

English Language Learners Who Are Provided Specific Extra Grammar  
Instruction/Exercise Will Significantly Improve Their English Language Skills as  
Measured by the Highpoint Unit Assessment.

---

A Special Project  
Presented to  
Dr. McPherson  
Heritage University

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirement for the Degree of  
Masters of Education

---

Gonzalo Guillén  
Summer 2007

FACULTY APPROVAL

English language learners who are provided specific extra grammar instruction/exercise will significantly improve their English language skills as measured by the Highpoint Unit Assessment.

Approved for the Faculty

\_\_\_\_\_, Faculty Advisor

\_\_\_\_\_, Faculty Advisor

\_\_\_\_\_, Faculty Advisor

## ABSTRACT

Grammar instruction had been the driving force behind English classes for over 100 years and the pedagogy of English had changed little. What remained a fact was that the student population had changed in those 100 years and the reasons for education had changed as well. The present study focused on the need to comprehend the relationship between the use of daily oral language instruction and its effects on test scores for the Highpoint reading intervention program for Native and Non-native English speakers. The study did not support the hypothesis that students who received daily oral language were significantly different than students who did not receive daily oral language. Significance was determined for  $p$  at .05, .01, and .001 levels.

PERMISSION TO STORE

I, Gonzalo Guillén, do hereby irrevocably consent and authorize Heritage University Library to file the attached Special Project entitled, *English language learners who are provided specific extra grammar instruction/exercise will significantly improve their English language skills as measured by the Highpoint Unit Assessment*. And make such paper available for the use, circulation and/or reproduction by the library. The paper may be used at Heritage University Library and all site locations.

I state at this time the contents of this paper are my work and completely original unless properly attributed and/or used with permission.

I understand that after three years the paper will be retired from the Heritage University Library. If I choose it is my responsibility to retrieve the paper at that time. If the paper is not retrieved, Heritage University may dispose of it.

\_\_\_\_\_, Author

\_\_\_\_\_, Date

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
FACULTY APPROVAL.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
PERMISSION TO STORE.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v-vii
LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
CHAPTER 1.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Background for the Project.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Purpose of the Project.....	3
Delimitations.....	3
Assumptions.....	4
Hypothesis.....	5
Null Hypothesis.....	5
Significance of the Project.....	5
Procedure.....	6
Definition of Terms.....	7
Acronyms.....	8

	Page
CHAPTER 2.....	9
Review of Selected Literature.....	9
Introduction.....	9
A Brief History of Grammar Instruction.....	9
Grammar Instruction for Native English Speakers.....	11
Grammar Instruction for Non-Native English Speakers.....	14
Selected ESL Instructional Techniques.....	16
Summary.....	20
CHAPTER 3.....	21
Methodology and Treatment of Data.....	21
Introduction.....	21
Methodology.....	21
Participants.....	22
Instruments.....	22
Design.....	22
Procedure.....	23
Treatment of the Data.....	24
Summary.....	24
CHAPTER 4.....	25
Analysis of the Data.....	25

	Page
Introduction.....	25
Description of the Environment.....	25
Hypothesis/Research Question.....	26
Null Hypothesis.....	26
Results of the Study.....	26
Findings.....	27
Discussion.....	28
Summary.....	31
CHAPTER 5.....	32
Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations.....	32
Summary.....	32
Conclusion.....	32
Recommendations.....	33
REFERENCES.....	34-38

## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1, <i>t</i> -test for independent Samples.....	29
Table 2, Null Hypothesis and Hypothesis Test for significance.....	29
Table 3, Test Scores for X group.....	30
Table 4, Test Scores for Y group.....	30

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

#### Background for the Project

The lack of direction from the top of the education hierarchy coupled with the laissez-faire attitude of officials and administrators has created an environment where educators have been held to higher standards with little support or direction from the latest trainings and educational research available. This prevailing image of the American public school system prompted President George W. Bush to encourage the United States Congress to pass the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2002. Which held states accountable for their academic performance as stated by President Bush “Student achievement is not where it should be.” (Spellings 2007)

The NCLB Legislation was received with mixed feelings by all those it affected. On one hand standards were raised for education and on the other many issues were either ignored or eliminated by the Act with little or no direction from the Federal Government on how to treat problems facing education, mainly teaching reading and writing to native speakers and non-native speakers.

Higher standards were deemed inarguable and children in the United States deserved the highest standards of education mandated by the NCLB Act. Where the NCLB Act fell short was in the funding and research of effective teaching practices. Too many times mandates were left unfunded but just as detrimental and disturbing was the lack of support for research and

implementation of curriculum that has made a difference in increasing student achievement, especially in terms of reading and writing. Teachers were often left without training and research concerning the latest and most effective ways of educating children. When speaking of English instruction for non English speakers, Secretary of Education Paige stated, “Whether or not it is advisable to completely shut the door on native-language instruction is a decision that has to be made at the point of instruction” (Denver Post, 2002). When arguing that teacher’s classroom needs were undermined by education officials in other contexts, Paige later stated “Some children just can't learn’ is the unofficial, unspoken motto--and it is the problem. We let the adults in the system drive the decisions, not the concerns of the children” (Paige, 2004). Too often, educators relied on old techniques that were recently updated and changed, this was especially true in the realm of teaching children English whether native or non native speakers.

