Literacy Learning and Instruction in a Mexican Bilingual School

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Department of

Languages in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master in Applied Linguistics

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January, 2004

This case study examined the biliteracy practices at a private middle-upper class bilingual school in Mexico. Two main objectives were to compare the differences and similarities between literacy instruction in the Spanish and English classroom and the strategies students applied during literacy activities. Data were collected through classroom observation, teacher, student and parent interviews, document analysis of students' literacy work and school documents, photographs and video footage of literacy instruction.

The results reflected that literacy instruction in the Spanish and English classrooms were different and that students tended to use the teacher-taught strategies in the classroom. The study also revealed that students were not always able to transfer literacy skills interchangeable from their L1 and their L2 due to differences in the Spanish and English classrooms' curriculum.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

1.0 Introduction

This case study examined the biliteracy practices at a private middle-upper class bilingual school in Mexico. Two main objectives were to compare the differences and similarities between literacy instruction in the Spanish and English classroom and the strategies students applied during literacy activities. Data were collected through classroom observation, teacher, student and parent interviews, document analysis of students' literacy work and school documents, photographs and video footage of literacy instruction.

This chapter will begin with a general overview of the investigation and the motivation for the study. A literature review of previous studies in the field of bilingual education and literacy in Mexico and the United States follows. The chapter concludes with a brief description of the study's research design.

1.1 Overview & Motivation for the study

Since this study was based in a Mexican school and with Mexican students, it is important to begin by discussing the literacy research developments that are occurring in Mexican schools. There have been fewer studies on literacy and biliteracy in Mexican schools than in the United States. However, the following studies are important for understanding current literacy practices within Mexico. The studies specifically concentrate on literacy learning and instruction in Mexico.

Recently Mexican policy makers and researchers are taking interest in better understanding literacy practices being currently implemented in Mexican schools.

Although there are more studies on Mexican immigrant students' literacy development in the United States, it is important to cite some of the important studies and programs developing in Mexico. For example, the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (SEP) in Mexico began in the year 2001 a new literacy program, *Programa Nacional de Lectura*, with the hope of making advances towards better development of literacy instruction and practices. The focus of the program is to *"…fortalecer los hábitos y capacidades lectoras de los alumnos y maestros..."*. (*Secretaría de Educación Pública*, 2001)

Although the SEP has begun this program they also openly reveal their lack of programs for producing information about the country's current state of literacy development. The SEP also admits that very little research has been done in regards to literacy practices in Mexican schools. They claim four specific areas where research continues to be much needed. Two examples of these include researching, *"Niveles de práctica de la lectura y la escritura logrados en la escuela, así como los factores asociados a estos niveles"* and *"Comportamientos lectores de la población en distintas edades, tanto en la escuela básica, como en la normal y en la educación universitaria."* (*Secretaría de Educación Pública*, 2001) The motivation for this study is based on the SEP's statement concerning the necessity for more research in the field of literacy in Mexican schools. In a SEP publication by Michéle Petit (1999) she stated that in Mexico she has heard the comment, *"Los jóvenes ya no leen"* (p.15). This idea was also publicized in a Mexican newspaper. The article was titled *"Cada vez se lee* menos" and it presented statistics as Mexico being one of the countries with the fewest number of readers (Reyes Calderón, 2002). However, more research is needed in Mexico in order to support the claims that Mexicans are not reading. Therefore, the need to analyze literacy practices in Mexican schools in order to understand how often students are

reading and what types of literacy instruction and strategies are being used continues to be an important area for research in Mexico.

As more emphasis is placed on literacy instruction and learning in Mexico it is important to study current literacy trends in Mexican schools and provide these schools with effective tools for improving students' literacy skills. Seda-Santana (2000) discusses the need for qualitative research paradigms to increase research in the school and classroom setting. She claims that, "in light of the need for immediacy, the content of Latin American research has focused mainly on program development and implementation and evaluation of educational programs. The immediacy of problem solving within formal schooling, a traditionally closed setting, has opened itself to analyses of these sorts." (Seda-Santana, 2000, p.7). Researchers in Mexico need to begin directing their research efforts towards schools and classrooms where information about literacy practices can be collected and analyzed. Literacy research in Mexican schools can provide Mexican teachers and policy makers with some helpful tools to strengthen instruction and student strategies. (Smith, Jiménez, & Martínez León, 2003)

1.2 Literature Review

Recent work by Jiménez, Smith, & Martinez León (2003) evaluates the language and literacy practices of two Mexican schools. Their data collection procedure of classroom observations, teacher, director and student interviews, and document analysis found a strong emphasis placed on control of written language. Reading was found to also be somewhat controlled but the students did have some choice in book selection. This contrasted greatly with the degree of freedom that these same students had when dealing with oral language. Children were permitted to express themselves with oral language throughout the class time.

Unpublished work by Ballesteros Pinto (2003) also found similar practices with written language in a Mexican public school. Students were asked to copy texts from the chalkboard or from a book into their notebooks but were rarely allowed to "author" their own stories. Ballesteros (2003) found that students mainly worked on developing the "scribal" functions of written language. The focus on written form in the two fourth grade classrooms included the use of the red pencil for writing capital letters and for punctuation marks, teacher hypercorrection and students' frequent copying of teacher-directed texts (Ballesteros Pinto, 2003).

De la Garza & Ruiz Ávila (1994) researched literacy practices in sixth grade students in Mexico City. Specifically they observed how students produced texts and what kind of literacy practices were used to create these texts. They found that students in the sixth grade level continued to use a different colored pencil for capitals and punctuation marks. They also observed student texts accompanied by drawings that served a variety of purposes. The drawings were used as an expression of the written text, for description purposes or as a means of filling up the page (De la Garza & Ruiz Ávila, 1994). These are similar literacy practices that were found in the previously mentioned studies observing children in younger grade levels.

Seda-Santana's (2000) overview of researchers' study of literacy in Latin America discussed similar results as Jiménez et al. (2003). Seda-Santana (2000) found that Spanish literacy curriculum and government policies for teaching *"lectoecscritura"* are based on placing an emphasis on literacy skills and behaviors. Work by Ferreiro (1989) in Latin America also revealed that students often are working on conventional forms of writing and appear to not even be interested in meaning.

Another contribution to literacy research in Latin America is a study done in Mexico, by Rockwell (1991). Rockwell's study observed reading and writing in a total

of 50 classrooms between the third and sixth grade in eight different schools. The study discussed the implicit teaching of reading and writing by the teachers and how this affects the processes students pass through while reading and writing in the classroom. This study showed once again how teacher emphasis based mainly on the accurate production of skills in reading and writing was indeed hindering the students' ability to become literate within the classroom setting.

These studies have presented a variety of the literacy practices that are occurring in Mexico. They mentioned a range of grade levels and schools with different socio-economic status. These studies are important for drawing conclusions about the current literacy practices at the school in this study. Since there is a limited amount of literature discussing literacy practices in Mexico I now present a variety of studies performed in the United States that address literacy and biliteracy learning and instruction with Latino students.

Concerns with literacy and biliteracy in the United States educational system amongst language minority students have slowly become a focus for recent research (Jiménez, 2002; Halcón, 2001). In the past, policy makers, teachers, and researchers have not placed sufficient importance in this field of study. However, concern for the academic achievement of Latino students has brought about the need for instructional changes to take place with the hope of raising these students' academic achievement (Goldenberg, et al., 1992). Freire & Macedo (1987), however, when talking about illiterate students in the U.S. place the fault for academic failure upon the school system itself and the curriculum, "…students are reacting to a curriculum and other material conditions in schools that negate their histories, cultures, and day-to-day experiences. School values work counter to the interests of these students and tend to precipitate their expulsion from school"(p.121).

Researchers have begun to look for ways to better develop literacy learning in the United States and some have turned to changes in instructional practices within classrooms (Gersten & Jiménez, 1994; Jiménez, 1994). Jiménez (1994) expresses the following concern, "Finding ways to meet the needs of Spanish/English bilingual readers requires taking a fresh look at existing practices, developing new information derived from research, and documenting more completely how this information can inform classroom practice."(p. 99). Literacy practices in the United States have not accurately taken into consideration the linguistic diversity of minority language speakers and have not been designed to meet the student's cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Reyes, 1992). Freire & Macedo (1987) also comment on the need for change in the educator's understanding of these diverse students, "They need to use their students' cultural universe as a point of departure, enabling students to recognize themselves as possessing a specific and important cultural identity" (p.127). Educators and policy makers need to accept and take advantage of students' cultural identity in order to obtain effective literacy instruction and literacy learning for language minority speakers.

With changes currently occurring in SEP policy in regards to literacy, Mexican policy makers and educators need to understand the importance of implementing effective instructional methods and reading strategies for producing literate and biliterate students. This will require an evaluation of Mexico's current literacy curriculum and an analysis of successful literacy practices in similar contexts. Since there are a limited number of literacy studies in Mexico it is important to discuss recent research on the literacy practices of language minority students in the U.S. (Langer, Bartolomé, Vásquez, & Lucas, 1990). Jiménez (2001a), specifically looked at Latino/a students' literacy development. He provided a group of students with a variety of

reading strategies. These strategies included, "making inferences, asking questions, dealing with unknown vocabulary items, accessing cognate vocabulary, translating, and transferring information across linguistic boundaries"(p.19). Students were also taught the think-aloud procedure, which is the process of silently reading a text while orally describing your thought processes as you read. This procedure was used to reveal important trends about the students' current reading strategies and how they may have been changed or improved upon over the course of the study.

Trends that emerged as a result of Jiménez's work were the need for instruction that is sensitive to the students' linguistic needs, instruction that is relevant to each individual student's culture and an approach that cognitively challenges these Latino students. At the completion of this study students had an increased awareness of literacy, obtained greater understanding of how to process a text and more knowledge of their first language (L1) and second language (L2), and the impact they can have on their literacy development.

Researchers continue to disagree as to whether a child should be taught literacy first in their L1 and later, once a foundation is formed work on literacy learning in their L2. Researchers like James Cummins (1979) felt that students would not be able to succeed academically if they did not first learn to be literate in their L1. Cummins introduced the idea of cognitive and academic language proficiency (CALP). He specified that if these aspects were absent in the students' language they would not have academic success. However, Cummins' work has been challenged, adapted and pondered by many researchers. Other research has provided a somewhat different view to Cummins' idea.

Troike (1984) claims that language achievement is not only founded on linguistic and cognitive proficiency but is also closely related to social and cultural

influences. He challenges, "…the counterevidence suggests that social and cultural factors may be much more powerful than purely linguistic factors in influencing educational achievement, and, indeed, that the linguistic factors may be simply a second or third order reflection of the social and cultural context of schooling"(p.49). For Troike the social and cultural aspects of language learning are more important for student success than Cummins' cognitive language proficiency.

Jiménez (1994) presents a somewhat different perspective with Cummins' idea that transfer will occur inevitably if language minority students receive instruction in their L1. Jiménez argues that some students may discover on their own how to transfer literacy skills from one language to their second language but that it is not inevitable. Some students need to be taught these skills. He continues to claim that this type of transfer instruction is possible and even a necessity for the success of these children.

It is important that teachers and policy makers are aware of the outcomes of these types of studies and have a solid understanding of L1 and L2 literacy to be able to accurately assess and teach these bilingual students.

Although this study addresses literacy learning in Mexican schools it may present implications for improving literacy instruction for Mexican students within the U.S. context. Without an understanding of the type of literacy instruction that these Mexican children received in Mexico, U.S. classrooms may not be able to maximize effective literacy practices for these linguistic minority students. The knowledge of the literacy background Mexican students already bring to a literacy lesson may be valuable information for appropriate literacy instruction in the United States. Regarding this type of knowledge, Maria de la Luz Reyes (1992, p.427) states, "…if teaching practices are to be all inclusive of all learners, they must begin with the explicit premise that each learner brings a valid language and culture to the instructional context."

A recent goal of educators and researchers is improving instructional practices in U.S. school systems. Jiménez & Gersten (1999) call these efforts to change literacy instruction "reform." Reform is defined as "new instructional approaches to teaching literacy that includes the replacement of conventional techniques…" (Jiménez & Gersten, 1999, p. 267). In this same work Jiménez and Gersten looked in depth at the literacy instruction of two Latina/o teachers in the U.S. with the intention of finding ways to improve upon literacy instruction for Latina/o students. Some research in education has sought to create successful instructional practices for students with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Moll, 1988). These successful practices included teacher understanding and acceptance of the students' cultural and linguistic diversity and the implementing of their culture in daily classroom activities (Jiménez, 2001b).

Research on teacher instruction in Spanish/English bilingual classrooms in the U.S. context conducted by Moll & Diaz (1987) revealed that students were not using transfer from Spanish to English in their bilingual class due to instruction practices implemented by the teacher. Literacy learning in each classroom was essentially different from one another. The teachers instructing in the students' L1 or L2 did not collaborate with or share instructional strategies for teaching literacy or work together to form an effective and similar curriculum for both languages. Therefore, this type of setting did not encourage the students to develop reading strategies to be used across language environments. Moll and Diaz worked with these teachers in order to produce effective instructional change at this particular research site. Their goal was to improve the current state of learning. Moll & Diaz (1987) claim,

> It is our contention that existing classroom practices not only underestimate and constrain what children display intellectually, but help distort explanations of school performance. It is also our contention that the strategic application of cultural resources in instruction is one important way of obtaining change in

> academic performance and of demonstrating that there is nothing about the children's language, culture, or intellectual capacities that should handicap their schooling. (p.300).

In summary, Moll and Diaz found that school success and failure lies in the social structure of schooling and can only be found "…in the social manipulations that produce educational change." (p.311). These results are similar to Troike's (1984) concept of SCALP. Both Troike (1984) and Moll & Diaz (1987) express the importance that social and cultural factors play in the academic success of students learning in their L1 and their L2.

Trueba's (1990) research on the role of culture for the acquisition of English literacy by minority language students also concluded that instruction should initially be in the students' L1 and if this is not possible then effective instruction in English should include the use of the students' cultural knowledge and experiences in all learning activities.

Research on biliteracy instructional practices will remain a constant necessity as long as Mexican international or bilingual schools and U.S. schools are serving diverse linguistic and cultural student populations. Even in English-only and monolingual school systems the knowledge of how these bilingual students acquire literacy skills in their native language and in English is essential for teacher and student success. The continued implementation and acceptance by schools, of new strategies and techniques such as those mentioned by the above researchers, will be important steps to improving the academic success of Latino students. I will now discuss research on reading strategies by English/Spanish bilingual students. These studies are important for contrasting the strategies used by emerging bilingual students and the students in this study. The results found in these studies may aid in understanding the current reading strategies implemented at the participating school in this current study.

Studies on the uses of reading strategies by bilingual Latino students are a recent development. Jimenez, Pearson, & Garcia (1995) define reading strategies "as any overt purposeful effort or activity used by the reader to make sense of the printed material with which he or she was interacting"(p.76). The case studies performed by Jimenez et al. (1995) compared the reading strategies of three children and found that a proficient bilingual reader differed from the other varying types of bilinguals in her use of strategies for dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary, her views of the importance of reading, how she related to the text, and the ways in which she used her bilingualism to her advantage while reading.

A study conducted by Langer et al. (1990) revealed that students used their knowledge of Spanish literacy as a source for creating understanding in English literacy. Therefore, the students carried L1 reading strategies over into their L2. Pritchard (1990) studied high school bilinguals and found that these students used shared reading strategies between English and Spanish. Students transferred their reading skills that they had learned in one language to the second language.

Dávila de Silva (1984) argues that reading in both English and Spanish is a meaning centered activity. She provides evidence that a child who has developed reading strategies for acquiring meaning in Spanish does not need to learn to read in English. She claims that the same strategies will be used in the L2. Barrera (1984) shares this view that children learning to read for meaning do not form separate processes for each language. Strategies for comprehending texts are transferred from one to the other. Barrera (1984) concludes that if sound reading instruction focused on meaning is occurring in the classroom, students may "codevelop" their L1 and L2 reading abilities.

Another case study by Jiménez (2001b) demonstrates how the implementation of effective reading strategies for a bilingual Latino learner labeled by her teachers as having a language related disability helped her change her views about learning to read, as well as providing her with the tools to become a successful reader. Some of these tools were strategies such as how to deal with unfamiliar vocabulary, re-reading, and translation. Understanding students' use of their reading strategies and how they obtained these skills can reveal important information necessary for developing an effective literacy curriculum. The results of studies, where specific reading strategies were taught and used by groups of students, supplies educators, and policy makers with valuable information to restructure instructional practices with the goal of improving education for these bilingual students. The previous studies focus on a variety of student age ranges. In the following section I review some important contributions in the field of early childhood literacy development.

In early childhood literacy development a variety of studies have been performed to better understand the transfer of skills from the students' L1 to the L2. Snow, Burns, & Griffin (1999) did research on preschool literacy environments and how they are related to the development of strategic reading skills. They found that many children with diverse linguistic backgrounds are "in special need of early language stimulation and literacy learning. (Snow et al., 1999, p.1) They conclude with a variety of strategies for improving the literacy environment in preschool classrooms.

August, Calderón, & Carlo's (2000) work on third grade literacy development looked at a Success for All program in order to observe if there was a transfer of literacy skills from Spanish to English. They were also working to find a good starting point for English literacy instruction. One question investigated was how English oral proficiency plays a part in the process of literacy skills transfer from Spanish to English.

The findings of the research showed that transfer from Spanish to English does occur and that literacy instruction in the students' L1 does indeed help them develop literacy skills in English.

Mulhern's (1983) case study of two kindergartners' literacy learning in Spanish discusses the continued use of phonetic based programs and the instruction of letters and syllables rather than focusing on meaning. The study observed students from a low-income Mexican community in the U.S. There is some evidence that this tendency is also occurring in Mexican lower and middle-class schools (Jimenez et al., 2002). Mulhern's work was based on the idea that literacy is built under social circumstances. She concluded this idea by stating, "…politicians and educators should not have the only voices in constructing definitions of literacy and literacy learning. Children's voices count as well. Acknowledging this means using children's ways of constructing definitions of themselves as readers and writers to inform pedagogy" (Mulhern, 1983, p.37). To better understand students literacy learning it is essential that researches, teachers and policy makers begin listening and observing students own perceptions of learning to read and write in their L1 and their L2.

The current study evaluates some similar questions to those of Edelsky (1986), in her yearlong study of an elementary school bilingual writing program. She looked at how writing in Spanish is related to writing in English. She also analyzed literacy instruction being implemented by the teachers selected for this case study. Among her many conclusions she found that teachers beliefs and instruction had a strong effect on the students and their students' writing. In regards to her research question about Spanish writing being related to English writing, Edelsky discovered some similarities and differences. Children tended to use Spanish orthographic knowledge when writing in English and some students segmented by syllables in Spanish but not in English. She

concluded that these types of comparisons reveal that these children "applied (not a passive transfer, but an active application, adaptation, and modification) what they knew about first language writing to writing in the second language" (p.117). It was in fact a learning process of using already acquired knowledge of a language and applying it to the other language until the L2 gaps could be filled in by new knowledge of the L2. Research in early childhood literacy development is important for understanding young children's processes of learning to read and write in their first and second language. Continued research in this field will allow for improved initial literacy instruction for bilinguals.

1.3 Theoretical framework

Barton's (1999) work provided some essential definitions and concepts that guided the way the data were considered in terms of literacy learning and instruction. These included definitions of a literacy event and literacy practices and Barton's two main types of writing. This research follows Barton's idea that in order to understand literacy it is essential to analyze and observe events where reading and writing are taking place. Barton (1999) defines literacy events and practices as:

> …the two basic units of analysis of the social activity of literacy. Literacy events are the particular activities where literacy has a role; they may be regular repeated activities. Literacy practices are the general cultural ways of utilizing literacy which people draw upon in a literacy event." (p.37).

Barton's two functions of written language, "scribing" and "authoring", are important for the theoretical framework of this study. When discussing the scribal function of written language Barton states, "To refer to neatness, spelling and the mechanics of writing is to concentrate on the scribal aspects of writing." (Barton, 1999, p.166). This is to say that punctuation, accent marks, and other physical characteristics of the written word are to be counted as scribing. Authoring, however, is the act of

thinking about and deciding what to write. In other words, scribing is focusing on form whereas authoring refers to a more meaning centered activity.

1.4 Students' Developing Theories about Literacy

As this study analyzed students' work over the course of one and a half years it is important to look at children's theories of literacy as continually changing and being shaped. Freire & Macedo (1987) discuss the role of the educator in a student's learning process. "The educator, as one who knows, first needs to recognize those being educated as the ones who are in the process of knowing more" (p.41). Children are continually developing and testing hypothesis about literacy.

In a case study by Ferreiro (1986) on emergent literacy she rationalizes two students' reading and writing strategies. In this work she presents each students' approaches to learning to read and write and the phases that these children pass through over a two-year period. She analyzes how the students develop and change theories about literacy. The students may use different strategies and approaches to their reading and writing but Ferreiro (1986) concludes that all young children develop interpretive systems for literacy that are not always replications of what they have been formally taught by their teachers.

