1999

Emergent literacy in Spanish-speakers: Stages of spelling development

Rebecca A. Helm
University of Northern Iowa

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.uni.edu/pst

Part of the Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons

Let us know how access to this document benefits you

Recommended Citation
http://scholarworks.uni.edu/pst/20

This Open Access Presidential Scholars Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the University Honors Program at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Presidential Scholars Theses (1990 – 2006) by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uni.edu.
Emergent Literacy in Spanish-speakers:
Stages of Spelling Development
Rebecca A. Helm
University of Northern Iowa
This research paper by: Rebecca A. Helm

titled: Emergent Literacy in Spanish-speakers: Stages of Spelling Development

has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the Presidential Scholar Senior Thesis Project.

Date Approved: 11-24-98

Faculty Thesis Advisor: Penny L. Beed
Abstract

Developmental differences in the area of spelling between English-speakers and Spanish-speakers, and possible sources for these differences, were investigated. Data was collected in the form of children's writing samples from four classes and interviews with both university professors and classroom teachers. The results indicated that the classroom using the Global Method of instruction had the most advanced spelling development. It was also found that there were certain spelling errors made frequently by all Spanish-speaking developmental spellers. The types of errors were similar to those made by English-speakers. As a whole, Spanish-speaking students were in comparable developmental spelling stages to English-speakers of the same age. The most noted difference in spelling development was that Spanish-speakers left out consonants and wrote vowels sooner, whereas English-speakers left out vowels and wrote consonants sooner. These findings are valuable for teachers and have implications for the education of diverse learners in the classroom.
Chapter One

"Learning to read and write is not just a matter of distinguishing letter shapes, drawing those shapes, following a text with the eyes, and so on. These and similar skills are secondary when it comes to understanding the nature and function of writing. ...Learning to read and write can not be reduced to a set of perceptual-motor skills, or to willingness or motivation, but must grow from a deeper layer of conceptual development" (Sinclair, Literacy Before Schooling, 1989, p. 5).

Teaching our children to read and write is considered to be one of the most important functions of the educational system. As citizens of society, we rely on the fact that children will exit our schools with the ability to read and write. Unfortunately, education today is facing a literacy crisis. In the United States, this crisis is most serious in the Hispanic population and begins in the early years when four-year-olds tend to have less well developed school skills. "In 1993, Hispanic four-year-old children were less able than Caucasians to ... recognize all letters of the alphabet (12% compared to 31%), and write their first name (59% compared to 74%)" (Hispanic American Education, 1996, p. 2). According to the 1998 Bureau of Census, Hispanics have an enormously high illiteracy rate. An inadequate introduction to school literacy may be a contributing factor to such long term negative consequences for Hispanic students. For this reason, it is important that teachers understand variations in literacy development and home literacy experiences of Spanish-speaking children. These understandings are especially important in light of the changing demographics of school populations in the United States. In a 1992 article from Education and Urban Society, Kris Gutierrez states that, "...by the year 2010, one of three Americans will be members of an ethnic minority group ... [Currently] 30% of all public school students come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, 2–4 million for whom the schooling language, English, is not the native language" (Gutierrez, 1992, p. 245).
In order to be effective bilingual teachers and help students become bilingual, literate citizens, teachers must understand how writing develops, not only in English, but also in Spanish-speaking children. Information on emergent literacy in Spanish-speaking children is crucial for teachers whose goal is to help children in our country become more literate. Taylor (1983) proposed fifteen years ago that we need to help teachers know more of the learning styles, coping strategies, and social systems of the children they teach, if we are going to make instruction in reading and writing meaningful and relevant to them. It is especially pertinent for those children who have recently arrived and are struggling to learn two languages at the same time.

It is imperative that teachers examine writing stages from native Spanish-speakers in their home country, as well as in the United States. Due to the fact that many immigrant parents learned to read and write in a different country, certain beliefs or attitudes may be reflected towards the way their children should learn to read and write. For example, Goldenberg, Reese, and Gallimore (1992) observed that low-income Hispanic parents tried to help their children in reading readiness by emphasizing skills such as letter identification and spelling-sound correspondences. We need to understand the structure of home literacy experiences, if we want to arrive at some meeting point between the home and the school. The better teachers can understand how their students' language and literacy develops, the better they will be able to effectively educate all children in our country.

Despite the importance of this issue, there is an unfortunate lack of research in the area. In his book, The Development of Writing in Children, Marvin Klein states, "The young child grows into and through a series of stages that have particular critical attributes....however, although this characteristic of writing development in children is widely espoused, there have remained fundamental questions in the minds of researchers" (Klein, 1985, p. 19). He also tells us that two experts, King and Rentel, in their review of literature, "note how little attention has been devoted to this area" (Klein, 1985, p. 19).
Klein is referring to research in the subject of emergent literacy as a whole. There is even less research provided regarding comparisons of emergent literacy development between Spanish and English speakers. In the previously mentioned article, Gutierrez writes, "Until recently, little attention has been paid to examining the social nature of language learning, the contexts in which language learning takes place, or the organization of effective classroom contexts for writing instruction for Latino students with limited English-speaking skills. Even less research attention has been given to the writing development of language minority students" (Gutierrez, 1992, p. 245). Yet another example of this lack of research surfaces through Lou Ferroli’s attempts to create a developmental spelling test for Spanish speakers. In his 1993 article, Ferroli states, "The similarities and differences in spelling in English and Spanish have not been worked out with such detail that a solid research basis is provided for a Spanish version of a DST (Developmental Spanish Test)" (Ferroli, 1993, p. 4).

The goal of the research conducted in this thesis was to find out more information about the Spanish-speakers' stages of spelling development through analysis of children's writing samples. The following research questions were asked, "What are the likes and differences between English-speakers and Spanish-speakers' development in the areas of spelling?" and "What might be some possible sources for these developmental differences?" Samples were taken of Spanish-speaking children in Colima, Mexico. These samples were later analyzed according to stages suggested by researchers of English-speaking children's writing, in particular those of McGee and Richgels and outlined in their book, Literacy's Beginnings (1996).

The few research studies that have compared the writing development of Spanish-speakers to English-speakers have differed in method from the research reported in this thesis. Yvonne and David Freeman conducted research on Spanish speakers in a bilingual classroom in the United States and arrived at conclusions about their spelling development (Freeman, 1997). Sofia Vernon also researched differences in Spanish and English-
speakers' spelling development (Vernon, 1993). However, Vernon used English-speakers in the United States as her subjects and compared them to Ferriero and Teberosky's levels of writing. The research discussed here is different because the subjects are native Spanish-speakers in their native country. The method of collecting samples also differs, because most previous research involves certain words or sentences that the subjects are asked to write. In this research, the subjects are asked questions orally and are free to select their own word choice to write for the samples.

