TITLE:
Evaluation and placement of K-3 Spanish-speaking students in Saturday-school Heritage Language programs

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ABSTRACT: The assessment instrument and class placement process are described for a novel Saturday Spanish heritage language program in Ann Arbor, Michigan, designed for students up to grade 3. Spanish literacy levels were assessed formally using the Spanish version of the Illinois Snapshots of Early Literacy (ISEL). The ISEL evaluates literacy skills such as alphabet recognition, oral comprehension, phonemic awareness, spelling, and vocabulary. The published kindergarten and 1st grade spring means were used as cut scores to place students into appropriate level classes. Use of the ISEL assessment data in class placement greatly reduced variability within each class on Spanish literacy level, while variability within each class on age or scholastic (normal school) grade level was only minimally increased, facilitating a more effective Spanish learning environment.

RESUMEN: Este trabajo describe el instrumento de evaluación y el proceso de formar clases al nivel primario para hablantes del español como lengua heredera. El programa, lanzado en Ann Arbor, Michigan, provee instrucción formal y actividades educativas todos los sábados en español para los niños hasta el tercer grado. Los niveles del alfabetismo en español fueron evaluados con el instrumento del 'Illinois Snapshots of Early Literacy (ISEL)', versión española. El ISEL, un instrumento normado, evalua las destrezas de alfabetismo como la recognición de la letra del alfabeto, la comprensión oral, el conocimiento fonémico, la ortografía, y el vocabulario. De los estudiantes de kinder y primer grado, los resultados (promedios) sirvieron para clasificar a cada niño en su grupo instruccional. Con eso, la variabilidad dentro de cada grupo, producida anteriormente por el nivel de alfabetismo, se redujo mucho. Al mismo tiempo, subió mínimamente el rango de edad o grado escolar de los estudiantes dentro de cada clase, lo cual mejoró el eficaz del entorno para aprender/mantener el español.

I. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This paper focuses on the implications and effectiveness of Spanish and English language placement tests when implemented for use in an academic Spanish language and literacy Saturday program. The program in question has been developed for Spanish-speaking heritage language ((S)HL) students, grades pre-K to 3, in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Saturday-school models have proven successful as academic tools for students of other ethnic and language minority backgrounds such as Hebrew or Japanese and Chinese students (Wang 1996, 1997), however this language education model has not been previously utilized in immigrant Latino communities. It is thus a novel approach among available interventions for SHL learners.

Unlike many Saturday language programs, the Saturday school in Ann Arbor was promoted and designed to exclusively fit the needs of SHL students and their parents. The debate of whether to mix HL and L2 learners within the same classrooms or curriculums (Potowski 2002; Roca & Colombi 2003; Beaudrie 2009; Bowles 2011; Correa 2011), does not occur in the context of this particular Saturday program, as the project is not overseen by the public school district. Nor does the Saturday program rely on participant fees to finance the project, thus it is not necessary to expand the student base to L2 learners.

As is well documented, HL speakers not only vary widely in their proficiency of English, but also in their proficiency of the home language (Valdés & Figueroa 1994, Beaudrie & Ducar 2005). Research on the effects of

bilingualism has shown that HL students who first learn to read in their native language ultimately master reading in English (in addition to reading in the first language (L1)) as well and often better than their HL peers who are taught to read in English only (Willig 1985; Wong-Filmore & Valdez 1986; E. García 1991, 1992; August & Hakuta 1998; Greene 1998; Slavin & Cheung 2003; cf. August & Shanahan 2006; E. García & Jensen 2010).

As numerous studies on academic attainment in the U.S also attest (e.g., Tomás Rivera Policy Institute 2010), Hispanic students, especially those with limited English proficiency, are at a higher risk for failure than any other racial/ethnic group in the country. What has previously been considered an educational polemic exclusive to U.S. communities on the southwestern borders and coasts is increasingly becoming an issue throughout small and midsize cities in the South and Midwest. Detroit, Michigan has experienced a 25% decline overall in population since 1990, but a 50% increase in its Spanish-speaking population in that time period (American Community Survey, U.S. Census 2010). In nearby Ann Arbor, up to 20% of the students enrolled in one-fourth of the elementary Schools in 2009 were Latinos, and these statistics continue upward.

There is a clear need for the development of new models or innovative modifications of existing models. In response, a SHL immersion program for pre-K-3 students was launched in Ann Arbor, Michigan, to complement instruction received in their normal English (immersion) weekday elementary school. The program is structured to operate on Saturday rather than taking place after

regular school hours during the week. As we claim, an initiative of this nature when operating in tandem with the daily school, may have the potential to achieve the same gains in English and Spanish literacy levels and academic outcomes as a paired bilingual program (i.e., bilingual instructional program providing both English and native language instruction to SHLs during different times of the normal school day, or on alternate days beginning in grade K).

With the application of an academic Saturday program for SHL speakers comes the challenge of effectively evaluating the linguistically and culturally diverse participants and placing them in classes according to certain criteria, so as to obtain the maximum learning benefits during the brief Saturday class period and beyond. The purpose of the present paper is two-fold: first, we focus on the constructs of the language assessment instrument employed in this specific K-3 program, since it is the testing that informs the program-internal decisions made at all curricular levels of our Saturday school, including student class placement and teaching strategies. Secondly, we intend to contribute to the discussion, lacking in the HL field, regarding the nature of testing and placement for primary school HL children, given the complexity of classifying these students of various demographics and diverse linguistic baselines (often still in development) and HL proficiencies. To meet our objectives for this paper, we closely examine the factors listed below:

1. Selection: What Spanish and English assessment tests are
   implemented in the Saturday program and why are these tests

appropriate? Who selects the evaluation instruments? What are the

tests designed to measure, and what are their limitations?

