BILINGUAL STUDENTS’ USAGE OF READING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES: THEORETICAL UNDERSTANDINGS AND INSTRUCTIONAL IMPLICATIONS

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Presentation Overview

- Importance of this research

- Discussion of dominant themes

- Implications for
  - Classroom practitioners
  - Researchers
  - Teacher educators
Importance

- **Nationally**
  - 1990: 90% of students in K-12 schools in the U.S. were Caucasian (García, 2001)
  - 2003-04 academic year: 3.8 million students in the U.S. (11% of the student population) received ELL instruction (NCES, 2006).
  - 2026: 90% of the students in the U.S. will be from “nonwhite” background (García, 2001)

- **Regionally**
  - Midwest contains the fewest number of trained bilingual/ESL teachers in the U.S. (Henke, Choy, and Geis, 1996)
  - Midwest = “New Latino Diaspora” (Wortham, Murillo, & Hamann, 2002)
Dominant Themes

- Metacognitive strategies
  - Common to L1 and L2 students
  - Unique to L2 students

- Differences between high/low proficiency L2 students

- Identification of the source of reading comprehension difficulty

- Instructional interventions
Common strategies/characteristics across L1 and L2 students

- **Common strategy use across proficient L1 and L2** (Block, 1992; Jiménez et al., 1995; Jiménez et al., 1996; Jiménez, 1997; García, 1998; Hardin, 2001; Olson & Land, 2007; Proctor et al., 2007; Pritchard and O’Hara, 2008)

- **Evidence of the following in both populations:**
  - Identification of a problem, resolve, and confirm (Block, 1992)
  - Use of prior knowledge and inferencing (Jiménez et al., 1995; Jiménez et al., 1996; Jiménez, 1997; García, 1998; Hardin, 2001; Olson & Land, 2007; Proctor et al., 2007; Pritchard and O’Hara, 2008)

- **Similarities across low proficiency L1 and L2 readers** (Block, 1992; Jiménez et al., 1995; Jiménez et al., 1996; Jiménez, 1997; García, 1998; Hardin, 2001; Olson & Land, 2007; Proctor et al., 2007; Pritchard and O’Hara, 2008)
Strategies unique to L2 students

- Use of L1 to support L2 understanding
  - Translation of text
  - Conversations (Jiménez et al., 1995; Jiménez et al., 1996; Jiménez, 1997; García, 1998; Pritchard and O'Hara, 2008; Hardin, 2001; Palmer et al., 2006)

- Use of cognate knowledge to address unfamiliar vocabulary (Jiménez et al., 1995; Jiménez et al., 1996; Jiménez, 1997; García, 1998; Pritchard and O'Hara, 2008; Hardin, 2001; Palmer et al., 2006)

- Use of prior knowledge in L1 to support L2 (Jiménez et al., 1995; Jiménez et al., 1996; Jiménez, 1997; García, 1998; Pritchard and O'Hara, 2008; Hardin, 2001; Palmer et al., 2006)

- Tendency to monitor comprehension more when reading in L1 vs. L2 (Jiménez et al., 1996; Pritchard and O'Hara, 2008)
Differences among L2 students

- **Low Proficiency**
  - Bilingualism = Burden
  - Reading = Fragmented across languages
  - Few strategies, used infrequently
  - Bottom-up, word level strategies dominate

- **High Proficiency**
  - Bilingualism = Asset
  - Reading = Unitary construct
  - Many strategies, used cooperatively
  - Top-down, holistic strategies dominate

(Block, 1992; Jiménez et al., 1995; Jiménez et al., 1996; Jiménez, 1997; García, 1998; Hardin, 2001; McKeown and Gentilucci, 2007; Pritchard and O’Hara, 2008)
Identifying the source of reading comprehension difficulties

- Do not assume that L2 status is the source of a reading difficulty

- Other factors to consider...
  - L1 Reading proficiency level (Block, 1992)
  - Vocabulary knowledge (Jiménez et al., 1996; García, 1998)
  - Lack of instruction (Hardin, 2001)
  - Lack of background knowledge (García, 1998)
  - Transiency/fragmentation of academic experience (Palmer et al., 2006)
Instructional interventions

- Address L2 students’ need to attend to unfamiliar vocabulary
- Teach L2 students strategies common to L1 students and those unique to L2 students
- Incorporate technology
- Consider the oral language and reading proficiencies of L2 students, specifically with regard to the use of think alouds

(Royer & Carlo, 1991; Block, 1992; Padrón, 1992; Jiménez et al., 1995; Jiménez et al., 1996; Jiménez, 1997; García, 1998; Hardin, 2001; McKeown & Gentilucci, 2007; Palmer et al., 2006; Olson & Land, 2007; Proctor et al., 2007)
Conclusions and Implications

- For classroom practitioners
- For researchers
- For pre-service/in-service teacher educators
For classroom practitioners…

- Provide instruction for all students on the use of reading comprehension strategies
- Support L2 students’ use of “bilingual” strategies to develop their L2 literacy skills
- Encourage the use and development of students’ L1
- Consider L2 students’ cultural and linguistic assets
For researchers…

- Initiate larger, longitudinal studies
- Study L2 populations that vary across:
  - SES
  - L1 (oral language proficiency and literacy level)
  - Patterns of formal education
- Investigate alternative measures to think aloud protocol for L2’s
- Develop OTL index
- Develop more valid assessments that reflect the knowledge base of L2’s
For pre-service/in-service teacher educators...

- **Educate** teachers about the similarities and differences between L1/L2 students

- **Empower** teachers with instructional practices appropriate to L2 students and with a basic knowledge of the home language(s) of their students

- **Expand** teachers’ understandings of the funds of knowledge that their L2 students bring to school
References


