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Teachers' Perspectives on Academic Achievement and Educational Growth of U.S.-Born Hispanic Students in a Midwestern Spanish Language Immersion Program

by

Herlinda Arlene Galve Salgado

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Doctor of Education
School of Education

Teachers' Perspectives on Academic Achievement and Educational Growth of U.S.-Born Hispanic Students in a Midwestern Spanish Language Immersion Program

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Herlinda Arlene Galve Salgado

This dissertation has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

at Lindenwood University by the School of Education

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Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

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Abstract

Elementary Spanish language immersion programs have become more popular in the educational field in the United States to support the academic achievement of minority students. The final goal of immersion programs is to develop proficiency in the home language and dominant language, identified as first language (L1) and second language (L2), to impact the understanding of academic concepts.

This study explores teachers' perspectives of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students' academic achievement and educational growth in a Spanish language immersion program. Ultimately, the study aimed to identify processes that educational leaders could incorporate into instructional models to improve as many Hispanic students' experiences and outcomes as possible. Research questions explored include: 1) What are teachers' perspectives of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students' academic achievements in a Spanish language immersion program? 2) What are the trends, such as social, behavioral, and cultural, that teachers perceive about the academic growth of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students in a Spanish language immersion program? and 3) What do teachers perceive to be the processes that educators can incorporate in the Spanish language immersion program to improve the academic achievement of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students?

A semi-structured interview and focus groups were used to approach the participating teachers (n=10) from one elementary school, identified as the pseudonym a Midwestern Spanish Language Immersion Program (MSLIP), that provides 80% of instruction in Spanish and about 20% in English for ELLs. Data analyzed for this study included secondary sources composed of information such as standardized test scores, behavior incident reports, attendance, age, parents’ ethnicity and school background, and years of schooling at MSLIP.

Major findings from this study showed that teachers at MSLIP perceive that U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students benefit from learning academics in their home language as students had better comprehension of content. However, MSLIP teachers recognized that having a 50/50 bilingual immersion model would facilitate a balanced program to succeed academically in the United States. Recommendations for further research includes among others: developing strategies to overcome the educational trends to perform in the subject content in both languages, English and Spanish; and research how the “deficit perspective” is affecting the teachers’ practices in urban settings since this is a distractor for teachers improving their professional practices.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements i

Abstract ii

Table of Contents iv

List of Tables viii

Chapter One: Introduction 1

- Rationale for the Study 2
- Background for the Study 5
- Purpose of the Study 7
- Clarifying Terms 7
- Summary 9

Chapter Two: The Literature Review 11

- Demographic Trends 11
- English Language Learners and their Educational Experiences 12
  - ELLs’ identification process 13
  - ELLs’ self-esteem and linguistic/cultural acceptance 14
  - ELLs’ educational experiences 15
  - Teachers’ role in educating English Language Learners 17
  - Parents’ role in education and the home culture 19
- Development of Literacy for ELLs in Early Childhood 21
  - Learning to read in L1 and L2 23
  - L1 proficiency 25
- Language Acquisition for ELLs 26

Language of Instruction for English Language Learners 30

Bilingual and Immersion Language Models 30

One-way immersion program 32

Two-way immersion program.. 33

Bilingualism: Implications in ELLs' Academic Achievement 34

Assessments Used to Measure ELL Student Achievement and Growth 37

Summary 40

Chapter Three: Methodology 41

Context for the Study 41

Research Design... 42

Triangulation 44

Participant Selection 44

Data Collection 47

Semi-structured interviews 47

Focus groups 48

Data Analysis 50

Trustworthiness, Validity, and Reliability 51

Ethical Considerations 51

Summary 52

Chapter Four: Results 53

Findings on Research Questions... 53

Research Question One 54

Teachers' Perceptions About Student's Academic Growth....................................... 54

        - Assessments 55
    - Language of Instruction Matters 57
        - Evidences that learning in the home language benefits learning 61
        - Research Question Two 63
    - Literacy, a Daily Practice 63
    - Student’s Engagement in the Class 65
    - Cultural Identification 66
    - Academic Success Starts at Home 67
        - Research Question Three 70
    - Improving U.S.-born ELL Hispanic’s Educational System 70
    - Summary 73
- Chapter Five: Conclusion and Implications 74
    - Conclusions of the Study 74
    - Implications of the Study 79
    - Limitations of the Study 80
    - Recommendations for Further Study 81
    - Conclusion 83
- References 84
- Appendix A: Informed Consent Interview - Teachers 93
- Appendix B: Informed Consent Focus Group-Teachers 95
- Appendix C: Semi-Structure Interview Protocol 97
- Appendix D: Focus Group Protocol 99
- Appendix E: 99

Appendix F: Students' Profiles 101

Vitae 107

List of Tables

Table 1. Participants' Demographics in Interviews 46

Chapter One: Introduction

This dissertation study began due to the researcher's self-questioning when reviewing and analyzing English Language Learner (ELL) students' academic data at a Midwestern Spanish Language Immersion Program (MSLIP) school, where the researcher was the school principal for the seven years previous. Teaching all subject areas using the Spanish language to Spanish-speaking students caused educators to think that students could comprehend content in a better way than learning concepts in English, and therefore could display a higher academic performance (Rose, Uro, Price, Simon, Lewis, & Casserly, 2009). In theory, students receiving instruction in their native language could transfer skills to the dominant language, English, and demonstrate knowledge in both languages. However, at MSLIP teachers identified Spanish-speaking children struggling with their academics and performing behind grade level, when testing in Spanish. Low performance was also demonstrated when completing standardized tests in English. In the role of instructional leader, the researcher had conversations with teachers about Spanish-speaking children performing lower than English-speaking children enrolled in the same Spanish immersion program. Some of the responses the researcher heard from teachers were that lower performance was due to parents not providing extensive vocabulary at home, lack of academic support from parents at home, or that Spanish speaking families talked less to their child and they did not have opportunities for participating in adult conversations to develop appropriate speaking skills, which interfered with writing skills. However, the academic performance gap among ethnicities evident in the results of the state test created the need for instructional leaders to suggest alternatives of instruction to impact students' performance.

This dissertation contains five chapters. Chapter One includes an introduction to the research study, background information about the topic addressed, the purpose of the study, and a list of key terms used throughout the document. Chapter Two contains a review of the literature related to the topic. Chapter Three includes the research methods and questions, context for the study, description of participants and sampling, data collection and data analysis, the validity and reliability of the study, and ethical considerations. Chapter Four reports the findings from the interviews and focus groups, and the themes identified to respond to the research questions. Chapter Five includes conclusions and implications of the study, and recommendations for further research.

Rationale for the Study

U.S.-born Hispanic students played a unique role in the American culture. At the U.S. national census, U.S.-born Hispanics were identified among the Hispanic ethnic group as the fastest growing population in the U.S. enrolling in schools. Those students were categorized as Hispanics, although they were born in the U.S. and were U.S. citizens. The ethnic determination was based on their ancestral heritage, language spoken at home, and their social and cultural experiences. However, they were born in a country where English was the dominant language and was used for social interactions and academic success in schools. In many cases, English was not spoken at the U.S.-born Hispanic's home and students had not visited their ancestral heritage countries. They learned the Spanish language, culture, and traditions from their parents. In the researcher's seven years as school administrator at MSLIP, she identified through informal conversations that those U.S.-born Hispanic students were confused in their own identity. They identified themselves as U.S. citizens and considered English as their native language. In most cases, they were not proficient in the language because Spanish was the language their parents spoke to them, but at school, they spoke in English to socialize with other peers. Academically, they may have been behind because of the lack of background knowledge and the academic language skills. The described situation was positioning this group of students in cultural, social, and academic learning disadvantages for succeeding in the U.S. society, which was the reason the researcher was interested in supporting research to help in finding appropriate ways to educate U.S.-born Hispanic students, identified as ELL.

The present study is focused in the academic achievement and educational growth of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students for the following detailed reasons. First, García (2000, cited in Thompson, 2004) estimated that 55% of the population, speaking a language other than English, were born in the United States and many of this population entered school with low pre-literacy skills. The U.S.-born Spanish-speaking students were the largest minority group in the U.S., and represented the highest at-risk group of students in schools (Pedalino, 1998). Nearly 10 million ELL students were enrolled in U.S. schools. U.S.-born Hispanic students dominated in ELL programs, making up 76% in elementary schools (National Education Association [NEA], 2008, p. 1). The second reason is because at MSLIP, the U.S.-born ELL Hispanic population represented 12% of the student population and those students were taught all core subjects in Spanish (L1) and communication arts in English (L2), plus receiving weekly additional 90-120 minutes of L2 support as a second language. The primary researcher was the school principal at MSLIP for the past seven years and expected the ELL Hispanic students to excel in their academics, since the language of instruction was in their L1. One of the initial concerns in the present study was to respond to what should be the appropriate language of instruction of ELL Hispanic students who were born in the United States, but with a lack of cultural identity and a poor proficiency in both (English and Spanish) languages. The immediate assumption might be for them to receive instruction in their native language. However, their home language was predetermining that their native language was the language spoken at home, not the dominant language where they were born. The controversy began when those children identified themselves as U.S.-born citizens and the English language as their native language, because English was the dominant language in their birth country. As Rose et al. (2009) suggested, language of instruction, strategic use of native language, mastery of academic language and vocabulary, and effective teaching strategies would help ELLs to succeed in their academics. The third reason for conducting the present study was that students with no knowledge of the English language and without a foundation of literacy skills built in their native language, including reading and writing, had faced some difficulties in the U.S. education system. ELLs without formal education in their native language may miss the abilities and academic knowledge that can be transferred to English literacy and success in school. Students who are well prepared in school and strongly literate in a language other than English hold conceptual knowledge and abilities such as reading and writing that can help their growing process of full literacy in English (Haynes, 2007). The final reason for this study was because the Hispanic population in the Midwestern had grown from 61,698 in 1990 to 118,592 in 2000, and to 206,239 in 2013 (Suburban Stats, 2014, p. 1) and most English learners' studies focused on urban school districts since the largest ELL population could be found in big cities in public school systems (Rose et al., 2009).

Background for the Study

Many Spanish-speaking students in the U.S. entered school at the ages of four through six with strong native language (L1) skills, but without capacities in the school's language (L2). Nevertheless, when children did not have the connotation for their L1, it was difficult for them to develop the L2 (Oller, 2002). As Oller (2002) affirmed, students in the U.S. school systems were required to learn content, speak, and read in their L2. In response to that demand, policymakers and researchers analyzed how to help those students to succeed in school (Slavin & Cheung, 2003). According to Slavin and Cheung (2003), policymakers and researchers were looking for answers to the questions: "What is the appropriate role of the native language in the instruction of English language learners?" and "Is quality instruction fundamentally different for English language learners than it is for other children?" (p. 1). Language of instruction and quality of instruction were considered as two of the most important factors that could influence the academic performance of ELLs, principally in reading.

In the U.S., the Hispanic community grew faster than other groups and surpassed African-Americans as the largest minority group (Slavin & Cheung, 2003). Slavin and Cheung (2003) presented evidence that many schools were not meeting the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals because they were not able to close the gap between different groups. The achievement gap between ELL students and other students created the necessity for educators and policymakers to understand and implement more appropriate strategies to support ELLs' learning (Slavin & Cheung, 2003).

McMaster, Kung, Han, and Cao (2008) emphasized that schools must be effective in closing performance gaps and in improving results for all learners, based on No Child

Left Behind (NCLB) and the Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA). These regulations began orienting schools to make additional help available to non-English proficient students before referring them to special education services. McMaster et al. (2008) mentioned that students who had difficulties in reading often received referrals to special education services, asserting that early intervention would keep accountability and diminution of numbers of students referred to special education. Thompson (2004) expressed that educators needed to learn how to identify students with a learning disability and students with difficulties acquiring language. McMaster et al. (2008) confirmed that students in special education could avoid being labeled if they were given specific instruction in reading, and also admitted that referrals to special education for non-English proficient students were caused by perplexities of differentiating between language impediments and language as part of the normal second language acquisition process. McMaster et al. (2008) also stated that progress in English was made when students had effective instructional learning, such as Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies, Response to Intervention (RTI), pre-referral interventions, prevention intervention programs in literacy, and bilingual programs.

Cummins (1984) emphasized that acquiring a second language at a proficient level could take from five to seven years. It was crucial that educators understand the process of acquiring a second language to support and implement the best plan for non-English proficient students and be able to distinguish when the student had a learning disability. Cummins (1984) and McMaster et al. (2008) agreed that in a classroom environment where there were minority cultures, teachers must empower the minorities in terms of helping them raise their self-confidence and by increasing parent involvement. In McMaster et al.'s study (2008) parents were a great source for educators by providing the teachers with information about their children, but minority parents were often disadvantaged in participating in students' education because of the language barrier.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perspectives of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students' academic achievement and educational growth in a Spanish language immersion program. Ultimately, the study aimed to identify processes that educational leaders could incorporate into instructional models to improve as many Hispanic students' experiences and outcomes as possible. Specifically, this research aimed to suggest what modifications and improvements could be made to immersion educational models when teaching students in their native language.

Clarifying Terms

This study referred to the following terms throughout:

World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) consortium defined Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELL®) Annual English Language Proficiency Test as an English language proficiency assessment given to kindergarten through 12th graders who were identified as English language learners (ELLs) (WIDA, 2014).

WIDA consortium used the ELL abbreviation as for English Language Learner students (WIDA, 2014).

WIDA consortium identified English as a Second Language (ESL) as teachers that work with ELL students to develop English skills (WIDA, 2014).

The Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) explained Immersion Language education as a program model where instruction and content is delivered in a target language that is different than the majority language (CARLA, 2015).

Midwestern Spanish Immersion Language Program (MSLIP), a pseudonym used in this study, is an urban public charter network of schools and a non-profit organization, founded in a Midwest City. At the time of this study, MSLIP had opened three elementary K-5 schools and a middle school, teaching sixth grade through 12th grade. MSLIP served 900 students, 60% African American, 30% White, and 10% Hispanic. The students in grades K-5 were taught curriculum in the target language (for the purpose of this study, only the Spanish program was referenced). All core subjects were taught in Spanish, including mathematics, language arts, science, social studies, art, computer-literacy, and physical education. The educational experience offered at MSLIP was in the Spanish language from the moment students walked to the school, during class time, transitions, recess, and lunch or social time, so the students were exposed to Spanish as an immersion setting. In grades K-2, 100% of the instruction was in Spanish. In grades two through five, 80% of the instruction was in Spanish and 20% was English instruction. In addition to the Communication Arts class, the ELL students received ESL support to continue growing in English. MSLIP was an International Baccalaureate (IB) school practicing the Primary Years Program (PYP). The PYP was an inquiry-based curriculum, which incorporated social, research, self-management, thinking, and communication skills to help the students to succeed in the elementary grades (MSLIP, 2014).

The CARLA used L1 and L2 abbreviations to refer to one’s first, or native, and second, or non-primary languages, respectively. For ELL students, L2 usually meant English (CARLA, 2015).

The Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) organization created the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP). This was an adaptive assessment to measure the students’ learning levels (NWEA, 2015).

State Department defined the State Assessment Program as the statewide common assessment given to all students in grades three through eight to measure student and school achievement, as well as AYP (NCLB, 2001).

The CARLA explained Native Language as a language other than English, or the language other than English spoken at home as dominant (CARLA, 2015).

Avant Assessment organization offered the Standards-based Measurement of Proficiency (STAMP) to assess the Spanish language proficiency in Spanish (Avant, 2015).

WIDA was an organization dedicated to monitor students' progress in acquiring academic English and met all requirements of NCLB for testing and reporting of English proficiency. WIDA’s instruments for ELL were called W-APT and ACCESS (WIDA, 2014).

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher presented a framework for this study. The research and analysis focused on exploring teachers’ perspectives of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students’ academic achievement and educational growth in a Spanish language immersion program. Ultimately, the study aimed to identify processes that educational leaders could incorporate into instructional models to improve as many Hispanic students' experiences and outcomes as possible. Specifically, this research aimed to suggest what modifications and improvements could be made to immersion educational models when teaching students in their native language.

