The Predicament of Generation 1.5
English Language Learners:
Three Disjunctures and a Possible Way Forward

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Abstract

This article reports key findings from a project that focused on the academic literacy development of children who are born and/or begin their formal schooling in Canada but are raised in homes where the societally dominant language is not the primary idiom. Analyses involved characterizing students' home ecological environments; assessing the nature of students' challenges in relation to school-based literacy demands; and documenting collaborations with professional educators in generating cognitively and pedagogically differentiated instructional approaches. Findings are interpreted as three disjunctive conditions that impede the development of academic literacy competencies and, thus, schooling success of G1.5 linguistic minority students.

Précis/Résumé

Cet article présente les principaux résultats d'un projet axé sur le développement de la littératie scolaire des enfants qui sont nés et / ou de commencer leur scolarité au Canada, mais sont élevés dans des foyers où la langue dominante socialement n'est pas l'idiome primaire. Analyses impliqués caractérisation des étudiants environnements domestiques écologiques, d'évaluer la nature des difficultés des élèves par rapport aux exigences d'alphabétisation en milieu scolaire, et la documentation des collaborations avec des professionnels de l'éducation dans la production cognitive et pédagogique approches pédagogiques différenciées. Les résultats sont interprétés comme trois conditions alternatives qui entravent le développement des compétences en littératie académique et, par conséquent, la réussite scolaire des élèves issus de minorités linguistiques G1.5.

Introduction

The Academic Literacy Development of Generation 1.5 English Language Learners

This article reports key findings from a collaborative project that focused on the academic literacy development of children who are born and begin their formal schooling in Canada but are raised in homes where the societally dominant language is not the primary idiom. Referred to as generation 1.5 (G1.5) because they share characteristics of both first- and second-generation immigrants (Rumbaut & Ima, 1988), the students whose academic competencies this project sought to illuminate do not fit into the traditional categories of nonnative speakers since they are both orally proficient in English and reasonably familiar with Canadian culture and schooling. Following C. Vasquez (2007), these students may be initially identified by teachers as "highly engaged and motivated"; by the time it is evident that their poor to average classroom performance outcomes are insufficient to ensure academic success, it is often too late to intervene within the particular school year. From recent research at the higher education (e.g., Roberge, 2002) and secondary (e.g., Forrest, 2006; Harklau, Losey, & Siegal, 1999) levels it is becoming evident that these students have characteristics and needs distinct from both immigrant language-minority and mainstream students.

What do we know about the characteristics of generation 1.5 English language learners? We know that students who are born in North America or arrive prior to beginning formal schooling may develop oral fluency in their heritage language but have not had and will typically not have an opportunity to develop literacy in the home variety (e.g., Cummins, 1991; Wong Fillmore, 1991). These characteristics are significant in light of research evidence accumulated over the past 25 years that linguistic, cognitive, and affective advantages accrue to students who develop literacy skills in two or more

languages and continue biliterate development at least through elementary school (see

Corson, 1993, Cummins & Danesi, 1990, and Garnett, 2012, for reviews). Indeed, one of

the most consistent findings in the literature on bilingualism is that literacy skills in the

first (L1) and second language (L2) are strongly related. In other words, L1 and L2

literacy are interdependent, or manifestations of a common underlying proficiency. This

interdependence principle is fundamental to understanding why literacy development in a

minority language is not just promoting proficiency in that language; it is also promoting

overall conceptual development and other forms of academic language that are

transferable across languages (Cummins, 1996).

By contrast, research has not produced sufficient evidence to support a hypothesis

based on an "oral-written continuum." Schecter and Bayley (2002), in an extensive study

of language maintenance and cultural identification among Mexican-descent families in

California and Texas, analyzed the oral and written narrative production of 40 focal

children in Grades 4, 5, and 6. They found no correlation between the oral and written

production of the focal children. On the contrary, they found these to represent distinct

dimensions of language proficiency that are separable and situated in localized practices

linked to the roles that English and Spanish played in the children's lives. In addition,

first language loss was more pronounced among families where children were not taught

to read or write Spanish either at home or at school.

Nor should the preceding summary be interpreted as suggestive of a stance

regarding "deficits" associated with particular child socialization practices or groups. Out

of-school literacies are not to be taken for granted in any demographic grouping,

including monolingual mainstream learners (cf. Lankshear, 1997); nor are school-based

reading and writing practices the only legitimate uses and functions of literacy (Martin-

Jones & Romaine, 1986). However, from sociolinguistic research (e.g., Bayley &

Schecter, 2003; Guerra, 1998) and from critiques emanating from the New Literacy

Studies (e.g., Gregory, Williams, Baker, & Street, 2004; Hull & Schultz, 2002; Street,

2005), we understand well that learners' school literacy practices are culturally

constructed, located both in power structure and in prior knowledge. We also know that

prior knowledge is complex, and to build upon it productively we need to acknowledge

that home background affects deep levels of identity and epistemology, including the

stances that learners take toward calls to reading and writing in formal educational

settings (Gough & Bock, 2001; Lee, 2007; Street, 1997).

