group performed significantly better ( $p = .0013$ ) at T3 than students in the control group (Gunn et al. 2005). At T5, there was not a significant difference between the groups ( $p = .8274$ ). Control groups were actually increasing at a higher rate ( $t = 8.40$ ,  $p < .0001$ ) than intervention students ( $t = -4.23$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). There was a significant difference in the rate of improvement between ethnic groups. Hispanic students scores started off lower than their non-Hispanic counterparts. Results showed that non-Hispanic students in the experimental group improved at a greater rate ( $p < .0001$ ) than non-Hispanic control groups, and Hispanic students with the same treatment improved even more quickly ( $p = .0228$ ) than their matched pair. This phenomenon faded at T3, where there was not a significant difference between races ( $p = .0954$ ).

For oral fluency, students in the intervention group improved at a faster rate than the control group ( $p = .0129$ ) (Gunn et al. 2005). At T3, the difference in abilities between groups was significant ( $p = .0356$ ). At T5 the difference was even greater ( $p = .0144$ ). “...Intervention students at T1 read less than 2 cwpm faster than controls, but by T5, they read almost 14 CWPM faster” (Biglan et al., 2005. 78.)

The study (Gunn et al. 2005) concludes that the results showed that intervention helped for all students on word attack and comprehension. On word attack, Hispanic and non-Hispanic students both improved more than their matched pair in the control group, even though the slopes started to come together at T5. Hispanic students improved faster than non-Hispanic students. At the final assessment (T5), at the end of four years and two years after the end of the intervention) “students differed by condition on letter-word

identification ( $d=0.25$ ), oral reading fluency ( $d=0.29$ ), and reading comprehension ( $d=0.29$ )” (Gunn et al. 2005, p. 82)

The study (Gunn et al. 2005) shows that intervention in small groups can affect the reading achievement of both Hispanic and non-Hispanic students who struggle with reading. Though Hispanic students started at a lower level (possibly because less than 15% spoke English at home), they improved at greater rates than their non-Hispanic counterparts. This is not only due to their increased familiarity with English, as the control group also became more familiar with the language during this period. The researchers suggest that it is helpful to provide supplemental instructions in reading English even before the students are proficient speaking it.

Paying the subjects to participate may have helped the researchers with their study, but brings questions into the reliability of the information. The parents may just be doing it for the money and not because they care about accuracy. Parents who have children with poor social skills or low levels of reading achievement may feel ashamed and not want to be honest, and so fill out a survey dishonestly trying to make their child look more competent than they are. They might not want to subject their family to scrutiny, and be participating just to get the money. No information was given as to the socioeconomic status of the participants.

Intervention in comprehension was not provided. If reading is the making of meaning, then this was a major omission on the part of the researchers. The researchers (Gunn et al. 2005) tested on comprehension, but comprehension strategies were not part of the intervention treatment. Testing for something that was not made part of the control is not reliable. The reader does not know what may have caused these changes. Though

intervention students improved more from T1 to T3 ( $p= .0357$  at T3) Control and intervention students improved at the same rate from T3 to T5 ( $p=.3703$ ). This could be expected for something that there was no specific intervention addressing. It seems control and intervention groups may have differed on this because of a phonic ability to read the words, and thus have a chance to comprehend them, but once the control group caught up in that sense there were no strategies taught that would have kept the intervention group ahead of controls. There was also no extra help in the intervention in vocabulary, but it was tested for as well. Intervention subjects scored only slightly better ( $p=.0446$ ) at T3 and even less so at T5 ( $p=.0571$ .)

Barone (2003) conducted a multi-case study in order to find out what teaching methods were most effective for low income students in a school with a majority of English Language learners. The researcher chose 16 students in a sample of opportunity. She chose the first children to arrive for their assessments with the kindergarten teacher on the first week of school. She attempted to include an even number of boys and girls by refraining from recruiting students of the sex she had too many of, until the sexes were even. She had the assistance of a bilingual English-Spanish speaking aide in recruiting children of Spanish speaking parents.

Of the 16 subjects selected, 3 dropped out of the study (Barone, 2003). This left the researchers with 6 boys and 7 girls. Ten of the children chosen were learning English as a second language. Nine of these children spoke Spanish, and 1 spoke Tagalog. Three of the chosen students spoke English as their first language. The inclusion of these students in the study seems unnecessary, as there were no recommendations made for their literary needs, even though of the 3 students that finished second grade below grade

level in reading, 2 were native English speakers. The researcher also notes that 3 of the children attended preschool, but does not connect this information with their later performance in reading. The information seems unnecessary to include in the study if it is not going to be connected to the conclusion.

The school the children attended (Barone, 2003) had a high population of English as a second language students. Of the 600 students who attended the school, 60% were not native English speakers and 85% of the students here Hispanic. Eighty percent of the student body received free or reduced lunch. The school was in a medium sized school district in a Western city.

There were 17 teachers who participated in the study (Barone, 2003). Three kindergarten teachers, eight first grade teachers, and six second grade teachers. Only one of the seventeen teachers was male. Only one of the teachers was fluent in English and Spanish. In kindergarten, one teacher taught a morning and afternoon session, and two teachers shared a morning and an afternoon session, alternating days so the students had a different teacher every other day. The first and second grade teachers all taught in pairs, so one large class would have two teachers. Unfortunately, no information was given about class sizes. The teachers were provided with professional development in literacy weekly.

The study (Barone, 2003) was conducted by observing in classrooms and interviewing students and teachers, as well as collecting student work and assessments. The end of the year interviews were tape recorded, but the others were not. The notes for the other interviews were made after the interview. The researcher does not explain why only some of the interviews were tape recorded or why no record was made of the

beginning of the year or mid year interviews while they were occurring. This makes the ability to confirm the research difficult, since no notes were made during the interview and they were not taped. The children were interviewed about their second grade literacy experiences at the end of that year, interviews lasting about 5 minutes. These interviews with the students could have been conducted more than once, perhaps at the end of each school year. Also, children may have a hard time remembering retrospectively their literacy experiences over the entire year, and more complete assessments of the children's feelings about their literacy experiences could have come from interviews even once or twice during the year as well as at the end.

The researcher (Barone, 2003) and a doctoral student took field notes simultaneously in the same classroom and compared notes until their observations were 90% similar in their recording of teaching and learning activities, then they observed in different classes. The children were observed once a week in their classrooms during reading instruction. Kindergarteners were observed for an entire half day session, while first and second graders were observed during their reading block. One full day at the beginning and one at the end of the year was spent in each child's classroom to identify how reading and writing were incorporated into the rest of the curriculum, if that is enough to accurately assess that. Depending on scheduling or where the class is at in a unit, it is possible that they might be doing less or more embedded literacy instruction than is the norm for the room. From these literacy block and full day interviews, a literacy profile was created for each student. These literacy profiles were shared with the teachers for accuracy, and for additional information. This could be problematic, because a teacher's own view of their instruction could be biased, and it is the job of the

researcher to see with a clear view what is occurring. Interviewing the teacher's about what literacy activities were happening would be acceptable, but having them check the researchers impartial observations for validity could lead to the information collected not being impartial after all.

A literacy profile was compiled for each grade in Barone's study (2003). Kindergarten classrooms varied in the method of literacy instruction. One classroom had a focus on phonemic awareness, reading aloud, and attempts at book discussions in English. Since the children struggled with the English discussions, the book readings and discussions were discontinued by November in favor of whole group phonics activities. The other classroom, which had a different teacher every other day, had vastly different expectations with each different teacher. One teacher read to the students but did not encourage discussion, and did not read any of the books a second time. The other teacher spent a lot of time having the children memorize how to spell their names and completing phonics worksheets. The phonics principles were not applied to the books that were read aloud. Neither classroom provided opportunity to practice conversational or academic English. Many children talked in their small groups in Spanish. There was little support bridging home language to school language. Only 4 of the kindergarteners had a rudimentary understanding of the phoneme grapheme relationship at the end of the year, and 2 of the children could not write their name

There are some concerns about the Barone's (2003) reporting here. She states that only 4 of the 13 kindergarteners "...had a rudimentary understanding of sound/symbol relationships at the end of the year" (p. 984). Later on the same page she summarizes "...the majority of the focal children left with very rudimentary knowledge

of the alphabetic principle and little understanding of books” (p. 984). 4 of 13 is not a majority in any sense of the word, and reporting it this way makes readers question the credibility of the rest of the information reported.

The First Grade Classrooms included in Barone’s (2003) study had a major curricular emphasis on phonics and decoding. The teachers said in interviews that they believed students needed a foundation in phonics to gain the skills for reading. Children were grouped in small ability groups for instruction, but all students completed the same worksheet packets, which were not leveled for ability or English proficiency. All teachers read to the students each day, and leveled texts were available to the students. One of the classrooms was very different. Students in this classroom copied sentences from the board instead of composing sentences, and there were no leveled texts in the classroom library. Three of the 4 focal children in this room qualified for Reading Recovery, a tutoring program, and a total of 3 from the three other classrooms combined qualified.

The emphasis on phonemic awareness, decoding, and phonics gives children skills in those areas, but there was little attention paid to comprehension, vocabulary, or writing in any of the classrooms. By the end of first grade, all children were able to independently read texts and write short stories. Three children were above grade level, while 3 more exceeded the schools expectations but were still in the first grade range. One child was at grade level, and 6 were below grade level. Of the 4 who had finished kindergarten with knowledge of grapheme phoneme correspondence, only 1 finished first below grade level.



Second Grade consisted of a more whole language approach, with a greater focus on meaning than on decoding (Barone, 2003). During, Daily Oral Language, students corrected sentences and discussed errors. Teachers read aloud and students discussed books. The students were in leveled reading groups and leveled texts were used. The focus of the reading was on meaning and reactions to plot and character. Students used Venn Diagrams and KWL(know, want to know, and learned) charts to help with understanding texts. Students wrote their own stories and books, on topics of their own choosing. Classroom discussions incorporated Think Pair Share, which helped students less proficient in English have a chance to talk their thoughts over so they felt comfortable articulating them in the large group. In one classroom, students were encouraged to make connections between their native language and English. Students were praised for native language abilities. The teachers this year helped students have academic conversations with each other, which teachers in previous years had not attempted or had given up on. At the end of the year, 8 children were at grade level, 2 children were above grade level, and only 3 were below grade level. Five of the children who ended first grade below grade level ended second grade at grade level. The focus on meaning may have made the difference for them.

The researcher (Barone, 2003) does not address the possibility that decoding does not work well for students who do not understand the words they are decoding. Students who do not know the meaning of an English word cannot comprehend its meaning by decoding alone, but this is not addressed as a reason the meaning based approach succeeded. Barone also does not address the possibility that the student's background in phonics could have been the reason they succeeded in second grade. She concludes

...after the emphasis on letter knowledge in kindergarten and phonics in first grade, the teachers in second grade utilized a more balanced approach to literacy that included shared, guided, and independent reading. This more complex curriculum enriched students' literacy learning. (p. 1014).

She had followed two of the students, Sandra and Julio, more closely than the other students through the two years. Julio never comprehended the alphabetic principle or phonics, and he ended the second grade below grade level. Sandra on the other hand had struggled at first but in first grade began to comprehend decoding and phonics. She ended the year only slightly below grade level. In second grade she skyrocketed and ended the year beyond grade level. The omission of the possibility that her background in phonics set her up for success in a literature based classroom discounts the role phonics may have played in Sandra's success. By saying that the second grade's meaning based approach worked better than phonics, the researcher does not consider that a background in decoding may indeed be necessary for that approach to work. Since Julio did not have the background and did not succeed in a whole language classroom, and Sandra did have the phonics background and went on to succeed, this is a possibility that should have been considered.

There were some credibility problems throughout the study (Barone, 2003). Some conclusions did not seem to fit with the data, and some important possibilities were omitted. Some have already been reviewed, but additionally, the researcher concludes that the lack of connection to the students' home language in kindergarten caused the students achievement problems. But she does not address the fact that half of the English speaking students finished kindergarten below grade level. If these students also failed to

thrive in the environment, then there were obviously more reasons for a lack of success than language, since their home language was the same as what was spoken at school. It seems like she wanted to draw that conclusion and ignored this fact to do so. Also, at the end of second grade 1 Spanish and 2 English speaking students were below grade level. So perhaps the differences in achievement have little to do with language at all, but with natural abilities and learning styles, or other variables.

The researcher's (Barone, 2003) numbers again do not match when she states that two children maintained status as above grade level from kindergarten through second grade, Heidee and Eric, but when you look at her chart on the next page, Eric was not above grade level in first grade. Only Heidee was above grade level all three years.