2. Logistics: What resources (e.g., time, expertise, research) have been

allocated in the assessment and placement process?

3. Classification: How are the assessment data used in class placement?

Are students best placed by age-grade alone, as in beginning students

in a traditional elementary school? Are cut scores strictly implemented

(and if so, which cut score are selected?), or are the assessment data

used in conjunction with other data in determining class placement

(Cronin et al. 2007)?

In turn, we relate the specific results of how these assessments and subsequent

interventions as carried out through a Saturday-school model can begin to

resolve certain learning issues that uniquely affect HL learners.

In order to contextualize the present paper within the Special Issue on

Spanish heritage language placement specifically, and within the field of Heritage

Language Education in general, two key points must first be acknowledged. The

first point is that this Saturday-school program began in a community with a

rapidly increasing Latino population, without any previous history of Spanish

language education programs for Spanish-speaking primary school students. This

"hit-the-ground-running" scenario is now occurring in numerous US communities,

where the recent presence of a substantial Spanish-speaking population is

impacting the status quo in profound ways. Consequently, the Ann Arbor

Saturday program faced the challenge of immediately placing a large number of SHL students of diverse ages and grade levels, but also with a wide range of competence in Spanish, into appropriate Saturday learning classes. In contrast, SHL student placement concerns found in the literature often presume an established academic program within a (bilingual) institution's curriculum (e.g., Calderón, et al. 1998; Potowski, et al. 2008; O.García, et al. 2008), such that the majority of the students are able to participate beginning in kindergarten or first grade, and continue annually into the next level, in concert with their regular school grade.

The second contextualizing point is that in comparison with the secondary or post-secondary level of the SHL learners discussed in much of the literature on SHL linguistic competence (Polinsky & Kagan 2007; Montrul 2004, 2008; Rivera-Mills & Trujillo 2010; Roca & Colombi 2003), and Spanish course placement (e.g., Potowski 2002; Beaudrie & Ducar 2005; Correa 2011; Valdés, et al. 2008), the students in the Ann Arbor Saturday program are primary school HL learners. They are L1 speakers of Spanish, like many of the older SHL learners discussed in the field. However, unlike the older learners, the SHL students in the Saturday program have on average 3 years or less of significant exposure to the dominant community language of English, and to the corresponding primary school environment. Furthermore, the SHL students participating in the Saturday school have the opportunity to continue their Spanish L1 language development relatively uninterrupted, and to gain Spanish literacy skills prior to and/or

concurrently with the introduction of these same skills in English. Thus, some of the important issues in assessing and placing post-secondary HL learners into university-level courses, such as reduced Spanish competence at certain linguistic interfaces or poor literacy skills in the face of often relatively high spoken and aural competence in Spanish may be more effectively managed with early intervention at the primary school level. Nevertheless, what has been observed in the Saturday students is a lack of knowledge of certain structures or registers as a result of their limited experience with academic Spanish and Spanish spoken outside the home. This deficit is one that the younger students share with older HL learners (Fairclough, 2006), but as generally agreed in the L1 acquisition literature, this is not an unexpected developmental characteristic among any group of primary school students. More significantly, however, the assessment data in Section III, shows that the variability that poses a challenge for placement for primary school SHL learners occurs in two particular areas. First, there is obvious variability in the amount of home literacy support. Second, despite the fact that all of the students have acquired Spanish as a home language, some students appear to have limited Spanish linguistic development, particularly evident in their ability to produce spoken forms.

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows: Section II contains a brief overview of the Ann Arbor Saturday language school program. The methodology presented in Section III describes the assessment instrument, procedure, and results. Section IV provides analysis of the assessment data and

other criteria as used in class placement, and includes a discussion of the Saturday school language evaluations. Section V offers final thoughts and conclusions.

II. BACKGROUND

In May 2010, the "*En Nuestra Lengua* (ENL)" project was initiated as a proof-of-concept of a Saturday-school Spanish language program for students whose home language is Spanish. This pilot project originally accommodated 40 SHL children in grades K-3, using a Saturday morning session of 90 minutes. The activities were based in a centrally located Ann Arbor Public School facility where a large number of students attended during the week. Over the 7-week period, the number of total student participants for the pilot was approximately 50, as an additional class was provided for pre-K 3 and 4 year-old siblings of the older school-age children. All students receive textbooks and other reading materials in Spanish at no cost to the parents. Saturday attendance has consistently remained high.