The Study's Method

Overview

This 3-year-long study promoted both an empirical and collaborative research

agenda. Firstly, with regard to the students, the project investigated how 10- to 12-year-

old students' formative experiences with home languages predisposed their approaches to

the processing of academic content and the performance of school literacy activities.

More precisely, we researched how junior-middle school students used language in the

home and community, including patterns of language dominance, while we

simultaneously examined the students' reading and writing practices in response to

school-based curriculum. Secondly, in collaboration with practising educators, the project

sought to explore pedagogical responses and strategies that showed promise in providing

relevant academic support to students who may appear at first glance to be bilingual, but

for whom English may well prove the only language of cognitive engagement involving

reading and writing.

The following research questions were used as heuristics to guide the inquiry:

1. What learning strategies do students who fit this demographic profile exhibit in approaching school problem-solving tasks involving reading and writing?

2. How do specific home language use practices relate to generation 1.5 students' efforts to negotiate systematic academic literacies, or the specific competencies required to participate in formal learning contexts?

3. What kinds of educational strategies and interventions show promise in fostering the cognitive development of generation 1.5 English language learners?

The project's method involved a cyclical and recursive process of gathering and analyzing data, presenting findings to professional educators and other engaged stakeholder groups, gathering more data, and constructing interventionist formats that applied the findings of the empirical research to curricular approaches.

Site and Participants

This 3-year project was situated within one public school (JK–8) located in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) of Ontario. The school serves an ethnically and linguistically diverse student body in an urban context characterized by transnational migration, transience, and flux. The overwhelming majority of students are second-generation Canadians whose parents or families migrated from South Asia, preponderantly northern India. Languages spoken in students' homes were identified, through self-report data, in order of frequency, as Punjabi, Hindi, Gujarati, Tamil, and Urdu, as well as English.

Participants included: 24 students aligning to the demographic under study; their parents or primary caregivers[1] and, in some cases, siblings; and teachers and administrators associated with the collaborating school. Participating students—in Grades 4 or 5 in the first year of the study—were either born in Canada or arrived prior to their

beginning formal schooling. All lived in homes where a language other than English was spoken—although focal students varied widely in their active versus passive engagement of this language. Of the larger cohort, 7 families were selected for intensive case study.[2]

Procedures and Instrumentation

Data Collection

The project combined qualitative methodology that included in-depth interviewing and intensive ethnographic observation with some quantitative measures designed to process information on a large scale. To explore our questions fully, we collected a variety of data types, including:

1. *Structured interviews and informal conversations with 7 focal children and their primary caregivers—generally the child's birth parents.* Interview protocols elicited information on participants' language use patterns, their orientations to school-based literacy activities, and more broadly related contextual issues related to schooling. Areas covered also included: family demographics, including number and ages of siblings and other household residents, parental vocations, circumstances of migration, length of residence in Ontario for all family members; parents' orientations toward linguistic and/or cultural maintenance; language use and usage in the home; enabling and constraining factors associated with child's formal educational experiences and perceived success or lack of success in school-based literacy tasks.

2. *Academic literacies indicators.* The project employed several different types of indicators to construct "literacies profiles" for each of the focal students. These included: task-based reading and writing performances as related to standards of achievement and proficiency reflected in the provincial language arts curriculum framework; school report card assessments; teacher judgments—both oral and written; focal students' judgments

regarding their own academic competence (i.e., self-report data on language proficiency and relative strengths in different school subject matter areas); and students' scores on the provincial EQAO exercise (Grade 3).[3] Profiles also contained information gleaned from field observations regarding individual children's acquisition of and orientation toward genres, styles, and discourses associated with the activities of the after-school intervention that the project supported.

3. *Focus group discussions.* These were conducted with the full participating student cohort and with collaborating teachers, to monitor the progress of the after-school interventions and to compare findings obtained through the 7 intensive case studies with overall reported patterns of language and mode use, in- and out-of-school interactional patterns, and approaches to schoolwork.

4. *Participant observation.* Through field notes, audio recordings, and close monitorings of planned interventions in the context of an after-school program, we documented our ongoing collaborations with professional educators as well as the pedagogic framework(s) that emerged from the project's activist research agenda. In our analyses, we paid special attention to key moments, events, and turning points associated with an emergent interventionist framework for pedagogical scaffolding of the learning and teaching processes that the project sought to foster. As well, in the second year of the project we closely monitored the participatory learning behaviours of the 7 focal children we had selected for intensive study.