### Statement of the Problem

The way that English has been taught has changed little in the last one hundred years, yet the world has changed immensely, during this time period. Higher accountability on standardized tests and the education of English as a Second Language (ESL) students required research based changes to increase low student achievement. If changes were not made students would be taught with methods that were inefficient and ineffective, further lowering the achievement on standardized tests. When referring to grammar instruction Ferris (2002) stated,

“Again, the research evidence is inconclusive because grammar instruction has not been isolated from other pedagogical techniques and because the nature of the grammar instruction itself is almost never specified in the research reports” (p. 27).

Phrased as a question, the problem which represented the focus of the present study may be stated as follows: To what extent did English Language skills improve when ESL students were provided specific extra grammar instruction?

#### Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this experimental research project was to determine whether providing specific extra grammar instruction for ESL students significantly improved their English language skills as measured by the Highpoint unit assessment. To accomplish this purpose, a review of selected literature was conducted, essential baseline data were obtained and analyzed, and related conclusions and recommendations were formulated.

#### Delimitations

The present study was conducted during the first half of the 2006-2007 school year at Washington Middle School (WMS) in the Yakima School District (YSD) in Washington State. The study used the Highpoint standards-based language intervention system published by Hampton Brown Publishing. Data were obtained from utilization of the Highpoint Intervention program assessment tools. According to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

(OSPI) website, WMS with a demographic population of 750 enrolled, 81% Hispanic, 12% White, 3.5% African American, and 3.5% Native American students. Ninety five percent of the student body qualified for the free and reduced lunch program. The level of Transitional Bilingual students was 31%. Washington Middle School was also a Magnet school where students who resided outside of the school's boundaries could attend for instruction in Art and Technology. Students who participated in the study were not part of the Magnet program.

### Assumptions

The assumption was made that the Highpoint Intervention Curriculum, designed around a pacing schedule, would allow teachers to follow a consistent instructional program assigned to all schools in the district. Teachers included in the study were expected to attend Highpoint training sessions throughout 2006-2007 with regards to the Highpoint Curriculum. In service trainings for the 2006-2007 was cancelled due to circumstances beyond the district's control. The further assumption was made that the Highpoint Curriculum would be proven an effective intervention for students that had language skills below grade level as well as students that were transitioned out of the school's ESL program. Students were placed in the Highpoint Curriculum program based on the curriculum's Diagnosis and Curriculum Inventory. Finally, the Highpoint curriculum, which contained a scope and sequence that included, Language Development and

Communication, Vocabulary, Reading and Writing, provided a balanced program of explicit grammar instruction for English Language Learners.

#### Hypothesis or Research Question

English language learners who are provided specific extra grammar instruction/exercise will significantly improve their English language skills as measured by the Highpoint Unit Assessment.

#### Null Hypothesis

There will be no significant difference in ELL student's skills among students who are provided extra grammar instruction as measured by the Highpoint Unit Assessment. Significance was determined at  $p \leq$  at .05, .01, and .001 levels.

#### Significance of the Project

Students that could not understand the complexities of English grammar would not be able to succeed in school. This was especially important for ESL students as well as students that struggle as native English speakers. Student achievement was directly related to teacher student time being used effectively with proven curriculum supplements. Students needed language skills to survive in a global economy; they also needed to communicate effectively outside of an academic environment.

#### Procedure

Permission to undertake the study was provided by the WMS building's Principal (Mr. Lorenzo Alvarado), In March, 2007. Data from the participating 7<sup>th</sup> grade Highpoint classes was collected by the reading coach at WMS. Assessment tools used were provided by the Highpoint Curriculum package. Data from these tests were compiled on an Excel spreadsheet, and were obtained directly from the school's reading coach. The study used two classrooms, both 7<sup>th</sup> grade level B Highpoint intervention classes. One of the classes used one hour of daily oral language exercises and the other did not. All data were compiled anonymously to keep the study as objective as possible. The reading coach acquired any materials and information needed from the classroom that used daily oral language. The classroom that did not use daily oral language followed the scripted Highpoint Curriculum and no other additional grammar exercises were used. Data were compared and tested to determine any significant difference between the two subsets of information. One subset, classroom A, had 11 students: Classroom B had 18 students. Classroom A received daily oral language, and Classroom B followed the Highpoint Curriculum script only. Before each Unit test was administered, students were to have completed four chapter tests as well as a written test prior to each unit assessment.

### Definition of Terms

Significant terms used in the context of the present study have been defined as follows:

Daily Oral language. Daily grammar lessons that used a sentence or a passage with grammar errors that the students then corrected for grammar errors.

Experimental Research Research in which at least one independent variable is manipulated, other relevant variables are controlled, and the effect on one or more dependent variables is observed.

Explicit Grammar Establishing as the prime objective of a lesson (or part of a lesson) the explanation of how a morphosyntactic rule or pattern works, with some reference to metalinguistic terminology, and providing examples of this rule in a linguistic, though not necessarily a functional, context.

Magnet School. A Public School that specialized in a specific subject area and drew students from outside the schools boundaries.

Native Speakers. People who used English as their first language.

Non-Native Speaker: People who used a foreign non English language as their first language.

t test. An inferential statistics technique used to determine whether the means of two groups are significantly different at a given probability level.

t test for independent samples. A parametric test of significance used to determine whether, at a selected probability level, a significant difference exists between the means of two independent samples.

