Exploring Writing of English Language Learners in Middle School:
A Mixed Methods Study

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Date of Approval:
May 4, 2009

Keywords: Bilingual, academic language proficiency, identity, writing topic, writing assessment

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the thousands of English language learners attending U.S. public schools who experience “being born again” as they acquire a new language, culture, and identity. May they rise up like the phoenix.
Acknowledgements

GRATEFUL is the overwhelming feeling I have about my life, and I would like to express that here to the many people who supported me throughout the dynamic (sounds more positive than ‘tumultuous’) journey that is the Ph.D. “Thank you” is not nearly adequate to convey my appreciation, but for now, on this page, it will have to do.

I would first like to express my admiration and gratitude to my academic advisor, Dr. Elaine Silliman. Over the last several years, Dr. Silliman has been both an inspiration and a driving force, equally nurturing and challenging me throughout the doctoral adventure and into the first, hopeful steps of an academic career.

I extend heartfelt thanks as well to the rest of my committee: Dr. Ruth Bahr, whose optimism and “voice of reason” helped me focus and remain calm, even in the face of nebulous statistical analyses; Dr. Patty McHatton, whose passion for education and qualitative research reflects in her enthusiasm for teaching and mentoring students; Dr. Jacqueline Messing, whose course in Educational Anthropology was both timely and influential in my career and research; and Dr. Louise Wilkinson, who has been both inspiring and welcoming as a mentor and friend.

Along the way I have been fortunate to cross paths with many excellent teachers and students who have had an impact on me as an educator and researcher. Some of these people made direct contributions to this investigation. I extend many thanks to the Bayview Middle School community and district for their hospitality and enthusiastic participation in this project. I deeply appreciate Cindi Garrett, who dedicated many hours to transcribing, coding, and organizing data. Cindi’s unstoppable, positive energy and bright spirit kept the project rolling, and I am grateful for her collaboration and
friendship. I send many thanks to Félix Matías, Justine VanDyke, and Kyna Betancourt for check-coding and providing feedback. Finally, I appreciate Dr. Judith Bryant for providing methodological advice and serving as the outside chair at the dissertation defense.

I am grateful for my wonderful family and friends, who have provided support and listening ears over the years. My parents, Rosalie and Roger Stockseth, have always been open-minded and supportive of all (or most) of my crazy ideas. Finally, I extend my love and gratitude to my dedicated husband, David, who has been loving, patient, and understanding over the course of many weekends and events spent in front of the computer or at the library.

Much love and appreciation go out to these people and the many others who have smiled upon this journey. A well-known line from the Spanish poet, Antonio Machado, provides some sense of closure to this adventure, as well as a look at what is to come:

Caminante, no hay camino, se hace camino al andar.

Walker, there is no path. The path is made by walking.
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Robin L. Danzak

ABSTRACT

The study’s purpose was to assess, through mixed methods, written linguistic features of 20 Spanish-speaking English language learners (ELLs) in middle school. Students came from Mexico, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic. Participants wrote two expository and two narrative formal texts, each in Spanish and English, for a total of eight writing samples each. Additionally, students developed 10 journal entries in their language of choice, and 6 randomly selected, focal participants were interviewed for the qualitative analysis.

The quantitative analysis involved scoring formal texts at the lexical, syntactic, and discourse levels. Scores were analyzed using Friedman’s 2-way ANOVA by ranks, and resulting ranks were compared across genre-topic and language. A key outcome was that the text topic, rather than genre or language, impacted on rank differences at all levels, possibly due to student engagement or influence of the prompt structure.

Performance at the three levels was essentially similar across both languages, revealing that participants were emerging writers in Spanish and English. Similar outcomes in Spanish and English also implied potential cross-language transfer of
academic language proficiency. Results further highlighted the interaction of multiple linguistic levels in text composition. Finally, students appeared to apply a knowledge telling strategy to writing, resulting in unsophisticated vocabulary and structures.

For the qualitative analysis, focal participants’ journals and interview transcripts were analyzed with domain and taxonomic analyses to discern how their language learning experiences shaped their identities as bilinguals. Results showed that 1) Spanish was preferred for all focal participants; 2) students shared the experience of language discrimination; 3) bilingual and monolingual identities resulted in different attitudes toward language learning and varied writing performance; and 4) Mexican and Puerto Rican students had diverse language learning experiences, leading to differences in identities and writing outcomes.

Overall, the quantitative and qualitative findings raise two questions: 1) which aspects of academic language proficiency are shared across both languages, and how might these be assessed with bilingual, integrated language measures? 2) How might integrated assessment in L1 and L2 aid in identifying adolescent ELLs with language impairment?
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Research Problem

Recently, there has been a national push to improve the literacy achievement of adolescents in our nation’s middle and high schools (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Graham & Perin, 2007). According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2007), less than one-third of adolescent students achieve at grade-level expectations in reading. In the case of writing, test scores across the country are equally as disturbing. On the last National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) writing examination, given in 2007, the majority of 8th graders (88%) scored at or above the basic level, but only 33% achieved a level of at or above proficient. For students in 12th grade, 82% scored at or above basic, while only 24% achieved at or above proficient (Salahu-Din, Persky, & Miller, 2008).

One group of adolescent students in need of greater attention in educational research and policy development is the growing, diverse population of English language learners (ELLs). Indeed, existing studies involving ELLs of all ages have documented that their literacy abilities often fall well below those of their native English speaking peers (Goldenberg, Rueda, & August, 2006; Gutiérrez et al., 2002; Shanahan & Beck, 2006). According to Cummins and Schecter (2003), it takes the average ELL at least five years to master the academic language skills necessary to catch up to native English-speaking students.

Similarly, Short and Fitzsimmons (2007) emphasized that adolescent ELLs in middle and high schools must do “double the work” (p. 1) of their native English
speaking peers in that they are expected to acquire English simultaneously as they learn academic content through English. In addition, many of these students, in spite of having been schooled in the United States for several years, are still developing academic language proficiency in English. Despite academic language needs, adolescent ELLs “are being held to the same accountability standards as their native English-speaking peers” (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007, p. 1). These researchers called for national-scale improvements to the assessment and instruction of adolescent ELLs, as well as policy changes (e.g., NCLB definitions, school accountability criteria) and increased funding for research in this area.

In spite of the literacy challenges apparent for adolescent English learners, much of the ELL and bilingual literacy research has focused on acquisition of early skills, such as phonological processing, word reading, and vocabulary development (Bialystok, 2007; Geva, 2006; Shanahan & Beck, 2006). Hence, many of the studies on ELL literacy development have sampled students in the lower grades. In addition, there has been little investigation into the area of ELL writing, in spite of this being an area of concern due to the general poor quality of ELL written work (Geva, 2006; Geva & Genesee, 2006). In addition, very few studies to date have examined micro-level, specific linguistic features of ELL writing at the lexical, syntactic, and/or discourse levels. Clearly, there is a need for increased understanding of the development of second language writing of adolescent English learners.
Purpose

The purpose of the present mixed methods study was to provide, through quantitative analyses, an in-depth, cross-language investigation of the linguistic features of the expository and narrative writing of 20, Spanish-speaking ELLs attending a public middle school on the west coast of Florida. A secondary goal was to explore, through qualitative methods, how the language and literacy learning experiences of a randomly selected sub-group of 6 focal participants may have contributed to these students’ developing identities as bilingual writers.

Participants produced a series of expository and narrative written texts in Spanish and English for the quantitative analysis, which involved the application of lexical, syntactic, and discourse assessment measures to investigate the variables of language (Spanish/English) and genre-topic (expository/narrative, topic 1 or 2). Written journals and interviews of the focal participants provided data for the qualitative analysis, which included domain and taxonomic analyses (Spradley, 1979) and the creation of data displays (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Conceptual Framework

The present investigation was carried out based on a sociocultural, constructivist view of identity, learning, and second language acquisition. Within this framework, identities are perceived as multiple and contextually or situationally motivated (DeFina, 2006). In addition, identity is largely constructed and expressed through discourse (Riley, 2006). For example, Sfard and Prusak (2005) described identity as a set of reifying,
significant, and endorsable stories about a person. In this conception, one’s identity is structured through stories that people actively construct for themselves and others.

In the case of second language (L2) learning in the context of school, there is some evidence that validation of students’ social identities through culturally-relevant instructional practices may strengthen social identity and increase student investment (Daisey & José-Kampfner; Meltzer & Hamann, 2004; Norton-Peirce, 1995), as well as contribute positively to literacy achievement (Au & Mason, 1981; Cummins et al., 2005; Flores-Dueñas, 2004; Pérez, 2004). In addition, the sociocultural perspective highlights the importance of acknowledging and incorporating students’ prior knowledge and experiences into learning and assessment, including students’ knowledge of their L1 and their participation in the cultural practices of their homes and communities (Collins & Blot, 2003; DaSilva Iddings & Katz, 2007; Flores-Dueñas, 2004; Gee, 2004; Gee, 1996; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992).

With regard to the incorporation of student resources as a bridge to learning, a key theoretical basis for the current study was the assumption that relationships exist between the first language (L1) and L2 that not only influence oral language production, but also play important roles in biliteracy learning and academic language acquisition (Bialystok, 2007; Bialystok, Luk, & Kwan, 2005; Durgunoglu, 2002; Francis, 2006; Geva, 2006; Geva & Genesee, 2006). Research reporting evidence of cross-language transfer of common underlying proficiencies by second language learners supports the notion that general cognitive and language skills, concepts, and metalinguistic awareness can be shared across languages (Bialystok, 2007; Cummins, 2000; Francis, 2006). That is,
common underlying proficiencies in L1 can provide scaffolds for the development of related knowledge and skills in L2, particularly in the case of well-established, higher-level cognitive processes and skills. These processes and skills include, for example, phonological awareness (Bialystok, 2007; Geva & Genesee, 2006; Lafrance & Gottardo, 2005), vocabulary depth (Ordóñez, Carlo, Snow, & McLaughlin, 2002), text production (Cummins, 1991), and knowledge of writing conventions and story grammar (Durgunoglu, 2002).

In keeping with the sociocultural conceptual framework, the framework of the present investigation maintains that a student’s L1 knowledge and skills can serve as cognitive resources to be accessed in the context of L2 language and literacy learning. Like funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) and other cultural and experiential resources, a student’s abilities in L1 can be incorporated into classroom instruction to facilitate and strengthen writing development in L2. In the present study, participants developed various written texts in Spanish and English that were used to assess these students’ cross-linguistic writing skills. Writing prompts were structured to incorporate students’ L1 knowledge and skills, prior experiences, funds of knowledge, and cultural experiences and practices. In addition, implementation of a mixed methods design provided the opportunity for an in-depth investigation of adolescent ELL writing within the context of a bilingual autobiography project that took place in the middle school English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom.
Review of the Literature

As mentioned previously, there has been little scholarly inquiry into the area of ELL writing. Prior research has typically fallen into four categories: 1) bilingual writing development; 2) the influence of instruction on ELL writing; 3) the relationship between L1 and L2 writing; and 4) assessment measures of bilingual/second language writing. Studies reviewed here are organized based on these categories. The first area, bilingual writing development, considers similarities and differences between monolingual and bilingual writing acquisition, as well as characteristics of biliteracy development in general, particularly in the case of young children learning two languages simultaneously.

The second area, influence of instruction on ELL writing, centers on effective ELL teaching strategies as well as challenges to instruction, such as curriculum reduction for language minority students. The third area, first and second language interaction in writing, explores the relationships between L1 and L2 writing, for example, the transfer of academic language skills, common underlying proficiencies, and use of L1 as a resource in second language literacy development. Indeed, studies focusing on writing development and writing instruction frequently highlight cross-linguistic relationships and/or influences. Because this theme is central to the present study, findings related to the topic of cross-language relationships will flow throughout the literature review.

Finally, the fourth area, assessment measures for (bilingual) writing, presents some of the various measures that have been applied to explore bilingual/second language as well as monolingual writing at the lexical, syntactic, and discourse levels. The review of the
literature on bilingual writing is preceded by a brief summary of predominant theories on
the process of writing development in general.

Theories of Writing Development

In their meta-analysis on strategies to improve adolescent writing in middle and
high schools, Graham and Perin (2007) highlighted two distinct yet interrelated roles
played by writing in the school setting: 1) writing as a skill composed of a conglomerate
of strategies that is used to accomplish communicative and academic goals; and 2)
writing as a medium through which subject matter is learned. However, years of literacy
development precede students’ ability to utilize writing effectively to meet academic and
learning goals. This section briefly describes writing development, highlighting
predominant theories of writing as both a cognitive process and a social practice.

Cognitive frameworks of writing. Writing is commonly defined as a complex,
dynamic process that involves the integration of multiple levels of cognitive and motor
skills and processes. This process-oriented conceptualization of writing was initially
driven by Hayes and Flower’s (1980) influential model of the cognitive processes of
writing, which replaced earlier linear models. Berninger and Hooper (2003) summarized
the process approach to writing as “a non-linear, recursive process in which the planning,
translating of plans into written text, and the reviewing/revising processes continually
interact” (p. 3). McCutchen (2006) noted that the original Hayes and Flower model had
been revised over the years to consider also the task environment. This includes elements
of the physical and social contexts of writing, such as the composing medium,
collaborators, and audience and, in the case of student writers, McCutchen (2006) added the instructional context.

Notwithstanding the impact of the Hayes and Flower model on how writing is understood and instructed, the original model and its revisions have been criticized for their focus on the practices and processes of expert writers rather than novice writers or children (McCutchen, 2006). Certainly developing writers differ from experts in their processes of text planning, production, and revision. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) proposed an alternative to the Hayes and Flower model, confirming that children make use of different control processes in their writing than do more experienced producers of written text. Specifically, according to Bereiter and Scardamalia, young writers do not employ sophisticated planning, translating, and revising processes. Instead, less-experienced writers engage in a simplified, “knowledge telling” strategy (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987, p. 5) which involves recalling experiences or facts based on the assigned writing topic and telling about these in the text. McCutchen (2006) confirmed that the practice of knowledge telling has been evidenced by research on children (e.g. ages 10-12 years), which has shown that composition at this stage is dominated by text generation processes, while conceptual planning and revising are rarely observed until later in adolescence.

In search of a more holistic view of writing that would take multiple strategies and processes into account, Berninger and colleagues (2002) integrated cognitive, developmental, neuropsychological, and educational theoretical frameworks into a proposed simple view of writing. In this triangular model, transcription processes of
handwriting and spelling along with executive functions, such as attention and planning, form the vertices. The goal, text generation, is represented by the apex of the triangle. These three “core processes” (transcription, executive function, and text generation) (Berninger & Hooper, 2003, p. 6) occur in a working memory environment, represented by the inside of the triangle. Figure 1 summarizes this model.

Figure 1. Graphic interpretation of the simple view of writing (adapted from Berninger & Hooper, 2003; Berninger et al., 2002)
With respect to the interactive nature of these processes, Berninger et al. (2002) stated:

Deficits in transcription skills or neurodevelopmental processes related to transcription can interfere with development of the text-generation component. … The more automatic low-level transcriptions skills are, the more capacity-limited, working-memory resources are available for high-level composing skills (p. 292).

In this way, the simple view of writing accounts for competition among cognitive resources as text composition plays out.

Along similar lines, Torrance and Galbraith (2006) discussed the processing constraints faced by developing writers. These constraints include dual task interference (based on the writer’s attempt to perform two or more tasks simultaneously), the transience of short-term memory, and the processing demands of the strategies required for the writing task itself. These authors suggested that effective writing development required automaticity of low-level components (spelling and handwriting) and efficient memory management strategies, such as the ability to shift attention among competing task demands. Indeed, Torrance and Galbraith (2006) highlighted the flexibility necessary for productive and successful composition of written texts:

No matter how skilled we are at managing the writing process, there is an irreducible core of potential conflicts and writing will always be a struggle to reconcile competing demands. Writers –motivationally- have to accept this if they are to get the task done. (p. 78).
Often the demands of writing include those imposed by the social context of the writing event. The purpose, goals, audience, context of instruction, and the topic and expectations of the writing assignment itself are all influenced by sociocultural factors. Taking this into account, Berninger and Hooper (2003) highlighted the need for writers to develop sensitivity to the social context of writing in addition to the cognitive processes involved in writing. Social frameworks for writing will be addressed in the section that follows.

_Social frameworks of writing._ According to Prior (2006), the dominant writing research paradigm is currently driven by sociocultural theories. In contrast to cognitive theories of writing, sociocultural frameworks highlight the dialogic processes of text composition: because writers produce texts within a given sociocultural-political-historical context and utilize culturally appropriated tools, resources, and practices, all writing is viewed as socially-mediated, distributed, and collaborative (Prior, 2006). For example, a white, monolingual English-speaking child attending school in the suburban U.S. will learn and utilize literacies differently than an adult, Spanish-speaking migrant worker studying English through a community program. These individuals will also acquire different types of symbolic capital based on language status, power structures, and other contextual factors (Christian & Bloome, 2004). Similarly, as viewed through the sociocultural lens, writing may be conceptualized not only as a means of communication, but also as a medium for social action (Berdan et al., 2006; Collins & Blot, 2003).
In the case of writing in school, instructional context, power relations, the purposes and goals of writing, as well as audience and collaboration (with other students and the teacher), become important elements for a sociocultural framework of children’s writing. Along these lines, Schultz and Fecho (2000) pointed out the following key characteristics of writing development: 1) it integrates social historical contexts; 2) it is nonlinear and varies across contexts; 3) it is influenced by social interactions, including classroom curriculum and instruction; and, 4) it shapes social identities of students.

This being said, sociocultural frameworks of writing (and literacy, in general) often highlight the integration of literacy learning and the development of social identity in school-age children. For example, Bloome and colleagues (2005) stated: “Teaching students to be readers and writers is as much a matter of language socialization, enculturation, identity production, power relations, and situated interaction… as teaching how to manipulate symbol systems. It is also an intimate part of identity formation” (p. xvii). These issues take on a particularly important role in the case of language minority students. For example, Christian and Bloome (2004) pointed out that, for ELLs, the relationships between literacy learning and social identity formation in the classroom context can impact on students’ overall school achievement. For these children, language minority status may result in their marginalization during literacy events, which diminishes their social capital, social status, and ultimately, academic performance. This pattern may also occur in the case of students with a language or learning disability as well (Brinton & Fujiki, 2004; Danzak & Silliman, 2005; Ruiz, 1995).
In relation to social identity development, Ball (2006) noted that sociocultural theories of writing in school also consider the influence of students’ prior experiences on learning. Indeed, sociocultural frameworks view both the individual and the context as dynamic and multifaceted, and emphasize the complex interrelationships among people and contexts. Hence, the context of writing in school must also take into account students’ literacy experiences outside of school. These experiences include the linguistic and cultural practices of students’ homes and communities, which, in the case of ELLs, may not neatly parallel the behaviors and skills expected and valued at school. An additional challenge for ELLs is the fact that, “Not only does writing in school happen in the context of broader literate practices in the home, community and workplace, but also school itself is seen as a profoundly laminated institution” (Prior, 2006, p. 62). This is to say that the school is not an autonomous influence on students’ writing development, but rather is connected at multiple levels to community practices and identities. This statement highlights the sociocultural perspective of the writer as having multiple identities and participating in multiple contexts, again, a framework particularly relevant to ELLs.

With regard to the ever-changing sociocultural tablet upon which developing writers learn to compose, Schultz and Fecho (2000) inquired, “What does it mean in terms of writing development for students to bring their home cultures, peer cultures, popular cultures, and academic cultures… to bear on a text in the process of being generated?” (p. 59). The present study is situated within the sociocultural framework of this type of question. The following sections begin to explore this question through an
overview of the literature on biliteracy: bilingual writing development, instruction, assessment, and the interaction of L1 and L2 throughout this process.

**Bilingual Writing Development**

Bialystok (2007) noted that the three prerequisites for literacy—oral language competence, understanding symbolic concepts of print, and metalinguistic awareness—are all differently influenced by bilingualism. For example, while bilingualism can enhance metalinguistic awareness, a child’s acquisition of two languages may initially result in reduced vocabulary breadth or diversity in each system (Bialystok, 2007; Cobo-Lewis, Pearson, Eilers, & Umbel, 2002). In addition, proficiency is likely to vary across the languages, which may lead to challenges for literacy acquisition in the less-proficient system. For these reasons as well as others, it is important to remember that bilingual literacy development is unique; that is, a bilingual child may experience developmental patterns in each language that differ from those of monolingual speakers of each language.

**Research findings.** With this in mind and noting the scarcity of published research on early bilingual writing development, Rubin and Carlan (2005) explored the development of writing in Spanish and English for over 100 bilingual writers, ages 3-10 years, in low-income elementary schools with bilingual programs on the US-Mexico border. Children were asked to draw pictures of things they liked and describe them both orally and in writing in both languages. The authors adopted Gentry’s (1979, 1982) five developmental levels of writing, created for monolingual English speakers, and Ferreiro
and Teberosky’s (1982) comparable five-stage system designed to explain writing development in Spanish.

In their analyses of Spanish and English writing samples of the bilingual children, Rubin and Carlan (2005) determined that bilingual stages were generally similar to the monolingual stages across languages; however, there were also differences. For example, bilingual children in Gentry’s precommunicative and semiphonetic stages (corresponding to Ferriero and Teberosky’s levels 1-3) often wrote the same symbols for both languages and read them differently in English and Spanish. This finding confirmed a similar observation by Moll, Saez, and Dworin (2001), who also found this pattern in their qualitative, multiple case study of two kindergarten students developing early biliteracy skills.

As children advanced, for example, to the phonetic stage/level 4, Rubin and Carlan (2005) attributed writing errors to different letter-sound relationships in the two languages. In the transitional and conventional stages/level 5, students’ vocabulary and sentence structure became more complex in both languages. An additional finding was that, as early as age 6 years, the bilingual children used code switching and strategically applied their general knowledge of both languages in writing as communicative resources. These findings also support the general notion that, for a bilingual individual, first and second language competence and literacy skills have a mutual influence on each other in the case of biliteracy learning and development.

Despite the value of these findings, it is notable that Rubin and Carlan (2005) analyzed participants’ writing in a rather holistic manner based on the writing-stage
models that were compared. That is, writing samples were explored and described by general characteristics of text production and errors, for example, representation of each syllable as one vowel, omission of silent letters, and use of compound/complex sentences. A more fine grained, micro-analysis of developing biliterate writing is needed to better compare and contrast the lexical and syntactic features of ELL writing across both Spanish and English.

Also in relation to biliteracy development, Edelsky (1982) examined changes over time in the writing of first through third grade students in Spanish and English, and how relationships between these two languages were expressed in children’s writing. Participants attended a bilingual program at a school serving primarily Spanish-speaking children from migrant families, located in a semi-rural area near Phoenix. To explore biliteracy development, Edelsky incorporated multiple sources of data, including samples of students’ regular classroom writing (477 texts in Spanish, 49 in English), interviews with teachers and aides, classroom observations, a language situation survey, observation of parent events, and school records. She found examples of L1-L2 “application” (transfer) in segmentation, spelling, and personal style, as well as L1-L2 “nonapplication” (differences) in segmentation, spelling, use of tildes/accents, syntactic complexity, style, code switching, and handwriting.

Edelsky (1982) concluded that the importance of these findings could be determined based on the perspective of the reader. Therefore, if writing was viewed as a hierarchical, linear set of skills applied invariantly across contexts (as many teachers at that time believed, according to the author), the findings would emphasize examples of
nonapplication (non-transfer). On the other hand, from the perspective that writing represents the context-dependent orchestration of multiple cuing systems of global and local conventions (Edelsky’s perspective), examples of application (transfer) would be highlighted. Indeed, the author emphasized that children utilized linguistic input differently in each language depending on available resources and contextual constraints.

*Interpretive frameworks.* Edelsky’s (1982) work is reflective of her contemporaries, specifically the cognitive process writing model of Hayes and Flower (1980), described in the previous section. However, Edelsky’s qualitative data sources (i.e., interviews, observations, and document review) also highlighted the context of student writing in the participating school, and included descriptions of both classroom practices and the philosophy of the bilingual program. In this way, Edelsky’s work, while driven by the cognitive processes framework at the moment of analysis, is framed within a broader, sociocultural perspective that takes into account “the context through, not merely in, which writing was produced” (p. 212 –itals are Edelsky’s).

For Edelsky, there exist underlying L1 writing processes – or common underlying proficiencies (Cummins, 2000) - that can be applied to L2 writing. Many researchers support the idea that these common underlying proficiencies can be incorporated as linguistic resources into language and literacy instruction of ELLs (Bialystok, 2007; Cummins et al., 2005; Durgunoglu, 2002; Francis, 2006; Koda, 2007). A further step in this process would be to acknowledge and integrate other cultural resources that language minority students bring to the classroom, for example, skills and practices that they experience in their homes and communities (Ball, 2006; Moll et al., 1992; Moll, Saez, &
Dworin, 2001). This brings us to the second category of second language writing research, which deals with writing instruction for ELLs.

Influence of Instruction on ELL Writing

Two general themes emerge from the research regarding the influence of instruction on ELL writing development. One is that, although many instructional strategies found to be effective for ELLs are examples of simply good teaching (Rueda, August, & Goldenberg, 2006), these highly effective teaching strategies must be strategically modified to meet the unique needs of ELLs (Escamilla, 2006; Shanahan & Beck, 2006; Walqui, 2007). Another underlying theme in this body of research is that teachers of ELLs should take care not to water down the curriculum or lower expectations for their students (Boyd & Brock, 2004; Moll, 1986; Koelsch, 2006; Rueda et al., 2006; Walqui, 2007).

Modification of instructional strategies. Regarding the first of these broad themes, Bialystok, Luk, and Kwan (2005) noted that biliteracy acquisition is different from monolingual literacy development in two key ways. First, a bilingual child brings different background skills to the literacy-learning experience. For example, their oral proficiency, vocabulary, metalinguistic awareness (including phonological awareness), and overall cognitive development differ from those of monolinguals in each language. In addition, and noteworthy for the present investigation, a biliteracy learner has the ability to transfer skills from one language to the other. What remains under investigation, however, is the question of which strategies and skills are readily transferable.
Rueda and colleagues (2006) reviewed multiple studies on the sociocultural context of biliteracy learning and concluded that additive language learning environments include those in which experienced teachers emphasize cooperative learning, critical thinking, and whole language, and utilize technology, home-school collaboration, and thematic, integrated curricula. However, these conclusions are based on descriptive investigations that did not report any outcome data. Hence, according to Rueda et al. (2006), these studies can only “suggest certain hypotheses about the influence of these factors on student literacy outcomes” (p. 319). Indeed, “what works” in ELL literacy instruction appears to vary widely across the literature reviewed.

In contrast to Rueda et al. (2006), Shanahan and Beck (2006) provided a qualitative, narrative review of studies of literacy instruction for ELLs in which they calculated effect sizes to compare results across investigations that met criteria for employing experimental, quasi-experimental, or single-subject designs. Three major findings were synthesized from the studies reviewed: a) ELLs advanced more in their writing ability in instructional settings that used structured writing as opposed to free-writing; b) no effects were found for use of cooperative learning groups to teach ELL writing; and c) revision training was generally helpful. Across the studies reviewed, effect sizes were smaller and more variable for ELLs than for monolinguals who participated as controls, indicating weaker practical significance and/or use of small sample sizes for ELL groups. This result may also be a consequence of the large inter-subject variation that exists in the academic skills and literacy learning experiences among ELL students.
Shanahan and Beck (2006) concluded that teaching specific reading and writing elements can benefit ELLs, but teachers need to adjust instructional routines to meet the unique needs of these students. Similarly, Escamilla (2006) noted a caution: When it comes to ELLs, the “good teaching is good teaching” phenomenon represents an erroneous “one size fits all” approach that only exacerbates broader problems in the schooling of ELLs in general. For this author, these problems include a lack of research and an emphasis on an English-speaking “literacy industry that drives teacher education and policy” (p. 2330).

One solution to this latter problem is that teachers of ELLs be knowledgeable enough about their students’ native languages to employ a contrastive analysis approach to second language and literacy instruction. In this approach, students are provided with sufficient metalinguistic understanding about how the languages compare and contrast at various levels (Ball, 2006; Gutiérrez-Clellen, 1999). Along these lines, Rubin and Carlan (2005) recommended that teachers should recognize the unique features of bilingual writing development, teach spelling patterns, and highlight similarities and differences between students’ first and second languages. These authors further suggested that ELL teachers emphasize meaning, promote the use of bilingualism as a resource, support writing in both languages, encourage children to talk about how and why they write, and use writing to assess and plan further instruction.

One caveat to these strategies is that teachers of ELLs may not have the knowledge, experience, or confidence to incorporate students’ L1 into classroom instruction. For example, in a discussion on the use of Spanish-English cognates for
vocabulary, Snow and Kim (2007) advised that teaching about cognates may be too much to ask of educators who do not have sufficient knowledge of Spanish. Regarding the complex relationships of cognate vocabulary, these authors concluded, “exploiting these cross-linguistic relations is unlikely to happen in classrooms where neither teacher nor students are highly bilingual” (p. 131). This statement is likely to generalize beyond cognate vocabulary to encompass other areas of language and literacy instruction for ELLs, such as comparison/contrast of phonetics/phonology, syntactic patterns, or discourse features across Spanish and English.

In a review of research on teaching ELLs in the content areas (e.g., history, science, math, etc.), Janzen (2008) explored the linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural features of academic literacy and the challenges these presented to ELLs. Based on her findings, Janzen (2008) concluded that the language of academic texts includes distinctive features that differ across disciplines. For many students, especially ELLs, this academic language needs to be explicitly taught for students to successfully interact with these texts. Janzen suggested that ELL students should be asked to engage with the material verbally, for example by thinking aloud, discussing in groups, or explaining learning strategies. In addition, this oral interaction with the content material was found to be equally effective either in students’ first language or English. Indeed, for Janzen, explicit instruction of cognitive strategies, which may be improved with increased teacher professional development, is critical to the success of ELLs in the content areas.

In the aforementioned review, Janzen (2008) alluded to the importance of “the role of students’ cultures, discourses, or literacies and how they affect academic success”
While this discussion was beyond the scope of Janzen’s review, several other studies have considered the use of multicultural literature and/or the integration of culturally relevant resources, i.e., funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) as a pathway to engage ELLs in literacy instruction. In one example, Flores-Dueñas (2004) elicited written responses and group discussions about culturally relevant literature with four Mexican-American students in grade 5. The participating students included two boys and two girls who attended an urban public school in Texas, had been exited from transitional bilingual programs, and were considered by their teachers to be performing on average or above average in academic work in English.

Flores-Dueñas (2004) framed her investigation in Rosenblatt’s (1978) reader response theory, which categorizes a reader’s response to literature as either efferent (text-bound, reading for information) or aesthetic (experiencing text as primary, connection of text to self). The author found that the participants engaged more with literature written by Mexican-American authors than literature from the dominant U.S. culture. In fact, the students were more likely to identify with the characters and experiences expressed in culturally-familiar texts, and thus were able to provide an aesthetic reader response that included increased reflection on feelings, deeper interpretation of the text, and higher-level writing.

