

Abstract

CHIU, CHING-HSIEN. *New Immigrant Readers: The Role of Young Adult Literature in Literacy Development and Academic Confidence*. (Under the direction of Dr. Carol A. Pope/Dr. William O'Steen.)

The purpose of this study was to investigate how reading young adult literature affected new immigrant adolescents who were in the process of developing their English literacy and making the transition to academic confidence. The primary question considered if reading young adult literature had a positive influence on literacy development and academic confidence for English as a second language (ESL) middle school students.

The study used a qualitative research approach incorporating observation, interviewing, and document analysis. The time frame for the five participants' coming to the United States was between one year eight months and five years. All participants expressed confidence in their academic performance, and four of them were determined to go to college. They all attended the same middle school with a large ESL population who came from the same region—Mexico. These Mexican students were bilingual, but more often spoke Spanglish, an English/Spanish mix.

The findings suggested that reading young adult literature extensively played a dynamic role in ESL student literacy success. Reading provided a foundation for their development in literacy and helped them think and reason. Reading served as a tool for their success in problem solving. It also helped the ESL participants in this study succeed in their academic performance.

Instructional implications for teaching ESL students immigrating from this study include:

1. ESL students need more support and practice to express their reflections on reading young adult literature, in writing as well as in speaking.
2. Teachers might also work with the school media specialist to sponsor book talks, to publish students' reflections, or to maintain lists of recommended books.
3. First year ESL students need more time in ESL classes.

Further longitude research is needed to investigate how ESL students who read extensively in middle school perform academically in high school and in college.

New Immigrant Readers: The Role of Young Adult Literature in Literacy Development and Academic Confidence

by
Ching-hsien Chiu

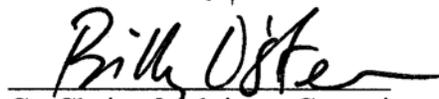
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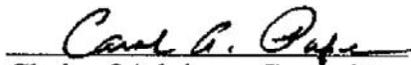
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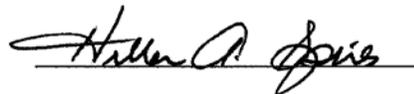




Co-Chair of Advisory Committee



Chair of Advisory Committee





For

My father and mother, my motivation and inspiration.

Biography

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Over the last twenty years, the immigrant population in the United States, has risen dramatically. Waggoner (1999) summarizes the U.S. Census Bureau data and concludes that since the 1980s, the United States has become a much more diverse society, full of cultural and lingual differences. In the 1980s, the number of non-English-speaking people grew from 23.1 to 31.8 million. Waggoner states that, “While the total population increased by 10 percent between 1980 and 1990, the foreign-born population increased by 40 percent and the population speaking languages other than English at home by 38 percent” (p. 14) with Spanish speakers being the majority (Padron, 1998).

Waggoner (1999) contemplates what this influx of immigrants means for the education system. She argues that the English as a Second Language (ESL) learners will become a strong resource for this country, but only if they have the educational opportunities to develop and enhance their potential abilities. Education is important for these new immigrant children and youth if they are to develop their potential and become a value, not a burden, to society. The United States government’s concern about schooling these new immigrants has led it to enact a new law, the No Child Left Behind Act.

The No Child Left Behind Act was signed into law on January 8, 2002. Title III under the No Child Left Behind Act, also called the “English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act,” requires public elementary and secondary schools with community support to provide supportive instruction for ESL learners. The purpose of this portion of the Act is to help all limited English proficient (LEP) children, including immigrant children and youth, to “attain English proficiency,”

and “to achieve at high levels in the core academic subjects so that those children can meet the same challenging State academic content and student academic achievement standards as all children are expected to meet” (U. S. Department of Education, 2003).

The No Child Left Behind Act makes an urgent call for the nation to acknowledge the importance of educating these young new immigrants. For ESL immigrants, the most urgent and most important skill required for attaining academic success is English literacy. Becoming skilled in English literacy helps ESL students transition into regular classrooms and succeed in their academic work (Krashen, 1995, 2003).

Research has shown that one of the best methods to promote students’ literacy is to have them read literature. Additionally, reading literature provides students space, interest, and responsibility for their own learning (Cummins, 2003; Krashen, 2003; Langer, 2003). Academic confidence for ESL learners is tantamount to becoming literate in English. With the No Child Left Behind Act, there is now an urgency for practitioners to find ways to better educate these ESL new immigrants in order to assure their successful literacy and academic performance. This study investigates the impact of using young adult literature with new immigrant, non-English-speaking middle school students in their struggle to develop English literacy and academic confidence.

The Problem

With the current massive influx of immigrant students into the United States school system, the No Child Left Behind Act forces schools to address ESL students’ needs and to acknowledge that ESL students are entitled to achieve at the highest level of English literacy.

Since reading literature has been cited as one of the most powerful ways students can develop their literacy (Cumming, 2003; Krashen, 1995; Langer, 1995, 2003; Lazar, 1993), research is needed to investigate if this holds true for ESL students. Can ESL students gain literacy skills and academic confidence by reading literature, and, if so, what strategies should be used?

Krashen (1995; 2003) suggests that the simple art of reading itself promotes students' reading abilities the most. Cox and Boyd-Batstone (1997) substantiate Krashen's work by illustrating how a literature-based approach helps ESL learners develop their English literacy in the elementary school setting. However, it takes time for an ESL learner to achieve a high level of academic English literacy. According to Cummins (1994, 1996, 2003), it takes the average ESL student five to ten years to learn English well enough to catch up to the grade level coursework. Thus, if an ESL student enters the educational system at the middle school level, it is quite possible that there will not be sufficient time for him or her to learn the language well enough in high school to be admitted to a college of choice. How educators accelerate ESL students' learning in English and thus increase their understanding throughout the whole curriculum is a real, yet difficult challenge.

Cummins (1994, 1996, 2003) suggests that extensive reading and writing practice is the basic foundation for academic success. Reading literature should be done both in class and outside of class. Studies suggest that using literature in the language classroom as early as possible will help ESL students develop English literacy proficiency (Lazar, 1993; Reid, 2002). Lazar and Reid both suggest that even beginning learners of the English language get the sense of the language best through reading literature.

For adolescents, young adult literature can provide an effective transition to literacy. The themes and the characters in young adult literature often deal with the problems and concerns of adolescents, such as love, friendship, race, and violence. Because these themes relate to the real world of the young adult, adolescents can connect with literature that is meaningful and useful to their own lives. Literature can also help students develop critical abilities, increase emotional awareness, and build imagination. As suggested by the research, this study will investigate whether reading young adult literature will contribute to ESL learners' literacy development in middle school.

In two pilot studies (Chiu, 2001, 2002), Vincent, the participant, showed promising results from extensive reading of young adult literature. As a result of his extensive reading, Vincent exhibited improvement in his literacy development and academic confidence. Vincent's successful literacy development piqued my curiosity about other new immigrants' literacy learning journeys (Chiu, 2001, 2002). I began to wonder if Vincent's success was unique or if he represented a wider population of success stories. I also wanted to explore what other factors might be affecting their language learning, and what kinds of support these ESL students had in common. Developing from the pilot studies, these questions formed the basis for the interview questions to explore the participants' literacy development and to understand their perspectives on their growth in English literacy. I undertook a more systematic and careful research approach to find out if there was a positive correlation between reading young adult literature and non-English-speaking new immigrant middle school students' literacy development and academic confidence.

Terms and Definitions

In this study, the investigation will focus on the English literacy development and academic confidence acquired by non-English-speaking new immigrants in the United States through learning English and reading young adult literature. For clarity, the following explanations, definitions, and acronyms are included.

Literary development and literacy development

Literary development refers to students' ability to read and write about literature, while *literacy development* refers to the cognitive and social-awareness development of becoming literate (Knickerbocker & Rycki, 2002; Langer, 2003). *Literary development* involves different levels of reading appreciation, including Building Fluency, Reading for Pleasure/Reading to Learn, and Mature Reading (Knickerbocker & Rycki, 2002, p. 198). For Langer (2003), *literacy development* means learning to have a literate mind. Langer believes that literacy development is shaped through reading and writing, and in turn affects the individual's ability to think, reason and build visions. She explains that developing a literate mind helps an individual conquer the challenges in life and may also affect decision-making abilities.

The Literacy Dictionary edited by Harris and Hodges (1995) explains that *literacy* can be viewed as an "adaptation to societal expectation, power to realize one's aspirations and affect social change, and a state of grace to be attained by the well-read cultured person" (p.140).

Academic confidence

Students' confidence in academic learning connects with their ability in literacy development (Goodman, 2003). Research done by Colvin and Schlosser (1997) suggests

that when students become proficient readers and writers, their confidence in their ability to succeed in school grows. ESL learners gain confidence when they feel that they can use the new language (English) expressively and flexibly. When students get good grades in school, including A's and B's, their confidence in academic work usually shows in their conversation about schoolwork. In this study, academic confidence will be measured through student attitudes expressed in interviews and in their subsequent grades earned at school.

The following acronyms are connected with this study.

ESL: English as a Second Language

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

Research repeatedly treats ESL and EFL as if they were synonymous. ESL stands for English as a second language while EFL means English as a foreign language. EFL refers to teaching English in a country where people do not speak English on a daily basis, such as teaching English in Thailand, Korea, or Taiwan. ESL refers to teaching English in the United States, to students who do not speak English fluently. In this study, I will call these new immigrant students who learn English in the United States ESL students.

LEP: Limited English Proficient

ELL: English Language Learner

L2: Second Language

A student who finishes ESL courses may still be an LEP student. LEP stands for "limited English proficiency." Researchers frequently use the term LEP when they

discuss the issues of the second language learner because learning a language and becoming proficient take a long time (Cummins, 2003; Krashen, 2003).

In second language acquisition literature, authors like to talk about ESL or LEP students by using the term second language (L2) learners or English language learners (ELL). In the study, I will refer to these new adolescent immigrants as ESL students. The references or acronyms are important to consider. While ESL students should be considered valuable and special because they are capable of using several languages, they may be viewed by some as inferior because of their limited English (Pardon, 1998). English Limited Proficiency may well describe the situation where these students need extra help in improving their English literacy, but it also labels these language learners as “limited,” a word that implies inferiority (Jimenez, 2003; Padron, 1998).

The terminology for ESL, EFL, LEP or even *bilingual* has changed over time. For example, the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs, under U. S. Department of Education, changed its name to the Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition & Language Instruction Educational Programs, 2002). This change may indicate that there is still no “proper” or “standard” term for referring to new immigrant students whose native language is not English. Studies that use terms like ESL, EFL, ELL, or LEP may indicate the same group of students who are new immigrants in the country and whose native language is not English.

New Immigrants: Students who have been in school in the United States for less than five years in the study

Middle School Students: Students who are in the sixth to eighth grade

ARP: Accelerated Reader Program

I used the Accelerated Reader Program (ARP) as a filter to select my participants, who were expected to have read a large number of young adult literature texts in order to be successful in ARP. Many schools use ARP to encourage students to read literature. In ARP, a software database tracks the number and titles of books students have read while assigning points for understanding content knowledge. To be considered successful in ARP, a student must obtain the full number of required points in each quarter of the academic year. To get the full points, the students have to read at least several young adult literature books on the ARP list in each quarter of an academic year. The candidate adolescents who participated in this study gained high points in ARP in the past year.

Schools in many states have adopted the Accelerated Reader Program (ARP) to encourage students to read. ARP, which is a reading software program designed for pre-K to 12th grades, is now used in more than 50,000 schools worldwide (Renaissance Learning, 2003a). It contains a database of different quizzes to test if the students did the outside reading or read the primary titles that teachers encouraged or required students to read. The ARP software can be a reference for teachers or librarians to track and record an individual student's points earned from the quizzes and the different reading-level books that each individual student picks. The reading list provided in the program contains more than 13,000 books assigned to different grade levels based on the Fry Readability Index (Paul, VanderZee, Rue, & Swanson, 1996; Volland, Topping, & Evans, 1999). When a school purchases the software, it receives different quiz sets depending on individual school budgets (Renaissance, 2003b). The price for kits varies

from \$499 to \$2,999. Different kits contain different databases of prepared quizzes for students. The higher the price of the kit, the more sets of quizzes it will contain.

Some schools that have adopted ARP also provide extra rewards for the students who achieve certain AR points. The more students read, the more points they get which, in turn, builds their literacy confidence and ability and leads them to being more engaged in reading literature (Krashen, 1993).

In the pilot studies, Vincent participated in the ARP program. Vincent's middle school used ARP to motivate young adolescent students to read extensively. Vincent's story inspired me to explore the world of new immigrant adolescents and their English literacy development based on reading young adult literature (Chiu, 2001, 2002). From my perspective, ARP can potentially serve as a catalyst to invite ESL learners to explore the literature world because it offers students reading selections according to different interests and reading levels.

YAL: Young Adult Literature

YAL refers to young adult literature. Young adult literature is a genre that is still growing and thriving (Probst, 1988). The topics of young adult literature are closely related to the needs that are of particular interest to that age group: adventure, fantasy, values, school, peers, and gender roles (James, 1974). Young adult literature provides students with a variety of themes, and can offer background knowledge related to history, geography, and social studies. ESL students' learning of content knowledge can start in the language classroom with the help of literature. Young learners will become more engaged with the texts, especially when they can make connections with the content, as in

young adult literature. Teachers in the middle school can use YAL to arouse young adolescents' interest in literature (Wilhelm, 1997).

Motivation for This Study

The foundation for the current research study builds upon two pilot studies conducted in 2001 and 2002 (Chiu). The informant for those studies was Vincent, a middle school ESL student. While taking the course, Teaching Literature for Young Adults in spring, 2001, I talked to Vincent and knew that he read a lot of young adult literature. His mother allowed him to participate in my study. From interviewing him and reviewing his growth in literacy development, I saw the power of reading literature.

When I first interviewed Vincent, he was in the seventh grade (Chiu, 2001). He had come to the United States from Taiwan at the end of fourth grade. Vincent had adapted well academically and socially to his new life in America at the time of my study. Through participating in the Accelerated Reader Program (ARP), he read young adult literature extensively. He told me that each book in ARP was assigned different points based on length and reading difficulty. In his school at the end of each quarter, students had to earn 25 points to get an A in the language arts class. Vincent accumulated 300 points in one school year. He read about 20 books in one quarter.

In Spring 2001, Vincent told me in an e-mail interview:

I started to read novels when I was in 6th grade because the teacher told us to. I really, really started to read novels every single day when I'm in 7th grade. I started to read that much because of the Accelerated Reader's Program (ARP) that the school has. The AR program makes you read certain books to get points and you need to get a certain amount of points

to get a good grade in language arts so that's why I started reading. I think that reading more books can help you gain more knowledge and helps you be a fast reader (Chiu, 2001).

I asked him what he thought would have happened if he had not participated in the ARP program. He replied:

Without the ARP program I don't think I would have read this much books because there's no motivation whatsoever except when my mom tells me to but I usually don't listen to her. I think the books I read helped me a lot in learning American culture and my peers because some books will teach you like what holiday is on which day and what my peers like to do and stuff. I think that the books I read helped a lot with my English ability because as you read you'll see some vocabulary that you don't know and you'll try to find out the meaning and try to memorize it. If you don't remember it the next time you see it you'll go look it up again and after about ten times or so you'll memorize it (Chiu, 2001).

Vincent's school used ARP to provide a list of many literature choices and to encourage students to read. In my second study of Vincent he told me, "Each book has different points but each quarter you have to get 25 points to get an A. I got 300 points. I read like twenty books" (Chiu, 2002). Vincent believed that reading extensively helped him speed up his English language ability, gain more knowledge and become a faster reader.

As an extension of the pilot studies, the current study includes five non-English-speaking new immigrant participants who had successful experiences in ARP to

determine whether they had developed literacy confidence as well as Vincent. Thus, the target population for my study was middle school students who were in grades 6 to 8, had been in the American school system for less than five years (new immigrants), had participated successfully in ARP for the past academic year (either got targeted AR points per academic quarter year or read more than 30 books from the list), or had been recommended by a teacher as one who enjoyed reading literature extensively outside class.

Purpose of the Study

Langer (1995) states that, “through literature, students learn to explore possibilities and consider options for themselves and humankind. They come to find themselves, imagine others, value difference, and search for justices. They gain connectedness and seek vision. They become the literate thinkers we need to shape the decisions of tomorrow” (p.1). Reading itself promotes reading ability. Developing English literacy through reading literature is a widely recommended approach. Reid (2002) states that literature can be a great resource for ESL students in learning English, regardless of the subjects they encounter. She states that, “literature written to be clear and accessible to young readers can serve as a useful scaffold, from understanding basic structures and vocabulary to practicing and eventually using a range of expressions, styles, and functions of language” (Reid, 2002, p. 19). Lazar (1993) suggests that language arts teachers weave literature into their lessons to enrich learning and help students explore different writing genres.

This study investigates the impact of young adult literature on new immigrant adolescents who had been in school in the United States for less than five years and who

had at least one successful year of experience in the Accelerated Reader Program. The primary question considered if reading young adult literature had a positive influence on literacy development and academic confidence for these non-English speaking new immigrant middle school students. This study investigated whether reading young adult literature motivated young adult ESL learners and hastened their English literacy learning.

The research techniques of this investigation utilized observation supported with field notations, recorded and evaluated interviews, and document analysis. I observed student classes and connected with participants and their ESL and language arts teachers to understand the participants' learning in school. I interviewed each participant three times and the ESL and language arts teachers once. I additionally analyzed written documents provided by the participants and the teachers in the research study.

Research Questions

The adolescents selected for the study were the focus of the following research questions:

1. What role does extensively reading young adult literature play in the literacy development of ESL students?
2. How is reading young adult literature related to students' academic confidence?
3. How do these ESL students view their own literacy development?

To support the primary questions of this investigation, a number of supporting topics were explored in the data collection. These topics included students' reading choices, success in school and the adjustment for learning.

Conclusion

Case studies explore individual students' voices, affording students with opportunities to express loudly and clearly who they are and what they want educators to do for them. This research considers the different voices of ESL learners towards their literacy development and academic transition and proposes to offer suggestions for educators to help other adolescent ESL learners develop their own English literacy in similar situations.

Educators across the country encourage all students to read extensively, especially teachers in primary and secondary schools. For ESL students, however, reading young adult literature may offer additional, unexplored academic benefits when compared with their native English-speaking peers. They may find interest and confidence in their literacy development through reading. This study will contribute to the growing body of ESL literature by exploring and opening a new page in ESL students' literacy learning journey through investigating the influence of reading young adult literature.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Research about new immigrants is extensive, and so is research about literature education; however, only a few studies address the connection between the new immigrant's literacy development and young adult literature (Cox and Boyd-Batstone, 1997; Hirvela, 1996). The literature review in this chapter includes three major parts. The first part discusses the research about the factors that affect ESL new immigrants' English literacy development and academic confidence. The second part of this chapter focuses on research and theories related to the impact of reading literature on students' literacy development. The last part shows the woven theories that support this research study. It will also demonstrate how these theories influence this study of non-English-speaking new immigrant middle school students who are developing English literacy and academic confidence through reading young adult literature.

Influences on ESL New Immigrants' Literacy Development and Academic Confidence

Factors that influence ESL new immigrants' literacy development and academic confidence are categorized into two major parts: formal education and informal constraints. In this study, formal education refers to: second language acquisition, classroom instruction, bilingual education, teachers' attitudes, and multicultural education. Informal constraints include discussions of age differences, individual differences, and social development theories.

ESL students' learning is influenced by many variables inside and outside schools. In school, the instruction varies based on the theories and pedagogies which

underlie the school's program. Different teachers have different influences on each student based on their instruction and assumed beliefs about these new immigrants. The ongoing trends and issues related to bilingual education and multicultural education have a strong impact on a school's policy, beliefs, and curriculum (Fitzgerald, 2003; Luke, 2003).

Informal constraints, such as age and individual differences, can also be viable explanations for different outcomes of ESL learners' English literacy levels. Students under the same instruction may not achieve the same results because every student is unique. Attitude, motivation, self-esteem, anxiety, family and social support, and their different learning strengths all contribute to the outcomes of their academic performances. Social development theories also help practitioners understand what affects adolescents' behaviors and how wide a range of differences these young adults may show. Middle school teachers who consider different social development theories help themselves view their students from different cultural backgrounds with a wider, more open-minded perspective.

Formal Education

The discussion in this section will focus on such issues as second language acquisition, classroom instruction, bilingual education, teachers' attitudes, and multicultural education.

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) in this study is based primarily on Cummins' and Krashen's SLA theories (Cummins, 1981, 1994, 1996, 2003; Krashen, 1987, 1988). Krashen's Monitor Model, Filter Hypothesis, and Input Hypothesis have greatly influenced the pedagogy in many ESL classrooms (Crawford, 2003; Dutro &

Moran, 2003). Krashen (1987, 1988) believes that language learners' performance in SLA is largely influenced by the students' motivation, attitudes toward the target language, and a non-threatening learning environment. Language and classroom teachers who follow Krashen's ideas work hard to provide students with communicative approaches that attempt to scaffold students' literacy learning in a non-threatening educational environment (Crawford, 2003; D. Freeman and Y. Freeman, 2003). Krashen also emphasizes that the acquired ability and cognition in the students' primary language literacy can be transferred to use in building the second language literacy.

Krashen (1987, 1988) believes that what determines second language acquisition most is the "comprehensive input" that ESL learners can get. Comprehensive input contains two major parts: "input" means the target language in which the learners receive information while "comprehensive" means the amount that the learners actually understand and are motivated to learn.

In his work, Cummins (1981, 1994, 1996) differentiates the conversational proficiency from the academic proficiency in language literacy. To address the differences, he points out that time needed for second language acquisition should be divided into two categories: conversational proficiency and academic proficiency. Summarized from repeated large-scale studies, Cummins concludes that it takes about two years for ESL learners to reach the oral proficiency of their English-speaking peers. It takes five to seven years or even more to reach academic proficiency. ESL learners need much more time to acquire proficiency in order to match their peers in their reading and writing abilities, which are critical to determine school performance.

In Cummins' updated definition of English proficiency, he extends his previous two layers of proficiency into three dimensions: conversational fluency, discrete language skills, and academic proficiency (Cummins, 2003). He states that building ESL learners' vocabulary, and their phonological, grammatical, and discrete language skills helps these ESL learners enhance their reading comprehension. He mentions that discrete language skills reflect specific phonological, literacy, and grammatical knowledge that students acquire as a result of direct instruction and both formal and informal practice. He believes that these discrete language skills can be learned concurrently with the development of basic vocabulary and conversational proficiency. Cummins also believes that reading extensively helps reading comprehension and vocabulary that are essential to academic reading. He states, "simply put, books are virtually the only place where students get access to the low-frequency vocabulary of English, which is important to build their comprehension in academic English" (Cummins, 2003, p. 3).

Cummins (2003) believes that it is important to give English learners meaningful texts to read as well as explicit instruction in discrete language skills. The language classroom used to provide language learners with texts focused on drills, vocabulary, and grammar neglects students' interests. He argues for the importance of "a balanced approach that combines explicit demystification of written language with opportunities to actively engage with meaningful text" (p. 11). Droop and Verhoeven (2003) also suggest the same idea in their research study. They believe that for ESL learners, vocabulary knowledge is an extremely important factor that affects students' reading ability. They suggest that teachers should work on building language learners' vocabulary ability for enhancing efficient second language reading comprehension. Dutro and Moran (2003)

strongly suggest that teachers' explicit instruction on grammatical and vocabulary knowledge is essential for building language learners' reading comprehension and academic proficiency. Explicit instruction is one of the important keys in facilitating ESL learning.

Instructional choices most often depend on the residency time and the literacy proficiency level of the ESL learners (Cummins, 1994; Dutro & Moran, 2003; Krashen, 2003). When the students just start their ESL learning, they need more exposure to the target language and opportunities to practice it. Teachers' explicit instruction and clear demonstration of the proper use of the target language is the most effective for building beginning learners' language acquisition (Cummins, 1994, 2003). Cummins emphasizes that in the beginning period of language learning, the exposure amount of the target language, both spoken and demonstrated by the teacher, carries the most weight in a student's learning. Teachers who follow Krashen's ideas of Second Language Acquisition try to give language learners a non-threatening environment, and take a natural language approach in which teachers do not emphasize structure, grammar, or vocabulary memorization to learning literacy (Crawford, 2003; Dutro and Moran, 2003). However, Dutro and Moran criticize natural language approaches, claiming that they hinder language learners' learning without providing explicit explanation on language elements and vocabulary.

After being immersed in the target language learning environment for a while, ESL students need more opportunities to practice their language learning. At this time, peer interaction and discussion and involvement in the learning experience play a crucial

part for building ESL students' language proficiency, and thus motivate them better for academic learning (Long, 1998).

For adolescents, interacting and learning through peer group settings is essential. Beane (1997) suggests that instruction, which groups students to learn and cooperate with each other, is important for empowering every student's learning. Hernandez (2003) suggests that curriculum designed with themes helps the ESL learners gain their language literacy effectively. She also puts much emphasis on the teacher and student's communicative interaction. She believes that with good interactions between teacher and student, students' motivation not only to learn language but also to learn in all content areas will soar (Cummins, 1996; Jackson & Davis, 2000). Cummins (1996) emphasizes the importance of respect and communication between the teacher and student in order to enhance non-English-speakers' success in academics.

Scaffolding reading experiences also plays an important role in assessing ESL students' learning (Graves & Fitzgerald, 2003). Educators recommend that schools with ESL learners need to provide extra support and scaffolding for these language learners beyond the ESL classroom (Short, 1999, see also Adger and Peyton, 1999; Harklau, 1999). These students need help to foster their academic knowledge (Crawford, 2003). The program for enhancing their language literacy along with their content knowledge is usually called "the sheltered instruction program." This kind of program encourages ESL learners to take the challenge of participating in the content areas with supporting and scaffolding instructions from their content-area teachers. For example, teachers teach students key vocabulary. They write them on the board for easy access, and summarize the contents before presenting the whole instruction for supporting ESL students'

learning. Crawford believes that ESL students need extra support from teachers using sheltered instruction (2003). Teachers may use easy words to express new ideas or write vocabulary on the blackboard for students' easy access. Both Adger and Peyton's (1999) and Harklau's (1999) studies call for restructuring schools' programs to help ESL students in literacy growth and in academic confidence. In their view, schools and teachers need to be aware of ESL students' needs and have more knowledge about second language acquisition and comprehension. These programs should extend beyond ESL instruction.

Vygotsky's theory (1978) of the zone of proximal development supports scaffolding and ESL students' learning. It says that every child can learn and can be helped to become a better learner. With the help from a teacher, a tutor, or a more capable peer, an ESL student can be guided to reach his/her proximal development and build his/her knowledge with a higher starting point every time he/she learns. In the core subjects and content areas, ESL learners may need extra scaffolding and support from the instructors to enhance their understanding in literacy. Thus the teachers as well as other students serve as mentors and help set the cultural norms and expectation. Adger and Peyton's (1999) suggest teachers introduce new vocabulary and write important vocabulary on the blackboard to support ESL students' understanding texts. A study done by Short (1999) shows that when school provides ESL classes integrated with content themes, ESL students are able to accelerate their academic performance and catch up to their peers. Short states that sheltered instruction that integrates language skill development along with content knowledge from different subjects can provide students a holistic background knowledge they will need to prepare them for academic challenges.

Short argues that ESL courses need to provide students with opportunities to participate in classroom tasks of content knowledge to prepare their academic skills.

Bilingual education is strongly connected with ESL students' learning in school. Over the years, the arguments for and against bilingual education have persisted (Cummins, 1996; Krashen, 1999; Macedo, 1995; Nieto, 2000; Ravitch, 1995).

According to the glossary in Nieto's book (2000), bilingual education is a general term for any educational instruction using both the students' primary language and the second language. Schools across the United States implement different kinds of bilingual education. These varied approaches to bilingual education are built upon different ideas and different theoretical concepts (Golden, 1996; Wolfe, 1999). Examples include bilingual/bicultural education, immersion bilingual education, maintenance approach bilingual education, submersion bilingual education, transition approach bilingual education, and two-way bilingual education.

Bilingual/bicultural education emphasizes learning in cultural aspects as well as the instruction of the second language in the curriculum. For immersion bilingual education, schools place students in a completely targeted-language learning environment for one or two years, and then they use their native language to construct literacy and learning. The maintenance approach in bilingual education places emphasis on learning both languages. The instruction may use both the students' native language and the second language as a tool for learning literacy in the second language. The main idea of this approach relies on the students' native language ability as a tool for developing the second language literacy. In submersion bilingual education, students are placed in a

total second language environment, but the teachers realize that the students' native language development can still be used as a tool for second language acquisition.

The transition approach places beginning ESL learners in a classroom using their native language and at the same time learning English as a second language. As soon as they can understand English, they are placed in a complete English (monolingual) learning environment. Two-way bilingual education places native English speakers and ESL learners together in the same classroom. The purpose of this approach is to attain "bilingual proficiency, academic achievement and positive cross-cultural attitudes and behaviors among all students" (Nieto, 2000, p. 382).

Since students involved in bilingual education are usually highly overlapped with "high-risk students," a term used for those who drop out early from school, have low academic performance, or require remedial reading instruction, bilingual education as an instruction approach is usually attacked as a failure (Krashen, 1999). Some politicians argue that bilingual education favors only the Spanish population, and that bilingual education may be a factor that leads to Hispanic students' high dropout rate (Krashen). Krashen argues for bilingual education, and notes that politicians who try to block bilingual education do not know the real educational problems of the new immigrants. Instead, they jump to conclusions and criticize bilingual education.

Arguments over bilingual education have existed for years (Thompson, 2000). Because of the many subcategories within bilingual education, the main functions and ideas of bilingual education are hard for some to understand. With its muddy and confusing status, bilingual education is not as popular an issue in educational debates as it has been. The Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs under the U.

S. Department of Education changed its name in 2002 to the Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition & Language Instruction Educational Programs, 2002). Thompson (2000) worries that the passage of Proposition 227 in California, which urges schools to put ESL learners into English-only classrooms after one year of ESL or bilingual instruction, may hinder and weaken ESL students' academic ability and deepen the academic performance gaps between these ESL students and their English-only peers when these ESL students are in the need of ESL instruction support.

Some educators who have championed bilingual education are moving to a position that advocates multicultural education (Cortes, 1994; Cummins, 1996; Cummins and Sayers, 1997; Nieto, 2000). This shift in position does not mean that these educators have given up their belief in bilingual education, but it shows that they will fight for equity and fairness in a diverse society from another perspective.

As in any classroom, teachers who work with ESL students play an important role in these students' learning. Teachers' attitudes can have a major influence on students' academic confidence and learning (Atwerger and Ivener, 1994; Nunan and Lamb, 2000; Reid, 2002). Atwerger and Ivener (1994) argue that a good relationship between the teacher and student enhances ESL students' self-esteem, which plays the most important role in helping their literacy development. Reid (2002) argues that teachers need to be aware of the different cultures that students bring to the classroom. The tone or gestures that the students use may not be viewed as proper in one culture, while in another culture

they may be considered totally appropriate. D. E. Freeman and Y. S. Freeman (2001) encourage teachers to know their individual students and their different backgrounds.

These students come from different countries and cultures, so when they start to learn in a new environment, they have to accommodate to the new culture and as well as to the new language. They are facing multiple kinds of challenges in their learning as well as in their lives. The adjustment to the new American culture and a new language will not be easy for them without help from teachers and school. Jorga (1995) encourages teachers and school staff to receive cross-cultural training to meet the challenges of today's diverse student population. Jorga believes that knowing diverse cultures can help teachers understand their minority students effectively.

Short (1999) praises the awareness of diversity as an exciting triumph in the school reform revolution. Multicultural education can lead to significant changes in education and thus contribute to a society of equality for all people. A study done by Blake and Sickle (2001) shows that when teachers acknowledge the language differences of students and respect students' dialect expression first, they can teach these linguistically diverse students to participate in academic learning more eagerly.

Nieto (2000), who advocates affirming diversity, believes that education is responsible for treating diverse students equally and letting students appreciate their differences in gender, race, language and culture. Jimenez (2003) urges educators to view the students who bring diverse lingual backgrounds to school as a resource instead of a challenge or a problem. Jimenez (2003, p. 125) asks educators to consider: "In what ways do monocultural, monolingual instructional practices and curriculum materials handicap all students?" Padron (1998) believes that educators need to address the needs

of students with diverse cultural and lingual backgrounds because they are a rapidly growing part in the educational system.

Harklau (1999) believes that understanding students' diverse cultures can be the first step to showing friendliness and developing respect for each other. She emphasizes that all the staff in the school need to be knowledgeable about the needs and the characteristics of the ESL learners in their school. From a cultural perspective, George, Raphael, and Florio-Ruane (2003) suggest that literary instruction should connect with family, community, and culture to enhance diverse students' learning in achieving the highest level of literacy. They believe that multicultural education is the true goal of education that was proposed by John Dewey, and will "enable all individuals to come into full possession of all their powers" (Quoted in George, Raphael, and Florio-Ruane, 2003, p. 323).

Informal Constraints

In addition to formal education, informal constraints can greatly affect ESL students' learning. These informal constraints include a student's attitude, motivation, self-esteem, anxiety, family and social interaction, learning strengths, and differences in social development. Some researchers in second language acquisition (SLA) believe that age difference is a key determinant regarding a student's literacy level, while some believe that individual differences are much more influential.

According to Gass and Selinker (2001), the Critical Period Hypothesis is generally discussed when studies are related to age differences in learning languages. According to the Critical Period Hypothesis, when children reach puberty, it will become hard for them to learn a second language at the same level as the target language native

users. For older learners (far beyond puberty), it is hard to attain the same accent as the native target language speakers; however, studies do not show significant differences among other aspects like reading, writing, or listening between older learners and young learners. Disagreements about the Critical Period Hypothesis exist among researchers (Gass and Selinker).