In the next chapter, a literature review provides a look into divergent themes that need to be explored to frame the focus of this research, including studies related to teachers' perceptions on ELL academic achievement and an overview of educational models used with Hispanic students in the U.S.

Chapter Two: The Literature Review

In exploring teachers’ perspectives of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students’ academic achievement and educational growth in a Spanish language immersion program there were different topics that needed to be explored to develop a proper understanding of the present study. The central theme focuses on ELLs and their educational experiences in American schools. The development of literacy for ELLs is a second theme with results relevant to understand how a strong literacy in the native language would result in a good development of English language proficiency. The third theme must be separated into two sub-themes, learning to read in L1 and L2, and L1 proficiency, to introduce the theme of language acquisition. A fourth theme is addressed to review what should be the most appropriate language of instruction for ELLs, opening the discussion for bilingualism as the educational model that showed implications in ELLs’ academic achievement. The last theme for the literature review in this research is the measurement of academic achievement and students’ growth.

Demographic Trends

Census numbers in the U.S. indicated that students with low English literacy skills were a population group that increased quickly in the decade previous to this writing. Spanish speaking students represented the largest immigrant population in the U.S., being the most at-risk group of students in school (Pedalino, 1998). Graham (2007) informed readers that 22.6% of all children in the U.S. under the age of five were Hispanic. In 2011, more than 12.4 million Spanish-speaking children were enrolled in pre-K through 12th grade in the U.S. public school system (Fry & Lopez, 2012, p. 2). According to the Census Bureau (as cited in Cable News Network [CNN], 2008), by 2023 Hispanic children were projected to be more than half of all minorities. The executive summary of the National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics (2007) stated that by 2030 a quarter of young children in the United States would be Hispanics. By 2050, 54% of the American population will be minorities (CNN, 2008, p. 1). The Hispanic population would continue growing across the U.S. and educators must be ready to provide the best education for Hispanic children, especially since data showed their education suffered. Pedalino (1998) stated that one out of five Hispanic children never attended a U.S. school and that their overall drop-out rate was the highest. García (2000, cited in Thompson, 2004) estimated that 55% of the population speaking a language other than English were born in the U.S. and many of this young population entered school with low pre-literacy skills and experiences in both languages (p. 1).

Demographic data made policymakers become interested in this topic since the number of Hispanic students identified with learning disabilities grew much higher than expected. Therefore, policymakers and educators were planning ahead for how to close the academic performance gap between Hispanics and Whites. Policymakers wanted to ensure that Spanish-speaking became proficient in the dominant language, English, to facilitate their incorporation into the U.S. school system and to become an educated population to be able to participate in different roles in society. In response to the identified need, schools were required to evaluate the English proficiency level of those students for whom English was not the first language at home and provide English as Second Language services (Gitomer, Andal, & Davison, 2005).

English Language Learners and their Educational Experiences

Different terms and acronyms were found throughout the literature reviewed, referring to children for whom English was not the first language spoken at home, such as: Limited English Proficient (LEP), Linguistic Minority Students (LMS), Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD), and ELL. Since ELL was the terminology that presented the highest frequency in literature, according to Webster and Lu (2012), the ELL acronym was used in the present study to identify Spanish-speaking students that speak the Spanish language at home and at school.

Many of these children were born in the U.S. and acquired two languages, one from their families and the other from the community. Gitomer, Andal, and Davison (2005) expressed that ELL students were required to be proficient in English as a second language, but also to learn the subject area content in English. These children became dual language learners (DLLs). DLLs were considered those children who from three to six-years-old were in the process of acquiring a first language at the same time they were in the process of learning a second language. The differences between DLLs depended on their linguistic experiences at home, such as if parents spoke English with them or if they had English influence from other relatives around them. Common characteristics of this population were that parents had not graduated high school, they did not have health care services, they lived in poverty, and they had limited early experiences that restricted them to be ready for school environment (Ballantyne, Sanderman, D’Emilio, & McLaughlin, 2008).

ELLs’ identification process. When a student was enrolled in the U.S. education system, schools were required to ask parents/legal guardians to fill out a Home Language Survey to indicate the language that was most often spoken at home. Students speaking a language other than English were screened to determine his/her English language proficiency level in listening, writing, reading, and speaking. The English proficiency level determined if a student may qualify to receive ESL services to increase the proficiency level of English. Students receiving ESL services were going to be identified as ELL. Following the ELL students' first year in the U.S. school system, they were required to take the state test. Immigrant students recently arrived to the U.S. had a one-year exemption in taking the state standardized test (WIDA, 2014). Life circumstances could interrupt students' growth and learning once they were deprived of important cultural and linguistic experiences (Christina, 1993).

ELLs' self-esteem and linguistic/cultural acceptance. Culture played an important role in all children's education, because the culture variable helped to develop a strong sense of self, according to Hobgood (2005). It was easier for students to learn in a school environment where cooperation, cultural, and linguistic acceptance was practiced by teachers, parents, and classmates (Christina, 1993). Whether teachers were able to understand differences between cultural differences and learning disability would be able to support individual student needs, decreasing anxiety among her/his students. To discourage students' anxiety and to increase self-esteem, Christina (1993) suggested that teachers must examine students on their academic performance, but also on their previous education setting, family mobility, post-traumatic experiences, socio-economic security level, and family and child's fluency, in both their native language and in their second language. Christina (1993) concurred with the National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics (2007) stating that students' self-confidence was favored when teachers encouraged, praised, and recognized students' values. These types of adult behaviors created more effective and positive classroom environments. Spanish-speaking children responded positively when working with adults who took into consideration the child's culture (Mathes, Pollard-Durodola, Cardenas-Hagan, Linan-Thompson, & Vaughn, 2007). Besides the student-teacher interaction for promoting a cooperative cultural environment, peer interaction was also important. Cummins (1984) considered that students whose first language was different than English interacting with English-speaking students benefited in acquiring the English language because subsequent of the language acquisition they were building a sense of belonging to the English speaking society. By the end, minority students needed to understand the U.S. school culture and teachers needed to understand minorities' diverse characteristics to address students' needs (Christina, 1993).

ELLs' educational experiences. There was a strong demand to close the achievement gap between all groups of students. Federal mandates insisted upon demonstrating greater proficiency by ethnic groups within each school (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001). In U.S. school systems students' demographic data was disaggregated by categories, such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, special education services, and limited English proficiency. This disaggregation was identifying subgroups, and each subgroup was expected to meet the academic state goals in order for the school to meet AYP. The NCLB (2001) required students in grades three through eight to take a state test to demonstrate academic achievement. School districts were putting their efforts in delineating each subgroup of students to demonstrate the appropriate academic achievement.

According to Brown-Chidsey (2007), the percentage of ethnic minority students eligible for special education services was much higher than the total percentage of racial minorities in the U.S. population. Artiles and Ortiz’s (2002) studies mentioned that the non-English proficient students with the least amount of language support and who received the instruction in a second language were the highest population referred for special education services. The main cause for referrals was lack of academic performance of the ELLs, which was also related to the high dropout rate showed from this population. Christina’s (1993) research study stated that Hispanic parents were the largest minority group with the most non-English proficient students inappropriately referred to special education.

Teachers around the U.S. referred non-English proficient students to special education services without enough evidence, other than thinking that they had a learning disability. The lack of bilingual and bicultural instructors and the lack of training in the second language acquisition process often misplaced students into an inappropriate learning environment. Educators did not know the second language acquisition process, so they expected children to learn academics, as well as to learn communication phrases in English, but when that did not happen they began the referral process (Chamberlain, 2005).

Often the Spanish-speaking families were unaware of existing early childhood programs and did not understand eligibility rules for public educational services. Therefore, young students lost the opportunity to be identified as at-risk and to receive the appropriate support to improve their academic skills (Matthews & Ewen, 2010). While the state and federal governments implement effective early childhood education programs, educators and policymakers needed solutions to address the challenges that immigrant populations faced in trying to be a part of the school culture and education (Matthews & Ewen, 2010). Matthews and Ewen (2010) mentioned three specific areas to consider for breaking the students' immigrant barriers. The first area was targeting ELLs as an at-risk population so they could be part of target intervention to prevent language delays. Second, setting early education standards as tools to improve the quality of the early learning programs and third, taking into consideration meeting the ELL needs for children and families, including education, family, health, and social services. Matthews and Ewen also mentioned the importance of aligning the academic standards, vertically and horizontally, across educational programs for a particular age group and from birth into elementary education. However, there were several factors, such as the variety of backgrounds, prior experiences, socio-economic status, parental support, and nutrition, but students' accountability relayed under the teachers' control. Teachers' performance and curriculum played an important role in the ELLs' education (August, 2007).

Teachers' roles in educating English Language Learners. Educators have created ESL programs to support students speaking a language other than English. These included students from different language backgrounds in the same class where teachers did not need to teach in students' home language. The most common ESL programs were ESL pull-out, ESL class period, and ESL resource center. In the ESL pull-out, students were in a mainstream classroom and were pulled out for a portion of the school day to receive instruction in English as a second language. In the ESL class students received English instruction during a regular class period and were grouped by their level of proficiency in English. The ESL resource center was a pull-out design where ESL materials and staff were concentrated to attend to the ESL students (Rennie, 1993).

The ESL teacher played a student-advocate role by working in collaboration with other professionals who interacted with non-English proficient students. Regular teachers expect ESL teachers to work with ELL students in language, reading, and subject matter, as well as being a liaison between the regular teacher, ELL students, and parents. ESL instructors taught concepts with simplified vocabulary and breakdown material so students would assimilate the concepts. ESL teachers also conducted parent-teacher conferences and built links in the school building (Penfield, 1987). According to Penfield (1987), ESL teachers played a role in constructing social opportunities for learning, although teachers' beliefs and assumptions often interfered with the social and academic integration in the regular classroom. Penfield studied teachers' perceptions of ELL students and ESL teachers to suggest improvements in preparing regular teachers and administered open-ended questionnaires to 162 teachers who taught subjects entirely in English to ESL students. Those teachers did not have training on how to deal with ELL students. The results of Penfield's investigation showed that ESL teachers needed to improve academic learning for ELL students and learn more about how to integrate content and L2 development. Penfield's study also reported that teachers were more prepared in teaching math, spelling, and phonics, and needed to have content curriculum material adapted to the ELL students. In Penfield's study, Hispanic students were identified as difficult to discipline, demanding more attention from teachers. ELL students were more isolated in the school environment than other classmates, and may have been accepted academically but not socially. When teachers provided students with solid content knowledge in the first language, students were going to perform academically because knowledge acquired in the first language helped students understand more of the topic taught in English (Peyton, Lewelling, & Winke, 2001). The National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics (2007) considered that educators must respond linguistically and culturally to the Hispanic students by providing instruction in both languages, English and Spanish, to develop a strong literacy among ELLs.

Educators in the U.S. expected to receive students in kindergarten with a certain level of knowledge in pre-literacy, knowing the alphabet, recognizing letters and sounds, and being familiar with other basic concepts. Early literacy experiences, before entering school, positioned children in advantage for continuing acquiring literacy skills (National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics, 2007). Gorski (2010) explained the deficit perspective concept that addressed the stereotypes that influenced false assertions in education, such as low -income families did not value education or the biases that distracted teachers from exploring the higher capabilities of their students because of the socio-economical background.

Parents' roles in education and the home culture. Gorski (2010) affirmed that parents with low income attended less school activities than parents with a higher socio-economic level, but confirmed that was because most volunteer opportunities were not accessible for parents who had more than one job or sometimes did not have benefits, such as paid time off in their jobs; a situation that deprived parents to participate in their children's education. Moreover, Ortiz (2001) asserted that parents of ELLs who were well informed at parent-teacher conferences could prevent inappropriate education placements due the fact that educators involved with the ELL students' families had a better understanding about the social, linguistic, and cultural contexts in which those students were raised. Ortiz also mentioned that the family and educators' proximity helped teachers to respect and understand the cultural differences, but at the same time to develop the best instructional strategies for learning since teachers would be able to fill the gaps in ELL background knowledge. Christina (1993) sustained that when parents could not communicate in the teacher's language it limited teachers to learn more about the children's skills and background, and parents were unable to request students' academic progress.

The lack of communication between parents and teachers opened a gap between home and school, putting students at risk in school to fail. Parents and teachers' collaboration played an important role in fortifying the students' self-esteem. That relationship enabled the students to reach their personal goals and know that learning difficulties could be overcome (Christina, 1993). The National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics (2007) mentioned that Hispanic mothers had less verbal interaction with their children and less literacy materials than White mothers did, making the Hispanic language experiences and vocabulary development more limited. The Early Head Start (2006) program reported that mothers reading daily to their children at the age of 14 months promoted them to develop more vocabulary at the age of three. Early Head Start also stated that parents who read small stories to their children, followed with a conversation or dialogue, encouraged the child to be actively engaged and increased their comprehension skills. When families spoke their native language at home, children enhanced their cultural identity. According to Muñoz and Bautista (2003) the most important factor to acquire the language was to speak and practice the language with the child, which meant to expose the child to the language.

Fullan, Schlecher, Kong, Gophinathan, and Hill (2007) focused their findings in the parents’ socio-economic level versus ethnicity. Fullan et al. mentioned that children of professional parents had more literacy advantages than children of parents on welfare. By age of three, children of professional parents had 1,100 words and an IQ of 117 while the average of children of parents on welfare had a vocabulary of 525 words and an IQ of 79 (p. 57). Furthermore, the National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics (2007) confirmed that low performance language learners came from homes with a non-enriched verbal environment. Poor literacy due to poorer home environment would not improve unless schools intervened effectively in the educational systems to close the gap (Fullan et al., 2007). Policymakers believed that early education, with a focus on literacy development, improved economic and educational outcomes for vulnerable families and children (National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics, 2007).

Development of Literacy for ELLs in Early Childhood

Berman (1997, cited in Thompson, 2004) stated that age might not be the best predictor for young children to learn a second language. Berman considered that students’ proficiency in the home language was more predictive of how students would acquire English literacy. According to Thompson (2004), the time needed to learn to read in English was related to a student’s literacy skills. Geva’s (2006) research found that children in earliest years with less exposure to English were challenged in developing literacy skills upon school entry and showed that early education decreased the achievement gap for Hispanic children when, in the early years of education, a strong community and family contributed to school readiness. Geva confirmed that students who attended school with experiences in reading showed less difficulty in gaining literacy skills. Also, Geva sustained that literacy background was a link between the first and the second language, since early literacy skills learned in the home language could be transferred to the second language.

Weisburd (2009) declared that literacy was a primordial process in instruction to help children to succeed in their academic achievement. Weisburd also mentioned the importance of using and practicing the language of instruction to develop literacy skills by stimulating vocabulary, speech, language production and listening comprehension. As well, Weisburd suggested doing instructional games, projects, mentoring, and tutoring programs to facilitate the development of early literacy skills. Similar to Weisburd, August (2007) and Watts-Taffe and Truscott (2000) pointed the development of literacy skills as tools to perform in subject areas. Watts-Taffe and Truscott explained the development of literacy as a dynamic process: students became literate when integrating literacy skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) with the thinking skill. Language and thought were acquired by social construction, while language acquisition was developed when students used the language for meaningful purposes, and when they were motivated to practice the language.

The National Early Literacy Panel (2004, cited in Restrepo & Towle-Harmon, 2008) pointed to the importance of preschool programs having an impact in closing the ELLs' gap. Emergent literacy skills were developed in preschool when children were in the process of becoming literate. Restrepo and Towle-Harmon (2008) mentioned ELLs' reading performance was predicted throughout the same emergent literacy skills (print knowledge, phonological awareness, writing and oral language) developed in early age at school. The five key components of reading (phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension) promoted the development of literacy in English; however, those components were not necessarily predictors of reading success for non-English proficient students. Students who spoke at home a language other than English needed to gain reading components plus the English language. To facilitate the gaining of language and literacy skills, Restrepo and Towle-Harmon (2008) suggested to build and enrich students' vocabulary skills through open-ended questions and repeated reading; as well as to reinforce comprehension skills by practicing inference, prediction, and identifying main ideas. According to Bialystok (2008), students succeeded in school depending on their proficiency in the language of instruction because of the relation to linguistic activities, such as learning to read.