Gordon Wells found similar results in his study observing children's pre-literacy skills. Gordon Wells (1986) observed preschool age children's "literacy-related" activities before they began formal schooling. He also observed their attitudes towards literacy. Wells (1986) wanted to understand the children's home literacy-related activities and literacy attitudes in order to understand what may make a student a successful literacy learner once formal education started. He observed children interacting in four different literacy activities: (a) Looking at and discussing picture

books, (b) listening to stories, (c) drawing and coloring, and (d) writing or pretending to write. Of these four activities writing was observed the least and listening to stories and drawing were the most frequent literacy-related activities. Wells (1986) concluded that listening to stories was the most beneficial activity for preparation of literacy learning. He also discusses that a parent's literacy activities influence their children's attitudes towards literacy and even model literacy behaviors for their children.

Denny Taylor (1983) discusses the importance of the context of literacy and how it is an everyday act of experiencing print through real life activities. She states that a student's failure to learn to read and write may be due to the form in which written print is presented to them. She comments, "Print is presented to them as some abstract decontextualized phenomenon unrelated to their everyday lives" (Taylor, 1983, p.92). In fact she continues by expressing that school's traditional practices of teaching literacy are not sufficient for providing all students with the proper tools for being successful literate students (Taylor, 1983). She shares, "Only when children have had the opportunity to inventively construct literate language uses which make sense to them will they be able to participate fully in literate society" (Taylor 1983, p.93).

Children are continually developing their theories about literacy. A variety of factors influence this development. These factors can include parents' daily modeling of literacy activities, teachers' formal literacy instruction and a child's ability to draw their own hypothesis and conclusions about certain aspects of literacy.

In this literature review I have addressed instructional practices, reading strategies, early childhood literacy development and literacy practices in Mexico and the U.S. I also briefly discussed the theoretical framework for this study and studies that approach students' literacy theories as continually changing.

1.5 Research Design

The following case study seeks to understand the biliteracy instruction and biliteracy strategies of English/Spanish-speaking Mexican students within their native country. Research questions that guided my study were the following: What literacy strategies are teacher taught in the students' L1 and L2? Do the students implement these strategies? How is L1 and L2 literacy learning affected when different literacy instruction is implemented for each language? Is there evidence of shared learning strategies between the languages?

The investigation was an empirical study following Bogden and Biklen's (1998) constant comparative method for qualitative researchers. Yin (1989) describes a case study as, "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (p.23). Dyson (1995) discusses the power and importance of case studies in literacy development in the classroom setting. She asks the question, "What professional contribution can be made through close observation of small numbers of children, given thousands of children in our schools?"(Dyson, 1995, p.51). Her response to this question clearly reflects the validity of case studies in the school environment, "Case studies offer educators in these places no specific laws of causation, no precise predictions of the outcomes of one teaching strategy or another. But they do offer a means for identifying and talking about the dimensions and dynamics of classroom living and learning."(Dyson, 1995, p.51)

A case study design was chosen for this study to examine what Barton (1999) calls literacy practices and literacy events that are naturally occurring in the classroom.

With this in mind the study included data from classroom observations, teacher and student interviews, attainment of relevant documents, such as students' work, and video footage of classroom instruction in a Mexican bilingual preschool.

More specifically, the study looked at five Mexican students between the ages of five and six who currently are proficient readers in their L1 and who are in the process of acquiring literacy skills in their L2. Over a three-month-period data were collected from two Mexican students and one English teacher during the 2001-2002 school year. The remaining data collection occurred over a five-month period during the 2002-2003 school year. The observations intended to evaluate the literacy learning of three different Mexican students and a Spanish teacher.

This case study used observations, documents of students' work and school documents, formal and informal interviews with teachers, students and parents for data analysis. Photos of students working and of the classroom were also used to provide the classroom context and support for examples of literacy instruction and learning. Video footage was used to provide concrete examples of teachers actively involved in literacy activities. It was also used as a tool for teacher interviews. Teachers watched the video and reflected on the strategies that they were using to teach reading and writing.

As the case study was narrowed down to the observation of five emerging biliterate students and two Mexican teachers in the partial immersion program at The Binational School (henceforth TBS) Preschool of Puebla, Mexico, the questions that guided my study were also refined. It is important to first examine the literacy instruction of both teachers. Did the English and Spanish teacher implement the same literacy instruction in their classrooms or did they differ depending on the language or an alternative factor? Did the five participating students use these teacher-taught literacy strategies in the classroom? Was the students' learning affected or altered due

to the language of instruction or did evidence exist that the children use L1 and L2 strategies interchangeably? These questions and their answers will be looked at in more detail in the following chapters.

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter two provides the context for the school and community setting. It establishes the background and provides details about the history of how the school was established and its continued goals as a bilingual, bicultural and binational school. Chapter three develops the methodology that was used for collecting and analyzing the data for this case study. Chapter four then describes the results and analysis of the data. It includes the patterns found in the L1 and L2 instructional practices of the participating teachers and the reading and writing strategies implemented by the students in both Spanish and English. Chapter five summarizes the findings and discusses the study's implications for practice at the participating school and at the SEP level. Chapter five concludes with implications for future research and the study's limitations.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BINATIONAL SCHOOL CONTEXT

2.0 Bilingual Education in Mexico

Bilingual education in Mexico serves two very different purposes and student populations. Romaine (1999) classifies these as "folk" bilingualism and "elite" bilingualism. An example of "folk" bilingualism in Mexico is indigenous children attending bilingual schools where they are taught in their native indigenous language and in Spanish. Smith (2003) describes these indigenous communities as, "their home language is typically not the prestige language of the community and, in most cases, their acquisition of another (generally European) language is a matter of economic and even physical survival. For these young bilinguals, their home language is underdeveloped and frequently ignored completely in school"(p.9). These students come from families with low social economic status and their education may in fact cause subtractive bilingualism. In Mexico these bilingual schools are sometimes private or SEP public schools. The SEP provides these schools with bilingual materials, however, often times it is difficult to find qualified teachers who are speakers of the indigenous languages.

Rippberger (1993) discusses bilingual educational programs that are payed for by the national government for minority language students in Mexico and the United States. When talking about bilingual education policy Rippberger emphasizes that majority group policymakers do not include the minority groups in curriculum planning. The dominant culture continues to control the minority groups often times causing subtractive bilingualism. This is one reason these programs are not meeting students' cultural and social needs. Rippberger discusses the need to place greater emphasis on 'Indian identity'. She concludes by recognizing that change is occurring in bilingual

education in Mexico and that indigenous teachers are now considering indigenous culture when planning the classroom curriculum.

Hamel (in press) presents an example of an indigenous school that has begun to adapt their curriculum to meet the cultural, social and cognitive needs of indigenous students. He discusses two strategies that are used when teaching indigenous students. First, he presented the strategy that the Indian people should assimilate to the majority group by leaving behind their language and culture. The second strategy was to preserve the Indian language and culture. Hamel continues by describing San Isidro, a Mexican school that promotes language survival rather than assimilation. This school successfully teaches indigenous students in their L1. The teachers have translated the SEP books and workbooks into the students L1 and have changed the curriculum wherever necessary for including their students' cultural identity.

2.1 Elite Bilingualism

The second type of bilingual education in Mexico is considered to be elite bilingualism. Students learn both Spanish and English in costly private institutions selected by their parents. The majority of this population includes middle-class to upper class families. Private bilingual education in Mexico has become popular and has received a high level of prestige. Although the majority of students in Mexico attend public schools run by the SEP, private bilingual education is increasing in demand. Many parents are willing to pay high tuition rates to receive some type of bilingual English/ Spanish instruction. (Lethaby, 2003) Lethaby (2003) presents various ideas as to the reasons behind the current prestige English-Spanish bilingual education has in Mexico. These include cognitive, cultural and job advantages over monolinguals. Other languages such as Japanese, French and German are also part of elite bilingualism

in Mexico. In Mexico City Japanese/Spanish and French/Spanish elite bilingual programs have been developed. Also in Puebla a trilingual school teaches German/English/Spanish to middle-upper class students.

McGuire (1996) presents the idea of language planning in Central America as command and demand. She refers to publicly taught schools as command. Students are obligated to take English classes that are often times poorly taught by incompetent English speakers. In contrast demand refers to families finding the best-trained private schools and professionals for teaching English to their children. This distinction is similar to Lethaby's work (2003) and the idea of demand in elite bilingualism. She discusses the advantages that parents perceive for elite bilingualism as providing more cognitive advantages, employment opportunities and cultural consciousness (Lethaby 2003, McGuire 1996).

Throughout the city of Puebla advertisements can be seen for small private bilingual schools. These schools range from toddler schools through high school. On occasion the word bilingual on the advertisement may only mean English is offered as a content class and on others English may be offered from 50%-90% of the school day.

The school in this study is an elite English-Spanish bilingual school in Puebla, Mexico. The TBS preschool is different from public schools, as it is not currently affiliated with the SEP. The curriculum at TBS is entirely separate from the SEP program. The only requirement TBS has to the SEP is to follow the same academic calendar. Public schools in Mexico are funded by the government and must follow the SEP curriculum and use the required SEP books and workbooks**.** The school is also unique in that it is a dual language program. Children are immersed in the target language (English) for half of the day and their native language (Spanish) for half the day. Although this school setting may not be the most common in Mexico, as there are

a greater number of public schools, it is worth studying the literacy practices in order to be able to compare them with other Mexican schools. For example, TBS compared to schools with varying levels of social economic status, public and private, monolingual and rural and urban communities could present a point of comparison for literacy learning and instruction in Mexico.

2.2 General Information about The Binational School (TBS)

TBS did not originate in the same way as many binational schools. The school did not begin with the intentions of reaching the Mexican nationals. It started with a group of six North American parents who wanted their children to continue learning in their native language, English. Mary Jones converted her garage into a bilingual school for the six students. The following year by request from a great many Mexican parents in the community, the school was opened up to any students who wished to attend. TBS was founded in 1942 with the desire to provide wealthy students with a bilingual education. By the year 1977 TBS had developed four different schools around the city. Although TBS is a considered a binational school, which draws upon U.S. culture, the structure of the school remains that of the Mexican school system and follows the SEP's academic calendar. Preschool consists of three grade levels where approximately 450 students are currently enrolled. The Elementary school, which begins with first grade and continues through sixth grade, has 1000 students. There is also a High school and a bilingual secretary school that reaches approximately 520 students. TBS prides itself on being known as one of the most prestigious and academically successful private schools in Puebla.

TBS has been a member of the Association of American Schools in Mexico (ASOMEX) since 1998. This association provides support for all the participating

schools, directors and teachers through the sharing of ideas, programs, and facilities. There are currently nineteen schools enrolled with a total student enrollment of approximately 15,500 students. This organization seeks to strengthen the American schools in Mexico through better teacher preparation especially in regards to the multicultural and bilingual aspects of these schools (Association of American Schools in Mexico, 2003).

During the year of this study TBS began the process of applying for its certification as an internationally accredited school through the International Baccalaureate Organisation's transdisciplinary curriculum called, Primary Years Programme (PYP). The purpose of this certification was first, to receive more prestige as an accredited international and bilingual school, as well as, working towards the goal of teaching the students to become independent learners and thinkers through investigation. In order to fulfill the requirements teachers and administrators attended a three-day intensive workshop on the changes that needed to be made in the curriculum. This included intensive investigations that teachers and students would be responsible for throughout the year. One change in the curriculum was the introduction to each thematic unit using the K-W-L (What I know, what I want to know and what I have learned). Students working together with the teacher brainstormed ideas for the questions, "What I already know" and "What I want to know". They then created a chart with the students' responses. The teacher's goal then is to answer the students' questions throughout the unit. At the end of each unit teachers and students will return to the K-W-L chart and add the responses to "What I learned?". Figure 2.1 shows the K-W-L chart used in the participating English classroom.

Figure 2.1 Wall chart using K-W-L technique

The tuition runs from approximately 35,000 to 50,000 pesos (approximately $3,500 to $5,000 US) yearly depending on the grade level. TBS also charges an additional 10,000-peso ($1,000 US) registration fee at the initiation of each year. The majority of students come from middle-upper class families. Many of the parents are business people, university professors and directors, doctors, and other professionals. Students of teachers at TBS are the only students to receive scholarships. Teachers must pay only the registration fee of approximately 10,000 pesos at the start of each academic school year, and the school then waives the monthly fee. Many of the families at the school have been attending for generations. Just as a great many of the teachers are alumni of TBS, many of the parents at the preschool also were students at TBS for a great part of their schooling. Currently approximately 30% of the preschool teachers and administrators are alumnus and approximately 20% of the parents are alumnus (S. Bretón, April 18, 2003).

During the current study TBS celebrated its 60th year anniversary. Since TBS opened it has been an English/Spanish bilingual school. According to their mission statement the schools objective is "To offer our students the best intellectual, emotional, social and physical development within a multicultural and bilingual framework, in Spanish and English, with the constant practice of universal rights and values". After the preschool principal of fifty years retired, many changes in the goals and objectives

of the school's curriculum as a bilingual school occurred. For example, the year following the director's retirement the first year of the preschool went from receiving half the day in Spanish and half the day in English to 90% of the school day in English and only 10% in Spanish. The objective was to provide these young students with a stronger foundation in oral and aural English before they were expected to read and write in both languages. This change in the curriculum also had a goal of sparking the children's interest in learning English and creating an enthusiasm for the second language in their first year of school.

2.3 Preschool Context

Private preschool attendance is popular in Mexico. In fact many children attend *maternal* (toddler) schools. These are schools designed for children between the ages of two and four. There are a wide variety of types of *maternal* and preschool in Mexico. They can range from public to private, monolingual to trilingual, and low tuition to high tuition rates. Tuition rates can range from a low registration fee of $1,100 ($110 USD) and monthly payments of $800 pesos ($80 USD) to a registration fee of $5,000 pesos ($500 USD) and a monthly fee of $2,000 pesos ($200 USD). At TBS approximately 95% of the preschool students attended a "Maternal". In order to attend TBS children must turn four before January of the school year.

Although this bilingual model is unique to Mexico, it is similar to what Genesee (1999) calls foreign/second language immersion. More than 90% of the students at TBS are native speakers of the majority language, Spanish and are learning English as their second language. The foreign language immersion model ranges from 50%-100% of instruction in the target language. At TBS the first year of preschool has a 90% English and 10% Spanish model. The second and third years of preschool follow a

50/50 model. Students are expected to learn to read and write in both languages and have content classes in the target language.

The preschool curriculum has been developed over the years by the principals and English/Spanish coordinators. The current principals have taken more of an interest in teacher input regarding the curriculum in the past two years. This has included brainstorming and planning with all the current teachers and administrators during professional development days that take place once a month. These changes are also due to the implementation of the Primary Years Programme that requires principals and teachers to have weekly two hour planning sessions together.

The preschool objectives are summed up in the Preschool mission statement:

> Our main objective is for the child to successfully begin the socialization process as an individual and as a part of a group where his/her individuality will be accepted and respected. At the same time, the child will be developing academically, physically and emotionally while immersed in a bilingual language program that focuses on two important aspects: on literacy in order to develop a life –long love of reading and on activities that children naturally enjoy such as games, singing.

Since the start of the Preschool in 1977 each classroom had one teacher who taught both English and Spanish. Students remained in the same classroom and received half of the day's instruction in English and half in Spanish. However, five years ago TBS changed their curriculum and provided each class with two teachers and two classrooms. One teacher taught English only and the other Spanish only. This follows Genesee's (1999) idea that different teachers should provide Spanish and English instruction within the foreign language immersion model. This separation of languages allows the students to see their teachers as monolinguals in the language they are instructing (Genesee, 1999). The reason for this change was due to the increase in non-native Spanish speaking teachers in the preschool. These teachers were not able to teach half the day in Spanish. Therefore, the principals felt that it would be more

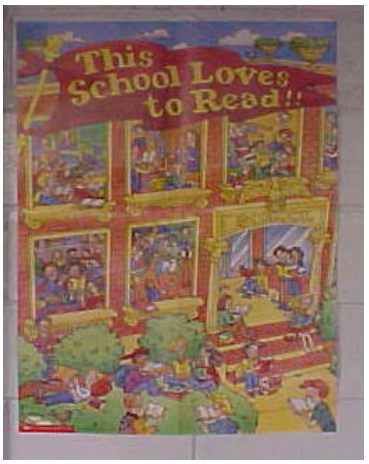
effective to have different teachers for each language. It also allowed students to identify each language with the corresponding teacher and native English-speaking teachers to use their L1 with a greater number of students, as well as, not have to use their L2 as a means of instruction.

The preschool consists of three levels, Kinder, Pre-First and First English. Kinder is the students first year of preschool. The majority of students enrolled in Kinder attended a *"maternal"* or toddler school for one or two years before entering TBS. The previous TBS Preschool principal owns one of the "maternal" schools where many of TBS students previously attended, but the others are not related to the school in any way. TBS, however, has a future goal of adding a *"maternal"* to the existing preschool. They have developed these plans due to competition from other bilingual schools that already offer this service. Many families are sending their children to these other bilingual schools since they begin up to two years earlier than TBS and they decide to leave their children in these schools for the duration of their schooling. The administration feels that if they add a toddler school they will not lose as many students to other bilingual schools in the area. At these schools students are presented with a minimal amount of English such as the introduction of numbers from one to ten and simple vocabulary, such as, colors and animals. The name Kinder in Mexico refers to the schooling students receive before Elementary school and most schools consist of first kinder, second kinder and third kinder. At TBS the names have been changed to express the bilingual aspect of the preschool. Pre-First refers to the idea that students are receiving pre-literacy skills in English and that this level precedes First English. First English, therefore, refers to the students first year of formal literacy instruction in English.

2.4 Literacy at TBS

Posters such as in Figure 2.2 can be seen throughout the school during the school year.

Figure 2.2 Poster promoting reading at TBS



The school sends home scholastic book orders periodically throughout the school year as well. Children and their parents have the opportunity to buy books with varying degrees of difficulty in English or Spanish. Also, one week out of the school year there is a book fair where students and parents can purchase many types of books in English or Spanish. During the school year it is common to find students walking the halls while reading a book. In a parent interview Clara expressed her opinion about the importance of being a bilingual reader, *"En el futuro hablar, leer y escribir en inglés va a ser un requisito para trabajar y quiero ofrecer a mis niños esta oportunidad desde ahora*".

2.5 First English Context

First English reaches students from the approximate ages of 5.8 and 6.7 years old. At TBS there are six First English classrooms. There is one classroom teacher for every group of 28 students. Three teachers teach in English while the other three in

Spanish. Students receive the first half of the day with their Spanish teacher and then the second half of the school day in a separate classroom with their English teacher or vice versa. The students' two classrooms are always physically located next to each other. English teachers are supposed to maintain the target language throughout the class period; however, I have observed on a variety of occasions the English teacher using Spanish to clarify instructions or correct misbehavior. Students receive the majority of instruction from one of these two teachers, however, some special classes are offered. For instance, physical education, music, art workshop, library and computer workshop are worked in to the weekly schedule and are taught in both English and Spanish. Approximately 80% of the special classes are taught in Spanish and 20% in English. The percentages can vary depending on the month's theme and the class activity.

The curriculum in First English has been developed around 10 central themes. One theme is taught each month. During the year of this study four in-depth investigations were carried out in the classroom. The investigations the year of this study were the plant life cycle, the farm, animal habitats and means of transportation. These investigations were implemented to meet the requirements of the Primary Years Programme (PYP) in order to receive recognition as an accredited international school. Each investigation was performed simultaneously in the English and Spanish classrooms with the intent that the Spanish classroom would reinforce the English curriculum and clear up any doubts from the students.

Students are formally evaluated twice a semester. Both English and Spanish teachers use evaluation rubrics to classify the students' learning according to different academic and social skills. Interestingly, the rubrics for English and Spanish evaluate different skills. Each skill is evaluated according to a scale of very good, good, average,

and below average. Table 2.1 shows the criteria that are used in the English and Spanish classrooms. The full Spanish rubric can be found in Appendix A and the English rubric in Appendix B.

Table 2.1
First English Evaluation Criteria for Spanish and English Classroom

-Lectura- Ritmo, conocimiento de la letra

-Escritura- Ubicación de la letra en el espacio
Letra

-Dictado

-Comprehension

-Copiado- Omite, invierte, sustituye

-Listening comprehension

-Speaking ability

-Attitude towards language

-Pre-literacy skills

According to these rubrics, students are not required or even asked to have the same literacy skills in both languages. In fact, the literacy standards in English are much less demanding than in Spanish. In English children are not evaluated on their ability to write or even read a text. In contrast these skills seem to be key aspects of the evaluation in the Spanish classroom. Table 2.2 provides an example of the different literacy requirements in English and Spanish.

Literacy evaluation in English includes only the students' ability to read brief sentences on a wall chart and recognize letters and sounds in English. In contrast, students in Spanish should be able to read, comprehend and summarize texts. They also must be able to begin to read fluently out loud.

Table 2.2
Comparison of the Evaluation Rubric for Literacy skills in English and Spanish

CRITERIOS	MUY BIEN	BIEN	REGULAR	ABAJO PROMEDIO
LECTURA Ritmo Conocimiento de la letra	A. Reconoce las letras enseñadas al leer. B. Une las letras para leer las palabras en una sola emisión de voz.	A. Reconoce la mayoría de las letras enseñadas al leer. B. Algunas veces lee las palabas en una sola emisión de voz y otras en sílabas	A. Algunas veces reconoce las letras enseñadas al leer. B. Une las letras para leer en sílabas.	A. Tiene dificultad para reconocer la mayoría de las letras enseñadas al leer. B. Lee las palabas deletreando

COMPRENSION	Puede leer un texto sencillo y explicarlo con sus propias palabras.	Al leer un texto sencillo puede contestar preguntas de comprensión.	Al releer un texto sencillo puede contestar algunas preguntas de comprensión.	Al releer un texto sencillo no puede contestar preguntas de comprensión.
Pre-Literacy Skills	The child is able to consistently: a. complete sentences on the classroom wallchart and b. recognize learned letters and their sounds	The child is able to: a. complete simple sentences on the wallchart and b. recognize most learned letters and sounds	The child is able to: a. make simple sentences on the wallchart with help b. and recognize some taught letters.	The child has difficulty a. making simple sentences on he wallchart, even with help. b. He/She may not recognize many of the taught letters and sounds.