Data Analysis

Three major strands of analysis were undertaken: One strand involved a process of characterizing students' home-family ecological environments. The second involved one of assessing the nature of students' challenges in relation to school-based literacy

demands. The third strand involved documentation of the fruits of the collaborations with

professional educators, a process aimed at generating cognitively, pedagogically, and

culturally differentiated instructional approaches in light of project developments.

For the first strand—characterizing family ecological environments—information elicited

from interviews with the 7 focal families was compared, with special focus on

relationships among language choice and dimensions of language use such as: *domain*,

i.e., delineated areas of social life in which particular language practices predominate

(e.g., talk among family members in the home vs. peer play outside); *topic* (e.g.,

schoolwork, activities of a friend, emotional state); *register*, i.e., the type of language

used, considered on a dimension of formality ranging from intimate to formal; *mode*, i.e.,

the medium of language activity—speaking, reading, writing, computer technologies—

and within these, more specific genres (e.g., notes to friends, formal communications to

teachers); *age* of speaker and *rank* among siblings.

The second strand involved, for the most part, tracking of students' reading,

writing, and oral participation practices in response to school-based tasks. Portfolios

were assembled to document the oral language and literacy activities of the case study

children. Portfolios also include copies of school assignments and report cards, comments

from teachers, provincial test results, and additional items contributed by the child and/or

primary caregivers.

As for the third strand, the pedagogic framework the project sought to engender

developed out of ongoing collaborations with teachers (cf. Schecter & Cummins, 2003;

Schecter & Ippolito, 2008). In periodic group meetings with collaborating teachers, we

reviewed the data collected within the first two strands with a view to: (a) developing an

appreciation among educators of the educational value of transferable resources and skills

and the importance of making connections with students' extra-school experiences; (b)

generating pedagogic practices that built on this knowledge and were supportive of the

academic literacy development of generation 1.5 students as well as the agency of

teachers; and (c) developing texts that could be used more broadly for professional

education of teachers and administrators and to inform broader policy deliberations.

To prepare qualitative data for analyses, recordings of interviews and selected portions of

audio recordings of focus group and instructional sessions were transcribed.

Transcriptions and other data (observational notes, summaries, texts written or acted on

by focal students) were organized into tentative categories that record regularities and

patterns related to the research questions (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Data relating to case

study families were grouped to yield profiles of different generation 1.5 learners'

experiences with literacy and schooling. Comparisons were made across the families and

between struggling and more successful students. Through a process of analytic induction

(Goetz & Lecompte, 1984), we were able to bring into view the various complex forces

that shaped the literacy environments and learning foundations of generation 1.5 students

and the ways in which school-based policies promoted or, alternatively, impeded

equitable educational outcomes for these students.

Findings

What Students' School-Based Performances Revealed

Close observation of G1.5 students' problem-solving practices in relation to

school-based literacy tasks revealed lacunae in the children's English vocabulary

repertoires and, more generally, in their orientations toward problem solving that

impeded cognitive processing. An illuminating example in the first year related to lexical

access: the majority of the cohort—in Grade 4 or 5—were unable to solve a mathematical

puzzle involving the calculation of an area's perimeter. Initially it appeared as if the issue

was that they had forgotten either what the term *perimeter* meant or what they had been

taught about calculating a perimeter. Indeed, the first of these hypotheses was the case;

but more interestingly, it was also the case for the recent immigrant ESL students and

native English speakers in the class, most of whom successfully solved the problem. On

closer examination, students in the G1.5 cohort additionally did not understand the

meaning of the word *pen*, which also appeared in the problem (or its meaning in context).

The native English speakers *did* understand the meaning of the word in context and on

the basis of this information were able to deduce what *perimeter* meant and solve the

problem. The ESL students were initially stumped by *pen*, but because they could read

and (mostly) write in their native language and were permitted to carry and use pocket

dictionaries, they were able to sort themselves out and then apply the formula for solving

perimeter problems that they had learned. Indeed, our research team discovered that the

G1.5 cohort had difficulty with a good deal of vocabulary related to rural life, and that

very few had been to a farm in Canada, pointing us to identify areas or fields of

experiential learning with which familiarity might yield positive results with this student

cohort.