## Acronyms

BICS. Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills

CAL Center for Applied Linguistics

CALP. Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

ELL. English Language Learners

ERIC. Education Resources Information Center

ESL. English as a Second Language

L1. Student's native or primary language

L2. Student's second language

NCLB. The No Child Left Behind Act enacted in 2002

OSPI. Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

SAT. Previously known as the Scholastic Aptitude Test

WLPT. Washington Language Proficiency Test

WMS. Washington Middle School

YSD. Yakima School District

## CHAPTER 2

### Review of Selected Literature

#### Introduction

The review of selected literature presented in Chapter 2 has been organized to address the following research topics:

1. A Brief History of Grammar Instruction.
2. Grammar Instruction for Native English Speakers.
3. Grammar Instruction for Non-Native English Speakers.
4. Selected ESL Instructional Techniques.
5. Summary

The preponderance of research cited in Chapter 2 was current within the past five years. Key resources utilized included Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), The Internet, and ProQuest. Information obtained from a hand-search of selected materials was also incorporated.

#### A Brief History of Grammar Instruction

In a speech delivered to the Heritage Foundation in December, 2004, by then Secretary of Education Rod Paige. Paige called for an increase in teacher accountability. Secretary Paige claimed, “We knew the system of education in our nation was withering. ‘Some children just can't learn’ is the unofficial, unspoken motto--and it is the problem” (p. 3). This authority claimed that administrators and teachers were not making decisions with the concerns of children in mind. Paige then cited a statistic that employers were spending 3 billion dollars a year

on correcting their workers writing skills. Paige laid blame on the very adults that he argued, two years earlier, had the power to determine instruction. In an editorial in the Denver Post Paige left the issue of curriculum adoption to teachers, signifying that teachers were prepared to make those decisions on their own. Said Paige: “Whether or not it is advisable to completely shut the door on native-language instruction is a decision that has to be made at the point of instruction” (p. E 06). Language instruction has not had a solid base of support from the federal government even with the NCLB act acclaimed as the cure to all of education’s ills.

A Washington Post article (2006) reported that news surrounding the Scholastic Aptitude Test SAT and the constant politicization of education in America constantly targeted education and what the public viewed as fundamentals of education, reading and writing. The Washington Post (2006) article focused on the reemergence of grammar teaching as a way to get students better prepared for the SAT’s new written assessment that was added in 2005. Teachers were now using sentence diagramming, and traditional grammar drills of days past. The Post concluded the article with a quotation from a grammarian identified as Amy Benjamin who stated, “We have armies of teachers, elementary teachers and English teachers, who don’t have the language to talk about language, its kind of their dirty little secret” (p.4).

The BBC news (2005) focused on a research study that used one hundred years of grammar research to identify which was the most effective form of

grammar instruction. The study by the University of York concluded that formal grammar did little to increase writing proficiency, and that education officials in England subsequently made changes to the English Educational system according to the York Study. The report also expressed that even high ranking education officials could not believe the conclusions of the report because it undermined methods that used formal grammar instruction.

The two prominent researchers related to the grammar debate were Truscott and Ferris. Ferris (2004) explained that Truscott had overlooked some positive effects of grammar correction. Students preferred to receive grammar correction when they received their written compositions from teachers. Truscott (1996) argued that grammar correction only created pseudo-learning and that pseudo-learning had little or no value on what the students needed to learn English. Students were trained to spot errors but had little or no ability to recognize and to explain the rule used to determine a grammatical error (p. 347). Together these two authorities created an interest focused on the issue of affective grammar instruction.

#### Grammar Instruction for Native English Speakers

According to Andrews et al. (2004), Gray (2004), Myles (2002), teaching Native English Speaking Children how to read and write in school has remained one of the fundamental principle of learning in the United States. Too often English instruction has been equated with teaching grammar as though it was the only component to English teaching. Research conducted by Nunan (2005)

related to the effectiveness of specific grammar effectiveness techniques. This authority explained how proper grammar had always been a sign of prestige and that we still teach grammar as though we were in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Today, social class distinctions in English language usage have become less visible.

Unfortunately grammar drills and memorization of rules had been the cornerstone of English teaching that many English teachers refused to relinquish. Wolfram (2003) argued that language was not an indicator of intelligence and that vernacular languages contained their own set of prescriptive rule and norms.

Sociolinguistics aside, the resurgence of explicit grammar instruction was based on some English teachers' perceptions of explicit grammar effectiveness. Explicit Grammar instruction typically encompassed a wide variety of teaching techniques, as stated by Macaro & Masterman (2006). The general agreement was that explicit grammar instruction represented, "references to metalinguistic terminology, and providing examples of this rule in a linguistic, though not necessarily a functional, context" (p. 298). Daily oral language and sentence diagramming fell into this category. Macaro & Masterman conducted a study with students learning French as a way to increase their college entrance exam grammar scores. Their study underwent grammar instruction to experimentally prove the effectiveness of explicit grammar instruction. Macaro & Masterman concluded that after students were taught how to identify grammar errors out of context, they were unable to write with fewer grammatical errors than the control group, which had not received grammar correction exercises. The group that was

taught explicit grammar did however score better on a test that was administered for “proceduralized knowledge” involving particular grammar rules. The experiment mirrored other studies of grammar instruction effectiveness that concentrated on explicit grammar but did little to improve grammar skills. Grammar skills learned lacked any usefulness in terms of reading and writing skills. Although this did not definitively establish a need to remove explicit grammar instruction, it did raise questions about the effectiveness of grammar instruction on school age children. According to Krashen (2004) differing explanations have raised questions concerning the real meaning of grammar and its importance. Was it a tool? Was it static? Was it dynamic? Answers to their questions varied according to context. Teachers of Native English Speakers had always viewed teaching grammar as important to their job that was never contested. This authority argued that reading could be used as a way to teach grammar, while others saw Native English speaking students as empty vessels in to which grammar rules were dropped to create mini grammarians. What was needed was more research on the effects of explicit grammar exercises on students, and a common understanding of what grammar was.

