

Promoting Language and Literacy in Young Children from Diverse Backgrounds

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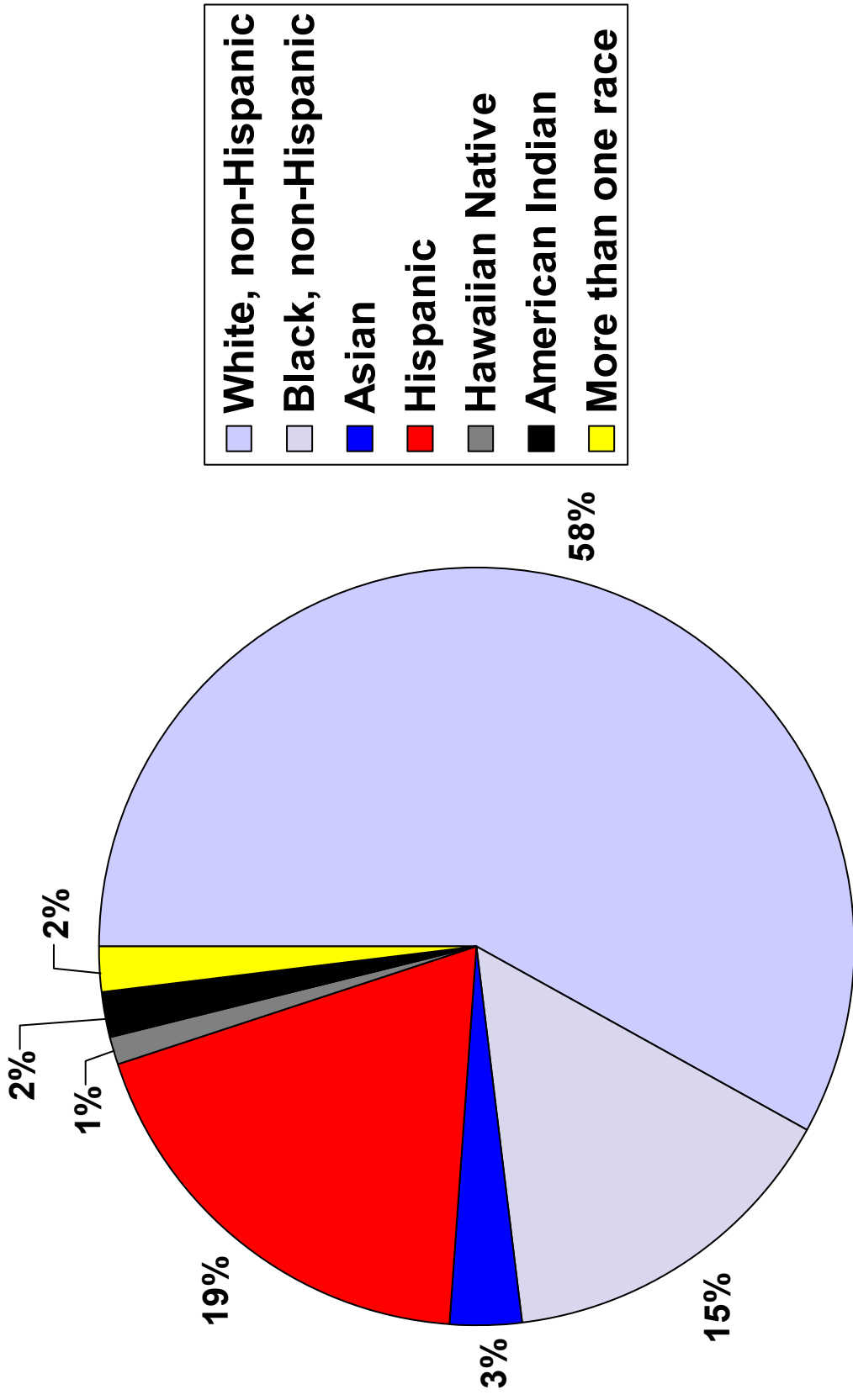
HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Outline