According to the criteria in the Spanish class, students are also expected to be able to write in Spanish with few to no errors in class during *dictado*, *copiado*, and in their homework. This is not a written requirement in the English classroom and is certainly not evaluated by the classroom teacher.

The English rubric focuses mainly on oral and listening proficiency. Students are evaluated on their ability to complete instructions in English, use learned vocabulary and the degree in which they participate in class. The different literacy expectations are due to the idea that students' L1 literacy should be a developed skill before they begin to learn to read and write in their L2. The Preschool director commented, "In the preschool students learn to read and write in their first language and during the latter part of the year in First English they begin to read and write in English." (S. Keen, September 12, 2003)

As an ongoing assessment tool teachers also keep student portfolios over the course of the year. Examples of students' work focusing on various skills are labeled and placed in the portfolio to demonstrate student advancement and any concerns the teachers have in regards to their academic achievement.

During the last month of classes each academic year students are evaluated in the form of an oral and written testing in English. These tests are used as a reference

point for teachers the following year and as evidence for students who will possibly fail the current academic year. The English rubric is evidence that oral proficiency in English more frequently dictates a student's success in the classroom than a student's literate proficiency in English. Students will repeat the year if their oral proficiency in English remains low throughout the course of the school year. Student portfolios are also passed on to each student's teacher for the following year.

The following section provides brief background information about the two participating teachers. I discuss their schooling and their teaching experience at TBS.

2.6 Participating Teachers

Pseudonyms have been chosen for all participants in this study. María and Laura are the selected names for the two participating teachers. María is a 55-year-old Mexican woman who was born in Puebla, Mexico. Maria began learning English during Elementary school in a monolingual private school. English was offered as a content class. Once María reached High school she began taking intensive English classes at a local English academy in Puebla. She continued her education at the *Universidad Femenil* where she received her degree in Early Childhood Education. Upon completion of her schooling, María began working as an English/Spanish kindergarten teacher at TBS, where she has worked for the past 25 years. She continued her study of English through free classes for teachers offered by TBS. She has been to an English-speaking country on only one occasion as a tourist. María has experience working in all three levels of the preschool, but has spent more years in First English than the other grade levels. María was the only teacher to continue teaching in both English and Spanish after the preschool decided to separate the English and Spanish

classroom teachers. The year of this study was her first teaching experience exclusively in English.

Laura is 42 years old and is an alumnus of TBS. She was a student from elementary school through middle school. Directly following middle school she attended the commerce school, which prepared her to be a bilingual secretary. Upon her completion of the commerce program she was hired by TBS to work in the administration department. From there she was transferred to the preschool, where she became the school's secretary. During her time as secretary she was provided with the opportunity to do classroom observations and substitute teach on occasion. Laura enjoyed teaching and asked to be given a teaching position in the preschool. The following year she left her secretary job and became a First English classroom teacher. She has never received any formal instruction as an educator. She has been working at TBS for 24 years teaching English and Spanish. During this time she has taken part in many professional development workshops, but she has never received a teaching degree. She has experience teaching in all three levels of the preschool. The year of this study she changed levels from Pre-First (second year of preschool) to First English.

2.7 Selected Classrooms

Both participating classrooms consist of one teacher and 28 students. In each Classroom the students are seated at individual desks that are touching each other to form groups of five or six children. Figure 2.3 shows one of the six clusters of tables.

Figure 2.3 The English Classroom Seating Arrangement

In the English classroom all desks are arranged facing the white board, either straight on or from a side angle. At the front of the room next to the white board are the song and poem charts that are used for the daily routine. On the other side of the white board is the teacher's desk where the majority of workbook corrections take place. One corner of the room is walled off by furniture allowing for a quiet reading corner. Some 15 books in English can be found on the shelves in the corner. At the back of the classroom there are a variety of wall charts. Currently there is a grammar chart, a reading chart and the weekly and monthly calendar (which is used for the daily routine) on the wall. On all sides of the room the walls are covered in posters related to the months theme and alphabet letters or other tools that may aid students in completing their work. The classroom is physically arranged to promote guided and independent literacy opportunities. At the front of the room the English teacher has a mural of students' work on her closet door. It seems to portray the best work of each of her students. Outside next to the entrance of the classroom there is a bulletin board that is used for displaying the work that the class is completing in regards to the monthly theme.

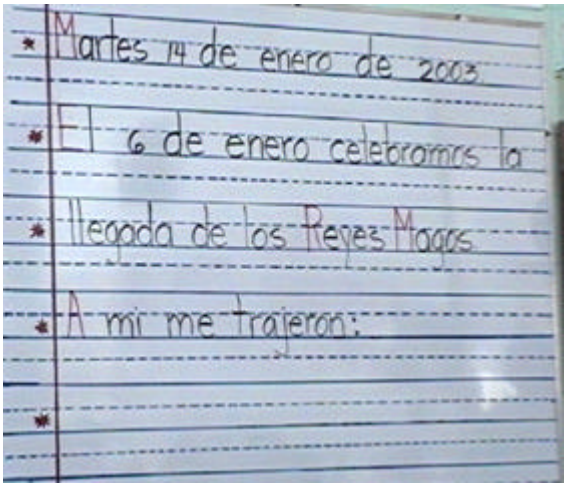
The Spanish classroom is arranged with all the desks facing forward towards the head of the class. Figure 2.4 shows the seating arrangement in the Spanish classroom.

Figure 2.4 The Spanish Classroom Seating Arrangement

The most central spot in the class is the white board, which portrays a permanent lined grid painted on the white board and alphabet letters posted directly above the white board. To the right of the white board is the teacher's desk again where almost all written work is corrected. To the left of the white board is a wall chart that is used occasionally. At the back of the classroom is an easel that holds on average three big books related to the thematic unit. There is also a clothesline that displays various theme related picture posters. In this classroom there is no reading corner and no bookshelves. The majority of time the students spend working or listening at their individual desks. In this classroom environment students are not surrounded by the same amount of written text. Apart from the teacher's big books students do not have contact with books in Spanish. Also the posters on the walls consist mainly of pictures and photographs. Written texts are scarce in the Spanish classroom. The only constant texts are those created by the teacher on the white board grid. An example of this text can be seen in the photo in Figure 2.5.

The unequal amounts of materials in English and Spanish at TBS are an example of Amrein's & Peña (2000) idea of asymmetry in dual language programs.

Figure 2.5 Text by Spanish Teacher on the Lined Whiteboard



Bilingual programs have the intention of providing equal access to both languages involved. However, often in some areas asymmetry occurs which does not provide all students with an equal opportunity to learn (Peña & Amrein, 2000). At TBS "resource asymmetry" was present in the classrooms. The Spanish classroom had less written materials in Spanish. Throughout the English classroom there were great number of posters, wall charts, song charts, titles, and textbooks in English. The Spanish classroom had no reading books in Spanish and the only text type posters were the alphabet flash cards on the wall above the whiteboard.

Figure 2.6 Alphabet Flashcards on the Wall in the Spanish Classroom

This physical contrast in classrooms leads to the assumption that the school may be investing more in materials for the English classroom. The target language appears to be the dominant language in regards to classroom materials and resources. This asymmetry tends to reveal that students had more literacy learning opportunities in the

English classroom. Also, this imbalance in resources may be due to the level of prestige and importance that is placed on learning English at TBS.

As defined by Romaine (1999) bilingual education in Mexico consists of "folk" and "elite" bilingualism. In this chapter I have contextualized TBS as an elite bilingual school. McGuire's (1996) idea of demand is present at TBS. Families are willing to pay higher tuition rates for English instruction because they believe that their children will have advantages over monolinguals if they are able to communicate in English. Parents believe these advantages will provide their children with more opportunities in the classroom as well as after formal schooling. The context of TBS as an elite bilingual school in Mexico is important to understand because the results of TBS's literacy practices in this study may only be relevant to this particular site or similar contexts. The description of the school environment is also important for understanding the student and teacher population, the goals TBS has developed over the years as a bilingual and bicultural school, and their approach to literacy.

The following chapter will present the methodology of the study and will give a more detailed description of the participating students and teachers.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Design

This is a qualitative case study of an elite English/Spanish bilingual school in Mexico. Merriam (1998) defines the case as a bound entity, "the case then could be a person such as a student, a teacher, a principal; a program; a group such as a class, a school, a community; a specific policy; and so on." (p.27). A case study approach was the selected design because it allowed me to closely observe a bounded group of participants actively partaking in literacy events. Since the participating students were five and six years old they were not able to respond to questionnaires and survey forms that are, often, part of qualitative methodologies other than the case study. When discussing the decision to choose a case study Merriam (1992) states, "The decision to focus on qualitative case studies stems from the fact that this design is chosen precisely because researchers are interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing"(p.29). This design provided me with the opportunity to receive rich data through classroom

observation.

A second factor in the selection of a case study was that it allowed me to focus on the literacy practices of a small group of students and their teachers with different characteristics than the Jiménez, Smith, & Martínez León (2002) study. Some of the different characteristics of this study were the socio economic status and the bilingualism of the teachers and students. The socio economic status of the participating schools in the Jiménez et al. study observed students from lower-class and middle-class families. Both schools were monolingual although one school had some students from indigenous backgrounds with families that may speak an indigenous

language. Therefore, my study differs from the Jiménez et al. (2002) study in that, (1.) my students come from middle-upper class families and (2.) students enter the school either speaking a prestigious language or are in the process of learning two languages of wider communication.

The study observed two teachers and five students in their school environment as they worked through literacy activities. The methodology of this study applies some of the methodology used in a recent study by Jiménez, Smith, & Martinez León (2002). Over a six-month period they collected data through "classroom observations, teacher and administrator interviews, school-produced documents, and publicly displayed texts" (p.2). Similar to Jiménez et al. (2002) I used the digital camara to capture environmental print in the classroom and school community. It was also used to record examples of students' work. School documents were obtained in order to understand the school's mission and beliefs about education and more specifically about literacy. Adaptations to the Jiménez et al. methodology were implemented for the purposes of this study. For example, as researchers we were different types of insiders. In the Jiménez et al. (2002) study two of the researchers were parents of students in one of the participating schools. In this study I was collecting data at the institution where I am currently teaching. A second example of a change in the methodology was the use of video footage of teacher instruction and students reading and working were also used as a tool for better understanding the literacy practices used and as a means of provoking interview questions about the teacher and students processes being observed during a lesson.

The Jiménez et al. study observed literacy practices in monolingual middle and lower class private schools in Mexico. They found that students had great amounts of freedom in spoken language, a varying degree of freedom in reading, but written

language was confined to mainly focusing on form. This study follows the same qualitative research methods as the Jimenez et al. (2002) study, however, it sought to understand the literacy practices that occurred within a different population of students and parents. The social economic status of the students in this school was middle-upper class and the setting was bilingual.

3.1 Setting and Participants

The school I chose for this study is a private bilingual immersion preschool in Puebla, Mexico. I obtained access to the school quite easily as I am currently finishing my third year as a teacher at TBS. Due to high tuition fees this particular school serves families in the middle- to upper class range, and is considered a highly prestigious school throughout the community. The school's prestige is not only related to the social economic status of the students but it is also due to the extensive English instruction and bicultural nature of the school's curriculum.

The preschool currently has approximately 600 children ages three to six enrolled in the three-year program. All grade levels are presently working to obtain international certification and are proud of the fact that as a whole school it draws from a student population of over 20 different countries around the world. However, the majority of the students are native-born Mexicans and more specifically are native to Puebla. The mission of this school is to not only provide their students with a bilingual education but also a bicultural one, taking into consideration the cultural diversity of their students and the importance of teaching students to be culturally sensitive.

Preschool students attend half of the school day in English with one teacher and then switch classrooms and have the second half of the day in Spanish with a different teacher. Unlike a great many schools in Mexico, this preschool does not have to follow

the SEP curriculum and, therefore, uses literacy materials other than those books or materials mandated by the SEP. Since TBS's preschool is private it does not have to follow the SEP policy in the same manner that the Elementary school, Middle school and the High school do. The preschool follows the same academic calendar as the SEP but the curriculum is different. The present curriculum is organized around monthly themes selected by the principals and is the same in both the Spanish and English classes. Content areas are divided between the two languages. Math and social studies are taught in English and science and history are taught in Spanish. An exception to this language of instruction allocation may be made when the English teacher is presenting a lesson on an important historical day in the United States. In such cases the English teacher may present a brief history lesson in English. Also at times a thematic activity in English may be related to science and is, therefore, presented in English. I observed a science activity in English involving students learning about the plant life cycle. They learned the parts of the flower and the reproduction process in English. Other than these exceptions, the First English teachers generally use the language that corresponds to the subject matter.

Students attending the third year of preschool called "First English" were selected as the participants of this study. The name "First English" is used to identify this as the first level of school where students are becoming literate in English. Although students have received oral instruction in English and have had contact with English texts such as, song charts, classroom labels, posters and books, the preschool considers the third year of preschool as the first concrete introduction of reading and writing in English. Therefore, the label "First English" does not refer to the concept that this is the students' first encounter with the English language but rather that it is the beginning of the development of their literacy skills in English.

3.2 Student Participants

The focal students of this case study were in their third year of preschool. The following year these students change schools from the preschool to the primary school. The third year of preschool is the equivalent of the first grade in the United States. The students are between the ages of five and six. Four of these students have been attending the bilingual preschool for two years and one began attending the year of the study, although she came from another bilingual school and has had private English classes for two years. Four of the students were born in Mexico to Mexican parents and are native speakers of Spanish. These children receive most of their English input in the classroom setting. The fifth student is a Mexican-American simultaneous bilingual in Spanish and English.

Four Mexican children and one Mexican-American child were selected from two different classrooms. Two boys and three girls were selected. The selection of these five children was based on recommendations by their current teacher with the researcher's specification that the chosen students should represent a variety of proficiency levels in reading and writing in both English and Spanish. Their proficiency levels were evaluated through the use of an English and Spanish rubric that is used by both the Spanish and English teacher. However, when teachers evaluated the students near the end of the study they did not cover a range of levels. The teachers placed the participating students under the category of either "Muy bien" (very good) or "bien" (good). A second specification was that the students were past students of mine. For this reason students did not represent all proficiency levels. See Appendix A for full version of the English and Spanish rubrics.

At the time of the study, two of the students were six years old and three were five years old. All five children come from middle-upper class families, where one or both parents have obtained their masters degree at a Mexican university.

3.3 Profile of the Case Study Students

It is important to give a brief profile of each student's background in order to provide a better understanding of their experience and knowledge of being bilingual and biliterate. The majority of the information presented here was acquired through daily contact that I have had with the students and their parents for the past three years. As the classroom teacher of four of these students, I had daily contact with the parents for one year. I also discussed their children's progress in English during parent teacher conferences. I have also had frequent contact with these children for three years and have had many conversations and interactions with them. Interviews with two of the participating students' mothers also provided additional information and insights about the students' family and academic backgrounds. In the following section I discuss the four native Spanish-speakers and the English/Spanish simultaneous bilingual.

Sara is six years old and comes from a family where the mother speaks, writes, understands, and reads fluently in English. Her parents are highly educated. Sara's mother has a masters in business administration and the father has masters degrees in finances and in engineering. Sara's mother frequently speaks English to her at home and reads to her weekly in English. Sara has been at the American school since beginning preschool at the age of three. She is an outgoing student with strong leadership qualities. Sara is always willing to help the teacher and her fellow classmates. She enjoys reading and participating in all school activities. When I asked her to describe herself she had a difficult time answering but she commented, "*Soy amigable porque tengo varios amigos y soy divertida*." A classmate of Sara's shared that Sara "*es lista y*

buena". María shared, *"Es una niña buena, noble, atenta, bien hecha, y trabaja excelente."*

The second native Spanish-speaker, Andrea, is also six years old and has been in the program for two years. She is a very quiet, respectful and friendly student. She often volunteers to help the teacher or takes the initiative when she sees that someone is in need of help. Andrea's academic abilities do not come naturally for her. She puts forth a great effort to learn and complete her work neatly and accurately. Her teachers described her as, *"Un líder a veces y muy buena niña"*. She described herself as, "j*ugetona*" and her friends described her as "amigable y compartida". Her mother has an undergraduate degree in business administration and her father has a master degree in engineering. Both parents have a limited knowledge of the English language. In an interview the mother shared with me that neither parent is able to read to their children in English although they can both help their children with some basic vocabulary in English. However, she reads to Andrea in Spanish daily.

Alberto is a five-year-old native Spanish-speaker. He has attended TBS since the first year of preschool. Alberto is a quiet introvert. He likes to please both his teachers and his classmates by being a hard worker and a nice friend. He is very courteous and well behaved. María shared that Alberto *"es un niño muy bueno, sano, tranquilo y educado"*. Alberto enjoys and excels in mathematics. Although he tries hard Alberto's reading level is much lower than his classmates in both English and Spanish. Alberto's mother received an undergraduate degree in international relations and his father is a medical doctor. Alberto's father is fluent in English but in an interview with Alberto he mentioned that due to his father's busy schedule he is rarely available for helping Alberto with his English. Alberto's mother is only able to help him with simple vocabulary in English. She admits that they rarely read stories in Spanish at home.

Marcela is also a five-year-old native Spanish-speaker. She is an extremely shy introvert and finds making friends to be a challenge. She often works and plays alone in and out of the classroom. Learning English for Marcela is very easy and seems to come without much effort. In fact, in most subject areas Marcela excels. Her one weakness at the start of this study was her inability to socialize and relate to her classmates and her teachers. This tended to be a constant struggle for her in the classroom as the teacher is incrementing the amount of time students are working in small groups. By the end of the study and the school year both teacher had noticed that Marcela had strengthened her social skills and had become a much more open and friendly classmate. This change seemed to motivate her academically. I observed that the quality of her work and her level of enthusiasm had increased as she developed social skills. Her mother has been taking English lessons for three years and can understand and carry on a conversation. She has a strong desire for her children to be able to understand, speak, read and write in English. In addition to the English curriculum at TBS, she provides private, after-school English classes with a native English speaker for her children. She reads to Marcela in Spanish and English on a weekly basis.

The simultaneous bilingual is a six-year-old boy who was born in Texas and who moved to Mexico shortly after his birth. Alex's mother is from the United States and her first language is English. His father is Mexican and his L1 is Spanish. They have been living in Puebla for the past five years. Alex has been exposed to both Spanish and English in the home since birth and at school since he entered TBS two years ago. The mother speaks only English to her son and the father mainly speaks Spanish, but has some fluency speaking and understanding English. The mother has an undergraduate degree in business and the father has a master in business. Alex is a bright student who is able to speak, understand, and read fluently in both Spanish and

English. He is also shy and friendly, however, he tends to be more dependent upon adults for attention and reassurement. He tends to interact more with the teachers than with his own classmates. He described himself as normal, athletic, fun and intelligent.

The family background is important for understanding where these students fit socially in the school and surrounding community and how their opinions about bilingualism may have been formed or influenced. All five families are middle-upper class with highly educated parents who expressed the importance of their child's learning English during interviews or casual conversation. These types of families at TBS are fairly typical in this school setting. However, there are also families that make financial sacrifices in order to send their children to TBS. These families use loans to pay for the tuition or are in debt to the school. One of the participating students comes from a family that makes these types of sacrifices for their children's education. In an informal conversation with the researcher the mother commented "*La educación de mis hijos es nuestro primer prioridad y los sacrificios que tenemos que hacer como pareja para ofrecerles lo mejor, pues, vale la pena.*"

The preschool principal recommended two Mexican teachers for this study. The selection was based on the criteria that both are considered master teachers with over fifteen years of experience in literacy teaching. Both teachers are women and native speakers of Spanish. They were educated in Mexico and one had received a bachelor degree in Early Childhood Education. They have varying degrees of spoken, written, reading, and listening proficiency in English. María has a high proficiency level in each of the previous categories. Laura has a basic speaking and comprehension ability in English. She has limited literacy skills in English. These are team teachers who work with the same two groups of 28 students daily. One teacher teaches only in English and the other only in Spanish. The study took place during their first year working together.

3.4 Reading Materials

The materials required to conduct this study were minimal. One English book and Spanish reading worksheets from each of the classrooms were used for assessing the students' reading strategies. Currently this level is not using a Spanish reading book; therefore the reading worksheets were chosen as a means for evaluating students' reading strategies in Spanish. The worksheets are focused around words and sentences beginning with a specific letter. For example, if the letter "V" was the letter of the week the worksheet would have a variety of words starting with "V" and a few sentences using those words. The last section of the worksheet consists of comprehension questions for the information read in the previous sentences. See Appendix B for a concrete example of this type of worksheet.