In order to understand this research and its significance, it is necessary to have a basic concept of background information in the area of emergent literacy. In the following chapter, existing research is outlined in a literature review. The third chapter focuses on the method for conducting the research including: participants, setting, procedures, and analysis. Results, including illustrative examples of children's writing, will be included in the fourth chapter. Finally, the fifth chapter includes conclusions, implications, and suggestions for further research.
Chapter 2

Most educators are aware of the profound impact that parents have upon their children’s education and views of education. The ties between home and school can be even more crucial for children who are new to this country, and struggling with two languages. An article by McCaleb supports the importance of family and school relations and also points to a reason we may have failed in parental involvement, "Traditionally in the United States, students from immigrant cultures or non-English...home environments have not had equal status with students from the dominant culture. The knowledge and cultural practices of their native country or their home have been devalued" (McCaleb, 1994, p. 4).

McCaleb also suggests that instead we should respect the knowledge and skills that a student from another culture brings to school. If we, as educators cut the bond between school and home, the results can be dangerous. "Students who have been forced by schooling to abandon their home language have frequently suffered tragic repercussions because of breakdown in the family and community possibilities for communication" (McCaleb, 1994, p.18).

For these reasons, it is imperative that we reinforce ties between the home and the school as much as possible, especially for families whose mother tongue is not English. We, as teachers, also need to understand developmental differences which we might encounter in our diverse learners. If we do not understand such differences and account for them in our teaching, we risk losing those children all together.

Therefore the purpose of this study is to help teachers better understand the development of second-language speaking students who are learning to speak and write in English. The study focuses on the similarities and differences between English-speakers' and Spanish-speakers' spelling development in their native language. It also touches briefly upon possible sources for that development. In order to understand the study
which was conducted, it makes sense to analyze what research has already been done. This chapter will discuss: both the English-speakers' and Spanish-speakers' writing stages, particularly areas concerning spelling development, some examples of previous research in the comparison between English and Spanish stages, and a brief explanation of Spanish reading methods used in the classrooms from which samples for this thesis were taken.

**English-Speakers' Stages of Writing (Spelling) Development**

"Research suggests that the acquisition of spelling skills can be viewed as a developmental process. Researchers have identified stages in learning to spell that writers seem to pass through as they attempt to work out some systematic regularities and patterns that might underlie spelling" (Browne, 1993, p. 59). It appears that overall, researchers agree on the same developmental process through which the child passes while learning how to spell. They have merely labeled the stages differently. In the text *Writing Development in the Young Child*, an "outline framework" of the developmental process of writing is listed as written by researcher DeFord. This framework shows the process completely, making it easier for one to understand the breakdown into stages which follows in this portion of the chapter. The framework for the early stages of learning to write is as follows:

1. Scribbling
2. Differentiation between drawing and writing
3. Concepts of linearity, uniformity, inner complexity, symmetry, placement, left-to-right motion, and top-to-bottom directionality
4. Development of letters and letter-like shapes
5. Combination of letters, possibly with spaces, indicating understanding of units (letters, words, sentences), but may not show letter sound correspondence
6. Writing known isolated words-developing letter-sound correspondence
7. Writing simple sentences with use of invented spelling (Klein, 1985, p.19).

One of the simplest series of writing stages is mentioned by Ann Browne in her text *Helping Children to Write* (1993). She divides the writing development process into five stages. In the first stage, pre-phonemic or pre-literate, children are attempting to imitate writing that they see around them. Writing appears in the form of scribbles, odd
numerals, or letters found in the child's name. Although the child may be able to explain what he or she wrote, the text is unreadable because there is no application of sound-symbol knowledge.

While in the second stage, known as the early or semi-phonemic stage, the child, "shows an awareness of the alphabetic and phonic principles of the English language" (Browne, 1993, p. 60). The child uses letter names to represent words, such as $B$ for $bee$. This indicates that the child is beginning to understand the sound-symbol nature of the language.

The third stage mentioned by Browne is the phonetic stage, in which the child recognizes that the sounds in words are represented by letters. Children's words become more complete in this stage. They also tend to include more letters in the words. An example of children's spelling in the phonetic stage might be $telvishn$ for $television$.

As the child approaches conventional spelling, he or she moves through the fourth or transitional stage. In this stage, "children are still aware of how words sound, but they combine this with a knowledge of how words look. Increasingly they begin to write words that look right, showing an understanding of letter combinations that are frequently found in the English language" (p. 62).

At the final or fifth stage, conventional spellings are produced almost all of the time. At this stage the children use a combination of strategies such as letter sounds, letter names, letter strings and visual strategies to produce clear approximations or correct spellings.

Using Browne's spelling stages as a basic framework, we can now examine some differences mentioned by others. In the text, The Beginnings of Writings, by Charles Temple, Ruth Nathan, Nancy Burris, and Frances Temple, we are given another set of spelling stages. The first or prephonemic stage is the same as Browne's. Yet, in the second stage there are some changes. While Browne leaves letter-name strategy as part of the early phonemic stage, Temple and his colleagues create a separate and third stage
Emergent Literacy in Spanish-speakers

for letter-name spelling. In the letter-name spelling stage, "the letters are chosen to represent phonemes on the basis of similarity between the sound of the letter names and the respective phonemes" (Temple et al., 1988, p. 103). An example of letter-name spelling is a child who wants to write the word, "bee" and ends up just writing the letter "B" because the sounds are the same.

Another difference is that Temple et al. does not separate the phonetic stage and moves directly to the transitional stage. In Temple's transitional stage there is invented or phonetic spelling, mixed in with correctly spelled words. "Words spelled by transitional spelling look like English words, though they are not spelled correctly.... The conventional spellings for short vowels are normally employed at this stage, with occasional throwbacks to the letter-name strategies for spelling vowels," For example, "We mite go later...to see the form," (Temple et al., 1998, p. 103).

In the text Literacy's Beginnings (McGee and Richgels, 1996), phonetic, inventive, or developmental spelling is broken down into three substages: Non-Spelling, Early Invented Spelling, and Purely Phonetic Spelling. In the first substage, Non-Spelling, the children have some alphabet knowledge, but no sound-letter knowledge. They also do not have a concept of what exactly a word is. The Non-Speller would also be likely to randomly string together letters of the alphabet. An example of this is when a child writes, "htpsot" and says that it means, "boat."

The second substage of inventive spelling is Early Invented Spelling, in which the child has nearly complete alphabet knowledge. It is within this substage that the child also begins to acquire the knowledge that sounds can be associated with letters. The letter-name strategy is common in this substage, as is the emergence of the concept of a word. There are some segmentations of word strings at word boundaries. In the Early Invented Spelling stage vowels are frequently omitted, especially non-long vowel sounds for which a letter-name strategy does not work. An example of this might be "B" for "boat" or "FH" for "fish."
The third substage is Purely Phonetic Spelling, in which the child’s writing is based strictly on sound-letter correspondences. Letter-name strategy is used for all long vowels. There is a use of manner of articulation for short vowels, while there is an omission of unheard vowels and nasals before consonants. An example of this stage is "KRI" for "cry" or "BREJ" for "bridge." At this point in development there is some segmentation of letter strings at most word boundaries.

