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## **Benefits of using reading strategies in elementary bilingual classrooms**

Diana Arely Garcia  
*University of Texas-Pan American*

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BENEFITS OF USING READING STRATEGIES IN  
ELEMENTARY BILINGUAL CLASSROOMS

A Thesis

by

DIANA ARELY GARCIA

Submitted to the Graduate School of  
The University of Texas-Pan American  
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ELEMENTARY BILINGUAL CLASSROOMS

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DIANA ARELY GARCIA

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dr. José Ruiz-Escalante  
Chair of Committee

Dr. Jennifer Joy Esquierdo  
Committee Member

Dr. Zulmaris Diaz  
Committee Member

Dr. Michael Whitacre  
Committee Member

May 2014



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## ABSTRACT

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This quantitative study focused on the benefits of reading strategies used by second grade students. What strategies they can use to comprehend tasks, what textual cues they attend, how to make sense of what they read, and what they do when they do not understand a word.

In this study, a questionnaire was given to the students. The questionnaire had a list of reading strategies in which students chose the strategy they felt more comfortable to use whenever they needed in order to comprehend a text.

The data collected was analyzed and served its purpose of helping one reach the conclusion that reading strategies are beneficial for these students.



## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my Heavenly Father because through him all things are possible. Philippians 4:13



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Developing reading strategies among students has historically been a major challenge for educators (Leinehardt,1981), requiring significantly different methods of instruction to help readers comprehend what they read. The development and practice of reading strategies in a classroom is crucial for every student starting at an early age. The way readers extract meaning from a text has always been a focus of attention, since it gives educators important information about reader's cognitive process while they read.

The use of reading strategies is also important for second language learners in the process of learning to read in English although, reading strategies are also used in the process of learning to read in their native language. According to Alderson (2000), reading in a second language includes the interactions among the reader's inter-language capacity, personal characteristics, and external situations. It means that reading in a second language is composed of many interconnected parts. It often occurs that when second language readers encounter unfamiliar words or text structures that they do not understand, they use alternative sources to understand what they read. Block (1992) states that second language learners must monitor themselves when they read using a reader strategy, but according to Carell, Gajdusek and Wise (1998) it doesn't really matter what strategy these readers use, what matters is that the readers must know when, how and why a strategy is to be used (Phakiti, 2006).

As Kindler (2002) states, that results from a survey taken by the National Clearing house for English Acquisition from 41 states that participated in the survey, only 18.7% of English language learners scored above the state-established norm for reading comprehension (Almaguer & Esquierdo 2013). This in turn has a rippling effect on the success of the Latino population. Whereas 10% of students who spoke English at home failed to complete high school, the percentage was three times high (31%) for language minority students who spoke English and five times as high (51%) for language minority students who spoke English with difficulty (National Center for Education Statics, 2004).

According to Hammer (2003), statistics suggest that one the reasons why children whose first language is Spanish are at a higher risk is due to the poor literacy in Spanish in the United States schools. However, an estimated of one out of five children now live in homes in which a language other than English is spoken; impressing upon us the importance of meeting the needs of a more culturally and linguistically diverse school-age student population. Data from the United States Census Bureau 2003 states that 18.4% of households with children aged 5-17 in the United States and 32.4% of these households in Texas, reported speaking a language other than English at home. This is a challenge for educators to make sure students master their native language and acquire English to become bilingual.

Culturally diverse areas in states such as Texas, California and Arizona are highly populated with first generation Mexican-American families who still use Spanish as their primary language (Gilroy, 2001). This makes bilingual education especially important for the children of these families.

As Almaguer and Esquiedo (2013) state, teachers have the job of both preparing bilingual students to meet not only the social demands placed on them of learning a second language; but, in addition, they must prepare them metacognitively and cognitively to meet the demands of content knowledge. This approach will prepare students to succeed not only in the classroom but also in the context of content knowledge. Sadly, as Garcia and Pearson (1991), state many teachers assume that second language learners are not able to comprehend what they read if they haven't fully mastered English. This big mistake affects considerable numbers of students because they are not being taught higher level thinking skills (Padron, 1992), bringing low scores on the state assessments.

On the other hand, when students are taught cognitive reading strategies, the results are different. Cognitive reading strategies explain students how to use reading strategies in order to increase reading comprehension (Palinscar, 1984, Wittrock, 1991). Readers become more aware of the strategies they use, and thus can develop greater self-control while reading (Brown, 1981, Haller, 1988). Studies have shown that when students apply reading strategies, their reading comprehension improves (Palinscar et al., 1984). Furthermore, according to Block, Waxman, Padrón, and Knight (1986), research has been conducted which examines the strategies used by bilingual students while reading in their second language. It has been concluded that bilingual students use fewer strategies than English-monolingual counterparts due to bilingual students are not being taught to use reading strategies because teachers believe that students must know English first in order to understand.

According to Pressley and Harris (1990), it is very important to take into account the way in which strategies are taught and that several considerations should be addressed in planning such instruction. For instance, the task that must be performed and the strategy instruction must

be at students' ability levels and to help students develop a full understanding of how and when to use a reading strategy. To accomplish this, teachers must model precisely every reading strategy that is chosen to be practiced by students. Reading strategies help students comprehend what they read (Padron, 1992).