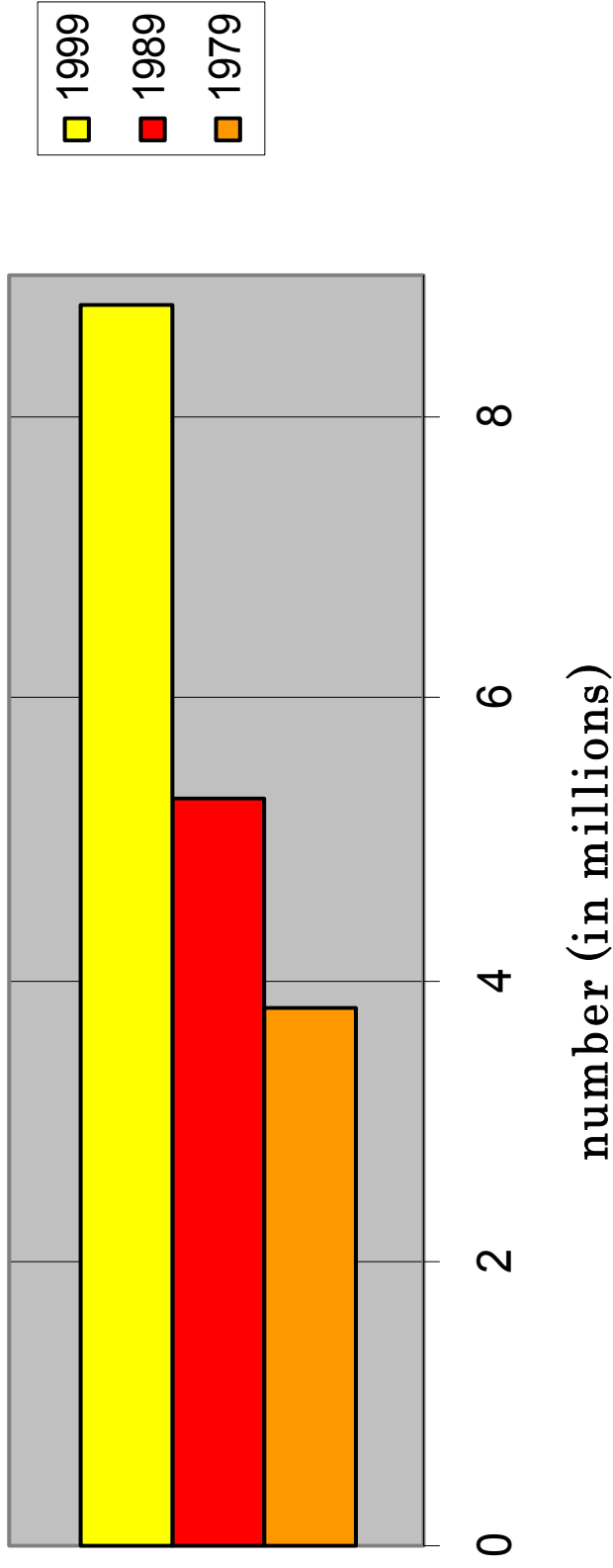


- Population, Demographics
- Issues at hand, misconceptions
- Language and Literacy: Development and Instruction
- Relevant Research Findings
- Implications

America's Kindergartners



Children who Speak a Language Other Than English at Home



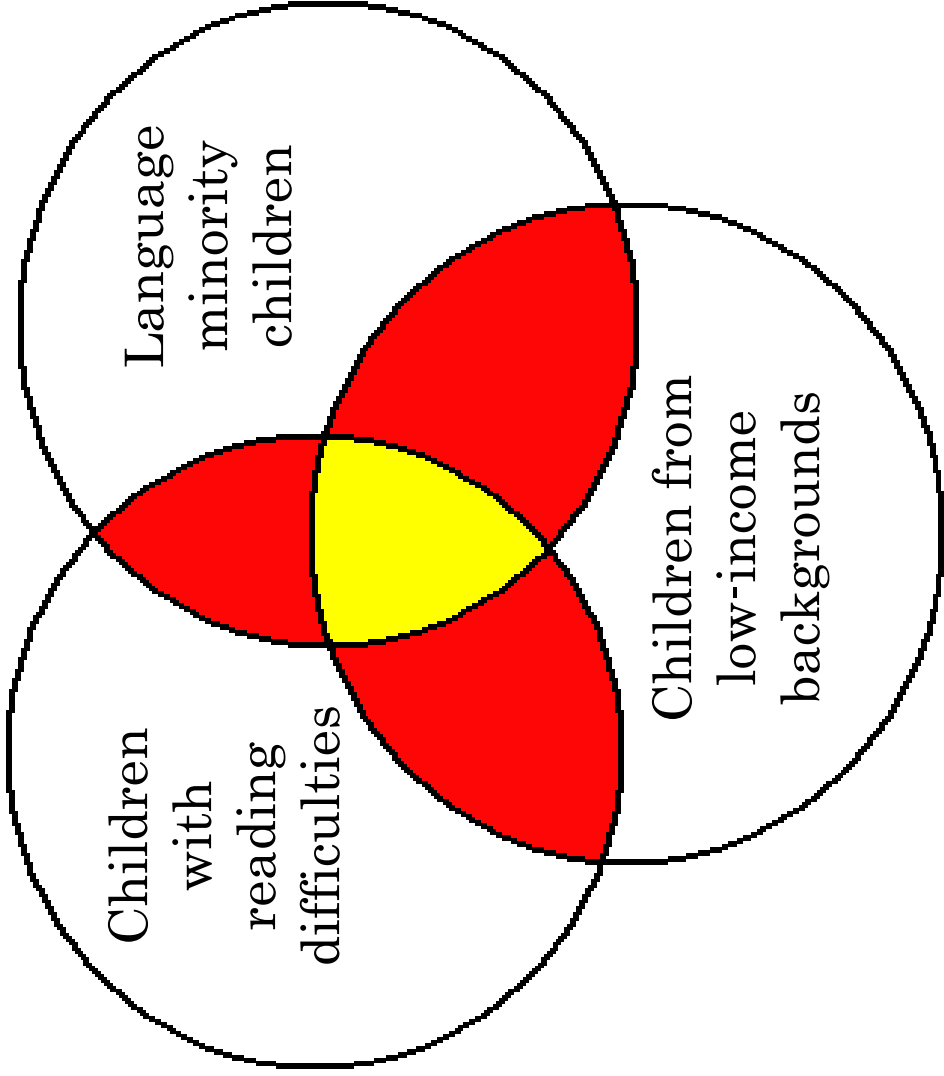
Language Minority Learners

Refers to individuals from homes where a language other than English is actively used, who therefore have had an opportunity to develop some level of proficiency in a language other than English. A language minority student may be of limited English proficiency, bilingual or essentially monolingual in English.

