THE LANGUAGE AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT OF BILINGUAL SPANISH-SPEAKING PRESCHOOLERS

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Presented at the Language Minority Roundtable:
Language and Literacy Development in Young Minority Children: Research, Policy & Practice
Washington, DC
April 16, 2008
Latino Preschoolers in US

- Come to school with varying proficiencies in Spanish & English
  - Some begin school with knowledge of Spanish (L1)
    - Which they build upon when acquiring English (Cummins, 1979)
  - Others are exposed to & expected to communicate in both Spanish & English before school entry
When in preschool, children typically are provided instruction in English (Snow & Tabors, 2001). Teachers/assistants may not speak Spanish, except for specific geographic regions. As a result, children are expected to communicate in English, a prestige language, which may not have their home language supported. This may make their development different from children in Canada & Europe who speak languages of equal status.

Because oral language skills are the foundation for later academic outcomes (August & Hakuta, 1997; Snow et al., 1998), we need to understand the language development of bilingual children & the relationship between early language and later literacy development.
Goals of the Presentation

- Review selected research on bilingual preschoolers’ language and literacy development
- Discuss differences between the development of preschoolers who learn
  - Spanish and English at home from birth &
  - Spanish at home & English upon preschool entry
- Examine the relationships between early language and later literacy development
- Address environmental factors that impact development
- Identify future research needs
BILINGUAL PRESCHOOLERS’ LANGUAGE AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT
Bilingual Preschoolers’ Language Development

- Studies compare bilingual preschoolers to monolinguals
  - Paucity of assessment instruments standardized on bilingual populations
  - FACES (2000, 2003); Hammer et al. (2008); Páez et al. (2007); Tabors et al. (2003)
    - Children received instruction primarily in English

- Spanish-speaking, bilingual preschoolers score below monolingual norms in both languages
  - In fall of preschool (-1 to -2 SD)
    - vocabulary
    - auditory comprehension
    - expressive language
  - as well as in spring of preschool
    - although increases in abilities are observed
Morpho-syntactic Development

- **Spanish morpho-syntactic development**
  - Focus on Spanish-speaking children living in US (Mexican dialect)
    - with minimal exposure to English or
    - knowledge of/exposure to English unspecified
  - Have information about order of acquisition

- **English morpho-syntactic development**
  - has received less attention
    - Order of acquisition of early-developing morphemes differs from monolingual English speakers

- Wide variation in children’s abilities
Emergent Literacy Development

- Bilingual preschoolers begin preschool with minimal/low phonological awareness (Tabors et al., 2003; Páez, et al., 2007; Hammer & Miccio, 2006)
- letter Identification (HHS, 2000; Páez, et al., 2007; Hammer & Miccio, 2006)
- emergent literacy skills in English (TERA-2; Hammer, Miccio & Wagstaff, 2003).

- Have higher abilities in literacy than language
- Experience minimal gains during preschool
  - Phonological awareness & letter identification
- Experience decreases in emergent literacy (Hammer, Miccio & Wagstaff, 2003)
By fall of kindergarten, significant changes occurred in both languages (Hammer & Miccio, 2006; Hammer et al., 2007)

- Phonological awareness
- Letter-sound knowledge
- Emergent literacy — caught up to monolingual norms
- Received systematic literacy instruction
DIFFERENCES IN DEVELOPMENT DEPENDING ON TIMING OF EXPOSURE TO ENGLISH
Bilingual Preschoolers: Precursors to Literacy

- Study of bilingual preschoolers language & literacy
  - Hammer & Miccio w/Rodríguez & Lawrence
  - Funded by NIH-NICHD & ED-IES (5-R01-HD-39496-05)

- Investigated the development of children from Spanish-speaking homes
  - Exposed to English from birth (Home English; HEC) v.
  - Exposed to English in Head Start (School English; SEC)
  - School entry – key point in development (Butler & Hakuta, 2004; Genesee, 2004; Oller & Eilers, 2002)

- Followed children for 2 years in Head Start (English Immersion)
  - through 1st grade
  - subset through 2nd & 3rd grades
English Receptive Language