From the aspect of cognitive maturity, older learners can learn a new language faster than younger ones (Cummins, 1996; Gass and Selinker, 2001). Cummins states that maturity in cognitive thinking helps older learners pick up the new language faster. He mentions that although learners as young children may learn more slowly when compared to adolescents, these young children still have more flexible or “luxury” time to achieve English proficiency before they go to college. For those who come to the United States during their middle school years or later, the period of five to ten years for learning language acquisition may hinder these ESL students when seeking to attend their ideal college. It becomes an urgent challenge for middle and high school teachers to help these ESL students accelerate their language learning in order to catch up with their peers’ academic performance.

In the United States, new immigrants as English learners come from everywhere in the world. Their backgrounds, support systems, and difficulties to learning are all different (D. E. Freeman and Y. S. Freeman, 2001; Schifini, 1994). Studies about these minority students often turn up as case studies (D. E. Freeman and Y. S. Freeman, 2001; Hynds, 1997; Nieto, 2000). Individual differences count greatly in the process of second language acquisition.

In psycholinguistic studies, motivation prompts extensive discussions regarding the language-learning process. R. C. Gardner (1985) believes that motivation is a major factor for achieving language proficiency. Weiner (1986) argues that motivation is a by-product of great experiences in learning the target language. R. C. Gardner and Lambert (1972) argue that motivation may be categorized into two major types: instrumental and integrative motivation. If one learns a new language for the purpose of gaining a career, power, or money, he or she has instrumental motivation. If one learns a new language for the purpose of integrating into the target language community, he or she has integrative motivation. Instrumental and integrative motivations are usually intertwined and both affect a student's learning.

Whether a cause or a by-product of learning, the effects of motivation on students' learning deserve teachers' attention (Nieto, 2000; Nunan and Lamb, 2000). Nunan and Lamb argue that teachers need to provide lessons that can match students' needs and interests for furthering their intentions to learn. Another way to motivate students is to urge them to take responsibility for their own learning (see also Beane, 1997; Hernandez, 2003). Cummins (1996) believes that positive interactions between teacher and student encourage and thus motivate students to learn.

In addition to students' motivation, their attitude has an impact on their learning. Attitudes are connected and correlated with motivation. Attitudes often have roots in past experiences (Belzer, 2002); this is especially true for negative ones. Negative attitudes toward learning the target language may come from students' prior experiences with teachers, peers, or the culture (Nunan and Lamb, 2000). Sometimes negative attitudes appear because the students may see the learning as irrelevant to their lives or futures or

because they feel powerless to change. Teachers' different instructional practices and approaches to encourage students' learning may help students build new and positive attitudes towards learning (Cummins, 1996).

Closely related to attitude is a student's self-esteem, which is greatly affected by both family and peers (Roberts, Seidman, Pedersen, Chesir-Teran, Allen, Aber, Duran & Hsueh, 2000). Altwerger and Ivener (1994) argue that self-esteem is the most prominent factor that affects ESL students' language and academic learning. They believe that when ESL students are empowered to establish and build their own self-esteem, learning will become a willing task for them. They argue that the school does not need to be a reflection of society; instead, teachers can change society, starting in their own classroom culture, by showing respect for diversity. Cortes (2000) argues that media plays an important part in teaching minority children how they are viewed in the majority society and thus affects their self-esteem. He states that people in the media should be careful with how they portray minorities, since this will affect the way that society views and treats minorities.

Just as self-esteem can affect ESL students' learning, anxiety can also be an influential factor on ESL students' ability to learn. Gass and Selinker (2001) state that the appearance of anxiety can be attributed to a mixture of motivation and personal differences. Anxiety in learning a new language comes from different sources (D. E. Freeman and Y. S. Freeman, 2001; Nunan and Lamb, 2000). When people meet a new challenge and a new environment, anxiety occurs. Anxiety in learning may serve as a good catalyst to motivate learning. Anxiety is a big issue in the psychology of learning and testing (Gregory, 2000). According to studies, anxiety and test performance do not

share a simple linear relationship. Slight anxiety is a good phenomenon in learning and testing, however, too much anxiety may hinder students' ability to learn. Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis theorizes that anxiety is one of the major factors that block the language learner's comprehensive input when receiving target language instruction (Krashen, 1988, 1989). Studies recommend that teachers provide students with a non-threatening learning environment to offset students' anxiety (D. E. Freeman and Y. S. Freeman, 2000). Gass and Selinker (2001) suggest that teachers discover the reasons behind the students' anxiety, so that they might know how to help these students effectively deal with their anxiety.

Another factor that influences young adolescent students' learning is their social and family interaction. Adolescence is a period during which many researchers believe that the interactions between peers and family play a crucial role in a student's life. The different results of good or bad interactions may steer a student's life into different directions (Hynds, 1997; Nieto, 2000). As Worthy and Hoffman (2001) state: "Over the years, we have learned that issues of literacy and education extend far beyond classroom and school doors, and that parent involvement is essential in matters of education" (p. 516). Nieto (2000) believes that adolescents can succeed when surrounded by supportive people. The supports provided by friends and family give these young people positive reinforcement, as well as help to shelter them from negative experiences. D. E. Freeman and Y. S. Freeman (2001) also emphasize the substantial significance of a support system for these new adolescent immigrants. The main sources of support for these adolescents come from parents, community, peers, and teachers.

Research has examined the importance of parent and peer relationships for young adults (Field, Diego, & Sanders, 2002). Studies suggest that positive and affirming parenting contributes to good peer relationships, and some suggest that adolescents who maintain good peer relationships also have strong connections with their parents. The relationship with parents serves as the best indicator in their emotional changes (Field et al.). Adolescents' emotional development is tightly bound with their relationship to their parents. Supportive and strong relationships between adolescents and their parents help these young adolescents in the process of becoming independent (van Wel, ter Bogt, & Raaijmakers, 2002). Van Wel et al. believe that maintaining a strong relationship between parents and adolescents can sustain the well-being of these young people. They also suggest that young people hope to attain a peer-like relationship with their parents in some aspects and at the same time get help, guidance, and support from parents.

For most new immigrant students, the reality is that their parents may not speak English at all or may even need the youngsters' help towards achieving English literacy for themselves (Packard, 2001). Like their children, these new immigrant parents need to adjust their lives to the new environment and try to learn English. At the same time, they are responsible for supporting their family economically. These new immigrant parents might seldom attend school activities or meetings (Cummins, 1996; D. E. Freeman and Y. S. Freeman, 2001; Nieto, 2000). This may be due to their lack of confidence in their English language communication ability, or because they are not familiar with the school system, or because cultural differences make them hesitant to participate in these school activities. Although these new immigrant parents may not attend school activities as other parents do, their support for ESL adolescents' learning can still come from their

words of encouragement, self-sacrifice, positive attitudes toward learning, and family values (D. E. Freeman and Y. S. Freeman, 2001; Nieto, 2000).

When teachers know the students' development through cognitive, mental, and personal understanding, it becomes easier for them to address the students' needs as well as their learning (Cummins, 1996; D. E. Freeman and Y. S. Freeman, 2001). Daniel Tatum (1999) and Nieto (1999) urge educators to embrace diversity among students. It is important to every student and teacher to improve his/her cultural understanding by affirming and celebrating diversity. Without knowing the different cultural perspectives of their students, teachers may not really know how to approach their students effectively. Students come from different backgrounds, cultures, languages, and social status; it is not wise to assume that they will all learn in the same way using a single teaching approach. It is the teacher's responsibility to face this challenge and to get to know individual students through teaching and learning (Cummins, 1996).

Teachers learn many instructional techniques to help students learn; however, there is no single "correct" way for teaching and learning. The Multiple Intelligences theory suggests that each individual has his or her own different strengths in learning (H. Gardner, Krechevsky, Sternberg, & Okagaki, 1994). H. Gardner (1993) encourages teachers to use different instructional techniques to explore students' multiple intelligences and different learning strengths. Some children may learn better through a visual approach while others may learn better with dramatization. Learners also have different thinking styles (Sternberg, 1994). Wilhelm (1997) encourages teachers to know what the students are capable of and to start from their beginning stage in order to build their knowledge from there.

Sternberg (1994) states that teachers should be more flexible in their teaching to fit many kinds of thinking styles. Teachers need to consider how they can enhance students' learning through various kinds of instructional techniques, instead of ignoring the differences in students' learning styles. Some children can accept what they have been taught if the teachers can give them good reasons for learning (Sternberg, 1994). When teachers explain to their students why they have to learn that particular lesson, students usually will be more willing to try hard. Good communication between teacher and students through dialogue, written instruction, and explanations are emphasized by many educators (Atwerger and Ivener, 1994; Cummins, 1996; D. E. Freeman and Y. S. Freeman, 2001; Hynds, 1997; Nieto, 2000; Wilhelm, 1997).

Teachers know that ESL students may need extra support emotionally and academically; they may need the understanding of development theories to bolster their ideas and concepts towards helping these ESL students learn. However, they should not strictly abide by the theories without reflecting on what their students really need on an individual-by-individual or case-by-case basis.

James (1974) states that young adolescents have a need to belong. They need to find a group where they believe they belong. Should this group be an "at-risk" group, a minority group, or a group with a bilingual ability, treasured by the teachers and schools? School and teachers' positive attitudes toward these ESL students may play an important role in helping them find a group or groups where they are comfortable and where they feel they belong.

James also suggests that a need for separateness and a need for belonging are connected to and influenced by each other. When middle school students know how to

accept their own individuality (separateness) and when they feel comfortable about their own identity, they know how to find a space for themselves in a big group (in the whole school) or smaller group with peers of similar characteristics (in the ESL student group). Teachers can help these ESL students find their own identity by showing their respect of the students' cultures, languages, and different cultural perspectives. This kind of attitude of affirming diversity helps students to search for their own unique values without losing their confidence in learning a new language in a new culture (Nieto, 2000).

Vygotsky (1978) helps teachers understand the intertwined relationships among thought, culture, and language. Speaking languages other than English, these middle school ESL students may develop their cognitive and logic thinking with a different perspective from their English-speaking-peers. Learning to express themselves in a new language could be a frustrating process in the beginning. Teachers can support these ESL students by giving them time and encouragement that will help them have more confidence in their learning. Writing in two languages can also serve as a tool for ESL students' learning. When teachers ask ESL students to express their thinking through writing in both languages in their learning journals and ask them to share their thinking in the class, these ESL students may feel proud about their bilingual ability and feel that they are valued in school. ESL students could easily feel frustrated because of their limitation in their English literacy abilities. School, curriculum, and teachers should pay extra attention in helping them speed up their academic English literacy development to catch up with their peers.

Piaget's cognitive theory (as cited in Thomas, 2000) categorizes middle schoolers within two different stages. Students aged 7 to 12 are in their Concrete Operational Stage in which they try to deal with concrete concepts, numbers, and relationships. In this period, students start to have basic logic and numerical thinking and reasoning. Piaget states that young adults between ages 12 to 15 are in the formal operation stage in which they are learning to think abstractly and reason logically and systematically. It is the last period of Piaget's cognitive development. It is also the time of fully developed logics and reasoning.

From Piaget's cognitive theory, teachers can see clearly that middle school students vary widely in their differing levels of cognitive thinking development. Because of the limitation of their English literacy ability, ESL students sometimes are mistakenly identified at a lower level of cognitive development. Their learning gap will be widened from other English-speaking peers because they are lower-tracked or mislabeled as low achievers. In such cases, learning toward proficiency in academics becomes less and less possible as they progress to higher grades. Teachers should think about this kind of disadvantage when they teach ESL students. They need to have not only high expectations but also "extra" confidence in their ESL students, and should encourage them to face their learning challenges.

From an ecological perspective, Garbarino (1985) suggests viewing the development of the adolescent in a systems approach. He states, "The adolescent is a system... But the adolescent is also part of some larger system. The adolescent's family is itself a system. The school is a system in which the adolescent is a part" (Garbarino, 1985, p. 50.) Garbarino contends that the adolescent is influenced and molded by the

multiple social systems of family, peer, school, and community that surround and encompass him.

Erikson (1959) suggests that adolescence is a stage of developing ego identity. He states, “The sense of ego identity, then, is the accrued confidence that one’s ability to maintain inner sameness and continuity is matched by the sameness and continuity of one’s meaning for others” (Erikson, 1959, p. 89). Students in this stage are eager to learn who they are and understand the process of their inner self. They want to understand themselves, the world, and their peers. Through activities and sports, middle school students explore their relationships with their peers and the adults who are around them.

The list of factors that influence ESL immigrants’ literacy development and academic confidence is extensive, however, each successful ESL learner may name different factors that influence his/her learning English literacy. One such factor in the process of learning a new language is a good book which could serve to engage ESL learners in English literacy.

Reading Literature

Providing students with meaningful texts is essential for ESL learners (Boyd-Batstone, 2003; Crawford, 2003; Cummins, 2003; Krashen, 1993, 2003). Krashen believes that reading voluntarily helps students most in second language acquisition. He suggests that teachers provide free time and meaningful texts to language learners to support ESL learners reaching English literacy proficiency.

The Power of Reading

Krashen (1993) extols the effects of reading. He suggests that free reading time is essential to develop students’ literacy abilities. He emphasizes that the more a student

reads, the better his/her reading comprehension, writing style, grammar, spelling, and vocabulary will be. In his book, *The Power of Reading*, Krashen values Free Voluntary Reading, which includes free reading time in school and time spent reading outside school. The main concept of his book is that reading is essential and powerful for literacy development. Other studies mentioned in his book support his theory but none as effective as Free Voluntary Reading, which emphasizes that students should spend time simply reading. Reading alone helps students develop their reading strategies and gain reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. This reading time, in essence, is the best way to cultivate students' critical literacy.

Although Krashen's study demonstrates the importance of reading, he does not address the issue of how to help reluctant readers become engaged in reading. Gilles and Dickinson (2000) examine the perspectives of struggling readers. They illustrate case studies of three students labeled as struggling readers because their reading abilities are tested at below grade level. In the case studies, teachers help these students gain confidence in reading by using different strategies, including testing the students with a different method of assessment to examine their appropriate reading level, and understanding their reading strengths and weaknesses to improve their reading skills. They state that once these students are labeled as slow readers and struggle in reading tests, they may easily give up.

Gilles and Dickinson (2000) encourage teachers to pay extra attention to students who are labeled as reluctant readers. To help reluctant readers build their reading abilities, Gilles and Dickinson suggest providing interesting texts, encouraging them in reading, and diagnosing their mistakes in reading strategies. They believe that teachers

should see the importance of providing students self-selected texts and guiding students' reading through their Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978), scaffolding students' development in cognition and reading strategies (Cox and Boyd-Batstone, 1997; Gilles and Dickinson, 2000; Vollands, Topping, and Evans, 1999).

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development suggests that teacher and peer mentoring can support a student's learning by starting with what the student knows which serves as a safety net for the student to challenge new ideas or knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). Students begin where they are, and teachers set the next task as a higher level. Therefore, when teachers want to provide texts that will challenge students as well as increase their confidence in reading, teachers consider the students' interests and their reading abilities. When students are assessed at 5th grade reading ability, the teacher may find texts from the 4.5 grade reading level to 5.5 or 6.0 grade reading levels to engage the students in reading. The idea behind the Zone of Proximal Development is to start from a level where students are capable and comfortable and then to challenge them to grow beyond their starting point.

Having high expectations for these ESL students supports their adolescent literacy development as well as scaffolds their reading strategies. Straughan (1996) illustrates how English teachers should have confidence in their ESL students' English literacy ability as well as their cognitive understanding level. Her ESL students prove to her that, while their English proficiency may not be up to grade level, their comprehensive and cognitive ability is equal or more. Straughan states that teachers should have equally high expectations for both ESL students and native speakers and challenge these ESL students to strive to achieve above their academic English proficiency by providing reading

strategies that scaffold their understanding. Scaffolded reading means providing explanations of vocabulary and grammar, and explicitly creating reading strategies. It should be clearly guided by the teacher and other experienced peer readers.

In his book, *The Power of Reading*, Krashen (1993) strongly states that reading itself promotes literacy ability, but he does not mention the help that a teacher can provide by scaffolding students' reading ability and cognitive growth to lead them into the habit of reading. Cox and Boyd-Batstone (2000) believe that teachers are crucial in helping slow readers reappraise their reading ability and regain their interest and confidence in reading by providing scaffolding strategies for students. Cox and Boyd-Batstone encourage teachers to examine their students' reading level by using different methods of assessment and by using their own anecdotal observations of the students' approaches to reading.

One of the reading strategies that teachers can use to support their students is scaffolding students' reading by applying Reader-Response Theory (Rosenblatt, 1995; see also Probst, 1988). Reader-Response Theory contends that the interaction between reader and text at any time is different, and the meaning the reader takes from the text is always negotiable (Rosenblatt, 1995). Hirvela (1996) argues that only a few researchers in the second language-learning field have acknowledged the importance of Reader-Response Theory. She urges the importance of applying the Reader-Response approach in the language classroom.

Reader-Response Theory

Rosenblatt's (1995) Reader-Response Theory has been widely discussed among educators since 1938, after the publication of her first edition of *Literature as*

Exploration. Her theory has had a great influence on other literary theories and inspires literature teachers' instruction. She suggests that literature teachers should encourage students to read literature from their own perspectives and opinions. In her view, readers should not be afraid of finding different meanings presented to them in different times they read. The true meaning of reading literature does not lie solely in either the text or the reader, but in both the text and the reader. The meaning in reading literature is negotiable and changeable depending upon the interpretation of the particular reader's reading of the text at that very moment. From this perspective, Rosenblatt (1995) warns teachers using literature-based instruction that "Literature leads little comfort to the teacher who seeks the security of a clearly defined body of information" (p. 27).

Inspired by Rosenblatt's Reader-Response Theory, literature teachers scaffold students' reading through discussion and negotiation in a non-threatening learning environment. The purpose of learning through literature lies not in finding the absolute true answers but in sharing and negotiating understanding with readers. Students are encouraged to express their own perspectives and learn to appreciate different viewpoints when decoding the meaning of the reading. Students' perspectives are valued and encouraged in this kind of literature instruction (Cox and Boyd-Batstone, 1997).

Hirvela (1996) argues that literature-based instruction in the second language learning class needs to include the reader-response approach to enrich a communicative language approach. Hirvela distinguishes the popular applied personal-response approach from the reader-response approach. She argues that "the reader-response approach with its focus on the reader's rather than the author's text, investigates and privileges the learner's whole experience of the reader-text transaction, as opposed to the

personal-response emphasis on the learner responding to authorial intention and meaning with text” (Hirvela, 1996, p. 132).

What Literature Can Contribute to ESL Learners

Langer (1995, 2003) believes that literature helps students develop a literate mind to face the challenges in their lives. Langer (2003) explains that reading literature shapes students’ literate minds. She states that literature helps students reflect on themselves and the world through exercising cognitive strategies, which form the literate mind. Reading literature could connect these new immigrant adolescents with their new environment and culture. Probst (1988) states that adolescents who possess a good sense of self are the ideal type of readers who can relate, respond, and analyze literature through their own interests. Literature opens the imagination with possibilities beyond the students’ surrounding environment, and empowers students with knowledge to pursue their ideas and dreams.

Langer (1995) argues that the importance of literature in secondary school education is often overlooked. Through reading literature, critical thinking can be nurtured and students’ different needs fulfilled. Langer states, “through literature, students learn to explore possibilities and consider options for themselves and humankind. They come to find themselves, imagine others, value difference, and search for justices. They gain connectedness and seek vision. They become the literate thinkers we need to shape the decisions of tomorrow” (Langer, 1995, p. 1). Literature serves not only as an escape from the real world, but also as a refreshing array of potential possibilities by reflecting the characters in the texts (Beach & Wendler, 1987). Hynds

(1989) suggests that the more adolescents engage themselves in external reading, the more connections they will internalize between literature and life.

Teachers hope to help students find the joy of reading and develop a lifelong habit of reading (Wilhelm, 1997). Wilhelm's intention for the action research he has done was to explore why some students just cannot engage themselves with books. He finds that writing reflective journals and discussing books in a literature circle can help students respond to reading literature with others and with themselves. He uses drama as a tool for creating meaning from texts and making reading more pleasant as the readers become involved as characters in the story. One student explains, "You have to be the book" to enjoy and engage in reading (Wilhelm, 1997, p. 110). After experimenting with drama to engage most of the students in reading literature, Wilhelm tries to use art to help struggling readers visualize the reading in order to help them understand it beyond written words.

Wilhelm (1997) refers to literacy as a "private and public phenomenon" (p. 152). He mentions, "As a private act, it helps the reader in the process of self-discovery and definition, in that continual odyssey of 'self-realizedness'" (Wilhelm, 1997, p. 152). Students in his class reveal their dreams and their future plans through interacting with the literature. Literacy opens the door for students to the possible dreams of their future. Through literacy, readers can relate their own world to others described in the texts, including imaginary and other possible worlds.

Reading literature can also help build students' critical literacy. Building students' ability in critical literacy helps students examine, decide, evaluate, and choose mindfully what is read and even experienced and heard (Wilhelm, p. 153). For

adolescents, literature opens the door to knowing themselves, as well as knowing others and the world. Lazar (1993) points out that literature written in English actually is a great resource to understand the world and other content areas. She points out that when students read something about the Civil War, they are introduced to background knowledge related to history. Young adult literature written in English, or popular trade books written in other languages and translated into English, actually present quite a variety of multicultural and multi-regional subjects for students to understand.

Landis (2002) views engagement in reading literature as not only the pleasure of reading texts, but also the appreciation of others' perspectives in reading. He reflected on the meaning of engagement in reading while, as a visiting educator in Kazakhstan, he had an opportunity to exchange ideas with other educators. Landis changed his perspective of engagement in reading from the joy of reading the texts to the joy of sharing and negotiating the texts with other readers.

Hynds (1997) believes that when young adults see the connection between "literature and life," they start to understand the importance of what literature means to them (p. 17). She argues that students' interactions with teachers, peers, and family along with other social activities, affect students' attitudes and motivation towards reading literature. When they get support from their social interactions, they will put more effort into reading literature to become genuine literature lovers and high-level critical thinkers.

Cummins (1996) believes that using literature can help students develop their own identity, and they can build their confidence from that. Folk tales and literature from students' cultures may play a crucial role in helping these students in their literacy development and in gaining their dignity and confidence (James, 1974). Literature

presents different cultures. Knowing one's culture is essential to building one's dignity and self-confidence. Researchers encourage teachers to use multicultural literature to enrich students' views from different cultural perspectives (Cortes, 1994; D. E. Freeman and Y. S. Freeman, 2001; Lazar, 1993; Nieto, 2000).

Allen (1994) reminds teachers to select available texts in the classroom from their diverse students' own cultural backgrounds. These multicultural texts can help students to identify with their own cultures and enhance their self-esteem. Other students can also benefit from these multicultural texts through reading to understand and appreciate other cultures. Dasenbrock (1992) states that even literature written only in English contains multiple world cultures. Many good writers in English come from all over the world. Teachers whose philosophy is learning from reading need to expand their perspectives when choosing literature for students to read.

Literature supports ESL learners' developing English literacy (Reid, 2002). Through literature, these ESL learners may gain cultural knowledge, affirm identity, obtain pleasure, and connect their life to learning.

Young Adult Literature and Accelerated Reader Program (ARP)

Using young adult literature in the middle school language arts class is often debated from different perspectives. Knickerbocker and Rycik (2002) discuss in their study the diverse perspectives many educators have about using young adult literature in English class. Some researchers view young adult literature as inferior to traditional classic literature because they argue that its themes are usually teen-related and the depth in language and characters are not as profound as those in classic literature (Jago, 2000). Herz (1996) argues that young adult literature may be good only for motivating reluctant

readers to start their journey in engaging reading. On the other hand, some researchers believe that young adult literature is no less valuable in comparison to classic literature (Moore, 1997). Its value lies in its essentiality to adolescents, and the themes in these texts are usually highly related to young readers. Wilhelm (1997) argues that using young adult literature can help adolescents easily relate to the texts and learn from the experiences of the adolescent characters in the texts (see also Probst, 1988). Jago (2000) points out that adolescents reading young adult literature may not need the help of teachers' scaffolding their understanding. Rather, it can serve as a great resource for adolescents engaging in reading as well as establishing the habit of reading.

Probst (1988) states that it is impossible to finish a comprehensive list representing all young adult literature because it is a genre that is still growing and thriving. Young adult literature is specifically designed to appeal to that age group, tackling issues like values, school, violence, gender, peers, and containing exciting categories such as mystery and adventure. These topics can arouse adolescents' different interests and are usually related to them or their circumstances. Probst suggests that because of the characteristics of young adult literature, these trade books can motivate students to discuss, to reflect on, and even to sympathize with the characters and situations in the books.

The decision for a school to use the Accelerated Reader Program (ARP) is another hotly debated topic. Schools encourage students to read literature by implementing ARP. In the current study, I use ARP as a screen for selecting my participants, each of whom had read a large number of young adult literature books represented within this program.

The Accelerated Reader Program (ARP) has now been adopted in more than 50,000 schools worldwide (Renaissance Learning, 2003a). ARP is a reading software program designed for pre-K to 12th grades. The reading list provided in the program contains more than 13,000 books assigned with different grade levels based on the Fry Readability Index and points (Paul, VanderZee, Rue, & Swanson, 1996; Vollands, Topping, & Evans, 1999). When a school purchases the software, it contains different sizes of quiz sets depending on the budget a school can afford (Renaissance, 2003b). The price for different kits varies from USD \$499 to USD \$2,999, not including the books on the list. A school has to purchase books on the list at an extra cost.

Each book in the ARP list is assigned a different grade level, a tool of convenience provided for students, parents, teachers, or librarians for choosing the books that may both meet and challenge the students' range of reading abilities (Vollands, Topping, and Evans, 1999). In school, the level of a student's reading ability is assessed. Vollands et al. state that a student's reading range is about .5 above or below the student's assessed reading level. Books in the individual student's widened reading range may challenge but not frustrate the student; thus the student enjoys reading more books to enhance his/her literacy development (Vollands et al.). For example, if a student is assessed as a 4.2 in reading, his or her teacher will recommend books leveled between 3.7 and 4.7. Students working with a teacher's approval or recommendations, can also select their own books from the list. In some schools, teachers may allow more flexibility for students to pick books of their interest beyond the list ARP provided.

Hamilton (1997) reports that ARP helps ESL students learn to become literacy proficient. As a librarian in a high school, she is excited to see that ESL students using

the ARP become book lovers and gain confidence in learning English. She argues that even though studies indicate extrinsic rewards may not be a good motivator to encourage students to learn, she has found that the rewards provided in the ARP system have a positive impact on students. The ESL student in her study enjoys the extrinsic rewards she gets when she finishes the books and the quizzes; in return, she is motivated to read more books and become a skilled reader.

With limited knowledge about the literature here in the United States, ESL students need more guidelines and encouragement to start reading literature written in English. These ESL students may not know which books are at their level, and they may not have heard anything about the books at home or from their non-English speaking peers. When teachers or librarians encourage these language learners to read literature, the motivation or the stimulus to read outside of class may not be strong enough for them to pick up the book and continue to read more. These ESL learners may need teachers or schools to give them a recommended list of books for their outside reading to explore the literature written in English. These students need even more than book recommendations. They need motivational factors or intrinsic or extrinsic rewards to encourage them to start reading young adult literature.

Parents and researchers have expressed concern about the books selected in the ARP list. Pavonetti, Brimmer, and Ciplewski (2003) quote a parent's concern about the ARP selections in their study. The child read one book at his reading level from the list and was terrified by the scenario in the book, and this alarmed his parent. Pavonetti et al. show concern that the ARP program may contain books of lower quality, which would remain unused or be criticized when the children approach them.

Conceptual Framework: Rosenblatt meets Krashen and Cummins—An Attempt at a Synthesis

Rosenblatt's Reader-Response Theory, Krashen's Reading Theory and Cummins' Second Language Acquisition Theory share a lot in common, especially in the area of secondary literature education in teaching diverse students (Cox and Boyd-Batstone, 1997). When the secondary language arts teachers want to help their culturally and linguistically diverse students in learning, they can apply Rosenblatt's Reader-Response Theory to scaffold students' reading and understanding of literature. At the same time, literature teachers need to be knowledgeable of Cummins' theory of second language acquisition and Krashen's theory of reading.

The main idea of Rosenblatt's Reader-Response Theory is that the result of reading is in the transaction between the text and the reader. Teachers are responsible for scaffolding and guiding students' reading instead of simply providing the correct answers to them. Cummins' Second Language Acquisition Theory states that it takes a much longer time to develop ESL learners' academic language learning than oral language acquisition. ESL learners need vocabulary knowledge and meaningful texts to develop and sustain their academic language acquisition. Krashen's Reading Theory expresses clearly that reading itself is a powerful tool in gaining language literacy. Students need to practice reading in school and outside class.

The teachers who apply Rosenblatt's, Krashen's, and Cummins' theories in their instruction can understand these language learners' characteristics in learning literacy and in their literacy development. Understanding these theories, teachers can understand the

needs and strengths of these English learners and enhance their English literary ability starting from the foundation of their first language acquisition.

Cox and Boyd-Batstone (1997) believe that learning language through reading literature can enhance L2 learners' literacy and language growth. They also propose that literature-based instruction is not only essential to native speakers but also equally valuable to English language learners. They strongly recommend that reader-response theory in the literature-based instruction is suitable to all students at all literary levels. Rosenblatt (1995) states that "since to lead the student to ignore either the aesthetic or the social elements of his experience is to cripple him for a fruitful understanding of what literature offers, the teacher of literature needs much insight into the complex nature of literary experience" (p. 30). Her research encourages teachers to seek the individual's uniqueness in the process of reading literature. Using the reader-response approach, teachers will encourage students to express their different perspectives instead of seeking to fit their reactions into the fixed answers. Giving confidence and space to students' response to the literature they read helps these English learners gain confidence in their literacy development.

Using literature in the ESL classroom has not yet had a clear impact on the English Language Teaching pedagogy (Hirvela, 1996). Ghosn (2002) strongly recommends that the English language classroom needs to use literature to foster students' motivation for language learning, academic literacy, and understanding of diversity. Every student can relate to the universal themes in literature dealing with fear, courage, value, and love. Through literature students can learn and simultaneously enjoy the stories. Students can be easily motivated to grab a trade book and start to read

without the teacher's demand. An example of this phenomenon is the global popularity of the Harry Potter series (Darcy, 2000).

Literature helps students develop their thinking skills along with their literacy growth in the target language. Literature helps students explore the world and understand others. Ghosn (2002) believes that the hostility and the misunderstanding among the different cultures in the world can be lessened through the reading of multicultural literature.

Adger and Peyton (1999) argue to help new immigrants comprehend literary content requires support far beyond that of ESL teachers alone. Programs that are used to help these ESL new immigrants need to be expanded and changed in structure as well as in direction. Schools, different subject teachers, and other educators are all needed to help these new immigrants foster their literacy ability and enhance their opportunities for postsecondary and higher education. Their main ideas are that the academic success of these adolescent ESL new immigrants depends on the support from all mainstream teachers, schools, and communities beyond the ESL classroom.

Lynch-Brown (1998) suggests that literature should be adopted and well used across the curriculum. Reading literature helps ESL students build vocabulary and improve reading comprehension. Krashen (1995, 2003) emphasizes that reading literature alone prepares students to climb to the highest level of literacy, while Cummins (2003) states that reading is as important as the teacher's explicit instruction on building ESL students' vocabulary knowledge. Irvin (1998) believes that extensive reading helps most in facilitating students' vocabulary knowledge to enhance reading comprehension and overcome academic challenges. Jimenez (2003) challenges that students who come

from different cultural and lingual backgrounds should be welcome and treasured in the educational system in order to rebuild the literary policy for young children's learning literacy.

With different voices to be heard, educators face the challenges of addressing the different needs of these ESL students (Padron, 1998). Grounded on the theories of Cummins, Krashen, and Rosenblatt, discovering ESL students' literacy development and their needs is the focus of this study. Krashen advocates reading as a major factor to develop L2 students' literacy; Cummins proposes that meaningful texts are essential for students' literacy learning; Rosenblatt tells us that students create their own world through reading literature. New immigrant adolescents may gain their learning support through the process of reading young adult literature to develop their literacy development and academic confidence.

Conclusion

There are many influences on ESL new immigrants' literacy development and academic confidence, but one major factor may serve to hook ESL students despite any difficulty. Among all the influences, this study will focus on the influence of reading young adult literature to see what it can contribute to ESL learners.

Krashen (2000) believes that ESL learners can learn to read through reading meaningful texts (see also Cummins, 2003). Langer (2003) suggests that literature provides, engages, and empowers every reader to build a literate mind. Cummins (2003) states that reading literature helps ESL learners encounter the academic language, which these students may not use in daily communication. Rosenblatt (1995) reminds us that readers find their own interpretation in the interaction between text and reader.

Reading young adult literature may help these new immigrants in the process of English literacy development and in their transition to academic and social challenges. Literature is an escape from reality, provides the simple enjoyment of reading, and stimulates the process of learning one's self and others through texts. Arnold (1993) mentions that the status of adolescents in our society is similar to that of a minority group. Minorities in the minority may be an apt portrait of ESL young adolescents who have just been in the United States for a few years and are still facing challenges in learning the culture, language, and academics. On the other hand, they could be the ones with different and abundant resources— different cultures, multiple lingual abilities, and the eagerness to succeed in a new environment. Helping these young adolescents to learn through reading literature may provide a solution for accelerating their learning English literacy, and this study provides a glimpse at this solution.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study used qualitative research in which the researcher collected information-rich data about individual participants (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). This research consisted of multiple case studies, consisting of five adolescent participants who had been in the United States for five years or less, whose first language was not English, and who had been highly successful in the Accelerated Reader Program (ARP) in the previous year. This study explored the relationship of literacy development and academic confidence of ESL young adolescent new immigrants to their experiences as young adult literature readers.