The above learning issue was compounded by the fact that G1.5 linguistic-

minority students experienced considerable difficulty in recognizing the kinds of

problems they were being asked to solve and the kinds of information they were being

asked to provide, and in retrieving the principles or procedures that they had used to

approach these kinds of tasks in the past. This issue of "problem-solving skills" was of

much concern to their caring teachers, who voiced frustration that there was "little to

show" for the academic support they provided to the students during regular school

hours, particularly in the areas of mathematics and language arts. The children seemed

unable to retain the principles or procedures they had used to approach generic tasks in

the past and retrieve the learning strategies they had been shown for future reference.

What the Home Observations Revealed

Visits with 7 case study children and their primary caregivers revealed a range of

strategies with regard to differential use of the heritage versus societal language in the

home and community. While at least one heritage language—Punjabi, Gujarati, Hindi,

Tamil, or Urdu—figured prominently in all 7 households, a result of living arrangements

that included grandparents, aunts, and other "extended family" (author's term) from the

country of origin, overwhelmingly (6 of 7) the focal children preferred to speak and

indeed used English in all interactional scenes and venues. These findings are especially

noteworthy given that additional family members who were members of the households

typically did not work outside the home and therefore opportunities for them to acquire

the societal language were limited. Indeed, of the 7 households, a majority contained two

cohorts of mutually unintelligible monolingual speakers, with the focal children's parents

serving as interpreters between older and younger generations.

Significantly, of the 7 focal children selected for case study, the parents of the two

students who were most successful academically—one a Gujarati speaker, one a Punjabi

speaker—attributed their children's (relative) school success to an intensive home

campaign to reinforce subject matter learning. For example, in addition to attending a

Gujarati heritage language program on Saturdays, Raj is enrolled in math and English

enrichment classes, also held on Saturdays. Gulfam, whose Urdu-speaking father and

Punjabi-speaking mother do not subscribe to a philosophy of linguistic and cultural

preservation, is even more successful academically than Raj. Gulfam's school success is

far from accidental, however, as we discover when the boy's father launches into a detailed account of the elaborate strategy used to support his son's academic development. This strategy involves the procurement of grade-level textbooks and home shadow instruction by father and high-school-aged sister of the full grade-level subject matter curriculum. Gulfam's father explains, "If I try to teach them in Punjabi . . . it's another struggle for them. I make it easier for them." In any case, "I don't care much about maintaining heritage . . . Time changes and then things change." We learn additionally that, unlike Raj who is subject to a policy of using Gujarati alone for spoken interactions in the home, Gulfam interacts with his father both inside and outside the home only in English.

Regarding attitudes to the children's schooling experiences, all of the caregivers we interviewed voiced the opinion that their children's educators took necessary steps, even beyond the call of duty, to create a welcoming environment for linguistic-minority students and observed that the school represented a positive social environment for their children. All, however, had major issues with the nature and quality of instruction that their children were receiving in Ontario public schools. One issue around which parents expressed significant discomfort had to do with expectations on the part of their children's educators regarding parental roles in and responsibilities for school-related work: They did not appreciate, nor were most in a position to practise, the fundamental principles of the contract for which their services were being enlisted, including monitoring their children's homework and engaging in mandated literacy practices such as reading to their children 20 minutes a day. In halting English,[4] Muthiah's Tamil-speaking father begins his wrenching testimony about his sense of helplessness around his son's continued failure to satisfy Ontario's grade-level academic requirements:

Muthiah is expecting the great English . . . Grade One to Five, always the teacher

complain to me he doesn't pick up the languages, he doesn't pick up the languages,

so what can I do? . . . The school decided what to do . . . 'cause Muthiah they say

can't talk or they can't read, write, they "get practice in the home, keep on

continuing he doing . . . more practice in the home . . . the parents to help" . . . They

are not doing. (Interview)

Muthiah's father concludes his lament: "We actually don't know, we come from Sri

Lanka . . . Whose is job? Schools is job." (Interview)

Additionally, most parents expressed frustration that their child did not understand

the homework problems they were being assigned and commented at relative length on

the stress-producing consequences for the family of students not receiving sufficient or

sufficiently clear in-class preparation and instructions for completing homework

assignments. Through their Punjabi-speaking translator, Harmen's parents plead their

case for:

more time for the children because sometimes they come home with the questions

that we do not understand or have a clue . . . So spend more time on the child so they

have a better understanding of how to do the homework. Not more homework but

more better understanding of how to do the work. Because sometimes the kids come

home from school with the work and they do not understand sometimes how to do

the work and then the parents have a hard time of what is expected. (Interview)

As we focus on Harmen's mother's facial expressions and vocal intonation, our Punjabi-

English interpreter continues to translate:

What she is saying sometimes they come home from school and they don't

understand the homework and they ask her and she tries her best but they don't

understand and they ask the grandfather's help and grandfather tries but no one

understands how to do it and they go back to school the next day—they get a note

that says homework not done. (Interview)