On the other hand, dominant culture literature evoked an efferent (i.e. text-based) written response that was shallower, shorter in length, and offered little interpretation. The author concluded that the home-school cultural mismatch experienced by many language minority students leads to lack of engagement because they cannot identify with
the literature of the dominant culture, which is typically included in the language arts curriculum. Although most literature is taught in school from an efferent perspective, when students are able to personally identify with literacy activities (aesthetic response), they are empowered to achieve ownership of literacy.

Flores-Dueñas’ (2004) report was based on a doctoral dissertation conducted over the course of one academic year. This qualitative study provides an interesting, albeit limited, example of the relationships between literacy learning and identity mentioned earlier. However, Flores-Dueñas’ publication lacks the rigor required to increase legitimation (validity) of a qualitative design (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Yin, 2003). For example, the author does not offer any criteria or rationale regarding participant selection and provides little information regarding data collection procedures or analysis. Specifically, it is stated that participants were interviewed, but no details are included about this process nor is an interview protocol provided. Also, the author briefly described the sessions in which participating students read, wrote, and discussed the literature; however, it is not clear how much time students had to write, how long the sessions lasted, or where they took place. Finally, regarding data analysis, Flores-Dueñas (2004) stated that the data (students’ written texts, her field notes, and transcriptions of videotapes of the group discussions) were analyzed based on Rosenblatt’s (1978) distinction between efferent and aesthetic responses to particular texts. However, the categories or criteria employed to determine efferent or afferent response were not specified. Due to Flores-Dueñas’ lack of attention to methodological detail in her report, it is difficult to understand how the author’s conclusions were inferred. Indeed, as
Goldenberg et al. (2006) cautioned, it is difficult to substantiate research claims in the context of methodological shortcomings.

Another qualitative study that offers an incorporation example of ELL students’ home culture into school writing is Dworin’s (2006) implementation of a family stories project with a bilingual class of Latino students in the 4th grade. This project was based on a sociocultural conceptual framework and a funds of knowledge perspective (Moll et al., 1992). Participating students were requested to work with their parents and families to develop family stories that were then written, discussed, critiqued, and revised collaboratively in the classroom in a writing workshop format. In the workshops, discussion and writing took place in each student’s language of choice (Spanish or English). Each student also prepared a translation of another student’s story, and all stories were published in books, one version for each language.

Dworin (2006) found that 15 of 18 stories were originally written in Spanish, and covered a wide range of topics, including a family’s journey to the US from Mexico, Easter in Guatemala, and childhood experiences of parents and grandparents. For this author, the collaborative nature of the workshops helped improve each story due to the inquiry of other students, who often demanded more details when stories were shared. Dworin also found an influence of English vocabulary in Spanish writing, for example, a student invented the Spanish word, ‘la traila’ for ‘the trailer’. The translation of others’ stories was an effective way to encourage the development of metalinguistic awareness across languages, and also served as an individual and social accomplishment for the students.
Dworin’s (2006) project reflected a qualitative design with ethnographic methods including participant observation and direct involvement in facilitation of the family stories project at the school over the course of several months. The school, teacher, and students were described in detail, as was the family stories project. As a means to illustrate the writing produced by the participants, Dworin (2006) highlighted the work of one female student, Claudia, based on his evaluation of her text as “one of the most interesting and powerful of all of the family stories” (p. 514). Miranda’s translation of Claudia’s Spanish text into English was also presented and explored in Dworin’s (2006) report. Similar to the other qualitative studies reported in this review, Dworin anecdotally described some salient features of these two compositions, but did not provide any systematic or in-depth linguistic analysis of any student writing. In addition, due to the descriptive nature of this study (the family writing project took place outside of the classroom and was not explored as an intervention), it is not possible to determine if the family stories project had any impact on the writing achievement of the participating students. Although there is something to be said about value of family involvement in (bi)literacy development (Goldenberg et al., 2006), more detailed, cross-linguistic exploration of ELL writing is necessary to learn how aspiring biliterate students develop skills across languages.

With respect to the sociocultural influences on ELL literacy learning, Goldenberg et al. (2006) concluded in a research review that the studies in this area provided “weak evidence that sociocultural characteristics of students and teachers have an impact on reading and literacy outcomes” (p. 256). For example, use of texts written in students’
native language appeared to provide greater support for literacy acquisition of language minority students than did culturally familiar literature written in L2. However, these authors cautioned that claims such as these are skeptical ones due to methodological problems, particularly in qualitative research. Goldenberg and colleagues identified the following four problems were noted by the authors: 1) insufficient triangulation of data; 2) lack of specific and/or sufficient information regarding participants, data collection procedures, and data analysis techniques; 3) lack of consideration of competing hypotheses or interpretations; and 4) presentation of inferences or conclusions not warranted by the data. These authors concluded, “better designed studies are critical for examining the relationships between sociocultural factors and student outcomes” (Goldenberg et al., 2006, p. 253).

**ELL curricula and student expectations.** With respect to the issue of curriculum reduction for ELLs, Moll (1986) observed through ethnographic research in bilingual communities that teachers of ELLs were likely to water-down the curriculum to match perceived limitations in their students’ English proficiency. According to Moll, this type of instructional bias can hinder ELLs’ literacy development by confining them to limited participation in classroom experiences and low levels of language and literacy instruction. Following a Vygotskian framework, Moll emphasized that learning is a social process, and that early literacy practices should be about purposeful communication with others. Support for this premise was evidenced in home observations in a bilingual community in which most writing was functional and practical, involving such activities as phone messages, grocery lists, and personal letters, as well as children’s homework. In
contrast, in the classroom Moll observed that writing was rarely used as a communicative tool.

As a solution to this conflict, an attempt was made to increase the motivation and writing achievement of the participating ELLs. Moll (1986) and cooperating teachers implemented structured, supportive writing instruction that revolved around assignments involving parents and community members. The purpose of these assignments was to promote home literacy interactions and make writing more meaningful for the students. The author provided an example in which students were invited to interview adults and students (with a questionnaire created collaboratively by the class with the teacher’s guidance) regarding their experiences with language learning, language use, and bilingualism. For Moll, these types of writing experience “minimized the constraining influence of [the ELL students’] English-language difficulties while maximizing the use of the students’ knowledge of the topic and other experiences” (Moll, 1986, p. 107).

Although Moll’s study took place over 20 years ago, current research in ELL classrooms continues to report that teachers of ELLs hold low expectations for students and often assume a “reductive approach of simplified content, and a focus on isolated basic skills” (Koelsch, 2006, p. 2). Koelsch argued that ELLs in high school should be encouraged to take challenging, college preparatory courses, as evidence has shown that academic achievement of adolescent ELLs is better predicted by track placement than English language proficiency. More advanced classes support students’ development of critical thinking and metacognitive skills as well as more complex literacy skills. Koelsch also noted that the quality of instruction in higher level classes may be an additional
factor influencing increased achievement for students in these courses. Overall, this author highlighted the need for educational systems to make structural changes in order to increase the educational opportunities of ELL students.

Walqui (2007) agreed that expectations, in tandem with structured support, need to be raised for ELL students. This researcher presented the objectives and research of Quality Teaching for English Learners (QTEL), a teacher professional development project sponsored by WestEd, a national nonprofit educational research agency. In her discussion, Walqui emphasized that ELLs require opportunities in which they can actively and legitimately participate in rich, high-quality, well-supported academic activities. These engaging, scaffolded opportunities provide students the support and intellectual challenges necessary to appropriate skills required to move from social to independent participation in related tasks. QTEL follows this same framework for the development and training of ELL teachers. Walqui summarized the major goals of QTEL as consisting of: academic rigor, high expectations, quality interactions, language focus, and quality curriculum.

Although more research in this area is needed, it is clear that ELL students can benefit from a variety of quality instructional and learning strategies and experiences as they acquire literacy in a second language. Boyd and Brock (2004) summarized this well when they argued that a “one size fits all” curriculum does little to serve the diverse needs and experiences of ELLs. Instead, solid instructional strategies and appropriately applied L2 supports combined with teacher awareness and respect for students’ home
language and culture can create an environment that promotes literacy learning and school success for language minority students.

*L1 and L2 Interaction*

*Evidence for cross-language transfer.* With respect to cross linguistic relationships in biliteracy, Francis (2006) asked a classic chicken-egg question: "Does new competence develop in response to experience with academic literacy, or do children learn how to use previously acquired knowledge in a new way?" (p. 46). For Francis, bilinguals depend on both shared (general) and language-dependent (specific) mechanisms and structures as they develop secondary discourse abilities and metalinguistic awareness in both languages. Based on this hypothesis, bilinguals have a unified, underlying academic language proficiency as well as some language-specific knowledge and skills, for example, grammatical representations. For this reason, Francis argued that a language-general skill, such as phonological awareness, will transfer from L1 to L2, while language-specific features, such as syntax, are less likely to transfer across languages.

The research reviewed here generally supports the notion that higher-level competencies, potentially represented in a shared underlying system, are likely to transfer across languages. These competencies include: phonological awareness (Bialystok, 2007; Geva & Genesee, 2006; Lafrance & Gottardo, 2005), vocabulary depth1 (Ordoñez et al.,

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1 Ordoñez et al. (2002) described vocabulary depth as involving the quality of phonological representations of words, knowledge of syntactic structures in which a given word is used, word class/es, morphological structure, richness of semantic representations, and pragmatic features of words.
2002), text production (Cummins, 1991), and knowledge of writing conventions and story grammar (Durgunoglu, 2002). In addition, there is evidence that, if students are proficient writers in their first language, these skills can transfer to a second language even if their basic oral communication skills are limited (Dressler & Kamil, 2006; Fitzgerald, 2006; Lanauze & Snow, 1989).

Some caveats to cross-language transfer. It is important to note that cross-language transfer is not always an available or dependable route for ELLs to acquire or access skills in L2. For example, Francis (2006) noted that, in addition to what might eventually become shared features of academic discourse ability, bilingual students must also master language-specific features, for example, grammar. Additionally, although Harley and King (1989) suggested that lexical similarities, especially cognates, between L1 and L2 may strengthen students’ L2 vocabulary, Snow and Kim (2007) cautioned that effective instruction by a teacher knowledgeable in students’ L1 is necessary to support transfer of cognate vocabulary across languages. It is reasonable to understand how this statement can be generalized to highlight the impact of instruction (in both L1 and L2) on other academic language skills as well. For example, in a meta-analysis of research findings for the effects of the language of instruction on literacy acquisition of ELLs, Francis, Lesaux, and August (2006) determined positive effect sizes in favor of bilingual education over English-only education for ELLs. Certainly, a quality instructional context that values and effectively incorporates the students’ L1 is more likely to provide an additive L2 acquisition framework in which ELLs can capitalize on the development of
common underlying proficiencies to support literacy in both languages (Cummins & Schecter, 2003; Gutiérrez et al., 2002; Janzen, 2008; Rueda et al., 2006).

**L1-L2 interaction in writing.** With regard to language interaction specifically in bilingual writing, Fitzgerald (2006) reviewed 56 studies—both quantitative and qualitative—in a meta-analysis of the last 15 years of research on multilingual writing in school. This author reported transfer from L1-L2 writing in spelling patterns and descriptive writing independent of L2 oral proficiency. In addition, the studies that Fitzgerald reviewed evidenced that, when L2 learners experienced difficulty with writing, problems were most likely due to faulty composing processes rather than language factors. These findings show that text-related core competencies may be present in writing across both languages, and also support the notion that higher level cognitive processes are more likely to transfer across languages. These processes include, for students in the primary grades, concepts of print and, for adolescent students, strategies for constructing meaning.

Based on this review, Fitzgerald (2006) noted “a tendency toward low levels of research rigor” (p. 337). The author summarized four methodological issues that emerged from the meta-analysis: 1) lack of information regarding participants’ language proficiency and language learning conditions and experiences; 2) incomplete information regarding the data collection procedures used, measures applied, scoring systems, and reliability procedures including inter-coder reliability; 3) insufficient detail regarding the methods of analysis; and, 4) the need to assess L2 writing with at least two writing samples for the purposes of replication.
In addition to research regarding potential transfer of common underlying proficiencies (Cummins, 2000), there is also evidence that second language learners rely on their implicit knowledge of L1 to infer patterns of L2 at multiple levels (e.g. pronunciation, spelling, and grammar), whether or not these inferences are correct. For example, Cronnell (1985) carried out an error analysis of the English writing of Mexican-American ELLs in Grades 3 and 6, classifying errors as no influence, influence of Spanish, influence of Chicano English, or interlanguage error. This author found that, although error types differed by age, English spelling errors included application of Spanish vowels and other Spanish-influenced, pronunciation-based errors.

More recently, Escamilla (2006) worked with teachers of Spanish-speaking ELLs to assess students’ Spanish and English writing in Grades 4 and 5. For the purposes of the present study, it is notable that the writing samples were analyzed and scored holistically on a 7-point scale using a rubric created by the participating school district. This type of scoring was selected as a means to involve teachers in professional development opportunities in which they would learn to apply the scoring system, assess students’ writing, and determine inter-rater reliability.

In teacher interviews, informants “expressed concern that the problem with English writing was Spanish interference, particularly in the areas of syntax, spelling, and word endings” (Escamilla, 2006, p. 2344). Writing samples developed by the students participating in Escamilla’s study generally confirmed these beliefs. Errors included imposition of Spanish vowels and other orthographic/phonetic influences on English spellings (e.g. ticher for teacher, attencion for attention) and influence of Spanish syntax...
on English construction (e.g., *she get mad with us* as a translation of *ella se enjoja con nosotros*, omission of subject: *because [she] is inteligent*). In addition, and in contrast to teachers’ emphasis on perceived writing deficiencies of their ELL students, Escamilla (2006) also found that the teachers generally shared a belief that literacy education provided first in Spanish supported the development of English literacy. This belief was based on the idea that Spanish literacy skills could transfer to English.

In another study that explored the notion of cross-language transfer, Lanauze and Snow (1989) framed their bilingual writing research on Cummins’ (1979, 1984) interdependence hypothesis, which posited that academic language and skills in L1 influence and support these in L2. These authors used a picture description task to compare Spanish and English writing of bilingual children who had been rated as either “good” or “poor” by their teachers in both languages. Participants attended grades 4 and 5 in a bilingual school in Puerto Rico. In contrast to Escamilla’s (2006) holistic scoring rubric (and most of the other studies reviewed here), Lanauze and Snow (1989) applied various, fine-grained analyses to their participants’ writing. These measures included several indicators in three overall areas: 1) linguistic complexity, which encompassed 9 indicators, such as number of words, number of *T*-units, mean length of *T*-unit, and number of noun/verb phrases; 2) linguistic variety, which included type-token ratios involving number of different verbs used and number of different colors mentioned; and, 3) semantic content, such as number of color words used and distribution of *T*-units into categories, including general description, specific description, positional statement, and action statement.
Overall, the authors found poor quality writing across groups, including those students rated as good in both Spanish and English. However, this may have been due to the elicitation procedure, which did not provide a highly engaging or personally meaningful task for the students. Students were provided with a color picture of a beach scene and given the instructions, “write a description of the picture” (Lanauze & Snow, 1989, p. 326). This activity took place in the course of the normal school day and was presented as an academic exercise. Students did not discuss the pictures or engage in other structured prewriting activities.

Regarding language transfer, the performance of students deemed as poor or good in both languages did not show significant correlations across languages. However, the performance of children rated poor in English but good in Spanish did show significant correlations on measures of linguistic complexity, variety, and content. Lanauze and Snow (1989) interpreted this finding as evidence that children with good L1 skills could rely on these skills in their early acquisition of L2 writing. Similarly, the lack of correlations for students rated as good in both languages may imply that better developed skills in both languages become more independent of one another. On the other hand, it can be inferred that students rated as poor in both languages had not developed sufficient writing skills in L1 to apply to their writing development in L2 effectively.

This latter conclusion appears to support Cummins’ (2000) threshold hypothesis, which indicates that, in order to transfer academic language skills from L1 to L2, children need to have reached a certain level of competence in L1. Also in support of this notion, Escamilla (2006) discovered through her interviews with teachers of ELLs that they
attributed poor English writing performance to the fact that “the children had been ‘rushed’ into English literacy without having had enough time to fully develop their literacy skills in Spanish” (p. 2349). In other words, teachers perceived that early literacy instruction in L1 would provide ELL students a threshold in Spanish literacy upon which to base subsequent English literacy instruction. It is notable that the teachers participating in the Escamilla (2006) study worked in a district whose English Language Acquisition (ELA) program followed an early-exit transitional bilingual model: ELL students were given literacy instruction in Spanish from Grades K-3, along with ESL instruction. By Grade 4, students were transitioned into all-English instruction. Hence, even within a program model attempting to provide a foundation in first-language literacy, these educators expressed concern for their students’ poor quality of writing across both English and Spanish.

The ELA program model just mentioned is based on the premise that L1 language and literacy skills can serve as a foundation upon which to build literacy in L2. The research reviewed on cross-language transfer has shown that, although L1 proficiency unquestionably influences L2 acquisition, the strength of this “foundation” can vary depending on students’ home and school experiences. With this in mind, Moll et al. (2001) carried out a qualitative, multiple case study that compared incipient (emerging) versus instructed (more practiced) bilingual writing. The aim was to discover how bilingual children used their languages and cultural resources as tools for biliteracy learning and practices in the classroom. These authors incorporated observation, field notes, and writing samples of two children in kindergarten (incipient biliterate) and one
student in grade 3 (instructed bilingual). Students attended a magnet school with a diverse population and bilingual classes that emphasized cooperative, student-driven, participatory learning.

Based on their observations of the kindergarten children, Moll and colleagues determined that the two students understood the idea of a correspondence between oral words and written symbols; however, like the participants in the Rubin and Carlan (2005) study, the two children wrote the same symbols for English and Spanish. For Moll and colleagues, this served as evidence that young students’ initial hypotheses about biliteracy are semantically driven; in other words, if it means the same in both languages, the written symbols must be the same. In contrast, Moll et al. (2001) reported that the student in grade 3 used biliteracy consciously as an academic resource. In addition, this participant was able to transfer writing abilities across languages, for example, application of their knowledge of genres in writing.

In an additional research question, Moll et al. (2001) addressed how it might be possible to create additive bilingual conditions in a classroom so that Spanish could achieve a language status equivalent to English, that is, “Spanish, along with English, is an unmarked language; students could use either one or both to do their academic work and to obtain support to develop their biliteracy” (Moll et al., 2001, p. 444). These authors criticized the dogmatic view of knowledge in schooling, which often favors the dominant monolingual English culture and creates subtractive biliteracy environments in most ELL programs (Gutiérrez et al., 2002; Nieto, 2002; Norton-Peirce, 1995, Pérez, 2004). For Moll and colleagues, schools will only be able to perpetuate an additive bilingual
environment through dedicated teachers “capitalizing on existing community resources and practices in support of the [bilingual] program, including developing the bilingual potential of all its students” (Moll et al., 2001, p. 446).

The study by Moll and colleagues (2001) adheres to the same general conceptual framework as the present investigation. However, the Moll et al. project focused on emerging biliteracy skills of students in the early grades. As evidenced by the literature review, this is the case for the majority of research performed in the area of ELL writing. In addition, Moll and colleagues did not systematically apply any formal linguistic measures to the analysis of their participants’ writing. Analysis of the micro-level features of ELL students’ writing is critical to the procurement of detailed information about lexical, syntactic, and discursive levels of ELL writing proficiency.

Assessment Measures for Bilingual Writing

Examination of syntactic structures. Few studies have provided systematic analyses of the linguistic features of ELL writing. In two, methodologically similar investigations, Kameen (1979) and Perkins (1980) addressed various syntactic structures in the second language writing of university students. Kameen (1979) examined the ability of various syntactic measures to predict “good” versus “poor” quality writing in ELL university students. A total of 50 expository compositions written by ELL students from multiple countries were assessed; 25 of these students had been rated as good writers and 25 as poor writers by their instructors. The measures applied, which broke down to 40 factors, included: 1) number and length of T-unit; 2) number and length of clauses; 3) types of clauses (adverbial, noun, relative, coordinates); and 4) use of the
passive voice. The variables that predicted participants’ writing abilities included T-unit length, clause length, and incidence of the passive voice. Kameen noted that, while use of subordinate clauses did not distinguish good writers from poor ones, an increased number of words in a clause (rather than increased number of clauses) allowed good writers to produce longer T-units. Kameen (1979) concluded that ELL students could benefit from writing instruction that provides practice in combining sentences into more “economical units” (p. 348) that might include prepositional, infinitival, and participial phrases.

Perkins (1980) also investigated the ability of numerous structures to predict the holistic writing scores of 29 advanced level, university ELL students on expository texts. In this case, measures used included: 1) number of words, sentences, and T-units per composition; 2) error-free T-units per composition; 3) number of words in error-free T-units per composition; 4) number of errors; 5) T-unit length; and 6) two syntactic complexity indices. Predictors of the holistic writing scores were error-free T-units per composition, number of words in error-free T-units per composition, errors per T-unit, and total errors were significant predictors of the holistic writing scores. All other measures, including the syntactic complexity indices, were not significant. Perkins (1980) concluded that “objective measures which do not take the absence of errors into account are of no use in discriminating among holistic evaluations at one advanced level of proficiency” (p. 64).

In contrast to the previously discussed studies, Harley and King (1989) explored verb usage in narrative and expository (letters) texts written by 69 native English speakers in grade 6 who were learning French at an immersion school in Canada as
compared to 22 native French-speaking peers. These authors employed a mixed methods design with quantitative analysis of the verbs used in student texts and qualitative analysis of the immersion classroom environment. Verb measures applied included: 1) lexical error rate (errors in verbs divided by total number of verbs); 2) lexical variety (type-token ratio for verbs); 3) lexical specificity (use of more frequent verbs); and 4) lexical sophistication (use of more infrequent verbs). The authors relied on three published frequency lists, including both an oral and a written corpus, to determine the frequency ratings of the verbs.

It was found that the French immersion students, writing in their L2, relied more heavily on high-frequency/utility verbs than did their native speaker peers. Derived verbs\(^2\), which are less frequent, were less likely to be used by the second language learners. Harley and King also found evidence that the French learners made use of L1-L2 lexical similarities (i.e. cognates) in their writing. These results, along with classroom observations, led to the authors’ recommendation to increase the lexical variety of L2 learners through instruction of less frequent vocabulary items in context. An additional implication is the idea that knowledge of cognates can increase L2 learners’ lexical resources.

*Comparisons across languages, genres, and modalities.* More recently, Berman and colleagues (Berman, 2008; Berman & Nir-Sagiv, 2007; Berman & Verhoeven, 2002; —

\(^2\) Harley and King (1989) described two types of derived verbs in French (parallel forms exist in Spanish and English): 1) verbs derived from other verbs by affixation (e.g. appear/disappear, take/retake); and 2) verbs derived from nouns or adjectives, with or without affixation (e.g. circle/encircle, flat/flatten).
Ravid, 2006; Ravid & Berman, 2006;) applied various, innovative linguistic measures to a large, international database of oral and written, narrative and expository, texts gathered from children and adults, monolingual speakers of seven different languages. Independent variables across this series of studies included language, age-level (students in grade 4, grade 7, grade 11, and adult university graduate students), genre (narrative/expository), and modality (oral/written) (Berman & Verhoeven, 2002).

The new linguistic measures applied to this data set included a noun scale (Ravid, 2006). This scale, adapted for use in the present study, rated nouns from 1-10 based on a classification from concreteness to abstractness. Results indicated that the participants’ noun usage became more abstract with age, especially in adolescence. Additionally, written expository texts were most likely to contain abstract nouns across the age levels when compared with spoken expository texts and spoken and written narrative texts.

A second measure examined information density of the same corpus of texts (Ravid & Berman, 2006). This measure explored the use of narrative content (eventive, descriptive, and interpretive) versus ancillary material in spoken and written narratives. Analysis found that increased narrative information was dependent on modality as spoken texts contained more ancillary material than written ones.

The third measure involved clause packaging (Berman, 2008; Berman & Nir-Sagiv, 2005). This measure compared oral and written expository texts and defined a clause package as units of text linked by syntactic or semantic relations. This measure found developmental differences again, particularly from adolescence on, for number of
clauses linked in a package, as well as types of linkages used. Additionally, modality was a factor as more clauses were packaged together in oral than written texts.

Finally, an innovative discourse measure (Berman & Nir-Sagiv, 2007) was applied to the written texts. This measure explored the global organization of narratives versus expository written compositions. More sophisticated grammar and vocabulary were found in expository texts across all age groups. However, at the global level, the expository genre was not well-developed until adolescence, while the narrative text structure was evidenced by children in the elementary school grades.

These numerous studies confirmed that text genre, as well as modality, is a factor in the development and usage of various linguistic structures. As might be expected, the written modality offers more opportunities for sophistication than the oral modality, as does the expository genre as opposed to the narrative genre. Specifically, the expository genre (especially in its written form) is acquired later in development; however, at that point, it is more likely to contain abstract nouns and more complex syntactic structures.

With respect to the relationship between syntax and genre in another study of monolingual students, Beers and Nagy (2009) examined how classic measures of syntactic complexity, such as those utilized by Hunt (1965), functioned as predictors of adolescent students’ writing quality. The participants included 41 English-speaking students attending grades 7-8 at a suburban middle school. The participants wrote two persuasive essays (expository genre) and completed one previously started story (narrative genre).
The measures applied included number of clauses per T-unit, number of words per clause, and number of words per T-unit, along with a holistic score of text quality developed by the authors. Results of bivariate correlational analyses found that, for the expository genre, words per clause was positively correlated with text quality, while clauses per T-unit was negatively correlated. In contrast, clauses per T-unit was positively correlated with text quality in narrative texts. Additionally, it was notable that words per clause and clauses per T-unit were negatively correlated, and words per text was not significantly correlated with text quality.

These findings support the previously described results of Berman and colleagues (summarized in Berman, 2008) and confirm the Beers and Nagy (2009) hypothesis that the relationships between syntactic complexity and text quality are influenced by text genre. It appeared that expository texts benefited from more efficient sentences with fewer clauses that made use of literate constructions, such as adjectives and gerundial and infinitival phrases. On the other hand, narratives with longer, multiple-clause constructions (e.g. descriptive, relative or adverbial clauses) were rated as higher quality.

Of course, this study was not without limitations. Similar to other studies of writing described here, Beers and Nagy (2009) allowed the participants a short time to develop their written texts (10 minutes). Also, the students did not physically compose at all, but rather dictated their texts to typists. While the authors argued that the students were trained in this procedure prior to data collection, it is possible that this format, as well as the very short composition time, did not provide a writing environment that would maximize the students’ abilities.
Summary and Conclusions

This review has provided an overview of bilingual writing research explored through four categories: bilingual writing development, influence of instruction on ELL writing, first and second language interaction in writing, and assessment measures for (bilingual) writing. In general, it can be said that a sociocultural perspective of writing served as the framework for a majority of these studies; in other words, the investigations reviewed considered not only the cognitive processes of writing itself, but also the broader sociocultural contexts in which writing occurs. This perspective aligns with the conceptual frame of the present study, which explores both quantitative, linguistic features of the ELL participants’ writing, as well as qualitative, experience- and identity-related influences on the students’ writing.

In the area of bilingual writing development, research has shown both similarities and differences between monolingual and bilingual literacy acquisition. For example, although bilingual children learning to write may advance along similar stages as their monolingual peers, bilinguals may differ with respect to vocabulary knowledge and types of errors that appear in their writing (Bialystok, 2007; Rubin & Carlan, 2005). In addition, emerging biliterate children may apply certain L1 strategies and skills to writing in L2 (Edelsky, 1982). It is important to note that studies in this area were descriptive in nature, with findings based on broad, holistic explorations of bilingual children’s writing. Therefore, this body of research would benefit from additional studies that apply fine-grained analyses of bilingual writing systematically across languages. In addition, the research reviewed in this section centered on relatively young children (under age 10).
Writing development is a continuous and evolving process. More research in the area of adolescent writing is needed to better understand how older bilingual students advance in specific areas of their biliteracy development.

In relation to the topic of writing instruction for ELLs, research highlighted the need to adapt effective literacy instruction strategies to meet the unique needs of ELL students, maintain challenging curricula, and hold high expectations for ELLs. Many teaching strategies have been found to support biliteracy development, including the use of structured writing practice and direct instruction of specific reading and writing elements. Results on the incorporation of culturally relevant literature in ELL classrooms have been mixed, and methodological issues associated with the (especially, qualitative) research in this area have made it difficult to make strong claims (Goldenberg et al., 2006).

In spite of methodological shortcomings, this research has provided some indication that the use of sociocultural strategies may be effective in increasing ELL students’ engagement with literacy activities (Flores-Dueñas, 2004). There is also evidence that bilingual classrooms that provide an equitable, additive, language learning context in which students have opportunities to interact with both L1 and L2 have the potential to enhance learning outcomes for ELL students (Rubin & Carlan, 2005; Rueda et al., 2006). However, successful incorporation of ELL students’ L1 into L2 literacy instruction may be much more easily said than done as ELL teachers often do not have the linguistic knowledge or confidence to include languages other than English effectively in their multilingual classrooms (Snow & Kim, 2007).
Regarding the area of L1 and L2 interaction in writing, there is evidence that bilinguals possess both shared and independent language mechanisms and structures. Additionally, shared linguistic structures may provide common underlying proficiencies (Cummins, 2000) that can transfer across languages. These include phonological awareness (Bialystok, 2007), vocabulary depth (Ordoñez et al., 2002), and knowledge of text level conventions (e.g. genre-related text structure) in writing (Durgunoglu, 2002). On the other hand, syntax has been viewed as a language-specific element (Francis, 2006). The present study integrates the concept of common underlying proficiencies as it compares the lexical, syntactic, and discourse features of adolescent ELLs’ writing across Spanish and English.

It is also of note that, with the exception of a few early studies (Kameen, 1979; Lanauze & Snow, 1989; Perkins, 1980), research in this area has generally explored bilingual writing in a holistic manner without the systematic application of micro-analyses of linguistic features at the lexical, syntactic, or discourse levels. Some investigations that have explored these types of linguistic measures include research in both bilingual and monolingual writing. These studies have considered: 1) lexical sophistication (e.g., verb usage, Harley & King, 1989; noun scale, Ravid, 2006); 2) syntactic structures (e.g., clause and T-unit measures, Beers & Nagy, 2009; Kameen, 1979; Perkins, 1980); and 3) discourse as it relates to overall text structure (information density, Ravid & Berman, 2006). As a group, the results of these investigations highlighted differences between text genres in that different measures predicted overall text quality for narrative versus expository texts. Similarly, it was shown that written
expository texts generally evidenced more complex lexical and syntactic structures. The current study further explores genre differences in writing by contrasting lexical, syntactic, and discourse features across expository and narrative genres.