The methods of data collection for this study included three one-on-one interviews with each participant, interviews with participants' ESL teacher and language arts teachers, observation of the participants' classes and their social interactions with peers at school, and documents of the participants' writings for their ESL and language arts classes. The researcher's memos, reflective research diary, and observational comments served as aids to interpret the data of these case studies. Different kinds of data, interview transcripts, observations, documents, and case-to-case comparisons, were collected to enhance the validity of the research.

The five participants came from a middle school in North Carolina. The school media specialist had all the students' ARP records. With the researcher's suggestion, the media specialist selected possible participants from a variety of races, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Data for this study were collected in March and April of

2004. The data analysis and writing process started at the same time and continued until the study's completion.

Participants

Since the study was about new adolescent immigrants and their interaction with young adult literature, the target population was in one middle school that had used ARP. The classes in the school were mixed with native speakers and new immigrants, most of whom spoke Spanish at home. The research focused on these five new immigrant students who still attended ESL classes.

Creswell (1998) suggests that for multiple cases, researchers should be cautious about the depth of the information. He states that “the study of more than one case dilutes the overall analysis; the more cases an individual studies, the greater the lack of depth in any single case” (p. 63). He suggests that for multiple cases, the number of the participants should be no more than four. I chose five participants to compensate for any who might withdraw over the course of the study. Fortunately, no one withdrew during the study.

The media specialist who administered the AR program, gave consent forms to all students who qualified as ESL students and who had high ARP scores. After the students signed their consent forms, their information could be released to me. I then chose five participants from among those who had returned their consent forms based on gender, grade level, and socioeconomic status.

Sampling Population

The sampling method in this study was purposeful sampling (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). Patton explains that purposeful sampling serves as a means of selecting information-rich cases. Merriam (1998) believes the key to sampling is a question of getting “an adequate number of participants, sites, or activities to answer the question posed at the beginning of the study” (p.64). In this study, I selected an information-rich site. The selected middle school had many ESL students, and the school used ARP. Selecting five participants from the same school meant there would be no differences in their learning environment that could potentially be a limiting factors in influencing their English learning.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, North Carolina’s population changed from 1990 to 2000 as follows: the Hispanic population increased 394%, the Asian population increased 117%, the Black population increased 19%, and the White population increased 16%. Among all the states in the United States, North Carolina had the fastest percentage growth in Hispanic population from 1990 to 2000. This information is presented in the Table 1 below:

Table 1. States with the fastest percentage growth in Hispanic population, 1990 to 2000

North Carolina	394 %
Arkansas	337 %
Georgia	300 %
Tennessee	278 %
Nevada	217 %

(Data: U. S. Census Bureau, quoted in Foust, Grow and Pascual, 2002, p.80)

Because of the dramatic changes, North Carolina must begin focusing its educational resources and abilities to meet the needs of this burgeoning immigrant and minority population.

The middle school in this study had many new immigrant students. Its entire population included 35.3% Hispanic, 13.3% Black, 48.6% White, and 2.8% other (Data given by a school secretary on April, 05, 2004). The school offered ESL courses to meet student needs.

Site Selection

The site selection was based on availability and accessibility (Patton, 2002). I chose a middle school in close proximity, which had many new immigrants, and had implemented ARP. Also, the school's support and agreement to the study were important considerations for any researcher who could like to conduct research at a school.

Data Collection

The data collection procedure started with observing participants in their classes. After observing a participant for a whole day, I arranged interview time with him/her for the next observing day. For example, for the first participant, Amber, I observed her on March 11, 15 and 17. I interviewed her on March 15, 17, and 19. The data collection time ended on April 29, 2004. It included observations, interviews, documents, and memo writings.

Observations

Multiple case studies provide opportunities to identify and analyze differences (Merriam, 1998). Each of the students who served in the multiple case studies for this research agreed to participate and signed a consent form. I started to build rapport and

become acquainted with participants by observing and following them individually for a whole day before the interviews. My second observation was followed by a 30-minute interview designed to break the ice and to get a picture of each participant's background. The third observation was followed by a second interview to ask about their experiences in learning English and in reading young adult literature. The fourth day, I observed the next participant but interviewed the previous participant to probe more into his/her academic and learning confidence. For example, I observed Amber (the first participant) on March 11, 15, and 17. Her three interviews took place on March 15, 17, and 19. Each participant was observed for at least 15 hours.

Interviews

I interviewed the five participants during the same time frame as the observation time from March 9 to April 29, 2004. Each student was interviewed three times. The first introductory interview was thirty minutes and was designed to build confidence and rapport between interviewer and interviewees. As the students started to understand the purpose of the study, they became more open to talking about their perspectives. In the second and the third interviews which lasted 45 minutes, I probed into their reading, literacy, and learning experiences. The interview questions were mostly the same for each participant, but the participants' different responses led to different findings and further probing. The basic questions in the interview were similar to the ones shown in Appendix A.

Additionally, in the second and third interviews, I verified with the students that I had not misinterpreted or misunderstood them in previous interviews. This process strengthened the validity of the interviews (Yin, 2003). I let them know that I expected to

document their own voices. From my previous experiences of interviewing adolescents, I found they needed time to establish rapport and trust with the interviewer. Multiple interviews helped me build a trusting relationship with the participants. Discussing the interviews with the participants themselves also solidified the truthfulness and validity of the case studies.

I also interviewed the participants' ESL teacher and language arts teachers. For each participant, I had his or her own responses, the responses of his or her ESL and language arts teachers, and my own observations to draw upon. The ESL and language arts teachers provided additional information that I did not get through the observation or interview process. The teachers' insight helped greatly to understanding the participants' literacy growth. Having both the teachers' and the participants' perspectives helped me explore what the participants really thought and felt about their own learning process (Stake, 1995).

Documents

Written documents from the five participants provided by the ESL and language arts teachers coupled with my own research journals served as aids to what I had learned from observations and interviews. Students' documents included their writing samples from their classes, their writing for quizzes, and their homework assignments. My reflective research diary, comparison, and response to these documents served as a part of the data to provide triangulation.

Memo writing

From the beginning of this study, I kept a research diary that traced all my ideas and reflections. When I entered the field, I wrote memos to go along with the

observation notes and the interview transcripts. Knapp (1997) used memos to find the hidden voices of her participants. She believed that while the qualitative researcher might bring his/her presumed position to the field, a careful, open-minded researcher might uncover some surprising findings in those detailed field memos.

Triangulation

The purpose of triangulation in qualitative research is to minimize mistakes in reporting the inquiry (Wolcott, 1990). Stake (1995) believes that triangulation enhances validity. Triangulation serves as the idea that the more kinds of data the researcher has, the more accurately the researcher can report about the inquiry (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). In this study, I collected data from different resources: observation, interviews, and documents. These data came from different sources: the five participants, their ESL teacher, their language arts teachers, and the researcher. Patton (2002) suggests that triangulation comes from using different methods of collecting data. Patton states that a qualitative researcher using multiple methods in a study can enhance the credibility and validity of the study. Wolcott (2001) argues that the researcher should consider the credibility of the information and yet leave space for readers to think and to question at the same time. Marshall and Rossman (1999) believe that the case study form combines the perspectives of the researcher and the participants. I attempted to assure triangulation by collecting data from as many perspectives as possible.

Ethical Issues in Research

I informed the five participants that the purpose of the study was to understand them so that we might help others understand the needs of new adolescent immigrants. I encouraged them to ask questions and share any concerns they had.

In my pilot study, Vincent knew and trusted me before the study. For the current study, I tried to establish a similar rapport by taking time to talk with the students and encouraging their questions. Student interviews helped reveal their significant voices. Interviewing their ESL and language arts teachers provided more information about these particular students to supplement my observations and interviews (Stake, 1995).

There was no need for any deception in this study. I sought only to observe the participants and understand them through their school activities and through their interactions with their peers. In the consent form, the participants were informed that they could withdraw at any time from the study without penalty, and they were under no obligation to finish the study.

Data Analysis

In this section, I will discuss how and when the collected data were analyzed and generalizability.

Collecting and Analyzing Data

Data analysis is the process of figuring out major categories and themes from the data the researcher has collected. Some researchers analyze data only after they have collected all their data from the field. Some do the analysis during the collection period (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). Data analysis was an ongoing process for this study.

For each participant, I present a within-case analysis in Chapter 4 and a cross-case analysis in Chapter 5 (Merriam, 1998). The data include observation notes, observer comments, interview transcripts, documents, and my reflective research diary (Yin, 2003).

The participants in the study had some given constants. They were new immigrants within 5 years, they were learning English as a second language, and they had participated in ARP for at least one year.

Wolcott (2001) suggests that one can never start writing too early. For data analysis, Wolcott suggests the qualitative researchers should try to “keep the task you are trying to accomplish simple” (p. 43). Following Wolcott’s direction, I used the method of repeated comparison to determine themes and categories. After repeated comparisons, the recurring words and phrases that stood out were sorted into themes (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998).

Constructing Categories and Themes

Qualitative research contains much information-rich description. The researcher has to collect the thick, descriptive data and analyze them by sorting them into categories and major themes (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). In this study, I used repeated comparison and found key words and key concepts to code and manage the data.

Glesne (1999) suggests that a study with different data analyzers can enhance its validity. Besides my personal analysis, I also asked my editor, a teacher and Ph. D. student in education, to critique my analysis and give suggestions for analyzing the data from her perspective. While comparing and reflecting upon different perspectives of data analysis, I examined my perspective, and discussed with my editor the possibilities of presenting the clear and true meaning of the data.

From the school observations and the interview questions (see Appendix. A), four categories were produced: the students’ school experience, literacy and reading, family and peer interaction, and the students’ characteristics. Under these four categories,

themes emerged from the coding (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). I tried to be open-minded to explore and analyze any unexpected outcomes.

Generalizability

Donmoyer (1990) argues that generalizability should not be an issue in qualitative research in educational, counseling, and social work fields, because people in these fields are concerned and deal with the issues of individuals, not the whole population (see also Creswell, 1998; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Wollcot, 1990). In educational research, the old, traditional way of viewing generalizability is not proper to use in educational qualitative inquiry. Donmoyer argues that a case study can substitute as a different approach for “generalizability” in educational research. Using the foundation of schema theory, Donmoyer (1990) suggests that the research of case studies can provide readers with “assimilation, accommodation, integration, and differentiation” (p. 197). From the storytelling of a case study, the readers can approach the case study from these different standpoints. Instead of generalizability, the qualitative research of case studies emphasizes the uniqueness of the individual cases that the researchers explore (Stake, 1995). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that, instead of focusing on generalizability, qualitative researchers should give proper weight to the local factors that make each case different and unique from others.

Validity and Subjectivity

Like Wolcott (1990), I would like to address subjectivity and validity at the same time. Wolcott explains that validity in qualitative inquiries is quite different from that in quantitative research. In qualitative inquiries, the researchers need to be aware of their own strengths (subjectivity) and be careful to follow some guidelines to qualitative

approaches, such as writing information-rich description, letting the participants' voices be heard, giving readers space to judge, and being clear and fair.

Qualitative research is also called postpositivist research (Gall, Walter and Gall, 1996). Gall, Walter and Gall define postpositivism as “the epistemological doctrine that social reality is a construction, and that it is constructed differently by different individuals” (p. 766). Different experts in this field have debated among approaches to subjectivity.

Unlike Phillips (1990), a postpositivist philosopher who argued that objectivity is reachable through qualitative research, I approach objectivity on the grounds that no research can reach fullness of validity or of objectivity. Neither do I see subjectivity as inferior or a fault. I agree with Glesne's perspective (1999) and view subjectivity as an issue to be monitored and used by the researcher, but not to be controlled or eliminated. Glesne argues, “monitoring subjectivity is not synonymous with controlling for subjectivity, in the sense of trying to keep it out of your work. When you monitor your subjectivity, you increase your awareness of its virtuous capacity. You learn that your subjectivity is the basis for the story that you are able to talk” (p. 109). Through reflection and through triangulation, researchers work towards finding the true meaning of humanity. Revealing the limitations and potentiality of the “self” in a qualitative study becomes one of the true goals of doing qualitative research (Glesne, 1999).

As a qualitative researcher, I brought myself into my study and became part of it. Being an ESL student myself, I was interested and felt strongly motivated to help other ESL students get through the struggle to become English proficient. I knew from my own experiences how ESL groups suffer through limited language capability in

expressing themselves in everyday communication with other people as well as in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Knowing how these participant ESL students learned helped me recognize how to approach this group. Through conducting this study, I hoped to provide better, more genuine help for new immigrants.

Wolcott (1990) asks qualitative researchers to demonstrate caution with validity issues through carefulness with their writing style, and reporting clearly and holistically. Wolcott asks these researchers to allow room for readers to think, to question, to generalize, and to ponder. Wolcott encourages qualitative researchers to start writing as early as possible (2001). He suggests that writing helps researchers to clarify their own ideas and inspires them to further exploration even before they start to conduct a study. During the collecting phase of the study, Wolcott encourages researchers to write the transcript as soon as possible to prevent misinterpretations and loss of memory, which leads to loss of truthfulness of the data. Knowing subjectivity, which means knowing one's weaknesses, limits, and strengths in the position of research, demonstrates the careful handling of the validity issue in qualitative research (Wolcott, 1990).

Limitations

Although I identified the influences of young adult literature on new immigrant students, I still had difficulty in finding and selecting the population I needed for this study. If I could find five new immigrants who enjoyed outside reading like Vincent in my pilot study, I would have no trouble using ARP as a filter to identify those young adult literature readers. Through ARP, I could determine which of the ESL learners had really made an effort to read young adult literature to earn the required points. Through

these participants, I hoped to make the connection between ESL learners and young adult literature.

Arguments and disagreements with the effectiveness of ARP have been expressed by school principals and teachers and documented in studies. Consequently, the ARP program may not serve as the best way to identify students who read the literature. The literature selections in AR program are limited and do not embrace the whole spectrum of young adult literature. Unfortunately, I had no other way to identify other new immigrants who were avid young adult literature readers if they did not participate in ARP.

Since I defined “new immigrant adolescents” in my study as the middle school students who had been in the U. S. school system no more than five years, I might lose many potential young adult literature readers who started their reading in their sixth or later years as English language learners. The reason I chose five years as a limitation was because as students stayed longer than five years in the school system, their immersion in the environment might influence their literacy development. Some gained their language growth through time or through their own maturation in reasoning and in language acquisition. Some achieved their learning through good instruction, being immersed in the language environment, watching TV and other media, or interacting with native speaker peers to help them gain literacy. As Cummins (1994; 1996) states, data from studies show that normally five to ten years are needed for ESL students to catch up on their academic work. In this study, I decided to limit participants to students who had five-years or less immersion. This study investigated if these ESL new immigrants

young adult literature readers were any different or showed any academic distinctions from other ESL new immigrants non-young adult literature readers.

Due to limitations of time and space, I used a school that was near my home in North Carolina. The population that I used were all Spanish speakers, and though this might not be a sample of all second language students, the Spanish speakers stood as the majority in the ESL population. The five adolescents who participated in this study were chosen from a list compiled by the school media specialist in charge of the ARP records with emphasis placed on variations in gender, cultural background, and socioeconomic status (Patton, 2002).

Conclusion

Qualitative research is a current trend in the research and publishing of research in the teaching of English. From February 1998 to February 2003, out of a total of 63 research papers in *Research in the Teaching of English*, only 7 used quantitative or mixed approaches while the other 56 articles were qualitative in style. Among the five traditions of qualitative research design analyzed by Creswell (1998), the case study is the most popular research design. Merriam (1998) also states that in qualitative educational inquires, case study is the most frequently applied. Stake (1995) believes that case study is for specialization instead of generalization.

Donmoyer (1990) suggests that educators in the field of education “are concerned with individuals, not aggregates, and for them, questions about meaning and perspective are central and ongoing” (p. 197). To better understand the role of young adult literature to ESL students and its influence of their literacy development, the methodology used for

this study is qualitative research. The case is a bounded system. It is bounded in time and space. Multiple sources and in-depth description provide understanding.

In the study, I followed five ESL middle school students who had been in the States for five years or less and had earned high scores in the Accelerated Reader Program (ARP) for the previous year. I wanted to see how they had accommodated their learning in academics in general and in language specifically, and if young adult literature had affected their learning. I believe that this is a case study. It is bounded in time and the givens that these are new immigrants, second language learners, and successful ARP participants.

CHAPTER FOUR: PARTICIPANT PROFILES

The purpose of this chapter is to present data and findings collected from the field. In this chapter, I will present the school, which was the learning environment for the five participants and where the study took place. To provide a profile for each participant, I include excerpts from the interviews and organize the data into four categories:

1. Background and Characteristics,
2. Literacy and Reading,
3. Family and Peer Interaction, and
4. School Experience.

In Background and Characteristics, I use the interview excerpts to reveal each participant's family background and information and to explore when each participant started learning in the United States. In the Literacy and Reading section, I discuss how each participant started the journey in learning English literacy. In this section, the students talk about their experiences in reading young adult literature for the AR points which the school required of them as a part of their language arts class grade. Their journey in learning to read presents how these ESL students were motivated to achieve their literacy skills in reading.

In the discussion on Family and Peer Interaction, participants reveal their different perspectives about social interactions with peers and family and how they handle relationships around them. As part of School Experience, each participant talks about school learning and experiences in different learning places, subjects, and the expectation

for their future learning. Chapter Four presents within-case analysis to show each participant's different stories and experiences.

The School

The middle school that served as my research site is in a rural community approximately one and a half hours from my home. I had been in contact with the media specialist through email and telephone and knew that I had gotten two consent forms.

The school sits on a hill above some railroad tracks. Trees beside the school block the view of adjacent houses. A small wood board mounted by the roadside says that it was established about one hundred years ago. The school has six buildings, three are for regular classroom instruction and offices, one is a cafeteria, one is a gym for physical education (PE), and the last one is for extracurricular art and woodcraft classes. All the observation and interviews took place in the school.

School starts at 8 a.m. Students who arrive before that time gather in the cafeteria where they eat, read, or talk to friends. Around 7:55 a.m., the homeroom teachers lead the students to their classrooms. The principal starts the day with the Pledge of Allegiance and then makes announcements including the lunch menu and ending with words of wisdom and encouragement excerpted from famous people's speeches. The principal concludes her speech with "make it a great day or not, the choice is yours. Make it a wonderful day." After the announcement, the school day begins.

I walked to the office to report my arrival and was led to the media center. The media specialist took me to the ESL group of three teachers who would serve as my main support and help and the connection between my participants and me. In the beginning, there were still only two consent forms, Amber's and Ryan's (All names in the study are

pseudonyms). The ESL teachers told me that now the school's ESL population was all Hispanic with similar socioeconomic status typical for a rural area. The school had about 200 students total, and the Hispanic students comprised 35.3 % of the population. I asked if I could get some ESL students who came about three years ago who qualified for the study but was told that most students had come about four to five years ago. There were only two who came less than three years and were considered good readers. Therefore, I had to compromise my original study to accommodate for the time range, the race differences, and the socioeconomic status. Most of the participants would be Hispanic students who had come to the United States about four to five years earlier. Consent forms were given to the two additional students who qualified for the study.

The whole faculty in the school was friendly and nice to me. The principal understood what my study was about and encouraged me to enjoy my time. When I asked for data or help, the secretaries gave me what I needed, including each student's schedule and school's population report.

The ESL Classroom

There were two ESL classrooms in the school. The two-teacher ESL team had an assistant teacher, Mr. Wood, who worked as the interpreter between the school and the Spanish family. The classroom that I observed most often was Ms. Sal's. There were about twelve chairs in her classroom and about two to eight students, since there were fewer ESL students in each class as compared to the regular classes. Students were pulled from their social studies, science, or other classes to attend the ESL class.

Around the walls of the classroom were bright and cheery posters encouraging students to have positive attitudes toward their learning. There were bookshelves

brimming with bilingual books, dictionaries, and some textbooks. There was a computer for the teacher.

The ESL program focused on strengthening students' literacy growth, especially in the areas of pronunciation, reading, writing, and speaking. The teacher used several textbooks, videos, and group discussions to instruct students. These ESL students were allowed to talk in Spanish in ESL class, but at the same time, the ESL teachers strongly encouraged them to speak more in English. Generally, the students who needed ESL support were pulled out from their regular classes about 45 minutes each day. A new ESL student would get more than one class period of ESL support.

The Profiles of the Five Participants

In the study, there are five participants. I will profile each student to explore his/her personality and learning in English literacy and in school. Each profile, which emerged from interviews, observations, and written documents, includes Background and Characteristics, Literacy and Reading, Family and Peer Interaction, and School Experiences.

In quoting the students, I use brackets and parentheses to add my own words. Words in brackets are intended to make the sentences run smoothly while words in parentheses are intended as explanations. For example, I added the word "pause" in parentheses to show that during the interviews, the participant might have paused before he/she responded. I use ellipses to show that I omitted parts of the participants' conversation. For example, Amber said, "I think I need it (ESL class)... Going to ESL, I feel like that [I have] more confidence in reading and in talking."

Amber, The 8th grader, Four Years in Learning English

Background and Characteristics

Amber was the first participant to return the signed consent form. The media specialist told me in her emails that I would enjoy working with Amber, and it did, indeed, prove to be a pleasant experience.

Amber was warm and friendly. She smiled at me whenever she saw me. She always addressed me with respect and never forgot to say, “thank you” every time we finished an interview. In class, she was quiet but attentive to what her teachers said. She willingly let me join her at lunch with her group of four in the cafeteria. In the interviews, she was cooperative and answered all the questions.

When I interviewed Amber, her family had just bought their own house. She was excited about her new home, and she mentioned that everyone in the family had a responsibility in fixing or cleaning the house. Amber said, “We bought the house. We schedule in one month; we take in charge of like cleaning bedrooms and bathrooms. Right now, I will clean the kitchen and my sister will clean the bedrooms and bathrooms.” Amber and her sister designed a schedule to clean their house in which their duties rotate each month. She told me that she hoped to help her parents by helping out around the house because “they are usually tired after they worked for a whole day.”

Amber’s father came to the United States to work before anyone else in the family. Five years ago, her mother joined her dad to work here. They planned for the children to finish school in Mexico while living at their grandparents’ home. However, her mom missed the children so much that the children soon joined them in North Carolina. Amber and her sisters came four years ago.

Amber is the oldest in her family. She has two younger sisters-- one attends the same middle school as Amber while the other is in elementary school.

When Amber came in January 2000, she was in the second semester of 4th grade. She stated that she was scared and nervous when she started school here. She said, “At the beginning when I came here, I was scared because I don’t understand what they are saying.” The following is an excerpt with Amber from our first interview:

Chiu: So how do you feel about the school here?

Amber: At the beginning when I came here?

Chiu: Hmm.

Amber: I was scared. Because I don’t understand what they are saying.

Chiu: You only spoke Spanish at that time?

Amber: Hmm.

Chiu: When did you start to feel a little bit more comfortable?

Amber: Mm... I think it was in 5th grade. I was nervous at 4th grade. I was nervous because of the teacher. And in 5th grade, I was better because the teacher helped me.

Chiu: Oh.

Amber: With some of the words [I had learned] so I can communicate with the teachers and with the students [in 5th grade.]

Chiu: Hmm.

Amber: And in 6th grade, I was like better. That’s when I first took the EOG. The first time.

In the beginning, Amber had a hard time understanding her teacher and classmates because she did not know English at all. For Amber, the first experience in learning a new language was a bad experience. She felt “nervous” and “scared.” She felt that she learned almost nothing at all in the beginning because she understood nothing at all. She said,

It was hard. Actually, I don't learn anything in 4th grade. Well, we just like, we start in pictures. They were like explain to us what the pictures were. But I still didn't get it. So... Everything was different. Like they will take a picture of fire and if I don't know that [word], they will take the index card and explain what the picture meant. I still didn't get it until 5th grade. I start learning in 5th grade.

Thinking back to the beginning of her American educational experience, Amber called it a nightmare. She felt that her real learning did not start until 5th grade. The only thing she referred to as helpful was her ESL class. She mentioned several times how learning English in ESL class was helpful. Amber said,

I think I need it (ESL class) cause some of the words, I need to work on my pronunciation and I need to learn more words so I can feel confidence and I can talk to people. Going to ESL, I feel like that [I have] more confidence in reading and in talking. So I think I still need it [now].

In the interview with Amber's ESL teacher, Ms. Sal praised Amber and said she had a positive learning attitude. She said,

Amber is an excellent student in every aspect. She has got a very good personality, very sweet girl, and very cooperative. She is willing to learn, not

only academic but also everything you put in front of her, like tennis, and drama and dance.

Ms. Sal recalled that in the beginning of 6th grade, Amber hardly spoke English at all because she was shy, she lacked confidence, and she had a weak vocabulary. Ms. Sal said proudly, “Now she is a totally different person. She is excellent in everything.”

Amber’s language arts teacher praised her as a self-motivated student. He described Amber as a “reserved” person. He suggested that Amber’s reading level was actually above the grade level because Amber knew that reading was a great tool for her academic learning. He said,

Her reading comprehension level would be probably 9th grade or 10th grade but her vocabulary right now what she gets is about 7th grade. In other words, when she gets the questions, she can handle the questions, but her vocabulary is not above 8th grade. There’s a gap, but the gap is closing.

Literacy and Reading

According to Amber’s ESL teacher and her language arts teacher, Amber was an excellent reader. Her ESL teacher said, “You will not know how much she knows until you ask her to write or to read.”

Amber has had ESL class since 4th grade. She remembered that it was usually only one ESL period a day. Having learned English for four years, she believed that ESL class was important to her. Even in her 8th grade, she felt that she needed the ESL class because she still needed improvement in pronunciation and vocabulary. She stated:

I think I need it (ESL class), I need to work on my pronunciation and I need to learn more words so I feel confidence [confident] and I can talk to people. Going

to ESL, I feel like that [I have] more confidence in reading and in talking. So I think I still need it... I like to practice my reading or my English [speaking].

Sometimes I have to practice what I want to say cause the Spanish and English is mixed up... Sometimes my tongue gets tinkled and sometimes I am speaking Spanish without knowing while talking in English.

Amber worked hard to learn English pronunciations by borrowing audiotapes of library books. The audiotapes helped her pronounce the words while she was reading along in the books. "I will repeat and repeat the words I don't know," she said.

Amber speaks with a definite accent. During the interviews, I needed to pay close attention to understand her, and sometimes I had to repeat what she said to make sure that I did not misunderstand her.

In my research diary for March 15, 2004, after my first interview with Amber I wrote:

I did not really understand what Amber told me in the beginning because I am not familiar with the accent. It took me extra time in repeating what she told me during the interview. I needed to ask her after the first interview: Did she say "span," "explain," or another word when we talked about her parents' attitude when she got a lower grade? I might mis-hear her.

It turned out that she did not say the word, "span" but "explain." In the first interview she said, "If I got a lower grade, they *explain* me until I understand something." In the second interview, I asked Amber to clarify what she meant about how her parents dealt with her schoolwork and grades in the first interview. She said, "They explain to me, not span me."

Amber told me that she did not worry about listening comprehension. Now, she could understand what teachers said in class. In my classroom observations, I saw that Amber was attentive and responded to questions like other classmates, especially in language arts and social studies classes. In language arts, she would volunteer to read aloud in class. Ms. Sal, her ESL teacher, believed that Amber did not need more ESL classes to improve her English literacy level when she went to high school. Ms. Sal said, “She passed [the Ideal Placement Test.] She will not be in ESL [next year.]” Her language arts teacher felt that the most important factor in improving Amber’s English literacy would be closing the gap in vocabulary. He said, “In my opinion, she passed the writing test but her writing is probably a little below her peers. That is because it is organized better but her use of vocabulary and its extension is probably a little below.” Amber agreed. She felt that with more vocabulary, she could understand and enjoy more in the books she read. She said, “This year what happens is that I learn more words that I didn’t know last year. So I can get bigger books, harder books so I don’t have problems in getting my AR points.”

Amber told me in the second interview that she started to pick up books in 6th grade:

Like in 4th grade and 5th grade, my ESL teacher, he read to us the book. And then in the 6th grade, I have to read by myself... In 6th grade, I didn’t read a lot ‘cause I didn’t learn so much words, and I don’t understand the reading. So I get bored and I prefer to read with teachers.

Although the school policy required every student to read for 30 minutes a day when Amber was in 6th grade, she felt too uncomfortable with her English to read. Her

weak vocabulary made reading difficult. She said, “I don’t read a lot [in 6th grade], and I don’t understand the reading so I get bored. So I prefer to read with teachers.” Amber said that at that time she read little books, which she could understand. She reflected that in 6th grade, she needed extra work to understand what was being read in class. At that time, she sometimes needed to borrow the book that the teacher had read in class to take home. At home, she would read it again to try and figure out what she had missed in class. Because of her lack of English proficiency in 6th grade (the second year of learning English), in ARP she was only expected to get partial points to fulfill the reading requirement, compared to her other classmates. In outside reading, she faced a similar situation. She mentioned in her interview, “Like in 5th and 6th grade, I have a lot of things to learn so sometimes I forgot a book or what happened in the book so I have to write some key words to help me remember.”

Starting in 7th grade, she picked up chapter books and could read 30 minutes a day. The third year of learning English was like a new start for her. In 8th grade, she read 30 minutes and even more. She said, “[In 6th grade], they (teachers) tell me to read with what I understand. The little books. In 7th grade, I get chapter books and this year like any kind of books.” She mentioned in the second interview about her improvement in 8th grade:

Sometimes I read more this year. It was like I want more. Last year, I understand some of the word, like this year. This year what happens is that I learn more words that I didn’t understand last year so I can get bigger books, harder books. So I don’t have problems in getting my ARP points.

Amber explained that she could read any books now that interested her. She said, “I can read all kinds of books. For me, it doesn’t matter whether it’s for boys or girls. I read both of them.” In language arts, the teacher was teaching a play excerpted from the abridged novel of *Anne Frank*. During my observation time in her class, I saw Amber reading *Anne Frank* to get more details, and she also read another true historical documentary book about Anne Frank.

For her taste in literature, Amber said she loved romance, historical fiction, fairy tales, diaries, and tragedies. She mentioned that after reading a tragedy about two sisters, she did not want to fight with her 6th grade sister anymore. When I asked about her favorite books, she said,

I just can’t remember the title [of the book]. It was about a girl who was sick and I think it is about cancer or like that. I read another one that is similar to that. It was my favorite, too. It was a good book. It was a girl who has cancer. It’s about sisters. The sister got sick, and she got cancer and she died. I started to think about my sister. I think it has good impact on me.

By impact she explained that she meant that after reading the book, she did not want to fight with her sister anymore.

Amber did not feel that she preferred girls’ books to boys’ books. She referred to reading as “a movie playing in my mind.” At this stage of learning English, she enjoyed indulging herself in the world of books. She read every day, including the weekends. She said excitedly, “Reading, I can take like two hours. It depends on the book. Some are interesting and sometimes I can stay all night long.” She mentioned in her second interview:

When I am reading, everything like disappears. When I finished reading everything comes back, like homework, all the things like that. So when I am in a book, there is so much time that I can forget everything. Suspension makes me enjoy reading too. I like to suspense. I like the feeling that you don't know what's going to happen. So when I get to the end [of the book], I stop and think about what's happening. I think I feel happy. It's hard to explain.

In my research diary, I wrote,

Amber's words remind me of what Langer (1995) says, "Literature plays a critical role in our lives, often without our notice. It sets the scene for us to explore both ourselves and others, to define and redefine who we are, who we might become, and how the world might be (p.5)." Literature also plays an important role for us to escape from the reality towards an imaginary world in which we would like to dwell.

Amber has become a reader. She loses herself in the text. She indulges herself in the world of books.

Amber's ESL teacher believed that Amber had great potential in writing as long as she worked on her vocabulary. Ms. Sal said,

You will not know how much she knows until you ask her (Amber) to write or to read. In the beginning of 7th grade, still the vocabulary is very limited. She doesn't have the big words to tell you how to relate. In 7th grade, we can see the big improvement in academics. Vocabulary has built up and the reading. She had 4, 4, last year [in EOG]. That means that she learns how to talk well, and academic confidence.

Amber loved to write poems with her friends. Sharing poems with her friends was one of her hobbies. She told me in the last interview that she had more confidence in writing poems in English rather than in Spanish now because she felt more confident in writing English. Below is a sample of Amber's writing in ESL class in April 2004, a thesis about why students should vote for her for the office of president of the student council:

As the president of the student council, I would make several changes in our school to improve it. I would do fundraisers for field trips, for the students who meet their A. R. goal, so they can be motivated to get their A. R. goals, I also would reward students who make Honor Roll by letting them play outside 30 minutes, by this way more students are going to do their best to make Honor Roll. And also help the students with Reading and Math, so they can pass the End of Grade test. All of this is what I would do if you vote for me.

As for her writing, gaps in her vocabulary affect her expression in English writing. While comparing Amber with other peers who speak English as their native language, her language arts teacher suggested that Amber's reading level was above the peers while her writing ability could not aptly express her real comprehension. Her language arts teacher also said, "I expect in a year or two, most of the gap of vocabulary will disappear or diminish. That's one of the ways by continuing to do that (reading). She also needs to continue to organize in her writing because the way she can make up the weakness and the gap of her writing is structuring and organizing..."