The researcher (Barone, 2003) concludes that teachers can change the literacy achievement of students by valuing their language and encouraging academic discussion. Also, a teacher's attitude and teaching methods can take a student who is on track to continue failing and move them onto a path of success. While it is true that significantly more students ended second grade at or above grade level in reading and writing, it made no difference for Julio, who continued to fail even in a whole language classroom. Additionally, the researcher states "the results of this study showed no clear pattern of literacy development for children learning English as a new language" (p. 1014), and on the same page states "schools and teachers can change achievement patterns of students in reading, even after first grade" (p. 1014). A critical reader may ask, if there is no pattern, how can the study show that the pattern can be changed?

Gilliam, Gerla, and Wright (2004) also searched out strategies to help Hispanic students succeed in school. They recognized the importance of a parent's involvement on

a student's literacy development. They conducted a study that investigated how to involve low income parents who had not been successful in school themselves in the literacy experiences of their children. Many parents want to help their children be more successful than they were, but do not know how. Classes for parents of kindergarten students were conducted to help them help their child succeed in reading.

The Texas Literacy Council showed that 40% of the minority families in the state were illiterate. It also "noted that many parents wanted to help their children, but they simply were not knowledgeable enough to provide the necessary assistance" (Gilliam et al., 2004, p. 227). These researchers decided to take on a project to help show minority parents what they could do to help their children's literacy development through a series of classes.

The study (Gilliam et al., 2004) was conducted in an elementary school in a Southwestern city. The school was located in one of the most low income areas of the city. It served a high number of low SES and minority students. The participants were the parents of 20 kindergarten students. Eighty percent of the parents were Hispanic, 15% were African American, and five percent were Caucasian. Each parent was paid ten dollars for each session they came to and \$25 at the end of the series if they had come to all the meetings. Childcare was provided by university students during all sessions for not only the kindergarten children of participants, but also their siblings.

To understand more about who the people who would want to participate in these classes were, a survey was given (Gilliam et. al., 2004). It showed that 100% of the families thought reading was important, and 65% said they read to their child daily. Upon further interviews, the researchers found that some of the information given on

these surveys was exaggerated. Perhaps parents did value reading and so exaggerated the amount they read together as a family because they did not want to look bad.

There were 10 sessions of the program, all held in the school library (Gilliam et al., 2004). The first night the school librarian showed how to check out books and the resources available, and after that session and all the rest of them, parents stayed after with their children and checked out books. The bookmobile from the public library also came and parents received library cards and bookmobile schedules. Other sessions included “storytelling in the home...choosing when, how, and what to read to children...using puppets in reading and storytelling...making and using literacy games...[and] reading and writing poetry”( Gilliam et al., 2004, p. 231).

In interviews conducted after the classes were complete (during the 10<sup>th</sup> session), 100% of parents said that their children asked to be read to much more often after the end of the sessions than before (Gilliam et al., 2004). Half of the families described turning off the television in order to read as a family, and all reported they were being purposeful to make time to read together as a family. The researchers contribute this success to their program, but also the students could have been exposed to literacy at school and may have wanted to read more anyway, an outside factor that was not acknowledged in the results. The researchers also report that parents stated they felt better about their parenting, but do not give a percentage. In fact there are three results where no number or percentage is given as to the amount of parents who agreed with the statement. The other two were that kindergarten students and even some younger siblings were pretending to read to the parents, a result of familiarity with text and the concept of what reading is, and parents feeling there was more bonding occurring between them and their

child. The fact that no percentages are reported for these aspects makes me think that perhaps there was not a high number who did agree, or else it would have been reported. This is deceitful and takes away from the credibility of the study.

The findings are dependable in some ways, but they do not relate the information to the children's performance in school so we cannot measure if it had a difference there, which makes it difficult to apply to the query of this paper. All we can see is that families were bonding, not that it helped the children in school. Credibility was also an issue, in that the researchers dismissed the findings of the preliminary survey as exaggerated, and neglected to report numbers of subjects agreeing with a statement on three different occasions. If they told readers how the survey was exaggerated, or how they knew it had been, that would have been more credible. And if researchers had reported percentages of the results, positive or negative, on each of their findings, they would be more convincing. There were definitely problems with the reporting, and a lack of proof that the program worked to enhance school performance.

Lane, Menzies, Munton, Von Duering, and English (2005) looked at the effect of literacy intervention on a student's social skills, in class and with peers. One student was followed for the case study. The subject was a male kindergartener who was 5 years old. He was classified as at risk by the school in both literacy and behavior. He was able to identify letters at mid year, but his word attack skills were low.

The intervention provided was small group work with two other kindergarteners (Lane et al., 2005). The literacy specialist for the school worked with them three to four times a week for 30 minutes each week for nine weeks. The curriculum used was the *Phonics Chapter Books Program*. It included independent readings and explicit phonics

instruction, as well as work in phonemic awareness, phoneme grapheme correspondence, sight words, reading, and dictation.

Data was collected by research assistants from the college who were trained by researchers (Lane et al., 2005). Phonological awareness was tested by onset fluency, where students must identify the first sound in a word. The ability to name letters was also tested. The student had to name randomly ordered letters, both in upper and lower cases. These skills were assessed DIBELS subtests.

The college students also assessed the subject's inappropriate behaviors in class and in social situations (Lane et al., 2005). It was found to decrease drastically in both settings. The study showed increases in phonemic awareness correlated with a decrease in disruptive behavior. The subject also rated it as a positive experience, and said he wished the classes would not have ended when they did.

The researchers (Lane et al., 2005) recognize their own limitations in the fact that the use of only one participant detracts from external validity. Also, the skills were only tested and there was no data collected on how he applied these skills in his regular classroom. We might more fully understand the development of this young boy if we understood how he was able to participate in the regular literacy instruction after the intervention. It is hard to say that with only one student if the results are reliable, and would be repeatable with another student who had the same issues. Perhaps for this boy his misbehavior was a reaction to feeling incompetent. Other students may act up for different reasons, and so intervention linguistically would not affect their behavior patterns.

Pollard-Durodola, Cedillo, and Denton (2004) studied the strategies that are used to teach phonemic awareness and early word reading in Spanish. Since English has a deep orthography (where the rules for pronunciation of letters vary) and Spanish has a shallow orthography, where most letters are pronounced the same in any situation (Pollard-Durodola et al., 2004). Thus, findings from English language studies may not be generalizable to Spanish speaking students. This study set out to find out how phonemic, syllabic, or whole word recognition strategies were used in Spanish speaking classrooms to teach beginning reading.

Research has shown that Spanish vowel sounds are more consistently pronounced than English, and are more of a focus of early instruction (Pollard-Durodola et al., 2004). There is also a stronger focus on the syllable as the unit of sound, versus the phoneme as the common focus in English reading instruction. There is also more focus on onset and rime in English reading instruction than in Spanish.

Pollard-Durodola et al. (2004) conducted a case study of two bilingual kindergarten teachers who taught their students in Spanish. The focus was on what reading strategies were used, how they changed over the year as students became more proficient, and how instruction differed for low, medium, and high ability readers. Teachers were videotaped and the tapes were analyzed. Field notes were also taken, as well as interviews with the teachers conducted. Students were assessed using the Woodcock Language Proficiency Battery Revised Spanish Form word attack subtest at the end of the year.

Subjects were from the classes of these two teachers (Pollard-Durodola et al., 2004). Teachers had classes just over 20 students, but self identified three high lever



readers, three low level students, and four average students to participate in the study, making a total of 20 students to participate in the analysis. The school was in a Southwestern city. Just under 76% of students in the district were low SES, marked by the receipt of free lunches. No information is given on the SES of students in the study.

Each class included whole group literacy instruction and small groups that were leveled by ability (Pollard-Durodola et al., 2004). From the videotapes, different types of instruction were identified and grouped. Drawing attention to specific phonemes, attempting to recognize the word as a whole, focus on onset and rime, drawing attention to a syllable, and a nonspecific strategy where the teacher simply said no or asked the student to try again were the strategies identified. Inter-rater reliability for categorization of strategies ranged from 74% to 83% between the two teachers.

At the beginning of the year, there tended to be a stronger emphasis on sounding out phonetically, as well as syllabication and word attack (Pollard-Durodola et al., 2004). As the year progressed, there was less emphasis on phonemes and more on whole words. There was also a stronger emphasis on whole words with advanced readers. One teacher used the segmentation of words only 30% of the time with advanced students, and 76% of the time with low level students at the beginning of the year. The second teacher used sounding out 25% of the time with advanced readers, 43 % of the time with middle level readers, and 18% of the time with low level students. This differs from teacher one, low level students in this class used sight word identification 53% of the time, much more often than the first class. Toward the end of the year, there was less emphasis on sounding out, the teacher said try again or told the students the word more often than at the beginning of the year, perhaps trying to promote whole word recognition to a greater

extent. The second teacher used word level identification 70% of the time at mid year, and 84% of the time at the end of the year. Both classrooms moved from use of phoneme and syllable sounds to an emphasis on whole word recognition over the course of the year. They both used smaller units of sound to sound out words in lower level groups than in higher level groups, where the word was the focus rather than its parts.

In interviews, teachers did not self identify this tendency to use whole word recognition strategies to the extent they actually implemented it in their teaching (Pollard-Durodola et al., 2004). There was a list of words the district wanted all students to know, and one teacher identified with trying to teach these words, but the other did not recognize the use of this strategy and talked about sounding words out with phonemes and syllables. They recognized the use of phonemic units for struggling readers to help break down words into their phonological parts. It was found that both classes of students were above average on the word attack assessment at the end of the year.

The results included the fact that even sight word recognition may depend on knowledge of the alphabet, to quickly identify sounds in a word (Pollard-Durodola et al., 2004). The emphasis on this part of reading development may not need to be as strong in a language where rules are more general. The emphasis on phonemic units rather than whole words for the less proficient readers may indicate their need for more focus on the alphabetic principle than more advanced readers. The study showed that teachers often encouraged students to read at the word level, but when mistakes were made, resorted to syllabic and phonemic units to correct mistakes.

A critique of Pollard-Durodola et al.'s study (2004) may be that it did not include any information on the English portions of the program. It indicated that both teachers

were bilingual. Perhaps there was not instruction in English at all, but indicating that the teachers were bilingual and the schools were in the United States, one might assume that there were portions in English.

In summary, Carlisle and Beeman (2000) showed that students who were taught in their native language were just as strong in English reading and writing, and stronger in reading and writing in their native language, than students who were taught in English. Pollard-Durodola et al. (2004) showed that, in classrooms that use Spanish as the language of instruction, there is a tendency to use more whole word recognition strategies than breaking a word down into phonemes.

Denton, et al. (2004) showed that when students were tutored with read well, it improved only context free reading and did not help students with comprehension. Chappe et al. (2002) also discovered that students of all language backgrounds could find success in decoding with explicit, systematic phonics instruction, though comprehension was not addressed. Barone (2003) found that less students ended the year below grade level in second grade when their study had been a whole language approach, rather than more ending below grade level in first grade and kindergarten when the focus was on phonics.

De la Colina et al. (2001) showed that students who were highly motivated to read improved more than students who weren't motivated, regardless of ability level. When Gilliam et al. (2004) conducted classes to involve parents in reading with their children, 100% of families reported reading more together.

## Effective Methods for Teaching Asian Pacific American Students

In a case study by Ruan (2003), three kindergarten age bilingual Chinese girls were studied to determine what the literacy experiences of these children were, and how the literacy instruction for these Chinese children in specific related to the teacher's cultural beliefs. All the parents in these cases had jobs that required higher education. Two of the girls were born in America and one was an immigrant. The study took place in a Midwestern town in a class where most of the students were white, and was taught by a white teacher.

The researcher (Ruan, 2003) acted as an observer and as an aide who spoke to the three girls in Chinese. She wanted to observe how the teacher interacted with different children, and especially notice how she treated the three Chinese girls. She found that the Chinese girls did not participate in whole group interactions unless they had to, for example, as in a situation where each person was expected to contribute something. The researcher attributed this to the fact that in the Chinese culture, children are discouraged from sharing information with adults.

In this classroom, the teacher only helped students who asked for it. Students who remained quiet and did not make their needs known were not given help, even if they needed it. In one instance, the Chinese immigrant did not know what to do, and did not solicit help. She ended up copying from another child. According to the author, many Chinese children experience shame when they do not understand, and this might contribute to the student having remained silent when she did not understand the directions. Since the Chinese students were not assertive about getting their needs met, they did not receive the help they needed. The teacher stated that she tried to be color

and culture blind, and see no differences in abilities and learning modalities between her Chinese students and her white students (Ruan, 2003).

There were some aspects of this study that were problematic for a reader. First, the results (Ruan, 2003) were from the researcher's observation and interviews only, and could be susceptible to bias, especially in the observations. As a Chinese woman herself, the researcher could have experienced these types of assumptions as a student and already had the idea of what her study would find. Her strong connection to the experience of Chinese children in school may have biased her toward something that is a sensitive subject. For example, each field note that is included in the study observes that the Chinese children did not participate in the class discussion. But there is no indication of how many of the other students did or did not participate, so it could be that there were other students who did not participate either. It seems like the author is attempting to be more convincing in her argument by making it seem that it was just these students who were not engaged, and omitting the participation data on students of other ethnicities. The confirmability of the study is present in the form of tape recorded interviews that were coded. These could be checked by interested parties. The observation notes could be reviewed by an outside party, but since there were no other observers, there is no way to check the reliability of these observations.