(August & Hakuta, 1997; p. 16)

Language Minority Learners

- Increasing number of children entering kindergarten with little or no exposure to English
- Teaching a child to read in a language in which they are not yet proficient an additional risk factor
 - Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998
- Lower academic achievement in this population (stable achievement gap)
- Negative outcomes
 - e.g., higher incidence of retention & school dropout



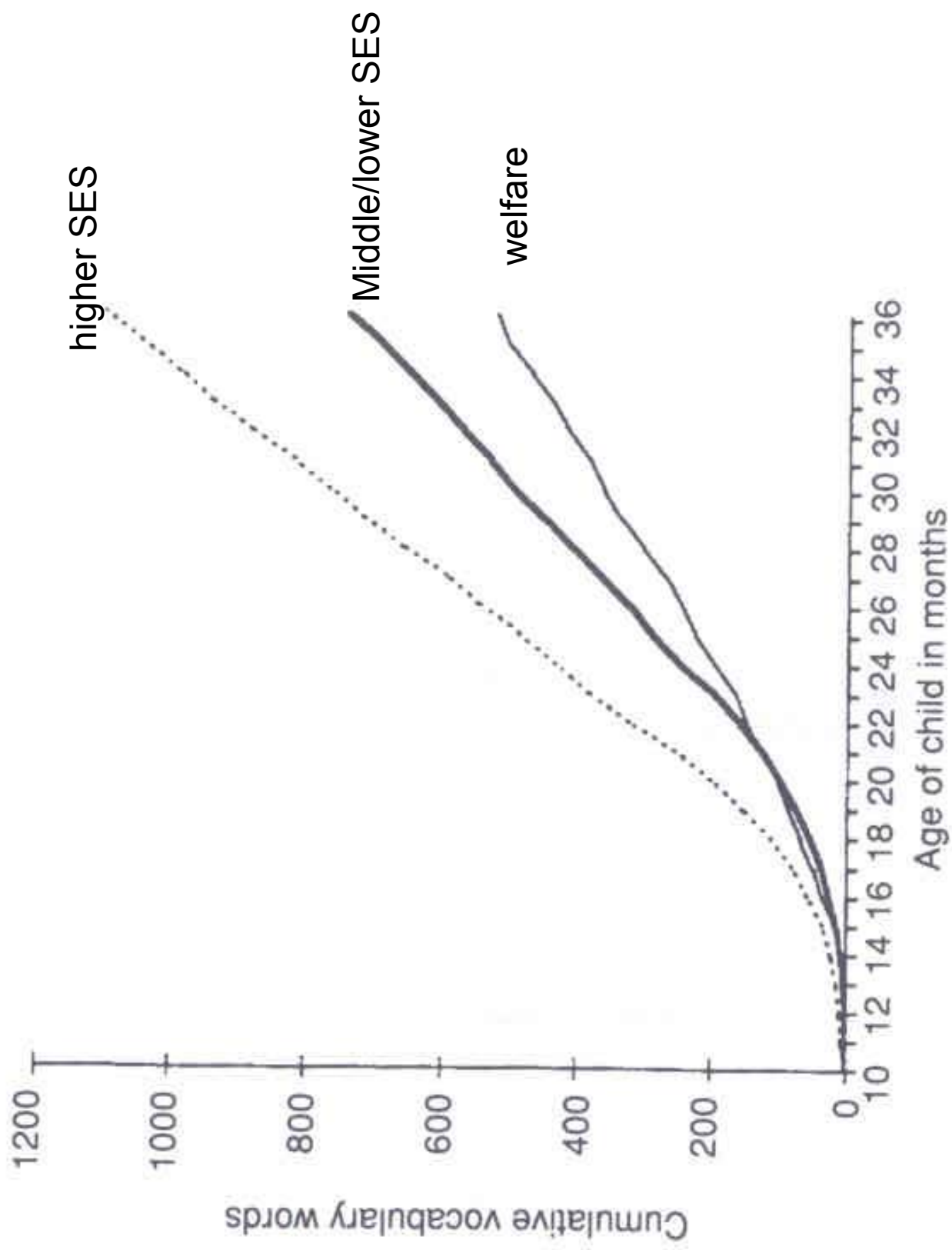
Children from Diverse Backgrounds: Demographics

- Low socioeconomic status further compounds the challenges of learning to read in a language in which they are not proficient.
- Difficult to disentangle the risk associated with poverty from the risk associated with limited proficiency.
- Neighborhoods and schools

Language & Environment



- Quantitative and qualitative differences in the linguistic input for children
- Quality and quantity of linguistic input strongly related on children's later reading achievement.
- Language skills strongly related to reading ability
 - Phonological processing
 - Vocabulary and oral language proficiency



Individual differences

- Age
- Length & Intensity of exposure
- Personality
- Motivation



Issues to consider



- Native language
- Cross-language transfer of linguistic skills
- Increased metalinguistic skills of bilingual children
- Special Education placement

Misconceptions about language learning

- Age differences
 - Learning situation; time on task
- Amount of language
 - Demands of the environment
- Teaching methods
- Pronunciation/Accent

Conversational v. Academic Language

- Important to distinguish between different purposes of language used in school settings
- Students learning a second language require different periods of time to develop age-appropriate levels of conversational skills when compared to academic skills
- Tremendous individual variability in the development of oral language skills

(Cummins, 1981).

One day at the water table in a preschool classroom two four year-olds – Naoshi, whose home language is Japanese, and Joon, whose home language is Korean – were playing side by side. They were building a structure with two plastic bottles with a tube running between them. At one point the tube flipped out of one of the bottles, and Naoshi started to help Joon put it back together. But as he lifted one of the bottles, Joon protested, “Stop! Stop!” and when Naoshi didn’t stop, Joon took the tube out of the bottle himself. Then Naoshi picked up the tube and again tried to insert it into the bottle. Joon started to help him saying “OK?” When the structure collapsed again, Joon said “Uh-oh.” As they continued their play, Joon called Naoshi’s attention to what he was doing by saying, “Hey.” And Naoshi replied, “OK, OK, OK, OK, OK.”