As one can see, the experts agree on relatively similar stages through which children develop their writing and reading skills: scribbles, letter-like forms, developmental spelling (non-spelling, early invented spelling, purely phonetic spelling), and lastly conventional writing. The stages are very close in nature, with different titles or substages as was noted above.

**Spanish-Speaker's Stages of Writing (Spelling) Development**

Two of the most important researchers in the area of emergent literacy involving Spanish-speakers are Emilia Ferriero and Ana Teberosky. In their text, Literacy Before Schooling (1989), they explain five successive levels of writing development.

The first level corresponds to the English-speakers' prephonemic stage, because at this level children do not associate letters and sounds. Ferriero and Teberosky found three characteristics of children's writing while in the first level. The first characteristic is that the writing is egocentric. Children do not realize that writing is a vehicle for transmitting information. "Sometimes they know what they are writing, but they do not expect others to read it, nor do they expect to be able to read what others write" (Freeman and Freeman, 1997, p.170).

The second characteristic is that the children attempt to have figurative correspondence between their writing and the object they are referring to. For example, a child claims that *oso*, "bear" in English, should be a much larger word than *pato*, or "duck," because a bear is much larger than a duck (Ferriero and Teberosky, 1989). This is very similar to #2 in the framework provided by DeFord, for English-speakers'
development, in which the child also had a hard time distinguishing between drawing and writing. The third characteristic is that children have difficulty in distinguishing differences in writing and drawing. It is also common for children in this first level to reverse characters, both letters and numbers. This is also common practice for native English speakers.

Within the second level, Ferriero and Teberosky found the children's writing to be more defined and more conventional. One could recognize most letters, although some reversal still occurred. "The researchers also found that children at this level operate on the hypothesis that words must have a certain fixed number of characters and that words require a variety of characters" (Freeman and Freeman, 1997, p. 173). The minimum number of letters "required" for a word is never less than three and usually is four. One little boy, Gustavo, states, "with three letters it doesn't say anything" (Ferriero and Teberoksy, 1989, p. 197).

In the third level, children attempt to assign a sound value to each letter, and to sound words out for themselves. "Up until this point, children think that letters represent objects directly. Now, they realize that the letters connect to the sounds of the words we use to name the objects" (Freeman and Freeman, 1997, p.176). This third level corresponds to the early phonetic stage in English-speakers. In Level Three, children make a syllabic hypothesis, in which they use one letter to represent each syllable in a word. This is also the first time that they understand the connection between sound segments of speech and letters in a text. Spanish-speaking children are more likely to write the five vowels first, as opposed to consonants.

Children in Level Four have moved from a syllabic hypothesis to an alphabetic hypothesis. In the syllabic hypothesis the child wants to write one letter to represent each syllable. In the alphabetic hypothesis they begin to realize the letter-sound relationship and how groups of letters can make up the word. Level Four corresponds to the English-speakers' phonetic stage. The Spanish-speaking children begin to notice that the words
have more than vowels, and begin to add more consonants. "This leads them to the alphabetic hypothesis that each sound in the word should be represented by a letter. They realize that the writing only reflected by vowels for the syllables is not enough and begin to add consonants" (Freeman and Freeman, 1997, p.181).

The final stage defined by Ferriero and Teberosky is Level Five, in which the children refine their alphabetic hypothesis. Both consonants and vowels are used to represent all the sounds in a word with more consistency. Children's spelling in this stage is closer to being conventional, and often is readable, but there are still orthographic problems. Most of the problems stem from letters which sound the same in Spanish. One example of a child's error in this stage might be to write *vaca* (cow) as *baca*, because the letters *b* and *v* sound very similar in the Spanish language.

Within the Mexican school system, there are four established levels of writing development. These levels are explained in full detail in the text, *Guia didáctica para orientar el desarrollo del lenguaje oral y escrito en el nivel preescolar*, published by the Secretary of Education. The four levels are as follows: Pre-syllabic, Syllabic, Transitional, and Alphabetic. These levels are very similar to those proposed by Ferriero and Teberosky, only the first two levels of Ferriero and Teberosky have been merged into the Pre-syllabic level here. This results in the four stages instead of Ferriero and Teberosky's five.

In the Pre-syllabic level the child learns to distinguish between writing and drawing. Interesting enough, while establishing this distinction the child places his or her graphic representation in close proximity to the drawing, sometimes it is even placed within the drawing. For example, a child draws a rabbit around the letter *c*, which appears in the Spanish word for rabbit *conejo*. At the beginning of this level, the child writes without control of quantity. The child begins to understand that writing represents something, referred to as the naming hypothesis. An important characteristic of this level is when the child develops the theory of minimal graphics. (This is very similar to what
Ferriero and Teberosky proposed.) The child thinks that anything less than three or four letters is not a word. In the Pre-Syllabic level the child controls the quantity of graphics to produce texts. They often have the misconception that the same series of letters in the same order can be regarded as different words. At the end of the level, the child begins to realize the need to vary his or her writing in order to represent different things. Overall, the key characteristic of this stage is that the child still doesn't understand the connection between symbols used in writing and the sounds which one speaks.

In the second, or Syllabic, level the child thinks that there should be one letter for each syllable of the word. There also occurs a conflict between two of the child’s convictions. The syllabic hypothesis contradicts the child's idea of minimal graphics. He or she wishes to have a letter for each syllable in the word, yet monosyllable or bisyllable words cannot exist because they are less than the "minimal" three graphic. For this reason, in the Syllabic level it is common to find surplus letters for monosyllable or bisyllable words. For example, a child might write "an" with an extra n to make, "ann," so it has the right number of letters. In the Syllabic stage, the child is beginning to discover the relationship between the writing and the sounds which we speak.

The closer understanding of the correspondence between letters and sounds leads the child into the third, or Transitional, level. At this stage of writing development, the child attempts to resolve the conflict between letters for each syllable and the minimal quantity hypothesis. Therefore he or she is working simultaneously with the syllabic system and the alphabetic system.

The final level of writing development as outlined by the previously mentioned text is the Alphabetic level. In this level, little by little, the child establishes the relationship between the phonemes that form a word and the letters necessary to write it. In his writing in this level, the child has each sound correspond with a graphic. This may or may not be a conventional letter. For example, there are children who use sticks, circles, and lines. Because children in this stage are still coming to the conclusion that each phoneme
is represented by a letter or group of letters, it is very common that the first letter of a word will match the sound, but the following ones don't have a function of representing sound.

Previous Research in Comparisons of Writing/Spelling Development in English and Spanish-speakers

As mentioned in Chapter One, there is not an abundance of studies being conducted on the similarities and differences of writing or spelling development between Spanish and English-speakers.

Some earlier research has been done on the subject by Temple, in 1979, and Hudelson, in 1981-1982. Based on their research they reached the conclusion that, "some elements of the articulatory basis of children's 'invented spellings' have been shown to extend to Spanish" (Ferroli, 1993, p. 4). Temple confirms that Spanish-speaking children seem to make generalizations similar to those of their English-speaking counterparts, with the exception of showing more variance with consonants (Ferroli, p. 1993). Hudelson collected samples of original compositions from 10 first and 10 second graders from March through May of 1981-1982. Hudelson's research "suggests that there might be some universals in the development of spelling strategies, at least in alphabetic languages" (Ferroli, 1993, p. 9).