In the following excerpt, Khushi's mother's frustration at educators' response to her

proactive stance in support of her daughter's learning is palpable:

One time she got a homework and she couldn't you know like I writ- wrote "can you

please help her." I couldn't understand and they send me a note back and it says

"Khushi was not paying attention in the class so she should pay attention in the class

next time." (Interview)

Parents also complained despairingly about the absence of specific corrective

feedback from school personnel. Here is Khushi's mother again:

I went there and "can you show me Khushi's work what Khushi is not doing well in

the school," and she couldn't show me. She has nothing to show me there and I said

"you know you're telling me Khushi is not doing good in math and I am telling you

my daughter is really good in math because I know. She love math and . . . she is

getting A+ in the report card . . . I want to say you should show me the work" and

she got up and she start looking at it and she couldn't find it. (Interview)

Parents additionally remarked that this particular dimension of Canadian schooling—

which also involved in-class exchanges of work between individual students for the

purpose of marking tests and quizzes—compared unfavourably with education in their

country of origin where the home was not expected to play a complementary role (with

schooling) in children's development of academic skills. Indeed, in examining the focal

children's written homework assignments and class quizzes, the author noted many

errors, a finding that was additionally disconcerting because this material was sent home as *corrected* work.

What the Pedagogic Collaborations Revealed

While the preceding observations are not encouraging, they are useful in illuminating the reasons that children who are born and/or begin their formal schooling in Canada but who speak a minority language in the home may be at risk in terms of their development of academic literacy skills, as well as the nature is of the cognitive gaps that they may experience. Approximately one year into the project, the collaborative team shifted its priorities to privilege an enrichment-oriented mediation strategy that had as its primary objective "helping generation 1.5 students learn how to learn." This agenda revolved around a once-a-week after-school intervention that combined an experiential learning component, based on Vygotsky's (1986) insights regarding syllogistic reasoning in the form of "everyday concepts" that develops as an outgrowth of children's interactions with facilitating others in daily experiences, and an enrichment-oriented, mediated activity component (Vygotsky, 1978).

For the experiential learning component, the team planned a series of field trips (farm, art gallery, waste disposal and recycling plant), the envisioned outcomes of which were to enhance students' semantic repertoires and extend their knowledge bases about processes related to the production and trajectories of everyday goods and services. This component was integrated into a series of thematically linked hands-on activities (for example, following the field trip: cooking vegetable soup) designed to reinforce and extend students' acquisition of related concepts and vocabulary. With regard to mediated learning, activities were aimed at facilitating children's acquisition of academic subject matter though bridging activities that involve applying concepts gleaned through

experiential or everyday activities (Hedegaard, 1998; van Oers, 1998), metacognitive talk about language and academic tasks/problems (e.g., Gibbons, 2003; Toohey, 2000), and experimentation with different genres and discourse forms designed to increase familiarity and facility with academic discourse (Gutierrez, 1995). For example, at the start of the arts-based sequence, students were introduced to terms such as *line, space, texture, colour, shape, form* and exposed to a series of activities that would have them use these terms in metacognitive talk about artistic creations. Another experience within the arts-based sequence involved a multi-modal activity that engaged students in observing and representing the "blue"-ness of their environment through painting, written and oral texts. That is, students were asked to generate a short, descriptive text about the scene depicted in their "blue" paintings and to prepare short oral presentations that expanded upon these descriptive texts. A third example – again within the arts-based sequence – saw teams of students engaged in competition to design and build the tallest, most stable, free-standing structure from recyclable materials. A crierion for the competition involved students explaining their team's strategy: "We put the heaviest and biggest stuff on the bottom and the lightest on the top…'cause it will be stable." As well, discursive genres that were difficult for students to access, e.g., protocols for formal debates, were modified and introduced through bridging discussions related to recent hands-on experiences to which students had been exposed (ex. exposition on the advantages of urban versus rural living following field trip to farm).

In the remainder of this section, I offer some observations about aspects of the pedagogic collaborations that I found to be encouraging as well as other aspects experienced as problematic.

The experiential and bridging components constituting the interventionist strategy that ensued from the school-university collaboration without doubt bore fruit. Regarding the former, aside from the obvious social advantages—friendship, diversion, conviviality—of off-site excursions to farms, art galleries, museums, recycling plants, there is evidence that academic benefits accrued as well, as we noted an increase in focal children's uses of related vocabulary and concepts in class discussions and problem-solving rationales. One direct result from the farm visit – an experience we scheduled relatively early on in the intervention -- was augmentation of students' active vocabularies regarding objects associated with agricultural production – *pen, hay, straw, maze, gourd, kid, scylo, llama* -- lexical items that appeared regularly in math problems that students encountered both in textbooks and on standardized exams.