### **Background of the Problem**

In recent years there has been a tremendous increase in the amount of children from other countries entering public schools speaking other language different than English. Politicians and policy makers are aware of that fact, and now instruction in the native language of second language learners has recently been more common. Although, while there has been a tremendous growth in the numbers of Hispanics and second language learners in public schools, there has been a lack of educational opportunities offered to those students resulting in low educational achievement. Hispanic students made up 18% of the enrollment in 2002-2003, an increase of 64% from the 1993-1994 school year (Fry, 2006). This increase in the number of Hispanic at the national level is reflected in population changes in the state of Texas. The growth in the number of Hispanic in Texas public schools is expected to continue as new immigrants arrive in Texas and the U.S. born children of immigrants begin school. Moreover, since the number of school population of students that speak other language than English is growing, also the number of languages spoken has increased in the United States. According to research, there are over 400 languages spoken by second language learners in the nation's school; nonetheless, Spanish remains to be the language that is spoken most frequently. Almost 80% of second language learners in the nation's schools speak Spanish as a first language. Efforts to improve second language reading instruction have grown remarkably in the past quarter century, particularly in the last 10 years. The recognition that reading is probably the

most important skill for second language learners in academic contexts has also been a big concern for educators in favor of bilingual instruction. (Carell, 1989, Lynch,1991).

In general, research on the achievement effects of bilingual education for second language learners, whose native language is Spanish, states that these students become better readers in English and Spanish respectively than students that are taught to read English only. In other words, the better students can read in Spanish, the faster they will learn to read in English. (Garcia 1991&1992).

Researchers have concluded that skilled readers possess metacognitive awareness of how, when and with what frequency to use a combination of strategies, while at the same time develop fluency, these readers are proficient at anticipating possible problems and at the same time monitoring their own comprehension (Anderson , 2000). In contrast, less successful readers tend to be those who are ignorant about what strategy to use and a lack of initiative creates low-level cognitive processes, detrimental to skills such as accessing background knowledge. One way to help these struggling readers is that teachers must guide students in the use of strategies that help them improve their reading level. According to Tanner (2012), a way to start would be teaching students using metacognition to help them analyze their own learning or thinking process. Metacognition also includes self-regulation, which is the ability to organize their own learning; to plan, monitor success, and correct their own errors. It also refers to the ability to reflect on their own performance (National Research Council, 2000).

### **Statement of the Problem**

In an effort to have a deep understanding on how to help students to read better, this study was focused on analyzing the effects or benefits of using different reading strategies in a

bilingual classroom to improve comprehension and fluency as well. The students targeted in the study were second graders that their first language is Spanish.

Debates around bilingual education are as much political as they are pedagogical. This topic is always going to be controversial, some politician believe that spending money on Hispanic students education is a waste, and that these types of students are the cause of low reading rating in schools (Crawford, 1999), while others believe that bilingual education is a cure for the dropout rates. However, the problem is that while these controversies are happening, second language learners are not properly being served the way they supposed to be.

The reading education of second language learners has become one of the most important issues in all of educational policy and practice.

### **Purpose of the Study**

All children have the capacity to succeed in school and in life. But yet too many children, especially those from poor and minority families, are less able to succeed due to the school practices that are based on sorting paradigm, in which some students receive high-expectations instruction while the rest are relegated to lower quality education and consequently to lower quality futures. In addition, to those students are the second language learners, or Hispanic, which speak Spanish as their first language. In an effort to help second language learners to improve their reading level in both languages, this study was taking place and was focused on analyzing the use of reading strategies used in a second grade bilingual classroom and to improve their reading level and comprehension as well. This study also sought to determine what reading strategies are the most used in a bilingual classroom and how their use benefit students.

## **Research Questions**

Reading is a fundamental skill in daily life. The purpose of this study was to analyze the different strategies that can help Hispanic students improve their reading level in both languages.

The following questions guided this particular study:

1. What reading strategies were the most used in a second grade bilingual classrooms?
2. What evidence supported the benefits of particular reading strategies for bilingual students?

## **Importance of the Study**

While much has been written concerning the effects of literature-base reading instruction and many reports have been published concerning to reading strategies, relatively a few of these studies have made a broad comparison of the overall combinations of these strategies (methodologies) in the typical elementary classroom, particularly in a second grade bilingual classroom.

This study specifically reveals which reading strategies benefit bilingual students in developing reading skills as fluency and comprehension.

## **Definitions of Terms**

The following definitions are pertinent to this study and should be used to understand the components, which make up the investigation.

*Reading* is a complex cognitive process of decoding symbols in order to construct or derive meaning.

*Reading strategies* are defined as mental operations relating to how readers conceive a task, what textual cues they attend to, how they make sense of what they read, and what they do when they do not understand. Strategies, therefore, are readers' resources for understanding (Langer, 1982). They are purposeful, cognitive actions that students take when they are reading to help them construct and maintain meaning. In other words, comprehension strategies are routines and procedures that active readers use to understand better what they read.

*Bilingual students* are students using or able to use two languages, especially with equal or nearly equal fluency.

*Second Language Learners* are students learning of a foreign or second language as has been shown (Munro & Derwing, 1996).

