

The Relationship of Literacy and Oracy in First and Second Languages

Preliminary Research Question I:

1. What is the relationship between first language oracy and second language literacy?
2. What is the relationship between second language oracy and second language literacy?

Preliminary Research Question II:

1. What is the relationship between first and second language literacy?

Most of the research deals with questions IB and IIA. The studies in table 1, from Krashen (in press) show clear correlations between reading in the first and second language, suggesting that the answer to question IIA is that there is a positive relationship between first and second language literacy. Those who read better in their primary language also tend to read better in English.

There is, however, some variation.

Some of this variation is due to age. The correlation between age and the relationship of L1-L2 reading is -.32 (correlation of average grade level, at times estimated from age, and L1-L2 reading comprehension correlations; based on 14 studies). In other words, correlations between reading ability across languages are higher for younger children. For those studies using only Spanish speakers, the relationship was strong ($r = -.801$, $n = 6$ studies). This result suggests that reading ability in the first language has its strongest effect in early stages of second language literacy development. An especially clear case of this is Hacquebord, (cited in Bosser, 1991) who tested the same subjects at age 13.9 and again at 15.9. The correlation between their ability to read in their first language (Turkish) and their second (Dutch) declined from .4 at age 13.9 to .09 at age 15.9.

Table 1: Relationship between first and second language literacy

study	L1	grade	r with L1 RC	r with oral L2
Escamilla	Spanish	4	0.48	0.19
Saville-Troike	various	2 thru 6		0.26
Tregar & Wong	Spanish	elem (3-5)	0.95	0.1
Tregar & Wong	Chinese	elem	0.4	-0.17
Cummins	Japanese	2 thru 6	0.23	
Hacquebord	Turkish	age 13.9	0.4	
Gonzales	Spanish	6	0.48	0.44
Garcia-Vazquez	Spanish	8	0.24	0.74
Hacquebord	Turkish	age 15.9	0.09	
Tregar & Wong	Spanish	middle sch (6-8)	0.26	0.42
Tregar & Wong	Chinese	middle sch	-0.14	-0.59
Cummins	Vietnamese	age 13.2*	.41, .51	
Otekani	Japanese	age 20	0.21	
Nguyen et. al.	Vietnamese	gr 5-8	0.06	
Cobo-Lewis et. al.	Spanish	2 and 5	0.55	
Okamura-Bichard	Japanese	grade 6	0.09	

* low LOR (5-22 m)

Preliminary Research Question IB asks if those who speak the second language better have higher levels of literacy in the second language. The data in table 1 also shows some positive correlations between second language speaking and second language reading, but it appears to be the case that in early stages, the

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influence of first language reading ability appears to be stronger than the influence of spoken second language competence (Escamilla, 1987; Tregar and Wong, 1984). This is, of course, the essence of Cummins' important distinction between conversational and academic language and his hypothesis of a strong relationship between academic language in the first and second language (Cummins, 1981).

Saville-Troike's study (1984) did not include a measure of first language literacy development, but her results are very interesting: She studied 19 children, grades 2-6, and reported low correlations between English reading and measures of oral fluency ($r = .26$), and even lower correlations between English reading and the amount of interaction children had with other children or adults in English ($r = -.057$ and $.131$ respectively). Because of the variety of first languages involved, no measure of L1 literacy was available, but Saville-Troike noted that "in almost all cases bilingual instructors' judgments of students' relative competence in native language studies coincided with the same students' relative achievement in English ... (a) Japanese girl who scored highest in reading English, for instance, was reported to read several years above grade level in Japanese, and her Japanese vocabulary and grammar were considered 'exceptional' for a child her age" (p. 214). (There were, however, two exceptions, two students who read very well in the first language but made little progress in English reading that year.)

August, Calderon and Carlo (2001) did not report on the results of tests of reading comprehension, but their results confirm the strong L1-L2 literacy relationship, and their design is noteworthy. They examined the relationship between word identification in the first language at the end of second grade and word identification in English at the end of third grade, a design that makes a great deal of sense: One would expect the impact of first language literacy to have a greater impact on subsequent second language literacy than on current second language literacy; Controlling for oral ability and general intelligence, they reported that performance on a test of word identification at grade 2 in Spanish predicted word identification in English one year later, but only for those who received early instruction in Spanish.

