

**NATIONAL LITERACY PANEL ON LANGUAGE MINORITY CHILDREN AND
YOUTH**

PROGRESS REPORT

OCTOBER 2001 – OCTOBER 2004

SRI INTERNATIONAL

CENTER FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS

This study was conducted under grants from the Institute of Education Sciences and the Office of English Language Acquisition of the U.S. Department of Education. However, the contents of this report do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

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CHARGE TO THE PANEL

The National Literacy Panel (NLP) was formed in 2001 to carry out these tasks:

identify, assess, and synthesize the literacy research related to the education of language minority children and youth; and
to produce a comprehensive report that evaluates and synthesizes this research literature to guide educational practice and inform educational policy.

This evidence-based review and synthesis has proceeded through several stages. The first task was to constitute a panel. Once the panel was established, they worked to define the scope of the study and establish a methodology. The work of acquiring and reviewing the studies then began. In the process, a working database was created that contains hundreds of studies. Panel members are now drafting and refining the synthesis of what they have learned from the research literature.

THE PANEL

In constituting the panel, a working group was created that has deep expertise in critical components of literacy, is balanced by gender and geographic region, and includes researchers who themselves are language minority. (See Appendix A for a complete list of panel members and their affiliations.)

- There are seven women and six men and they come from universities in the West, Southwest, Midwest, Northeast, and Canada.
- Among the panelists, there are five who have non-English-language backgrounds: Claude Goldenberg (Spanish/Argentina), Esther Geva (Hebrew), Margarita Calderon and Robert Rueda (Spanish/Mexico), and Keiko Koda (Japanese).
- In addition, four panelists have important cross-cutting expertise: Timothy Shanahan and David Francis are methodologists; Linda Siegel and Esther Geva are knowledgeable about learning disabilities.

The membership of the panel also ensures that there is coordination with the activities of key research centers and other panels dedicated to literacy or the education of language minority students.

- Robert Rueda is affiliated with the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA).
- Claude Goldenberg is affiliated with the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE).
- Margarita Calderon is affiliated with the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk.
- Two panelists were members of the National Reading Panel. Michael Kamil was chair of subcommittees on reading comprehension and technology, and Timothy Shanahan was chair of the panel.

Helping to guide the NLP's work is the chair, Timothy Shanahan. Further guidance is provided by two methodologists: David Francis for quantitative methodology and Frederick Erickson for qualitative methodology. The principal investigator for the project is Diane August.

To address specific research questions, the panel was divided into six working subcommittees, each being responsible for synthesizing the research in a particular domain. (See Appendix B for a list of subcommittees and their members.)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The parameters of the review and synthesis were established in terms of six domains of investigation, with relevant research questions identified for each domain.

1. Relationship Between Oral Language Proficiency and Literacy

- What is the relationship between oral proficiency in a first language (L1) and oral proficiency in a second language (L2) in domains that are related to literacy?
- What is the relationship between oral proficiency in L1 and literacy in L2?
- What is the relationship between oral proficiency in L2 and literacy in L2?

2. Relationship Between First and Second Language Literacy

- For what components of literacy is there a relationship between L1 literacy and L2 literacy?
- Under what circumstances is there evidence for cross-linguistic influences that facilitate literacy acquisition in L2?
- Under what circumstances does literacy in L1 interfere with literacy in L2?
- What evidence does this body of studies provide to support or contradict theoretical accounts of transfer?

3. Development of Literacy

- What is the course of literacy development in L2 for language minority children and youth?

- What are the factors that may have an impact on L2 literacy development for language minority children and youth?
- What is the course of L2 literacy development for successful and unsuccessful and/or at-risk language minority children and youth?

4. Context in Which Literacy Is Developed

- What is the influence of language prestige and immigration circumstance on L1 and/or L2 literacy outcomes?¹
- What is the influence of discourse and interactional differences between children’s homes and classrooms on L1 and/or L2 literacy outcomes?
- What is the influence of other culturally or socially rooted factors on L1 and/or L2 literacy outcomes?²
- What is the influence of other classroom non-instructional factors linked to social and cultural characteristics of students and teachers on L1 and/or L2 literacy outcomes?
- What is the influence of parents and the community on L1 and/or L2 literacy outcomes?
- What is the influence of school, district, state, and federal policies on L1 and/or L2 literacy outcomes?