*English language learners* is a term that describes students who are in the process of acquiring English language skills and knowledge. Some educators and researchers refer to these students using the term *limited English proficient* (LEP), and the term *English learners* (ELs) is also becoming common.

*Language minority students* this term is used to refer to students whose parents speak a language other than English at home, but who may or may not have limited English proficiency themselves. This broader term is often used to define study populations when individual data on English proficiency are not available

*Metacognition* refers to one's knowledge concerning one's own cognitive process or anything related to them as Garofalo and Lester (1985) stated.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE: THE READING SITUATION

According to the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, there were over 5 million second language learners in the United States in 2009, making up 10% of all K-12 students, compared to 3.5 million a decade ago. Second language learners are not only one of the largest, but also one of the most rapidly growing sectors of our total student population.

Currently an estimate of one of five children now live in homes in which a language other than English is spoken, as a result we must be aware of the needs of varied culturally and linguistically diverse school student-age population.

According to the Hispanic Dropout Project, second language learners, especially those with Spanish as their primary language, are twice as likely to be below the reading level of their White or Asian American peers. Cheung and Slavin (2012), state that in comparison to their monolingual counterparts, second language learners tend to be at higher risk of performing poorly in early literacy. While this is happening teachers have the challenge of preparing bilingual students to meet the social demands of learning a second language, but also to prepare students cognitively to meet the academic demands of content knowledge specially in reading. In the last two decades, the growth rate of second language learners students was 169% compared to only 12% of the general school population (Francis, 2006). In 1990, one in 20 public schools students in kindergarten-12 was a second language learner, but future projections suggest that in 20 years, about one in six U.S. residents will be of Hispanic origin and by the

middle of the century; this amount will increase to about one in four. Unfortunately, some second language learners are not succeeding in U.S. schools.

According to Almaguer and Esquierdo (2013) the survey taken by the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition states that out of the 41 states that took part in the survey, only 18.7% of English language learners scored above the state-established norm for reading comprehension (Kindler, 2002). They also stated that due to the high growth of bilingual students all over the country, schools have the responsibility to teach children academic English in order for them to succeed, and not just conversational English. However, this cannot be done if bilingual teachers are not aware of how students learn content and language, moreover they have to take into account the stages of language development to help students knowing that language is a step before reading, and they both are interrelated.

Almaguer and Esquierdo (2013) also stated that according to the National Research Council, (2000) there are three learning principles that second language learners students must develop in order to acquire content literacy. First principle is the engagement of prior knowledge and understandings, this refers to the knowledge that students bring from home and their environment, to school. This is known as funds of knowledge (as cited in Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). The second principle is the importance of the foundation for bilingual learners to be able to think in a high order level. Second language learners' students must acquire a strong knowledge based on previously acquired knowledge. The last principle is the role of understanding or self- monitoring of thinking process, this principle focuses on the metacognitive approach that students apply to their learning, and as a result, their developing of ownership of their learning. This ownership helps students become life-long learners. The

process of metacognition occurs when students take control over their own learning that can be defined as, thinking about your thinking.

On the other hand, teachers must be knowledgeable on how to guide students to develop their own thinking to become lifelong independent learners. The planning of lessons for bilingual students is crucial to meet the goal of the educational system, which is to create real bilingual students that become successful readers in two languages (Almaguer & Esquierdo2013).

According to Dewey (1929), Piaget (1955), and Vygotsky (1957) there are many collaborative and student-centered reading strategies and approaches. The currently popular use in the classroom of social grouping activities and the use of real literature presenting rich language in a social context have grown naturally out of the social constructivist theoretical framework presented by Vygotsky and others, who believe that all language arts capabilities grow naturally through extensive exposure to socially interactive language environments.

According to Anderson and Pearson (1984), they stated that active readers in the development of the Schema Theory are readers that actively construct meaning by connecting all prior knowledge with new information encountered in the text, allowing for development of new concepts as well as revision and improvement of existing understanding. Therefore, reading comprehension is the level of understanding of a text. This understanding comes from the interaction between words that are written, and how readers activate prior knowledge to figure out their meaning. Comprehension is crucial for any reader, and in order to help readers comprehend what they read there are reading practices called reading strategies.

Reading Strategies are methods used during reading to help the reader understand or comprehend the meaning of a text. All readers at a certain time of their life have used a reading

strategy to help themselves to better comprehend a word, a phrase, or even a paragraph in a text (Almaguer & Esquiedo,2013).

This literature review will discuss research findings related to several different strategies used during reading instruction time, all of which are commonly used in elementary bilingual classrooms. Students need to learn to use comprehension strategies before, during, and after they read, and to ensure good outcomes teachers must model every reading strategy to help students to know when and how to use them (Honig et al. 2000).

Research strongly supports the following strategies (Allington, et al., 2001; Farstrup & Samuels, 2002): activating prior knowledge, answering and generating questions, making and verifying predictions, using mental imagery and visualization, monitoring comprehension, and recognizing story structure as being good comprehension strategies. However, several more strategies are going to be mentioned in this study.