The theoretical framework guiding the ENL project and its research program is known as the "Interdependence Hypothesis, " the notion that accessing L1 knowledge best facilitates literacy development in the second language (L2), particularly where learners are dominant in the L1 and have adequate motivation (Skutnabb-Kangas & Toukomaa 1976; Cummins 1978, 1981; Verhoeven 1994; Pardo & Tinajero 2000; Gabriele et al, 2009; Pollard-Durodola & Simmons 2009, among others). The linguistic and literacy results in

the ENL program to-date not only provide proof of concept for the Saturday

Spanish school, they also strongly align with the Interdependence Hypothesis,

suggesting that when a child develops language and literacy skills in her L1

(Spanish), the benefits also positively influence L2 (English) (Satterfield, Benkí,

Sánchez & Morales, submitted). The "Creative Reading Methodology" (using the

Hagamos Caminos readers and workbooks (Ada & Wensells 2004), has been

adopted as an instructional approach compatible with the Interdependence

Hypothesis. The Creative Reading method is a 4-part process linking learning,

interaction and reflection. It is ideal for the ENL program because the curriculum

can come form any content area and the methodology is applicable for any age

group. The *Hagamos Caminos* series contains both the "whole language" and

phonics approaches (primarily with syllables), and includes beginning-reader

levels as well as more advanced ones, providing ENL with broad coverage across

different learning groups.

In the May 2010 pilot, the students were matriculated based solely on

grade-level, and fortuitously, this procedure yielded five classes with 10 children

each: Pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, first-grade, second-grade and third-grade.

The core ENL "team" brings together individuals from formal and applied

linguistics. The program has continued to benefit from its access to highly

trained native Spanish-speaking educators (with training in pedagogy) who work

with the HL students, including graduate students in the field of Education who

bring cutting-edge teaching techniques to the Saturday HL classrooms. ENL also

recruits SHL speakers from the local Ann Arbor high schools and undergraduate students from the University of Michigan to serve as assistants in the Saturday classrooms. These inter-generational contacts further develop strong community bonds that filter into the daily activities of the ENL students. Concurrent with the children's language instruction, a parent informational group is held to support Spanish-speaking caregivers in their interaction with the American public school system and to provide a forum for other relevant topics. Parents also participate weekly in reading stories, singing songs and carrying out cultural presentations for the classes.

The ENL project enjoys considerable community support, as measured both by formal questionnaires and informal feedback from parents and ENL instructors, as well as from Ann Arbor daily school administrators, teachers, and staff. Language assessments and observational data were initially collected from representative samples of students. Preliminary findings demonstrated that the elementary students participating in the May 2010 session attained and/or maintained grade-level Spanish literacy (Satterfield & Benkí, submitted), and this level of achievement continues to be the case in the present. Anecdotal data from the student's daily schoolteachers further indicates that the children's reading level in English and general participation in class improved coinciding with participation in the Saturday school.

After the spring pilot, community demand for the program surged. ENL resumed in autumn 2010 with a 9-week session. Although the program is

targeted at supporting Spanish literacy for grades K-3, four grade 5 and seven

grade 4 students were enrolled. These older students had younger relatives in

the program, and their parents indicated that the older children would also

benefit from the program (and confirmed by the assessment data presented

below). In all, 55 students were enrolled in the academic (K-3) classes from 32

families, divided equally between boys and girls, ranging in age from 4 to 11.

The pre-K class included 15 additional students between the ages of 3 and 4.

Three-quarters of the students were returning from the pilot and one-quarter

was new to the ENL program. A waiting list also became necessary, due to

limited resources. The amount of instructional time was extended from 90

minutes to two and half hours each Saturday.

     As will be elaborated in the Section III, the pilot findings revealed that

while literacy gains were made, it was pedagogically unsound to simply organize

classes according to scholastic grade level or to presume that a student's Spanish

proficiency could be gauged without a reliable assessment mechanism. For the

second period of the project, formal evaluation and placement protocols were

established and continue to evolve. Also, instead of overtly labeling students by

traditional "basic, intermediate, advanced" categories or by the more intuitive

Creole Continuum (Rickford 1987) adapted for HL speakers by Polinsky & Kagan

(2007), ENL employs names of symbolic Latin American animals to categorize the

different Spanish proficiency levels. Starting from the lower to the highest

competencies, the classes are: *Alacranes* (Scorpions), *Jaguares*, *Quetzales*,

Delfines (Dolphins) and *Águilas* (Eagles), respectively. This strategy has the additional advantage of providing positive linguistic cues, thus preventing HL students from being self-conscious or unmotivated (Cimpian et al. 2007). The "pre-K" group, which is not formally evaluated for language proficiency at this time, is known as the *Pingüinos* (Penguins) to maintain consistency within the program.

A nine-week ENL winter session lasted from February to April 2011, with an enrollment of 85 students. A new group labeled the *Iguanas*, comprised of 6 to 8 year olds with low proficiency in spoken and written Spanish, was incorporated into the curriculum. These students are classified between the *Alacranes* and *Jaguares* in terms of proficiency. The waiting-list of interested families for future sessions continues to grow.

III. METHODOLOGY

Assessment instrument selection

In this section, the inner-workings of student placement and cut scores for class proficiency levels are discussed and analyzed. The overall objective was to form appropriate classes using individual students' social or English grade level, total numbers of students at each grade level, and objective information on individual student Spanish language proficiency, both oral and written. An assessment instrument, normed on U.S. Spanish speakers, was needed to provide the latter. The available instruments for assessing child Spanish language proficiency include Bilingual Verbal Ability Tests (BVAT; Riverside), Woodock-

Muñoz Language Survey – Revised (WMLS-R; Riverside; Schrank et al. 2010),

LAS Links Español (CTB/McGraw-Hill), and the Illinois Snapshots of Early Literacy

(ISEL; Barr et al. 2004a,b). Of these instruments, the BVAT is intended to assess

oral language only. The LAS Links Español, in particular, is designed for a formal

educational setting with students from grades K-12, and is a suitable option for a

comprehensive program. However, given that ENL is a pilot program aimed at K-

3 students, the ISEL is a more viable alternative that can be implemented on an

ongoing basis, given available human and financial resources.