Blaauw-Hara (2006) made reference to five rules of grammar instruction deemed fundamental for communication; these included:

Grammar 1. Grammar that people internalized as self speak.

Grammar 2. Internalized grammar to aid in thinking.

Grammar 3. Related to a persons self concept of good and bad grammar.

Grammar 4. Was concerned with grammar learned in school, educational.

Grammar 5. Related to stylistic writing.

Blaauw-Hara suggested at the conclusion of his study on grammar instruction was that the best way to teach grammar was to focus on the first 3 internalized rules of grammar. This was seen as preparation, before students could be expected to produce stylized writing and to associate grammar with educational value.

One attempt made to address the effects of explicit grammar instruction led to the conclusion that more research was needed before a definitive answer could be found. Feng & Powers (2005) studied the benefits of explicit grammar instruction. Specifically they wanted to determine the short and long term effects of error-based grammar instruction. These authorities concluded that error-based grammar instruction was effective and that short mini-lessons were ineffective. Explicit grammar mini-lessons included daily oral language, and sentence diagramming. The few positive results supported a teacher-student based instructional model for teaching grammar that took into account Native English Speakers' writing and verbal input.

#### Grammar Instruction for Non-Native English Speakers (NNES)

According to Crawford (1991) the vast majority of research on grammar instruction and NNES evolved from the realm of adult college students or students in foreign countries who learned English for professional reasons. This

authority contended that explicit grammatical instruction has proven equally effective with adolescent learners. Crawford cautioned however that, “First grammar books are woefully incomplete, when compared with the complex set of rules internalized by native speakers of a language.” (p. 103).

Myles (2002) implied that adult ELL’s were able to comprehend the intricacies of learning another language due to their past experiences with their native language, and their extrinsic desires to learn another language. Although both adolescent and adult ELL’s needed feedback in terms of their errors in writing and until they were able to learn and apply revision techniques themselves. The key was to understand that students did not always recognize complex rules of grammar. Explicit teaching of these rules may not have been what students needed to succeed. Teachers may have understood differences in pronouns, adjectives, and other grammar terms and rules, but students saw these rules as arbitrary and inconsistent (Gray, 2004). Gao (2001) observed that students consistently made grammatical errors in their own writing due to their inability to connect their own writing to classroom grammar exercises. Their own grammar was unique to them and was untainted with the rules of grammar, said Gao: “For children with less knowledge of the world, rules are acquired through hypothesis testing, not grammar teaching” (p.328). Gao described the process in which language was typically learned by NNES whether adult or adolescent ELLs. According to this authority, four basic components were essential to learning or mastering a language. These included:

1. Grammatical competence: Rules of word and sentence formation.
2. Sociolinguistic competence: For example using appropriate language according to the situation, formal or informal.
3. Discourse competence: The speaker's or writer's ability to organize different phrases, sentences, and paragraphs into a unified cohesive unit.
4. Strategic competence: Indicated that the speaker or writer had the ability to expound on their communication by use of paraphrasing, dictionaries, and other non verbal communication devices.

Adult ELLs may have had a grasp of grammatical rules in their own language which transferred to a second language, while adolescent ELL's often lacked this and relied instead on explicit grammar instruction. Although NNES students have always been a challenging group for teachers to work with, new English language standards mandated by the NCLB have placed additional learning expectations on both teachers and ELL's. All ELL's were now required to take state tests designed to assess their knowledge of English writing and conventions. Many teachers were now faced with the daunting task of teaching ELL's explicit grammar instruction to increase test scores and, many teachers were ill prepared for such a task, and reverted back to the basics of teaching English grammar (Sjolie, 2006).

#### Selected ESL Instructional Techniques.

Krashen (2004) a leading proponent of bilingual education, and a well known grammarian, argued that NNES needed to become familiar with the rules

necessary for understanding and using correct grammar. Said Krashen, “Grammar, thus, is not excluded. It is however no longer the star player but has only a supporting role.” Krashen recommended:

1. Providing feedback which allowed ELL’s to correct grammatical errors  
Grammar Correction
2. Using reading as a way to teach grammar by showing students grammar in context.

Krashen explained how grammar instruction which typically employed the red ink looking for errors method was gradually replaced by providing the writer with feedback, which allowed the student to make his/her own corrections.

Krashen explained this method incorporated more cooperation between the writer and the teacher. Krashen argued that the degree of correction given to a student did not ensure that the student would understand grammar. Some students simply had to copy the correct sentence that the teacher had written for them.