To ensure that strategies are well understood teachers must make sure when teaching reading strategies to provide an explicit description about when is recommendable to use a certain strategy, model it, and allowing students to use the strategies independently to ensure that the components of effective comprehension lesson are being taught (Pearson,2002).

### **Age Recommended for the Use of Reading Strategies**

There is no established age for children to start or stop using reading strategies. Children in grades first through third, learn about language and literacy through exploration. At this age, children's reading skills vary significantly, a few children will enter first grade able to read with some fluency. However, some children need one on one attention with a tutor to develop an understanding of basic concepts, build specific skills, gain confidence, and become motivated to read. In addition, all readers at a certain time have applied a reading strategy while they are

reading and when they find an unknown word or when they don't understand the meaning of a phrase.

### **Reading Strategies Used by Bilingual Students**

For many years, the use of literature only in English (L2) was the only way to learn and teach reading. However, in recent years, an interest on using literature in Spanish in the classrooms has incremented. The use of literature in L1 in the classroom creates an environment that lowers the affective filter and provides comprehensive good contributions from students.

As Cho, Ahn, & Krashen (2006) stated, the use of literature in L1, plays in important role in the learning of L2. The creation of a rich literature in the students first language environment will motivate students to read in L2 as Morrow (2004) stated. There is when the use of reading strategies is very important in the development of the reading process.

As Miramontes and Cummins (1989) stated that effective transfer of strategies from one language to another might depend on a certain level of metacognitive awareness that explains the fact that what second language readers know about reading affects their reading performance. This explains that children who are good readers in one of the two languages, eventually will be good readers in a second language, this process is due to the transfer of comprehension strategies across languages. Moreover, according to August, Calderon, and Carlo (2002), the rationale for proving second language learners instruction in their own language is based in the fact that language skills acquired in school contexts transfer across languages. The fact supporting this argument is that once reading skills are acquired can be applied to another language.

According to Walter (2007) reading in a second language is accessing to an already existing cognitive skills. He bases this theory on the work of Gernsbacher, Varner, & Faust,

(1990) in which they concluded that comprehension is not linguistic. Comprehension is not in the first language that can be transferred to a second language, it is the construction of a mental structure, where readers have reached a level where they can access their existing skill to build mental structures . However, research supports the fact that increased literacy in native language (L1) allows a greater transfer of knowledge and understanding of language, metacognitive and cognitive strategies, and content in a second language (L2) (Cummins, 2000; Krashen, 2004; McGhie, 2007; Rodriguez & Higgins, 2005; Terrell, 1991).

Moreover, the acquisition of a second language requires the learning of an enormous number of words, word families, syntax structures, phonology, and inflections as well as the socio-cognitive dimensions of the language. Reading education of bilingual students is now an important subject and educational policies and practice since the population of people immigrating to the United States has increased in the last years as stated by Slavin and Cheung (2005).

### **Development of the Reading Strategies in a Bilingual Classroom**

According to the National Literacy Panel on Language, results of studies about reading comprehension performance of language in minority students compared to monolingual, native speaking peers (Lesaux et al., 2006) are, that bilingual students responded well to specific strategy instruction and used specific strategies, as questioning, making inferences, monitoring, and summarizing to enhance their reading comprehension. In addition, positive effects were found for programs that used phonetic small group or one- to-one tutoring, cooperative learning, extensive professional development, and coaching.

## **Importance of Metacognitive and Cognitive Strategies**

According to Anderson (2005), metacognitive strategies play an important role in reading, due to the fact that when a reader learns how to regulate or direct its own reading, they also involve thinking about their own thinking. Metacognitive strategies are considered higher order cognitive skills due to their role in managing other cognitive skills. Once second language learners are taught and model how to use metacognitive strategies, they will be able to set their own reading goals, select their own reading strategies that feel more comfortable with, and monitor their own progress. Metacognition and reading comprehension are linked to one another in the ability to use metacognitive skills effectively and to monitor reading is the key to successful reading. However, as Auerbach and Paxton (1997) stated, if students are not well taught how to develop metacognitive awareness, there will be a lack of use of effective metacognitive strategies, and this what usually happens with the second language learners (Huang, 2012).

On the other hand, as Palinscar & Brown, (1984, 1985); Wittrock, (1991) states that Cognitive Strategies are beneficial because their identification teach students how to use them in order to increase their reading comprehension. Moreover, the identification of cognitive reading strategies has contributed to the development of instructional programs that teach students how to use them, as the students read they become more aware of the strategies they used to read certain texts. In other words, students are aware of what type of reading strategies they can use to read a text. Overall, the development of instructional programs teaches students how to use cognitive strategies (Padron, 1992).

## **Population of Bilingual Classrooms**

Usually most of the population enrolled in bilingual classes are students that their first language is something other than English. Specifically this study is focusing on students who their first language is Spanish. As Willing (1985) stated in a meta-analysis research of the educational outcomes of native language, “concluded that bilingual education was more effective than English-only instruction” for the bilingual students, which proves that students are closing gaps in their first language, while their learning a new one.