The English book is the first in a series of reading books used in the primary school. The title of the book is "Literature Works: A collection of readings" published by Silver Burdett and Ginn (2000) and focuses on two main themes; "Here I am" and "Let's Be Friends". This series of books was originally chosen by the Elementary school with the hope that it would spark students' interest for reading in English. However, the teachers and administrators of the elementary school labeled it as being below a first-grade reading level so the texts were donated to the preschool. During the study the textbook was used on a weekly basis and was becoming familiar to the children. The teachers have been using these materials for the past two years with their students. These two readings were chosen for this study based on the assumption that more realistic results would be produced if all participants were equally familiar with both the English and Spanish reading resources.

3.5 Interview Questions Asked of the Participating Teachers and Students

A variety of questions were developed to guide the open-ended interviews with the teachers and the children. The following is a small sample of the questions that were asked during the teacher interviews with the intention of understanding some of the literacy instruction and practices observed during the study:

1. *¿Cuál es tu definición de lectoescritura?*
2. *¿Cuándo y por qué usan lápiz rojo? ¿Todos los alumnos tienen que usar*

   esta técnica y es un requisito de la escuela o es la decisión de cada maestra?
3. *¿He visto que copian mucho del pizarrón, cuál es el propósito de este tipo de trabajo?*
4. *¿Cuál es tu propósito al corregir los trabajos de los niños?*

A variety of example questions for the children are as follows:

1. *¿Cómo aprendiste a leer en español?*
2. *¿En tú opinión dime un compañero que lee muy bien y por qué?*
3. *¿Cuál es más difícil para ti, leer en inglés o español? ¿Por qué?*
4. *¿Cómo aprendiste a escribir en español e inglés?*
5. *¿Que significa para ti leer, escribir, y hablar en inglés?*

A full list of questions for both teacher and student interviews can be found in Appendix C. These materials were used in collaboration with the following procedures in order to obtain reliable data that accurately portrays the instructional practices and literacy strategies used by the teachers and the students.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

3.6.1 Observations

I observed two times a week in both the English and Spanish classrooms over a six-month period. Each observation lasted between 40-60 minutes. This is a typical length of a lesson that includes an activity with the whole class and independent work time. I completed a total of 38 observations in each classroom and approximately 38 hours of data collection. All observations occurred during literacy lessons or content-based lessons where literacy practices were being implemented. During the approximately hour-long observation sessions, I created field notes on the literacy instruction and practices that were being used by both the teacher and students. During each observation I also dedicated approximately 20 minutes to directly observing the case study students as they participated and worked on activities pertaining to literacy.

I also decided to perform more intensive observations by observing the children and teachers on a daily basis for two weeks. This was done during the last phase of my observations. The purpose of this intensive observation was to see all the literacy events and practices that occurred during the study of one particular theme in both Spanish and English. I spent the first week in the mornings with the English teacher and the afternoons with the Spanish teacher. Thus, I observed the entire class day with one group of students. Three hours were spent in the English classroom and three hours in the Spanish classroom. The second week I followed the routine of the second class by observing the Spanish teacher in the morning and the English teacher in the afternoon. This allowed me to observe all English and Spanish literacy activities related to the month's thematic unit. During this two-week observation time I completed 10

observations and 30 additional hours of data collection. Overall I did 48 classroom observations involving a total of 68 hours.

During the last week of the observation period I also observed a different team of English/Spanish teachers. I performed a single observation in both the English and Spanish classrooms that are adjacent to the participating teachers. Each observation lasted one hour. During this time I took field notes about the literacy activity and instruction being implemented. I also focused on any counter examples of the data I had collected from the participating teachers. This was important in comparing the participating teachers' literacy instructional practices with that of another teacher using the same curriculum. This comparison allowed me to observe any patterns in their teaching techniques and to see in what areas there procedures were uniform and in which areas they used their own teaching style.

3.6.2 Teacher Interviews

I began piloting the interview format with other teachers in the preschool department in both Spanish and English with two purposes in mind. The first purpose was to detect any potential flaws with the formation of the questions and to add any important questions that developed as a direct result from these interviews. The second purpose was to decide if interviewing these bilingual teachers in English or Spanish would produce the same results. I found through these pilot interviews that both participating teachers, being native Spanish speakers, produced much more detailed and informative answers in Spanish. When asked in English they tended to give surface level and short answers. Only in one instance did an English-language interview produce a more in-depth look at the teachers' literacy instruction. However, this teacher

was from the United States and a native speaker of English. Thus, all interviews with native Spanish-speaking teachers and students were conducted in Spanish.

I conducted two formal interviews with each of the participating teachers. One interview took place at the beginning of data collection and the second interview was performed at the conclusion of the study. All formal student interviews were performed before the teacher interviews. The purpose of this was to use information obtained by the students for the formulation of the teacher interview questions. All interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed by the researcher, with the help of a native speaker of Spanish. Teacher interviews were conducted with only the teacher and interviewer present in the participating teacher's classroom. They took place during the teacher's planning period to ensure a quiet environment with no interruptions. Each interview lasted from 25-35 minutes.

3.6.3 Student Interviews

I conducted two formal interviews with each participating student. Student interviews were conducted in my classroom on a carpet in the reading corner. I chose this location because the students were very familiar with the environment and because there was no one else present in the room at the time of the interviews. I invited students to participate in the interview in pairs with the hope that they would feel less inhibited and would more freely answer the questions. The interviews with the native Spanish speakers were performed in Spanish and the interview with the simultaneous bilingual was in English, as he tended to identify me as a native English speaker. Each interview session, lasting approximately 15 minutes, was tape recorded and later transcribed. I also jotted down any important notes as we talked.

During the observations of specific students, spontaneous informal conversations about literacy provided additional support or counterevidence for the information obtained in the interviews. An example of this type of interaction occurred as Alex worked on writing down the vocabulary from the board and I asked if he was copying the words or writing them as they sounded to him. He commented that he was writing them as they sounded. These interactions provided greater insight for data analysis.

3.6.4 Artifacts

During the spring semester of the school year 2001-2002 I obtained samples of literacy work in Spanish and English from two of the participating six-year-old students over a three-month period. These data consisted of dictation exercises; work with syllables, research questions pertaining to the content class of science, English vocabulary lists and illustrations. Over the course of the 2002-2003 school year I collected examples of each of the five students' literacy work in English and Spanish on a weekly basis. I also received one continuous weeks' worth of student documents in order to observe the students' literacy development while working on one continuous thematic unit. These documents allowed me to observe and understand some of the processes the students go through as they complete a literacy assignment as well as understand the teachers correcting process. The examples of students' work were also used as a tool or reference for asking specific interview questions of the teachers about literacy practices in their classroom.

I also obtained school documents relating to the school's mission statement and philosophy on literacy instruction and learning. For example, I obtained a copy of the updated mission statement for each level of the preschool. The principals created the

final product of these statements with the assistance and input of the teachers for each corresponding level. These documents allowed for a comparison between stated school beliefs and goals and actual observed practices. Many of these documents were created by the American School superintendent or by one of the preschool principals.

3.6.5 Video Footage and Photographs

During class observations on four occasions video footage was recorded for twenty minutes during different class activities. This included teachers' instruction of the group and students' responses during class. Video footage was also taken at the end of each child interview of the student reading from their English book and their Spanish reading worksheets. Both types of video were used as a tool for questioning the participating teachers' about their students' reading strategies and the teachers' instructional practices.

In addition, digital photographs were taken of the classroom, students working, and teacher instruction at the whiteboard. Photos of the classroom were taken as a means of providing literacy examples children have contact with and use on a regular basis. Photos of students working and students' finished products provided reminders of specific activities, as well as providing a profile of each student. Photos of teachers' instruction at the white board were used to portray the type of examples students have to follow and the type of daily work students are required to complete.

Triangulation, member checking and key informants were used to strengthen the validity of the study. Merriam (1992) defines triangulation as "using multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings"(p.204). In this study triangulation occurred in the multiple use of sources of data between the use of observations, recorded interviews, students' work, photos and

video footage. The use of various means for data collection allowed for a more precise analysis of the data and results.

3.6.6 Data Analysis

Before the formal analysis began all observations were typed on the computer and then I used cut and paste to categorize each piece of information found in the observation. All observations, interviews, documents, and photos were either typed or scanned in to the computer for easier access and retrieval. I analyzed the data from the initiation to the finish of the data collection. One method of analysis used in this study was the construction of categories through the coding of data. Merriam (1998) describes the purpose of this type of analysis, "to construct categories or themes that capture some recurring pattern that cuts across… the data"(p.179). Once a variety of categories have been assigned Bogden & Biklen (1998) recommend placing "units of data" which are parts of "field notes, transcripts, or documents" in a corresponding category.

Following these guidelines, I analyzed the field notes, transcripts and documents collected from the classroom and student observations on a weekly basis and then coded them depending on specific instructional practices and strategies used by the focal students. All observational data were placed under a specific theme or various categories within the general heading of coded data. Emerging patterns in the data were found in the coded data, as well as counterexamples of these same patterns. Observations, formal and informal interviews, video footage and photo data were read, reread and analyzed in order to create, change, or refine any new or major themes that were detected in the data. These categories were eventually narrowed down to the major themes that are presented in the following chapter. The patterns that emerged

from the children's interactions with literacy and data from the formal interviews were used to infer their perceptions of their own literacy learning and the strategies they implemented during literacy events. Analysis of the two teachers' instructional practices was handled in the same manner.

Table 3.1 Coding categories and subcategories

Categories	Subcategories
Teacher guided written work	Copying
	Dictation
	Enunciados
	Red pencil
Teacher-student interaction	Teacher instructions
	Teacher error correction/Reminders
	Classroom management
Reading	Comprehension
	Choral reading
	Wall Charts & visual aids
Environmental print	Class posters
	Students' work
Student errors	Self-Correction
	Student autonomy
Student-student interaction	

Document analysis was also an ongoing process as the work was being collected on a weekly basis and then compared and contrasted with the documents of all the participating students. Analysis of the documents occurred on the spot during the direct observation of a particular participating student's work in a specific literacy activity. This analysis evaluated the specific strategies that a student may be implementing in that moment.

Member checking occurred with the analysis of students' work, photos of classroom activities and video footage. The participating teachers reviewed the ongoing analyses and their clarifications and ideas were used to accurately represent the data.

The teachers also checked the accuracy and provided feedback on my summaries of the participating students' family backgrounds.

A key informant was also consulted to gain information about TBS. The administrative principal at the preschool provided me with details about the school's history. She provided me with feedback and clarified any errors I may have made about the school in general and specifically about the preschool. Her validity as an informant stems from her years of contact and interaction with the school. She was a student at the TBS from preschool through high school, and has also been working at the school for the past 20 years. Her position for the past 19 years as the Spanish coordinator of the preschool has provided her with a wealth of knowledge about the school's history, school policy, curriculum and the teachers and staff at all levels.

The following chapter presents the results of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESUTLS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Possible Outcomes

At the outset of the study I predicted that a possible outcome in regards to teaching instruction was somewhat similar to the results found in Mulhern's (2002) study on kindergartners' constructions of Spanish literacy learning. Mulhern discusses the great emphasis that is placed on skills learning through the use of phonics and the teaching of letters and syllables in the United States. Although this was a different type of setting and classroom my current data collection revealed the same strategies of teaching reading through the use of letters and syllables in both English and Spanish instruction.

Also, in regards to teacher instruction, I expected to find that written instruction by both participating teachers was skills based and focused on conventional forms rather than on building meaning. Therefore, I expected to observe that written classroom instruction was concerned with what Barton (1999) calls the scribal function of writing and would reveal little evidence of the development of authoring.

I predicted that literacy instruction in both classes will be similar and the teachers' teaching strategies did not precisely depend on the language of instruction. I also predicted that students would show evidence for the implementation of the reading and writing strategies used by their teachers. Therefore, they will also use the same strategies for reading and writing in their L1 and L2. With these predictions in mind I now present the results of the study.

In the following section I discuss the reading and writing strategies used by the teachers and students. I first present the students' environmental print. I also present the similarities and differences found between the English and Spanish contexts. I end

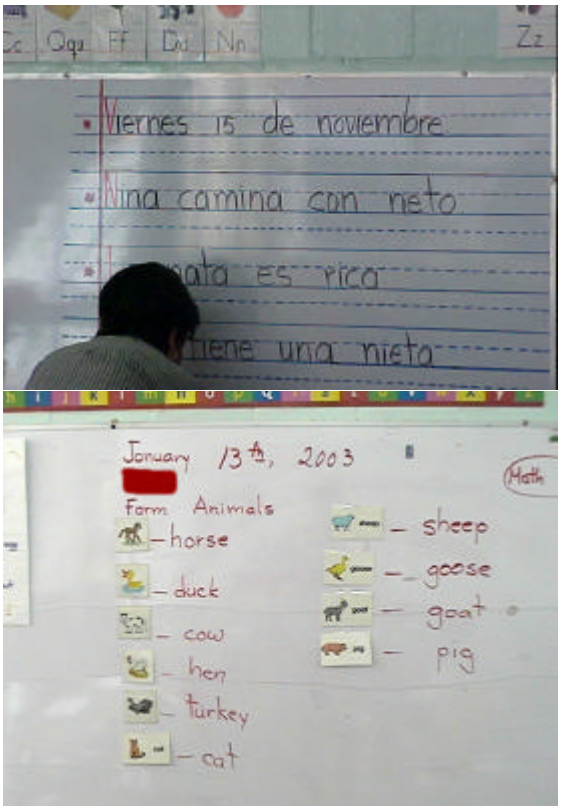
by discussing teacher strategies for student correction and student and teacher's developing theories of literacy learning.

4.1 Teacher-Produced Texts

This section describes the environmental print that students are in contact with on a daily basis. It also shows the contrast of teacher-produced texts in both classroom settings.

The photos in Figure 4.1 demonstrate the use of the white board in the Spanish classroom and the English classroom. It is interesting to compare the two, as they seem to provide different ideas about classroom text. These different formats on the white boards were consistently used throughout my observations.

Figure 4.1 Comparison of Teacher Produced Texts in the Spanish and English Classrooms



The photograph on the left of Figure 4.1 of the Spanish classroom demonstrates orthographic structure and neatness. The letters are written neatly in the lines with

capital letters always written in red ink and lower case letters in black or blue ink. Lower case letters always touch both the bottom and dotted lines. Also, each letter and word is evenly spaced on each line. The Spanish text is at the sentence level. The grid represented on the whiteboard in Laura's classroom is permanent and is an amplified reproduction of the style of paper found in the students' workbooks.

In comparison, the photo on the right of Figure 4.1 demonstrates that the English teacher's modeling of written text tends to be less focused on orthographic features and more on learning the content of the lesson. The English text is presented at the word level and is supported by a drawing or a picture. The text is written without lines and many words are sloping up or down. The letters in each word are not evenly spaced and to some extent are different sizes. There is no distinction between capitals and lower case as they are all in red ink.

4.1.1 Use of Red Pencil

On one occasion I observed a student in the English classroom approach María at the board after María had written the date and title of the work students were to copy from the board into their notebooks. On this occasion María had chosen to write with a blue marker. The student informed María that she had forgotten to write the capitals in red letters. Upon hearing this María exclaimed "Oh my God" and she quickly erased the blue ink and replaced it with red. There was less emphasis placed on the use of red pencil in Maria's class. When I asked the English teacher about the use of the red pencil and where she had learned this technique she commented the following:

> *Se hace con el fin de que aprendan que al principio del enunciado se empieza con mayúscula y esto les hace diferenciar las letras. Yo creo que no importa el color que fuera. Esta técnica la aprendí en el Colegio América y no es un requisito de la escuela, pensamos hace tiempo, aquí, que era lo adecuado.*

The Spanish teacher's response was similar:

El lápiz rojo lo usamos para hacer mayúsculas y, éste... para escribir los números. Para las mayúsculas lo usamos para que se enfoquen en la mayúscula, para que ellos sepan que al principio de un enunciado se empieza con mayúsculas o nombres propios, para enfocárselos a ellos no precisamente porque tenga que ser con rojo. Ya una vez que ellos lo tienen bien enfocado con este color. Ya no importa que después ya no lo hagan pero ya saben perfectamente que al principio del enunciado se escribe con mayúsculas o nombres propios. Eso en primero de ingles. Que vayan aprendiéndolo de alguna forma visualizándolo y con este color que resalta, digo, puede ser el rojo, puede ser el azul, puede ser el verde, pero, bueno, el rojo se escogió porque no sé pero es un color
que además a los niños les gusta.

In the Spanish classroom I observed a boy asking Laura why they could not write in pencil or with ink. Laura responded, *"Porque apenas estamos aprendiendo, entonces nos ayuda el* rojo". Students also responded to the question about the use of the red pencil. When I observed Sara using the red pencil I asked her about it and at first she commented *"Porque es mayúscula"*. When I probed her more she simply stated, "*Porque dice la Miss*". Alberto and Marcela both responded *"Porque son mayúsculas y para recordar ponemos rojo*".

María and Laura both learned this technique years ago and have no concrete definition as to why red pencil has been used to mark capital letters at TBS. During my observations it became clear early on that the use of red pencil for capital letters and punctuation has become habit for the majority of the students. When I asked the preschool director when and how the red pencil technique was introduced, she could only answer that it had been in existence since she had been a student at TBS. She recommended that I ask a teacher who has been working at TBS for a greater amount of time. I approached a teacher who has been in the school for over thirty years and she remembers that María the participating teacher in this study introduced this technique to the teachers years ago and has been implemented by the First English teachers since that time. (E. Barón, Novemeber 13, 2003)

4.2 Environmental print

In the English classroom students are surrounded by texts in the target language. There are texts on the walls in the form of posters, wall charts, song charts, weekly calendar and the work on the white board. Figure 4.2 shows photos of the environmental print found on the walls of the English classroom.

Figure 4.2 Environmental Print in the English Classroom

Texts can also be found in the books in the reading corner, their workbooks, and their Individual English reading books. However, with so many types of environmental print surrounding the students I only observed two teacher-guided reading activities over the course of my observations.

The Environmental print in the Spanish classroom was somewhat different than the English classroom. There were posters with pictures and texts about farm animals hanging on a clothesline, two big books about farm animals on an easel at the side of the classroom, an empty wall chart in one corner of the room and alphabet flash cards

hanging on the wall above the whiteboard. The Spanish classroom was different than the English classroom as I did not observe a reading corner, books for the children and the weekly calendar in the Spanish classroom. Also, the students did not have a textbook in the Spanish classroom. Students in the Spanish classroom were surrounded by teacher-produced texts on the whiteboard and student-produced texts in their notebooks.

4.3 Reading Activities in the Spanish and English Classrooms

The following section is dedicated to describing the reading activities that took place in the English and Spanish classrooms. There are examples of choral reading, reading for comprehension, one on one reading with the teacher, silent individual reading and reading in a content class.

4.3.1 Choral Reading

The first reading activity was a class choral reading from their English textbook. Students all turn to the same page in the book and begin reading out loud in unison with the teacher. Figure 4.3 shows the English teacher and students reading together.

Figure 4.3 Group Read Along in the English Classroom

Students read in unison until the end of a short story. Upon the completion of the short story María began to ask comprehension questions in English. However, when she realized few students were raising their hands to respond she explicitly told the children that they could answer in Spanish or English. The responses that children gave in this particular lesson in English or Spanish indicated that they had understood the simple English text. Alberto demonstrated his understanding of the short story by listening to a classmate give an answer in English to one of María's questions, which he then proceeded to translate the into Spanish for a classmate who had not understood the answer in English. In this case, Alberto's response reflects his ability to use his reading comprehension skills in both the L1 and L2 almost simultaneously.

During this class choral reading activity comprehension of the short story was one of María's learning objectives. María stated, *"Primero el niño tiene que expresarse y soltar todo lo que trae adentro. Aunque en japonés o en chino, pero que lo hacen y luego van aprendiendo inglés. Pero si no, los pobres se quedan frustrados"*. When Maria discusses her goals for literacy in her classroom she expresses the importance of comprehension. *"Mis metas son que puedan hacer bien sus trazos y poder escribir y entender lo que escriban."* And in regards to reading she comments, *"Que aunque la lectura sea silbante entienden lo que están leyendo"*.

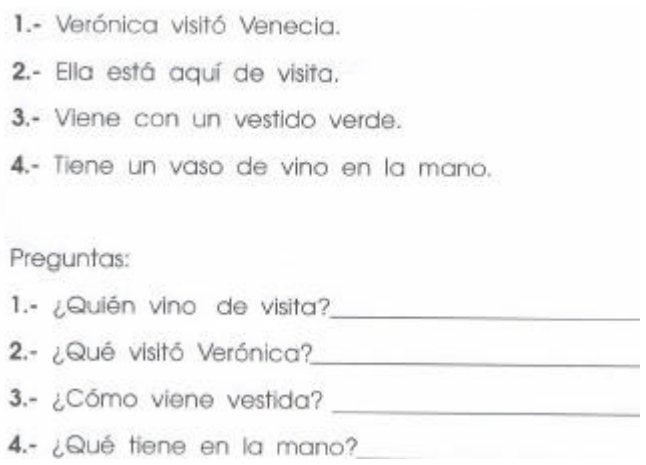
During the interviews with the children I discussed their English reading book with them. I asked them if it was an easy or difficult book for them to read. Sara commented that the book was easy to read because it was repetitive. As I observed the children during the choral reading activity the majority of the children also expected repetition while reading from the book. Many children tended to become disoriented when the pattern of the story changed. For example, during one story the repetition was as follows: "I like rainbows." "I like rainbows, too". This type of repetition continued

for a series of pages. However, at one point the repetition stopped. The teacher had read, “Talking faces” and the children responded with “Talking faces, too” even though that was not the correct text that followed.