Learning to read in L1 and L2. Oller (2002) described three stages of learning to read. In the first stage the child realized how to use a book and that books contained words to express ideas; in the second stage, the child recognized the words and determined the relation between alphabetic symbols and the symbols' sounds, and in the third stage students understood meaning and were capable of learning from reading. Peyton et al. (2001) supported that once students were able to read in the primary language, the knowledge was transferable to any other language. Peyton et al. explained that literacy developed in the first language was a shortcut to literacy in the second language, since it was easier to read and write in a language that students understood. To understand how literacy skills were transferred from L1 to L2, Geva (2006) explained the “central processing” (p. 1) framework. Cognitive and linguistic component skills facilitated the development of literacy skills. When those components were the same in the native language (L1) and in the second language (L2) those skills could be transferred from L1 to L2 or vice versa. Geva described word-based and text-based as processing skills that may be measured in the L1 and L2 to predict the development of literacy skills in both languages, L1 and L2.

Geva (2006) studied different language groups and discovered that when students learning a second language had word-based and/or text-based difficulties in their home language they displayed challenges in applying those skills in their second language. According to Geva (2006), some of the word-based reading skills that students must learn in L1 and transfer to L2 were decoding, spelling, word recognition, and phonological awareness. The same happened with reading comprehension skills. When text-based aspects of reading were developed in L1, second language learners correlated the L2 with the L1. However, Geva (2006) also stated that when students were having hard time in acquiring the word-based reading skills in their home language, they would also have difficulties in developing fluency, reading comprehension, and writing skills in their L1; a situation that would be an obstacle for transferring literacy skills to L2. Geva also explained that the performance in phonological awareness and rapid naming skills were predictors of the appropriate development on word-based reading skills.

Geva’s (2006) findings were contrasted to Ivey and Broaddus’ (2007) studies who suggested that theories of reading for native speakers must also be used to describe the cognitive reading process of second language learners. Ivey and Broaddus mentioned that in order to support the cognitive reading process literacy must be developed first in the students’ native language so they could transfer reading and writing skills to English. The cognitive reading process described by Geva (2006) and Ivey and Broaddus (2007) had implications for assessing students learning a second language and when identifying a reading disability. Although Geva recognized that when receiving instruction in L2, it could take more than five years to reach the appropriate language proficiency; however, they also concluded that a reading disability could be suspected when L2 learners were not performing on word-based skills in early school years. Bialystok (2008) sustained that literacy and language proficiency were important to perform high on the non-verbal computational subjects, such as mathematics, and on the content-based curricula, such as social studies. “Children must be skilled in the forms and meanings of the school language and be competent readers of that language” (Bialystok, 2008, p. 1). Ivey and Broaddus (2007) pointed out that enforcing learning strategies for reading and writing, increased students’ abilities to transfer comprehension and composition skills from the first language to a second language.

L1 proficiency. A strong literacy in the native language would result in a good development of English language proficiency. Cummins (in Amrein & Peña, 2000) mentioned that students who had access to the instructional curriculum in their native language experienced academic success and showed higher-order thinking skills. Cummins (1984) stated that cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) took as long as seven years to acquire, while basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) could be acquired in two to four years. BICS enclosed the literacy skills needed for social interactions, but CALP proficiency encircled the cognitive language required to succeed in school academics. Geva also agreed with Cummins (1984) in that second language learners took a long time to develop a second language, especially the skills required for academic learning. Over time, the second language learners developed literacy skills but they continued behind their native speaking classmates. Learners of a second language acquired language when the context was meaningful for the student, since practice was key in language acquisition. Geva (2006) also concurred that children must be exposed to the language in order to acquire a language. It was not enough having the genes to learn a language. Children needed to hear the language to learn the language, according to Geva (2006).

Language Acquisition for ELLs

Language acquisition is a relevant theme in cognitive studies relating to ELL learning since language is considered the main tool to establish a relationship by interacting with other people. Chamberlain (2005) defined language as the tool used to communicate, and communication as the base of a comfortable social interaction; therefore students who struggled understanding the language would have problems learning and difficulties in communication. Language acquisition began early in the human lifespan, at the age of four. Children in the early years, from birth to puberty, had a special predisposition to acquire a second language because of the development of linguistic, cognitive, and social skills (Muñoz & Bautista, 2003).

Chomsky (as cited in Ellis, 1981) explained that all children had innate language learning capacities that enabled the development of the language, no matter the quality of the input language environment. Chomsky theorized that children were born with a hard-wired language acquisition device (LAD) in their brain. Later, he stated that children were born knowing linguistic rules, which he called the universal grammar. The universal grammar was the basis on which all languages were built (Chomsky, as cited in Ellis, 1981). Also, Chomsky considered that children acquired the language because they heard the native language; children made estimations and presumptions about the language that was heard, and from the estimations and presumptions the children worked out grammatical sets of rules (as cited in Ellis, 1981). Brunner's LASS theory (as cited in Ellis, 1981) stated that any children had a Language Acquisition Support System (LASS), which was related to the family and entourage of the child. Everything around the child became an opportunity for the child to acquire the mother tongue. All interactions with the child were recognized and predicted by the child, so the infant became aware of the different forms that adults used the language. Ellis (1981) pointed out that for behaviorist researchers, represented by Skinner, the environment was crucial in the language learning process since they believed that a child learned all behavior based on stimulus, responses, associations, and reinforcements. Skinner (as cited in Ellis, 1981) remarked that all behavior was conditioned, punished, or rewarded, until it became natural and automatic. The behaviorism theory considered that the behavior of parents was relevant in the language learning process. Based on the child psychology field, Piaget (as cited in Ellis, 1981) described the language as a cognitive capacity that a child had to acquire. The meaning of the language was controlled by the development of thinking. In this theory, both the child and the adult influenced the language acquisition process. In Piaget's theory, the environment, practice, and innate capacities were all related in the same level of importance to lead children to acquire the language. Hobgood (2005) exposed that the social theory known as zone of proximal development, represented by Vygotsky, recognized the importance of language and communication as part of the child's development.

There were many studies stating the effect that age had on the acquisition of a second language. Lenneberg (1967) noted that language acquisition was an innate process determined by the biology of the brain. Certain biological factors limited the brain to a specific period for language acquisition from age two to puberty. Lenneberg mentioned that after the complete lateralization the brain no longer had the ability to reopen the part that dealt with learning language, since it lost plasticity, making it more difficult to acquire a second language after puberty. Lenneberg's hypothesis stated that the child's brain was like a sponge that underwent the most significant changes during the years of two and 12. This was an innate ability that young children had to pick up on things rather quickly (Lenneberg, 1967).

Peyton et al.'s (2001) studies related to interferences in the language acquisition process described that interferences appeared until children mastered the two languages. Phonological acquisition interferences resulted in a foreign accent, and vocabulary knowledge delayed the response time, because bilingual children had more words in memory and their search was longer, were two of the most frequent interferences that appeared in early years. According to Haynes (2007) all ELLs went through five stages to achieve the language. Haynes (2007) described the stages of second language acquisition as follows: Stage I: Pre-production. This was characterized as a silent period. At this stage, ELLs had up to 500 words in their vocabulary but they were not speaking. ELLs repeated the words but that did not mean they were producing the language. The learners understood and duplicated gestures to show comprehension. Stage II: Early production.

Students had up 1,000 words and were able to speak in one or two word phrases. Stage III: Speech emergence. Students had developed up 3,000 words and were able to communicate with simple phrases and sentences. They asked simple questions and initiated short conversations with their peers. Stage IV: Intermediate fluency. English learners had up 6,000 words and they began to use complex sentences and express opinions and thoughts. At this stage, students were able to work in content knowledge; they synthesized their learning and did inferences. Stage V: Advanced fluency. Students demonstrated academic language. Haynes (2007) concurred that most ELL students at this stage were out of the ELL classroom.

As stated by Ellis (1981), the earliest phonological productions that a child showed in the language acquisition process were vocalizations. Those were the sounds that occurred in all languages; later the vocalizations became babbles, a combination of vowels and consonants that did not have a linguistic meaning. Afterwards, the child produced the first words and later the child was able to produce more than 50 words, and to combine those words. In this stage, children started increasing their vocabularies. When the child became more confident in the language production, the child then became part of conversations and started producing questions (Ellis, 1981).

Muñoz and Bautista (2003) stated that children in the early years of life had a special predisposition to achieve an appropriate linguistic, cognitive, and social development. This was the most convenient time for teaching and learning a second language since children had an intellectual potential and the brain plasticity facilitated this process of learning. However, it was important to promote and offer motivating activities connected to their world in order for children to maintain their initial interest and to develop meaningful learning. In order to succeed in learning a second language, the learning environment should facilitate a close relationship between the process of teaching a second language and the process of teaching a mother tongue, according to Muñoz and Bautista (2003).

Language of Instruction for English Language Learners

Discussions around the question of what should be the most appropriate language of instruction for ELLs was present for several years (Slavin & Cheung, 2003). In most programs, ELLs could be placed in classes where their classmates only spoke English, or in a separate class taught in English to transition, when ready, to interact with English-speaking classmates. There were proponents that agreed on teaching ELLs to read in their home language in their school early years and then to transition them to be instructed in English when they were in grade three or four (Slavin & Cheung, 2003). Other programs differed in this home language initial instruction, considering that ELLs must be taught to read in both English and home language, to receive a bilingual instruction. Slavin and Cheung (2003) explained that the main difference among these two conceptions for teaching to read ELLs was based on the delays that ELLs had in developing the English language and to be part of the U.S. society.

Bilingual and Immersion Language Models

People who acquired two languages at the same time or learned a second language after acquiring the first language were called bilingual. Bilingual programs were intended to develop two languages. Bilingual programs had been used to help ELL students to transition from their home language to English as language of instruction in the U.S. (Cummins, n.d.). One of the most common bilingual programs was known as paired bilingual program, in which students learned both languages, English and Spanish, at different times during the day but learned the same content in both languages (Slavin & Cheung, 2003).

Immersion programs were a form of bilingual education that offered 50% or more instructional time in a second language (Cummins, n.d., p. 8). Ultimately, successful bilingual programs aimed to develop bilingualism and bi-literacy. Cummins (n.d.) informed that immersion education programs appeared in the 60's in Canada to facilitate fluency and literacy in French to kindergarten students who spoke English at home. Later, those immersion programs were extended to K-8 grades. Typically in immersion language models home language was not used in the daily instruction since those educational models were created with the intention of teaching in the second language: "Immersion refers to the immersion of immigrant or minority language children in a classroom environment where instruction is conducted exclusively through their second (or third) language" (Cummins, n.d., p. 2).

Tedick and Wesely (2015) researched what they called "content-based language instruction" (CBI) in immersion language programs in elementary and upper grade levels in the U.S. (p. 3). Tedick and Wesely focused on: academic achievement, English language development, minority language development, and attitudes toward immersion programs. Some of their interesting findings showed that all students enrolled for at least six years in immersion programs, with a good design and implementation, performed at or above grade level, when compared to other students not enrolled in this type of program. Another finding was that in Spanish immersion educational programs there existed a tendency to use more English language in school regardless the language of instruction or home language. English students tended to use the L2 language to interact with the teacher but a mixture of L1 and L2 when interacting with other peers. Then students used the L1 to socialize or when involved in a behavioral issue, and L2 for academic functions. A different situation occurred with Spanish-speaking students who tended to use more the L2 during L1 instruction time (Tedick & Wesely, 2015). Two of the most common immersion models implemented in education were one-way immersion and two-way immersion programs.

One-way immersion program. Sangha (2013) reported that in 2007, there were 250 language immersion schools in the country (information recorded by the Center for Advanced Research on language acquisition at the University of Minnesota). However, in a term of four years, the number of schools extended across the U.S. by growing to 530 in more than 20 different languages. One way immersion (OWI) programs were designed for English-speaking students learning a second language (Tedick & Wesely, 2015). The immersion language model in early childhood was students were taught 90% of the day in the target language or language of immersion (Sangha, 2013). In a first-grade immersion program, the target language was decreasing 10% of the day but increasing 20% in English, and the percent of instructional hours in fifth grade English increased to learn 50% and the target language the other 50% of the day (Sangha, 2013). More states, such as Utah and Delaware, authorized growing their immersion programs and more states were also analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of adopting language education. According to Sangha (2013), there were controversies in considering the immersion programs as beneficial. The main concern was that when English was not taught at least half of the school day, the academic performance of students who were non-English dominant in a classroom could suffer academic delays (Sangha, 2013).

Two-way immersion program. This educational model integrated English speakers and speakers whose first language was other than English, and provided content and literacy instruction to all students in both languages (Slavin & Cheung, 2003). The integration of language minority (Spanish native-speaking) and language majority (English native-speaking) in two-way immersion (TWI) programs provided a unique opportunity to develop native language for minority students and integrate them into the school cultural environment, while majority students had the opportunity to acquire a second language (Howard, Sugarman, & Christian, 2003). This was possible when groups were considered equal socially and academically, as well as when teachers worked together in developing a curriculum where both languages were used for planning content instruction (Howard et al., 2003).

Students must be placed in the TWI program for at least six years in elementary education to make this educational model worthy in their student growth (Tedick & Wesely, 2015). Howard et al. (2003) mentioned two TWI programs, the 90/10 and 50/50. In the 90/10 program the instruction was provided 90% of the time in the minority language and 10% in English. The English instruction increased until reaching 50/50, where the language of instruction was equal. The TWI instruction ran from grades K-5. Parental involvement was important, as well as staffing in the program. The instructional strategies were important, such as hands-on cooperative learning, thematic units, and separation of languages. In order to ensure academic success in the TWI programs, teachers used environmental scaffolds in the classroom, such as daily repetition of routine, phrases, songs, poems, and vocabulary; the use of gestures, visuals and manipulatives, as well as modeling verbal responses were also employed (Howard et al., 2003).

TWI programs encouraged the minority students to maintain their home language and taught the whole school population the value of multicultural and multilingual learning environments. The TWI goals were to develop high levels of proficiency in the first language (L1): speaking, listening, reading, and writing in the home language and high levels of speaking, listening, reading, and writing in English (Howard et al., 2003). Students developed high levels of proficiency, also in a second language (L2) since students were able to maintain and develop oral and written skills simultaneously in both languages. In Howard et al. (2003) all students in the TWI program in the study showed an academic performance at or above grade level, and all TWI students demonstrated cross-cultural attitudes (Howard et al., 2003). Parental involvement and the quality of teachers were crucial in students' achievement, as well as students' participation and motivation (Howard et al., 2003). The integration of Spanish-speaking and English-speaking students in two-way immersion programs provided a unique opportunity to develop native language for minority students and integrate them into the school cultural environment, while majority students had the opportunity to acquire a second language. However, teachers needed to develop a formal planning and assessment process to monitor language development and academic growth.

Bilingualism: Implications in ELLs' Academic Achievement

In the past, theorists thought that bilingualism affected the ability to develop cognitive functions (Bialystok, 2008). Nicoladis, Charbonnier, and Popescu (2006) found that parents, educators, and policymakers were interested in ensuring that bilingualism did not affect children’s intellectual or emotional development. The Center for Equal Opportunity in Washington, D.C. (cited by Pedalino, 1998), published a Latino parents survey. The results surprised the educators, since a high number of parents advocated teaching English to their children as a priority over students being taught in their native language. Tedick and Wesely (2015) reported that educational bilingual models would demonstrate outstanding academic achievement when the programs were well implemented (p. 27). Besides instruction, measuring the students’ outcome in literacy and mathematics was going to provide accurate data to testify the academic achievement. Research showed that Spanish-speaking students in TWI programs were going to perform at/above grade level norms in L2 in literacy and mathematics after six or seven years of being instructed in a bilingual program (Tedick & Wesely, 2015).