## **Use of Reading Strategies in a Bilingual Classroom**

### **When to use them**

When readers find an unknown word while they are reading, they use a strategy to help themselves find the meaning of the unknown word. People might think that only young children that are just learning to read need to use reading strategies, but the reality is that all readers use them to fit their needs, and most of the time they don't realize that they are using them. However, students need to be taught how to use a set of strategies that they can use on their own when they read a text, especially when they encounter difficulties through the reading. Many reading strategies combine cognitive strategy use and monitoring where students use the strategy needed for each situation (Anderson 1991, Barnett 1996, Cohen 1990).

### **Benefits of using Reading Strategies in a Bilingual Classroom**

There are several types of reading strategies, and most of them give successful results when they are used wisely according to the needs of the students. Jimenez, Garcia and Pearson (1996) classified the strategies into three groups (Text-initiated Strategies, Text-initiated and Reader-Initiated Strategies and Reader-interactive Strategies) in a research that examined the

strategic reading process of eight bilingual Latina/o children who were identified as successful English readers. The main goal of this study was to develop an abstract and deep understanding of how and when these students used a certain strategy while they were reading. When Latino/a students found an unknown word, they appealed to prior knowledge to help them find out the meaning of the unknown word. They also used cognates or context clues as well, since cognates help both Spanish speakers learning English and English speakers learning Spanish to understand a text. Due that, many Spanish and English words have Latin or Greek roots and the same meaning which facilitates their understanding (Nagy, 1993). In addition, the use of context clues is a strategy that helps readers finds the meaning of a word or a portion of the text by looking for nearby relevant information.

According to Garcia et al. the Text-initiated strategies are the following: Using text structure, Focusing on Vocabulary, Summarizing, Restating the text, Paraphrasing, Using Context Clues, Rereading, and Decoding. Within the second group of Garcia's classification (Interactive Strategies) are Inference, Questioning, Predicting, and Confirming/disconfirming. Under the last classification (Reader-initiated strategies), are; Invoking prior knowledge, Monitoring, Visualizing, Evaluating, Noticing novelty and Demonstrating awareness. The use of these strategies brought satisfactory results in regards to comprehension among the Latina/o students.

### **Practicing Reading Strategies in a Bilingual Classroom**

All the reading strategies mentioned above may be used in a bilingual classroom with success. The follow section will give an overview of each reading strategy mentioned in this study. Besides reading strategies, there is scaffolding, which may not be a reading strategy, but it

leads from the concrete to the abstract, it involves supporting students with new concepts and content until they are ready to proceed on their own.

### **Scaffolding**

Teachers must be very careful to develop the best scaffolding possible in order for the students to understand what is being read. For instance, when a new story is introduced, teachers must activate students' background knowledge during the discussion. Then, introduce the story by looking at the title and asking students for their predictions, the teacher writes ideas on the board, paraphrasing constantly and repeating ideas for clarifications in case students did not understand.

### **Using Text Structure**

As using this strategy, the reader will determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas, and at the same time analyze how a text makes connections through an author's method of an organization.

### **Focusing on Vocabulary**

It is vital that teachers give students the tools for acquiring their own rich vocabulary. Students will learn many words when they encounter them in meaningful contexts, but other words must be taught directly. Repeated meaningful encounters with words in read-aloud, in conversation, in personal reading, in discussion, or in media viewing can lead students to build vocabulary over time. Teachers should model effective word learning strategies for students.

## **Summarizing**

It is how the reader takes larger selections of text and reduces them to their bare essentials: the gist, the key ideas, the main points that are worth noting and remembering. Webster calls a summary the “general idea in brief form.”

## **Inference**

Inference is the capability to use two or more pieces of information from a text to find a third piece that is implied in a text. Inference can be simple or complex, as simple as relating a pronoun with the person mentioned previously in a sentence, or can be as complex as understanding a message that is implicit in a text.

As Cain and Oakhill (2004) found that students that are poor readers do not have the capability to understand what they read. Moreover, poor readers have poor comprehension skills; they have a tendency to approach all texts in the same manner. On the other hand, good readers comprehend what they read, they look back for evidence when they need define an unknown word, they monitor their comprehension as well, and notice when they make a mistake while they are reading Cataldo and Oakhill (2000). In order for students to have the ability to make good inferences, they must be good readers. Background knowledge plays a very important role in making inferences, as Oakhill and Yuill (1996) stated. Moreover, according to Cromley and Azevedo (2007 p. 20) not only strong background knowledge is enough to make good inferences, also vocabulary is crucial for being able to draw inferences needed to comprehend a text.

## **Materials**

Graesser *et al.* (1994) stated that narrative and expository text are the two types of text recommended to make inferences. The narrative texts are the easiest to make inferences due to the fact, that they are relate to everyday life. On the other hand, expository text has academic use in making inferences, with these texts inferences are made consciously since they inform the reader about new concepts and technical material.

## **Questioning**

One way to keep students engaged in learning is an effective questioning. Questioning is a crucial aspect of teaching and learning as well. Having a good culture of questioning is very important, but asking the right questions is what it matters. Hannel (2003), developed a series of High Effective Questioning (HEQ), these questions encourage teachers to follow a question response question in their questioning. It means that the teacher asks a question first, student answer and then the teacher asks a follow up questioning expecting an explanation from the student reasoning. Expert listeners and readers are always asking questions themselves when they read. As Owocki (2003) stated, questioning can be taught by thinking aloud wondering about something when teachers want to address something with their students. It is important to know that questions from young children are often not consciously articulated; that is when teachers must bring the questions to a mindful level as to how students will answer them correctly stated.