McBride-Chang and Ho (2005) studied the development of phonological awareness and reading ability in Chinese students, in Hong Kong, who were learning both Chinese and English simultaneously.

The subjects were tested during their first year of a three year kindergarten program, and in their third year (McBride-Chang & Ho, 2005). Their ages were about

three and about five at the two testing times. Ninety children comprised the sample.

There were 34 females and 56 males. All were in the same school. Most were middle and upper middle class. The native language of all the subjects was Cantonese.

The study (McBride-Chang & Ho, 2005) was interested in phonological awareness because in English, the language consists of blending letters for each sound, while in Chinese the smallest unit of sound is the syllable. There are different characters for all the syllables, while English uses the same letters to make many sounds. Since a review of the literature showed that student's phonological awareness most often comes from their native language and transfers to their second language, the researchers were interested in how this would work in languages with different phonological structures.

In the classrooms, students were not taught to decode English words, but rather they read the whole word, sometimes called word attack (McBride-Chang & Ho, 2005). They would look at the word and say it, and try to remember it that way. This is more similar to the use of a character than breaking a word down into individual phonemes. In the two years that elapsed between testing time one and testing time two, students were expected to learn "approximately 150 to 200 Chinese characters and... [be able to] read some short phrases and sentences in Chinese. In addition, K3 [students in their third year of kindergarten] children can recognize about 50 to 80 isolated English words but few phrases or sentences" (McBride-Chang & Ho, 2005, p. 124).

In order for assessments to match over languages, students were asked to do a syllable deletion task instead of a phoneme deletion task, because in Chinese they would have to delete an entire syllable (McBride-Chang & Ho, 2005). For this, compound words with one syllable words were used, such as hotdog. At the first testing time,

students were tested individually, but at time two they were tested in groups of 30, and then interviewed individually. The tests of English ability were only given at time two, because the students had had no English instruction before the first testing time. Students were assessed on several measures, including Chinese vocabulary, ability to identify the English alphabet, English words, and Chinese characters, ability to delete syllables, ability to hold a series of numbers in their verbal memory, quickly recalling names of pictured items, and the accuracy of students invented spelling in English.

The study (McBride-Chang & Ho, 2005) found that the students ability in reading Chinese and reading English at time two was not related in any way to the English phonological assessments from time one. Chinese phonological skills were stronger predictors of ability. Even English word identification was better predicted by the Chinese character identification at the first testing time. Basically, the skills in the first language were stronger predictors of success in both languages than skills in the second language predicting success in that same language.

The findings of this study (McBride-Chang & Ho, 2005) are dependable, as they concur with other studies that have shown students use the phonological skills from their first language to process and learn a second language, and that the ability to read in the second language is based on phonological awareness in language one. The study could be confirmed, because the information and results are provided. The study could be transferable to understanding other schools in China that teach both Cantonese and English, but I am not sure how well they can be transferred to a mixed ethnicity classroom, or even an ESL class taught in English in America. The study includes aspects that could inform teaching reading in a multicultural classroom, but the setting of

the study and purpose for learning English were different, so it can't be applied specifically to the question of this paper.

Steffensen, Goetz, and Cheng, (1999) explored the impact of cultural background and imagery when subjects read in their native language and in a second language, in this case English. The sample in this case consisted of much older individuals than is the focus of this paper, but there are some aspects that can be generalized to second language learners of all ages.

The study (Steffensen, et al., 1999) cites a review of the literature showing the importance of cultural background on reading comprehension and enjoyment. They state that when reading, people “comprehend more and give more appropriate elaborations to texts based on their own culture; they comprehend less and intrude inappropriate information from their own culture, with distortions of the content, when reading a text based on an unfamiliar culture” (Steffensen, et al., 1999, p. 302). They also suggest that emotional reactions to texts can keep students interested in reading in their second language. Because often students need much practice in reading in a language to become proficient, it is important that students are motivated to read, which interest and emotional response promote.

The basis for the study (Steffensen, et al., 1999) is the idea that when reading, there is a dual coding process that makes not only a linguistic representation of the words, but also makes mental images of what is being read. These can be visual (most often) but also can be auditory, olfactory, tactile, and even relating to the way something tastes. An example given is “when the sight of a dog elicits the name of the animal, or when the word *dog* elicits an image of a favorite pet” (Steffensen, et al., 1999, p. 304). The



question here is: how do these nonverbal images occur in first language and second language readers?

The sample (Steffensen, et al., 1999) included 24 people who spoke Chinese as a first language, most (21) spoke Mandarin. All were graduate students who attended universities in the Midwest. They had been in the United States from one to five years, and had been speaking English for at least ten. Most subjects were 25 or older. 12 subjects were men, and 12 were women. This sample is highly educated, was more familiar with English than many beginning bilingual readers, but their reading behaviors are educative nonetheless.

The participants (Steffensen, et al., 1999) were randomly assigned either the Chinese or the English group. They were asked to read a letter which described a train trip in China. This is the main mode of transportation there and many people had strong feelings about the topic. All but one of the subjects had had extensive personal experience with the system, and the one who did not felt it was exaggerated while all the others verified it with strong emotions. The letter was written in Chinese, translated into English, then retranslated back into Chinese and compared to the original version to make sure it had been translated into English properly. Instructions were given, and responses taken, in the language the students read in.

Results included the finding that students in both languages reported about the same number of images, number of emotional responses, and type of emotional responses (Steffensen, et al., 1999). They found that for both groups, the majority of responses were related to one specific piece of the text, 75% for English speakers and 77% for the Chinese. It took students reading in English almost twice as long, on average, to

complete the passage. Chinese readers' mean was 4.73 minutes, while English readers had a mean of 8.9 minutes. This indicated that students who do not read well, no matter if they are ESL or not, may be just as successful at comprehending when reading if given enough time. It shows that high levels of "fluency" are not necessary for students to understand and be engaged in texts.

When the subjects (Steffensen, et al., 1999) were asked to describe their emotional responses, most of them were related to the text (just under 60%), or closely related with background knowledge of the situation (approximately 40% for both groups). There were only a few variations that did not make sense given the text. Because the English group took more time to read, they were able to focus on the meaning and create the visual images that might not be possible if they were rushed through the text.

The researchers conclude "texts that elicit emotional responses from their readers *and* a high level of imagery in several modalities are likely to result in increased engagement" (Steffensen, et al., p. 319). I wonder here why no group was given a text that perhaps they did not have a background for, to see what the mental images and emotional responses would be to that. There is nothing to compare it to here, and the conclusion that texts that elicit emotional response increase engagement cannot be internally valid if readers cannot compare the engagement in reading different types of texts, only one was used here.

In summary, Ruan (2003) showed that in some situations, Chinese American students are not assertive about getting their needs met, and so don't receive the help they need. McBride-Chang and Ho (2005) found that skills in the native language of students

are stronger predictors of success in a second language. Also, they found that the character system is more comparable to using the syllable as the smallest unit of sound, so students may not be able to segment words into individual phonemes. Steffensen, et al. (1999) found that subjects reading in a second language got as much of an emotional response, and comprehended as much, as those reading in their native tongue even though they may have taken longer to complete a reading.

#### Effective Methods for Teaching Native American Students

Fry and Johnson (1973) explored the relationship between oral reading fluency and reading achievement in a group of Native American subjects. Subjects for the study included 69 students. Forty five attended public schools and 24 attended a Bureau of Indian Affairs school in a nearby city. Both Schools were in Arizona. Students were Native Americans from the Pima Maricopa tribe.

The students were assessed using the Lorge- Thorndike Intelligence Test and the Metropolitan Achievement Test (Fry & Johnson, 1973). Students were separated into above average and below average groups based on these scores. Students were then asked to respond to 20 pictures to get a language proficiency sample. The amount of and difficulty of words produced by the students in response to these stimuli were recorded and analyzed to provide a score. Students who produced at least 30 Communication Units were included in the study, leaving 52 subjects. Then to control for sex, 10 more students were eliminated from analysis, leaving 42 students, 21 males and 21 females. All students were in second grade.

For males, there was not a relationship between IQ and oral language scores, but there was a connection with female Native American students (Fry & Johnson, 1973).

It was also shown that males often needed fewer pictures to score at least 30 communication units. The above average group used more complex sentences. Below average students used more simple structures more often. This was also true for conjoining verbs.

The study (Fry & Johnson, 1973) showed that the above and below average readers did not differ very much in reading achievement, above average scoring a median of 2.1 on the exams and below average readers just three tenths of a point less, at 1.8 median for the group. It also showed that there were more above average students in the public school than the tribal school, but acknowledged that could be due to the difference in socioeconomic status rather than the schools, since attendees of the BIA school did have lower income in general than those attending the public school. A factor not considered in this analysis is the possibility that traditional Native American people may be less verbal than in mainstream culture. This is not a rule, but a trend that has been observed. Students taught by teachers who expect them to be more verbal will indeed produce more communication units than students in a tribal school, where verbal communication is not as highly stressed. The test given also may have not been a setting students at a tribal school would be verbal about; where as other activities might elicit more dialogue from them. It would depend on how their schooling is structured, but classroom practices are not covered by the study.

The study is hard to generalize to Native American students in other settings, due to the small study size, and the inclusion of only one tribal group, when there are over 200 Native American tribes in the country.

Stage, Sheppard, Davidson, and Browning (2001) studied students' oral reading fluency. Since many students are referred to special education because of difficulties with reading, these researchers found it important to study early predictors of reading difficulty in students, so interventions can be implemented. Since knowledge of the alphabet has been shown to be a predictor of future achievement in reading, researchers used this to study its predictive value for a culturally diverse sample.

This study included 59 subjects (Stage et al., 2001). Seventy percent were Native American, 18% Hispanic, and 12% Caucasian. Students were followed throughout their kindergarten year. Most students were low income, 70% received free or reduced lunch. They attended a rural school in Washington State. There was an almost even gender split, with 47% of the students as male and 53% as female.

The study (Stage et al., 2001) focused on students' familiarity with the alphabetic principle, that is, knowledge of letter names and phoneme grapheme relationships. The study investigated the connection of this knowledge in kindergarten to the development of oral reading fluency in the first grade. The researchers used Hierarchical linear modeling to create growth curves for different factors influence on oral reading fluency.

Students were asked to identify upper and lowercase letters that were randomly ordered (interrater reliability was 99%), and also using the same sheets, were asked to identify the sounds each letter made (interrater reliability was 98%) (Stage et al., 2001). They were also tested using curriculum based measurements of oral reading fluency. These measures were taken in October, January, March, and May.

Kindergarteners received the normal curriculum used in the district, which included "print awareness, letter name knowledge, and letter sound knowledge.

Specifically, each letter name and its corresponding sound were taught in sequence....instruction was delivered in small groups of 4 students/ session” (Stage, et al., 2001, p. 229). In first grade, students learned phonological awareness and phonics rules.

It was shown that all students improved in oral reading fluency over the year (Stage et al., 2001). Kindergarten sound fluency and letter naming fluency predicted this growth. For sound fluency,  $t=2.98$  ( $p<.01$ ) and letter naming fluency  $t= 2.32$ ( $p<.05$ ). Letter naming fluency most strongly predicted first grade oral reading fluency. No differences were found on the basis of race in oral reading fluency.

The study concludes that letter naming may be an even stronger predictor of at risk students than letter sound identification (Stage et al., 2001). Students who can name letters already have a start on the letter sounds, since they are apparent in letter names for most letters. Also, familiarity with the alphabet may indicate pre-reading experiences with preschool or with family, who has taken the time to expose the child to literacy and teach them the alphabet. The study also concludes that race had little to do with performance, though socioeconomic status did, and may be a stronger risk factor overall. The researchers conclude that low SES students with difficulty in letter naming should receive early intervention to strengthen letter naming fluency in order to ensure they do not fall behind peers in first grade and beyond.

Reyhner (1986) studied the representation, in number of appearances and in the accuracy and realism of those appearances, of Native American students in basal readers, the reading textbooks used with young readers. A review of the literature showed that Native American students are more engaged and comprehend more when the reading

materials represented their culture accurately. It was important that the representations of Native Americans include not only historical representations, but also depict Native Americans as a living culture in modern times.

The material for this study (Reyhner, 1986) was taken from textbooks and basal readers implemented statewide in states over 5 million residents. Textbooks for first, third, and fifth graders were analyzed. There were 8 books chosen to analyze, the 4 most used, and of the 15 series that qualified, the 4 least used. This decision is not explained or justified. They did not differentiate the differences in Native American representation from the most used and least used books among the 15 that qualified. Random samples of 25% of the stories in each of the 8 books were analyzed for six categories of realism identified as important by experts in the field. These included a broad range of ages, conflict between characters, aggression involving children, the presence of basic life situations, negative emotions, and intellectual activities.