For the September 2010 evaluations, the Spanish Kindergarten/1st grade

portion of the Illinois Snapshots of Early Literacy (ISEL-S K/1; Barr et al.

2004a,b) was selected as the Saturday program's formal assessment

instrument. Both English and Spanish versions are available for grades K-2, with

most materials, including scoresheets, administration booklets, and technical

manuals downloadable from the National-Louis University Reading Center at

<http://www2.nl.edu/READING_CENTER/>. Median (50th percentile) and watch

(20th percentile) scores for each snapshot are available for the Spanish version,

based on a sample of children who are native speakers of Spanish living in the

U.S. Midwest, comparable to the students of the ENL program. The ISEL-S K/1

consists of eight subtests or snapshots of early literacy skills:

Alphabet recognition: The student is shown upper case, then lower case letters

in random order and is asked to say the name of each letter.

Story listening: The student is read *La semilla de zanahoria* (*The Carrot Seed*, by

> Ruth Krauss and translated by Argentina Palacios) and is asked nine

> questions on content and vocabulary.

Phonemic awareness: For each of 10 items, the evaluator names a prompt and

> three pictures, one of which begins with the same consonant phoneme as

> the prompt. The student identifies the matching picture.

One-to-one matching: The evaluator reads a story consisting of three short

> sentences. After each sentence, the student is asked to read each

> sentence while finger-pointing, then identify two target words with her

> finger.

Letter sounds: The student is shown upper case letters in random order and is

> asked to produce the sound for each letter.

Developmental spelling: The evaluator produces six words, one at a time, which

> the student is asked to spell.

Word recognition: The student is presented with 22 words, one at a time from

> familiar to difficult, and is asked to read them. Because this snapshot is

> intended to measure the size of the student's sight word vocabulary, but

> not her ability to decode, items requiring effort to decode are scored as

> incorrect.

Passage reading: The student is asked to read aloud four books independently,

> ranging in difficulty from Level A to I under the Fountas & Pinnell (1999)

letter level system. Scoring is on the basis of oral fluency, accuracy, and comprehension.

A version of the ISEL-S for 2nd grade students is also available; however the decision was made to forego administration of this version in light of *En Nuestra Lengua's* curricular structure to have a single class of advanced students whose Spanish literacy level was at the 2nd grade level or higher, and thus beyond the ceiling of the ISEL-S K/1. The 2nd grade version would be useful for other programs with advanced students, or for subsequent academic years of the ENL program.

In providing an age-appropriate and comprehensive evaluation of Spanish oral comprehension, production, and emerging literacy skills, the ISEL-S K/1 satisfies the basic requirements of content validity of an assessment instrument (Carmines & Zeller 1979) for early Spanish literacy. Since the norming population reported by Barr et al. (2004a, b) consisted of Spanish-English bilingual children in a Midwestern US bilingual education program---similar to the ENL students in many respects---the grade means also have criterion validity for use in placement and progress assessment. Ideally, other measures would be used to evaluate the criterion validity of the ISEL-S means. Present and future reports on the ISEL-S K/1 will be used to evaluate criterion validity more rigorously.

Assessment procedure

Fifty-two students were formally assessed with snapshots 1-7 of the ISEL-S prior to the start of classes in September 2010. Three students who were assessed did not enroll, and six students were placed early in the fall 2010 term but after the process described here. Given time constraints, snapshot 8 (passage reading) was not administered. Students were scheduled for an assessment on one of three Saturday mornings in the school setting where the ENL classes take place. A team of four evaluators performed the ISEL-S assessments. Two evaluators were native speakers of Spanish and the other two were near-native speakers of Spanish. Prior to testing, all evaluators reviewed relevant portions of the ISEL-K/1 Teacher's Guide (Barr et al. 2004a), and followed the recommended procedure during testing.

Upon arrival to the school, parents and students were greeted in Spanish and all ensuing interactions took place in Spanish as well. Each assessment took place in a classroom with only the evaluator and student. Evaluators began the assessment by explaining to the student that s/he was going to read a book and ask some questions, all in Spanish. Parents waited in the hallway during the assessment, which lasted about 30 minutes per student. In all, 52 students were assessed, including 3 students who did not enroll in the program. Immediately following the ISEL-S assessment, kindergarten and 1st grade students were also assessed with snapshots 1-8 of the Kindergarten/1st grade ISEL-E (English) Version 2 Form A (Fall). A separate team of three evaluators, all of whom were

fluent speakers of Spanish, performed the ISEL-E assessments. The results from the English assessments are not reported here.

In addition to recording responses to the ISEL-S assessment itself, evaluators also took notes on each student's Spanish fluency and switches to English. When such switches occurred, evaluators reminded the students to provide their answer in Spanish and that for the session at hand, they should speak in Spanish. The story listening snapshot presented particularly fertile opportunities for collecting observational data.