It is clear that more research is needed to better understand how ELLs acquire English writing and how the linguistic and cultural resources that these students bring to school can play a role in this process. This need is particularly great in the case of older ELL students who, due to more years of schooling in L1, may have a better foundation of academic language and literacy upon which to anchor their second language writing development than children in the elementary grades. In addition, more specific detail regarding lexical, syntactic, and discourse features of biliterate writing would contribute to our understanding of how these features interact or do not interact across languages and genres. The present mixed methods investigation provides an in-depth, quantitative exploration of the linguistic features of Spanish and English writing, across expository and narrative written texts produced by ELLs in middle school. Additionally, with the goal of better understanding the variance in their writing performance, this study provides a qualitative profile analysis of six individual students. These profiles begin to shed light on how the language and literacy learning experiences and behaviors of ELL students shape their attitudes and abilities as emerging bilingual writers.
Research Questions

The study addressed three quantitative research questions:

1. How do lexical features of the participants’ writing compare across languages (Spanish/English) and genres (expository/narrative) as assessed by a noun tiers measure (adapted from Ravid, 2006) and number of different words?

2. How do syntactic features of the participants’ writing compare across languages and genres as evaluated by a clausal complexity measure (adapted from Ravid & Berman, 2006) and mean length of clause?

3. How do discourse features of the participants’ writing compare across languages and genres as examined by the Analytic Scales for Assessing Students’ Expository and Narrative Writing Skills (Quellmalz & Burry, 1983)?

Finally, a sociocultural question directed the qualitative portion of the study:

4. How do previous and current language and literacy learning experiences and/or practices influence the participants’ identities as bilingual writers, including their attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about L2 writing?
CHAPTER 2

Method

Overview of the Research Design

The purpose of the present study was to obtain a deeper understanding of ELL writing at the middle school level. The quantitative focus concerned a comprehensive assessment of the linguistic features of the participants’ expository and narrative texts written in both Spanish and English. An additional aim of this investigation was to develop through qualitative methods an understanding of how the identities of the participating middle school ELLs as writers have been shaped by their bilingual language and literacy learning experiences. Because of this dual purpose, and in keeping with a sociocultural framework, a mixed methods design was selected to address the research questions.

Mixed Methods Designs

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) defined mixed methods research as involving a methodology, the “philosophical framework and fundamental assumptions of research” (p. 4), and methods--“techniques of data collection and analysis” (p. 4)--that unite quantitative and qualitative approaches throughout the research process. For these authors, the central premise of mixed methods research is that “the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides for a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 5). In accord with this statement, Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2004) highlighted three benefits of the implementation of a mixed methods research paradigm. These include: 1) the opportunity
to investigate phenomena in a flexible and holistic manner; 2) the ability to research both micro and macro aspects of a setting or phenomenon; and 3) the ability to validate qualitative data analysis with quantitative analysis and vice versa. In addition, according to the fundamental principle of mixed methods research, the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods provides the researcher with complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses (Johnson & Turner, 2003).

For example, an experimental, quantitative study allows for large-scale analysis of a behavior or phenomenon in which resulting findings may be generalized to the broader population, but will not provide detailed specifics regarding the individuals in this population. On the other hand, a qualitative investigation offers an in-depth, holistic examination of a phenomenon from the perspective of a unique individual or group. The ability to explore an issue with both methods affords the opportunity to achieve both a big-picture understanding as well as more detailed view of the nuanced complexities of the phenomenon in question.

In a mixed methods study, quantitative and qualitative methods may be mixed within and across stages of the research process. These stages broadly include definition of the research objective, data collection, and data analysis and interpretation (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie (2003) further described mixed methods designs as occurring either in parallel/simultaneous or sequential fashion. The parallel and/or sequential use of qualitative and quantitative methods may also differ at the different stages of the research process. More specifically, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) identified four major types of mixed methods designs, which also incorporate the
notion of simultaneous vs. sequential timing: 1) the triangulation design, a single-phase (simultaneous) design in which the researcher merges quantitative and qualitative data sets in an integrated analysis; 2) the embedded design, in which one set of data assumes a secondary or supportive role to the other set (timing may be either simultaneous or sequential); 3) the explanatory design, a two-phased (sequential) structure in which qualitative data serve to explain or extend initial quantitative results; and 4) the exploratory design, a two-phase (sequential) model that begins qualitatively with the purpose of developing or testing a quantitative instrument.

Based on these classifications, the current study can be defined as a two-phased, embedded, mixed methods design, the second type that Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) identified. The design is two-phased because, although the collection of quantitative and qualitative data occurred simultaneously, the data were analyzed sequentially. That is, the quantitative analysis of the formal writing samples (N = 148) obtained from all of the participants (N = 20) occurred first, followed by the qualitative analysis of the journal entries and interviews obtained from 6 focal participants. In addition, this investigation represented an embedded design due to the nature of the research questions, which distinguished between a primary purpose (addressed by a quantitative analysis of the linguistic features of participants’ writing) and a supporting, secondary purpose (addressed by a qualitative analysis of the content of the focal participants’ journals and interviews.)
Informal Interviews of Teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL)

Several decisions regarding the study design, participant selection, and data collection were determined based on informal interviews with three ESL teachers between July and September 2007. These interviews occurred as part of what Stake (1995) considered an “anticipation” (p. 52) phase of the study. In addition, Bernard (2002) recommended informal interviews as “the method of choice at the beginning of participant observation fieldwork” (p. 204).

Conversations with the ESL teachers took place on the phone and lasted approximately 30-45 minutes with each. Topics addressed included demographic information and an estimation of their students’ abilities, how they taught writing in their classrooms, how their students developed English writing proficiency, and their recommendations for the study focus and data collection procedures. The teachers, who were all female, were selected on the basis that a large percentage of their students were Spanish speakers. A total of two ESL educators at the middle school level and one at the high school level participated. Each teacher instructed ELL students of all grade levels and degrees of proficiency at her respective school.

The ESL teacher interviews provided important insights regarding the background experiences and abilities of potential participants, writing instruction in the ESL classroom, and feasibility of the investigation. One of the teachers interviewed, Ms. Brady³, became the source of participants for the study because her classroom was

³ All names of teachers, students, and the school have been changed to protect the confidentiality of participants.
selected as the study site. (See Appendix A for a summary of findings from these informal ESL teacher interviews.)

Participants

A major challenge for research involving bilingual populations is the difficulty in recruiting a homogenous sample with respect to language proficiency, the frequency and conditions of language use, and social, educational, and linguistic experiences (Grosjean, 1998). Indeed, it was clear from the ESL teacher interviews and initial conversations with Ms. Brady that the ELLs attending local public schools demonstrated extreme variability with regard to Spanish and English language abilities and behaviors, prior educational experiences, cultural and family backgrounds, etc. Because of this variability, it was not possible to recruit a large, homogenous group of participants with the resources available.

This being said, participant selection for this investigation occurred through what Maxwell (2005) termed purposeful selection (also known as purposeful sampling or criterion-based selection). According to Maxwell, four possible goals exist for purposeful selection: 1) to achieve a representative or typical sample; 2) to capture the maximum variation in the sample; 3) to examine critical cases as they relate to theories being explored; or, 4) to compare or highlight differences among individuals or settings. Maxwell’s first goal best aligns with the purposes of this study.

Participants for Quantitative Analysis

The final group of participants in this study included 20 students attending middle school (grades 6-8; ages 11-14 years). All of these students were Spanish-English bilinguals whose families originated from Mexico and the Caribbean (Puerto Rico and
the Dominican Republic). Although all of the participants spoke Spanish at home, six of
them were born in the United States. All of the participants experienced varying years of
schooling in the United States and in their families’ home countries. At the time of data
collection, the participants attended the same middle school; therefore, they shared the
same ESL teacher (Ms. Brady), ESL classroom, and overall school culture.

All participants attended ESL classes at their school, Bayview Middle School, a
public middle school on the West Coast of Florida. At the time of data collection,
Bayview Middle had a diverse population of approximately 600 students. The
racial/ethnic distribution of Bayview’s students was 43% White, 25% Hispanic (majority
of Mexican descent), 23% African American, 6% Multiracial, and 3% Asian. It is clear
from this distribution that the majority of ELL students at the school were from Hispanic
backgrounds. Additionally, approximately 50% of Bayview’s students received free or
reduced price lunch.

To serve the needs of its second language learners, Bayview had one ESL class
for the ELL students in grade 6 and another class that combined the ELL students in
grades 7-8. Each class met daily for two periods of 50 minutes each. Although, as noted,
Spanish speakers comprised the majority of the ELL population at Bayview, the
participants’ ESL classmates included children from countries in Europe, Southeast Asia,
India, Africa, and the Middle East. The teacher, Ms. Brady, was an English-Spanish
bilingual of Puerto Rican heritage and the only ESL teacher on staff at Bayview at the
time. Ms. Santos, a bilingual aide from Puerto Rico, assisted Ms. Brady in the classroom.
At this point it should be mentioned that the researcher is also a fluent English-Spanish bilingual.

A total of six inclusion criteria were applied for participant selection:

1. Participants were Spanish speakers whose families originated from Mexico or the Caribbean, as determined by students’ self-report and teacher report, and confirmed by participant questionnaires.

2. Participants had received up-to-grade-level instruction in their home country or the U.S., as confirmed through school records and participant questionnaires.

3. Participants were not from migrant families, as determined by teacher report and consistent school attendance throughout the 2007-2008 academic year.


5. Participants were able to write in English and Spanish, confirmed by evidence of student writing and ESL teacher report.

6. Participants had no previous diagnosis or record of disability or special education services including speech/language, behavioral services, etc., as documented by school records.

The ESL teacher initially identified 29 students in grades 6-8 who met the inclusion criteria. These students were invited to participate in the study, and parental consent and student assent forms were distributed. The forms were signed and returned for 24 of these students. After data collection for the original 24 participants was...
complete, four of the male students, two in grade 6 and two in grade 8, were eliminated from the study because their writing did not meet the criteria for analysis. Of the four, two of these students could not write in Spanish, one could not write in English, and one produced texts that consistently did not meet the productivity criteria for analysis (at least 10 T-units and/or 75 words). Therefore, the writing samples of a final group of 20 students were included in the quantitative analysis. Characteristics of these 20 participants are summarized in Table 1. (Additional information about the students, obtained from a participant questionnaire, is provided in Appendix B.)

Table 1

*Participants by Gender, Grade Level, Family Origin, and Place of Birth*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade level</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Family from Mexico Born</th>
<th>Family from Puerto Rico Born</th>
<th>Family from Dominican Rep. Born</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

55
Focal Participants for Qualitative Analysis

As previously stated, the present study followed a mixed-methods methodology with an embedded design in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously and analyzed sequentially (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). In line with this approach, during the data collection phase a subgroup of 6 focal participants was randomly selected for the qualitative data collection and analysis from the original sample of 24 students. After all of the writing samples had been collected, the 6 focal participants were interviewed and their interview transcripts and journal entries were transcribed for the qualitative data analysis.

One student in the focal group, Manuel, was one of the four participants dropped from the quantitative analysis because four of his eight formal writing samples did not meet the productivity criteria (at least 10 T-units and/or 75 words). However, because he was a focal participant, his writing was coded and scored for the quantitative measures, but was not included in the statistical analyses. Table 2 provides demographic information about the focal participants. (The focal participants are described in detail in the qualitative results section.)
Table 2

*The Six Focal Participants for the Qualitative Analysis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Place of Birth</th>
<th>Schooling Outside the U.S.</th>
<th>Schooling in the U.S.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>Grades K-4 in Mexico</td>
<td>Grades 5-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carolina</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>Grades 2-6 in Puerto Rico</td>
<td>Grades K-2*, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edgar</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Grades 1-5 in Mexico</td>
<td>Grades 5*-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Grades 1-5 in Mexico</td>
<td>Grades 6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuel</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Grades K-5 in Mexico</td>
<td>Grades 6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>Grades K-6 in Puerto Rico</td>
<td>Grades 7-8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data Sources and Collection Procedures*

One of the benefits of a mixed methods design is the ability to triangulate findings from multiple sources of evidence. For Yin (2003), the key advantage of triangulation of data sources is the opportunity to develop “converging lines of inquiry” (p. 98), in which multiple sources of evidence overlap to confirm findings. This study involved four data sources: 1) for all participants, eight formal writing samples, controlled for genre (expository/narrative) and language of text (Spanish/English); 2) for all participants, 10 journal entries written in the students’ language of choice; 3) for all participants, a written

* Grades are repeated to indicate when a student spent part of a school year in her or his home country and part of the year attending school in the U.S.
questionnaire that addressed the students’ educational backgrounds and first and second language acquisition; and 4) for the 6 focal participants, an interview that provided a more in-depth understanding of the students’ backgrounds, educational and language experiences as well as attitudes and feelings toward these experiences and bilingualism. All data were gathered during the spring semester of 2008. Each of these data sources and procedures for their collection are described in detail next.

**Participant Writing**

For the purposes of the present investigation, the primary source of data was the participants’ writing. These formal writing samples were analyzed quantitatively to examine several aspects of academic language proficiency. The content of the focal participants’ writing (journals) was also analyzed qualitatively. To increase opportunities to explore consistency and variability within and across the writing abilities of the participants, 8 formal samples and 10 journal entries were elicited from each student over a period of one month, from April-May 2008.

All writing samples were elicited through carefully constructed writing prompts provided to the students in English and Spanish. Participants produced two expository texts each in Spanish and English, as well as two narrative texts each in both languages for a total of 8 texts each or 160 total for all 20 participants. These formal samples were controlled for genre and language, and prompts were repeated so that students wrote on the same topic in both languages. The topics for the formal writing samples are outlined in Table 3.
Table 3

Topics for Formal Writing Samples (N = 160)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal writing sample</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expository 1</td>
<td>Family: A person I admire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expository 2</td>
<td>School: Letter to a new student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative 1</td>
<td>Family: Special or funny family memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative 2</td>
<td>School: First day of school in the U.S.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students also created personal journals and developed 10 journal entries in their language of choice. Journal prompts, which were unique to each writing event and not repeated, were balanced for expository and narrative genres. Because journal entries were not controlled for language, they were not included in the quantitative analysis. However, the journals written by the focal participants (N = 60 texts) were included in the qualitative analysis, which focused on the content of the students’ writing rather than linguistic factors (journals written by the remaining participants may be utilized for future analysis on this group of students). (The complete writing prompts for all formal samples and journal entries are provided in Appendix C.)

All writing took place in the context of ESL classroom instruction. The data collection process and, eventually, the students’ written texts were integrated into a bilingual autobiography project in which all the ELL students at Bayview Middle --not just those participating in this research study--took part (although all the ELL students
responded to all of the writing prompts, only the study participants’ writing was collected by the researcher for analysis). The bilingual autobiography project served to engage the students, provided a goal and purpose for writing, and united all written texts under a common theme. The researcher and ESL teacher collaborated to facilitate the bilingual autobiography project and elicit the writing samples from the class. In addition, before data collection began, students constructed and decorated their journals and worked collaboratively to brainstorm topics for the autobiographies (see Appendix D). After the data collection was complete, with the support of Ms. Brady and her aide, the ELL students compiled, typed up, and edited their work, and presented the finished bilingual autobiographies to the school community at a book-signing event. This culminating event celebrated the ELL students’ linguistic and cultural identities as well as their identities as bilingual writers.

One 50-minute class period was devoted to the production of each writing sample. In each session, the students were greeted individually upon their arrival and the researcher chatted with them as they found their seats and procured the necessary materials for the day (i.e. students’ journals or loose-leaf paper and pencils). At this time, the ESL teacher also welcomed the students and announced any news or requests (e.g., reminder to return permission forms for a field trip).

Once the students had settled into their seats and were prepared to work, the researcher presented the prompt, in both English and Spanish, projected on a screen at the front of the classroom. Student volunteers read the prompt aloud in both languages. The researcher then read it again for clarification, stated the genre (expository or narrative),
and noted the language (home language or English) required of that particular writing sample. The researcher and ESL teacher then took a few minutes to informally discuss the topic with the class, providing personal examples and encouraging students to make suggestions as to what they could write about. In addition, students were reminded to include not only eventive information (telling what happened, a chain of events), but also descriptive (writing about the state of affairs, facts, or background information) and interpretive information (attitudes, feelings, writer’s evaluation) in their writing (Ravid & Berman, 2006). In this way, the participants’ writing was scaffolded to some degree by the researcher, teacher, and students’ peers.

After presenting and discussing the prompt for approximately 10 minutes, the students were given 30 minutes to address the prompt in writing. During this time, classical music was played in the classroom and the researcher, teacher, and aide circled the room to encourage and monitor students. Students wrote by hand and worked independently, but were permitted to sit anywhere in the room—including on cushions on the floor, writing on clipboards—as long as they maintained focus on their work and did not distract others. As the students completed their texts, the researcher reviewed them to ensure that all aspects of the prompt were addressed. If they were not, students were encouraged to continue writing. At the close of each 30-minute writing period, the participants’ texts were collected and were later transferred verbatim into Microsoft Word documents by the primary researcher and a research assistant. (See Coding and Scoring section below.)
In general, the teacher and researcher promoted productivity in student writing during the data collection phase in five ways. These included: 1) using clear and specific, bilingual prompts and instructions that outlined the multiple components to be addressed in each writing sample; 2) discussing the prompts with the students and orally providing personal examples before writing as a warm-up; 3) reminding students to use details, description, feelings, and “exciting” vocabulary in their writing; 4) creating a calm, comfortable atmosphere with music and flexible seating options; and 5) reviewing students’ writing as they worked to provide motivational feedback and ensure completeness.

For the formal expository and narrative samples, students were instructed to write either in English or Spanish. Language of writing was alternated each week so that the students wrote the same topic in both languages with one week in between sessions (see Table 4 for the schedule of writing samples). On the second week of any given formal sample, students were permitted to review what they had written the previous week for approximately 5 minutes before writing the alternate language version. After briefly reviewing their previous texts, students returned their writing to the teacher and the researcher. When writing the alternate language version of a given prompt, students were instructed not to translate, but rather to “recreate” their original text in the other language.
Table 4

Schedule of Data Collection: Participant Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Journal 1</td>
<td>Narrative 1, English</td>
<td>Expository 1, Spanish</td>
<td>Journal 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Journal 3</td>
<td>Narrative 1, Spanish</td>
<td>Expository 1, English</td>
<td>Journal 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Journal 5</td>
<td>Narrative 2, Spanish</td>
<td>Expository 2, English</td>
<td>Journal 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Journal 7</td>
<td>Narrative 2, English</td>
<td>Expository 2, Spanish</td>
<td>Journal 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Journal 9</td>
<td>Journal 10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Data Sources

In addition to the participants’ writing, other instruments were designed and applied to collect background information about all of the participants, as well as to provide additional data for the qualitative analysis of the focal participants. These instruments included a participant questionnaire, and interviews of the focal participants.

Participant questionnaire. All participants completed a written questionnaire that was provided in both English and Spanish. The purpose of the questionnaire was to collect information regarding their family, heritage, place of birth, and places of schooling. Students completed the questionnaire during one class period after all writing samples had been completed. (The participant questionnaire, in English and Spanish, is provided in Appendix E.)

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4 The ESL teacher, Ms. Brady, was also interviewed at the time of data collection. However, because the focus of the study is on the students’ writing, the teacher interview was not considered in the analysis.
Participant interviews. Interviews were conducted with each of the 6, randomly selected focal participants. All interviews were audio-recorded with Audacity software (general public license) with permission of the students (and written consent of their parents). The interviews were semi-structured in nature in that they were organized around a pre-designed interview guide (Bernard, 2002). The interview guide, designed for the purposes of the present study, included open-ended, descriptive questions to be asked of each student. However, when conducting the interviews, the researcher assumed a flexible approach to the questioning order and incorporated additional, relevant questions as needed. For these reasons, and based on Briggs’ (1986) classification, the interview instruments utilized here can be described as semi-standardized and nonscheduled.

The student interview was developed to provide insight into the qualitative research question that inquired about how previous and current language and literacy learning experiences and practices influenced the participants’ identities as bilingual writers. Specifically, the student interview inquired about the focal participants’ language and literacy learning experiences, language usage, and language and literacy practices for both Spanish and English in the home, community, and school contexts. The interview also provided a forum to explore the focal participants’ attitudes and feelings toward their language learning experiences and bilingualism in general.

Interviews were conducted individually with each focal participant during the ESL class period and after all writing samples had been collected. Interviews were approximately 20 minutes in length. It is important to note that, although interview
questions are presented here in English (see Appendix F for the student interview guide), the researcher immediately established a bilingual language mode (Grosjean, 1998) at the onset of each student interview, making it clear that students were welcome to respond in English or Spanish, and that code-switching was also permissible. This was accomplished by introducing and explaining the interview process in both languages and asking the participant which language s/he preferred to speak during the interview. Additionally, by the time the interviews took place, the focal participants were aware of the researcher’s bilingual status and were comfortable speaking with her in either language. Interestingly, all 6 focal participants elected to conduct their interviews in Spanish.

Analysis

According to Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie (2003), mixed methods data analysis enhances representation (ability to extract adequate information from data) by providing more opportunities to discover or construct meaning from the data. In addition, mixed methods designs increase legitimation (validity) by taking advantage of the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative analysis. For example, the researcher has the opportunity to “quantitize” qualitative data by counting, scaling, or scoring qualitative themes, or “qualitize” numerical data by transforming them into narrative form to which qualitative analyses can be applied (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003).

In order to address the study’s research questions, both quantitative and qualitative analyses were carried out on the data. For the quantitative analysis, the 160 formal samples written by the 20 participants were evaluated at the lexical, syntactic, and discourse levels, and scores were compared within-subjects across genre
(expository/narrative) and text language (Spanish/English) of the text. For the qualitative portion of the study, interviews and journal entries of the 6 focal participants were analyzed using domain and taxonomic analyses to determine domains (categories), their included terms (members in each category), and the relationships among them (Spradley, 1979). Both the quantitative and qualitative analyses are described in detail in the following section. Table 5 reviews the research questions, assessment measures applied, and data sources.

Table 5  
Research Questions, Assessment Measures, and Data Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>Assessment measure applied</th>
<th>Data source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do lexical features of the participants’ writing compare across languages and genres?</td>
<td>Noun tiers, adapted from Ravid’s (2006) noun scale analysis; number of different words (NDW)</td>
<td>Formal writing samples, expository and narrative, in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How do syntactic features of the participants’ writing compare across languages and genres?</td>
<td>Clausal complexity measure, adapted from Berman &amp; Nir-Sagiv (2007); mean length of T-unit (MLT)</td>
<td>Spanish and English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How do discourse features of the participants’ writing compare across languages and genres?</td>
<td>Analytic Scales for Assessing Students’ Expository and Narrative Writing Skills (Quellmalz &amp; Burry, 1983).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research question</td>
<td>Assessment measure applied</td>
<td>Data source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How do previous and current language and literacy learning experiences and/or practices influence the participants’ identities as bilingual writers, including their attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about second language writing?</td>
<td>Domain and taxonomic analysis (Spradley, 1979)</td>
<td>Interviews and journal entries of the focal participants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Quantitative Measures: Coding, Scoring, and Agreement**

All of the participants’ formal written texts underwent multiple levels of coding and scoring for the quantitative analysis. The complete set of written samples (N = 160) were coded in the following order: 1) segmentation of the text into T-units (Hunt, 1965); 2) classification of the nouns into 10 noun scale categories (Ravid, 2006), which were later compressed into three noun tiers (see below); 3) classification of each T-unit into type/s of clauses via the clausal complexity measure; and, 4) holistic and analytic scoring of the complete written texts with the *Analytic Scales for Assessing Students’ Expository and Narrative Writing Skills* (Quellmalz & Burry, 1983). Coding the writing samples in this order provided opportunities to check previous coding at each new level of coding.
The primary researcher coded the texts written in English for all of the measures with the help of a research assistant who was a graduate student in speech-language pathology and had some proficiency in Spanish. During this process, both coders maintained a continuous dialogue regarding decisions about coding at all levels. The researcher reviewed texts coded by the assistant. The researcher also coded all texts written in Spanish. Details on coding procedures and scoring for each of the quantitative measures are explained in the following sections.

Segmentation of Texts into T-Units

After the original, hand-written texts had been transferred verbatim into Microsoft Word documents, each text was separated into minimal terminable units, known as T-units. Hunt (1965) defined T-units as “the shortest, grammatically allowable sentences” (p. 21). T-units are generally described in current literature as containing an independent clause and all of its subordinate clauses and modifiers (Gutiérrez-Clellen & Hofstetter, 1994).

Hunt’s traditional conception of T-units for written English called for the separation of coordinate clauses into new T-units only when the subject of the coordinate clause was explicit (e.g. I went to the store/and I bought candy = 2 T-units; the / indicates a new T-unit). On the other hand, a coordinate clause with an ellipted subject is traditionally considered to be one T-unit (e.g., I went to the store and bought candy = 1 T-unit). In contrast to this approach and because participants wrote in both English and Spanish, which is a pro-drop language, an alternative system was employed for the designation of coordinate clauses into T-units. The criteria used by Gutiérrez-Clellen and
Hofstetter (1994) and Miller et al. (2006) were applied. These authors designated all coordinate clauses as separate T-units in both Spanish and English, whether or not the subject was explicit for segmenting Spanish T-units. For example, the English text “I admire my mom because she is nice / and (she) works hard” was coded as two T-units in spite of the ellipted subject (she) in the coordinate clause. This separation is equivalent to the separation in the parallel Spanish text, “Yo admiro a mi mamá porque es buena / y (ella) trabaja mucho,” in which the subject of verb in the coordinate clause was dropped. Hence, both texts are separated before the coordinate conjunction, and or y. This procedure allowed for consistency in the coding of T-units in both languages.

After the texts were divided into T-units, they were entered into the Systematic Analysis of Language Transcripts software (SALT, University of Wisconsin, 2008) for further coding and analysis (discussed below). After the writing samples had been segmented into T-units and entered into SALT, texts that did not meet productivity criteria (at least 10 T-units and/or 75 words) were eliminated. Of the 20 participants’ formal samples (N = 160), 12 individual texts did not meet the criteria and were eliminated, leaving 148 analyzable writing samples.

**Lexical Level: Noun Tiers and Number of Different Words**

**Coding of noun tiers.** Using SALT, the 148 writing samples that met the criteria for analysis were coded for lexical sophistication using Ravid’s (2006) noun scale. The design of this noun scale was based on previous research on the development of noun categories in children, such as: 1) exploration of the acquisition of count nouns versus collective/mass nouns in young children (e.g., book, house, shirt vs. furniture, clothing,
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stuff); 2) adolescents’ use of abstract nouns (e.g., authority, career, challenge) and
derived nouns (e.g., intervention, annoyance, underestimation); and 3) use of
simple/concrete to complex/abstract nouns in different types of spoken and written texts.

Ravid noted that a systematic model for the development of noun categories had not yet
been constructed; therefore Lyons’ (1977) classification of first-, second-, and third-order
nouns was also incorporated into the noun scale. For Lyons (1977), first-order nouns
included stable objects, people, and animals; second-order nouns referred to processes,
events, or states; and third-order items were abstract nouns not defined by time or space.

Ravid’s (2006) noun scale instrument was developed as both a ranking and a
classifying tool. As a ranking instrument, the noun scale scores nominals on a scale of 1-
10, designating them as levels that range from concrete countable (level 1) to derived
abstract (level 10). Additionally, the 10 levels can also be considered categories into
which nouns may be classified based on their semantic-pragmatic content. Ravid built the
case that the noun scale dealt with universal concepts expressed as nouns, and, therefore,
the categories transcended linguistic differences such as noun gender, which occurs in
Spanish and not in English. Based on this argument, the noun scale measure appeared to
be applicable across different languages, including English and Spanish.

For the purposes of this analysis, the noun scale was used as a ranking tool, and
students’ nouns were rated based on Ravid’s (2006) original 10 levels and coded in
SALT. After this coding was completed, the 10 levels were compressed into three
categories, or tiers, similar to the procedure used by Berman & Nir-Sagiv (2007), which
also condensed Ravid’s (2006) original 10-level noun scale into four categories. In this
case, the three noun tiers were created to provide fewer, but broader, categories for the purpose of statistical analysis. The nouns were classified into tiers based on the following procedure: 1) Nouns rated as categories 1-4 on the noun scale were reclassified as tier 1 nouns; 2) nouns coded as levels 5-7 on the noun scale were reclassified as tier 2 nouns; and, 3) nouns rated as categories 8-10 were reclassified as tier 3 nouns. The noun tiers and examples of each level are summarized in Table 6.
Table 6

**Noun Tiers Extrapolated from Ravid’s (2006) Noun Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun tier</th>
<th>Ravid’s (2006) categories</th>
<th>Examples from participants’ writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tier 1</td>
<td>1- Concrete, countable</td>
<td>Ball, locker, cohetes (firecrackers), regalos (gifts), Ms. Brady, Ms. Santos, house, Mexico, Latinos, Busch Gardens, mom, principal, policia (police), payaso (clown)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2- Proper nouns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3- Collective, location</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4- Role</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 2</td>
<td>5- Generic</td>
<td>Stuff, medicine, school supplies, actividades (activities), viernes (Friday), hour, year, un rato (a while), pelea (fight), soccer game, misa (mass), party, vacaciones (vacation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6- Temporal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7- Event</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 3</td>
<td>8- Imaginable</td>
<td>Report card, homework, techo (shelter), professional, money, bills, rent, love, error, reglas (rules), ganas (desire), encanto (enchantment), destreza (dexterity), alma gemela (soul mate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9- Abstract</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10- Derived abstract</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scoring of noun tiers. For scoring purposes, the nouns in each writing sample were given point values based on their tier membership ( tiers 1, 2, and 3 were valued at 1, 2, and 3 points, respectively). Points were then summed for each text, and the total number of points was divided by the total number of nouns in the writing sample. Resulting scores were recorded into an Excel spreadsheet for statistical analysis.

Number of different words (NDW). In addition to the noun tiers, the participants’ writing samples were scored for number of different words used. NDW is a vocabulary productivity measure commonly used in investigations of cross-linguistic abilities of bilingual children (e.g., Miller et al., 2006; Paradis, Crago, Genesee, & Rice, 2003) as well as in research on monolingual children with language impairment (LI) (Fey, Catts, Proctor-Williams, Tomblin, & Zhang, 2004; Hewitt, Hammer, Yont, & Tomblin, 2005; Nelson & Van Meter, 2007). In the present study, word root tables were provided by SALT for each writing sample. These tables listed for each text all words included and their frequencies. Based on these tables, the NDW was independently calculated by the researcher and research assistant by excluding repeated morphemes and totaling the remaining different words.

Syntactic Level: Clausal Complexity Measure and Mean Length of T-Unit

Coding clausal complexity. In addition to coding and scoring at the lexical level, all texts were evaluated at the syntactic level with a clausal complexity measure. Many cross-linguistic studies of language have used the clause as a unit of analysis (e.g., Berman & Nir-Sagiv, 2007; Katzenberger, 2004; Gutiérrez-Clellen, 2002; Paradis & Crago, 2000; Ravid & Berman, 2006).
Ravid and Berman (2006) served as a starting point for the development of the clausal complexity measure applied to the present study. For Ravid and Berman, a clause was defined as a unit containing a subject and predicate, and text units were identified as containing less than a clause (here, a non-clause), a single clause (independent clause), or a combination of clauses (subordinate or coordinate clause).