Of the 203 stories analyzed, only 16 had Native American characters (Reyhner, 1986). Only one story was found in the first grade books, six in the third grade books, and the rest (nine stories) were found in fifth grade texts. Most of them were found to represent modern Indian culture. There was not a broad range of tribes represented, most represented southwestern tribes. No coastal tribes (Atlantic or Pacific) were represented, and the Plains Indians only had representation in one story. Most stories were fairly realistic.

Most of the stories had rural settings, instead of urban settings (only 2 stories) (Reyhner, 1986). It was found that some of the stories had stereotypical aspects. For example, in one story about the production of pottery, the purpose for making the bowls

was to sell them to the tourists instead of making them to maintain tradition. This depicts Native American's in a way that makes their traditions about catering to white culture instead of showing the spiritual or traditional importance for these people in making their art. In another story, the illustrations depict terrain (mountains and rivers) that were not accurate to the lands that Hopi Indians lived in. Another story, about ballerina Maria Tall Chief, left out any aspects of her culture or heritage other than her name.

When the study analyzed the other stories as well, it was found that there were seven times as many white characters and twice as many African American characters as Native American characters (Reyhner, 1986). This may make sense when you compare the population of White, Black, and Native American students. But the fact is that if students comprehend more when they are reading about characters that are like themselves, then white students will have a much higher proportion of the literature that is easy to comprehend than minority students will. The authors suggested that it is important to supplement the basal readers with trade books that represent Native American student's culture, especially tribe specific books if possible.

To summarize, Fry and Johnson (1973) and Stage, et al. (2001) both found that socioeconomic status may be a higher risk factor than race for many Native American students. Reyhner (1986) found a real lack of authentic Native American characters in texts, and recommended teachers use a variety of trade books that represent Native American culture, especially tribe specific works.

#### Effective Methods for Teaching African American Students

Charity, Scarborough, and Griffin, (2004) explored whether familiarity with School English, or a Standard English Dialect, affected reading achievement in the early



grades. The study was conducted with 252 students spread across three different cities, Cleveland, Ohio, New Orleans, Louisiana, and Washington D.C. All students were African American and between kindergarten and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. There was a roughly even gender split. This sample was taken from schools that were both low performing and low income. In New Orleans and Cleveland, one hundred percent of the students qualified for free and reduced lunch and in Washington D.C. ninety four percent qualified. Students were selected in a random sample from grades K, 1, and 2 in each of the schools.

The study (Charity et al., 2004) evaluated the participants in one on one sessions lasting fifteen to thirty minutes in April, May, or June in the 2000-2001 school year. They were tested for reading achievement using the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised. These tests assessed word identification, the phonological decoding pseudo-words, and comprehension. Students were then assessed on their ability to imitate School English. To determine this ability, students were asked to repeat sentences in a story in the same way the tester pronounced them. The story was designed to have elements that were pronounced differently in African American English and School English. The study was looking for a relationship between the students' two test scores, and whether their familiarity or unfamiliarity with School English affected word identification, phonologically decoding pseudo-words, and comprehension. The examiners also asked comprehension and recall questions about the story the children had repeated. They were scored for grammar, phonological items, and memory in the story they had read.

The study (Charity et al., 2004) found that more imitations of School English occurred in the grammatical category ( $m=61.6$ ,  $SD=22.6$ ) than with phonological examples ( $m=50.8$ ,  $SD=19.9$ ). Results showed that children in New Orleans had less

familiarity with School English than children in other cities. They hypothesized that in the South most people exhibit some language characteristics outside of Standard English, that have more in common with African American English. For example, the dialect may differ phonologically from Standard English, in terms of the reduction of the final consonant cluster from a consonant blend to only one of the consonants being pronounced, and a final s being deleted from plural words.

Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade students' test scores on phonological and grammatical imitation were correlated with the reading test scores on word identification, phonologically decoding pseudo-words, and comprehension ( $r_s=.42$  to  $.59$ ) (Charity et al., 2004). In second grade, this correlation was not significant for phonological tests ( $r_s=.08$  to  $.29$ ), but familiarity with School English was correlated to grammatical imitation ( $r_s=.34$  to  $.49$ ). The results showed there was not a strong correlation between the familiarity with school English and story recall for any of the three grades (Charity et al., p. 1348).

According to this study (Charity et al., 2004), students' familiarity with School English will affect the way they use grammar or phonetically decode and pronounce words, but that no matter how they pronounce words, and no matter their familiarity with School English, they will still comprehend what happened in the story, and be able to retell it.

Murray, Stahl, and Ivey (1993) explored whether using alphabet books had an impact on the phonological awareness of a group of students in a high minority, low income pre-k classroom. Phonological awareness is defined as the ability to understand

that there are different sounds in spoken words, and the ability to manipulate these sounds.

The researchers (Murray et al., 1993) cite a conclusion from an earlier study conducted by two of their members which links a child's knowledge of the alphabet with their phonological awareness. In that study, children who could recognize a majority of letter forms also had basic understanding of phonological awareness, and could identify onset and rime. This study (Murray et al., 1993) searched to find if using alphabet books could help students with familiarity of the alphabet and increase their phonological awareness.

Forty two children participated, and most were four years old, with only a few had turned five years old (Murray et al., 1993). Most of the students (86%) were African American, and all the students were low income. Genders were split with the majority of boys (63%) and only 37% girls. The preschools were located in a small city in the Southeastern region of the United States. The children came from three separate classrooms that were located in three different public elementary schools. Two students who were already reading were dropped from the study, as they already had phonological awareness covered. Another two were dropped because they refused to respond to tasks.

Children were pre-tested using Concepts About Print, in which students knowledge of print conventions are discovered through an assessor reading the story to the child and asking them questions. Next, an alphabet recognition exam was given where children attempted to identify capital and lowercase letters. The last assessment was the Test of Onset-Rime Awareness (Murray et al., 1993).

All three classes were focused on exploration at centers, but took time each day to share a story, read by the teacher (Murray et al., 1993). Each class randomly received a different type of books to read with their classes. One group had regular picture books, one had traditional alphabet books, and the other had alphabet only books. Each group was provided with four different books in their assigned genre, and the teachers or their aides were asked to read one of the books each day for three weeks. Most classes spent about ten minutes a day with the book. No instructions were given to the teachers as to how the books should be read.

The control condition (Murray et al., 1993) read regular picture books, which included *Have You Seen my Cat?* by Eric Carle, *The Cat in the Hat* by Dr. Seuss, *The Gunniwolf* by W. Harper, and *Caps for Sale* by E. Slobodkina. The traditional alphabet book group read books with the letters of the alphabet and words that started with these sounds provided. Their choices include *From Apple to Zipper* by Nora Cohen, *Dr. Seuss's ABC* by, of course, Dr. Seuss, *Alphabears: an ABC Book* by K. Hauge, and *The Z was Zapped* by Chris Van Allsburg. Alphabet only books consisted of books which had the letters of the alphabet, but did not have words with the sounds the letters made, only the letters themselves. Their books included *The Gunnywolf* by A Delaney, *The Cat in the Hat Comes Back!* by Dr. Seuss, *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* by Bill Martin and J. Archambault, and an adaptation of *The Z was Zapped* dubbed *The Z was Struck by Lightning* in which children provided their own captions.

One of the researchers (Murray et al., 1993) observed in each classroom once a week. Field notes were taken during the readings. All classrooms had the children

sitting on the floor around the teacher's chair. In all classes, the students listened and participated.

The study (Murray et al., 1993) found that most of the children scored very low in both the pre and post test in of Concepts About Print, students overall had an only 0.91 point gain, a score of 3.64 to 4.55 in all groups. The group that gained the most was the storybook group, which gained 1.4 points. While alphabet gained .93 and alphabet only lagged behind at a .31 gain. An ANOVA showed significant gains in Concepts About Print across the treatment groups of  $f= 6.14$  ( $p<05$ ).

Letter recognition showed an improvement in all groups (Murray et al., 1993), with a score of  $f=5.98$  ( $p<.5$ ). All groups learned approximately the same number of new letters, which is surprising since one of the groups had books that did not emphasize the letters of the alphabet, but could be due to factors outside the scope of the study.

Phonological awareness improved in some of the study groups as well, with an  $f$  value of 14.2 ( $p<.1$ ) (Murray et al., 1993). The group/time interaction was significant for this measure, with an  $f$  of 3.78 ( $p<05$ ). This showed the subjects differed in the improvement of their phonological awareness between groups. The alphabet only group made no improvement between their pre and post tests. The conventional alphabet book gained 1.86 points, and the storybook group gained 1.27 points. The researchers conclude that that these similarities may be due to the fact that the teacher in the traditional alphabet condition did not emphasize the sounds of the letters, rather she read these books like any other book and emphasized the meaning of words, not the fact that the word started with a certain phoneme, for example the  $m$  sound in mouse. The teacher in the regular story book class was a former student of one of the authors, and knew the

importance of phonological awareness. The improvements of her class might not even have been a result of the storybooks, but other activities held in the class.

The fact that one of the teachers was a former student of one of the researchers (Murray et al., 1993) could pose some objectivity problems. The personal relationship between researcher and, in some way, the subject, could be a problem. The teacher was not being tested here, but the teachers were not given instruction on how to read the books or conduct their class, and it seems the researcher had a major impact here. Also, information on the relationships or lack thereof between researchers and the other teachers was not given.

Variables in teaching style, as in the normal storybook classroom, could also have caused the changes attributed to the story reading by the researchers (Murray et al., 1993), causing some issues in reliability. Because there were three different teachers, the reader can't know what to attribute the changes to, the variable the researchers put in place or the multitude of other variables that existed between the three classrooms. The study could be repeated, with possibly very different results if different teachers were used. If there was a chance to conduct this research in classrooms that had the same curriculum, or even a morning and afternoon session with the same teacher, it might be more valid.

Wilson-Jones (2003) investigated African American males' attitudes and feelings on finding success in school. The study summarized that the research in this area has shown that often African American students, especially males, withdraw from engagement in their education because of wanting to reject mainstream culture. Also, "negative stereotypes associated with race cause students of color to under achieve

academically and to disassociate with academics, because of fear of predicted failure” (Wilson-Jones, 2003, p. 2). Research has also shown that conversely, African American students with high levels of parent involvement, not necessarily parent education, performed better in school.

Subjects for the study came from a rural school where one fourth of the students are African American. One troubling statistic given was that half of the students who attended this school did not graduate from high school. Most of the families were low income, and there were high unemployment rates for families in the area. 16 African American males in the school qualified for and agreed to participate in the study. They ranged from grades three to six, and in age from eight to 13 years old. Seven of the students included in the study had repeated a grade level.

Students were interviewed six times, one on one with a researcher. Each time the interviews lasted half an hour. The interviews were tape recorded and analyzed later for common patterns. Their scores on the Mississippi Curriculum Test Scores and current grades were compared to their answers to find correlations.

It was found that students felt strongly about the influence their families had on their reading success. Students mentioned adults reading to them as small children, and expressed that they felt these events prepared them for learning to read and success in school. Students also felt it was important to have family to help with homework, to check it for correctness and also to help them understand what it was about. The students reported feeling more confident and competent in class on a day after they had received such help at home. Students also felt that having their parents come to school and be involved in their education in that way helped them to be successful. One student

reported “It makes me feel proud, like I know someone is here to help me and explain it [school work]. It makes me feel funny inside. I am proud and excited that they are here” (Wilson-Jones, 2003, p. 11).

Subjects also seemed ready and willing to talk when there was someone (the researcher) willing to listen to their problems. Some students expressed concern about the threat of violence at home or school, while one felt safer at school because it was a smoke free, quieter environment where he could concentrate. Students also spoke of difficulties staying focused when teachers talked, and not understanding the directions on assignments causing them problems in school. Students reported they thought they could do better in school if they studied harder and listened more. Also, they reported that they thought that students who do well listen more to the teachers.

In looking at the connections between the students reported attitudes surrounding literacy and their test scores and classroom grades, it was found that students who said they had been read to before learning to read themselves had higher grades. Also receiving higher grades were students who received help from their parents on homework. Conversely, students who did not get help from their families did not do as well on the test or in class. Even students whose parents came to school when they were falling behind or in trouble did better than students whose parents did not involve themselves in their child’s schooling at all. Of the 9 children who had not repeated a grade, their parents more often were involved in their education than students who did repeat a grade.

