

## REL Southwest Ask A REL Response

English Learners

June 2018

### Question:

*Do English learners who may have lower English proficiency have better outcomes when they participate in newcomer programs rather than participate only in English language mainstream programs?*

### Response:

Thank you for the question you submitted to our REL Reference Desk. We have prepared the following memo with research references to help answer your question. For each reference, we provide an abstract, excerpt, or summary written by the study's author or publisher. Following an established Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southwest research protocol, we conducted a search for research reports as well as descriptive study articles on evidence-based newcomer programs and mainstream ELL student performance outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

We have not evaluated the quality of references and the resources provided in this response. We offer them only for your reference. Also, we searched the references in the response from the most commonly used resources of research, but they are not comprehensive and other relevant references and resources may exist. References provided are listed in alphabetical order, not necessarily in order of relevance. We do not include sources that are not freely available to the requestor.

### Research References

Moughamian, A. C., Rivera, M. O., & Francis, D. J. (2009). *Instructional models and strategies for teaching English language learners*. Portsmouth, NH: Center on Instruction.  
<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED566267>

---

<sup>1</sup> Newcomer students are defined as newly arrived immigrants who need to learn English, however, at the same time, are “held to the same accountability standards as native English speakers while they are just beginning to develop their proficiency in academic English and simultaneously studying core content areas” (Short & Boyson 2012). The goals of newcomer programs, therefore, are to:

- help students acquire beginning English skills
- provide some instruction in core content areas
- guide students’ acculturation to the school system in the United States
- develop or strengthen students’ native language literacy skills (Short & Boyson 2017: 3)

Therefore, it is important to highlight the research related to the program model (dual language, transitional bilingual, English immersion).”

*From the ERIC abstract:* “This paper investigates the differences in academic achievement trajectories from elementary through middle school among English Learner students in four different instructional programs: English Immersion, Transitional Bilingual, Developmental Bilingual, and Dual Immersion programs. Comparing students with the same parental preferences but who attend different programs, we find that the ELA test scores of ELs in all bilingual programs grow at least as fast as, if not faster than those in English immersion. The same is generally true of math, with the exception of developmental bilingual programs, where average student scores grow more slowly than those of students in English immersion. Further, Latino ELs perform better longitudinally in both subjects when in bilingual programs than their Chinese EL counterparts. We find no differences in program effectiveness by ELs' initial English proficiency. The following are appended: (1) Early Childhood Development Inventory Analysis; and (2) Additional Tables with Complete Set of Models. [This article was published in "Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis," v37 n4 p612-637 Dec 2015 (EJ1084502).]”

Slavin, R. E., Madden, N., Calderón, M., Chamberlain, A., & Hennessy, M. (2011). Reading and language outcomes of a multiyear randomized evaluation of transitional bilingual education. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 33(1), 47-58.

<http://repositorio.minedu.gob.pe/bitstream/handle/123456789/2962/Reading%20and%20Language%20Outcomes%20of%20a%20Five-Year%20Randomized%20Evaluation%20of%20Transitional%20Bilingual%20Education.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

*From abstract:* “This article reports the outcomes of a multiyear study comparing the English and Spanish language and reading performance of Spanish-dominant children randomly assigned, beginning in kindergarten, to transitional bilingual education (TBE) or structured English immersion (SEI) for periods of up to 5 years. On the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test and its Spanish equivalent (Test de Vocabulario en Imágenes Peabody) and on the English and Spanish versions of three Woodcock Reading Scales, first graders in TBE performed significantly better in Spanish and worse in English than did their SEI counterparts. Differences diminished in second and third grades, and by fourth grade, when all students in TBE had transitioned to English-only instruction, there were no significant differences on English reading measures. These findings suggest that Spanish-dominant students learn to read in English equally well in TBE and SEI and that policy should therefore focus on the quality of instruction rather than on the language of instruction for English-language learners. (Contains 1 note and 8 tables.)”

Tong, F., Lara-Alecio, R., Irby, B., Mathes, P., & Kwok, O. M. (2008). Accelerating early academic oral English development in transitional bilingual and structured English immersion programs. *American Educational Research Journal*, 45(4), 1011-1044.

[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Fuhui\\_Tong/publication/249134809\\_Hispanic\\_English\\_Learners%27\\_Responses\\_to\\_Longitudinal\\_English\\_Instructional\\_Intervention\\_and\\_the\\_Effect\\_of\\_Gender\\_A\\_Multilevel\\_Analysis/links/57e02bac08ae3f2d793ea517/Hispanic-English-Learners-](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Fuhui_Tong/publication/249134809_Hispanic_English_Learners%27_Responses_to_Longitudinal_English_Instructional_Intervention_and_the_Effect_of_Gender_A_Multilevel_Analysis/links/57e02bac08ae3f2d793ea517/Hispanic-English-Learners-)

[Responses-to-Longitudinal-English-Instructional-Intervention-and-the-Effect-of-Gender-A-Multilevel-Analysis.pdf](#)

*From the abstract:* “The authors examined the effectiveness of a 2-year (kindergarten and first grade) oral English intervention provided to 534 Hispanic English-language learners in transitional bilingual education (TBE) and structured English immersion (SEI) programs. Using latent growth modeling, the authors compared instructional programs in relation to growth trajectories and rates in academic English oracy. The findings revealed that students in all four programs (treatment TBE, control TBE, treatment SEI, and control SEI) improved significantly ( $p < .05$ ) in a linear pattern over 2 years, and students receiving the intervention developed at a faster rate than those receiving typical instruction ( $p < .05$ , effect sizes  $> 0.46$ ). The authors concluded that (a) first language instruction did not impede the learning of a second language, and (b) enhancements and best practices in TBE and SEI programs are needed to accelerate oral English acquisition to remove the initial disadvantage of low levels of English proficiency.”