Similar to the lexical coding previously described, the designation of clausal complexity in participants’ writing samples involved a two-step process. Using SALT, the clauses in every T-unit in each text were initially coded in a highly specific manner. For example, subordinate clauses were categorized as nominal (subject or object), relative (differentiated for presence or absence of a relative pronoun), or adverbial clauses of various types (temporal, locative, causal, conditional, comparative, purpose, exception). Similarly, coordinate clauses were first classified as additive, temporal, causal, contrastive, or exclusionary clauses (Alarcos Llorach, 1996; de la Peña, 1999; Gili Gaya, 1972; Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 1985). Based on this system and using SALT, the T-units in each text were coded for type/s of clauses.

In the second step, similar to the collapse of the noun scale categories into the three tiers, the numerous clause types were reclassified into broader categories for the purpose of the statistical analysis. These categories were non-clause, independent clause, subordinate clause, and coordinate clause. These categories were then used to determine a clausal complexity score for each text.

Scoring clausal complexity. For scoring purposes, each T-unit was assigned a point value based on the number of embedded subordinate clauses. Non-clauses were
valued at zero points, and independent and coordinate clauses received one point. T-units
with one subordinate clause received two points, two subordinates, 3 points; three
subordinates, 4 points, and four or more subordinates, 5 points. Points were then summed
for each writing sample, and the total number of points was divided by the total number
of clauses in the text.

Mean length of T-unit (MLT). In addition to the clausal complexity measure, MLT
for each text was determined as a measure of written syntactic productivity. The MLT for
each writing sample was calculated by SALT.

Discourse Level: Analytic Scales

Finally, the writing samples were scored at the discourse (text) level using the
Analytic Scales for Assessing Students’ Expository and Narrative Writing Skills
developed by the Center for the Study of Evaluation (CSE) at the University of California
Los Angeles (Quellmalz & Burry, 1983; referred to hereafter as the CSE Scales). The
CSE Scales were developed at a time when a common approach to writing evaluation
involved “constructed response measures” (Quellmalz, 1979, p. 3), such as multiple
choice tests that addressed text organization and sequencing and/or language usage and
mechanics for written composition. Quellmalz (1979) argued for the need to assess actual
written compositions with domain-referenced assessments that provided clearly defined
criteria from which to evaluate writing outcomes. For Quellmalz, a domain-referenced
assessment adhered to three principles: 1) ecological validity: the measure is applicable to
real students in the context of school writing; 2) generalizability: performance on the
measure will predict performance on related tasks; and 3) diagnostic value: the measure
has instructional implications regarding student placement and/or teaching strategies. In addition, Quellmalz (1982) discussed the need for an analytic (rather than holistic) writing assessment that could distinguish between mastered and non-mastered skills for various elements of a text. Finally, the selected criteria should enable outcomes that provide opportunities to diagnose problems and implement appropriate instruction or intervention (Quellmalz, 1982).

The CSE Scales (Quellmalz & Burry, 1983) were developed based on the aforementioned concerns and expectations, as well as the authors’ research on writing and its assessment. As opposed to a holistic scoring method whose outcome is a single, overall score for a given composition, the CSE Scales represented an analytic assessment of writing that provided ratings for several elements of students’ written texts, including a holistic score for the overall quality of the composition. Rubrics describe the criteria to rate texts for each element on a scale of 1 to 6; scores of 1-3 are considered non-mastered/not-competent and scores of 4-6 are considered mastered/competent.

This type of writing assessment can also be described as primary trait scoring, a system in which raters are trained to evaluate various textual features based on a given set of criteria (Schriver, 1990). Schriver classified this method as a category of expert-judgment-focused evaluations of writing, and highlighted as a benefit the wealth of information that this type of measure can provide about a text. On the other hand, a disadvantage of primary trait scoring is that it is difficult for readers to reach agreement consistently and reliably. Quellmalz (1980) agreed that, “the instability of ratings has been a major, and generally acknowledged, weakness of measures of writing skill” (p. 5).
However, Quellmalz and Burry (1983) attempted to minimize inter-judge variability by providing explicit scoring criteria and training procedures for the CSE Scales.

Regarding the theoretical and research base for the CSE Scales, Quellmalz and Burry (1983) distinguished between the structural development of expository and narrative writing. For these authors, expository writing was based on the logical development of ideas with explicit and specific support; therefore, the CSE Scales offered criteria for scoring each of five elements of expository compositions on the 6-point scale: 1) general competence or overall quality (which incorporates the scores on all other elements), 2) organization and coherence, 3) paragraph organization, 4) quality of support provided, and 5) mechanics, which includes spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

In contrast to the logical development of expository writing, Quellmalz and Burry (1983) described narrative texts as a chronological development of events supported by descriptive detail. With this in mind, the CSE Scales further provided criteria to rate narrative compositions in four areas, using the same 6-point scale for each: 1) general impression or overall judgment, 2) focus/organization, 3) support, which involves use of descriptive detail, and 4) grammar/mechanics.

For the present investigation, the CSE Scales were selected as the discourse-level measure because they supplied similar decision rules and a scoring system that could be applied to both expository and narrative texts. Participants’ expository and narrative texts were scored for all elements using the CSE criteria (rubrics) and the 6-point scoring system. The holistic scores (overall quality ratings), which incorporated the ratings on other elements, were utilized for statistical analyses.
Inter-Judge Agreement

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), the purpose of “check-coding” (p. 64) is to support definitional clarity of codes and strengthen reliability of the data. For Bakeman and Gottman (1986), agreement ensures accuracy of observers and reliability of procedures. With these goals in mind, 20% of the narrative and expository samples were selected at random (N = 4 participants, 32 writing samples) to be check-coded for agreement by coders who did not participate in the original coding. A doctoral student in Communication Sciences and Disorders with a linguistics background check-coded the writing samples produced in English, and a Spanish-English bilingual clinical instructor in speech-language pathology check-coded the texts written in Spanish.

Both check-coders met with the researcher prior to coding and were trained in how to segment the texts into T-units and to apply the noun tiers, clausal complexity measure, and CSE Scales. In the case of the noun tiers, check-coders were asked to identify and rate each noun as either a tier 1, 2, or 3. For clausal complexity, the check-coders coded each T-unit for the following categories: 1) non-clause; 2) independent clause; 3) subordinate clause/s; and, 4) coordinate clause/s. The check-coders’ results were compared with the original coders’ results utilizing the following formula to compute a percentage of agreement (Bakeman & Gottman, 1986, p. 75):

\[ P_A = \frac{N_A}{N_A + N_D} * 100 \]

\( P_A \) is the percentage of agreement, \( N_A \) is the number of agreements, and \( N_D \) is the number of disagreements.
Percentage of agreement, rather than a more stringent formula such as Cohen’s kappa, was utilized here based on the nature of the judgments required for the measures applied. For example, particularly in the cases of T-units and clauses, there were not predetermined numbers of items to be coded. This situation led to both true disagreements in coding as well as disagreements based on error, i.e. omission of codes. This being said, the inter-coder agreement for number of T-units averaged 87% for the English texts and 82% for the Spanish texts. For noun tiers, inter-coder agreement averaged 81% for texts written in English and 83% for texts written in Spanish. The averages for clausal complexity were 76% for English texts and 74% for Spanish texts. Finally, agreement percentages on the CSE Scales were calculated based on Quellmalz and Burry’s (1983) dichotomy for global scores, non-mastered (scores of 1-3) versus mastered (scores of 4-6). Agreement for these ratings averaged 75% for English and 81% for Spanish texts.

Miles and Huberman (1994), who referred to the same formula to calculate percentage of inter-coder agreement for qualitative data, estimated an average agreement percentage around 70% for the first round of check-coding. Based on this guideline, the inter-judge agreements were interpreted as acceptable.

**Quantitative Measures: Statistical Analysis**

Because the scores from the various measures were not normally distributed, a nonparametric statistical procedure was selected for analysis. According to Siegel and Castellan (1988), nonparametric statistics are well suited for non-normal distributions and research with small sample sizes, both of which are applicable to the present study;
therefore, Friedman’s two-way ANOVA by ranks (within subjects) and the corresponding post-hoc test (Siegel & Castellan, 1988) were applied for the analysis of the lexical, syntactic, and discourse level data.

For each level, comparisons were made between languages within genre-topics (all expository samples in both languages were compared; all narrative samples in both languages were compared), as well as between genre-topics within languages (all texts of both genres written in Spanish were compared; all texts of both genres written in English were compared). SPSS Statistics 17.0 software (SPSS, Inc., 2008) was used for the statistical analyses. Post-hoc tests were conducted to determine which ranks differed significantly ($p < .05$).

**Qualitative Analysis**

*Overview*

In the present mixed methods design, the qualitative portion was subordinate to and embedded within the quantitative investigation. In an embedded mixed methods design, “the secondary data type is playing a supplemental role within a design based on the other data type” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 69). In this case, the purpose of the qualitative analysis was to explore how the participants’ language and literacy learning experiences had shaped their attitudes and identities as bilingual writers. Qualitative data were collected with the quantitative data in a simultaneous fashion. However, qualitative data were analyzed sequentially, after the quantitative analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).
As previously mentioned, a subgroup of 6, randomly selected, focal participants was included in the qualitative analysis. These students’ interviews and hand-written journals (10 journal entries each, written in the students’ language of choice) were transcribed for the qualitative analysis, resulting in 72 double-spaced pages of interview transcripts and 30 double-spaced pages of journal texts. In addition, the qualitative analysis integrated to some extent the quantitative results of the focal participants’ writing.

Two levels of qualitative analysis were applied to the data: 1) a within-case analysis (profile) of each focal participant, and 2) a cross-case analysis that explored the specific topic of attitudes toward bilingualism across the 6 focal participants. At each of these levels, Spradley’s (1979) domain and taxonomic analyses were applied with the support of XSight qualitative data analysis software (QSR International, 2006). Data displays (Miles & Huberman, 1994) were created in conjunction with these analyses for each case as well as for the cross-case analysis.

Domain and Taxonomic Analyses

Domain analysis. The purpose of a domain analysis is to discover domains (categories) in the data as they are perceived and applied by the participants. For Spradley (1979), “any symbolic category that includes other categories is a domain” (p. 100). A domain includes a cover term (name of the category) and two or more included terms that are connected to the cover term by a single semantic relationship. Once the domains are defined, included terms are determined based on category membership. Hence, a domain analysis results in a series of hierarchical relationships in which each
domain is comprised of various included terms based on semantic relationships such as attribution (X is an attribute of Y), cause-effect (X is a cause/result of Y), strict inclusion (X is a kind of Y), sequence (X is a step/stage in Y), and rationale (X is a reason for doing Y) (Spradley, 1979, p. 111).

In the present study, the domains were based on the topics of the journal entries and the interview questions, and thus were established apriori by the researcher (with input from the students in the case of the journal topics—see Appendix D). Thus, cover terms for the domains, which were similar for all focal participants, included *coming to the U.S.* , *language learning*, *bilingualism*, *goals and wishes*, *traditions*, *family*, and *friends*. However, for each focal participant, included terms differed based on the content of their journal entries and interviews. For example, although two students may have shared the domain, *coming to the U.S.*, included terms for one student may have been, among others, *separation from family and friends*, *nervous about school*, and *goodbye party*, while for the other participant, *moved in order to learn English*, *happy to be here*, and *making new friends* may have emerged as included terms.

In addition to the assignment of included terms to the various domains, each included term was further supported by verbatim texts from the focal participants’ journal entries and interviews. Thus, following the example above, the included term *separation from family* was supported by the journal text, among others, “*Una de los muchos momentos tristes de mi vida fue cuando deje a toda mi familia en Puerto Rico los deje a todos*” (One of the many sad moments of my life was when I left all my family in Puerto Rico; I left them all; Juan, Journal 3).
**Taxonomic analysis.** A taxonomic analysis was employed in conjunction with and simultaneous to the domain analysis in the present study. Taxonomic analysis is an effective partner of domain analysis in that the taxonomic analysis represents a holistic review of the data in order to determine the relationships among domains and their included terms. Thus, established domains, included terms, and their supporting texts were connected through the taxonomic analysis.

A simple illustration of this process, based on the previous examples, is the following: the included term *moved in order to learn English*, as well as its supporting texts were linked to the domains *coming to the U.S.* and *language learning*; thus, this included term linked the two domains. Similarly, a given supporting text might link to two or more included terms, which in turn would link their domains. For example, the text, “2 semanas antes de irme yo fui a una fiesta de despedida … Allí estaban TODOS mis amigas (o)” (Two weeks before leaving I went to a goodbye party… ALL of my friends were there; Carolina, Journal 3), would link to the included term, *separation from family and friends* (included under the domain *coming to the U.S.*), as well as the included term, *friends in Puerto Rico* (included under the domain *friends*).

XSight qualitative data analysis software (QSR International, 2006) was used for both the domain and taxonomic analyses, which were carried out simultaneously for the individual profiles as well as the cross-case analysis. This software facilitates the coding of qualitative data (e.g. documents, transcriptions) and allows the user to build analysis frameworks (including data displays—see below) that, in this case, provided a medium
within which to develop and manage the domains, included terms, supporting texts, and the relationships among these.

Data displays. Throughout the qualitative analysis, data displays were created for each profile as well as for the cross-case analysis. Based on Spradley’s (1979) model and Miles and Huberman’s (1994) description of cognitive mapping, nodes and connecting lines were used to create taxonomic diagrams that diagramed domains of interest, their included terms, supporting texts, and the relationships among them. These data displays were initially created in conjunction with the domain and taxonomic analyses using XSight, and were later were more carefully developed using Inspiration 8 concept mapping software (Inspiration Software, 2008). Because its purpose is to create concept maps, outlines, and other graphic organizers, Inspiration 8 provided numerous organizational tools and visual options to create the data displays for the present study. As they demonstrate the domains, related terms, and how these are connected, the data displays provide graphic summaries of each individual profile as well as the cross-case analysis.
CHAPTER 3

Results

As a mixed methods design, the present study provides both quantitative and qualitative results. Friedman’s two-way ANOVA by ranks and the corresponding post-hoc test (Siegel & Castellan, 1988) were applied for the quantitative analysis. Domain and taxonomic analyses (Spradley, 1979) and data displays (Miles & Huberman, 1994) were utilized for the qualitative analysis. In this chapter, quantitative results will be presented first, followed by the qualitative results.

Quantitative Results

Statistical Analysis

The nonparametric statistic, Friedman’s two-way ANOVA by ranks (within subjects) and the corresponding post-hoc test (Siegel & Castellan, 1988) were applied for the analysis of the lexical, syntactic, and discourse level scores. SPSS Statistics 17.0 software (SPSS, Inc., 2008) was used for the statistical analyses. The independent variables included language of text (Spanish/English), genre (expository/narrative), and topic (topic 1 or 2) of text. The latter two variables were collapsed into one variable (genre-topic). The genre-topics for the different formal samples were: 1) Expository 1: A person I admire; 2) Expository 2: Letter to a new student; 3) Narrative 1: Special or funny family memory; and, 4) Narrative 2: My first day of school in the U.S.

The dependent variables were the scores that the participants attained on each of the following measures: 1) noun tiers and NDW for the lexical level; 2) the clausal complexity measure and MLT for the syntactic level; and 3) the global scores from the
CSE analytic writing scales (Quellmalz & Burry, 1987) for the discourse level. For each level, comparisons were made between languages within genre-topic (all expository texts in both languages were compared; all narrative texts in both languages were compared), as well as among genre-topics within language (all Spanish texts--expository and narrative--were compared; all English texts--expository and narrative--were compared). Post-hoc tests were then conducted to determine which ranks differed significantly ($p < .05$).

The quantitative analyses were conducted to answer the following three research questions:

1. How do the lexical features of the participants’ writing compare across languages (Spanish/English) and genres (expository/narrative) as assessed by a noun tier analysis (adapted from Ravid, 2006) and NDW?

2. How do syntactic features of the participants’ writing compare across languages and genres as evaluated by a clausal complexity measure and MLT?

3. How do discourse features of the participants’ writing compare across languages and genres as examined by the CSE Scales for assessing students’ expository and narrative writing skills (Quellmalz & Burry, 1983)?

**Lexical Level: Noun Tiers and NDW**

**Noun Tiers.** Scores on the noun tiers measure ranged from 1.00 to 2.50 (minimum possible score = 1.0; maximum possible score = 3.0) across all writing samples (N = 148). The distribution of noun scores was positively skewed, with the greatest number of
texts scoring in the 1.21-1.60 range. Table 7 provides the medians and interquartile ranges of the noun tier scores for each formal writing sample.

Table 7

*Medians and Interquartile Ranges for Noun Tier Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre-topic</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>25&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>50&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (Median)</th>
<th>75&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expository 1</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expository 2</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative 1</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>1.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative 2</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Friedman’s ANOVA revealed a significant difference in the noun tier scores within genre-topic for the narrative texts, $\chi^2(3) = 11.03, p = .021$. Post hoc testing confirmed that Narrative 2 in English (My first day of school in the U.S.) ranked significantly higher than Narrative 1 (Special or funny family memory) in both English and Spanish (see Figure 2). There were no significant differences within genre-topic for noun tier scores in the expository texts.
These results suggest that, in the case of the narrative compositions, the participants used more abstract nouns in recounting their first day of school in the U.S. than they did narrating a family memory. Hence, it appears that topic, rather than genre or language, played a role in the students’ choice of nouns. In the case of expository texts, the participants’ noun complexity was relatively similar across the two topics (A person I admire, Letter to a new student) and languages.

Figure 2. Average ranks within genre-topic for noun tiers

Friedman’s ANOVA also detected significant differences in the noun tier scores for English language comparisons, $\chi^2 (3) = 13.11, p = .004$. Specifically, post-hoc testing determined that Narrative 2 in English was again ranked significantly higher than all other genre-topics in English (see Figure 3). There were no significant differences among the ranks for Spanish texts. These results confirm that the participants’ employed more sophisticated nouns in the narratives about their first day of school in the U.S. when writing in English. The students’ performance on the noun tiers measure was more consistent across the texts written in Spanish.
Scores on the NDW measure varied greatly, ranging from 29 to 146 across all writing samples (N = 148). Like the noun tier scores, the NDW distribution was positively skewed, with the greatest number of texts producing between 61 and 80 different words. Medians and interquartile ranges for NDW are provided in Table 8. Friedman’s ANOVA did not find any significant differences among the ranks either within genre-topic or within language for the NDW measure. This result indicates that, overall, the participants’ lexical variety was similar in both Spanish and English as well as across the genres-topics of the writing samples.
Table 8

*Medians and Interquartile Ranges for NDW*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre-topic</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Percentiles</th>
<th>25th</th>
<th>50th (Median)</th>
<th>75th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expository 1</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>55.25</td>
<td>64.50</td>
<td>81.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>52.75</td>
<td>62.50</td>
<td>77.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expository 2</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>64.50</td>
<td>72.00</td>
<td>86.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>53.75</td>
<td>72.00</td>
<td>86.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative 1</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>51.50</td>
<td>65.00</td>
<td>77.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>54.50</td>
<td>67.50</td>
<td>79.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative 2</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>64.25</td>
<td>84.50</td>
<td>94.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>62.00</td>
<td>75.50</td>
<td>87.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In summary, on the noun tiers measure, the participants performed relatively consistently across both languages on the expository texts. However, in the case of the narrative texts, scores on Narrative 2 in English (My first day of school in the U.S.) were significantly higher than Narrative 1 in both Spanish and English (Special or funny family memory). Indeed, when all four English texts were examined within language (across genre-topic), it was revealed that the students’ performance on Narrative 2 ranked higher than the ranks of all other texts. In the case of texts written in Spanish, there were no significant rank differences in noun tier scores across genre-topics. The participants also demonstrated consistent NDW scores across both genre-topics and languages; no
significant rank differences were found for NDW. These results indicate that, with the exception of increased lexical sophistication in one writing sample (Narrative 2 English), the participants’ use of different types of nouns was relatively similar irrespective of language or genre-topic.

*Syntactic Level: Clausal Complexity and MLT*

The participants’ overall text length varied greatly across the writing samples. The inclusion (productivity) criteria for analysis were at least 10 T-units and/or 75 words. The total number of T-units in the included texts (N = 148) ranged from 5 to 52 across all texts (median = 16). Similarly to the noun tiers and the NDW, the distribution for T-units was positively skewed, with the majority of students producing texts containing 11-20 T-units.

*Clausal complexity measure.* The scores on the clausal complexity measure ranged from 1.05 to 1.62 (N = 148). Table 9 displays the medians and interquartile ranges for the clausal complexity measure across the different writing samples.

Friedman’s ANOVA revealed significant differences in clausal complexity scores within genre-topic for expository texts, $\chi^2 (3) = 10.77; p = .013$. Post-hoc tests confirmed that Expository 1 in English (A person I admire) ranked significantly higher than Expository 2 in English (Letter to a new student) (see Figure 4). In addition, Friedman’s ANOVA found significant differences among the ranks within genre-topic for narrative texts, $\chi^2 (3) = 9.00; p = .029$. Post-hoc testing determined that Narrative 2 in Spanish (First day of school in the U.S.), ranked significantly higher than Narrative 1 in English (Special or funny family memory) (see Figure 4). The within genre-topic results suggest
that, similar to the findings for noun tiers, topic played a role in the participants’ selection of more or less complex clausal structures. In this case, within the expository genre for English texts, the topic, *A person I admire* ranked higher than the topic, *Letter to a new student*. Similarly, for narrative, the topic, *First day of school in the U.S.* written in Spanish ranked higher than the topic, *Special or funny family memory* written in English.

Table 9

*Medians and Interquartile Ranges for Clausal Complexity Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre-topic</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Percentiles</th>
<th>25&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>50&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (Median)</th>
<th>75&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expository 1</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expository 2</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative 1</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative 2</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Friedman’s ANOVA also revealed significant differences in the clausal complexity scores for the English writing samples, $\chi^2(3) = 9.52; p = .023$. Specifically, post-hocs confirmed that Expository 1 (A person I admire) was ranked significantly higher than Narrative 1 (Special or funny family memory). There were no significant rank differences within language for texts written in Spanish. This result indicates that the participants utilized more complex syntactic structures in an expository text than a narrative one in English. However, their clausal complexity in Spanish was similar across both expository and narrative texts and topics (see Figure 5).
MLT. The MLT ranged from 4.77-21.60 across all texts (N = 148). The medians and interquartile ranges for MLT are displayed in Table 10. Friedman’s ANOVA detected one significant finding for MLT for the English language texts, $\chi^2(3) = 8.31, p = 0.4$. Post hoc testing confirmed that Narrative 1 (Special or funny family memory) was ranked significantly lower than both of the expository texts. Along with the results of the clausal complexity measure, this finding suggests that the participants wrote shorter T-units--as well as less complex syntactic structures--for Narrative 1 in English. This may imply that this particular topic was not very engaging for the students.
Table 10

*Medians and Interquartile Ranges for MLT*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre-topic</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>25&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>50&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (Median)</th>
<th>75&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expository 1</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>8.72</td>
<td>9.42</td>
<td>11.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>8.23</td>
<td>8.97</td>
<td>12.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expository 2</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>7.17</td>
<td>8.47</td>
<td>9.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>7.53</td>
<td>9.02</td>
<td>10.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative 1</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>7.18</td>
<td>8.78</td>
<td>9.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>7.07</td>
<td>7.95</td>
<td>9.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative 2</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>8.18</td>
<td>8.74</td>
<td>10.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>7.81</td>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>10.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To summarize the results on the syntactic level measures, significant rank differences were revealed for clausal complexity scores in both the expository and narrative genres. For the English texts, the participants’ clause scores were significantly higher on Expository 1 (A person I admire) than Expository 2 (Letter to a new student). Additionally, scores on Narrative 1 in English (Special or funny family memory) were significantly lower than those on Narrative 2 in Spanish (My first day of school in the U.S.). Both of these results indicate that topic, yet again, had an influence on the participant’s clausal complexity scores.
Within the English language texts, the participants earned higher clausal complexity scores on Expository 1 than they did on Narrative 1, indicating that genre played a role in the student’s choice of syntactic structures in writing. Additionally, Narrative 1 in English ranked significantly lower on clausal complexity for both the variables of genre-topic and language, although this was not the case for Spanish. Similarly, MLT within language was ranked significantly lower for Narrative 1 in English than for the expository texts in English. Overall, Narrative 1 in English stands out as consistently scoring lower than other writing samples on the syntactic level measures.

**Discourse Level: CSE Scales**

Global scores on the CSE Scales ranged from 1-5 points; no text (N = 148) earned the maximum score of 6 points. Table 11 displays the medians and interquartile ranges for the CSE scores across the eight writing samples.
Table 11

*Medians and Interquartile Ranges for CSE Global Writing Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre-topic</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Percentiles</th>
<th>25th</th>
<th>50th (Median)</th>
<th>75th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expository 1</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expository 2</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative 1</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative 2</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Friedman’s ANOVA revealed significant differences on the CSE global scores within genre-topic for expository texts, $\chi^2 (3) = 10.47; p = .015$. Post-hoc testing found that Expository 2 in English (Letter to a new student) was ranked significantly lower than the all other expository texts (see Figure 6). There were no significant differences in the ranks among the narrative texts. These findings indicate that, again, topic played a role in students’ text production in the case of the expository--but not narrative--writing samples.
Friedman’s ANOVA also revealed significant differences in the CSE global scores within language for English, $\chi^2(3) = 11.28; p = .01$. Post-hocs determined that Expository 2 (Letter to a new student) was ranked significantly lower than Narrative 1 (Special family memory). There were no significant differences among the ranks for Spanish. Figure 7 displays the average ranks on the CSE global scores within language. The within language results suggest that, in English, the participants composed a better-constructed narrative (Special family memory) than an expository (Letter to a new student) text. However, in Spanish, the students’ compositions across genre-topics were of similar quality.
To summarize the discourse level results, it was found within genre-topic that students performed significantly worse on Expository 2 in English (Letter to a new student) than on all other texts. Similarly, within the English language texts, Expository 2 scored significantly lower than Narrative 1 (Special or funny family memory). Thus, Expository 2 in English was ranked significantly lower than other texts both within genre-topic and within language.

Qualitative Results

After the quantitative analyses were completed, the qualitative data analysis, which was embedded within the quantitative methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007), was carried out. Data for the qualitative analysis included the interview transcripts and written journal entries of the 6, randomly selected, focal participants. These students were: 1) Diego, grade 6, from Mexico; 2) Carolina, grade 7, from Puerto Rico; 3) Edgar, grade 7, from Mexico; 4) Sara, grade 8, from Mexico; 5) Manuel, grade 8, from Mexico; and 6) Juan, grade 8, from Puerto Rico (see Table 2). The students and their profiles are
presented by grade level (lowest to highest) and, within each grade level, gender (girls, then boys).

The purpose of the qualitative portion of the study was to answer the research question: How do previous and current language and literacy learning experiences and/or practices influence the participants’ identities as bilingual writers, including their attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about second language writing? To address this question, domain analysis was used in conjunction with taxonomic analysis (Spradley, 1979) and the development of data displays (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The qualitative results included two levels of analysis: 1) individual, within-case analyses performed on each focal participant to serve as profiles of these bilingual adolescents; and 2) a cross-case analysis that served to compare and contrast how the focal participants perceived their bilingual status. With respect to the domain analysis, as discussed in the Methods chapter, the domains were created apriori to data collection and comprised the topics of the journal entries and interview questions. On the other hand, the included terms were derived from the data based on the content of the focal participants’ journal entries and their responses to the interview questions. Table 12 outlines the topics of the 10 journal entries, their genres, and, for the expository entries, their primary structure. (See Appendix C to review the journal prompts.)
Table 12

*Journal Topics and Genres*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal entry</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Genre and structure (expository)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journal 1</td>
<td>Intro to journal</td>
<td>Expository, describe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal 2</td>
<td>Happy moment</td>
<td>Narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal 3</td>
<td>Sad moment</td>
<td>Narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal 4</td>
<td>A problem or conflict</td>
<td>Narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal 5</td>
<td>The languages I speak</td>
<td>Expository, compare-contrast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal 6</td>
<td>Sports and hobbies</td>
<td>Expository, describe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal 7</td>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>Expository, cause-effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal 8</td>
<td>Family/cultural traditions</td>
<td>Expository, describe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal 9</td>
<td>My dream vacation</td>
<td>Narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal 10</td>
<td>Three wishes</td>
<td>Expository, explain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data displays, in the form of concept maps (Miles & Huberman, 1994), were created during the qualitative data analysis to organize and summarize the results. *XSight* qualitative data analysis software (QSR International, 2006) and *Inspiration* concept mapping software (Inspiration Software, 2008) aided in the analysis and the creation of the data displays. (The concept maps are presented in Appendix G.)

In the following section, the individual profiles of each focal participant are presented first, followed by the cross case analysis. In order to integrate the qualitative analysis with the quantitative findings, the linguistic characteristics of the focal
participants’ formal writing samples are referenced in addition to the written journal entries. Table 13 summarizes these students’ performance on the eight formal texts by providing their global scores from the CSE Scales (Quellmalz & Burry, 1983). This scale rated students’ writing from 1-6, with global scores representing the following levels of general writing proficiency: 1) not at all competent; 2) not very competent; 3) almost competent; 4) adequately competent; 5) definitely competent; and, 6) very competent (p. 26). For a detailed description of the CSE Scales’ development and scoring system, see Discourse Level section in the Methods chapter.
Table 13

*Focal Participants’ Global Scores on CSE Scales*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre-topic</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Diego</th>
<th>Carolina</th>
<th>Edgar</th>
<th>Sara</th>
<th>Manuel</th>
<th>Juan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expository 1</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A person I admire</em></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expository 2</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Letter to new</em></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>student</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative 1</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Special family</em></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>memory</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative 2</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>First day of school</em></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>U.S.</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average for all texts</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Profiles

The journals and interviews of the 6 focal participants provided a substantial amount of qualitative data to analyze, considering the embedded nature of the qualitative analysis in the present investigation. As examples, the transcripts amounted to 30 double-spaced pages of journal text and 72 double-spaced pages of interview text. In addition to the 10 domains generated apriori by the topics of the journal entries (see Table 12), the student interviews afforded additional domains common to all of the focal participants. These included background, language usage, language learning, and bilingualism, coming to the U.S., school (home country and U.S.), and family and friends, among others.

The goal of the present qualitative analysis was to discover how the participants’ language and literacy practices and experiences contributed to their identities as bilingual writers. For this reason, the domains reported here—as well as their derived included terms and supporting texts for each focal participant—represent only those that specifically supported the research question. These three interrelated domains are: background, coming to the U.S. (often the content for the journal, “Sad moment”), and language learning, language usage, and bilingualism (all of which included the content of the journal, “The languages I speak”). Notable quantitative findings (i.e., linguistic characteristics of some formal writing samples based on the lexical, syntactic, and discourse measures) are included in the profiles of each focal participant.