According to Bialystok (2008) some of the variables that affected the outcome of bilingual growth were the context in which the language was learned, parental attitudes, the exposure to the language, and the children’s backgrounds. Nicoladis et al. (2006) asserted that the outcome of bilingualism depended mainly on the exposure to the language. The authors also stated that bilingualism showed some socio-cognitive development advantages (Nicoladis et al., 2006). They explained that socio-cognitive development was related to children’s changes with age in terms of processing their emotions in a social and environmental setting, but also to how words and thoughts were processed and represented. In Nicoladiset al.’s (2006) study the more common socio-cognitive advantages identified were that bilingual children understood the beliefs of other people, participated in conversations, and solved problems. It was also found that bilingual children developed better mental flexibility, but the context in which the second language was learned was important. In contrast, Bialystok (2008) found a difference between a bilingual child and a second language learner. The difference depended on the child's degree of involvement with the second language. Bilingual and monolingual children developed the language in the same way, and second language learners developed the second language over time. Bialystok (2008) stated in her studies that bilingual children that learned two languages mixed words from one to the other language and tended to have a smaller vocabulary in each language, compared with children that spoke only one language.

According to Pedalino (1998), bilingual education intended to help immigrant students learn the English language so that they had an education equal to their English-speaking peers. The idea was to teach all core subjects in the native language so children could continue learning while they learned the English language. The bilingual education hypothesis made by Cummins (as cited in Pedalino, 1998) was that if students learned to read in their native language, it would facilitate reading in a second language, and also, that ELLs' proficiency would depend on their mastery level of their native language.

Pedalino (1998) insisted that the bilingual education setting did not represent an advantage or benefit to the English learner population and did not prove that bilingual education students could gain a higher level of self-esteem. Collier (as cited in Pedalino, 1998) claimed that ELLs taught in their native language would be able to do class work in English in five to seven years. Nicoladis et al. (2006) showed that bilingual children were able to perform highly in writing when the writing system was similar in both languages. One of the strong Latino community arguments was that if children did not receive adequate instruction in English they would lose equal opportunities in education, employment, and public participation. The second language learners' successes depended on the teaching strategies, content coverage, resources used, teacher collaboration, teacher preparation, professional development, and also on the student assessments (August & Shanahan, 2007).

Assessments Used to Measure ELL Student Achievement and Growth

Assessments should be the tool to guide educators to measure achievement levels and to determine the student's placement and supports needed (Lopez, Lamar, & Demartini, 1997). The National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics (2007) suggested improving the ELL's quality of instruction starting in early years by increasing the number of Spanish-speaking educators and developing appropriate assessments for ELLs. Educators should observe specific steps to assure that each assessment measured the content and domains. The ELL teachers should create assessments to cover the curriculum taught and the curriculum practiced (Lopez et al., 1997). Assessments provided the outcomes of what students knew, what students understood, and what students could do, and at the same time examined the performance of each school system (Fullan et al., 2007).

The CARLA (2015) explained that performance-based assessments were used to measure how students did in the target language and assessments provided feedback on students' performance. Feedback was relevant for students and parents to discover progress, for example to see if students met the learning objectives. In the type of performance-based assessments, students were not compared with their classmates, because it was an individual assessment. This type of assessment focused on real situations to provoke real communication centered on the student learner. Performance-based assessments considered social context, such as personal interest, age, and background (CARLA, 2015).

Another type of assessment mentioned by CARLA (2015) was the norm-referenced assessments. Those compared the students' achievement with the rest of the population that should have the same level of performance, yet educators encountered assessment problems since assessments contained bias, affecting groups of students by putting them at a disadvantage. In the ELL's case, the norm-referenced assessments were constructed in English. ELLs were at a disadvantage because they were measured in the content-subject, but also in the English language proficiency. It was not only the content, but also the language performance (CARLA, 2015). Artiles and Ortiz (2002, p. 5) expressed that norm-referenced tests were inappropriate for non-English proficient students since the assessments did not consider the entire range of language skills. This is, students were not assessed in a natural communication environment, the conversational abilities were not considered as part of the measures, and interpreters affected the validity and reliability of the results. Those variables could change the nature of the test. Artiles and Ortiz (2002) suggested three effective considerations for pre-assessment as follows: the use of an observational model, creation of adequate learning environments, and documentation of students' academic difficulties, not test scores. Although the purpose of norm-referenced assessments had been to represent a sample of students, those assessments should be appropriate for each specific cultural and linguistic group in order to have accurate results (Chamberlain, 2005). For example, identifying students' strengths and weaknesses from an early age helped to prevent learning problems instead of correcting them in special education (Chamberlain, 2005).

Chamberlain (2005) recommended implementing curriculum-based assessments (CBAs) and dynamic assessments instead of norm-referenced assessments. CBAs addressed the content taught in the classroom and facilitated monitoring of students' progress. Dynamic assessments were based on student learning ability and measured students' task performance during instruction. In a different perspective, Lopez et al. (1997) recommended improving the practice of assessing the LEP population. They suggested implementing pre-referral activities, such as the training of referral personnel, the implementation of screening committees, and consultation activities that contributed to LEP children succeeding in academic and social-emotional areas. Lopez et al. (1997) recommended adapting all assessment measures to make them culturally appropriate for new target groups. They concluded that the cognitive assessment of LEP children resulted in a difficult process because of the lack of tools appropriate for those LEP groups. Similar to Lopez et al., Slavin and Cheung (2003) questioned the legitimacy of assessment results when testing ELLs in the second language, considering that acquiring the language was a process and took time. ELLs could score lower than the English-speaking group because ELLs would need a reasonable time to transfer their academic skills from L1 to L2.

Although innumerable types of assessments existed, Tedick and Wesely (2015) indicated that one of the important topics to discuss when assessing "content-based language instruction" (CBI) in language immersion education is the lack of national achievement examinations (p. 14). At the time of this writing, academic standards were developed by states, intending to offer a valid measurement to use to assess and compare students’ performance across states in relationship to their own standards. Tedick and Wesely also mentioned the lack of data published to describe the achievement from OWI and TWI programs. More of the research focused on overall academic achievement instead of on classroom content learning (Tedick & Wesely, 2015, p. 14).

Summary

The literature reviewed revealed the importance of doing more research on the language acquisition and educational needs of minority students. High levels of literacy are essential for meeting the academic language and literacy skills needed for successful school achievement. Bilingual programs are educational models implemented in the educational field to help ELL students to learn the English language so they have an equal education as their English-speaking peers, and also to protect their own rights by preserving their home language. This study explores teacher perspectives of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students’ academic achievement and educational growth in a Spanish language immersion program. Ultimately, the study aimed to identify processes that educational leaders could incorporate into instructional models to improve as many Hispanic students’ experiences and outcomes as possible. Specifically, this research intended to suggest what modifications and improvements could be made to immersion educational models when teaching students in their native language.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perspectives of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students' academic achievement and educational growth in a Spanish language immersion program. Teachers' comments, points of view, and suggestions were recorded and analyzed. The research was oriented toward the following questions: 1) What are teachers' perspectives of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students' academic achievements in a Spanish language immersion program? 2) What are the trends, such as social, behavioral and cultural, that teachers perceive on the academic growth of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students in a Spanish language immersion program? 3) What do teachers perceive to be the processes that educators can incorporate in the Spanish language immersion program to improve the academic achievement of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students?

This study design used a qualitative approach, and included a semi-structured interview of 10 lead teachers at a Midwestern Spanish language immersion school. It also included two focus groups with five lead teachers each. The focus group discussions were framed around secondary data sources, such as discussion of six de-identified students' profiles that contains academic data.

Context for the Study

The research was conducted in a small Midwest City at a Spanish immersion school. The Midwestern Spanish Language Immersion Program (pseudonym) was an urban, public, charter, elementary school with a wide diversity of students (60% African-American, 30% Caucasian, and 10% Hispanic). Seventy-seven percent of instructional teachers were Spanish native speakers, but proficient in English, and 13% were English native speakers, of whom only 30% spoke Spanish. At MSLIP, parent-teacher conferences and students' report cards were conducted in Spanish to facilitate communication with Spanish-speaking parents.

At MSLIP, students in grades K-5 were taught curriculum in Spanish, including mathematics, language arts, science, social studies, art, computer literacy, and physical education. The educational experience offered at MSLIP was immersed in the Spanish language from the moment students walked into the building, during class time, transitions, recess, and lunch time; so, they were immersed in Spanish. In grades three through five, 80% of the instruction was delivered in Spanish and 20% in English instruction, which was in the form of a 50-minute English Language Arts (ELA) class. In addition to the ELA class, the ELL students received ESL support about 90 minutes a week, to continue growing academically in English (MSLIP, 2014).

Cummins (as cited in Amrein & Peña, 2000) argued that students who had access to the instructional curriculum in their native language experienced academic success and showed higher-order thinking skills. However, there were controversies in considering the immersion programs as beneficial. The main concern was expressed in citing that when English is not taught at least half of the school day the academic performance might be detrimental on students who were non-English dominant in a classroom (Sangha, 2013). The main researcher of this study, who was a school principal in this program for seven years, was concerned about ELL students not performing at or above grade level in the Spanish language immersion program.

Research Design

For this study the researcher chose a basic qualitative study. In qualitative research there is the assumption that multiple realities are related to each other and work together as a whole depending on the knowledge, perspectives, and experiences of people (Merriam, 2009). The primary instrument of data collection in qualitative research interacts directly with the subjects of research and looks for meaning in context. Understanding the essence of those experiences is one way to interpret the world and create new knowledge (Merriam, 2009). Documents, interviews, and observations are the tools used to conduct basic qualitative studies.

A semi-structured interview and focus groups were the primary methods used to gather primary research data in this study. Semi-structured interviews are often used when the investigator wants to explore more deeply into a subject (Harrel & Bradley, 2009). This method of collecting data was appropriate for this study because the researcher wanted more detailed information about teachers’ perspectives of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students’ academic achievement in a Spanish language immersion program. This study also collected data via two focus groups with teachers. Focus groups help to understand the concern, attitudes or beliefs associated with a specific topic (Harrel & Bradley, 2009). The focus group protocol designed for this study sought to explore the teachers’ perspectives and together, to identify processes that educational leaders can incorporate into instructional models to improve as many Hispanic students’ experiences and outcomes as possible. The researcher was looking to explore what modifications and improvements can be made to the type of immersion program studied. In order to facilitate the focus group discussions, the researcher incorporated what was called secondary sources of data, which frequently was collected and available for different purposes; but researchers could adapt for research goals (Goes & Simon, 2011). For this study, data from all 10 interviews, two focus groups, and secondary sources (six students’ profiles) were purposefully identified to validate the findings in this study. Merriam (2009), and Patton and Cochran (2002) explained that triangulation is used when a variety of sources are used to collect data, as well to ensure a valid study by identifying similarities or differences in responses.

Triangulation. Analyzing the findings from 10 interviews, two focus groups, and the secondary sources used for discussion during the focus groups discussions, helped ensure triangulation of data sources, to increase validity of the research findings throughout the narratives arranged in different themes.

Participant Selection

The researcher used a purposeful sampling process based on two strategies: criterion and homogeneous sampling (Patton & Cochran, 2002). First, the researcher focused on criterion sampling, which was choosing participants based upon their knowledge of specific topics (Patton & Cochran, 2002). The sample of this study met the following criteria: having prior knowledge of ELL students, immersion programs, the MSLIP educational model, and experience in the educational field. The second strategy used was homogeneous sampling, which requests participants to have similar characteristics (Patton & Cochran, 2002).

In order to recruit the participants, the researcher delivered a brief presentation during a staff meeting to share the rationale and purpose of the study, and the contributions that this research could make to improve ELL Hispanic students’ academic achievement in immersion language programs. At the staff meeting all (n=18) lead teachers were invited to participate in the present study. Interviews were planned to be conducted by a graduate student, to avoid anxiety for the participants because of the researcher’s role at MSLIP and to avoid bias. The graduate student was in charge of contacting the participants to schedule interviews. Ten teachers accepted the invitation. All 10 participants in the interviews possessed a background in the educational field. Nine of the 10 participants usually taught reading, writing, and core subjects, and all had at least one year of teaching at MSLIP. Specifically, eight out of 10 teachers participating held a Bachelor of Arts degree in elementary education and possessed an elementary education certificate. Also, nine-out-of-10 participants were identified as a Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT), and all participants had at least one year of experience in a Spanish immersion program.

For the focus group purposes, the researcher explained again at the staff meeting, the purposes of the focus groups, date, time, and the researcher’s participation in conducting the groups: as an observer and listener more than the figure as school leader. Ten teachers volunteered to participate in the process as follows: seven women and three men. Six were native Spanish speakers and four were English native speakers. All participants have worked at MSLIP for more than two years. Seven out of 10 were performing a Lead Teacher position, teaching all core subjects in Spanish. One out of 10 was teaching communication arts in English, and one of them, was coaching teachers to improve the students’ reading skills in Spanish. Nine out of 10 students have a background in education and are considered as Highly Qualified Teachers (HQTs). Demographics are provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographics of Participants' Interviewed

Participants	**Teaching subject**	**Grade of teaching**	**Degree**	**Teaching Certificate/HQT**	**Years of Experience at MSLIP**
Interview 1	General Content Subjects	3rd	Bachelor of Arts in Education and Spanish	Early Childhood K-3 Spanish K-12 HQT	6
Interview 2	General Content Subjects	2nd	Bachelors in Elementary Education and Spanish	Spanish K-12 and Elementary Education 1-6. HQT	4
Interview 3	General Content Subjects	4th	Bachelor of Arts	Temporary Authorization Certificate (TAC). No HQT	3
Interview 4	General Content Subjects	4th/5th	Bachelors in Elementary Education	Elementary Education 1-6 and Spanish K-12. HQT	2
Interview 5	English	2nd/3rd	Masters in Education and Reading Specialist	Reading Specialist K-12 Elementary Education 1-6. HQT	2
Interview 6	General Content Subjects	4th	Bachelors in Education Masters in Applying Linguistics	Foreign Certificate in Education. HQT	2
Interview 7	General Content Subjects	3rd	Bachelor of Arts	Elementary education 1-6. HQT	2
Interview 8	General Content Subjects	3rd	Bachelor of Arts in elementary education 1-6	Elementary education 1-6. HQT	2
Interview 9	General Content Subjects	1st	Doctorate Degree in Sciences	No teaching certificate but HQT	6
Interview 10	General Content Subjects	4th/5th	Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education 1-6	Elementary education 1-6. HQT	1

Data Collection

Prior to initiating the data collection, all signed letters of consent were obtained. The researcher requested formal permission from the Director of MSLIP to conduct the study in this organization, explaining the purpose, methodology used to collect data, and the ethical considerations to keep anonymity of MSLIP. The researcher also obtained signed consent letters from all 10 participating lead teachers, who decided to be involved in the interviews (Appendix A), and from the 10 teachers participating in the focus groups (Appendix B). University College of Education and Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedures were followed, including expedited approval from the IRB Committee.

Data collection for this basic qualitative study included: (1) 10 semi-structured interviews ranging from 45 minutes to 60 minutes each (Appendix C); (2) Two focus groups with five participants in each group, ranging from 45 minutes to 60 minutes (Appendix D). At the focus groups, secondary sources of data in the form of six students' profiles (Appendix E) were reviewed to elaborate during the focus group discussions. The interviews and focus groups took place at the work location of participants, at a pre-arranged time, and face-to face.

Semi-structured interviews. As it was mentioned before, an identified third party, specifically a graduate student from a local university, individually interviewed 10 staff members, who taught reading, writing, or core subjects to U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students. The aim of the interviews was to explore teachers' perspectives of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students' academic achievement, and to identify the trends that teachers perceived on the academic growth of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students in a Spanish language immersion program. These semi-structured interviews were guided by pre-designed questions that corresponded directly to the research questions and the interview protocol (Appendix C). One week before each interview, the interview questions were sent to the participants by email for them to have a general idea about the content. After each interview, the interviewer (graduate student) transcribed the whole conversation into a word document, and the researcher began the analysis of the interview. All interviews were conducted in English and transcribed in English, as well. Each interview included the teachers' background information and key content of the interview. The interviews lasted up to one hour and voice responses were recorded on a digital device, stored in a locked file cabinet in the home office of the interviewer, and the computer used had a password to prevent access from persons without appropriate credentials. The raw data will be kept for two of years to be used for potential further analysis.