- English vocabulary (PPVT-III) & Auditory comprehension (TELD-3) (Hammer, Lawrence & Miccio, 2008)
  - In the fall of their first year in Head Start,
    - Both groups scored below monolingual norms
    - HEC had higher scores than SEC
  - Linear growth observed over 2 years in HS & Kindergarten
    - Gaining on monolingual peers
    - SEC’s vocabulary & auditory comprehension grew at faster rate
  - In elementary school,
    - Vocabulary - neither group caught up to monolingual norms by 1st grade (-10 pts below)
    - Auditory comprehension – both groups within monolingual norms by end of kindergarten
English Receptive Vocabulary
PPVT-III

![Graph showing the PPVT-III scores over different measurement occasions for BiStat, HEC, and SEC.]
English Auditory Comprehension – TELD-3
Spanish Receptive Language

- In the fall of Head Start Year 1,
  - Both groups scored below monolingual norms
    - receptive vocabulary
    - auditory comprehension
  - SEC scored higher than HEC

- Receptive Vocabulary (TVIP) - Growth
  - During Head Start
    - SEC - positive linear growth
    - HEC – no growth in standard scores
  - In 1st grade – both groups below monolingual norms
Spanish Receptive Vocabulary - TVIP
Spanish Auditory Comprehension

- Growth during Head Start
  - Initially observe an acceleration
  - Followed by deceleration
- In kindergarten
  - Both groups below monolingual expectations
Spanish Auditory Comprehension – PLS-3

![Graph showing performance over measurement occasions.](image-url)
Emergent Literacy

- During Head Start,
  - no group differences
    - Phonological awareness – Spanish/English
    - Letter knowledge – Spanish/English
    - Emergent Literacy – TERA-2
      - (Hammer et al., 2003; Hammer & Miccio, 2006)
- During early elementary grades
  - performed better in English than Spanish
RELATIONSHIPS AMONG EARLY LANGUAGE & LATER LITERACY OUTCOMES
Early Language & Literacy Outcomes

- In monolingual children, predictive relationships between oral language & literacy have been shown
  - Limited research on bilingual preschoolers

- Phonological awareness
  - Relationships between two languages exist
    - In preschool (Dickinson et al., 2004; Tabors et al., 2004)
    - Early elementary grades (Branun-Martin et al., 2006; Durgunoglu et al., 2003; Lindsey et al., 2003; Manis et al., 2004; Oller & Cobo-Lewis, 2002)
Preschool Language & Kindergarten Outcomes (Hammer, Lawrence & Miccio, 2007)

- Growth in English receptive language (vocab + auditory comprehension) during 2 yrs in Head Start predicted
  - Emergent literacy abilities (TERA-2)
  - English Letter-word ID
  - Spanish Letter-word ID
- Similarly, growth in Spanish receptive language predicted
  - Emergent literacy abilities (TERA-2)
  - English Letter-word ID
  - Spanish Letter-word ID in kindergarten
- End of Head Start scores did not
ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS IMPACTING DEVELOPMENT
Environmental factors

- A number of factors have been shown to impact children’s development
  - Maternal education
  - Poverty
  - Maternal depression
  - Home language other than English
  - Impact of educational setting
Educational Setting

- **Effect of preschool on development**
  - No preschool v. bilingual preschools (30/70 to 70/30 English-Spanish; Rodríguez et al., 1995)
    - Both groups made gains in their Spanish abilities
    - Children in bilingual preschool classrooms
      - Made greater gains in English in comparison to children who did not attend preschool
      - No impact on children’s Spanish abilities
  - Dual language v. English immersion (Barnett et al., 2007)
    - No differences in English vocabulary & literacy development
    - Children in dual language made greater gains in Spanish vocabulary
  - Dual language/bilingual classrooms promote development in both languages
RESEARCH NEEDS
Research Needs

- Further investigation of preschoolers’ language & literacy development longitudinally
  - Children with varying levels of exposure to and proficiency in English & Spanish when entering preschool
    - Evidence that developmental trajectories are different
  - Children of differing SES levels
    - Focus has been on children from low-SES homes
  - Children attending differing educational contexts
    - Home v. preschool
    - Various educational models (dual language, immersion, etc)
    - No one model is likely to be best for all children
Research needs cont’

- Investigations that identify
  - home, school & community factors that impact children’s development
  - & potential interactions that may occur among these factors
- Results of such studies can be used to inform preschool interventions that are
  - designed to support the outcomes of children from varying backgrounds
  - tested for their effectiveness
Selected References