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5 Although domains of interest other than those discussed here (e.g., goals and dreams) are included in the data displays (see Appendix G).
Diego: Futbolista Trilingüe (Trilingual Soccer Player)

Background. Diego, who self identified as a “niño mexicano” (Mexican kid; Journal 1) with a passion for soccer, was born in Florida. However, Diego moved with his family back to their hometown of Ixmiquilpan, in the state of Hidalgo, Mexico, at the age of 5 years. He attended kindergarten through grade 4 in Ixmiquilpan. When he was 10 years old, Diego’s family returned to Florida, where he continued the fourth grade and began, for the first time, to study English in school. At the time of data collection, Diego was 12 years old and a student in grade 6.

Coming to the U.S. Regarding his family’s return to the U.S., Diego explained in his journal6, “Yo me mobi para estados Unidos porque yo tenia asma y costaba muy caro las medicinas y siempre tenia que tomarlas pero nada, siempre me sentia lo mismo tosia en la noche y cuando corría me cansaba muy rapido y no podia respirar” (I moved to the United States because I had asthma and the medicines were very expensive and I always had to take them but nothing, I always felt the same and was always coughing at night and when I ran I got tired really quick and couldn’t breathe; Journal 3). Although in his journal Diego complained that his move to the U.S. was difficult because he didn’t know English or have any friends, he wisely commented, “Yo amprendi de esta experiencia que no es malo mudarse de un lado a otro porque puedes sabe or aprender otras cosas que no sabes” (I learned from this experience that it isn’t bad to move from one place to another because you can find out or learn other things that you don’t know; Journal 3).

6 All written excerpts from the participants’ journals are quoted verbatim. Spelling and/or structural errors are interpreted in square brackets in cases where the error is likely to interfere with comprehension.
Language learning. When asked in the interview how he felt about learning and speaking English at school, Diego had a mixed response. He initially stated, about English, “Fue fácil de aprenderlo, luego, luego” (It was easy to learn, right away; line 219). However, like the other focal participants, Diego noted the existence of language prejudice at school, where he claimed to speak both Spanish and English with his friends and teachers. Referring to some teachers at Bayview (although specifically not Ms. Brady, the ESL teacher), Diego stated, “Uhm, dicen que no hables aquí, uhmm... español. Que aquí es América dicen, que aquí es los Estados Unidos” (Um, they say that you shouldn’t speak here, um, Spanish. That here it is America, they say, that here it’s the United States; lines 252-253). When asked to offer some insight as to why people might say these things, Diego responded, “Creo que ´tan like... ummm... ¿cómo se dice? Umm... like, ‘jealous’ de hablar, que no entender lo que dicen, como en español, no entender” (I think they’re like… um… how do you say it? Um… like ‘jealous’ of speaking, of not knowing what they are saying, like in Spanish, not understanding; lines 260-262).

Language use and bilingualism. Diego considered himself to be trilingual, because he spoke not only Spanish and English, but also Otomi, an indigenous language of Mexico. According to Diego and other focal participants from the same area (Manual and Ana), Otomi is taught in school in Ixmiquilpan. In Diego’s case, he claimed in his interview to now know only “un poquito” (a little bit; line 57), but that, previously, “sabía un montón; sabía hablarlo” (I knew a ton; I knew how to speak it; line 59). Diego used to speak Otomi with his grandparents, who still live in Mexico and predominantly
speak this language: “Tengo también un abuelo también que él no habla español, casi puro ese idioma” (I also have a grandfather too that doesn’t speak Spanish, almost only that language; lines 75-76). At the time of data collection, Diego lived with his parents, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, and cousin. He reported that out of these relatives, his aunt was the most likely to speak Otomi, and she sometimes spoke it with his mother. Spanish was primarily spoken in Diego’s home.

Diego’s writing. Diego wrote almost all of his journal entries in Spanish, with the exception of a few lines here and there in English. Diego’s formal writing samples in both languages earned CSE global scores between 2 and 3 points, which is to say that his writing ranged from not very competent to almost competent on the rating scale. His Spanish writing samples generally outscored the English texts. For the most part, his writing was void of punctuation and paragraph separations, and contained numerous errors in spelling and sentence structure. Diego’s writing also did not stand out in terms of lexical sophistication; however, some examples of complex sentences were observed in Diego’s written texts in Spanish. For example, in Expository 1 (A person I admire): Yo quiero conocer al ronaldinho en persona para ablar con él y que me enseñe a dominar el balón como él (I want to meet ronaldinho in person to talk with him and so that he can teach me how to dominate the ball like him). This sentence includes two subordinate clauses (adverbials of purpose). In Narrative 2 (My first day of school in the U.S.), Diego wrote: cuando yo iba al baño o a otro lado me llamaba Gonzalo i les dije que yo no soy Gonzalo (when I went to the bathroom or somewhere they called me Gonzalo and I told them that I am not Gonzalo). This sentence also contains two subordinate clauses, an
adverbial temporal (beginning with when) and a nominal object clause (beginning with that).

Overall, Diego appeared to have adjusted to middle school in the U.S. and had a positive attitude about learning English at school. When asked how he felt about it, he stated, “Yo aquí me siento bien, hablar inglés aquí (Here I feel good, speaking English here; line 224). This being said, although he self-identified as trilingual and reported being comfortable speaking English, when given the choice Diego preferred to speak or write in Spanish. In addition, his formal writing samples generally scored higher in Spanish than English. (See Figure 8, Appendix G, for Diego’s qualitative data display.)

Carolina: Modista en París (Fashion Designer in Paris)

Background. Carolina, who dreamed of studying fashion design in Paris, was born in Puerto Rico and moved with her family to Kentucky at the age of 3 years. She lived in Kentucky for 4 years, where she attended preschool, kindergarten, grade 1, and part of grade 2. Her family then returned to Puerto Rico, where Carolina attended grades 2-6. At the time of data collection, Carolina was 13 years old and a student in grade 7. Because she attended the primary grades in Kentucky, Carolina learned literacy first in English. Additionally, she studied English in school while living in Puerto Rico.

Coming to the U.S. According to Carolina, her family moved to Florida from Puerto Rico so that she could improve her English. She explained in her interview, “Se me estaba olvidando [el inglés], lo que como ahora me acostumbré en Puerto Rico a hablar el español, pues se me estaba olvidando. Pero entonces cuando mami me dijo a mí que se me estaba olvidando el inglés, yo me empecé a preocupar. Porque mami me
dijo a mí que el inglés es bueno p’al futuro….Y yo le dije pues, ‘Vámonos p’a’ los Estados Unidos’, y nos vinimos pa’cá’” (I was forgetting [English], since now I was used to speaking Spanish in Puerto Rico, so I was forgetting it. But then when Mom told me that I was forgetting English, I started to worry. Because Mom told me that English is good for the future. … And I told her then, ‘Let’s go to the United States’, and we came here; lines 195-198).

Like many of the participants, Carolina described leaving Puerto Rico as a sad moment in her life: “Mi momento triste fue cuando me fui de Puerto Rico. Fue bien triste porque tuve que dejar a todos mi familiares, amigos y personas que quiero mucho” (My sad moment was when I left Puerto Rico. It was really sad because I had to leave all my relatives, friends and people that I love a lot; Journal 3). However, in the same journal entry she stated, “Me alegro mucho que me vine para Florida. Ahora conoci muchas personas nuevas. Tengo amistades nuevas. Estoy muy contenta. Aveses extraño a Puerto Rico, pero fue lo mejor que ise!” (I am really happy that I came to Florida. Now I met a lot of new people. I have new friends. I am very happy. Sometimes I miss Puerto Rico, but it was the best thing I ever did! Journal 3).

Language learning. Carolina explained in her interview that she began learning English at age 3 when her family came from Puerto Rico to Kentucky. She spent four years in Kentucky where she attended grades K-2. Regarding the experience of learning to read in English, she stated that it was, “Difícil y a la misma vez fácil, porque las palabras eran más o menos como en español” (Difficult and at the same time easy, because the words were more or less like in Spanish; lines 130-131). Later, she described
her return to school in Puerto Rico and learning to read and write in Spanish: “Ahí se me hizo fácil, porque como el español ya yo lo sé y todos los días estoy hablándolo” (There it was easy for me, because I already know Spanish and every day I am speaking it; lines 147-148). Regarding her return to Florida and learning English at Bayview Middle, Carolina described it as “easy” because “aquí todo el mundo habla el español” (here everyone speaks Spanish; line 185). Apparently, Carolina was aware that an advantage of having knowledge of two languages is that one can support the development of the other.

Language use and bilingualism. Of the 6 focal participants, Carolina most clearly identified herself as a bilingual language user. In fact, when addressing the topic of language in her journal, she used both Spanish and English to explain: “El español yo lo hablo con mi familia y mis amistades latinos y el Inglés con los maestros y amistades que no hablan El Español. Cuando estoy en mi casa o hablo los dos lenguajes y lo mismo en mi escuela. I speak both languages everywhere I go cuz there are lots of bilingual people” (Spanish I speak with my family and my Latin friends and English with the teachers and friends that don’t speak Spanish. When I am at home I speak both languages and the same with school. I speak both languages everywhere I go cuz there are lots of bilingual people; Journal 5). Similarly, when asked which language she preferred for the interview, she responded, “Ambos, cualquiera” (Both, whichever; line 5). Indeed, both languages were spoken in Carolina’s interview, although Spanish was primarily used. With her friends and family, Carolina also said that she speaks “Both, Spanglish” (line 34).
Carolina also expressed a positive view of bilingualism and stated that she thought she was fortunate to be able to speak two languages. When asked how she felt about being bilingual, she immediately responded, “Orgullosa!” (Proud! Line 221).

Similarly, although she recognized that language prejudice exists, she was confident that it is a result of the weaknesses of others: “Hay gente que piensa que… no, hay gente envidiosa. Sabes que como ellos no saben dos lenguas pues… son ‘haters’” (There are people who think that… no, there are envious people. You know, since they don’t know two languages well… they are ‘haters’; lines 224-225). These ‘haters’ didn’t bother Carolina at all; in fact, her perception of other students at school was that they thought, about her and other bilingual students, “¡Ay, tu tienes suerte!” (Wow, you are lucky! Lines 232-233).

*Carolina’s writing.* Carolina wrote her journals mostly in Spanish with some English; in both languages she wrote well in comparison to the other participants. On the CSE Analytic Writing Scales, she earned a score of 4 (adequately competent) on all of her expository formal writing samples (in both Spanish and English), and a score of 5 (definitely competent) on Narrative 1 in English (Special or funny family memory). This is to say that Carolina’s formal writing samples in both languages were clear, fairly well organized, provided adequate support, and contained only a few mechanical errors (sentence construction, spelling, punctuation). Like Diego, Carolina’s use of vocabulary was not notable. However, she did display clausal complexity in her writing in both English and Spanish. For example, in Expository 1 (A person I admire), in English: *The person I most admire is my mother Because she works really hard to give me and my*
brother everything she can. This sentence contains 4 subordinate clauses: two relatives, an adverbial causal, and an adverbial of purpose. It is notable that the two relative clauses in this example do not contain relative pronouns (i.e. *that*). In English, the relative clause structure without the pronoun is considered less sophisticated (i.e., more aligned with oral language) than the clause containing a relative pronoun (Hunt, 1965). However, Carolina’s choice to omit the pronouns in her English writing demonstrates her acquisition of a differentiated syntactic structure because, in Spanish, relative pronouns in this context would be obligatory.

In Spanish, in Expository 2 (Letter to a new student), Carolina wrote: Cuando *vengas para acá te aconsejo que te prepare para las peleas porque aquí se forman muchas peleas* (When you come here I advise you that you prepare for fights because here a lot of fights are started). This sentence contains three subordinate clauses: an adverbial temporal (beginning with *when*), a nominal object (beginning with *that*), and an adverbial causal (beginning with *because*).

It was evident in her writing and interview that Carolina enjoyed school and learning. She was comfortable socially and made friends quickly when she came to Florida. Carolina also strongly self-identified as a bilingual and considered this a positive attribute that others might envy. Overall, her writing, which scored relatively evenly across the Spanish and English texts, demonstrated Carolina’s growing proficiency in both languages. (See Figure 9, Appendix G, for Carolina’s data display.)
Edgar: “El Inglés No Me Gusta Para Nada” (I Could Care Less about English)

Background. Edgar was born in Mexico City and attended public school there for grades kindergarten through fifth. He continued grade 5 when his family moved to Houston, Texas when he was 11 years old. At the time of data collection, Edgar was 13 years old and attended grade 7. Edgar had plans to return to live his adult life in Mexico where he aspired to be a professional soccer player or attorney.

Language learning. Except for some instruction in kindergarten, Edgar did not have any experience learning English in Mexico. He explained in his interview, “Lo que pasa es que donde yo iba no era escuela privada. Era una escuela del gobierno y no nos enseñaban inglés…. Esos son las escuelas privadas en que te enseñan todo. Las escuelas del gobierno solo te enseñan la historia de México, y... te enseñan lo normal, nada más” (What happened is that where I went was not a private school. It was a government school and they didn’t teach us English. …Those are the private schools that teach you everything. The government schools only teach you Mexican history, and… normal stuff, that’s all; lines 28-29, 36-37).

Regarding learning English at school in the U.S., Edgar expressed general feelings of negativity. In fact, in his interview he stated, “El inglés no me gusta para nada” (I could care less about English; line 339). When asked to explain why, Edgar responded, “No sé, pero no me llama mucho la atención y entonces por eso no he aprendido yo tampoco, porque no, no, algo que no me gusta, yo no le tomo importancia” (I don’t know, but it doesn’t really interest me and therefore that’s why I haven’t learned it either, because I, when I don’t like something I don’t take it seriously; lines 343-344).
Later in the interview, Edgar admitted that, for him, learning language is a challenge: “Sí me interesan los idiomas, pero es que son muy difíciles para aprender. Es lo que no me gusta: son bastante difíciles” (Yes I am interested in languages, but the thing is they are very difficult to learn. That’s what I don’t like: they are really difficult; lines 399-400). Hence, although Edgar recognized it might be important to learn English or other languages, he found language learning difficult and did not enjoy doing so.

Language use and bilingualism. Edgar expressed that he uses Spanish whenever possible, and did not consider himself a bilingual. When asked why not, he explained, “El inglés lo tengo aprendido como 50%. Tengo otro 50% que me hace falta. No me considero bilingüe porque… muchas veces te puedo decir lo que dijo. Muchas veces no te lo puedo decir. Muchas veces no lo entiendo” (I have learned English about 50%. I have another 50% left. I don’t consider myself bilingual because… often I can tell you what was said. A lot of times I can’t. A lot of times I don’t understand; lines 406-408).

Like the other focal participants, Edgar recognized the existence of language prejudice toward Spanish speakers in his journal: “Yo hablo español y me gusta mi idioma. aunque a mucha gente no le [gusta] el español aquí en los estados unidos. con mis amigos yo hablo español y con mis papas hablo español”(I speak Spanish and I like my language. even though many people don’t like Spanish here in the United States. with my friends I speak Spanish and with my parents I speak Spanish; Journal 5).

Edgar’s writing. All of Edgar’s journals were written in Spanish. His journals and formal samples provide evidence that Edgar has the potential to be a persuasive writer, especially in Spanish. It is not surprising that Edgar received higher CSE global ratings
on the texts he wrote in Spanish (he received a 5, 4, and two 3’s in Spanish, three 2’s and a 3 in English). Of all of the participants’ writing, Edgar’s formal samples in Spanish were notable for the use of sophisticated, even metaphorical, lexical items. For example, in Expository 1 in English (A person I admire), Edgar included the Spanish words, *ave fenix* (phoenix) and *polbo de estrellas* (stardust) in describing a friend whom he admired. In Expository 1 in Spanish, Edgar used the words *pasion* (passion), *dextreza* (dexterity), and *triunfos* (triumphs) in his description of Maradona, the famous Argentinean soccer player. This text also demonstrated Edgar’s ability to write with descriptive supporting details, for example in the complex sentence, *Nacido en Argentina en un barrio muy pobre desde niño descubrió su gran pasión por el futbol* (Born in Argentina in a very poor neighborhood since childhood he discovered his great passion for soccer). This sentence contains a fronted adverbial phrase, which can be viewed as a stylistic option used by more mature writers to create thematic variety in a text (Perera, 1984). Overall, Edgar seemed to have the lexical, syntactic, and text level skills to write proficiently in his first language, Spanish. However, he had not yet acquired enough proficiency to achieve the same level of writing in English, nor did he have the desire or confidence to do so. (See Figure 10, Appendix G, for Edgar’s data display.)

*Sara: Familia Unida (United Family)*

*Background.* Sara was born in Ixmiquilpan, in the state of Hidalgo, Mexico, where she attended kindergarten through grade 5. She entered grade 6 when she came to the U.S. with her mother and two sisters, prior to which she had never visited the U.S. or studied English in school. At the time of data collection, Sara was 13 years old and
attended grade 8. Sara had hopes to return to live in Mexico to attend college and have a career as a human rights attorney.

Coming to the U.S. Sara repeatedly discussed how her father had abandoned the family to be with another woman, which prompted her mother to move with her and her sisters to join other family members in the U.S. The experience of her father’s separation from the family had a great effect on Sara, who repeatedly reminisced in her journal about the times when the whole family was together having fun, in the past. She also repeatedly wished for her whole family to be united again, including her father because, as she wisely stated, “mi mama no puede ser mamá y papá para mí” (my mom can’t be both a mother and a father to me; Journal 10). At the same time, Sara expressed admiration for her mother for keeping the family afloat under the circumstances: “Su dedicacion es trabajar y sacarnos adelante tiene 4 años que mi papá no vive con nosotros” (Her dedication is to work and move us forward it’s been 4 years since my father hasn’t lived with us; Journal 1). In Journal 10 (Three wishes), Sara wrote, “mi segundo deseo seria que toda mi familia podriamos regresa a mexico para estar juntos” (my second wish would be that all of my family could return to mexico to be together).

Language learning. Like Diego, Sara studied Otomi in school in Ixmiquilpan and had family members who spoke it. Specifically, she explained in the interview that her father and his side of the family speak Otomi well. Regarding her own proficiency in Otomi, Sara stated in her interview, “Yo lo entiendo, pero no lo hablo” (I understand it, but I don’t speak it; line 62).
Regarding learning English at school, when asked how this experience has been for her, Sara responded, “Pues, más o menos, no muy buen porque cuando llegué, pues, yo no le entendía nada, ni que me decían. Pues tengo primas aquí que tienen ocho años aquí, pero ellas si saben dominar bien el inglés, saben hablar español, otomí y... inglés. Saben hablar los tres idiomas” (Well, more or less, not very good because when I arrived, well, I didn’t understand anything, not even what they said to me. But I have cousins here who have been here for 8 years, but they do know how to speak English well, they know how to speak Spanish, Otomi, and... English. They know how to speak three languages; lines 125-128).

Language use and bilingualism. In her journal, Sara clearly identified herself as a Spanish-speaker, although she ironically wrote the first sentence of this entry in English: “My home language is Spanish because that’s my first language en mi casa se abla puro español y yo ablo ingles con mi sister en mi casa casi no ablo ingles por que nadien abla ingles en mi casa en la escuela trato de ablarlo por que los maestros ablan ingles” (… in my house we speak only Spanish and I speak English with my ‘sister’ at home I almost never speak English because nobody speaks English at home at school I try to speak it because the teachers speak English; Journal 5). When asked if she considered herself to be bilingual, Sara responded, laughing, “No, porque todavía no sé hablar bien el ingles” (No, because I still don’t know how to speak English well; line 180).

Sara’s writing. With the exception of a few isolated words and phrases, all of Sara’s journal entries were written in Spanish. Similar to Edgar, on the CSE global rating Sara generally scored higher on Spanish than English texts (three 3’s and one 2 in
Spanish; one 3, one 2, and two 1’s in English). However, Sara’s writing demonstrated some emerging complexity in English, for example, in Expository 1 (A person I admire), she wrote, *The person I most admire is my mother Because she work really So hard every day*. Although this sentence contains errors (i.e. subject-verb agreement), it includes two subordinate clauses: a relative clause (relative pronoun absent) and an adverbial causal clause. This example parallels Sara’s introductory sentence in the Spanish version of Expository 1, which contains identical clausal structures: *A la persona que yo admiro es ami mami por que ella nos a sacado adelante* (The person that I admire is my mom because she has moved us ahead). Overall, Sara appeared to be an emerging bilingual student who did not feel proficient enough in English to self-identify as a bilingual. Although her writing scores were higher in Spanish than English, her texts demonstrate similar syntactic structures across both languages. (See Figure 11, Appendix G, for Sara’s data display.)

*Manuel: “No Me Acostumbro” (I Can’t Get Used to It)*

*Background.* Like Diego and Sara, Manuel’s family came from Ixmiquilpan, in Hidalgo, Mexico. Like Sara and Edgar, Manuel was born in Mexico and grew up there until his family moved to the U.S. and he entered grade 6, where he began to study English for the first time. At the time of the study, Manuel was 14 years old and attended grade 8. Manuel also desired to return to live his adult life in Mexico, where he hoped to contribute to the development of his hometown.

*Coming to the U.S.* Manuel’s sad moment, according to his journal, was when his family came to the U.S. In his interview, he explained that he would never feel at home in
the U.S.: “Tengo… varios años de vivir allá. No me puedo acostumbrar aquí” (I lived there for several years. I can’t get used to it here; line 107). When asked if he thought he could ever get used to living here, Manuel responded, “No, nunca. … Porque siento que no es mi país, no.” (No, never. … Because I feel it’s not my country, no; lines 109-111).

Language learning. Like the other students from Ixmiquilpan, Manuel also had experience studying Otomi in school and being exposed to it through family members. Again, like the others, Manuel claimed to understand it but not speak it. When asked in the interview to describe his experience learning English here, Manuel quickly responded, “Muy difícil” (very difficult; line 60). When asked to elaborate, he stated, “No sé, es muy difícil, como... es como si estuviera volviendo a nacer porque es otro idioma” (I don’t know, it’s very difficult, like… it’s like as if I were being born again because it’s another language; lines 64-65).

In addition to his frustration with learning English in school, Manuel also noted that language prejudice has had a negative effect on him (lines 75-77): “Me he dado cuenta… que unos que dicen que no debemos hablar español”(I have realized that there are some people who say that we should not speak Spanish; lines 75). When asked how he felt when he heard these types of comments, Manuel responded, “No sé (mumble), me deprime” (I don’t know, I get depressed; line 77).

Language use and bilingualism. Manuel stated in his interview that he prefers to use Spanish whenever possible, including speaking with family and friends, watching T.V., and listening to music. Additionally, Manuel did not consider himself to be bilingual. In his interview, Manuel even went as far as stating that Mexicans do not speak
Spanish well: “España llegó a conquistar a Méjico. Hay unos que piensan que [los mejicanos] hablan bien el español... pero son los españoles los mejores” (Spain arrived to conquer Mexico. There are people that think that [the Mexicans] speak Spanish well… but it’s the Spanish who are better; lines 95-98). Hence, Manuel, an ELL student who was uncomfortable and unhappy learning English, also placed a low value on his own first language.

Manuel’s writing. All of Manuel’s journal entries were written in Spanish. Manuel struggled during data collection to produce all of the texts, and had difficulty writing in both Spanish and English. In fact, his formal samples were eliminated from the quantitative analysis because half of them did not meet the productivity criteria\(^7\). His global scores on the CSE scale generally stayed between 1 and 2 points, that is, not at all competent to not very competent. However, he scored a 3 on Narrative 2 in Spanish. In this text, Manuel provided details about his first day of school in the U.S. and developed a more elaborate text with some examples of clausal complexity. For example, *Yo cuando llegue a los EEUU y vine a la escuela el primer día estaba muy nervioso por que no conosía a nadie* (When I arrived in the U.S. and came to school the first day I was very nervous because I didn’t know anyone). This sentence contains two subordinate clauses: an adverbial temporal (beginning with *when*) and an adverbial causal (beginning with *because*). Manuel also wrote, in Expository 2 in Spanish (Letter to a new student): *yo*

\(^7\) Recall that quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously; therefore, the focal participants were randomly selected from the original group of 24 participants. It was discovered later (during the data analysis phase) that Manuel’s writing did not meet the criteria for the quantitative analysis.
I would like to say to a student from my country that this country is not the same because there are many different things here in the U.S.

This sentence also contains two subordinate clauses, a nominal object clause (beginning with *that*) and an adverbial causal clause (beginning with *because*).

Overall, Manuel was a struggling student in both his first and second languages. He was not happy living in the U.S. and felt that learning English was very difficult. These challenges were reflected in Manuel’s writing, which generally received low scores on the CSE scale. Indeed, Manuel was the type of ELL student who may have slipped through the cracks with an unidentified language or learning impairment (Wagner, Francis, & Morris, 2005) (See Figure 12, Appendix G, for Manuel’s data display.)

*Juan: “Un Segundo Michael Jordan” (The Next Michael Jordan)*

*Background.* Juan, who “lives to play basketball” (Journal 7), was born in Puerto Rico, where he attended kindergarten through grade 6. Like Carolina, Juan received English instruction at school in Puerto Rico every year, and also had private English lessons to intensify his studies during the year before he moved to Florida. In addition to these experiences, Juan visited family members in the U.S. every summer for 2-month periods; however, he claimed that he only spoke Spanish with his family during these visits. Juan relocated to Florida as a student in grade 7, and was 13 years old and in grade 8 at the time of data collection.
Coming to the U.S. Also like Carolina, Juan claimed it was his idea to come to Florida in order to improve his English: “me tuve que huir de Puerto Rico para venirme asía los Estados Unidos para aprender Inglés. Yo me tuve que ir porque en Puerto Rico los cosas están malas y total este fue una decisión mía de venirme asía los Estados Unidos” (I had to leave Puerto Rico to come to the United States to learn English. I had to leave because in Puerto Rico things were bad and really it was my own decisión to come to the United States; Journal 3). Similarly to other participants, Juan described his departure from Puerto Rico to the U.S. as his sad moment. He wrote, “De esta experiencia yo aprendí que algunas decisiones no son lo que tú piensas y pueden doler mucho en el corazón” (From this experience I learned that some decisions are not what you think and they can cause a lot of pain in your heart; Journal 3).

Language learning. When asked about his feelings regarding learning English at school, Juan reported positive experiences and a desire to learn. He expressed that knowing English would be important to his future career as a professional basketball player in the NBA. In addition, about ESL class, he stated, “Me gusta porque Ms. Brady te ayuda. Ms. Brady si ve que si te - si necesitas preguntas, ella antes, casi siempre antes de que tú llegues al salón está diciendo, “Juan, -me da un email- si que te ayudo, si que necesita ayuda me llama, me avisa. Te ayudo en lo que necesites” (I like it because Ms. Brady helps you. Ms. Brady if she sees that you- if you have questions, she before, almost always before you arrive in her classroom she’ll be saying, ‘Juan, -she gives me her email- if I can help you, if you need anything call me, let me know. I’ll help you with
what you need’; lines 194-196). Teacher support was apparently a motivator for Juan as he adjusted to his new school and language environment.

*Language use and bilingualism.* In spite of his claim that he came to the U.S. to study English, in his journal Juan indicated, “*Yo hablo español bajo todas circunstancias.* Porque español es el lenguage en el que yo me puedo deshaogar con todo el mundo. *Cuando hay problemas cuando me molestan para todo hablo español*” (I speak Spanish under all circumstances. Because Spanish is the language in which I can let go with everyone. When there are problems when something is bothering me whatever I speak Spanish; Journal 5).

Although Spanish is his language of choice, when asked in the interview if he considered himself bilingual, he responded, “*Sí porque yo, yo hablo con to- con los morenos, yo hablo en inglés. Con los blancos hablo en inglés. Yo hablo inglés. Lo hablo, lo hablo con las personas que tengo que hablarlo*” (Yes because I, I speak with ev- with the Blacks, I speak English. With the Whites I speak English. I speak English. I speak it, I speak it with the people that I have to speak it with; lines 224-225). In addition, Juan expressed positive feelings about his bilingual status: “*Me siento bien porque al, al mismo tiempo entiendo lo que dice mi gente, y también entiendo lo que dicen las otras personas. Y me defiendo.Me puedo defender cuando digan, cuando dicen cosas malas a mi, o cualquier cosa, porque me defiendo*” (I feel good because at, at the same time I understand what my people are saying, and I can also understand what other people say. And I can defend myself. I can defend myself when they might say, when they say bad things to me, or whatever, because I can defend myself; lines 227-229).
Juan’s writing. With the exception of some isolated words, all of Juan’s journal entries were written in Spanish. Juan’s formal writing samples scored between 2 and 4 points on the CSE scale, and the variation in the quality of Juan’s writing is evident in both Spanish and English. That is, he did not consistently write better in one language or the other. Although inconsistent, Juan’s writing demonstrated instances of both lexical and syntactic complexity. In describing his brother in Expository 1 in English (A person I admire), Juan used the words, [he is my] shadow and guardian. In the Spanish version of the same text, Juan described his brother as an alma hemela (soul mate) and a buena persona de corazon noble (good person of noble heart). With regard to syntax, Juan was one of the few students who mixed languages in his writing (although not in his journal), for example, he is with me en las buenas y en las malas (…in good times and bad; Expository 1, English); I like teachers to be gentle, and buenas because when a teachers yell at me I get angry with them and I am very tranquil (…nice… calm; Expository 2, English).

Overall, Juan appeared to be a confident young man with emerging writing abilities in both Spanish and English. Although he predominantly expressed himself in Spanish when given the opportunity, he appreciated the value of learning English as a second language, enjoyed his ESL class, and felt secure in his abilities. (See Figure 13, Appendix G, for Juan’s data display.)

Summary of Profiles

The individual profiles that resulted from the qualitative analysis uncovered much variety among the focal participants with regard to educational backgrounds, transitions
to the United States, language learning experiences, and perceptions of bilingualism. As might be expected, the focal participants’ writing also evidenced diverse proficiencies across Spanish and English languages.

Diego, Edgar, Sara, and Manuel came to the U.S. from Mexico, and none of them had received any English language instruction prior to attending school here. Among these four students, varying strengths emerged. Diego had a positive outlook on learning and using English in school; however, his writing in Spanish generally scored slightly higher on the CSE Scales than in English. Edgar and Sara demonstrated a similar pattern, with CSE Scale scores consistently higher in Spanish than English. Edgar displayed some sophisticated vocabulary choices in his writing in Spanish; however, his scores on the CSE Scales in English were, for the most part, in the range of not very competent. Sara, on the other hand, expressed a desire to learn English and utilized similar structures in her writing in both languages. Finally, Manuel, who was not happy in the U.S. and felt that learning English was “very difficult”, achieved ratings on the CSE Scales of not at all competent to not very competent in both Spanish and English.

