

**FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING OF STUDENTS WITH LANGUAGE
LEARNING DISABILITIES: AN ACTIVITY THEORY PERSPECTIVE OF THREE
MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS**

by

Heather Jean Hendry

Bachelor of Arts, Colgate University, 1997

Master of Arts in Teaching, University of Pittsburgh, 2004

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
The Department of Education in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh

2009

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

This dissertation was presented on Thursday, April 9, 2009

by

Heather Jean Hendry

To the committee including the following members:

Dr. G. Richard Tucker,
Paul Mellon University Professor of Applied Linguistics, Carnegie Mellon University

Dr. Marcia Rosenbusch,
Associate Professor of Foreign Language Education, Iowa State University

Dr. Amanda Thein,
Assistant Professor of English Education, University of Pittsburgh

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Richard Donato
Associate Professor of Foreign Language Education, University of Pittsburgh

Copyright © by Heather Jean Hendry

2009

FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING OF STUDENTS WITH LANGUAGE
LEARNING DISABILITIES: AN ACTIVITY THEORY PERSPECTIVE OF THREE
MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

Heather Jean Hendry, B.A., M..A.T., Ph.D.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the existing literature on the foreign language learning of students with LLDs by conducting a comprehensive investigation of the performance of three students in middle school foreign language classes in a suburban school district in southwestern Pennsylvania. More specifically, this study documents (a) student writing over time, (b) student and teacher perceptions, (c) classroom interactions, and (d) the instructional practices that teachers use to accommodate these three middle school students with (LLDs) during whole group class instruction. As previous research has demonstrated a relationship between classroom interactions and student performance in a foreign language, this study also examines how the writing performance of three students with LLDs relates to the classroom interactions and instructional practices that their teachers implement to accommodate students with LLDs.

To conduct this study, several data sources were collected and analyzed including student writing assessments over time, student and teacher interviews, and classroom observations. To link these multiple sources of data that were collected, an Activity Theory was applied as an analytical framework. This sociocultural theoretical framework was applied to this study because it provides a method to explain the multiple aspects of a child's environment that contribute to his/her learning. By referring to Activity Theory, relationships between classroom components such as classroom interactions, student and

teacher perceptions, mediational tools, and student performance were established and explained.

Although this study examines a small group of three students and its specificity prevents generalizing to all students with LLDs who participate in foreign language programs, the findings and implications contribute to a grounded conceptual understanding of students with LLDs and their abilities and challenges in learning a foreign language. By contributing to the conceptual understanding of the foreign language learning of students with LLDs, the findings of this study assist school districts in making decisions regarding enrollment of students with LLDs in foreign language programs, designing curricula and instructional accommodations for students with LLDs, developing professional development for foreign language teachers, and informing the public on the issue of students with LLDs and foreign language learning.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE.....	XVII
1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	1
2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	8
2.1 QUANTITATIVE STUDIES OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING: UNIVERSITY AND HIGH SCHOOL SETTINGS	11
2.1.1 Identification of students with a foreign language learning disability	12
2.1.2 Poor performance of students: A rationale	15
2.1.3 Instructional Accommodations.....	17
2.2 QUANTITATIVE STUDIES IN CANADIAN FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAMS	20
2.3 QUALITATIVE STUDIES ON STUDENTS WITH LLDS.....	21
2.3.1 Identification of characteristics of students who struggle.....	22
2.3.2 Instructional Accommodations.....	23
2.4 LIMITATIONS OF CURRENT LITERATURE.....	25
2.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....	28
2.6 ACTIVITY THEORY.....	29
3.0 METHODOLOGY.....	36

3.1	CONTEXT.....	37
3.1.1	Rationale	37
3.1.2	Program description	38
3.2	PARTICIPANTS	39
3.2.1	Identification of Participants	39
3.2.2	Description of Participants.....	41
3.2.2.1	Nate	41
3.2.2.2	Gayle	42
3.2.2.3	Tina	42
3.3	QUALITATIVE NATURE OF THE STUDY	43
3.4	DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS	45
3.4.1	Research questions.....	45
3.4.2	Literacy Assessments	46
3.4.3	Classroom observations.....	48
3.4.4	Classroom interactions	49
3.4.5	Teacher and Student Interviews.....	50
3.5	ACTIVITY THEORY ANALYSIS.....	52
3.6	SUMMARY	54
4.0	FINDINGS: LITERACY ASSESSMENTS	56
4.1	STUDENT WRITING PERFORMANCE: A COMPARISON OF COMPOSITE RATINGS	57
4.1.1	Nate.....	58
4.1.2	Gayle.....	59

4.1.3	Tina.....	60
4.2	STUDENT WRITING PERFORMANCE: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF SPECIFIC CRITERIA.....	62
4.2.1	Nate.....	63
4.2.2	Gayle.....	66
4.2.3	Tina.....	69
4.3	STUDENT WRITING PERFORMANCE: AN ANALYSIS OF FUNCTIONS.....	73
4.4	STUDENT WRITING PERFORMANCE: AN ANALYSIS OF LEXICON	76
4.5	STUDENT WRITING PERFORMANCE: AN ANALYSIS OF SYNTAX	78
4.6	SUMMARY	80
5.0	FINDINGS: PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS	82
5.1	STUDENT PERCEPTIONS.....	83
5.1.1	Student perceptions: Nate	84
5.1.2	Student perceptions: Gayle	87
5.1.3	Student perceptions: Tina	90
5.1.4	Student perceptions: materials and instructional practices.....	93
5.1.4.1	Nate	93
5.1.4.2	Gayle	94
5.1.4.3	Tina	96
5.1.5	Student Perceptions: Classroom Participation	97

5.1.5.1	Nate	97
5.1.5.2	Gayle	97
5.1.5.3	Tina	98
5.1.6	Summary.....	98
5.1.7	Student perceptions: Connections between Spanish and English	100
5.1.8	Summary.....	101
5.2	SPANISH TEACHER PERCEPTIONS.....	102
5.2.1	Spanish Teacher Perceptions: Materials and Instructional Practices	103
5.2.1.1	Accommodations.....	103
5.2.1.2	Instructional practices helpful for students with LLDs	105
5.2.2	Spanish Teacher Perceptions: Frustrations and Concerns.....	106
5.2.3	Spanish Teacher Perceptions: Observations of Students’ Classroom Participation	109
5.2.4	Summary.....	112
5.3	SPECIAL EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS.....	113
5.3.1	Special Education Teacher Perceptions: Materials and Instructional Practices.....	114
5.3.1.1	Accommodations.....	114
5.3.1.2	Practical application of accommodations.....	118
5.3.2	Special Education Teacher Perceptions: Observations of Student Participation	120

5.4	SUMMARY	122
6.0	FINDINGS: CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS	124
6.1	MS. O'BRIEN'S CLASSROOM.....	125
6.1.1	Instructional Practices.....	125
6.1.1.1	Instructional practices that introduce lesson content.....	126
6.1.1.2	Instructional practices that present and practice lesson content	127
6.1.1.3	Reading activities	133
6.1.1.4	Writing activities.....	136
6.1.1.5	Summary	138
6.1.2	The role of Ms. O'Brien.....	138
6.1.2.1	Teaching approach	139
6.1.2.2	Verbal interactions with participants	141
6.1.2.3	Parental interactions	142
6.1.2.4	Perceptions of students with LLDs	143
6.1.2.5	Summary	145
6.1.3	Nate.....	145
6.1.3.1	Class participation.....	146
6.1.3.2	Parental interactions	147
6.1.3.3	Oral participation	148
6.1.3.4	Summary	151
6.1.4	Gayle.....	152
6.1.4.1	Class participation.....	152

6.1.4.2	Oral participation	156
6.1.4.3	Summary	159
6.1.5	The Role of the Researcher	160
6.1.6	Summary.....	162
6.2	MR. DOMICO’S CLASS.....	164
6.2.1	Instructional Practices.....	164
6.2.1.1	Instructional practices that introduce the lesson.....	165
6.2.1.2	Instructional practices that present and practice content	166
6.2.1.3	Writing Activities.....	171
6.2.1.4	Summary	173
6.2.2	The Role of Mr. Domico	173
6.2.2.1	Teaching approach	174
6.2.2.2	Perceptions of students with LLDs	175
6.2.2.3	Mr. Domico’s interactions with Tina	176
6.2.2.4	Summary	177
6.2.3	Tina.....	178
6.2.3.1	Performance in class activities.....	179
6.2.3.2	Perceptions	182
6.2.3.3	Oral participation	182
6.2.3.4	Summary	185
6.2.4	The Role of the Researcher	186
6.2.5	Summary.....	190

7.0	AN ACTIVITY THEORY PERSPECTIVE: COMMON FEATURES OF NATE, GAYLE, AND TINA’S ACTIVITY SYSTEMS	193
	7.1.1.1 Mediating artifacts.....	195
	7.1.1.2 Rules.....	197
	7.1.1.3 Community.....	198
	7.1.1.4 Division of labor	199
	7.1.1.5 Summary	200
8.0	DISCUSSION.....	202
8.1	A PROFILE OF STUDENTS WITH LLDS LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE	202
	8.1.1 Perceptions of Students with LLDs.....	202
	8.1.2 Class Participation of Students with LLDs	204
	8.1.3 Writing Performance of Students with LLDs	205
8.2	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INSTRUCTION.....	206
	8.2.1 Instructional accommodations in the IEPs.....	206
	8.2.2 Specific Accommodations for Foreign Language Learning.....	208
	8.2.2.1 Accommodations for ensuring comprehension.....	209
	8.2.2.2 Accommodations for knowledge of grammatical concepts.....	209
	8.2.2.3 Accommodations for functional application of vocabulary and grammatical concepts	211
	8.2.3 Accommodations During Introduction, Presentation, and Practice of Lesson Concepts.....	212
	8.2.3.1 Accommodations during introduction of concepts.....	213

8.2.3.2	Accommodations within student groupings	214
8.2.3.3	Accommodations to encourage oral participation.....	215
8.2.3.4	Accommodations for reading activities	218
8.2.3.5	Accommodations for writing activities	220
8.2.4	Accommodations for assessment	221
8.2.5	Differentiated Accommodations	224
8.2.6	Accommodations: What are they and what does it mean to accommodate?	227
8.2.7	Identification of Students with LLDs.....	232
8.3	ACTIVITY THEORY PERSPETIVE: AN ANALYSIS OF RECOMMENDED ACCOMMODATIONS	233
	APPENDIX A: SAMPLE MODIFICATIONS FROM AN IEP.....	238
	APPENDIX B: SAMPLE WRITING ACTIVITY FOR 6 TH GRADE.....	239
	APPENDIX C: SAMPLE WRITING ACTIVITY FOR 7 TH GRADE.....	240
	APPENDIX D: MODI FIED ACTFL RUBRIC FOR PRESENTATIONAL COMMUNICATION.....	241
	APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR TEACHERS.....	242
	APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR STUDENTS.....	243
	APPENDIX G: MS. OBRIEN’S CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES.....	245
	APPENDIX H: MR. DOMICO’S CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES.....	247
	REFERENCES.....	249

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Alignment of research questions and data sources	46
Table 2. 6th Grade writing assessments: Comparative composite ratings in Sept and Dec	58
Table 3. 7th Grade writing assessments: Comparative composite ratings in Sept and Dec	60
Table 4. Participant writing assessments: Ratings on specific components in Sept and Dec	62
Table 5. Writing assessments: Analysis of Functions	74
Table 6: Writing assessments: A comparison of the number of words in Sept and Dec ..	77
Table 7. Writing assessments: A comparison of sentence types in Sept and Dec	79
Table 8 A profile of Nate, Gayle, and Tina's perceptions.....	99
Table 9. Nate’s Classroom Participation During Seven Selected Class Observations ...	149
Table 10. Gayle’s Classroom Participation During Seven Selected Class Observations	157
Table 11. Tina’s Classroom Participation During Seven Selected Class Observations .	183

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Engstrom's Triangular Model of an Activity System	30
Figure 2. Engestrom's Model Applied to the Foreign Language Learning of a Middle School Student with LLD	33
Figure 3. Data Analysis as Depicted Through Engestrom's Model of Activity System ..	53
Figure 4. Nate's Illustration of Spanish Class	86
Figure 5. Gayle's Illustration of Spanish Class	88
Figure 6. Tina's Illustration of Spanish Class	92
Figure 7. Types of Instructional Practices that Present and Practice Content in Ms. O'Brien's Class	129
Figure 8. Grammar Exercise Example from Ms. O'Brien's Class	130
Figure 9. Story Reading and Exercise from Ms. O'Brien's Lesson	134
Figure 10 The role of instructional practices in Nate and Gayle's activity systems.....	138
Figure 11 Ms. O'Brien's role in Nate and Gayle's activity systems	145
Figure 12 Nate's activity system	152
Figure 13 Gayle's activity system	160
Figure 14. Types of Instructional Practices that Present and Practice Content in Mr. Domico's Class	168
Figure 15 Tina's Comic Strip Project.....	170

Figure 16 The role of instructional practices in Tina's activity system	173
Figure 17 Mr. Domico's role in Tina's activity system	178
Figure 18 Tina's activity system	186
Figure 19. Common Features in the Activity System of Nate, Gayle, and Tina's Foreign Language Learning	194
Figure 20. Proposed Activity System for Nate, Gayle and Tina's Foreign Language Learning	234

PREFACE

Completing this dissertation could not have been possible without the support and encouragement of my family, friends, and committee members. First, I would like to thank my supportive family. Matt, thank you for believing in me, and for experiencing the highs and lows of this venture by my side. You have a way of always providing a hug or a laugh when I needed it most. Mom, thank you for listening, giving me confidence, and always pushing me to do my best. Your words of encouragement mean more to me than you know. Dad, you have always informed me of the importance of dedication and perseverance, thank you. Todd, thanks for all the video assistance! Jenna and Sean, thank you for your support and helping me to maintain “balance” in my life. I would also like to express thanks to my grandparents for supporting me in spirit. Pop-pop Campbell, thank you for introducing me to the value of education and inquiry at a very young age. Frisco and Tommy, thank you for being by my side “literally” throughout the lonely process of writing. I am also grateful to all of my friends who have also given me encouragement. Chris, Pam, Tracy, Lori, Kelli, Christine, Andrea, and AnnMarie, you have shown support from Pittsburgh, Miami, Minneapolis, and Washington, DC. Thank you! I also thank Michele for paving the way for me and informing me of the smallest details that I should remember. I would also like to express thanks to the students and teachers that participated in this study. I learned so much from spending three months in your classrooms. I hope that this study helps educators to facilitate the learning of *all* students in foreign language classrooms. Finally, I would

like to thank the members of my committee. Dr. Richard Donato, thank you for your inspiration, encouragement, time, and extensive written and oral feedback. Through working with you over the past five years, I have gained a deeper understanding of educational research, sociocultural theory, and academic writing. I could not have accomplished this dissertation without your advisement! I would like to express thanks to Dr. Marcia Rosenbusch for supporting me with feedback and professional development opportunities. My participation in the seminars at the NFLRC inspired me to change my career path from teaching Spanish in an elementary school to pursuing a doctorate. I would also like to express gratitude to Dr. G. Richard Tucker for his written feedback, inspiration, and assistance with research methodology. Thank you to Dr. Susan Palfy for your time and support. I would also like to thank Dr. Amanda Thein for your time, feedback, and support.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Current government policy demands that students with identified language learning disabilities (LLDs) are provided with the same opportunities in education as their peers without LLDs. In 2004, the government amended the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which states that all students must have access to fair and appropriately accommodated education programs (Evarrs & Knotek, 2005). In accordance with this mandate, students with LLDs have the right to participate in courses of all content areas, including foreign language. In addition, this law requires that foreign language teachers design the appropriate accommodations for the students with LLDs who are enrolled in foreign language classes. The American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) has also supported this mandate in their position statement announced on May, 2007. In this statement, ACTFL and its members commit to developing and maintaining an educational environment that promotes diversity and allows students, regardless of their linguistic, cultural, or socioeconomic background, access to foreign language programs (2007).

Despite government policy and the known benefits of learning a foreign language, some educators believe that students with identified LLDs should be exempt from taking a foreign language, as they are not reading and writing at their appropriate grade level in their first language. These individuals claim that the time dedicated to learning a foreign language should be used for practicing reading and writing skills in their first language.

Literature in the field of foreign language education discusses the metalinguistic benefits of learning an additional language. Bialystok (1988) and Yelland et al. (1993) found that bilingual children have better lexical and phonological awareness than their monolingual peers. Vygotsky also discusses the advantages of learning two languages, claiming that, “a child’s ability to express themselves in two languages enables the child to see his language as one particular system among many, to view its phenomena under more general categories, and this leads to awareness of linguistic operations.” (1962, p. 110). Thus, contrary to the belief of some educators, providing the opportunity for students with LLDs to participate in a foreign language program might, in fact, enhance their knowledge of their first language.

Discouraging students with LLDs from participating in foreign language programs would also deny them of additional advantages of learning a foreign language. Additional research in the field of foreign language claims that learning a foreign language promotes cross-cultural awareness, prepares students for the global and economic community, and develops cognitive and problem solving skills (Debut, 1998; Summer, 1998). To ensure that students with LLDs receive a fair and equitable education, they must have the same opportunities as their peers and be able to participate in foreign language programs with the appropriate educational accommodations. With the opportunity to participate in foreign language programs, students will LLDs will have exposure to the benefits of learning a foreign language, prepare for the global community, and grow metalinguistically, multiculturally, and cognitively along with their peers without LLDs.

Several studies have emerged that respond to the current debate regarding enrollment of and accommodations for students with LLDs in high school and university foreign language programs. In the 1990’s, a research team lead by Sparks et al. began to examine issues such as

enrolling students with LLDs in foreign language classes, identifying students who struggle learning a foreign language, and designing appropriate accommodations for these students. Using quantitative measures of linguistic knowledge such as the Modern Language Aptitude Test, Sparks et al. found that students who struggled learning a foreign language were those who had difficulty with learning the phonological, syntactic, and/or semantic ‘codes’ of the language (Sparks et al., 1992). This body of research also found that the students who struggled learning a foreign language were not necessarily previously identified by special educators as “LLD.” In examining appropriate accommodations for students with LLDs, Sparks et al. reported that multi-sensory teaching techniques such as the Orton-Gillingham method should be used to assist students in learning a foreign language.

Another, earlier body of research conducted in the late 1970’s investigated the foreign language learning of elementary students with LLDs enrolled in French Immersion programs in Canada. Bruck (1978) found that students with LLDs performed just as well as their colleagues without identified LLDs in immersion classes, however their learning occurred at a slightly slower pace. In comparing immersion and French as a Second Language Programs (FSL), Bruck also discovered that students with LLDs learn best through contextualized language learning environments, such as those promoted in immersion classrooms.

More recently, research in the field of foreign language has focused on investigating students with LLDs using qualitative research methods. Studies conducted by Arries (199), DiFino and Lombardino (2004), Hurst (1996), Mabbott (1994) and Castro and Peck (2005) examine students with LLDs as they participate in classrooms with appropriate language-related accommodations. The results of these studies list the characteristics of students who struggle and provide a comprehensive list of accommodations for students with LLDs.

Although the current research in the field attempts to identify students who struggle and provide the appropriate accommodations for these students, the findings are very limited. First, with the exception of Bruck's studies of immersion and Hurst's observations of her middle school Spanish students, the majority of the research has been conducted in the high school and university setting. To the best of my knowledge, there have been no comprehensive studies that examine students with LLDs in elementary and middle school non-immersion, foreign language classrooms.

Second, the majority of previous research examines the foreign language learning of students with LLDs by using a very narrow view of language learning. These studies emphasize students' ability to phonologically, syntactically, and semantically decode language in decontextualized settings. Current views of language learning advocate for a much broader view of foreign language learning, that of *communicative competence* (Bachman, 1990; Campbell & Wales, 1970; Canale & Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia et al. 1995; Hymes, 1972; Savignon, 1972). According to these researchers, *communicative competence* is the ability of a learner to use the phonology, syntax, and semantics of a language to communicate meaning in contextualized, cultural environments. In other words, language learning refers to a learner's ability to perform functionally in a culturally appropriate manner by using the features of the language. It is not the mere ability to decode certain linguistic features out of a cultural and communicative context. Therefore, with reference to these views of language learning, future research is needed that focuses on the ability of students with LLDs to communicate in the foreign language using the phonology, syntax, and semantics of the language.

A final caveat of current research on the foreign language learning of students with LLDs relates to the research methods. The majority of the studies previously conducted examine

students' foreign language learning through quantitative measures. A few, more recent studies utilize more qualitative analyses to look at student performance in foreign language classrooms (Arries, 1999; Castro & Peck, 2005; DiFino & Lombardino, 2004; Hurst, 1996; Mabbott, 1994). Research is needed that provides a comprehensive examination of the social, historical, and cultural aspects of foreign language learning of students with LLDs, viewing multiple sources of data through qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the existing literature on the foreign language learning of students with LLDs by conducting a comprehensive investigation of the performance of three students in middle school foreign language classes in a suburban school district in southwestern Pennsylvania. More specifically, this study documents (a) student writing over time, (b) student and teacher perceptions, (c) classroom interactions, and (d) the instructional practices that teachers use to accommodate these three middle school students with (LLDs) during whole group class instruction. As previous research has demonstrated a relationship between classroom interactions and student performance in a foreign language (see Pessoa et al., 2006), this study also examines how the writing performance of three students with LLDs relates to the classroom interactions and instructional practices that their teachers implement to accommodate students with LLDs.

To investigate these aspects of the foreign language learning of students with identified LLDs, the following research questions guided this study:

Research question 1: How do the foreign language writing skills of students with LLDs develop over time?

Research question 2: What are the perceptions of students and teachers of the instructional practices, classroom interactions, and materials that teachers use to accommodate students with LLDs during whole group class instruction?

Research question 3: What are the instructional practices, classroom interactions, and materials that teachers use to accommodate students with LLDs during whole group class instruction?

Research question 4: How do the instructional practices, classroom interactions, and materials that teachers use to accommodate students with LLDs relate to student performance?

To address these research questions, several data sources were collected and analyzed. These data sources included student writing assessments over time, student and teacher interviews, and classroom observations. To link these multiple sources of data that were collected, an Activity Theory was applied as an analytical framework. Developed by Vygotsky and A.N. Leontiev, Activity Theory provides a framework to examine the social, cultural, and historical components of an individuals' learning environment (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Lantolf 2000). This sociocultural theoretical framework was applied to this study because it provides a method to explain the multiple aspects of a child's environment that contribute to his/her learning. By referring to Activity Theory, relationships between classroom components such as classroom interactions, student and teacher perceptions, mediational tools, and student performance were established and explained. This comprehensive analysis of the foreign language learning of students with LLDs through an Activity Theory framework, contributes to a broader understanding of (a) the development of foreign language writing skills of students with LLDs, (b) the perceptions of students with LLDs of their foreign language learning, (c) the

interactions of students with LLDs in foreign language classes, and (d) the types of instructional practices that accommodate students with LLDs learning a foreign language.

Although this study examines a small group of three students and its specificity prevents generalizing to all students with LLDs who participate in foreign language programs, the findings and implications contribute to a grounded conceptual understanding of students with LLDs and their abilities and challenges in learning a foreign language. By contributing to the conceptual understanding of the foreign language learning of students with LLDs, the findings of this study assist school districts in making decisions regarding enrollment of students with LLDs in foreign language programs, designing curricula and instructional accommodations for students with LLDs, developing professional development for foreign language teachers, and informing the public on the issue of students with LLDs and foreign language learning.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Teachers, parents, and school administrators debate whether or not students with language learning disabilities (LLD)'s should be exempt from learning a foreign language. It is known that learning an additional language (a) increases metalinguistic awareness of first and second languages; (b) promotes cross-cultural knowledge and appreciation; (c) prepares students for the global economic and political community; and (d) develops cognitive and problem solving skills (Bialystok, 1988; de Bot, 1998; Summer, 1998; Yelland et al., 1993).

In examining young students in second language programs, Bialystok (1988) and Yelland et al. (1993) found that bilingual children have better word and phonological awareness than their monolingual peers. Vygotsky (1962) states that having the ability to express oneself in two languages enables a child to “see his language as one particular system among many, to view its phenomena under more general categories, and this leads to awareness of linguistic operations” (p. 110). In advocating for foreign language programs, Summer (1998) emphasized that students need to know more than one language in order to participate in the current multi-lingual, global economic and political society. Thus, if students with LLDs are without the opportunity to learn a foreign language, they are missing an opportunity to develop linguistically, culturally, and cognitively. In her article, Bacon (1998) reaffirms this issue, “We cannot deny that every child has the right to become a literate adult. This precept applies as much to L2 as to L1. We know that literacy is required for an individual to continue acquiring information and to continue

developing intellectually.” (1998, p.318). In other words, in order to provide *all* students the opportunity to grow and learn, we need to allow them access to learning and developing literacy skills in multiple languages. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages supports this claim in their most recent position statement (2007). When stating their position on the implementation and expansion of language programs, ACTFL dedicates one of their guiding principles to providing opportunities for *all* children to learn other languages, regardless of their cultural, linguistic, or socio-economic background. To meet this guiding principle, ACTFL and its members are committed to supporting full access for all students to foreign language programs.

Current policy in education demands that students with identified physical and learning disabilities have equitable educational opportunities analogous to their peers (Evarrs & Knotek, 2005). To guarantee equitable opportunity for students with disabilities, the government passed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which states that all students must have access to fair and appropriate education programs. Thus, students with LLDs *should* have the opportunity to participate in foreign language study because they *are* capable of learning a second language and, in accordance with current educational policy, *must* be given the same opportunities as their non-LLD peers to explore another language and culture.

Those who believe that students with LLDs should be exempt from foreign language programs are concerned with issues other than the benefits of foreign language learning and current educational policy. They claim that, because students with LLDs are not performing at grade level in their first language courses, they should not attempt to learn another language. Those against foreign language education for students with LLDs feel that the time in the school day that is dedicated to foreign language should be focused on first language learning; and, if

students with LLDs are enrolled in second language classes, they will struggle and not be able to perform consistent with their peers.

This review of literature synthesizes the research that examines the learning of a foreign language by students with LLDs. In this review, the literature will be divided into the following sections: (a) quantitative studies from the 1971-2006 that examine the performance of students with LLDs in high school and college, (b) quantitative studies conducted in the late 1970's that investigate the learning of students with LLDs enrolled in Canadian French Immersion Programs, and (c) more recent qualitative studies from 1990-2004 that report on the foreign language learning experiences of students with LLDs in middle school and university classrooms.

After synthesizing the research in the field of foreign language education, the limitations of current literature are identified, and a trajectory is suggested for further investigation of the foreign language learning of students with LLDs. This synthesis shows that the majority of the research in the field has examined the ability of students with LLDs to analyze decontextualized grammatical structures and memorize vocabulary. To this date, there have been no studies that examine the ability of students with LLDs to use foreign language to communicate functionally. In addition, there have been few studies that use qualitative research methods to explore the foreign language learning of students with LLDs. The few qualitative studies that have been conducted demonstrate findings related to the accommodations and perceptions of students and teachers at the university level. The only qualitative study that has been conducted in middle school reported on anecdotal data from the perceptions of the classroom teacher. Thus, few studies exist that gather data using both qualitative and quantitative methods to present a comprehensive view of the foreign language learning of middle school students with LLDs.

After discussing previous research, summarizing the corresponding findings, and uncovering the limitations, this chapter concludes with a discussion of Activity Theory. Developed by Vygotsky and A.N. Leontiev, Activity Theory is a theoretical framework that is derived from sociocultural views of human learning. Because Activity Theory provides a framework that accounts for the social, cultural, and historical aspects of learning, it is used to analyze the multiple sources of data that are collected in this study. The summary of Activity Theory demonstrates how Engeström (1999) uses the concept of the activity system to relate the historical, cultural, and social components that describe and explain learning contexts. Then, this chapter concludes with examples that show how this theoretical framework can be used to analyze the foreign language learning of students with LLDs in middle school classrooms.

2.1 QUANTITATIVE STUDIES OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING: UNIVERSITY AND HIGH SCHOOL SETTINGS

The first published study that discusses the foreign language learning by students with LLDs was conducted by Dinklage (1971), a clinical psychologist at Harvard. In his study, Dinklage examined motivated students who were succeeding in all academic areas but foreign language. Through his research, he identified three types of students who were struggling with learning a foreign language: students who had problems in reading written language aloud and frequently reversed individual words and word sequences; students who demonstrated difficulty with differentiating similar, but different sounds; and students who struggled with remembering auditory discrimination of sounds. The findings of this early study began a research trajectory that seeks to identify some of the characteristics of foreign language learners who struggle. This

study also indicates that skills such as phonological decoding might need to be emphasized for those students who are challenged more than others.

Similar to Dinklage, more recently, a group of researchers led by Sparks and Ganschow have performed studies on students with LLDs enrolled in high school and university foreign language programs. The majority of this body of research seems to be politically driven by the legal question, “Should students with LLDs be required or exempt from enrolling in foreign language programs?” According to the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA), all students with special learning requirements are guaranteed access to fair and appropriately accommodated education programs, including foreign language (Evarrs & Knotek, 2005, 118). Therefore, the research conducted by Sparks et al. attempted to determine the characteristics of deficits that are common among those who struggle with learning foreign language, explain why these students are challenged with learning a foreign language, and provide implications as to which students are legally represented by IDEA and how they should be receiving the legal accommodations in which they are entitled.