Both her ESL and language arts teachers praised her serious learning attitude and her reading ability. Her ESL teacher had great confidence in her and said that after 8th

grade, Amber would not need the help of an ESL class. She would do quite well in high school. The language arts teacher believed that Amber would have the ability to attend the academic gifted classes when she went to high school. The only thing he was concerned about was her weak vocabulary. Amber herself felt her biggest problems in reading were her lack of vocabulary and pronunciation difficulties. She acknowledged that in reading aloud in class she felt nervous, she said, “’cause I don’t know if I pronounce the words right and sometimes it is hard for me to understand some of the words.”

When asked about recommendations for other new ESL students, Amber suggested that these new students should not be afraid to try and try again when learning a new word and a new pronunciation. She also suggested that new ESL students had to pay close attention to their teachers. She believed that as they practiced their speaking and reading attentively with the teachers, they would improve their English. She said, “In the beginning, [ESL students have to] try again and pay attention to the teacher and then practice.”

Family and Peer Interaction

In the interviews, Amber talked about her family, especially her parents’ expectations for her. She said that her parents’ expectations had great impact on her academic performance. I asked about her parents’ expectations for her and her sisters; she was clear about their expectation:

They want us to finish school here so we won’t be at the same place as they were. They want us to go to places to learn more. They want us to succeed. Things that we will do better. They don’t want us to satisfy what we have. They want us to

have more, in a good way. They don't want us get involved in bad things, like stealing or something like that. They want us to have better [lives.]

Amber was also aware that her parents had high expectation in her academic performance:

They expect me to finish college. I mean to have a career and all that to succeed. They encourage me. If I am doing [well], they give me something. They [also] encourage me to get into groups. Like Beta group--all the groups that can help me with my English and my classes. And... they help me with a lot of things, like they encourage me to be better. Sometimes they help me with [preparing] the tests to study. If I have a test tomorrow, I will do work, like spelling or math, and then they will see if it's right. So they help me.

Amber mentioned that her parents had the same high expectation for all their children. They helped their children with homework and sometimes her mother would accompany her when she was reading. Amber acknowledged that one of the main factors to motivate her to do well in school came from her parents' expectations.

Amber mentioned in the interviews that her family would go traveling in the summer. Her parents believed that traveling released their pressure and helped their children explore the world and learn more. Amber enjoyed their trip to Washington, DC most because she visited many historical memorials and famous buildings.

Amber's father worked several jobs to earn extra money because they just bought a house. Amber's mother was a housekeeper and took care of her own family. Amber said that both her parents were hard working people. In seeing her parents' hard work, Amber and her sisters tried to share some household chores to help their parents. Amber

knew that her parents were tired from work, and she tried to help her sisters with their homework also as a way of helping her parents.

Being the oldest girl in her family, Amber felt that she should share more of her parents' responsibility at home. She knew that her parents worked hard to secure a better life for them. She tried to help her parents by doing household chores and helping her younger sisters with homework. In that way, she felt that her parents would not be under so much pressure.

Amber mentioned that her parents talked to them about drugs and about teen pregnancy as well. They wanted their children to be aware of the dangers of getting involved with bad friends and bad situations.

As much as Amber liked to talk about her parents in the interviews, she did not care to talk about her friends and their influence on her. She had many friends in the neighborhood and in school, and she was confident that she knew how to keep herself from bad influences. She said,

We have fun together and we try to encourage each other but sometimes, I don't like to be influenced by them. Because sometimes they do something I don't like so I just do my own things and what I think is right. And if they ask me a favor or something, I just answer that I give myself with the school. [With friends,] I give myself, like a part and I just have fun with them, like play with them and talk with them.

In school, she was in a group of four classmates--three girls and one boy. In my observations, I usually saw her with her group while walking to classes or eating in the cafeteria. In class, she usually sat in the front row and listened to her teachers attentively

without speaking or sitting anywhere near her good friends. Amber said that she preferred to pay attention to the teacher. At home, she did not talk to the friends over the phone for long hours. She told me that she did not like to talk too much, and that she would rather read than talk. She said, “I am not that kind of person who likes to speak so much on the phone. So I think it’s better for me to read. I like to read.”

Amber and her friends in her neighborhood had similar interests. They walked together and wrote poems together. Her favorite activity was dancing with friends. In her extracurricular time in school, she chose a Latino dancing class. Her ESL teacher also mentioned that Amber was good at playing tennis.

Amber told me that she watched television to relax. She said that because her parents wanted the children to watch educational channels, she usually watched Discover, History, or other educational channels. After school, the television was always on for about three or four hours no matter whether anyone was watching or not. The television was usually on while the children were doing homework or eating dinner. Amber mentioned that the television sound sometimes helped her concentrate on her work.

School Experience

Amber preferred school in North Carolina to school in Mexico. She referred to the Mexico teachers as “mean” and “mad” when she did not understand their instructions, but she explained:

When teachers explain something like doing homework and if you don’t do it right, they get mad and angry. They were angry at everything because they got a lot of students and some like to play in class; I think that’s why they were mean. I think they were so stressful. It was like one teacher and thirty, forty students.

Amber felt intimidated and did not know how to respond to the teachers' harsh attitudes in Mexico.

On the other hand, Amber enjoyed and appreciated her North Carolina teachers' patient, friendly attitudes and "things became easier" here. When she started school here, she felt that the new teachers had "more time to explain to you" and take her "*step by step*" than her former teachers. She enjoyed learning here more, and believed that her parents made the right decision to bring the children to North Carolina because she felt that "schools are better here."

She felt that her North Carolina school's and teacher's support was invaluable. She especially liked her middle school because "the teachers are helping us." She said, "They (teachers) try to make me—um... learn so much stuff but *they take me step by step* so I can understand in everything and so I can learn."

When I broached the subject of her friends, Amber said she enjoyed having a harmonious relationship with her friends and family. She seemed to apply the same philosophy in her learning to her relationships with her learning "partner"—teachers. When I asked what motivated her to read and learn more, she replied, "I think the teachers. They work hard to teach you, so you have to help them. The teachers are trying to teach you so you have to help them."

In my Research diary I wrote:

Amber's expression about "I want to help the teachers because teachers want to help us learn" is quite neat to me. I never think about learning hard as a way to repay or to help teachers. But isn't it so? Amber refers to the learning process as a relationship between the teacher and the learner. Teachers' expectation on the

learners needs learners' help by working hard to respond to the instruction and preaching. The motivation for students to learn hard could come from keeping a good relationship with the teachers. It is neat to think about the connection between learning and the good relationship between teacher and student.

Amber's relationship with her teachers was obvious from the teachers' words in their interviews. Both ESL and language arts teachers said that Amber was an eager student. Her personality was sweet, and she was considerate to others. She was a quiet, respectful, attentive student. During one of my observations, I saw a male classmate who sat behind her repeatedly hitting the back of her chair with his desk. Amber just ignored him. I mentioned this in the interview. Amber told me that she just wanted to "concentrate on the class."

Amber mentioned several times how important the teachers' help meant to her. She appreciated her teachers' help in tutoring, in class, in ESL, and in learning. She talked about how she had changed in the 7th grade from nervous to confident because of teachers' guidance:

I just got from 6th grade. I didn't know so much words. I knew more than in 6th grade but I feel nervous 'cause I could communicate more with the teachers. They expect me to do more stuff. After that, I feel better 'cause teachers are helping us. They help everybody. Like if I pronounce the word wrong, they help me and tell me how to pronounce it. They just encourage me to learn more. At the end of 7th grade, I don't want to leave 7th grade. It's easy for me.

In contrast to her confidence at the end of 7th grade, Amber's 4th grade year was full of frustration and nervousness. When she talked about her first experience in 4th

grade, she said that if the teachers had helped her more maybe she would have learned better and faster. Luckily, in 5th grade, teachers provided free tutoring after school for Spanish or English students who needed extra help. By 6th and 7th grades, Amber did not feel that she needed tutoring help to catch up with the class.

During the two-month observation, I got many opportunities to be in Amber's class because Chad and Neil (the fourth and fifth participants) were in the same class with her. Her overall attitude toward the teacher's instruction was attentive and quiet. In class, she did not always respond to the teacher's questions. In her language arts and social studies classes, she sometimes would contribute to class discussions but rarely to never in math class. She explained why she did not always respond to the teacher's questions:

Well, what happens to me is that I know the answers. I think about the answer in my head. I don't want to raise my hand 'cause I am not sure if I am going to do it [and if] they are going to understand me. So I just give myself quiet. Even I know the answers; sometimes I feel bad; like my head aches or something like that, I will just write the answers, and wait them to say the answers, and I will just mark right or wrong on my paper.

It seemed that her lack of confidence in pronunciation was an obstacle to her interaction in class.

When Amber talked to me in the interviews, she appeared confident. She agreed that she had more confidence now than in the beginning of middle school. Thinking back to 4th grade she said she had felt powerless:

I was like sitting there. They were talking and everything. I did not know what they were saying. I was like looking at everybody and looking at their mouth talking. I am like in another place.

Struggling through her 5th grade, she told me that she felt that because of her language barrier, she did not want to go to school. Her ESL teacher mentioned that Amber was much more timid and shy when she first came to middle school. She got B's and C's in 6th grade. In 7th grade, Amber still felt "scared and nervous." After 7th grade, she had more and more confidence about her academic performance. She knew that as she progressed in her English, her teachers' expectations were higher for her. Throughout her learning journey, she felt that her teachers' encouragement had been invaluable.

Amber felt that teachers' encouragement and patient instruction contributed to her improvement and growth through the years. Her grades became better and better. By the third year here, in 7th grade, Amber felt she had reached a benchmark. In the beginning of 7th grade, she was nervous because she knew the teachers' expectations were higher, and she wanted to be like everybody else, but her language barrier still frightened her. By the end of 7th grade, however, she said, "I did not want to leave seventh grade." In her first semester of 8th grade this year, she has earned straight A's on her report card. Her language arts teacher fully expects she will be a B honor student for sure by graduation. With growing confidence in her academic performance, Amber talked confidently about her future:

I want to finish school (college). I want to have a career. I want to...umm... I want to finish everything. I want to have less pressure than my mom and my dad.

I want to succeed more. I want to get better grades. Like if I get a B, I want to get a B+ or A, a better grade.

Amber's confidence came through with her choice of words in the interviews. Starting with "I want to..." showed her strong will and determination. Amber, it would appear, is driven, ambitious, and motivated--all traits that will help her succeed.

On the other hand, facing the changes of going to high school, Amber also expressed a natural nervousness:

I think it (high school) will have more to learn and more challenging. I feel scared because it is a new school and new teachers. I know I will do good but I am nervous. My cousin in high school, she told me that there are so much girls with drugs, or alcohol, and people are fighting with each other. It's just [always] fighting. I was scared. Sometimes they steal. Even if you don't want to get into trouble in drug or people fighting. That's what scares me most. Because of new school and new teachers, I expect it will be the same pressure [in academics, but] it's not going to be much more.

Amber and I parted warmly. She thanked me for listening to her story. In my research dairy I wrote:

I felt so warm when Amber said, "thank you for listening to me." It also triggered me to think about that adolescents needed someone to listen to them. They want to be understood and they are eager to tell their stories. I hope the second participant would be similar to this situation.

Amber's Day

Amber awoke at 6:10 in the morning. Her mom had to rush to another town to do her housekeeping work. Amber said, "I don't take a bus. My mom takes me because she has to go to clean the house. She takes us (Amber and her sister) to school at 7:20."

Students who come to school early gather in the cafeteria. Some students eat breakfast there before homeroom around 8 a.m. Amber does not like to eat breakfast because she feels that rushing from classroom to classroom would make her sick if she had food in her stomach. She says, "My mom makes us at least cookies or milk but sometimes because of the schedule, I have to go back and forth. Sometimes, my stomach gets upset if I eat."

Amber starts her social studies class in her homeroom classroom. The class is studying about North Carolina in the Civil War. The social studies teacher uses a supplemental young adult literature book, *Mountain Valor*. While reading along the book, the teacher asks students to use their reading strategies. The teacher puts vocabulary on the whiteboard, and asks students to recap what happened in each chapter. So besides learning historical events, students also learn vocabulary and discuss the author's writing style.

After social studies, Amber walks to another building with other classmates for language arts. The language arts teacher is also Amber's literature and AR teacher. He usually uses a big literature textbook supplemented with young adult literature. As the end of grade (EOG) test nears, the teacher will ask students to practice from an EOG coaching book. Amber has homework every day from language arts class. Besides

writing homework, everyone is required to read at least 30 minutes a day to earn AR points which is a part of the language arts grade.

In social studies and language arts, Amber is always eager to respond to the teacher's questions. She raises her hand to respond when she has confidence in her answers. She sometimes volunteers to read a paragraph aloud in class as well. She enjoys practicing her English when she gets the opportunity.

After language arts, Amber walks to another class in the same building for ESL class. She put her bags and belongings on her seat and then walks out with friends to the cafeteria for recess time. At recess, the students have snacks at the cafeteria and gather in groups to socialize for about 15 minute. Amber usually stays with her group of four. She says, "We are just a group of four. We have two girls, one boy, and me. We are always together." They were all on the same schedule and in the same class. Amber says, "I have a lot of friends but they (my group of four) are in my class. So I am with them, most of the time."

In the ESL class, there are about eight students unlike regular classes which usually contain 20 or more students. After ESL class, it is time for lunch. Math follows after lunch. Amber is cautious not to eat too much at lunch so she will not feel sleepy during math class. After math, it is PE time. Students can play various sports or use the time to read AR books in the gym. The last class is the extracurricular activity time. This semester, Amber has joined the dancing class. Amber enjoys dancing with peers. She says, "I like dancing. We have a class of dance so I practice at my house. And I like music."

At 2: 45, Amber's mom picks up Amber and her sister. Amber's home is near school. She arrives home around 3: 10. She and her sister eat a snack and then start on their homework. Amber helps her mother clean. Amber's family just bought their house. Amber says, " We are buying a house right now. So he (my dad) is working hard for us. We have to save money, pay the bills, and the house. He doesn't like to pay rent any more. It's too much." The whole family has promised to take care of the house. Amber and her sisters take turns cleaning the kitchen, bedrooms, and bathrooms. They know that their father works extra work to pay the mortgage, and their mom is usually tired after a long day of working. So they share the chores as a way of helping out in the family.

Amber sometimes takes walks with her neighborhood friends when the weather is nice. She sometimes composes poems that are inspired by her walks. She and her friends enjoy walking, talking, and writing poems together. Amber says, " Sometimes, we gather together like in weekend. We went to walk and to talk. Sometimes, we got together like for some dance with other friends. Sometimes, we will write poems." After eating dinner at 6, she reads her AR books borrowed from the school library. She feels this is precious time for her to do whatever she wants. Her parents asks the girls to watch only educational programs if they want to watch TV. Amber enjoys watching educational programs for the knowledge as well as for the entertainment. She goes to bed at 9 although sometimes she stays up later to try and finish reading a book. Her mom warns her that it will not be good for her eyes.

Summary

Amber believed that learning English was an ongoing process, and that she should never finish learning. She enjoyed reading, and showed her passion when talking about her reading experiences. She hoped to improve her vocabulary through reading. She was also aware that she needed more practice to perfect her ability to speak English. Despite her awareness of knowing she should practice her oral English, she usually got together with her Spanish-speaking peers. While they might mix some English in their conversations, they talked with each other mostly in Spanish.

Amber enjoyed school. She appreciated her teachers' patience and encouragement. She even felt that her teachers' help was a major factor in her educational success. She also felt that her parents' support was important to her, too. She mentioned in the interviews that her father worked hard. Her parents expected much from their children, and Amber was clearly aware of those expectations. She was kind in helping other peers, especially those who were new in school. She helped teachers to translate when necessary. At school, she was always with her group of four, but at home she had different friends in the neighborhood. She appreciated and valued her good friendships while trying to avoid bad influences. She also held herself to high expectations. She hoped that one day she would finish college and get a career to "have a better life."

Ryan, The 8th Grader, Five Years in Learning English

Background and Characteristics

Ryan gave his consent form one day after Amber. When I entered the field on March 9, 2004, Ryan and Amber were the only two students who had returned their

consent forms. I told their ESL teachers that Amber and Ryan would be the participants for the study. After finishing interviewing Amber on the morning of March 19, I started to observe Ryan later that same day and arranged his first interview on the following field day, March 23. When thinking back about Ryan's interaction with me, in the research diary on May 7, 2004, while I was preparing for coding, I wrote:

When I think back about Ryan. The impression is that Ryan was always resisting giving me information. He was the second one to give the consent form far before any other students... I did not expect that he would not cooperate. All the teachers that I talked with told me that Ryan was very smart. He was in pre-algebra—the advanced math class because he was very good in math. He had been in the U. S. for about five years; it seems that for him English should not be a barrier for communication with me at all. When I asked him in the interviews, the common answers were: “I don't know.” “I don't remember” and again “I don't know.”

I tried to give him time and space to talk more in the interviews, but it never succeeded. Most of his responses were either a “yea” or “no” or a short sentence. The excerpt from the first interview provides a better picture of his reluctance to respond:

Chiu: What kind of TV do you watch? (Pause) Any kind like?

Ryan: Music.

Chiu: Like MTV?

Ryan: MTV.

Chiu: Oh. Do you have Internet at home?

Ryan: We have a computer but no Internet.

Chiu: So you don't talk with friends on the Internet.

Ryan: No.

Chiu: Do you call them? (Pause) Or not often?

Ryan: Not often. Sometimes.

Chiu: So what's your parents' expectation on you?

Ryan: What do you mean?

Chiu: Do they expect you to go to high school or college or even?

Ryan: Both.

.....

Chiu: OK. Can you tell me about yourself?

Ryan: I don't know.

Chiu: You don't know.

Ryan: I like playing games.

Chiu: What kind of games?

Ryan: Dangerous games.

Chiu: What are they?

Ryan: I don't know. Something fun.

Chiu: Do you mean video games?

Ryan: Games, like doing something.

Chiu: Like what?

Ryan: I don't know.

Chiu: It's not video games.

Ryan: No.

Chiu: So do you play video games at home?

Ryan: Yeah, but I don't like it that much.

Chiu: You have video games but you don't like them that much.

Ryan: No, I don't. I think it gets me bored.

Chiu: OK. It's too boring for you.

Ryan: Yeah.

Chiu: So, when you talk about dangerous games, what are they?

Ryan: Like something that is dangerous, like go swimming.

Chiu: Go swimming? (Pause) And?

Ryan: And other kinds of stuff could be dangerous.

In the interviews, Ryan always sat as far away from me as he could. He moved the chair a little further from me and sat back into the chair to have more distance between us. He never looked at me in the eyes. He usually played with his necklaces and sat back during interviews. He always spoke in a very quiet voice. He spoke fast but short.

Ryan's language arts' teacher was not surprised about Ryan's unwillingness to cooperate with me. He said,

Instead of seeing someone like myself, he (Ryan) can learn and get information from. He thought [of me] simply as an authority figure that he has to deal with.

When the day is over, I (Ryan) am done dealing with you. That's it."

Ms. Sal, Ryan's ESL teacher talked about his shyness. She said, "In 6th grade, he (Ryan) was very excellent in everything except he is very limited because he was very shy." She mentioned that Ryan was in Beta Club in 7th grade but withdrew in 8th grade. She said,

When he had to come to the audience or like go to the parents' conferences, he overslept or he didn't come. I mean excuses. He told the teachers that he did not want to be called out. Because of his shyness, he did not want to be in Beta Club.

Ryan came to the United States in April 1999. In the interviews, he did not talk much about his family. When I asked him what brought his family to North Carolina, he simply replied, "My dad needs money."

There were six people in his family: besides Ryan there was a father, a mother, an older sister in high school, a six-year-old sister, and a six-month-old sister. He was the only boy in the family. He did not feel that his parents showed any favoritism based on gender. His father worked outside the home and his mother worked in the home. At home, Spanish was the main language. My last interview with Ryan had to be postponed because he had gone with his mother and baby sister to the hospital to serve as the translator.

Ryan did not talk much about his interaction with family members. When I asked Ryan about his family, he usually gave me short answers, and he did not seem to have any interest in talking about his family. He did not tell me what kind of job his father had. I asked him, "What does your father do?" He replied, "He works." I repeated, "He works?" and waited for him to say more but he did not. I did not probe further because I did not want to make Ryan uncomfortable. He told me that he paid his older sister to clean his room for him because he was too lazy to do house chores. His older sister worked part-time while attending high school. He mentioned that every time he held his baby sister, she cried.

After three interviews with Ryan, I was frustrated at the lack of information he would offer and his reluctance to talk with me. On the last day of my fieldwork, I gave each of my participants a box of candy to show my appreciation. Ryan reacted with surprise and, totally out of character, thanked me with a smile.

Literacy and Reading

Like Amber, Ryan felt scared in the beginning of his literacy learning here. He did not feel comfortable speaking English, mostly because he felt that he did not have any friends to talk to here. He said, "I know nobody and I can't communicate with them."

Ryan came to the United States in April 1999. After only one month, the school ended for summer break. That summer, he stayed home because he did not know any one here, and complained, "I have a lot of friends in Mexico." I asked him if he worked on learning English over the summer. He said that he had no one to help him.

When he started 4th grade in the fall, he remembered being bored and scared because he could not speak English. ESL was the only class that he felt had helped him with his English. He had one ESL class a day for several years.

He did not care too much about reading when asked about his reading experiences in the interviews. Instead of answering questions about reading, he changed the subject. "Starting from fourth grade, I started to talk a little bit." It seemed that Ryan was more concerned about his ability to communicate with people because he felt that being able to make friends in 4th grade was more important. I asked him whether he was motivated to learn quicker in English, he replied, "No, 'cause it makes no differences [to communicate] with friends."

After 4th grade, he went to summer school, where he felt that his learning in school and his English seemed to improve. The summer school was for any students who needed support in his/her reading and writing. As indicated by the following interview excerpt, Ryan felt that through that summer school, he knew how to write in English.

Chiu: (In 4th grade) Do you want to learn more English to communicate with your friends? (Pause) Or you can speak Spanish?

Ryan: We can speak Spanish.

Chiu: You don't feel that you want to learn faster?

Ryan: No, 'cause it makes no differences with friends. Now I want to communicate with teachers.

Chiu: OK. So that makes you feel that you want to learn faster.

Ryan: Yeah.

Chiu: So in what ways will help you learn faster?

Ryan: We went to summer school.

Chiu: What's about the summer school? (Pause) Can you tell me a little bit about summer school?

Ryan: There were teachers. She used to teach Spanish, English.

Chiu: Is that your ESL teacher?

Ryan: No, it's another.

Chiu: How long is it in summer school?

Ryan: A month.

Chiu: How much time in a day?

Ryan: From 8 to 11.

Chiu: Is the class more like ESL?

Ryan: Both.

Chiu: What do you mean by both?

Ryan: They teach reading and writing.

Chiu: They teach reading and writing. Why not like ESL class?

Ryan: Because they were not all Spanish students there. There were like American persons, too.

Chiu: Are the ways they teach reading and English similar to ESL class?

Ryan: Not really.

Chiu: What are the differences?

Ryan: ESL, they teach you how to pronounce good. In summer school, they teach you how to write.

Chiu: Does that help you?

Ryan: Yeah. [They] teach me how to write.

In 4th grade, Ryan complained that he did not understand anything in language arts class. I asked him what he did in class; he said, “Just stare.” In comparison to his language arts class, Ryan felt that he understood math. It came easy for him.

In 5th grade, he was in the AR program but he did not read any books or take any test. He said, “I could read, but I was lazy.”

When Ryan started middle school, he liked his 6th grade language arts teacher. He told me that she was a great teacher. In general, he now understood almost everything his teachers were talking about. All he needed to do was listen to the teachers and he got good grades. Ryan’s 6th grade language arts teacher encouraged him to read but he

claimed in the interviews that he did not read. Even when the teacher talked to his parents about encouraging him to read, he told me that he still did not read. He knew that earning points in AR program through reading counted as part of his language arts grade but he felt that his grade was good enough without the AR points.

In his second interview, Ryan insisted that he did not enjoy reading in 5th or 6th grades:

Chiu: How long do you read at that time (5th grade)?

Ryan: Like nothing.

Chiu: What?

Ryan: Nothing. I don't like reading.

Chiu: You don't like reading at 5th grade.

Ryan: I don't like reading in 6th grade, either.

Chiu: You don't like reading in 6th grade either? Why?

Ryan: 'Cause it's boring.

Chiu: Because the books were too easy or?

Ryan: No, 'cause they were boring.

(Pause)

Ryan: I just don't like reading.

Chiu: Then, what time do you start to like reading?

Ryan: 7th grade. But now, I don't like reading, either. (Pause) It's boring.

Ryan insisted that he did not read and did not enjoy reading in 6th grade. He said in the interview that his 6th grade teacher called his parents to encourage him to read but he did

not. He said, “She got mad at me. She called my parents that I didn’t read but still I don’t read.”

Ironically, in 7th grade, he no longer earned good grades in language arts and that was why he started to read. He said, “I started to get more troubles. Like, if I don’t get my AR points, I started to fail in language arts.” In the AR program, he began to read “a lot of” books, including four of the Harry Potter series in his 7th grade. His grades became much better in the second semester of 7th grade after he realized that he needed the AR points to improve his language arts grade. He read an hour a day at that time and he realized that through reading, his vocabulary and comprehension had greatly improvement. When I asked him who pushed him to read, he replied, “Myself.” Because Ryan had good AR points in 7th grade (the previous year before the study), he was recommended as “a good ESL reader” to fit in the study.

Interestingly, when I retrieved his AR record from 6th grade, he had passed 62 out of 64 tests earning 150.3 points. In 7th grade, he passed 35 out of 37 tests, earning 116.1. He had insisted many times in the interviews that he did not read in 6th grade. He had also told me that he had started to enjoy reading in 7th grade and now in 8th grade he did not read because it was again boring. Table 2 illustrates Ryan’s performance in AR points:

Table 2. Ryan’s ARP Reports

	8/1/2001- 6/5/2002			8/1/2002- 6/5/2003			8/1/2003- 3/2/2004		
Ryan	Passed /Taken	Book Level	Points earned	Passed /Taken	Book Level	Points earned	Passed /Taken	Book Level	Points earned
	62/64	3.7	150.3	35/37	4.4	116.1	17/22	4.9	107.8

In my Research Diary of July 10th 2004, I wrote:

I felt so puzzled when I retrieved the AR record of Ryan's. I did not get the AR records when I interviewed Ryan. After I read the records of Ryan's AR points, I felt so puzzled and astonished. I went back to read the transcripts of his interviews again and again. I believed he meant it when he said that he did not enjoy reading in 6th grade. But how come he denies he read in 6th grade? He insisted many times that he did not read in 6th grade even when his teacher was mad and called his parents. The records showed that he read more in his 6th grade than in 7th grade. He even got more points in 6th grade than in 7th grade. How come he denied that he read in 6th grade? Could it be that he used spare time in school to read and did not read at home? Or could it be that he could read more but he did not? Or was it not cool to admit that he had read so many books? Or he simply did not enjoy reading at that time so he felt like he did not read?

I think about what Weiss (1994) says, "Cooperative respondents asked about a past no longer much thought about will probably display oases of vivid memories within a desert of uncertainty. They are likely also to display unwillingness to make all the memories accessible" (p.148). If so, even a cooperative interviewee will act like that, not to mention what an uncooperative one will do. At least, Ryan taught me a lesson: even when a student reads a lot according to the record, it might not mean that he/she enjoys reading.

Ryan's AR book selections showed a definite preference for "boy" books, including adventure, sports, mystery, and action. During my observations, I saw him choose books about sports teams and famous athletes from his school library. In reading, he wanted the stories in the books to "feel real" to him. He told me in the interview that

he did not have any “model” or heroes that he would read about in books. I asked him what reading brought to him, he said, “Nothing... Try to get AR points to not to be in trouble.” Ryan knew that if his grades in school were not good, he would be in trouble with his parents.

Now, in 8th grade, he not longer had impetus to earn extra AR points to supplement his language arts grade. He told me that he did not read at home even though he knew that was part of language arts homework each day. He read during his spare time and during reading time at school. In the observations, I saw him reading sports fiction books. He acknowledged several times in the interviews that he still did not enjoy reading although one time he did say that reading was good. Ryan’s excuses for not reading included: “It’s boring. It wastes my time. [I got] more important things to do. I was just lazy now.”

While considering what might motivate him to read more, Ryan suggested that his teachers’ recommendations might help. He said that he did not know how to choose books in the library that might interest him. His friends did not read so they were no help. He said that teachers’ recommendations helped him understand and enjoy some books, but he also recalled guided reading was not helpful in elementary school when he was first learning English. He said, “I just did not understand anything.”

It was unbelievably hard getting Ryan to talk, especially about reading. He said, “Nothing” in the beginning. In the last interview, he finally opened up a little:

Chiu: Tell me about *Harry Potter*—the four books you have read.

Ryan: They are good.

Chiu: Hmm? (Pause.)

Ryan: They are good.

Chiu: What else? (Pause.)

Ryan: I feel like I am the book.

Chiu: Good. What else?

Ryan: I tried to imagine what's happening.

Chiu: Hmm.

Ryan: That's it.

While it was evident that reading was an unpleasant subject for Ryan, he did not seem to have the same issue with his writing. His language arts teacher found it interesting that even though his reading level was not particularly high, his vocabulary was strong. In comparing Ryan to Amber, the language arts teacher found that “Amber’s reasoning and critical thinking skills were better than Ryan’s but his vocabulary was better than hers.” While Ryan knew that reading would improve his vocabulary and ultimately his writing, he still insisted that he was too lazy to read. His attitude was that it was easy, and he did not need to spend time doing something so easy.

Below is an excerpt of Ryan’s writing from his ESL class in October 2003:

The Joy Luck Club was about different people’s problems especially Chinese people that they had when they were young. One was about a teenager mother didn’t want to her to marry a white boy because she thought he wasn’t good enough for his daughter and didn’t had enough money for her, but she still married the white man. One was married to a popular guy from school when she was only 14 years old, first it all started pretty goo[d], but then she had a baby, and then they got married. He didn’t respect her and he was cheating on her. He

brought another woman to her house in front of her, one time the girl tried to kill the guy because he had brought another woman to his house, she was so mad and sad she killed her baby so it wouldn't suffer. Then she moved to North America to have a better life and to forget her past.

Ryan's ESL teacher gave him full credit for writing the book summary. He told me in the interview, "Writing is easy."

Family and Peer Interaction

When I asked Ryan about his family, he responded with characteristically short answers. He said his parents expected him to go to high school and finish college. He, himself, just wanted to finish high school.

Chiu: What's your own expectation for yourself?

Ryan: Go to high school.

Chiu: Go to high school?

Ryan: That's it.

Chiu: Ok. Don't you think that you will go to college?

Ryan: Just don't.

Chiu: What do you think about your future?

Ryan: I don't know.

Chiu: Maybe what do you plan for your future?

Ryan: That's it.

One reason for Ryan's lack of expectations is that he may have been reluctant to talk to me. Another possibility for his response, according to his teacher, was his visa status. The teacher explained,

That's because they don't have papers--the legal papers. So no matter what they do, his sister doesn't have any place to go after she finishes high school this year. She will stay at home. If he was in Mexico, he wouldn't think like that, but his parents didn't plan to go back to Mexico, so...

Other difficulties that Ryan and other Hispanic students face in going to college include having to pay out of state tuition or not having anyone to guide or counsel them about the possibilities. Ryan's teacher acknowledged the hard truth. "He could have a better future if he stays in Mexico."

Ryan enjoyed his friends' company. He said in the interviews that he enjoyed doing dangerous and exciting activities with his friends such as the fighting he talked about earlier and playing soccer. Most of his friends were Hispanic students who attended his school.

Ryan did not talk to his friends often on the phone, nor did he like to talk to his friends at school during his classes. He did not have Internet access at home so he did not talk to his friends using the computer either. In the following excerpt, I asked him about his friends:

Chiu: How many friends do you hang out with?

Ryan: How many?

Chiu: Yeah.

Ryan: I don't know. A lot.

Chiu: What kinds of activities do you usually do?

Ryan: We play soccer.

Chiu: What time do you play soccer? (Pause) At weekends or after school?

Ryan: Every day.

Chiu: So you play soccer every day?

Ryan: And basketball.

Chiu: Where do you play?

Ryan: In front of my house or in the park.

Chiu: Ok. So usually how long do you play sports?

Ryan: About an hour.

Chiu: Is that before or after you finish your homework?

Ryan: Before.

It was interesting that Ryan did not feel that his friends influenced him, however, his teacher saw a different picture. His language arts teacher said,

Ryan is going through one thing a typical male [would go through.] He is trying to be around his peers a lot and he is trying to follow what his peers are about.

When these peers don't have Ryan's intelligence and his academic background... he is constantly in a battle with himself—Do I excel academically or, if I excel in academics, it will look bad for my peers. He is kind of in an internal fight. So for him, a lot of things that are not cool or good for his peers' relations [like if he] excelled really hard make it hard for him to go against his peers. That's why I think he is pulling against his literacy level goes.

Ms. Sal, Ryan's ESL teacher, also worried that his friends would have a bad influence on him. She believed that "Ryan could do a lot better [if he wanted]." She explained:

Ryan is a good reader. He is a very good guesser. He reads part of the book and he gets it. He has intuition. Even when he only reads half of the book; he can

pass it (the test). He is very smart... He can comprehend very well. For example, if you ask him [something] he doesn't care; he knows but he just tells you, "I don't know." It's not just with you. When EOG comes, he is fine. He is in the stage of the age to be cool.

Ryan mentioned that none of his friends read. His friends never recommend any books. His language arts teacher described Ryan's situation well:

"He is constantly in battle with himself"—not to excel too much in front of his friends. Like what I said before, most of his peers are not at his academic performance level. So it's a constant battle to be with his peers because [if] he comes out looking too good, he will not be like his peers. I think that's the battle he is fighting.