## **Predicting**

Effective readers use pictures, titles, headings, text, and personal experiences to make predictions before they start reading. Predicting means thinking in advance while reading and anticipating information and events in the text.

What motivates student's prior knowledge is making predictions about the text, and they make connections between their own experiences and the new information. According to researchers, this reading strategy should be taught along with summarizing the main idea, predicting information from the text, and drawing inferences.

When students make predictions their understanding increases, and they get more interested in the text they are reading. Students use their background knowledge and clues from the text to predict and anticipate or guess what the subject of the text will be. (Fielding, 1990) To help students develop the important reading strategy of predicting, teachers must start a lesson by activating the students' thinking about content and genre of a text before opening it. Teachers should also ask their students questions about the content of the book before they open it, just by reading the title, author, and the cover picture. The background knowledge used in predicting comes from previous experiences and from meaning that is built during the reading.

## **Confirming**

This is a reading strategy where good readers automatically predict and confirm what will or will not happen in the text and combine their knowledge and ideas with the author. Poor readers do not make predictions or verifications as they read. Confirming helps readers learn to make predictions before they read and verify those predictions while they are reading.

There are two instructional approaches that have been used on bilingual students' cognitive strategy in reading in English as a second language obtaining excellent outcomes from

students. The two strategy approaches are: Reciprocal Teaching (Palinscar & Brown, 1984), and Question-Answer Relationships (Raphael, Winograd & Pearson, 1980). The Reciprocal Teaching is the most mentioned to cognitive strategy instruction. As the name indicates, it takes place in a cooperative instructional environment in which students and teacher engage in a dialogue. As Palinscar and Brown, (1984), Padron, (1985), Pressley and Harris (1990) state, students receive instruction in four comprehension-monitoring strategies, which are: summarizing, self-questioning, clarifying, and predicting. These types of strategies are recommended for strugglers readers, because they increase students' reading achievement. On the other hand, Pearson and Johnson's (1978) taxonomy of questions are the foundation for Question-Answer Relationships (QAR) approach. In this approach, students are taught that answers to questions could be: text-explicit when the answer was stated in the sentence of the text, text implicit when the response to the question must be drawn from different places in the text, and script-implicit when the answer to the questions depends on the readers prior knowledge. This procedure examines students' knowledge and the use of question-answering strategies.

### **Pedagogy of Teaching Reading Strategies**

Teachers must be able to know in what reading level students are in the first language and teach the strategies necessary to help students to improve as readers. As Grabe (1991) stated efficiently, "These strategies include adjusting the reading speed, skimming ahead, considering titles, headings, pictures and text structure information, anticipating information to come, and so on. Finally, reading develops gradually; the reader does not become fluent suddenly, or immediately following a reading development course. Rather, fluent reading is the product of long-term effort and gradual improvement."

## **The Need for Qualified Teachers for Second Language Learners**

As Garza-Reyna (2011) states, the growth in the population of students from diverse backgrounds has not been along by ethnic and linguistic diversification of the force of teachers. Regardless research suggesting connections between increases in the percentage of minority teachers and positive outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse students, the teachers force is composed primarily of English monolingual, female, white, middle class. Furthermore, the number of minority teachers in public schools does not represent the diverse student background (Zumwalt & Craig 2005). A well-prepared teacher understands the diversity of students in schools, but a teacher's lack of understanding of racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students is misled by stereotypes and misconceptions. There is high demand of bilingual (Spanish-English) teachers to work with Spanish-speaking students. Similarly, the demand for minority grows as the number of minority students increases (Casey, 2004).

Bilingual teachers teach all the standards within each content area. The difference from the rest of the teachers is that bilingual teachers have an extra responsibility to teach students Spanish, as well as English in order for the students to become bilingual individuals (Freeman & Freeman, 1998). Teachers know that English language learners are capable, and need a challenging curriculum in order for them to fully develop their academic potential. Moreover, bilingual teachers are aware that they can use any reading strategy to teach the students reading in their first language (L1), and later the second language (L2) as well.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Research Paradigm**

The following section contains the methodology used to carry out this quantitative study. Each reading strategy was chosen and evaluated for its level of friendliness by students in a second grade bilingual classroom.

This quantitative research study was concentrated in the developing of the different reading strategies by the students, based on the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data in a period of three years, to gain a deep understanding and the effects of using reading strategies in a bilingual classroom. Each reading strategy was evaluated for its preference and efficacy of the results obtained.

#### **Context of Study**

This study was conducted over a course of three years, during which the researcher accumulated information regarding the use of reading strategies in a bilingual classroom. The students attend a large independent school district with a population of 31,508 students starting from early childhood through grade 12. A 98.98% of Hispanic/Latino students, while the rest are Asian (0.18%), Black/African American (0.13%), and White (0.76%) compose this population. Out of all these ethnic groups, 99.14 % are bilingual.