Temple and Hudelson both agreed that children's Spanish spellings show more deviations among consonants while vowel spellings were more consistent. However, Temple attributed this to, "more ambiguity among Spanish consonants, while Hudelson suggested that it's because Spanish vowels are more regular and perceptible" [than English vowels] (Ferroli, 1993, p. 9).

In 1993, Ferroli wrote an article about the Spanish Developmental Spelling Test, which had been just recently created. Over a two year time period the spelling test was administered to 80 subjects (39 boys, 41 girls) in kindergarten through second grade in a suburban elementary school in the Midwest. The subjects were of Mexican descent and all
were limited speakers of English enrolled in the school's transitional bilingual program. This research also supported the early emergence of vowels in Spanish-speakers.

In the same year, Sofia Vernon published her study, *Initial Sound/Letter Correspondences in Children's Early Written Productions*. The purposes of Vernon's study were to find out "whether the early literacy development of monolingual English-speaking children is similar to the development of Spanish-speaking children, as described by Ferriero and Teberosky, and whether English-speaking children also construct a syllabic hypothesis to establish initial sound/letter correspondences, or if they rather construct a consonantal hypothesis" (Vernon, 1993, p. 12). In the study 49 monolingual English-speaking American preschoolers and kindergartners from Tucson, Arizona, were interviewed. Children were asked to write certain words and sentences. The writing samples were later analyzed and categorized by three researchers.

The study concluded that syllabic writings in English-speaking children are like syllabic writings in Spanish-speakers. Yet, there are differences. "The main difference between English and Spanish syllabic writings is...in Spanish, children usually choose vowels to represent syllables. In English, the use of vowels is not excluded, but consonants seem predominant. This is probably due to the nature of English syllable" (Vernon, 1993, p. 21).

Yvonne and David Freeman also make some comparisons between Spanish and English stages of writing/spelling development in their 1997 publication, *Teaching Reading and Writing in Spanish in the Bilingual Classroom*. Freeman and Freeman collected writing samples from children in bilingual classrooms in the United States and compared their results with the Argentine study of Spanish-speaking children conducted by Ferriero and Teberosky.

"One difference we have noticed in comparing the writing samples from the United States and those from the Argentina study is that many of the Argentinean children have a few words fixed in their repertoire. They seemed to have learned the words from a family
member, or they may have often seen the word. The memorization of certain words to write seems less common in the samples we have from [our] classrooms" (Freeman and Freeman, 1997, p. 175).

Freeman and Freeman have also come to the conclusion that emergent Spanish writers in Spanish-speaking countries usually write their vowels first. "The appearance of vowels in Spanish writing can be attributed to the fact that in Spanish, the five vowel sounds correspond to the five letters for vowels. In contrast English writers in English-speaking countries generally write consonants first" (Freeman and Freeman, 1997, p. 177).

It is interesting to note that Freeman and Freeman found many similarities in their samples to the characteristics of writing development as discussed by Ferriero and Teberosky. There were also differences which may stem from the fact that the students in the United States were in bilingual classrooms, and are becoming literate in English at the same time that they are developing literacy in Spanish. In addition, the writing in the Ferriero and Teberosky study was very carefully controlled. "Words and sentences that children wrote were dictated in a one-on-one setting. The writing samples from the bilingual classes were complete texts produced in classrooms where students are given choices and write frequently for a variety of purposes" (Freeman and Freeman, 1997, p. 187).

**Reading Methods Used in Sample Classrooms In Mexico**

Reading and writing are closely intertwining subjects. It is difficult to look at one without also examining the other. Fredericks, Blake-Kline, and Kristo write that, "...as students develop higher levels of mastery in one language art, they are also enhancing the development of other language arts as well. The language arts are not separated or divorced from each other. They are interrelated and dependent on each other in facilitating an individual's overall language development" (Fredericks et al., 1997, p. 57). In short, that means the interpretive language arts (reading, listening) are critical to the expressive language arts (writing, speaking) and vice-versa.
For this reason, it was difficult in the study to focus solely on the skill of writing, without at least taking note of the other language arts. In observations of classrooms, and professor and teacher interviews, it became clear that one area can have influence over the others. This led to curiosity about the reading methods and their possible role in the development of writing and on the writing samples which were taken in the study.

There are a number of methods for teaching reading in Spanish; however this portion of the chapter will focus only upon reading methods pertinent to the study. In the classrooms which were observed in Mexico, there were five methods used: Alphabetic, Onomatopoeic, Phonetic, Global (Structural Analysis), and Whole Language.

The Alphabetic Method begins by teaching children the names of the letters. In the strictest form, students are taught the names of the vowels and consonants first. Secondly, the vowels and consonants are joined to create syllables and then words. Students are often asked to repeat the spelling of the syllables or words and then pronounce them (Freeman, 1988). This procedure is repeated for many different words that the students are given to learn to read. The criticisms of this method is that it uses only the graphophonic system; students do not have the opportunity to use syntactic or semantic system.

Another method used in the classrooms observed for the study is the Onomatopoeic Method. In this method the teacher associates sounds in the environment to letters an is made with letters and sounds in the language. "For example, the Spanish vowel sound $i$ might be taught in connection with the squeal of a mouse or monkey and the sound $a$ in connection with people laughing" (Freeman, 1988, p. 655). Often consonants are taught by having students repeat them in sentences with alliteration. The method is similar to Zoo-phonics in English in which students are asked to associate English sounds with sounds that animals make. The disadvantage of this method is that, in its purest form, students do not really have a text to read and therefore are only identifying
Emergent Literacy in Spanish-speakers

sounds that might be found later in other words; they aren't really reading (Freeman, 1988).

Another method used in the classrooms observed is the Phonics, or Phonetic Method. This method is the same as the Phonic Method in English. Typically, in Spanish this method has been used to teach the vowels only. Then, once the vowels are learned, the teacher uses the Syllabic Method to teach syllables and words. The emphasis is on the sounds which letters of the alphabet represent. "This part to whole system requires students to use the sounds of letters and synthesize those individual sounds into syllables and words" (Freeman, 1988, p. 655).

The Global Method of Structural Analysis is yet another method for teaching reading in Spanish. It aims at teaching reading and writing by means of whole words or complete sentences without analyzing all of the individual parts. Elements of language experience and sight words are included in this method (Freeman, 1988). This method is based on a hierarchy of skills. Each year the skills become progressively harder. "Initially, the students are taught readiness skills, progress to learning the sight words concerning colors, parts of the face, parts of the body, drinks, fruits, and animals. Phonetics and comprehension are introduced and the hierarchy begins" (Miller, 1982, p. 893).