He suggested:

It's a hard thing to do but he has to be his own person. He has the capability to do whatever he wishes to do. Right now, instead of being his own person, he tries to be part of the crowd. I think that's where his problem is.

School Experience

When Ryan came to the United States in 1999, he did not feel comfortable in the English-speaking environment mainly because he had left a lot of friends in his hometown school and he did not know anybody in North Carolina. It frustrated him that he could not communicate or make friends with anybody. His 4th grade year proved better. At the end of 4th grade he went to summer school to learn to read and write. Now he could finally communicate with other students, and he began to make friends.

Today, Ryan is a quiet student in class. It is almost as if he is trying to be invisible. He responds little, if at all, to class discussions. According to his ESL teacher, the only trouble he gives to a teacher is in trying “to make his friends look good on tests.” In my research diary for March 23, I wrote:

It seems to me that Ryan wants to be invisible in class. His attitude was like: If you don't bother me, I don't want to bother you, either. He liked to play with his necklaces and put them in the mouth or play with his pencils and draw scribbles on the paper. While he was looking around, he was cautious whether the teacher was watching him or not. He seemed to know very well how to keep himself out of trouble and to “survive” well in class.

Ryan told me in the interview that social studies was his most challenging subject, but he thought that if he would just listen more carefully to the teachers, he would have no problems. His favorite class was his extracurricular woodshop class. The teacher taught the process as a serious business, starting from the design on paper to the finished wood product. Ryan enjoyed the whole process, and he referred to the class as his happiest time in school. His second favorite subject was math. While help was available through tutoring sessions with his math teacher, Ryan preferred to get help from his friends.

Overall, Ryan was satisfied with his academic performance. He felt that B's were good enough, and he did not want to try harder to get A's. When he got a C grade, he became cautious and worked harder because he believed that he would get in trouble with his teachers and parents if he received C's.

In his last interview, Ryan refused to talk with me any further. He would only yawn and repeat, “I don’t know,” or “I don’t remember.”

Chiu: How can teachers in school make reading more attractive to you?

Ryan: By explaining what they are saying.

Chiu: Ok. Like they are doing in language arts?

Ryan: In ESL.

Chiu: What else can they do?

Ryan: (Yawn). That’s it.

Chiu: Or do you feel that - “I have read enough.”

Ryan: I have read enough.

Chiu: You feel that way.

Ryan: Hmm.

Chiu: Ok. You do have confidence in your English?

Ryan: Yeah.

Chiu: Because now you could understand everything?

Ryan: Almost everything.

Chiu: When do you start to feel that school is not that hard for you?

Ryan: I don’t know. (Pause). I don’t remember.

Although Ryan was the least cooperative of my students, and he seemed the least interested student of all five, he did not withdraw from the study. Ms. Sal told me later that Ryan had told her that he was just glad that the interviews were finished.

Ryan's Day

Ryan took the school bus to school around 7:20. He gathered in the cafeteria with other students who arrive before 8 a.m. homeroom. Ryan used this time to talk or eat or sometimes to read his AR book. Ryan always sat with his large group of six to eight friends.

At 7th grade, Ryan read a lot of books to gain his AR points when his grades dropped down below B. He was cautious not to have grades below B or his parents would get angry with him. Reading books to gain AR points for sustain the language arts grade was the only way that he could get higher grade. Now in his 8th grade, he got to read more these days because for this period, his language arts grade was at the margin again. He had better read more and gain more AR points to supplement his grade.

Ryan was not in Amber's homeroom. His homeroom class was pre- algebra. He liked math but sometimes he got confused and felt bored in class when he did not understand. Luckily, the math teacher provided extra tutoring time for students to ask questions; however, Ryan preferred using his friends for help.

In class, Ryan usually kept quiet. He avoided drawing attention to himself. Even as he played with his necklaces, he would check to see if the teacher was watching. He was careful not to talk too much or too loudly. If the teacher called his name, like when he was playing with his necklaces, he would correct his behavior immediately. He did not like to raise his hands to respond to questions. During my observations over three days, I did not see him raise his hand once.

Ryan's favorite class was the extracurricular woodshop class at the end of the day. He had attended the wood workshop class for two years. He enjoyed the process of

designing, drawing, scraping, and painting to finish a project. He said, “That’s my best class. My favorite.” He felt that this was the best time of the whole school day. Next to woodshop, his favorite class was math which came easy for him. Social studies was the most challenging class for him. He knew that if he paid more attention to the teacher, he could do better. He said, “I am trying better in social studies ‘cause it is lowest of my grades.”

Ryan did not want to take a bus home in good weather. He preferred to walk home with friends. He said, “After school, I walk home when it’s not cold.” In school, Ryan did not like to talk with his friends in class, but he did speak of a group of friends he walked home with after school. They would talk about school, sports, movies, and girls. Sometimes, he would go to a friend’s home to watch videos with his parents’ approval. He spoke about meeting another group while walking home and getting into what he called “fun” fights. It happened a few times and, luckily, the school did not find out. He said, “At streets we met another group sometimes, we fight.” “It’s just for fun.”

Ryan’s mother is at home every day taking care of his six-month-old sister when he gets home from school. He eats a snack and might play soccer in the neighborhood. He plays in a soccer league that travels around the state on weekends. However, Ryan is losing interest in soccer. He has decided he is better at tennis.

Ryan does not do his homework until his parents go to bed. He did not have a fixed time to go to bed. He had his own room and he would go to sleep at any time he liked. Consequently, he yawned a lot in class if he did not get enough sleep. His parents encouraged him to read, but he said, “Well, I just don’t [read].” When he found out that his language arts’ grade was in the “danger zone,” he began to read more.

Summary

Ryan was a quiet, uninvolved student in class most of the time. He did not respond to teachers or participate in class discussions nor was he ever disruptive in class. In class as well as during our interviews, he usually played with his necklaces and sometimes yawned. Ryan showed little interest in the interviews, in fact, it was evident that he simply “endured” the interview process and was pleased when it had ended. He preferred woodshop and math to social studies or language arts. Reading bored him. His 7th grade experience with AR was positive only because he needed to improve his language arts’ grade. Otherwise, he did not spend much time reading. In fact, he said he did not enjoy reading at all. He refused to book talk with me, and he did not have any role models or heroes that he would read about in books. While he said his friends did not influence him, it is interesting that his friends were not readers either. His language arts teacher noted that Ryan was definitely at an uncomfortable, difficult crossroads in which he must decide between making the effort to do well in school or following along with his less academically-inclined friends.

Interlude

Chad and Neil were the last two students who returned their signed consent forms. This now gave me two students who had only been in this country for two years. Amber and Ryan had been in the country for four and five years respectively. Even though the majority of my participants were 8th graders, I now could know more of a difference based on length of time in the United States. The last candidate I chose for my study was 7th grader Rosa.

Rosa, the 7th Grader, Four Years in Learning English

Background and Personalities

The first class in which I observed Rosa was her science class, where groups of four students were working on an owl poster project. She wore necklaces, rings, and big hoop golden earrings and had light makeup on her face.

Rosa was a willing and delightful participant in the study. She described herself as “nice and mean.” She explained, “When people are nice to me, I am nice. But I am mean when people are mean to me.”

Rosa came to the United States in January 2000. She was put in the same class with her cousin who had come to North Carolina one year earlier. With her cousin’s support, Rosa had not felt so stressed or uncomfortable about learning a new language in a new environment. She appreciated her cousin’s help and recognized, “That’s why the teacher put us together.” Now, the two cousins still help each other.

Me and my cousin, we used to sleep over and go to the mall but not much because we stayed at home and studied very hard. I have good grades and my cousin has good grades too, because of me. Sometimes, I don’t understand some words; she explained to me. When she doesn’t understand some of the work, I will tell her.

When Rosa first came to North Carolina, she was put back one grade primarily because that she did not speak any English. She said,

I was supposed to be in 8th grade [now]. Because in Mexico when I first came, I was in 4th grade, but when I started here, the teacher said I didn’t speak English very well so they put me in 3rd grade.

In the interviews, Rosa mentioned this several times. It was obviously a sore subject for her. She felt it had been unfair to put her back for one academic year, but she was more

accepting when she found out that several boys had had similar experiences. She emphasized that while she was capable of being an 8th grader as she should really be, she now had such good friends she was content to stay in 7th grade.

I was mad with my mom. I said, “Man, why do you put me back? I want to be with the same age.” She said, “I am sorry.” I know that I can take a test to pass 8th grade, I talked to the principal. But my friends, they say, “Why do you want to go there without us? It’s fun we are together.” So I decide not to go 8th grade. But I know that I can be in 8th grade.

Rosa told me that she had gone through some major changes after 6th grade. She had become thinner, and she had made lots of friends, including older high school girls and boys. She began to like her life better because she had made lots of new friends. Whereas before, her main companion had been the cousin from 3rd grade, now Rosa spent most of the time with her new friends. Rosa’s teachers described her as outgoing, and she admitted, “I like to study, but I like to hang out with my friends, too.”

Rosa willingly talked about her large, extended family. In her core family, she had her father, mother, and one younger sister who attended the same middle school. Her extended family included aunts, uncles, and cousins here as well as in California, Canada, and Mexico.

Chiu: So what language do you speak at home?

Rosa: Spanish and English.

Chiu: So you speak Spanish to...?

Rosa: To my dad and my mom and English to my cousins that know English, like my sister and my cousins or my little nephew. He just started 1st grade, and he

wanted to learn English. We try to speak English so my mom and my aunt, they can understand more.

Chiu: So you have relatives here?

Rosa: Yea. I have uncles, aunts, cousins, nephews, and my dad and my mom. And my other families are in Mexico, and in Canada, and the others are in California.

Rosa's cousin who lived in Canada was her role model because, "She knew three languages and she had a good life. She was rich and she was free to go anywhere she wanted to."

Literacy and Reading

Through her interviews, Rosa told me that learning English was not hard, and that reading was easy for her. When asked about her experiences in the North Carolina school she remembered,

[I felt] different. I mean, I didn't see people like this, brown hair, American.

They speak another language I didn't even know. I just knew Spanish. I was kind of, I didn't feel fine because there were like three kinds of races: Blacks, Americans, and Mexicans.

Rosa admitted that she had been a little scared. In 4th grade, she and her cousin were separated in school which made her feel uncomfortable. Fortunately, her ESL class helped ease her transition away from her cousin. Her ESL teacher helped her with her English pronunciations and started her on learning words and sentences. He also helped translate in her other subjects as well.

The ESL teacher from elementary, he was from Puerto Rico. He helped me know how to move our tongue. He helped us in math... It was mixed up. In one hour, he showed us how to pronounce, how to do math, and how to study social studies. So mix it up.

Rosa believed that it was her ESL class and not her language arts class that helped her gain English literacy. “In language arts, I didn’t get the words so I will draw pictures or the teacher will send me to ESL teacher, and he will help me do the work.”

Rosa told me that she had good grades in 4th grade. At home, Spanish was the main language spoken so neither her parents nor her extended family could offer much help. She really had to learn English on her own.

Now, in 7th grade, she was a confident young lady who felt she no longer needed help. She believed that attending summer school when she was still in elementary school had helped her catch up to where she needed to be within her grade level. That is where she really honed her reading and writing skills.

[In summer school,] they show us how it was going to be. That helps me. If they show me what in 4th grade it will be going to be, I will know what it will be going to be and that helps me a lot. They showed us what kind of work to do, like math, science, and language arts. They showed us how the class will be going to be and I said, “If I’m coming back next year; I will know what to do.”

While in elementary school, Rosa said she might not know what the teachers were saying but when it came to doing the work, such as in math, she just knew how to do the work. She said, “I used to sit there because I didn’t understand the English, but I get my work because I knew how to do it.”

In retrospect, Rosa wished she had practiced her English more. She said that it was interesting that English and Spanish were so similar and yet so different in spelling and pronunciation. She was confident that one day she would be totally bilingual. Rosa said being bilingual would be fun:

It's fun because I can go to Mexico and speak English and they would not understand, and I can be here and speak Spanish and they could not understand too. So it's kind of fun... [In the future], it will help me a lot because I can be in both places and speak both languages.

Rosa's school environment was her main English literacy support. While she mainly spoke Spanish with her Hispanic girl friends, she practiced English with her American classmates and teachers. Her opportunities for listening came from teachers and from watching television at home.

Rosa only felt comfortable enough to begin picking up books in 6th grade after she had studied English for two and half years. Her 6th grade teachers began emphasizing the importance of reading. From the time she stumbled across a book that looked promising, she started to read and found she enjoyed it.

In 6th grade, the teachers are telling us to read, but I didn't like it. One day, I didn't know what to do. One day, I went to the library. I picked up a book and it was so good and I started to read it. And read and read, and then I started to get my [AR] points.

She could not remember the title of the first book that had got her reading; she just remembered it as being a good book. She defined a good book as one that had won medals or that her friends had recommended.

Rosa enjoyed adventure, romance, and scary books, either fiction or non-fiction. She would select a book by reading its summary on the back cover, by determining if it had won some sort of award, or by the recommendation of her friends.

Now Rosa cannot imagine her life without books. She says, “I love reading. Reading is easy. I think reading helps my brains grow. If I see the words I don’t know, I can look them up in the dictionary and find their meanings.” She believes that reading helped her do well on her EOG tests.

In terms of AR, Rosa ranks in 3rd place among other students in her class in total points earned. Interestingly, she does not enjoy the competition aspect of AR. I asked her if she wanted to be in first place. She told me,

Not really that much because I don’t like (Pause). Last year, I was like competing with my cousin for the AR points. I have more AR points than her; she started to tell me that she was going to win me. That is when I started to... Man, I don’t feel good to compete with my cousin.

Neither did she like the 30-minute reading rule imposed by the school. She enjoyed reading, and it was not unusual for her to read for hours at a time, but she resented being forced or required to read.

Of all the study participants, Rosa was the one most willing to talk about books. We first talked about the book, *Speak*. It was a book about a girl who was raped at her friend’s party. Rosa explained,

It’s about a girl who is a freshman now, and she has trouble making friends. She had a best friend but they hated her because they say that when they had a party and she called the police but they don’t know why she called. She called because

a man raped her. That's why the book is called *Speak* because she didn't speak any much. That's why it's called *Speak*.

Rosa continued:

I have read one I really like it. *Amazing Grace*. And the other ones (pause), there are lots of good books. Oh, yeah, *The Darkness before Dawn*, *Romiette and Julio*, *Forged by the Fire*. Those are nice, good. Like *Romeo and Juliet*, it (*Romiette and Julio*) talks about gangs and people who are racism. It's a black girl who falls in love with a Mexican boy. Some people in high school, they don't like American with Mexican so they started to tell the girl to be away from the boy. They could not be together because the gangsters couldn't let them be happy. *Romiette and Julio* is about gang and gangsters. It's kind like true and about people who are racism. And that's why I like it.

Sometimes Rosa would speak about race. She said that she had never realized that there were so many different kinds of people in the world. She said, "Man, there are many races. I started to get that United States are full of races: Mexicans, Africans, Asians, and Central Americans." As with *Romiette and Julio*, she sometimes connected the discussion of race to some of the books she had read.

Rosa enjoyed books with tragic stories:

Darkness before Dawn, I like it. It's about his best friend was sick so he killed himself and the girl was never the same as before. The girl met a man and the man try to rape her, and she missed her boyfriend. But it showed her that she is still a young girl not a woman. That's why I like that book, too.

Rosa talked at length about plot and about characters who shared her similar young adolescent concerns and worries. Other topics of interest for her included books about death, gangs, race, suicide, drug addicts, sexual incidents, and tragic stories. She said,

And I like the other one. It's about a boy whose mother was a drug addict. She was put in jail. The boy was sent to the aunt. He loved his aunt very much. One day, at his birthday, his mom came. She came with a little girl and a man so he knew that he has a new stepfather and sister. His aunt had a heart attack, and he had to live with his mother. He found that the little sister was not happy. His stepfather was mean and he got drunk and hit his mother and raped his sister. It was sad. I first got interested in that book. It was like mean. It was scary, and it made me cry, too. The boy was very confused and he didn't know what to do. The boy was crying and a man helped him. His stepfather went to the jail. One day, he was 18 and his sister was 16, his stepfather came out of the jail, and then at the end the man dies because of the fire.

Her language arts teacher said Rosa was one of her top readers. She never had to push Rosa to read. I asked the teacher how much of a barrier the language presented for students like Rosa. She found that ESL students overall were eager to learn English well, and she felt that they might be even more motivated than their native English-speaking peers. She said, "I think they (ESL students) do better. They want to read more so it (the motivation) can help them. I believe that there is a little more drive to them. I see them progress from small books to big ones."

Overall, the teacher did not worry about Rosa's English literacy. She stated that Rosa's literacy level was average and above, compared with her classmates. She believed that Rosa could improve her English by participating more in class. She felt that Rosa was smart, and she needed to "speak out more and be willing to answer questions" in class. We agreed that it could be that Rosa did not have much confidence in her pronunciation when she tried to talk in class.

Rosa's ESL teacher told me that she had less than one year with Rosa because in 6th grade, the teachers had decided that they would keep students in class instead of pulling them out for ESL class. Rosa's mother came to school to advocate for her ESL class but to no avail. At the end of the 6th grade, when Rosa passed her oral exam but not her reading and writing, she returned to the ESL class in 7th grade. Ironically, in 7th grade, she passed her reading and writing but not her oral exam. The ESL teacher explained that Rosa's experience could have been because the test was new or because Rosa might need to work harder. "Rosa's writing was good when she put her heart in it. She wrote beautiful essays," but, according to the ESL teacher, Rosa did not show enough enthusiasm in learning English. Rosa told me that she could read and write in both Spanish and English. Below is Rosa's essay written for her ESL class in April 2004 about allowing a girl to join the school's football team:

Well my opinion to this problem is an easy one. It would not hurt a little bit to let a girl play on a school football team. And if she's athletic and is very good at playing it, just give her a chance. Boy and girl have all the rights to play in any sports, no matter if the game is for boys or girls. This girl may even help the other players to win games for the school. And like I said just give her a chance.

In the writing, she wrote as if she were talking to someone. She did not worry about her writing or literacy because she said that she always got good grades. She hoped to improve her vocabulary by reading more and using a dictionary to become a better reader and writer.

Family and Peer Interaction

Rosa had many relatives around her, and she mentioned that her cousin in Canada was her role model because she was “rich and lived a good life.” Rosa told me that her parents were strict but good to her, and they had great expectations for her.

They are strict, but they are nice too. Like, they will let me go to dances here at school and my friends, but they don't want me to go to my friends' houses or go somewhere else. I like them but sometimes I get mad at them because they told me when they were little, they could go to dances or wherever they want with their friends. They can go to their friends', but I can't. Sometimes, I got mad because they can have their lives. Why I can't have mine?

Rosa enjoyed dancing and said, “Every Mexican knows how to dance.” She disagreed with her parents over boys and boyfriends. She said, “They think bad.” Rosa's mother has warned her about the consequences of teen pregnancy. She told Rosa that she had better focus on school to get a better life in the future instead of being concerned about boyfriends. Rosa's mother and father also worried about her safety outside of their home. They did not feel comfortable letting her go out even with friends. Rosa complained that she had to stay home most of the time because her parents were too strict:

They (my parents) will let me talk on the phone a little while and then they will be saying like hanging up the phone. We (my sister and I) have to stay at home because they said like it's not secure to go out.

On weekends, her mother may drive her to the mall to meet her friends.

Rosa knew her parents worked hard to give her family a better life. She said, I have confidence that I can go to college. My mom said, "When you go to college, you have to study hard, and you can have a little fun." They want me to finish school and my college and be somebody. Have a good life. She (my mom) said, "You don't want to work like ten hours a day or twelve hours a day. I said that I don't want to. She said, "Then, study."... I think I have a good opportunity to finish school and have a good life. They said they are working hard for us. They don't want us to suffer. They want us to have a good life. Yeah, they come here so we can have a better life; me and my sister to learn English, and to know Spanish, but not to forget about our own race.

She said a better life meant better in education and opportunities. She offered, "my mom said" many times in the interviews. Rosa believed she would go to college and have a better life. She had high expectation for herself saying, "I want them (my parents) to have a good life. It is their work to [give] me what I need, and it's my work to give them what they need [in the future]."

Rosa talked about her extended family, her uncles, aunts, cousins, and nephews, several times during the interviews. She told me that she was teaching her little nephew how to play soccer in the backyard after school. She missed her life in Mexico. She missed her grandparents who were still in Mexico. She felt divided in her life now and

then, here and there. “Sometimes I want to go back, but I have my life there, and I have my life here. I don’t know where to go.”

Rosa was proud of her heritage, and angry at students in school who did not like Mexicans:

Some people get us mad and we started to speak in Spanish. There are people here who don’t like Mexicans. When we speak Spanish and then some people said, “Don’t speak Spanish; speak English because it is United States.” We told them to shut up because it is none of their business.

When I asked her about her school experience here, her first thoughts were about the different races she saw in school. While she had friends of all races, she felt more comfortable with her Mexican friends.

Rosa told me, “People say I have changed.” She explained,

Last year, I just got along with my cousin. I wouldn’t talk to nobody. I was like a saint. Last year, I will not go anywhere. People said I have changed a lot and that’s because of my friends. They are like more free. Now, I want to be with them and we have fun together in PE, everywhere we have fun talking. Just having fun. ... I have friends in high school. I have friends here. Last year, I didn’t use to have friends, just my cousin here. Now, I have a lot of friends, and I don’t even remember their names.

Rosa believes the change after 6th grade came about because she made more friends after she lost weight. Now she and her friends talk about “study, boys, shopping, what to buy, CDs, music, and everything.” She told me that she likes how she is now,

and having fun with her friends is important, so important she decided to remain in 7th grade.

Rosa's ESL teacher expressed concern about Rosa's friends' influence on her. Ms. Sal felt that Rosa should put more effort in her school work and less on her friendships. Rosa, on the other hand, believed that she had a good balance between "studying and having fun."

Rosa joined the girl's soccer team in school. She stayed after school for practices and games. She loved playing soccer but she did not enjoy activities in PE class. She usually read her AR books or talked to friends during her PE time.

School Experience

Rosa was satisfied that she got good grades. She believed school was easy for her. She knew that her parents expected her to earn A's and B's and she added, "I can't go down 'cause they will kill me." She believed the few freedoms her parents allowed her with her friends were because she maintained good grades. Overall, she was happy although she still regretted being a grade behind.

About her elementary school experience, Rosa said it was easy.

In third grade, I knew everything already because in Mexico, in kindergarten, you have to start to learn how to read. First grade, you have started adding and subtracting. So in 3rd grade, they show how to subtract. I already learn that in 1st grade. In 4th grade, it was kind of strange because when I was in 3rd grade, I was with my cousin and in 4th grade, I was not. I was with other Mexicans.

She felt that her language arts teachers in elementary school did not help her in learning English. She got good grades even though she did not necessarily know what the

teachers were talking about in class. It wasn't until 5th grade when she began to understand her teachers.

She described her middle school teachers as most helpful. She saw them as patient and nice, and said they would willingly explain things to her until she got it. Her least favorite subject was science. She did not like science activities such as using a microscope. Her favorite class was math. She said, "I always got good grades in math," and she felt confident in solving math problems.

Rosa's Day

Rosa usually woke up around 7 a.m. Her bus came around 7:45. Like Amber, she did not like to eat breakfast so she would grab a snack in the cafeteria before going to class.

Rosa's first class should have been science, but she was pulled out for ESL for 45 minutes and then rejoined her science class. Even though she missed part of science, she did not think it hurt her grade. She made sure she kept up with her homework and got help from the teacher if she needed it.

After science, Rosa had PE. She was always one of the last to enter the gym. After a few stretching exercises or tests, students could choose to play basketball, volleyball, or table tennis, or they could sit on the bleachers to read their AR books. Rosa would read most of the time.

At recess, Rosa sat with a group of four Mexican girls. They all wore big hoop gold earrings. Like at PE, they stayed together and chatted. After recess, Rosa went back to language arts. Rosa's 7th grade language arts was longer than the 8th graders and was divided into two sections by lunchtime. The language arts teacher sometimes used

some of the time to ask students to pick up AR books or read silently in the media center. Students took their AR tests on the computers either in the language arts classroom or in the media center. The language arts teacher posted each student his/her AR points and goals they needed to reach every six weeks on one of the bulletin boards in the classroom. Rosa ranked as the third highest in her class.

At lunchtime, Rosa joined her four friends who all happened to be in the same class. During the school day, they usually stayed together when they walked to different classrooms and during PE time, recess time, and lunchtime. During my observations, I notice that while she was in class, Rosa avoided her friends. She preferred to concentrate on what her teachers said so she sat by herself. She believed that as long as she paid attention in class, she would earn good grades.

After school, Rosa enjoyed talking to friends on the phone, sometimes for up to three hours. Now that the EOG exams were approaching, however, Rosa kept her phone conversations to 30 minutes a day or less so she could spend more time studying.

Rosa's mom did not like her to go out to meet friends after school because she was concerned about Rosa's safety. Even if Rosa wanted to go to a friend's house for a party, her mom would escort her.

Rosa enjoyed her big family in her neighborhood. She had uncles, aunts, cousins and nephews all close by. After school, Rosa sometimes enjoyed teaching her little nephew soccer. Sometimes, she was allowed to run errands with her cousin.

Rosa felt that she managed her time well after school. She budgeted between doing homework, reading, and building in a little time for fun. For fun, she liked watching sports, music, and Spanish programs on television. She especially liked

watching programs on the Mun2 (*Mundos*—two worlds in two languages) channel. The hosts of Mun2 would speak a mixture of Spanish with English. Rosa told me it was called “Spanglish.”

Summary

Rosa had initially struggled in school when she first came to North Carolina from Mexico. She was forced to repeat 3rd grade in her new school and that had caused her decided embarrassment and frustration. However, she found herself in 3rd grade with her cousin which proved to be a great support for her transition.

By 5th grade Rosa was understanding her teachers and doing well in school. Her 7th grade year saw a new, thinner, more outgoing Rosa, who was showing normal adolescent interests. She was making good grades, and in her language arts class she had the 3rd highest AR score in the class. Some of her success definitely could be attributed to her ESL classes. Rosa was a good reader and enjoyed young adult literature. She reveled in music, dancing, shopping, playing soccer, and doing things with her friends. She complained that her parents were too strict, and she was confident that she could balance time for fun with time for schoolwork.

Rosa had the support of her core family and an extended family. Her parents had high expectations for her success and wanted her to do well in school. She was a young lady who had confidence in herself as well.

Chad, 8th Grader, One Year and Eight Months in Learning English

Background and Personality

Chad was pleased to be involved in my study. He appreciated having the opportunity to practice his English with other people. Chad’s ESL teacher spoke highly

of him. She said, “Since his first day, he will repeat and apply what he learned. He is very good at using what he is learning, very observing.” During my observation time, I always saw him participate eagerly and willingly in class.

Chad’s father has been in the US for 20 years. Before Chad’s father moved the whole family here, Chad’s two older brothers joined their father to work in the US. In June 2002, the rest of Chad’s family came to the US. There were eight people in the family: the father, mother, 24-year-old brother, 22-year-old brother, 20-year-old sister, 17-year-old brother, 13-year-old Chad, and 4-year-old sister.

Chad said his mother was a great support. Chad felt that his 22-year-old brother knew him better than his father did. He said, “My brother is like my second father. I feel like I have more connection with him.” His brother told him to study hard and behave in school and he would help Chad go to college.

In addition to his immediate family, Chad had many aunts and uncles close by. Chad said that his family had waited a long time for the proper legal papers before coming to the US.

In the interviews, Chad was pleasant and personable. He talked with me eagerly sometimes interrupting my questions with his comments. Ms. Sal, his ESL teacher, described him as “very restless” and said he wanted to learn but had trouble paying attention. She told me in the interview that after one week of learning English, Chad was conversing so well his other teachers could not believe that he had just started to learn English. She joked that this actually caused them a little trouble in that his teachers then became skeptical when he wanted his Hispanic classmates to help him translate. She explained:

One week later, after Chad had come here, whatever English he had learned, he was applying it. The teachers thought he knew English so they wouldn't let him get help from other students because he speaks English. We explain that he doesn't speak English. He is practicing what he is learning. We have a lot of problems with that. So Chad asked, "What am I going to do? I just want to practice what I have learned."

Chad's English was good enough for him to serve as a translator for his family. After only one year he could speak English better than anyone else in his family. He explained how this made him feel:

Chad: Then, like a half year [ago], I was excited 'cause (pause) my brother one day said, "Can you translate for me?" I don't know. I never translate for people. And for the first time, I did it wrong. And then I practice and practice. Now...

Chiu: You can help people translate now?

Chad: It happened one day. We did not finish.... We want to get the resident card. The papers, signs, and we need to sign more paper. When we need to sign more paper and then that day, I was the only one. (Pause)

Chiu: Who can speak more English?

Chad: Yeah.

Chad enjoyed being able to translate for his family and he was shrewd about using his "power."

Chiu: So how do you feel about your family's influence on you?

Chad: Sometimes, they will like telling me keeping good grades but sometimes when we have field trips, they will say, "We don't have money for this." My

father sometimes did not want me to go to. I say, “I don’t translate for you any more” and he said, “Ok. You go.” If I just do whatever they want; they will not let me go anywhere. You know, yesterday, my sister. I told her to take me to school. Because she is going to be late [for] work and she said, “I don’t have to take you to school, you can take a bus. I told her that then I don’t want to help you like last time: She wants to get her cell phone [and] I went to translate and make payment. She said, “OK.”

Literacy and Reading

Even though he had only been in North Carolina for one year and eight months, Chad was confident in his speaking especially from serving as a translator in his family. He said English was easy for him. He knew that his willingness to express himself in English helped him a lot but at the same time he also felt that he did not get enough practice in speaking English.

Chad had English as foreign language (EFL) in his 6th grade when he was still in Mexico. He did not count it as learning English. He complained that his teacher in Mexico had not taught him to pronounce English like it was pronounced in the United States. He told me that he had just learned a few words before he came to the United States. When he came in June of 2002, he only knew a few words but he started to learn the alphabet that summer. His younger cousin helped him when he first came to North Carolina, and by August he was excited by all he had learned before school started. When he started school in North Carolina, he felt excited and a little strange, but he said he had not been afraid because many people would talk to him and help him. He said,

I liked the school. I was not afraid or something because in the first day, everyone started to talk to me and I make friends [immediately] and everything. In fact, I [almost] couldn't go to school the first day. [At the night before that,] I said, "I can't sleep, I want to go to school."

Chad got help from his classmates, including Amber. In my observations, I saw Amber translating for Chad. He appreciated his Hispanic peers' help in class.

When he first came, he got lots of help from ESL teachers. He said, "I am quite lucky to be here. They have good teachers. Actually, most of the time, we are with Mr. Wood. He actually is more with students who don't know English." Ms. Sal and Mr. Wood knew both Spanish and English. Chad felt comfortable about learning English with explanations in Spanish to help him understand, especially in the beginning. He said,

Mr. Wood, he gave us a sheet of paper and told me and Neil, "You memorize these, I think you will speak a little bit of English." And then, me and Chad, we memorize all the words. And then when we memorize all the words. He said, "Let's start to make up sentences." He explained. He explained to us in Spanish. You know the new boy? They did the same to him.

For his first year, Chad was pulled out of the regular classroom often, and spent most of his time in the ESL classrooms. There were three ESL teachers on the school's ESL team. Many of the ESL classes offered "individualized" instruction because they were only two students in class. This year, Chad and Neil were mainstreamed back to their regular classes and spent only two periods a day in ESL classes.

Chad feared that he did not have enough contact with English speaking people because his family spoke Spanish. Mr. Wood suggested that he watch television to listen and learn English. Chad said,

In my family, everybody speaks Spanish and Mr. Wood said it doesn't really help us a lot. We need to be with people who speak English. Then he said, "Look at the TV and learn English." And then I started to listen. In the beginning, my cousins, they have been three years here. They like to watch cartoons in English. I said, "Put it in Spanish now." They put in English and they said that will help you to learn more English.

Watching cartoons with his cousins helped him, and he boasted, "I could learn fast." He said,

Actually, all the time, I understand everything. I understand everything [they] just told me. If I am reading a lesson, just two or three words that I don't understand. That's normal because I haven't enough time but I understand most of the... like 80 percent what I read, I understand.

Chad suggested that other new ESL students should focus on memorizing new words, speak more, and listen to the teachers. He expected that in high school, he would start to learn another language, either Italian or French, "because they are easy. They are just like Spanish."

In the interview, we talked about how lucky he was to go to school when two of his older brothers had to work and study English on the side. To my surprise and delight, he related the situation to a book. He stated, "I read a book. It says about a boy who did not go to school for four years. He had to go to work."

Starting in 7th grade, only his first year learning English, Chad started to read short books of about 20 pages. Initially, he felt frustrated in his reading comprehension and his ability to read out loud. However, he believed that reading could help his vocabulary and spelling. Chad said,

[It seemed like] that I am following the reading [in class] and I understand but when they are finished [reading]; then that's like I didn't read it. So I need to read again. Last year, I did not understand any book because I read like that. I [just] started reading, you know. This year, I start on reading and I understand more.

Chad noticed two months ago that he was beginning to understand more of what he was reading. He was motivated to be like his peers. He felt that the more he read, the more he would understand:

You know what help me to read books? 'Cause everybody reads big books.

Sometimes I tried to read big books. Then, one day, my friend Samuel gave me the book. [He said,] "That's a good book. It will help you understand." When I started to read the book, then I start to try another book. You know what was needed to read the book? I need to read the [series] book so I will understand.