2.1.1 Identification of students with a foreign language learning disability

In examining the issue of identifying the students who should be receiving instructional accommodations in foreign language as referenced in IDEA, Sparks et al. (1992) examine whether or not educators can classify students who have a specific foreign language learning disability (FLLD). They claim that previous research has not been able to identify students who succeed in foreign language courses. Through quantitative analyses of student performance in foreign language, Sparks et. al. (1992) showed that students who had difficulty learning a foreign language were previously diagnosed by special educators as both LLD and non-LLD. In

addition, studies have indicated that students classified as LLD do not exhibit cognitive or academic achievement differences when compared to low achieving students who were not identified as having a learning disability (Sparks, 2006). Therefore, their study presents compelling evidence that simply identifying a student as having a LLD does not predict weak student performance in foreign language classrooms.

Studies initiated by Sparks et al. also critique the manner in which students are currently identified and diagnosed with a LLD. The traditional method in which students are diagnosed with LLD relies on an aptitude-achievement discrepancy, utilizing a student's IQ score in relationship to their achievement in academic areas (Sparks, 1996). This method of diagnosis can lead to identifying a heterogeneous group of learners with a broad spectrum of learning issues, ranging from severe mental retardation to simple underachievement in academic performance, both of which are not directly linked to ability to learn language (Sparks, 2006). Thus, according to Sparks et al., this general identification of students with LLD does not isolate language learning issues, and therefore cannot predict students' weak or strong performance in learning a foreign language.

Another method used to predict student performance in foreign language classes is the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT), an assessment tool that was created by Carroll & Sapon in 1959 to assess students' aptitude through subtests that evaluate number learning, phonetic script recognition, spelling clues, word identification in sentences, and paired associates (Gajar, 1987). Sparks (2006) argues that although this test has a correlation of .62 with foreign language performance in class, using only one test to predict student performance is not a valid and reliable method of assessment. Finally, some schools utilize grades in foreign language classes to denote a FLLD. They argue further that this method of identification is also

problematic because student learning can be affected by motivation, anxiety, teaching methods, and teacher-student attitudes and relationships.

According to Sparks (2006), all of these assessment methods are ineffective because research has shown that these assessment tools do not clearly differentiate students who are capable and incapable of passing foreign language classes. Therefore, because it is difficult to identify learners who struggle with language, Sparks claims that all learners should not be excluded from foreign language study on the basis of one study. Rather, the focus of teachers, programs, and research studies should shift from identifying students with LLDs who struggle in foreign language classes to an awareness of each student's learning style in an attempt to accommodate instruction accordingly.

To address the query of learning styles and predicting student performance in foreign language classes, Castro and Peck (2005) conducted a large-scale study that correlated student learning styles with the performance of university level students in who struggle in foreign language classes. Using the Kolb Learning Styles Inventory, Castro and Peck found that students with the ability to rely on a variety of learning styles were more successful in foreign language classes than students who were identified to employ one specialized learning style.

To further explore specific student's learning styles and the appropriate accommodations for students with LLDs, a research agenda including qualitative and quantitative analyses must be initiated. As mentioned in the previous studies conducted by Dinklage and Sparks et al., quantitative assessment measures are not successful predictors of foreign language performance as they are too broad and do not take into account other factors such as anxiety, teaching methods, and the attitudes and relationships of teachers and students. A research study that is more qualitative in nature will provide evidence of student performance from a variety of

measures: observations of classroom interactions, an analysis of verbal and non-verbal interactions, and examination of student and teacher beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions through interviews. When combined with quantitative analysis of student performance, these qualitative data sources will provide a more comprehensive examination of the foreign language learning of students with LLDs.

2.1.2 Poor performance of students: A rationale

Another argument presented by Sparks et. al. (1992) discusses the issue of why certain students, both previously diagnosed as LLD and non-LLD struggle with learning a foreign language. In their studies, Sparks et. al. (1992) refer to the work of Carroll (1962) whose research equates phonetic coding, grammatical sensitivity, inductive language learning ability, and rote memory to successful foreign language learning. In addition, they allude to Pimsleur's (1963) studies that relate students' poor performance in FL classes to auditory problems and difficulty with sound discrimination and the sound-symbol aspect of language.

Referring to these previous studies and through extensive quantitative analysis, Sparks et al. (1992) developed the Linguistic Coding Deficit Hypothesis (LCDH) in order to explain why certain students struggle with learning a foreign language. The LCDH states that "learning problems are linked to native language learning difficulties in mastering the phonological, syntactic, and/or semantic 'codes' of language." (Sparks et al., 1992, 1993). In other words, consistent with Dinklage (1971), Carroll (1962), and Pimsleur (1963), Sparks et al. (1992, 1993) claim that students, whether identified as LLD or non-LLD, who have difficulty with sound discrimination, sound/symbol connections, word order, and denoting meaning in their native

language, will have similar problems in learning a second language. This finding, however, is not without criticism.

One principle criticism of the LCDH relates to the type of language performance that is examined by Sparks et al. Since the completion of these studies, the field of foreign language education has changed its emphasis from a linguistic, grammar-based analysis, to a more communicative approach. Currently, foreign language educators value *communicative competence*, the ability to use the target language to appropriately function in a communicative setting (Celce-Murcia et al. 1995; Bachman, 1990; Campbell & Wales, 1970; Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1972; Savignon, 1972). To better understand the specifics of communicative competence, these researchers have divided the term into four sub-competencies: *discourse competence*, *sociolinguistic competence*, *strategic competence*, and *grammatical competence*. To demonstrate communicative competence, language learners must be able to: put words and phrases together in a clear, cohesive, coherent manner (*discourse competence*); use verbal and non-verbal language for the appropriate cultural contexts (*sociolinguistic competence*); negotiate meaning through linguistic breakdowns in the language (*strategic competence*); and apply the appropriate phonology, morphology, syntax, and vocabulary of the language when making meaning (*grammatical competence*).

In addition to *communicative competence*, foreign language educators also emphasize the language learner's ability to demonstrate *interactive competence* (Hall, 1995). In her study of novice level students in a Spanish class, Hall reiterates that language learners must be able to participate in "real conversations" that include *opening utterances*, phrases that establish a conversational topic; *ellipsis*, utterances that respond to an interlocutor without repeating information that is already known; *related lexical items*, vocabulary specific to the conversation;

and *expressive reactions*, exclamations or questions that appropriately react to a previous utterance.

To be consistent with current theory in the field of foreign language, researchers must evaluate students' ability to use the language accurately, appropriately and coherently to negotiate meaning in authentic verbal interactions that include Hall's components of real conversation. The assessment measures used in the studies conducted by Sparks et al., merely evaluated the grammatical knowledge of the students in decontextualized contexts; and emphasized students knowledge or lack of knowledge in phonology, morphology, and syntax. Sparks et al. did not take into account how this grammatical knowledge could be applied to cultural contexts and used to appropriately communicate functionally in the language.

2.1.3 Instructional Accommodations

In contrast to those who support communicative competence, Sparks et al equate phonetic coding, grammatical sensitivity, inductive language learning ability, and rote memory to successful foreign language learning. In their studies, Sparks et al. conclude that students who struggle learning a foreign language have difficulty with phonological decoding, and thus recommend that these students receive direct instruction of phonology in order to succeed.

Two methods of direct instruction, Multi-Sensory Learning (MSL) and the Orton-Gillingham method have been used as accommodations for students with LLDs (Sparks et. al., 1996; Sparks et. al., 1991). MSL is a type of foreign language instruction that focuses on the explicit instruction of the phoneme-grapheme (sound-symbol) relationship and attempts to assist students with language learning difficulties by providing them with multiple modes of input. More specifically, the MSL instructs the sound-symbol system of language by allowing students

to simultaneously hear a sound, see the symbol that represents the sound, and write the symbol of the sound. In a study conducted in a high school Latin program, Sparks et al. (1996) discovered that MSL significantly improved the FL aptitude and native language ability of students previously diagnosed as LLD.

In another study, Sparks et al. (1991, 1992) apply the Orton-Gillingham method to students who have been previously identified as dyslexic, those who have difficulty in forming adequate phonological representations of the sounds of one's language (DiFino & Lombardino, 2004). Established in 1964, the Orton-Gillingham method is the most popular method to teach students with dyslexia. Using an Auditory-Visual-Kinesthetic approach (AVK), the Orton-Gillingham method is structured, sequential, multi-sensory, and student-centered (DiFino and Lombardino, 2004). In teaching linguistic forms, instructors demonstrate grammar in context, rather than teaching grammar deductively. Teachers use songs, games, and role-playing to make language learning more meaningful and concrete. Teachers also adopt teaching strategies that accommodate the variety of types of learners in their class and plan whole-group, pair-work, small-group, and individual activities in lessons. Similar to the previous study applying MSL strategies, Sparks et al. (1992) found the instructional accommodations suggested by the Orton-Gillingham method were helpful in teaching foreign language to students with LLDs. Therefore, according to Sparks et al., to assist with students with LLDs who have difficulty with phonological, syntactic, and semantic decoding, teachers should teach grammatical concepts using structured, sequential, student-centered, multi-sensory activities.

In another study on learning styles and student performance, Castro and Peck (2005) found pertinent information for educators developing accommodations for students who struggle in foreign language classes. After conducting the Kolb Learning Styles test with university

students, Castro and Peck concluded that knowledge of student learning styles can assist teachers with developing instructional strategies that address student needs. They also discussed that students' own knowledge of their learning styles can assist their learning because they are able to identify their strengths and weaknesses with reference to foreign language learning and address them accordingly.

Although these studies identify appropriate accommodations for students, they view foreign language learning as the ability to analyze specific, decontextualized aspects of language. This body of literature does not take into account other skills that are significant in foreign learning language such as using the language coherently and appropriately to communicate, as defined in the theory of *communicative competence*.

Thus, the quantitative studies conducted in high school and university programs fail to present other possible accommodations that mediate and support learning, such as types of teacher and peer verbal and non-verbal interactions, and do not include how to assist students with using the target language for communicative purposes. Future studies are needed to identify the tools and interactions that assist students in their learning so that teachers can be informed of the type of classroom materials, methods, and interactions that benefit students who have difficulty learning a foreign language. In addition, these studies do not address learners within the K-8 setting. The following section will address research that discusses the performance of students with LD's in a K-8 French Immersion setting.

2.2 QUANTITATIVE STUDIES IN CANADIAN FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAMS

In addition to studies applied to high school and university settings, quantitative research has been conducted on students with LLDs in elementary Canadian French Immersion programs in the late 1970's. After conducting a two year longitudinal study in Canadian Schools, Bruck (1978) compared the academic performance of students in four categories: those enrolled in an elementary French Immersion Program with and without LLDs and those enrolled in an English, non-French Immersion School with and without LLDs.

The findings of Bruck's studies report that students with LLDs can benefit and learn when participating in French Immersion Programs, and that the immersion curriculum did not have any impact on the general academic progress of students with LLDs. The results also indicate that students with LLDs who were enrolled in French Immersion Programs learn reading, mathematics, and spelling skills in their own language and become proficient in French consistent with their non-LLD peers. However, the rate at which students with LLDs learn was slightly slower than that of their non-LLD counterparts. Implications of this study recommend that students with LLDs enrolled in French Immersion programs should receive remedial support for academic areas in the target language, French, rather than English. In addition, this study shows that students with LLDs are not categorically disadvantaged or low achieving when learning a second language. Their rate of progress might be slightly slower than students who have not been identified with LLDs.

Bruck's study also reports on the comparison of students with LLDs in immersion programs and French as a second language programs (FSL). Bruck (1978) found that students with LLDs in FSL classes performed more poorly than students participating in French

Immersion classrooms. She speculates that this difference in performance is due to the effects of traditional foreign language instruction that consists of repetitive, decontextualized tasks presented in non-meaningful contexts. Contrary to traditional FSL instruction, immersion classrooms provide students with the opportunity to learn within the context of the academic content, which allows them opportunity to negotiate misunderstandings in a meaningful context.

In summary, the research examining students with LLDs in French Immersion Programs in Canada implies that students with LLDs perform similarly to their non-LLD peers, but at a slightly slower rate, benefit from a contextualized language environment. Although the Canadian research provides some as to how students with LLDs perform in foreign language classes and how teachers should accommodate students, the findings remain to be quantitative and general. The following section will examine qualitative studies that provide more specific findings on the identification of students who struggle, and how teachers should appropriately accommodate these students.

2.3 QUALITATIVE STUDIES ON STUDENTS WITH LLDS

Following the French Immersion studies in the late 70's, a more recent qualitative body of research, conducted by DiFino and Lombardino (2004), Mabbott (1994), Hurst (1996), and Arries (1999), examines the performance and the perceptions of students with LLDs learning foreign languages, and suggests appropriate instructional accommodations for learners who struggle.

2.3.1 Identification of characteristics of students who struggle

In their study of university students with language learning disabilities such as dyslexia, DiFino and Lombardino (2004) identify three popular areas that are difficult for all students: memorization, anxiety, and lexical grammar confusion. In addition to discussing the general difficulties of students who struggle, DiFino and Lombardino (2004) establish a checklist of areas of language learning that are difficult for students with LLDs and a corresponding list of accommodations to help students with LD's overcome challenges in foreign language learning. DiFino and Lombardino (2004) suggest that, in order to better reach students with LLDs, there needs to be support for alternative teaching methods for special educators, since the majority of special educators do not speak the target languages. The implications of DiFino and Lombardino's study also indicate that additional support is also necessary for foreign language teachers, as they are not trained to detect and accommodate students with language learning difficulties.

Another study, conducted by Mabbott (1994) applied qualitative methods to examine five adult learners with LLDs who experienced success in developing advanced level proficiency in a foreign language. In this study, Mabbott investigated the relationship between the participants' performance in their first and second languages on reading and writing tasks. Through conducting written dictations, oral readings, and reading comprehension tests in both English and the foreign language, Mabbott found that these students experienced similar errors in both languages. These findings confirm the LCDH determined by the research of Sparks et al. that claims that students who have deficiencies in the phonological, syntactic, and semantic decoding of their first language will display similar deficiencies in the foreign language.

2.3.2 Instructional Accommodations

In concluding their study, DiFino and Lombardino (2004) provide a comprehensive list of accommodations for students who struggle learning a foreign language. They imply that teachers of foreign languages should include the following techniques to reach all styles and abilities of learners:

- choral repetition to help students who struggle with sound pronunciation and sound symbol connection
- visual materials to assist students who are challenged with auditory discrimination and memory
- contextualization of words and concepts to help students retain new linguistic knowledge
- questions and tasks that promote comprehension rather than rote repetition
- authentic realia to make learning meaningful
- contrasting colors and patterns can help make linguistic aspects comprehensible
- kinesthetic and printed materials in combination with aural/oral activities
- daily assignment sheets and outlines of goals and expectations to encourage student ownership of their work
- frequent, formative, alternative forms of assessment

In contrast to the accommodations presented by Sparks et al. and Bruck, this list is very specific, detailed, and varied. By using qualitative research methods, DiFino and Lombardino were able to suggest accommodations that relate to instruction, materials, assessment, classroom management, and student learning of communicative, cultural *and* linguistic knowledge of the foreign language. These accommodations are much more comprehensive than the Orton-Gillingham method that was suggested by Sparks et al. to assist only with phonological decoding.

Similar to DiFino and Lombardino, Mabbott (1994) conducted interviews with adult learners with LLDs to gather specific information on the instructional practices and learning strategies that were useful in their learning of a foreign language. Interestingly, four out of five

of the participants learned a foreign language both formally in a classroom setting and informally in an immersion situation outside of the classroom. In the interviews, the participants attributed their success in learning a foreign language to their participation in immersion settings, supporting the findings gathered in Bruck's studies. The participants struggled to learn a foreign language in the formal classroom because the instruction focused on the memorization of grammar and vocabulary. All five of the participants agreed that memorizing language and textbook exercises were nearly impossible. They claimed that for students with LLDs to be successful in learning a foreign language, they must participate in classrooms or immersion settings that are communicative, meaningful, and provide tools that assist students with applying the structure of the foreign language to communicate in the language.

Another qualitative study produced by Hurst (1996) reports on a personal account of a teacher and discusses her experience in instructing Spanish to a group of seventh graders with identified LD's. The students in Hurst's study struggled learning a foreign language in grades 3-6 due to learning problems such as auditory processing problems, attention deficit disorders, dyslexia, organizational difficulties. To become a more effective teacher, Hurst drew upon the previously presented "Orton-Gillingham" method (also used in studies conducted by Sparks et al.) and utilized multi-sensory techniques to teach Spanish to students with language learning problems. Although she did not include specific data on student performance in her analysis, Hurst provides very positive personal observations and student reactions to her accommodations and instructional techniques. Hurst's personal observations suggest that accommodations, such as those listed above from DiFino and Lombardino (2004), can assist learners of diverse styles and disabilities in succeeding in foreign language classrooms. Hurst observed that students with LLDs succeed in foreign language classes when teachers: know their interests and backgrounds;

maintain a structured, multi-sensory class environment; include direct instruction of phonology; use visuals, stories, games, and cultural activities; maintain a comprehensible, target language rich classroom; frequently change activities every ten minutes; assign flash cards for homework; and foster self-esteem through highlighting individual strengths.

Similar to Hurst's accounts, Arries (1999) reports on a qualitative study that examines the perceptions and performance of students with LLDs in an appropriately accommodated university classroom. In contrast to Hurst, Arries uses multiple sources of data and collects his information through interviews, student self-reports, and personal observations. Arries' focused his data on instructional accommodations such as course design, enhanced phonological processing, improving memory, reducing anxiety, and eliminating distractions. Findings report that the application of these focused instructional accommodations aid in the successful learning of students with identified LLDs. Another interesting implication of this study notes that the instructional accommodations intended to assist students with LLDs actually benefited students without LLDs as well.

In summary, current research in the field uses both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis to examine the identification of students who struggle learning a foreign language and to suggest instructional practices that appropriately accommodate the learning of these students. The following section of this review of literature will address the limitations of these studies.

2.4 LIMITATIONS OF CURRENT LITERATURE

It is clear that the literature on foreign language learning by students with identified LLDs is extremely limited. As previously indicated, the majority of research focuses on

quantitative analyses of specific linguistic aspects of language learning and rarely, if ever, takes into account the historical, social, and cultural aspects of the learning environment that are consequential to a learner's achievement. Currently, the field second language acquisition has changed its focus from a linguistic, analytical approach to studying language learners to a more communicative, sociocultural approach (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Lantolf, 2000, Firth and Wagner, 1997). Instead of relying exclusively on quantitative test scores, this sociocultural approach of second language acquisition research utilizes both quantitative and qualitative measures to examine the relationships between cultural contexts, social interactions, classroom discourse, student perceptions of themselves, and student communicative performance over time.

Lantolf (1994) summarizes Vygotskian notions of research, "He [Vygotsky] conceived of the sociocultural setting as the primary, and determining, factor in the development of higher forms of human mental activity [e.g. language] and called for the redefinition of development from a quantitative to a qualitative problem," (p. 6). To be consistent with current trends in research of SLA, studies relating to foreign language learning by students with LLDs need to turn their focus on the sociocultural setting when analyzing student learning. Studies should include classroom observations, verbal and non-verbal interactions, interviews, and performance-based assessments of language use. By using a sociocultural approach in examining the foreign language learning of students with identified LLDs, researchers will be able to track how students perform over time and discover the mediational tools and social interactions that support learner development. More specifically, this approach to research will inform teachers of the specific characteristics that relate to students who struggle, and help them to instruct and manage their classrooms to reach students with LLDs.

Another limitation in the previously mentioned research relates to the tools used for linguistic analysis of student performance. With the exception of Difino and Lombardino (2004), Hurst (1996), Mabbott (1994) and Arries (1999); the majority of the studies conducted by Sparks et al. use the MLAT, an aptitude test that was created over forty years ago, and represents the traditional linguistic-focused foreign language pedagogy of the 1960's. This tool assesses student ability in number learning, phonetic script, spelling clues, words in sentences, and paired associates, and does not evaluate students' ability to communicate in context. Moreover, the MLAT is a multiple choice test and is not performance based, and therefore does not examine student ability to communicate in the language.

Previous studies are also problematic because they begin with the premise that foreign language learning is simply related to phonology, orthography, syntax, and semantics. Currently, foreign language education promotes a very different perspective of learning language, that of *communicative competence*, the ability to use language in meaningful, culturally *and* grammatically appropriate ways. As previously indicated, Celce-Murcia et al. (1995); Bachman, (1990); Campbell & Wales, (1970); Canale & Swain, (1980); Hymes, (1972); Savignon, (1972) identify *communicative competence* as having the ability to use and negotiate the use of phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics of language in a cohesive, coherent, culturally appropriate manner.

Previous research in the field also presents a caveat relating to the participants studied. Each of these studies uses a very broad definition of students with LLDs that does not specify the specific characteristics of the population of students being studied. This issue also relates to the fact that the field of education has not discovered a tool that is consistently used to determine students with LLDs. In addition, the majority of previously mentioned literature investigates the

foreign language learning of students in high school and university classes. Very few of the studies include students in a K-8 setting. The following section identifies future studies that address the limitations of current literature.

2.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

After reviewing the literature in the field of LLDs and foreign language education, it is apparent that there is a need for more research on students with LLDs in the elementary and middle school setting. Future research should use a sociocultural approach to research, use both qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis, view foreign language learning as developing communicative competence, apply a more specific definition of students with LLDs, and focus on the K-8 school setting. Student progress should be assessed using tools that evaluate linguistic knowledge and interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational performance in contextualized, authentic, communicative settings. In addition to tracking students' performance quantitatively on foreign language tasks, further research should also be qualitative in nature and examine classroom environment, social interactions, teaching methodology, classroom discourse, tools, identity, and perceptions of foreign language learning.

Through initiating more qualitative studies of students with specific LLDs in elementary and middle school programs, research in the field of foreign language will be able to contribute to a general understanding of how students with LLDs in a K-8 setting learn a foreign language. More specifically, future studies will be able to determine the learning expectations for students with specific learning issues, recommend appropriate curriculum and accommodations that are

required legally through IDEA, and indicate the capacity in which particular students should participate in foreign language programs.

Studies are needed that provide specific analyses of the foreign language learning of middle schools students with LLDs through qualitative methods to broaden the current research in the field beyond linguistic processing. Instead of analyzing large scale scores of students on standardized examinations, there is a real need for studies that conduct a more fine-grained analysis of a small group of students and their historical, social, and cultural contexts of foreign language learning.

The following section includes a summary of Activity Theory, a theoretical framework developed by Vygotsky and A.N. Leontiev to evaluate learning within a system of activity that include of historical, social, and cultural components (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Lantolf 2000). A description of this theoretical framework is included in this chapter because it provides a method to explain the multiple aspects of a child's environment that contribute to their learning. As mentioned previously, there is a need for this type of research that evaluates the foreign language learning of students with LLDs through a qualitative lens and considers multiple sources of information and contexts of learning as an explanation for performance, or lack of it. Activity Theory provides this framework and explains theoretically how the multiple sources of an individual's learning is consequential to what is or is not learned.

2.6 ACTIVITY THEORY

Developed by A.N. Leontiev, Activity Theory is based on the premise that human psychological development and learning are social activities that are firmly connected to history,

culture, and social interaction (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Lantolf 2000). Contributing to this sociocultural belief, Vygotsky and A.N. Leontiev developed a theoretical framework entitled Activity Theory, which provides a systematic method to analyze the complex historical, cultural, and social activity system of learning.

When explaining learning, rather than analyzing the isolated individual, activity theorists view the entire activity system as the unit of analysis and claim that the relationships within the system are consequential to what individuals learn (Engestrom, 1999). The relationships within this activity system include the following components: the *subject* and its related *object* and *outcome*, the associated mediational *tools*, and the *community* and its related *rules* and *division of labor* (ibid). Figure 1 displays a model developed by Engestrom to visually demonstrate how these components of the activity system are related. Engestrom’s use of the a triangle and double headed arrows demonstrate how all of these aspects of the activity of human learning are interrelated and, in turn, influence each other.

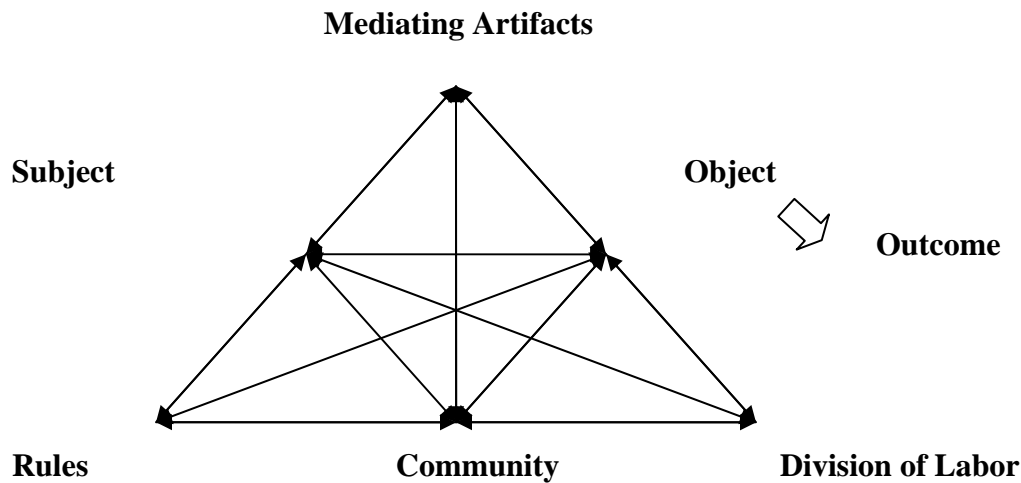


Figure 1. Engestrom's Triangular Model of an Activity System

Within an activity system, it is important to understand the meaning of each term in the system. According to Engestrom, *activity* refers to the process that is driven by a motive toward a particular *object*, and the *motive* is the “cultural-psychological-institutional impetus that guides

human activity toward a particular object.” (Lantolf, 2006, p. 223). In other words, the motive is a sociocultural construct that accounts for the reasons why people behave in particular ways. The *object* is the target of the subject’s thoughts and actions within the activity, and the *subject* refers to the agent or agents that are the focus of the activity analysis (Lantolf, 2006). It is important to note that, according to Engestrom, the *object* is not exclusively material, it is also a symbolic component of learning that drives the minds of the individuals, *subjects*, that are the focus of the activity analysis.

In this model, the *tools* refer to symbolic artifacts, most notably language, and material artifacts, e.g. textbooks, tasks, or teaching accommodations, within the activity system. The *community* relates to the participants of the activity system who share the same *object*. The community’s *rules* constrain or advance the activity within the system; and its *division of labor* also influences the entire activity system through the interactions among the members of the community. For example, the status, division of power, organization of participation, and established identities of the individuals involved in the community can affect the shared activity (Engestrom, 1999, Lantolf, 2006).

In Figure 1, the placement of the components of the activity system helps to explain their relationships. The *tools* are located at the top of the triangle, in between the *subject* and the *object*. This strategic placement represents the significant role that the symbolic and material artifacts play in mediating the agent towards her goal-directed activity. At the base of the triangle, Engestrom places the *community*, *rules*, and the *division of labor* within the community. These aspects of the community fall at the bottom of the triangle to denote their purpose of providing a conceptual framework for the activity as they connect the local micro-activity of the subject to the greater macro-activity of the larger social-cultural-historical structures (Lantolf,

2006). As indicated by Vygotsky, learning occurs within social and cultural contexts, and community and its components are at the base of the triangle demonstrating their importance of providing the social and cultural context in which the learning, or activity, occurs.

The following example of an application of Activity Theory serves to further unpack the components and relationships of activity system and to demonstrate how this theoretical framework could be used to analyze foreign language learning of students with LLDs. This proposed application can be viewed in Figure 2. Hypothetically speaking, a *subject*, a student with LLD in a middle school Spanish program, might target their thoughts and actions towards the *object* of learning Spanish to communicate with Spanish friends in their neighborhood. The *motive* that guides the student's activity towards learning Spanish to communicate might be to make more friends in their neighborhood, and the corresponding *outcome* might be that students go home from school and have a conversation with their Spanish speaking friends about their favorite sports.

In the context of the middle school Spanish classroom, the *tools* might be an info-gap task that asks the students to converse about their favorite sports and a corresponding list of vocabulary and expressions with accompanied visuals to make language comprehensible. The *community* could include the Spanish teacher and the students, both those with and without identified LLDs who attend the class and have the same object of communicating in Spanish. Also associated with these members of the community are their related historical, cultural, and social experiences. The *rules* of this community might be that the teacher uses the target language 90% of the time to lead the class, and the students are expected to use Spanish to communicate to the best of their ability as they are informally evaluated on this skill daily.

Finally, the *division of labor* could relate to the participant structures of the students as organized by the teacher and reflected by prior knowledge of student ability, e.g. having an identified LLD.