The bilingual program being implemented in this school district is the Gomez and Gomez Dual Language Enrichment Program (DLE), in which students enrolled in this program start participating from pre-kinder through first grade Language Arts in their first language (Spanish). Science and Social Studies are taught in Spanish as well; while Mathematics is taught in English. Once students are in second grade and according to the Gomez and Gomez bilingual program, students take Spanish and English Language Arts for the same amount of time, meaning 50/50.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

During the three years that this study was conducted, the average of the amount of students per class was approximately of 18 students, with ages ranging from seven to eight years of age. They attend a school in a large school district in the southwestern part of the United States.

### **Data Collection**

The data used for this study is based on archival data accumulated during three years (2012 – 2014) of teaching of the researcher who is the teacher. The data was gathered as during the reading period and while students were instructed on the use of several reading strategies. The average of number of students per class each year was approximately of eighteen students, which makes the amount of fifty-four students approximately during the three years.

### **Instrument**

During the reading period, the second grade bilingual students more frequently used twelve reading strategies during the time that the archival data was collected, out of all the reading strategies that they were taught to understand a task. The reading strategies more frequently used were arranged in a table to show the percentage of the students that chose a

specific strategy. This procedure is similar to the one adopted from Hann (1984) and Paris & Myer (1981) by Padron (1992). It is a Reading Strategy Questionnaire (QRS) (Waxman & Padron, 1987) that consisted of 14 reading strategies and according to Padron, Knight, & Waxman (1988) the 14 strategies have been found to be consistent and valid in other studies and the consistency of the questionnaire is 80. The reading strategies included in the questionnaire were separated into two categories the first being comprised of: Asking Questions About Parts Not Understood, Checking Through The Story, Imaging, Looking Up Words In The Dictionary, Self-Generated Questions, Taking Notes, Underlining the Important Parts Of The Story, Saying The Main Idea Over and Over. The second category is composed of: Saying Every Word Over and Over, Summarizing In Writing, Skipping The Parts You Don't Understand, Writing Down Every Word, Thinking About Something Else While Reading, and Reading Fast (Padron 2012). This study investigated the effects of two types of strategy instructional approaches or methods on bilingual students' cognitive strategy used in reading in any of both languages (Spanish).

In this study, the reading strategies that were more used by second grade bilingual students were Self-Generated Questions, Summarizing, Predicting, Clarifying, Looking Up Words in the Dictionary, Underlining The Important Parts Of The Story, Using Text Structure, Use of Context Clues, Reading Fast, Predicting, and Confirming.

## **Procedures**

One of the procedures of the dual bilingual program that the school district has adopted (Gomez and Gomez) is that the students must be arranged in pairs and in teams to work in all the subjects during class.

Group 1(n=5), Group 2(n=5), Group 3(n=4), and Group 4 (n=4), where “n” means the amount of students per group. Bilingual students being in second grade were instructed each year in those

three years with the use of several reading strategies, but at the end of each sixth six weeks, the teacher asked the students what strategies they felt more comfortable with when they were reading a task. The questioning was as an informal survey that students answered as part of the class. The day when students answered the questions about their preference on the use of the reading strategies, the groups (Group 1, Group 2, Group 3, and Group 4) were instructed in different ways.

### **Group 1**

This group was taught first how to use the following strategies 1). Question Generating. 2). Summarizing. 3). Predicting. 4). Clarifying. According to Palinscar and Brown (1984) these four activities or strategies are called reciprocal teaching (Padron,1992). The instruction consisted in the explanation and modeling of the strategies by the teacher and what to do when a reader have difficulties to understand a text, using these strategies would help students to understand what they read. After the instruction, most of the students were encouraged to use the strategies with the supervision of the teacher. The researcher, which is the teacher, instructed students to look at the title and pictures in the story, talk about it with a partner and come up with questions. They also were instructed to make predictions; this is what picture walk is. Next, students had to read silently and talk to a partner about their reading. As it is mention before, talking to a partner after an activity in the classroom is a very common routine in a bilingual classroom, students talked to a partner about unknown words and asked the teacher for clarification, and then they had to answer their own questions. As a final activity, students modeled the four strategies to the class and teacher gave feedback and reinforcement during the developing of the activities or strategies. To facilitate the developing of the required work by the students, teacher provided them with a very detailed checklist that students followed religiously.

## **Group 2**

The instruction for this group was that students had to classify different types of comprehension questions according to how the questions could be answered. For instance, they were taught that the answers can be a). Text explicit, it means that the answer is right there in the text; b). Looking up Words in The Dictionary, where students are allowed to use the dictionary whenever they find a word that they don't know the meaning; c). Underlining parts of the story is when readers underline parts that they consider important. Reading passages were given to students in this group, along with questions and answers that students had to match the answers with the questions.

## **Group 3**

The instruction for this group was not as detailed as for the previous groups. Students in this group were given a story, that was introduced generally and students answered comprehension questions by themselves. Unknown words were discussed with the whole class.

## **Group 4**

Students in this group did not received any type of instruction in the target reading strategies when they answered the questionnaire. They just answered the questions about their preference on the use of reading strategies.

Table 1

Number of students that were asked for their most frequent used reading strategy in three years (n= 54).