Perhaps the most extensive research conducted in the area of ELL instructional techniques was contained in a report commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills in England. These researchers conducted a study of all research on the effectiveness of grammar teaching for the last one hundred years. These researchers concluded that explicit grammar instruction was ineffective and the most promising way to teach English writing was through the use of sentence combining. Sentence combining incorporated the following characteristics:

1. Compounding sentences: For example, “The bag felt heavy. It had lead in it.” becomes “The bag felt heavy because it had lead in it.”
2. Compounding sentence elements.
3. Subordinating one clause to another.
4. Using appositives to connect ideas.
5. Using participial phrases to connect ideas.
6. Using absolute phrases to connect ideas (Andrews et al. p. 6).

Although these British researchers adapted these sentence combining techniques, they also warned they should be “As a practice set within meaningful writing contexts, rather than presented as a drill-and-practice exercise” (Andrews et al. p.51).

Sjolie (2006) described the sentence-combining strategy helpful when instructing NNES in proper grammatical usage. This technique, popularized in the United States, has continued to show promise for grammar instruction with native speaking students and non-native speaking students alike. The idea behind sentence-combining involved combining smaller sentences and clauses to produce more complex and professional sentences. This strategy coincided with Gao’s description of communicative competence as it related to NNES (I.E. “discourse competence”) alluded to the writers ability to derive word meaning and forms

needed to achieve a unified text in different modes. Sentence combining has been used to help NNES to bridge the gap between basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) used by ELL students on the playground and, cognitive academic language proficiency (CALPS) required for the classroom (Cummins).

Additionally students were able to combine familiar BICS sentences to make them combine grammatically with short CALP sentences presented by the teacher in class. Identifying and using these language distinctions (Cummins 2003).

The Lexical Approach for teaching both NES and NNES was developed by Michael Lewis in 1997. The Lexical Approach focused more on language acquisition skills rather than on grammar per se. Islam & Timmis (2004) restated what Lewis argued that language developed in learners as small lexical chunks. For example, a student may have said “That was a figment of my imagination.” Lewis argued the student did not learn “Figment,” “Imagination,” and “That,” as separate pieces, but rather as a unit or chunk, all together.

Moudraia (2001), a researcher at the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) also has used this technique for the instruction of ELL’s. This authority concluded that the teachers mindset was all that was needed to implement this approach, said Moudraia, “Most significant is the underlying claim that language production is not a syntactic rule-governed process but is instead the retrieval of larger phrasal units of memory” (p.3). These instructional techniques held promise in terms of research and effectiveness for both native and non-native English speakers.

Teachers were encouraged to adopt these techniques and to apply them according to their personal classroom dynamics when providing grammatical instruction.

### Summary

The review of selected literature presented in chapter 2 supported the following research themes:

1. The history of grammar instruction in America has served to emphasize the ongoing need for effective instruction in English language grammar and usage.
2. Teaching Native English speaking children how to read and write in school has remained one of the fundamental principles of learning in the United States.
3. Improving test scores of Non Native English Speakers has become a daunting task for ESL teachers.
4. Three proven approaches used for ELL's included extensive reading practice, the Lexical Approach, and sentence combining methods.

## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology and Treatment of Data

#### Introduction

The purpose of this experimental research project was to determine whether providing specific extra grammar instruction for ESL students significantly improved their English language skills as measured by the Highpoint unit assessment. To accomplish this purpose, a review of selected literature was conducted, essential baseline data were obtained and analyzed, and related conclusions and recommendations were formulated.

Chapter 3 contains a description of the methodology used in the study. Additionally, the researcher (Gonzalo Guillén) included details concerning participants, instruments, design, procedure, treatment of the data, and summary.

#### Methodology

The researcher utilized a *t*-test for independent samples to determine whether providing specific extra grammar instruction for ESL students significantly improved their English language skills as measured by the Highpoint unit assessment. This parametric test for significance allowed the researcher to determine whether, at a selected probability level significant difference existed between students who received daily oral language instruction, compared with students who did not receive daily oral language instruction.

## Participants

Participants included in the experiment were 7<sup>th</sup> grade students enrolled in the 2006-2007 Washington Middle School Highpoint B curriculum. All of the students used were bilingual and above level 2 according to WLPT testing which are advanced and transitional levels. Experimental and control groups included.

Experimental group (X): Eleven Male/Female bilingual ESL students who received 1hr of DOL exercises

Control Group (Y): Eighteen Male/Female bilingual ESL students who did not receive any extra language instruction.

## Instruments

The unit test for the Highpoint B curriculum unit test was used to measure student performance. The unit test was divided into two parts. The first part was open book and the second part was closed book. The total points possible were 100. Scores were divided into three groups: 0-60 was below standard; 60-80 was within standard; and 80-100 was above standard.

## Design

A *t*-test for independent samples was used to determine whether daily oral language instruction made a significant difference in Highpoint B unit test scores, among experimental and control groups. Points awarded on the unit test were used for the *t*-test analysis. The design utilized two independent groups:

**Group X:** Experimental students who received 1hr of daily oral language exercises.

**Group Y:** Control students who did not receive any extra language instruction.

### Procedure

Procedures employed in the present study evolved as follows:

1. During March, 2006, the researcher sought permission for the experiment from the building principal at Washington Middle School, (Mr. Lorenzo Alvarado).
2. The researcher was then directed to the building's reading coach Mr. Charles Cook, to obtain the data from the Highpoint B Assessments.
3. Throughout 2007-2007 The researcher conducted a review of selected literature. The literature review focused on language acquisition for ESL students and teaching techniques for ESL students. The literature search was acquired through Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), The Internet, and ProQuest. Information obtained from a hand-search of selected materials was also incorporated.
4. During Summer of 2007, the researcher analyzed the Highpoint assessment scores, while completing studies for the M. Ed at Heritage University.