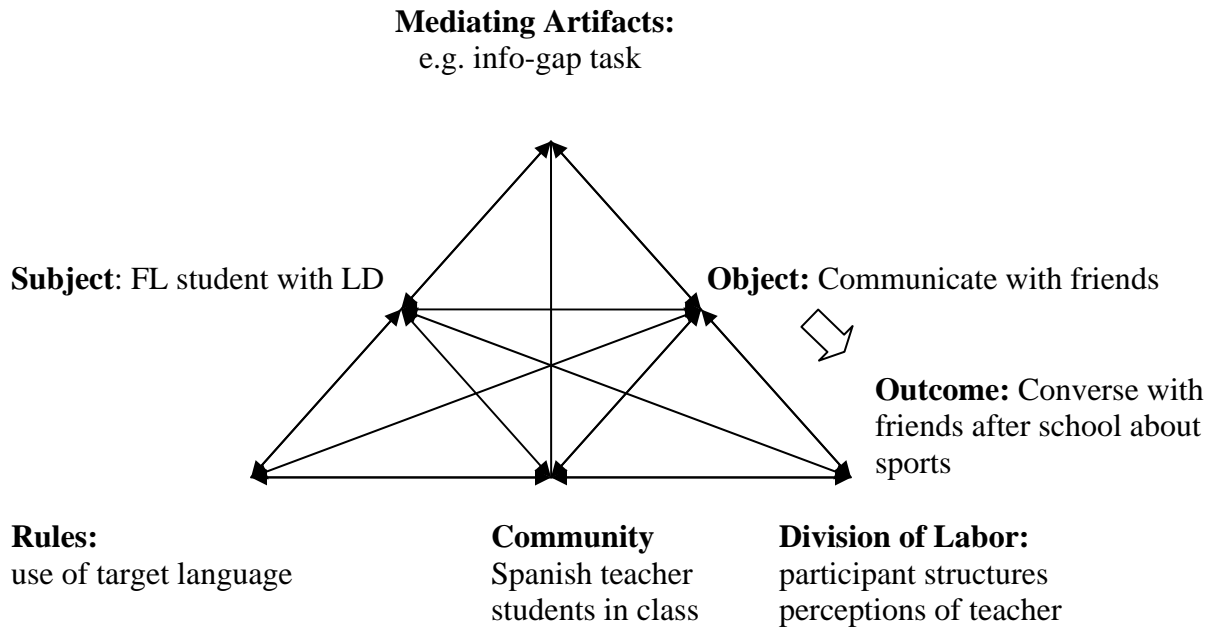


Figure 2. Engeström's Model Applied to the Foreign Language Learning of a Middle School Student with LLD

In this partial activity system for this student, the components are all interrelated. For example, the *division of labor* can affect how the student learns. The teacher has privilege over the student as she has the capacity to change the content of the discussion, choose the activities, and organize the participation in activities. At times the teacher might organize the participation evenly, so that all students, including the other students and the student with LD, are able to contribute to class conversations, have the same opportunity to practice learning Spanish orally to meet the object of communicating with friends. However, the teacher might identify the student with LD as having difficulty with a certain topic due to their disability, and, in turn, limit her participation in a certain activity. This *division of labor* will affect the *subject's* ability to

reach the *object* of communicating with friends in Spanish as she will not have the capacity to practice speaking in class.

In addition to the *division of labor*, the available symbolic and material tools could alter the *subject's* ability to reach the associated *object* and *outcome*. A teacher could ask the students to participate in an info-gap task asking each other about their favorite sports, however, by not providing the material tools of visuals and a list of vocabulary and phrases to use, the student with LLD who has difficulty remembering and associating sounds with words might not be able to successfully complete the task. In addition, the *tools* that a teacher provides, such as a list of vocabulary, might not be the appropriate mediation to assist the student with LLD to complete the task, thus resulting in the student unable to practice using the language, and therefore impacting her ability to reach the *object*.

Finally, the *rules* could also alter the *subject's* ability to reach the associated *object*. For example, if the teacher did not enforce a target language rich classroom, students might not have the routine, practice, or input of vocabulary and phrases to complete a communicative task. Without having the ability to complete a task in class, the *subject* will not have the opportunity to practice using language and therefore not be able to reach the *object* of communicating with friends outside of the classroom.

After summarizing the various components of Activity Theory, viewing Engestrom's model of an activity system, and examining an associated example in the context of foreign language learning it is apparent that Activity Theory will provide an appropriate method for analyzing multiple sources of data in a qualitative study. The triangular model provides a framework in which to examine an individual learner, her motive for learning, the mediational tools that assist in connecting the subject to her object of learning. In addition, it provides a

model that relates the individual learner with her community and its rules and division of labor. Finally, Activity Theory views learning as occurring in an entire social, cultural, and historical system that is constantly changing and being influenced by each one of its components.

The following chapter describes the methods used in conducting this qualitative study of students with LLDs in the middle school setting. After indicating the setting, research questions, and data collection tools, the following chapter concludes indicating how Activity Theory assists in examining the multiple sources of data that reflect that reflect the historical, cultural, and social aspects of student learning.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This research study focuses on the foreign language literacy development of students with language learning disabilities (LLDs) in a middle school located in suburban western Pennsylvania. In this chapter, I first describe the context and participants of the research study, the rationale for the particular school site, the small sample of participants, the qualitative research design, and the focus on writing. Then, I identify the research questions that motivate the study and indicate the corresponding data and data collection tools that I collected to gather information on student writing development, whole-group classroom interactions, and student and teacher perceptions.

Through the analysis of these qualitative data, this study sheds light on the foreign language writing development of students with LLDs, their performance in class, and the perceptions that students and teachers demonstrate regarding students with LLDs in foreign language classes. Previous research findings collected in foreign language classrooms illustrate a relationship between student writing development and teacher talk, classroom activities, and student and teacher perceptions (Pessoa et al., 2007). Therefore, in order to examine the writing development of students with LLDs, I examined the modes of instruction and verbal interactions that promote language development among students with LLDs, and the perceptions of the teachers and students towards foreign language learning. The findings provide valuable insight

and recommendations for appropriate instruction and facilitation of foreign language literacy development of students with LLDs.

3.1 CONTEXT

3.1.1 Rationale

This study was conducted in a suburban, middle school in southwestern Pennsylvania. I chose to conduct the study in this school district for three reasons. First, the school's curriculum contains a nationally renowned K-12 foreign language program in which the students are required to participate in Spanish classes in kindergarten through seventh grade. After seventh grade, Spanish courses are offered, however students are able to choose whether or not to continue enrolling in a foreign language program.

Second, I chose to study students in this district for the way in which Spanish language instruction is viewed within the entire district curriculum. In this district, Spanish is treated as a core subject, and all students, including those diagnosed with LLDs, are required to participate in Spanish classes. Therefore, this district is unique in that there are several students that are diagnosed with LLDs who are enrolled in Spanish classes, which is not the case in most other middle schools. However, this unique mandate of required enrollment for all students with and without LLDs has been a recent debate among the parents, teachers, and administration. Several of the students with LLDs are not able to read and write at grade level in their native language, and some parents and teachers believe that the time devoted to learning a foreign language

should be eliminated so that these students can receive more literacy instruction in their first language.

Third, in addition to the reputation of this particular school district's Spanish program and its required enrollment of students with learning disabilities, I chose to work at this school site because it has been involved in a ten-year research partnership with the university. For the past three years, I have worked with the Spanish teachers in this school district on developing and evaluating literacy skills of students. Therefore, I am familiar with the administration and faculty involved in the instruction of foreign language, and student literacy development has been a topic of discussion and research for the past ten years.

3.1.2 Program description

In this school district, from kindergarten through fifth grade, the Spanish curriculum follows the Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES) model of instruction. In this model, the students meet their Spanish teacher once a day in their home classrooms for twenty minutes of instruction. In sixth grade, the Spanish program begins to include Content-Based Instruction (CBI), where Spanish is used to teach select thematic units from the middle school curriculum in four subject areas: English/language arts, reading, social studies, and science. In addition to this curricular change from FLES to CBI, the students begin to leave their home classrooms and travel to a Spanish classroom for forty minutes of instruction instead of learning in their grade level classrooms.

Next, I explain the participants in the study, how I identified them, and how I provided a profile L1 and L2 writing ability as it relates to their experience with foreign language

3.2 PARTICIPANTS

The purpose of this study was to provide a comprehensive understanding of the foreign language literacy development of students with LLDs. To uncover this comprehensive understanding, the development of foreign language literacy of three students with LLDs was tracked and this development was related to the instructional practices, classroom materials, classroom interactions, and student and teacher perceptions. To provide an in-depth profile of foreign language learning by students with LLDs, I selected a small sample of three students, one boy and one girl from sixth grade and one girl from seventh grade and followed their progress over a period of three months. This three month period was chosen because it allowed the opportunity to collect data over one entire content-based unit.

3.2.1 Identification of Participants

Due to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records, I was forced to work with the special education coordinator at the school district to select and identify my participants. To protect the anonymity of students under the FERPA laws, I was not able to have any information on the students in the school that had identified LLDs until I had received parental consent. Thus, to initiate the selection of the participants, I first contacted the special education coordinator and informed him of the study. He agreed to support the study and to assist me with selecting participants.

After contacting the special education coordinator, I informed him of the characteristics that were to be used to identify the sample of participants in the study. To identify the specific characteristics related to language learning disabilities, I turned to previous research in the field

of foreign language. Carroll, (1962) Dinklage, (1971); Pimsleur, (1963); Sparks, et al., (1993, 1996); and DiFino and Lombardino, (2004) claim that students struggling in learning a foreign language demonstrate problems discriminating sounds, connecting sounds with written symbols, transferring print into sounds, identifying and relaying appropriately sequenced syntactic structures, and remembering new sounds and vocabulary.

In selecting the students, the special education coordinator utilized the Individualized Education Program (IEP) to first identify students who have disabilities; then he screened the IEPs to identify those students whose learner characteristics matched those representative of previous research. The IEP is a document that is legally required through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to guarantee access to fair and appropriate education programs for all students (Evarrs & Knotek, 2005). The IEP summarizes information relating to students with special needs and is designed through collaborative discussions among special educators, teachers, parents, and the particular student. The content of the IEP includes specific information on the special learning difficulties of the student, an evaluation report that documents the student's performance over time, and a list of suggested instructional accommodations that are related to the students learning difficulties (Appendix A). Although the IEP document helped to identify a group of students who had learning difficulties in school, the mere existence of an IEP was not sufficient for selecting the sample of participants. Students who have IEPs can contain physical, emotional, mental and learning disabilities that are not necessarily related to language learning. Thus, I asked that the special educator screen the IEPs for the characteristics determined in previous literature to identify students who struggle learning a foreign language.

After screening the IEPs, the special education coordinator chose eight students whose learner characteristics matched those of students who struggle to learn a foreign language. With the hope that at least three participants would agree to participate in the study, the special education coordinator sent home a letter and waiver to the parents of these eight students. The letter, that I composed, summarized the study and the associated waiver asked if the parents would permit their children to participate. If the parents agreed to allow their students to participate, the parents and students signed the waiver that allowed me to access to their school records and to collect data on their performance and perceptions in Spanish class.

After the letters and waivers were disseminated, only four waivers were returned. Three of the waivers indicated that the students and parents were interested in the study, and included enthusiastic comments about participating. One waiver expressed a parents' negative opinion towards the study, and commented that she would prefer that her child does not participate in the study. Thus, the three students who returned waivers and agreed to participate were the students selected for the study. A brief description of these students is provided in the next section.

3.2.2 Description of Participants

3.2.2.1 Nate

Nate was a shy, quiet student who was assigned an IEP for his difficulty with reading and writing in English. Nate's reading comprehension was at a fifth grade level (one grade level below), and his reading fluency averaged 84 words per minute, (15 points lower than the sixth grade target of 100-140 words per minute). Nate wrote well-organized paragraphs, however that he struggled with spelling and frequently omitted definite and indefinite articles in his English writing. In Spanish class, Nate enjoyed working individually on grammar exercises that

included conjugating verbs or learning pronouns. He preferred to study with flash cards and found individual assistance from the teacher to be extremely helpful. In his free time, he enjoyed watching and playing sports and participating in video games.

3.2.2.2 Gayle

Gayle was a highly social student who was assigned an IEP for her difficulty with reading and writing in L1. She struggled with reading comprehension and identifying sounds. In writing, Gayle lacked organization, frequently omitted topic sentences, transitions, and conclusions. During class activities, Gayle also struggled to stay on task, and ignore the behavior of other students. Gayle was a talkative student who worked well with her classmates, asked them for assistance, and helped them on occasions. It was common for Gayle to talk loudly and laugh with her peers, however, at times, Gayle displayed a negative attitude toward her learning Spanish. In Spanish class, Gayle's favorite activities included working collaboratively with classmates and playing games. After school, Gayle enjoyed horse back riding and socializing with friends.

3.2.2.3 Tina

Tina was a unique student who enjoyed reading and working intrapersonally during class activities. She was assigned an IEP because she has been diagnosed with mild Asberger's syndrome, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and displayed a discrepancy between her ability and achievement in reading and writing. As a student with mild Asberger's syndrome, Tina struggled with emotional and socialization issues such as attending school, participating in classes, and working with other students. Due to her ADHD, Tina had difficulty attending to classroom tasks, completing assignments on time, and organizing materials. Tina

enjoyed reading during her free time, however she struggled with word recognition and language decoding. Although Tina enjoyed reading, she was assessed to have a fluency rate of 110 correct words per minute, which is at the lower end of the norm for 7th grade students (7th graders should read between 110-150 words per minute). With reference to her writing, Tina struggled with spelling, handwriting, organizing, and focusing on the topic. In addition, Tina had difficulty with applying language meaningfully, writing comprehensibly, and appropriately addressing the functional aspect of her writing. As indicated her IEP, in addition to academic accommodations, Tina required encouragement and assistance with participating in activities, taking notes, organizing materials, completing tasks, taking tests, and finishing assignments.

The next section of this chapter discusses the qualitative nature of the study, and justifies the research methods utilized to collect data on these three participants.

3.3 QUALITATIVE NATURE OF THE STUDY

This study was qualitative in nature as its' purpose was to document, analyze, and interpret naturally occurring data that provides an in-depth profile of students with LLDs in a middle school foreign language program through multiple perspectives. Consistent with the purpose of qualitative research, to gain a better understanding of a phenomenon, I did not attempt to manipulate variables or predict performance. Using qualitative research methods, I was able to explore and analyze closely individual students with LLDs, the features of their foreign language learning environments. These features included classroom interactions, instructional practices, and perceptions of students and teachers. In addition, a qualitative approach provided the opportunity for analysis of the relationships between classroom features;

student proficiency in native and foreign languages; and student and teacher perceptions of themselves and foreign language learning in general. This comparison of multiple sources of data also demonstrated reliability and validity of the findings of the study. As reiterated by Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater (2002), “This triangulation of data, accumulating and analyzing multiple data sources, can make field studies more persuasive” (p. 160).

Because my research aimed to identify specific classroom and language related learning issues of a small, select group of students with LLDs, I did not compare the select sample of students with LLDs with a matched group of students without LLDs. Any comparative study would demonstrate differential performance in foreign language learning of students with and without LLDs. A previous study conducted by Bruck, (1978) has already shown that students with LLDs can learn a second language; however, their learning occurs at a slower rate than their colleagues without LLDs.

Given the qualitative nature of the study, and considering that all students with LLDs represent a variety of very different learning issues and special needs, the implications may not directly generalize to all students with LLDs learning a foreign language. However, the findings provide a close analysis of the experience of students with LLDs in one school district, and shed light on the educational and political issue of deciding on enrollment and accommodations of students with LLDs in foreign language programs.

Although the specificity of this study prevents generalizing to all students with LLDs who participate in foreign language programs, the findings and implications may apply to other similar settings. Consistent with the principle purpose of qualitative research, the findings of this study contribute to a grounded conceptual understanding of students with LLDs and their

abilities and challenges in learning a foreign language rather than generalize to all students with LLDs in foreign language programs.

In the following section of this chapter, I describe the research questions, data collection tools, and methods of analysis that were used to examine the data gathered from the sample of three middle school Spanish students with LLDs.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

3.4.1 Research questions

This study of foreign language literacy development by students with LLDs was motivated by the following research questions:

Research question 1: How do the foreign language writing skills of students with LLDs develop over time?

Research question 2: What are the perceptions of students and teachers of the instructional practices, classroom interactions, and materials that teachers use to accommodate students with LLDs during whole group class instruction?

Research question 3: What are the instructional practices, classroom interactions, and materials that teachers use to accommodate students with LLDs during whole group class instruction?

Research question 4: How do the instructional practices, classroom interactions, and materials that teachers use to accommodate students with LLDs relate to student performance?

The following subsections of this chapter discuss the data collection tools and methods of analyses that address the research questions of the study. Table 1 provides a framework of the research questions and the corresponding data sources.

Table 1. Alignment of research questions and data sources

	RQ 1	RQ 2	RQ 3	RQ 4
Pre-Post Writing Assessments	X			X
Classroom Observations		X	X	X
Student/Teacher Interviews		X	X	X

3.4.2 Literacy Assessments

To attempt to answer the first query, I collected data on the participants' abilities in writing using performance-based assessments at the beginning and end of a three month period. In these performance-based assessments, students were asked to respond to writing tasks that were related to the curricular content that was taught. To gather data on the students' ability in writing, I asked students to respond in writing to a prompt that was thematically related to the curricular content. The writing tasks for sixth and seventh grade are included in Appendix B, and Appendix C respectively. The first set of tasks were administered at the beginning of the three month period in September, and the second set of tasks were conducted at the end of the three month period in December. Although the principle purpose of this study was not to compare the performance of students with LLDs and their non-LLD peers, the writing tasks were administered to *all* students in the sixth and seventh grade classes observed. Comparative data was included in the analysis in the composite ratings primarily to describe the performance of the

participants' peers, providing a comprehensive understanding of the learning environment of these students.

To evaluate each student's performance, I examined various components of scores. To assess each student's ability in writing, I used a modified version of the rubric developed by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) for evaluation of the presentational mode of communication (Appendix D). As indicated in the rubric in Appendix D, student writing was assessed with reference to six skills. These categories of writing skills are: *language function*, the ability to use appropriate language tasks in a consistent, comfortable, sustained, and spontaneous manner; *text type*, the quantity and organization of the written text; *impact*, the depth of presentation and attention to audience; *comprehensibility*, to what extent a native speaker or sympathetic reader can understand the written message; *vocabulary*, the use of sufficient or expansive vocabulary, and finally *accuracy*, the use of appropriate grammatical forms. As indicated on the rubric in Appendix D, after evaluating each writing sample, each student's work received a score of 0, not meeting expectations, 1 meeting expectations weakly, 2 meeting expectations strongly, or 3 exceeding expectations for each of the six categories of writing. Therefore, the students' total scores on the task ranged from 0-18.

To insure inter-rater reliability, a research assistant, who was familiar with the ACTFL rubric for presentational mode of communication, rated each of the students' writing samples, compared scores, and established approximately 85% agreement on the scores of the six assessments. In situations where disagreement occurred, conflicts were resolved through discussion and consensus.

3.4.3 Classroom observations

In addition to collecting data on student performance, I conducted observations twice a week of each of the students' classrooms over a three month period. While observing, I recorded the most natural occurring classroom data using a notebook and a voice recorder, when appropriate. Every other week, a hired videographer videotaped the classrooms while I continued to record written observations. I recorded detailed notes on the instructional practices, classroom interactions, and materials that were available for students with LLDs learning Spanish as a foreign language. After taking notes on the observations, I used the margins to code the data according to the types of assistance the teacher was giving. In coding the observation notes, I looked for the types of language promoting assistance that are presented by Scarcella & Oxford (1992) for English Language Learners and the accommodations suggested by DiFino and Lombardino (2004) for foreign language learners with LLDs. Some of these coding categories included teacher encouragement, methods to make classroom talk in Spanish understandable, and techniques that focus on important concepts.

While observing in the classroom, several opportunities arose to converse with the teachers and the participants about the performance of students with LLDs on a particular activity, the instructional practices implemented in the lesson, and the assistance that was provided for the students with LLDs. Although this was not an intentional source of data, if a conversation emerged naturally with the teacher or the students, I talked with them and recorded these interactions.

3.4.4 Classroom interactions

Recognizing the importance of teacher-student talk in learning, an analysis of classroom verbal and nonverbal interactions were also included in the proposed study. In referring to the work of Edwards and Mercer (1987), Gibbons (2005) claims that it is through talk that knowledge is constructed and “it is essentially in the discourse between teacher and students that education is done or fails to be done” (Edwards & Mercer, 1987, p. 101). A previous study in the same district by Pessoa et al. (2007) indicates a strong relationship between the classroom discourse and student performance on literacy assessments. Moreover, an analysis of the observed classroom talk provided evidence of the verbal and non-verbal assistance that the teachers were using as well as the quantity and quality of the language produced by students with LLDs.

To examine classroom verbal and non-verbal interactions, I conducted an illustrative discourse analysis. In this analysis, I watched the videotaped classroom observations and listened to the voice recordings, selected several relevant episodes, and transcribed the related classroom discourse. The selected episodes included interactions between the teachers and the students that occurred frequently in the observed classroom and therefore represented typical incidences from the entire data set of observations. When the opportunity arose to work individually with the students during the classroom observations, I also recorded and transcribed these interactions.

The episodes that I chose demonstrated the teacher and students working with content (as opposed to management tasks), participating in a variety of activities, and using the target language. For example, I selected class periods that included whole group interactions, teacher-fronted activities, and individual activities in which the students were receiving assistance from

myself or the teacher. More specifically, within these chosen episodes of activities, I was concerned with looking at questioning (e.g. display vs. referential questions); levels of assistance from the teacher, peers, and associated materials; quantity of teacher-initiated interactions; and the quantity of student-initiated interactions among students with LLDs and students without LLDs. These topics of interest became the coding categories for the transcribed classroom discourse. To verify reliability, the coding categories were examined for their frequency in the data set.

3.4.5 Teacher and Student Interviews

To elicit student and teacher perceptions, triangulate the data, and identify whether or not the noted accommodations that were explicitly intended by the teacher met the needs of the students with LLDs; the observations and analysis of classroom verbal and non-verbal interactions were followed by interviews. At the end of the twelve week period of data collection, one interview was conducted with each student, and each corresponding teacher and special educator separately. The interview protocols used for the students and teachers are included in Appendices E and F.

The purpose of the teacher interviews was to identify the teachers' (a) observations of student performance, (b) perceptions of the accommodations designed for LLDs, and (c) opinions on helpful instructional practices for students with LLDs. Appendix E lists the type of questions asked to the teachers during the interviews. In the beginning of the discussion with each teacher, I asked about their observations of students with LLDs during reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities. Then, I asked the teachers to identify the specific accommodations and techniques that they implemented to assist students with LLDs. After

discussing the accommodations, I also asked the teachers about additional instructional practices that were not necessarily intentional accommodations, but were helpful in developing the competencies of students with LLDs in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. To connect the teachers' perceptions to previous literature, I asked the teachers to provide their opinions on some the accommodations that were suggested in by previously conducted students (see Chapter 2). Finally, to elicit information on support for teachers, I asked about the resources that were available for teachers who are required to develop accommodations for students with LLDs.

To connect the classroom observations and teacher interviews with students' perceptions, I also interviewed the students on their thoughts and feelings of specific instructional practices and materials. The purpose of the student interviews was to shed light on the students' perceptions about their learning and the extent to which they benefited from teachers' instructional practices and classroom accommodations. Because it is difficult to encourage middle school students to verbalize their thoughts and feelings about their learning, a particular format was applied to the student interviews (Appendix F). This interview format first asked students to participate in a classroom activity called, "That's me, that's me sometimes, and that's not me." In this activity, the teacher (or interviewer in this case) supplies an expressive phrase, and the students are required to respond with one of the choices, "That's me, that's me sometimes, and that's not me." This feature of the interview elicited the students' opinions of helpful classroom practices. To elicit the students' specific feelings about classroom practices, the interviews also included a number of open ended activities that asked the students to choose whether specific classroom activities made them feel scared, excited, frustrated, interested, or smart. To further elicit student perceptions of their learning, the interviews concluded by asking the students to draw themselves learning Spanish in their respective classrooms.

The next section discusses how Activity Theory was used to analyze and relate the multiple sources of data that were collected.

3.5 ACTIVITY THEORY ANALYSIS

As discussed previously in the literature review, Activity Theory is a theoretical framework that was developed by Vygotsky and A.N. Leontiev to examine the social, cultural, and historical components of a learner's environment. Based on sociocultural views of human development, Activity theorists claim that learning derives from social activities that are firmly connected to history, culture, and social interaction (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Lantolf 2000). When explaining learning contexts, activity theorists view the entire activity system as the unit of analysis and claim that the relationships within the system are consequential to what individuals learn (Engestrom, 1999).

Therefore, to utilize an Activity Theory perspective, the data collected in this study was referred to as components in an activity system. To indicate the components and the consequential relationships of the activity system under analysis in this study, the multiple sources of data were applied to the model developed by Engestrom (1999) (see Chapter 2, Figure 1).

Figure 3 depicts an example of how the data that was collected in this study can be viewed as related components of an activity system. The *subjects* of this study are three middle school students with LLDs and their corresponding *object* is to develop communicative ability in Spanish reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The associated *outcome* of each subject's activity system could be the performance on the writing assessments in Spanish. The *mediating*

physical and symbolic artifacts could be the instructional practices, techniques, and materials used by the teacher in instruction and the verbal and non-verbal interactions in the context of the classroom.

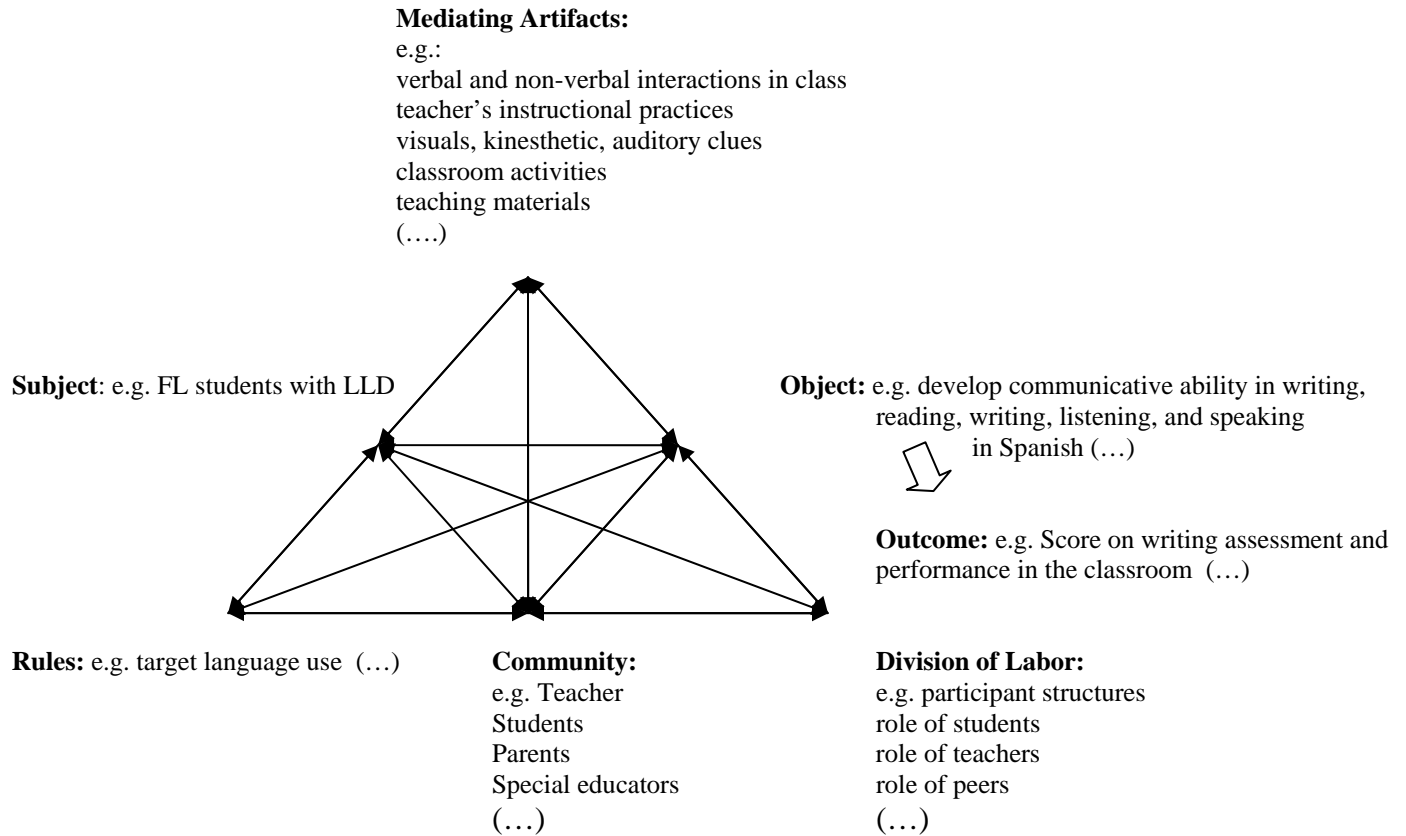


Figure 3. Data Analysis as Depicted Through Engeström's Model of Activity System

The *community* in this study is a sixth and seventh grade foreign language classroom that includes students with LLDs, students without LLDs, a Spanish teacher, the student's parents, and the related historical, cultural, and social experiences of these members of the community. Also associated with this community are the corresponding *rules*, which, in this study, could be referred to the amount of target language the teacher promotes in the classroom. Also related to the community is the *division of labor*, which is determined through the analysis of talk and interactions in the classroom context. By analyzing talk, participant structures of the classroom

were identified, demonstrating the status, division of power, organization of participation, and established identities of the members of the community.

Engstrom's model of activity system identifies and relates several different components of an activity setting. It also considers an activity setting as a dynamic entity that is constantly changing. Therefore, because Engstrom's model of activity system contains different components that change over time, an activity system model was used to describe and interpret the multiple sources of data for each participant. After taking notes on the interactions in the classroom, the activity system model is used to describe graphically and interpret the observational data that related to each participant. In displaying the findings, activity system models, based on Engstrom's model, were constructed pictorially throughout the data analysis to interpret the data for each individual student and demonstrate the relationships of the various components of the students' classroom environments.