Through his friend's recommendation, Chad started to read series books. He finished that book, *The Circuit*, in one afternoon. He said, "I wasted one afternoon." I corrected him, "Not waste, you spent." In my research diary that day, April 20, 2004 (after the second interview with Chad), I wrote:

In the interview, Chad always spoke very fast but not always clear voice or correct grammar. Well, maybe his brains go faster than his mouth and his English expression is not enough to express how he really feels yet. He usually interrupts

me before I can finish saying a complete sentence. He was like talking anything whatever he liked to talk about instead of following my questions. Was that because he did not understand my questions? Or because he just liked to followed whatever his mindset was. I think he is still building up his oral literacy. He might learn and use words that he learned from others' conversations but I don't know why he used the word, "waste." What was that? With a participant like Chad in the study, I might need to spend more time to observe and interview him but I could feel his impatience by telling me that he had talked about everything already and no need for the third interview.

While talking to him in the interviews, I usually had to repeat what he told me to make sure I did not hear him wrong or to clarify what he meant. It seemed that his frustration in reading came from his lack of comprehension and lack of vocabulary. He acknowledged that reading aloud in class was difficult for him.

Chad expressed a love of reading and pride that he could now read books with more than one hundred pages, which he called "big books." He would recommend books to his friend Neil. Chad read at school and at home. He said, "When I have time to read a lot, I read a lot. When I don't, I just read a little." He estimated that he spent on average 30 minutes to an hour reading at home. He mentioned several books he had read and loved. Two, which he felt a special connection to, were about immigrants.

They are *The Circuit*, *Breaking Through*, [and] *The Cheerleader: The Second Evil*. First because it talked about the immigrants, you know, the first two. And then the last one is about, I don't know [how to describe it].... It talked about

strange things like a girl can hear scream. The scream kills people. Like scary book.

For all his confidence in reading, Chad had even more for his writing ability. He said writing was easy for him. He felt that the only thing he needed to improve upon was his spelling. His language arts teacher disagreed:

Chad's writing skill is really, really limited, I think, because his vocabulary is still very limited. I think if he writes in his native language, his writing will be above his peers, but because he has such a huge gap in vocabulary. When it comes to writing, there are some concepts that are foreign to them (ESL) until you hear the explanation. He has got to go back to his native language to dig what he tries to write about.

Below is a sample of his writing from February, 2004:

I think that the best solution is that the people might have to care about the air pollution and the invairoment (environment) contamination because if the people don't want to help on the contamination problem the community will be affected by the wather (weather) the air pollution and the messy that the community are doing the (The) people will get sick and because the people that don't care about what's happening with the community they only came and start messy around and what we need to do is don't throw trash everi wear (everywhere) and be careful with the people that are only messing around.

Chad definitely needs improvement in his spelling and sentence structure. In the interviews, he worried about his spelling. In this writing sample, he did not use any punctuation except the last period at the end of the paragraph.

Family and Peer Interaction

On the home front, while Chad's father did not ever say much, his mother encouraged him to do his best all the time. Chad said,

They said, "Pay attention to the teachers. Don't just play." Actually, in the beginning I have like behavior not so good. I was like they say... and I get mad and everything. Sometimes and sometimes, they kept telling me and tell me. My head hurt me. And like, well, I don't want to learn any more. I want to be at home. I want to get out of the school. And then, they tell me: "No, you have to go to school."

Chad felt that he got more support from his 22-year-old brother who encouraged him to behave and try hard in school and he would help him get to college. Chad said,

You know, my brother, the 22-year-old. He understand me more. He said, "I would look for you. I think I will put you in college if you behave and don't give us problems and everything. Be good and everything."

Chad felt that his brother who was in high school was not trying hard enough to learn to speak English. He said,

He didn't have a lot of practice because he always hangs out with Mexican friends. He didn't really do the work. Sometimes he asks me what it means and help him and in the beginning, I didn't know how to explain him but now I know how to explain to him and help him.

Two of his older brothers came to the United States to work and did not attend school.

Chad felt lucky to be able to go to school.

Chad spoke confidently about his future. He believed that he would go to college and then find a good job. He talked about maybe studying to be a television reporter, a lawyer, or even an artist. However, he was sure he did not want to be an engineer:

I don't like that because I don't like anything about construction. I like nothing about mechanics, you know, like fixing cars. It's greasy. Actually I never like it. I like clean and [neat.]

Unlike Ryan who was always with a fixed group of friends, Chad had a wider range of friends; some from his regular classes, some from ESL class, and some from the neighborhood. He told me that in the beginning of 7th grade, he got in trouble with his friends because he thought he should tell the teacher when they were doing something wrong like cheating. Ironically, he confessed that in the beginning, he, too, had to copy from his classmates' papers to help him understand what was going on in the class. He explained, "In the beginning, she helped Neil and me. I copied it not because I want to." Chad also clashed with his friends over what he called their bad attitudes toward teachers and learning. So he decided to leave them alone and spend time with other classmates.

Chad, like other participants in the study, sometimes speaks a mixture of English and Spanish with his Mexican friends. He said, "We speak in Span-English. We speak like some words in Spanish and some words in English, like any ways that they understand."

In his free time, Chad enjoyed playing soccer with boys in his neighborhood. On weekends, he said,

Saturdays and Sundays, he (my brother) goes to play soccer. He plays on a team. I am there. I am the administrator. Everybody gives me their money. I keep

everybody's jewels. I said, "I am a rich man." I have to keep like two or three pockets of money, and bracelets because they can't play with that. You know, I am full with everything.

School Experience

Chad's ESL teacher Ms. Sal described him as "immature, no rules, restless, observing and interrupting." She said, "He really was very restless, and he wanted to learn a lot, but he wouldn't pay attention. He was so restless—looking for the girls, the paper, and talking to people. Just interrupting, very interrupting." Chad acknowledged that he was not a stranger to the planning room for in-school suspension.

Chad appreciated his teachers' help. When he started school here in 7th grade, he did not see much difference between schools in North Carolina and those in Mexico. In the United States, he was anxious to go to school. "I could not go to sleep" the night before, he told me.

Unlike Rosa, Chad did not have to repeat a grade. He said,

Something is strange here, that I am in school, and they did not make me one year back, but they make my brother one year back for school. And then, he failed the grade last year because he did not know enough English. He supposed to be 11th [grade] but he is in 9th grade [now.]

The first few weeks Chad enjoyed school but after two months, he began to feel too much pressure, and he no longer enjoyed going to school. Chad's language arts teacher became concerned about his inconsistency and change in attitude. On one of my observation days, he had to go to the "planning room" which meant in-school suspension. Apparently

this was becoming more common for him. Chad explained why he was misbehaving in class:

Actually, in the beginning, I have like behaviors not so good. I was like they say [so many things] and I get mad and everything. Sometimes they kept telling me and telling me; my head hurt me. I don't want to learn any more. I want to be at home. I want to get out of the school. They (my parents) tell me, "No, you have to go to school."

Even now, he confessed that he did not know how to focus: "Well, I always try to listen but sometimes I don't understand. I used to be concentrated because when I am lost, I am 100 percent lost. When I pick up my pencil from the ground. I got lost the whole stuff."

Chad's language arts teacher said,

Chad likes to get in and create mischief, not like trouble. I don't think he likes to get in trouble. Mischief is the smaller version. He likes to do little things to annoy people, little things to get under people's skin but he doesn't want to get in troubles... Chad's verbal skills are coming along, but I see Chad's struggling in reading. He is getting better. He certainly is better than at the beginning of the year.

In my observations, I saw two occasions when Chad got "under teachers' skin." Ms. Sal described his behavior as "just immature and no rules."

Behavior aside, Chad had confidence in his academic performance both in language arts and in math, although as the EOG test neared, he was becoming nervous. He attended the school's tutoring program for reading and math that was offered during

extracurricular time the last period of the school day. He saw himself as being a good math student but thought the extra help might help him do better on the EOG tests. After school, there were some high school volunteer students who also came into the middle school to provide tutoring. Chad attended both tutoring sessions in April. Ms. Sal believed that Chad was serious about his school work, and she was confident that he could be responsible for his learning. His language arts teacher expected Chad would do well as long as he remained focused.

Chad's Day

When I first met Chad, he had gotten in trouble at school and had to spend two days in-school suspension. Students like Chad who got in-school suspension had to stay a small, windowless room their whole day without talking or socializing with any other students. A teacher was with them at all times. Sometimes they had to write reflections and read silently. For Chad this was not so bad because he enjoyed reading.

Normally, Chad had two periods of ESL in the morning. Because of the schedule, he and Neil, the 5th participant in the study who came to school 20 days later than Chad, actually had three ESL teachers. Chad felt that he was lucky to be in this school because of the ESL resources. He told me,

For example, some school, they don't have so many Spanish students there. They just got two or three. They don't have ESL. I was lucky to get in this school because here, they have the most Mexicans around these schools. And then, for my fortune here, Mr. Wood and Ms. Sal (ESL teachers) are teaching here.

Chad enjoyed the company of other Mexican friends, however, he did not really have a fixed group of friends. Chad felt that some of his friends had bad attitudes toward learning. Sometimes they cheated on tests. Chad decided to keep his distance:

Last year, I had friends who are in my other class. They got me in a lot of troubles 'cause sometimes they are doing something, like sometimes they cheat on the tests or something like that.

Chad liked to practice his English whenever he got the chance, unlike his brother who preferred to hang out with his Mexican friends. Chad felt that it was important to practice English, and he was proud that he was the only one in his family who could translate for them after learning English for only one year.

Every time Chad checked out new books from the school's media center, he shared them with his friend Neil. He liked to recommend good books to his friends. The media specialist taught him how to divide words into syllables to pronounce the words. Chad knew that he could ask for help from any of his teachers and other school personnel.

In the afternoon Chad had PE, however, on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays he went to reading class instead of PE. In reading class, the teacher used software programs on the computer to help students strengthen their reading skills. On the computer Chad would work on things such as speed-reading, vocabulary, synonyms, and other fun activities designed to support learning. Chad liked his reading class but he also enjoyed PE class.

The last period in school was extracurricular activity time. Chad normally was in dance class with Amber. Now, as the EOG test was approaching, Chad had to go to a remediation class to get help. He hoped to pass the EOG tests in both math and reading.

After school, Chad rode the school bus and arrived at home around 3:30 pm. Chad's mom would fix him a "real lunch." After finishing his homework, Chad joined his neighborhood friends to play soccer. Back at home, he watched cartoons with his little sister. When he got the chance, he would watch Spanish programs. The Spanish channel mixed Spanish with English. Chad called it "Span-English." He also liked to watch Spanish soap operas. Sometimes, he liked to listen to music on the radio; sometimes he would read. He had no set bedtime.

Chad would talk for hours on the telephone. When his father said Chad had to pay the phone bill if he kept talking for so long, Chad decided to curtail his phone time, especially now that the EOG test was approaching.

Summary

When the study was concluded, Chad had been in the US for less than two years, but was becoming more and more comfortable with the language. He seized every opportunity to practice his English. He was the only study participant who talked about the value of watching TV programs improve his listening comprehension.

He took pride in his ability to translate for his family even if he did sometimes use it to his advantage. Unlike the previous study participants, Amber, Ryan, and Rosa who only had ESL one period a day, Chad was pulled out more from his regular classes to get extra help in ESL class. Chad felt that he had been lucky to get this extra help. With the

EOG test dates approaching in May, Chad was confident that he could pass the reading and math test as long as he studied.

*Neil, The 8th grader, One Year and Eight Months in English Learning
Background and Personality*

Neil was shy, and he spoke softly during our interviews. According to his ESL teacher, Neil resisted practicing his English in the beginning. During the interviews, he sometimes asked me to repeat what I had asked so I would try to find different words to help him understand me. During the observations, I always sat at the back of each class. Neil would always turn around to look at me.

Neil's father had come to the United States in 2000. Neil, along with his mother and older brother, joined their father in September 2002. He had started school 20 days after Chad, and he and Chad had many of the same classes together.

In my research diary for April 27, 2004, I wrote,

When I interviewed Chad, Chad would talk about what he wanted to talk about regardless of my questions. Neil was not like Chad. Neil often showed confusion and told me that he did not understand my questions. After explaining to him, he usually replied with very short answers. Chad and Neil were always in the same class. The first period of ESL class was like an “individualized” tutoring section made for them. One teacher taught only two students—Chad and Neil. I would also feel lucky if I were the student here.

Unlike Chad who jumped at the chance to test out the new skills he had learned through his ESL class, Neil shied away from speaking. Neil refused to practice English in Ms. Sal's ESL class because he knew she could speak Spanish. Neil told me that he

had taken great comfort in being able to talk in Spanish to two ESL teachers and lots of Mexican students, especially for the beginning of his learning. Finally, Ms. Sal had Neil and Chad moved to another ESL class where the teacher did not speak Spanish. That proved to be a turning point for Neil. He now began making more attempts to practice English.

Neil actually had English as a foreign language (EFL) while he was in Mexico from 1st through 6th grade. He did not think those six years studying English had been helpful. He said, “I just learned a few words.” The excerpt showed how he interacted with me in the interview:

Chiu: So you have English class from 1st grade to 6th grade. How much time did you learn?

Neil: (pause) Can you repeat the sentence?

Chiu: Yes. I mean in one day or in one week, how many hours did you learn English?

Neil: Like one hour.

Chiu: One hour in a...

Neil: In a day.

Chiu: So it's for each day, you have one hour for English learning.

Neil: No, not for each day. Some days. We have different schedule [for each day.]

Chiu: So in a week, how many hours?

Neil: Like two hours.

Chiu: But it's a lot. Do you feel that?

Neil: Yes, but I did not pay attention to that. (Smile)

Chiu: Was that hard for you or you feel OK?

Neil: Hmm... a little bit hard.

Chiu: Is your school a public or private school?

Neil: Public.

Chiu: Does every public school have English like your school?

Neil: No.

Chiu: How was your learning in Mexico?

Neil: Hmm... (Pause)

Chiu: In general.

Neil: Not so good.

Chiu: Why?

Neil: 'Cause I did not pay attention to the class.

Chiu: You did not pay attention to class. How about now?

Neil: Now I try to pay attention because I need to... (Inaudible)

Chiu: You need to?

Neil: To learn.

Chiu: You mean now you have to pay more attention because you need to learn?

Neil: Yeah, I need to learn to speak more because I need to speak in the class.

After interviewing Chad who was always in a rush and interrupted me before I could finish a complete sentence, Neil was a totally different story. Neil always spoke in a soft almost inaudible voice. Often he needed me to repeat my questions.

Chiu: What do you feel when you first came to the United States?

Neil: Fine.

Chiu: Why?

Neil: (pause) I don't know.

Chiu: And how do you feel about school?

Neil: I think that's a good school.

Chiu: Why?

Neil: Because the teachers are nice to students. Hmm... (pause) I don't know. I think just that.

Chiu: Ok. When you first come, how do you feel, in the beginning of learning English here?

Neil: Embarrassed 'cause I didn't know how to speak.

Chiu: What else?

Neil: (Silence.)

Chiu: Do you feel scared?

Neil: No.

Chiu: Do you feel that you have to work hard?

Neil: Yeah.

I had to ask many "leading" questions or he would only answer, "I don't know." He acknowledged that he was, indeed, shy but said his older brother who was in high school was even "more shy," explaining that his brother would stay home most of the time and had little interaction with friends.

Literacy and Reading

Neil's language arts teacher spoke encouragingly about Neil's literacy development. He said,

Neil's performance has enormously improved from the beginning of the year to now. At the beginning of the year, I didn't think he would pass the end of grade test but now I think he will pass the end of grade test without problem.

In math class in 7th grade, Neil's math teacher understood that he did not know enough English to understand the instructions. Chad and Neil were allowed to read silently in class and do their ESL homework. The math teacher did not ask them to do any math homework or take any tests.

Even though Neil had studied EFL in Mexico for six years, he did not consider that he had learned English at all, partly because he had not made an effort to learn it and partly because the vocabulary had been limited. I probed several times why he did not think he learned English in Mexico. He only would reply, "I don't know;" or smiled without saying a word.

Here, he felt comfortable in his ESL class because in the beginning the books he used had both languages in them. He also preferred to get explanations in Spanish when he tried to learn a new word. Unlike the other study participants, he did not express any specific appreciation about ESL teachers helping him nor did he ever say that he was lucky to have his ESL teachers, however, when I asked about how he learned English, he said that his ESL teachers had helped him. He thought it was important that his teachers knew Spanish and because of that, he could better learn English.

Neil was good at learning new vocabulary and spelling. In one observation in ESL class, Neil quickly learned several new but potentially confusing words without having to take any notes, and he did well when he took a quiz on the new words.

In 7th grade, the first year of Neil's English learning, he started picking up short books of about 20 pages during ESL class. By his 8th grade year, Neil had started to read chapter books of around 200 pages.

Neil knew that he could learn new words through reading, and that reading would help him in gaining English literacy, but he confessed that he was usually too lazy to read. Without being forced to earn AR points, he said that he probably would never have started to read. However, in 7th grade, he was required to get AR points. He told me that there were some books, which were printed in both Spanish and English in the library. When he took a test, his ESL teacher Mr. Wood would translate the questions into Spanish to help him understand. He read just enough to keep his AR points up and his teachers happy.

Neil said that he usually read at school in his spare time, but he did not really enjoy reading at home. In school, he would read when he finished his math practice before other classmates did. He could also read at PE, language arts, and ESL class during silent reading period. His parents encouraged him to read more but, "I am lazy," he said.

Neil's friends sometimes recommended good books to him. I saw Chad share books with Neil on several occasions. I once saw that Chad borrowed several books from the media center and handed one to Neil. Neil preferred mystery and horror books.

Interestingly, he admitted that he had passed the AR tests and gotten AR points after watching the Harry Potter movies instead of reading the books.

Unlike Chad, Neil lacked confidence in his English reading and writing. He knew he could help himself by reading more and learning new words by looking them up in the dictionary but he would not make any effort to do so. With a little more pressure, as from earning AR points, Neil admitted that he might be motivated to try a little harder. While his language arts teacher believed Neil would pass the reading EOG test, Neil did not have much confidence himself.

His language arts teacher said,

I think Neil wants to learn but Neil doesn't want anybody to know that he wants to work. (Laugh). Neil is very quiet. Neil will not give you lots of answers. Neil will prefer if he doesn't have to read in class. For a while Neil tried to pretend: I can't read. Well, yes, you can read it. Reading and comprehension are two different things. Neil can read the words but not always comprehend the words. Neil's performance has enormously improved from the beginning of the year to now... I think he is accelerating ahead of the typical ESL students.

For Neil as for Chad, their lack of vocabulary hampered their ability to write on their grade level. His language arts teacher said, "He (Neil) has similar vocabulary problems like Amber has, but Amber is in a higher level. His writing once again is very limited like Chad's writing. He's very limited in what he can do as his English vocabulary is poor." Below is an excerpt of his writing sample from his ESL class on a summary of *Anne of Green Gables*:

The main idea of chapter 1- 10 is that Ann was an orphan girl who was going to be adopt by Marilla and Mathew. I[t] started when Anne was at the train station waiting for Mathew, then Mathew came he said there must be a mistake She thought about the mistake about the train being left. Then they got on the buggy and left. Anne was talkative and Mathew was shy. When she did not like a name she would change it. When they arrive at green gables Anne knew it was green gable.

Neil knew he was struggling with his writing because of his limited English vocabulary. He depended on his friends to help him. He did not think he had problems with spelling.

Family and Peer Interaction

Neil's father and mother expected him to do well in school and to go on to college. His parents encouraged him to pay attention and behave well in school. Unlike Chad, Neil never went to the principal's office for in-school suspension. He said that he was careful to behave. At home, his parents allowed Neil and his brother to play video games for one hour. On the weekends, their family went shopping together and to church every Sunday. Neil told me that he did not really read at home. His time after school was mostly spent in playing soccer with his friends and watching TV. He read at school to gain his AR points.

Neil played soccer with friends after school for two to three hours a day. He had friends from school and from his neighborhood. He was more comfortable speaking Spanish and I usually saw him more around his Spanish-speaking peers in school. He usually hung out with Mexican friends because being able to communicate in Spanish

was important to him. Now, however, in 8th grade Ms. Sal was becoming concerned about his friends' influence on him. She felt that Neil was changing and trying to be cool to impress his friends. She said,

His behavior is different. He had got very excellent behavior, very shy, quiet, and everything. Now, his behavior is changing and changing. One (Chad) went from immature to be much better; the other (Neil) from very good to be influenced by some friends.

She hoped that Neil would be careful to make wise choices and to think for himself.

Neil's language arts teacher had similar concerns. He had great expectation for Neil and believed that he could do well in high school as long as he worked hard. He was concerned that Neil's peers would not be good academic influences. When we talked about Neil trying to "hide out" to impress his friends, he said,

Yeah, I have noticed. I think it is typical among Hispanic males. That is, they get in a group and nobody wants to be below or above in that group... OK.

That's not only Hispanic. I think it happens to several groups because I work in several areas [to know that.] I think that's what his (Neil's) problem is, too. In the beginning [of 8th grade], I did not see him hanging out with lots of people. I am beginning to see his social development. He is actually, I think, developing quicker socially [compared] to Chad and he is kind of mirroring images of people. For example, I think Neil at times tried to image Patrick... Neil, for him to be able to improve [in academics,] has to separate himself from that; otherwise, he is going to be sucked down to that same way which would be disappointed.

Neil mentioned that he enjoyed being with friends to talk and to play soccer but he did not see that his friends might be having a negative effect on his academics. He said, “Sometimes they tell me to read, and sometimes they tell me to play.” He believed that it was his personal responsibility to study for schoolwork.

School Experience

Neil told me in the interviews that he and his friends studied math together. I observed him and his classmates interacting in math class, checking their answers and practicing problems.

Neil did not find many differences between school in Mexico and school in the United States. He liked schools at both places. He felt that he had good experiences at both places, although he said he probably didn’t learn as well as he should have in Mexico because he “did not pay attention to the class.”

Early on in school in North Carolina, Neil felt embarrassed because he could not say a word. However, he did not feel scared because he could still communicate with some teachers and students in Spanish. He said, “[In the beginning, I felt] embarrassed ‘cause I didn’t know how to speak.” Being able to communicate in Spanish made him feel comfortable in the new environment. He was comforted because the teachers were nice to students. He started to pick up new words and tried to make sentences with the support of ESL classes.

In 7th grade, Neil spent most of his days in ESL classes. He told me that he felt much better about his English in 8th grade. He said, “I think I know how to read better, and I can understand better than 7th grade. I can write better. I think that’s the reason that I feel better in 8th grade than 7th grade.”

He felt that he should pay more attention in class now because he could understand more.

The following excerpt showed how he felt about bilingual ability:

Chiu: What do you think about what you can do with your two languages?

Neil: (Silent). Looking for jobs or help me to understand the classes.

Chiu: Do you feel that you think differently or the same in English and in Spanish?

Neil: (Silent).

Chiu: Like the grammar or the ways to use words?

Neil: It's different.

Chiu: What do you feel?

Neil: I get confused 'cause in the grammar and sometimes in pronunciation. Most of the time, the grammar.

Chiu: Do you feel that in different languages, you have different ways of thinking?

Neil: Hmm. I think that's all.

Chiu: How do you feel about your learning attitude?

Neil: I think I have very good attitude.

Math was less threatening for Neil. It was his favorite class. For math, he said, "I just got it." Neil showed much more confidence in math than in reading. He was confident that he would pass the math EOG test.

Neil seemed happy in his classes, always smiling but quiet. He would turn around to look at other students or to look at me when I was observing the class. If he had to

read aloud, he would read in a soft, almost inaudible voice. In math class, he interacted with his peers to check his answers.

Neil along with Chad was excused from social studies to work on his English proficiency in ESL class. In 7th grade, he was excused from science. When asked if it concerned him to lose his science or social studies classes, he admitted it worried him. He felt that he might not be well prepared for classes in high school, and he might be handicapped when he went to high school.

Neil's Day

Neil woke up at 6:30. He ate breakfast at home before catching his school bus. At school, he enjoyed talking with his friends in the cafeteria before homeroom. Chad was in Neil's homeroom. They did not stay for social studies class like the rest of their classmates; they were pulled out for ESL class. He had two ESL periods, as Chad did. The only difference between the two boys in their schedule was that Chad would go to dance for the extracurricular activity while Neil went to workshop. In class, Neil liked to turn around in his seat to socialize with other students while trying to avoid his teacher's attention. He liked math, and he liked to discuss math problems with his friends. For reading, he would ask help from his friends or use the dictionary when he came to a new word. In the language arts when necessary, one Mexican girl helped translate for Neil but after almost two years of English, Neil no longer needed much translation help.

Neil always had a smile on his face but was a quiet student. He lacked confidence in speaking English so he appreciated being able to speak with friends and some teachers in Spanish. Ms. Sal had tried hard since 7th grade to get Neil to speak up in English. Neil resisted speaking to her in English because he was shy, and because he

knew that she spoke Spanish. He did not like to read aloud in language arts class.

Overall, he did not talk much in school in either language. Neil behaved in school. He never went to the planning room for in-school suspension as Chad did.

He knew he had to read more but he said he was always too lazy to pick up books. He did not go to any tutoring or attend summer school since he had come to North Carolina. He did not think he would do well on the EOG reading test, but the school had not asked him to join any tutoring sessions based on the results of his EOG pre-test.

Having studied in Mexico for six years, he could read and write well in Spanish. He knew that his bilingual ability would be an asset in finding a job in the future. He understood that here in North Carolina he would have to pay more attention in his language arts class to improve his English. He also knew that he needed to read more and that maybe setting higher AR goals would push him to do so.

Without reading much at home, Neil spent most of his after school time playing soccer with friends or playing video games with his big brother. Most of the time he spoke Spanish with his friends. At home, he and his brother spoke Spanish to their parents. Sometimes, they would try to practice their English with each other. They helped each other learn new words. His brother could also help him in math. In 8th grade now, Neil had made more friends.

Summary

Shy, soft-spoken Neil started his American school experience seeking out teachers and peers who could converse with him in Spanish. Even after a year and eight months, he still spoke Spanish more than English. He was much more comfortable in his favorite class which was math. He was a reluctant reader, seemingly only motivated by

earning AR points. While he did not think so, his teachers thought he was beginning to show more interest in his peers than in his studies. Neil sometimes depended overly on his friends to help him with his English when he knew he could help himself by reading. He said he was too lazy to read. He was concerned about his science and social studies knowledge when he got to high school because those classes were replaced in middle school by ESL classes.

Conclusion

Each of the five participants in this study chose routes to English literacy that were as different as their own individual personalities. These five young adults were all becoming fluent in two languages—Spanish and English. Some enjoyed reading for pleasure, others read only because they needed to earn AR points. Amber, Rosa, and Chad were avid readers anxious to discuss books. Ryan and Neil did not care much about reading. In most cases, their peers did not influence their reading habits. Amber sometimes discussed books with her friends and Chad also tried to share what he had read with Neil. During my observations and interview times, I enjoyed watching these young adolescents learning in school and listening to their stories about their literacy-learning journeys.

The whole school participated in ARP, and students had to read AR books in order to earn points which were then counted as part of their languages arts' grade. I saw math teachers and a science teacher tell the students, "When you finish your test, you may take out your AR book." Students carried their AR books with them everywhere. They knew that between classes or when they finished their work, they were expected to use the spare time to read.

Both principal and teachers emphasized the importance of reading for student success on the EOG tests. The 7th grade language arts teacher told me that every student was supposed to read at least thirty minutes a day. She said, “That’s just a given for them. Like all the way through elementary school, they should know that.”

In some ways it is exciting that the whole school is on the same page when it comes to encouraging students to read. It remains to be seen if the ARP program is the best way to motivate students.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Themes

In this chapter, I describe the themes, expected and unexpected, that emerged from analyzing the participant data as presented in chapter four. I also discuss the study's research questions in light of the findings. The following themes emerged from an analysis of the data:

1. *Mundos*-- Two Languages in Two Worlds
2. The Cultural Comfort Zone
3. New Immigrant Young Adult Literature Readers: From "Reading Helps My Brains" to Being "Cool"
4. A Search for Identity
5. Family-- the Bond and the Pressure

Mundos— Two Languages in Two Worlds

Mundo is the Spanish word for world. Rosa described her new immigrant status as living in two worlds using two languages. She taught me the term "Spanglish." She said that Spanglish refers to the language that Hispanic people use when they mix Spanish and English together. Rosa told me that she usually watches the Spanish television channel called Mun2 (2 in Spanish is *dos*.) In Mun2 (*Mundos*), many hosts and hostesses of the TV programs speak Spanglish. All of the young adults in my study used Spanglish while talking in school with their Mexican peers.

Additionally, Rosa explained that, "(my parents) come here so we can have a better life. Me and my sister to learn English and to know Spanish but not to forget about our own race." She was proud that she could understand both English and Spanish. She

said, “It’s fun because I can go to Mexico and speak English, and they would not understand me, and I can be here and speak Spanish, and they could not understand me, too. So it’s kind of fun.”

With Hispanics (predominantly Mexican) making up 35.3 % of the whole school population, it is not surprising that the Hispanic students formed subgroups in school, especially as they did not share the same language or culture as the dominant group. In my observations, I always saw Mexican students walking together, sitting together at lunchtime, and talking together whenever they got opportunities. ESL class also brought different Mexican students from around the school together. Many of the Mexican students also lived near each other in the same neighborhoods and/or had many relatives nearby. Both Rosa and Amber talked about their aunts, uncles, nephews, and cousins. In these ways these new young adolescent immigrants are able to share and maintain their language, culture, and interests in school and in the neighborhood.

In the extracurricular period at the end of the school day, some Mexican students attend a cultural awareness class where they practice dancing. Rosa told me, “Every Mexican knows how to dance.” Soccer proved to be another cultural activity that was continued in the new country. Chad said that they played soccer after school. “Soccer. That’s the particular game for the Mexican boys,” he said. Rosa played on the girls’ soccer team at school. After school, she taught her nephew how to play soccer in their backyard. Ryan practiced soccer with his team. He said, “In 6th grade, I didn’t like reading but I wasn’t lazy... [I got] more important things to do. Play soccer games.” On the weekends, his coach took the team to different cities to play games with other teams. Neil told me in the interviews that he usually played soccer with his neighborhood friends

about three hours after school every day. So it would see all the participants in the study had much in common: soccer, sports, dance, and the language they spoke at home-- Spanish.

Ryan told me that he had American friends as well as Mexican friends, but he did things, “ mostly with Spanish friends.” He walked home with a group of Mexican friends. The two cultures were friendly, but the Mexican students were definitely not as comfortable with their American peers perhaps because of the language barrier or perhaps because of cultural differences. Ms. Sal tried to explain, “Because [of] being Hispanic, from another country, from another culture, they are very shy and they always lower their head and they don’t want to talk.”

Rosa added a different dimension,

There are people here who don’t like Mexicans. And then, we just speak Spanish and then some people said, “Don’t speak Spanish; speak English because it is United States.” We told them to shut up because it is none of their business.

Charity James (1974) contends that adolescents have a need to be needed and to see their place in the culture. These new immigrant middle school students need to be with a group where they can feel comfortable sharing their experiences, languages, and cultures. Coming to the United States, these young people not only had to relate to a new culture but also had to embrace a new language as well. It is comforting to be able to share common experiences with peers who have endured similar experiences and hardly surprising that they would form subgroups at school or use Spanglish.

Rosa said she was much more comfortable using Spanish than English with her Mexican friends. Amber liked to practice her English in a non-threatening environment, usually with her four Mexican friends.

Sometimes I have to practice what I want to say 'cause the Spanish and English is mixed up... Sometimes my tongue gets tinkled and sometimes I am speaking Spanish without knowing while talking in English.

Once as I happened to walk behind Amber and her groups of friends who were talking in Spanish a white male schoolmate behind them told them to, "Speak English 'cause it is America here." Amber and her friends just ignored him. In my research diary that day, I wrote:

School helps these Hispanic students gain English literacy to bridge their Mexican world with American world. Rosa, Amber, Chad, and Neil showed their pride in knowing two languages. What if the English native speaking students hope to bridge their world to access to the different culture and different language? Especially, these Americans saw these Hispanic students speak Spanish every day around them without knowing what they were talking about. They may have curiosity and hope to learn another language as well. Maybe the White male student hoped to understand what Amber and her friends were talking about. Maybe he wished he could speak both languages to understand what these Hispanic peers were talking about. Maybe there were many students in the school who hoped to become bilingual. I wonder when it would happen that these two groups of students would share each other their different languages as well as their different cultures.

As Rosa stated that she felt that she lived in two worlds and spoke in two languages, some of the American students might hope to experience this adventure of living in *Mundos*.

In different *Mundos*, there are different cultures presented through different languages. These new generations come to the United States with their parents who only speak Spanish. Parents still pass along their traditions and culture in their new home. When the children go to school, they learn another culture--American, and another language--English. The children learn to operate within the new culture at school, they learn to adjust, but they are also able through things such as Spanglish to hang onto their own culture and thereby become citizens of *Mundos*.

Chad mentioned in the interviews that he liked to read books about immigrants, as did Rosa. These young adult books tell the immigrant stories with which these young new citizens of *Mundos* can relate. When I asked about his favorite books, the first one Chad mentioned was *the Circuit* "because it talked about the immigration." Rosa mentioned that *Romiette and Julio* was one of her favorite books. It is about the struggles between cultures. She said,

Like *Romeo and Juliet*, it (*Romiette and Julio*) talks about gangs and people who are racism [racist]. It's a black girl who falls in love with a Mexican boy. Some people in high school, they don't like American with Mexican so they started to tell the girl to be away from the boy. They could not be together because the gangsters couldn't let them be happy. *Romiette and Julio* is about gang and gangsters. It's kind of like true and about people who are racism [racist]. And that's why I like it.