Unlike the students from Mexico, Carolina and Juan, who grew up in Puerto Rico, had experienced English language instruction prior to moving to Florida. In fact, Carolina had attended grades K-2 in Kentucky. Carolina felt comfortable using both Spanish and English and demonstrated this in her writing, which, for the most part, scored in the adequately competent range for both Spanish and English texts. Juan, who also expressed that he felt proficient as a Spanish-English bilingual, achieved similar scores on the CSE
Scales in both languages. This brings us to the cross-case analysis regarding the focal participants’ perceptions of bilingualism.

Cross-Case Analysis: Bilingual Perspectives

In addition to the case studies, a cross-case analysis was carried out to compare and contrast the focal participants’ self-perceptions and feelings regarding bilingualism. The students varied considerably in their language learning experiences as well as in their opinions about learning English and bilingualism. Out of the six focal participants, only Carolina and Juan, both from Puerto Rico, had studied English in school prior to arriving in Florida. The students from Mexico, on the other hand, had not received any previous instruction in English; however, Diego, Sara, and Manuel studied Otomi in school in Mexico and experienced some degree of its usage with their families. Overall, those students who considered themselves bilinguals had positive attitudes about learning English and bilingualism in general. On the other hand, students who self-identified as Spanish monolinguals did not enjoy learning English or feel proficient in English as a second language.

Bilingual Identity and Positive Views of Bilingualism

The focal participants who considered themselves bilinguals included Diego, Carolina, and Juan. Diego came from Mexico and had not studied English prior to arriving in Florida in grade 4; however, he did have some experience with learning a second language, Otomi. Both Carolina and Juan grew up in Puerto Rico where they studied English at school. In addition, Carolina attended grades pre-K-2 in Kentucky, and Juan visited the U.S. often as a child and had private tutoring in English for a year before
he moved to Florida. All of these students claimed to regularly speak both languages, enjoy and/or value both languages, have proficiency in both languages, and feel happy living in the U.S.

Regarding the regular usage of both languages, Diego, Carolina, and Juan claimed to make use of both Spanish and English when watching television, listening to music, and reading for fun. Juan was particularly explicit in explaining his bilingual T.V. viewing habits: “Porque… este, como el ESPN, que ahí es lo que dan el baloncesto y el béisbol y a mí me gustan mucho los deportes, y que es en inglés. Y ahora los programas de música porque a mí me gusta mucho la música, como el MTV-Tres, ahí eso lo veo en español. Este, Telemundo lo veo en español, y yo veo como tres o cuatro canales porque los demás son en inglés porque yo veo mucho ABC, TNT… películas. Y HBO, que es en inglés” (Because, well… ESPN, that’s where they show basketball and baseball and I really like sports, and that’s in English. And now the music programs because I really like music, like MTV-Tres, that one I watch in Spanish. Like, Telemundo I watch in Spanish, and I watch like three or four channels because the rest are in English because I watch a lot of ABC, TNT… movies. And HBO, which is in English; lines 109-113).

Diego, Carolina, and Juan also claimed to use a combination of Spanish and English, “Spanglish” (interview of Carolina, line 34), when speaking with friends and family. When asked to describe what he termed, “espanglish” (line 100), Juan provided an example of how he might chat online with a friend in Puerto Rico: “Es… Le pongo como… este, le pongo así, ‘Mira este, …how you doing, este, como está, bien y todo la-todos los friends allá’, y todas esas cosas (It’s… I put something like… like, I write it
like this, ‘Look, like, …how you doing, like, how are you, fine and all the- all the friends there’, and all those things; lines 102-103).

For these students, learning English at school has been a generally positive experience. For example, Juan expressed that he liked English class and felt supported by the ESL teacher, and Carolina and Diego shared their experiences with first friends who helped them by interpreting when they first arrived. At the same time, unlike the students who self identified as monolinguals, these participants did not emphasize the difficulties or challenges of learning a second language. In fact, in his interview Diego described learning English as easy: “Aquí cuando yo llegué ya me, como yo me sabía el… ‘ABC’, entonces a mí se me fue bien fácil aprenderlo” (Here when I arrived I already, like I already knew the ‘ABC’, so for me it was pretty easy to learn it; lines 216-217).

In addition, Carolina and Juan expressed the idea that English was a valuable skill or tool. Regarding her move to Florida, Carolina said, “Porque mami me dijo a mí que el inglés es bueno p´al futuro” (Because Mom told me that English is good for the future; lines 197-198). Juan elaborated on how English would be important to his future as a professional basketball player: “Me siento bien porque el inglés es como, es una de las, es una de las segundas lenguas, es la segunda lengua más importante del mundo. Que...es bueno porque... y mi sueño es llegar a, a la NBA a jugar baloncesto profesionalmente. Y ahí tengo que hablar el español [inglés] porque no me gusta que esté siempre uno que está, que alguien está al lado... porque a veces, algo que tú dices, a veces él dice un error, y la gente te entiende mal. Por eso no me gusta tener a alguien [i.e., un intérprete] que te traduzca” (I feel good because English is like, it’s one of the,
it’s one of the second languages, it’s the most important second language in the world.

That … is good because- and my dream is to get to the NBA to play basketball professionally. And there I have to speak Spanish [English] because I don’t like it if I am, if someone [an interpreter] is there next to me … because sometimes, something you say, sometimes he makes a mistake, and people misunderstand you. That’s why I don’t want to have anyone translating for me; lines 204-209).

In spite of their general positive feelings about bilingualism, Diego, Carolina, and Juan all expressed having experienced language prejudice for speaking Spanish in school. In his journal, Diego wrote, “Cuando yo ablo español en la escuela dicen que able ingles que aqui es america yo pienso que ellos esta como celoso porque nada mas saben un idioma y nosotros sabemos dos idiomas o mas yo ablo 3 idiomas” (When I speak Spanish at school they say that I should speak English that this is America I think that they are like jealous because they only know one language and we know two languages or more I speak three languages; Journal 5).

These three focal participants shared the explanation that people who responded negatively toward Spanish-speakers did so out of jealousy or envy. In his interview, Juan went beyond this explanation to discuss his perception of the social dynamic of the various racial groups at his school: “En esta escuela yo pienso que algunos, porque los morenos, tienen muchos problemas con los mexicanos y a veces, yo pienso que los morenos no les agradan bien, mucho, los mexicanos. … Que yo siempre veo que los morenos se llevan mejor con los boricuas y los- y los dominicanos, y todas esas personas así (In this school I think that some, because the Blacks, they have a lot of problems with
the Mexicans and at times, I think that the Blacks don’t really like the Mexicans. … I always see that the Blacks get along better with Boricuas [Puerto Ricans] and the- and the Dominicans, and all those types of people; lines 239-245).

Although these students recognized the existence of language prejudice, they also resisted letting it bring them down. For example, Carolina, who stated that she felt proud to be bilingual, also explained that most other students consider her lucky to know more than one language. Similarly, Juan discussed how bilingualism could benefit not only him, but also the monolingual English speakers around him. He stated, “Yo pienso que... es algo más fácil pá’ ellos. Porque ahí no tiene que estar explicándole a la persona y haciendo y pasando tanto trabajo en explicarte. Por eso yo pienso que es mejor para ellos” (I think that… it’s easier for them. Because you don’t have to be explaining to the person and putting so much work into explaining yourself. That’s why I think it’s better for them; lines 232-234).

Overall, Diego, Carolina, and Juan identified themselves as bilinguals and expressed a general sense of satisfaction with their English language learning experiences. These students could be considered emerging bilingual writers who are capable of composing in English; however, when given the choice, all three preferred to speak or write in Spanish. For example, in spite of their perceived bilingual status, Diego and Juan elected to have their interviews in Spanish. Carolina, who initially stated that the language of the interview did not matter, also spoke predominantly Spanish throughout the interview.
Similarly, all three participants wrote the majority of their journals in Spanish, although Diego and Carolina included some English in a few of the entries. Diego also generally received higher CSE ratings on Spanish texts than English ones (see Table 13). Carolina and Juan scored similarly across both languages, although in the case of narrative texts, Carolina received higher ratings in English. Hence, as can be expected for ELL students, these participants’ writing in both languages is still irregular.

Monolingual Identity and Negative Views of Bilingualism

The focal participants who did not consider themselves bilinguals were Edgar, Sara, and Manuel. These students all came from Mexico and had not studied English before coming to the U.S.; however, Sara and Manuel had some experience learning and speaking Otomi as a second language in Mexico. In addition, all three students expressed the desire to move back to Mexico to attend college and/or to live as adults. Edgar, Sara, and Manuel did not consider themselves to be bilingual because they felt that they did not speak enough English, expressed that English was difficult, did not want to learn English, and/or were not happy or comfortable living in the U.S.

Edgar and Manuel were particularly decisive about using Spanish whenever possible, in conversation as well as when watching television or listening to music. Edgar wrote in his journal, “Yo hablo español y me gusta mi idioma. aunque a mucha gente no le [gusta] el español aquí en los estados unidos. con mis amigos yo hablo español y con mis papas hablo español” (I speak Spanish and I like my language. Even though many people don’t [like] Spanish here in the United States. With my friends I speak Spanish and with my parents I speak Spanish; Journal 5).
Although Sara expressed an interest and desire to learn English, she felt that she did not have the proficiency to be considered bilingual. On the other hand, Edgar alluded to some proficiency in English, but insisted in his interview that he simply did not like it: “Mi vida se va adaptando a cómo es la pronunciación y todo. Y no me gusta tanto” (My life has been adapting to the pronunciation and everything. And I don’t like it very much; lines 377-378). Manuel in particular expressed unhappiness with living in the U.S. He claimed to feel depressed about language prejudice and stated that he would never feel at home here “porque siento que no es mi país” (because I feel that it is not my country; line 111).

Like Diego, Carolina, and Juan, the students who self-identified as monolinguals shared the experience of language prejudice in their school and community. Sara explained, “Pues, hay mucha gente que son racistas, y piensan quizá, ‘Oh, está hablando mal de mi’, o cualquier cosa” (Well, there are a lot of people who are racists, and maybe they think, ‘Oh, she’s talking bad about me’, or something; lines 188-189). When asked to elaborate, Sara recounted the story of how her younger sister’s teachers (grade 5) called and sent notes to her mother complaining that the girl was speaking Spanish in school: “En la escuela de mi hermana, ahorita, hace poco, ella hablaba español, así, con sus amigas. Entonces la otra vez que llaman a mi mamá y le dicen na’ que su hija habla puro español. Siempre, toda la agenda, llena de notas y dice, na’, que no debe hablar español” (At my sister’s school, just now, a little while ago, she was speaking Spanish, like this, with her friends. Then the other time they called my mom and
they said that her daughter is speaking only Spanish. Always, all of her planner, full of notes saying no, she shouldn’t speak Spanish; lines 191-194).

In spite of their overall negative feelings toward learning English, Edgar and Sara did express the understanding that it might be helpful for them to become bilingual. In particular Sara noted repeatedly her attempts to practice English at school and at home, where she described mixing languages with her two sisters: “Los revolvemos. ...Es que empezamos hablando en español. Hay unas palabras que no sabemos en... así decirlo en inglés, lo decimos en español. Y pues tratamos de hablar inglés (We mix them up. ... It’s like we start out speaking in Spanish. There are some words that we don’t know in… how to say them in English, we say them in Spanish. And well, we try to speak English; lines 95-100). Sara also claimed to read in both English and Spanish although reading in each language served a different purpose: “A la vez en inglés para que aprenda. Y luego español... pues, también. Bueno, en español sí sé leer” (At the same time [I read] in English in order to learn. And then in Spanish… well, also. Well, in Spanish I already know how to read; lines 117-118). Finally, in his interview Edgar stated, “Yo sé que el inglés es necesario... poco a poco lo he ido aprender. Y ahora sí le pienso echar un poco más ganas al inglés. Pero ya cuando salga de aquí ya yo sepa inglés, aquí de la secundaria” (I know English is necessary … little by little I’ve been learning. And now yes, I’m thinking about putting a little more effort into English. So that when I get out of here I already know English, here out of secondary school; lines 346-348).

In summary, Edgar, Sara, and Manuel identified themselves as monolingual, Spanish speakers and expressed a general lack of confidence and/or desire to learn
English, or felt that learning English was difficult. All of these students elected to have their interviews in Spanish, and, with the exception of one sentence in Sara's journal, they wrote all of their journal entries in Spanish. Edgar, Sara, and Manuel also consistently received higher CSE global ratings on the formal samples produced in Spanish than those written in English. Unfortunately, this is not to say that these students are consistently demonstrating competence in their writing Spanish. Manuel, in particular, is a struggling writer in both languages. (See Figure 14, Appendix G, for the data display of the cross-case analysis.)

Results Summary

Summary of Quantitative Results

**Lexical level results summary.** For the noun tiers measure, it was evidenced that topic--more than language or genre--played a role in students’ choice of vocabulary in their formal written texts. In particular, Narrative 2 (My first day of school in the U.S.) in English resulted in more abstract noun use than the other genre-topics in both languages. Also regarding the participants’ lexical choices, NDW resulted in no significant rank differences for either language or genre-topic comparisons, indicating that lexical variety and usage were similar in both Spanish and English as well as for both expository and narrative texts.

**Syntax level results summary.** For the clausal complexity measure, higher scores were produced on Expository 1 (A person I admire) in English than on Narrative 1 in English, indicating that genre may have played a role in the students’ choice of syntactic structures in their writing. Additionally, Narrative 1 (Special or funny family memory) in
English ranked significantly lower on clausal complexity both for genre-topic and language comparisons. This topic also ranked significantly lower for MLT for the English language comparisons. This result may imply that this particular topic was not engaging for the students.

Discourse level results summary. Topic again appeared to play a role in the overall quality of the participants’ written texts. Expository 2 (Letter to a new student) in English was ranked significantly lower than the other texts both within genre-topic and within language. This may be an indication that the letter format of Expository 2 was more challenging for students to compose in English than the narratives or other types of expository texts.

Summary of Qualitative Results

Profiles results summary. The qualitative profile analysis provided an inside view of the 6 focal participants that explored beyond their writing scores to encompass the following three interrelated domains: 1) background; 2) coming to the U.S.; and 3) language learning, language usage, and bilingualism. The domain and taxonomic analyses uncovered similarities as well as differences in the focal participants’ schooling, language experiences, and self-perceptions of themselves as more or less proficient bilingual learners. In particular, the students from Puerto Rico, who had more experience studying English at school, emerged as having more similar writing scores in both languages. On the other hand, the students from Mexico, regardless of their self-identification as bilingual or monolingual, generally scored higher on texts written in Spanish than English.
Cross-case results summary. Finally, the cross-case analysis of the focal participants’ perceptions of bilingualism revealed two patterns in language identity. The first pattern, bilingual identity and positive views of bilingualism, was exhibited by Carolina and Juan (from Puerto Rico), as well as Diego (from Mexico). These three students reported that they regularly spoke and felt proficient in both languages, enjoyed/valued both languages, and felt happy living in the U.S. Notwithstanding their self-identification as bilinguals, these participants elected to write or speak in Spanish when given the option (journal/interview). Also, while the quality of their formal writing samples (CSE Scales) varied across languages, these students (particularly Carolina and Juan), tended to receive more consistent scores across Spanish and English.

The second pattern, monolingual (Spanish speaking) identity and negative views of bilingualism, was demonstrated by Edgar, Sara, and Manuel (from Mexico). These three students felt that they did not speak enough English, English was difficult, they did not want to learn English, and they were not happy or comfortable living in the U.S. Additionally, all three of these students expressed a desire to return to live in Mexico. Like the self-identified bilingual students, Edgar, Sara, and Manuel elected to write and speak Spanish when given the option (journal/interview). However, in contrast to the bilingual group, the quality of their formal writing samples (CSE Scales) was consistently rated as higher in Spanish than English.
CHAPTER 4

Discussion

The present study explored, through an embedded, mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007), expository and narrative writing in Spanish and English of 20 ELL students in middle school. All of the students produced 8 formal writing samples controlled for language and genre, as well as 10 journal entries in the language of their choice. The quantitative portion, which was the primary focus, examined the participants’ formal writing samples at the lexical, syntactic, and discourse levels across languages (Spanish/English) and genre-topics (Expository/Narrative, Topic 1 or 2). For the qualitative aspect, domain and taxonomic analyses (Spradley, 1979) were applied to the journal entries along with interviews of 6 randomly selected focal participants to ascertain how these students’ language and literacy learning experiences had impacted on their identities as bilingual writers. The study addressed three quantitative research questions:

1. How do lexical features of the participants’ writing compare across languages (Spanish/English) and genres (expository/narrative) as assessed by a noun tiers measure (adapted from Ravid, 2006) and NDW?

2. How do syntactic features of the participants’ writing compare across languages and genres as evaluated by a clausal complexity measure (adapted from Ravid & Berman, 2006) and MLT?

3. How do discourse features of the participants’ writing compare across languages and genres as examined by the CSE Scales (Quellmalz & Burry, 1983)?
The embedded, qualitative portion of the study was driven by a fourth question:

4. How do previous and current language and literacy learning experiences and/or practices influence the participants’ identities as bilingual writers, including their attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about L2 writing?

The discussion that follows is organized by these four research questions. For each question, three areas will be addressed: 1) interpretation of the patterns of findings in light of ELL research; 2) factors influencing the assessment of ELL writing, including challenges presented by the measures that were applied and recommendations for future research; and 3) instructional and clinical implications for ELL literacy development. Following the discussion of the research questions, a general discussion presents the overall conclusions of the study and directions for future research in this area.

Discussion: Quantitative Patterns

Lexical Level Patterns

To examine the participants’ vocabulary choices in their formal writing samples, two measures were used: a noun tiers measure (adapted from Ravid, 2006) and NDW. Differences in vocabulary use across languages (Spanish/English) and/or genres (expository/narrative) were expected.

Noun tiers. In the case of the noun tiers measure, the scores ranged from 1.00 to 2.50 (minimum possible = 1.00; maximum possible = 3.00) across all of the participants’ formal writing samples (N = 148). However, the distribution was positively skewed, with the majority of the students’ texts scoring between 1.21 and 1.60. This result indicated a relative dependence on tier 1 (more concrete) nouns with less frequent use of tier 2 and 3
(more abstract) nouns. This pattern is comparable to the findings of Harley and King (1989), whose French language learners in grade 6 utilized more high-frequency/utility verbs than less frequent, derived verbs in comparison to native French speakers on two narrative and three expository (letters) writing tasks. The participants in this study may have applied a similar pattern of noun usage in their compositions in both Spanish and English, selecting more high frequency, concrete nouns in their writing.

This is not to say, however, that the participants’ writing was void of abstract noun usage; instead, some of these meanings were present, particularly in the Spanish texts (e.g. felicidades (congratulations), encanto (enchantment), destreza (dexterity), alma gemela (soul mate), seguridad (security), and vergüenza (embarrassment). Even so, due to the participants’ infrequent incorporation of more literate vocabulary, contrary to expectations, the statistical outcomes did not reveal significant rank differences in noun tier scores between the Spanish and English texts.

On the other hand, a significant result on the noun tiers measure for the genre-topic comparisons was that Narrative 2 in English (First day of school in the U.S.) ranked significantly higher than Narrative 1 in both languages (Special or funny family memory). For within English language comparisons, Narrative 2 also ranked significantly higher than the other three genre-topics. These results imply that the topic of Narrative 2, rather than the language or genre, may have afforded the students a more productive framework within which to explore their lexical abilities in English. Perhaps, because Narrative 2 dealt with the subject of school in the U.S., the participants found it easier to include related English vocabulary that was more frequent in their day-to-day activities.
Indeed, nouns such as *locker* and *office* (tier 1), *homeroom, period*, and *tour* (tier 2), and *schedule, problem,* and *fear* (tier 3), etc. were common in these English writing samples.

The fact that a narrative text ranked higher than the expository compositions on the noun tiers measure contrasts with the findings of Ravid (2006), whose noun scale analysis of spoken and written narrative and expository texts determined that written expository texts were most likely to contain abstract nouns regardless of the participants’ age level (students in grades 4, 7, 11, and university graduate level). A note of caution is warranted, however, in comparing this study’s results with Ravid’s (2006) findings. The oral and written texts included in Ravid’s sample were produced by 80 monolingual speakers of Hebrew who were from middle to upper-middle socioeconomic status (SES) in Israel. Hence, linguistic as well as sociocultural differences—such as quality of education—may explain this discrepancy in results.

*Factors influencing the consistency of coding.* The noun tier application was not without problems, however. Ravid (2006) briefly noted that inter-judge agreement for the 10-level noun scale reached 91% once all of the nouns in the 320-text sample had been identified and counted. However, beyond stating that “disputes [were] settled by discussion” (Ravid, 2006, p. 796), the author did not provide further details regarding the process of determining inter-coder agreement. For example, it was unclear how the check-coders were trained or what agreement formula was applied to the results (Bakeman & Gottman, 1986). Based on the challenges in coding that were experienced with this measure in the present study, it appears that the omissions in Ravid’s (2006) report may affect the overall reliability of the noun scale.
For the current study, at least three procedural challenges arose regarding noun scale coding in general, as well as cross-language coding differences specific to Spanish or English. One such procedural challenge for coding consistency was the fact that the same noun could be coded at more than one level in different linguistic contexts. For example, when used in the sentence, “we went to class”, the noun, class was considered a level 3 (location); in contrast, this noun was coded as level 7 (event) in the context, “the class was really fun”. In a third possible scenario, “She has a lot of class”, the same noun would be considered a level 9 (abstract) item. A similar example was the word time. This noun was coded as a level 7 (event) in the context, “we had a good time”. However, the same word was considered level 8 (imaginable abstract) in the expression, “it’s time to play soccer”. Ravid (2006) distinguished between a noun type (i.e., “a course-grained entity encapsulating a cluster of interwoven meanings”, p. 796) and a noun token (“fine-grained, semantic quanta dictated by its syntactic and discursive context” (p. 796). Hence, although the noun scale was designed to consider noun tokens in context, in practice, consistently coding contextually-variable nouns on a 10-level scale was difficult.

Condensing Ravid’s (2006) 10-level noun scale into 3 noun tiers likely minimized some of the inconsistencies noted above. However, when coding for agreement on the noun tiers, a second issue arose. The coders did not always agree on the words to be regarded as nouns. For example, although the researcher did not consider indefinite pronouns (e.g., everything, someone, nothing) as nouns, one of the check-coders rated these words as tier 2 nouns (generic). Also, certain nouns formed parts of commonly used phrases in Spanish, such as le eché muchas ganas (I put a lot of heart into it) or isla del
encanto (island of enchantment, motto for Puerto Rico). In both of these situations, the nouns ganas and encanto were initially coded as tier 3 (abstract); however, the check-coder did not judge these nouns at all because they were deemed to be elements of “slang” expressions. This unexpected challenge could have been overcome by providing the check-coders with texts in which the previously determined nouns to be coded had been identified, thus eliminating the possibility that certain nouns would not be coded at all.

This strategy could also have been applied to a final discrepancy that emerged during the Spanish check-coding, namely, that compound nouns such as arroz con frijoles (rice and beans) could be regarded as either one or two separate tier 1 nouns. The decision to treat compounds as one or two words influenced overall coding in that these disagreements resulted in different total numbers of nouns in the sample. This issue was resolved by asking the check-coders to rate any missing or overlooked nouns, which were identified by the researcher. Consequently, both elements of Spanish compound nouns were coded as individual nouns.

Shifting to cross-language challenges, differences in the forms and meanings used to express physical and emotional states (e.g., hunger, thirst, fear, shame) resulted in a group of level 9 (abstract) nouns that existed only in the Spanish equivalents. For example, while the expression “I was hungry” in English uses an adjective to describe the writer’s physical state, the Spanish translation “Tenía hambre” (I had hunger) instead utilizes the verb to have and includes an abstract noun as the direct object of this verb. The same is true for expressions containing thirsty/thirst, sleepy/sleepiness, afraid/fear,
embarrassed/embarrassment, etc. This cross-language difference did not appear to influence the results in favor of the Spanish texts. Nonetheless, this issue should be considered for future applications of the noun scale when comparing across different languages.

*NDW.* No significant differences were found for NDW across the languages or genre-topics. This result implies that the participants’ lexical diversity was similar in both Spanish and English as well as across the genre-topics of the writing samples. This finding is not particularly surprising based on the results of the noun tiers measure. That is, the results of the noun tiers measure did not demonstrate consistent rank differences between the Spanish and English texts, nor between the expository and narrative genres. It is also noteworthy that NDW has not been shown to be a robust predictor of differences in writing quality (Beers & Nagy, 2009; Perkins, 1980).

The noun tiers and NDW patterns indicated that the participants used similar, yet rather unsophisticated, lexical items in their written texts across the languages and genre-topics. Although the lack of consistent differences in the students’ vocabulary choices was unexpected, it is notable that these ELL adolescents wrote with similar levels of lexical sophistication or simplicity across all texts.

*Implications.* These patterns of findings are consistent with the consensus that acquisition of more literate, academic vocabulary is both a challenge and a critical factor in the school success of ELL students (Janzen, 2008; Snow & Kim, 2007; Wilkinson & Silliman, 2008). One aspect of academic vocabulary development is vocabulary depth. Ordóñez and colleagues (2002) described vocabulary depth as including quality of a
word’s phonological representation as well as knowledge of the word’s class, morphological structure, and related syntactic structures. Vocabulary depth is also conceived as a metalinguistic, cognitive skill that is language independent. Along these lines, Ordóñez et al. indicated that vocabulary depth, expressed through use of superordinate categories in definitions (e.g. “a boat is a vehicle that…”), was more likely to transfer across languages for Spanish-English bilingual children in grades 4 and 5.

In order to develop academic vocabulary, including vocabulary depth, in either language or both, ELLs must have access to explicit instruction and frequent opportunities to apply this specialized vocabulary in varied and meaningful literacy experiences (Janzen, 2008; Wilkinson & Silliman, 2008). The study’s participants would benefit from increased (or more effective) vocabulary instruction and practice to improve their lexical diversity and depth in writing.

Additionally, with respect to cross-language semantic relationships, Harley and King (1989) found that English-Speaking, French language learners in grade 6 made use of lexical similarities, especially cognates, to maximize their vocabulary resources when writing in L2. Systematic, comparative analysis of word roots and derivational morphemes may support ELLs’ development of higher-level vocabulary in both languages. Higher-level vocabulary includes what Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2008) designated as Tier 2 and Tier 3 words, as opposed to Tier 1 words that comprise the basic oral language lexicon. Tier 2 words are described by Beck and colleagues as “not the most basic way to express a concept” (p. 10); for example, the word devious is a Tier 2 word that has a similar meaning as the more basic words, tricky and sneaky. Tier 2 words
may also be derived (e.g., poverty, impoverished; context, contextual, decontextualize) and are considered high-frequency words for experienced language users. On the other hand, Tier 3 words, which are used infrequently, include vocabulary specific to academic disciplines such as mathematics, science, or history (e.g., parallel, photosynthesis, unconstitutional). Since many of these Tier 2 and 3 words are derived from Latin or Greek roots, they often share cognates in both English and Spanish (e.g., context/contexto, parallel/paralelo, photosynthesis/fotosíntesis). Also, derivational morphemes share commonalities in English and Spanish as well (able/able, tion/ción, dis/des, ab/a). These forms could be taught in a comparative/contrastive manner to increase ELL students’ metalinguistic awareness of derivational morphology in both languages. A cautionary note to this recommendation is that successful teaching about cognates may not be an available strategy for educators without sufficient knowledge of Spanish (Snow & Kim, 2007).

Finally, the challenges in coding along with the unexpected cross-language differences presented by the noun scale/noun tiers measure suggest that, for future examinations of ELL vocabulary in writing, other measures may be more effective to estimate students’ knowledge of academic lexical items. For example, it may be possible to consider aspects of vocabulary depth in writing through a morphological analysis of derived words and/or content-specific, academic vocabulary (Wilkinson & Silliman, 2008). Alternately, it might be useful to consider frequency of nouns and/or verbs on a low-mid-high frequency scale, similar to Harley and King (1989).
In addition to these measures, teachers of ELLs would benefit from practical, efficient assessments of lexical proficiency that can be applied in the real-life context of the classroom. An example of this might be an assessment tool that quantifies students’ use of elaborated noun phrases⁸ in writing. This type of measure would offer insight into lexical as well as morphosyntactic development, and could be applied in English and Spanish. These types of investigations and assessments have the potential to provide more information about the extent to which phonology, orthography, and morphology are coordinated into a unified representation for the expression of meaning in both L1 and L2.

**Syntactic Level Patterns**

A clausal complexity measure and MLT were used to examine the participants’ choice of syntactic structures in their formal writing samples. Differences in syntactic structures across languages (Spanish/English) and/or genres (expository/narrative) were expected outcomes.

*Clausal complexity measure.* The scores on the clausal complexity measure ranged from 1.05-1.62 across all 148 formal writing samples, which indicated that the

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⁸ Examples of elaborated noun phrases present in the participants’ English texts include: *I remember something funny and very special with my family* (8M5, Narr1Eng); *I’m really proud of having my beautiful mother* (8M8, Expos1Eng). Examples in Spanish include *Yo admiro a Maradona un exelente jugador de futbol* (I admire Maradona, an excellent soccer player; 7M2, Expos1Span); *mi hermana era elejida para candidata a reyna de la feria de Pozuelos Cardonal Hidalgo Mexico* (my sister was chosen as a candidate for queen of the fair of Pozuelos Cardonal, Hidalgo, Mexico; 8M2, Narr1Span).
participants, for the most part, wrote with independent clauses and single subordinate clauses rather than sentences with multiple, embedded subordinate clauses. Combined with the results of the noun tiers measure, the clausal complexity measure further paints an overall picture of relatively unsophisticated structures employed by the students in their formal writing samples across both languages and genres.

However, for the adolescents in this study, topic again played a role in determining significant differences in clausal complexity. In this case, for the within genre-topic comparisons, Expository 1 in English (A person I admire) ranked significantly higher than Expository 2 in English (Letter to a new student). Additionally, Narrative 2 in Spanish (First day of school in the U.S.) ranked significantly higher than Narrative 1 in English (Special or funny family memory). In the case of the English language comparisons, Expository 1 ranked significantly higher than Narrative 1.

The within-genre-topic results again point to the topic of a writing sample as a more important influence on syntactic complexity in this study than the language of expression; namely, for both expository and narrative texts, significant rank differences occurred between the two topics. For the English language comparisons, the participants’ increased syntactic complexity on an expository text than a narrative one better aligns with previous research findings of increased syntactic sophistication in expository texts than narrative texts (Berman and Nir-Sagiv, 2007).

**MLT.** In the case of MLT, Narrative 1 in English (Special or funny family memory) was ranked significantly lower than both of the expository texts in English. Along with the results of the clausal complexity measure, this finding suggests that the
participants wrote shorter T-units, as well as less complex syntactic structures, for Narrative 1 in English than for the other writing samples. This may imply that this particular topic was not very engaging for the students. As adolescents in middle school, the participants in this study were likely spending more time with friends than their families. Therefore, the Narrative 1 topic may not have succeeded in evoking the prior experience/memories necessary for the students to compose more productive texts. Additionally, Narrative 1 in English was the first writing sample elicited; hence, a novelty task effect or task expectations may have influenced how students approached the writing activity.