Umansky, I. M., & Reardon, S. F. (2014). Reclassification patterns among Latino English learner students in bilingual, dual immersion, and English immersion classrooms. *American Educational Research Journal*, 51(5), 879-912. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED566368>

*From the ERIC abstract:* “Schools are under increasing pressure to reclassify their English learner (EL) students to “fluent English proficient” status as quickly as possible. This article examines timing to reclassification among Latino ELs in four distinct linguistic instructional environments: English immersion, transitional bilingual, maintenance bilingual, and dual immersion. Using hazard analysis and 12 years of data from a large school district, the study investigates whether reclassification timing, patterns, or barriers differ by linguistic program. We find that Latino EL students enrolled in two-language programs are reclassified at a slower pace in elementary school but have higher overall reclassification, English proficiency, and academic threshold passage by the end of high school. We discuss the implications of these findings for accountability policies and educational opportunities in EL programs.”

Valentino, R. A., & Reardon, S. F. (2015). Effectiveness of four instructional programs designed to serve English learners: Variation by ethnicity and initial English proficiency. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 37(4), 612-637. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED566267>

*From the ERIC abstract:* “This paper investigates the differences in academic achievement trajectories from elementary through middle school among English Learner students in four different instructional programs: English Immersion, Transitional Bilingual, Developmental Bilingual, and Dual Immersion programs. Comparing students with the same parental preferences but who attend different programs, we find that the ELA test scores of ELs in all bilingual programs grow at least as fast as, if not faster than those in English immersion. The same is generally true of math, with the exception of developmental bilingual programs, where average student scores grow more slowly than those of students in English immersion. Further, Latino ELs perform better longitudinally in both subjects when in bilingual programs than their Chinese EL counterparts. We find

no differences in program effectiveness by ELs' initial English proficiency. The following are appended: (1) Early Childhood Development Inventory Analysis; and (2) Additional Tables with Complete Set of Models. [This article was published in "Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis," v37 n4 p612-637 Dec 2015 (EJ1084502).]"

## Additional Organizations to Consult

Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) – <http://www.cal.org/resource-center/publications/helping-newcomer-students>

*From the website:* “Adolescent newcomer students are at risk in our middle and high schools funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and districts across the United States have been looking for effective program models to serve them. *Helping Newcomer Students Succeed in Secondary Schools and Beyond* has been written for educators and policymakers to focus attention on these newcomer adolescent English language learners at the middle and high school grades and to communicate promising practices for serving their educational and social needs.

The report is based on a 3-year national research study, Exemplary Programs for Newcomer English Language Learners at the Secondary Level, conducted by the Center for Applied Linguistics on behalf of the Carnegie Corporation of New York. This research project consisted of a national survey of secondary school newcomer programs; compilation of program profiles into an online, searchable database; and case studies of 10 of these programs, selected for their exemplary practices.”

REL Southwest archived Bridge Event “Helping Newcomers Succeed Through Effective Programs and Practices” – [http://relsouthwest.sedl.org/bridge\\_events/2016-0308\\_newcomers/index.html#](http://relsouthwest.sedl.org/bridge_events/2016-0308_newcomers/index.html#)

*From the website:* “Build your knowledge of programs and practices for newcomers—newly arrived immigrant students who need to learn English. Two presenters share research and lessons from the field.

Participants will increase their working knowledge of the following:

- Newcomer program models and features, curriculum and instructional practices, strategies for developing academic literacy and numeracy skills, and resource selection
- Case study research on family and community connections in newcomer programs—Evidence-based practices that districts are implementing to support newcomers”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> This website will be going offline in the near future. Please check this site for more information on this event: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southwest/index.asp>

## Methods

### *Keywords and Search Strings*

The following keywords and search strings were used to search the reference databases and other sources:

- Newcomers + English learners
- Newcomer programs
- Newcomer’s performance
- English language learners + newcomers
- Newcomer program success
- Mainstream ELLs
- Mainstream English Language Learner Programs
- General ELLs
- General English Language Learner Programs
- English immersion
- Academic outcomes + Dual Language
- Academic outcomes+ transitional ELD
- Socio-emotional + dual language
- Socio-emotional + transitional ELD

### *Databases and Resources*

We searched ERIC for relevant, peer-reviewed research references. ERIC is a free online library of more than 1.6 million citations of education research sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). Additionally, we searched Google Scholar and PsychInfo.

### *Reference Search and Selection Criteria*

When we were searching and reviewing resources, we considered the following criteria:

- *Date of the publication:* References and resources published from 2003 to present, were included in the search and review.
- *Search priorities of reference sources:* Search priority is given to study reports, briefs, and other documents that are published and/or reviewed by IES and other federal or federally funded organizations, academic databases, including ERIC, EBSCO databases, JSTOR database, PsychInfo, PsychArticle, and Google Scholar.
- *Methodology:* The following methodological priorities/considerations were given in the review and selection of the references: (a) study types—randomized control trials, quasi-experiments, surveys, descriptive data analyses, literature reviews, policy briefs, and so forth, generally in this order; (b) target population, samples (representativeness of the target population, sample size, volunteered or randomly selected, and so forth), study duration, and so forth; and (c) limitations, generalizability of the findings and conclusions, and so forth.

---

This memorandum is one in a series of quick-turnaround responses to specific questions posed by stakeholders in the Southwest Region (Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas), which is served by the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southwest at AIR. This memorandum was prepared by REL Southwest under a contract with the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences (IES), Contract ED-IES-91990018C0002, administered by AIR. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.