

This review intends to compile evidence from academic interventions that influence the development of literacy skills in language minority (LM) children educated in a second or foreign language. The review will identify relevant studies by applying a series of inclusion and exclusion criteria to experimental research in the field of LM children's literacy development and will analyze the effectiveness of any applicable intervention study to the augmentation thereof using a set of criteria to evaluate the study's weight of evidence. Five applicable studies were identified through this method and are reviewed in-depth in *Chapter Four*.

### *1.1. Research questions*

This review will address the following research questions:

1. What experimental interventions have been carried out that affect the development of literacy in language minority (LM) children educated in a second or foreign language in the last thirty years?
2. What methods or techniques do these interventions use to affect or enhance the development of literacy in language minority children educated in a second or foreign language?
3. How effective are intervention programs at enhancing the literacy achievement of language minority children? Do certain intervention programs or techniques appear to be more effective than others?

### *1.2. General relevance of review topic*

A growing number of LM children are being educated in a second or foreign language, typically English, especially in the United States (see Bowman-Perrott, Herrera & Murray 2010). Schools prepared to educate children in their first language are often ill-equipped to handle the needs of LM children for whom the language of instruction is not their L1, leading to poor academic achievement on the part of the LM students. LM students whose literacy instruction is in a second or foreign language may find learning to read particularly difficult (August & Hakuta, 1997). Since achievement in literacy is closely linked with achievement in school (Lipka & Siegel, 2010), any academic program or intervention that aids in the

development of literacy or literacy-related skills is a useful tool for educators who wish to increase the achievement levels of their students.

While some researchers maintain that equivalent literacy instruction appears to be similarly effective for both native speakers and English language learners (August & Shanahan, 2010; Lesaux & Siegel, 2003; Fitzgerald, 1995), Calhoun, al Otaiba, Cihak, King and Avalos (2007) note that empirical evidence has found differences in the ‘cognitive reading processes of second-language learners’ (170) when compared to native speaker processes. An investigation into the most effective ways to teach and encourage literacy in young LM students should therefore be appropriate and germane to educators and policy-makers dealing with LM readers in majority language classrooms in order to provide the most constructive learning environment for that population.

### *1.3. Relevance of review topic to research and policy*

This review is intended to provide a background for research into literacy development programs for bilingual children for whom the language of instruction is not their first language. Any research concerning similar literacy-based interventions for bilingual children will benefit from the information compiled in this review; researchers will similarly find a consolidated evaluation of such programs useful in order to develop new or revised programs to augment literacy development in LM children or to compare new evidence from interventions with previous research. Policy-makers in education will be able to use the analyses of the intervention studies contained within this review to determine the most effective way in which to implement an academic program designed to encourage or enhance literacy development in LM children.

### *1.4. Relevance of review topic to educators*

This review is intended to inform educators as to the various methods of encouraging literacy development in LM children in mainstream classrooms so as to allow them a measure of understanding of the phenomenon, to illustrate the current relevant research in the area, and to suggest intervention types or styles that appear to effectively increase the literacy development of LM children.

### *1.5. Definitions of terms*

Terms that may be ambiguous to researchers or that may have contested meanings within the literature are defined below according to the parameters of this review.

#### *1.5.1. Literacy*

Literacy refers to the ability to effectively decode orthographic input in a given language, and may encompass the ability to communicate orthographically (that is to say, in writing). August and Shanahan (2010), reporting on the finding of the National Reading Panel (2000), assert that the development of literacy requires six skill sets: “phonological awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing” (343). Interventions focusing on any of these skills may be referred to as literacy-based interventions. Word and non-word reading, word decoding, and text comprehension may be considered literacy-related skills<sup>1</sup>.

#### *1.5.2. Language minority children*

Language minority (LM) children are those children for whom the majority language of their surrounding environment or community is not the language spoken at home. LM children in state-funded educational institutions, excluding those enrolled in bilingualism-oriented Heritage Language<sup>2</sup>, Dual Language<sup>3</sup>, or Immersion<sup>4</sup> programs, tend to be educated in the majority language of the population. Because the majority language is not the students’ home language, the majority language is often a second language to these children. Their vocabulary size in the majority language is frequently smaller than that of otherwise-similar language

---

<sup>1</sup> This is not an exhaustive list of literacy-related skills but rather an exemplar of possible skills in that category.

<sup>2</sup> Heritage Language programs are academic programs designed to encourage the use, development, and/or revival of a non-majority language that has a cultural or religious significance to a specific group of people (Baker 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Dual Language programs (also called Two-Way Immersion programs) are academic immersion programs designed to encourage the development and use of a non-majority language in addition to the majority language by using both languages for instruction (Baker 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Immersion programs (also called One-Way Immersion programs) are academic immersion programs which use a non-majority language as the main medium of instruction in order to encourage its development and use (Baker 2006).

majority children, leading to an academic disadvantage that is difficult to overcome in educational settings geared towards monolingual children (Mancilla-Martinez, 2010). The amount of exposure to and fluency in the majority language varies among LM children even within family units. Studies on heritage language acquisition have shown that factors affecting the language acquisition of LM children include but are not limited to the number of siblings, the presence of family members fluent in the majority language, exposure to social media, and the individual level of extroversion of each child (Montrul, 2010).

### *1.5.3. Majority language*

For the purposes of this review, a majority language is the official language of the supervisory government and the language in which public or state-funded education is provided outside of the bilingual programs described in *Section 1.5.2*. This definition allows for the inclusion of programs designed to enhance the literacy achievement of LM children living in a community in which the minority language is the method of communication for the majority of inhabitants, since these children are not educated in their home language despite residing in areas where the home language is prevalent.

### *1.5.4. Efficacy*

The intervention studies reviewed in this work are considered efficient if the group receiving the treatment program or experimental intervention demonstrates a higher rate of literacy achievement or overall academic performance than the control or non-treatment group. Additional factors such as the monetary cost of implementing the intervention, the length of the intervention, and the time required to execute the intervention during school hours will also be taken into consideration when comparing the effectiveness of two or more interventions against one another.

### *1.6. Summary of introduction*

The studies analyzed in depth by this review are those which adhere to a strict set of criteria designed to identify intervention programs designed to augment or enhance literacy development in language minority children educated in a second or foreign language. The review will determine the efficacy of each included intervention study and will allow policy-

makers, educators, and researchers to measure the worth of the included studies as it applies to policy, education, and research.