Factors impacting the measurement of syntactic complexity. ELL research has employed numerous measures to explore syntactic language proficiency with mixed results regarding their ecological validity. The present study is no exception, as it may be questioned whether the most appropriate syntactic categories were examined to compare and contrast the participants’ written texts.

The clausal complexity measure utilized number of subordinate clauses as a measure of T-unit complexity; however, Kameen (1979) found no significant differences between previously categorized “good” and “poor” ELL writers at the university level based on number of embedded clauses or types of clauses. On the other hand, Kameen did find that significant predictors of writing skill were length of T-unit (MLT)—also applied here—and use of the passive voice. Based on these results, Kameen recommended that the ELLs should be provided with instruction and practice in sentence combining, in
particular, “how to reduce full *clauses* to prepositional, infinitival, and participial *phrases*” (Kameen, 1979, p. 348).

In contrast, Perkins (1980) found that MLT, among several other syntactic measures applied to university students’ expository writing, did not predict holistic writing scores. Instead, Perkins determined that only measures that considered errors (error-free T-units per text, number of words in error-free T-units, and total errors) emerged as significant predictors of writing outcomes. Finally, Beers and Nagy (2009) found that words per clause, rather than words per T-unit, was positively correlated with text quality for monolingual, English speaking middle school students.

It is possible that these micro-level measures of syntactic ability have not afforded consistent patterns of findings due to their narrow scope. That is, tools that attempt to isolate syntax from the discourse features of its context might overlook important relationships among the various levels of language present in a text. Ariel (2009) argued that grammar and discourse simultaneously complement and impose different constraints upon each other. For this author, “discourse and grammar are very much part of one system of linguistic behavior, and just like horse and carriage, they definitely go together” (Ariel, 2009, p. 6). From this perspective, it becomes impractical to attempt to establish a means to measure grammar without considering the discourse in which the syntactic structures are situated. In their report on developing academic literacy for ELLs, Short and Fitzsimmons (2007) also discussed acquisition of English academic vocabulary and sentence structure in the context of discourse and text knowledge. For these authors, academic literacy begins with exposure to and understanding of multiple types of texts.
(including different genres and text media) for different purposes. Vocabulary and grammar are developed as a consequence of these interactions with texts.

Regarding teaching strategies for ELL writing, both grammar and discourse level structures must be addressed, and these may be instructed both in isolation and in conjunction with one another. Research on cross-language transfer has found that, while syntactic level structures appear to be language-specific, text level structures may form part of a bilingual student’s common underlying proficiency. These patterns provide support for the use of some direct instructional strategies that are specific to syntax and text structure. These issues are further discussed in the next section.

**Implications.** Just as ELL students face the challenge of acquiring the specialized vocabulary of academic language proficiency in a second language, they also must learn to comprehend and produce more literate sentence structures in English to achieve grade level expectations (Janzen, 2008; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). For the students in this study, the degree of syntactic complexity they displayed appeared to depend on their level of engagement with the writing topic. However, the participants’ syntactic complexity in writing also appeared to be relatively equivalent across languages. This finding conflicts with expectations as well as previous research on cross-language transfer. For example, Francis (2006) argued that, although bilinguals possess a unified, underlying language proficiency, certain skills, including grammatical rules and syntactic structures, remain specific to each language. Evidence for this assumption is Edelsky’s (1982) study in which, for ELLs in grades 1-3, syntactic complexity appeared not to transfer across writing in Spanish and English. These findings emphasize that, for
bilinguals, language-specific knowledge, as well as common underlying proficiencies, are equally important contributors to (academic) text production. With respect to bilingual literacy, Bialystok (2007) argued, “Competence with the literate structure of language that is the basis for text is acquired individually as a function of experience in each language. Children must establish the literary basis of their linguistic competence individually for their different languages” (p. 59).

With this in mind, the results of the present study suggest two possible explanations for the apparent consistency in syntactic level expression across Spanish and English texts. The first explanation offers a glass-half-empty, or deficit, perspective. Namely, the participants had not achieved a high level of syntactic complexity in writing in their first language, Spanish. Therefore, the students’ writing in L1 looked similar to their emerging writing in L2, English. For some of the participants, this scenario could be due to differences in educational experiences in their home countries.

The second explanation provides a glass-half-full, or strengths, focus. The participants had achieved a sufficient level of English language proficiency to produce syntactic structures in L2 that were on par with, if not more advanced than, their already established capabilities in L1. In this light, the students can be viewed as growing in their English academic language proficiency, which, due to the effects of schooling in L2, should eventually surpass their academic language skills in L1 (Kohnert, 2008).

These explanations are truly two sides of the same coin and offer some insights into the ideas of common underlying proficiency and the threshold hypothesis (Cummins, 2000). Based on research supporting the non-transfer of syntactic skills (Francis, 2006),
the ELL students would not necessarily need advanced capabilities in L1 to develop them in L2. However, as previously emphasized, syntax cannot be separated from discourse (Ariel, 2009). It is certainly possible that the nature of the writing task itself (i.e., the assigned genre and language, the use of a highly-structured prompt, the purpose for writing) also may have influenced the participants’ use of certain structures in their writing. For example, in Expository 1 (A person I admire), the last point in the prompt asked, “If you could spend a whole day with this person, what would you do?” Invariably, the students’ written responses to this inquiry were structured after the prompt and included an adverbial conditional clause followed by a main clause in the conditional tense (in both Spanish and English): “If I could spend a whole day with… I would…”. Similarly, prompts that included why questions (e.g., “Why is this a funny or special memory for you?”, Narrative 1; “Why do you admire him or her?”, Expository 1) inevitably resulted in the production of T-units containing adverbial causal clauses: “This was a fun day because my whole family was together”.

These patterns provide an alternative explanation for why certain topics may have been more effective in eliciting more productive or more sophisticated writing across the measures. The first explanation, discussed previously, is that certain topics may have been more engaging for the participants in that they were better able to identify with the topic (e.g., Narrative 2, My first day of school in the U.S., which ranked high on the noun tiers measure). A second possible reason is that, beyond the topics themselves, certain prompts may have influenced the participants’ selection of syntactic structures (as well as vocabulary), affecting the final outcomes of the statistical analysis.
Keeping in mind the mutual influence of syntax and discourse, this effect might be minimized in future examinations of the data by considering larger units of text (i.e., beyond the clause and T-unit) for analysis. Indeed, the results of this study, along with the diverse research findings with regard to the measurement of ELL syntactic ability and shared versus language-specific skills, suggest a need to develop new measures of written syntactic complexity for ELL students that move beyond unitary surface structures to include larger units of text that take into account the overlap of syntax and discourse.

For example, Berman (2008) explored this possibility by breaking texts down into clause packages, which encompass multiple T-units or sentences and are linked by syntactic or semantic relationships. As a corollary to deconstructing students’ original writing for analysis, it may be useful to see how students can reconstruct basic written texts by combining simple sentences into more complex ones. Along these lines, Scott and Nelson (2009) explored how sentence-combining tasks might provide a useful writing assessment, in particular, to aid in the identification of children with language learning disability (LLD). Likewise, Saddler and Preschern (2007) offered instructional strategies to improve students’ writing through guided practice with sentence-combining. Indeed, sentence combining could be used as both an instructional strategy and an assessment measure for teachers of ELLs to learn more about their students’ language proficiency. Because writers essentially rebuild stories through the sentence-combining strategy, this task not only serves to highlight the relationships between syntactic and discourse features of a text, but also allows for the assessment of these features in an integrated fashion.
Ariel (2009) emphasized the interconnectedness between discourse and grammatical structures and highlighted the bidirectional influences between them. Deeper yet broader explorations of these relationships may serve to increase our cross-linguistic understanding of the written syntax of ELL students. Attempting to isolate syntax from discourse in writing may result in a distorted picture of ELLs’ abilities to integrate multiple levels of text.

**Discourse Level Patterns**

To examine the participants’ construction of expository and narrative texts at the discourse level, the CSE Scales (Quellmalz & Burry, 1987) were applied. Differences in global text level scores across languages (Spanish/English) and/or genres (expository/narrative) were expected results.

At the discourse level, the CSE global scores also showed significant differences for the genre and topic, although not for the language, of the writing samples. In this case, for the English language comparisons, although Narrative 1 (Special or funny family memory) ranked low on the clausal complexity measure, it ranked significantly higher than Expository 2 (Letter to a new student). In addition, for within genre-topic comparisons, Expository 2 in English ranked significantly lower than all other expository texts in both languages. This may be an indication that the letter format of Expository 2 was more difficult for these ELL students to produce in English than was the narrative structure or the more traditional expository style text of Expository 1 (A person I admire). Perhaps this is due to the students’ lack of experience or practice with letter writing. Additionally, this result might be an indication that the topic of Expository 2 (Letter to a
new student) was not as engaging, or the prompt was not as supportive, for the students as the alternative Expository 1 (A person I admire).

The finding that a narrative text ranked higher than an expository text on the CSE Scales (in English) provides some support for the Berman and Nir-Sagiv (2007) finding that, although more advanced grammar and vocabulary may be observed in expository texts than narratives (which was not necessarily the case here), young writers first achieve command over narrative structure in the elementary grades and are only able to successfully formulate well-organized expository texts beginning in the middle-high school years.

It should be noted that the Berman and Nir-Sagiv (2007) study included 160 writing samples (half narrative, half expository) produced by 80 monolingual English speakers in grades 4, 7, 11, and university level. Again, this sample was considered middle to upper-middle SES in the United States. Despite these procedural and sample size differences, Berman and Nir-Sagiv’s developmental pattern regarding narrative and expository texts may afford a useful explanation of the current result. It is possible that, in the case of ELLs, students would be more likely to capitalize on their strengths and would maximize their proficiency with the better established, more comfortable narrative structure for writing in L2.

The explanation that students relied on better developed narrative skills across the languages, as well as the lack of significant differences among texts written in Spanish and English, supports evidence that text-level writing skills, in contrast to grammatical structures, may be transferable across languages irrespective of L2 oral proficiency
(Dressler & Kamil, 2006; Fitzgerald, 2006, Lanauze & Snow, 1989). The explanation for this finding lies in the distinction between syntax and discourse as linguistic processes. First, syntax is relatively language-specific (Francis, 2006); hence, particularly in cases of languages from different families (e.g., Spanish, a Romance language versus English, a Germanic language), bilingual students must acquire different sets of grammatical rules for each system. In contrast, knowledge of genres, text structure, and composition processes can be considered language-general skills; therefore a student who develops skills related to the writing process in one language may be able to apply them in another (Dressler & Kamil, 2006). Indeed, text-level skills (e.g., knowledge of genre characteristics, such as story grammar, appear to form part of the common underlying proficiency accessible across L1 and L2 (Cummins, 1991; Durgunoglu, 2002).

Factors affecting the assessment of overall text quality. Although Quellmalz and Burry (1983) argued that the CSE Scales contained “built-in procedures” (p. 7) to ensure agreement among different raters, this type of measure relies on expert-judgment-focused evaluation which, according to Schriver (1990), may present challenges for inter-rater agreement. On the other hand, an analytic writing assessment such as the CSE scales can provide a wealth of information about a text. In the case of the present analysis, the CSE

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However, this may not be the case for learners who acquire a second language in the same family as their L1 (e.g., Spanish and Portuguese, both Romance languages). While there is little research on this topic, it would appear that metalinguistically-savvy speakers of one system could transfer known grammatical rules and structures to the other. However, even in the case of similar languages, what works in one may not always function in the other, resulting in errors (Carvalho & da Silva, 2008).
Scales did prove to be a challenge for inter-rater agreement. Two main factors may have contributed to the difficulties in this area.

First, neither the researcher nor the check-coders experienced the CSE training sequence in the way it was initially prescribed by Quellmalz and Burry (1983). The CSE Scales were originally developed to use in school districts, and the creators recommended a multi-step district training involving several levels of practice for scoring, checking, and testing of raters. Clearly, this type of training was not appropriate for the purposes of this study; however, increased training and discussion among the researcher and the check-coders throughout the rating process may have raised the agreement percentages.

A second methodological issue was the subjective nature of this type of scoring system, which was also affected by the rubric’s item construction. For example, in a broad area of judgment such as mechanics, several elements were included in the overall rating for that domain (i.e., sentence construction, usage, spelling, and punctuation/capitalization). In this case, one rater may have placed more emphasis on one element than another, causing a difference in scoring for that area. Finally, regarding subjectivity, raters were likely to compare across the participants’ texts as judgments were made and/or experience “rater drift”, a shift in the assessment standards applied as the reading of compositions progresses (Quellmalz, 1980, p. 7). Therefore, scores may have been inflated in the case of students who wrote above-average texts as compared with the rest of the participants.

These two issues call for improved ways to rate ELL written texts at the level of discourse. Perhaps alternative discourse level features, such as coreferential structures or
transitions may be useful to consider in determining students’ coherence in writing. On the other hand, the value of analytic or holistic scoring cannot be dismissed, as this type of assessment can provide teachers and speech-language pathologists with important insights into individual students’ initial writing abilities as well as their writing development over time.

Implications. At the middle school level and beyond, adolescent students are expected to demonstrate their knowledge of content through writing (Graham & Perin, 2007; Janzen, 2008). Additionally, as Short and Fitzsimmons (2006) noted, students at this age level have both in-school and out-of-school literacies, including household responsibilities such as reading or translating bills or communicating with landlords, physicians, etc. Based on the results of the CSE Scales, it was evidenced that, as a group, the ELL students in this study were producing written texts that could be considered marginally competent in both Spanish and English. In fact, the majority of the global scores fell in the 3- to 4-point range, which is at the top of the non-mastered level (1-3 points) and the bottom of the mastered level (4-6 points). Global scores of 3 and 4 were described by Quellmalz and Burry (1983) as, respectively, “almost competent” and “adequately competent” (p. 26) for expository texts, and as “a marginal example” and “an adequate example” (p. 34) for narrative texts. Because, similar to the other measures, there were not significant discourse level differences across languages, it could be said that these middle-school ELL students were emerging bilingual writers in both Spanish and English.
These outcomes indicate that the students, rather than composing and revising their texts in a planful manner, instead may have applied a more streamlined, “knowledge telling” strategy (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987, p. 5) commonly used by both children and less sophisticated writers. In this “natural and efficient” (p. 9) strategy, an immature writer takes cues from the writing assignment (prompt) and genre to activate related topic knowledge. The writer then generates a text by simply writing down everything s/he recalls about the given topic. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) contrasted the knowledge telling model with a more complex “knowledge transforming” strategy in which mature writers engage in a recursive, back-and-forth writing practice that involves developing and recreating thoughts and text in an interrelated process.

Due to its linear nature, the knowledge telling strategy can often result in more primitive lexical and syntactic choices, as well as a general lack of global planning and text organization as the students are “simply getting ideas down on paper” (McCutchin, 2006, p. 16). Also, McCutchin (2006) noted that, because the knowledge telling strategy relies heavily on topic cues, students produce better texts when they have more situational knowledge of the topic at hand. This could explain why topics like Expository 1 (A person I admire) or Narrative 2 (My first day of school in the U.S.) proved to be more productive for the participants than others on these particular measures.

In addition, as recently addressed, the structure of the prompts, as well as their presentation and discussion scaffolded the students’ writing. This support provided organization for their texts, examples of possible content, and even specific grammatical structures to include (see examples in the Syntactic Patterns section). This elicitation
procedure—which emphasized the prompt—may actually have primed the students to activate the knowledge telling strategy, more so for those who did not readily identify with the topic. Perhaps then, it was the students’ overall writing strategy, for example, a knowledge telling framework (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987), which resulted in written compositions that were fairly straightforward (following the prompts step by step) and lexically, syntactically, and textually basic, yet consistent, across languages.

It appears that, as inexperienced writers, the participants applied a simple yet efficient knowledge telling strategy that resulted in less sophisticated textual organization (as well as vocabulary and syntactic structures) in their writing. The implication of this conclusion, along with the evidence of language transfer of text level proficiencies, is that ELL students could benefit from writing instruction that aims to further develop their skills in both L1 and L2. Indeed, Fitzgerald (2006) suggested that difficulties with ELL writing are not generally caused by lack of proficiency in L2 but rather problems with the composing process in general. For the bilingual writer, these difficulties would affect both languages.

Shanahan and Beck (2006) recommended structured writing instruction (rather than free writing) as well as explicit instruction in revision to improve the writing achievement of ELLs. Further, Short and Fitzsimmons (2006) made the point that ELL writing development also requires support outside the language arts classroom. Content area teachers can contribute to the development of ELL literacy by integrating reading and writing activities into their instruction, for example, by using strategies that build students’ Tier 3 vocabulary specific to their disciplines (Beck et al., 2008). Along with
ELL specialists, teachers in the content areas can also support academic writing development through direct instruction and practice of genre-specific characteristics and structures (Beck & Jeffery, 2009). For example, Beck and Jeffery suggested that History and English classes are ideal contexts for students to engage with the genre of analytic exposition because these subject areas require analytic interpretation of historical events and literature. Similarly, teachers of science can promote the development of science information texts, another type of expository genre involving analysis, interpretation, and synthesis (Wilkinson & Silliman, 2008). In closing, it should be noted that text-level writing skills cannot flourish without continuous development of lexical and syntactic proficiencies in a learning context that is challenging, yet supportive, of ELL students (Walqui, 2007).

Quantitative Conclusions

The quantitative findings of this study can be summarized by four overall patterns that surfaced in the formal writing samples of the participating ELLs.

Impact of topic. First, although some genre-related distinctions emerged, significant differences in lexical, syntactic, and discourse rankings were generally based on the topic of the writing sample. This pattern seemingly reflects the value of students’ identification and engagement with writing topics, and also suggests the possibility that the structure of certain prompts may have influenced the participants’ use of specific vocabulary or syntactic structures. These findings indicate that topic choice and elicitation procedures may play a more important role in writing assessment than previously thought.
Transfer of academic language proficiency. A second key finding was that across the lexical, syntactic, and discourse measures, the participants consistently displayed similar skills in both Spanish and English texts. This finding supports previous research findings regarding language transfer and common underlying proficiencies (Cummins, 2000). Additionally, this pattern suggests that academic language proficiency may cross linguistic boundaries and hence, its development in either L1 or L2 would support literacy skills in the other language as well.

Knowledge-telling orientation to writing. The third conclusion is that the results in the lexical, syntactic, and discourse domains identified the participants as emerging writers in both Spanish and English. It appeared that the ELL students in this study depended on a basic knowledge telling strategy typical of children and immature writers (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). Consequently, although the writing skills of this group of students may appear marginal or even adequate, these ELLs still have quite a bit of work to do in order to increase their literate vocabularies, acquire more sophisticated syntactic structures, and shift from a knowledge telling to a knowledge transforming (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987) model of composition.

Multiple linguistic levels of text composition. A final consideration highlighted by the overall quantitative findings is the need to acknowledge the relationships among lexical, syntactic, and discourse features of written text composition. The implication here is that educators and speech-language pathologists in the area of ELL literacy must provide meaningful opportunities for students to develop these skills in an integrated fashion, also providing direct instruction on specific structures in isolation when
appropriate. Certainly, as developmental models of writing attest, a hallmark of the mature, successful writer is the ability to integrate multiple language elements with composition skills in an automatic and recursive process (Berninger & Hooper, 2003; Torrance and Galbraith, 2006).

Discussion: Qualitative Findings

Patterns of Language Learning and Identity

The qualitative interpretation applied domain and taxonomic analyses (Spradley, 1979) in conjunction with data displays (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to construct individual profiles that explored the language and literacy learning experiences of the 6 focal participants. The profile analysis centered on three interrelated domains: 1) background; 2) coming to the U.S.; and 3) language learning, language usage, and bilingualism. Simultaneously, a cross-case analysis was completed to compare and contrast the focal participants regarding their self-perceptions and feelings toward bilingualism. The results of these analyses highlighted differences as well as similarities among the focal participants and supported a more in-depth understanding of their writing performance based on their language experiences and practices. Overall, four general patterns emerged from the qualitative analyses.

Language preference. The first pattern relates to the language choices of the focal participants. Notably, all of these students opted to hold their interviews in Spanish with the exception of Carolina, who selected “both” as her language of choice but still spoke predominantly Spanish. The 6 focal students also wrote the majority of their journal entries in Spanish. These facts highlight these students’ continued preference to use L1
when given the choice, regardless of their perceived status as a bilingual or monolingual. This finding is similar to the experience of Dworin (2006), whose Latino students in grades 4 and 5, in collaboration with their parents, wrote the majority of their family stories (15 of 18 texts) in Spanish when given the option.

These students’ language choices can be explained by the fact that all of the focal participants had arrived in the U.S. within 2 years prior to data collection. Hence, most likely, they felt more confident using Spanish in an academic context (Cummins & Schecter, 2003). Yet, in spite of their relatively recent integration into schooling in English, these students demonstrated varying levels of proficiency in their writing in both Spanish and English. These differences were probably influenced by many factors, including previous educational experiences and, as discussed next, their identities and perceptions of L2 learning and bilingualism.

Bilingual and monolingual identities. The second pattern that emerged from the cross-case analysis contrasts the focal students’ identities and perceptions of bilingualism. Namely, the three students who self-identified as bilinguals, Diego, Carolina, and Juan, regularly spoke and felt proficient in both languages, enjoyed/valued both languages, and felt happy living in the U.S. On the other hand, those students who considered themselves to be monolingual, Edgar, Sara, and Manuel, did not feel they had achieved an acceptable level of English proficiency, stated that English was difficult, and expressed that they were not motivated to learn English and were not comfortable living in the U.S.
In general, the quantitative analyses revealed that the total group of participants did not consistently display statistically significant rank differences between Spanish and English on any of the writing assessment measures. When individual profiles of the focal participants were created, however, a somewhat different pattern emerged. Of the 6 focal participants, three students identified themselves as bilinguals and three identified themselves as monolinguals. On the CSE global measure, the self-identified monolingual students consistently scored higher on the texts written in Spanish. In contrast, two of the students who identified themselves as bilinguals, Carolina and Juan, displayed a more consistent performance across the two languages.

*Language discrimination.* A third pattern that arose from the qualitative analyses relates to the focal students’ common experience of language prejudice for speaking Spanish at school or in the community. This outcome that is consistent with the findings of other qualitative research on adolescent Latino students in the U.S. (Bejarano, 2005; McHatton et al., 2007). This theme was addressed in Journal 5, “The languages I speak”, and was also discussed in the interviews. All of the focal participants revealed that they had at some point heard someone comment that they should speak English in this country; however, their responses to this evidence of language prejudice varied. Although most of the students, perhaps influenced by their ESL teacher, rationalized these experiences as based on the other person’s ignorance or envy, Manuel stated that these comments made him feel depressed. Juan further described language prejudice as a part of the racial conflicts he observed at school, including gangs involving African American and Mexican students.
Ethnic differences. Finally, and related to the previous themes, the fourth pattern distinguished the Puerto Rican students from those who came from Mexico. The two students from Puerto Rico, Carolina and Juan, had studied English and had experiences living in the U.S. before coming to Florida. Both of these students considered themselves to be proficient bilinguals and had a positive view of bilingualism. These students also received similar CSE global scores on their writing in both languages.

On the other hand, the four students from Mexico, Diego, Edgar, Sara, and Manuel, had not studied English prior to their arrival in the U.S. Of the four, only Diego self-identified as a bilingual (trilingual); the others considered themselves monolingual Spanish speakers. Of the Mexican students, Diego, Sara, and Manuel also had experience using an indigenous language, Otomi, with their families and in school. Finally, regardless of their self-identification as bilingual or monolingual, the students from Mexico scored consistently higher on texts written in Spanish than English.

Factors Influencing Legitimation

Some obstacles to legitimation (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007) arose in the qualitative portion of the study. For example, in the case of the interviews, it would have been desirable to conduct member-checks\textsuperscript{10} (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) with the interviewees; however, due to time constraints, i.e., the end of the school year, this was

\textsuperscript{10}The purpose of the member-check is to solicit participants’ feedback regarding transcriptions and initial interpretation/coding of interview data. This technique has been recommended by numerous authors as a means to decrease threats to validity in qualitative research (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002; Brantlinger et al., 2005; Maxwell, 2005; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).
not possible. Also due to timing issues, it was not feasible to collect additional qualitative
data (e.g., through classroom observations or document analysis beyond the writing
samples). These data would have further served to triangulate and enhance the qualitative
analysis. Finally, for future qualitative analyses of the present data set, check-coding is
recommended.

In spite of the aforementioned limitations, the qualitative findings of this study
bring to light the methodological and clinical potentials of moving beyond statistical
analyses of group data in order to explore the linguistic profiles (and social identities) of
individual students. Indeed, for the present study, the qualitative profile analysis offered
enhanced insight into the language and literacy backgrounds, attitudes, and writing
outcomes of the participants.

Implications

For an ELL student, both the perceived proficiency in L2 and the self-determined
purposes for using L1 or L2 contribute to investment in learning and using English
(Norton-Peirce, 1995). Regardless of their status as bilingual or monolingual, Mexican or
Puerto Rican, all of the focal participants identified with their Latino heritage, home
language/s, and previous educational experiences in their countries of origin. As Bloome
et al. (2005) stressed, literacy entails much more than learning to decode a system of
symbols; rather it is a complex sociocultural process that involves socialization,
enculturation, power relations, identity production, and situated interaction. Therefore,
effective literacy instruction for ELL students must take into account their background
experiences as well as the sociocultural and linguistic resources they bring to the classroom (Cummins et al., 2005; Moll et al., 1992).

With this in mind, Kohnert (2008) suggested that even monolingual speech-language pathologists can achieve increased cultural understanding of their ELL clients and families through the effective use of three tools: 1) ethnographic interviews, which use open-ended questions to build knowledge of the client and family’s life circumstances, perspectives, and goals; 2) skilled dialogue, a process that creates respectful, reciprocal, and responsive interpersonal interactions including techniques for conflict resolution; and 3) collaboration with interpreters and translators, who can bridge remaining gaps in communication and understanding between the professional and the client/family.

These practices can contribute to the creation of individual profiles of ELL students that extend beyond scores on standardized tests or language performance measures to shed light on the sociocultural and experiential factors that shape students’ identities as bilingual or monolingual readers and writers. In the current study, the profile analysis delved deeper than the lexical, syntactic, and discourse features evident on the surface of the students’ texts to offer explanations for their diverse writing abilities.

From this perspective, a case that stands out is that of Manuel, the Mexican student in grade 8 who was excluded from the quantitative analysis because his writing
did not meet the productivity criteria\textsuperscript{11}. Notwithstanding his exclusion from the quantitative analysis, Manuel’s presence in the qualitative analysis contributed to the richness of the profile analysis and the final outcomes of the study (see General Discussion). Because Manuel struggled to write in both Spanish and English, he surfaced as a student with a possible, undiagnosed LI. In this way, Manuel represented an outlier, or an extreme/unique case (Yin, 2003), which highlighted him both quantitatively and qualitatively as a student to further investigate.

Perhaps then, in addition to an examination of how students write, an exploration of what they write can provide educators and speech-language pathologists with valuable entryways through which to better engage ELL students and meet their unique needs for development of academic language proficiency. Additionally, for ELL research, individual profiles may serve as a tool for differentiating sociocultural variables that facilitate or hinder L2 language and literacy learning.

\textit{General Discussion}

This mixed methods investigation leads to several broad conclusions, as well as questions, regarding the bilingual writing of adolescent ELL students. Gutiérrez and Orellana (2006) argued for the abandonment of deficit and difference frameworks for describing ELL students in favor of “more nuanced and complete analyses and depictions of students’ literacy practices observed across a range of settings, tasks, and contexts over

\textsuperscript{11} The focal participants were randomly selected and interviewed during the data collection phase, so it was not revealed until later, when student writings were analyzed, that Manuel’s texts were too short to include in the quantitative analysis (criteria for analysis were at least 10 T-units and/or 75 words).
sustained periods of time” (p. 505). As a mixed methods study, the present investigation provides a small-scale attempt to broaden this dominant paradigm to a more inclusive framework and methodology that not only explores trends within and across ELL participants, but also widens and deepens our collective understanding of individual students through qualitative profile analysis. This methodology has the potential to enrich our understanding of bilingual language proficiency, as well as to aid in the development of more effective assessments and instructional strategies for ELL students. In addition, this type of research is a promising approach to meet Gutiérrez and Orellana’s (2006) challenge, “to capture both regularity and variance in the communities about which we hope to learn more” (p. 503).

With this in mind, the general discussion that follows focuses on two overarching themes that emerged from the quantitative and qualitative findings: 1) bilingual language proficiency is a dynamic, interactive system with relationships occurring at multiple levels both within and across L1 and L2; and 2) how students construct and perceive their identities also impacts on how they approach L2 learning and related literacy practices. The presentation of these themes is followed by a discussion of future directions for research with adolescent ELLs.

A Multifaceted Look at Language Interaction

The overall results of this study suggest that the ELL participants were able to apply skills from their however limited or expansive bilingual repertoires of academic (writing) skills to produce texts that were generally similar in both Spanish and English. That is, the participants may have drawn from a more-or less-developed repertoire of
cross-linguistic academic resources to employ in either Spanish or English writing. These resources might include both general cognitive and linguistic strategies as well as skills that incorporated vocabulary, syntax, and text-related structures. Hence, students who had acquired the skills required to write in school in either Spanish or English, such as the ability to use more abstract nouns, construct syntactically complex sentences, and organize a genre-appropriate text, were able to apply these skills in the other language as well.

In contrast, and similar to the findings of Lanauze and Snow (1989), the students who wrote poorly in one language also did so in the other. The question that arises from these patterns for the adolescent ELL student is which aspects of academic language proficiency are shared across both languages, and, how can these be assessed and taught? Specifically, how can we provide adolescent ELLs with the metalinguistic awareness and strategies necessary to develop and access these skills across both L1 and L2 for reading and writing tasks? Finally, how might an integrated, cross-language understanding of academic language proficiency support a more reliable identification of adolescent ELLs with an undiagnosed LI?

The results of this study point to interactive relationships among the lexical, syntactic, and discourse levels of the ELL participants’ writing, as well as potential cross-linguistic relationships among texts written in Spanish and English. These outcomes support a general interactive processing theory of language that recognizes bidirectional interfaces among areas of language (e.g., semantics, syntax, and discourse), cognitive-
linguistic domains (attention and memory), and, for bilingual individuals, L1 and L2 (Kohnert, 2008).

In light of this theoretical framework, the findings additionally call for reflection on the classic, structuralist distinction of *langue*/*parole* (language/speech; de Saussure, 1959) better conceptualized in French as *langue*/*langage* or in Spanish, *lenguaje*/*lengua* (English does not have different words for these concepts). The first of these terms represents the human capacity for language and its cognitive underpinnings and the second refers to the manifestation of this capacity in a specific language such as English, Spanish, or French.