The last method which was observed in the study is the Whole Language Method. The Whole-Language Method in Spanish is the same concept as in English. Children first develop global understandings and gradually come to understand the parts. All of the reading and writing is centered around meaningful activities for the students. Reading is viewed as an enriching experience instead of a skill.

In this chapter both stages of English-speakers' and Spanish-speakers' writing development was discussed. A special emphasis was placed on spelling development, especially since that was examined in the thesis study. Previous research comparing Spanish-speakers and English-speakers' spelling development was discussed. Also because of the integration of reading and writing in language arts and the possible
influence of those instructional methods on Spanish-speaking children's writing
development, Spanish methods of teaching reading were also examined.

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, it is extremely important that
teachers have an awareness of the differences in writing, development, especially in the
area of spelling, which may occur between Spanish-speakers and English-speakers. In
order to teach to the background, and address the learning needs of all students, it is
imperative that an understanding of those differences is shared. For these reasons, a study
of native Spanish-speakers' spelling development in Colima, Mexico, was begun.
Chapter Three

Participants

The goal of the research was to focus on the similarities and differences between English-speakers' and Spanish-speakers' spelling development in their native language. It also touches briefly upon possible sources for that development.

The participants of the research were Spanish-speaking students in five classrooms, in Mexico, at the end of the school year. All research was conducted in the state of Colima in Mexico. (see Figure 1 and Figure 2) Four of the classrooms were in the city of Colima, and one was in a rural community located approximately twenty minutes outside of the city.

One of the classes was a kindergarten, which was included in the study for samples of beginning writing. Fifteen samples were collected from the students in the kindergarten class, which was located in a private school, Instituto Marcelo Domine. I chose this class, because I did an independent study with them in 1996, and already knew the teacher and the school.

The remaining four classes in the study were first grades. Twenty-nine samples were taken from the first grade class in the Instituto Marcelo Domine. These were the first-graders who had been in my kindergarten independent study previously.

Samples were also taken from two first grade classes in a public school, Escuela Dr. Miguel Galindo. I selected this school because it was the most easily accessible public school in the city for me. There were twenty-four samples taken from one first grade classroom in the Escuela Dr. Miguel Galindo and twenty-five samples taken in the other first grade from the same school.

Thirteen samples were also taken from a first grade classroom in the Escuela Primaria José Maria Morelos. This school is located in a rural community, La Esperanza, outside of the city of Colima. This sample collection was an addition to the original samples I had intended to take, but I was invited to visit this school by one of the teachers
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom 1</th>
<th>Classroom 2</th>
<th>Classroom 3</th>
<th>Classroom 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Age (Yrs)</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Students</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Boys</td>
<td>39.30%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Girls</td>
<td>60.70%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>Phonics / Alphabetic</td>
<td>Global Method (Structural Analysis)</td>
<td>Phonics / Whole Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban/Rural</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public/Private</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2. Demographics of classes.
in the Escuela Dr. Miguel Galindo, and I thought it might be interesting to observe differences between the rural and urban schools.

Each of the five classroom teachers was interviewed. Two university professors from the ISENCO (La Escuela Normal de Maestros), and one professor from the Universidad Pedagogica Nacional were also interviewed in order to gain a better understanding of the Mexican educational system. These professors were selected for the study based upon recommendations from classroom teachers and community members.

**Instruments Employed to Collect**

I collected data in the form of children's writing samples. Colored forms were printed up for each class. The front of the form had demographic questions (see Appendix A) which I filled out as each child provided the information to me orally. There was a large space left on the form on which the children could write.

The back of the form was labeled, "Questions To Be Answered After the Sample Is Taken" (see Appendix B). I used these questions as a guide during later analysis of the samples. The first question was whether the student had progressed in writing development since the last sample had been taken. (This only applied to those who had given samples previously.) The remaining questions were as follows: whether the sample was written in cursive, printing, or a combination; which language the sample was written in; the number of words in the writing sample; the stage of writing development evidence by the sample; and the type of approach used in the classroom to teach literacy.

**Procedure**

At the kindergarten level students were taken out of the classroom one at a time to work on their writing samples. In the private first grade the students were taken out of the classroom three at a time, and in the other classrooms the children worked on their samples two at a time.

The students were taken apart from the class in order to do the samples. We moved into the *pasillo*, the outdoor patio area in the school, similar to our hallways. Each
student was seated at a desk, provided with a form, and asked to use his or her own pencil or eraser. I spoke with the children a bit in Spanish to help them relax, explaining what I was doing and how it was not a test. Then I proceeded to ask the children to provide the demographic information, such as age, and I wrote their answers on the front side of the forms I provided for each child. Four questions followed afterwards, three of which were written by the students, and one of which I wrote as the children answered individually. All questions were asked in Spanish.

The first question I asked was, "If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would it be?" If a child wrote quickly and wanted to write more while waiting on others then I asked, "How do you think you would get there?" The second question asked was, "Do you have any pets? What are they? If you do not have any pets, what kind would you like to have?" If the students had more time to write, I asked extension questions such as, "How many pets do you have? What colors are they? What are their names?" The third question was, "What is your favorite food?"

The final question was, "How do you think you learned how to read and write? Did someone help you?" I wrote down the children's answers for this myself, since I was not assessing their writing ability at this point, but rather was eliciting information about instructional methods and the children's perceptions of the emergent literacy process.

Interviews were also conducted with each of the classroom teachers separately. All interviews were conducted in Spanish and I wrote down their answers in a notebook. The questions were as follows:

1. Does your classroom or school have a library? If so, how often do your students use/visit it?

2. What are some components in your Language Arts program and how much time is spent on each? (Some examples: vocabulary, comprehension, grammar, phonics, etc.)

3. How do you teach reading? (Ask about particular methods, if not obvious.)
4. How do you teach writing / spelling? (separate subject, context words, or official lists) What do you do when children make up their own spelling?

At a later time, I interviewed three university professors in Spanish from ISENCO and the Universidad Pedagogica Nacional. The questions asked in the interviews were the following:

1. What education is required to hold a teaching position? Does this vary from public to private schools? Is there a field experience or participation required?

2. Are there required Teaching Reading and Language Arts methods courses?

3. Are there official readers or texts required by the government? Is this true nationwide? Does it vary from public to private schools?

4. Is the official method of reading instruction still the Global Method of Structural Analysis? Which reading method do you prefer?

Data Analysis

There were several steps involved in data analysis after the writing samples had been collected. Before doing any statistical analysis, I analyzed each individual sample to see into which level of developmental writing, or spelling, the sample fell. The stages used for the analysis are based upon the work of McGee and Richgels, previously outlined in Chapter Two. The stages are as follows: Scribbles, Letter-like Forms, Developmental Spelling (Non-spelling, Early Invented Spelling, Purely Phonetic Spelling), and Conventional. During this first examination of the samples I also recorded the number of words, or length of each sample.

While analyzing the samples for stages of writing development and length, I began to notice that there were certain orthographical errors being repeated by the children. I became extremely interested in this, and began a running total of errors made by the children, organized by the letter required for conventional spelling and the letter used, and
categorized in groups of the four different classes from which the samples were taken (see Figure 3).