### Treatment of the Data

A *t*-test for independent samples was used jointly with the STATPAK statistical software that accompanied the text book Educational Research Competencies for Analysis and Applications by (Gay, Mills, & Airasian 2003), which allowed the researcher to compare for significant difference between the experimental and control groups. Significance was determined for *p* at .05, .01, and .001 levels. The following formula was used to calculate the *t*-test for independent samples:

$$t = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{\sqrt{\left( \frac{SS_1 + SS_2}{n_1 + n_2 - 2} \right) \left( \frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2} \right)}}$$

### Summary

Chapter 3 provided a description of the research methodology employed in the study, participants, instruments used, research design, and procedure utilized. Details concerning treatment of the data obtained and analyzed were also presented.

## CHAPTER 4

### Analysis of Data

#### Introduction

The present study focused on the need to comprehend the relationship between the use of daily oral language instruction and its effects on test scores for the Highpoint reading intervention program. To speak to this problem, the researcher sought to determine whether there was a significant difference between students that receive daily oral language instruction and those who did not receive in daily oral language instruction. A test for independent samples was used to for data analysis. The intent of the study was to demonstrate whether current practices in English classes were effective and whether those practices fully addressed the needs of student native and non-native speakers alike.

Chapter four contains a description of the environment, hypothesis, null hypothesis, results of the study, findings, discussion, and a summary.

#### Description of Environment

This study took place at Washington Middle School in the Yakima School District during the 2006-2007 school years. The study was conducted to determine whether daily oral language instructional exercises had an effect on student's test scores on the Highpoint reading intervention program. Two classes were selected and determined to be nearly as identical as possible. Both used the Highpoint B level program. Both were 7<sup>th</sup> grade classes and both followed the Highpoint pacing schedule used by the Yakima School District for Highpoint

instruction. Highpoint units are divided into five units for the entire school year. The researcher used the unit two test results to test for significance of variance to ensure that the students had been exposed to a Highpoint level B unit test with unit one and that the treatment group had been exposed to daily oral language for longer than one unit test. The study utilized 29 students enrolled in the two classes. The first group (treatment group X) had 11 students. The second group (control group Y) consisted of 18 students and of those all were used in the study since they all had test scores to report.

#### Hypothesis/Research Question

English language learners who are provided specific extra grammar instruction/exercise will significantly improve their English language skills as measured by the Highpoint Unit Assessment.

#### Null Hypothesis

There will be no significant difference in ELL student's skills among students who are provided extra grammar instruction as measured by the Highpoint Unit Assessment. Significance was determined at  $p \leq$  at .05, .01, and .001 levels.

#### Results of the Study

The hypothesis and the null hypothesis were tested for significance using a *t*-test for independent samples at the probability levels of .05, .01, and .001. The test had 27 degrees of freedom and a *t*-value of 1.08. Table 1 demonstrates

STATPAK results for independent samples and Table 2 demonstrates the results for the hypothesis and the null hypothesis for  $p$  at .05, .01, and .001 levels.

The study did not support the hypothesis that students who received daily oral language were significantly different than students who did not receive daily oral language. Significance was determined for  $p$  at .05, .01, and .001 levels.

The mean of group Y was 71.5 and the mean of group X was 76.45. Therefore the researcher concluded that the difference in means was insignificant. The test scores were tested for significance with a  $t$ -test for independent samples. Table 3 shows the test scores for the X group and the individual scores for the different sections of the unit test. Table 4 shows the test scores for the Y group and the individual scores for the different sections of the unit test.

### Findings

Analysis of the data indicated that highpoint test scores of students taught grammar using daily oral language instructional exercises were not significantly higher than students who did not receive this special daily oral language instruction. Accordingly the hypothesis was rejected and the null hypothesis was supported (I.E. There will be no significant difference in ELL student's skills among students who are provided extra grammar instruction as measured by the Highpoint Unit Assessment. Significance was determined at  $p \leq$  at .05, .01, and .001 levels.

The problem presented at the inception of this study was to determine the extent to which English language skills improved when ESL students were provided specific extra grammar instruction/exercises

### Discussion

Grammar instruction had been the driving force behind English classes for over 100 years and the pedagogy of English had changed little. What remained a fact was that the student population had changed in those 100 years and the reasons for education had changed as well. In a more inclusive classroom, teachers had been required to accommodate all types of learners, but their English pedagogy had not been updated. English Language Learners required language acquisition, not language teaching, and the use of explicit grammar teaching such as daily oral language did little to aid in language acquisition. The researcher came to the conclusion that time spent on grammar instruction could have been better used in proven language acquisition exercises that could benefit an inclusive classroom of native and non-native speaking students.