These young adult novels talk about conflicts and struggles with which these new immigrant young adolescents can easily identify. Reading literature thus becomes a channel through which these new immigrant young adolescents can view how other new immigrant young adolescents face their conflicts and challenges. These new immigrant readers often feel a connection with the characters in the books. Through reading young adult literature, they feel empathy and know that they are not alone. I expect, in the near future, that in the field of young adult literature, there will be more and more new and excellent stories of *Mundos*.

As an observer, I understand how fortunate these students are to be able to learn English while still being able to cherish their native language and culture with friends who share a common background. They may yet be too young to appreciate the advantages of participating in two languages and two cultures. The school system through the EOG tests may inadvertently be asking these new young adolescent immigrants to choose one culture over the other.

The other issue of concern is almost the reverse of the one above. It is possible that the Mexican peers who have irresponsible attitudes toward academics might well negatively influence those students who look to them for support. This would be a case of the Mexican culture hindering student success. When some of the ESL students fail to motivate themselves to study hard in school, they can be a major influence in the group and drag others down who do not want to appear different or stand apart from their peers. Like the 8th grade language arts teacher said,

Like in a group, three are average and two are higher; the two of them will come down to average. I think that's what his problem is too. In the beginning, I don't

see him (Neil) hanging out with lots of people. Now, I am beginning to see his social development. He is actually, I think, developing quicker socially than Chad and he is kind of mirroring image of people. For example, I think Neil at times tried to image Patrick. Patrick might not be the best person to mirror image because Patrick has mixing feeling about gangs. Patrick has mixing feeling with drugs or out there, you know. Neil, for him to be able to improve, has to separate himself from that. Otherwise, he is going to be sucked down to the same way, which would be disappointed.

The 8th grade language arts teacher also said that at this stage, students might not have developed their English enough to relate to their American peers, while at the same time they tend to relate more with someone who speaks their same language. Their role models are limited. In addition to the two *Mundos* of language, these students also live in the world of early adolescence. This combination contributes to the complexity of their lives. They might not realize the many opportunities that lay ahead of them. Do they dare to dream? Do they know that the future can be hopeful and full of choices? The question is how can teachers, schools, the community, and society help these ESL students value themselves and realize a prosperous, successful future?

The Cultural Comfort Zone

When a new Hispanic student comes to a school with a large Spanish-speaking population, he or she might not feel so lonely or frightened. Chad, who came to this school as a 7th grader, was not terrified on the first day of school because he was surrounded by teachers and students who spoke Spanish:

When I started school, I met Mr. Wood and he took me to the class. And then Amber, she was the first one, and another Mexican girl, Lisa, to help me. I didn't feel afraid or something because in first day, everyone started to talking to me and I make friends and everything.

All the participants told me that they liked school here. They all spoke Spanish and English in school. They used Spanish to communicate with their Hispanic friends and with ESL teachers who knew Spanish. For Chad and Neil who had been here less than two years, they felt especially comfortable because they could use Spanish to communicate with their ESL teachers to learn English.

Krashen (1988, 1989) states that a non-threatening environment is essential for ESL students to gain "comprehensive input" of the target language. Affective Filter Hypothesis theorizes that anxiety is one of the main factors that block ESL students' comprehensive input. Using their native language in the beginning of learning English helps lessen their fears and anxiety in learning a new language.

Amber stated that she still needed her ESL class even now because, "I have to feel comfortable so I can talk to people. Like going to ESL, I feel like more confidence in reading and in talking. So I think I still need it" (ESL). Chad and Neil felt that since they could communicate in school with ESL teachers and Hispanic students in Spanish, they were not as afraid in the new school. When Rosa just came to the United States, having her cousin in her first class helped her become accustomed to the new environment and the new language.

Both Amber and Ryan talked about bad experiences when they first started school in North Carolina. Ryan said that he had learned nothing from school in the beginning,

except in ESL class. He did not believe that the language arts class in the elementary school helped him at all. Amber also felt that nobody helped her in the beginning. The peer tutor that her teacher assigned to translate for her in class did not do her job. She was left helpless. Amber said, “I was like sitting there. They were talking and everything. I didn’t know what they were saying. I was like looking at everybody and looking at their mouth talking. I am like in another place.”

Teachers’ kindness helped these students to acclimate themselves to the new learning environment. Amber said, “I was nervous in 4th grade. I was nervous because of the teacher, and in 5th grade, I was better because the teacher helped me.” Amber felt her teachers were nice to her in the United States and that they expected her to do better with her English over time. She said that one of the motivations for her to learn well was because “I want to help the teachers.” She believed that teachers wanted their students to learn well so she studied hard to reach the goal. Learning well meant a good relationship between Amber and her teachers. Ryan and Rosa knew that they got help from their teachers, especially their ESL teachers. Chad commented that he considered himself lucky to have such good teachers in the school. Neil said he had had a good school experience in Mexico, but he knew the teachers in North Carolina worked hard to help him.

Teachers’ attitudes can have a major influence on students’ academic confidence and learning (Atwerger and Ivener, 1994; Nunan and Lamb, 2000; Reid, 2002). A good relationship between the teacher and student enhances ESL students’ self-esteem, which plays the most important role in their literacy development (Atwerger and Ivener, 1994). Extensive young adult research has been done to examine the importance of parent and

peer relationships for young adults (Field, Diego & Sanders, 2002). A study done by Wong, Weist, & Cusick (2002) suggests those adolescents who maintain strong attachments with their parents show greater motivation in their academics. The study supports the view that there is a positive correlation between parent attachment and motivational orientation. Support from parents serves as a significant indicator for the adolescents' success in academics. Few studies have examined the social relationship between teacher and student, and how their positive relationship could lead to positive academic performance. Amber's experience serves as a good example of the attitude of young adults and how positive relationships with teachers might affect their learning in school.

At home, all the participants spoke Spanish to their parents. Rosa's parents told their children not to forget Spanish. Rosa said, "My mom said that I have to learn [but] I don't have to forget Spanish because when I go to Mexico, I will forget everything and don't know what to do." At school, these Mexican students usually got together with their own subgroup. Their conversations were mostly Spanish with a little bit of English. When I ate with Amber and her friends in the cafeteria, they mostly spoke Spanish.

Surrounded by so many friends and family members who spoke Spanish, these Mexican students did not get many opportunities to practice their English. Chad knew that he had to create his own opportunities to practice English. Ms. Sal said that Chad practiced his English as soon as he started learning it. She said, "One week later, after he had come here, whatever English he had learned, he was applying it." Unlike Chad, Neil refused to speak English to Ms. Sal in ESL class because he knew that she could understand Spanish. Ms. Sal said,

So here we have two students, came in at the same time. Three month later, one is speaking English but the other one is the same—zero. Not even “Good Morning” because he is shy. OK. After one year, we have the same thing with Neil. Neil just doesn’t speak at all.

Chad’s brother was like Neil. They were trying to stay in their cultural comfort zone with their Mexican friends using Spanish to communicate. Chad said, “My brother [the one in high school,] he didn’t have a lot of practice because he’d always hang out with Mexicans.”

In my observations, I saw Mexican students get together without much interaction with American students. While the five participants all realized they needed to practice their English, they still preferred being in their cultural comfort zone. Rosa put it this way:

Because if you know English and they are speaking English and you feel that I know how to speak but I don’t speak it because I am shy. So it’s bad. You don’t speak it, how will you going to know people and that’s why you speak it.

It seemed that Rosa was reminding herself to take courage in speaking English. Amber, after studying English for four years, was much more comfortable in speaking English.

Ms. Sal told me about Amber’s public speaking experience in participating in Beta Club:

She (Amber) said, “Ms. Sal, I don’t want to do it. I cannot do it. My heart is going to get out of my chest. I can’t do it.” Now, it is very natural for her to do it so that helps her a lot.

Although there were some changes in students like Amber, and they were aware that they had to create more opportunities to practice their English, they still spent most of their time with their comfortable group of Mexican friends who spoke Spanish.

Chad said, “I was lucky to get in this school; because here they have the most Mexicans around these schools.” Because of the large Hispanic population, the school received abundant ESL resources. Their ESL team had three teachers. Mr. Wood, one of the ESL teachers, also helped the school communicate with Hispanic parents. New students could get lots of help from their ESL teachers. Like Chad and Neil, one of their ESL classes had only the two boys in it so they got lots of attention. That was one of the reasons why Chad felt lucky to be in the school.

All five participants stated that ESL class helped them more than anything else to learn English. To show their progress in ESL classes, students took the ESL (Ideal Placement) test. If they passed this test, they would no longer need to attend ESL classes. However, the new ESL standardized tests had different criteria than the previous version. The five participants were having differing successes with the test. Ms Sal said,

Right now, Ryan passed and Amber passed. For Rosa, [last year] she passed the oral part [of the Ideal Placement Test] but she didn't pass the reading and writing. This year she went down in her oral test and she passed the reading test and the writing. We don't know [why.] Most students instead of going up went down in their oral test. Maybe because it is a different test.

Along with ESL classes, some students mentioned that they watched television, another potential source for practicing listening skills. However, none of the participants in this study felt that watching TV helped their English literacy. Among the five

participants, only Chad said that watching cartoons on TV helped him learn English. The students said they mainly watched the Spanish channel at home which meant they heard mostly Spanglish.

At home, the students spoke Spanish with their parents. At school they spoke Spanish with their Mexican friends. The only chance for them to practice English was the interaction with their teachers and American classmates. However, the opportunities were quite limited, and some of the students were uncomfortable speaking out in their classes.

There is nothing wrong with these ESL students who wanting to stay in their “Cultural Comfort Zone.” It is a normal, natural inclination. For everyone, but especially for adolescents, it is in their nature to want to be with others who share similar interests, cultures, backgrounds, and languages. Where there are problems, however, is when students feel they must decide between going with their peers or doing things differently. This is where teachers must become involved to help students try to make good decisions. Students must know their teachers care about them. Teachers must show this care by vocalizing their expectations and concerns to students to perhaps prevent a student from following his/her peers in the wrong directions. Having a guiding teacher or a mentor is so important to young adolescents in this fragile time of life.

*New Immigrant Young Adult Literature Readers: From “Reading Helps My Brains”
to Being “Cool”*

The participants in this study ranged from the one who announced that “reading helps my brain” to one who avoided reading at all costs, especially because it would not be considered “cool” by his/her friends. They differed in their attitudes and in their

motivations toward reading. Rosa, Chad, and Amber showed a marked interest and enjoyment in reading. Rosa said, “If I am bored in my house, I read.” They all mentioned that reading helps them in learning English, and they all wanted to better their English ability.

Rosa did not care for the competitive part of the AR points. She just enjoyed reading for the sake of reading. She said, “I want to read because I feel comfortable.” Amber satisfied her curiosity through reading. In my observations, the 8th graders were reading an abridged play of *Anne Frank*. I noticed that Amber had checked out the novel of *Anne Frank* from the media center and another historical document about Anne Frank.

For Neil and Ryan, reading was more an obligation that they had to fulfill. They read because they needed to gain AR points for their language arts grades. Neil said, “I don’t like to read at home. I think it’s boring.” I asked Neil how he felt about reading helping him learn English. He replied,

This year, I can get what the teachers told me to do, and I can get my AR points easier than last year because I can get bigger books and I can get more points. I think that’s all.

He also said, “I just have to read them (books) because I have to get the AR points.” For Neil, reading in the AR program seemed to be more schoolwork drudgery that he had to do.

Like Neil, Ryan read because he needed AR point to supplement his language arts grades. He kept telling me, “I don’t like to read.” He refused to talk about what he read. He commonly responded in the interviews with, “I don’t know.” He mentioned that in 7th

grade, not until his language arts grades began falling to an unacceptable level for his parents did he start reading AR books.

Overall, the five participants in the study were considered good readers as indicated in their ARP records below. They had all read a considerable number of books before they participated in the study. Table 3 illustrates the records of their ARP reports.

Table 3. The ARP Reports of Five Participants

	8/1/2001- 6/5/2002			8/1/2002- 6/5/2003			8/1/2003- 3/2/2004		
Amber	Passed /Taken	Book Level	Points earned	Passed /Taken	Book Level	Points earned	Passed /Taken	Book Level	Points earned
	36/46	4.1	101.4	53/57	4.4	115.4	16/16	5.1	84.4
Ryan	Passed /Taken	Book Level	Points earned	Passed /Taken	Book Level	Points earned	Passed /Taken	Book Level	Points earned
	62/64	3.7	150.3	35/37	4.4	116.1	17/22	4.9	107.8
Rosa				Passed /Taken	Book Level	Points earned	Passed /Taken	Book Level	Points earned
				75/76	4.5	338.6	30/30	4.3	140.8
Chad				Passed /Taken	Book Level	Points earned	Passed /Taken	Book Level	Points earned
				104/136	2.9	67.3	16/33	3.8	57.4
Neil				Passed /Taken	Book Level	Points earned	Passed /Taken	Book Level	Points earned
				65/70	3.1	37.3	7/14	4.8	33.9

Table 3 shows the records of Amber's and Ryan's 6th grade, 7th grade and part of 8th grade AR records. Rosa was a 7th grader in the study. The record showed what she earned in 6th and part of 7th grade since she had entered middle school. Chad and Neil had come for less than two years.

Comparing their latest records of the "book level" with the records of their previous years, Neil showed the greatest improvement. No wonder his language arts teacher had great confidence in his literacy development, especially in reading comprehension.

A student needed 60% or above to pass the test. For each test passed, students accumulated AR points. For the academic year of 2004, Rosa and Amber had passed all the tests they had taken, meaning they probably had actually read the books before attempting the tests. For Ryan, Chad, and Neil, the percentage passed was 77.3 %, 48.5%, and 50%, respectively. Either they had not read their books completely, or they did not understand what they had read. As one student had mentioned, he had been able to pass a Harry Potter test just by watching the video.

Among these five participants, Amber and Rosa talked the most about reading. They both enjoyed reading. Amber told me the stories from her favorite books. For one she said,

It was about the girl she was sick, and I think it is about cancer or like that. I think it was about a few days to die, something like that. I read another one that is similar to that. It was my favorite, too. It was a good book. It was a girl who has cancer. It was sad. It's about sisters. The sister got sick, and she got cancer, and she dies. I started to think about my own sister. I think it's good impact on me. The impact that Amber spoke of was that she did not want to fight with her sisters after reading the book.

Rosa liked to talk about books, too. She remembered the details and tried to explain what the books were about. Her language arts teacher praised her as motivated and as a top reader in her class. During my observations, I saw her reading whenever she had any spare time. She explained to me how reading helped her:

* I think reading helps my brains. If I see the words I don't know, I can look them up in a dictionary and find the meanings.

* Reading helps me a lot, and I like reading too.

* [Reading helps me in] like making words, like learning more spelling words, and like sentences.

* Reading helps me a lot because in EOG we have to read and answer the questions.

Unlike Rosa who chatted easily, in the interviews, Chad did not always answer my questions. Instead, he would sometimes go off on tangents talking about whatever he felt like. I was, however, able to get some information out of him about reading.

That's why sometimes I don't do all the work because I am following the reading and I understand but when they are finished, then that's like I didn't read. So I need to read again. Last year, I didn't understand any book because I read like that. I [just] started reading, you know. This year, I start on reading and I understand more.

Chad had been in the school for one year and eight months; reading was still a challenge for him.

Chad's attitude with me was apparently typical of his attitude in his classes. His ESL teacher said he was disruptive, while his language arts teacher was concerned about his inconsistency in learning as well as his mischievousness which made him "get under people's skin."

On the other hand, Neil was shy and quiet and he struggled with listening and speaking well in English. He did not feel comfortable speaking English in class. He would never volunteer to read aloud in any class. His language arts teacher said,

Neil doesn't want anybody to know that he wants to work. Neil is very quiet. He will not give you lots of answers. For a while, Neil tries to pretend: "I can't read." Well, yes, you can read it. Reading [aloud] and comprehension are two different things. Neil can read the words but not always comprehend the words. [However,] his performance has enormously improved from the beginning of the year to now. At the beginning of the year, I don't think he will pass the end of grade test, but now I think he will pass the end of grade test without a problem.

A look at Neil's AR record shows why the language arts teacher felt Neil knew more than he was letting on. His book level jumped from 3.1 to 4.8 in one year. Of all five participants, he showed the most progress.

Neil told me that he liked mystery and horror books. He said, "I think all the mystery books are interesting for me and horror books are the same. They are interesting for me." He said, "I just imagine while I read." He also told me in the interviews that he could usually predict the endings of the mysteries before reading them.

Neil understood the importance of reading. He said, "If I read more books, then I can get more words, more vocabulary words. It (learning English) will be easier for me. I think that reading books helps me feel easier to learn English." While he knew reading would help him, he resisted reading saying, "I think I am lazy."

Ryan did not appear interested in any questions that I asked. It was obviously an "obligation" for him to finish what he promised to do in the study. His attitude was not just towards me, according to his teachers. His language arts teacher said, "I think he has a distrust of anybody in an authority position."

When I looked closely at the AR records, I was surprised and puzzled about what Ryan told me. I could see the positive correlation between those students who told me they enjoyed reading, (Amber, Rosa, and Chad) and their successful AR records. What did not correlate was that Ryan had achieved so well in AR when he had told me emphatically that he did not read in 6th grade nor did he enjoy reading. I wished I had seen the AR records and had done the document analysis before the interviews. From this, Ryan taught me a lesson that enjoying reading and reading extensively could be two completely different things.

Ryan got more AR points in 6th, 7th, and 8th grade than Amber even though he claimed that he did not enjoy reading in 6th grade nor in 8th grade. Ryan mentioned in the interviews that none of his friends read. In fact, according to his ESL teacher, Ryan got in trouble in school because in the previous years he tried to help his friends “look good” on tests. The activities he told me he enjoyed doing were exciting and dangerous things. Reading, of course, was not included in those activities at all, and none of his friends read either. Reading was not a topic that he enjoyed talking about in the interviews. He always replied to questions about reading with: “I don’t know;” “They are boring;” or “I am lazy now.” Reading was not “cool” to him. Reading was not something his friends admired. Reading was boring. I suggested that wanting to look cool to his friends could be a factor in his resistance to reading.

How educators can connect reading with being “cool” could perhaps be a motivating factor for young adults like Ryan to feel good about reading. Wilhelm (1997) states that “being the book” helps young adults become interested in reading. Ryan experienced “being the book” when he read the *Harry Potter* series in 7th grade, but the

experience was short-lived. He said, “[when reading *Harry Potter*,] I feel like I am the book. I try to imagine what’s happening. I feel like I am one of the characters.” Talking about Harry Potter was the only time that he really forgot himself and talked about reading.

Ryan told me that he did not think reading connected with his life. Books did not offer him any role models. He refused to have any book conversations with me. He kept saying that reading was boring. Ryan commented that he just wanted to finish high school, and that was all. He refused to explain why he had made that decision.

Sometimes negative attitudes appear because students may see learning as irrelevant to their lives or futures or because they feel powerless to change (Cummins, 1996). Teachers’ different instructional practices and approaches may be one solution to encourage students’ learning. In the interviews, Ms. Sal, the ESL teacher, told me she tried hard to use different approaches to help students enjoy reading. She sometimes would use drama, or video, or discussion to help students understand what they had read. It is an ongoing task for every literature teacher to help students build new and positive attitudes towards reading.

When I reread what Ryan had told me about his reading experiences, I came to see that Ryan might have just been keeping his feelings from me. In the interviews, he refused to express his feeling about reading except when he told me about *Harry Potter*. He denied that he read in 6th grade, but his AR statistics indicated otherwise. His attitude toward reading can be compared to Neil’s. Neither one wanted people to know that they were learning or reading. I asked Ryan what reading brought to him and he responded, “Nothing... Try to get AR points to not to be in trouble.” Ryan’s ESL teacher said,

Ryan can comprehend very well. If you ask him, he doesn't care. He knows but he just tells you, "I don't know." It's not just with you. When EOG comes, he is fine. He is in the stage of the age to be cool.

I suspect Ryan's reluctance was peer driven. None of his friends read, therefore it was hard for him to admit that he did enjoy reading. What if his friends found out? Also, I suspect Ryan's quietness and reluctance was a way of telling me that reading was personal to him, and he just did not want to talk to anybody about it.

Ryan admitted that he had difficulty choosing a book from the library. His friends did not read. He did not know whom to ask. While he enjoyed adventure, action, and sports books he just felt overall that reading was boring. Rosa took a look at the covers of the books to decide if she would try a book. She said that she liked books with awards—Newbery awards or others. She also looked at the summary on the back of the cover to decide. Her friends recommended good books for her to read as well. Chad mentioned that his friends recommended good books to him. Chad enjoyed telling friends which books were good and even shared whatever he read with Neil.

Among these five participants, reading meant different things. Neil and Ryan were motivated by external factors. They needed their AR points for language arts grades, while Amber, Rosa, and Chad enjoyed reading and wanted to improve their English literacy.

According to Cummins (1994, 1996, 2003), it takes the average ESL student five to ten years to learn English well enough to catch up to the grade level coursework. In the current study, maybe it is not about the length of time they had been in North

Carolina that determined their English literacy development but the amount of time and effort they expended to learn English.

With the limited exposure to English speaking and listening practice, reading then becomes the most critical means for these ESL students to gain English proficiency. To help these new immigrant students obtain literacy proficiency, the school encouraged them to read. On the second day of my observations, when I was in Amber's language arts class, the principal walked in to talk to the students. She told them that the only way they could prepare for the EOG test would be to read more. Projecting a chart on the wall, she emphasized the connection between ARP and EOG. The charts showed that there was a positive correlation between students' AR points and their EOG test results. So, she encouraged the students to read more and to, "Take your reading seriously."

During the two months of my observation phase, I saw everyone in the school encouraging students to read. Students were expected to carry AR books with them everywhere and pull them out whenever they had spare time. They were encouraged to read in the cafeteria while waiting for school to start. They were encouraged to read when they finished tests or practice earlier than other students in any classroom. In PE, after they finished exercising, they were allowed to read silently if they chose not to participate in any sports. They were also supposed to read at home at least for thirty minutes a day. "That's just a given for them. Like all the way through elementary school. They should know that," the seventh grade language arts teacher said.

All the five participants knew that reading was important. They knew that reading helped them learn new words. They also knew that reading was the most important way to gain English proficiency. In the interview, Amber said, "Reading, I can

take two hours.” She enjoyed reading at home as well as in school. Amber’s language arts teacher said, “I think she can see the connection between reading and the academic performance. I believe in certain areas, she used reading as a tool.” Rosa told me that she began to love reading in 6th grade. Rosa knew that reading helped her gain knowledge and learn vocabulary. She said, “I think reading helps my brains grow. If I see the words I don’t know, I can look them up in a dictionary and find the meaning.” In 7th grade, Ryan used reading in the ARP as a means to raise his language arts grade. In his second interview, Chad told me that he thought reading helped him learn English. Neil also acknowledged that he knew reading was important to his learning English.

Research shows that reading plays a crucial role in English learning in a Spanish-speaking environment. Books are the only place that these ESL students can have access to academic vocabulary (Cummins, 2003; Krashen, 1993). Books can be with young adolescents no matter what the circumstances.

No matter what drives a student to read, the good thing is that the school is promoting reading. It is important to have a strong policy to support students’ reading. Langer (1995) states that reading keeps shaping and reshaping the readers. Rosenblatt (1995) suggests that every reading is different because the readers are changing their views every time they read. In such cases, every reading experience counts.

A Search for Identity

Adolescents have a need to belong (James, 1974), and they search for identity (Erikson, 1959). Parents, peers, and school affect their search (Garbarino, 1985). They become who they are as they make meanings and identify themselves through their interactions with and impact from parents, peers, and school (Garbarino, 1985). For

these ESL students, their search for identity might be harder than for their American peers because they have so many barriers to overcome. ESL students sometimes have to face other challenges beyond language barriers in order to pursue their education (Jimenez, 2003; Krashen, 1999).

Some have to share family responsibility. These students and their families may face economical pressure. Rosa said, “They (my parents) said they are working hard for us. They don’t want us to suffer. They want us to have a good life. Yeah, they come here so we can have a better life.” When I asked Ryan why he came here, he replied, “Because my dad needs money.” Amber’s father and mother worked hard. She said that she tried to help in the house to ease their workload. She said, “My mom cooks, but we help her clean the house. So she won’t like get so nervous ‘cause she has pressure with the work and with my sister, like she has to take care of them.”

Another roadblock for the ESL students in this study came about because they were unable to get academic support from their parents who do not speak English. In fact, most of the students often had the responsibility of translating for their parents. They learn at school while their parents struggle to earn money for their family and thus have no opportunities to gain the second language literacy skills. All of the participants’ parents spoke Spanish at home. Even though his father had been in the United States for 20 years, Chad said, “My dad knows very little English.” While these parents supported their children’s educational endeavors emotionally, they were unable to provide help with their homework

Some ESL students may have legal issues. How difficult it must be for students who are searching for their own identity to be part of a family that has to give up its

identity to come to a new land. When I asked teachers why Ryan appeared so resistant, I was told that it could be because of his legal status. The 8th grade language arts teacher spoke about the difficulties teachers had in making connection with Hispanic parents. These parents did not speak English and were sometimes afraid to come to school not only because of the language barrier but also because of their legal status.

Some students may be influenced by peers who have become involved with drugs or alcohol or gangs. Facing an alien culture and a new language, these ESL students have few people with whom they could relate. Like the 8th grade language arts teacher said,

They've got a lot of influences on peers. Well, in middle school it's typically when they have strong influence from peers but I think, from what I have seen, especially for a Hispanic person who has not been here for that long, who doesn't have the language development, [peer relationship] is even more important for them because they have less people to relate to. Because for instance, Neil is not going to walk around and relate to somebody like Wilson or John because they don't share common language, or common culture. So he tries to relate to people; whoever he happens to attach to first is who he is going to relate to.

The language arts teacher has a strong point. These Hispanic students have fewer people to relate to because of language barriers. They naturally seek out support and friendship among those students who share the same language and culture. In such a limited circle, negative influences may abound.

For these five participants, the importance of peer relationship was not equally important. Amber prided herself on being independent and impervious to her friends' influences. She said,

Well, we have fun together, but we try to encourage each other, but sometimes, I don't like to be influenced by them. Because sometimes they do something I don't like, so I just do my own things and what I think is right.

Amber tried not to get involved with friends especially when she felt uncomfortable with what they were doing. Amber avoided the telephone. She said, "I am not that kind of person who likes to speak on the phone. So I think it's better for me to read. I like to read."

Unlike Amber, Rosa held her friendships in high regard. What her friends said influenced her decisions. She would talk on the phone with friends for several hours at a time. When she was made to repeat her grade, she said,

I was mad at my mom. I said, "Man, why do you put me back? I want to be with the same ages." She said, "I am sorry." I know that I can take a test to pass 8th grade. I talked to the principal but my friends, they don't want me to go to 8th grade. They say, "Why you want to go there without us?" It's fun we are together, so I decide not to go to 8th grade.

Amber, Ryan, Rosa, and Neil all had groups of friends in school. Chad drifted between groups. Rosa and Chad each liked to talk on the phone with friends for hours. Ryan had adventures and fun with his group of friends. Neil played soccer every day with his friends for two to three hours. Only Amber recognized that friends could be negative influences. Rosa insisted that having fun with friends and studying hard were equally important to her and that she could do both. She said, "I like to study, but I like to hang out with my friends, too." The language arts teacher and ESL teacher worried about Ryan, Rosa, and Neil and how their friends might negatively influence them. Ryan

and Neil hung out with Patrick who was showing interest in gangs and drugs according to the language arts teacher. Rosa mentioned that she had changed a lot. She said, “Last year, I didn’t use to have friends, just my cousin here. Now, I have lots of friends, and I don’t even remember their names.” Additionally, the teachers worried about the lack of role models for these new young immigrant students.

James (1974) states that young adolescents have a need to belong. They need to find a group where they believe they belong. When ESL students are labeled as “minority” or “at-risk,” are the schools inadvertently forcing them into the wrong groups? One big question is how can and should teachers help students such as these ESL students find groups that transcend the stereotypes and the cultural comfort zone?

James (1974) suggests that a need for separateness and a need for belonging are connected and influenced by each other. Teachers can help ESL students to find their own identities by showing their respect for the students’ cultures, languages, and different cultural perspectives. An attitude of affirming diversity helps students search for their own unique values without losing their confidence in learning a new language in a new culture (Nieto, 2000). Valuing themselves is a great task for any young adult to achieve, but especially for ESL students who are confronted by a different language and an alien cultural environment. When these middle school ESL students know how to accept their own individuality (separateness) and feel comfortable about their own identity, then they will know how to find a space for themselves within the whole, big group (in the whole school) or within the smaller group of peers (in the ESL student group).

Erikson suggests that in the period of early adolescence, children are developing their sense of competence and fidelity through industry in learning as part of their effort

to develop their own identity (Erikson, 1959). Middle school teachers can focus on ESL students' needs as they search for their identity and self-confidence. These students, coming from different languages and cultural traditions, face an enormous uphill struggle in finding their own identities and place within a vast American culture and its intimidating English language. They may need extra support from their teachers in building their self-confidence and self-assertion. They should be affirmed for their unique value and commitment to their new circumstances (George, Raphael, & Florio-Ruane, 2003). Having a caring adult or mentor in school can be invaluable to these students in finding their own values and identity and attaining academic success.

I suggest that reading literature helps these ESL students escape from their pressures. Amber indulges herself in reading. "When I am reading, everything is like disappear. When I finish reading, everything goes back, like homework, all the things like that. So when I am in a book, there is so much time that I can forget everything."

Reading can help these ESL students envision a better future. Reading can also expand their world and help them succeed in identifying themselves in the new place. At the same time, the proper intervention of teachers, community, and school are also important to support every student's learning. Like the African proverb says, "It takes a village to educate a child." These young adults need to know that they are supported by the world around them. By endeavoring to learn in school and to read, they lay the groundwork for success.

Family: The Bond and the Pressure

In the interviews, the five participants often talked about their strong family bond. All five participants came from two-parent families, and they all had siblings. They also

all had relatives who lived nearby. They knew that their parents worked hard to make a good life for them, and they were all aware of how their families depended on their English language skills. For example, Chad said, “Where we lived, we had to work very hard on the field and not enough money.” Amber talked about her father who traveled back and forth, back and forth for eight or nine years between Mexico and the United States to make a good living. Chad said, “My dad actually came twenty years first and then he was here working and put application and try we get a visa.” Rosa remarked,

They want me to finish school and my college and be somebody. Have a good life. She (my mom) said, “You don’t want to work like ten hours a day or twelve hours a day. I said that I don’t want to. She said, “Then, study.”... I think I have a good opportunity to finish school and have a good life. They said they are working hard for us. They don’t want us to suffer. They want us to have a good life. Yeah, they come here so we can have a better life. Me and my sister to learn English and to know Spanish but not to forget about our own race.

These students believed that through finishing their education here, they would have a better life than their parents. Amber told me that her family had just bought a house. She mentioned that her father worked two jobs to earn more money. Amber said, He (my father) had to work two jobs, in the furniture [factory] and then in restaurant. After the work [in the furniture factory], he didn’t go back to the house; he had to go to restaurant. He had to wake up at 6 o’clock. We are buying a house right now so he is working hard for us. We have to save money, pay the bills and the house.

The students were well aware of their parents' expectations. Their parents wanted them to succeed in school. They knew that a better life came with better English skills.

Amber said,

They (my parents) want us to finish school here so we won't be at the same place as they were. They want us to go to places to learn more. They want us to succeed. Things that we will do better. They don't want us to [be] satisfied [with] what we have. They want us to have more, in a good way. They don't want us get involved in bad things, like stealing or something like that. They want us to have better [lives.]

Rosa said, "My mom tells me, 'you have a different life. You don't have to have a life like us.'"

These participants knew that how hard their parents worked. So in some cases they were probably under more pressures than their American peers. Amber said,

After school, right now, I have to do my homework and I have to help the house. It's like so much things for me. My mom cooks but we help her clean the house so like she won't like get so nervous cause she has pressure with the work and with my sister, like she has to take care of them. So we have to help with the house, to clean the house.

How realistic are the parents' expectations? Does coming to America really mean a better life? Ms. Sal considered Ryan's attitude towards learning:

Parents who come here, they may not have their expectation on the kids because their goal is to make money. It's not that they don't care about their children; what their children will become later on. It's just that they don't have the time to

do it. They don't have the means to do it. So whatever happens—if they finish high school or if they don't finish it, well... It's very sad about the situation.

Ms. Sal believes that for Ryan, if he were staying in Mexico, he would have a better future. When I asked Ms. Sal why Ryan would be satisfied just to finish high school she said, "That's because they don't have paper. The legal papers. So no matter what they do... If he stays in Mexico, he wouldn't think like that."

Amber said, "I want to finish everything. I want to have less pressure than my mom and my dad. I want to succeed more. I want to get better grades." Rosa said, "I just do it in my ways because I know my mom and my dad work, I have to become responsible for me. Because they say like I am not a little girl any more. I work; you study. Look for your grades."

These Hispanic students knew that their responsibility was working hard at school. The 7th grade language arts teacher said that her Hispanic students were the top readers in her class. "I think they do better [than their American peers.] They want to read more so it can help them. I believe there is a little bit more drive to them. I see them progress from the small ones to big books." While their parents worked hard for them, the ESL students accept their responsibility to study and learn and do well in school. Rosa put it this way, "My mom and my dad. They don't really put me to study. I just do it in my ways because I know my mom and my dad work; I have to become responsible for me."

Besides schoolwork, these ESL students took on additional responsibilities within their families. Often they would paraphrase or translate for their parents. When Ryan missed one of his scheduled interview sessions, the teacher told me he had stayed home

that day to translate for his mother who had to take his little sister to the hospital. Later, Ryan would not talk with me about missing school.