(Tabors, 1997)

Social and linguistic constraints

- Social constraints
 - Invisibility
 - Difficulty getting into play situations
- Linguistic constraints
 - Not much to say
 - Non-verbal options
 - Not understandable, misunderstood

The developmental sequence

- Use of the home language in second language settings
- Nonverbal period
- Telegraphic and formulaic communication
- Productive language use

Nonverbal period

- Nonverbal communication
 - Attention getting, requesting, protesting
 - Social consequences
- Data gathering
 - Spectating
 - Rehearsing
- Sound experimentation
- Receptive abilities in new language

Telegraphic and formulaic speech

- **Telegraphic**
 - Acquisition of individual words, often nouns for objects in the immediate environment or words important in the culture of children
- **Formulaic**
 - Acquisition of common words or phrases, often used for social purposes

Productive language use

- Combining telegraphic & formulaic
 - Phrases and labels
- Construction and deconstruction
- Similarities with first language acquisition
 - I/me distinction
 - Over-generalizing past tense
 - Question form

Facilitating second language acquisition

- Communication
 - buttressing
 - repetition
 - talking about the here and now
 - running commentary
 - expanding and extending
 - topping the ante

Facilitating second language acquisition

- Classroom organization
 - providing safe havens
 - classroom routines
 - small group activities: ensuring inclusion
 - getting help from English speaking children

Vocabulary



- Emphasize the words over time and in different contexts
- Multiple exposures to build depth of knowledge
- Use stories as contexts for vocabulary learning
- To the extent possible, choose readings containing only a limited number of new words.
- Readings should be considered comprehensible input i.e. at or just slightly above the student's present level.

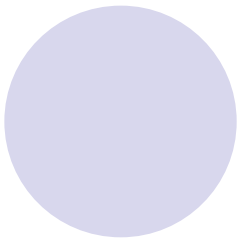
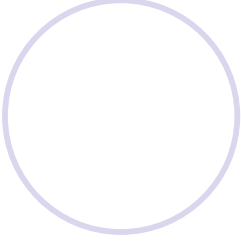
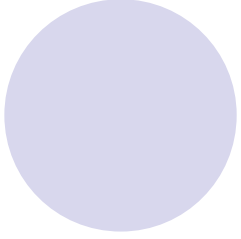
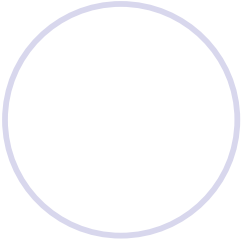
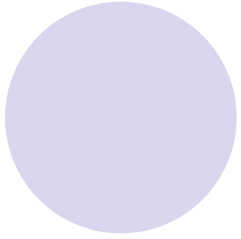
Effective classrooms for second language learning...

- routinized and consistent organizational structure
- language-rich with teachers who use supportive methods of communication
- discussions that help English speakers understand and help language minority learners
- curriculum that helps language minority learners actively participate

Working with parents

- All parents want children to do well in English
- Most parents want children to maintain their home language as well
- need strategies to help facilitate that process
- Teachers can assure parents that keeping the home language is *not* detrimental, it is *beneficial* to later success in school

EARLY LITERACY



National Early Literacy Panel

(in process)

- Comprehensive report and synthesis of research on early literacy development
- birth to five
- Four research questions
 - Skills
 - Child characteristics
 - Environmental characteristics
 - Programs and interventions

National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children & Youth

(in process)

- Oral proficiency and reading
- Transfer of skills
- Development of literacy skills
- Social and cultural influences
- Program types
- Assessment
- Instructional methods

Early Literacy: Predictors of Success

- Concepts of print
- Alphabet knowledge
- Phonological sensitivity
- Emergent writing
- Oral language

Three Year-Olds

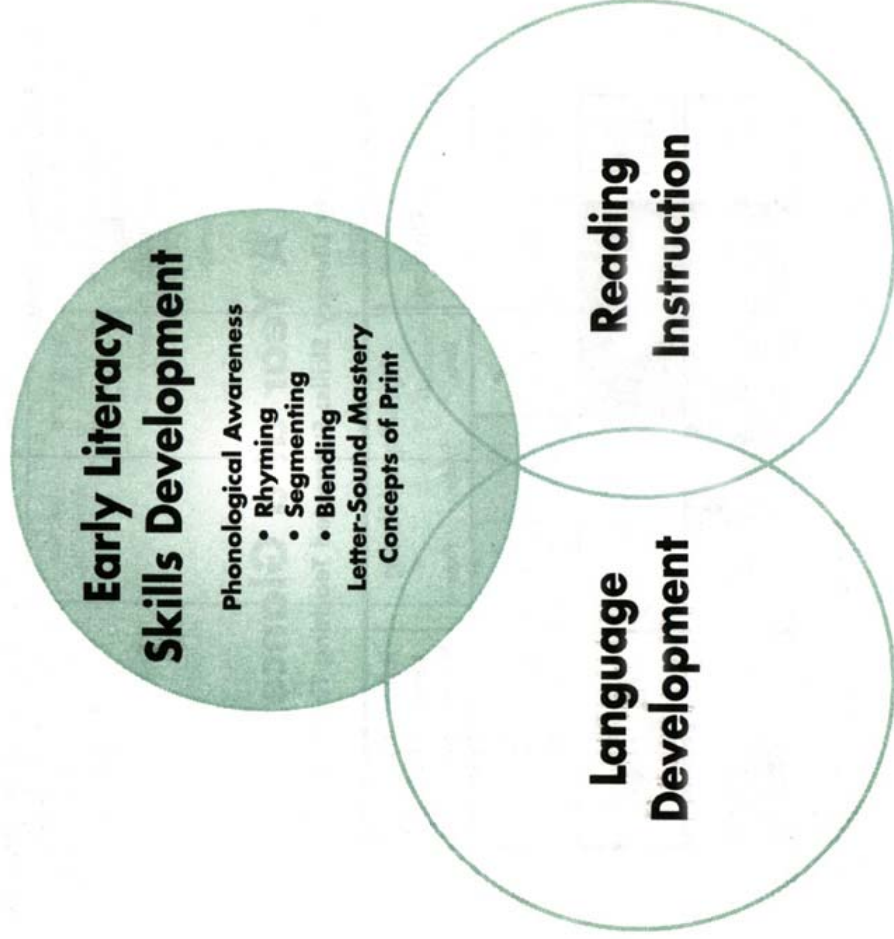


- Shared reading
- Storytelling
- Recognize books, pretending to read
- Emergent literacy
- Repeated reading
- Expanding, extending language
- Labels
- Tongue Twisters, Rhyming
- Following directions (non-verbals)