Cobo-Lewis, Eilers, Pearson and Umbel (2002) reported that for second and fifth grade acquirers of English as a second language who spoke Spanish as a first language, tests involving reading and writing (Word Attack, Letter-Word, Passage Comprehension, Proofing and Diction) were highly intercorrelated, regardless of the language of the test. Tests involving oral language (verbal analogies, oral vocabulary), however, only intercorrelated with other oral tests given in the same language. These results are consistent with the generalization that first and second language literacy are related.

Reports from teachers

In addition, reports from teachers confirm that transfer of reading ability from the first to the second language occurs. In Krashen (1996), I published a case history showing that children who learned to read in Spanish found it easy to transfer this knowledge to English (pp. 28-29). Here is a synopsis:

Lorraine Ruiz taught a second grade class of Spanish speakers, all LEP or non-English speakers. The children had aural comprehensible input in English, but much of the curriculum was in Spanish and reading was taught in Spanish, done with whole language "with a little dab of phonics." Ms. Ruiz had a classroom library with books both in English and Spanish. At the beginning of the year, the children could not read the English books, but by the end of the year they could. The children themselves were amazed. One child asked Mrs. Ruiz, "When did you teach us to read in English?" My conclusion was that Ms. Ruiz helped them learn to read in Spanish, and once you can read, you can read. I also claimed that this experience was not an isolated one.

In a personal communication by email, a reporter for the Santa Cruz Sentinel, then in the process of preparing a series of articles on bilingual education, questioned the generality of this phenomenon. She said that this case study was "interesting" but "perhaps it is the exception to the rule." To see if this case was an exception I posted a request on several listservs, asking whether Ruiz' case was indeed an exception, whether according to their experience it really was true that once children read very well in their first language, and have some aural competence in English, they pick up English reading quickly.

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Lorraine Ruiz herself was among those who responded, and confirmed that the event was not an isolated one: ... "The same thing happened in other classes that I have taught as well. As research indicates once you can read you can read. It is just a matter of transferring the skills to another language. " Here are some of the other testimonials I received:

Transition was "a piece of cake" was sent by Yolanda Garcia, Redwood City, California: I was an assistant in a 1st grade Bilingual class at Selby Lane School about 11 years ago. I taught the Spanish speakers reading, writing and arithmetic and the teacher taught the English speakers (30 students per class). Two of the three groups were on or near grade level. After that year I left assisting and went to graduate school for my teaching credential. As part of an independent study I returned to track that group of students (and had them perform a play that I converted from one of their literature books). Then in third grade, their teacher told me that their transition had been a piece of cake. They were reading with the fluency of their English-only counterparts, had the comprehension, and their test scores were high! They were also in a strong ESL program. Then a few years later, while taking a CLAD preparation course, I met a teacher who taught Junior High. She was raving about a group of students that she had and their high level of English fluency and excellent test scores. To my surprise she was talking about my same group of students!

I do not believe they were the exceptions to the rule. We had a good program with continuity and a positive transition program I have been an employee in the bilingual program with the Redwood City School District for 25 years. I have seen it rollercoaster, both functioning and faltering. At one point the program was unstable due to lack of parent education, or support. There were also many changes in staff and an administration causing incontinuity. When these factors became stable, students gained a strong development of their native language. This ability to dominate their native language enabled them to dominate English (and other Romance Languages). Our students end up prepared to live in a global world with the advantage of speaking/knowing multiple languages, and more importantly, having a strong sense of self.

"They transition themselves" was sent by Ginny Kalish (Ms. Kalish was selected as teacher of the year by the Arizona Educational Foundation): I teach a bilingual second grade. My best readers in Spanish who have had a great deal of exposure to oral English just pick up English books and start reading. I have one girl who is writing in her journal in English (her choice) everyday. The monolingual English teachers say her entries rival their top students' entries. When their skills are strong in their first language, and they have had lots of exposure listening to English it seems that they transition themselves. I have had students pick up English books and read them fluently the first time they saw them. I do no "formal" English reading or writing instruction.