This type of literacy work was not observed in the Spanish classroom. First, children did not have a textbook in Spanish. In fact, Laura commented that students used only worksheets with short texts related to the letter students were learning during that particular week, with a few simple comprehension questions at the end of the worksheet. These questions, however, were even simpler than the comprehension questions asked during Maria’s English literacy lesson. Figure 4.4 is a section of an example of these types of worksheets. This activity was used when Laura introduced the letter “V”. A full version of this reading worksheet can be found in Appendix D.

The texts in these Spanish language worksheets are not presented in paragraph form. Figure 4.4 shows that each sentence has a number at the beginning, but this number does not necessarily correspond to the questions that follow. Although the sentences use a variety of words that begin with the letter “V” the context and subject matter of the sentences is not appropriate for this age of students.

Figure 4.4 Spanish Reading Worksheet Focusing on the Letter “Vv”


1.- Verónica visitó Venecia.
2.- Ella está aquí de visita.
3.- Viene con un vestido verde.
4.- Tiene un vaso de vino en la mano.

Preguntas:
1.- ¿Quién vino de visita?_____
2.- ¿Qué visitó Verónica?_____
3.- ¿Cómo viene vestida? _____
4.- ¿Qué tiene en la mano?_____

For example, children at the age of six may not know where "*Venecia*" is, and the idea of "*vino*" (wine) may not be concrete for these students. The questions that follow the four-sentence text can be answered with one-word answers taken directly from the previous text. Students are not required to summarize what they read or answer reflective questions about the text. This is a skill that is not only required in the English classroom, but also completed accurately in English and Spanish by the students in the English classroom. When I asked the Spanish teacher about her students' Spanish reading abilities, she commented that it is normal that students are still reading syllabically but that at this level a child should not be sounding out letter by letter. "*Malo cuando siguen deletreando. Entonces, sí caen en un habito malo. Porque van deletreando y al llegar al fin del enunciado o la palabra que están leyendo no se acuerdan de lo que leyeron, ni saben lo que dijeron*". In this statement Laura is expressing the importance of comprehension.

4.3.2 Silent Reading and One on One with the Teacher

The second reading activity observed was the use of wall charts for creating a variety of sentences. During the thematic unit on the farm the wall chart contained animals, prepositions and their habitats. Students were to choose an animal and create a sentence with the correct preposition and the correct habitat. Once the sentences were completed students were asked to read the sentence out loud to María. As Figure 4.5 shows María called students up to the chart individually and worked with them until they completed the sentence correctly.

María allowed students to work on their own and only intervened if the child was struggling with the sentence. Students seemed to be quite familiar with this type of activity, indicating that they use these grammar charts on a regular basis.

Figure 4.5 María Works with a Student at the English Grammar Chart Forming a Sentence with Prepositions

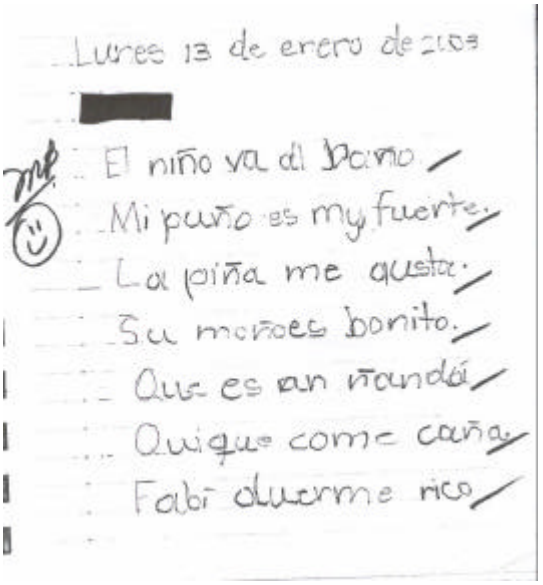
Figure 4.6 shows a close up of Alberto's sentence that he was constructing for this activity, "The pig lives in the pig pen".

Figure 4.6 Alberto's Sentence at the Grammar Chart

Other reading opportunities were present in the Spanish classroom. However, unlike the English classroom, where group-reading activities regularly occurred, instruction in the Spanish classroom tended to focus more on individual reading or one-on-one reading activities. Often times while correcting the students' work in their notebooks Laura would ask students to read the sentences they had produced as a class or individually. These type of activities occurred on a daily basis in the Spanish classroom. Figure 4.7 is an example of the sentences students were asked to read out loud in Spanish.

Students also had many opportunities for individual silent reading. Students were constantly copying words and sentences from the board. Often times while observing the

Figure 4.7 Students *Copiado* Work



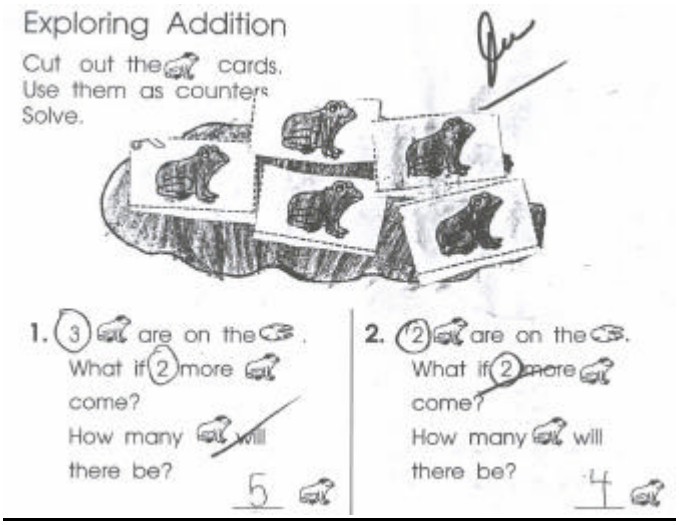
children copying from the whiteboard I noticed the children reading out loud or silently what was written on the board. However, I did not observe structured reading activities in the Spanish classroom.

4.3.3 Content Class

A third reading activity in the English classroom was completed during math class. At this grade level, math is taught in English. Students have a math workbook in English, as well as some homework assignments in their take-home notebooks. Figure 4.8 is an example of an activity in the math workbook. Students are to complete the addition problems taking place in each story problem. The skills required for the completion of this activity were interesting.

Students had to be able to read and comprehend the written text and second be able to complete the addition problem. As I observed Sara in the process of completing this task I noticed that she first paid close attention to the story problem and after reading the whole

Figure 4.8 Worksheet Containing Story Problems in an English Content Class



text she would go back and pay attention to the written numbers to complete the addition problem.

In contrast, Marcela did not read the written text. The English teacher had circled the numbers and told Marcela to just add these two numbers to find the answer. Marcela then quickly completed the task by just paying attention to the numbers.

I asked the English teacher if the objective was to focus on reading in English, student comprehension of the text or the addition problem. María's answer was, *"Las tres son importantes. Tienen que leer, comprender y sumar."* I then asked her why she just focused on the numbers with Marcela by circling only the numbers. She responded, "*Esta actividad tiene demasiadas instrucciones. El niño se revuelve con estas instrucciones. Yo nada más quería ayudar a Marcela a ubicar los números que tenía que sumar*." Math class, therefore, involved reading, writing and addition skills, but the focus was mainly on using addition skills and finding the correct answer.

I observed one content class in the Spanish classroom. It was a history class on the Mexican Constitution. The Spanish teacher introduced the topic and read out loud a teacher-produced text that she had copied onto the whiteboard. Students were then instructed to copy the paragraph into their notebooks. See Figure 4.11 for an example

of this text. The lesson lasted approximately ten minutes and then students had 20 minutes to copy the text.

4.4 Writing

This section describes the observed written literacy practices. This included, students' orthography, dictation, enunciados, copying from the board and creative writing.

Jiménez et al. in their study with lower to middle class schools in Mexico found that writing instruction focused mainly on the scribal functions of written language rather than authoring. (Barton, 1994) Students participate in few creative writing activities. In fact, most of their written work was composed of copying teacher-produced texts or SEP produced texts reproduced by the teachers. This study produced many similarities to Jiménez et al. in regards to student writing.

4.4.1 Orthography

The emphases the Spanish teachers place on the scribal aspects of writing are demonstrated by the Spanish classroom rubric used to evaluate students in lecto-escritura. In order to receive the "very good" rating students must demonstrate the following:

-Su letra muestra un tamaño uniforme y es legible
-Sus letras están bien ubicadas respetando su espacio
-Puede tomar dictado de palabras, frases u oraciones sin omitir, sustituir ni invertir letras.
-Realiza la copia sin errores.

The Spanish classroom writing-rubric was created by the Spanish teachers and the school principal. These expectations by the teachers reflect the importance placed on orthography. Is it even possible for students to receive a rating of "very good" in some

areas? Can a child at the age of six copy from the board without ever making any errors? The examples of work that I obtained show that even the students rated "very good" had orthographic errors when they copied from the board. The rubric does not contain a section on creative writing or individual student-produced texts.

4.4.2 Teacher corrections

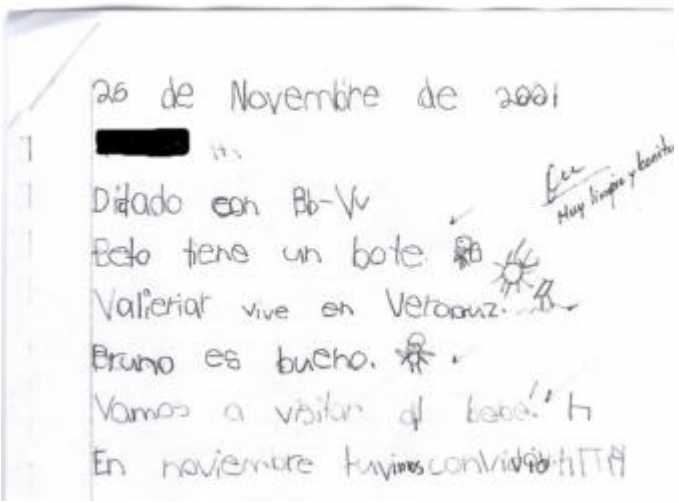
Teacher corrections on students written work are discussed in this section. The large amount of time teachers spent on correcting and marking students work is worth noting. Teachers spent approximately equal amounts of class time on correcting student notebooks and teaching a lesson. The English and Spanish teachers repeatedly commented on the importance of correcting the majority of students' written work. The English teacher's rationale for this type of correction was that if students' orthographic errors were not corrected immediately they would not learn the correct spelling and would continue to make the same errors. After one particular activity I asked her if she was going to correct their work. María responded, *"Sí, porque si no, se les va a quedar grabado. Por ejemplo, "ghost" con "u" se les va a quedar grabado, se me hace que los voy a corregir. Siempre hago eso. También que pueda ver en que les ayudo y hacer que ellos noten sus errores*".

The Spanish teacher had a similar opinion about correcting students' work: *"Hacerles ver el error que cometieron. Hacerles ver sus errores. Se los marco no para ponerles un tache, decirles está mal sino para decirles, "Mira, este es tu error, para la próxima vez fíjate bien*".

However, the strong emphasis placed on orthographic accuracy and the constant teacher reminders and corrections did not seem to be an effective tool for improving students written text. For example, a common error found in the participating students'

work was in regards to the use of "v" or "b" in Spanish. I observed the Spanish teachers frequently correcting these errors verbally and in written form in student notebooks. Students also often had to practice texts focusing on these specific orthographic features. Figure 4.9 shows examples of participating students' work practicing the use of "V" and "B".

Figure 4.9 Student-Produced Texts Practicing the Use of "V" VS. "B"



In the upper right corner of Figure 4.9 the teacher corrected the students work and commented, "*Muy limpio y bonito*". This is another demonstration of the importance the Spanish teacher places on written form. The teacher comments in Figure 4.13 also focus on orthographic neatness rather than on content. The Spanish teacher wrote, "*Puedes mejorar tu letra, O.K.?*" I frequently observed similar written and oral comments about students' orthography in the English and Spanish classrooms. I did not observe teacher correction in regards to the content of the students written work. An illustrative example follows of the Spanish teacher's verbal corrections during an *enunciado* activity. These corrections occurred during a five-minute period while students were writing the sentences into their notebooks and the teacher wandered around the room observing their work.

Teacher: "*Bonita letra Beto o te lo borro todo. Dije niño, no Ñoño. Dije "b" de bicicleta*".

Beto: "*Yo sé*".

Teacher: "*Entonces porque pones "v" de vaca*".

The teacher turned to the student next to Beto and says,

Teacher: "*Dije "b" de bicicleta, no "d" de dedo". Rayones no. En kinder hacen rayones; aquí no. Tu ya no haces rayones*".

She turned to the entire group and reminds them to write neatly,

Teacher: *Advierto, bonita letra. No me hagan al trancazo. Si no, tacho todo. Hagan su mejor esfuerzo con cariño y con amor*".

Girl: "*¿Es con "v" chica?"*

Teacher: "*¡No! "b" de bicicleta."*

These types of oral corrections were made throughout Spanish classroom writing activities.

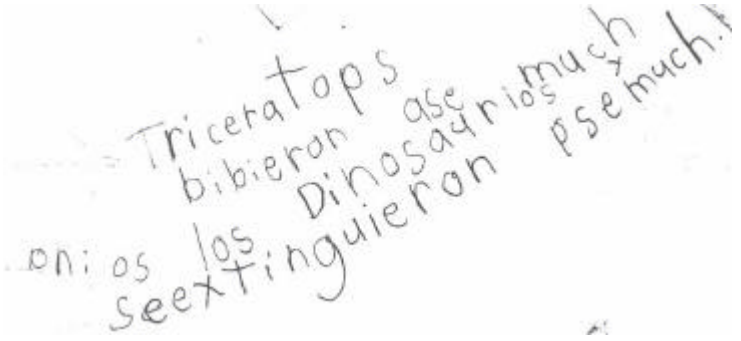
4.4.3 Common Student Errors

The following are examples of participating students' orthographic errors found in a variety of classroom-produced texts. These examples demonstrate that the use of explicit instruction and error correction of certain orthographic features in these classrooms was not accomplishing the objectives that both participating teachers had for their students. Students continued to make the same errors on a regular basis, despite multiple correction or instruction provided by the teachers. When I asked the teachers about student errors when copying from the board both expressed the belief that the students were not paying attention.

Figure 4.10, Alex's dinosaur activity, is another example of students' confusion between "B" and "V". He wrote the word "*vivieron*" as "*bibieron*". In this text, Alex also produces two other commonly found developmental errors in student's work. The first error is in regards to the use or absence of the silent "h" in the word "*hace*" which

he wrote "*ase*". In the second error he had confused the letter "S" with the "C" in "*hace*". In spite of frequent teacher correction, Alex made these spelling errors regularly throughout the period of observation.

Figure 4.10 Alex's Dinosaur Activity



Although the Spanish teacher is constantly correcting students orthography she admits that students will continue to make errors because they are going through a process that will take years.

> *Todavía, todavía van a tener muchas faltas de ortografía como es lógico a su edad. Que esto se va corrigiendo poco a poco en el transcurso de los años. Y la fluidez, pues, es lo mismo van a ir adquiriendo poco a poco. Pero sí, una de las metas es que tengan una fluidez buena en Primero de Inglés.*

In the following section I will address the writing activities observed in the Spanish classroom.

4.5 Writing Activities in the Spanish Classroom

In the Spanish classroom there was extensive use of *dictado, copiado* and *enunciado* activities. All written work was done in *libretas*, small notebooks containing a small grid of square boxes or, as Figure 4.13 shows, lines with a dotted line down the middle of the page. The lines in Figure 4.13 are of similar nature to the permanent grid

that is on Laura's whiteboard. According to both teachers, the small cube grid is intended as a guideline for writing words, leaving spaces, and making a distinction between capitals and lower case letters. Laura clearly states her objectives for dictation, copying and *enunciados*:

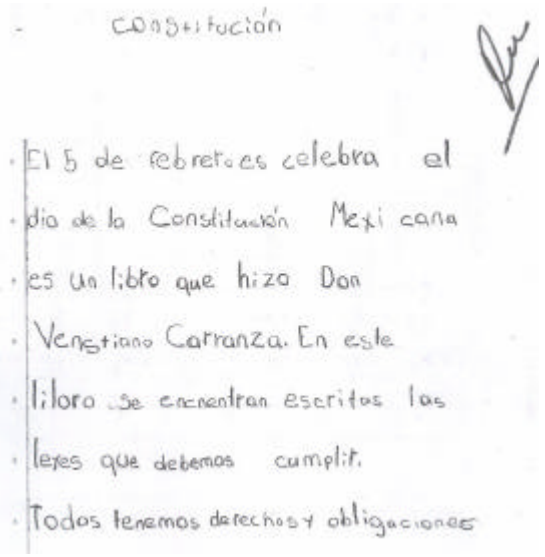
"*El objetivo del dictado, pues, es conocer, conocer las letras, ¿no? Cada semana vemos una letra nueva. Ir este, como te diré, ir trabajándola por medio de dictados; Con banco de palabras que sacamos palabras con la letra que vimos en esa semana. Enunciados con palabras que comienzan con esa letra o que tengan esa letra. Para que ellos se les vayan quedando, ¿verdad?, la vayan conociendo, vayan aprendiendo, trabajando sobre lo mismo. El copiado es que se acostumbren, igual, a escribir las letras correctamente como en los trazos, este... pero aparte para igual ir... seguir conociendo las letras que ellos vayan leyendo de la misma copia, porque hay niños que a estas alturas del año se comen las letras o no copian bien o ponen uno por otro. Este es básico para irse a la primaria*."

4.5.1 Copiado

I begin by discussing the copying that students were required to complete on a daily basis. On a regular basis students had to copy directly from the board a paragraph created by the teacher about a certain topic. In the case of Figure 4.11 the paragraph was used to present information about the Mexican Constitution and why it is celebrated on the fifth of February. During these activities students did not add their own ideas to these paragraphs.

During the Primary Years Programme farm investigation students were required to do research at home and bring in a poster with information about farm products. As I

Figure 4.11 Example of Sara's *Copiado* Homework

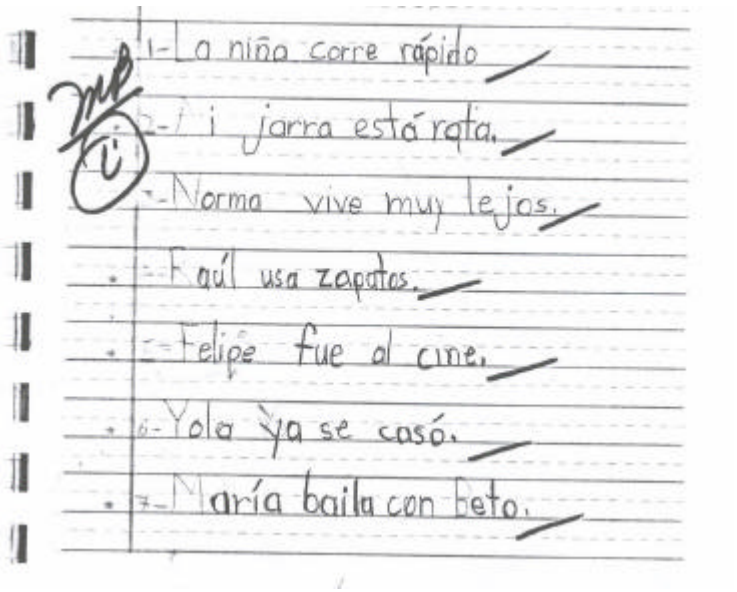


observed their final work I noticed that students were allowed to copy paragraphs from websites or "*laminas*" (small posters containing information about specific topics that are sold at *papelerías*). They were even permitted to cut the paragraphs out and paste them onto their poster. They were not expected to do the research and then create their own texts or summaries about the information they gathered on the topic. Only one child out of the two classrooms brought an authentic text summarizing the facts about the farm products she had researched.

4.5.2 *Dictado*

Another writing activity in the Spanish classroom that students participated in daily was dictation. Figure 4.12 demonstrates the type of sentences children are dictating. One of Laura's main literacy objectives is that the students can write the dictation without committing errors. She did not discuss wanting the students to be able to freely express

Figure 4.12 Marcela's Dictation with the Letters "B" and "V"



their ideas. She shared, *"En cuanto a lectoescritura es que logran el conocimiento de todas las letras, todo el abecedario, que tengan una fluidez en la lectura y que logran conocer todas las letras y que para poder ellos escribir lo que quieren para poder hacer un dictado correctamente."*

A typical pattern during *dictado* was that the Spanish teacher would dictate word-by-word sentences associated with the letter of the week or previous learned letters. She would repeat a word several times while students worked at writing the word in their notebooks. After each word she would say *"espacio"* (space) as a reminder that the word was finished and that they needed to leave a space between each word. She continued to dictate in this fashion until the end of the sentence and she would remind students to end with a period. Two example sentences of a dictated sentence that I observed were as follows:

1. *Quique usa su camisa.*
2. *Ceci está en el cine.*

Typically during these activities students dictated five sentences containing approximately four or five words. These dictation exercises usually lasted 30 minutes.