Assessment results

While the component ISEL-S snapshots provide detailed and useful information on individual student's literacy skills, for class placement purposes a more abstract measure was ultimately required. An ISEL-S composite score was computed (similar to the composite measure in the National-Louis University Reading Center ISEL Interactive Data Charting Templates, with snapshot 8 omitted) as the mean percent correct on all seven snapshots, having possible values between 0 and 100. Figure 1 shows the distribution of composite scores.
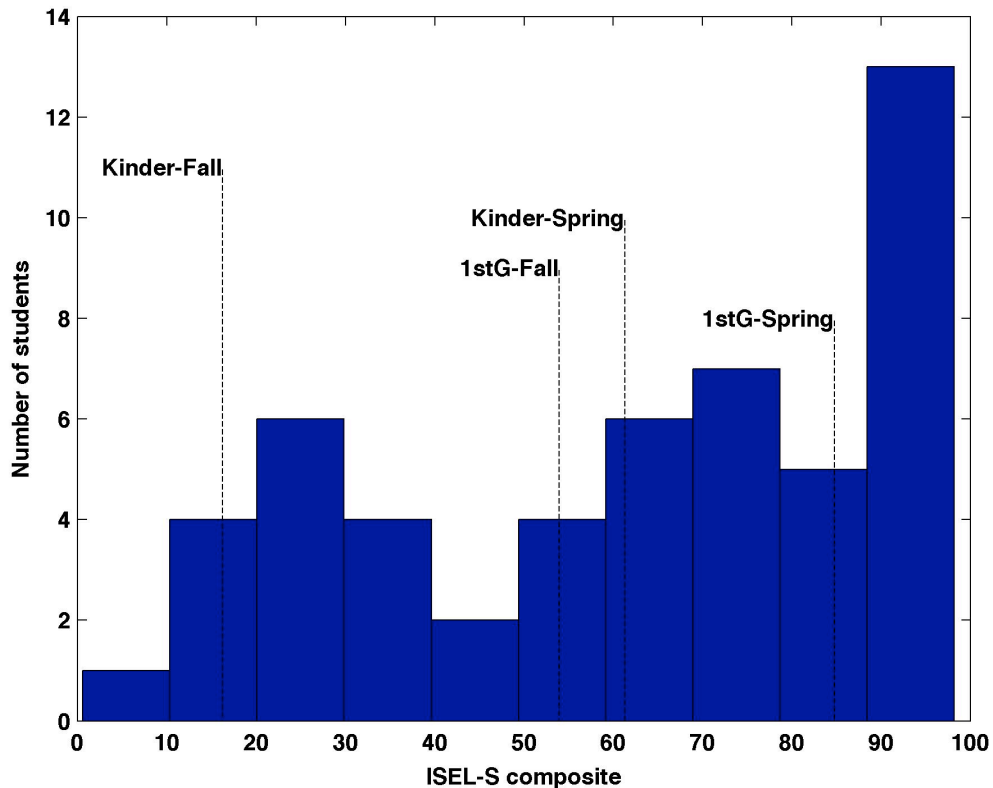
Figure 1. Histogram of 52 ISEL-S composite scores, September 2010. The composite score is calculated as percent correct averaged over the 7 snapshots, with each snapshot weighted equally. The corresponding composite scores for the means in the norming population for kindergarten and 1st grade, fall and spring (Barr et al., 2004a) are shown for reference.

The composite ISEL-S score distribution is trimodal, with modes at approximately 25, 75, and at 95, corresponding roughly to middle of kindergarten, middle of grade 1, and ceiling. While a correlation between composite ISEL-S score and English scholastic grade level (i.e., the grade that the child has reached in his/her daily school) is present, there is considerable variability as shown in Figure 2.
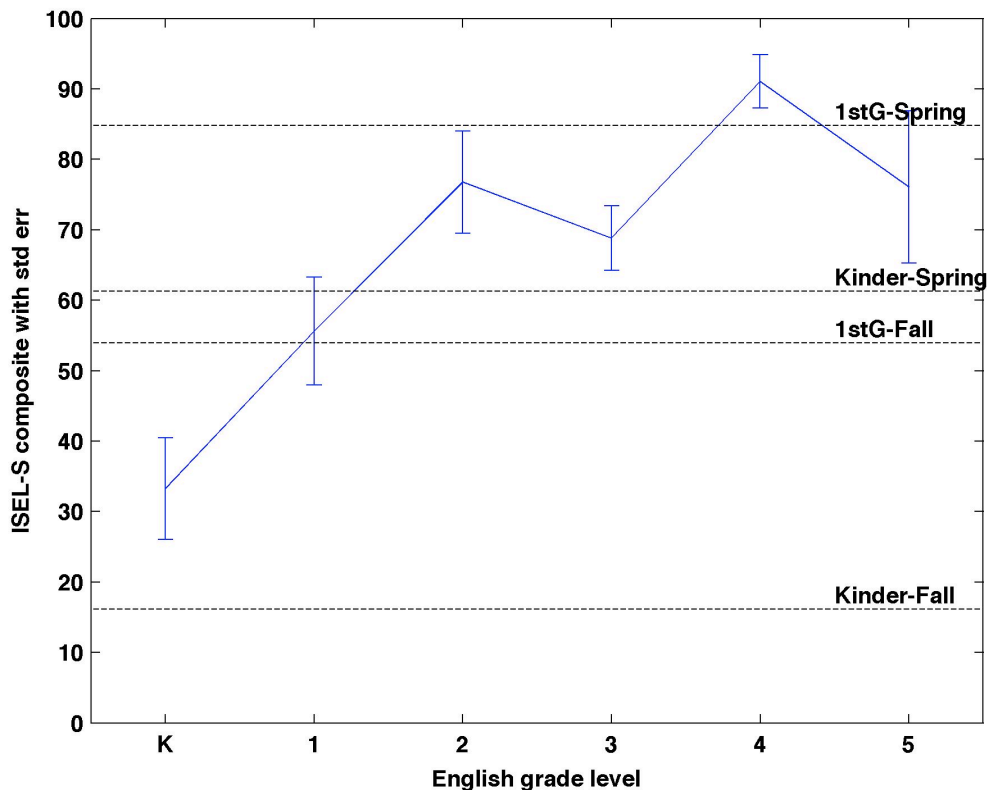
Figure 2. Mean ISEL-S composite score by English grade level. Each point shows the mean ISEL-S composite score averaged across all of the students at a given English grade level. The error bars are ±1 standard error. The corresponding composite scores for the means in the norming population for kindergarten and 1st grade, fall and spring (Barr et al., 2004a) are shown for reference.