"The top five readers in English were also the top five readers in Spanish" was sent by Fay Shin, California State University, Long Beach: I have done many observations and student teacher supervisions - some in bilingual classes or transitioning bilingual classes. I observed one class in Montebello Unified School District. They were 4th graders who were transitioned from a K-3 Spanish bilingual program to 4th grade English instruction. The top five readers in English were also the top five readers in Spanish (from 3rd grade). I particularly observed a 4th grade girl who was reading very well in English (she was at the top of her class), and I was told by her teacher that she was also an excellent reader in Spanish.

Also, I observed Korean bilingual students in a third grade class in LAUSD, Wilton Elementary. The students were actually reading and writing in Korean very well, and I was amazed at how well they read in English also. Of course it is easy to argue that they would have done well in an English-only class, but I was very impressed at how well they did in language arts in both English and Korean.

"The rule, not the exception" was sent by Francisco Ramos, LAUSD (now at Florida International University, Miami): In my experience (eight years in elementary school) [transfer of literacy from the first language] has been the rule, not the exception. In addition I have constantly been asking friends and teachers at my school and they all agree: good skills in the first language almost for sure guarantee no

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 problems in English. In my class at (Cal State) Fullerton (middle school and high school teachers) even people who don't support bilingual ed also agree.

More: In my own experience learning English as a Foreign Language, I was never taught the English phonetic system. I learned to read in English by reading simple words and simple sentences first, and proceeding to more complicated sentences later. My wife ... came from Cuba at 11, very literate in Spanish. She was translating for her family six months later. She holds an MA in Speech and Language, she reads in both languages, writes in both languages, and never lost her Spanish.

"The more proficient the Spanish reading, the more easily English reading is achieved" was sent by Kerry Anne Dees, Redwood City, California: As second and third grade aged students grow from beginning to more fluent readers I see this change occur annually. In the beginning of the year they don't themselves believe that they can read in English and I have never forced the issue. But having a library such as the one named above [Ruiz' classroom library], the students eventually find the courage and take on the challenge to read out of those English books. They share with their peers and attack the text with all of the reading strategies they have learned: decoding, contextual clues, pictures etc. They have at this point, NEVER been instructed to read in English. And it is true, the more proficient the Spanish reading, the more easily English reading is achieved.

"Students with a good background in L1 reading generally teach themselves to read in English" was sent by Pam Isaacs, San Diego Unified School District: ... I frequently have the opportunity to notice this very phenomenon. I have been a bilingual teacher for the last 16 of my 30 years of teaching. I currently provide literacy support for students in the general education population. Therefore, I see and work with a large number of students, many of them English language learners, many of them in bilingual education. Students who have a good background in L1 reading generally teach themselves to read in English. They are guided by the teacher, but most of it occurs very quickly. Of course, direct instruction in English phonics, spelling and further oral vocabulary development helps the process along. Since I know some students well over a period of years (second through fifth grade), I have been able to make many observations. First, the specific skills or lack of skills that a student has carries directly over into second language reading. For instance, a student who was taught only to decode in Spanish will carry this imbalance into English language, and not use meaning as a cue, a severe handicap in English reading. Students who have learned to monitor themselves and self-correct often in Spanish, will carry this skill into English reading ... Students who learn to think carefully about what they read, the story line and abstract concepts, will carry this comprehension skill into their second language reading ... I have absolutely no question that primary language instruction assists in the acquisition of English literacy.

(For additional reports, see Krashen, 2002).

Taken alone, these reports provide, at best, suggestive evidence; a critic can claim that they were reported by dedicated supporters of bilingual education, and may not represent what occurs in all cases. They are, however, consistent with the research and confirm that Ruiz' case is not a rare exception.

As noted earlier, the evidence suggests that the transfer effect from the first language appears to decline as children get older. The most obvious reasons for this decline include the loss in first language literacy competence that typically occurs as children get older, due to lack of access to print (see discussion below). A second is that other factors become stronger, especially one that is rarely considered in studies of this kind: reading in English.

Preliminary Research Question 2B asks: What do we know about the development of literacy in second language learners?

There is overwhelming evidence that reading in a second language, especially free voluntary reading or pleasure reading, makes a powerful contribution to the development of academic language in a second

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Correlational Studies

Studies in both second and foreign language confirm that those who read more do better on a wide variety of tests. I include here recent studies in foreign and second language acquisition (see Krashen, 1993, for earlier studies).