Rosa talked about helping her aunt and mother understand more English. She said, “We try to speak English so my mom and my aunt, they can understand more.” Chad seized every opportunity to practice his English speaking from the beginning. After one year of learning English, he could speak better than anyone else in his family. Chad said in the interview,

Sometimes when we have field trips, they will say, “We don’t have money for this.” My father sometimes did not want me to go to. I say, “I don’t translate for you any more” and he said, “Ok. You go.” If I just do whatever they want; they will not let me go anywhere. You know, yesterday, my sister. I told her to take me to school. Because she is going to be late [for] work and she said, “I don’t have to take you to school, you can take a bus. I told her that then I don’t want to help you like last time: She wants to get her cell phone [and] I went to translate and make payment. She said, “OK.”

Because of the need to communicate with the outside world, these young ESL students are finding themselves in an unlikely leadership role within their families. Because they are learning English, they are being looked upon by their families to now take the lead in speaking for their families.

When these ESL students feel pressure, reading could serve as one means of escape. Amber acknowledged that reading made her happy. When she was reading, all her worries were left behind.

When I am reading, everything like disappears. When I finished reading everything comes back, like homework, all the things like that. So when I am in a book, there is so much time that I can forget everything. Suspension makes me enjoy reading too. I like to suspense. I like the feeling that you don't know what's going to happen. So when I get to the end [of the book], I stop and think about what's happening. I think I feel happy. It's hard to explain.

Rosa's language arts teacher said, "I think she reads because she enjoys it." Through reading, these ESL students can get away from the pressures of their real life. They can perhaps glimpse their future as their English experience matures. Rosa and Chad read books about immigrants because they could relate to the characters in the books. Their favorite books were about immigrants.

Garbarrino's (1985) ecology of adolescent development points out that a student's learning is connected inside and outside the school. Garbarino (1985) states that the lives of the adolescents are connected and influenced by their relationships among their family, community, school, and peers. Teachers can ask ESL students to share their experiences in school about how they translate for their families in their homes to show their connection outside the school. Schools can offer sports like soccer that would appeal to ESL students to give them opportunities to show their expertise in sports (a need for physical activity; a need to affect the outer world). Teachers can also encourage ESL students to share their folk stories or legends in class to allow them to share their culture (a need for myth and legend). "You have lots of opportunities with this life."

Understanding what pressures these ESL students face in school and in their families is one way schools and teachers can support these students' education.

The Research Questions

In this section, I will use the themes from the analysis of findings in this study to answer the research questions posed from the beginning of the study. Three major research questions guided the interview questions and the collection of the data.

1. What role does extensively reading young adult literature play in the literacy development of ESL students?

Although the findings of this study suggest that reading young adult literature extensively played a dynamic role in the ESL students' literacy success, it is hard to determine the real impact of young adult literature (YAL) alone because the school has as its focus reading and the use of the Accelerated Reader Program (ARP). This study did reveal that reading prompted these ESL students to think and reason, and that reading provided a foundation for their literacy development. Besides the literacy value, the adolescent ESL students got additional support for their burgeoning adolescent needs through reading young adult literature. Young adult literature presented topics that they could relate to, topics that offered them a better understanding of typical adolescent social and personal issues at a time in their lives when they were struggling to find their own identities (Garbarino, 1985). They chose books that explored *Mundos*—the “two worlds” that the characters had to inhabit. For example, Chad explained that he picked his favorite book “because it talks about the immigrants.”

Reading also served as a tool for these students' success in problem solving. Amber developed a different attitude toward her own sisters through her reflections on a book which focused on the negative impact of sisters fighting. She recognized that reading helped her deal with school pressures. She said, “When I am reading, everything

like disappears. When I finish reading, everything comes back, like homework, all the things like that.”

Reading YAL extensively also helped the ESL students in this study succeed academically. Rosa even thought that “reading helps my brains grow.” Her language arts teacher said, “I think they (ESL students) do better. They want to read more so it (the motivation) can help them. I believe that there is a little more drive to them.” Clearly from this teacher’s perspective, the students’ motivation to succeed in school drives them to read extensively.

All five participants agreed that reading extensively helped them succeed in their academic performance. As Neil said, “reading books helps me feel easier to learn English.” Research suggests that reading is the only place that ESL students can gain access to an academic vocabulary (Cummins, 2003). Therefore, reading supports these students in their academic success as they expand their vocabulary along with their use of English. Young adult literature provided exposure to a more academic language for ESL students than is normally offered through conversational English. This academic language helped them perform more confidently in their academics (Cummins, 2003).

Additionally, research suggests that reading is essential in helping ESL students build their literacy (Cummins, 2003; Krashen, 1993). Langer (2003) states that *literacy development* means learning to have a literate mind. Literacy development, therefore, is shaped through reading and writing, which, in turn, affects the individual’s ability to think, reason, and envision.

Following Langer’s definition of literacy development, I asked the five participants to talk about how reading helped them. Rosa responded, “I love reading.

Reading is easy.” Amber described the influences of a book she read about sisters. After reading that book, she did not want to fight with her sister. She connected reading with how she reasoned, and she thought about the consequences of reading. She said, “It’s about sisters. The sister got sick and she got cancer and she died. I start[ed] to think about my own sister. I think it has good impact on me.”

This study suggests that through reading extensively, these ESL students have started to build a foundation for literacy success, a foundation which will support them in thinking and reasoning as they find their way through adolescence. Amber reflected on how she felt when she was reading: “It’s like a movie playing in my mind. It’s like images. It’s like I am reading but it’s like I am just like in a movie and the characters are moving.” Ryan said when he read *Harry Potter*, “I felt that I am one of the characters.” Chad liked the book, *The Circuit*, because it helped him learn about others who also lived in *Mundos* like him—“It talked about the immigrants.” Rosa, on the other hand, explored issues that she was confronting while building her identity. “*Romiette and Julio* is about gangs and gangsters. It’s kind of like true and about people who are racism. And that’s why I like it.” Living in two *Mundos*, these students loved to talk about books like *Amazing Grace*, *The Circuit*, *Breaking Through*, and *Romiette and Julio*. These books focused on immigrants’ lives, races, and courage. Through following along with the characters in these books, the ESL students could see the parallels with their own lives and identify with the fictitious adolescents who were also forging paths toward new identities.

Through reading, these young adolescents could hone their thinking and reasoning skills as they took on the perspectives of the characters in the books. Neil said,

“I just imagine while I read.” By developing their ability to take the perspective of others, these new immigrant YAL readers developed their ability to think, to reason, and to envision. They expanded their range of coping skills and problem-solving strategies to use in their future endeavors.

Rosa’s and Chad’s discussions of books in the interviews were mostly about the stories in the books, not about the books’ literary merits. They were operating within Piaget’s Concrete Operational Stage. According to Piaget’s Theory of Cognitive Development, middle school students vary within a wide range of different cognitive thinking stages (Thomas, 2000). Some students are in the Concrete Operational Stage in which students are able to deal with concrete concepts, numbers, and relationships, while others may be in the Formal Operational Stage when they begin to reason logically and systematically. The Formal Operational Stage is also the time when students learn to build fully-developed logic and reasoning. Because of their limited English ability, ESL students sometimes are mistakenly identified at the lower levels of cognitive development when in fact they might simply still be in the early process of developing their logic and systematic thinking, or because of the language barrier, they may not yet know how to express their reflective thinking.

The ESL participants in this study learned English mostly through classroom instruction. Because they chose to stay in their cultural comfort zone with their Mexican peers and family, they primarily communicated in Spanish with peers at school and with their families at home. As a result of staying in their cultural comfort zone, they limited their opportunities to perfect their new language and were inadvertently handicapping themselves. In these circumstances, it is all the more crucial that they find additional

opportunities to practice and develop their English literacy such as through reading literature for pleasure.

In my discussions with these students, I found that reading helps them understand themes in literature that relate to young adults, and, perhaps more importantly, make real-world connections to issues in their lives. Amber and Rosa enjoyed stories that delved into tragedy. The books that Amber mentioned as her favorites were mostly those where the protagonists faced conflicts and issues such as death and fatal illnesses. She felt sympathy when she read about a sister's death, and said the book convinced her to look at her relationship with her own sister differently. Reading young adult literature prompted her to think and reason and empathize beyond the world of books as well. Some young adult books focused on gangs, peer relations, and other issues with which these students could identify. These books helped them explore the world beyond their own circumstances, titillating their imaginations while at the same time providing a safe, inviting forum to help them test ideas and potential strategies for dealing with the real world.

Reading guided these students in their search for identity. It inspired and encouraged them and offered up role models. It entertained them and offered them solace. Ryan read books about sports, action, and anything that piqued his imagination. He said, "I feel like I am one of the characters." He read for relaxation and as an escape from the realities and pressures of school and family. Neil devoured horror and mystery books, while Chad chose action-packed books or books about immigrants, like himself, living in two *Mundos*. Amber talked about books that involved romance and tragedy. Rosa, on the other hand, read anything she could get her hands on. "If I am bored in my

house, I'll get a book. If I know the books are going to be good. I read in the back to see if it is a good book. I also see if the book got the awards; I will know if it's a good book." Perhaps it could be said that reading offered these children of two *Mundos* a third world.

Reading leveraged these five ESL students for higher level thinking and reasoning, and ultimately helped them improve academically. As Neil observed, "Reading books helps me feel easier to learn English." Chad remarked, "This year I start on reading and I understand more." Amber, who saw herself growing as a reader by reading more, set ambitious goals for herself; "I don't feel like satisfied with myself. I want to do better." Similarly, Rosa said, "Reading helps me a lot and I like reading."

Close examination of the data from the study indicates that reading has supported these students' search for identity, expanded their vision of themselves as learners, and offered them hope for a better future.

2. How is reading young adult literature related to students' academic confidence?

Evidence from this study suggests that reading young adult literature helps ESL students gain academic confidence. These five participants read extensively in the AR program, and they all showed great confidence in their academic performance and progress. Rosa exuded confidence when she said, "Reading helps me a lot because when EOG [takes place,] we have to read and answer the questions." Being a new immigrant reader gave Rosa a different cause to read. She enjoyed reading for how it could help her. "I don't like to compete [in ARP] to see who is the best. I just do it for my best for good grades... I want to read because I feel comfortable." For Neil, reading was

necessary for survival and success in school. “I just have to read them [AR books] because I have to get the AR points.” Even with his somewhat reluctant view, Neil nonetheless read avidly and showed great progress in just one year.

The policy and philosophy of the middle school in this study supported the belief that reading extensively affects students’ academic performance. On March 11, 2004, the second day of my fieldwork, the principal walked into Amber’s language arts classroom and gave a presentation to illustrate how reading could help students improve their EOG scores. She further explained how the EOG tests results would affect student promotion to 9th grade. Therefore, the school implemented the ARP as part of students’ language arts grades to encourage students to read and thereby increase their chances of success on the EOG tests. Further, the school encouraged students to read at every opportunity. In my observations, I saw students reading AR books in all classrooms. In math or science, when students finished their work, teachers asked them to take out their AR books and read. The 8th grade social studies teacher used literature books to supplement the social studies text. When she taught a unit on the Civil War, she had students read both the textbook and a novel, *Mountain Valor*, set in North Carolina at the time of the Civil War. Even in physical education students were allowed time to read. The school emphasized the important connection between reading and academic performance, and it practiced what it preached.

All five participants read extensively in the AR program as indicated by their AR records. Their high AR points paralleled their academic performance. They also recognized and described the connection between reading and their academic performance. For example, Neil commented that reading helped him in school: “If I read

more books, then I can get more words, more vocabulary words. It will be easier for me.” Amber, Rosa, and Chad enjoyed reading and understood that as they became better readers, they became better at English. Chad even recognized that his brother in high school did not work hard enough to learn English. “My brother, he didn’t have a lot of practice because he always hangs out with Mexican friends. He didn’t really do the work. Sometimes he asks me what it means and to help him. And in the beginning, I didn’t know how to explain [to] him but now I know how to explain to him and help him.”

Amber, who was a successful reader and student, understood the concept of life-long learning English: “I think it [learning English] will never finish. I think it will be all my life ‘cause every day I am learning a new word and how to pronounce it. I think I will never be finished with English.” With confidence in her reading and her academic performance, Amber said,

I will keep going on. I mean I know I can do things better than I did before. So if I don’t get good, I will just practice and try to do better next time and just keep doing it and doing it. And I will get it right.

Reading gave her the confidence to keep going even when the going was tough.

Ryan knew that reading helped his academic performance. He said, “I can do better by reading books.” When I asked him what motivated him to read, he replied, “To get better grades.” He told me that if he wanted a better social studies grade, he needed to put more effort into listening to the teacher. He said, “I am trying to read more. I am trying better in social studies ‘cause it is the lowest of my grades. [To do better, I need to] pay attention.”

Neil knew that he needed to read even if he was “too lazy.” His ARP records showed that he was trying to read more challenging books. He said, “[In 7th grade], I can pick up books by myself but it’s little books.” In 8th grade, he picked up longer books like “two hundred pages.” He also expressed preference in his reading choices. “I think all the mystery books are interesting for me, and horror books are the same- they are interesting for me.” By 8th grade his grades were good, and his language arts teacher noticed a change. “At the beginning of the year, I don’t think he (Neil) will pass the end of grade test, but now I think he will pass end of grade test without a problem.” Neil concurred, “I think I know how to read better and I can understand better than 7th grade. I can write better. I think that’s the reason that I feel better in 8th grade than 7th grade.”

All five participants got A’s and B’s, and all five participants read extensively, but only partially because AR points counted toward their language arts grade. They also all seemed to care about their parents’ expectations. All told me that their parents were concerned about their grades, and they did not want to “get in trouble” with their parents. Family bond and pressure is important to Ryan. Ryan knew that his parents expected him to do well in school; he chose to work up to his family’s expectation. He said, “[I will] try to [earn] AR points to not be in trouble.” Even though the parents could not support their children in English, they still knew how to motivate them. Neil said, “They care about how I learn.” Rosa said,

They [my parents] want me to finish school and my college and be somebody.

Have a good life. She [my mom] said, “You don’t want to work like 10 hours a day or 12 hours a day. I said that I don’t want to. She said, “Then, study.”... I think I have a good opportunity to finish school and have a good life. They said

they are working hard for us. They don't want us to suffer. They want us to have a good life. Yeah, they come here so we can have a better life; me and my sister to learn English, and to know Spanish, but not to forget about our own race.

Amber described a similar commitment to her academic performance.

I want to finish school [college]. I want to have a career. I want to...umm... I want to finish everything. I want to have less pressure than my mom and my dad. I want to succeed more. I want to get better grades. Like if I get a B, I want to get a B+ or A, a better grade.

Most students reported their parents would give them certain privileges for good grades. Family bonds and desires to please parents served along with reading as factors promoting the ESL students' academic success.

All five participants agreed that reading extensively helped them succeed in their academic performance. As Neil said, "reading books helps me feel easier to learn English." Research suggests that reading is the only place that these ESL students can gain access to the academic vocabulary (Cummins, 2003). Therefore, reading supports these students in their success as they expand their vocabulary as well as their use of English. Reading extensively helped these five participants gain access to an academic language instead of just conversational language. This academic language helped them perform more confidently in their academics (Cummins, 2003).

3. How do these ESL students view their own literacy development?

The ESL participants in this study often talked about their English literacy performance and their capability to read, write, speak, and listen. Cummins (2003) suggested that teachers should emphasize vocabulary instruction at the same time that

students are being encouraged to read extensively. Cummins believed that reading extensively and learning vocabulary were equally important to hasten ESL students' literacy development.

All five participants were concerned with their limited vocabulary. The more they relied on their cultural comfort zone, the more important reading became for exposing them to new vocabulary and building their knowledge base. This phenomenon suggested that Cummins' emphasis on helping ESL students gain vocabulary and discrete language skills through classroom instruction is an important issue for ESL researchers and teachers to consider.

Amber said that she knew that it was better for her to read more in order to build her vocabulary. Reading and vocabulary were two areas where she hoped to improve. "This year what happens is that I learn more words that I didn't understand last year. So I can get bigger books, harder books. So I don't have problems in getting my AR points." Amber's language arts teacher believed that Amber knew the connection between reading and her literacy development. He said that she knew reading was a tool she could use to gain more vocabulary. Rosa had similar opinions about the value of reading for her vocabulary development:

Writing is easy. Because I know the word, I know how to spell it, and I know the sentences, everything. And reading is easy too. I think reading helps my brains grow. If I see the words I don't know, I can look them up in the dictionary and find the meaning.

Ryan knew that reading helped him get good grades in language arts class, even though he said he disliked reading. He said that he had to read to avoid trouble. "I get in

trouble because I didn't read. Because they gave us some AR points. I didn't get no AR points so I got in trouble, and I started to read." At the same time, he learned new words through reading extensively. His language arts teacher said, "With him [Ryan], I don't think the vocabulary gap is a big deal with him."

Rosa read extensively starting in 6th grade. Reading became a habit for her. When I asked how she felt about her learning, she replied, "I feel good. I listen to teachers but sometimes I don't get them. And, I like it here because I see my friends here. We can be joking; we can study together." Rosa liked to talk about books in which the characters dealt with conflicts in race, friendship, and tragedy. She was interested in the issues of race and living in two *Mundos*. She believed that her English was good enough, and that it was important to keep two languages. She said,

When I started to learn English, I feel funny. I said, Man, I can't believe I am going to learn all that. And then I started to speak it, speak it, and now I know how to speak it, and it's kind of good.

Rosa showed confidence both in living in two *Mundos* and in the search of her identity. She was proud of her bilingual ability, "It [being bilingual] will help me a lot because I can be in both places and speak both languages. I know how to write in Spanish and English." She mentioned in the interviews that all ESL students should practice English, and she suggested other ESL students should "speak up." Rosa said that she had good grades in school, and learning English was easy. She said, "I have confidence that I can go to college... I think I have good opportunity to finish school and have a good life."

For Chad, he knew that he wanted to read, and he recommended books to his friends, even to Neil. He related books to his life and his interests. Chad said, “This year, I start on reading and I understand more.” He worked hard to read like his peers. Chad said,

You know what help me to read books? ‘Cause everybody reads big books.

Sometimes I tried to read big books. Then, one day, my friend Samuel gave me the book. [He said,] “That’s a good book. It will help you understand.” When I started to read the book, then I start to try another book.

In the interview, when we discussed how Chad was lucky to come to school while his older brothers had to work, he remembered a book with a similar situation. He said, “I read the book. It says about a boy who didn’t go to school for four years. He had to work.” As a new immigrant reader, reading YAL helped Chad in searching for his identity as well as in adjusting to life in a new culture. He said, “When I like the book I read about all afternoon. That’s what happened when I read *The Circuit* and *Breaking through*. I read that book in one day.”

Neil would read but, compared to the other participants, he read the least of anyone. In one year, his reading level went from a 3.8 to a 4.8, and yet he would not openly embrace reading. His language arts teacher said that Neil did not want anybody to know that he was learning. For learning vocabulary, Neil chose to get help from his friends first and then afterwards would resort to a dictionary if no one could help him. When I asked him about his strategies in learning new vocabulary, he said, “The dictionary. Ask the teachers. I asked Mr. Wood sometimes or asked my friends. They will tell me.” Neil’s parents’ expectations served to motivate him to read and learn in

school. He said, “They told us that we have to go to college.” He mentioned that he was shy to speak but now he tried to practice English speaking with his brother. He said, “[We speak] in Spanish but sometimes we practice English.”

Amber, Ryan, and Rosa had been in the U.S. for four to five years. They had no problems understanding their teachers. Although Ryan did not like to talk much about how he viewed his literacy development, he said that he understood what his teachers said and that his English was good enough. Amber, Ryan, and Rosa did not worry about reading, writing, or listening to teachers; they were concerned about their pronunciation and opportunities to practice English.

Having been in the U.S. for less than two years, Chad and Neil tried different approaches to gain English proficiency. Chad was proud of how well he could speak. He liked to practice his speaking and tried out everything new he had learned in class in a conversation. He became the family translator. He noted his difficulties were in memorizing words, spelling, and writing.

Neil learned new vocabulary fast. His language arts teacher said that Neil was a strong speller. From the observations, Neil had done well in his ESL class. He memorized new words quickly, and he understood what the ESL teachers talked about.

Chad and Neil knew that their literacy development had progressed with time. They considered themselves quick learners; however, teachers told me that they were “typical” ESL students. Chad loved to practice English, and he hoped to get more opportunities to do so, while Neil felt much more comfortable if he could communicate in Spanish.

In discussing their own literacy development, the ESL students in this study focused most often on their vocabulary and their improvement since coming to the U. S. These five participants spoke confidently about how reading had helped improve their English literacy, but at the same time they expressed concerns over not having enough practice in speaking English. Their time in the ESL class was important to them, they acknowledged, in supporting their literacy development but more so in smoothing the transition of learning a new language in a new learning environment.

Conclusion

The findings from this study of five ESL students suggest that reading YAL extensively has helped these students in their literacy, academic confidence, and views of themselves as being literate. They have adapted to living lives defined by two languages and two worlds, and they are finding ways to adapt to a new culture. They are a new generation capable and willing to bridge the language/culture chasm between their Spanish culture and their new American environment.

Their choices of books show that they relate closely with stories of other immigrants, and they also look to books to help navigate the issues and difficulties in their adolescent lives. In the next chapter, I will provide a summary of this study and conclude with future research recommendations.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate how reading young adult literature might affect ESL adolescents who were in the process of developing their English literacy and making the transition to academic confidence. The study focused on the roles and the effects that reading young adult literature (YAL) extensively had on ESL students. The findings which emerged from this study suggest that reading YAL has helped these five ESL students improve their English literacy and their academic confidence. It helps them deal with their own lives and improves their grasp of English literacy as they simultaneously maintain a life in their cultural comfort zone with peers who not only speak the same language but also speak Spanglish--a mixture of English and Spanish.

The primary research question investigated whether reading YAL affected ESL students' literacy development. The findings suggest that reading YAL helped these five ESL students think, reason, and develop literate minds (Langer, 2003). It also established a foundation for their cognitive reasoning development. When they talked about books, they explored social and personal themes that interested them. In essence, they were trying to understand the world through reading YAL. By reading extensively, these students improved their English literacy and became more successful in school.

Five ESL students in a rural middle school participated in this study. The school policy asked every student to read at home at least 30 minutes each day. The school used the Accelerated Reader Program (ARP) to monitor students' reading practice. Students were assigned a specific goal to reach every six weeks. These five participants read extensively and had a strong record as reflected in their ARP reports. They showed that

reading “is a clear route to English literacy and the development of academic English” (Krashen, 2003, p. 55).

The study used a qualitative research approach incorporating observation, interviewing, and document analysis. The time frame for the participants’ coming to the United States was between one year eight months and five years. Four of the participants were 8th graders, and one was a 7th grader. All of them expressed confidence in their academic performance in their interviews, and four of them were determined to go to college. They all attended the same middle school with a large number of other ESL students who came from the same region—Mexico. These Mexican students were bilingual, but more often spoke Spanglish, an English/Spanish mix.

Amber, Ryan, and Rosa had been in the U.S. for four to five years. They no longer worried about difficulties in their reading, writing, or listening. They were at this point more concerned about their pronunciation and wanted more opportunities to practice speaking English. Chad and Neil had been in the U. S. for less than two years. They were satisfied with how their literacy development had progressed. They considered themselves quick learners; however, their teachers said they were quite “typical” ESL students and probably had an exaggerated sense of accomplishment. Chad liked to practice speaking English, and he hoped to get more opportunities to do so; on the other hand, Neil felt much more comfortable communicating in his native language.

All five participants were concerned about their vocabulary development. Amber’s language arts teacher said that Amber knew reading was a tool for her to use to gain a stronger vocabulary. He believed that Amber knew the connection between reading extensively and her literacy development. Amber was a motivated reader who

enjoyed reading. She knew reading would improve her vocabulary. She hoped that through books as she progressed in both her reading and vocabulary she would improve in her English literacy.

Ryan also knew that reading helped him get better grades in language arts class. At the same time, he learned new words through reading extensively. His language arts teacher said, “With him (Ryan), I don’t think the vocabulary gap is a big deal.” Ryan stated that he did not enjoy reading. He said he had enjoyed reading in 7th grade but not in 6th or 8th grade. His 8th grade language arts teacher said, “I think he (Ryan) sees reading as something he has to do instead of really enjoyment.”

Rosa read extensively starting in 6th grade. Reading became a distraction for her, and she enjoyed talking about books during her interview. The books she referred to as her favorites involved immigrants, tragedy, and racial issues. She spoke confidently about her academic performance. She said, “I have good grades. I always being good, they (my parents) are proud of me.” She insisted that, “I like to study but I like to hang out with my friends, too.” At this stage of adolescence for Rosa, having fun with her friends was equally important to studying.

For Chad, he knew that he wanted to read, and he tried to recommend books to his friends. He saw how books could relate to his life and interests. He made a connection between a book he had read and his own brother having to work rather than being able to go to school. He discussed books about immigrants that piqued his interest to begin reading chapter books. His ESL teacher lauded him saying, “We are very proud of him. He can speak English well, and his comprehension is improving.” His language arts teacher, on the other hand, talked about his inconsistent attitude towards his studies.

Neil was smart, according to his teachers. His language arts teacher believed he would pass the 8th grade EOG reading test. He read, but compared to the other participants, he was the one who read the least. Neil knew he should read more to help improve his English literacy, but he stated that he was too lazy to read. When he made an effort to read and accumulate AR points, he jumped from a 3.8 reading level to a 4.8 reading level in just one year. It may be that Neil was working on his literacy but not in ways that others could see. His language arts teacher explained that Neil did not want anybody to know that he was learning.

Cumming (2003) suggests that teachers should emphasize vocabulary instruction at the same time that students are being encouraged to read. Cumming states that reading extensively and learning vocabulary are equally important to ESL students' literacy development. All five study participants expressed concern about their vocabulary ability. Cumming's research on gaining vocabulary and discrete language skills suggests an important issue for ESL teachers and researchers.

James (1974) believes that young adolescents have a need for myth and legend--fantasy and the imaginary world. Stories, then, satisfy the students' imagination. Through books young adults can live in different worlds—history, reality, fantasy, or their own imaginary world. Langer (1995) states, “As we read and tell stories through the eyes of our imagined selves, our old selves gradually disappear from our recollections, our remembrances of yesterday become firmly rewritten, and our new selves take on a strength and permanence that we believe was and is who we are” (p. 5). Through reading literature, thus, the new immigrant young adults in this study were shaping and reshaping themselves and the world around them.

These five participants read extensively; however, their attitudes towards reading were quite different. Amber, Rosa, and Chad enjoyed reading, and reading helped them learn English. Ryan had the highest Accelerated Reader (AR) points among these five participants, however, he said, “reading is boring.” None of his friends read, and he said he preferred “dangerous” extracurricular activities over reading.

The participants in this study chose to stay in their cultural comfort zone with their Mexican friends who shared the same culture and language. Rosa referred to her world as *Mundos*, worlds in Spanish. She used Spanglish, a mixture of the two languages in her life and faced two worlds of different cultures merged together.

In searching for their identities, the new young adult immigrants faced more challenges than just their language. Their families often coped with economic pressures, while some faced issues of legal status.

These five ESL students benefited from having close family and relatives around them. All of them were aware of their parents’ high expectations for them. They saw their parents working hard to earn a living and they, for the most part, accepted their responsibility to do well in school. As Rosa said, “Because I know my mom and my dad work, I have to become responsible for me. Because they say like I am not a little girl anymore. I work; you study. Look for your grades.”

Although research studies suggest that it usually takes two years to become proficient in oral literacy (Cummins, 1994, 2003), the case studies did not support this. Without opportunities to practice their oral skills, it is difficult and time consuming for ESL students to reach a high level of oral proficiency—certainly more than two years. The five participants lived in a rural area with many Spanish friends and relatives around

them. They communicated much of the time in Spanish either in school or at home. Not all of them sought every opportunity to practice their listening and speaking in English.

Arriving in North Carolina at the same time, Chad and Neil showed different levels of oral proficiency. Chad eagerly practiced each new word he learned in ESL class, while shy Neil communicated only with teachers and students in Spanish. Amber, who had been here for four years, still felt that she needed improvement especially in speaking English. She made an effort to listen to English and learn the pronunciations by listening to audio books at home.

These five participants revealed different personalities, different experiences in reading young adult literature, and different journeys towards English literacy. Through their voices I was better able to understand the world of the new immigrants.

Before going into the field, I was concerned with how young adult literature could make a difference in the English literacy development of these young adult ESL students. My research did find that reading was helpful for these new immigrant readers. It helped them gain confidence in their literacy as well as in their academic performance. After working with the students, I began to see their *Mundos*, their two worlds. I saw them using two languages and mixing two cultures as they develop their new identities and new language, *Spanglish*. Their living in *Mundos* influenced their choice of books and friends and helped situate them within their comfort zone.

Instructional Implications for Teaching ESL

In the course of this study, I spent many hours in the middle school classrooms talking with students and teachers. From my observations and the findings of this study, instructional implications for teaching ESL students emerged.

- More Support and Practice

It is clear that ESL students need more support and practice to express their reflections on reading YAL, in writing as well as in speaking. Teachers should provide time for students to discuss or write about their favorite books. They can also encourage students to join book clubs in the local library. In language arts class, teachers can provide class time to discuss what the students have read. This practice can provide students with time and space to reflect on what they think about books and to share what they have learned with others.

- Book Talks and Book Recommendations

Teachers might also work with the school media specialist to sponsor book talks, to post student reflections, or to maintain lists of recommended books. Through this process, other students can get help in selecting appealing books. Students in this study sometimes served as resources for each other. Amber, Rosa, and Chad would recommend books to their friends. For students like Ryan, literature circles or book recommendation posts might prove helpful. In book talks or literature circles, students share what they have read (Langer, 1995; Rosenblatt, 1995; Wilhelm, 1997). Teachers might also consider publishing student recommendations on Internet listservs or discussion boards or display student posters in the media center. Many alternative options exist to help students with book selection.

- First Year ESL Class

Another recommendation which emerged from this study is that first year ESL students need more time in ESL classes. Students like Chad and Neil indicated that they did better in their new learning environment because they had more support from their

ESL classes. Other students, like Amber and Rosa, complained they did not learn well in the beginning when they only went to ESL class for an hour a day. They both agreed that they did not get enough ESL support their first year in school, and consequently learned nothing from their other classes. If their experiences are typical, schools should consider providing newcomers with longer, more intensive ESL class time before mainstreaming them into regular classrooms.

Implications for Future Research

This study revealed several areas in which future research would be merited. The themes that emerged from this study show that ESL students are typical adolescents. They are searching for their identity and independence in their new environment yet at the same time struggling to stay in their cultural comfort zone with their peers who share similar language, culture, and background. These new immigrant young adolescents understandably thrive with the support of their families, peers and teachers. In the light of the themes in this study, several areas should be investigated for future research.

All five participants in this study wanted more practice speaking and listening in English. Further research should examine the influences on ESL students that inhibit or facilitate English oral proficiency.

Further longitudinal research is needed to investigate how ESL students who read extensively in middle school perform academically in high school and in college. Is their academic interest, ability, and success maintained? Do the same supports of teachers and family hold true for them? What role do their friendships play, and do they maintain their cultural comfort zones? Four out of five participants in this study wanted to go to college and looked forward to a promising future. Further research could explore the

difficulties they might confront in pursuing a college education and their experiences within higher education.

This study revealed how essential teacher support is for ESL student success. Future research should probe the nature of the relationship between ESL students and their teachers. Amber said, “They work hard to teach you, so you have to help them. The teachers are trying to teach you so you have to help them.” ESL students especially need extra support within the educational environment to help them face their many challenges. Arnold (1993) talked about the status quo of young adolescents as a minority group. Middle school ESL students would be viewed as a minority within a minority. Caring, concerned teachers could help them develop the confidence needed to experiment with their new language, to feel comfortable within the classroom, and to be able to establish their independence beyond the influence of their peers. Future research should investigate how significant the relationship between student and teacher actually is to ESL students’ academic success.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Questions

Questions for Interviewing Participants

About School:

- 1. How did you feel about your first day at school?**
- 2. What is your school experience here in the United States?**
- 3. How did you feel about school before you came to the United States?**
- 4. In your perspective, describe the school differences between your home country and here.**
- 5. What subjects do you like?**
- 6. What subjects challenge you most?**
- 7. Why do you feel challenged by these subjects?**
- 8. From your perspective, how does school help you?**
- 9. What can teachers help you in learning?**
- 10. How do you feel about your academic performance?**

About Reading

- 11. Tell me about your learning in English.**
- 12. What are your suggestions for other English as Second Language students?**
- 13. What helps you in learning English?**
- 14. Who helps you in learning English?**
- 15. Tell me about your reading.**
- 16. Tell me about your experience in the Accelerated Reader Program.**
- 17. What motivates you to pick up a book to read?**

18. What kinds of books are you interested in?

19. Tell me about the books that you read.

20. Which book is your favorite?

21. Why is it your favorite?

About family and peer interaction

1. When did you and your family come to the United States?

2. What did you feel when you first came to the States?

3. What language do you use at home?

4. Tell me about your family.

5. What language do you use when you are with your friends?

6. Tell me about your parents' attitude towards your learning in school.

7. What are their expectations?

8. Tell me how you feel about your family's influence on you.

9. Tell me about your friends.

10. Who are your best friends?

11. What activities do you and your friends do?

12. Tell me about any of your friends' influence on you.

About you

1. Tell me about yourself. Your interests, for example.

2. How do you describe yourself?

3. What are your own expectations of yourself?

4. **How do you think about your own learning?**
5. **What are your own expectations for your future education?**
6. **What are your expectations for your future?**
7. **What else do you want to tell me besides answering my questions?**

Appendix B: Young Adult Literature mentioned in the content

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