Academic bridging activities, ensuing from the subject matter engaged during the off-site visits (e.g., urban versus rural living, artistic creation versus commodity), elicited more student risk-taking as well, with original arguments and complex sentence structures slowly replacing the reductive, subject-verb-object (SVO) oral texts that characterized students' school-based performances at the outset. For example, when we first encountered the students, the following represented a typical response to an elicitation calling for an opinion or judgment response. Asked which part of the school day he preferred, one student responded: "I like gym. " However, after we introduced strategies (such as Venn diagrams), designed to elicit more elaborated discursive formats for the presentation of arguments, the majority of students were able to produce substantive rationales following their use of disposition verbs: "I like living in the country because the city is dirty."

Concomitantly, teachers and researchers associated with the collaboration enhanced their own pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986), as they grew more adept at designing strategic interventions aimed at eliciting more elaborate process and meta-process responses and rationales. Indeed, as the project progressed the instructional team learned to pose less open-ended questions, such as asking what students thought of a video they just watched. Consequently, responses such as "I liked the video because it was interesting" became less frequent, and ones providing specific, substantive information in response to more focused elicitations ("Can anyone give an example of adaptation that they saw in the video?"), more frequent.

We did, however, encounter some setbacks with regard to the mediated learning framework. The most significant of these is that we have been unable to pursue with students a strategy of metacognitive awareness about problem-solving procedures and skills with the degree of deliberateness and intentionality that research has shown to exert a transformative effect on cognitive structures (e.g., Feuerstein, 1990; Passow, 1980). The teacher collaborators proved resistant to pursuing learning experiences with this level of explicitness related to processes of metacognition. Their own professional backgrounds had not prepared them to seek out the sorts of logical and procedural clarifications that would render them increasingly attuned to their own mental processes, and they were uncomfortable engaging students in focused discussion about academic problem-solving strategies.

During the second year, following from our initial finds, the project secured the services of an educational consultant, an accomplished teacher with a strong research background and expertise in promoting student awareness of the types of cognitive processing that underlie successful academic learning. This strategy met with a degree of

success: indeed, in interviews and focus group discussions the children qualified these related "problem-solving" sequences as the most "helpful" of all the activities they engaged in in the program. However, after several months the project teachers decided that they preferred to design and navigate all the segments of the intervention on their own. For a short time (2 months) they did attempt to incorporate some shorter activities that invoked problem-solving strategies of a deliberative nature, but they did not systematically debrief on the metacognitive aspects with students at the end of these sequences. Eventually, this type of activity was abandoned entirely.

In retrospect, we might have anticipated this development. Indeed, for teachers, this deliberative approach would have required a radical shift away from the meandering story grammar of everyday schooling, at least at the primary-junior-middle school levels where students generally follow through with the same teacher throughout the school day. We had no right to expect such a departure from these longstanding, professionally entrenched semiotic practices. Also, from experience with earlier collaborations with professional educators I am aware that the success of such endeavours rests significantly on the reciprocal respect that participants develop for the domain-specific expertise that different stakeholders bring to the table. By engaging a pedagogic facilitator to experiment with cognitive enrichment strategies designed to help learners to think through a problem-solving process through exposure to explicit problem-solving strategies, I had inadvertently blurred the psychological demarcation lines between domains of expertise associated different professional stakeholder groups. While my motives were well-intentioned -- I did not feel I had a right to exact from my collaborators a commitment to invest time and resources in the acquisition of technical knowledge associated with training in instrumental enrichment approaches for

enhancement of cognitive reasoning -- I appreciate how this additional presence could have been perceived as intrusive by colleagues.

Discussion: Three Disjunctures and a Way Forward

The project of which key findings are summarized in this article was intended to help redress a lacuna in the research on literacy development and academic achievement among linguistic-minority students and to stimulate needed dialogue about appropriate educational provision for generation 1.5 linguistic-minority students across schooling levels. At this point—that is, at the conclusion of the study—while we have made significant gains in understanding the deep structures of generation 1.5 English language learners' processings of cognitive academic demands, we have also identified several significant problems regarding equitable access to subject matter competencies for this demographic. I interpret these problems as a series of disjunctive circumstances. Firstly, it is clear that the overwhelming majority of generation 1.5 English language learners will have missed opportunities to develop reading and writing skills in a minority language and therefore will not be able to benefit from acquiring the kind of underlying language proficiency that research has demonstrated is transferable to the acquisition of literacy skills in the societal language (Fishman, 1991). Thus, while progressive, research-friendly school districts within Ontario and, indeed, across Canada now openly acknowledge the beneficial effects of reading and writing in a first language for linguistic-minority students' academic development in English and, moreover, promote board- and school-based policies that would encourage families of English language learners to "maintain" their heritage language, the conditions that most beneficially promote the transfer of cognitive skills across languages do not obtain. Moreover, in all but one of the 24 households that constituted our study cohort, these conditions are not