In Stokes, Krashen and Kartchner (1998), students of Spanish as a foreign language in the United States were tested on their knowledge of the subjunctive on a test that attempted to probe acquired competence (in the results presented below, only subjects who were not aware that the subjunctive was the focus of the test were included). Formal study was not a predictor of subjunctive competence, nor was length of residence in a Spanish-speaking country. Stokes et. al. also asked subjects about the quality of instruction they had had specifically in the subjunctive. This variable also failed to predict performance on the subjunctive test. The amount of free reading in Spanish, however, was a clear predictor (table 2).

Table 2. Predictors of performance on the subjunctive in Spanish (multiple regression analysis)

predictor	beta	t	p
formal study	0.0518	0.36	0.718
length of residence	0.0505	0.35	0.726
amount of reading	0.3222	2.19	0.034
subj study	0.0454	0.31	0.757

$r^2 = .12$, $p = .128$

from: Stokes, Krashen and Kartchner (1998)

Constantino, S.Y. Lee, Cho and Krashen (1997) reported that the amount of free reading international students living in the US said they did before taking the TOEFL was an excellent predictor of their score on this examination (table 3). In this study, formal study and length of residence were also a significant (and independent) predictors.

Table 3. Predictors of performance on the TOEFL test (multiple regression analysis)

predictor	beta	t	p
free reading/books	0.41	3.422	0.002
English study/home	0.48	3.72	0.001
LOR/US	0.42	3.243	0.003

$r^2 = .45$

from: Constantino, S.Y. Lee, Cho and Krashen (1997)

Gradman and Hannaia (1991) reported similar results for those taking the TOEFL test abroad: "Extracurricular reading" was the best predictor of TOEFL performance, with those reporting more "extracurricular speaking" actually doing slightly worse.

In-school free reading

In school free reading studies include evaluations of several kinds of programs: In sustained silent reading, students read whatever they please (within reason) for a short time each day and there is no accountability required. In extensive reading programs, a small amount of accountability is included, e.g. a short description of what was read. In self-selected reading programs, the entire class period is devoted to

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I have reviewed the available research on in-school free reading in several places (Krashen, 1993; 2001). In my most recent summary (Krashen, 2001), I found that students who participated in these programs did as well or better than comparison students in traditional language arts or second language programs on tests of reading comprehension in 51 out of 54 comparisons. The results were even more impressive when one considers only studies lasting one academic year or longer: in eight out of ten cases, participants in in-school reading programs outperformed comparisons and in two cases there was no difference.

I describe here a few of these studies here, focusing on those done in the foreign language situation.

In Elley and Mangubhai (1983), fourth- and fifth-grade students of English as a foreign language were divided into three groups for their 30-minute daily English class. One group had traditional audio-lingual method instruction, a second did only free reading, while a third did "shared reading." Shared reading "... is a method of sharing a good book with a class, several times, in such a way that the students are read to by the teacher, as in a bedtime story. They then talk about the book, they read it together, they act out the story, they draw parts of it and write their own caption, they rewrite the story with different characters or events ..." (Elley, 1998, pp. 1-2). After two years, the free reading group and the shared reading group were far superior to the traditional group in tests of reading comprehension, writing, and grammar. Similar results were obtained by Elley (1991) in a large scale study of second language acquirers ages six through nine in Singapore.

Elley's recent data (Elley, 1998) comes from South Africa and Sri Lanka. In all cases, children who were encouraged to read for pleasure outperformed traditionally taught students on standardized tests of reading comprehension, and other measures of literacy. Table 1 presents the data from South Africa. In this study, EFL students who lived in print-poor environments were given access to sets of 60 high-interest books, which were placed in classrooms, with another 60 made available in sets of six identical titles. The books were used for read alouds by the teacher, shared reading, and silent reading. Table 4 presents data from different provinces; in every case the readers outperformed those in comparison classes, and the gap widened with each year of reading.