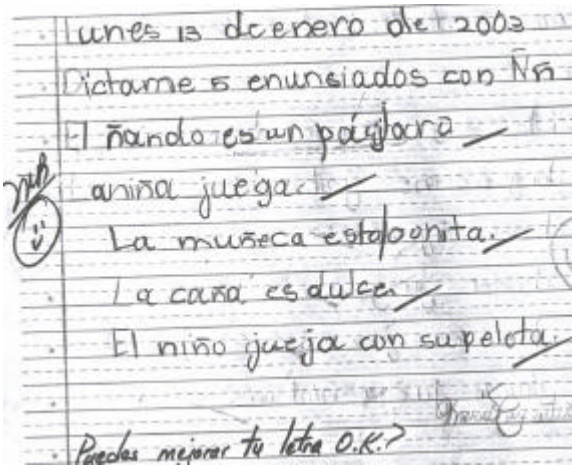
As I observed students during this activity I noticed that students worked at different paces. Some students finished writing a word quickly and waited patiently or impatiently for Laura to give the next word. Other students were missing words in the sentence because they worked too slowly, were distracted, or did not know how to write the word. These children would either look at their neighbors work or shout out questions to Laura. The words in the dictation were almost always words students were already familiar with from *enunciado* or *copiado* work.

4.5.3 *Enunciados*

During *enunciado* activities the students and the teacher formed a *"banco de palabras"*, a list of words that start with or contain the sound of the letter of the week. Once they formed the list of words together they created coherent sentences containing these words. Students and the Spanish teacher created the *enunciado* sentences. In fact, this was the one writing activity where student derived sentences were greater than teacher derived sentences. Laura would then write the sentences on the whiteboard and the children would copy the sentences into their notebooks. Figure 4.13 is an example of *enunciado* work completed in Laura's class working with the letter "Ñ".

Since these sentences are often student-generated they are at the children's vocabulary level and are often related to the students lives. For example, in Figure 4.9 the sentences working on "B" and "V" talk about a party the students had at school in November and a few of the sentences contain names of some of the students in the class. During this study this type of writing activity was observed almost daily. For the students

Figure 4.13 Alex's *Enunciado* Work with the Letter "Ñ"



this activity appeared to be routine. Students knew what was expected of them throughout the lesson and the only confusion on the part of the students was thinking of words that started with the correct sound.

The majority of class time students were partaking in *dictado*, *enunciado* and *copiado* writing activities. Once I observed the Spanish teacher leading the children in a song about the value of the month or a song related to the thematic unit. On rare occasions, students were asked to complete a creative writing assignment.

4.5.4 Creative Writing or Free Expression

Over the course of this study I observed only one occasion in the Spanish classroom where students participated in a creative writing assignment. After a lesson on dinosaurs, students were asked to create a small text about what they know about dinosaurs. Laura instructed that it did not matter if they made errors or if they needed help with spelling. She also emphasized that they were to do this on their own and with their own creativity. Since this did not appear to be a frequent activity in the Spanish classroom and since it seemed to be an important contrast from other types of writing activities which so heavily focused on the proper use of orthographic features, I asked Laura in an interview why she did not correct students' work in this particular activity. Her response was:

> *"Para mí esto es algo precioso que ellos hicieron. Junto con sus errores con sus faltas de ortografía y si yo corrijo algo en este trabajo que no es el cuaderno, siento que estoy echándoles perder un trabajo que a su edad es algo precioso. Es la creatividad de ellos. Es como si fuera a destruir un trabajo que ellos crearon. Esta mal. Esto es creatividad y esto es maravilloso".*

Laura here is making a clear distinction between what is expected of the students when working in their notebook and what is acceptable when creating one's own text. This concept was reinforced during the study when I asked a First English teacher outside of the study why she did not want the computer teacher to make corrections on students work that had been created during their weekly computer class. She made a distinction between when she corrects students' work and when she allows errors. She called this distinction, *"libre expresión"* (e.g. students' own words) and *"trabajos dirigidos"* (e.g. *dictado, enunciados, copiado*). She said *"Solamente cuando es libre expresión puedo dejar los errores. Los niños saben que en ciertas actividades no voy a corregir sus trabajos"*. The free expression activities allow the child to express themselves without the worry of making mistakes. Students are allowed to ask for help or call out *"pavo es con v chica o b grande"* but the teacher will not offer help or advice unless called to do so by the student.

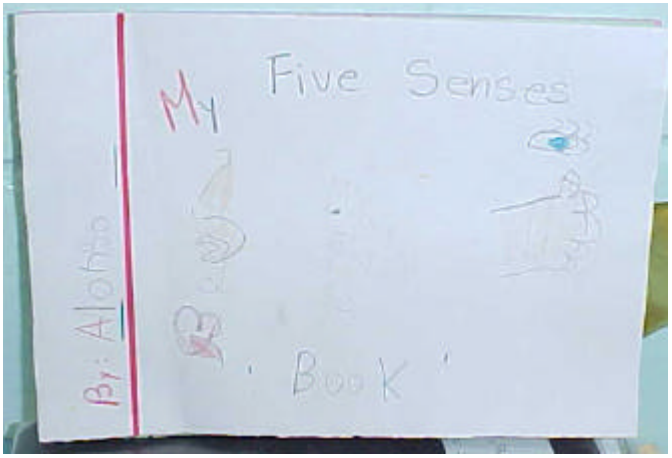
Sara's work in 4.14 is one of the creative writing activities. It shows a variety of different types of errors in regards to form. For example, she tends to have an over usage of capitals and periods, as well as, some spelling errors. Sara placed a period after each word unless the words were connected by *"y"* and she used a capital letter at the start of every word except *"y"*. She also made the common mistake between "B" and "V" and "C"

Figure 4.14 Sara's Creative Writing Project about Dinosaurs

and “S”. The one last aspect of this writing assignment that I would like to point out is Sara’s technique of continuing the word *reptiles* by placing the “s” on the following line. This is not a strategy taught by the Spanish teacher. In fact Sara should be conscious of this error as she is constantly reminded of how to properly space and divide words on lines from all of her notebook work with grided paper. This writing assignment is, however, rich with authoring as it demonstrates Sara’s understanding of the thematic unit and expresses the dinosaur facts that most interested her. As Laura said, *“Esto es creatividad, y esto es maravilloso”*.

In the English classroom students are asked to author their own books containing information about the thematic unit they are working on. Figure 4.15 shows Alberto’s book about the five senses. On each page the book represents one of the five senses. Alberto has copied the information from the teacher’s text on the whiteboard into his own book. He added a variety of drawings that represent the sense he wrote about. The concept of the book could be labeled “authoring”. However, the finished product continues to be a “scribal” activity as the students must copy the information directly from the teacher’s text and are not creating their own texts.

Figure 4.15 Alberto’s five senses book



4.6 Children's Strategies for Writing

The strategies that students were using during both the English and Spanish classroom activities were not always the same as those instructed by the teachers. For example, Alex demonstrated an all-together different type of strategy. As I observed Alex copying from the whiteboard vocabulary about farm animals into his notebook I noticed he had written "shecen" instead of "chicken". María corrected him and made him copy the word correctly from the board. However, I decided to ask him his strategy for copying down the words. He informed me that he sounded the word out and then wrote it as it sounded to him. I found this strategy very interesting because both teachers explicitly expressed that this was not one of their strategies used for writing instruction. In this instance Alex had used his own strategy or a strategy taught to him outside of TBS instead of what his classroom teachers had taught him.

When I asked the teachers their opinion about Alex's use of this strategy they responded, "*Porque no crees que sea americano. Los americanos no vean mucho el pizarrón. Los extranjeros tratan de escuchar lo que tu dices y escribirlo. Como inglés es su primer idioma Alex puede usar esta técnica*". However, she did not have an answer as to where he learned this strategy other than because he is American. I went a little further and asked her if Native Spanish speakers use this strategy in their L1. She

responded, *"No, no tienen la costumbre o no saben como hacerlo. Ya es por inercia"*. Both strategies for writing the vocabulary list from the board, whether by invented spelling or direct copying seemed to produce errors.

4.7 Children's Strategies for Reading

Sara read whole words and captured meaning as she read in English and Spanish. She demonstrated this ability by answering comprehension questions throughout a story. Alberto continued to read syllabically and often times had to return to the text in order to answer comprehension questions correctly in Spanish. In English Alberto frequently pronounced sounds in Spanish. He also had a more difficult time answering comprehension questions in English.

Andrea read fluent in Spanish and English the majority of the time and when she would get stuck on a word she would return to reading syllabically. Alex reads fluently and comprehends what he has read. He is also able to summarize the story. In Spanish he tends to pronounce some sounds in English but his comprehension level is high in both languages. Marcela reads syllabically in Spanish and English and sometimes works through a word silently and then reads it out loud. She can summarize a story after referring back to the text in Spanish and English.

All five students tended to glance at the drawing in the book before and after reading the page in the English book. On several occasions the students would look at the drawing after I asked a question referring to the text. These were the observed strategies the selected students used during the duration of the study.

4.8 Children's Developing Understandings of the Purpose of Literacy

The participating children's understandings about literacy tended to coincide but there were also some interesting differences worth discussing. I received interesting answers when I asked students who they thought was the best reader in the class and who had trouble reading. All five students had trouble thinking of the best reader but most had definite answers for the low level readers. However, their reasons for their answers varied.

When I first asked Alex he responded, "I never saw anyone read in this class." After I pushed him to think hard he responded that his teacher María reads the best. "She knows how to read well. She reads excellent. She's been practicing more and she reads fast. Alex had no trouble sharing his opinion about the classmate who has trouble reading. "Juan José, because he doesn't even know what he's saying. He doesn't understand the words." Alex regards his classmate's inability to comprehend text as classification of a low level reader. However, his definition of a good reader, "María", is someone who reads fluently and fast. Alex's analysis of literacy has placed a strong emphasis on fluency and comprehension.

Alberto responded that Sara was the best reader in the class. His reason was, "*Sara sabe leer más que yo en inglés y se fue con Ms. Ana* (the school principal) *porque va a leer en público en la graduación, en español*". For Alberto being chosen to read in public was an indication of a skilled reader. Other reasons children offered for the selection of the best reader were, *"Porque lee bien." "Se escucha bien"*.

Andrea and Marcela gave the following reasons for choosing the low level readers, *"Porque no pone atención"*, *"Porque a veces se equivoca mucho con las letras"*, and simply *"porque cuesta más trabajo leer"*. These answers are focused on the form in which these students read. They do not express the importance of comprehension as in Alex's answer.

Students also shared with me, which was more difficult reading or writing. Andrea commented that it was easier to make errors while writing, *"Confundimos unas letras. Podemos equivocar con las letras más fácil escribiendo que leer algunas veces."* Alonso agreed with Andrea by responding, *"A veces escribo la letra mal."* Both children are very conscious of their written errors and appear to understand a good writer to be someone who does not make orthographic errors. They did not comment on the content of the texts they write or the meaning they are trying to convey. Their only worry seems to be on the form of their writing.

I also asked students to comment on whether it was more difficult to learn to read and write in Spanish or English. Students had varying answers but each participating student either directly or indirectly shared that reading in English was more difficult. Alberto responded honestly, "Inglés es más difícil porque no sé pronunciar los sonidos en inglés." Alberto is aware of the difficulties he faces when learning to read in a L2. Andrea shared with me that learning to read in English is easy, but the accent is difficult.

Children's developing theories of literacy also had some similarities and differences in regards to the importance and role of literacy in our lives. Children had developed varying ideas with one underlying theme. Literacy is needed for our every day lives. Children were asked about the importance of learning to read and write. Marcela responded, *"Para que seas buena en la vida*". The act of being able to read and write made you a better person.

Alberto shared that literacy is an essential part of a person's survival. *"Si no sabes leer te vas a perder en la calle. Pero vas a ver puros dibujos y no se entiende los dibujos*". Sara also believed literacy was necessary for daily life. *"Si quieres escribir algo en la calle, no vas a poder*". Marcela commented, *"Como cuando vayas a trabajar*

te pueden preguntar si sabes a leer o sumar. Y si no sabes no puedes trabajar". Marcela is thinking of the future and the skills she will need to be a productive member of society. Each student expressed that their ability to read and write will be an essential part of their lives.

4.9 Teachers' Understandings about Literacy

In the Spanish teacher's interview she presented some very clear and fundamentally sound strategies for teaching reading and writing. Laura expressed her understanding of literacy in an interview.

> "*Una definición no te lo podía decir exactamente porque es un proceso. Es decir, cuando comienzan y cuando llegan a su meta. La lectoescritura, es cuando ellos ya están en el proceso de aprendizaje en la lectura y escritura. Primero es la lectura y luego la escritura... Porque la escritura es mucho más difícil.*"

She also went on to describe the long-term goals she has for her students in the area of literacy.

> "*En cuanto a lecto-escritura es que logran el conocimiento de todas las letras todo el abecedario, que tengan una fluidez en la lectura y que logren conocer todas las letras y que para poder ellos escribir lo que quieren, para poder hacer un dictado correctamente. Todavía, todavía van a tener muchas faltas de ortografía como es lógico a su edad. Que esto se va corrigiendo poco a poco en el transcurso de los años. Y la fluidez, pues, es lo mismo van a ir adquiriendo poco a poco. Pero sí, una de las metas es que tengan una fluidez buena en primero de inglés.*"

The goals presented by the Spanish teacher reflect the same goals outlined in the Spanish classroom rubric. Laura does not express any concern for students' comprehension of a reading or their ability to summarize the reading. Her concern for students' fluency in reading and their ability to dictate properly are her main objectives for literacy.

At the end of the interview after I had asked all my questions she wanted to conclude by making one important comment. She declared,

> *"A mí en particular, me preocupa mucho el autoestima de los niños, más que aprendan a leer y escribir, me preocupa mucho el que ellos se sienten seguros de sí mismos, que no vayan con la autoestima abajo, porque son sus bases principales para poder seguir adelante."*

It is important to understand that this statement by the Spanish teacher was offered voluntarily as a closure to the interview. This comment expresses her motivation for being a teacher and her main objectives as a teacher of preschool age children. It demonstrates that Laura clearly believes that her teaching techniques and her manner of correcting her students is helping them to gain more self esteem, which she believes to be a fundamental base for these preschoolers.

In the interview with the English teacher she commented on the difference in the English and Spanish literacy rubrics. She commented about why students are not evaluated for their reading and writing skills in English during First English.

> "*Porque es su segundo idioma. Sí, es importante, pero tal vez no le damos tanto importancia en preescolar. En la primaria tienen que ir aprendiendo según su madurez. No vas a enseñar a un niño a leer y escribir en inglés en Primero de Inglés.*"

The English and Spanish teachers have similar beliefs about students' maturity and their development of literacy skills occurring over time.

I also asked the English teacher in an interview about whether students had more difficulty learning to read and write in English or Spanish. She responded,

> "*Español. En español puedes hacer más rollos porque aprenden muy bien. Puedes enseñarles canciones de las sílabas y es más fácil para ellos en español que en inglés. Pero, claro, aprenden los dos fácilmente porque el niño es una esponja. Pero no te va a entender igual en inglés.*"

This comment reflects the English teacher's idea that reading and writing can be taught by using songs and phrases that will help the students remember rules about written form and reading phonetically or syllabically. She also expresses that this type of

teaching is easier in the Spanish classroom because students have higher levels of comprehension in Spanish.

The previous comments by the English and Spanish teachers are important for understanding their theories and ideas about literacy instruction and learning for preschool age children. They both express important ideas that literacy learning is a developmental process that occurs over years.

4.10 Conclusion

To conclude this chapter it is important to return to the predictions made at the start of this chapter. It appears that the predictions were only partially accurate. I predicted that the English and Spanish classrooms would focus more on conventional written forms rather than on students' ability to create meaning through authoring (Barton 1999). In general students participated in writing activities, such as *dictado, enunciado,* and *copiado* that were mainly focused on improving their orthography rather than on the creation of authentic texts. The children were not entirely restricted to activities that focused on the scribal aspects of written language as two counter example activities were observed. In the Spanish classroom students were asked to create sentences that contained the letter of the week. These sentences were used for *copiado* activities. The second counter example is the dinosaur activity (Figure 4.14) that children completed in the Spanish classroom. Students were allowed to write any information about dinosaurs and the teacher did not correct the finished texts. Each student created an authentic text.

The prediction that literacy instruction would be similar in the English and Spanish classrooms was inaccurate. In fact, literacy instruction was handled quite differently in each language. Written language in the Spanish classroom focused on

improving orthographic features at the sentence level and the English classroom worked with learning English vocabulary at the word level. Reading in the Spanish classroom was either done independently by the students while they worked during *dictado, enunciado,* or *copiado* or one-on-one with the teacher. Students were asked periodically to read out loud the sentences they had copied into their notebooks. On the other hand, reading in the English classroom consisted of group, individual and one-on-one activities. Students consistently used an English textbook for choral reading activities. Students were also asked to summarize and answer comprehension questions about the reading. This skill was not observed in the Spanish classroom.

I also predicted that students would implement the reading and writing strategies that were taught by the English and Spanish teacher and that students would use the same strategies for literacy learning in their L1 and L2. Students did in fact implement a variety of teacher-taught strategies. When reading out loud at times students would work through a word by syllables. This strategy was taught to the children explicitly in the English and Spanish classroom. Students did, however, use strategies that were not present in the classrooms. For instance, Alex's use of inventive spelling did not follow the teachers' conventional forms for teaching writing. Alex may have acquired this skill elsewhere and he brought this writing strategy to the classroom. The dinosaur activity in Figures 4.12 and 4.14 also demonstrate that other children were using inventive spelling.

Students did seem to be using the same strategies interchangeably between their L1 and L2 during English and Spanish literacy activities. For example, Alex also used inventive spelling in the Spanish classroom during a *copiado* activity. Every so often he would stop looking at the whiteboard and he would sound out a word and write it down

as it sounded to him. Also students who read syllabically in one language also did so in the other.

In the following chapter I explore the possible meanings of these results and the differences in the literacy instruction in the English and Spanish classrooms even though the students are the same in both classrooms and the teachers are co-team teachers. I conclude with the implications for future research in Mexico and other contexts.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter I return to the research questions that guided this study. I discuss the conclusions about practice and policy for literacy learning at TBS and at the SEP level. I also discuss implications for future studies of literacy and biliteracy practices in Mexico and other contexts.

5.1 Research Questions

In this section I answer the research questions and draw conclusions about the literacy practices at TBS. The first research questions is as follows:

Did the English and Spanish teacher implement the same literacy instruction in their classrooms or did they differ depending on the language or an alternative factor?

The English and Spanish teacher typically used different strategies for literacy instruction. The writing activities in the English classroom were mainly copying down lists of vocabulary words and drawing illustrations representing each word. The students' written work rarely consisted of writing complete sentences. On the other hand, written work in the Spanish classroom was mainly at the sentence level. Students worked at copying into their notebooks various sentences related to the letter of the week and typically containing an average of four words per sentence. Interestingly, neither the English nor the Spanish classroom worked on developing texts in the form of paragraphs. The only observed written paragraphs that students produced were the

teacher-directed texts in the Spanish classroom, such as the paragraph about the Mexican Constitution in Figure 4.11.

Reading instruction in the two classrooms was also different. In the English classroom students typically read out loud as a group, one-on-one with the teacher and silently while completing activities in other content areas. Unlike writing activities that mainly consisted of writing vocabulary words, students in the English classroom read whole sentences, paragraphs and even complete stories. The choral reading activities involved reading short stories or poems. During these activities students generally seemed to enjoy themselves as the majority of students participated enthusiastically. Students demonstrated comprehension of these stories by orally answering questions and summarizing. Students also formed sentences at the grammar chart and read them out loud to the English teacher. Mathematics was one of the content classes where students were required to read in English silently. The math worksheet in Figure 4.8 is an example of the type of texts students were asked to read. During the math activity students had to understand the written text in order to solve the math problem. Reading in the English classroom, therefore, consisted of reading out loud, reading silently and comprehension of different length texts. These activities were not observed in the Spanish classroom.

Reading instruction in students' L2 was more complex than L1 reading instruction. Reading in the Spanish classroom was mainly at the sentence level. Students read silently while copying from the board, reading a worksheet or one-on-one with the teacher. Reading material was rarely contextualized for the students and the few comprehension questions they answered were very simple. The reading worksheets contained sentences that were not related to the students' lives or the thematic unit. Instead, the texts and sentences were only related to the letter of the week. After

reading the sentences in this worksheet, students were asked to answer the three comprehension questions with one-word answers. Students were not asked to summarize texts or re-tell stories in the Spanish classroom. Students read independently while copying from the board with greater frequency than they participated in teacher-directed reading activities. Students demonstrated well-developed reading skills in their L2. However, they were not required to use or develop these same skills in their L1.

In conclusion, the data collected in this study revealed that reading in the children's L2 appeared to be a more complex task than in their L1. In English students were asked to read longer texts and answer more difficult comprehension questions. Students were permitted to use either language when answering questions but those students who worked at answering in English were developing more advanced reading skills in their L2. Spanish reading activities were oftentimes reading isolated sentences and did not involve reading short paragraphs. These results seem to contrast with Moll & Diaz's (1987) findings. Moll & Diaz (1987) found that Spanish/English bilingual students received more complex instruction in their L1 rather than their L2 and that L2 instruction was far too simple. Moll & Diaz (1987, p.303) concluded,

> "…there was no transfer from English to Spanish reading…because the organization of instruction was such as to make reading in English dissimilar from reading in Spanish. Comprehension, the key to reading, did not enter in any important way into English reading lessons. You cannot transfer what you are not allowed to display".