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Number of students using each reading strategy</b>	<b>% of total students using reading strategies</b>
Self-Generating Questions	42	81%
Summarizing	51	94%
Predicting	39	72%
Clarifying	42	81%
Looking Up Words in The Dictionary	24	44%
Underlining The Important Parts Of The Story	10	19%
Using Text Structure	14	26%
Context Clues	33	61%
Reading Fast	15	28%
Predicting	36	67%
Confirming	23	43%
Inference	45	83%

## Results

Table 1 reports the number and percentages of students that used each reading strategy in the three years that the archival data was collected.

The results from this study indicates that the most frequently chosen reading strategies by bilingual students are effective strategies, while those that were reported being used less frequently are ineffective strategies.

The results for this particular study show that the weak or ineffective strategies are: Looking Up Words in The Dictionary, Underlining the Important Parts of the Story, Using Text Structure, Reading Fast, and Confirming. While the effective strategies or strategies that students felt more comfortable using are: Self-Generating Questions, Summarizing, Predicting, Clarifying, Context Clues, Predicting, and Inference.

This study also found differences between the Groups 1 and 2 and Groups 3 and 4 in terms of strategy instruction and preparation. Thus, proving that bilingual students benefit from instruction in cognitive strategy use as opposed to no instruction in regards to strategy use. Students that participated in the reciprocal teaching groups did better than the other groups participating in the study. This fact proves that bilingual students are capable to understand cognitive reading strategy instruction. This instruction enables students to link new information to previous knowledge, which exhibits demographic features as well as previous experiences play a large role in comprehension and learning.

To summarize, this study provided a large amount of evidence, that supports the idea that reading instruction is not the only crucial skill students need to acquire, but they must also master the use of cognitive strategies in order to be able to know what strategy they can use to comprehend a task.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

In spite of what is known about the importance of the use of reading strategies in improving the reading level of second language learners in a bilingual classroom, this quantitative research was intended at gaining a deep understanding of how the different strategies used during reading help in the comprehension of a text. Each student, whether a second language learner or not, comes to the educational setting with a unique array of background experiences and knowledge gained from those experiences. Gaining an understanding of some of the possible kinds of experiences second language learners may have encountered, will provide with some additional insight about how to teach them better.

Historically speaking second language learners have been underserved by public education. In a congressionally mandated study, students who were labeled as second language learners received lower grades, were judged to have lower academic abilities, scored below their classmates on standardized tests of reading, had higher dropout rates, and were placed more frequently in lower ability groups (Moss, 1995). On the other hand, an important factor that affects the way that a student feels upon entering a classroom will largely affect the amount that he or she learns in that classroom. That is bilingual teachers must have a deep understanding of the way these students are treated, that frequently are been discriminated. In other words, a positive classroom environment is one that fosters an atmosphere of mutual respect, meaning that

the teacher respects the students, the students respect the teacher, and the students respect one another. These details are sometimes not being observed as important in the way students succeed in the classroom, but they must be taken into account, for the benefits of bilingual students.

This study was accomplished by the accumulation of information during a period of three years and it was intended for gaining a deep understanding of how the different types of reading strategies help to improve the reading level of students that are enrolled in a bilingual classroom. It also aims to get a better understanding through first-hand experience.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study was to identify research-supported strategies for reading that could be integrated effectively to promote the development of biliterate academic literacy by second language learners in elementary school bilingual classrooms. This study began with a review of the theoretical foundations that highlighted the learning needs of the young language learners at elementary school level. The reading strategies selected for inclusion in this paper provide a scaffold for these learning needs and were presented in an integrated framework supporting one of the curricular areas for elementary second language learners.

This study has provided a variety of information about who, how, and when to use reading strategies in a bilingual elementary classroom. Through this study, it has been proven that reading strategies are the most valuable tools that a reader can use at any age and during any situation regarding the comprehension of a text. However, results from this study found that the second grade bilingual students felt more comfortable using Self-Generating Questions, Summarizing, Predicting, Context Clues, Clarifying, and Inference. This makes the researcher conclude that if during the three years that the data was collected the students chose the same strategies, it can be considered valid that they are very effective and appropriate for second graders.

On the other hand, an important fact that must be taken into consideration is that teachers must model each reading strategy and make sure that students understand the instruction. In

addition, students also must be motivated to use and practice each reading strategy for several weeks to get good outcomes from students.

This study can serve as a starting point for collaborative discussion and planning among second language learners at the elementary level within the district who share a goal of aligning classroom instruction with research-based best practices and strategies proved to assist young children at elementary level to develop academic literacy in bilingual elementary school classrooms.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Diana Arely Garcia obtained a Bachelor of Chemist Pharmaceutical Biology in 1988 from the Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas. Later, in the state of Texas, she earned a teacher certification in EC-4 Spanish in 2006 and a Master of Bilingual Education in 2014 from the University of Texas-Pan American.

Diana started working as a second grade bilingual teacher in 2007, at an elementary school where she has been honored to be the Teacher of the Year 2014 in the Pharr San Juan Alamo Independent School District. An additional involvement in her elementary school includes; sponsors her school's Spanish Spelling Bee team at the University of Texas Pan American. She also belongs to LPAC (Language Proficiency Assessment Committee) within the elementary campus.

Diana resides in San Juan Texas; her mailing address is P.O. Box 833, Hidalgo, TX.