The data in Figure 2 suggest that age/English grade is a useful factor in class placement, given the clear positive correlation between English scholastic grade and ISEL-S composite score (r=0.6083, p≤0.0001). However, using the child's grade or age as the sole basis of placement would be problematic, as discovered in the spring 2010 pilot. First, variability within each grade is high, as diagnosed by the large standard errors (not standard deviations) for grades K-2 and 5. Second, the means for grades K and 1 are at or above the published fall

means, unusual for students who are not receiving formal Spanish literacy

instruction. The mean for grade 4 students is at ceiling. The grade-level scores

for these students are likely the result of home schooling efforts by parents.

Finally, the means for grades 3 and 5 show little development if any relative to

the grade 2 means. Again, this result is likely due at least in part to a lack of

(effective) Spanish academic instruction either at home or in school for many of

the students in these grades, but there is no explanation at present for the

variable relation between English grade level and ISEL-S composite score.

IV. Class placement

Based on the spring 2010 ENL pilot assessments and in consultation with

the autumn 2010 ENL instructional staff, the following guidelines were devised

for forming the 5 classes of *Alacranes, Jaguares, Quetzales, Delfines*, and

Águilas.

Class size: No more than 13 students per class, and for the Alacranes, no more

than 10 students.

Class composition: Students in each class should be similar in Spanish reading

level and proficiency, as assessed by the ISEL-S, as well as scholastic

grade level. However, advanced students might be placed one "level"

higher depending on their ISEL-S composite score.

Cut scores: The 2004 published spring mean composite scores for grade K (61)

and grade 1 (85) would be used as loose criteria to place a student one

level higher.

Using these guidelines, two students in the *Alacranes* with ISEL-S composite scores of 87 and 79 were placed one level higher into the *Jaguares*. Two students in the *Jaguares* with ISEL-S composite scores of 87 and 93 were placed one level higher into the *Delfines*. These adjustments resulted in a class of beginning students in the *Alacranes* (all in grade K), a class of early readers in the *Jaguares* (primarily grade 1 students with two kindergarteners), and a class of independent readers in the *Delfines* (students in grades 1, 2, and 3).

Older students in grades 4-5 with ISEL-S scores above 85 were all placed into an advanced class of *Águilas*. Students in grades 2-5 with ISEL-S scores below 85 were placed into the *Quetzales*. One grade 5 student with an ISEL-S score of 75 was placed into the *Águilas*. In this case, the evaluation team felt that the student's Spanish academic level was underestimated by the ISEL-S score. The ISEL-S scores are summarized by class in Table 1 and plotted in Figure 3.
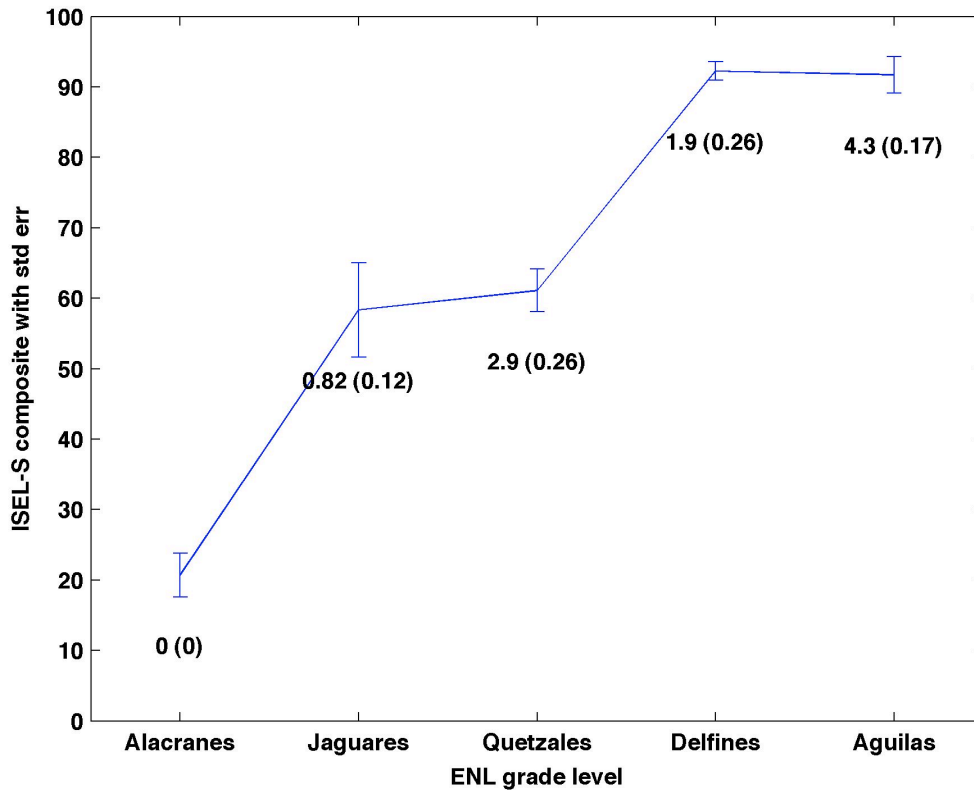
Figure 3. Mean ISEL-S composite scores for each ENL class. The error bars are ±1 standard error. Each point is also labeled with the mean English grade level for the corresponding ENL class, with standard errors in parentheses.