5. Effective Practices and Professional Development to Promote Literacy

- What language of instruction should be used when teaching language minority children and adolescents?
- Is it better to teach almost entirely in English or in the students’ home language?
- Do language minority students benefit from the same kinds of literacy teaching that benefit students who are native English speakers?
- What else can be done to improve the literacy attainment of language minority children and adolescents?
- What do we know about professional development programs geared to promoting literacy in language minority children?
- What do we know about the instructional contexts that promote discourse in L1 and L2 for language minority students?
- What do we know about instructional programs for language minority children in special education settings?

6. Assessment of Literacy

¹ Discussion of the prestige of L1 is relevant to domain 4; if “status of L1 or L2” relates to proficiency, the topic belongs to domain 3. If “immigration circumstance” means time in the new country, the topic is in domain 3; discussion of forced vs. elective immigration status belongs to domain 4.

² Discussion of cultural factors as they impact beliefs, attitudes, learning styles, and motivation belongs in domain 4, while discussion of individual factors impacting beliefs, attitudes, learning styles, and motivation belongs in domain 3.

- What measures and methods are used in the field to identify, place, and exit language minority students from bilingual or ESL programs and to assess their literacy development and progress in the L1 and L2?
- How much research has focused on measures and methods designed or used to identify, place, and exit language minority students from bilingual and ESL programs?
- What does this research say about the appropriateness (validity and reliability) and usefulness of such measures and methods?
- How much research has focused on the use of wide-scale assessments (e.g., standardized tests, state-developed tests based on standards, and NAEP) in English and the native language with language minority students?
- What does this research say about the appropriateness (validity and reliability) and usefulness of such measures and methods and any accommodations?

CRITERIA FOR INCLUSION OF STUDIES

Due to budget and time constraints it was not possible for the panel to examine critically all studies on the development of literacy in language minority children and youth. For the most part, the review of the literature and the synthesis that is based on the review focus on language minority children ages 3-18 acquiring literacy in a societal language.³ The review of the research incorporates only studies published in peer-reviewed journals, dissertations, and technical reports⁴ dating back to 1980.⁵ (Also, in the writing of the synthesis report, it was agreed that background information could come from publications that fall outside the basic inclusion criteria.)

Studies to be included must also meet certain methodological standards:

- They must report empirical data; data must be disaggregated for the key study groups; or the target group (as defined by our research questions) must be 50% or more of the sample.
- For experiments or quasi-experiments, the study must have a control, comparison group, or normative data. The comparison group samples must have more than 4 subjects.
- For quasi-experiments, there must be pretesting of the outcomes of interest (with the exception of regression discontinuity designs).
- For correlational studies, samples must consist of 20 subjects or more.

³ To answer several of the research questions, we also reviewed research on the acquisition of literacy in a foreign language, if the foreign language is English, and studied the acquisition of French by English speakers in Canada.

⁴ Technical reports are incorporated if they focus on context (domain 4), effective practice (domain 5), or assessment issues (domain 6).

⁵ For effective practices (domain 5), studies prior to 1980 have also been used.

The bulk of the studies covered in the analysis and reported in the synthesis were conducted in the United States. However, the report will also include studies from the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, as well as the Netherlands, Finland, and Israel.

OVERVIEW OF THE SEVEN SEARCHES OF THE LITERATURE

Acquisition and review of studies has been an iterative process. Search and inclusion criteria were refined over the course of several meetings of the full panel. In two outreach meetings in September 2002, interested stakeholders raised issues that were taken into account in the refinement of the research questions. Through seven major searches of the literature, research assistants identified new studies and panelists reviewed abstracts of these studies and made preliminary decisions on which studies should be retained in the database. On the basis of these preliminary decisions, hard copy of full articles was acquired and panelists made further decisions on the studies, whether they should be rejected or included. In this manner, the total of approximately 1800 titles provisionally identified through the seven searches was gradually reduced as the panelists examined each study more carefully. Still further adjustments have been made since the writing of the synthesis began and the content of the chapters of the report started to take shape.

Preliminary Search

This was conducted in June and July 2001 as a part of the tasks of a working group established to explore the feasibility of a full-panel study. The ERIC, PsycInfo, LLBA, and Sociological Abstracts databases were searched using keywords derived from a preliminary set of research questions. An additional search was made of MEDLINE and the MLA Bibliography using more general keywords, and very few articles were found in those databases. Only articles in refereed journals and relevant references from seven major reviews were included. The reviews were: August and Hakuta, 1997; Fitzgerald 1995a, 1995b; Garcia, 2000; Gersten and Baker, 2000a, 2000b; and Kamil, et al., 2000. 857 studies were identified by the preliminary search.