Five Year-Olds

- Recognizes beginning sounds of words and sounds that rhyme
 - Phonological, metalinguistic awareness
- Shared & independent reading
- Can follow a series of events in some stories
- Connecting story to life & experiences
- Difference between print & words
- Alphabet knowledge

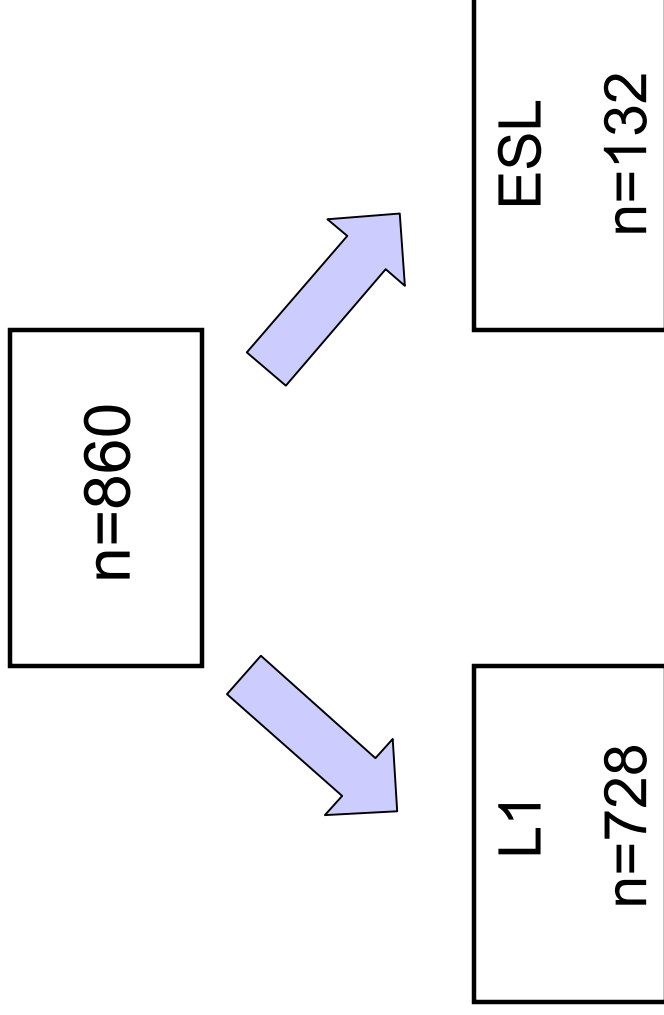
Firm Foundations



Why Early Literacy Screening?

- **For Children**
 - self-esteem
 - reading development
- **For Schools**
 - less intervention
 - decreased learning assistance time
- **For Society**
 - school dropout, unemployment, antisocial and criminal behaviour.

Grade 4 Longitudinal Sample



Firm Foundations: Sequence

- Circle Skills Teaching
- Centre Skills Practicing
 - Using games at the literacy centre
- Screening Assessment
- Intervention
 - *Launch into Reading Success* with classroom teacher, learning assistance teacher or aide

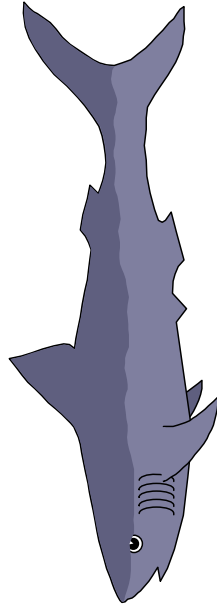
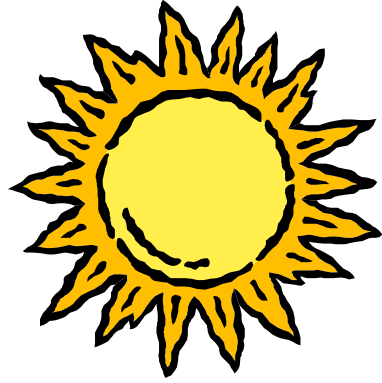
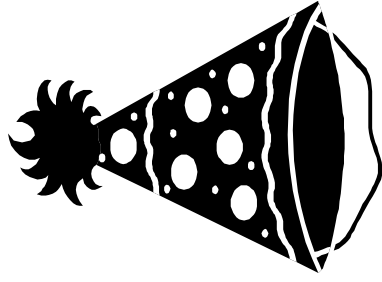
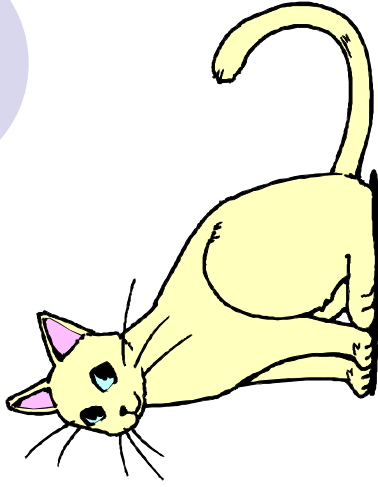
Languages in the Study

- Arabic
- Armenian
- Bulgarian
- Chinese
- Croatian
- Czech
- Dutch
- English
- Farsi
- Finnish
- French
- German
- Greek
- Hindi
- Hungarian
- Indonesian
- Italian
- Jakartian
- Japanese
- Korean
- Kurdish
- Norwegian
- Polish
- Punjabi
- Romanian
- Russian
- Serbian
- Slovak
- Spanish
- Swedish
- Tagalog
- Tamil
- Turkish