Table 4. In-school reading in South Africa: Reading comprehension results

Province	Std 3		Std 4		Std 5	
	READ	NON-READ	READ	NON-READ	READ	NON-READ
Eastern Cape	32.5	25.6	44	32.5	58.1	39
Western Cape	36.2	30.2	40.4	34.3	53	40.4
Free State	32.3	30.1	44.3	37.1	47.2	40.5
Natal	39.5	28.3	47	32.3	63.1	35.1

from: Elley (1998)

Mason (Mason and Krashen, 1997) developed a version of extensive reading for university EFL students in Japan in which students do self-selected reading of pedagogical readers as well as easy authentic reading. Accountability was present but minimal; students only had to write a short "appreciation" of what they had read. In three separate studies, Mason found that extensive readers made greater gains than comparison students who participated in traditional form-based EFL classes. Table 5 presents the details of the three studies, in the form of effect sizes comparing the extensive readers and the traditionally-taught students.

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Table 5. Extensive reading compared to traditional methods of teaching EFL

Study	Subjects	duration	measure	results	effect size
1	4 year college 1 sem.	1 sem	cloze test	ER > Trad.	0.702
2a	4 year college	1 yr	cloze test	ER > Trad.	1.11
2b	2 year college	1 yr	cloze test	ER > Trad.	1.47
3	4 year college	1 yr			
	(a) reactions written in Japanese		cloze test	ER = Cloze ^a	0.244
			RC	ER > Cloze ^a	0.609
	(b) reactions written in English		cloze test	ER > Cloze ^a	0.63
			RC	ER > Cloze ^a	0.48

RC = reading comprehension; ER = extensive reading

a: Cloze = traditional instruction with emphasis on cloze exercises

from: Mason and Krashen (1997)

Effect size calculation = (mean of ER group - mean of traditional)/pooled standard deviation.

Shin (2001) examined the impact of a six week self-selected reading experience among 200 sixth and seventh graders who had to attend summer school because of low reading proficiency. Students attended class four hours per day; during this time, approximately two hours were devoted to sustained silent reading, including 25 minutes in the school library. The district invested \$25 per student on popular paperbacks and magazines, with most books purchased from the Goosebumps series. In addition, about 45 minutes per day was devoted to reading and discussing novels such as *Holes* and *The Island of the Blue Dolphins*. Comparison children (n = 160) followed a standard language arts curriculum during the summer. Attrition was high for both groups but similar (class size dropped from 20 to 14.3 among readers, and from 20 to 13.2 among comparisons) as was the percentage of limited English proficient children (31% in the reading group, 27% in the comparison group). The readers gained approximately five months on the Altos test of reading comprehension and vocabulary over the six week period, while comparisons declined. On the Nelson-Denny reading comprehension test, the summer readers grew a spectacular 1.3 years (from grade 4.0 to grade 5.3). On the vocabulary section, however, the groups showed equivalent gains.

Another role for first language reading: Developing the heritage language

Continuing development of the heritage language after English has been acquired has several advantages, including cognitive advantages, career-related advantages, and the attainment of true biculturalism (Tse's "ethnic identity incorporation stage; Tse, 1998). It is, however, extremely difficult to develop and maintain high levels of competence in the heritage language (Krashen, Tse and McQuillan, 1998). There is some evidence that pleasure reading in the heritage language can contribute to heritage language development.

Correlational evidence comes from Cho and Krashen (2000), a study of 114 Korean Americans, ages 18-30, who were either born in the US or arrived at a very early age. As indicated in table 6, free reading in Korean was a significant and independent predictor of Korean language competence (based on self-report), along with several other significant predictors.

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Table 6: Predictors of competence in Korean as a heritage language

predictor	beta	t	p
parental use of Korean	0.37	4.02	0
visiting Korea	0.22	2.31	0.023
watching Korean TV	0.245	2.67	0.01
reading in Korean	0.22	2.49	0.014
attending HL classes	0.072	0.85	0.4
age	-0.103	-0.756	0.451
length of residence	0.162	1.06	0.293

$r^2 = .398$

from: Cho and Krashen (2000)

Tse (2001) examined a group of ten bilinguals who developed high levels of competence in their heritage language. All had arrived in the US before age six or were US born, none had studied for longer than two weeks in the country where the heritage language is used, all were fluent in English, and all could read the heritage language at a level typical of native-speaking adolescents in the heritage language. Tse found that a number of factors were present in each case: they had input from parents, a peer group that valued the use of the heritage language, and formal instruction in the heritage language (not always a positive experience). In addition, all subjects had literacy experience in the heritage language at home and in the community. Of interest to us, Tse notes that "the most frequently mentioned activity the participants engaged in independently was reading for pleasure" (p. 692). Two subjects were dedicated comic book readers in the heritage language (Japanese) in junior high school, two others reported heavy magazine reading in Spanish, and one other was a devoted nonfiction reader on a variety of topics in her heritage language.