By comparing these models of an activity system for the three students, similarities and differences were identified in each student's activity system. These similarities and differences demonstrate how the activity system was consequential to each subject's ability (here the student) to reach their associated object (here development of communicative ability) and outcome (here performance in the classroom and on foreign language writing assessments).

3.6 SUMMARY

In summary, this qualitative study used activity theory as a framework to describe, interpret, and analyze (verbally and pictorially) the various components of the activity systems of three middle school students with LLDs. By conducting individual writing assessments,

recording classroom observations, analyzing verbal and nonverbal interactions, and facilitating student and teacher interviews, this study contributes to the conceptual understanding of the foreign language learning of students with LLDs. More specifically, after documenting and analyzing multiple sources of data on the foreign language writing development of three students with LLDs, this study informs educators of the instructional accommodations that should be designed for students with LLDs and contributes knowledge to the public on the writing development and perceptions of students with LLDs and foreign language learning.

4.0 FINDINGS: LITERACY ASSESSMENTS

In this chapter, the findings on the literacy assessments are summarized which address the research question, “How does the foreign language writing ability of students with LLDs develop over time?” To document student performance over time, writing assessments were administered at the beginning of the data collection period in September and at the completion of the data collection period in December. In September, Nate, Gayle, and a small cohort of five sixth grade students (see Chapter 3 for details on the cohort) responded to a writing prompt that asked them to write a letter to a pen pal discussing important dates and holidays (Appendix B). In December, the sixth grade participants wrote another pen pal letter discussing and asking about favorite sports. Similarly, in September, Tina and a small cohort of seven other seventh grade students responded to a writing prompt that asked the students to write a letter to a pen pal describing themselves and the foods and sports they like and dislike (Appendix C). In December, the seventh grade participants wrote a letter to Santa describing their house, their family, and themselves.

After the students completed the writing tasks, the assessments were evaluated according to a modified ACTFL rubric (Appendix D). Students received scores in September and December on specific criteria of their writing, and these scores were totaled to compute a composite score out of 18. The composite score was then assigned a rating: *exceeds expectations*, if the score fell within 15 and 18; *meets expectations strongly*, if the composite

score fell between the range of 9 and 14; *meets expectations weakly*, if the score fell within 4 and 8; or *does not meet expectations* if the score fell between 0 and 3. These ratings indicated the degree that the participants' writing demonstrated the characteristics of an intermediate level foreign language learner as per the ACTFL proficiency levels.

The following section describes the participants' performance on the writing assessments. First, the participants' composite scores are summarized and compared to a small cohort of students not participating in the study. Then, a more in depth analysis of the participants' ratings on specific components of their writing is discussed. Lastly, each participant's writing sample is analyzed for growth in language functions, lexicon, and syntax. These analyses demonstrate that, despite their identified LLDs, each participant was able to demonstrate proficiency in particular areas of their writing.

4.1 STUDENT WRITING PERFORMANCE: A COMPARISON OF COMPOSITE RATINGS

To indicate a change in the participants' overall performance, composite scores of writing were computed in both September and December. For the purpose of comparison, an average composite score of a small cohort of classmates not participating in the study was also calculated. Data show that Nate and Tina's writing scores increased over time despite their identified LLDs, and that Gayle's scores decreased due to circumstances unrelated to her language abilities.

Table 2 displays the sixth grade comparative composite ratings in September and December of Nate, Gayle, and the class cohort. The class cohort ratings were calculated by

averaging the scores of five other sixth grade students who participated in the assessment task, but not in the study.

Table 2. 6th Grade writing assessments: Comparative composite ratings in Sept and Dec

	Nate		Gayle		Cohort average (n=5)	
	Sept	Dec	Sept	Dec	Sept	Dec
Rating (0-18)	10.0	15.0	9.0	5.0	12.8	13.2

4.1.1 Nate

As indicated in Table 2, Nate’s composite score in writing increased over the three month data collection period. Nate received a composite score of 10.0 in September and a 15.0 in December. According to the modified ACTFL rubric, a score of 10.0 shows that Nate’s writing *meets expectations strongly* in September. Therefore, at the beginning of the study, Nate’s writing skills were slightly above what is expected at the intermediate level of proficiency. As shown above in Table 2, Nate’s composite score on the writing assessment increased to 15.0 in December, a 5.0 point differential over the short three month data collection period. According to the modified ACTFL rubric in Appendix D, a score of 15.0 indicates that a student’s writing ability *exceeds expectations*. This increase in Nate’s writing score suggests significant growth in his writing ability and indicates that Nate performed beyond what is expected at his level of proficiency in December, despite his learning disability.

In addition to demonstrating growth in Nate’s writing ability over time, Table 2 compares Nate’s scores with the class average of five sixth grade students who participated in the assessment task. The class cohort scored an average of 12.8 in September showing that, similar to Nate, his classmates *met expectations strongly* according to the rubric, however with a score

2.8 points higher. After the three month data collection period, the class average composite score only increased to 13.2, indicating that in December, the class average still *met expectations strongly*. Nate outscored the cohort by 1.8 points in December and received a rating of *exceeds expectations*, a category higher than his classmates. In addition, the class average score of 13.2 indicated an increase of only .4 points over the three month period, much less than Nate's composite score increase of 5.0 points. The differential increase between Nate and the class average suggests that Nate's growth in writing increased at a higher rate than the average of the class, despite his identified learning disability.

Therefore, the analysis of the composite scores shows that, despite his identified LLD, Nate improved in his overall writing ability, exceeded expectations for his level of proficiency, increased at a faster rate than his peers, and outperformed the class cohort average score in December.

4.1.2 Gayle

According to Table 2, Gayle's composite score in writing decreased over time. Gayle scored 9.0 in September and 5.0 in December on the writing assessments. When comparing these scores to the rubric (Appendix D), Gayle's writing *met expectations strongly* in September, and then decreased to a rating of *meets expectations weakly* in December. These scores also calculate a decrease of 4.0 points over the three month data collection period. Although the scores show a decrease in Gayle's writing, her score in December indicated that she displayed writing skills that are expected for her level of proficiency, despite her identified LLD.

Table 2 also compares Gayle's performance to the class cohort average. In comparing the data in Table 2, it is noted that Gayle scored below the class average in both September and

December. In December, the class average continued to *meet expectations strongly*, and Gayle’s score dropped to *meet expectations weakly*. The scores in Table 2 also show that the gap between Gayle’s performance and the performance of the class cohort increased over time. Gayle’s score in September was only 3.8 points below the class average of 12.8, and in December Gayle’s score of 5.0 was 8.2 points below the class average of 13.2.

Therefore, the analysis of the composite scores demonstrates that, although Gayle did not improve in her overall ability in writing, she was meeting expectations weakly for her level of proficiency, despite her LLD. The scores also show that Gayle’s score grew incrementally lower than the class cohort over time. The decrease in Gayle’s composite score and the incremental differential of her score in comparison to the class cohort will be explained in the next chapter by linking student performance with data gathered from the class observations and student and teacher interviews. The class observations and student and teacher interviews suggest that Gayle’s decrease in performance could be influenced by the negative behavior of peers and problems occurring at home with her family.

4.1.3 Tina

Table 3 displays Tina’s writing performance over time and compares her scores to the average of seven seventh grade colleagues. The class cohort score was determined by averaging the composite scores of seven seventh grade students in Tina’s class.

Table 3. 7th Grade writing assessments: Comparative composite ratings in Sept and Dec

	Tina		Class cohort average (n=7)	
Rating (0-18)	Sept	Dec	Sept	Dec
	3.0	8.0	9.0	11.2

The data in Table 2 illustrate that, despite her LLD, Tina's writing ability grew over time. In September, Tina scored a 3.0, demonstrating writing ability that *does not meet expectations*. However, in December, Tina scored 9.0, showing a rating two levels higher of *meeting expectations strongly*. This increase demonstrates that despite her LLD, Tina's writing ability grew from *not meeting expectations* to *meeting expectations weakly* over a short period of time.

When comparing Tina's scores to the class cohort, it is evident that her writing ability increased at a faster rate. In September, Tina received a rating of 3.0 on her writing assessment, a score that was 6.0 points below the class cohort average rating of 9.0. According to the ACTFL rubric (Appendix D), Tina's score of 3.0 in September *does not meet expectations* while the seventh grade class average score of 9.0 *meets expectations strongly*. According to Table 3, after three months, Tina's writing score of 3.0 in September increased 5.0 points to a rating of 8.0 in December. Unlike Tina's high rate of increase, the class cohort average score only increased 2.1 points, from a rating of 9.0 in September to a rating of 11.1 in December, demonstrating writing ability that remained *meeting expectations strongly*. Although Tina's score remains 3.1 points below the class average in December, her writing ability increased by a much larger increment in the same short three month time period.

In summary, by looking at Tina's writing over time, the composite scores in Table 3 indicate that, despite her identified LLD, Tina developed writing ability over time at a faster rate than her colleagues, scored only slightly below the class cohort average, and was capable of meeting the expectations of the accepted level of proficiency for intermediate level learners.

4.2 STUDENT WRITING PERFORMANCE: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF SPECIFIC CRITERIA

In addition to determining composite scores, the participants' writing was analyzed with respect to specific writing criteria included on the ACTFL rubric. Below, Table 4 displays the ratings that Nate, Gayle, and Tina received on their ability to apply the appropriate *functions*, to connect and organize coherent and cohesive *text type*, to *impact* the audience with appropriate style and register, to utilize a variety of *vocabulary*, to communicate meaning *comprehensibly*, and to demonstrate *language control* of grammatical structure. For each criterion, the participants scored a 3.0, *exceeds expectations*; a 2.0, *meets expectations strongly*; a 1.0, *meets expectations weakly*; or a 0.0, *does not meet expectations*.

Table 4. Participant writing assessments: Ratings on specific components in Sept and Dec

	Nate		Gayle		Tina	
Criterion	Sept	Dec	Sept	Dec	Sept	Dec
Function	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.0	1.0	2.0
Text Type	2.0	2.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	1.0
Impact	3.0	3.0	3.0	0.0	1.0	2.0
Vocab.	1.0	2.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	2.0
Compr.	1.0	3.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	1.0
Control	1.0	3.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	0.0
Total	10.0	15.0	9.0	5.0	3.0	8.0

4.2.1 Nate

The scores illustrated in Table 4 above and the writing displayed in Examples 1 and 2 below show growth in specific criteria of Nate's writing. In September, Nate scored 2.0 in function and text type, indicating that he *met expectations strongly* in these areas. In December, Nate continued to score 2.0 in both function and text type, demonstrating his ability to continue to *meet expectations strongly* in these areas. The writing prompt in Appendix B shows the specific functions that Nate was capable of expressing in Spanish. In the prompt, the participants were asked to write a letter, denote important dates, express and elaborate on likes and dislikes, and ask questions. Examples 1 and 2 below illustrate Nate's writing responses. These writing responses further exemplify Nate's ability to include the functions from the writing prompt in a clear and coherent text type in Spanish. For instance, in Example 1, lines 2-4, Nate wrote the date of his birthday, indicated several holidays that he likes and dislikes, and included two questions for his pen pal. His writing was coherent, logically organized in the format of a letter, and represented a paragraph as opposed to a list. In addition, his text type incorporated a variety of syntactic structures including both simple sentences (Example 1, line 2) and a complex sentence (Example 1, line 3 and 4). Nate maintained this ability with language functions and text type in Example 2, lines 2-4 by including questions and likes and dislikes, within the format of a coherent, organized letter.

Table 4 also shows Nate's score on impact; his ability to include the appropriate style and register for an informal letter. In September, Nate scored 3.0 indicating that he *exceeded expectations* with respect to impact, and he maintained this ability by scoring a 3.0 in December. This score on impact is reiterated in Examples 1 and 2 of Nate's writing. In both writing

responses, Nate used language appropriate for an informal letter such as “Hola, ¿Cómo estás?” (Example 1, line 2) and opened his letter with “Querido” (Example 1, line 1).

Example 1. Nate’s writing response: September (including all errors)

1 Querido Britt,
2 Hola, ¿Cómo estás? Mi cumpleaños es march 3. ¿Cuándo Cumpleaños? Me
3 gusta de Halloween, las pascuas, el día de Año Nuevo, y la Navidad. No me gusta el día
4 de gracias porque no me gusta pavo.
5 Nate

1 [Dear Britt,
2 Hi, how are you? My birthday is March 3. When birthday? I like of Halloween,
3 Easter, New Years Day, and Christmas. I don’t like Thanksgiving because I do not like
4 turkey.
5 Nate

Although Nate was capable in the areas of function, text type, and impact; his scores in September show that he *met expectations weakly* in vocabulary, comprehensibility, and control, scoring a 1.0 in each category. Example 1, lines 2-4, shows that Nate’s writing only applied three different verbs with few inflections, and lacked any additional vocabulary that was not included in the word bank. With reference to language control, Example 1, line 1 exemplifies several, significant grammatical errors such as, “march 3,” [in place of “el 3 de marzo”] and the absence of the verb “es” in the question, “¿Cuándo cumpleaños?” This lack of variety of verbs and subject-verb inflections, and the frequent grammatical errors shown in Example 1 also affected the comprehensibility of the writing.

At the end of the three month data collection period, Nate *exceeded expectations* in comprehensibility and control, increasing from a 1.0 to a 3.0, and *met expectations strongly* in vocabulary, increasing from a 1.0 to a 2.0. This change in Nate’s writing ability is further

demonstrated when comparing his writing sample below from December (Example 2) to the above writing sample completed three months earlier in September (Example 1). By comparing Example 2 to Example 1, it is evident that Nate’s writing included more grammatical control and comprehensibility over time. In Example 2, Nate only demonstrated two grammatical errors relating to spelling “tu gusta” [in place of “te gusta”] and “jueges” [in place of juegas”]. Example 2 also shows that Nate was able to use several verbs, “estás,” “me gusta,” (line 1) “jugar,” (lines 1-2) and “tienes,” (line 4) in a variety of conjugations. In addition, Example 2 illustrates that Nate applied a more expansive vocabulary by including a words such as “videojuegos” (line 4) that were not provided in the word bank.

Example 2. Nate’s writing response: December (including all errors)

1 Querido pen pal,
2 Holla. ¿Cómo estas? Me gusta hockey. No me gusta volibol. Juego Futbol
3 baloncesto. ¿Que deportes tu gusta? ¿Que deportes jueges? Me gusta jugar wii jugar
4 madden 08 y Zelda y sonic y Mario al los olimpicos. ¿Qué videojuegos tienes?
5 Tu amigo,
6 Nate

1 *[Dear pen pal,*
2 *Hello. How are you? I like hockey. I don’t like volleyball. I play soccer*
3 *basketball. What sports do you like? What sports do you play? I like to play wi, madden*
4 *08 Zelda and Sonic and Mario at the Olympics. What videogames do you have?*
5 *Your friend,*
6 *Nate]*

In summary, the scores on the specific components of Nate’s writing show that Nate was strong in the areas of function, text type, and impact; and he improved in the areas of vocabulary, comprehensibility, and control. Nate’s performance on specific criteria of his writing is particularly interesting given that Nate had an identified language-related disability. Despite his

LLD, Nate was able to show competency and improvement in specific areas of his writing. These scores on the specific criteria of Nate's writing will be further explored in the next sections by comparing Nate's performance with his perceptions expressed in the interviews and his interactions during the classroom observations.

4.2.2 Gayle

Gayle's scores on specific criteria of her writing are presented in Table 4 above and supported by the writing samples displayed below in Examples 3 and 4. As discussed previously, Gayle's composite scores on the writing assessment decreased over time. With reference to the scores on specific components of her writing, Gayle's ability remained the same in vocabulary, comprehensibility, and control, *meeting expectations weakly* with a score of 1.0 in both September and December. These static scores show that Gayle was capable of applying the appropriate vocabulary from the word bank comprehensibly with some control of the grammatical structures.

By looking at the samples of Gayle's writing in September (Example 3) and December (Example 4), it is evident that Gayle was meeting expectations by appropriately applying vocabulary from the word bank comprehensibly and with some control of the language. However, it is interesting to look more thoroughly at the errors in Gayle's writing. In Example 1, lines 3 and 4, Gayle's stated, "No me gusta fiesta es Hanukah," and "Que es tu me gusta fiesta?" Both these errors show that Gayle applied the syntactic structures and lexicon of English when writing in Spanish. In examining the errors of Gayle's writing in December (Example 4), it is evident that her use of relexification decreased. Her errors (lines 7-8) are

related to spelling, punctuation, and syntax. Therefore, in December, Gayle's writing shows less of a dependence on English syntax and lexicon in her writing.

Gayle's ability to appropriately perform the functions required of the writing task (writing a letter, denoting dates, expressing and elaborating on likes and dislikes, and asking questions) decreased from a 2.0 to a 1.0. Similarly, her ability to address the audience, a pen pal in this assessment, decreased from a 3.0 to a 0.0, not meeting expectations and indicating that her writing did not match that of a letter.

Example 3. Gayle's writing response: September (including all errors)

1 Querido amgo,
2 Hola ¿Cómo estas? Mi cumpleaños es el 16th de Novemdre 2007. Cuándo es tu
3 cumpleaños? Me gusta gusta fiesta es la navidad. No me gusta fiesta es Hanukah. Que
4 es tu me gusta fiesta?
5 adios
6 Gayle

1 *[Dear friend,*
2 *Hi How are you? My birthday is the 16th of November 2007. When is your*
3 *birthday? I like like holiday is Christmas. I don't like holiday is Hanukah. What is you I*
4 *like holiday?*
5 *Good-bye,*
6 *Gayle*

The decrease in the specific criteria of Gayles' writing is evident in the responses written by Gayle. In September (Example 3), Gayle was able to perform multiple functions: denote dates, express likes and dislikes, and ask questions (lines 2-4). However, in December, Gayle's writing only applied one instance of expressing likes and dislikes (Example 4, lines 7-8). In both September and December, Gayle's text type was organized less like a list and more like a paragraph. However, in September, Gayle's writing addressed the appropriate audience (a pen

pal) and used phrases such as “Querido” (Example 3, line 1) and “adios” (Example 3, line 5); and this ability was not addressed appropriately in December as Gayle addresses a state, not an individual’s name, with the phrase “Querido Alaska” (line 4); and did not appropriately close her letter. In both September and December, with several errors, Gayle applied some of the vocabulary given in the word bank without additional words and wrote comprehensibly with respect to a reader that is familiar with the writing of second language learners.

Example 4. Gayle’s writing response: December (including all errors)

1 el 13 de diciembre
2 50 xxx Run Rd
3
4 Querido Alaska
5 Hola Alaska
6 ¿Cómo estás?
7 Me gusta mucho equitación. Porque yo me gusta cabios. No me gusta baloncesto.
8 ¿Que deportes juegas.

1 *December 13*
2 *50 xxx Run Rd*
3
4 *[Hi Alaska*
5 *How are you*
6 *I really like horseback riding. Because I like horses. I do not like basketball.*
7 *What sports do you like?]*

In summary, Gayle’s writing samples and the analyses of specific criteria of her writing show change in Gayle’s performance over time. Over the three month data collection period, Gayle’s ability to include vocabulary, write comprehensible and cohesive text type, and control the grammatical structure of the language in her writing remained the same, *meeting expectations weakly*. However, her ability to apply the language functions decreased from *meeting expectations strongly* to *meeting expectations weakly*, and her ability to impact an audience in

her writing also decreased from *exceeding expectations* to *not meeting expectations*. The student perceptions and classroom observations in the next sections will provide an explanation for the lack of growth in specific areas of Gayle's writing.

4.2.3 Tina

Tina's growth in specific areas of her writing is evident when analyzing the scores presented in Table 4 above and the writing samples displayed in Examples 5 and 6 below. In examining the seventh grade composite scores previously (Table 3), the data illustrate that Tina's rating increased from 3.0 to 8.0, a 5.0 point differential, similar to that of Nate's. In September, with a score of 1.0, Tina *met expectations weakly* in function, impact, and vocabulary; indicating that she weakly applied the appropriate functions indicated in the prompt (to greet her pen pal, to describe herself, to express likes, and to ask questions), weakly addressed the audience, and weakly used the vocabulary provided in the word bank to the writing task. Example 5 below further illustrates Tina's ability to weakly meet expectations in September in the area of function. For instance, in Example 5, line 1, Tina greeted her pen pal; and in line 2, Tina described herself, and in lines 3-5, Tina attempted to express what she likes and to ask questions of her pen pal. With reference to addressing an audience, Example 5, line 1, shows that Tina opens and closes her letter with the appropriate expressions, "querido amigo, com es used," (Example 5, line 1) and "Adios con cariño," (Example 5, line 6); however her writing was not presented in format of a letter. Thus, through examining Tina's scores and writing samples, it is evident that Tina's ability to apply the language functions asked in the prompt, address the audience of an informal pen pal, and apply the vocabulary provided in the word bank *weakly met expectations*.

At the beginning of the three month data collection period, Tina scored a 0.0 in text type, comprehensibility, and control; illustrating that her writing was not coherent, cohesive, or comprehensible, and she lacked control of the grammatical structures necessary to communicate. This lack of ability is also evident in the below example of Tina's writing in September (Example 5). For instance, the phrases, "Que es me gusta fruta" (Example 5, line 4) and "Papas fritas es chocolate" (Example 5, line 3) are not comprehensible because they use translation from English in their syntax and lexicon. In addition, although her writing was logically organized, it lacked cohesion and read more like a list of sentences than a letter (Example 5, lines 2-5). Example 5 also demonstrates several grammatical errors relating to spelling, verbs, and syntax. In Example 5, line 2, Tina wrote, "Me gusta es," which is improper use of verb compounding; in Example 5, line 1, Tina spelled "amoego" incorrectly; and in Example 5, line 2, Tina wrote "Me pelo café," which lacks a verb and includes an incorrect usage the an indirect object pronoun, 'me.'

Example 5. Tina's writing response: September (including all errors)

1 Querido amoego, como es used.
2 Me pelo café. Me gusta es,
3 Papas fritas es chocolate.
4 Que es me gusta fruta?
5 Que es no me gusta pollo?
6 Adios con cariño
7 Tina

1 *[Dear friend, how are you (formal)*
2 *My hair brown. I like is,*
3 *French fries is chocolate.*
4 *What is I like fruit?*
5 *What is I don't like chicken?*
6 *Good-bye with care*
7 *Tina*

The scores illustrated in Table 4 and Tina's writing sample displayed in Example 6 demonstrate that Tina improved in all areas of writing, *but* control. Table 4 shows that Tina's score in function improved from 1.0 to 2.0 points on the rubric. In Example 6, lines 1-5 Tina included greetings, two statements comparing herself to family members, and several descriptions of herself and her home. Thus, the analysis of Tina's writing scores and of her writing sample illustrates improvement in the ability to apply functions and to increase the quantity of these functions in her writing.

Tina also improved in her ability to write organized, coherent discourse and to address an audience. Table 4 displays that Tina's score in text type improved from 0.0 to 1.0, and her score in impact progressed from 1.0 to 2.0. The writing sample below also shows Tina's improvement in text type and impact. The writing in Example 6, lines 1-5 was more cohesive than the writing previously displayed in Example 5. The sentences are logically organized, and reflect a paragraph rather than a list of ideas. Example 6, line 1 includes the appropriate opening greeting for a letter, "Querido Santa," and Example 6, line 5 displays an appropriate closing, "Feliz Navidad" and "adios." In addition, Tina's writing in December included more vocabulary and phrases that reflect the form of an informal pen pal letter. According to Table 4, Tina's score in vocabulary improved from a 1.0 to a 2.0. Example 6 shows that Tina was able to utilize the vocabulary provided and include a few additional terms. Words such as "amable," "alta," "joven," "ladeo," and "Ferls Naved," were not provided in the word bank. Previously, in Example 5, Tina only applied vocabulary that was included in the word bank, and there were no instances where she elaborated on the words provided in the prompt. It is also noted in Example 6, that Tina's writing was more comprehensible, however her ability to control the structure was

still not meeting expectations as she struggled with spelling, including verbs, and demonstrating subject-verb and noun-adjective agreement.

Example 6. Tina's writing response: December (including all errors)

1 Querido Santa,
2 Aloa como estás? Moau bueno. Me pelo café. Mes ojos café. Yo soy Amable.
3 Yo soy mas alta que mi madra. Yo soy mas joven que mi papá. Yo soy da Pittsburgue.
4 Me gusta nandra. Me gusta attar. Mi casa erta Noblestown. Mi casa ser roja mi casa
5 ladeo. Qué
6 ta gusta. Ferls Naved!
7 Adios
8 Tina

1 *Dear Santa,*
2 *Hello, how are you. Very good. My hair brown. My eyes brown. I am friendly. I am*
3 *taller than my mother. I am younger than my father. I am from Pittsburgh. I like ...*
4 *I like ... My house is Noblestown. My house to be red my house brick. What*
5 *do you like? Merry Christmas!*
6 *Good-bye*
7 *Tina*

It is interesting to note that Tina improved in all criteria except for control. This discrepancy will be explained later when relating the classroom observations and student and teacher interviews. The classroom observations and teacher interviews reveal the specific linguistic concepts that challenged Tina in all areas of her learning, and this might explain her lack of grammatical control. In addition, in the student interviews, Tina expressed the areas that were most frustrating and difficult for her.

The following sections of this chapter utilize additional methods of analysis to examine the writing of the participants in more depth. First, an analysis of the quantity and variety of functions is conducted to describe the types of functions these students are able to maintain. Second, an analysis of the lexicon applied to the writing is examined. Finally, a summary of the

syntactic structures is included. The findings of the following sections show specific areas of growth in the students' writing and demonstrate the validity of the writing assessment measures and rubric scores.

4.3 STUDENT WRITING PERFORMANCE: AN ANALYSIS OF FUNCTIONS

In addition to scoring the writing assessments with reference to the modified ACTFL rubric, an analysis of language in use was conducted to examine the types of functions the students were able to maintain in their writing. To carry out this analysis of language use, Halliday's *seven functions of language* (1994) was applied to the writing assessments. To apply Halliday's framework, each writing sample was divided into idea units (IU). After the IUs were determined, the total number of IUs was calculated, and each unit was coded for one of the seven functions of language (for more details on this analysis see Chapter 3).

Table 5 illustrates the number and type of functions each student was able to include in their writing. To show functional ability, Table 5 includes Halliday's seven functions of language on the left, and indicates the number of instances of each function from each student's writing in September and December. At the bottom Table 5, the total number of IUs is also displayed. When comparing the total number of IUs of each student from September to December, it is evident that both Nate and Tina increased in the number of IUs in their writing. Nate increased from seven to ten IUs, and Tina increased at a larger rate from seven to seventeen IUs. When comparing Gayle's writing from September to December, the number of IUs remained the same at seven. These numbers further demonstrate that, despite their identified LLDs, both Nate and Tina were able to include more ideas in their writing over time. These total

numbers also indicate that although Gayle’s total composite score decreased (see Table 2), she was still able to include the same amount of ideas in her writing over time.

Another interesting finding that emerged from the data in Table 5 relates to the amount of functions that each student included in their writing in both September and December. Both Nate and Tina applied four of the seven different categories of functions: interactional, personal, heuristic, and informative. The multiple instances of these functions indicate that Nate and Tina used written language to establish social relationships, express personal opinions, ask questions, and give information about the world. Gayle was able to maintain three of the seven different functions of language: interactional, personal, and heuristic, indicating that she was able to establish social relationships, give personal opinions, and ask questions. Unlike Nate and Tina, Gayle did not apply any informative functions to describe information about the world.

Table 5. Writing assessments: Analysis of Functions

Function	Nate		Gayle		Tina	
	Sept	Dec	Sept	Dec	Sept	Dec
Instrumental	0	0	0	0	0	0
Regulatory	0	0	0	0	0	0
Interactional	1	2	2	1	2	3
Personal	3	3	2	4	1	2
Imaginative	0	0	0	0	0	0
Heuristic	2	4	3	2	3	2
Informative	1	1	0	0	1	10
Total IU	7	10	7	7	7	17

Table 5 indicates that the participants did not include instrumental, regulatory, or imaginative functions, however, this deficiency is explained when referring back to the writing prompts (Appendix B & C). The writing tasks asked the students to open and close a letter, include a greeting, ask questions, and express personal likes and dislikes; the tasks did not require students to use instrumental, regulatory, and imaginative functions (language that makes requests, controls the behavior of others, or creates fantasy or imaginary worlds). Therefore, due to the nature of the tasks, the participants did not have the opportunity to use instrumental, regulatory, and imaginative functions in their writing; and thus the scores in Table 5 are not indicative of an inability with reference to these functions.

In addition, it is important to note that the data in Table 5 corroborate with the participants' scores on function (displayed in Table 4). As previously determined, both Nate and Tina's scores on function *met expectations strongly* in December, and the data in Table 5 show that both participants displayed all four functions in December and increased in their IUs. On the other hand, Table 4 illustrates that Gayle score on function *met expectations weakly* in December, and Table 5 indicates that her IUs remained the same and she only included three out of the four required functions in the prompt. This corroborating evidence supports the validity of the data analyses used to evaluate student writing in this study.

In summary, the analysis of functions specifies the students' ability to apply particular functions, as indicated by Halliday, and validates the tools used to evaluate student writing. The functional analysis indicates that, despite their identified LLDs, Nate and Tina were able to apply the four different functions addressed in the writing prompt, and increase their total IUs; and, in contrast, Gayle applied three of the four functions indicated in the writing prompt, and her total IUs remained the same.