In relation to language proficiency, Kohnert (2008) described this distinction as “proficiency in a language and proficiency in language” (p. 20). Kohnert explains that ability in any *specific* language includes knowledge of that system’s phonological, lexical, syntactic, pragmatic, and discourse levels and their efficient use for varied and numerous communicative functions. On the other hand, proficiency in *language*, in general, consists of a person’s neurological, sensory-motor, cognitive, and social abilities to “map form to meaning in conventional and efficient ways, for meaningful conversation. …[or the] ability to ‘do’ language” (Kohnert, 2008, p. 22).

As an ELL student acquires L2, s/he will necessarily experience the challenges that result from developing proficiency in a second language, in this case, English. However, if a bilingual child has LI, general and systemic lags in coordinating various language levels (Silliman & Mody, 2008) will manifest themselves in both languages (i.e., Spanish and English). For both typically developing ELLs and those with language-
learning difficulties, awareness of and access to general language abilities may serve as a key to unlock cross-language aspects of academic language proficiency.

Additionally, it is important to keep in mind that, for adolescent ELLs, aspects of academic language proficiency may vary across specific content areas. For example, specialized vocabulary and morphosyntax characterize the discourse of science, social studies, mathematics, etc. (Bailey & Butler, 2007; Janzen, 2008). This implies that language features unique to specific disciplines will require attention for the purposes of both assessment and instruction/intervention. The content challenge is yet another layer of the multileveled and integrated academic language system students must learn to manage to succeed in school.

Language Identity and Academic Language Learning for ELLs

Diversity and uniqueness. The adolescent ELL participants of this study varied widely in their language proficiencies as well as their language and literacy acquisition experiences and patterns of usage in Spanish and English. This diversity was explored more deeply through the individual profiles of the 6 focal participants who comprised the qualitative analysis. Additionally, as was demonstrated by the qualitative results, ELL students’ diverse identities can affect their attitudes about language learning and may also impact on their writing performance.

An example of this variation across all participants can be appreciated in that, while many of the students were born and educated outside of the U.S. and received no English language instruction through the elementary grades, others attended the primary grades (or even all grades) in the U.S. and acquired literacy first in English. Others still
grew up in Puerto Rico, where Spanish was their primary language, but they received English language instruction throughout their elementary school years. Clearly, these students bring different language and literacy strengths and needs to the ELL classroom.

All of these students had been designated as ELLs by the school system and received specialized instruction to develop their English language proficiency. However, based on this variation, it is difficult to identify, for the total group of students, which language is the L1 and which is the L2. Similarly, when examining the content and structures present in the various linguistic levels of the participants’ writing, the direction of potential language transfer is not clear: students may equally utilize known vocabulary, syntax, or text structure in Spanish to support their writing in English, or vice versa. These differences also highlight the challenges faced by educators and other professionals who serve ELL students. The question becomes one of individual differences, emphasizing the need to determine effective and efficient methods to capture individual portraits of ELL language proficiency and more successfully support literacy development.

**Regularity and variance.** The qualitative profiles illuminated the focal participants’ perceptions of themselves as either bilingual (proficient user of Spanish and English) or monolingual (lacked the skills and/or interest to communicate in English). These identities, shaped by their previous language and literacy learning experiences and attitudes, also influenced their current language and literacy learning experiences and attitudes. The relationship between identity construction and literacy learning is further illustrated through the emergence of patterns of regularity and variance (Gutiérrez &
Orellana, 2006) among the adolescent ELL participants of this study. Generally speaking, these students might be viewed as emerging bilingual writers whose strengths and abilities varied depending on their experiences as well as the topic of the writing sample, taking into account the structure of the prompt itself.

It has also been shown that the participants made use of cross-linguistic, academic resources in their efforts to compose expository and narrative texts in Spanish and English. This finding, in tandem with the students’ overall use of a knowledge telling writing strategy (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987), resulted, for the most part, in a relatively regular performance across languages and genres in spite of the individual variance in the group.

Considering these patterns of regularity and variance, and based on their scores on the various measures, the participants this study can be considered emerging bilingual writers whose writing proficiencies in both languages varied across a continuum from struggling in both languages to competent in Spanish and English. Along this continuum, three portraits of adolescent ELL writers were developed based on the quantitative and qualitative findings: 1) non-emerging: ELL students who struggled and wrote poorly in both languages; 2) dominant emerging: participants whose writing was at least marginally proficient in either Spanish or English, but not both; and, 3) balanced emerging: students who demonstrated marginal to adequate proficiency equally across both languages. Each of these portraits has instructional implications related to the unique linguistic, social, and academic needs of the students who fit these profiles.
The non-emerging bilingual writer. The first portrait, non-emerging, is embodied by students like Manuel, from Mexico, who self-identified as a monolingual and claimed he would never get used to living in the United States. Manuel, a student in grade 8, expressed that learning English was very difficult and felt that it was like being born again because it was a different language. Manuel was not only was frustrated by the experience of learning English as a second language, but also lacked a solid foundation of academic language skills in his first language, Spanish. As a result, Manuel was a struggling student and wrote poorly in both languages. This situation might also depict the experience of an ELL student with (undetected) LI.

Students like Manuel, including ELLs with language or learning disabilities, require extensive academic support to strengthen their general language and literacy abilities as well as to develop their English language proficiency. The former may be done in both languages to maximize success across both languages and in varied contexts (Kohnert, 2008). Regarding English language instruction, vocabulary development is critical for these students’ successful interaction with academic texts and tasks in the content areas (Janzen, 2008; Snow & Kim, 2007; Wilkinson & Silliman, 2008). Overall, ELL students who lack academic proficiency in both their first and second languages would benefit from explicit literacy instruction in both languages, including contrastive analysis experiences (Kohnert, 2008) to build metalinguistic awareness, emphasize connections between the languages, and strengthen common underlying proficiencies that can be applied to literacy tasks in either the first or second language.
*The dominant emerging bilingual writer.* The second portrait, dominant emerging, is illustrated well by Edgar, from Mexico. Edgar was a student in grade 7 who self-identified as a monolingual Spanish speaker. He expressed his disinterest and dislike of learning English at school, and had plans to return to Mexico to attend university and law school. In contrast to Manuel, Edgar wrote relatively well in his first language, Spanish. He utilized abstract, metaphorical vocabulary and complex sentence constructions, particularly in his expository compositions. However, due to his inexperience with--and perhaps also his negative feelings toward--English, Edgar was unable to transfer these skills to his writing in English.

Students like Edgar, who come to the ELL classroom with some level of academic language proficiency in their home language, require, in addition to acquisition of L2 vocabulary and sentence structure, metalinguistic strategies that will aid them in applying the skills they already possess to literacy tasks in their new language. Further, sociocultural factors will be important in encouraging dominant emerging ELL students to take risks and build confidence in their second language. Students like Edgar strongly identify with their home language and culture and may resist the second language and culture. For these ELLs, as others have recommended (e.g., Ball, 2006; Dworin, 2006; Flores-Dueñas, 2004; Moll et al., 1992; Moll et al., 2001), the incorporation of culturally relevant literacy practices and students’ funds of knowledge may provide more meaningful opportunities to engage in literacy activities in a supportive, additive language learning environment.
The balanced emerging bilingual writer. Finally, the third writer portrait, balanced emerging, describes a student like Carolina, in grade 7. Carolina attended the primary grades (K-2) in Kentucky and then continued her schooling in Puerto Rico before returning to Florida in grade 7. She also experienced continuous English language instruction at school in Puerto Rico. Carolina considered herself to be bilingual and felt proud of her skills. She demonstrated her bilingual identity through her attempts to mix both languages in her interview and journal entries (although Spanish was still dominant). In her formal writing samples, Carolina demonstrated proficiency across both Spanish and English texts, consistently scoring in the competent range on the CSE analytic measure.

With regard to ELL instruction, students like Carolina are ready to be challenged with higher level academic language and literacy tasks. In the classroom, these students can be encouraged to continue their expansion of both languages through development of more complex, literate vocabulary, sentence and text structures. A student like Carolina may also serve as a resource to other ELLs who are non-emerging and dominant-emerging, for example as a collaborator in a bilingual identity text (Cummins et al., 2005) or bilingual autobiography similar to what the participants developed for this study.

These three portraits, which summarize the integration of the quantitative and qualitative findings of this research, offer an additional window through which to view the diverse identities and abilities of ELL students in middle school. Much work is still needed to better understand and meet the needs of adolescent ELL students, in particular
those who may have an undiagnosed language or learning impairment. As previously discussed, there are numerous ways that the participants’ writing may serve to explore and create new lexical, morphosyntactic, and discourse measures to increase our understanding of ELL writing, as well as to advance our success in discovering the linguistic characteristics of ELL students who are in need of special education services.

**Research Agenda**

It is clear that there is a continued need for investigation in the area of ELL literacy, particularly with adolescent students, who have been largely overlooked in previous research (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). Gutiérrez and Orellana (2006) called for a shift in ELL frameworks from those that paint these students with broad brush strokes to deeper and richer examinations of the diversity of ELL literacy practices in a variety of contexts. The conclusions of the present study align with this approach, highlighting the value of qualitative profile analysis of ELLs in conjunction with linguistic measures that take into account the numerous, interactive levels of a bilingual language system.

More specifically, the results of this study bring attention to an unresolved theoretical issue with clinical and educational implications; that is, which aspects of bilingual academic language proficiency are shared across both languages? From a clinical perspective, the question arises about whether an adolescent ELL student with LI may be more reliably identified through examining the interaction of various aspects of academic language proficiency in both L1 and L2, as compared to more traditional measures that evaluate specific linguistic features and/or assess only one language. In the educational realm, it will be important to address how adolescent ELLs might be taught
the necessary metalinguistic awareness to develop and access academic language knowledge to achieve literacy goals across both L1 and L2.

Follow-up studies. The current findings, consistent with previous research, suggest that micro-level, text analyses of ELL writing may not be the most effective solutions to assess bilingual academic language proficiency. Instead, an integrated framework that recognizes language as an interactive system may prove more useful to shed light on the cross-language aspects of the academic language proficiency of adolescent ELLs. Additionally, a mixed methods approach could increase opportunities to effectively identify adolescent ELLs with undiscovered LI, such as the focal participant, Manuel, who, in grade 8, continued to struggle with literacy in both Spanish and English. An objective for future research, then, would be to apply integrated language measures to delve more deeply into the cross-language aspects of ELL academic language proficiency, as well as to explore whether these integrated measures are more effective for this purpose than more traditional, micro-level (or monolingual) measures such as NDW and MLT.

One such integrated research approach could extend the analysis of the present data set to explore the relationships between vocabulary depth and morphosyntactic awareness. For example, examination of the elaborated noun phrases used by the participants in both languages could provide not only increased understanding of how nouns were situated in the written texts, but also insight into the students’ ability to build more structurally complex forms in ways other than the embedding of dependent clauses. In addition to comparing outcomes across languages, it would also be useful to contrast
the elaborated noun phrase findings with those from equivalent writing samples collected from monolingual English (and, ideally, also Spanish) speakers at the middle school level.

Moving beyond the present corpus of student writings, another study involving the crossover between vocabulary depth and morphosyntactic awareness could investigate variations in adolescent ELLs’ metalinguistic sensitivity to derivational morphology. This might be explored by a measure that evaluates students’ ability to apply semantic morphemes from L1 and L2 to change word meanings and/or create novel words that make sense in sentences. Performance could be compared across groups of ELL students with diverse language histories focusing on such variables as more or less time attending schools in the U.S. Alternately, and considering that bilingual/monolingual emerged as an identity variable for the focal participants in the present study, students could also be grouped based on their self-identification as bilingual or monolingual (or, more or less proficient in L2). This type of semantic morpheme measure would address the question of cross-language academic language proficiency in the area of morphosyntactic awareness in relation to knowledge of derived words, which may be characteristic of more elaborate semantic networks.

A second area of an integrated language paradigm warranting study involves the interactions between syntax and discourse and how these play out in bilingual academic language proficiency. Integrated measures in this area might employ larger units of text to examine the nature of syntax as it is situated in written discourse. An example of this type of measure is clause packaging (Berman & Nir-Sagiv, 2005; Katzenberger, 2004). A
clause package is a “text-embedded unit of two or more clauses that are linked by syntactic criteria, but also taking into account thematic and discursive factors” (Berman & Nir-Sagiv, 2005, p. 5). These authors used clause packages to explore differences between spoken and written texts and among different age groups of monolingual participants. A similar measure might be applied to the current data set to further compare and contrast discursive and syntactic patterns across L1 and L2 writing. Additionally, outcomes could be compared with those of adolescent, monolingual speakers of English and Spanish to enhance our understanding of bilingual versus monolingual patterns in academic language proficiency.

Finally, sentence combining, which has yet to be explored with ELLs at the middle school level, could also serve as a vehicle to achieve deeper insights into the cross language aspects of academic language proficiency at the syntactic-discourse interface. One possibility is to employ an analytical approach used by Scott and Nelson (2009) designed to assess students’ ability to rewrite short scenarios consisting of simple, one-clause sentences into new stories that “sound better” because principles of sentence combining have been applied (e.g., deletion, insertion, subordination, coordination, etc.). As described above, participants’ performance on this task might be compared across languages as well as between groups distinguished by the variables of language experience or language identity. Outcomes might also be compared with those of monolingual controls. This type of measure has the potential to target an ELL student’s syntactic proficiency in both languages and also may serve as a prospective approach to identify ELLs with LI.
Additionally, previous research has shown that sentence-combining may be an effective instructional tool. In a meta-analysis, Graham and Perin (2007) found a moderate effect size (0.50) for the impact of sentence-combining as an instructional strategy to improve writing for English-speaking adolescent students. Further, this instructional strategy could become more engaging to adolescent ELLs if it were applied in the context of culturally-relevant, or autobiographical, texts that acknowledged the students’ social identities and experiences (Flores-Dueñas, 2004).

**Instructional/intervention strategies.** Keeping in mind the sociocultural aspects of language and literacy learning, in addition to the research directions described above, there is an additional need for instructional/intervention studies whose objective is to determine which strategies are most effective in promoting cross-language academic language proficiency for adolescent ELLs. One possibility for a response to instruction study involves the direct instruction of systematic, contrastive language analysis strategies in Spanish and English to an experimental group as compared with a control group receiving instruction/intervention in English only. Some such contrastive strategies include direct instruction in Spanish versus English inflectional and derivational morphemes, use of compound words and conjunctions, sentence word order, and use of prepositions, including in phrasal verbs (see Kohnert & Derr, 2004 for a summary of non-overlapping features of Spanish and English).

An exploratory investigation of this kind might be structured as a clinical intervention study involving an individual or small group of adolescent ELL students diagnosed with LI. These students would be evaluated before and after receiving the
contrastive analysis intervention in order to determine how this type of treatment
impacted on their metalinguistic awareness in both languages. They could also be
compared with a control group of ELL students with LI who receive the “typical” ESL
curriculum. At the moment, there remain many unanswered questions regarding best
practices in adolescent ELL instruction. This is particularly the case when individual
differences, including LI, are taken into account.

Final Thoughts

This mixed methods study has explored expository and narrative writing in
Spanish and English of ELLs in middle school. A quantitative examination of these
students’ lexical, syntactic, and discourse proficiencies across the languages and genre-
topics has provided a glimpse into the multiple factors that take part in ELL writing
development. Namely, the significance of the role of the writing topic and prompt, the
potential transfer of academic language proficiency across languages, and the integration
of vocabulary, grammar, and text-level skills stand out as key outcomes to glean from
this study.

Beyond these quantitative patterns, the qualitative profile analysis of 6 focal
participants has highlighted additional factors that play a role in the orchestration of
bilingual writing. Such elements include language choice, reaction to language prejudice,
identity as bilingual or monolingual, and ethnic identity. While it is not possible, given
the scope of this investigation, to delve into each of these aspects in depth, it is critical to
recognize the value of individual profile analysis for these types of students.
Gutiérrez and Orellana’s (2006) theme of regularity and variance is woven throughout the bilingual writing samples as well as in the journal content and interview discourse of the ELL students who participated in this study. A common challenge to the educator or speech-language pathologist working with ELL students is the variation in experiences and abilities of these students. Perhaps a deeper exploration into this diversity, integrated with big-picture patterns of ELL language and literacy development, will offer some solutions to overcome these challenges.
References


XSight (Version 2) [Computer software] (2006). Doncaster, Victoria, Australia: QSR International Pty Ltd.

Appendix A

Summary of Data from Informal ESL Teacher Interviews

The following table summarizes the observations obtained from informal phone interviews with middle and high school ESL teachers. The average phone conversation lasted 30-45 minutes. Main topics addressed included: a) student demographics, b) how they taught writing, c) how their students developed English writing proficiency, and d) what they recommended for the present study. Note: All names have been changed.

Table 14

Summary of ESOL Teacher Interview Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher, date of conversation</th>
<th>Characteristics of students</th>
<th>Writing instruction</th>
<th>Advice on elicitation of writing samples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Brady, Middle School, 7/17/07</td>
<td>Majority Spanish L1: N = ~38-40. Grade 6: ~25; Grade 7: ~13; Grade 8: ~13.</td>
<td>Journaling, daily bell work stresses writing, writing in L1 and L2, stresses transfer of mechanics, gives guidance. Uses literature to inspire.</td>
<td>Writing topics: - Hometown stories? No – will not be interesting. - Border crossing? Yes. She did autobiography project and students shared a lot. “They will get into it if they are interested [in the topic]”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher, date of conversation</td>
<td>Characteristics of students</td>
<td>Writing instruction</td>
<td>Advice on elicitation of writing samples</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms. Michaels, Middle school, 9/5/07</td>
<td>Speakers of various languages. Spanish L1:</td>
<td>Students write independently; she conferences with individuals. “Not proficient enough for Writers’ Workshop”. Encourages use of thesaurus, focuses on building vocabulary. Uses Florida Writes outline format for narrative. Planning and prewriting are important.</td>
<td>Biggest problem for ELL writing is lack of vocabulary. “Kids this age have a hard time focusing”. They will need SPECIFIC instructions of what we are looking for (e.g. description, interpretation, etc.). Only higher-level students would be able to write a narrative. Recommended not using computer to write –students are more proficient by hand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher, date of conversation</td>
<td>Characteristics of students</td>
<td>Writing instruction</td>
<td>Advice on elicitation of writing samples</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms. Thomas, High school, 9/12/07</td>
<td>Majority Spanish L1: N = 70 in grades 9-12. Origin: Mexico, South America, Central America, Caribbean</td>
<td>Structured, systematic, process-oriented. “They need to work up to writing so it’s not a traumatic experience”. Writing is so complex, many layers – takes time to build this.</td>
<td>Writing topics: Writing topics: Border crossing: No, too problematic. Her kids like to write about friends, families, here vs. there, being homesick, going back to visit, differences in themselves from when they arrived until now, the day they left their home country. Abilities vary greatly, with phonetic/lexical items). Abilities vary greatly, SES/educational opportunities in home country play a big role.</td>
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Appendix B

Summary of Results of Participant Questionnaire

Table 15

Personal and Educational Characteristics of Participants

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<th>Grade level</th>
<th>Age</th>
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<th>Birthplace of father</th>
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<th>Country of schooling</th>
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Appendix C

Writing Prompts for Formal Samples and Journals

Formal samples

Narrative 1

Special or funny family memory (Family)

a. Remember something funny or special that happened in your family.

b. Tell the story of what happened.
   i. Who was involved?
   ii. Where were you?
   iii. What happened?

c. How did you feel at the time?

d. Why is this a funny or special memory for you?

Un recuerdo especial o chistoso con la familia (Familia)

a. Recuerda un evento chistoso o especial que pasaste con tu familia.

b. Cuenta la historia del evento.
   i. ¿Quién estaba?
   ii. ¿Dónde estaban ustedes?

c. ¿Cómo te sentiste en este momento?

d. ¿Por qué este evento fue chistoso o especial?
Expository 1 (description)

A person I admire (Family/friends)

a. We all admire people for different reasons.

b. Whom do you admire? (It can be someone in your family, a friend, professional, or celebrity). Describe this person with lots of details.

i. What does this person do?

ii. What makes him/her special?

iii. Why do you admire him/her?

c. If you could spend a day with this person, what would you do?

Una persona que yo admiro (Familia/amigos)

a. Todos admiramos a alguien por alguna razón.

b. ¿A quién admiras? (Puede ser alguien en tu familia, un amigo, un profesional, o una persona famosa). Describe esta persona con muchos detalles.

i. ¿Qué hace esta persona?

ii. ¿Qué tiene de especial?

iii. ¿Por qué admiras a esta persona?

c. Si pudieras pasar un día con esta persona, ¿qué harías?
Narrative 2

First day of school in the U.S. (or First day of middle school) (School)

a. Think back and remember your first day of school in the US.

b. Tell the story of what happened that day.
   i. What did you do?
   ii. Whom did you meet?

c. How did you feel throughout the day?

d. What did you learn that day about yourself and life at your new school?

Primer día de clases en los EE.UU. (o Primer día de la escuela media) (La Escuela)

a. Acuérdate de tu primer día de escuela aquí en los EEUU.

b. Cuenta la historia de lo que pasó ese día.
   i. ¿Qué hiciste?
   ii. ¿A quién conociste?

c. ¿Cómo te sentiste durante ese día?

d. Ese día, ¿qué aprendiste sobre ti misma y sobre la vida en tu escuela nueva?

Expository 2 (compare/contrast)

Letter to a new student (School)

a. Now that you have been here for a while, you can help a new student coming to this school from your home country.
b. Write a letter to this student explaining what it is like here. How is this school the same/different from school in your home country?
   i. What are the students and teachers like?
   ii. What kinds of things do you do with your friends?

c. What advice would you give to this new student about starting school here?

Carta a un estudiante nuevo (La escuela)

a. Ya que llevas tiempo aquí en este país, puedes ayudar a un estudiante nuevo que viene a esta escuela de tu país natal.

b. Escribe una carta a dicho estudiante nuevo, explicándole cómo es aquí. ¿Cómo es esta escuela igual o diferente a la escuela en tu país natal?
   i. ¿Cómo son los profesores y los estudiantes?
   ii. ¿Qué haces con tus amigos?

c. ¿Cómo aconsejarías a este estudiante nuevo en cuanto a asistir a la escuela aquí?

Journals (English versions)

Journal 1 (Expository - describe)

Intro to journal

   a. Pretend your journal is a new friend you just met.
b. Write a letter to your journal introducing yourself. Tell your journal about yourself. Give an overview of your family, school, friends, hobbies, and goals. We will expand on these topics in other journal entries.

c. What are your expectations for the autobiography project?

Journal 2 (Narrative)

Happy moments

a. Remember a very happy moment in your life.

b. Tell the story of this happy time.
   
i. Who were you with?
   
ii. Where were you?
   
iii. What happened?

   c. How did you feel at the time?

   d. Why is this moment a special memory for you?

Journal 3 (Narrative)

Sad moments

a. Remember a very sad moment in your life.

b. Tell the story of this sad time.
   
i. Who were you with?
   
ii. Where were you?
   
iii. What happened?

   c. How did you feel at the time?

   d. What did you learn from this sad experience?
Journal 4 (Narrative)

Problem or conflict

a. Remember a time when you had a problem/conflict with a friend or family member.

b. Tell the story about this problem or conflict.
   i. What happened?
   ii. What was the problem/conflict?
   iii. How did you resolve this conflict or solve the problem?

c. How did you feel during this time?

d. What did you learn from this experience?

Journal 5 (Expository - compare/contrast)

The languages we speak

a. Everyone in this class is bilingual – we speak more than one language.

b. Compare and contrast the language/s you and your family speak.
   i. With whom do you speak each language?
   ii. When, under what circumstances do you speak each language?

c. Have you ever experienced prejudice for speaking a minority language?
   How did it feel?

Journal 6 (Expository - describe)

Sports/hobbies

a. We all have hobbies and interests.

b. Tell your journal about your favorite activity to do for fun?
i. When did you learn to do this activity?

ii. How/why did you become interested in it?

iii. When, where, and with whom do you practice this activity?

c. Would you recommend this activity to someone else? Why/why not?

**Journal 7 (Expository – cause/effect)**

Goals

a. Everyone has goals and plans for the future.

b. Explain your goals and why you have these goals.

   i. How do you envision yourself when you are an adult?

   ii. How will each of your goals help you achieve these plans for the future?

   c. What steps must you take to achieve your goals?

**Journal 8 (Expository - explain)**

Tradition/family/culture

a. We all practice family/cultural traditions. Think of a tradition in your family/culture. It can be something complex like celebrating a holiday or something simple like eating pizza every Friday night.

b. Explain this tradition using lots of details.

   i. Why do you practice it?

   ii. What do you do (dress, eat, music, place)?

   iii. When?

   c. When you grow up, will you continue this tradition with your own family?
Journal 9 (Narrative)

Dream vacation

a. Imagine you are able to go on a trip anywhere in the world, for free!

   Where would you go?

b. Tell the story of your dream vacation, as if it really happened.
   i. Where did you go?
   ii. Who was with you?
   iii. What kinds of things did you do?

c. How did you feel while you were on your dream vacation?

Journal 10 (Expository -explain)

Three wishes

a. We often wish to change our lives or the world.

b. Imagine you have a magic wand and can have 3 wishes, whatever you want! Explain each wish and why you wish it.
   i. Will the wish help you, your family, or other people?
   ii. Will the wish improve the environment or the planet?
   iii. Why is this wish important to you?

c. Now imagine you have one extra wish to give away. Who will you give it to and why?
Appendix D

*Students’ Suggested Topics for Bilingual Autobiographies*

Topics that were addressed in writing prompts are underlined.

*Grade 6*

- School
- Culture
- Family
- Sports
- Country
- Hobbies
- Food
- Religion
- Fashion
- Music
- Movies
- Language
- Fun
- Holidays

*Grades 7-8*

- Shopping
- Friends
- Family
- Shoes
- School
- Hobbies
- Sports
- Culture
- Goals
- Sad moments
- Language
- Where we are from
- Country
- Foods
- Future
- We are Latinos
- Tradition
- How we dress-out
- Problems with family/friends
- Love life
- Happy moments
- Chores
- First bad hair day
- First award
Appendix E

Participant Questionnaire

Today’s date: __________________

Name: _______________________

Grade:_______________________

Date of birth (month, day, year): ______________________

Place of birth (city/state, country):  _______________________

Parents’ place of birth (country):  Mom: _______________ Dad: ______________

Do you have sisters and/or brothers? List each sibling, their age, and country of birth below (for example: Francisco, 15, Mexico):

________________________________________________________________________ 
________________________________________________________________________

Circle the grades when you were in school in the United States:

Kindergarten  1st  2nd  3rd  4th  5th  6th  7th  8th

Circle the grades when you were in school in a different country:

Kindergarten  1st  2nd  3rd  4th  5th  6th  7th  8th

Where did you go to school outside the US? (country) ______________________

When and where did you start speaking Spanish?______________________________

When and where did you start speaking English?______________________________
Cuestionario

La fecha de hoy _____________________

Nombre _______________________

Grado ____________

Fecha de nacimiento (mes, día, año) _________________

Lugar de nacimiento (ciudad, estado, país) ________________________________

Lugar de nacimiento de tus papás (país): Mamá _____________ Papá ____________

¿Tienes hermanos? Nombra cada hermano/a, su edad, y su país de nacimiento (por ejemplo, “Francisco, 15, Mexico”)

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Circula los grados cuando asistías a la escuela en los **Estados Unidos:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kinder</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Circula los grados cuando asistías a la escuela en **otro país:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kinder</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

¿Dónde asististe a la escuela fuera de los EEUU (país)? _________________________

¿Cuándo y dónde empezaste a hablar el español?

_________________________________________________

¿Cuándo y dónde empezaste a hablar el inglés?

_________________________________________________
Appendix F

*Interview Guide for Focal Participants*

**I. Background information:**

1. Participant name:
2. Age:
3. Grade:
4. Place of birth:

**II. Language history/use:**

1. At what age and where did you begin to study/learn Spanish, English?
2. Do you or your family speak any other language(s) besides Spanish and English?
3. What age/grade were you in when you came to the US?
4. What language(s) do you speak to parents? Siblings? Grandparents, extended family?
5. What language(s) do you speak with friends in/outside of school? Phone? Email? Chat?
6. What language do you prefer for TV/radio/movies at home/with friends?
   (examples)
7. What language do you prefer for reading for fun? (examples)

**III. Attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about language and literacy:**

1. What do you most remember about school in your home country? Tell me about it. What did you like/not like?
2. Tell me about your experiences learning to read and write in your home country.
   What did you like/not like about it? What did you find difficult/easy?
3. Did you study English in your home country? Tell me about that experience. What did you like/not like about it? How was it different/similar to learning English now?

4. How did you feel when you came to the US? How is it different from your home country? What was most difficult/easy to get used to?

5. Tell me about your experience learning English here. How does it feel to speak another language?

6. How did you learn to read and write in English? What was most difficult/easy?

7. What do you think of when I say ‘bilingual’? Do you consider yourself to be bilingual? Why or why not? How does this make you feel? How does it make other people feel?
Figure 8: Data display for Diego.
Figure 9. Data display for Carolina.
Figure 10. Data display for Edgar.

- Edgar: El inglés no me gusta para nada
  - is an attribute of
    - Family problems: Mi familia no es muy unida eso ha tenido muchos problemas
      - is a reason for
        - Does not like learning English
          - is a result of
            - Strong mother: Entonces mi mamá fue siempre la que me enseño adelante
              - is a way to
                - Returning to live in Mexico
                  - is a kind of
                    - Cases in law: Logico que también quiera mi carrera de leyes
                      - is a kind of
                        - Eliminate poverty, prostitution, and crime
                          - is a kind of
                            - Soccer: Más se debe para el futuro son ser un gran futbolista
                              - is a way to
                                - Goals and wishes
                                  - is an attribute of
                                    - Spanish speaker: Yo hablo español y me gusta mi idioma
                                      - is a reason for
                                        - Aunt left her family for another man
                                          - is a result of
                                            - "No me dan mucho la atención"
                                              - is a result of
                                                - "No me llaman mucho me atienden"
Figure 11. Data display for Sara.
Figure 12: Data display for Manuel.
Figure 14. Data display for cross-case analysis.
About the Author

Robin. L. Danzak received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Art History/Hispanic Language and Culture from New College of Florida in 1997. She completed her Master of Arts in Linguistics at the University of Concepción, Chile, in 2001, where her research focused on literacy of deaf adolescents and adults. In Chile, Ms. Danzak earned a national scholarship for graduate study and participated in a national grant for the arts to research life histories of rural craftswomen, resulting in a book publication.

Upon her return to the U.S., Ms. Danzak worked as a public school educator and, as a doctoral student at the University of South Florida, shifted her research focus to language and literacy of English language learners. While at USF, Ms. Danzak co-authored an article and a book chapter, and participated in several national and international conference presentations. She is currently an instructor at USF Sarasota-Manatee, where she teaches online post-baccalaureate courses in Language, Speech, and Hearing Sciences.