Kondo (1998) also noted that one of her subjects who was successful at maintaining the heritage language was an enthusiastic reader of comic books (Japanese manga).

McQuillan (1998a) reviewed several experimental studies of university students confirming the value of free reading in developing the heritage language, including one SSR study and two studies of Spanish for Native Speaker classes that focused on popular literature and literature circles (see also McQuillan and Rodrigo, 1998). Results included clear gains in Spanish vocabulary and improved attitudes toward reading in Spanish.

McQuillan also notes that heritage language reading may not work in all cases. In Schon, Hopkins and Vojir (1984), immigrant heritage language students were more enthusiastic about reading in Spanish than were those born in the US. McQuillan notes that those in the second group may have been in the "ethnic avoidance/ambivalence" stage, a time in which there is little interest in or even disdain for the heritage language and culture (Tse, 1998). This typically occurs during high school, the age of the subjects in this study.

Conclusions

There is good evidence for each of the three roles for reading:

1. In early stages, reading in the primary language is of great help in promoting second language literacy.
2. Free reading in the second language makes a strong contribution to advanced second language development.
3. Free reading in the heritage language appears to make a strong contribution to continued heritage language development.

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In addition to the studies showing that reading has a very positive impact on literacy development, research also shows what every reader of this paper already knows: free voluntary reading is also extremely pleasant (Nell, 1988; Krashen, 1994). The major problem in making sure that reading happens is access to books, and this problem is extremely serious.

There is very good evidence that providing access to interesting reading is the crucial factor in encouraging reading. In many cases, it is all that is necessary (Ramos and Krashen, 1998; Von Sprecken and Krashen, 1998).

For many children, especially those in high-poverty areas, there is little to read outside of school (Neuman and Celano, 2001). For children acquiring English as a second language, print resources in the heritage language outside of school are also seriously lacking. The average American family owns about 137 books (Purves and Elley, 1994), but the average Hispanic family with limited English proficient children owns only about 26 (Ramirez, Yuen, Ramey, and Pasta, 1991).

It is therefore of great concern that school libraries, the only source of reading material for many children, are so inadequate in so many places. Current studies show that better libraries are associated with better reading (Lance, 1994; Krashen, 1995; 2000b; McQuillan, 1998b). The sad state of school libraries has been documented in several publications (Allington, Guice, Baker, Michaelson and Li, 1995; McQuillan, 1998b; Krashen, 1996, 1999) and the situation is particularly grim with respect to books in Spanish (Pucci, 1994). Here is an additional report, focusing on the lack of books in the primary language.

Pucci and Ulanoff (1996) surveyed four school libraries in the greater LA area, focusing on schools with 90% Spanish-speaking children. Data was only available from two of the four libraries. Pucci and Ulanoff reported that three of the four libraries did not have regular hours or regular staff, and one was "periodically used as a storeroom." In the two libraries studied, only 15 to 22% of the books were in Spanish, and of these, about two-thirds were at the K-2 level, and about 3% were at the grade 5-6 level. Pucci and Ulanoff also surveyed 32 school librarians: 54% said that books written in Spanish were difficult to obtain and 70% said that their cost was "prohibitive." Of 5000 books on an approved reading list for purchase for libraries, only 300 were in Spanish. Pucci and Ulanoff note that "... even if these books were age appropriate, a child reading two books per week would finish every Spanish volume in the library before entering fourth grade" (p. 114).

Children of poverty have little to read, in school or outside of school. If their primary language is Spanish, the problem is even more serious. There have been no formal studies of availability of books in other heritage languages, but we can be sure that the situation is even worse than it is in Spanish.

All this gives us reason to be optimistic. As noted earlier, bilingual programs have been shown to be successful. If we add a healthy supply of books in both languages, they have the potential of being much more successful.

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