4.4 STUDENT WRITING PERFORMANCE: AN ANALYSIS OF LEXICON

To demonstrate growth in the quantity of student writing, the writing samples were examined for the quantity and type of words. Table 6 displays the results of the calculation of total words, verbs, different verbs, and nouns. These data show that, despite their identified LLDs, Nate, Gayle, and Tina were able to increase in the quantity of words and develop syntactic complexity in their writing. In addition, the analysis of lexicon corroborate with the rubric scores on vocabulary and text type, further establishing validity in the previously determined rubric ratings.

The data in Table 6 show Nate's development in written vocabulary and syntax. Nate wrote 45 words in December, 6 more words than the 39 words he wrote in September. This increase in the number of words demonstrates slight growth in the quantity of words that Nate included in his writing. Although the increase of the total number of words was minor in Nate's writing, growth is more evident when viewing the number of verbs; they double from four in September to nine in December. His use of nouns also grew from eleven to fourteen. These specific aspects of growth in writing, demonstrate that Nate expanded his use of a variety of vocabulary in the form of nouns, verbs, and different verbs. In addition to vocabulary growth, these data show that Nate developed more syntactic complexity. An increase in different verbs indicates that Nate varied the way that he constructed sentences, and did not write formulaic, sentences that use the same verb and verb form to express meaning. Thus, the analysis of lexicon illustrates that Nate's writing grew in quantity, vocabulary, and syntax.

Table 6: Writing assessments: A comparison of the number of words in Sept and Dec

	Nate		Gayle		Tina	
	Sept	Dec	Sept	Dec	Sept	Dec
Total wds.	39	45	38	34	29	58
No. vbs.	5	10	8	5	6	12
No. Dif. Vbs.	3	4	3	3	2	4
No. nns.	11	14	7	9	7	15

In contrast to the analysis of Nate and Tina’s writing, Gayle’s writing shows a decrease in the quantity of total words, a decrease in the total number of verbs, and an increase in the total number of nouns. In September, Gayle included 38 words in her writing, and this number decreased to 34 in December. Gayle’s writing also decreased in the number of verbs, from eight to five, much lower than the verbs written in Nate and Tina’s writing. Although Gayle’s writing decreased in number, the verbs included differed, indicating that Gayle was able to vary her sentences to include different verbs, denoting syntactic complexity. Thus, the analysis of lexicon indicates that Gayle’s writing decreased in total quantity, increased in the use of nouns, and maintained the same number of different verbs, denoting syntactic complexity.

Tina’s growth in the quantity of her writing was more expansive than Nate and Gayle’s. According to Table 4, Tina produced 29 words in September, and 58 words in December, doubling her quantity of words. In addition, Tina’s writing doubled in her use of verbs (from six to twelve), different verbs (from two to four), and nouns (from seven to fifteen). As mentioned previously, a variety of different verbs shows that students are growing from writing basic formulaic sentences that repeat the same verb to writing more of a variety of sentences

discussing varying actions with a variety of different verbs and corresponding subjects. Thus, the analysis of lexicon demonstrates Tina's writing grew in quantity, vocabulary, and syntactic complexity.

The differential growth among the participants can be explained by the data discussed previously in Table 2. As discussed previously, Tina's writing *did not meet expectations* in September, therefore she had more opportunity to grow. On the other hand, Nate's writing score *met expectations strongly* in September and grew to *exceed expectations* in December.

In addition to the functional analysis, the analysis of lexicon corroborates with the writing scores determined by the rubric. According to the rubric scores in Table 4, both Nate and Tina grew in their use of vocabulary from a 1.0 to a 2.0. The data in Table 6 correspond with the scores in Table 4 in that both Nate and Tina display an increase of lexicon in their writing; and their quantity of the total words, verbs, different verbs, and nouns is comparable. The analysis of lexicon of Gayle's writing also parallels the scores in Table 4. Gayle did not show growth in total words, verbs, and nouns; and her score remained the same (1.0) in the area of vocabulary in Table 4. Thus, the analysis of lexicon confirms the validity of the analyses used to evaluate students' writing in this study.

4.5 STUDENT WRITING PERFORMANCE: AN ANALYSIS OF SYNTAX

A final analysis of student writing was conducted to reveal growth and complexity in the area of syntax. To examine syntactic complexity, the participants' writing samples were coded for the quantity and type of sentences. Table 7 displays the coding categories of sentence types

(simple, complex, and compound) on the left, and the number of types of sentences that were represented in each student’s writing in both September and December.

As shown in Table 7, Nate and Tina displayed growth in the quantity of their written sentences; and all three participants displayed complexity in their writing. Nate increased his total sentences from five to eight, and Tina’s total sentences tripled from five to fifteen. In addition, Nate incorporated two complex sentence structures in September and one in December; and Tina grew from writing only simple sentences in September to including two complex sentences structures in December. Although Gayle’s total sentences decreased from six to four, she was able to write one complex sentence in December, indicating that she began to develop syntactic complexity. Thus, the analysis of syntax illustrates that, despite their identified language-related disabilities, both Nate and Tina developed growth in the quantity of written sentences; and all three participants demonstrated syntactic complexity in their writing by December. The significance of the development of syntactic complexity in the writing of students with LLDs will be further emphasized in Chapter 6, when the participants’ writing is compared to a similar study of the writing of six non-LLD middle school students

Table 7. Writing assessments: A comparison of sentence types in Sept and Dec

Sentence Types	Nate		Gayle		Tina	
	Sept	Dec	Sept	Dec	Sept	Dec
Simple	3	7	6	3	5	13
Complex	1	0	0	1	0	2
Compound	1	1	0	0	0	0
Total Sentences	5	8	6	4	5	15

4.6 SUMMARY

Through analyzing participant writing assessments over time, several themes emerge with reference to the foreign language learning of students with LLDs. First, the scores show that by the end of the data collection period, despite their identified LLDs, the writing of all three participants met the expectations of the performance of an intermediate level learner. One participant, Nate, exceeded what is expected of the writing of an intermediate level learner. Second, the assessments show that Nate and Tina's writing scores increased over time by the same rate of 5.0 points, showing that they were both very capable of developing and improving the skills expected at the intermediate level in a short period of time. In December, Nate's rating exceeded expectations, and Tina's rating strongly met the expectations. Third, it is apparent that one of the participants, Gayle, scored significantly lower over the three month period. However, in spite of this decrease, she met expectations weakly in her writing in December, and scored comparable to some of her non-LLD classmates. Fourth, the findings also show that, although Nate has a LLD, he outperformed his non-LLD classmates by 2.7 points in December.

Fifth, it is interesting to note that each participant developed their writing differently with reference to specific skills. In September, Nate was strong in the areas of function, text type, and impact. Over time, Nate maintained his strengths and developed skills in the area of vocabulary, comprehensibility, and control. Tina was weak in all areas except function, impact, and vocabulary; and over three months, she developed in all areas except control. In September, Gayle exceeded expectations in impact, met expectations strongly in function, and met expectations weakly in text type, vocabulary, comprehensibility, and control. However, in December, Gayle's ability in impact changed from *exceeding expectations* to *not meeting expectations*, suggesting that maybe she did not understand the assignment or was not motivated

to complete the task. Her abilities in all other areas of the criteria remained to meet the expectations. Therefore, each student's writing has strengths and areas that still require improvement. This differential student writing development is supported further in the next sections by analyzing each participant's perceptions, background, and classroom environment.

Finally, the analyses of function, lexicon, and syntax illustrated that, despite their identified LLDs, the participants in the study were able to develop specific linguistic components of their writing. All three participants were able to apply the appropriate functions to communicate in writing, and demonstrated the ability to include at least one complex syntactic structure in their writing. In addition, Nate and Tina showed growth in lexicon, while Gayle remained the same.

The next section describes the perceptions of the teachers and participants involved in the study. To develop a more comprehensive analysis of the learning of students with LLDs, these perceptions will be compared to the previously summarized findings on student performance.

5.0 FINDINGS: PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

In this chapter, the findings of the student and teacher perceptions are discussed. These findings were collected to address the research question, “What are the perceptions of students and teachers of the instructional practices, classroom interactions, and materials that teachers use to accommodate students with LLDs during whole group class instruction?”

To collect data on the teachers’ perceptions, separate interviews were conducted with the two teachers and the special educator at the end of the data collection period. During the interviews, the teachers and special educator were asked about student performance, accommodating for students with LLDs, and the resources available to support teachers in meeting the needs of students with LLDs. The questions asked to elicit the teachers’ perceptions are included in Appendix E.

To elicit student perceptions of their learning, separate interviews were also conducted with each participant in the study. These interviews followed a format that was appropriate and conducive to eliciting verbal and pictorial perceptions from middle school students (see Chapter 3 for more details on interview format). Throughout the interviews, the students reported on their thoughts and feelings with reference to particular classroom activities. The students also represented their perceptions pictorially in a drawing of their learning Spanish.

After the interviews were collected, they were transcribed and coded for common themes that emerged inductively from the data. This chapter begins by examining the themes uncovered

in the student interviews. These themes include: (a) student perceptions of their learning Spanish, (b) student perceptions of helpful instructional practices and materials, (c) and student perceptions of their classroom participations. After examining the student interviews, this chapter investigates the themes that emerged in the teacher interviews, including (a) teacher perceptions of the performance of students with LLDs, (b) teacher perceptions of accommodations and helpful instructional practices, (c) and teacher frustrations in teaching students with LLDs. Finally, this chapter reports on the perceptions of a special educator with reference to her observations of the performance of students with LLDs in foreign language and the instructional practices that are helpful for their learning.

5.1 STUDENT PERCEPTIONS

The following section describes the students' perceptions of their learning a foreign language. To reveal these perceptions, interviews were conducted at the end of the three month data collection period. In the interviews, students were asked to discuss helpful classroom practices, to explain their oral classroom participation, to identify challenging foreign language activities, and to distinguish any connections between Spanish and English vocabulary, syntax, and content. For a more in depth description of the interview methods, see Chapter 3.

The drawings and comments gathered in the interviews reveal Nate, Gayle, and Tina's perceptions of Spanish class, their views of the materials and instructional practices that accommodate their learning in Spanish class, and their explanations of their lack of oral participation during teacher-fronted activities in Spanish class. The student interview findings reveal four themes relating to the student's perceptions of their learning. First, the participants'

perceptions of their learning Spanish differ and are related to the personality and the learning profile of the students. Second, these findings indicate that students with LLDs have negative perceptions towards reading and writing activities in Spanish class. Third, these data reveal specific multi-sensory activities that students believe are helpful to their learning. Fourth, the student interviews provide an explanation for the participants' lack of participation during teacher-fronted activities. Finally, the students comment on similarities between English and Spanish vocabulary, syntax, and content. The purpose of the student interview analysis is to gain a better understanding of a) the perceptions of students with LLDs in foreign language classes, b) the activities that are difficult for students with LLDs in foreign language classes, c) the forms of assistance that help to overcome the challenges of students with LLDs in foreign language classes, and d) the level of metalinguistic awareness acquired by the participants.

5.1.1 Student perceptions: Nate

Nate's illustration and comments demonstrate that his perceptions of Spanish class relate to his learning profile. In the interview, Nate reported that he prefers to work individually, and his favorite activity involved learning grammatical concepts such as verb conjugations and pronouns. He reported, "I like learning the verbs... 'ar verbs' is the easiest thing to do [in Spanish class]." He explained that 'ar verbs' are easy because they involve simple memorization of word meaning and structure, which Nate reported can be accomplished by using flash cards. He also enjoyed writing sentences with the verbs, "...it's very easy...because if you know the verbs you like, kind of just put them in front of the words and then just copy the rest of the sentences." Therefore, Nate preferred to work individually and to study specific, linguistic components of the language because it merely involves memorization and application of

formulas. However, although Nate enjoyed applying grammatical structures to writing, he struggled with creating meaning. He described how he feels when he participated in a writing activity, “I’m, interested [in writing], but I don’t like writing all of the words its frustrating when you don’t know them.”

The classroom observations summarized in Chapter 6 provide corroborating evidence of Nate’s preferences to work individually and to study specific, linguistic components of the language; and the student writing scores summarized in Section 4.1 connect Nate’s perceptions with his performance. The classroom observations describe that Nate was a quiet student who preferred to work alone during class activities; and frequently asked for assistance from the teacher. The writing assessment analysis illustrated that Nate’s ability to control the language increased from 1.0 to 3.0, exceeding expectations at the end of the study in December, indicating that his positive perceptions of learning grammatical knowledge might have influenced his performance in control of the language.

Although Nate enjoyed writing and working with verbs, Nate disliked reading the stories in Spanish and taking quizzes. When describing the stories, Nate stated “I don’t get ‘em...I understand some of it...but I don’t know all of the words.” This comment suggests that Nate became frustrated during reading activities because he needed linguistic assistance with the meaning of unknown vocabulary in the texts. Nate’s difficulty with stories could have been related to his LLD. As indicated later in Chapter 6, Nate had a deficiency in reading comprehension, reading fluency, and decoding. In addition to the reading activities in Spanish class, Nate expressed his concern about quizzes, “I don’t want to do bad and make my grade go down.” This comment indicates that Nate was anxious about quizzes, feared receiving a poor evaluation, and valued his letter grade in the class. Thus, Nate became frustrated during stories

in Spanish class because he required more linguistic assistance with the meaning of vocabulary, and feared the quizzes because he was concerned that they would lower his overall grade in the class.

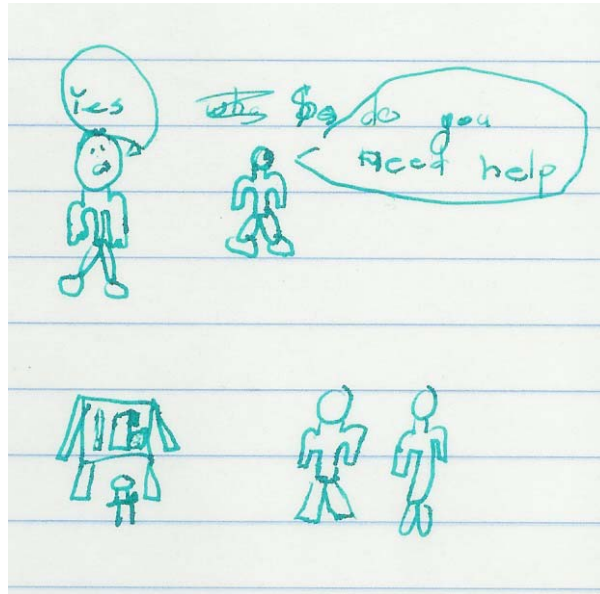


Figure 4. Nate's Illustration of Spanish Class

Figure 4 above displays Nate's visual of his learning in Ms. O'Brien's sixth grade Spanish class. Nate described this image, "That's me, and she [his teacher, Ms. O'Brien] is helping me like how to spell stuff...those are people, and that's a chair and that's a pencil, a paper, and an eraser." The dialog in the picture depicts the teacher, Ms. O'Brien, asking Nate if he needs help; and Nate is responding, "yes." As depicted in this illustration, Nate included himself, the teacher, and two other students in his visual of learning Spanish. Quite different from Gayle's illustration of many students below, out of twenty-eight possible peers in his Spanish class, Nate only included two other students in his illustration. Therefore, because Nate's illustration focused primarily on himself and the teacher, it seems that Nate's Spanish learning was perceived as very dependent upon one-on-one assistance from the teacher. This

illustration further exemplifies Nate's preference to work individually. The significance of individual teacher attention in Nate's learning is reiterated later in Nate's comments and in the classroom observations described in Chapter 5.

In summary, the student interviews reveal that Nate preferred to work individually, enjoyed working with linguistic components of the language, disliked quizzes, feared a lower grade, struggled with comprehending and communicating meaning during reading and writing activities, and valued individual assistance from his teacher.

5.1.2 Student perceptions: Gayle

The student interview findings indicate that Gayle's perceptions of Spanish class differed from Nate's and unique to her learning profile. Gayle commented that "Spanish is sort of fun," because in Spanish class, she had the opportunity to participate in activities with her friends. When asked about her favorite activity in Spanish, Gayle reported, "Doing things together," reiterating the significance of working with her peers in Spanish class. These perceptions differed from the perceptions indicated in Nate's interview and reflect Gayle's learning profile. As described later in Chapter 6, Gayle was a social individual who enjoyed working with peers, but was easily distracted by other classmates.

In addition to talking about what she enjoys, Gayle described her performance, "I'm not real good at Spanish, but I do have a B." This comment indicates that, similar to Nate, Gayle described her performance with reference to her grade, not what she was able to do with the language.

When asked to illustrate her learning in Ms. O'Brien's sixth grade Spanish class, Gayle depicted an illustration that also differed from Nate's. Unlike Nate's illustration (Figure 4),

Gayle included a large group of students in three frames that represented a story or comic strip (Figure 5). Gayle's depiction of her learning begins with the teacher in front of the classroom instructing in front of a group of students. Then, in the second frame, Gayle volunteers in front of the classroom and speaks in Spanish to the class. The teacher interrupts Gayle to reprimand Robert, one of the students who frequently disrupted class and sat next to Gayle. In the last frame, another student volunteers to present in front of the class, and the teacher reprimands Robert again for talking and interrupting the class. Gayle concludes her illustration of learning Spanish with, "The end."

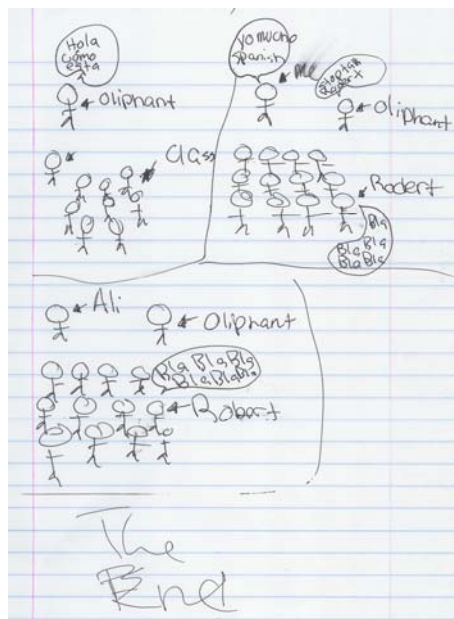


Figure 5. Gayle's Illustration of Spanish Class

It is interesting to note the way in which Gayle selected to display her learning in Spanish class and compare this format with the type of activities that she perceived to be challenging. Gayle's visual of her learning is representative of a story. Her illustration included three frames depicting several characters and sequential events that display a beginning, middle, and end. She also concluded her story with, "The end," a phrase that is representative of storybook language.

When discussing frustrating and confusing activities, Gayle referred to stories and poems in Spanish. She claimed that they were difficult and that she was “just not a poem person.” However, although Gayle perceives stories as challenging, her illustration of learning Spanish reflected the format of a story with many characters, sequential events, and a dialog. This contradiction suggests that Gayle understands the basic organization of stories, uses a story framework to represent daily occurrences, however her comments in the interview indicated that she struggles with comprehending meaning of the vocabulary presented in the text.

When comparing Gayle’s illustration of learning in Spanish class with the classroom observations of Ms. O’Brien’s sixth grade Spanish class, consistent findings are apparent. Gayle depicted the Spanish class involved in teacher-fronted instruction, each frame of her story included a group of students with the teacher or another student in front of the classroom. This illustration is consistent with the classroom observations that illustrate that 50% of the classroom activities observed was conducted in a teacher-fronted mode. The observations also discussed how Gayle frequently talked with her peers, asked them for assistance, and helped them in return. As seen in Figure 5, Gayle included many of the other students in her drawing. In addition, as summarized previously, Gayle’s favorite activity in Spanish class was, “doing things together.” Therefore, consistent with the comments previously summarized, Gayle’s illustration suggests that other students’ behaviors and social interaction with peers are significant in her learning.

In summary, Gayle’s illustrative and verbal responses demonstrate that Gayle’s perceptions reflected her learning profile as a social individual who enjoyed and learned best through interactive pair, group, and project-oriented activities. These preferences and perceptions differed from Nate and Tina who were more introverted individuals.

5.1.3 Student perceptions: Tina

The student interview findings demonstrate that Tina's perceptions of Spanish class reflected her unique learning profile. Similar to Nate and different from Gayle, Tina indicated that she preferred to work individually or with assistance from the teacher, the aide, or the researcher. This preference to work alone relates directly to Tina's learning profile. As indicated in her IEP, Tina had been diagnosed with mild Asberger's Syndrome, a disability that impairs an individual's ability to interact socially. In addition to working individually, Tina enjoyed reading in all subjects. However, in Spanish class, Tina was very confused when she read the stories because she struggled with identifying the meaning of the vocabulary. When asked how she felt during a reading activity, Tina reported, "Confused, I don't know what the words mean, but reading is easier than writing or speaking." This struggle with understanding the meaning of the vocabulary in the reading activities was shared by both Gayle and Nate, and can be explained by the students' language-related disabilities and the lack of instructional accommodations that provided linguistic assistance (see Chapter 6 on classroom observations for more details on accommodations).

Tina was also frustrated during note-taking, translating, and writing in Spanish because, again, she struggled with handwriting and with identifying the meaning of every word, which forced her to lose sight of the main purpose of the activity. Tina described her feelings during a writing activity, "[I am] Frustrated, looking up the words a dictionary and a word bank helps but the dictionary takes so much time to look up all of the words to say." This frustration with finding the vocabulary necessary for writing was also shared by Nate and Gayle.

Figure 6 displays Tina's illustration of her learning Spanish in Mr. Domico's seventh grade Spanish class. She described her picture, "That's me and that's Mr. Domico, that's a book, those are words on the board, and I want to say 'quiet' here because that's what he always says." In this picture, the only characters apparent are Tina and Mr. Domico, the teacher. Similar to Nate, who only included a few students in his illustration, and different from Gayle, who included several students in her drawing; Tina chose not to depict the remaining twenty-nine students that were present in her class every day. For Tina, according to her illustration, it seems that learning Spanish was an independent activity that involved a random set of vocabulary on the board and interaction with Mr. Domico, the teacher.

Tina's illustration of teacher-fronted instruction is consistent with the classroom observations summarized in Chapter 6. Out of the total activities observed, 40% required the students to work on an individual assignment and the remaining 60% engaged the students in a teacher-fronted activity. During the classroom activities, Mr. Domico frequently reminded the students to work silently and individually, however many students conversed. According to the observations, Tina never interacted with her peers, and frequently asked for assistance from the teacher, the special education aide, or the researcher. This individual style of learning is apparent in the illustration below (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Tina's Illustration of Spanish Class

The verbal comments and drawings of Gayle, Nate and Tina show different perceptions of learning in Spanish class that reflect their unique learning profiles. Gayle, a more social individual, depicted her learning as a story with dialog, sequential events, and characters. On the other hand, Nate and Tina, more introverted students, included only themselves and the teacher in their learning scenarios. Nate displayed materials in his illustration of learning, showing the importance of being organized with the appropriate materials such as paper, a pencil, and an eraser was significant in his learning in Spanish class. For Gayle, a large group of students and behavioral reprimands were included in her scenario of learning Spanish class, indicating the importance of other students in her learning and the possible distraction of other's behavior in her learning. For Tina, the vocabulary words written on the board were a tool of significance for her learning in Spanish class.

By comparing the perceptions of the three participants, two principle findings are apparent. First, each student differed in their perceptions of learning Spanish and of the Spanish classroom environment. These differential views were related to the students' personalities, learning styles, and disabilities. Second, these students, who had diagnosed LLDs, were

frustrated and confused during reading and writing activities in Spanish class, and required accommodations that provided assistance with comprehension of and creating meaning with the foreign language.

5.1.4 Student perceptions: materials and instructional practices

5.1.4.1 Nate

During the student interviews, Nate, Gayle, and Tina discussed the materials and classroom practices that assisted their learning in Spanish class. A summary of the students' perceptions of the materials and classroom activities contributes to a better understanding of the type of accommodations that should be developed to benefit the learning of students with LLDs.

During the interview, Nate described his perceptions of classroom practices and suggested several classroom interactions, activities, and materials that assisted him in his learning to read, write, and speak in Spanish. As previously stated, Nate struggled to comprehend the stories in Spanish class. When asked if role plays, visuals, and word banks would assist him with reading comprehension, Nate enthusiastically answered, "Yeah!" According to Nate, the most challenging activity in Spanish class was writing. He reported, "Writing is the hardest, I don't like writing all of the words, it's frustrating when you don't know them." However, Nate indicated that word banks and his peers helped him with writing and spelling his ideas in Spanish. For vocabulary and grammar practice, Nate preferred to use flashcards to help him memorize. With speaking activities, Nate thought they were enjoyable, and was able to participate when the teacher provided linguistic assistance on the board. When asked, "How do you feel when you are involved in a speaking activity?" Nate responded, "If the words are on the board, it's kind of fun I like it!" Thus, the interview findings reveal that Nate

struggled with reading and writing activities and enjoyed speaking activities. In reading, writing, and speaking activities, Nate required assistance with comprehending and creating meaning, and he suggested that this assistance should be multi-sensory in the form of visuals, kinesthetic activities, and graphic organizers.

When discussing other forms of assistance, Nate expressed that his learning benefited from various groupings of students in Spanish class. He commented that one-on-one instruction from his teacher, Ms. O'Brien, was very effective in his learning. This comment is supported by the image drawn by Nate (displayed previously in Figure 4) that depicted Spanish learning as a one-on-one interaction between himself and his teacher. In addition to individual teacher interactions, Nate commented that he benefited from games and group work because these instructional practices allowed for collaboration and peer assistance. When asking friends for assistance, Nate usually requested for clarification of assignments, directions, and spelling of words. Therefore, in addition to multi-sensory activities, Nate indicated that small group work, games, and individual assistance from the teacher and classmates were helpful in his learning of Spanish.

In addition to discussing helpful classroom practices, Nate found certain materials confusing and ineffective in helping him learn Spanish. When asked to identify the most confusing classroom activity, Nate replied, "the homework packets." In the interview, Nate stated that the homework packets of grammar exercises were very confusing and frequently was forced to ask friends to explain the content.

5.1.4.2 Gayle

Consistent with her above illustration of a group of students (Figure 5), Gayle indicated that social activities such as games, small group interactions, and interpersonal oral and written

conversation tasks enhanced her learning. When asked what she liked in Spanish, Gayle stated, "I like the games, I learn a lot during the games." Gayle reported that she was very excited when the class was involved in games such as Bingo because she believed the games were fun and easy and they helped her learn Spanish. She also enjoyed interactive partner speaking activities, felt comfortable and confident in her ability to speak, and liked writing letters in Spanish because it allowed her to talk to her friends. When asked, "Imagine that you are doing a talking activity, asking friends for information, how do you feel?" Gayle responded, "Good, confident, comfortable talking to friends, I am able to talk to my friends in Spanish, but some questions are hard." When asked, "How do you feel when you are writing a letter in Spanish and what helps you write?" Gayle answered, "Good..I'm not frustrated, I'm excited to give a letter to a friend, my friends help me write." Thus, interactive social activities and competition enhanced Gayle's learning of Spanish.

In the interview, Gayle discussed several other classroom activities that were beneficial to her learning. She reported that projects, small groups, and individual teacher-student interaction assisted her in learning Spanish. When asked to talk about the alien project that the students completed, Gayle commented, "That really helped me with my writing." Other tasks such as the "do now" beginning class activity, listening to stories, and drawing pictures of a new vocabulary sometimes helped Gayle learn Spanish.

In addition to various classroom activities, Gayle commented on helpful classroom materials. According to Gayle, a variety of visual and kinesthetic materials such as visuals, graphic organizers, word banks, white boards, computer activities, role play, and flash cards with drawings helped Gayle learn Spanish. When asked what helped Gayle read in Spanish, Gayle answered, "I would like a word bank, or to act it out. I did not like reading out loud." When

asked about helpful vocabulary activities, Gayle commented, “Writing it [the word] down in Spanish and drawing a picture and reading it silently helps.”

Similar to Nate, Gayle stated that materials which involve extensive reading and linguistic analysis such as homework packets and poems were too difficult and confusing, and therefore did not help her learn Spanish. Reading stories and poems frustrated Gayle because she reported, “they are difficult” and she claimed that she was “not a poem person.” Gayle’s dislike for reading and poems could have related to her difficulty with reading and writing as indicated in her IEP. In addition, as stated previously, reading is an individual activity that does not involve the social interaction that Gayle enjoys.

5.1.4.3 Tina

Tina also indicated specific classroom activities that assisted her in learning Spanish. As discussed previously, Tina struggled with remembering the vocabulary to use in writing and reading activities. When asked what helped her remember new vocabulary, Tina expressed, “Draw pictures, and guess from English words and other Spanish words that I know.” This comment referred to a specific classroom activity that incorporates guessing the meaning of the vocabulary word, using the dictionary, drawing a visual, and applying the word to a written sentence in context. Tina expressed that this activity was the easiest task that she had to do in Spanish class, and that it helped her learn and remember new vocabulary. Therefore, for Tina, drawing visuals and accessing prior knowledge of words and cognates helped her learn Spanish.

5.1.5 Student Perceptions: Classroom Participation

During a portion of the student interviews, Gayle, Nate, and Tina were asked to provide an explanation for their lack of participation in Spanish class. In the Chapter 6, the classroom observations data show that the participants rarely participated orally in class during teacher-fronted activities. Therefore, during the interviews, the students were asked if they participated in Spanish class, and to explain their answer.