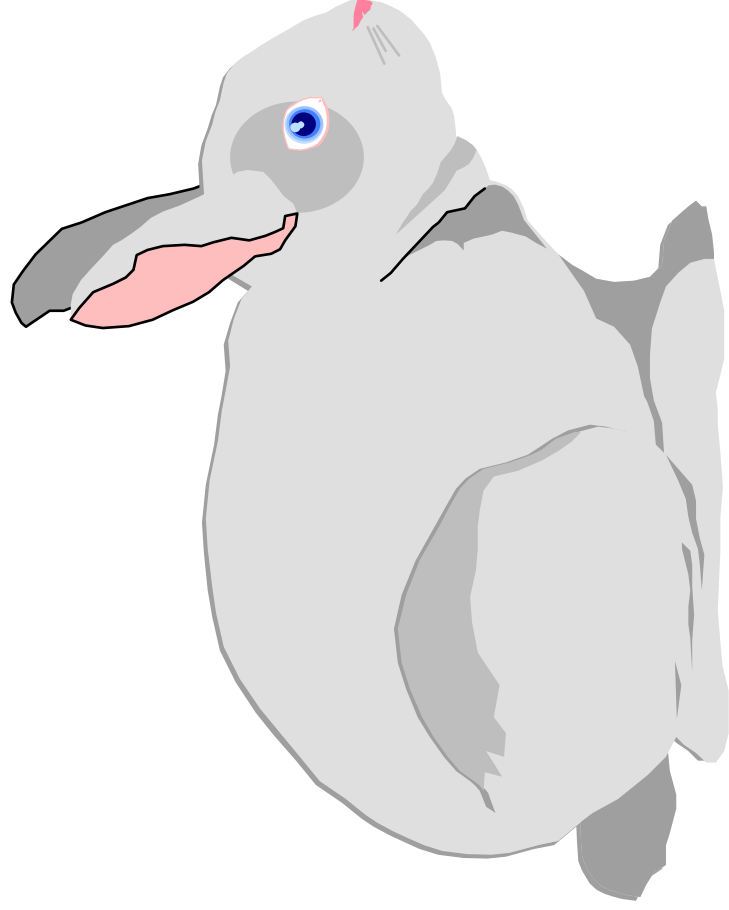
Phonological Awareness and ELLs

- Phonological awareness activities can begin before ELL students achieve oral language proficiency in English.
- Accompany words with pictures to provide context