recoverable: that is, for our focal students, linguistic maintenance, while always worthwhile for its culturally enriching value (Schecter & Bayley, 2002; O. Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez, & Shannon, 1994), would at this point entail the teaching and learning of the minority language as a second, not a native, variety.

The second disjunctive condition we identified concerns a tension between a pedagogical *zeitgeist* prevalent in Western professional educator circles regarding roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders in the teaching and learning enterprise and the situations of linguistic-minority families who are unable to hold up their end of a state-authored accountability contract because they do not practise—and most of them do not share—the basic terms of engagement on which the exercise is premised. While all of the linguistic-minority parents we spoke with were deeply concerned with their children's academic success, most felt unable to respond to the school's expectations regarding their facilitative roles beyond maintaining sporadic contact with their children's teachers. Specifically, they felt incapable of helping their children with subject matter learning and resented being asked to perform mediating functions that were clearly beyond their capabilities. Even the two families who took matters into their own hands with regard to their children's academic subject matter preparation did not hold the view that it was their responsibility to facilitate in this manner. On the contrary, they were clear that they were exerting their agency in the absence of adequate school resources and sufficiently rigorous academic feedback, responsibility for which they placed squarely at the feet of the educational infrastructure.

The third disjuncture relates to an implicit standard of intersubjective ethics operating just below the surface of a professional subculture in which the valuing of linguistic and cultural diversity is demonstrated through positive affect rather than

through a sense of responsibility to foster students' learning through intellectually

challenging, academically rigorous, culturally responsive curriculum. Indeed, study of

patterns of language use and interactions associated with the 2 focal children who were

relatively successful academically revealed the orchestration and oversight of a shadow

schooling process that paralleled, supplemented, and filled the gaps associated with the

public one supported by Ontario taxpayers. Tellingly, the one commonality among all the

caregivers we interviewed, regardless of the child's level of academic attainment, was

their unequivocal unwillingness to trust their children's preparation for future societal

opportunity and mobility to the haphazard practices of public schooling. Where parents

differed was in their perceived agentive capacity to engage alternative means to support

their children academically.

In truth, I am not entirely certain why professional educators proved so resistant

to the prospect of making connections with students' home environments and cultural

backgrounds. I can, however, assert that practitioners understood "bridging" to mean

modification and simplification of instructional content -- and their roles as mediators to

involve adaptation of material and concepts taken directly from second and third grade

curriculum texts -- where enrichment approaches compatible with a "cultural modeling"

framework (Lee, 2007; Martinez, 2010), arguably, held greater promise for bridging

distances between students' cognitive processing and the academic objectives to which

they would be held accountable. One example of a culturally inappropriate strategy

involved a thematic unit on animals where students were asked to identify characteristics

of the animal they were assigned "that match your family." Such an assignment was

incongruent with the backgrounds of students of Muslim, Hindu and Sikh religious

affiliation. In my view, the instructional team would have better succeeded in their efforts

to foster the children's academic literacy development by leveraging information related to the children's everyday language practices (e.g., uses of home language in tandem with computer skills to stay in contact with friends and family Pakistan, knowledge gleaned from watching programs on the popular Hindi-language television station to which the majority of the cohort had access) that the researchers acquired (and shared) from interviews with family members and focus group discussions with students.

With regard to a way forward, additional experimentation with interventionist formats that ensue from recent research on instructional practices that have shown success in addressing human learning challenges would represent a positive direction. In my current collaborations with professional educators, we are pursuing a more systematic strategy that combines insights from both Vygotsky's paradigm and that of clinician and educator Reuven Feuerstein. While the paradigms differ in their appreciations of required degrees of deliberateness and intensiveness associated with mediation that has the capacity to exert a transformative effect on cognitive structures—with Feuerstein placing greater emphases on intentionality and transcendence (Kozulin & Presseisen, 1995)—both orientations converge on the usefulness of mediated, intersubjective learning experiences. This strategy continues to involve a significant experiential learning component based on Vygotsky's (1986) understandings of "everyday" learning whereby "spontaneous" concepts are not normally explicitly introduced but rather acquired through exposure. Such experiential learning continues to be important because, as van der Veer (1998) points out, academic learning presupposes everyday concepts as its foundation. This strategy also continues to involve bridging activities that both link and integrate concepts acquired from experiential learning with academic subject matter and discourses associated with formal schooling processes.