The researchers recommend promoting pre-literacy activities in the community, designing programs for the schools that promote parental involvement, organizing



programs for students to talk about their problems with peers, teaching study skills to students and parents, and programs that encourage reading

In critiquing this study, I would say that it would be interesting to see how much the scores correlated with the attitudes of the children. Since this information is not given, it is hard to know how much to trust the conclusion. When there is evidence in the article that a reader can see, it is much more believable, and can be confirmed by others who are analyzing the information. The fact that it is left out makes one wonder how strong it really was. We can see that the findings did agree with studies conducted in the past, so it is dependable in that way, but a reader can't scrutinize information that is not presented.

Durkin (1984) studied African Americans with low SES who were good readers to find what factors contributed to their success. The 23 subjects included in the study were chosen by their performance on the fifth grade standardized test. They were spread across 13 different schools. Twelve of the subjects were female, and 11 were male. The students that scored half a year above grade level were included in the study. The students also all qualified for free lunch. They lived in a large Midwestern city.

The methodology of the study (Durkin, 1984) included finding what classes these successful students had been in, and then interviewing the teachers. Unfortunately it turned out that most of the students had transferred from other schools, and had transferred so many times that there were no patterns of teachers that provided more success than others. Only three of the subjects were students in the same school the entire time. Students transferred schools an average of nearly three times each.

Family structures of the participants included 7 students who lived with two parents, either biological or step parents (Durkin, 1984). Sixteen families had one parent, and only one of those was a single father. Of these 16 families, 9 of them also had grandparents living with them.

According to Durkin (1984), after students were identified, interviewers talked with the principals and asked them about the students in question, what factors might have contributed to their success, and what the school did to help that specific student succeed. Most principals knew little of the students in question unless they or a sibling had been in trouble. Even the three students who attended the same school from kindergarten through fifth grade were mostly unknown to the principal. They also were unable to articulate what the school had done to help with reading, chalking the success up to the student being bright.

Since no patterns were found for teachers more successful students had in common, the researcher (Durkin, 1984) was unable to interview the past teachers. She did interview the subject's sixth grade teachers to see if they could shed some light. Teachers knew little about the students' families. They tended to suggest that these students in specific achieved more because they were intelligent, liked to read, and worked hard. This information was not coming from the teachers who had actually taught the students to read, though, so it seems to not cover the aspect of the study the researchers had hoped for. Perhaps selecting a few of the highest readers in the study and going to their teachers as a case study might have shed more light, and actually gotten some results to analyze. The researcher had no way to get the information that he or she

was searching for since patterns in the teachers the students had were not found. This causes major credibility issues.

The top 15 students were interviewed about reading, and were told that they were being interviewed so “their answers might provide information about how to help other students who did not read as well as they did” (Durkin, 1984). Almost all students said they had their own books at home and checked out books from the library often. Also, the students enjoyed reading. Parent expectations played a role for 14 of the 15 students in that their parents expected them to go to college.

Parents of these top 15 students were also interviewed (Durkin, 1984). The parents reported in 12 of the 15 cases that the students could read before they started kindergarten. Parents also said they read with their children often, and from an early age. Also, several had older siblings or cousins who played school with them and modeled and taught reading to them before they started school.

The finding that so many of the students had been reading before they came to school surprised the researcher (Durkin, 1984), and early childhood programs for reading were a recommendation of the research. Durkin also noted the possibility that the students early achievement caused teachers to view them as students who were going to succeed, and so their expectations for these students were higher. This could have become a self fulfilling prophecy and helped these students to achieve while students the teachers did not expect to do well would not. The article concludes that information from all interviewed suggested that students love of reading and frequent reading is what caused them to be a good reader.

The critique of this study (Durkin, 1984) is the failure to collect the data it set out to find, that is classroom techniques that promote the success of readers. There could have been modifications made to the study to find this data, but this did not happen. I do not think that the results are credible or convincing. Durkin reported what the teachers, students, parents and principals said, but did not correlate this with the grades of the students or give proof that this was valid information, other than the fact that most interviewees said the same thing. This does add some dependability to the information, but there is still not enough proof that “reading often” and “working hard” caused the students to be successful in reading.

In summary, Wilson-Jones (2003) found that students attributed their success in school to the influences of their family, both in reading with them and in getting help with their homework. Durkin (1984) found that students who were successful in reading reported an enjoyment of reading and visited the library often. Charity, et al (2004) found that students were successful at comprehension even when they couldn't reproduce the story in School English, but rather used African American English.

#### The Effect of Teachers Attitudes and Expectations on Students Learning

Love and Kruger (2005) conducted two studies on the cultural relevance of assimilationist views in working with African American students. The first study investigated the correlation of professional educator's attitudes to their own demographic identifiers.

Professional educators in six different schools were selected for the sample (Love & Kruger, 2005). Five of the schools were located in the same southeastern city, and another lay in a different southeastern city. Four of the schools in the first city were

participating in a program in partnership with a major university to evaluate their own instructional strategies. The fifth school from that city was in a program to infuse the arts into the curriculum. The sixth school that was located in another city was chosen because it had a long term commitment to outstanding inner-city education. All the schools had some level of low income students, and four of them had 95 % of students who received free and reduced lunch.

Two hundred and forty four teachers, para educators, specialists, and administrators from the six schools were chosen to participate in the study (Love & Kruger, 2005). The range of experience was from zero to thirty seven years. The participants consisted of 48% African American, 42% Caucasian, 3% Hispanic, Indian, Asian, or Biracial, and 7% of the respondents chose not to answer the question. The median age of the teachers was 38, but they ranged in age from 22 to 64. The mean level of experience was 12 years. Eighty five percent of the educators surveyed were women.

The participants read 48 statements and rated them from strongly disagree (0), to strongly agree (4) (Love & Kruger, 2005). The statements are arranged in six categories, knowledge, race and culture, social relations, the profession of teaching, teaching methods, and students' individual needs and strengths. Twenty five of the statements aligned culturally relevant beliefs, the rest reflected assimilationist views. Culturally relevant views included a belief in students' abilities, emphasis on cooperative learning, and the importance of the impact of race on a student's experience. Assimilationist views do not take individual or cultural differences into account in teaching methods or goals.

The knowledge portion of the survey showed that teachers mostly strongly agreed with two culturally relevant and one assimilationist statement (Love & Kruger, 2005).

Teachers agreed that reciprocal teaching and critical thinking were essential, but they also strongly agreed (77.9% agreed or strongly agreed) that a teachers job is to “disseminate knowledge to [his or her] students” (Love & Kruger, 2005, p. 90). Teachers disagreed on a statement about expectations of children’s prior knowledge, with teachers of younger students expecting students to come to school with less knowledge of what was to be taught than the teachers of older students were.

Teachers agreed that a student’s ethnicity and or culture are important factors in their learning, but they also agreed with two assimilationist statements that promoted colorblindness, that is they agreed that when they saw a child, they saw just that, a child, and not that child’s race (Love & Kruger, 2005).

Teachers were split, some agreed and some disagreed, about the strength of their relationships with their students (Love & Kruger, 2005). Teachers that had attended historically black colleges and universities seemed to be more positive about their relationships with students. I wonder if the researchers considered that teachers who went to historically black colleges and universities may indeed be black themselves, and so this could be part of the reason they identified with African American students more strongly. It did not provide a racial profile of the teachers who answered this question, an omission on the part of the researchers. They provided racial demographic information of the teachers when they discussed their participants, but neglected to use that information when discussing their results.

For 3/4 of the statements about the cooperative responsibility for each child’s achievement, teachers did not come to any kind of consensus, with large numbers both agreeing and disagreeing (Love & Kruger, 2005). When it came to parental involvement,

teachers were split mostly on the grounds of the schools they were teaching in. All schools agreed with “parents ought to be self motivated to help their child learn and be actively involved in the classroom” ( Love & Kruger, 2005, p.91). Schools that had strong parent involvement disagreed with the statement “I hardly ever see or hear from the parents of the children in my classroom” ( p.91). Two of the other schools had teachers who disagreed with each other about these statements. The schools were located in a lower income neighborhood than the first two, and saw less of the parents because many were working more than one job. The schools were also instituting programs to increase parental involvement, so these factors could explain the disagreement among teachers. The last two schools agreed with the statement. They seemed to see less of the families, because though they were low income like the second set of schools, their residents were more transient and they did not have the programs to increase parent involvement.

Teachers agreed with four culturally relevant statements about the profession of teaching (Love & Kruger, 2005). These statements showed that the teachers saw the relevance of working in urban schools, and their desire to do so. Most teachers disagreed with each other on an assimilationist statement stating that inner city children needed a good education so they could leave the inner city for a better life.

In considering statements about teaching methods, teachers agreed with culturally relevant statements that allowed students to share their own knowledge with the teacher and showed the flexibility of letting a lesson go where it needed to go, and not confining it to a concrete plan (Love & Kruger, 2005). Teachers did disagree on two of the five

assimilationist statements, which endorsed repetition and drill, and acknowledged the inevitability that some students will fail no matter what the teacher does.

Teachers endorsed culturally relevant statements about a student's individual strengths and needs, agreeing that all students' needs should be incorporated into lesson planning and that all students have some skill and can find success. They rejected the idea that all "children basically learn in the same way" (Love & Kruger, 2005, p.92). The researchers concluded that though teachers recognized the importance of race and ethnicity to a student's identity and life, the so called color blind statements seemed "more socially acceptable, or that to ignore racial and other differences in the classroom may seem more equitable" (Love & Kruger, p.95). The researchers stated that not recognizing the difference diminishes the importance of this factor in children's lives. The study does not present research to support this conclusion, but cites other authors who have stressed the importance.

The second study by Love and Kruger (2005) looked at the correlation of the teachers responses to the test scores of their students. Two of the schools from the original study were used to pull teachers as subjects for this study. Both schools were working to effect change and become more culturally responsive. Both were very low income, and most of the students were African American. Fifty teachers were chosen. Their responses from the first study were used, and these were compared with test scores of their students on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, (ITBS). The grades taught by the teachers ranged from kindergarten through fifth grade. Seventy percent were African American, 28% were Caucasian, and two percent were Indian (Native American or native or descendent of India was not indicated). The age of the teachers produced a median of



36 and 38, and again the range was quite broad, from teachers as young as 22 to as old as 55. The least experienced teacher had taught only one year previously, while at least one had been teaching as long as 30 years. The median for experience was nine years.

The test scores of 1,432 students were analyzed (Love & Kruger, 2005). The scores of each classroom were grouped together and averaged so each classroom had one score to analyze. Test scores were converted to Z scores so there would be compatible numbers for the correlation.

The study (Love & Kruger, 2005) showed that nine of the statements on the survey had significant correlations with the test scores of the students. Agreement with the statement “It is my job to disseminate knowledge to my students” ( Love & Kruger, 2005, p.90) was shown to correlate positively with students higher test scores in Language Arts (+.37) and reading(+.30). That this assimilationist statement correlated positively with achievement was surprising. Culturally relevant statements regarding the importance of success for a whole class, not just the individual student also showed a positive correlation (+.35) when it came to higher reading scores. These three questions had had a lot of disagreement, and teachers who agreed with them had students with higher test scores than those who did not agree. Teachers who saw teaching as a way to give back to the community also had students with higher test scores (+.41). The assimilationist statement “with enough repetition, drill, and practice, students will attain a passing grade” was also shown to have a positive effect on reading achievement (+.36).

The statements that showed teachers believed they could not reach all students and that they rarely had parents visiting their room were both negatively correlated with students test scores, (-.31 and -.41 in reading, respectively) (Love & Kruger, 2005). The

less a teacher agreed with these statements, the lower the students' test scores were. The researchers suggest that making a classroom as welcoming to parents as possible could be a way to reverse this pattern. Indeed, some situations may keep parents away for other reasons, but they suggest being as gracious and flexible with parents as possible may create an environment they feel comfortable entering.

The study (Love & Kruger, 2005) showed no correlation between race, culture, or ethnicity and students test scores, either high or low. The endorsement of the assimilationist statements that reflect traditional teaching methods were hypothesized by the researchers to connect to an experienced teacher's use of flexible teaching strategies, as well as other culturally relevant practices.

In critiquing Love and Kruger's (2005) study, the reader find things the researchers themselves recognize. The fact that the schools were going through organized efforts to become more culturally relevant may have caused some reporting problems. Teachers who know what they think the right answer is may not report their actual hidden beliefs, and may not even be conscious of them themselves. Some of the questions are obviously easily labeled as socially acceptable or not. The survey was not long enough to have differently worded statements that may catch some of these hidden assimilationist beliefs. An observation of a few of these classrooms as an extension could elucidate whether or not these policies are actually being used in the classrooms.

Another critique could be the fact that standardized tests are sometimes not the best way to see student's real success (Love & Kruger, 2005). Other measures of achievement could be used to cross check these results as well. The researchers

recommend further research into the connections between teacher attitudes and student achievement.

In summary, Love and Kruger showed that when teachers believed they could not reach all students, or reported that they rarely had parents visit the room, students reading scores suffered. When teachers viewed teaching as a way to give back to the community, students grades improved, just as they did when teachers believed that repetition would help students achieve passing grades.