Focus groups. A total of 10 participants were split in two homogeneous focus groups (five each) to discuss up to six students' profiles (secondary data). The two focus groups were conducted separately. Both groups were guided for discussion with the same questions and the same six students' profiles. The conversations were recorded with a digital device and the researcher took notes while the discussion was in place, but also one of the participants of each group was requested to take minutes of the conversation. The minutes were delivered to the researcher. These notes were used to confirm the information recorded, to validate the researcher's notes, and for data accuracy. The recorded conversations were transcribed into a Word document. As with the interviews, the raw data will be kept for two years to be used for potential further analysis.

Secondary source of data (students' profiles). As a reminder, the focus groups involved discussion of academic data for six de-identified students, who provided a variety of profiles, ranging from weak-to-strong academic performance, and both ELLs and those not designated at ELLs. Those profiles were used as secondary data for this study. Staff at the MSLIP created what they called ‘snapshots’ to provide students’ information to teachers for internal data analysis. The students’ profiles were composed of information such as standardized test scores (STAMP, NWEA, MAP, ACCESS), behavior incident reports, attendance, age, parents’ ethnicity and background, and years of schooling at MSLIP (Appendix E).

The secondary data framed the discussion in both focus groups to explore the teachers’ perspectives of U.S-born ELL Hispanics’ academic achievement and growth at MSLIP over four-to-six years. Choosing a wide variety sample of students allowed the researcher and participants to explore the processes that educators can incorporate in a language immersion program to improve the academic achievement of Hispanic students, in general. Students’ identities remained anonymous by being identified as student A, B, C, D, E, or F.

The sample of students included the following:

- Student profile A, who was a U.S.-born Hispanic but was not ELL, who had been at MSLIP over four-to-six years with strong academic performance.
- Student profile B, who was a U.S.-born Hispanic but is not ELL, who had been at MSLIP over four-to-six years with weak academic performance.
- Student profile C, who was a U.S.-born ELL Hispanic, who had been at MSLIP over four-to-six years with strong academic performance.
- Student profile D, who was a U.S.-born ELL Hispanic, who had been at MSLIP over four-to-six years with weak academic performance.

- Student profile E, who was a U.S.-born ELL Hispanic, who had been at MSLIP over four-to-six years who started out weak and got stronger.
- Student profile F, who was a U.S.-born Hispanic but is not ELL, who had been at MSLIP over four-to-six years who started out weak and got stronger.

Data Analysis

According to Merriam (2009) researchers must identify main themes by summarizing, interpreting, comparing, and categorizing the collected data and the research memos. For this study, after collecting data, the researcher proceeded to analyze the data by using a thematic analysis approach, explained by Patton and Cochran (2002). The thematic analysis of data consisted of the following five steps: (1) observed the preliminary data to start understanding what was in there; (2) identified the themes that summarized the main topics from the transcripts collected in interviews and focus groups conversations; (3) sorted the interviews and focus groups questions and responses in each category by research questions, and listed the themes to develop the codebook; (4) applied the codes in the data already transcribed and identify the patterns in the responses across all participants to convey with specific outcomes converted as (5) the major findings.

When doing an open coding to categorize the interviews' data, the researcher identified 27 total initial codes that reappeared frequently. Then, the researcher grouped those codes into broad categories of content and correlation to each other. The same open coding was used to categorize the focus group data, identifying 13 initial codes. The total of 40 categories identified in interviews and focus groups were used to formulate the seven major themes outlined in Chapter Four as follows:

1) Teachers' Perceptions about Students' Academic Growth

    a) Assessments

2) Language of Instruction Matters
    a) Evidences that learning in the home language benefits learning
3) Literacy, a Daily Practice
4) Students' Engagement in Class
5) Cultural Identification
6) Academic Success Starts at Home
7) Improving the U.S.-born ELL Hispanic Educational System

Trustworthiness, Validity, and Reliability

One of the most important things that researchers were requested to do was to ensure trustworthiness. To ensure a reliable study, the researcher maintained records for all the interviews and focus groups' interventions, as well as documented the process of data analysis. During the entire research process, interviews, focus groups, students' profiles as secondary data, and coding processes were kept anonymous. Research memos that supported the data collected were kept also, as confidential files.

Ethical Considerations

It is important to mention that the researcher played an instructional leadership role at MSLIP where the research was conducted. The researcher prevented potential emotion or anxiety of participants by conducting the interviews through a third party, specifically, a graduate student at a local university. Initially, the researcher thought to encourage teachers' participation by making individual invitations. The researcher decided, however, that it was important to let them make personal decisions in participating to avoid any anxiety or pressure from the researcher, since she was their direct supervisor. They were informed that a college graduate student would conduct the interviews to keep the anonymity of the interview participants and the graduate student would transcribe the responses for the researcher. This decision was made based on Stake's (1995) ethical considerations for conducting a research. Stake recommended to meet professional standards to minimize risk for trespassing individuals' privacy, since anonymity and confidentiality of all participants at any research was a core ethical consideration. For ethical consideration in this study, fictitious names were assigned to participants in order to protect their identity. A consent form was used to obtain agreement from participants to ensure full understanding of their role in this study as well as the provisions guaranteeing their privacy.

In addition to the interview process, the researcher conducted the two focus group interviews, since the purpose of those sessions was to explore the teachers' perspectives of academic achievement and educational growth of U.S.-born Hispanic students based on secondary data (students' profiles). The six selected students' profiles were anonymous and pseudonyms were used for any demographic data in order to preserve confidentiality and privacy.

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher explained the steps to collect data and the coding system used to perform the appropriate analysis. Also the development of categories to gather findings and conclusions was described. Trustworthiness and ethical considerations were also addressed. The following chapter describes the results of this data collection and analysis process. Ultimately, the aim was to make recommendations for modifying and improving immersion education for Hispanic ELLs.

Chapter Four: Results

The semi-structured interviews of the 10 teachers at MSLIP and the two focus groups reviewing the six students' profiles were used to review the three research questions driving this study: 1) What are teachers' perspectives of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students' academic achievements in a Spanish Language Immersion Program? 2) What are the trends, such as social, behavioral and cultural, that teachers perceive on the academic growth of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students in a Spanish language immersion program?, and 3) What do teachers perceive to be the processes that educators can incorporate in the Spanish language immersion program to improve the academic achievement of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students? As mentioned in Chapter Three, the following major themes were outlined to respond to the research questions: a) Teachers' Perceptions about Students' Academic Growth and Language of Instruction Matters intended to respond question one; b) Literacy, a Daily Practice, Students' Engagement in the Class, Cultural Identification, and Academic Success Starts at Home responded to research question two; and c) Improving the U.S.-born ELL Hispanic Educational System supports the response to question three. Analyzing the findings from 10 interviews, two focus groups, and the secondary sources used at the focus group discussions helped ensure triangulation of data sources to increase validity of the research findings throughout the narratives and arranged in different themes.

Findings on Research Questions

The following narratives are organized around two themes: (1) Academic achievement and (2) Language of instruction matters, intending to answer the first research question.

Research Question One: What are teachers' perspectives of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students' academic achievements in a Spanish language immersion program?

While 100% of the teachers interviewed agreed that a Spanish immersion model provided to U.S-born ELL Hispanic population the appropriate background knowledge in the native language, only 70% fully supported the immersion model. However, from the percentage of teachers supporting immersion, all recognized the need of using a little English so students receiving instruction in their home language did not fall behind in their academic achievement, concluding that students should be learning in a bilingual environment. "I feel like they should be in a bilingual environment because there is some things in Spanish they will achieve better but we don't want them to stay behind in the language that is surrounding them in the society" (Interview 4, line 44).

Teachers' Perceptions about Students' Academic Growth

Across all interviews, teachers believed that U.S-born ELL Hispanic students should succeed and perform the same as any other English-speaking student, with the same academic rigor and high expectations. Contrasted with respondent 1A in a focus group:

"High academic expectations should be set for all students but unfortunately exists an academic gap between U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students compared with U.S.-born Hispanic but no ELL, and English-speaking students" (Focus Group 1A, line 84). Respondent 1C concurred, "U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students showed academic growth over time [at the Spanish immersion program] but much slower than U.S.-born Hispanics but not identified as ELL student" (Focus Groups 1C, line 59). However, Interview 10 considered that academic achievement depends on different factors: "The academic achievement of U.S. born ELL Hispanic students in a Spanish immersion school is the outcome of having teachers, parents and students setting educational goals. It is a combination of these three particular people to define students' achievement" (Interview 10, line 39).

Interview 9 pointed out the success of the academic achievement was directly related to the socio-economic status and to the background of the family. In agreement with this interview, all respondents in Focus Group 1 concluded that parents' education did not demonstrate a clear correlation in how students were performing. The students' profiles reviewed showed that students with parents at college level were not necessarily performing higher than a student whose parents had a general education development (GED) education level. However, respondents in Focus Group 1 concluded that when parents only have an elementary education, they do not know how to support their children's education. Respondent 1E mentioned that probably the parents with a bachelor degree were not around home supporting their child because they were working. Although teachers participating did not find the parents' education as a factor determining the students' academic achievement, as Respondent 1D strongly stated, "When the parents are Hispanic the students' growth tends to be slower over time in English. Students with a Hispanic background advance slower over time in the English reading skills" (Focus Group 1D, line 70). To this statement, Respondent 1B stated that the social and economic status, regardless of the ethnicity, affected the students' academics.

Assessments. Another factor that influenced academic achievement, according to participants, was assessments. Interview 5 focused the academic achievement merely as the result of the measurement of learning through assessments and testing, “Currently across our country standardized test scores define academic achievement” (Interview 5, line 29). But there did not always appear to be a congruency among assessments to determine the students’ academic achievement. For example, Student Profile A, who was a U.S.-born Hispanic but not ELL, who had been at MSLIP over five years with strong academic performance, demonstrated a reading level in English as an 11th grader when the student was enrolled in fourth grade; however, the student did not show the same performance in two different tests. In the state test the student scored a proficient level compared with English-speaking students in fourth grade at the state level, and the question raised was, “Shouldn’t Student A score as advanced level in the state test in Communication Arts if he/she is reading as an 11th grader according to NWEA reading test [in English]?” (Focus Group 1, line 43).

Related to the performance in state assessment, another respondent inquired, “[When] a student is performing at grade level in a standardized test used as progress monitoring, why is [he/she performing] Basic in the state test?” (Focus group 2D, line 109). The respondents were expecting to see a correlation across all tests scores representing the academic achievement of Student A, which in the STAMP test, to measure literacy skills in Spanish, Student A scored 5/6 in reading and 2/7 in writing. This data caused disbelief when comparing the achievement of Students A and C. Respondent 1E questioned what happened with Student C, U.S-born Hispanic ELL in third grade, scoring at 3.5 reading level in English on the NWEA test, but basic on the state test, and higher or equal in reading (5/6) and writing (4/7) than Student A in Spanish, “Why does student C not score higher in the state test but score higher than student A in writing in Spanish?” (Focus Group 1E, line 51). Furthermore, there was an interesting comment from 2D, who revealed that some of the reading level scores were not good predictors for measuring academic success, since the given test provided fluency information but no comprehension. Respondent 2B voiced that the data collected for the students’ profiles gave teachers a great deal of information, but having students’ profiles with anonymous students created difficulties for the data analysis, “It would be better for teachers to collect any other evaluation data, such as teachers’ direct observations or writing samples, to talk about their performance, because we don’t know if the kids were underrepresented” (Focus Group 2B, line 208).

Teachers who were interviewed mentioned many other forms to prove the students’ academic achievement in the classroom, such as direct observations, formative and summative assessments, pre and post assessments, students’ portfolios, and projects, among others. Moreover, all interviewed teachers concurred that standardized tests were marking the success or failure of students’ academic achievement. There was a disconnect between the need of the language of instruction in L1, with state assessments in L2, and the need of learning academic and social language in the dominant language (L2) in the country, “Why are formative and school standardized assessments reflecting a higher academic performance across all students profiles data reviewed but when giving state standardized assessments they are showing a poor performance?” (Focus Group 2B, line 184).

Language of Instruction Matters

The teachers’ points of view about what should be the language of instruction for U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students, English or Spanish and why, caused some controversy when reviewing the data. While all teachers were pleased in having immersion education programs for the Hispanic population to provide the appropriate background knowledge in the native language, all interviewed referred to the need to provide academic instruction in both languages, English and Spanish. For instance, Interviewee 1 expressed, “They need to speak English to be able to communicate, to write, and to be functional in the country they live” (Interview 1, line 68).

But at the same time, this participant agreed that when a student was not proficient in English, he or she should be in a classroom learning core subjects in his or her first language to facilitate the learning process, because the language of instruction matters to understand the concepts. Sustaining this point, Interviewee 1 said, “If the child has the ability to transfer from one language to another with the appropriate skills, then language really doesn’t matter. It has more to do with their academic skills and language skills” (Interview 1, line 88).

In some cases, teachers firmly trusted in the success of learning at school in the home language to transfer content skills from L1 to L2 and to become bilinguals. Respondent A in Focus Group 2 observed that Student E had consistent growth in math, performing at grade level but not for reading “probably because of transferring math skills from L1 to L2” (Focus Group 2A, line 107). Interview 2 shared her ups and downs in trusting the benefits of students learning in their L1. However, she expressed that the language of instruction for U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students should be Spanish, L1,

> When I came into MSLIP, I was very adamant that it should be English. I have since changed my opinion. I’ve seen low academic achievement in reading and writing even though they are speaking Spanish at home all the time. I definitely

> think there is still more room for me to teach them in Spanish, help them become bilingual but really help them cement that first language, Spanish. (Interview 2, line 66)

Because of the inquiry curriculum taught at MSLIP dealing with close readings or working with more complex texts, Interviewee 2 mentioned that in her classroom she dealt with more abstract and difficult concepts in the students' native language, which made it easier for children to be more engaged. When a student was not proficient in English, she believed the student would do better in school if he/she learned to write in his/her first language, because students were capable of making connections between the languages,

> even though not all the rules are the same or similar but if you are learning to write in your native language, and you get the idea of punctuation, of using your voice in your writing, those are things that you can then apply to whatever language you are writing in. (Interview 2, line 196)

Although Interviewee 2 supported the immersion language model, she thought that U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students must be well prepared to compete with any other English native speaker in the United States by making sure they become bilingual and bi-literate, in both English and Spanish. She said, "The real goal is to develop these little people who become big people and are able to function in society" (Interview 2, line 141). Similar to this perception, Interviewee 4 emphasized that the language of instruction impacted the achievement at or above grade level, since being taught in their own language gave students an advantage to be able to understand concepts, rather than being taught in a language in which they were not fluent or did not even speak "that can be a benefit for them to be able to achieve or at least perform at a closer level to American counterparts" (Interview 4, line 54).

However, there was a choral agreement at all interviews that ELL students should be learning in a bilingual environment, because there are some things in Spanish they will achieve better, "U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students should be learning in the language they will use in their daily lives" (Interview 4, line 98). All participants, except Interviewees 3, 5, and 6, considered that if a student was not proficient in English, students would benefit by learning the subject matter in the first language, because it was still important for them to learn the academic skills, and it would be easier to learn it in their native language rather than English. Although Interviewee 5 recognized that students benefitted learning concepts in their native language, this participant highlighted that it was much better for them to learn concepts in their dominant language, "The language in which the assessments are being taken and that should be English" (Interview 5, line 41). Interview 3's point of view of the language of instruction for U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students was that it should be English, because that language was utilized around the world. She did not know if the language of instruction impacted the U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students to perform at or above grade level, but she thought, "Not receiving instruction in English, ELLs do not get the different 'cutbacks' for performing the state test" (Interview 3, line 53).