In the second step, after I analyzed which writing or spelling stage, the children were in, I recorded the percentages of children in each stage for each classroom (see Figure 4). During this second examination of the writing samples, I also recorded average word length for each class. Furthermore, I compared the totals of orthographical errors made in each of the different classes.

Lastly, I went through the collected samples another time and found the average age of the children in each of the four classes. I also calculated the percentage of males and females in each of the four classes (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).

After collecting all of the samples, I became extremely interested to find out what exactly the data meant. The results provided me with some valuable insight and information. The results will be shared and discussed in the following chapter.
Figure 3. Common spelling errors.

Letter Needed / Letter Used by Child

Percentages of Students in Each Classroom Making Errors
Figure 4. Spelling stages according to classes.

Percentages of Students in Each Class
Chapter Four

This chapter presents results from all three areas of the study: professor interviews, classroom teacher interviews, and the children's writing samples. Following is an overall analysis and discussion of the Spanish-speakers' development, common spelling errors and omission of vowels.

Results of Professor Interviews

I interviewed three different professors, but they all came up with very similar answers, so I have not quoted them directly here, but instead compiled their answers.

1. What education is required to hold a teaching position? Does this vary from public to private schools? Is there a field experience or participation required?

   The education is a four year college degree, two being specified to the study of teaching. By the time they graduate they have 480 hours in the community and schools. The requirements do not vary from the public to private schools.

2. Are there required Teaching Reading and Language Arts methods courses?

   Yes, there is one course on the history of reading and writing and another on how children learn to begin to write and read.

3. Are there official readers or texts required by the government? Is this true nationwide? Does it vary from public to private?

   Yes, there are texts for teaching Spanish (which is comparable to our Reading subject). These are distributed by the government and it is the same for all schools nationwide. Sometimes private schools supplement with additional books, but everyone uses at least the official texts. There's also a set of 30 books for each school's book corner or library, which is distributed nationwide by the government.
4. *Is the official method for reading instruction still the Global Method of structural analysis? Which reading method do you prefer?*

There isn't an official method, but the Global Method is still one of the most preferred. We teach several different methods in our classes and let our students decide which one they will choose to implement.

**Results of Classroom Teacher Interviews**

A variety of questions were asked of each of the first grade classroom teachers. However, I have only included the answers to questions which I found particularly relevant to this research.

**Phonics and Alphabetic Method.**

1. *Does your classroom or school have a library? If so, how often do your students use/visit it?*

   Yes, there is a little library area of 15-20 books in the classroom. My students have to visit it at least once a day.

2. *What are some components in your Language Arts program and how much time is spent on each? (Some examples: vocabulary, comprehension, grammar, phonics, etc.)*

   Penmanship, Spelling (with sandpaper letters), autodictions...each time that they learn three consonants or vowels they go to the autodication area where there are little cards with drawings. In the pockets they form words to match the pictures with loose letters. They also use the loose letters to form their names. They're already practicing the reading. Spelling is taught with teacher dictations each week. Also each month there are spelling contests. Yes, the spelling does come from a list. We have reading two or three times a week, in the morning. I focus on letters which are repeated in the reading, and with which letter the words begin. At the end of the first grade, I expect them to be reading about 70 words per minute.

3. *How do you teach reading?*

   I use the Phonics Method in combination with the Alphabetic Method.
4. How do you teach writing and spelling? What do you do if they spell incorrectly?

Sensorially, with the sandpaper letters. I correct them, from the beginning with red. Sometimes we talk about how the word sounds and why it is spelled as it is.

**Global (Structural Analysis).**

1. Does your classroom or school have a library? If so, how often do your students use/visit it?

   Yes, there is a book corner. (The books provided by the government that the entire school shares.) The students visit there once each week, and they can also check out stories to take home.

2. What are some components in your Language Arts program and how much time is spent on each? (Some examples: vocabulary, comprehension, grammar, phonics, etc.)

   The Language Arts are all integrated - one lesson per week.

3. How do you teach reading?

   The Global Method of Structural Analysis

4. How do you teach writing and spelling? What do you do if they spell incorrectly?

   By writing, drawings, words, and significant names. I teach spelling with dictations. If they spell incorrectly, the child should be corrected, but they should learn for themselves, too.

**Phonics Method and Whole Language.**

1. Does your classroom or school have a library? If so, how often do your students use/visit it?

   There is the school library and the students go one time per week.

2. What are some components in your Language Arts program and how much time is spent on each? (Some examples: vocabulary, comprehension, grammar, phonics, etc.)
There is the subject of Spanish which includes reflection over the language with reading passages and spelling. We spend about one hour per week on dictations and an hour and a half or two hours daily on the Spanish. We also do letter of the day.

3. How do you teach reading?

The Phonics Method and the Whole Language.

4. How do you teach writing and spelling? What do you do if they spell incorrectly?

I teach spelling the same time as reading, there are no lists that they have to memorize. I do teach them the spelling of the numbers, though. We also do a lot of grafismos (drawings of designs or patterns) that the children copy in their notebooks. They also cut out words which form the alphabet and they paste them in their notebooks. The students do some copying of particular sounds in their notebooks too, for example, "cra, cri, cro, cre."

If they spell unconventionally, I correct them, but they have to look for the word spelled correctly in books, so they understand their errors.

Onomatopoeic and Global Method

1. Does your classroom or school have a library? If so, how often do your students use/visit it?

Yes we have the book corner, (the books provided by the government that the entire school shares), which they visit twice a week.

2. What are some components in your Language Arts program and how much time is spent on each? (Some examples: vocabulary, comprehension, grammar, phonics, etc.)

It is all integrated in the Spanish subject, which we do daily.

3. How do you teach reading?

Onomatopoeic and Global Methods

4. How do you teach writing and spelling? What do you do if they spell incorrectly?
We try to use a lot of environmental print to teach writing. We also do spelling with context words and some dictations. If they spell incorrectly, I don't correct them. They eventually will identify the letters themselves.

**Children's Writing Samples**

Samples were taken from one kindergarten classroom and four first grades, but for the comparison purposes of the study, I have only included the results of the first grades. I analyzed samples of the children's writing and placed them into a category according to McGee's stages of writing: Scribbles, Letter-like Forms, Developmental Spelling (Non-spelling, Early Invented Spelling, Purely Phonetic Spelling), and lastly, Conventional. Non-spelling means that the child uses conventional letters, but has no letter/sound connection. An example of this is YST = hair. Early Invented Spelling means that the child begins to understand some letter/sound relation, but does not spell the whole word phonetically. Vowels are also often omitted in this stage for English-speakers, for example BD = bird, or SWM = swim. The Purely Phonetic Spelling Stage is when the child begins to represent all sounds of the word with logical sound/letter connection, for example KRI = cry, or BREJ = bridge.