#### Culturally Responsive Literature and its' Effect on Students

Mohr (2003) investigated the different choices Hispanic and non-Hispanic children made in selecting a book to keep to identify if multicultural literature was preferred by non-white students. Since it has been shown that reading motivation is tied to the student's ability to choose their own books, this type of inquiry is important to show teachers what type of books they need to have available for their students in the multicultural classroom. For all students to succeed in reading, they need to be motivated and want to read. This type of study shows us how we can provide texts that will encourage that to happen. To wit, the study states "if teachers expose students to a variety of books and can direct students to books that interest them, students will spend more time reading independently" (Mohr, 2003, p. 163).

There is an assumption that students most likely would respond to books that have characters of their own race, since girls mainly like to read books about other girls, and boys about boys (Mohr, 2003). But not a lot of research has been put into this field, and this study (along with others to follow) seeks to discover the literature preferences of minority student groups. Mohr was looking to find the preference of first grade Hispanic

students, gender differences between and within Hispanic and non Hispanic groups, and what genres they would select.

Books were used to represent both genders, a variety of genre including fantastic and realistic fiction, biography, informational nonfiction, and poetry, as well as Caucasian, Asian, African American, and Hispanic characters, the English and Spanish languages, and themes of family, school, nature, history, and fantasy (Mohr, 2003). The total number of books was nine. The book selection criteria and final choices were approved by a children's literature expert, a bookstore owner, and librarian. All were recently published with interesting illustrations.

The subjects (Mohr, 2003) were from a semi rural district in the Southeast. Ten first grade classrooms participated, totaling 190 students. Thirty percent were Hispanic, their number was 56. Half of these students (28 total) were limited in their English language abilities. Instructions for these students were provided in Spanish if needed. In the whole group and the Spanish group, 55 % were boys and 45% girls.

The study (Mohr, 2003) was conducted at the end of the school year so the students had nearly two full years of school experiences behind them to become familiar with books. No information was provided about their background experiences with literacy, and the types of books or literacy choices they had in their classrooms, an important omission by the researcher.

The researcher (Mohr, 2003) set up a table outside the classroom to show the books and have students select one. The students were able to choose a book that was then ordered and sent to them, so it was an authentic choice they were making. Students came out one at a time to pick a book, and if they agreed to (65% did), the students were

interviewed on their choice. The questions asked were “Why did you pick this book to keep? Why is this one (book) your favorite one in this group (of books)?” (Mohr, 2003, p. 168). The interview questions were done while the next child was picking out their book.

Two of the classrooms were chosen to have all the books read to them (Mohr, 2003). 41 of the students (no information on their race makeup was given) had three stories read to them by the researcher for three mornings in a row. These children then selected a book in the same manner as the rest of the classes.

Results (Mohr, 2003) show that almost all of the children (84%) chose non fiction. The favorite was *Animals Nobody Loves*, by Seymour Simon, and was chosen by 46% of the children in the study. Two more nonfiction books, a poetry book *There's a Zoo in Room 22*, by Judy Sierra, and a comedic nonfiction book *What Moms Can't Do*, by Douglas Wood, were chosen by 34% of the students together. Less than 10 students chose the rest of the books, which included a biography of Abraham Lincoln and five multicultural fiction stories. The students who were read to chose non fiction to an even greater extent, 90% of this group chose nonfiction. This shows that *Animals Nobody Loves* was not chosen only for the interesting title, but for the content since students who had read all the books still chose it.

There were more boys that chose nonfiction than girls, but the majority of girls still chose nonfiction (Mohr, 2003). Ninety six percent of boys chose nonfiction, and 69% of the girls. It was near the same for the Hispanic group, where 97% of the boys chose nonfiction and 76% of Hispanic girls chose it, while only 62% of non-Hispanic girls did. This shows the possibility that Hispanic girls may be more likely to enjoy

nonfiction than non-Hispanic girls. The order of preference for girls and boys both listed the three aforementioned nonfiction books as their favorites, but in opposite order. Boys enjoyed *Animals Nobody Loves* most, then *What Moms Can't Do*, and finally *There's a Zoo in Room 22*. Girls chose *There's a Zoo in Room 22* first, *What Moms Can't Do* next, and *Animals Nobody Loves* third.

During interviews, students most often cited humor and the fact that they liked animals as the reason for their choice (Mohr, 2003). Although there has been an emphasis in the early grades on fiction, this study showed that non fiction is where major interest lies for a majority of young children. Many stated that they wanted to learn something from the book, and one stated that “you get to see the information... and you need this information” (Mohr, 2003, p. 172).

No Hispanic boys chose books with Hispanic characters, and only 3 Hispanic girls chose these books (Mohr, 2003). This seems to disprove the theory that students prefer to read about characters like themselves. Almost all the children chose animal books and not books with human characters at all. Perhaps if a study were conducted where there was not the choice of animal books, it might more clearly investigate this question.

An important critique of this study is the fact that these nine books may not be enough to cover all the different attributes that were selected. There might be too many descriptors to have clear lines between what students chose if one book was chosen to represent so many of the characteristics. I think though, for the children to choose there might have needed to be a more limited selection so it did not get too confusing or drawn out. I think if this was the case the researchers needed to limit the attributes they were

analyzing in the books to much fewer than 18 different descriptors. Also, in the results the researchers reports that for one of the books that was chosen by the students as a favorite, “the combination of elements makes it difficult to determine why students preferred this book” (Mohr, 2003, p. 174). A reader may ask, why was a book chosen that did not have clear characteristics that could be analyzed? This only further emphasizes either the need for more books or less criteria.

The research (Mohr, 2003) here seems credible, but again I would like to see better defined books being used. Perhaps provide nonfiction books about Hispanic figures or issues related to that culture. Another way to make strides toward credibility could be limiting the selection to only fiction or only non fiction. The scope of the questions asked was too broad for the amount of books used. The fact that nearly half the students chose the same book makes it clear that students do enjoy non fiction, but it is unclear as to whether they preferred the book about animals or because it was in fact non fiction. The only fiction books used were about humans, possibly having animals as a main character in a fiction tale would have changed the results. Also, the only nonfiction with human characters was a biography of Abraham Lincoln, who did not represent the Hispanic culture. It is an interesting idea, but needs to be expanded upon with future research.

A study by Rickford (2001) showed that culturally relevant literature does make a positive impact on the enjoyment of reading and comprehension of what is read for at risk students in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades. She worked with a group of poor readers who were able to come up with insightful thoughts on literature when they were provided with culturally relevant fiction along with high order questions.

Rickford (2001) theorized that when children saw representations of themselves in the literature they were reading, it motivated them more than other texts. She states “ethnic folk tales and contemporary narratives have the advantage of increasing cultural congruence and motivation for multicultural students, through their inclusion of themes, situations, perspectives, language, and illustrations with which they can relate” (Rickford, 2001, p. 383).

The study (Rickford, 2001) was conducted over a two year period, from 1994 to 1996, in a split grade six/seven class in a school that served from kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. There were 25 students included in the study, a majority of whom were African American. There were also Hispanic and Pacific Islander students, who included Tongans, Samoans, and Fijians. A majority of the students scored below the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile on the state test, the California Test of Basic Skills. Almost one third of the class was around only the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile. The school was located in a low income urban area in northern California, and was surrounded by the Silicon Valley and San Francisco Bay area.

Six stories were chosen as a focus for the study (Rickford, 2001), three African American folktales and three modern stories about African Americans. All stories featured African American characters and had at least one full page illustration that was well drawn and showed ethnic minorities. After students read each book, they answered 11 questions. Two were about their enjoyment of the text, three quizzed the child with multiple choice about the surface features of the text but did not go for deeper understanding. These were recall only, and did not ask the students to interpret. The last



six questions were higher order questions that asked the students to apply their knowledge of their own lives, and interpret the story and characters.

The multiple choice questions were scored on a scale, there was a most right answer, a somewhat possible answer, a barely possible answer, and an impossible answer, which scored from three to zero, respectively (Rickford, 2001). Then senior students at the university were trained to use rubrics to score the higher order questions, which were in short answer format. The inter-rater reliability was between 100% and 75%, depending on the question. It was lowest (80 and 75) for the two questions that asked students to put themselves in the situation and to write a new ending. For questions that asked them to make a moral judgment, identify a favorite character, and write about character feelings, the inter-rater reliability factor ranged between 84 and 100%.

Children identified with the folktales deeper relationships, and were able to identify with the personal circumstances that caused difficulty in the lives of characters in a completely different context (Rickford, 2001). This went far beyond the surface structures children are most often asked to identify on multiple choice exams. They also identified strongly with characters in a modern setting, and most of the time empathized with the underdog or whoever was being mistreated in the story.

Students seemed to especially enjoy the dialogue of characters that used African American English (Rickford, 2001). Even students who were not African American enjoyed this, but it was noted that many of them also spoke with features of AAE, especially Pacific Islanders. The students felt this feature made the stories more believable. A student “commented ‘I like the dialect because it was my kind of talk. I

enjoy reading dialect stories and also I think it help [sic] the story' ” (Rickford, 2001, p. 371). The researcher notes the research from this field that shows teachers who accept the use of dialects and also teach the Standard English a child will need to know for life skills will reach children better than one who attempts to eradicate native dialects. This also applies to the students’ engagement when their ethnicities are represented in illustrations. One student commented about the illustrations “I like the way they... are made and everything. AND THERE ARE BLACK PEOPLE [student’s emphasis]” (Rickford, 2001, p. 372).

Students scored higher on the higher cognitive demand questions than the low order questions (Rickford, 2001). Even though they were allowed to use the books to refer to, students scored a mean of 60% on the recall, multiple choice questions, and were more successful with 79% and 75% means on the critical evaluation and creative reading questions, respectively. The researcher attributed these differences to the fact that students could not use their real life experiences to interpret the answers; it was more literal and had to be found exactly in the text, not interpreted. On the higher order questions students were able to “stake a claim, and provide a well reasoned warrant in support of it” (Rickford, 2001, p. 379). She believed the reason was because students could apply things that happened to them in their lives to their answers here.

Rickford (2001) concluded that not only were culturally relevant texts important to student’s engagement with the text, but also that comprehension questions not only be based on surface details, but underlying themes and student reactions are important to engaging students in thinking about reading.

A critique of this study would emphasize its lack of a comparison. Since all the stories used were culturally relevant we have no way to see if the students would not have gotten the same scores with mainstream, not culturally relevant literature. The methodology seemed to only confirm what the researcher already thought. If other types of literature had been added, then we would have some proof here. But without that, the findings of this study lack credibility.

Trousdale and Everett (1994) also conducted a study to see how minority students reacted to literature. They wanted to see if students from minority cultures comprehended the messages in mainstream literature, or if there was a cultural barrier that impeded meaning.

The researchers (Trousdale & Everett, 1994) included one elementary school teacher who taught at a school with a majority of African American students and who also wrote children's books. The second researcher was a teacher from a local university. Both were Caucasian and spoke Standard English.

Their subjects (Trousdale & Everett, 1994) included 3 seven year old African American girls, none of whom were in the researcher's classes. All students lived in a mostly African American community in a low income housing area. All children spoke the African American English dialect. Two children came from single parent homes, one of whom lived with extended family (grandmother), and one of the children lived with both parents. Although many people in the area are unemployed, often because they were illiterate, the subjects chosen were all from families who were employed. All three children said they went to the library often, and that they liked reading. The first child admired her teacher, and wanted to be a teacher when she grew up. Another wanted to

be a writer, especially plays, which she wrote and performed with children in the neighborhood. The last child was shy, but enjoyed reading as well.

Author number one wrote three different stories, all around the same theme of birthdays (Trousdale & Everett, 1994). It was decided to have her write them so it would be easier to analyze whether the students comprehended the author's message, since the author was right there and not a third person! All books were humorous, and had main characters around the children's age. One was "Mom Don't You Like It?", a story that included a lot of repetition, and two more stories, one based on *Alexander and the Terrible, horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*, and was called "The Worst Birthday in the History of the World", where many bad things happen, but which of course has a happy ending. The last was based on *The Day Jimmy's Boa Ate the Wash*, and was called "The Iguana Got Loose at the Birthday Party", where a series of funny events follows one after the other. There was no information given as to whether illustrations accompanied the stories.

Each student was read each story separately in the living room of one of the researchers (Trousdale & Everett, 1994). The stories were read one week apart, and afterwards the child was asked to retell the story and asked questions about it. For the most part, students understood the plot very well. Only one child grasped the overlying message, which the authors speculate might show she is closer to the formal operations stage than other students her age. Most grasped a message such as the importance of obeying your parents, whereas the theme the author intended was "situations and people are not always what they appear to be. Through patient waiting, reasons for actions

become evident” ( Trousdale & Everett, 1994, p. 6). The authors concluded that it was unreasonable to expect all children in first grade to comprehend abstract messages.