Interview 6 showed a more neutral position in expressing his point of view about teaching all content area instruction in Spanish to U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students. He believed in a more balanced curriculum. He did not believe that if a student was not proficient in English then he or she should be in a classroom learning subject matter in his or her first language. He thought a combination of teaching in both English and Spanish would be beneficial, because in that form students would make more connections. Interviewee 7 provided a slightly different view than any other participant, stating that the language of instruction greatly impacted the performance, but he pointed out the importance of having ESL class for ELL students, instead to offering an entire bilingual program to them.

Similar to other teachers, Interviewee 10 believed the language of instruction definitely had an impact on how students performed at grade level, but she exposed that language of instruction should be English and Spanish, because it was important for students to be able to practice and master both languages, since students happened to be living in an English speaking country. She stated, “I am not entirely in agreement with this. If these kids are in an English-speaking country, then I think they should be taught in both languages” (Interview 10, line 44). However, she also stated that all content should be taught in the native language, unless students did not understand the English language at all.

Evidences that learning in the home language benefits learning. Interviewees 3 and 6 did not evidence that U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students benefited from opportunities to learn concepts in their native language, but participant six stated, “Using their own language for instruction is always good to help them transfer that knowledge into English” (Interview 6, line 67). The rest of the participants provided examples of evidence noticed in their day-to-day classroom interactions. Interview 1 informed that when students were performing academic projects, they seemed to enjoy it more when they could take over their own learning in the language, L1, which made them feel more comfortable. Interviewee 7 noticed when students were learning in their L1, they were more motivated to participate in class discussion and were engaged. Interview 9 shared evidence that students receiving instruction in their L1 were able to understand academic concepts. Interviewee 2 also evidenced in her anecdotal histories that U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students benefited from opportunities to learn concepts in their native language, rather than learning in an L2 environment:

> Hispanic students working in an only English environment, there was a lot of stress involved, a lot of frustration, a lot of me doing translations to help them feel more at ease whereas here (at MSLIP) I don’t see that happening. I see more comfort …often feel like the [they are] experts with their classmates because they know more than some of their classmates do. But as far as data or evidence . . . even if some might score low, when I look at their Spanish checklists, I don’t see those red flags. (Interview 2, line 102)

However, Interviewee 9 also mentioned that when academic concepts were assessed in L2, students did not know what to do, because of the lack of L2 development.

There was unanimity by teachers about the need for U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students to learn English at MSLIP, but not at the cost of sacrificing the learning of the home language. The opinions of those interviewed concluded that learning in the home language favored the academic achievement in Spanish; however, the instructional model at MSLIP must be implemented in the way that students could associate what they knew in Spanish with English. The majority of the respondents felt that the MSLIP model was not producing the results in academic achievement for ELLs in English. The necessary scaffolding needed to happen to make connections between the students’ home language and English.

The following narratives are arranged around four themes: (1) Literacy, a Daily Practice, (2) Students' engagement in class, (3) Cultural differences, and (4) Support at home. Those four themes were intended to support the second research question.

Research Question Two: What are the trends, such as social, behavioral and cultural, that teachers perceive on the academic growth of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students in a Spanish language immersion program?

Literacy, a Daily Practice

The development of the language impacts the growth of academic skills, which at the same time impact the students' performance. Interview 1's point of view was that teaching all content area instruction in Spanish to U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students would provide a good foundation of the language they have been born into and raised with at home, reflecting an easier comprehension of the instructional content. Respondent 1B reported that one of the trends impeding the academic growth of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students remained in the daily practice of reading at home, which could be happening in English or Spanish, but developing literacy skills, such as the use of vocabulary and fluency. This perception was seconded by respondent 1E who remarked,

> Student growth in either, English or Spanish, is tied to how well the kids develop literacy skills such as phonemic and phonologic awareness to be able to decode, to develop fluency, acquire vocabulary, and finally to comprehend a text, but with a constant practice of reading. (Focus Group 1E, line 137)

There were situations when U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students were learning all the content area in their home language, but students did not understand the concept, because they did not have the appropriate vocabulary to develop the cognitive language, "Spanish vocabulary depends on what they heard or are used to at home. It is harder for students to transfer to other language depending on the concept when not having the appropriate vocabulary" (Interview 1, line 115).

Interviewee 4 supported the idea that vocabulary played an important role in language development, being one of the greatest challenges impeding academic achievement. The same as 1 and 4, Interviewee 9, identified the development of vocabulary as an important factor to review when talking about students' academic growth, "Some students have functional Spanish at home, and then when you go to the vocabulary for the content of instruction they don't understand the content" (Interview 9, line 87). The lack of vocabulary resulted in a representative trend across interviews and focus groups. Respondent 2A considered that the lack of communication students had at home limited the extent of their vocabulary, stating, "Hispanic parents are not talking too much to their kids. Kids are in school listening the teacher so they are not having opportunity to talk to develop vocabulary" (Focus Group 2A, line 219).

Contrary to Interviewees 1, 4, and 9, and Respondent 2A in one of the focus groups, Interviewee 8 had the perception that students learning in L1 could have difficulties with instruction, but not with vocabulary since children learning in both languages had more options for using a word in either of the language known, "They are more familiar with their first language. They are able to apply what they know. They are not going to struggle with the instruction, maybe the concept but not the vocabulary" (Interview 8, line 5). This interviewee perceived that U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students could develop their vocabulary by having peers interacting.

> I introduced fractions and one student [wasn’t] didn’t understand with the [vocab] vocabulary that we were using . . . their peer . . . explained it to him in native language used a different [vocab] to where they were better able to understand. (Interview 8, line 2)

The majority of the interviewees agree that ELLs must have access to practice literacy skills every day in English and Spanish, to go beyond acquiring only conversational English or Spanish language skills. Interviewees expressed feeling overwhelmed teaching content and language at the same time. However, most of them concurred that when students were learning literacy in their home language, they were more engaged in the lesson.

Students’ Engagement in Class

Learning in the native language does not always allow students to become fully engaged in the class. Interview 1 did not perceive any difference in terms of students’ engagement in the class, since “they feel more identified speaking English because of their peers and they refused to speak Spanish; when they feel part of the community they feel engaged, no matter what language they are talking ” (Interview 1, line 107). However, a different consideration around this topic was that when receiving instruction in their native language, students were more engaged because they were using the language that made them feel comfortable. Interviewee 7 also observed that students were more engaged in their academics when the content instruction was given in L1. “The participation in class is extremely well and they are very motivated to participate in class discussions” (Interview 7, line 64).

According to Interviewee 8, when learning in L1 students were engaged because they felt more confident, mastered concepts quickly, and had sense of pride. In Interviewee 10’s experience, students were more engaged in their academics when learning in Spanish, because it was their native language. “Especially being in an immersion school where they go with English speaking kids, they are able to connect those skills to the English and help their peers better understand certain material” (Interview 10, line 98). An additional consideration found in Focus Group 2 was, “The relation with the teacher is crucial for the level of motivation toward students’ achievement” (Focus Group 2A, line 144). In comparison to this comment, Focus Group 1 mentioned the advantages that teachers at MSLIP offered to U. S.-born ELL Hispanic students by understanding the students’ culture and language to support their cultural background in the learning process.

Cultural Identification

Interviewee 1 perceived that ELL Hispanic immigrants felt comfortable speaking Spanish, but U.S.-born Hispanic students were affected in their cultural identity, because they considered themselves as born in the U.S. and English as their native language. However, they had a Hispanic heritage and Spanish was the language spoken at home. According to Interviewee 4, even though they were born in the U.S., English was not being reinforced at home or spoken at all, and so the only way to communicate was in Spanish. Seeing the Spanish language immersion education as an advantage to reinforce their heritage and home language, “It’s one way that we are able to teach them otherwise we would be teaching them not just concepts but also another language at the same time.”(Interview 4, line 70). This participant mentioned that through different events performed at MSLIP there was plenty of cultural support for parents and students to be identified with their Hispanic heritage.

In the opinion of Interviewee 1, the greatest challenge impeding the students' educational growth was when parents were not motivated and involved in the school activities, or not understanding how the school system worked. That caused students' disengagement in their academics and difficulties in doing homework. She identified that the existence of a cultural and social trend was affecting the academic achievement, "They come to school and they may be shyer than other kids, because of their cultural difference. That affects their academic achievement" (Interview 1, line 51).

In both Focus Groups 1 and 2, respondents coincided that teachers understanding the parents' cultural background increased their participation at their child's school. The cultural practices were a hook to keep parents engaged in their children's education. However, different strategies must be implemented to involve parents in the academic side.

Academic Success Starts at Home

Parents were choosing the Spanish immersion program, because they felt more comfortable when they could communicate with the teacher. Hispanic parents felt safe at MSLIP because of the sense of community, "They feel like there is a little part of their country in that school" (Interview 6, line 104). However, Interviewee 4 proposed to improve the communication with parents and to educate them in what was being taught in the classroom by using some guides with instructions for parents. This interviewee expressed that this communication should be in their native language, because the communication with parents mattered for students to be successful. Interviewees 5 and 9 expressed that the greatest trends impeding the students' academic achievement were the language barrier between school and families, but also their socioeconomic status, which resulted in parents not being able to provide academic support at home. Interviewee 5, who was not a Spanish-speaking teacher, contacted parents to get support, but she had a language barrier to communicate effectively with parents. She agreed that parents were choosing the MSLIP education model to make it easier on their children, and she believed that parents must keep and stay involved to support their children academically. Interviewee 9 thought that most of Hispanic families were low income and parents worked a great deal, so they were not around in the house all the time. They did not have the ability to check homework and school work. "They take very good care of the children but they don't know much about subject area or English enough to help their kids" (Interview 9, line 51).

Most of the interviewees concurred that Hispanic parents were supporting their children's education, but parents had personal limitations. Interviewee 6 considered that although Hispanic parents supported their children in their academics, "They do what they can, as much as they can, they have limitations of their own education and resources. They are involved but they have other priorities like making a living for their kids" (Interview 6, line 55).

Interviewees 4 and 5 insisted on the importance of having consistent communication with parents. The joining of the parents and teachers helped students in a positive way. Interviewee 7 stated, fully convinced that he had experiences that made him confirm that Hispanic parents had been one of the most supportive families in his classroom. This participant mentioned that one of the biggest factors that made Hispanic parents choose a Spanish immersion program as the educational model for their children was the ability to speak to teachers, “Many other teachers are not proficient in Spanish and they may not feel comfortable talking to Hispanic parents” (Interview 7, line 101). One thing he strived for was being in constant communication with parents and letting them know how their child was doing in school; to be on the same team supporting their student’s academics.

Contrary to Interviewee 7, Interviewee 8 shared that in her point of view, the below-grade-level of academic performance was related to lack of support at home. However, this resulted in the confusing statement during her interview,

> Parents support their kids more than Americans” (Interview 8, line 7). Her perception on this matter was that “most Hispanic parents come to the United States for better opportunities so they know their kids have an even better potential so they provide emotional support and encouragement in order for their kids to be the top and the best” (Interview 8, line 9). Similarly, Interviewees 8, 4, and 10 relayed much of students’ failure or success to the parents’ support: “In general there is usually not enough support at home because Hispanic parents work longer hours and sometimes they do not have much interest in their kids’ academics” (Interview 4, line 49). This participant also affirmed: “even though they might understand the concept, the lack of support at home leads into failure. (Interview 4, line 78)

This perspective was aligned with findings in Focus Groups 1 and 2, “The support received at home and at school, and the exposure to literature are some factors that enforce the academic performance” (Focus Group 2, line 142). Respondent 1D in the focus group stated that a student performing below grade level in literacy, in either language, English or Spanish depended on the home life, “It depends on the support students get at home, even if parents can’t support academically at least can give education the value needed to impulse their kids to keep engaged in their academics and moving forward in school” (Focus Group 1D, line 154). Interviewee 10 also believed that the greatest challenges impeding the academic achievement of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students was “the lack of support at home, the lack of interest of a child as much as having difficulty fitting in a certain environment” (Interview 10, line 66).

All participants in Focus Groups 1 and 2 echoed that parents of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students had favorable attitudes toward their children’s education at MSLIP, but in most cases parents did not possess the academic competence and language abilities to reinforce the content knowledge at home, in either Spanish or English. Teachers felt that the lack of support at home was one of the main trends making a difference in the academic growth of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students. Also, teachers perceived that students were slightly more motivated and engaged in the classrooms when learning in their home language and were more likely to take challenges when participating in whole group activities.

In order to respond to research question three, the following narratives were arranged around one theme: (1) Improving U.S.-born ELL Hispanic educational system.

Research Question Three: What do teachers perceive to be the processes that educators can incorporate in the Spanish language immersion program to improve the academic achievement of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students?

Improving U.S.-born ELL Hispanic’s Educational System

In the intention to overcome some of the challenges and deficiencies in the U.S.-born ELL Hispanic education, participants proposed different strategies to create a more effective ELL educational system. Interviewees 1 and 5 proposed to have more opportunities for parents' participation to make them feel part of the community. Interviewees 1 and 8 expressed to send all school communication in Spanish. Interviewee 1 also suggested promoting teamwork with peers to master specific skills. It was also imperative to make sure that the curriculum was aligned to the state standards, to keep students in the same level as any other student in the same grade level. Furthermore, giving standardized tests in the primary language, providing more one-on-one assistance, and incorporating more technology in instruction were also vital to a successful ELL education model. However, Interviewee 1 strongly recommended that U.S-born ELL Hispanic students should receive academic instruction in both languages, English and Spanish. She believed children needed to support their own language because it was part of them, but also they needed to keep proficient in the country where they lived. Interview 2 considered it important to have better human capital supporting ELLs. For example, more teacher training to be knowledgeable in working with ELLs, learning how to engage Hispanic families (such as literacy nights or weekend English reading time to facilitate parents' self-confidence in teaching English to their children), having an interpreter to help with the language, sending communications in their native language, and creating a relationship among teachers and parents to support academically and culturally the U.S.-born ELL Hispanics' to succeed in a Spanish immersion program. One aspect this interviewee would change when teaching U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students was "to open up the floor for more bilingual setting just to make both languages as equally important" (Interview 2, line 202). Interview 3 proposed improvement in writing, reading comprehension, and to perform comparisons like what children their same age who were not ELL learners, or others, could do. Then, place the students in different groups and different levels to differentiate the instruction, but also suggested to provide instruction in English. Interviewee 4 suggested dedicating more time in introducing L1 and L2 vocabulary in contexts to make more meaningful their reading comprehension. Also stated, "Students would benefit by learning in a 50/50 instruction, not specifically have subjects taught in a specific language but alternate them just by day" (Interview 4, line 98). He would do instruction in a bilingual setting, not just in their native language, because students also needed to catch up the English language. Interviewee 5 suggested to teach ELL students in the dominant language, English, to make students succeed in the academic performance measured by standardized assessments in English. Interviewee 6 suggested reviewing the curriculum and assessments given to U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students. Interviewee 6 believed in a balanced curriculum, where students could acquire both languages, English and Spanish.

As Interviewees 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 suggested to incorporate more English in the curriculum, Interviewees 9 and 10 were also convinced that, in order to improve the educational system for U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students, it would benefit to incorporate a program in which the students could study and learn in English and their native language. Interviewee 9 thought the best fit for U.S-born ELL Hispanic students was "the bilingual program, half/half, two -way instruction, because they will have 50% in both English and Spanish." (Interview 9, line 43). In her personal consideration,

> Total immersion education is excellent when children come from an educated

> background, because parents challenge the child to prepare in both languages and parents help at home. In those cases, children are able to do the switch in both languages. (Interview 9, line 54)

Interviewee 7, as any other participant in this study, suggested providing more bilingual and language immersion around the country as the educational model when teaching U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students.

Summary

Major findings from this study showed that teachers at MSLIP perceived that U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students benefitted from learning academics in their home language, as students had a better comprehension of the content. However, MSLIP teachers were worried that the 80/20 immersion model practiced at MSLIP denied students the opportunity to succeed in their academic performance, since standardized testing was given in the dominant language, English. MSLIP teachers recognized that students' academic performance on the state tests may have been behind, but students' educational growth showed progress on the formative assessments in Spanish and in – school assessments in English. MSLIP teachers recognized that having a 50/50 bilingual immersion model would facilitate in having a balanced program that best applied for helping U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students to succeed academically in the U.S. Finally, MSLIP teachers acknowledged the involvement of Hispanic parents in their child's education, but teachers insisted on finding creative ways for providing resources to parents to facilitate cognitive academic language support at home. In Chapter Five, the researcher will draw final conclusions and reflect on the overall research.

