Examining the Writing of Emergent Biliterate Children

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Purpose
• Part of a larger study - Literacy Squared®
• Examine the writing behaviors of early elementary emergent biliterate children who are learning to write in both Spanish and English simultaneously.
  - Content
  - Conventions
  - Cross language transfer
  - Code-switching

Related Literature
• Literacy instruction in U.S. has focused on reading and not writing;
• Research on cross-language transfer has focused on reading and not writing (Slavin & Cheung, 2003; August & Shanahan, 2006);
• Recent research suggest that writing may be a higher correlate of cross-language transfer than reading (Garcia, 2004; Carlisle, 1989; Escamilla et. al., 2006);
• Research suggests that learning to write assists in learning to read (Riojas Clark, 1995; Vernon & Ferriero, 1999);

Research Questions
• What is the relationship between Spanish and English writing for early elementary emerging biliterate children?
• What specific skills, strategies and content are children transferring across languages?
• How do we need to assess a trajectory toward biliteracy in writing?

Mixed Methods
• Longitudinal Study (Literacy Squared®) - 2004-2009
• Writing data are collected during Dec./Jan. each year
• Data were collected via a 30 min. writing prompt done first in Spanish and two weeks later in English
• Prompts are similar across languages but NOT the same
• Data collected include children in 1st-5th grades

Data Analysis
• Data are scored using a project developed rubric.
  - Content (0-7)
  - Punctuation (0-3)
  - Spelling (0-4)
  - Overall (0-14)
• Data are analyzed using quantitative and qualitative measures.
• Data are analyzed via growth across time.
• Data from Spanish and English are correlated.
• Data on teacher notations will be analyzed 2009.
**Correlation between Spanish and English Writing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Cohort I</th>
<th>Cohort II</th>
<th>Cohort III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Spanish/English Correlation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Trait</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Qualitative Analyses

- Bilingual Strategies
  - Code-switching
    - Intersentential (I love my new ropa)
    - Intrasentential (I got a power ranger. Me gusta mucho)
  - Syntax (The bike of my sister; Marta’s chanclas hacen mucho ruido)

- Spelling Strategies
  - Spanish influenced
  - Common to grade

High correspondence between Spanish and English

\[ C = 5, 5; P = 2, 2; S = 2, 1 \]

- L1
- Febret - favorite
- Ji - he
- Gevet - gave it
- Ai - I
- Juen - when
- Jim - him
- Sou - so
- Mach - much
- Lars - ears
- May - my

- Common
- Conventions
- Organization
- Voice
- Crismas - Christmas
- Danses - dances
- Muves - moves
- Whit - white
Multiple Strategies

- Discoveri en español
- Age - word spacing
  - Megusta
  - enelagua
- Spanish development
  - Y/I; I for y
  - Ai for hay
  - B/V - tivurones
- English - primero, segundo

- Llinyourbredman
- Age - word spacing
- Spanish influenced
- Llinyourbredman (?)
  - Ets - its
  - Mi - my
  - Ji-he
  - Its - eats
- English
  - First, second, third etc.
  - Dat - that
  - Awei

Findings

- High and positive correlations between writing in Spanish and English at all grade levels and for all cohort groups;
- Writing strategies used by emerging biliterate children are complex - multiple cross-language strategies are used within words and across words and sentences;
- 50% of all spelling errors were ‘typical’ to monolingual children;
- 50% were L1 influenced;

Findings

- Content scores at all grade levels were higher than punctuation and spelling;
- Within and across language correlations between punctuation, spelling and overall rating;
- Teachers had difficulty identifying cross-language strategies.

Implications

- Rubrics to look at development of emerging biliteracy.
- Analyses need to look at two languages separately and together;
- Need to develop a paradigm of interlanguage and not interference;

Implications

- What is “normal” or “common” writing development for a student who is monolingual in English
- What is “normal” or “average” for a student who is monolingual Spanish
- What is “normal” or “common” for an L2 English writer
- What is “normal” or “common” for a simultaneous bilingual writer

We need to know MORE about the interactions between Spanish and English in emerging bilingual/biliterate children.