Students in the Moll & Diaz (1987) study were not given the proper means for demonstrating reading comprehension in their L2. Instruction in the students' L2 limited use of L1 reading skills and thus from taking advantage of transfer to develop their L2 reading skills. Interestingly, in the current study students were using more developed and complex reading skills in their L2 than their L1. This difference in reading practices is similar to the Moll & Diaz conclusion that students cannot

demonstrate their reading abilities in their L1 or the L2 if the reading instruction or reading activities do not promote the use of these skills. The reading activities in the Spanish classroom did not allow or challenge students to use their reading skills that they had developed in the English classroom.

Reading at TBS also occurred outside of the English and Spanish classrooms. Students attended the school library on a weekly basis. The following section describes the reading that occurred in the library.

5.1.1 Reading Activities Outside the Classroom

During the study, students received outside classroom support for literacy learning once a week. Students visit the library where the librarian reads a short story in Spanish or English. Oftentimes puppets or slides are used to enhance the story. The story is frequently related to the thematic unit students are studying in the classroom. Following the story children are given approximately 15 minutes to quietly read a book of their choice individually or with a classmate. At the end of each session students may choose a book they would like to check out and take home for the week. The English and Spanish books are on opposite sides of the room. There are approximately 100 more books in Spanish than in English. Reading is treated differently in the library, as it is a more casual activity than in the classroom. Students can listen and interact with the story without pressure of having to read out loud or complete a written assignment. During my observations the librarian also asked the students to make predictions throughout the story, answer comprehension questions, summarize and re-tell the story in their own words. These were activities that were observed in the English classroom but not the Spanish classroom. In the library students also enjoyed

their time of choosing any book and sitting or lying down on the carpet to read their story.

According to the preschool principal, the Spanish textbook is no longer part of the curriculum because the teachers found that students were memorizing the text and not actually reading and understanding the texts. Therefore, the principal decided to rely mainly on the school library to fulfill the place of the Spanish textbook. I observed children checking out of the library once a week books in English and Spanish that they had individually selected. However, these texts were not incorporated into classroom instruction. Children took the book home for a week and brought it back on the day of their designated library class. The library experience was, therefore, similar to that of the English classroom but it incorporated the reading activities in both languages.

5.1.2 Possible Reasons for the differences in Instructional Practices

The comparison of texts used in both classrooms and the different literacy instructional practices lead to the question of why these two teachers working at the same school produce such different types of written texts and instructional practices in their classrooms? When I asked this question of the English teacher, her only comment was, *"Cada quién tiene su sistema. Cada quién tiene su estilo. Es la misma meta, pero cada quién tiene su estilo*". Individual teaching styles may be one contributing factor but I believe there are other reasons for the difference in instructional practices.

One important conclusion can be drawn that the Spanish classroom dedicates a large percentage of their curriculum to the teaching of the "scribal" function of writing, while the English classroom is more concerned with the learning of the thematic vocabulary and oral production in the target language. Evidence of this can be noted in the English rubric (Appendix B) that teachers use to evaluate their students. According

to this measure, students in the English classroom are held accountable only for pre-literacy skills. The main objective for students outlined in the evaluation rubric and observed during class activities were to increase their English vocabulary and use of short phrases and develop good listening comprehension of classroom dialogue in the English classroom. Students are not required to know how to read and write in English at this grade level even though they seem to be reading at higher level than in Spanish. Both the English teacher and the preschool director commented that reading and writing in English would be the focus of instruction the following year at the Elementary school. Therefore, writing instruction in the students' L1 was the Spanish teachers responsibility. In conclusion, the difference in instructional practices and teacher-directed texts was apparently due to the differences in the pre-determined literacy objectives for the English and Spanish classrooms.

The effects of economics on TBS has aided in the development of these differences in literacy objectives. The effects of the increase in market for a bilingual education in Puebla has driven TBS to take measures to ensure their continued success as a binational school. As I commented in chapter two, TBS has plans for adding a "*maternal*" school due to the competition from other bilingual schools in Puebla. There has also been a decrease in student population at TBS due to the increase in number of competing schools. This competition has led administrators and policy makers at TBS to make changes in the school's curriculum.

The first changes began two years before the onset of the study when "*kinder*", the first year of preschool at TBS, was changed form a 50/50 English/Spanish model to 90% of the day in English. These shifts in language instruction are similar to those that occur in Dual Language programs in the U.S. TBS believes that this English program will aid in the promotion of the school by drawing more families than other bilingual

programs. In fact, the year following this study TBS plans to implement the 90/10 model in the second year of the preschool. This pattern may lead to the entire preschool curriculum relying on an all-English program in the classroom with special classes providing Spanish language support. The preschool director reflected that an all-English program allows students to acquire a better English accent. She did not discuss the importance of literacy instruction in the students L1 or learning in different content areas. This idea presented by the director reflects more importance and emphasis on students' ability to speak the L2 rather than on their development of literacy skills in both Spanish and English.

These factors suggest that TBS is continually making changes to their school policy and curriculum in order to attract clients to what they consider a "unique" bilingual environment. Since I began working at TBS four years ago, the policy makers have attempted to implement four different curriculum programs. They have also changed their bilingual model twice in four years. This is evidence that TBS tends to make curriculum changes yearly. The market forces in Puebla seem to drive TBS's curriculum and may in fact be a cause of the imbalance and differences in literacy instruction between the English and Spanish classroom.

Reading and writing activities in English and Spanish were found to be similar only in that both teachers used frequent oral and written forms of correcting students' written work and both teachers began by teaching the children to read syllabically. A third similarity is that reading activities were relatively scarce in the English and Spanish classrooms. The lack of reading instruction and practice in the Spanish classroom was also due to the majority of class time being dedicated to critique of students' use of written form. The *dictado*, *copiado*, and *enunciado* writing activities used a great deal of the class time. The Spanish teacher used the majority of time for

these exercises and for correcting students' work. Since the English teacher did not practice *enunciado* and *dictado* work in English, she had time to implement reading activities.

Asymmetry between English and Spanish reading materials was another contributing factor to the absence of reading activities in the Spanish classroom. The basic Spanish worksheets were not conducive to meaningful reading experiences in the Spanish classroom. On the other hand, the English teacher had a developmentally-age-appropriate reading book for each student in the class. These materials allowed the students to partake in a variety of meaningful reading activities in English.

5.1.3 Research Question #2

I now present the second research question and draw conclusions about teacher-directed literacy strategies.

Did the five participating students use these teacher-directed literacy strategies in the classroom?

Students implemented the teacher-directed writing strategies that focused on the "scribal" aspects of written language. This was demonstrated by the students' use of the red pencil, their frequent questions about conventional spelling, and their focus on having neat handwriting. Students were very conscious about using the red pencil for capital letters and punctuation marks and would frequently have the red pencil ready in one hand while they wrote with the other hand. Students also corrected the teacher if she forgot to apply the use of the red pencil to a text.

Students also applied the English and Spanish teachers' strategy of using conventional spelling. During writing activities students would ask if words were spelled with certain letters. For example, students would ask if "*bicicleta*" was spelled

with a "v" or a "b" or if the word "*hace*" was spelled with an "s" or a "c". Students would also call out punctuation questions. For instance, they would ask if a word had an accent and, if so, over which letter.

Students were also conscious of the importance teachers placed on neatness of written work. Frequently during *copiado* exercises, typically containing five sentences, students would use a large portion of the time erasing and rewriting letters. They would even place their finger after a word in order to leave an acceptable amount of space between words. This focus on the form of written language was explicitly taught in the English and Spanish classrooms and was implemented by the students in this study. This finding supports Edelsky's (1986) conclusion that teachers' beliefs and instruction effect students' writing.

Students also applied certain teacher-directed reading strategies. Teachers began teaching reading phonetically and syllabically. These practices were observed of all five participating students. These teacher-directed reading strategies were also observed in Mulhern's (1983) study of kindergartner's literacy L1 learning in Spanish. Although the social economic status of the students at TBS differed from the students in Mulhern's study, the tendency to teach reading by direct instruction of letters and syllables rather than through meaning-centered activities was similar in both studies.

An example of a different literacy strategy being used is Sara's over use of periods and capitals in her dinosaur activity shown in Figure 4.14. She is working to understand when to use capital letters and periods, a skill that is explicitly taught by her teachers. However, Sara continues to experiment with and test different hypotheses about punctuation, which may be evidence that initial learning is developmental and, thus, instruction has no immediate and absolute effect. It is also possible that Sara

either disregards teacher instruction or she is over generalizing the explicit, teacher-directed strategies.

Alex's use of non-conventional spelling was another example of a student using writing strategies that were not teacher-directed. Alex's use of inventive spelling surprised me since both teachers seemed to disapprove of this style of writing. The teachers would consider this technique for writing to be inaccurate, producing a greater number of orthographic errors. The participating teachers did not seem to be aware of Alex's use of inventive spelling and, when I asked them about errors in copying, they did not mention his non-conventional spelling as being a possible reason for the errors. It appears that his teachers would say that Alex was distracted while doing the activity. After some probing, the English teacher commented that maybe Alex used this strategy because he is from the U.S. and English is his first language.

Children's use of non-teacher-directed strategies is similar to the results of Ferreiro's (1986) study on emergent literacy, which found that children did not always replicate the teacher-directed literacy practices. In Alex's case, he developed this technique through his own experiences with literacy outside of the classroom. Alex may have developed this practice or been encouraged by his parents to write without worrying about being corrected before receiving any formal schooling. There is no evidence that Alex applied this practice simply because he is from the U.S. In order to receive a deeper understanding of Alex's spelling technique it would be important to observe the literacy practices used in his home by his U.S. mother and Mexican father.

Students implemented the English and Spanish teachers' strategies in regards to written form simply because it was a constant part of formal instruction. The importance teachers and most parents placed on the "scribal" functions of written language seemed to be assimilated by the students in both their attitudes towards writing

and in the practices they demonstrated while writing. Writing had become a mechanical activity for these students.

5.1.4 Research Question #3

Was the students' learning affected or altered by the language of instruction or did evidence exist that the children use L1 and L2 strategies interchangeably?

The language of instruction affected students' learning due to the fact that reading and writing instruction was different in the English and Spanish classrooms. Students did not always have the opportunity to use their literacy strategies in both language settings. There were some isolated cases where students used their L1 and L2 literacy strategies interchangeably. For example, Alex used his non-conventional spelling in the English and Spanish classrooms. Although this technique was not promoted by either teacher, Alex continued this practice during most writing activities in English and Spanish. In this case Alex had discovered, without teacher guidance, how to transfer writing skills from one language to the other. Jiménez (1994) argues that this type of transfer does not always occur and that students may need to be taught how to transfer these skills. In contrast, this idea of teaching students to transfer skills was observed at TBS only during the initial stages of reading instruction.

A more common strategy employed in both the students' L1 and L2 took place during reading activities. Both the English and Spanish teachers began teaching children to read syllabically. This skill was observed of the five participating students at varying degrees. In both languages the more fluent readers reverted back to reading syllabically only when they encountered a difficult or unknown word. The lower-level students tended to read each word in a sentence phonetically or syllabically. Interestingly, students generally read unfamiliar English L2 words with Spanish L1

pronunciation. Therefore, it appeared that students were transferring their ability to read phonetically and syllabically in Spanish to their L2. This is consistent with Pritchard (1990) and Langer et al. (1990) studies that students shared reading strategies between their L1 and their L2. The use of shared reading strategies, however, did not extend beyond the use of reading phonetically and syllabically in this study. Students had developed reading comprehension skills in their L2 but not their L1. Dávila de Silva (1984) and Barrera's (1984) idea that students can "codevelop" their L1 and L2 reading abilities if reading instruction is focused on meaning was not a possibility at TBS because students were not provided with opportunities to develop or use these strategies for acquiring meaning in Spanish.

The language of instruction affected students' learning because reading and writing activities in the Spanish and English classrooms were markedly different. Therefore, activities were such that students could not transfer the skills acquired in the English classroom to the Spanish context. The Spanish teacher did not appear to consciously make learning in the Spanish classroom different from the English classroom. In fact, the reason student were not allowed to transfer skills was due to the structure of the Spanish curriculum. Children did not have the opportunity to participate in reading activities where comprehension was a main objective.

5.2 Important Questions and Issues that Developed During the Study

One characteristic of qualitative research is that new questions arise during observation and analysis of the data. (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, Merriam, 1998) Apart from the previously presented research questions two other important questions and issues about literacy at TBS emerged during this study.

5.2.1 Teachers' Understanding of Literacy and Their Applied Instructional Practices

The first issue was that on several occasions teacher voiced strategies and employed teaching techniques that did not coincide with the collected data from classroom observations. In fact many of the ideas that both teachers shared with me were based on sound teaching practices, but were never actually observed in their teaching practices. For example, when I asked the English teacher about the frog story problems in Figure 4.8 where students had to solve story addition problems in English during math class, she commented that the activity was too confusing and had too many instructions for her students. She felt it was not a productive activity and she hoped that next year the First English teachers could make some changes to these types of activities. She also stated her ideas about dictation, *'Si tu vas a nada más dictarles, ¿Qué caso tiene?: Queremos más actividades de comprensión*". Although the English teacher discussed this she did not actually perform more of these activities in her classroom.

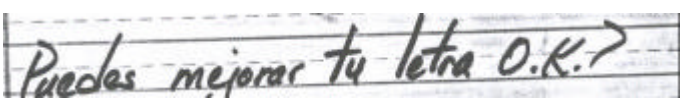
During informal interviews throughout the study the English teacher discussed her beliefs about the importance of reading comprehension and her desire to change some of the activities to coincide with these beliefs. Although she verbalized these feelings there was no evidence that she was implementing these types of activities in her class. María has a good deal of freedom in her classroom curriculum and if she so strongly believes in the benefits of less dictation and more comprehension activities, why has she not added them to her weekly routine? There are two possible answers to this question. The first is that these teachers truly believe in the methods they have been using since they began teaching. Both teachers made comments about literacy practices that they had used as a student or learned years ago as continuing to be useful teaching

techniques for their current classrooms. Their traditional perspectives on education do not allow them or make it difficult for them to change their instructional practices. The second possibility is that the teachers do not have the sufficient tools or professional development to make the changes they would like to in regards to literacy practices. Teachers that have been using the same or similar practices for years may not have the required knowledge for changing their techniques. Therefore, these teachers may have good intentions and a clear understanding of students' literacy development but they are not prepared professionally to teach these practices.

5.2.2 Teacher Corrections and Focus on Written Form

In this section it is important to return to Barton's (1999) definition of the "scribal" and "authoring" functions of written language. The first refers to the written form, including orthography, punctuation and neatness. On the other hand, "authoring" refers to the creation of meaning-centered texts by individuals or groups. The Spanish teacher made a comment about students' orthographic errors as being normal for the developmental level of the case study students. *"Todavía, todavía van a tener muchas faltas de ortografía como es lógico a su edad. Que esto se va corrigiendo poco a poco en el transcurso de los años."* This statement by Laura does not coincide with her observed actions in the classroom. The Spanish teacher is frequently reminding and reprimanding students for their written errors. Her written comments on students' work in Figure 5.1 is another example of the strong emphasis placed on orthography.

Figure 5.1 Example of Written Teacher Corrections of a Student's orthography



It is necessary to refer back to the Spanish teacher's comments about why she believes it is important to correct students written work. She stated, *"Hacerles ver el error que cometieron. Hacerles ver sus errores. Se los marco no para ponerles un tache,*

decirles esta mal sino para decirles, mira, este es tu error, para la próxima vez fíjate bien". It seems that her reasoning is that students need to be corrected for them to be able to change their orthography the next time. However, the Spanish teacher's actions demonstrate that she feels an obligation to correct students' written work.

Both participating teachers commented that the students' orthographic errors during dictation and copying sentences or paragraphs from the board occurred because students were distracted. However, the five participating students, all labeled "good" to "very good" academically, by their literacy teachers, also had frequent orthographic errors. Therefore, distraction may be one of a variety of plausible factors that caused misspelled words, inverted words or letters and punctuation errors. First of all, these students were only starting formal schooling to learn to read and write in Spanish in English. They brought only their pre-literacy skills that they had developed in the first two years of preschool and any experiences with literacy obtained in their homes. The errors of these young children are developmentally and age appropriate. Second, the children were not just looking at the letters on the board and copying them into their notebooks. For example, in English class, Alex read the word from the board and then sounded it out as he wrote it down. He had errors in words such as "shecen" instead of "chicken" because of the use of non-conventional spelling. Other students would read the entire word and then write the word as they remembered in their notebooks. The errors were not necessarily due to the students being distracted. In fact, it appears that each of the different strategies applied by the students for copying words form the board contained some margin of error in form. However, these errors are once again developmentally appropriate for these students.

The Spanish and English teachers on various occasions expressed their main literacy objectives as a student's ability to freely express oneself and to be able to

comprehend and fluently read texts in both English and Spanish. However, the practices they used in the classroom generally did not reflect these goals. It seemed that good handwriting with few or no spelling errors is regarded as more important than the students being able to create texts with their own ideas and words. Practices such as use of red letters, small gridded paper, constant copying and constant correction all reflect the importance that these teachers placed on the scribal aspects of writing. However, it does not reflect an environment that promotes "authoring" or creative writing. The English and Spanish teachers commented that creative writing would begin in February after students had learned all the letters of the alphabet. Creative writing would begin only after students had mastered the scribal functions of written language. The excessive focus on form or the "scribal" functions of writing more accurately describes the type of writing the students were required to complete.

The findings at TBS in regards to writing exercises were very similar to the findings in the Smith, Jiménez & Martinez León (2003) study. The study observed two different participating schools, one was a lower class school and the second was a middle-class school.

> "…student writing centered on short, discrete texts, typically dictation or copying teacher-produced models. Students were rarely given the opportunity to write texts longer than the sentence level, with notable exceptions including paragraph-length texts copied off the board" (p.6).

Smith et al. (2003) did not find examples of authentic student-created texts. Barton's idea of "authoring" was not observed in the Smith et al. study and a limited amount of "authoring" was observed in this current study.

5.2.3 Teacher Controlled Writing

The majority of the writing at TBS was teacher controlled causing the focus to be mainly on students' written form. Students did not have the freedom to express

themselves through written language. In fact, what they were asked to write was either isolated sentences or teacher-produced texts. Students were not permitted to use their imagination to create their own texts. Teacher controlled writing was also found in Ballestero Pinto's (2003) study in a public elementary school. She made the following comment about writing in the two fourth grade classrooms she observed:

> "*…la forma de corregir, el uso de los colores, las libretas cuadriculadas y la importancia de forma de escribir eran una forma de controlar y regular la escritura por parte de los profesores. Esto significa que los profesores hacían gran énfasis tanto en la forma de escribir como en la presentación de los trabajos escritos.*" (p.82)

In fact, Ballesteros Pinto's (2003) study contained teachers' comments made during writing activities that were very similar to those made by the participating teachers in this study. In both studies the teachers made comments to the students about having nice handwriting and reminders to use proper punctuation.

The study by De la Garza & Ávila (1994) on the production of written texts by sixth grade Mexican students also revealed similar results. De la Garza & Ávila (1994) discuss the reoccurring literacy practices of the sixth graders,

> "*...nos llamó la atención el uso recurrente de lo que hemos llamado "convenciones escolares": el cambio de color para escribir mayúsculas y signos de puntuación, así como para distinguir líneas, ideas o párrafos".* (p.168)

However, one difference was present with this study. De la Garza & Ávila (1994) found that students at a private upper-class school did not use the same literacy practices as a lower-class school. This difference in literacy practices according to the social economic status of the students and the school did not appear to be a factor at TBS.

The Smith, Jiménez, & Martinez León (2003) study shared similar conclusions about the use of written language.

> "Perhaps the most striking feature of the use of written language had to do with an overall concern for correctness of form, in spelling, accent marks and punctuation, as well as in actual quality of student

> handwriting, the "scribal" aspect of written language in Barton's (1999) terms…students and teachers alike seemed more concerned with the form of the work rather than the content or meaning it conveyed" (p.6)

These similar literacy practices appear to be evident throughout a variety of grade levels and across a range of socio-cultural contexts. The studies used in the previous examples range form preschool through sixth grade. The similarities in results found by these studies suggest that in local Mexican schools more emphasis is being placed on written form than on students' ability to create authentic texts.

One reason for teachers' focus on the written form is because of parental pressures. The idea of change at TBS is easy to discuss, however, putting these new ideas into practice is difficult. Parents demand stability and consistency in teaching and new teaching practices tend to draw away form the stability that TBS parents want. Many of the TBS parents are alumnae of the school and their expectations of the preschool is that it will provide their children with the same system of education they had received in the past. This leads to a certain degree of pressure from parents in regards to writing. Parents are very occupied with their children's use of written form. They appear to place more importance on this aspect of their education over all others, including English instruction. When I asked a TBS parent in a formal interview about the greatest weakness of TBS, she responded, *"Una desventaja es que en la primaria cuidan muy poquito la gramática y spelling"*. She felt that more lessons on spelling and handwriting were necessary. This parental pressure may cause teachers at TBS to work on written form and student error correction daily.