Chapter Five: Conclusion and Implications

Chapter Five describes conclusions, implications, and limitations of the study. Additionally, recommendations for further research will conclude the presentation of this study, but may mark the beginning of other possible related research. This chapter summarizes the overall research, the literature reviewed, and findings. The researcher, reflecting on the semi-structured interviews and focus group responses, found teachers' perspectives on academic achievement of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic Students as follows.

Conclusions of the Study

It is interesting to find that all participants across interviews and focus groups valued the instruction for ELLs in the home language, but the need for incorporating a balanced curriculum to dedicate more instructional time in English was unanimous. U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students benefitted from learning the core subjects in the home language to understand the content of instruction and to master concepts, which might be the role of the home language. However, definitely U.S.-born ELL Hispanics must receive a parallel instruction in English to enrich their vocabulary and to bridge the meaning of the concepts in both L1 and L2. The quality of instruction must be equal for all students, with the same learning standards and the same high academic expectations for all students. Having a mindset about U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students' capability for achieving at the level of any other student at the same age in the U.S. is vital for their academic growth and integration to the U.S. society. Throughout interviews and focus group discussions, none of the teachers thought that perhaps ELL Hispanic students were struggling because the instruction at MSLIP was geared toward English-speaking students. A program designed for English-speaking and Spanish-speaking students would offer different instructional resources leading them to a better academic achievement; including more advanced vocabulary, which perhaps would help the ELL students push to the next level.

A major finding also was the parental involvement as a trend in the students' academic achievement. Teachers participating in this study asserted that parents were key pieces in the students' success; enforcing parents' participation must be one of the areas of improvement needed to overcome the students' interests for their education and for developing the language of instruction. One of the unanimous perspectives of teachers was that students' engagement in their academics depended on the home environment. Children of professional parents had more opportunities for developing literacy skills in an early age and had advantage over children living in poor home environments. The teachers' perspective supported Fullan et al.'s (2007) discoveries, which mentioned that children of professional parents had more literacy advantages than children of parents on welfare. However, teachers did not mention that students would improve unless schools intervened effectively in the educational systems to close the gap, as Fullan et al. mentioned. This was one of the biases identified. Teachers were focused on external trends, out of MSLIP. The limited English proficiency of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students created challenges in learning to read in English. The early reading skills they acquired were coming from their parents, who may or may not speak English, and at the same time their Spanish language was very poor, in terms of grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, and including appropriate pronunciation of words. The socio-economic status of their families was limiting them in building strong background knowledge in terms of content area, cultural or social experience. There was a mismatch in what children were learning or reading at home that could create difficulties in their comprehension at school. However, it was important to recognize that teachers' perspectives could be explained based on the "deficit perspective" informed in the literature review, where Gorski (2010) approached certain assertions as socio-economical biases that distracted teachers from exploring the reality of the issue.

Literacy in the home language benefitted students in developing phonemic and phonologic awareness to be able to decode, to develop fluency, acquire vocabulary, and finally to comprehend a text. The academic instruction might happen in L1 because what teachers reported to this research which was the importance of developing the language and academic skills in the language that made them feel comfortable. However, teachers perceived that there was a great need of incorporating ELL Hispanic students to the English language to make them function in the society where they lived. Students made connections between the languages but when they performed the reading and writing skills, they were capable to apply those skills to any other language. This finding was similar to what was showed in Bialystok (2008), who mentioned that bilingual children were able to perform highly in writing when the writing system was similar in both languages. Teachers participating in this study believed that when ELL Hispanic children catch up, L1 and L2 were going to surpass their other counter parts.

U.S.-born ELL Hispanic children faced a cultural discontinuity among the culture from the country in which they were born and the culture of their home, which was confusing to them. U.S.-born ELL Hispanics were not proficient in their native language, in English. In many cases, children were the ones translating and supporting the English language at home. Parents wanted to keep the Hispanic culture at home and to pass their culture to their children born in the U.S. Most of those children never had been in a Hispanic country, which made it difficult for them to create the connection with that culture, in terms of values, experiences, and expectations. It was also difficult to be connected with the U.S. culture when at Hispanic homes their cultural practice was aligned with their heritage. U.S.-born Hispanic children were in the middle of identity development that was determined from adults and society surrounding them.

U.S.-born ELL Hispanics developed an English communication with their classmates in terms of their linguistic characteristics, but not necessarily for academic purposes, which was not sufficient for readiness for English. They needed to develop more language skills to succeed in their academics. Students with well-cemented L1 skills acquired a L2 easier than students with weak L1 skills, since skills learned in L1 would be transferred to L2. Language skills, cognitive skills, and academic skills were interconnected, and all three must be supported by educators if they want ELL Hispanic students to succeed linguistically, academically, and cognitively in both, English and Spanish. Educators should provide complex academic instruction through L1, while doing the same with L2.

The initial reading instruction should be conducted in the ELL Hispanic L1 for students to understand the concept and acquire the academic skill. Although academic skills can be transferred to L2 language, it should be important for U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students to receive 50% instruction in L1 and 50% instruction in L2. Educators need to assure that children are getting the concept and they are equipped to face the English demand when giving standardized tests.

U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students must be supported in developing English vocabulary; such support should be incorporated while introducing new content of instruction through meaningful and contextually rich activities. This strategy should stimulate the developmental process of understanding the concept in their L1 to build the background knowledge, but giving the English vocabulary to make the appropriate connection and then to be able to transfer L1 to L2 content. In that way, the curriculum can be assimilated in an enriched instructional environment.

Assessments should be given in the children's dominant language, L1 or L2, to measure how much the ELL Hispanic student learned, but not used to compare it to an English native speaker peer. That was placing ELL Hispanic students at a disadvantage when considering their academic achievement level. Assessments should be made to confirm the growth that children are doing, but not merely to prove they are performing at specific ranges expected of their grade level. Education should be more holistic, looking to develop good citizenship and reinforcing character education, focusing less on percentages of children scoring at an expected range, which at certain point becomes a detriment to the self-esteem, motivation, and confidence toward being educated at school.

There have been politicians' and educators' debates over the type of educational programs most appropriate for ELL Hispanic students. Educational programs must have a series of components. Programs can vary for the type of curriculum and expectations set for students, but MSLIP teachers want to identify the approaches that make successful classrooms and schools, such as a balanced curriculum, a more holistic education, a safe and positive school-wide environment, an inquiry-based approach, effective grouping and independent strategies, exposure to higher-order thinking, and exposure to complex texts for enhanced students' engagement and understanding. What is needed to incorporate is more clear guidance for teachers about the immersion model to have the appropriate tools to support the students in transferring content from L1 to L2.

Implications of the Study

The literature reviewed and the study findings were compared and sustained most of the outcomes of this research. There were four important implications for educational programs as they continue educating U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students in the Spanish immersion language program:

The immersion language model should incorporate a balanced curriculum, focused on language and content, to serve all students attending the program; English-speaking students but also Spanish-speaking students. There is an imperative to differentiate the instruction considering the characteristics of the students served. The one-way-immersion model may be reviewed to consider implementing a TWI model to offer the appropriate curriculum to specific group of students. The purpose will be to provide the opportunity to develop the home language for cultural identification and better understanding of instructional content, and to acquire a second language to perform at the society where they remain (Howard et al., 2003; Rose et al., 2009; Sangha, 2013; Slavin & Cheung, 2003; Tedick & Wesely, 2015). A second implication was the fact that incorporating more parental involvement strategies in the school program will support the students' academic achievement, since parents are expected to support literacy at home (Cummins, 1984; Fullan et al., 2007; Howard et al., 2003; McMaster et al., 2008). Although parents can communicate with their child's teacher in Spanish, many times parents only participated in cultural celebrations, yet exhibited low involvement in the academic life. There was a strong correlation among socio-economic background, parents' education and students' performance. The implications were related with the type of support that children were receiving at home, as the condition for success or failure at school. However, it will be crucial to educate teachers in what is called 'deficit perspective' to explore more students' abilities instead to adjust all students' deficiencies to their socio-economic background (Gorski, 2010). The last implication identified in this research was regarding the tools that may be used to measure the academic achievement. One of those tools must be to identify the effectiveness of the instructional model prior to assessing the students' performance. On the state tests, U.S.-born ELL Hispanics may have been behind, but students' educational growth showed progress on the formative assessments in Spanish and in school assessments in English. Academic achievement should be determined with the combination of a variety of assessments given in the children's dominant language, L1 or L2, to measure how much the student learned (Artiles & Ortiz, 2002; CARLA, 2015, Chamberlain, 2005; Lopez et al., 1997; Tedick & Wesely, 2015).

Limitations of the Study

Although this research was carefully prepared and reached its aim, there were some limitations. First of all, the study was conducted where the main researcher was working as the school principal for seven years. The main researcher did not conduct the interviews to avoid anxiety among the participants, since the researcher was the direct supervisor of the potential participants. Therefore, one limitation was the possibility that teachers felt coerced to respond to interview questions in particular ways; the main researcher made the assumption that participants responded to the interview questions honestly and without coercion. Also, the researcher assumed that participants responded with their own personal perspectives about the discussed topics rather than answering in ways they assumed the researcher wanted to hear. To avoid any type of threat, a graduate college student conducted the semi-structured interviews, but the main researcher should give more guidance to the interviewer to formulate immediate questions based on the responses of the participants. Second, the sample size was a small number of participants. The study was conducted in only one school with only 10 participants. However, the researcher made an attempt to obtain a wide range of responses by conducting individual interviews and focus groups. Third, the secondary source, students' profiles, reviewed as point of discussion at the focus groups presented a certain degree of subjectivity and the anonymity of the students did not allow participants to make clear conclusions of the trends impacting the academic achievement and educational growth. Also, there was some bias regarding the expected results because of the students' ethnicity. A fourth limitation encountered was that most of the interviewed teachers had less than five years of experience in teaching, two had seven years of teaching, but all those years had been at MSLIP, which limits their experience to a unique environment, preventing them to compare and contrast how ELL students were educated in other schools. Finally, the small number of students' profiles might not represent the majority of the U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students enrolled in a Spanish immersion program. But, although the sample was small, studies like this were necessary for increasing the field's understanding of language immersion education in areas with recent growth of the Hispanic population, such as found in smaller Midwestern cities.

Recommendations for Further Study

There are opportunities for developing research to overcome the educational trends impeding the performance of L1 and L2 language, comprehension of subject content, as well as identify strategies to keep parents engaged and interested in the academic life of their children. Other opportunities for further research are gathering data to inform on the academic and social growth of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students to identify patterns that influence a student's overall academic achievement or to study the relationship between the language of instruction and student achievement in core subjects. Also, there is a good chance to research how the 'deficit perspective' is affecting the teachers' practices in urban settings, since this is a distractor for teachers improving their professional practices. For future research it would also be interesting to explore data of ELL students' in immersion language programs, but from different home language backgrounds to compare academic achievement and educational growth across ethnicities. The results of this study do not represent the absolute response to settle conclusions for processes that educational leaders can incorporate into instructional models to improve as many Hispanic students' experiences and outcomes as possible. Using additional data from other OWI and TWI schools can promote further investigations.

Having more than 50% of the population speaking a language other than English born in the United States, and entering to school with low pre-literacy skills and experiences in both languages have created the need of the integration of home language (Spanish) and born language (English) to develop the heritage language, but integrate that population into the school environment where they lived and were born, in the United States of America. Although there have been studies, and discussions by politicians and educators, bilingual programs are a good option in the implementation of a curriculum that is fully prepared and intentionally elaborated for making the Spanish minority to achieve academic content and to demonstrate through assessments what they have learned.

Conclusion

Research studies were seeking value-driven leaders dedicated to making contributions to the literature to support previous findings and to generate new information to improve knowledge in the educational field. Exploring and finding responses of teachers' perspectives of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students' academic achievement and educational growth in a Spanish language immersion program was an enrichment opportunity to help identify processes educational leaders could incorporate into instructional models. The goal was to improve as many Hispanic students' experiences and outcomes as possible. Further research in such areas would contribute to the body of knowledge with regard to ELL academic achievement and support for the appropriate language of instruction and assessments to be created to evaluate the students' academic growth. This study may provide information helpful to staff, faculty and administration at MSLIP, allowing them to continue to more fully and successfully educate U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent Interview - Teachers

Lindenwood University
School of Education
209 S. Kingshighway
St. Charles, Missouri 63301

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities
“Teachers’ Perspectives on Academic Achievement of U.S.-born Hispanic Students in a Midwestern Spanish Language Immersion Program”.
Principal Investigator Herlinda A. Galve Salgado
Telephone: 573-424-4493 E-mail: hg457@lionmail.lindenwood.edu

Participant ____________________Contact information_________________

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Herlinda Arlene Galve Salgado under the guidance of Dr. Sarah Coppersmith. The purpose of this research is to explore into teachers’ perspectives of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students’ academic achievement in a Spanish language immersion program to identify processes that educational leaders can incorporate into instructional models to improve as many Hispanic students’ experiences and outcomes as possible. Another purpose of this project is to examine what are the trends that teachers’ perceive on the growth of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students in a Spanish language immersion program. Other information that this research will generate is to suggest what modifications and improvements can be made to immersion educational models when teaching students in their native language.
2. Your participation will be as follows:

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Ø A staff member, non-participant in the study, will interview individually up to ten staff members who teach reading, writing, or core subjects to the U.S.-born Hispanic identified as ELL students to get general perceptions on students’ academic achievement.
Ø The individual interviews will be guided by pre-designed questions that correspond directly to the research questions.
Ø The questions arising from each conversation will be added into the interview.
Ø One week before each interview, the researcher will send the interview questions to the participants for them to have a general idea about the interview content.
Ø After each interview, the interview responses will be transcribed into a word processor to create an interview summary.
Ø Each interview will include teachers’ background information, key content of interview, and researcher’s personal reflection on the interview.

The total length of time for participation will be 60 minutes.. The interviews will take place at the work location of the participants, at a pre-arranged time, and face-to-face. The interventions may last up to one hour and voice responses will be recorded on a tape recorder and/or digital medium. Approximately 8-10 teachers from MSLIP will be involved in this research.

3. Because of the sample size, could be a risk of identification, even though the researcher will do all possible to keep confidentiality and anonymity in place. Another foreseeable risk could be if any emergency may necessitate the cancellation and re-scheduling of the interviews.
4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about processes that educational leaders can incorporate into instructional models to improve as many Hispanic students' experiences and outcomes as possible. Also you will learn what modifications and improvements can be made specifically to immersion educational models when teaching students in their native language.
5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.
6. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study and the information collected will remain in the possession of the investigator in a safe location.
7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Herlinda Arlene Galve Salgado 573-424-4493 or the Supervising Faculty, Sarah Coppersmith, Lindenwood University 314-729-0283. You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Jann Weitzel, Vice President for Academic Affairs at 636-949-4846.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

___________________________________ ___________________________________
Participant's Signature Date Participant's Printed Name

___________________________________ ___________________________________
Signature of Principal Investigator Date Investigator Printed Name

Appendix B: Informed Consent Focus Group-Teachers

Lindenwood University
School of Education
209 S. Kingshighway
St. Charles, Missouri 63301

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities
"Teachers' Perspectives on Academic Achievement of U.S.-born Hispanic Students in a Midwestern Spanish Language Immersion Program".
Principal Investigator Herlinda A. Galve Salgado
Telephone: 573-424-4493 E-mail: hg457@lionmail.lindenwood.edu

Participant ________________Contact information___________________

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Herlinda Arlene Galve Salgado under the guidance of Dr. Sarah Coppersmith. The purpose of this research is to explore into teachers' perspectives of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students' academic achievement in a Spanish language immersion program to identify processes that educational leaders can incorporate into instructional models to improve as many Hispanic students' experiences and outcomes as possible. Another purpose of this project is to examine what are the trends that teachers' perceive on the growth of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students in a Spanish language immersion program. Other information that this research will generate is to suggest what modifications and improvements can be made to immersion educational models when teaching students in their native language.