All the children identified with the main character, but only one of the children was on his “side”, thought he or she was the most important character and was right when there were conflicts with adults (Trousdale & Everett, 1994). Although the other two children identified with the main character, they thought the adults were the most important characters, and cited many flaws in the child such as selfishness, bad, or naughty. They justified the parents’ actions, even though they thought maybe they too were a lot like the child character.

When students were asked to retell the story, deletions or additions were almost all based on their life experience, and not from misunderstanding the story (Trousdale & Everett, 1994). For example, one student was not familiar with what Crackerjacks were, but was familiar with the Cracker Barrel store. Instead of saying the children got prizes from a Crackerjack box in the story, she said they went to the Cracker Barrel store and got prizes out of the machines there when she retold it. Not only did she replace Crackerjack with Cracker Barrel, but she also changed the surrounding details so it would make sense. In another instance, students added characters to the story to make them match their own family circumstances, for example saying one of the characters had two bothersome sisters (like herself), or saying a cousin and uncle had come to the birthday party (the student had close extended family relationships, especially with her cousin and uncle). This shows that students are always going to interpret a story with their own experiences.

Subjects also analyzed the stories based on their own cultural lenses (Trousdale & Everett, 1994). The student who wanted to become a teacher evaluated each book's usefulness for that purpose, and the student who wanted to write plays discussed each book in terms of how it could be used in that sense.

These children used their lives and goals as a reference for their understanding and enjoyment of the texts (Trousdale & Everett, 1994). The conclusion of the authors is that it may be important to include literature that includes an emphasis on extended family when working with children of the African American community. Also it seems important to encourage students to use their own life experience to understand and interpret stories, as this may bring about a better understanding of the writing.

In critiquing this study, the reader must focus on its credibility and transferability. How the children were selected was not shared, and the children that were chosen did not represent a cross section of the community they lived in, rather in a location with high illiteracy and unemployment, children were chosen whose families were employed and who encouraged literacy activities. The findings then could not be transferred to the rest of the community. It is not a good representation of the students she would be working with, and so I would need justification as to why this sample was chosen. If they were not students of the researcher, how did she find them? If she found them, say, at the library, then this would not be a bias free sample. Perhaps the goal here was to create a sample where culture would be the only factor, and not reading ability, but then that needs to be stated. And since the problem in the community was the illiteracy, working with the comprehension of students who do not have the family support may be more

important to research than how to help the students who already do have the family support.

A study by Grice and Vaughn (1992), sought to explore the effect of using multicultural literature on African American and Caucasian children. Thirteen children in a southern city were asked to respond to twenty-four books representing African American experiences and culture. Nine respondents were black (5 boys and 4 girls) and 4 were white (3 boys and 1 girl). All were third graders and had been identified as slow learners, reading two years below grade level.

In the study (Grice & Vaughn, 1992), the teacher read the entire class each book, and then interviewed three children who were randomly selected about each of the twenty four books. I do not think this is thorough transferable, because if only 3 children are interviewed randomly, there is no assurance that there will be enough representation of African American boys versus girls, and the same with Caucasian students. Interviewing more students on each book, and trying to represent all male/female and ethnic groups could make the study more convincing.

The questions asked (Grice & Vaughn, 1992) were over the content of the book, whether or not the story or characters could be real, whether or not the student could place themselves in the story, and whether or not they liked the book and why. The stories read ranged from African heritage and biography to community, friends, and family themes, and poetic verse. After the individual interviews, the teacher led a class discussion about the books. The students shared their feelings about the book and ranked it.

The study (Grice & Vaughn, 1992) found that family, community, and friend themed books were the easiest for children to follow. One hundred percent of black females and 83% of black males identified with the community and friendship books. Sixty seven percent of white boys also identified with these stories.

The children took the question referring to whether or not the story could be real very literally. If it had not happened to them, they could not believe it. They found middle class and books about interracial families, even autobiographical ones, to be unbelievable, because “nobody in my family is white” (Grice & Vaughn, 1992, p.159). Because the students were not biracial and did not know any multiracial families, they could not relate to the themes. Also, many students did not find the African heritage books believable. One African American boy said “If I was in Africa and the slavers tried to kidnap me, I would want to leave Africa” (Grice & Vaughn, 1992, p.159).

The terminology used by Grice and Vaughn is interesting. I wonder what they mean by saying that 67 % of white boys found a story believable, when really only saying 2 children out of 3 thought so. This is the same thing, but 67% makes the research sound more extensive than interviewing only 3 children on each book if a reader is not reading very closely. The study could also have been more complete if it included a book about a white protagonist who had a low SES, to see if the students identified with this book as much or more than the African American stories in which the children identified with the main character because of social conditions and not race.

The findings of this study (Grice & Vaughn, 1992), are confirmed in Taylor’s (1997) study, and so seem more convincing. The information was not recorded by tape



recorder, and no information was given as to how the interviews were recorded (Grice & Vaughn, 1992).

Taylor (1997) conducted a study continuing Grice and Vaughn's 1992 research. Taylor's study researched the literature preferences of African American and Hispanic American fifth graders, two years older than Grice and Vaughn's study. In Taylor's study, 24 students were asked to respond to literature. 14 of the students were African American and 10 were Hispanic. No information was given as to the gender makeup of the sample, other than that it did include both boys and girls. The school the study was conducted in was an inner city elementary school in the Southwest. It does not give the state, but the students received a score of 70 on the Texas learning index by taking the Texas assessment of Academic Skills, implying that it took place in Texas. This qualified the students to receive assistance from a Title I teacher. All the students in the study were low income and received free lunch from the school.

In Taylor's (1997) study, students read 24 picture books. There were 24 students and 24 books. Each student read each book. The report does not say how they were read (alone or in groups) or over what period of time. The books included a majority of melting pot and culturally conscious books. Melting Pot fiction consists of stories wherein African Americans or other minorities are included in plots with Caucasians. They are not usually main characters and the only differences between African Americans and European Americans addressed here is skin color. No other social issues are addressed. Culturally Conscious stories do address historical, social, and cultural aspects of African American life. They might use African American English and include plot details dealing with extended family. Other books read included Hispanic American

fiction, mainstream children's literature, and African and African and African American folklore.

After each child read all 24 books, they completed a questionnaire which asked their opinions on the books they read (Taylor, 1997). The rated each book from 1 to 5, but the questionnaire asked not only their opinion of the book, but also whether they could picture themselves in the story (identify with the characters). The children then wrote a paragraph about their favorite and least favorite books to give reasons for their opinions. The children's favorite books as a whole class were *The Talking Eggs* (a fairy tale) by Robert San Souci, *Grandma's Joy* (a culturally conscious story) by Eloise Greenfield, and *The Snowy Day* (a melting pot story) by Ezra Jack Keats, a very popular children's author and one of the first to include African American characters in mainstream children's literature.

*The Talking Eggs* was popular because of its humor and fantasy (Taylor, 1997). The researcher felt that the popularity of *Grandma's Joy* served to confirm Grice and Vaughn's (1992) conclusion that all children could identify with family themed books, no matter what the race of the reader or the character was. *The Snowy Day* was a favorite for its interesting pictures and ability to put oneself in the place of the main character (Taylor, 1997). Even though the top three included culturally conscious fiction and melting pot books, the least popular 5 books were also made up of these types. The children seemed to dislike books that dealt with unpleasant topics, such as *Daddy*, by Jeannette Caines, which was about a girl whose parents are divorced who gets to spend the day with her father.

When the students were split by ethnicity, the favorite books differed somewhat (Taylor, 1997). Looking at only African Americans, *Jambo Means Hello* by Muriel Feelings, *Tar Beach* by Faith Ringgold, and *She Come Bringing Me That Little Baby Girl* by Eloise Greenfield were favorites, all three culturally conscious fiction. These students had two years of maturity on the subjects in Grice and Vaughn's study, and were more able to appreciate books involving African Origins.

Hispanic American student's favorite books included *Where the Wild Things Are* (mainstream children's literature) by Maurice Sendak, *Grandma's Joy*, and *Snowy Day*. Hispanics seemed to enjoy mainstream books and books that dealt with family issues most (Taylor, 1997). *Abuela* (Hispanic American literature) by Arthur Dorros ranked 9<sup>th</sup> with Hispanic subjects, even though it was the only book with Hispanic characters and plot. The third favorite book for African American students was the least favorite for Hispanic American students. *She Come Bringing Me That Little Baby Girl* came in last at 24 for Hispanic American subjects.

The researcher (Taylor, 1997) concludes that not all students have the background knowledge to appreciate culturally conscious stories. Membership in an ethnic group does not mean that students know the history and culture of that ethnic group. Teachers may need to pre-assess knowledge and teach some background information before reading some culturally conscious books.

The research by Taylor (1997) is believable, results of the children's rankings are included, as is a copy of the assessment they used. What would make the study more convincing would be the inclusion of over what period of time the books were read. This could affect how the students ranked the books. If the students read the books all at one

sitting, they may have tired of reading halfway through and not enjoyed the later books. If they read a few books each day, by the end of the period they may not have kept fresh in their mind exactly how much they liked the first ones. Children, and adults, can move from one favorite to another very quickly depending on how recently they were exposed to the material. Information as to how these issues were addressed would lend more credibility and transferability to the research.

The study (Taylor, 1997) is consistent with the findings of Grice and Vaughn (1992) in that it found that students often can relate to universal family relationships no matter the race of the character. It (Taylor, 1997) moved beyond this research and showed that with maturity and more background information, students are more able to process information about culturally conscious books, including information about African origins.

To summarize, Mohr (2003) found that first grade students preferred nonfiction books to books with characters who represented their race, and Grice and Vaughn (1992) found that third graders didn't enjoy stories they couldn't relate to in their immediate lives, even if their race was represented by the characters in the book. Trousdale and Everett (1994) found that 7 year old children used their life experiences to interpret texts, and Taylor (1997) showed that some students just don't have the background information to appreciate culturally conscious stories, and preassessment and teaching background knowledge may be necessary for some culturally conscious books, even if the students are part of the culture represented in the book. Rickford (2001) found that culturally relevant literature positively impacted the reading enjoyment for 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade students.

## Summary

There is a wealth of research on ways to help different cultural groups find success in reading. Some suggest community and school wide programs in order to help all children succeed, while others give teachers specific strategies that could be implemented in the classroom.

Craig et al. (2003) showed that state funded preschools for low income students could help overcome the achievement gap, while Gilliam et al. (2004) showed that parental involvement in classes to help their children in reading caused more families to read together. Wilson-Jones (2003) showed that students achieved more when their families were involved in their schooling. All of these suggestions are something that must be supported by communities, school districts, and individual schools in order to effect change for students.

Wiencek et al. (1998) showed the reader that many of the so called developmentally appropriate views of reading in some kindergartens disadvantage low income students. Denton, et al. (2004) and Chappe et al. (2002) both showed that students' fluency in a second language could be improved using explicit phonics instruction, but neither of these programs benefited comprehension. Ruan (2003) reminded readers that Chinese students may not be assertive about getting their needs met. Chang and Ho (2005) showed readers that characters use syllables as the smallest unit of sound, so expecting students who speak Chinese as a first language to segment words into phonemes may be asking more than for a student who uses English as a first language. Grice and Vaughn (1992) and Mohr (2003) showed that students, when given a choice, didn't necessarily prefer culturally relevant literature, and Taylor (1997)

showed that sometimes students don't have the resources to understand this literature, even if the characters represented are part of their racial group.

## CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSIONS

The research reviewed in Chapter Three has revealed several practices that may encourage culturally relevant teaching. In considering the past and present experiences of minority students in school, it is important to find the most effective practices to teach all people's children. The following are practices that research has shown to be effective when working with a diverse student base.

### The Effect of Tracking and Stereotyping by Teachers

Studies have shown that teachers refer minority students to gifted and talented programs less (Elhoweris et al, 2005), and to special education programs more (Hosp & Reschly, 2004), than white students. Since minority status, unfortunately, often correlates with low socioeconomic status, these figures may be due to differences in class. Low SES students are also overrepresented in special education classes for the mentally retarded (Hosp & Reschly, 2004).

The study by Elhoweris et al. (2005), which showed race had an effect on teachers' recommendation of students into gifted and talented programs shows that teachers' expectations of a student will affect what they see. If teachers hold stereotyped impressions of their students, they will continue to think their minority students are less able than white students, even if they perform in approximately similar ways.

If indeed African American students have lower achievement scores as Hosp and Reschly (2004) found, it would seem that more would be referred to special education programs. To this I would suggest future study into what is it about our system that gives minority and low SES students less of a chance to succeed.

That race is such a strong predictor in Hosp and Reschly's (2004) study for the referral of students to classes for the emotionally disturbed, a branch of special education that deals mostly with behavior, is telling of the difficulties that teachers (a majority of whom are white) may have in connecting with minority students. Just because a student comes from a different cultural background than their teacher does not mean the teacher should assume they need special education. The teacher may need some "special education" to learn culturally relevant practices and help all his or her students succeed.