5.1.5.1 Nate

During the interview, Nate discussed his oral participation in Spanish class. When asked, “Do you participate in Spanish class?” Nate stated, “Sometimes, when I know the right answer,” and when asked, “Why don’t you participate?” Nate said, “Because I’m embarrassed to get the wrong answer.” Nate discussed his verbal interactions in Spanish class. Thus, Nate explained that he rarely participated in Spanish class because he was afraid of answering incorrectly and frequently did not know the answer to the questions asked by the teacher.

5.1.5.2 Gayle

Gayle enjoys participating in Spanish class, however her understanding of participation differs from what most teachers consider class participation. According to Gayle, class participation involves simply paying attention and looking at the teacher when s/he is speaking. Gayle’s belief of participation does not involve raising her hand and speaking aloud; how most teachers view student participation in class. When asked, “Do you participate in Spanish class?” Gayle stated, “That’s me, I always pay attention to the teacher...I always look at the teacher.” When asked if Gayle raises her hand to speak in class, Gayle stated, “...I don’t raise my hand a

lot because I forget the answer, forget the question, or I'm worried that I'm gonna get it wrong and people will laugh at me." When she participated, she reports that she raised her hand to ask, "Can you write down the question or the answer on the board?" and this only occurred, "When Robert [the problematic student in her illustration in Figure 5] is not talking to me, he talks too much!" Therefore, with reference to class participation, Gayle felt as though she participated comfortably by paying attention, however when the teacher asked a question, she failed to raise her hand because she forgot the content of the question and feared the disapproval of her peers.

5.1.5.3 Tina

Similar to Nate, Tina stated that she did not participate in Spanish class. When asked, "Do you participate in Spanish class?" Tina responded, "That's not me." When asked, "Why don't you participate in Spanish class?" Tina explained, "Because I don't know the words to say." Therefore, similar to Nate and Gayle, Tina also indicated that she was embarrassed to participate in Spanish class because she did not know the correct answer.

The students' fear of answering incorrectly is supported by the classroom observations in Chapter 6. According to the observation tallies (Tables 9, 10, & 11), the participants with LLDs rarely raised their hand to participate in class. This lack of participation is also supported in the next sections that analyze the interviews with the Spanish teachers and the special education instructor.

5.1.6 Summary

The student interview findings reveal that the participants in this study displayed various perceptions of their learning of a foreign language. These various perceptions are represented

pictorially in Table 8. By comparing the positive perceptions (indicated by a +) with the descriptions of the students, Table 8 illustrates how the learning profiles and social preferences of these students were directly related to their views of foreign language learning. In addition, the components of this table demonstrate that, although these three students displayed similar deficiencies with language, their perceptions differed. These differential perceptions will be addressed further in the discussion included in Chapter 8.

Table 8 A profile of Nate, Gayle, and Tina's perceptions

	Nate	Gayle	Tina
Learner characteristics	Introverted	Social	Introverted
Deficiencies	Reading, writing	Reading, writing, and attention	Reading, writing attention, and social-emotional
Illustrations of learning	individual interaction with teacher a few peers	comic strip of events many peers	individual interaction with teacher, no peers
Learning grammar concepts	+		
Flash cards	+		
Teacher assistance	+	+	+
Peer assistance	+	+	
Reading comprehension in Spanish	-	-	-
Quizzes	-		
Homework packets	-	-	
Writing in Spanish	-	-	-
Role plays	+		
Visuals	+	+	+
Word banks	+	+	+
Games	+	+	
Group work	+	+	
Note taking			-
Vocabulary/hypothesize/Contextualize exercise			+
+ signifies a positive perception			
- signifies a negative perception			

For example, Gayle, a more social individual, depicted Spanish class as an environment with many social interactions. Conversely, Nate and Tina, more introverted students, viewed

learning Spanish as an individualized experience with interactions with the teacher. This is important to note when creating instructional accommodations and assessing student learning, which will be discussed in Chapter 6. In addition, the interviews indicate that activities that involve reading and writing frustrated Nate, Gayle, and Tina, (indicated by a “-,” a negative perception in Table 8) who had pre-existing language deficiencies. The students’ comments also reveal that instructional accommodations such as visual, kinesthetic, and interactive activities enhanced the learning of students with LLDs. Finally, the students explained that their lack of participation was due to a fear of answering incorrectly.

5.1.7 Student perceptions: Connections between Spanish and English

An additional topic of the interviews asked the students to identify connections between learning English and Spanish. The students’ responses revealed that they were able to identify cognates and similarities in punctuation, grammar, and function. For example, when asked, “Do you see anything similar between Spanish and English when you learn about grammar, verbs, and forming questions?” Nate responded, “Oh, they [Spanish speakers] have an upside down question mark and we [English speakers] don’t ...and, we [in English] have nouns verbs and pronouns like Spanish.” This comment demonstrates Nate’s understanding of the linguistic concepts of word classification and punctuation. When asked, “Do you see anything similar between Spanish and English when you learn about new vocabulary?” Gayle answered, “We write letters to friends, [in English] and, the names of some of the words are the same.” In this example, Gayle illustrates her comprehension of cognates and recognizes that different languages utilize similar functions and writing genres. When asked to compare learning vocabulary in Spanish and English, Tina responded similar to Gayle, “The words are the same,

there are cognates, [such as] brillante,” demonstrating her ability to identify words that contain the same meanings and origins. Thus, when asked to compare learning Spanish and English, these students indicated that they were able to identify cognates and similar linguistic concepts such as punctuation, word classification, and writing genre. By identifying these linguistic concepts, the students demonstrated their ability to develop metalinguistic awareness and knowledge of the system of language, despite their LLDs.

In addition to identifying similar linguistic concepts in English and Spanish, Tina recognized that prior knowledge of content that she learned in English assisted her with learning new language in Spanish. When Tina was asked, “Does learning Spanish make learning English easy?,” Tina responded, “Yeah, when it’s the same [content].” Tina’s comment illustrates that despite her language-related disability, she was able to determine strategies that assist her with learning new language in Spanish.

Thus, when asked to compare learning English and Spanish, the participants were able to identify strategies to comprehend new, unknown language and to recognize patterns within both languages.

5.1.8 Summary

In summary, the analysis of the student interviews identified Nate, Gayle, and Tina’s perceptions of their learning of a foreign language. Through analyzing the interviews, it was found that the participants a) differed in their perceptions of learning Spanish, b) expressed negative perceptions of reading and writing activities in Spanish class, c) identified specific activities that were helpful in assisting their learning of Spanish, d) attributed their lack of oral

participation to a fear of answering incorrectly, and e) established connections between learning Spanish and English, indicating development of metalinguistic awareness.

The next section of this chapter examines the Spanish teachers' perceptions of the foreign language learning of students with LLDs. To provide a more comprehensive examination of the learning of the three participants, the teacher interviews discuss the accommodations they include in their instruction, reveal their perceptions of the students with LLDs in their classes, and provide a rationale for the lack of oral participation of students with LLDs.

5.2 SPANISH TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

In addition to interviewing Nate, Gayle, and Tina, the two Spanish teachers who instructed these students were consulted for their perceptions of the learning and teaching of students with LLDs. In the interviews, Ms. O'Brien, the sixth grade teacher, and Mr. Domico, the seventh grade teacher, reported on the materials and classroom activities that they used to accommodate for students with LLDs, described techniques that were helpful for the participants, and shared their observations of the classroom participation of students with LLDs. The following section summarizes the findings gathered from the teacher interviews. These findings contribute to the general knowledge of the types of accommodations that are available for students with LLDs and provide insight into teachers' perceptions of the foreign language learning of students with LLDs.

5.2.1 Spanish Teacher Perceptions: Materials and Instructional Practices

Throughout the interviews, the Spanish teachers discussed their perceptions of the materials and classroom activities that were beneficial and available for students with LLDs. Through analyzing the teachers' comments, several themes emerged. First, the teachers revealed how they altered their instruction of new content and developed accommodations for assessments. Second, the teachers discussed techniques that were helpful for students with LLDs. Third, the interviews discussed the minimal assistance provided for teachers in meeting the needs of students with LLDs, and indicated the need for additional teacher resources. Lastly, the teacher interviews described the frustrations that teachers developed when instructing large classes with several students with LLDs.

5.2.1.1 Accommodations

In her sixth grade class of thirty students, nine who had identified IEPs, Ms. O'Brien reported that she accommodated her instruction for students with LLDs. Because almost one third of her class had an IEP, Ms. O'Brien indicated that she assisted students by reducing the amount of content that she instructed throughout the year, slowing her pace of instruction, using more English, and eliminating difficult, creative projects that were too challenging. To review new content, she provided study guides that contained fill in the blank, cloze activities of the information that was presented in class. Ms. O'Brien described on how her instruction differed in classes with students with LLDs:

I guess I give a lot more modeling than I might normally have given in the past. I find myself showing examples of things and good examples....I go over it, writing it down and having it chunked for them...also giving them a rubric tends to help by showing them exactly what they need to do...also it's a slower pace, and I use way too much English than in the other classes.

In accommodating his instruction, Mr. Domico stated that he wrote words on the board; prepared students by giving new content prior to its presentation; used cognates in presentations; and, similar to Ms. O'Brien, he diminished the amount of Spanish use (40% of the total class period instead of 90% in classes that did not have students with LLDs). Mr. Domico described how he accommodated his instruction:

Accommodations in my instruction?...I change the amount of Spanish used. I try to use cognates. I try to have the words written on the board, and sometimes I give them more information. If it's an assessment or assignment, I limit the number of questions, number of sentences, or how many words in the sentence are required. Even grading it, look at it a little bit differently. That's about it. Everything is adapted, and even further to each individual student, some students have to have 16 font, some students only can have 2 answers, some students have to have the test read to them, so there's a lot of adaptations going on...

The above teacher responses show that these teachers designed minimal accommodations in the presentation and practice of content. To assist students with LLDs, the teachers merely moved at a slower pace, minimized the content, used less Spanish, and provided a few written tools. Thus, according to Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico, to accommodate for students was to require less work and instruct less content. The teachers' comments failed to mention the possibility of instructing the same content to all students and giving the students with LLDs a more simplified activity with guidance. In providing assistance, the teachers did not mention incorporating techniques such as multi-sensory activities, personalization, and individual projects that were suggested in previous research (DiFino & Lombardino, 2004; Hurst, 1999; Sparks and Ganschow; 1993). This lack of accommodations in the presentation and practice components of the lessons, and the deficiency of accommodations that reflect current literature is confirmed in the next chapter on class observations.

5.2.1.2 Instructional practices helpful for students with LLDs

Although Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico discussed minimal, intentional accommodations in their instruction, they listed several techniques that they believed helped the students learn. However, according to the Spanish teachers, these techniques were not considered to be intentional accommodations. For listening activities, Mr. Domico reported that re-explaining material several times helped students listen. Ms. O'Brien shared that proximity assisted in refocusing students who were easily distracted. After asked specifically about TPR, visuals, and realia, Ms. O'Brien agreed that these techniques would be helpful in assisting students with listening tasks. For writing activities, Ms. O'Brien suggested that word banks; specific, clear, concise instructions; graphic organizers; and checklists of the writing process helped students with LLDs. Similar to Ms. O'Brien, Mr. Domico commented that word banks assisted his students with LLDs with writing. Mr. Domico also suggested that limiting the quantity of sentences for the assignments and individual assistance helped to lower the anxiety of students with LLDs during writing activities.

When asked how she helped students with LLDs during reading tasks, Ms. O'Brien stated that she taught her students to look for words in the questions and then encouraged them to copy the answer from the text. When reading stories aloud, she believed that comprehension checking questions assisted students' understanding and helped them follow the story. She also discouraged the use of dictionaries because this confused students by using grammar translation of every word.

Both Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico reported on how they assisted students with speaking. Ms. O'Brien used the stories to promote speaking because it allowed students to hear language before they talk about it. In addition, Ms. O'Brien included info-gap tasks in her class to

promote speaking because it allowed for meaningful repetition of questions and responses. Finally, Ms. O'Brien implemented songs in her lessons to encourage students with LLDs to speak.

When asked about developing specific accommodations for assessments, both Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico stated that they look to the IEPs for assistance on how to adapt the quizzes and tests. The IEPs require limited choices, chunking of tasks, multiple choice (instead of fill in the blank questions), word banks, fill in the blank sequencing sentences (instead of open ended answers), larger font, grammatical formulas, conjugation charts, sample sentences, orally read directions, individual guidance through test questions, and extended time.

In summary, when discussing accommodations, the teachers spoke globally about minimizing content, pace, and the use of Spanish during instruction; and identified how they altered the tasks used for formal assessments. The Spanish teachers also indicated a few multi-sensory techniques that helped the students with LLDs, however they did not refer to these as intentional accommodations. It is possible that, when designing accommodations, Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico did not have a general understanding of a) the content that students with LLDs need accommodations for, b) the classroom practices that accommodate effectively, and c) the implementation of these accommodations in all components of instruction (a concept that will be discussed further in Chapter 5.)

5.2.2 Spanish Teacher Perceptions: Frustrations and Concerns

Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico discussed several frustrations and concerns that they faced in working with students with LLDs.

One concern was associated with the information provided in the IEP document. When discussing the IEP as a resource for accommodating for students with LLDs, Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico stated that the content of the IEP was helpful for accommodating tests and describing the students' past struggles and behavior. However, both teachers reported that the IEP document was not specific in providing information for foreign language classes and lacked suggestions for effective instructional practices for the presentation of contents. In addition, they reported that the IEPs were lengthy, and it was virtually impossible to read all of the information on each student's IEPs before the first day of school.

In addition to the IEP documents, Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico indicated frustrations with the lack of resources available for helping them accommodate for their students with LLDs. With reference to the resources available for supporting accommodations, Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico indicated that the special educators in their school site were helpful. Ms. O'Brien stated that it was helpful to meet daily with the special educator to discuss student issues and accommodations. Mr. Domico reported that it was helpful to have an aide in the classroom that had known the students for several years, was familiar with the Spanish curriculum, and could assist the students with LLDs during the class period.

Although Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico discussed the support provided by the IEPs and special educators, both teachers suggested that more professional development opportunities were needed to educate teachers on how to develop materials and instructional practices that meet the needs of students with LLDs. Ms. O'Brien did not have any previous training on how to accommodate for students with disabilities, and wished that the school would purchase materials, initiate training, and allot more time for planning to meet the needs of students with LLDs. Mr. Domico attended a course in college on students with disabilities, however he

reported that it merely described the characteristics of the students with the various disabilities that he might encounter in teaching. He emphasized that the course failed to prepare him to interpret an IEP and consequently develop accommodations for students with specific disabilities in foreign language classes. He suggested that courses should be offered to pre-service and in-service teachers that provide examples of effective accommodations and allow teachers to discuss making accommodations for specific real-life scenarios.

Another concern reported by the Spanish teachers included the high number of students with IEPs enrolled in certain classes. Because of scheduling issues relating to the standardized test preparation classes, many students with LLDs were homogeneously grouped in the same classes. Therefore, certain classes had a high enrollment of students with LLDs, and Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico felt that this hindered their ability to challenge the more advanced students. To meet the needs of the more advanced students, Ms. O'Brien Mr. Domico wished that they were able to cover more material throughout the year, use more Spanish in instruction, move at a faster pace, and include more challenging, creative projects.

Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico reported that, when classes had high amounts of students with IEPs, it was almost impossible to provide all of the assistance that students with LLDs need throughout the class period. Mr. Domico discussed the issue of meeting the needs of an academically diverse student body, "The most frustrating thing is that there is not enough of me, you can't be everywhere at once and there are students that really love the language, but because you have to spend so much time with some of the students who are truly very low, you really can't get to everybody." Ms. O'Brien stated, "The expectations are that they will have more help than it's physically possible sometimes to give, particularly in a classroom where they are supposed to be doing more interaction and communication."

5.2.3 Spanish Teacher Perceptions: Observations of Students' Classroom Participation

In addition to discussing the materials and classroom activities that met the needs of students with LLDs, Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico also discussed their observations of the participation of students with LLDs during classroom activities. During the interviews, the teachers described how students with LLDs performed in a variety of activities, indicated when these students struggled, and accounted for their lack of participation in oral activities.

In the interview, Ms. O'Brien described how students performed on different activities in class. Ms. O'Brien expressed that students with LLDs memorized vocabulary easily, created class projects competently, made the same amount of errors as other students, and participated during in-class activities. She stated that students have the most difficulty with homework, organization, and using the dictionaries. Ms. O'Brien also commented that students with LLDs struggled in Spanish because they were working so hard in other classes that it was difficult to give 100% effort to Spanish class.

Similar to Ms. O'Brien, Mr. Domico indicated that students with LLDs were able to accomplish what regular education students are able to do, but just at a slightly slower pace. Mr. Domico commented that students with LLDs were overwhelmed by large assignments. He also stated that motivation was a factor in student performance. The students with LLDs who were not receiving support at home, performed poorly in Spanish class. In addition, Mr. Domico stated that it is important that students with LLDs learn to work with their disability, and not use it as an excuse to eliminate work. For example, Mr. Domico described how Tina's motivation and ability to work with her disability positively affected her performance:

Tina has a 98%! She scores higher than any of the other adapted kids on the tests, but you can tell that's a girl who genuinely wants to learn and wants to know things, its just that she has a disability, but she works around it, she works with it, and others use it against themselves,

and say well, I have this, [and therefore I cannot do it] and instead, she's says, well I have this, but I'm gonna do it anyway, type attitude...it comes down to the student, whether they live with their disability or let the disability rule their life.

Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico also described how students with LLDs behaved during specific tasks during class. Both Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico stated that these students were more easily distracted during listening activities, however Mr. Domico found this extremely frustrating because he felt had to repeat instructions many times. He expressed that his repetition of directions had almost hindered the students because they did not even try to listen the first time and expected the teacher to come over and explain it individually. This became a problem when there was only one teacher and nine students with LLDs. Both Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico observed that students with LLDs were able to participate in writing assignments as well as their regular education colleagues, provided that they had the necessary accommodations.

Ms. O'Brien also discussed her students' reading ability. She stated that students were able to comprehend the stories, however they needed the questions ahead of time. This was an interesting observation for two reasons. First, this indicates that Mr. O'Brien thought that instructional practices such as giving the questions ahead of time were accommodations, when in reality they are considered to be effective instructional practices for all students. Second, this shows Ms. O'Brien's understanding of what it means to read in a foreign language. According to Ms. O'Brien, reading in a foreign language refers to the ability of answering the comprehension questions by lifting off the answer from the text. She described her perceptions of reading:

I think if you break it down into chunks, you review the question words before you even start...the difference between que/quien is clear so that at least then they can comprehend what you're asking. I think if you tell them that there are sometimes sentences that you can pull and extract directly from the story, than answer them, that helps...that's what I've used in the past,

you look for the words that match the words in the question, and then you can take that sentence from the story and that will answer it without changing it.

Ms. O'Brien's description of teaching students with LLDs to read is a concern. Instead of helping students gain the main idea and supporting details, she focused on teaching her students to understand the questions and then search the story and copy the answer. Simply looking for a sentence that has the same words and copying it does not elicit the student's ability to comprehend a reading passage. This comment demonstrates that Ms. O'Brien did not have an understanding of reading comprehension skills, and consequently how to teach students how to read. Thus, because Ms. O'Brien misunderstood what it means to comprehend a reading passage, she struggled to develop instructional practices to assist students with LLDs in developing reading skills in Spanish.

When discussing speaking in class, both Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico reported that oral participation was a struggle for students with LLDs. Interestingly, this struggle was identified in the class observations and student interviews above, and will be observed in the special educator's interview below. Mr. Domico reported that his students with LLDs disliked participating because they were nervous and afraid of answering incorrectly. However, he observed that, when students participated in a unit that included a lot of cognates and contained an interesting topic, they participated more because they had less of a chance of answering incorrectly. He also stated that with prompting from a teacher, they spoke in Spanish during small group activities. They also participated more during white board activities because there was less of a chance of the entire group viewing their errors. Consistent with Mr. Domico, Ms. O'Brien expressed that her students were shy, not confident, and embarrassed about their inability to pronounce words during speaking activities.

To contribute to the understanding of the materials and modes of instruction that accommodate for students with LLDs and the class participation of students with LLDs, the following section will examine the perceptions of a special educator at the school site.

5.2.4 Summary

Throughout the interviews, the Spanish teachers discussed several topics, including accommodations for students with LLDs, observations of the classroom participation of students with LLDs, and frustrations in teaching students with LLDs. In the discussions of these topics, several themes emerged.

First, the interview analysis indicated that when designing accommodations for students with LLDs, Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico lacked an understanding of the content that required accommodation and the instructional practices that provided effective assistance for students with LLDs. Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico's discussed that they accommodated instruction through minimizing the amount of content taught, using less target language during instruction, and reducing the tasks in assessments. In addition, the Spanish teachers provided most of their accommodations during assessments, and included little assistance with vocabulary, functions, syntax, and comprehension of the target language.

Second, the Spanish teachers described their observations of the class participation of students with LLDs. Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico indicated that students performed similar to their non-LLD peers, however at a slower rate. They also discussed that motivation was a major factor in the success of students with LLDs learning a foreign language. Similar to the justification provided by the special educator and the students themselves, the Spanish teachers

stated that the lack of oral participation of students with LLDs in teacher-fronted activities was related to students' fear of answering incorrectly.

Finally, Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico shared their frustrations with teaching students with LLDs. The Spanish teachers admitted that they were frustrated with teaching large classes of students that contain many students with LLDs. The large classes inhibit the teachers' ability to meet the needs of all of their students. In addition, Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico reported frustrations with the IEP document, and claimed that the information provided on accommodations was too broad and lacked assistance specific to foreign language teaching. The Spanish teachers also expressed frustration with the lack of professional development that prepares foreign language teachers to teach students with LLDs.

To provide a more comprehensive understanding of the type of accommodations made for students with LLDs and an additional perspective of the learning of students with LLDs, the following section discusses the perceptions of a special educator who worked closely with Nate.

5.3 SPECIAL EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS

At the end of the data collection period, an interview was conducted with Ms. Caldwell, Nate's special education teacher. Similar to the above Spanish teacher interviews, Ms. Caldwell was questioned about her perceptions of the materials and instructional practices that accommodate the learning of students with LLDs and was asked to describe her observations of the classroom participation of students with LLDs in their Spanish classes. The following sections summarize Ms. Caldwell's perceptions of effective instructional practices that meet the

needs of students with LLDs and express Ms. Caldwell's observations of the classroom participation of students with LLDs in Spanish class.

5.3.1 Special Education Teacher Perceptions: Materials and Instructional Practices

When discussing lesson planning, Ms. Caldwell indicated that she met daily with the team of sixth grade teachers from each content area including Spanish. During these meetings, the teachers collaborated to develop study guides, alter tests, and design appropriate rubrics to better meet the needs of Spanish students with IEPs.

Ms. Caldwell expressed that appropriate materials and instructional practices are extremely important to include in Spanish classes because students with LLDs struggle much more than their regular education colleagues. According to Ms. Caldwell, students with LLDs differ from the regular education students in learning Spanish because they are trying to understand linguistic concepts that they have not yet mastered in their first language, in addition to translating and applying these concepts to a second language. Ms. Caldwell described students with LLDs learning Spanish, "To a degree it's like they are ESL, because they're trying to learn a second language that's in common play in the school and they haven't even mastered their first." Therefore, in the interview, Ms. Caldwell indicated that it is important to accommodate for students with LLDs because they need assistance with understanding the basic components of language and the meaning of the foreign language.

5.3.1.1 Accommodations

After discussing why students with LLDs struggle, Ms. Caldwell alluded to several accommodations that assist students with LLDs on assessments. She suggested that teachers

adapt the content of tests by chunking questions into smaller sections, limiting choices for students to select in answers, using larger print, and reading the directions aloud. In preparing for tests, Ms. Caldwell suggested that teachers collaborate with special educators to develop study guides to assist students with LLDs with preparing for assessments. These study guides should include concrete, simplified explanations of content, and highlight key concepts from large units that contain an overwhelming amount of new information. In addition, Ms. Caldwell recommended that students with LLDs have the opportunity to come to the special education resource room to have extra time to complete tests and long term projects. In the resource room, students are less distracted by their peers, and the special educator is able to provide a comfortable environment to promote performance on assessments.

Ms. Caldwell also discussed the importance of altering the directions on classroom activities and assignments. She suggested that when teachers assign verbal and aural tasks, they should provide a clear set of expectations in writing to assist with deficits in memory. If students cannot remember directions to an activity or cannot understand aural explanation, they will not be able to complete the assignment for lack of memory skills, not necessarily lack of content knowledge. Also, students with LLDs benefit from having clear, well-developed rubrics for assignments that inform students what is expected for the assignment. Examples of student work and indicators of what not to do also help to make assignments and expectations extremely clear for students with LLDs. Thus, when developing assignments and activities, Ms. Caldwell suggested that Spanish teachers include clear directions and expectations.

Finally, Ms. Caldwell indicated that it is important to draw attention to specific linguistic concepts. She described her students with LLDs, “Reading is a delay that most of these children have, so putting things in print doesn’t always help. Putting them in print that draws their eye or

has a color...that can help them remember, just giving them that added reinforcement helps.” Therefore, Ms. Caldwell suggested that teachers use color coding, different fonts, and large, bold print to draw attention to new or key linguistic concepts in classroom materials.

In addition to providing suggestions for helpful classroom materials, Ms. Caldwell discussed specific instructional practices that assist students with LLDs in learning Spanish. First, Ms. Caldwell reported that presenting new content of Spanish language in a familiar context for the students is very helpful. According to Ms. Caldwell, lessons that familiarize students with previous knowledge, personalize content, or connect with the existing curriculum in other subject areas are effective when instructing student with LLDs. The Spanish program at the research site followed a content-based curriculum in which the Spanish classes taught language through the content of the existing middle school curriculum. Ms. Caldwell expressed that this style of curriculum helped her students with LLDs because they were learning new language through a familiar context. Traditional foreign language programs tend to teach both new Spanish language and new, unfamiliar content; which has been reported to be more challenging for students with LLDs (see Chapter 2, Bruck, 1980). Ms. Caldwell also indicated that the content-based program was helpful for students with LLDs because it reinforces the content they have already learned other subject areas. Ms. Caldwell discussed the benefit of this curriculum, “They [the Spanish teachers] try and follow along with what we’re doing in the other classes. For example, if science is doing the solar system, Spanish is doing the solar system in Spanish...when they correlate with the other subjects, it really helps.” Thus, according to Ms. Caldwell, familiar, personalized, content-based lessons are helpful when accommodating for students with LLDs.

During instruction, Ms. Caldwell also advised that Spanish teachers include all three modalities (visual, auditory and kinesthetic) in their lessons. She commented, “It’s really using as many modalities as you can. Show it to them, say it to them, do it with them, have them do it as many times as possible in as many different ways so that you can hit every learning style to see which one works best.” In other words, when planning lessons, teachers should include visual, auditory, and kinesthetic activities in instruction to effectively meet the different learning styles of students with LLDs.

Ms. Caldwell stated that many students with LLDs learn through kinesthetic, personalized, concrete experiences, therefore projects are very helpful in their learning. She indicated that analytical concepts are extremely difficult for students with LLDs. Therefore, when choosing activities, students with LLDs select visual, auditory, and kinesthetic activities in place of analytical activities because they have more of a chance of feeling successful. In addition, individual projects allow students to share their strengths because they can choose to demonstrate their knowledge through an activity that highlights their skills. For example, Ms. Caldwell stated that students who prefer music can write a song to practice new vocabulary, and students who are more artistic can draw a comic strip to apply new linguistic knowledge. Ms. Caldwell reported that this variety of presentation through projects is effective because it allows students with LLDs to thrive in areas where they are strong, while practicing foreign language skills, an area that is more difficult. In addition, projects allow students to personalize their presentation of knowledge. It is easier for students to talk about their own life in a foreign language because it is a familiar context. Therefore, Ms. Caldwell advocated that foreign language instructors include projects that allow students to demonstrate their linguistic

knowledge through concrete, multi-sensory activities that highlight students' abilities in skills other than analyzing language.

According to Ms. Caldwell, games can have mixed results for students with LLDs. At times, games can be difficult for students with LLDs because they become concerned with disappointing their team or demonstrating that they are slower than others. Therefore, Ms. Caldwell indicated that games should only be used after students have shown mastery of content through other activities, and should be structured to include support from peers by organizing teams and encouraging students to support each other with answers.

During instruction, Ms. Caldwell recommended that teachers take also into account the grouping of their students. She indicated that in her work with students with LLDs, the students are in a small group of nine students. This small group encourages students to assist each other, teach each other different ways of learning, and the supportive atmosphere eliminates the anxiety of making errors. Therefore, although Spanish classes contain twenty-five to thirty students, Ms. Caldwell suggested that Spanish teachers incorporate small groups in their lesson planning because it promotes peer assistance and eliminates anxiety of answering incorrectly.

5.3.1.2 Practical application of accommodations

After discussing the various materials and instructional practices that could be helpful for students with LLDs, Ms. Caldwell commented on the practical application of these instructional accommodations in the Spanish classrooms. When asked about implementing these accommodations in the Spanish classrooms, Ms. Caldwell comments:

In my room, I implement them a lot. I think that in another language it can help, but I think of those things a lot of times as different reinforcers for once you've taught the concept. How to help them better remember it. I think it's really tricky with Spanish because it's all brand new so I know my students get preoccupied with 'oh and I'm supposed to step on this square

when I say something,' so it's more once they learn a concept to reinforce and I just don't know if they have the time in Spanish to do that.