2. Your participation will be as follows:

FOCUS GROUPS

Ø 8-10 participants are going to be split in two homogeneous focus groups to analyze up to six students' profiles selected. The students' profiles are going to be handled by the primary researcher. Focus groups are going to guide the data analysis discussions based on data already collected. No action needed from the participants prior to the meeting with focus groups.

The total length of time for participation will be 60 minutes.. The focus groups will take place at the work location of the participants, at a pre-arranged time, and face-to-face. The interventions may last up to one hour and voice responses will be recorded on a tape recorder and/or digital medium. Approximately 8-10 teachers from MSLIP will be involved in this research.

3. Because of the sample size, could be a risk of identification, even though the researcher will do all possible to keep confidentiality and anonymity in place. Another foreseeable risk could be if any emergency may necessitate the cancellation and re-scheduling of the interviews.

4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about processes that educational leaders

can incorporate into instructional models to improve as many Hispanic students' experiences and outcomes as possible. Also you will learn what modifications and improvements can be made specifically to immersion educational models when teaching students in their native language.

5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.

6. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study and the information collected will remain in the possession of the investigator in a safe location.

7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Herlinda Arlene Galve Salgado 573-424-4493 or the Supervising Faculty, Sarah Coppersmith, Lindenwood University 314-729-0283. You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Jann Weitzel, Vice President for Academic Affairs at 636-949-4846.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

___________________________________ ________________________________
Participant's Signature Date Participant's Printed Name

___________________________________ ________________________________
Signature of Principal Investigator Date Investigator Printed Name

Appendix C: Semi-Structure Interview Protocol

Semi-structured Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to talk to me today. Although your responses will be recorded on tape, what you say will remain confidential. The purpose of this study is to explore teachers' perspectives of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students' academic achievement in a Spanish language immersion program to identify processes that educational leaders can incorporate into instructional models to improve as many Hispanic students' experiences and outcomes as possible. Another purpose of this project is to examine what are the trends that teachers' perceive on the growth of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students in a Spanish language immersion program. Other information that this research will generate is to suggest what modifications and improvements can be made to immersion educational models when teaching students in their native language.
(Note to Interviewer: Make sure that the participant signed the consent form).
General questions:
a. What subject are you teaching?
b. What grade are you teaching?
c. What degree do you have? a. Are you HQT? b. What teacher certificate do you hold?
d. Do you have experience in teaching in a Spanish language immersion program? a. How many years?
Substantive questions
1. How do you define academic achievement of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students in a Spanish language immersion program? a. How do you measure the students' academic achievement?
2. What are the greatest challenges impeding the academic achievement of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students?
3. What areas of improvement are needed to overcome these challenges?
4. In your point of view, what should be the language of instruction for U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students? English or Spanish? Why?
5. As a teacher, what experiences or perceptions do you have of how the Hispanic parents support their kids in their academics?
6. How do you think the language of instruction impacts the U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students to perform at/above grade level? What may impact those students to perform below grade level?
7. Do you have any evidence that U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students benefit from opportunities to learn concepts in their native language L1? If so, please describe what evidence you have.
8. Do you consider U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students more engaged in their academics when learning in Spanish? a. If so, please describe how U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students are using the native language to understand the content area instruction.
9. Have there been circumstances in which you've identified that although U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students are learning all the content area instruction in Spanish, they

may not be understanding or processing the information? a. If so, what do you think is impacting the learning process? b. What do you do in your classroom to improve the U.S.-born ELL Hispanic understanding or processing information?
10. How are you academically preparing a U.S.-born ELL Hispanic student attending the Spanish immersion program to be well prepared to compete with any other English native speaker in the United States?
11. What do you think educators could do to more effectively use the native language for learning improvement?
12. What is your point of view about teaching all content area instruction in Spanish to U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students?
13. What are the factors that make Hispanic parents to choose a Spanish Immersion Program as the educational model for their children?
14. How can teachers better support Hispanic parents in understanding their child's academics? a. Does communicating with parents in their native language matter?
15. How do teachers and parents support academically and culturally the U.S. -born ELL Hispanics' to succeed in a Spanish immersion program?
16. If a student is not proficient in English, do you believe he/she should be in a classroom learning subject matter (e.g. math, science, etc.) in his/her first language?
17. If a student is not proficient in English, do you believe the student will do better in school if he/she learns to write in his/her first language?
18. If you could change one thing about the type of educational models when teaching U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students in their native language, what would it be?

Appendix D: Focus Group Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to talk to me today. Although your responses will be recorded on tape, what you say will remain confidential. The purpose of this study is to explore teachers' perspectives of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students' academic achievement in a Spanish language immersion program to identify processes that educational leaders can incorporate into instructional models to improve as many Hispanic students' experiences and outcomes as possible. Another purpose of this project is to examine what are the trends that teachers' perceive on the growth of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students in a Spanish language immersion program. Other information that this research will generate is to suggest what modifications and improvements can be made to immersion educational models when teaching students in their native language.

(Note to Interviewer: Make sure that the participant signed the consent form).

For the purpose of this study, it has been chosen six academic students' profiles composed of information such as standardized test scores (STAMP, NWEA, MAP, ACCESS, W-APT), Behavior Incident Reports, Attendance, Demographics (age, parents' ethnicity and background), and years of schooling at MSLIP to allow the discussion between the researcher and participants to explore the processes that educators can incorporate in the Spanish language immersion program to improve the academic achievement of U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students. The students' profiles were chosen based upon the following range of characteristics:

U.S.-born Hispanic but is not ELL that has been at MSLIP over 4-6 years with strong academic performance.

U.S.-born Hispanic but is not ELL that has been at MSLIP over 4-6 years with weak academic performance.

U.S.-born ELL Hispanic that has been at MSLIP over 4-6 years with strong academic performance.

U.S.-born ELL Hispanic that has been at MSLIP over 4-6 years with weak academic performance.

U.S.-born ELL Hispanic that has been at MSLIP over 4-6 years who started out weak and got stronger.

U.S.-born ELL Hispanic but is not ELL that has been at MSLIP over 4-6 years who started out weak and got stronger.

Focus Group Questions:

1. What are teachers' perceptions on the growth of each child over time?
2. Look at the student's performance over time. What trends do you see? What do you think has affected the student's performance?
3. What may be impacting the U.S.-born ELL Hispanics at/above grade level performance on Literacy tests, in English? What about in Spanish?
4. What may be impacting the U.S.-born ELL Hispanics' "below grade level" performance on Literacy tests, in English? a. What about in Spanish?

5. How can you determine whether U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students are performing in reading at grade level or above in L1 and/or L2. a. What are the factors behind their success?
6. How can you determine whether U.S.-born ELL Hispanic students are not performing in reading at grade level or above in L1 and/or L2. a. What are the risk factors that impede their success?
7. Do you have any suggestions for improving the U.S.-born ELL Hispanic educational achievement?

Appendix E: Students' Profiles

U.S.-born Hispanic but is not ELL that has been at MSLIP over 4-6 years with **strong academic performance**

Student A			1st	2nd			3rd			4th			5th
	ACADEMIC READING PERFORMANCE L1												
	Period to show student growth		SP11	F11	W12	SP12	F12	W13	SP13	F13	W14	SP14	SP15
	NWEA Reading RIT		*No enrolled at MCSIS*	189	196	194	200	213	208	221	222	233	
	Reading Grade Level Equivalent			2.7	3.6	3.5	4.1	6.2	5.1	8	8.1	11+	
	MAP **Communication Arts** test								Advance			Proficient	
	ACADEMIC READING PERFORMANCE L2												
	PALS-**Reading Grade Level** Equivalent				2				4				
	STAMP test	**Reading**										5/6	5/6
		Writing										3/7	2/7
	ACADEMIC MATH PERFORMANCE L1												
	NWEA MATH RIT			199	203	217	212	217	224	218	226	220	
	MATH Grade Level Equivalent			3	4	5.5	5	5.5	6.7	5.6	7	6	
	MAP **MATH** test									Proficient		Proficient	
	ACADEMIC SCIENCE PERFORMANCE L1												
	NWEA Science RIT									210	205	212	
	Science Grade Level Equivalent									5.5	4.5	5.7	

Student's dashboard

Absences		0	4	3	7
Years at MSLIP	4				
Student age	10				

Demographics

Parents' Ethnicity: **Hispanic** **Parents':GED**

U.S.-born Hispanic but is not ELL that has been at MSLIP over 4-6 years with **weak academic performance**

Student B														
	ACADEMIC READING PERFORMANCE L1	K	1st			2nd			3rd		4th			
	Period to show student growth	SP11	F11	W12	SP12	F12	W13	SP13	F13	W14	SP14	SP15		
	NWEA Reading RIT	*No enrolled at MSLIP*	155	160	163	152	165	169	180	179	183			
	Reading Grade Level Equivalent		0.8	1.1	1.3	0.6	1.4	164	2.3	2.1	2.3			
	MAP **Communication Arts** test									N/A			Basic	
	ACADEMIC READING PERFORMANCE L2													
	PALS-**Reading Grade Level** Equivalent							1			2			
	STAMP test **Reading**											4/6	4/6	
	Writing											2/7	2/7	
	ACADEMIC MATH PERFORMANCE L1													
	NWEA MATH RIT				166	171	182	162	180	179	178	187	197	
	MATH Grade Level Equivalent				1.2	1.5	2.3	0.9	2.1	2	2	2.6	3.4	
	MAP MATH test									N/A			Basic	
	ACADEMIC SCIENCE PERFORMANCE L1		N/A											
	NWEA Science RIT													
	Science Grade Level Equivalent													

Student's dashboard

Absences							2			4		4	3
Years at MSLIP	4												
Student age	9												

Demographics

Parents' Ethnicity	**Multiracial**
Parents' school level	**BA/Secondary**

U.S.-born ELL Hispanic that has been at MSLIP over 4-6 years with strong academic performance

Student C	ACADEMIC READING PERFORMANCE L1			1st			2nd			3rd		4th	
	Period to show student growth		SP11	F11	W12	SP12	F12	W13	SP13	F13	W14	SP14	SP15
	NWEA Reading RIT		157	155	156	163	155	180	191	186	186	194	N/A
	Reading Grade Level Equivalent	0.9	0.8	0.9	1.1	0.8	2.3	3.1	2.6	2.6	3.5	N/A	
	MAP Communication Arts test											Basic	
	ACADEMIC READING PERFORMANCE L2												
	PALS-Reading Grade Level Equivalent				2			4					
	STAMP test	Reading										5/6	6/6
		Writing										4/7	2/7
	ACADEMIC MATH PERFORMANCE L1												
	NWEA MATH RIT			158	173	174	167	188	193	195	195	208	
	MATH Grade Level Equivalent			0.9	1.6	1.7	1.2	2.7	3	3.2	3.2	4.5	
	MAP MATH test											Basic	
	ACADEMIC SCIENCE PERFORMANCE L1										N/A		
	NWEA Science RIT												
	Science Grade Level Equivalent												
	Student's dashboard												
	Absences		19			0			6			5	2
	Years at MSLIP	5											
	Student age	9											

Demographics

Parents' Ethnicity: **Hispanic**

Parents' school level: **Secondary**

U.S.-born ELL Hispanic that has been at MSLIP over 4-6 years with weak academic performance

Student D	ACADEMIC READING PERFORMANCE L1	K	1st	2nd			3rd				4th			5th
	Period to show student growth		SP10	SP11	F11	W12	SP12	F12	W13	SP13	F13	W14	SP14	
	NWEA Reading RIT		Kdg at MSLIP	154	151	159	159	155	175	173	161	187	184	
	Reading Grade Level Equivalent		No data	0.7	0.5	1	1	0.8	2	1.7	1.2		2.6	
	MAP Communication Arts test										Below Basic		Below Basic	
	ACADEMIC READING PERFORMANCE L2													
	PALS-Reading Grade Level Equivalent						2			4				
	STAMP test Reading												4/6	
	Writing												2/7	
	ACADEMIC MATH PERFORMANCE L1													
	NWEA MATH RIT			168	172	170	187	179	193	204	172	197	208	
	MATH Grade Level Equivalent			1.3	1.5	1.4	2.6	2	3	4.1	1.5	3.4	4.5	
	MAP MATH test										Below Basic		Basic	
	ACADEMIC SCIENCE PERFORMANCE L1													
	NWEA Science RIT										177	186	193	
	Science Grade Level Equivalent										1.8	2.8	3.5	

Student's dashboard

SY Absences		29	13	9	6	5
Years at MSLIP	6					
Student age	10					

Demographics

Parents' Ethnicity:	**Hispanic**	Parents' school level:	**Elementary**

U.S.-born ELL Hispanic that has been at MCSIS over 4-6 years in MSLIP who started out weak and got stronger

Student E	ACADEMIC READING PERFORMANCE L1			K		1st			2nd			3rd		4th
	Period to show student growth			SP11	F11	W12	SP12	F12	W13	SP13	F13	W14	SP14	SP15
	NWEA Reading RIT			147	150	147	158	157	161	166	179	179	201	
	Reading Grade Level Equivalent			0.3	0.5	0.3	1	0.9	1	1.1	2.2	2.2	4.2	
	MAP Communication Arts test												Basic	
	ACADEMIC READING PERFORMANCE L2													
	PALS-Reading Grade Level Equivalent						2			3				
	STAMP test	Reading											5/6	5/6
		Writing											2/7	3/7
	ACADEMIC MATH PERFORMANCE L1													
	NWEA MATH RIT			154	169	169	174	182	178	179	185	186	194	
	MATH Grade Level Equivalent			0.6	1.4	1.4	1.7	2.3	2	2	2.5	2.6	3.1	
	MAP MATH test												Basic	
	ACADEMIC SCIENCE PERFORMANCE L1			N/A										
	NWEA Science RIT													
	Science Grade Level Equivalent													
	Student's dashboard													
	Absences			8			1			7			13	4
	Years at MSLIP		5											
	Student age		9											
Demographics		Parents' Ethnicity	**Hispanic**	Parents **Elem/Se**										

U.S.-born Hispanic but is not ELL that has been at MSLIP over 4-6 years who started out weak and got stronger

Student F	ACADEMIC READING PERFORMANCE L1		K	1st		2nd			3rd			4th		5th
	Period to show student growth		SP10	SP11	F11	W12	SP12	F12	W13	SP13	F13	W14	SP14	SP15
	NWEA Reading RIT		Kdg at MSLIP	161	165	175	174	183	189	216	NR	203	199	
	Reading Grade Level Equivalent		No data	1	1.4	2	1.8	2.5	3	7		4.7	3.8	
	MAP Communication Arts test									Basic			Proficient	
	ACADEMIC READING PERFORMANCE L2													
	PALS-Reading Grade Level Equivalent						1			2				
	STAMP test	Reading											4/6	4/6
		Writing											2/7	3/7
	ACADEMIC MATH PERFORMANCE L1													
	NWEA MATH RIT			166	171	178	182	184	188	200	198	203	NR	
	MATH Grade Level Equivalent			1.2	1.5	2	2.3	2.4	2.7	3.7	3.5	4.7		
	MAP MATH test									Basic			Basic	
	ACADEMIC SCIENCE PERFORMANCE L1													
	NWEA Science RIT										185	193	192	
	Science Grade Level Equivalent										2.7	3.5	3.4	
	Student's dashboard													
	Absences		20	8			7			4			2	2
	Years at MSLIP	6												
	Student age	10												
	Demographics													
	Parents' Ethnicity		**Multiracial**											
	Parents' school level		**HighSchool/BA**											

Vitae

Arlene Galve Salgado has served at an urban public charter elementary school in a city of the Midwestern over the past seven years as Head of School. She earned an Educational Specialist in School Administration at Lindenwood University. She has performed different roles in administration: School Principal, Department Chair in Human Resources, and Administrative Vice-President in a large hospital.