Table 1. ISEL-S composite scores for each ENL class (with standard errors), minimums and maximums, and mean grade level (with standard errors).

Class	Number of Students	Mean ISEL-S (S.E.)	(Min, Max)	Mean grade (S.E)
Alacranes	10	21 (3.1)	(1, 36)	0 (0)
Jaguares	11	58 (6.7)	(22, 87)	0.8 (0.12)
Quetzales	12	61 (3.0)	(40, 74)	2.9 (0.26)
Delfines	7	92 (1.3)	(87, 98)	1.9 (0.26)
Águilas	9	92 (2.6)	(75, 98)	4.3 (0.17)

By shifting 4 students on the basis of the ISEL-S data, the program was able to form classes of students of similar Spanish proficiency, as shown by the smaller standard errors relative to Figure 2, and similar scholastic grade level as well. Furthermore, the class ISEL-S means for *Alacranes, Jaguares*, and *Delfines*

are similar to the 2004 ISEL-S fall means for grades K, 1 and the spring mean for

grade 1 respectively.

Relationships among ISEL-S snapshot scores

Although there is much overlap among specific emerging literacy skills

(e.g., word decoding skills vs. vocabulary), each ISEL-S snapshot score focuses

on a specific subset of such skills. Examination of the relationship among the

snapshot scores and the composite score may provide useful information on the

development of literacy by Spanish-English bilingual children and the assessment

of such development. Table 2 presents the correlation matrix of individual

snapshot scores along with grade level and the composite score for all of the

students.

Table 2. Correlation matrix of English grade level, the seven ISEL-S snapshots and composite score. In each column, the cell with the highest r value (not counting the cell for the composite variable in the final row) is in **bold**.

	Grade	ABC	Story	Phon.	1 to 1	Letter	Spelling	WordR	Comp.
Grade	1	0.5389	0.3827	0.4951	0.4898	0.4944	0.5567	0.6355	0.6083
ABC	0.5389	1	**0.5814**	**0.7920**	**0.7935**	**0.8009**	0.7389	**0.8446**	**0.9336**
Story	0.3827	0.5814	1	0.5463	0.4564	0.5051	0.4616	0.447	0.6582
Phoneme	0.4951	0.7920	0.5463	1	0.6794	0.7305	0.7778	0.7701	0.8788
1 to 1	0.4898	0.7935	0.4564	0.6794	1	0.6761	0.641	0.7505	0.8368
Letter	0.4944	0.8009	0.5051	0.7305	0.6761	1	0.7313	0.717	0.8668
Spelling	0.5567	0.7389	0.4616	0.7778	0.641	0.7313	1	0.8298	0.8743
WordR	**0.6355**	**0.8446**	0.447	0.7701	0.7505	0.717	**0.8298**	1	0.9098
Composite	0.6083	0.9336	0.6582	0.8788	0.8368	0.8668	0.8743	0.9098	1

All correlations are significantly correlated with one another and the

composite score ($p \leq 0.001$), providing statistical confirmation of overlap in what

they assess, or at least that development of each area proceeds in parallel. For

all students, the alphabet recognition snapshot (ABC) is the most highly

correlated with the composite score (r=0.9336), and consequently with all other

snapshots. Grade level has the lowest correlation (r=0.6083).

When correlations are examined separately for the beginning students

(*Alacranes, Jaguares,* and *Quetzales*) and the more advanced students (*Delfines*

and *Águilas*), a slightly different picture emerges, though caution is advised in

interpretation given the reduced statistical power from subdividing the students.

Table 3 presents the correlation between the composite score and the

snapshots, comparable to the final column of Table 2.

Table 3. Correlation values between the composite ISEL-S score with English grade level and the seven snapshots, for all students, for beginning students (*Alacranes, Jaguares*, and *Quetzales*), and advanced students (*Delfines* and *Águilas*). In each column, the cell with the highest *r* value is in **bold**. All of the advanced students were at ceiling in the one-to-one task.