In this response, Ms. Caldwell recommended that instructional accommodations such as kinesthetic, visual, and auditory activities help students with LLDs, however she implied that the Spanish teachers do not have the time to incorporate effective teaching strategies in their lessons. It is interesting to note that Ms. Caldwell felt that it is more important to move quickly through the Spanish content, then to teach using effective instructional practices. This belief was also reiterated above in the Spanish teacher interviews. Both Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico expressed frustrations with teaching students with LLDs because the accommodations slow the pace of learning and impede the amount of material covered throughout the year. Thus, although Ms. Caldwell described several effective instructional practices to accommodate for students with LLDs, she felt that the Spanish teachers lacked the time to implement them.

After discussing appropriate accommodations, Ms. Caldwell identified a few additional issues that relate to teaching students with LLDs. First, she reiterated that accommodations in instruction can help all students, both in regular and special education. She also recognized that accommodations vary among teachers. She worked with three different Spanish teachers in sixth grade, and she commented that some accommodated better than others. Finally, Ms. Caldwell identified a lack of support for educating teachers to instruct students with LLDs. In this particular school there was no purchased, pre-published curriculum. Teachers designed the curriculum themselves, and therefore there were not textbooks and resources available. The teachers searched for their own resources for teaching both LLD and non-LLD students on the computer and in catalogs. Therefore, Ms. Caldwell indicated that they need more time, money,

and professional development to be able to appropriately accommodate their instruction. Ms. Caldwell discussed this issue:

I think that it's a little bit tricky in this district because there's not a set Spanish curriculum. The teachers design it. So they don't have books, per say, they don't have, things that they can look to for resources, they're really going on the computer trying to find things to supplement themselves. So I think that it would have to be more school supported if their going to get more resources [for LLDs] in the curriculum.

Thus, in the interview, Ms. Caldwell reiterated the importance for professional development and financial support for teachers to become more effective in meeting the needs of students with LLDs. This belief was also expressed in the interviews with the Spanish teachers.

In summary, the previous section described a special educator's perceptions of the struggles of students with LLDs and shared her beliefs of the materials and instructional practices that assist these students. The following section depicts Ms. Caldwell's explanation of the verbal participation of students with LLDs in Spanish class.

5.3.2 Special Education Teacher Perceptions: Observations of Student Participation

When discussing verbal interactions, Ms. Caldwell reported that the participation of students with LLDs differed in the Spanish classroom then in the special education classroom. When observing her students in Spanish, Ms. Caldwell noticed that her students were much quieter and hesitant to participate in all classes, including Spanish. This lack of participation was supported in the classroom observations (see Chapter 5) and the student and Spanish teacher interviews previously discussed. Similar to the student and teacher explanations, Ms. Caldwell attributed this lack of participation to a fear of answering incorrectly and of being labeled "the special ed. kids." Ms. Caldwell stated:

My kids are a little bit slow to raise their hands because they're so nervous they're going to get the wrong answer, and I don't think that's from anything new. I think growing up as a child with a learning disability, if you don't get diagnosed right away, then you've been that person in the class that have raised their hand and said an answer and people have laughed, and that's a fear that it takes them a while to get over.

To confront this negative identity, Ms. Caldwell indicated that students with LLDs work harder and try to demonstrate their strengths through activities that allow them to use other skills in areas such as music, art, science, athletics, and drama.

In the interview, Ms. Caldwell also indicated that the students interacted differently in her classroom in comparison to the Spanish classroom. In Ms. Caldwell's classroom, the students were grouped with eight other students with LLDs. This group was much smaller than the Spanish classroom of 29 other students who were mixed special education and regular education. Therefore, due to the small number of homogeneously grouped students, the students with LLDs were much more verbal in Ms. Caldwell's classroom than in the Spanish classroom. Ms. Caldwell attributed this differential participation to the comfortable learning environment. In the special education classroom, the students were not afraid to participate because their peers did not ridicule incorrect answers. Instead, the students supported each other and different ways of learning and remembering new concepts was accepted and encouraged. Thus, Ms. Caldwell further implied that the students' lack of participation in Spanish class was due to a fear of answering incorrectly and perpetuating a negative identity; for these students participate more frequently and confidently in their special education classrooms that perpetuate a comfortable, accepting, low anxiety learning environment.

5.4 SUMMARY

The analysis of the student and teacher interviews reveal findings regarding the perceptions of students and teachers of the foreign language learning of students with LLDs and the related materials and instructional practices that accommodate the learning of students with LLDs.

The student interviews found that the participants' differed in their perceptions of learning Spanish, expressed negative perceptions of reading and writing activities, found multi-sensory activities helpful in their learning, related their lack of oral participation to a fear of answering incorrectly, and established connections between learning Spanish and learning English.

The Spanish teacher interviews indicated that Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico lacked a comprehensive understanding of designing accommodations for students with LLDs learning a foreign language, required additional professional development on providing accommodations that are specific to foreign language, indicated frustrations with teaching large classes of students with LLDs, suggested that the IEP documents include accommodations that are specific to foreign language learning, and associated the lack of participation of students with LLDs to students' fear of making errors.

In the interview with the special educator, findings revealed effective instructional practices and an explanation for the lack of participation of students with LLDs. Ms. Caldwell suggested that Spanish teachers provide accommodations for both the components of language and the meaning of the language used in instruction. She also indicated that students with LLDs need explicit explanations of content and assignments, important linguistic concepts identified

and highlighted, and extra time on assignments and assessments. In addition, the special educator discussed the importance of presenting language in a familiar context including repetition, designing multi-sensory activities, and incorporating projects in lessons to effectively reach students with LLD. Ms. Caldwell also indicated that students with LLDs participate more in small group activities; they are hesitant to participate in large, teacher-fronted activities because they fear answering incorrectly, which affects the perceptions of their peers.

To supplement the data collected on student performance and student and teacher perceptions, the next chapter addresses the classroom observations. For the purpose of triangulation, the analysis of the student and teacher interviews is compared to the analysis of student performance summarized in the previous section and linked to the analysis of the classroom observations described in Chapter 6.

6.0 FINDINGS: CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

By summarizing the classroom observations of both Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico's classes, this chapter addresses the research question, "What are the instructional practices, classroom interactions, and materials that teachers use to accommodate students with LLDs during whole group class instruction?"

Classroom observations were recorded twice a week for twelve weeks, were initiated when the first writing assessment was administered in September, and were completed when the final writing assessment in December. The findings from the classroom observations serve three purposes. First, the observations describe the classroom settings, the lesson activities, and the interactions between the students, the teachers, and the researcher. The purpose of these descriptions is to show the instructional resources that were available (either intentionally or unintentionally by the teachers) to accommodate for students with LLDs. Second, by connecting the classroom observation data with the scores on the literacy assessments and the perceptions from the interviews, these data indicate how the classroom setting, lesson activities, and classroom interactions were consequential to student performance. Third, the classroom observations serve as a source of triangulation; they corroborate and validate the findings gathered from the interviews and literacy assessments.

6.1 MS. O'BRIEN'S CLASSROOM

Ms. O'Brien taught in a large, well-lit room that was surrounded by four large whiteboards. Most of the color in the room emanated from wall posters that displayed Spanish language phrases and images of Spanish speaking countries. The majority of the area of classroom was filled with clusters of students' desks that were arranged in groups of four or six. Ms. O'Brien's desk was positioned in the back corner of the classroom. Nate and Gayle sat at two separate clusters of six desks that were close to the whiteboard which was used for the focus of instruction. Ms. O'Brien taught several sixth grade Spanish classes in this classroom and shared the room with another teacher. Each Spanish class was about forty minutes. The class that Nate and Gayle attended began just before lunch at 11:33 and concluded at 12:14. This sixth grade class contained 30 students, nine that had identified IEPs and required specific accommodations.

6.1.1 Instructional Practices

For the purpose of this analysis, several terms must first be identified and clarified. "Instructional practices" were defined as the procedures (e.g. activities, techniques, groupings, and exercises) that the teacher used to implement a lesson. The term "activity" denoted any instructional practice that involved functional, meaningful use of the target language, and "exercise" indicated any instructional practice that involved decontextualized rehearsal of grammar or language practice for the sole purpose of promoting language skills (as opposed to language use).

Over the course of twelve weeks, the 22 observations of Ms. O'Brien's classes revealed a pattern that described the conduct of her typical sixth grade class. Typically, the class began as the students entered the classroom and started the introductory *hazlo ahora* [do now] activity. Then, Ms. O'Brien initiated the lesson activities that related to the existing sixth grade curricula in reading and language arts. These lesson activities are listed and coded in Appendix G. To display the sequence of activities from September to December, Appendix G includes the date of the observation, the daily objective, the *hazlo ahora* [do now] introductory activity, and the corresponding lesson activities that were used to present or practice the content of the lesson. During the analysis of the observations, each of these classroom activities was coded according to their type and grouping of students.

6.1.1.1 Instructional practices that introduce lesson content

Each of the 22 classroom observations noted that Ms. O'Brien's classes began with a routine introductory activity called the "*hazlo ahora*" [do now]. The "*hazlo ahora*" was written on the white board each day along with the daily objective and homework assignment. The purpose of this activity was to help the students to transition into Spanish class, to focus on the content of the lesson, and to prepare for the activities to follow. A list of these *hazlo ahora* activities and the corresponding objectives can be found in Appendix G. Some examples of an *hazlo ahora* from Ms. O'Brien's classes include, "Fill in the blank with the correct question word," "Translate 'shoulder' and 'knee' in Spanish," and "Place 'el' or 'la' in front of the following words" (Appendix G).

In Ms. O'Brien's class, 63% of the *hazlo ahora* activities were form-focused: 36% required students to respond by translating vocabulary and 27% asked students to insert the correct grammatical form in a decontextualized sentence. Eighteen percent of the *hazlo ahora*

activities required students to comprehend the language they were reading and applying; a mere 14% of the activities required display questions about the content, however these questions were in English; and only one activity asked a referential question, requiring students to produce language that was more than one word.

As mentioned in the literature review (Chapter 2) and the teacher interviews, students with LLDs need assistance with organizing information and focusing on content and language concepts within a context. Given their purpose, the *hazlo ahora* activities could help students with LLDs organize information and focus on what will be taught in the lesson. However, in Ms. O'Brien's class, as noted previously, 63% of the *hazlo ahora* activities involved translation or grammar responses out of context. The few activities that required comprehension of Spanish lacked visual or linguistic clues to assist students' understanding, failing to prepare them to comprehend Spanish later in the lesson. To help Nate and Gayle focus and prepare for lessons, these findings suggest that Ms. O'Brien alter the *hazlo ahora* activities to display language in a meaningful context, to include visual and linguistic clues for comprehensible input, and to draw attention to both content and language-related concepts.

6.1.1.2 Instructional practices that present and practice lesson content

The instructional practices in Ms. O'Brien's classes that present and practice lesson content were coded according to their type and grouping of students (Appendix G). In the analysis of 22 observations, 49 instructional practices that practice and present content were observed. Within these 49 instructional practices, three types of groupings of students were noted and tallied. The analysis of student groupings revealed that 50% of the 49 instructional practices involved teacher-fronted instruction, 44% required the students to work individually, and only 6% engaged the students in small group activities.

The large amount of teacher-fronted instruction and individual activities in Ms. O'Brien's class is problematic when analyzing the assistance available for Nate and Gayle during lesson activities. When Ms. O'Brien instructed in front of the class, she was unable to give assistance to Nate and Gayle because she was occupied with leading the activity. During individual activities, Ms. O'Brien was not able to interact with all 30 students within one class period, and therefore several students, (at times Nate and Gayle), were unable to receive assistance. During the few small group activities, Ms. O'Brien was able to act as a facilitator because she was not occupied with leading the class, and therefore she was able to give assistance to all students, including Nate and Gayle. In addition, during small group activities, Nate and Gayle were also able to receive assistance from their peers. To facilitate more assistance for students with LLDs, the observations show that Ms. O'Brien should include small group activities in addition to teacher-fronted and individual activities in her lessons.

As summarized in Chapter 5, the interviews with Nate and Gayle also support the need for a balance of teacher-fronted, individual, and small group activities. In the interviews, Nate, and Gayle indicated that pair and small group activities were beneficial in their learning because they allowed for assistance from classmates and collaboration with peers. In addition, the interview findings indicated that Nate and Gayle perceived one-on-one instruction as helpful in their learning Spanish. In his drawing of learning Spanish, Nate illustrated an individual interaction with Ms. O'Brien, showing the importance of assistance from the teacher in his learning. Therefore, to meet the needs of student with LLDs, both the classroom observations and the student interviews demonstrate the importance of balancing the grouping of students during classroom activities to include small group, teacher-fronted, and individual student activities.

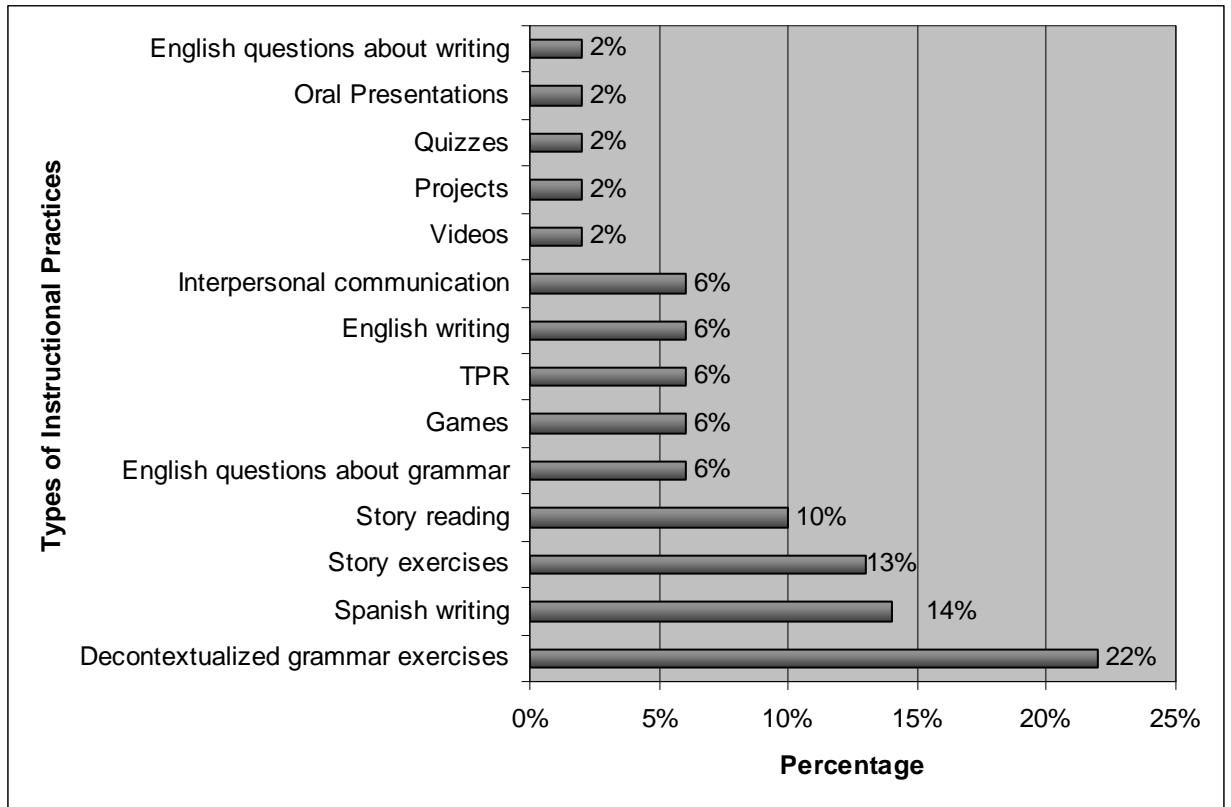


Figure 7. Types of Instructional Practices that Present and Practice Content in Ms. O'Brien's Class

In the analysis of the 22 observations, the 49 instructional practices were also categorized by their type. The various types of instructional practices included in Ms. O'Brien's classroom are illustrated in Figure 7.

Figure 7 displays 14 different types of instructional practices that were observed in Ms. O'Brien's lessons. However, when looking at the distribution of these activities, it is apparent that the majority involve decontextualized grammar exercises (22%). In Ms. O'Brien's class, these pencil and paper exercises asked the students to apply grammatical rules by filling in the blank and rewriting sentences (see Figure 8).





Tener
To have

Tener (to have) is an important irregular verb. Study its forms.

yo	tengo	nosotros/as	tenemos
tú	tienes		
usted	} tiene	ustedes	} tienen
él		ellos	
ella		ellas	

Tener is usually followed by a noun.
Yo **tengo** un radio.

Using the pictures, tell what the following people have.

1. **Marcos** _____  una guitarra
2. **Yo** _____  unos discos
3. **Ana** _____  una casa
4. **Nosotros** _____  unos libros

©1993 Instructional Fair, Inc. 2 IF0209 Spanish

Figure 8. Grammar Exercise Example from Ms. O'Brien's Class

These grammar exercises were problematic for Nate and Gayle and other students with LLDs for three reasons. First, the exercises were presented without meaningful contexts or visual representations, and therefore there was not opportunity for the students to negotiate the meaning of the unknown foreign language presented in the exercises. Second, in these exercises, the students learned the appropriate rules and patterns of the language, but they did not have the opportunity to apply these rules in meaningful, communicative ways. Lastly, these exercises involved isolated, decontextualized analysis of linguistic concepts, which was difficult for students who already struggle with language due to their LLDs. To accommodate for students

with LLDs when teaching grammar concepts, it is recommended that teachers incorporate activities that involve the analysis of linguistic elements of the language through multi-sensory, activities that are presented in meaningful contexts (DiFino & Lombardino, 2004; Hurst, 1999; Sparks & Ganschow; 1993). Therefore, these findings suggest that Ms. O'Brien was not including accommodations for Nate and Gayle in her grammar instruction.

In addition to the classroom observations, the student interviews summarized previously in Chapter 5 suggest that multi-sensory, contextualized activities assist Nate and Gayle with their learning. Both Gayle and Nate indicated that visuals, role play, interpersonal activities, graphic organizers, word banks, and computer activities help them learn Spanish. However, Figure 7 shows that these activities were rarely included in instruction. In addition, in the interviews, both Gayle and Nate lamented about the homework packets that contained grammar exercises, claiming they were "frustrating and confusing." This frustration was probably related to the lack of linguistic support and high level of language analysis required on the tasks. Thus, the interview findings also show that Ms. O'Brien did not include instructional practices that present and practice content that accommodate Nate and Gayle in their learning.

In addition, when comparing the classroom observation data with the special educator interviews summarized previously in Chapter 5, it can be concluded that Ms. O'Brien was not appropriately accommodating for Nate and Gayle in her instructional practices to present and practice content. Ms. Caldwell, the special educator, indicated that Spanish teachers need to include personalized, contextualized, multi-sensory activities in their lessons to help accommodate for students with LLDs in their instruction. Although Ms. Caldwell was involved in daily collaborative lesson planning with Ms. O'Brien, the data in Figure 7 show that her suggestions for instruction were not implemented in Ms. O'Brien's activities because the

majority of her instruction focused on grammar exercises. This disconnect between the Spanish instruction and the special educator's perceptions of effective instruction is explained by additional comments stated by Ms. Caldwell. In the interview, after discussing effective instructional activities for students with LLDs, Ms. Caldwell indicated that Spanish teachers do not have time to teach using effective strategies for students with LLDs because it slows down the pace of instruction, and therefore the class will fail to cover the content of the Spanish curriculum by the end of the year. Ms. Caldwell also explained that the Spanish teachers struggled to design effective instructional strategies for students with LLDs because they lacked supportive resources, planning time, and professional development opportunities.

The Spanish teacher interviews provide an additional explanation Ms. O'Brien's lack of multi-sensory, contextualized activities that accommodate for students with LLDs in lesson activities. When asked about the instructional accommodations that they implemented in lesson activities, Ms. O'Brien emphasized that she moved at a slower pace, minimized the content, used less Spanish, and provided a few written tools such as word banks and study guides for students with LLDs. She commented that the majority of their accommodations occurred during assessments and projects, not during lesson activities to present and practice content. The IEPs do not suggest accommodations for classroom activities that are not formally assessed, such as the presentation of new content or the application of concepts. Therefore, Ms. O'Brien reported that she did not develop specific accommodations for the activities that present and practice the lesson content.

These findings suggest that Ms. O'Brien was not providing accommodations in her instructional practices that present and practice lesson content. As mentioned in previous literature (DiFino & Lombardino, 2004, Hurst, 1996; Mabbott, 1994), to meet the needs of

students with LLDs during the presentation and practice of content, teachers should include a balance of groupings and present grammar in a contextualized, personalized format. The instructional practices in Ms. O'Brien's lessons lacked a balance of groupings and presented grammar in decontextualized contexts. Therefore, to be more effective in her instruction of students with LLDs, the findings show that Ms. O'Brien should include more of a variety of multi-sensory activities; contextualize grammar instruction; and balance the grouping of students to include teacher-fronted whole group, small group, and individual activities. To promote this type of instruction, the findings suggest that Ms. Caldwell and Ms. O'Brien should acknowledge that the Spanish teachers have the time to apply a variety of instructional practices. In addition, the findings support that the special educators and the Spanish teachers should collaborate in planning accommodations for *both* assessments and instructional practices that present and apply content. Finally, these classroom observation findings indicate that the school district should provide resources and professional development for Spanish teachers on how to accommodate for students with LLDs learning a foreign language.

6.1.1.3 Reading activities

The classroom observations revealed that 23% of the total classroom practices involved reading activities. All of these reading activities involved a similar approach to integrating stories into the classroom. First, Ms. O'Brien disseminated a written form of the story to the students that contained minimal visuals (as seen in Figure 9), and then Ms. O'Brien or one of the students read the story aloud in Spanish while the class listened. After the story was read once, Ms. O'Brien asked a few oral comprehension questions in Spanish, and then the students completed an exercise that asked basic factual, display questions, such as “¿De dónde es Margot?” [Where is Margot from?] and “¿Dónde vive Margot?” (Figure 9). This type of

questioning did not require the students to comprehend or interpret the story, it merely asked them to find the answer in the text and copy it (as described previously by Ms. O'Brien in the interview in Chapter 5)

NOMBRE: _____	FECHA: _____
TODO EL VERANO EN UN DÍA	
<p>Margot es una niña tímida y solitaria. Ella es de la Tierra. Ahora vive en Venus. No hace buen tiempo en Venus. Llueve constantemente y no hace sol. Un día los científicos anuncian que va a hacer sol por unas horas. Los compañeros de Margot la encierran en un ropero. Margot esta triste porque cuando sale del ropero llueve y no hace sol. ¡Pobrecita!</p>	
Contesta en español:	
1. ¿De dónde es Margot?	
2. ¿Dónde vive Margot?	
3. ¿Qué tiempo hace en Venus?	
4. ¿Qué anuncian los científicos?	
5. ¿Por qué esta triste Margot?	

Figure 9. Story Reading and Exercise from Ms. O'Brien's Lesson

This routine presentation of reading activities in Ms. O'Brien's class did not provide intentional or unintentional accommodations for Nate and Gayle. There were few visuals on the written part of the story to help the students understand the text, and there were no

supplementary, multi-sensory activities such as TPR, role-play, or songs that could have assisted the students' success in comprehension of printed texts. In addition, the story was read aloud one time, providing students only one chance to comprehend the reading. According to their IEPs, Nate and Gayle have deficiencies with reading comprehension, vocabulary retention, and reading fluency. Therefore, during reading activities they needed accommodations to help them decode and comprehend language. Some of these accommodations include a) providing multi-sensory activities such as visuals, songs, and dramatizations for reading comprehension and vocabulary retention; b) allowing students multiple opportunities to comprehend and decode written texts; c) developing reading strategies, and d) guiding students through the reading process of pre-reading, skimming and scanning, contextualized guessing, and establishing a purpose for reading.

The interview findings support the claim that students with LLDs need accommodations with reading activities. During the interviews, Gayle and Nate indicated that they struggled with the stories. Nate talks about the stories, "I don't get 'em...I understand some of it...but I don't know all of the words." Gayle argued, "The stories do not help me in Spanish class. I just don't like them!" When other reading activities such as role-play, visuals, and dramatizations were suggested as possible activities to help with the stories, both Gayle and Nate agreed emphatically that these activities would help them understand the text and make the stories more exciting and interesting. However, in looking at the summary of reading activities in Ms. O'Brien's class, students read the text once, and answered basic factual questions about the components of the story. Therefore, both the classroom observations and interview findings suggest that Ms. O'Brien was not providing the appropriate accommodations during the reading activities for Nate and Gayle.

6.1.1.4 Writing activities

The classroom observations show that 23% of the 49 activities observed in Ms. O'Brien's class involved various types of student writing. In observation 10 (Appendix G), students wrote in Spanish about favorite sports that the class likes and plays. During observations 12 and 13 (Appendix G), the students discussed the components of a comparative essay and wrote a comparative essay in English comparing and contrasting Halloween and the Day of the Dead. Observation 16 (Appendix G) includes a task that asked students to label the parts of a friendly letter in Spanish, with no assistance in comprehending the meaning of the letter. In observation 17, the students wrote a Thanksgiving Day card to a family member in Spanish. Lastly, during observation 18, the students wrote a letter to a seventh grade pen pal (the students with LLDs wrote their letter in English and Ms. O'Brien translated the content to Spanish).

It is interesting to examine the writing activities included in Ms. O'Brien's classroom and compare these tasks to Nate and Gayle's performance on the writing assessments in this study. As noted in Appendix G, the sixth grade writing assessment in December asked students to write a letter to a pen pal expressing opinions and providing information. One of the classroom activities focused on the functions of expressing personal opinions and providing information. Looking back at the writing assessments (Table 4), Nate's scores on function (2.0 in Sept. and 2.0 in Dec.) remained the same with a rating of *meeting expectations strongly*. Gayle's scores on function (2.0 in Sept. and 1.0 in Dec.) decreased from a rating of *meeting expectations strongly* to a rating of *meeting expectations weakly*. Although both of these students met expectations, the scores did not show growth in ability to apply functions. This lack of growth could be related to the fact that only one of the class activities involved students writing in Spanish,

practicing the use of these functions. More growth might have occurred in the students' writing with more practice of the use of functions in meaningful written contexts.

Another writing activity focused on explicit teaching of the parts of a letter. During this activity, Ms. O'Brien instructed on the organization of discourse (text type) and the importance of addressing an audience (impact). According to Table 4, Nate's scores on text type (2.0 in Sept. and 2.0 in Dec.) and impact (3.0 in Sept and 3.0 in Dec.) remained the same. Gayle's scores on text type (1.0 in Sept and 1.0 in Dec) and impact (3.0 in Sept. and 1.0 in Dec.) decreased. Therefore, a comparison of the classroom observations and the writing scores suggest that the instruction did not affect Nate and Gayle's scores in text type. However, because Gayle's score decreased and was lower overall, the data show that she needed more assistance than Nate in her development of text type and impact. Thus, these findings demonstrate that students with LLDs need differential assistance with writing activities.

In addition to instructing on organization and audience in writing, 28% of the observed instructional practices in Ms. O'Brien's class incorporated explicit instruction of grammar. These activities focused on decontextualized writing of questions, forming appropriately structured weather date expressions, constructing negative sentences, identifying pronouns, conjugating verbs, and establishing definite article and subject agreement. Nate's scores on language control increased from 1.0 in Sept. to 3.0 in Dec., and Gayle's scores remained the same, 1.0 in Sept. and 1.0 in Dec. The comparison of the classroom observations and the writing scores show that the decontextualized grammar practice may have assisted Nate in the control of his writing, and did not affect Gayle's score in the control of her writing.

6.1.1.5 Summary

In summary, the classroom observations demonstrated that Ms. O'Brien's instructional practices included (a) decontextualized hazlo ahora activities, (b) a majority of teacher-fronted instruction, (c) traditional reading activities, (d) a focus on decontextualized grammar instruction, and (e) minimal communicative writing activities. Figure 10 utilizes Engstrom's activity triangle to depict the role of these instructional practices in Nate and Gayle's activity systems. This role will be addressed further in the next chapter. At that point, the activity system will be described, combined, and analyzed in its entirety.

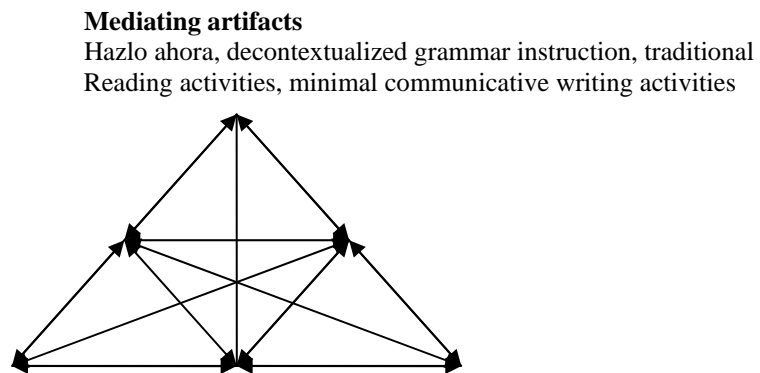


Figure 10 The role of instructional practices in Nate and Gayle's activity systems

6.1.2 The role of Ms. O'Brien

The classroom observations describe Ms. O'Brien's role in Nate and Gayle's learning. In discussing Ms. O'Brien's role, several aspects will be analyzed: her approach to teaching foreign language, her interactions with Nate and Gayle, her perceptions of students with LLDs, and her relationship with Nate and Gayle's parents.