The researchers (Hosp & Reschly, 2004) suggest the development of early interventions that might help reduce the higher representation of minorities in special education classes. Professional development for teachers working with a multicultural student base is not addressed as a cause by the authors. They report that yes, race and income have a strong affect on placement, but they do not address why they do. Teaching teachers to see the student rather than the race or cultural characteristics often attached to race may help with this

Teachers who want to give all their students a chance at a fair education need to keep studies like these (Elhoweris et al, 2005, Hosp & Reschly, 2004), in mind. When struggling with a student from a different culture, a teacher must analyze the source of the conflict or misunderstanding, and attempt to find culturally relevant ways to teach the student. Teachers can find methods that keep students with diverse abilities in the mainstream classroom, and stop relegating students to special education programs because of cultural misunderstandings. All students have unique abilities and needs, and being aware of these can help teachers accurately diagnose students who need special education, and students who just need a different type of help in their regular classrooms



### The Effect of Class and Socioeconomic Status on Teaching and Learning

Craig et al.'s study (2003) concluded that with proper intervention, social class should not make a major difference in a student's success in school, and Stage et al. (2001) concluded that low SES students with difficulty in letter naming should receive early intervention to strengthen letter naming fluency in order to ensure they do not fall behind peers in first grade and beyond. Given these findings, schools must provide early testing and intervention for students who show signs of struggling with literacy early on in education, by offering testing for pre-kindergarten students and offering preschool slots to students who show a need for extra help. These recommendations require state, district, and school wide efforts. Teachers must also provide early intervention in the primary classroom, so students get the help they need early on and do not slip behind their peers in reading development.

Since Wienczek et al.(1998) found that when teachers use the developmentally appropriate view of early reading development, wherein children learn to read when they are ready, seems to work for the middle and upper class students and disadvantage poor students. From this finding the reader can assume that teachers must take it upon themselves to make sure all students, especially low income students, have time to explore books and concepts about print, as well as work with phonemic awareness and phoneme grapheme correspondence. Children should also have small group or one on one teacher interaction, and an opportunity to receive teacher scaffolding.

### Effective Methods for Teaching Hispanic Students

Riccio et al. (2001) also called for early intervention of reading difficulties for Spanish speaking ESL students. They found that for students who don't speak English at home, it is difficult to identify reading problems early on, because of the language barrier. With the high rates of illiteracy and drop out in the Hispanic community, it is vital to identify problems with phonemic awareness early. With tests such as the CTE that identify abilities in the native language, schools can identify reading difficulties early on. It is important to have this early intervention in place instead of waiting to diagnose these problems once the student learns English, after they are already significantly behind their classmates.

It has been shown (Carlisle and Beeman, 2000) that students who speak Spanish upon entering school were shown to learn to read more quickly in Spanish and in English when they were taught in Spanish, while children who were taught in English did not start reading as quickly in either language. Perhaps a reader needs to be familiar with the language before comprehension strategies can be applied, decoding words that do not make sense will not nurture comprehension. It is important for ESL students to receive some instruction in reading strategies in their native language when possible, so these can develop as early as possible and then be transferred to the student's second language. The application of Carlisle and Beeman's (2000) study is that learning to read in one's native language will not only benefit the student's literacy in his/her first language, but also help him/her read much better in English. This shows teachers that students will make gains in English reading whether or not they read only in English, and that students

are able to maintain their literacy capabilities in their native language if they are encouraged to practice, and read, in their native language.

Research shows (Denton, et al., 2004) that students who do not speak English and who learn to read in a school culture where decoding and phonics are of key importance may learn to decode words that they cannot understand. Spanish ESL students who were tutored improve only in context free reading. It is important to focus on the difference between fluency and comprehension. Fluency can be helpful for students who are learning to read words they already know the meaning of, but being able to pronounce words with an English pronunciation does not help students who do not know the meaning of the word to begin with. Allowing students to spend some time reading in their native language will help students' comprehension, as has been shown by Steffensen, et al. (1999). When ESL students are pushed to have increased fluency, their comprehension may suffer because they need more time to think about the content and translate mentally (Denton, et al., 2004).

According to the research (Chiappe et al., 2002), teachers must remember that until ESL students learn English, they are interpreting everything in terms of their native language, which can cause confusion. In most languages, the syntax is different than in English. Students cannot use this as a cueing system for reading. It is important for teachers to make sure students are able to make meaning out of reading, instead of just pronouncing words that have no meaning to the student. A focus on meaning helps students improve more than an emphasis on decoding unfamiliar words.

Pollard-Durodola, et al. (2004) studied the strategies that are used to teach phonemic awareness and early word reading in Spanish. This is important for a teacher

to know, even in an English instruction classroom, because students may be coming into classrooms already having learned to read in Spanish. Teachers should be familiar with strategies, similar and different, to better understand their new students unique abilities and schema. This study really showed the difficulty students may have in transitioning their reading abilities from a language with shallow, consistent orthography like Spanish to one with many different rules like English. Knowing that Spanish often treats a syllable as the unit of sound rather than a phoneme can help a teacher work with students who may not comprehend the idea of breaking words down into the smaller units. Having knowledge of these differences can help teachers assist students who may need to grasp not only a new language, but a new set of rules for reading it.

#### Effective Methods for Teaching Asian Pacific American Students

As a teacher, it is also important to remember that Asian students are not always the best students, even though many teachers describe them as model students (Ruan, 2003, Tatum 1997). It is important for teachers to not assume they do not need help just because they do not ask for it (Ruan, 2003). This could be due to a cultural difference, not because they feel competent or are successful at the task. Recognizing the disadvantage that is done to students when their needs are not attended to is an important lesson for a good teacher to remember. Teachers should always make sure all students get the help they need even if they can't ask for it because of cultural differences.

Since different languages have different methods of decoding and different structures, or orthographies (McBride-Chang and Ho, 2005, Pollard-Durodola et al., 2004), it is important to consider a student's prior abilities in decoding in their native language, if they come into our classrooms with prior abilities in reading in their native

language. In Chinese and other Asian languages (McBride-Chang and Ho, 2005), just as in Spanish (Pollard-Durodola et al., 2004), it is important for effective teachers to find ways to expand upon the student's existing abilities. Having a focus on nurturing and transferring skills from a native language will help students learn the new language more quickly and successfully. Early reading skills in the native language are more predictive of later accomplishment in English than early performance in English is (McBride-Chang and Ho, 2005).

Students coming from homes that speak Chinese (Cantonese) and possibly other languages that use characters may not be able to decode using individual phonemes (McBride-Chang and Ho, 2005). Understanding that if students have learned to read in Chinese, they will be using a syllabic base rather than a phonemic one will allow teachers to understand thought processes of these children. It is important to be aware of these needs and proficiencies that might be discounted without this knowledge of the orthography of a student's native language.

#### Effective Methods for Teaching Native American Students

One area where there was not an abundance of literature was studies on the early reading acquisition of Native American students. Most articles were dated or involved older students. It is important to have more research on the needs of these students available, and it is also important to have more tribe specific information. Studies that were reviewed usually dealt with one specific tribe, and so were possibly not generalizable to the more than 280 other tribes in the United States, which according to Willis (2002) "...differ in terms of their language, traditions, economics, and social interactions" (p. 152).

Some information that was useful in the research reviewed was the finding that Reyhner (1986) reported, showing that it is important to supplement the basal readers with trade books that represent Native American student's culture, especially tribe specific books if possible.

#### Effective Methods for Teaching African American Students

It has been shown that family involvement can make a major impact on reading achievement for African American students and others (Gilliam, et al., 2004, Wilson-Jones, 2003). Making classrooms welcoming to parents, finding ways to involve them in their child's education, providing trainings that help them help their children, if they feel they are not capable, are all ways that parents can become more involved in schooling. Being available during non school hours for working parents and being willing to call or visit parents at home can also be ways to help parents become more engaged in their children's school lives.

Another thing that is important to keep in mind when working with African American youth is the idea that it is important for teachers to remember that differences in pronunciation are not always miscues, they are simply the differences in pronunciation between dialects (Charity et al., 2004). According to LeMoine (2002), a teacher's disapproving attitude about an African American student's use of African American English can negatively affect how they perform in school. Charity et al. (2004) agree, showing that an overemphasis on pronunciation may take away from a student's attention to meaning. The important thing is that the student making meaning of the text. Since the underlying grammatical structures of African American English are different than Standard English, teachers need to understand how the dialect works and not count the

children's use of the dialect as a mistake in English, but rather a use of their native dialect. Overcorrecting the use of native dialects or languages when the student is making meaning is counterproductive. Students will be more likely to participate in instruction when their linguistic abilities are respected and taken advantage of. It has been shown that the use of realistic minority dialect in literature helps students enjoy stories, stay engaged, and feel represented in the texts (Rickford, 2001).

#### The Effect of Teachers Attitudes and Expectations on Students Learning

It is important for teachers to remember that being color blind is almost as bad for students as overt racism (Love and Kruger, 2005). By not seeing the unique needs and abilities culture contributes to a child, you are not seeing the whole child. Ignoring these abilities and needs discounts them and leaves students without consideration in teaching methods. Of course assuming that all students of a certain ethnicity fit a certain stereotype is wrong, but it is important to recognize when it does influence student's needs and respect that. Teachers must find ways to use a student's culture to their advantage in schooling.

#### Culturally Responsive Literature and its' Effect on Students

In De la Colina et al's (2001) study, it was found that low engagement students did not have any statistically relevant improvement over a 12 week improvement, and some performed worse as time went on. Finding ways to get all students highly engaged should be an important goal for teachers. It has also been shown that highly engaged students make greater gains in reading, and read more often. Finding ways to engage all students in reading is an important way for teacher's to make education equitable for minority students. By using methods that keep students excited about reading, teachers

can motivate them to want to do it, and their skills will have greater chance of developing with extensive practice.

It has been shown that students comprehend more and are more engaged when they are reading about something they have background knowledge, and when their culture is represented in the story (Steffensen et al., 1999, Rickford, 2001). It is important for students not only to be represented in the texts, but it helps with comprehension when the background knowledge required is something they are familiar with. Trousdale and Everett (1994) showed that even when third grade students had characters that looked like them in stories, they didn't necessarily have the background information to comprehend and so didn't enjoy the texts.

Steffensen et al. (1999) also showed that students who took longer amounts of time to read in English comprehended the same amount as students who took half the time to read in their native language. It is possible that giving ESL students more time to read stories will help with comprehension, and this may make reading more fun and motivate the students to read more, and may be just as successful at comprehending when reading if given enough time. The reader can see that ESL students in a classroom culture that perhaps puts too much emphasis on fluency may struggle to understand what they read. If what we want is for comprehension and personal connection to the literature to occur, then perhaps it is more important for students to take their time and think about what they are reading, and how it connects to their lives, than for students to read quickly and accurately.

In the Steffensen (1999) study, it was interesting that one of the women who read in English said that this was the easiest thing she had ever had to read in English. This



statement points to the fact that English books that cover all students prior experiences are important to have in classrooms where knowledge of English is the goal. When students are able to read about familiar subjects, schema takes hold and it is easier to predict and comprehend a story.

Mohr (2003) showed that Hispanic students in first grade chose mostly nonfiction when given a choice of books. Almost all 1<sup>st</sup> grade students chose animal books, not human books, even when books with characters of their own race and culture were available. This can be translated into practice by providing interesting and reading level appropriate nonfiction texts to children for reading choices just as much as fictional books. Students can be very motivated to read non fiction that is well presented, as much as or more so than the traditional storybooks. This study tells us another important lesson, just because you have a minority student, they many not be drawn to multicultural literature.

It is also important to remember that this study was done with first graders. According to Tatum (1997), a students need to develop their racial identity by racial grouping does not happen until 6<sup>th</sup> grade or older. Although students are obviously aware of race before then, and may enjoy seeing characters that are like them, they may not be as concerned with the subject of race in first grade as teachers may assume they are. Taylor (1997) showed that not all students have the background to appreciate culturally conscious stories. There is a difference between having the multicultural literature available for students to read and in pushing it on students when they are not interested, because an important part of reading is the motivation to do so, prompted by high interest in the subject matter. Grice and Vaughn's (1992) study is important because it showed

engaging children in literature that is enjoyable and relates to their personal experience is important in motivating them to want to read.

### Summary

In summary, there are many things a teachers can do to make their classroom a place where children from all cultural and class backgrounds can succeed in learning to read. Chapter 4 has outlined many methods that can be used with specific cultural groups, which can be used by teachers to create equity in the classroom. In order to have fair treatment, it does not work to treat all children the same. Teachers must be aware of the culture of their students, and be aware of teaching methods that work for those specific cultures, in order to create an equitable environment in which all children can learn.

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