Internal pressures from teachers at the Elementary school also affect literacy practices. Teachers at the Elementary school place pressure on the preschool to focus on producing students with neat handwriting and very good spelling. Frequent comments by the Elementary school teachers reflect apparent feelings that the preschool

teachers are not dedicating enough time to students' use of written form and, therefore, students are arriving to their classrooms unprepared and with "poor" writing habits.

In summary, teachers under this type of parental and school pressures feel that in order to escape this pressure they must produce students who produce conventional written forms. There is evidence that teachers are conscious of these parental pressures found in the two participating teachers' comments made during formal and informal interviews throughout the study. I have also heard comments by other preschool teachers about the existing parental pressures they feel in regards to writing instruction. In order to produce students with conventional written forms, teachers use hypercorrection and other literacy practices that are mainly focused on improving form.

A second reason for the focus on form may be due to TBS teachers' traditional perspectives and the use of culturally situated literacy practices. The majority of the teachers at TBS have been teaching in the preschool between 10-50 years. A good number of these teachers were also students at TBS from preschool through high school. Although educational change is often slow, this type of tradition and stability creates an environment that is especially resistant to change. Teachers and parents alike appear to want to continue with the same teaching techniques that they believe worked for their own education years ago. This may be one of the reasons teachers are still using literacy practices that have been reflected in their culture for many generations. The English teacher commented in an informal interview that she really does not want to start using the new lined notebook paper. She would much prefer the small-grid paper that she has used at TBS since she began teaching. Her comment for not wanting to make this change was, *'Soy tradicionalista. Creo que los niños pueden ubicarse mejor con el cuadriculado"*. These types of attitudes and teaching techniques can be extremely difficult to change. This may also be one reason why the Spanish and

English teacher's voiced beliefs may contradict their behavior in the classroom. The teachers understand and may even agree with the required adaptations to the literacy instruction but they have a hard time applying the changes due to their traditional perspectives and the extensive use of these culturally situated literacy practices. Ferreiro (1989) commented that teachers take more time than students to adapt to changes in the school and classroom. Ferreiro states,

> *"Los niños asimilan estas propuestas educativas mucho más rápidamente que los maestros; sin embargo, para que haya un cambio perdurable es preciso que haya profesores y maestros convencidos."* (Ferreiro, 1989, pp.21)

These teachers may have good intentions and believe in their methodology but the strategies they used for teaching writing did not seem to be effective as students continued to commit the same errors while copying from the board, dictating or writing independently. Students also appeared to be bored and restless when participating in these daily exercises. Writing was not an activity that students were enthusiastic about like singing, drawing or sculpting did.

5.3 Implications for Practice at TBS

Using my authority as a teacher of the students at TBS and as a researcher I now discuss possible implications for literacy practice at TBS. My first recommendation is that teachers at TBS focus on finding a balance between instruction that focuses on the "scribal" function of writing and "authoring". It is important that students enjoy writing and are willing to take risks while learning to write. Students may not take these risks if the form of their writing is under frequent scrutiny and correction by the teacher.

In order to successfully complete the stated goals in the TBS's mission statement of creating confident, capable and literate students, I recommend that the school make some changes to their current literacy practices and policy. First, teachers need to relinquish some of the control they have over written language and give students

freedom to express themselves. To accomplish this, creative writing should be implemented as a daily writing exercise that is initiated from the start of the academic school year, instead of beginning during the second semester. The value of creative writing activities, such as the dinosaur activity in Figure 4.14, is that the teacher can learn a great deal about the children's theories and understanding about written language. Students' authentic texts will reflect the strategies they use for writing, the hypotheses they may be testing, and any applied teacher-directed strategies. This is important for understanding students' developing theories about literacy throughout the year. These creative writing exercises also help to teach students to take risks in their writing and develop their ability to express themselves using written language.

Second, I recommend that teachers at TBS reflect on their oral and written hypercorrection of the students' work. Teachers need to allow students to make mistakes and focus more on the content of the students' texts by providing students with more creative writing assignments where orthographic features are not corrected. It is important that students gain an understanding that the meaning they are conveying is equally if not more important than the form.

I also recommend that the English and Spanish teachers select developmentally appropriate reading activities. Students should feel challenged in both their L1 and their L2. The focus of reading activities must be based on more meaningful texts with high levels of student comprehension. Therefore, appropriate reading texts may be adapted to relate to the students' daily lives and their interests and more relevant comprehension activities can be added to the curriculum. In order to accomplish this the books in the classroom and in the library could be categorized into various levels of difficulty. This would allow students to progress at their own rate and gain a sense of accomplishment as they pass through each reading level. Students would be able to appropriately choose

and read books that would challenge them but also allow them to be successful readers. This would require TBS to invest in better-developed reading resources for the Spanish and English classrooms. It would also require teachers to dedicate more class time to reading.

In regards to the focus on students' written form I recommend that teachers monitor the pressure they place on students and allow a margin of orthographic errors. Teachers should accept students' efforts without constantly correcting their work. This will help to teach students to take risks in their writing and develop a sense that the written language can empower students through the expression of their ideas and opinions in a meaningful way. In order to accomplish this objective it is important that students are not afraid that the teacher will correct their ideas and opinions.

The English and Spanish classrooms may want to reduce the amount of *copiado*, *dictado*, and *enunciado* activities. These activities limit student creativity and are capable of provoking negative students attitudes towards written language. These types of activities can remain as one element in the development of students' literacy learning, but should not be the central focus.

It is important that students make a connection between reading and writing (Freire & Macedo, 1987). These processes should not be taught exclusively as separate or isolated activities. In fact, they are necessary components for all content areas. This can be accomplished if the teachers are reflecting and modeling this connection between reading and writing daily.

My last recommendation is that TBS involves the parents in the decisions regarding the changes in policy and literacy learning at TBS. If they are not involved in the process it is important to inform the parents of these policy and instructional changes and clearly present the reasons for the changes to the literacy practices.

Parental support will be one key factor in the successful implementation of these literacy practices at TBS.

5.4 Implications for Future Research

Implications for continued research at this site include four different possibilities. First, this study could be continued as a longitudinal study observing the same five students as they begin primary school at TBS. It would be interesting to observe literacy practices at the primary school and the possible changes or new developments in students' theories about literacy. It would also allow researchers to observe any congruence that exists between the Preschool and Elementary School's literacy practices. This type of research would aid TBS in providing students with a more developmentally appropriate literacy program. I predict that literacy instruction at the Elementary school would be comparably different than at the preschool and that teacher expectations would differ to a certain degree. My predictions are based on the SEP influences in the Elementary school. The Elementary grades must use the SEP mandated texts and they must complete the SEP curriculum as well as the English curriculum. The strains and the nature of the curriculum in the Elementary school may influence teachers' literacy instruction and reflect different expectations in their classrooms. Teachers in the upper grade levels may focus even more on orthographic features in students' writing while at the same time expecting that their students will be able to produce longer texts.

Second, the TBS Preschool could also benefit from a follow-up study observing the effects of the new literacy policy that is to begin during the 2003-2004 school year. The changes to the literacy curriculum include a new phonics reading book and students will be learning to read first in their L2. These changes are important to study and

comment on the possible alterations in teacher instruction and how students' developing theories about literacy may be different.

A third option would be to observe literacy practices during the second and first year of preschool at TBS to see when teachers begin teaching the literacy practices observed in this study and when students start implementing these practices. A case study design could be used to observe the literacy practices during the entire academic school year. Frequent interviews with the teachers of these two grade levels would be an important aspect of the case study design. If students arrive at TBS with different literacy skills it would be important to note the students pre-literacy skills that were developed outside the classroom.

A fourth study observing two First English Spanish classrooms with one classroom being the experimental group and the other the control group could provide further insight into the effects of this literacy program on the students' literacy development. The experimental group would receive literacy instruction in Spanish that differs greatly from their current literacy practices described in this study. Students could be taught to read longer texts, to summarize and to answer more complex and open-ended questions about texts. They could also participate in daily creative writing exercises and be explicitly taught to use non-conventional spelling. In contrast the control group would continue to receive the current literacy instruction and curriculum. The resulting data would be analyzed to observe if students in one of the two classrooms were developmentally better prepared for reading and writing, or have acquired more literacy skills than their peers in the comparison group. It would also be important to describe any differences in the two groups' developing theories of literacy. Such a study would provide a data-based comparison to allow TBS to adapt their literacy program to better meet the students' needs.

Implications for research on a broader scale could extend the study to include three contexts of schools with differing student populations. For example, a comparison between public monolingual Mexican preschool, binational schools (such as TBS) and U.S. Kindergarten may present interesting similarities and differences in regards to literacy practices that could be used to better education for Mexican students in Mexico and the U.S. I predict that Mexican schools and Binational schools in Mexico or Latin America would present similar results in regards to their approach to the "scribal" function of writing. Possible results from this type of study may present that these form based literacy practices are uniform amongst most Mexican schools regardless of their socio-economic status. However, U.S preschools and binational schools in other countries may present different literacy practices. These differences may be present because the literacy practices in Mexico may have become an integrated part of Mexican culture and, therefore, encompass the general population. Where as, these culturally situated literacy practices may not be present in U.S. schools or other binational schools.

The previously cited studies, Jiménez et al. (2003), Smith et al. (2003) and Ballesteros Pinto (2003) observed literacy practices at a range of public and private schools, and differing socio-economic status. The similarities found by these studies contribute to provide a basis for understanding literacy instruction and learning in Mexico. The fact that teachers of these students implemented similar teaching strategies and methods of correcting students' literacy work demonstrates that a pattern may exits amongst Mexican schools. However, these studies represent a small region of the country. An extension of my study would be to continue observing and working with literacy practices in schools in other areas of Mexico including both urban and

rural populations. If these schools reveal similar or different literacy practices more profound conclusions could be made about literacy instruction and learning in Mexico.

Another possible future study could compare biliteracy instruction and student biliteracy learning in other bilingual and binational schools in Mexico and different countries and contexts. Since the results of this study seemed to contrast with the results of Moll & Diaz's (1987) study that students were completing more complex reading activities in their L1 than their L2, it seems that more research is needed in this area of biliteracy learning. Research in the area of biliteracy is needed in order to create a biliteracy program that accurately develops students' literacy skills according to their individual abilities in their L1 and L2.

More research observing Barton's (1999) "scribal" function of written language in Mexico may be useful for developing a deeper understanding of the culturally situated literacy practices that seem to have been developed years ago and continue to remain a constant part of literacy instruction. It would be important to observe the "scribal" function of written language throughout the Mexican Republic in order to reveal any existing patterns within the Mexican school system.

A case study observing students' home literacy would provide researchers with insight into when these culturally situated literacy practices begin. Do students develop the literacy practices observed in their homes? Do Mexican children begin to focus on the "scribal" function of written language at home or is this developed in school? A study in the area of home literacy may provide the researcher with a deeper understanding of the current literacy practices in Mexico.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

It is important to note that this study does not attempt to generalize the findings beyond this particular site. It also only reflects a brief snapshot of students' literacy theories developed during the two-year study. A longitudinal study with a wider range of sites and contexts would be necessary to draw conclusions outside of this site, and a study of the same participating students as they start Elementary school would provide more insight into students' developing theories about literacy.

One limitation of this study was the relative lack of input by the participating students. Children at this age are often shy or more reserved when separated from the group. Although they felt comfortable with me they still hesitated when answering my questions. One technique that could be used in future studies is to have interviews with the children with greater frequency. This would be beneficial for two reasons. First, students will begin to feel more comfortable and share more willingly if they have had practice at being away from the group and being interviewed. Secondly, children are changing and growing rapidly at this age and a series of interviews would provide the researcher with a more accurate picture of their development in regards to literacy.

At the start of the study a few assumptions were made that possibly weakened the study. One broad assumption for this study was that the selected students' literacy's would provide outcomes that will be useful for teachers working with Mexican children in the U.S. Two more narrow assumptions for this study were that a students' possible third language would not be relevant for this research as literacy instruction at TBS is only in English and Spanish. This possibly weakened the study because students' developed literacy skills in a third language may influence literacy learning in English and Spanish. The second assumption is that the teachers' selection of the participating students was accurate in accordance with the desired student profile provided by the researcher. If the teachers did not select students with varying literacy abilities the

participating students may not be an accurate representation of the general student population in the two classrooms.

5.6 Conclusion

TBS serves an elite group of students and families that are willing to pay high tuition fees for a bilingual education. As TBS may not be a typical Mexican school the results of this study may not be representative of Mexican schools. However, the results found by Jiménez et al. (2003) in a semi-private lower-class school and a private middle-class school and Ballesteros Pinto's (2003) work in a public working-class school are important for considering implications of this study. It may in fact be evidence that TBS is a somewhat typical Mexican school in regards to its treatment of literacy learning. If this is the case then the patterns observed in these studies may reflect the culturally situated literacy practices used throughout the Mexican school system. Therefore, I recommend that the SEP continues researching in the area of literacy and analyzing the literacy traditions that have been in existence for many generations and continue to evaluate the effectiveness in today's educational system.

TBS has provided the middle-upper class community of Puebla with a unique bilingual and bicultural environment for over 60 years. It is a school that has won awards internationally for its academic excellence in English and Spanish. As competition between private bilingual schools increases in Puebla, TBS is taking certain measures to ensure their own success as a bilingual school. One measure policy makers at TBS are taking is to revise current literacy curriculum. With this in mind, I would like to conclude by returning to Dyson's words about what we can achieve through case studies.

> "Case studies offer educators in these places no specific laws of causation, no precise predictions of the outcomes of one teaching

> strategy or another. But they do offer a means for identifying and talking about the dimensions and dynamics of classroom living and learning." (Dyson, 1995, p.51)

I have presented various conclusions about literacy practices at TBS and my hope is that this study reveals the literacy learning "dimensions and dynamics" at this particular site and can aid in strengthening biliteracy instruction and learning at TBS and perhaps beyond.

APPENDIX A

SPANISH EVALUATION RUBRIC

6 a 7 años. - 1° DE INGLES - LECTO ESCRITURA.

CRITERIOS	MUY BIEN	BIEN	REGULAR	ABAJO PROMEDIO
LECTURA Ritmo Conocimiento de la letra	A. Reconoce las letras enseñadas al leer. B. Une las letras para leer las palabras en una sola emisión de voz.	A. Reconoce la mayoría de las letras enseñadas al leer. B. Algunas veces lee las palabas en una sola emisión de voz y otras en sílabas	A. Algunas veces reconoce las letras enseñadas al leer. B. Une las letras para leer en sílabas.	A. Tiene dificultad para reconocer la mayoría de las letras enseñadas al leer. B. Lee las palabas deletreando
ESCRITURA Ubicación de la letra en el espacio. Letra	A. Su letra muestra un tamaño uniforme y es legible. B. Sus letras están bien ubicadas respetando su espacio	A. Su letra es variable en su tamaño, pero es legible. B. Algunas letras no las ubica todavia dentro de su espacio.	A. A veces su letra no muestra un tamaño uniforme ni es legible. B. Frecuentemente no ubica las letras en el espacio.	A. Su letra no muestra un tamaño uniforme ni es legible. B. Casi nunca ubica las letras en el espacio.
DICTADO	Puede tomar dictado de palabras, frases u oraciones sin omitir, sustituir ni invertir letras.	En muy pocas ocasiones al tomar dictado de palabras, frases u oraciones omite, sustituye o invierte letras.	Algunas veces al tomar dictado de palabras, frases u oraciones omite, invierte y sustituye letras.	Con frequencia omite, invierte y sustituye letras de palabras, frases u oraciones.
COMPRENSION	Puede leer un texto sencillo y explicarlo con sus propias palabras.	Al leer un texto sencillo puede contestar preguntas de comprensión.	Al releer un texto sencillo puede contestar algunas preguntas de comprensión.	Al releer un texto sencillo no puede contestar preguntas de comprensión.
COPIADO Omite,Invierte, sustituye	Realiza la copia sin errores.	Rara vez omite o invierte o sustituye letras al copiar.	Frecuentemente omite, invierte y/o sustituye palabras.	Al copiar omite, invierte y sustituye letras.

APPENDIX B

ENGLISH EVALUATION RUBRIC

Criteria 1st English	Very Good	Good	Average	Below Average
Listening Comprehension	The child demonstrates good comprehension of classroom dialogue by following classroom instructions and completing activities correctly	The child demonstrates good comprehension of classroom dialogue most of the time but may need instructions to be repeated	The child sometimes demonstrates comprehension of classroom dialogue but needs the help of classmates, gestures, visuals and other types of cueing in order to follow instructions and complete activities	The child rarely demonstrates comprehension of classroom dialogue; is frequently unable to follow classroom instructions and complete activities correctly
Speaking Ability	The child uses learned vocabulary, short phrases, sentences and courtesy formulae in the L2 correctly and occasionally expresses himself/herself in the L2 spontaneously	The child correctly uses learned vocabulary, short phrases, sentences and courtesy formulae in the L2	At times, with prompting by the teacher, the child is able to use learned vocabulary, short phrases, sentences and courtesy formulae in the L2	The child rarely responds and/or expresses himself/herself in the L2 even with extensive prompting by the teacher
Attitude Towards Language	The child demonstrates a great deal of interest in the L2 by consistently participating in classroom activities and completing activities with enthusiasm	The child demonstrates interest in the L2 most of the time but occasionally needs to be prompted and motivated by the teacher	The child sporadically demonstrates interest in the L2 and may need to be prompted and motivated by the teacher frequently	The child rarely demonstrates interest in the L2 even with prompting and motivation from the teacher; may show signs of being distracted in class and/or apathetic
Pre-Literacy Skills	The child is able to consistently: a. complete sentences on the classroom wallchart and b. recognize learned letters and their sounds	The child is able to: a. complete simple sentences on the wallchart and b. recognize most learned letters and sounds	The child is able to: a. make simple sentences on the wallchart with help b. and recognize some taught letters.	The child has difficulty a. making simple sentences on he wallchart, even with help. b. He/She may not recognize many of the taught letters and sounds.

APPENDIX C

TEACHER AND STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Teacher Interview Questions

1. *¿Qué estudiaste? ¿En dónde y por cuanto tiempo?*
2. *¿Cómo aprendiste inglés?*
3. *¿Por qué querías trabajar en una escuela bilingüe?*
4. *¿De que tipo de familias vienen tus alumnos? ¿Qué me puedes decir de los alumnos de este estudio? ¿Dónde caben los niños según la rúbrica?*
5. *¿Cuál es tu definición de lectoescritura?*
6. *¿Cuáles son tus objetivos de largo plazo para tus alumnos en cuanto a lectoescritura?*
7. *¿Cuáles son tus metas para el final del año en cuanto a lectura?*
8. *¿Cuáles son tus metas para el final del año en cuanto a escritura?*
9. *¿Cuál es el proceso que siguen para llegar a esta meta?*
10. *¿Quién propone estas metas y objetivos?*
11. *¿Qué pasa si un alumno no cumple con estas metas al final del año?*
12. *¿Qué estrategias utilizas para enseñar lectoescritura? ¿Quién te enseñó estas estrategias o métodos?*
13. *¿Puedes darme unos ejemplos de cuando has visto a tus alumnos utilizando estas estrategias?*
14. *¿Cuándo y por qué usan lápiz rojo? ¿Todos los alumnos tienen que usar esta técnica? ¿Es un requisito de la escuela o es la decisión de cada maestra?*
15. *¿Quién desarrolla los planes de estudio que utilizan?*
16. *¿Qué papel tuviste en el desarrollo de estos planes?*
17. *¿Cuál es el propósito de las actividades de copiado?*
18. *¿Cuál es tu propósito al corregir los trabajos de los niños?*

19. *¿Cuál es tu opinión sobre libre expresión?*

20. *¿Cuál es el propósito de los enunciados?*

21. *¿Por qué los niños escriben sus nombres arriba de cada pagina de sus cuadernos?*

22. *¿Qué tipo de actividades de lectura realizan en la clase?*

23. *¿Cuál es el propósito de actividades de dictado?*

24. *¿Por qué piensas que los alumnos cometen faltas de ortografía?*

25. *¿Por qué los niños pueden contestar en inglés o español durante actividades de comprensión?*

Student Interview Questions

1. *¿Cómo aprendiste a leer en español?*

2. *¿Cómo aprendiste a escribir en español e inglés?*

3. *¿Cuál es más difícil para ti, leer en inglés o español? ¿Por qué?*

4. *¿Cuál es más difícil para ti, escribir en inglés o español?*

5. *¿Cuál te gusta más, leer en español o inglés?*

6. *¿Cuál te gusta más, escribir en español o inglés?*

7. *¿En tú opinión dime un compañero que lee muy bien y por qué?*

8. *¿En tú opinión dime un compañero que no lee muy bien y por qué?*

9. *¿Por qué es importante saber leer y escribir en inglés?*

10. ¿Por qué es importante saber leer y escribir en español?

11. ¿Que significa para ti leer, escribir, y hablar en inglés?

APPENDIX D

SPANISH READING WORKSHEET

V v

va ve vi vo vu

av ev iv ov uv

vaca vaso vino violín veo

vestido Verónica verde vivir

vista visión ventana vida

1.- Verónica visitó Venecia.

2.- Ella está aquí de visita.

3.- Viene con un vestido verde.

4.- Tiene un vaso de vino en la mano.

Preguntas:

1.- ¿Quién vino de visita?_____

2.- ¿Qué visitó Verónica?_____

3.- ¿Cómo viene vestida? _____

4.- ¿Qué tiene en la mano?_____

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