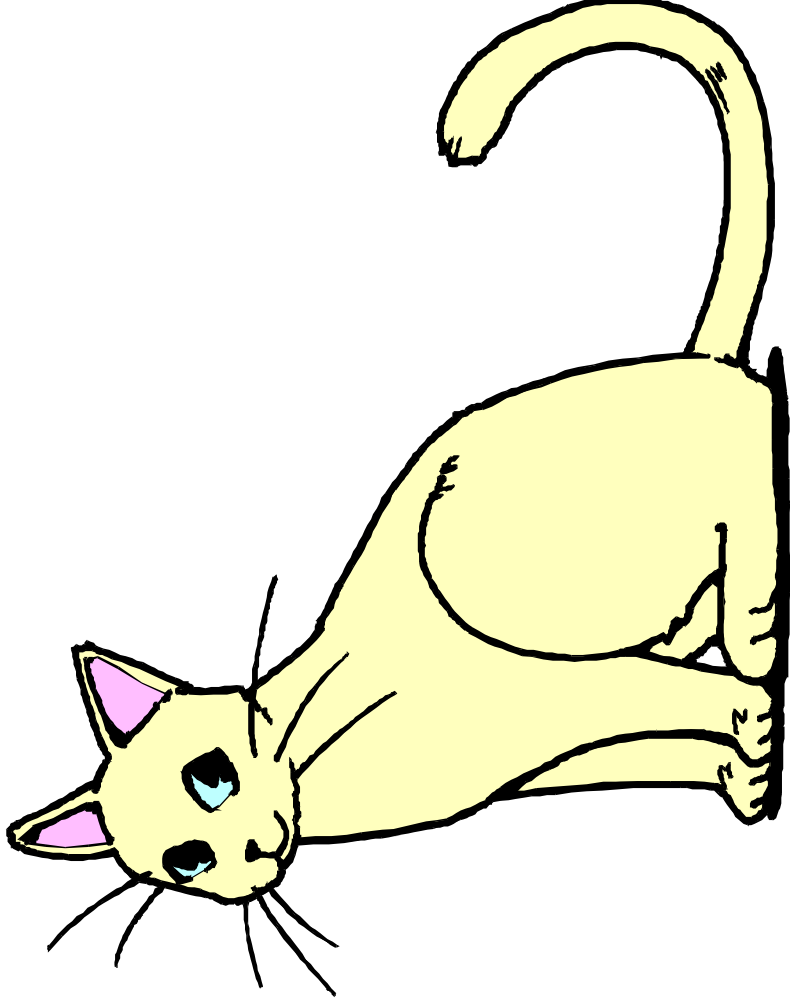
Rhyme Identification



Syllable Identification

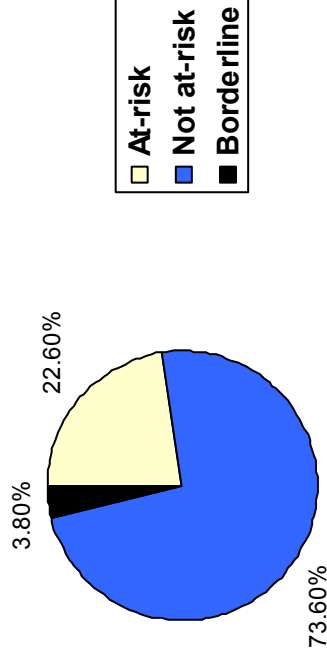


Phoneme Identification

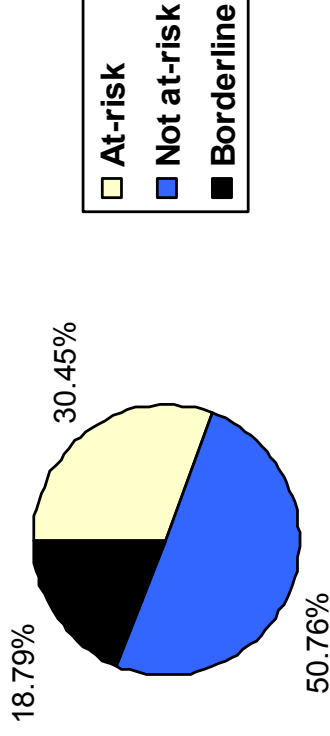


Frequency of Reader Type by Language Group

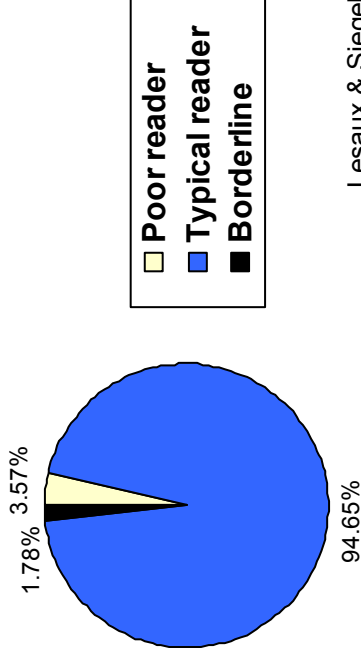
L1 Speakers - Kindergarten



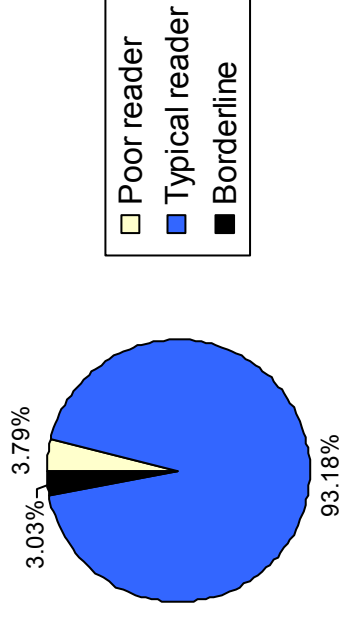
ESL Speakers - Kindergarten



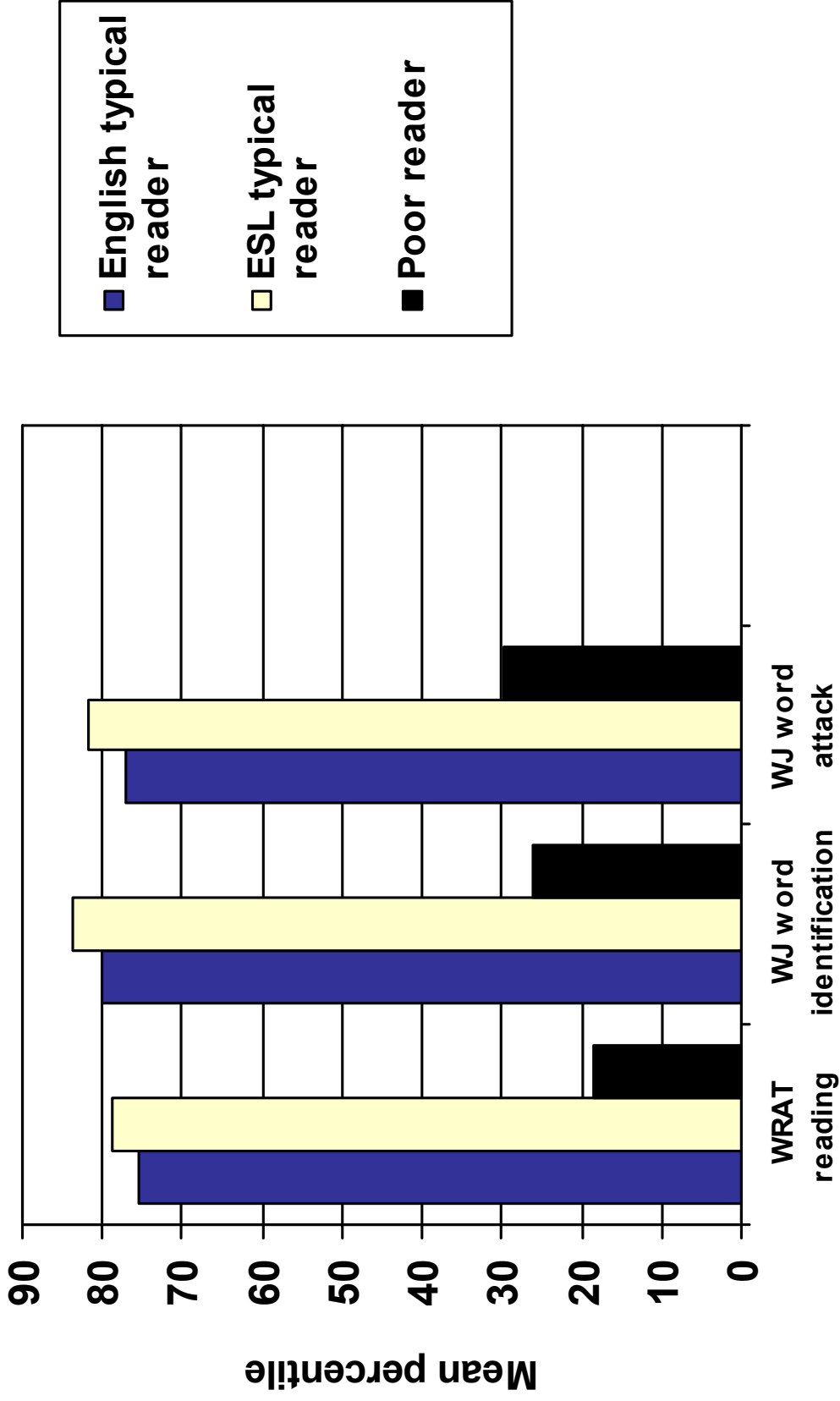
L1 Speakers - Grade 4



ESL Speakers - Grade 4



Measures of Reading



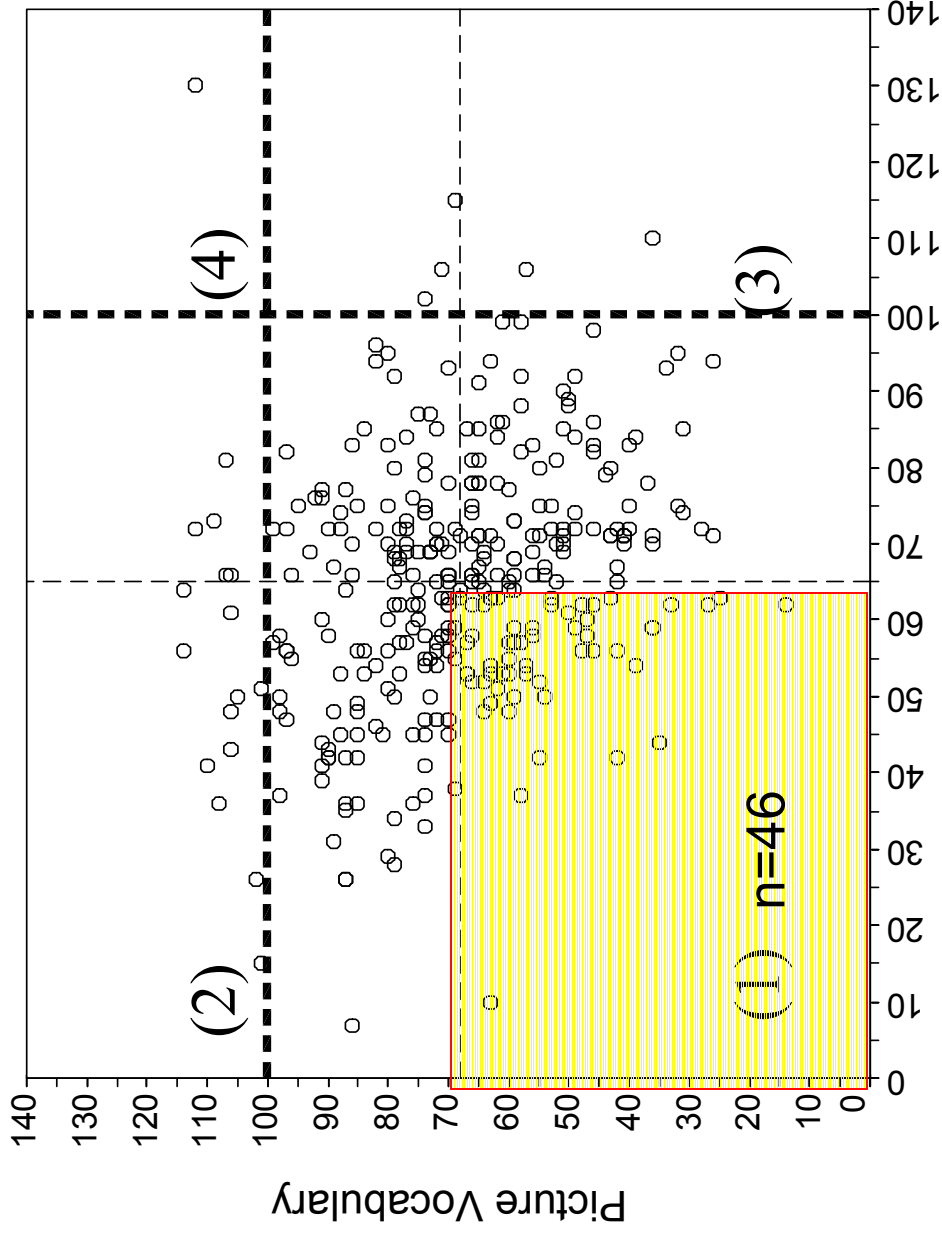
ESL Learners & Reading Instruction

- Explicit skills instruction
- Systematic student assessment
 - August & Hakuta, 1997; Hakuta, 1999
- Acquisition of reading by L2 learners improved with phonological awareness instruction and phonics
 - Stuart, 1999

Early Childhood Study (ECS) Sample

- 410 young children from Spanish-speaking homes
 - Boston, Lawrence, and Framingham, MA
 - Montgomery County, MD
- Assessments in Spanish & English
 - Pre-Kindergarten (2001-2002): fall & spring
 - Kindergarten(2002-2003): spring
- Language and Literacy measures

Pre-K Fall Picture Vocabulary





Issues

- Home support
- Assessment
- Identification
- School Services

Global Strategies



- Visuals, gestures
- Previewing and prereading strategies
- Repetition and routine
- Extending language
- Use of media
- Cooperative learning
- Promoting & working with first language

Selecting books

- At, or slightly below, ability level
 - Ratio of new: known
- Alliteration, rhyme
- Informational, concrete experiences
 - Build background knowledge
- Culturally relevant content
- Considers supports and scaffolds in the home
 - Parents, older siblings

Conclusions

- developmental sequence, individual differences for young language minority learners
- ways to organize classrooms and developing curriculum to help young language minority learners
- language minority learners are a special population of young children
 - specialized knowledge is needed to work effectively with these children and their parents



Conclusions

- Time for explicit literacy and vocabulary instruction
- Interdependence of language & literacy development
- Coordinated efforts & expectations