Second Search

The second search followed the first full-panel meeting in May 2002. It focused on obtaining: formerly excluded document-types, such as dissertation abstracts and technical reports; formerly excluded studies that measure teacher, rather than child outcomes; and formerly excluded studies that involve language-minority children in contexts where English is not the societal language. The second search added 696 studies to the database.

Third Search

The third search, which responded to changes in inclusion criteria made at the second full-panel meeting in July 2002, focused on obtaining technical reports that describe interventions and on formerly excluded studies that involve foreign language literacy acquisition. In addition, the 1,553 studies located by the preliminary and second searches

were reviewed in light of modifications to inclusion criteria. A total of 25 additional studies were identified in the third search.

Fourth Search

The fourth search followed up on changes to inclusion criteria made at the third full-panel meeting in October 2002, which in turn incorporated input from the outreach meetings of September 2002. It targeted studies that examine the literacy development of populations specified under Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act. It also targeted studies that examine first language literacy outcomes for language minority children, studies that examine literacy development for creole and pidgin speakers and studies where literacy-related components (vocabulary, metalinguistic awareness, and phonological awareness) are the dependent variables. The fourth search added 108 new studies to the database.

Fifth Search

The fifth search was a response to panel requests at the fourth full-panel meeting held in April 2003, specifically focusing on effective practices (domain 5) and assessment (domain 6). The effective instruction search targeted studies that are in relevant references from four key review articles (August & Hakuta, 1997; Greene, 1998; Rossell & Baker, 1996; Willig, 1985) to find studies that examine the effects of native language use on literacy development of language minority children. A search of the National Research and Development Centers Web site was performed for the same purpose. Studies that were published before 1980 were also included (an exception to the criterion setting 1980 as the earliest date of studies).

The search for additional assessment studies involved searching the five main databases (ERIC, LLBA, PsycInfo, MLA, and Sociological Abstracts) again and the Web site for the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) to obtain studies on content area assessment for language minority children. The fifth search added 114 studies to the database.

Sixth Search

For further coverage of research on the literacy development of Native American students, the sixth search involved retrieving relevant studies abstracted in the Demmert and Towner (2003) bibliography.

Seventh Search

To ensure maximum coverage of articles published in 2001-2002, a final search was performed in the ERIC, PsycInfo, LLBA, and Sociological Abstracts databases.

As of October 2004, the database consists of 978 studies. The number of studies accepted for inclusion in the synthesis has not been finalized; currently, the panelists are working with approximately 400 studies.

THE CODING INSTRUMENT

Early in the review process, as the panelists were beginning to establish research questions, inclusion criteria, and methodology, they determined it was crucial to develop a coding form to be used by all the researchers. This form served as a template to ensure that panelists were attending to the same information across studies, as well as a device for organizing and retrieving coded information about the studies.

After a comprehensive search that included a review of instruments developed for similar purposes by various national organizations,⁶ the panel decided on the Design and Implementation Assessment Device, version 0.3, developed and used by the What Works Clearinghouse. As this instrument has been used for coding studies, it has been revised, based on the experience of its users, so that it is suitable for coding a variety of study types, including group comparisons, correlational studies, and qualitative studies, as well as experimental and quasi-experimental studies. Moreover, it is designed to be especially useful for coding studies on a specific population of interest, in this case language minority students. All studies included in the database have been coded through the use of this instrument. A coding manual with instructions for coding and a glossary of key terms was developed to accompany the instrument.

In actual use, the coding instrument has two broad functions. The first is process related; the instrument ensures that each study in the database measures up to specific criteria for acceptance. Studies that meet the test of the first elimination round may still be rejected by panelists in a second round if they are not relevant to the research questions of a specific domain or if they do not meet the methodological criteria.

The second function of the coding instrument is to encode specific types of information from all studies remaining in the database after the second elimination round. Encoded information is of two types: (1) objective information contained in the studies (e.g., description of the sample), which is coded by research assistants; and (2) information relating to the quality of the studies, based on design and methodological considerations, which is coded by panelists.

A great deal of information is coded for every study, for example: the focus of the study, a description of the setting and the sample, measures used, analyses reported, results, and statistical validity. The panelists can access the coded studies that are in their domain, review the information, and code the information relevant to the quality criteria. As a by-product of this review and synthesis of the literature, a subset of this information will be made available for general access through a public Web site.