Table 1

*t*-test for Independent

Samples

**t - TEST FOR INDEPENDENT SAMPLES**

Statistic	Values	Group X	
No. of Scores in Group X	11	63	<input type="button" value="Enter Score"/> <input type="button" value="Calculate"/> <input type="button" value="Clear Scores"/> <input type="button" value="Print"/>
Sum of Scores in Group X	841.0000	87	
Mean of Group X	76.45	66	
Sum of Squared Scores in Group X	65969.00	87	
SS of Group X	1670.73	54	
No. of Scores in Group Y	18	85	<input type="button" value="Main Menu"/>
Sum of Scores in Group Y	1287.0000	74	
Mean of Group Y	71.50	76	
Sum of Squared Scores in Group Y	94261.00	89	
SS of Group Y	2240.50	94	
t - Value	1.08	69	
Degrees of freedom	27	59	
		47	
		77	
		87	
		66	
		63	
		64	
		81	
		94	

Table 2

Null Hypothesis and Hypothesis Test for Significance

Degrees of Freedom = 27	.05=1.08/2.052	.01=1.08/2.771	.001=1.08/3.690
<u>Null Hypothesis</u>	Accepted	Accepted	Accepted
<u>Hypothesis</u>	Not Supported	Not Supported	Not Supported

Table 3

Test scores for X group

1	66
2	63
3	87
4	66
5	87
6	54
7	85
8	74
9	76
10	89
11	94

Table 4

Test scores for Y group

1	82
2	63
3	79
4	71
5	78
6	59
7	73
8	75
9	69
10	59
11	47
12	77
13	87
14	66
15	63
16	64
17	81
18	94

## Summary

Chapter 4 provided an overview of the description of the environment, hypothesis, null hypothesis, results of the study, discussion, and summary.

The hypothesis and null hypothesis were tested using the *t*-test for independent samples to determine if there was a significant difference between scores of experimental and control groups as measured by the Highpoint unit test. The chosen probability levels were .05, .01, and .001 with 27 degrees of freedom. Data analysis rejected the hypothesis and supported the null hypothesis at all levels of probability. Accordingly, there was no significant difference in ELL student's skills among students who were provided extra grammar instruction as measured by the Highpoint Unit Assessment.

## CHAPTER 5

### Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

#### Summary

The purpose of this experimental research project was to determine whether providing specific extra grammar instruction for ESL students significantly improved their English language skills as measured by the Highpoint unit assessment. To accomplish this purpose, a review of selected literature was conducted, essential baseline data were obtained and analyzed, and related conclusions and recommendations were formulated.

#### Conclusions

Based on the review of selected literature and major findings produced from the present study, the following conclusions were reached:

1. The history of grammar instruction in America has served to emphasize the ongoing need for effective instruction in English language grammar and usage.
2. Teaching Native English speaking children how to read and write in school has remained one of the fundamental principles of learning in the United States.
3. Improving test scores of Non Native English Speakers has become a daunting task for ESL teachers.
4. Three proven approaches used for ELL's included extensive reading practice, the Lexical Approach, and sentence combining methods.

5. Data analysis supported the null hypothesis that extra grammar instruction for ESL students who were provided specific extra grammar instruction did not significantly improve their English language skills as measured by the Highpoint Unit Assessment.

### Recommendations

As a result of the conclusions cited above, the following recommendations have been suggested:

1. Educators should continue to emphasize the need for ongoing, effective instruction in English language grammar and usage for both native and non-native English speakers.
2. Teaching the fundamentals of reading and writing to Native English and non-native English Speakers should remain a priority educational goal.
3. Although faced with a daunting task, ESL teachers should receive ELL in-service trainings focused on improving language acquisition skills for non- native English speakers, to improve test scores for Non Native English Speakers through ELL teacher training.
- 4) Teachers and schools using explicit grammar instruction to improve English language skills of non-native English speakers may wish to utilize information contained in this study or they may desire to undertake further research more suited for their unique needs.

## REFERENCES

- Andrews R, Torgerson C, Beverton S, Freeman A, Locke T, Low G, Robinson A, Zhu D (2004) The effect of grammar Teaching (Sentence combining) In English on 5-16 Year Olds' Accuracy and Quality in Written Composition. In: *Research Evidence in Education Library*. London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education.
- Blaauw-Hara, Mark (2006). Why Our Students Need Instruction in Grammar, and How We Should Go about It. *Teaching English in the Two Year College*, 34(2), 165-178. Retrieved March 4, 2007, from ProQuest Education Journals database. (Document ID: 1188891461).
- Crawford, James. Bilingual Education: History Politics Theory and Practice. Trenton: Crane Publishing Co. 1991.
- Cummins, Jim. (2003). BICS and CALP: Origins and Rationale for the distinction. In C.B. Paulston & G.R. Tucker (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics The Essential Readings* (pp. 322-328). Massachusetts: Blackwell.
- Cunningham, P. Cunningham, J. Allington, R. Research on the Components of a Comprehensive reading and Writing Instructional Program. (2006) Retrieved March 4, 2007. From OSPI website.  
[www.k12.wa.us/conferences/summerinstitute2006/Materials/Mietusk/ResearchonWritingCunningham.doc](http://www.k12.wa.us/conferences/summerinstitute2006/Materials/Mietusk/ResearchonWritingCunningham.doc)
- De Vise, Daniel - Washington Post Staff Writer (2006, October 23). Clauses and Commas Make a Comeback; SAT Helps Return Grammar to Class :[FINAL

Edition]. *The Washington Post*, p. A.1. Retrieved March 4, 2007, from National Newspapers (5) database. (Document ID: 1149628661).