**Results of Writing Samples.**

The results of the samples are organized according to the reading / writing methods of instruction as indicated by the teachers. The percentages given indicate the percentage of children in the class who are that particular writing or spelling stage. The same information has been included in Figure 4.
**Phonics and Alphabetic Method.**
Average Length of Sample = 13.6 words
Writing / Spelling Stages
   Scribbles = 0%
   Letter-Like Forms = 3.6%
   Developmental Spelling = 89.3%, comprised of the following sub-stages:
   a. Non-Spelling = 0%
   b. Early Invented Spelling = 10.7%
   c. Purely Phonetic Spelling = 78.6%
   Conventional = 7.1%

**Global Method of Structural Analysis.**
Average Length of Sample = 15.3 words
Writing / Spelling Stages
   Scribbles = 0%
   Letter-Like Forms = 0%
   Developmental Spelling = 95.8%, comprised of the following sub-stages:
   a. Non-Spelling = 0%
   b. Early Invented Spelling = 12.5%
   c. Purely Phonetic Spelling = 83.3%
   Conventional = 4.2%

**Phonics Method and Whole Language.**
Average Length of Sample = 12.8 words
Writing / Spelling Stages
   Scribbles = 0%
   Letter-Like Forms = 0%
   Developmental Spelling = 92%, comprised of the following sub-stages:
   a. Non-Spelling = 8%
   b. Early Invented Spelling = 32%
   c. Purely Phonetic Spelling = 52%
   Conventional = 8%

**Onomatopoeic.**
Average Length of Sample = 5.2 words
Writing / Spelling Stages
   Scribbles = 0%
   Letter-Like Forms = 0%
   Developmental Spelling = 100%, comprised of the following sub-stages:
   a. Non-Spelling = 28.6%
   b. Early Invented Spelling = 28.6%
c. Purely Phonetic Spelling = 42.8%
  Conventional = 0%

Discussion of Writing Samples

In analyzing the data from each of these classrooms, one must bear in mind that there is a variety of variables which may influence the results. First, the classes are labeled by instructional methods based on how the classroom teachers labeled them. Classroom observations made during the study indicated that these are not the methods in their truest form. Furthermore, all of the teachers use the same texts which are highly phonics based. Secondly, there are also demographic differences between the classes which could influence how the classes rank (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). For example, the rural students might be in school for less amount of time or the private students might receive additional instruction. A third factor which could influence the results is the developmental levels of the children when the entered the particular programs using certain methods. For example, children learning in certain methods might have had more parental guidance in the area of literacy development, or preschool experiences not found in children from other programs.

If one takes the data at face value and examines the percentages of children from each class in the different writing stages, it appears that the Global method prepares the children to move through the stages more quickly: although this classroom does not have as many children in the Conventional stage, as Phonics/Alphabetic or Whole Language/Phonics, there are more children in the Purely Phonetic Spelling stage. There are also no children scoring below the Early Invented Spelling stage.

According to the data, the second most successful method appears to be the Whole Language and Phonics method. This classroom ranks the highest in percentages of children already in the Conventional Stage. The rest of their students were categorized as using one of the three substages of Developmental Spelling, with 52% of their children in the highest substage of Developmental Spelling, the Purely Phonetic Stage. Furthermore,
there were not any children who scored below the Non-Spelling stage, and only two children were in the Non-Spelling stage.

Because of the variables, it is hard to judge which method seems more effective according to the data. The ranks of the students in the Phonics and Alphabetic class are comparable to the students who were taught by Whole Language and Phonics Method. The Phonics and Alphabetic Method does have a student in the Letter-like Forms stage; however, that is just one student out of 28 students. Aside from that one sample, which was from a special needs student, all of their students are in either the two higher substages of Developmental Spelling: Early Invented Spelling and Purely Phonetic Spelling or in the Conventional Stage. The Phonics and Alphabetic Method has the second highest number of conventional spellers.

The Onomatopoeic and Global Method classroom ranks the lowest according to the data samples. This class has no children spelling conventionally yet. All of their students are in the Developmental Spelling Stage, with equal percentages in the two lower substages: 28.6% in both Non-Spelling and Early Invented Spelling. 42.8% of their children were in the Purely Phonetic Stage. This might be due to the rural school setting, or low literacy proficiency in parents.

Analysis of Spanish-speakers' Development.

As a whole, the writing samples taken from the Spanish-speakers show that the majority of the students at the end of first grade were writing using developmental spelling. Most of these are in the two higher substages of developmental spelling: Early Invented Spelling and Purely Phonetic Spelling. Some of them have already crossed over into Conventional Spelling (see Figure 4).

Discussion.

Overall the Spanish-speaking first grade students were in stages comparable to most English-speaking children in the United States. According to The Beginnings of Writing, it appears that most children reach conventional spelling sometime during second
grade, but not before (Temple et al., 1988). The fact that some Spanish-speakers have already reached conventional spelling, and that most of them are at least spelling developmentally, indicates a similarity to what we might expect from English-speaking children.

Common Spelling Errors

It was found that certain spelling errors were repeated by students in each of the four classes (see Figure 3). Results and possible reasons for the frequency of certain letter errors follows.

Results

Certain spelling errors were repeated in many of the samples taken from Spanish-speakers. The most common error that occurred in all four classes was writing the letter "s" when the letter "z" was required for conventional spelling. From 14.3% to 37.5% of the students in the classes made the error.

The children's writing also suggested a lot of confusion between the "b" and the "v." Children from all four classes made the mistake of writing a "v" when the letter needed for conventional spelling was a "b." Another substitution that occurred in all four classes was "ll" for "y" and "ll" for "y." However, it happened more frequently with the latter. One last error that occurred in samples from all four classes was substituting "rr" for "r." Many Spanish-speakers wrote the single "r" when the "rr" was needed. Errors due to letter reversal also occurred in each of the four classes.

Discussion

There are different spelling errors which occur with beginning spellers of English such as confusion between: voiced and unvoiced sounds, same sound errors, and confusion between letters which look similar (Temple et al., 1988.) Voiced and unvoiced means that production of the sounds occurs in the same place in the mouth; only unvoiced means that vocal chords don't vibrate as it is made. This is true of "z" and "s" (Temple et
Emergent Literacy in Spanish-speakers 40
al., 1988, p. 63). The same is true of the "s" and "z" in Spanish, which would explain the errors which are occurring in the writing samples from the Spanish-speakers.

Another category of errors are same sound errors. Temple gives us an example of this on page 59, with the English letters of "k" and "c." A child wrote the word "pick" as "pec." The same errors occur in Spanish, but for different letters. The "b" and "v" have very similar sounds in Spanish, as well as the "ll" and "y." This would explain why Spanish-speaking children are making those particular errors with such high frequency.

Another type of error which commonly occurs in young spellers is confusion between letters which look similar. These errors occur in both Spanish and English. An example is failure to distinguish between the "q" and the "g," which look very similar in printed writing. This would account for the errors of letter-reversal which occurred in the data. The confusion made by Spanish-speakers between the "rr" and the "r," can also be attributed to this type of error, because the child sees one "r" and thinks that it could be enough to make the sound of the double "r."