	Grade	ABC	Story	Phon.	1 to 1	Letter	Spelling	WordR
All	0.6083	**0.9336**	0.6582	0.8788	0.8368	0.8668	0.8743	0.9098
Beginning	0.4687	**0.8755**	0.4123	0.8198	0.8198	0.8081	0.7764	0.8392
Advanced	-0.1468	0.6065	0.7091	0.846	N/A	**0.8790**	0.3471	0.4795

Among the beginning students, the alphabet recognition snapshot is the

most highly correlated with the composite score (r=0.8755), similar to the result

for all students. All snapshots are significantly correlated with the composite

(story comprehension at $p \le 0.05$, all others at $p \le 0.01$). For the more advanced

students, however, the letter sounds snapshot is the most highly correlated with

the composite score (r=0.8790). Probably as a result of reduced variability

among the students, some of the snapshots of the advanced students are not

significantly correlated with the composite score, namely grade, one-to-one

matching, and spelling, with the other snapshots significantly correlated with the composite score ($p \leq 0.01$).

Discussion

The discussion begins with the results of ISEL-S snapshot correlation analyses. For all students, two snapshots stand out in terms of their correlation coefficient values, namely alphabet recognition alphabet recognition (ABC) and story comprehension. Alphabet recognition has the highest correlation coefficient values of all the snapshots. A possible interpretation of the high alphabet recognition values is that success on this task by Spanish HL speakers indicates a broad range of literacy skills, more so than any of the other snapshots. Based on interviews and questionnaires with the parents of the program, it is likely that HL students with high alphabet recognition scores receive strong home schooling support in reading Spanish. The higher correlation between letter sounds and the composite score (relative to the alphabet recognition snapshot) for advanced students may reflect a transition in the development of decoding skills.

The other interesting snapshot from the perspective of the correlation values is the story listening task, which has the lowest (but still significant) correlation coefficient values. It provides information on a more distinct set of literacy skills such as Spanish oral comprehension and ability to articulate responses in Spanish, as opposed to the other snapshots that focus almost entirely on written language and phonological decoding. As reflected in program observations of the students in the *Quetzales* class (e.g., 'older' students [grades

2-3] with low Spanish literacy skills), our prediction is born out that many SHL

learners without formal language and literacy instruction can easily excel on this

test component, while performing poorly on the other tasks.

The rich data offered by the ISEL-S snapshot scores also present valuable

information for the adaptation of a Spanish academic curriculum to the students

in the ENL program. Two important insights were gained from the assessment

data are highlighted here. First, only three of 52 students had perfect scores on

the alphabet recognition snapshot. Being able to identify and name letters is

surely one of the first steps both in the development of literacy and in the

development of a metalinguistic academic vocabulary necessary for ongoing

academic success (Bialystok 2001). While a few students were developing

academically in Spanish without the benefit of the Saturday program, one of the

weak areas for even these SHL learners was the development of a Spanish

academic vocabulary. Therefore, reviewing the alphabet was incorporated into

the curriculum for both beginning and advanced classes, and given additional

emphasis in the beginning groups relative to traditional kindergarten or first

grade curricula.

The second insight was the instructional challenge presented by the low

Spanish literacy level relative to their school grade-level among some of the

students, particularly those who were placed into the *Quetzales* class. The mean

grade level of this class was approximately 3, and none were below grade 2. In

contrast to the *Jaguares* and *Alacranes*, the English literacy level of the *Quetzales*

was far more advanced than their Spanish literacy level. Because of their young

age, it did not seem accurate to characterize these students as having

incompletely acquired L1 (Silva-Corvalán 1994; Domínguez 2009) as

development was clearly in progress; but without participation in a program such

as ENL, these students would certainly be on a common linguistic trajectory of

transitional bilingualism (Lipski 1996, 2008) that did not include further

development in their L1 as SHL speakers. Engaging students of this learning

profile in the classroom can be challenging, given that they needed to learn very

basic decoding and comprehension skills that many had mastered (or presumed

that they had mastered) in English. In order to maintain student interest and

motivation, a special effort was made to use dynamic multimedia materials

(videos and music) when reviewing basic skills such as reciting the alphabet.

Additionally, the use of *Scholastic* primary school magazines in Spanish,

appropriate for their grade level and which they may have already read in

English, was helpful in engaging the *Quetzales* in particular and all of the

students generally.

Finally, one of the key motivations for utilizing a formal assessment

instrument in the ENL program was to precisely obtain classes with (relatively)

less variability among the students. Suffice it to say, the program is now able to

consistently carry out this goal using the resources that are currently in place.

However, in the final analysis, it is crucial to understand that successful

placement of students is a very complex undertaking that requires a

knowledgeable stakeholders and a combination of viable tests (Llosa & Bunch 2011). When the levels of proficiency in a group are too variable, the class will not be productive. When a class is too homogeneous, namely in the lower levels of SHL proficiency, the incentive to speak exclusively in Spanish are greatly lowered. However, as shown by ENL data pertaining to the *Jaguares*, a small degree of language variability within the Saturday school class is actually beneficial to those HL students' Spanish development.

V. Conclusion

This paper examined Spanish-English assessments and their implementation within a newly developed Saturday SHL literacy and language program. The discussion of test selection, logistics and subsequent classification of the students illustrates that while many options were available for this particular program, each decision has repercussions for the curriculum and instruction of the *En Nuestra Lengua* students. In the end, it was determined that for this specific learning community, formal testing results mediated with scholastic grade-level information provide an effective class placement mechanism. Moreover, our findings point to specific results in these types of language assessments, such as the fact that the SHL speaker's ability to correctly name letters serves a robust composite measure of literacy skills. This data also served to identify certain learning characteristics or features unique to SHL learners, which allowed the students participating in the Saturday program to make noticeable progress in both Spanish and English literacy.

Acknowledgements

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