Feng Shoudong, Powers Kathy. (2005). THE SHORT- AND LONG-TERM EFFECT OF EXPLICIT GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION ON FIFTH GRADERS' WRITING. *Reading Improvement*, 42(2), 67-72. Retrieved March 4, 2007, from ProQuest Education Journals database. (Document ID: 860993451).

Ferris, Dana. (2002) Treatment of Error in Second Language Student Writing. In D. Belcher & J. Liu (Eds.), *Michigan Series on Teaching Multilingual Writers* . Michigan: The University of Michigan Press.

Ferris Dana, (2004) The “Grammar Correction” Debate in L2 Writing: Where are we, and where do we go from here? (and what do we do in the meantime. . . ?) *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 13 49-62.

Formal Grammar is ‘Ineffective’ Formal Grammar is not an effective way of teaching children to write, say researchers at the University of York. (2005, January 18). *BBC News*. Retrieved January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2007, from [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/education/4185507.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/4185507.stm)

Gao Zhonggang, Carl (2001). Second Language Learning and the Teaching of Grammar. *Education*, 122(2), 326-336. Retrieved March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2007, From Research Library Core database. (Document ID: 110692209).

Gray, Ronald. (2004). Grammar Correction in ESL/EFL Writing Classes May Not Be Effective. *TESL Journal*, Vol. X, No. 11, November 2004. Retrieved December 15, 2006, from <http://iteslj.org/Techniques?Gray-WritingCorrectio.html>

- Islam, C. Timmis, I. Lexical Approach 1 What does the lexical look like? Retrieved January 11<sup>th</sup> 2007 from British Council of Teaching English database.
- Krashen, SD. (2004, November 13). Applying the Comprehension Hypothesis: Some Suggestions. Retrieved December 11<sup>th</sup> 2006. From SDKrashen.com Collection Database.
- Macaro Ernesto, Masterman Liz. (2006). Does intensive explicit grammar instruction make all the difference? *Language Teaching Research*, 10(3), 297-327. Retrieved March 4, 2007, from ProQuest Education Journals database. (Document ID: 1053514221).
- Moudraia, O. (2001, June) Lexical Approach to Second Language Teaching [Electronic version]. CAL Digests Online Resources. Found at <http://www.cal.org/resources/digest/0102lexical.html>
- Myles, J. (2002, September). Second Language Writing and Research: The Writing Process and Error Analysis in Student Texts. [Electronic version] TESL-EJ, 6 (2).
- National Writing Project (2007) website search results for “Grammar” March 8, 2007 from:  
<http://www.google.com/custom?q=grammar&cof=S%3Ahttp%3A%2F%2Fwww.writingproject.org%3BGL%3A0%3BAH%3Aleft%3BLH%3A126%3BL%3Ahttp%3A%2F%2Fwww.writingproject.org%2FImages%2Fsearchbanner.gif%3BLW%3A1254%3BAWFID%3A262019624bdea3d8%3B&domains=www.writingproject.org&sitesearch=www.writingproject.org>

- Nunan, Susan Losee (2005). Forging Ourselves and Forging Ahead: Teaching Grammar in a New Millennium. *English Journal*, 94(4), 70-75. Retrieved March 4, 2007, from Research Library Core database. (Document ID: 808360041).
- Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. (n.d.). *Washington State Report Card* Retrieved March 4, 2007, From the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction Web site:  
<http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/summary.aspx?schoolId=3160&reportLevel=School>
- Paige, Rod. (2002, July). A Bigot by any other name. O'Brien S. *Denver Post*, p. E06.
- Paige, Rod. (2005, January). Leading American Education into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. *The Heritage Foundation*, No 863 Retrieved March 4, 2007, From Heritage Lecture Website: <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Education/hl863.cfm>
- Saddler Bruce, Graham Steve. (2005). The Effects of Peer-Assisted Sentence-Combining Instruction on the Writing Performance of More and Less Skilled Young Writers. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 97(1), 43. Retrieved March 4, 2007, from PsycARTICLES database. (Document ID: 800003961).
- Spellings, Margaret. (2007). Statement by Secretary Spellings Regarding Report on States' Educational Effectiveness. Retrieved March 8, 2007. From Department of Education Web Site,  
<http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2007/02/02282007.html>

The Neglected “R” The Need for a Writing revolution. (2003). Retrieved March 4, 2007. From The College Board web site,

[http://www.collegeboard.com/prod\\_downloads/writingcom/neglectedr.pdf](http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/writingcom/neglectedr.pdf)

Truscott, John. (1996) The case against Grammar Correction in L2 Writing Classes.

*Language Learning* 46: 2, 327-369. Retrieved Jan 5, 2007 from:

<http://www.hss.nthu.edu.tw/~fl/faculty/John/Grammar%20Correction%20in%20L2%20Writing%20Class.pdf>

U.S. Department of Education. (2002). *No Child Left Behind Act* Washington D.C.

U.S. Government Printing Office. found at:

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/107-110.pdf>

Wolfrom, Walt. (2003). On the Construction of Vernacular Dialect Norms. In C.B.

Paulston & G.R. Tucker (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics The Essential Readings* (pp251-271). Massachusetts: Blackwell.