⁶ They include those developed by the National Reading Panel, the National Center to Improve the Tools of Educators (EQI Quality Review Tool), the American Psychological Association and the Society for the Study of School Psychology (Procedural Manual for Review of Evidence-Based Interventions), and the What Works Clearinghouse.

TYPES OF RESEARCH EVIDENCE AND BREADTH OF RESEARCH METHODS

The nature of the research questions called for a review of research that employed a variety of designs (e.g., descriptive-interpretive, correlational, experimental). In deciding to explore studies using these different designs, the panel was guided by findings of the Committee on Scientific Principles for Education Research:⁷ “multiple methods, applied over time and tied to evidentiary standards, are essential to establishing a base of scientific knowledge” (Shavelson and Towne, 2001, p.2). [DA1] For example, the question “What do we know about the development of literacy in language minority students?” can be answered by studies that estimate population characteristics (numbers of English-language learners in grades K-12 in U.S. schools), studies that describe patterns of relationships between variables (relationship between first language reading vocabulary and second language reading vocabulary), studies that describe classroom contexts (deeper understanding of first and second language use in bilingual classrooms, or the ways in which children with differing second language oral proficiency respond to literature logs), and studies that identify systematic effects (whether systematic phonics instruction enhances spelling skills of English-language learners).

Depending upon the number and type of studies and the consistency of focus across a set of studies, panelists determined whether to use meta-analysis, other quantitative methods for synthesizing particular bodies of research, or a systematic interpretive procedure (Fitzgerald, 1995a, 1995b; Glaser, 1978).

ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

Currently the final report synthesizing the results of the review and analysis of the literature is in the latter stages of the drafting process. No findings may be published until the report assumes its final shape. However, we can present an overview of the planned contents. In general terms, the report will address:

- basic research questions about bilingualism, second-language acquisition, transfer of language skills, and the sociocultural context of school learning;
- practical issues such as program evaluation, effective instruction and programming, professional development, and assessment; and
- cross-cutting issues and themes

⁷ This committee was constituted by the National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences in Washington, DC to examine and clarify the nature of scientific inquiry in education and how the federal government can best foster and support it.

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Appendix A: Members of the National Literacy Panel

Dr. Timothy Shanahan, panel chair, professor, Department of Education, University of Illinois at Chicago

Dr. Isabel Beck, professor, School of Education, University of Pittsburgh

Dr. Margarita Calderón, senior research scientist, Center for Research on the Education of At Risk Students (CRESPAR), Johns Hopkins University

Dr. David Francis, professor, Department of Psychology, University of Houston

Dr. Georgia Earnest García, professor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Dr. Esther Geva, professor, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

Dr. Fred Genesee, professor, Psychology Department, McGill University, Montreal

Dr. Claude Goldenberg, professor, Department of Teacher Education, California State University, Long Beach

Dr. Michael Kamil, professor, School of Education, Stanford University

Dr. Keiko Koda, professor, Department of Modern Languages, Carnegie Mellon University

Dr. Gail McKoon, professor, Cognition, Psychology and Psycholinguistics, Northwestern University

Dr. Robert Rueda, professor, Division of Learning and Instruction, Rossier School of Education, University of Southern California

Dr. Linda Siegel, professor, Educational and Counseling Psychology and Special Education, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia

Appendix B: National Literacy Panel Subcommittees⁸

1. Relationship Between Oral Language Proficiency and Literacy

Fred Genesee
Esther Geva

2. Relationship Between First and Second Language Literacy

Cheryl Dressler*
Michael Kamil

3. Development of Literacy

Nonie Lesaux*
Keiko Koda
Linda Siegel

4. Context in Which Literacy Is Developed

Diane August
Claude Goldenberg
Robert Rueda
Fred Erickson⁹

5. Effective Practices and Professional Development to Promote Literacy

Diane August
Isabel Beck
Margarita Calderon
David Francis
Nonie Lesaux*
Timothy Shanahan¹⁰

6. Assessment of Literacy

Diane August
Georgia Garcia
Gail McKoon

⁸ Includes panelists and principal authors (starred if not panelists).

⁹ Fred Erickson is a methodology consultant, but participated in discussions with this subcommittee.

¹⁰ Timothy Shanahan is Chair but participated in discussions with this subcommittee.