One might conclude that the types of spelling errors which are occurring are very similar in nature in English and Spanish. It is simply due to the nature of the language and its pronunciation that the errors are the same type, but occurring in different letters.

Omission of Vowels

As mentioned previously in Chapter Two, English-speakers are likely to omit vowels and write consonants first. This usually happens in the Early Invented substage of Developmental Spelling. Through this study it was found that the opposite occurs in Spanish-speakers: vowels are usually written first and consonants are more likely to be omitted.

Results

While looking through the samples and comparing them to McGee's spelling stages, I noticed one difference occurring throughout. McGee states that in the Early Invented Spelling Stage of English-speakers, frequent omission of vowels occurs,
(McGee, 1996). However, I have found that Spanish-speakers in this same stage are more likely to omit consonants than the vowels.

Discussion.

I have two theories on why the difference in vowel versus consonant omission may be occurring. The first is the instructional methods used, which emphasize the vowels more. Although the classroom teachers in the study implement different methods, they all use the same national texts, which are largely phonics based and also have a strong, early focus on vowels before consonants. From what I observed in the classrooms, there were several activities pertaining to vowels, so I know there is a strong focus on them from the very start.

It could also stem from the fact that in Spanish, the vowels make one sound, as opposed to English where one vowel makes several sounds. In English, the letter "e" can be silent, it can sound like the letter itself as in the word, "week," or it can make an "eh" sound as in the word, "pet." Possibly vowels in Spanish are easier for young children to grasp since they have fewer sounds to learn to correspond with a letter.

Chapter Four presented results from all three areas of the study: professor interviews, classroom teacher interviews, and the children's writing samples. This was followed by an overall analysis and discussion of the Spanish-speakers' development, common spelling errors and omission of vowels. It was found that Spanish-speakers are more likely to omit consonants and write vowels, while English-speakers are more likely to omit vowels and write consonants. The research also led to the conclusion that there are certain spelling errors that they are likely to make. Lastly, it was found that as a whole Spanish-speakers are in comparable stages of developmental spelling as English-speakers.
Chapter Five

The outcomes of this study were various. The first was the answer to the basic question presented in the introduction, "Do Spanish-speakers move through the same stages of writing, particularly spelling, development as English-speakers?" The answer to this question is affirmative. Spanish-speakers indeed move through very similar stages as English-speakers while learning how to write. However, there are differences such as the omission of consonants in Spanish-speakers as opposed to the omission of vowels in English-speakers found in the Early Invented Spelling Stage.

Some other differences occur in the errors which Spanish-speakers make in their developmental spelling. Spanish-speakers may have trouble distinguishing certain sounds which are similar in Spanish, but produced with different letters, in the early stages of spelling. Some examples of this are, "b" and "v," "ll" and "y."

Both of these findings have major implications for teachers of Spanish-speakers within the United States. Teachers should not think it strange that the Spanish-speaking children write their vowels first, before their consonants. Before teachers might have thought that the vowels on the page, were just random stringing together of letters. They might have placed the child in a Non-spelling stage. However, for Spanish-speaking children it could be that these vowels are directly related to the message they intended to communicate. This initial letter-sound correspondence would instead place the child in the Early Invented Spelling Stage, a stage higher than the Non-spelling stage. A helpful practice for the bilingual teacher or teacher of Spanish-speaking children might be to ask the child to read his or her sentence aloud to see if the vowels in the words have been picked out and represented on paper.

Neither should the teacher be surprised by the confusion between "b" and "v" or "ll" and "y" in their Spanish-speaking students. For an English-speaker, it sounds very bizarre for a child to write a "b" instead of a "v." One might not realize that the child is actually using developmental spelling if one is not aware that some of these letters sound
the same. If teachers could keep a list of these common Spanish letter confusions in the classroom, it might help them keep track of their Spanish-speaking students' spelling development more accurately.

Another finding of the study was the similarity of the Spanish-speakers writing development and their ages as a whole. Overall, the children were in much the same stages as English-speakers in the United States. This is very comforting to bilingual teachers or teachers of Spanish-speakers recently arriving to our country. Based on this study, it highly likely that the new incoming students will be at about the same stage of writing development as the students already in the classroom.

It also appeared in the study that the Global Method was most effective for Spanish-speaking children's spelling development. However, it is hard to make this statement based upon just four classroom samples and the variables that were involved. This topic could be researched even further. One possible study might be to take just two of the methods and several classroom samples for comparison. For example, one might compare the Global Method in classrooms as opposed to the Whole Language phonics. It would also be interesting to do a comparison between Spanish-speakers in these methods in their native country, and those who have already immigrated and are in bilingual schools here.

The instructional methods observed in this study are not just for teaching writing, but rather the entire literacy process. It would be fascinating to study the different methods for teaching reading and the effectiveness of them with Spanish-speakers. One article which I read described nine different methods of teaching reading in Spanish (Freeman and Freeman, 1988). I think it would be beneficial to conduct a study comparing the effectiveness of these different methods in preparing children to read.

Another possibility for further research might be a longitudinal study. The Global Method might be most effective for children's writing at this point of their development, but how does it match up with certain other methods over a period of time. If writing
samples were taken at third grade and at sixth grade, which method would come out ahead?

The possibilities for further research are wide open. In doing the literature background and previous study sections of Chapter Two, I became aware of just how much of a lack of research there are in these areas. It is a growing need in our country and could be beneficial to all parties involved government, administration, teachers, and students, to attempt to find more about these matters of concern.

As teachers we cannot stay isolated from the world, tucked away in our classrooms. No matter which state we teach in, we are bound to encounter diversity. I heard a quote once that said, "Children are our future - diversity our strength." We must, as educators, look upon this diversity as a strength. We also must know what the diversity means and how it effects our children or we will never accomplish the task laid out before us, which is the education of every child in our country. I hope all educators have found the information I presented in this thesis to be useful. It should not be looked upon as an ending of a study, but rather a beginning for future studies in the area and a starting place for all of us.
References


Una didáctica para orientar el desarrollo del lenguaje oral y escrito en el nivel preescolar. Secretaria de Educación Pública.


Appendix A

Questions To Be Answered Before Sample Is Taken

Name of child

Age of child: 3 4 5 6 7 8

Native language of child: Spanish or English

If sample is in 2nd language, how many years has he or she spoken it?

Child's writing has been sampled before: yes or no If so, at what age? 3 4 5 6 7 8
Questions To Be Answered After Sample Is Taken

How has she or he progressed in writing development since the last sample was taken?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Sample was written in: cursive or printing or combination

In what language is the sample written? Spanish or English

How many words are in the writing sample? ______________

Applying previously developed stages of writing development, where does this sample fall? 1) Scribbles 2) Letter-like Forms 3) Dev. Spelling 4) Conventional

If developmental spelling is used, what substage? 1) Non-Spelling 2) Early Invented 3) Purely Phonetic

What approach is used in this classroom for teaching literacy?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________