However, in addition our interventions integrate an explicit, cognitive enrichment learning orientation, focused on how learners think through a problem-solving process and consisting of short, interleaved (Rohrer & Pashler, 2010), high-yield activities designed to build higher-order cognitive skills by making academic problem-solving strategies explicit (Feuerstein, 1990; Passow, 1980). Feuerstein has been unequivocal about the need for practitioners to undergo rigorous prior training to prepare them to implement this kind of program (Feuerstein, Rand, Hoffman & Miller, 1980). While I am not convinced that the Feuerstein model, which consists of a mandatory teacher preparation component that includes didactics for navigating individuals' mental functioning, is strictly necessary, I acknowledge the need for an intensive campaign that renders professional educators increasingly confident in planning and conducting activities designed to both make explicit and change certain processes of metacognition related to functions such as planning, voluntary attention and inattention, logical memory, problem-solving, and evaluation (cf. Lantolf & Appel, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978).

Conclusion

Based on the findings of a 3-year empirical, collaborative research program, this article seeks to characterize the predicament—both cognitive and sociocultural in dimension and scope—of generation 1.5 English-language learners in relation to Canadian schooling and recommend a strategy for moving forward with a comprehensive approach involving enrichment-oriented, mediated learning activities designed to apprentice students into ways of knowing that are compatible with an academic discourse community. This approach will by right and also by necessity involve some movement on the part of professional educators—at least a willingness to develop targeted pedagogic strategies and approaches and to question basic assumptions about roles and prerogatives

of various stakeholders in the matters and relevancies of mass public schooling. Of course, it would be even more productive if we could negotiate some of these crucial recontextualizations at the stage of preservice teacher education (e.g., Ball, 2000; Duesterberg, 1998), so that conditions associated with this vulnerable demographic are not misattributed to inferior levels of language development (as opposed to different experiences) and the emphasis remains on mediation, as opposed to *re*-mediation.

I would make one final observation with regard to the larger agenda that seeks to uncover patterns of systematicity and to address issues of equitable access that I have summarized in this paper. At this juncture, I do not find helpful generalized claims, ensuing from undifferentiated data sets, relating to the academic problem-solving abilities and home and community literacy practices of students from a variety of linguistic-minority groups at differing points in the immigration cycle. Instead, I would urge a more comprehensive research agenda—involving all levels of formal schooling—committed to the study of the academic problem-solving practices of Canadian-born language minority students, and to the exploration of how these practices may be mediated beneficially through responsive and, equally important, respons*ible* educational processes.

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Authors' Note

Notes

[1] Not all caregivers were the children's birth parents. We found different arrangements, involving parents' siblings and grandparents in various combinations. For example, one focal child was being raised by his birth mother and the husband of the birth mother's sister in whose home the focal child resides. Because as a rule caregivers did not wish the children to be aware of these intimate details, we were careful to elicit basic information about the structure of households when the children were not present.

[2] In the original study design, 6 of the 24 participating focal children and their families were to be selected for intensive case study. However, as a precautionary measure—since it is not atypical to lose a key respondent in the course of a 3-year project—we undertook intensive case studies with 7 of the participating families. All 7 families remained robust participants throughout the study.

[3] Normally, Ontario Grade 4 and 5 students' academic profiles would also contain the results of their performances on two norm-referenced standardized measures—the Canadian Cognitive Ability Test (CCAT) and the Canadian Achievement Test (CAT/3). However, in this board the official policy is that students who are not at Stage 3 (using English independently in most contexts) or 4 (using English with a proficiency approaching that of a first-language speaker) of the Ontario Ministry of Education's Second Language Acquisition and Literacy Development rubric do not take the CCAT or CAT/3 tests, as the results are considered unreliable. Significantly, only one of the 24

students in this cohort was at Stage 3 English when the CCAT and CAT/3 tests were
administered.

[4] In preliminary contact, where caregivers self-reported that they did not feel comfortable
transacting interviews in English, I secured the services of translators who were familiar
with the goals of the project to assist with the home visits. Indeed, this was the case with
two Punjabi and one Gujarati native-speaking caregivers. However, in our initial contact
with Saarkaan's mother, she did not identify a need for a Tamil-speaking translator. Once
the interview was underway, notwithstanding the father's limited English-language
resources we were transfixed and transported by his compelling account, his obstructed
English a poignant testament to the frustrations experienced by linguistic minority
families as a result of unrealistic expectations on the part of schooling systems.