6.1.2.1 Teaching approach

The classroom observation findings suggest that although the curriculum was content-based, Ms. O'Brien's instruction incorporated a traditional, structural approach to teaching foreign language. In a traditional, structural approach to teaching foreign language, the learning of the linguistic components of the foreign language is emphasized, the teacher is the principle disseminator of new information, the students take on a passive role in their learning, and the materials focus on grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary development.

As indicated previously, of the total activities included in Ms. O'Brien's classroom, 50% were teacher-fronted, 44% required individual student work, and only 6% utilized small group interaction. As indicated previously, classroom that incorporates a majority of teacher-fronted and individual student work reflects a traditional approach to teaching foreign language. Traditional approaches to teaching foreign language situate the teacher at the center of most of the interactions that occur in the classroom, and the students take on a passive role in their learning. More current approaches to teaching foreign language include a variety of teacher-fronted, small group, and individual student interactions.

During class activities, to make her target language instruction comprehensible, Ms. O'Brien utilized translation and frequent switching from English to Spanish, which is another characteristic of a traditional approach to teaching foreign language. Example 7 below, illustrates Ms. O'Brien's frequent use of English and Spanish simultaneously during instruction, which serves as a proxy for all 49 lessons observed.

Example 7. Ms. O'Brien's use of Spanish and English during instruction

1	Ms. O'Brien:	Raise your hand if you think you know the answer to this one.
2		Levántense la mano.
3	Student:	Hombro
4	Ms. O'Brien:	Hombro, hombro shoulder....¿Knee? ¿Cómo se dice knee?
5	Student:	Rodilla
6	Ms. O'Brien	Rodilla...Hombro, y rodilla
7	Ms. O'Brien:	¿Que tenemos mañana? Cual es la tarea mañana, What should you
8		be doing for tomorrow?
9	Student:	studying
10	Ms. O'Brien:	Why? ¿Por qué?
11	Student:	There is a quiz tomorrow.
12	Ms. O'Brien:	Sí, hay una prueba. There is a quiz...La tarea, the body part quiz.
13		I'll give you a cuerpo, a body, I'll give you a quiz on the body.
14		There will be a picture of a body and you will have to label it, and
15		there will be a banco de palabras. ¿Qué es esto?
16	Student:	A word bank
17	Ms. O'Brien:	A word bank, excelente....Ahora, vamos a presenter las criaturas.
18		We are going to present our aliens. Hay voluntaries. Do we have
19		any volunteers?...Good...We are going to go up present your
20		creatures, your aliens, en español, in Spanish, ok?

As seen in the lines 1-20 above, Ms. O'Brien frequently switches from English to Spanish during her instruction. This use of translation to assist students with understanding the foreign language is characteristic of a traditional approach to foreign language instruction.

Ms. O'Brien's instructional practices implemented to teach reading and writing also reflect a traditional, structural approach to teaching a foreign language. In her reading activities, students read and answered basic questions that could be elicited directly from the text (previously displayed in Figure 8). In addition, the majority of instructional practices focused on explicit grammar instruction within decontextualized contexts, which are additional characteristics of the practices applied within traditional, structural; approaches to teaching

foreign language. Therefore, the findings show that Ms. O'Brien incorporated a traditional approach to language instruction.

6.1.2.2 Verbal interactions with participants

The classroom observations describe that Ms. O'Brien rarely solicited Nate and Gayle to participate orally in front of the class; and when she interacted with Nate and Gayle, she provided positive feedback and used English to translate questions and phrases. During class activities, Ms. O'Brien provided encouragement by saying statements such as, "You're getting it! Very good! Good job!" However, when Ms. O'Brien asked a question in Spanish to the class, she rarely, called on the participants with LLDs to answer questions in front of the class (see Tables 9 & 10 on Nate and Gayle's participation). When she called on the participants, she phrased questions either in English or in Spanish first and then immediately translated the question into English. When Ms. O'Brien called on other regular education students in the class, she did not translate. Example 8 below highlights how Ms. O'Brien's interactions differ when she was interacting with Nate and when she was speaking to a regular education student.

Example 8. A comparison of Ms. O'Brien's questions to Nate and another student

1	Ms. O'Brien	¿Donde viven? Tell me where they live?
2	Nate:	Mars
3	Ms. O'Brien	¿Cuantos piernas tiene Mauricio?
4	Student (reg. ed.):	cuatro

This questioning pattern was problematic when considering the participation of Nate and Gayle during teacher-fronted activities in Ms. O'Brien's class. When Ms. O'Brien translated for Nate and Gayle, and not for the regular education students, she was implicitly indicating to Nate

and Gayle that they need translation to be able to understand and participate in class. Therefore, this simple act of oral translation could have, in turn, affected the confidence of Nate and Gayle and how their peers viewed them with reference to the overall ability of the class, either as capable or incapable students.

6.1.2.3 Parental interactions

Between September and December, the classroom observations findings illustrated that Ms. O'Brien's interactions with the parents of both Nate and Gayle were consequential to their learning.

At the beginning of the year, Gayle completed assignments on time and her work was comparable to other students in the class. Ms. O'Brien attributed part of Gayle's conscientious behavior to the support of her parents. On September 24, through talking at length with Gayle's mother at parent night, Ms. O'Brien discovered that Gayle's mother supported Gayle's learning of Spanish. On October 21, Gayle's parents talked with Ms. O'Brien again to gather make-up work for their daughter because Gayle was to miss one week of school at the end of November for a family vacation. These interactions show that Gayle was receiving support at home which could have contributed to her positive performance in the beginning of the year in Spanish class.

The class observations also show that interactions between Ms. O'Brien and Nate's parents were also consequential to Nate's performance in Spanish class. At the beginning of the year, Nate failed to complete assignments and received a C in Spanish. On October 28, Ms. O'Brien called Nate's mother to discuss Nate's low grade and his negligence completing in assignments. After this phone call, Nate's behavior in class changed drastically. He started to seek the teacher for assistance, participated and attended during class activities, and became self-sufficient in managing his assignments. As a result, Nate's grade changed from a C to an A by

December. Therefore, observations show that the interactions between Ms. O'Brien and Nate's parents had a positive affect on his behavior and performance in Spanish class.

Thus, because parental interactions were consequential to Nate and Gayle's learning, the findings suggest that teachers should communicate regularly with the parents of students with LLDs to assist in their learning.

6.1.2.4 Perceptions of students with LLDs

Over the course of three months, impromptu conversations with the researcher revealed that Ms. O'Brien expressed contrasting perceptions of the performance of and accommodations for students with LLDs learning Spanish.

In the beginning of September, Ms. O'Brien was supportive of students with LLDs learning Spanish. She commented, "They all perform fine because the instruction is auditory and multi-sensory." On September 17, she began to contradict her positive evaluation, "They do well, but it's hard to do anything if they don't know the question words." On September 24, she commented on the difficulties of teaching a class with nine children with IEPs. She complained about the extremely slow pace of instruction and the need to review more often than in other classes. On September 27, she further commented on her frustrations, "They are so young. This is the first time I have had to review so much with the days, the numbers, and writing the date! Am I doing something wrong? I don't understand why they aren't getting it!" On October 29, Ms. O'Brien said, "Was this hard? I don't know why some struggled? I don't think that the students with IEPs do any differently than the others." On November 19, Ms. O'Brien shared that Nate and Gayle performed very well on the quiz on punctuation with accommodations and they probably did not need the required accommodations. Lastly, on December 3, Ms. O'Brien commented that she was frustrated because next year the students will have a choice to take

Spanish, and the students with LLDs will probably be discouraged to take Spanish despite the fact that they can perform just as well as their peers.

Thus, during impromptu conversations with the researchers, Ms. O'Brien expressed contradictory comments about students with LLDs. In one instance, Ms. O'Brien complained about the slow pace and low performance of students with LLDs; and during another conversation, she supported their learning by indicating that they could perform just as well as their peers.

In addition to student performance, Ms. O'Brien expressed contradictory comments regarding accommodations for students with LLDs. During one conversation with the researcher, Ms. O'Brien admitted that she was frustrated with the inability of students with LLDs to comprehend the lesson content, however she was resistant to helpful resources. After listening to Ms. O'Brien's frustrations with students with LLDs "not getting it," the researcher provided her with a website on accommodations for instruction and an article from the literature review on meeting the needs of students with LLDs in a middle school Spanish class. After reading these references, Ms. O'Brien responded with several reasons concerning why she could not include these instructional accommodations. First, she stated that there was not enough time in the lessons. Second, she claimed that the accommodations would prevent the classes from completing all of the content in the curriculum. Finally, she commented that accommodating instruction for students with LLDs would be unfair to more capable students because they would become bored and unchallenged. Thus, although Ms. O'Brien was frustrated with students' inability to comprehend, she was not open to implementing resources that could possibly assist her instruction.

6.1.2.5 Summary

In summary, the classroom observations and impromptu conversations with the researcher revealed Ms. O'Brien's role in the classroom. Because Ms. O'Brien implemented a traditional approach to foreign language teaching, she maintained full control of classroom activities, content, and talk, which situated students in a more passive role within the classroom. Although Ms. O'Brien's provided encouragement for students with LLDs, her verbal interactions facilitated an excess of unnecessary assistance which, in turn, could have affected the confidence of these students. The impromptu conversations revealed that Ms. O'Brien also maintained contradictory perceptions about the performance of and the accommodations for students with LLDs. Figure 11 utilizes Engstrom's activity triangle to position Ms. O'Brien's role within the activity system of the participants that will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

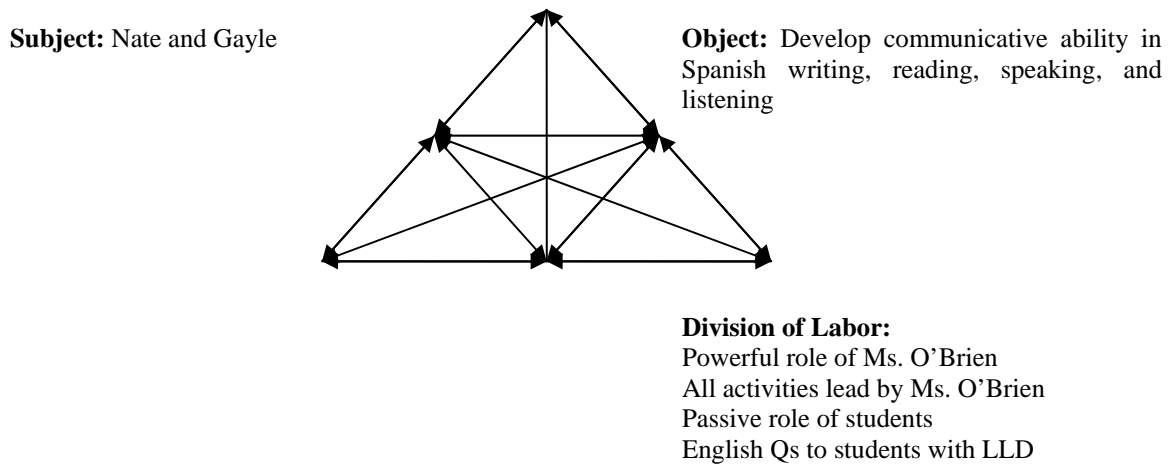


Figure 11 Ms. O'Brien's role in Nate and Gayle's activity systems

6.1.3 Nate

The purpose of this section is to describe Nate's behavior in Spanish class and to indicate the activities, interactions, and materials that were available for Nate during his learning.

Nate was a shy, quiet student who was assigned an IEP for his difficulty with reading and writing in English. Ms. Caldwell, the special educator, reported that Nate's reading comprehension was at a fifth grade level (one grade level below), and his reading fluency averaged 84 words per minute, (15 points lower than the sixth grade target of 100-140 words per minute). Ms. Caldwell also reported that Nate wrote well-organized paragraphs, however that he struggled with spelling and frequently omitted definite and indefinite articles in his English writing.

6.1.3.1 Class participation

Over the course of three months, classroom observations indicate a positive change in Nate's behavior in relation to teacher-fronted and individual activities. At the beginning of the year, Nate appeared distracted during teacher-fronted listening activities. When listening to stories, videos, or student presentations, Nate doodled in his notebook and appeared not to pay attention, and Ms. O'Brien consistently reminded Nate to stay on task in class. When he was involved in individual classroom activities, Nate flipped through his notebook papers, and wrote and erased answers incessantly. During individual work, Nate was frequently observed to peer over at his classmates' papers for answers. Nate was more engaged in activities when they involved small group, interactive, interpersonal activities. Overall, Nate always maintained an organized notebook, however he frequently lost class materials, and Ms. O'Brien frequently assisted him with organizing important papers and assignments.

On several occasions, the researcher worked individually with Nate, and noted what he understood, where he struggled, and how he responded to assistance. When Nate worked on a story-based activity that included comprehension questions, Nate struggled with how to express the answer in Spanish. When the researcher gave him choices however, Nate was able to choose

the correct expression. During an activity on birthdays, the researcher provided confirmation of Nate's understanding of Spanish. The researcher asked Nate, "¿Cuándo es tu cumpleaños?" Nate responded by asking "My birthday?" to confirm that he understood the question. The researcher said "Yes," and then, Nate answered, "March," The researcher answered by requesting, "¿En español?" After glancing at the word bank, Nate he answered with a questioning intonation, "marzo?"

On grammar exercises, Nate struggled with transferring grammatical knowledge to new contexts. For example, Nate learned the rule for forming questions and negative sentences and was able to apply it to the fill-in-the blank examples, but when the grammar exercise asked Nate to write his own negative sentences, he was not able to transfer his knowledge of the format of negative sentences to other contexts outside of the fill-in-the-blank exercise. While completing another fill-in-the-blank exercise involving the conjugations of -AR verbs, Nate was able to conjugate the verbs very easily, but when the researcher asked him the meaning of the conjugations, he was unable to answer.

Thus, the observations of Nate's behavior in class show that Nate struggled to attend, to stay organized, and to understand the meaning of language in reading and grammar exercises. In addition, these findings show that Nate benefited from guiding questions that assisted him with comprehending the meaning of the foreign language in specific activities.

6.1.3.2 Parental interactions

At the end of October, Nate had earned a 72% in Spanish class. Ms. O'Brien was concerned for Nate because she felt that he could achieve a better grade, if he had handed in his assignments and attended during teacher-fronted and individual classroom activities. As a result of her concern, Ms. O'Brien called Nate's mother to discuss his low grade, his missing

assignments, and his difficulty paying attention during class. After this phone call, Nate's behavior changed considerably. He attended to teacher-fronted activities by looking at the teacher and not doodling in his notebook, and began to use class time efficiently to complete individual activities. In addition, he began to take ownership of missing assignments by frequently checking in with Ms. O'Brien to make sure he had fulfilled class requirements. He also initiated studying at home by creating flash cards, which he reported was his favorite method to prepare for quizzes. By December, Nate's Spanish class grade increased from a 72% to a 97%, indicating that after Ms. O'Brien contacted Nate's parents, Nate's participation improved and his grade increased from a C to an A. Therefore, parental contact between Ms. O'Brien and Nate's parents appeared to have a positive affect on Nate's performance in Spanish class.

6.1.3.3 Oral participation

Although Nate became more conscientious in Spanish class after Ms. O'Brien spoke with his parents, Nate's oral participation in teacher-fronted activities remained infrequent. Over the course of three months, data show that Nate rarely participated during teacher-fronted activities. Table 9 displays Nate's participation during seven classes selected at random. This table includes the amount of questions asked by the teacher that are directed to the whole class, the number of times Nate voluntarily raised his hand to participate, and the number of times the teacher called on Nate to answer. To show the type of questions Nate felt comfortable answering, Table 9 also indicates the content of the questions that Nate volunteered to answer. These questions include English questions about the activities themselves (L1.A) such as, "What is the homework?", English translation questions (L1.T) such as, "How do you say 'bathroom' in

Spanish?”, English questions about culture (L1.C) such as, “What do we do on Halloween?”, and English questions about grammar (L1.G) such as, “What article goes in front of ‘mesa’?”

Table 9. Nate’s Classroom Participation During Seven Selected Class Observations

	Oct.15	Oct.18	Oct.29	Nov. 7	Nov.8	Nov.12	Nov.15	Total
Teacher Qs to students	15	42	5	12	10	51	10	145
Nate Volunteered	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	4
Q Type	L1.A	L1.T	X	L1.G	X	X	X	
Teacher Selected Nate when He volunteered	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	3
Teacher selected Nate when did not volunteer	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	4
Total Q’s answered by Nate	1	2	0	2	0	2	0	7

L1.A signifies English questions about the activities themselves
 L1.T signifies English questions to translate
 L1.G signifies English questions about grammar

The data in Table 9 indicate that Nate participated in class infrequently. Within seven class periods, Nate only volunteered to answer the teacher’s questions four times out of 145 opportunities. In the 145 questions asked to the students, Ms. O’Brien only called on Nate to answer seven times, four of which were voluntary answers by Nate. When looking at the content of the questions, Table 8 illustrates that Nate volunteered to answer English questions relating to

management, culture, translation, or grammar. During the observations, many of the questions asked by Ms. O'Brien were in the target language, however Nate did not volunteer to answer these questions. Therefore, the findings show that Nate participated infrequently, Ms O'Brien called on Nate when he volunteered, and the questions Nate chose to answer were in English. This pattern of oral participation during teacher-fronted instruction is also supported later in the analysis of Gayle and Tina's oral participation (Tables 10 & 11).

The analysis of instructional practices (Figure 7) shows that Nate had few additional opportunities to practice his Spanish orally. As indicated previously, 50% of Ms. O'Brien's classes included teacher-fronted activities, 44% included individual activities that did not require oral participation, and only 6% incorporated small group activities that allowed students to speak orally with each other. Thus, for most classes, the only opportunity to speak Spanish was during teacher-fronted activities, when the teacher posed a question. Therefore, because Nate rarely participated in teacher-fronted activities, and teacher-fronted activities were the activities that encouraged the majority of oral participation in Ms. O'Brien's class, Nate had very few opportunities to practice Spanish orally.

The interview data (Chapter 5) and additional classroom observations provide an explanation for Nate's lack of participation. When a student does not participate in class, it is usually because they do not know the answer, lack the confidence in their knowledge of the content, or they are a shy individual. The observations and interviews suggest that Nate was hesitant to participate because he was a shy individual and he lacked confidence in his knowledge of Spanish. During several observations, when the researcher asked a question in Spanish, Nate had to confirm the meaning of the Spanish question by first translating it to the researcher, which indicated his uncertainty with his comprehension of the meaning of the

question. For example, the researcher asked, “¿Cual deportes juegas?” and Nate asked the researcher, “What sports do I play?” and the researcher responded, “yes,” and then Nate responded, “Oh, football.” During the student interviews, when asked why he did not participate orally in Spanish class, Nate explained that he was afraid of making a mistake. In the special educator interview, Ms. Caldwell also confirmed that students with LLDs have a fear of participating orally in class because they are afraid to answer incorrectly, and, in turn be evaluated negatively by their peers.

6.1.3.4 Summary

In summary, the classroom observations and student and teacher interview findings describe Nate’s profile as a learner in Ms. O’Brien’s class. Nate was an introverted student who had particular reading and writing difficulties and perceptions about learning. He participated infrequently in class, and when he did participate, it was to answer questions in English regarding translation, grammar, or management of the task at hand. It was concluded that Nate’s lack of participation was related to his lack of confidence in his knowledge of Spanish and his fear of answering incorrectly. In addition, it was found that Nate’s learning profile was consequential to the outcome of his activity, performance on the writing task and participation in class. Figure 12 utilizes Engstrom’s activity triangle to align Nate with the object and outcome his activity (Chapter 7 will combine and explain the additional features of Nate’s activity system).

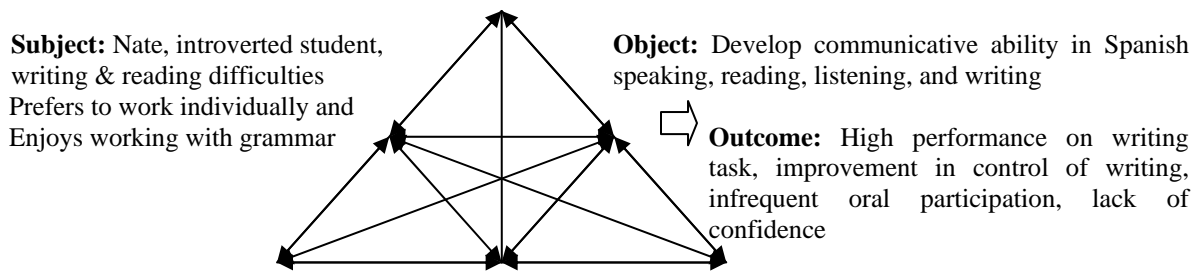


Figure 12 Nate's activity system

6.1.4 Gayle

The classroom observations describe Gayle's behavior on tasks, her abilities and challenges, and the interactions, activities, and materials that were available for Gayle in her learning. Gayle was a highly social student who was assigned an IEP for her difficulty with reading and writing in L1. She struggled with reading comprehension and identifying sounds. In writing, Gayle lacked organization, frequently omitted topic sentences, transitions, and conclusions. During class activities, Gayle also struggled to stay on task, and ignore the behavior of other students. Gayle was a talkative student who worked well with her classmates, asked them for assistance, and helped them on occasions. It was common for Gayle to talk loudly and laugh with her peers, however at times, Gayle displayed a negative attitude toward her learning Spanish.

6.1.4.1 Class participation

Gayle's behavior in class ranged from active and lively participation to outward expressions of resistance and negativity. This behavior was related to the proximity of certain students and the type of activity that was incorporated in the lesson. At the beginning of the year, Gayle sat with a group of students who worked diligently during class to complete

assignments and participate in activities. At this time, Gayle often remained on task during individual activities and displayed a positive attitude during Spanish class. At the end of October, Gayle entered class saying to the researcher, “I’m just not in the mood for Spanish today. I hate when she [Ms. O’Brien] says we have a lot of work to do today!” After class began, the students became involved in one of the few interactive games that asked the students to express their favorite sports and the sports they play. During this game, Gayle’s negative outlook changed, she began to laugh and enjoy herself. Gayle’s enjoyment of interactive games was also supported in the interviews. In the student interview, Gayle reported that she liked the games because they allowed her to “talk with her friends in Spanish.” Therefore, the interviews and the observations suggest that interactive, interpersonal activities that effectively engage students socially and personally positively affected Gayle’s outlook on learning Spanish.

Gayle’s behavior varied relative to the type of class activities included in the lesson. During whole group activities that required students to listen, Gayle frequently became distracted. For example, when Ms. O’Brien read a story, Gayle flipped through her notebook and whispered to her peers. Similarly, when her classmates presented their projects, Gayle doodled in her notebook and did not appear to be interested. However, when Gayle was involved in an interpersonal communicative activity or game, Gayle became very attentive, excited, and actively participated. As indicated previously, Nate displayed similar off-task behavior during teacher-fronted activities, and became more engaged during interactive small group tasks. The observations indicate that Nate and Gayle can be easily distracted during teacher-fronted activities, especially when the students were required to listen for long periods of time, and therefore needed assistance with attending to these types of activities.

Gayle's behavior in Spanish class was related to the proximity of other students. In mid-November, Ms. O'Brien changed the students' seats. The new seating chart situated Gayle at a cluster of desks next to an extremely disruptive student (the student illustrated in Gayle's drawing in Figure 5, Chapter 5). This student was repeating sixth grade Spanish class for a second time and was frequently reprimanded for acting disrespectfully and interrupting the class. Interestingly, when Gayle changed her seat, her work ethic and attitude changed drastically. She began completing in-class assignments carelessly with sloppy writing and displayed a negative attitude toward all activities. When I asked her questions about Spanish, she refused to answer. It was clear that the seating change had a negative effect on Gayle's behavior in class.

Gayle's performance on the grammar exercises and reading comprehension activities show that she struggled with grammar, syntax, and comprehending the meaning of vocabulary. At the beginning of the year, the students learned about question words. When asked about her performance on a grammar exercise that required students to fill in the blank with question words, Gayle reported, "I did it, but it's hard to remember what the words mean." On another grammar exercise later on in the month, Gayle struggled with understanding and applying the rules for forming questions and negative sentences. She did not understand the rule, and when the researcher attempted to explain the rule to her, she remained confused because she could not identify the subject and the verb in the sentence, and did not know the meaning of the words. Another grammar exercise focused on editing and labeling the parts of a letter written in Spanish. Although Gayle could identify the parts of a letter, she was unable to complete the assignment because she could not comprehend the Spanish content of the letter that was to be revised.

Gayle struggled with the writing activities in Spanish class. When writing the answers to questions on a story, the researcher noted that Gayle omitted several verbs and important words

in her answers, showing difficulty with recognizing the important components of syntactic structures. For example, when answering questions about a reading, Gayle wrote, “Pancho en Costa Rica, Pancho poco.” During the writing activity that compared Halloween and the Day of the Dead in English, a Venn diagram helped Gayle brainstorm and organize her ideas. However, when the activity asked the students to convert their ideas into paragraph form, Gayle struggled with transferring the information written in the graphic organizer into connected, written discourse. During Spanish writing activities, Gayle also had difficulty expressing herself in Spanish. When Gayle had difficulty articulating herself in Spanish, the researcher provided her with choices of words and phrases and pointed her to the word bank. With this assistance, Gayle was able to choose the correct words from the options provided and then apply them to her writing. These observations of Gayle’s performance during writing tasks suggest that she needed assistance with developing syntax, transferring ideas to written discourse, and articulating the vocabulary in Spanish.

In summary, the observations indicate that Gayle’s behavior during class activities varied and was related to the type of activity and the proximity of different students. Gayle participated in class activities, however she struggled to complete grammar exercises, to develop syntax, to express meaning in Spanish in her writing, and to pay attention during teacher-fronted activities. In Ms. O’Brien’s, however, no accommodations were available to assist Gayle with grammar, syntax, meaning-making, and attending. Thus, Gayle struggled to complete several of the activities. Gayle was able to participate in activities and complete them successfully, but was hindered by a lack of understanding the meaning of the words and the grammatical structures used in the activities.

6.1.4.2 Oral participation

Similar to Nate, Gayle's oral contributions were infrequent during teacher-fronted instruction. Table 10 shows the quantity of Gayle's participation during seven classroom observations. To illustrate Gayle's participation, Table 10 displays the number of times Ms. O'Brien asked questions to the class, the number of times Gayle volunteered to answer by raising her hand, the type of questions that Gayle volunteered to answer, the number of times Ms. O'Brien selected Gayle to answer when she volunteered, the number of times Ms. O'Brien selected Gayle to participate when she did not volunteer, and the total number of times Gayle participated orally.

Table 10. Gayle’s Classroom Participation During Seven Selected Class Observations

	Oct.15	Oct.18	Oct.29	Nov. 7	Nov.8	Nov.12	Nov.15	Total
Teacher Q to students	15	42	5	12	10	51	10	145
Gayle volunteered	1	1	0	2	0	0	1	5
Q Type	L1.A	L1.T	X	L1.T	X	X	L2.Q	
Teacher selected Gayle when she volunteered	1	1	0	2	0	0	1	5
Teacher selected Gayle when She did not Volunteer	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total Q’s Answered By Gayle	1	2	0	2	0	0	1	6

L1.A signifies English questions about the activities themselves

L1.T signifies English questions to translate

L2.Q signifies Spanish questions about a meaningful topic

Table 10 illustrates Gayle’s lack of oral participation during teacher-fronted instruction. The data indicate that within the seven randomly selected class periods, Ms. O’Brien selected Gayle to respond only six times out of 145 teacher questions. Five of these answers were voluntarily contributed by Gayle, and in the remaining one response, Gayle was chosen by the teacher. When looking at the content of the questions, two out of the five volunteered responses

were asked and answered in English: two of these required translation, and one was related to the activity of the class as opposed to the lesson content. Thus, the data show that Gayle participated infrequently, Ms. O'Brien called on Gayle when she volunteered, and when Gayle participated, it was in English to translate or answer questions related to the activity as opposed to the lesson content.

Although the class observations show that Gayle rarely participated orally in Spanish, Table 10 shows that on November 15, Ms. O'Brien asked a question in Spanish and Gayle raised her hand to participate. During the lesson on November 15, the students were involved in an interpersonal, oral and written activity that required them to ask each other orally about their favorite sport and what sports they played, and later record these personalized answers in paragraph form. Throughout the lesson, Gayle had multiple opportunities to practice asking and answering questions about sports in Spanish. At the end of the class period, Ms. O'Brien asked a similar question about sports to the group, "¿Qué deportes juegas bien?" [What sports do you play well?]. At this time, Gayle raised her hand energetically to participate, and when Ms. O'Brien called on her to answer, she responded correctly in Spanish. This response was the only incident during the three month data collection period that Gayle raised to hand to answer a question in Spanish during teacher-fronted questioning. It appears that Gayle was motivated and confident to participate in the teacher-fronted activity because she had multiple opportunities to ask and answer questions in the small group activity.

This relationship between Gayle's confidence and classroom participation was supported during another class period when students were asked to volunteer to present their projects (a description of a self-created alien) in front of the class in Spanish. The students had been working on these projects for several days, and had multiple opportunities to determine what to

say about their alien project and how to say in Spanish. Interestingly, Gayle was the second student to volunteer to raise her hand and present her project. Thus, in the case of Gayle, it was found that her participation in Spanish during teacher-fronted activities was influenced by the opportunities she experienced to prepare linguistically by writing or speaking Spanish with her peers in small group activities.

6.1.4.3 Summary

In summary, the classroom observations and student and teacher interview findings describe Gayle as a subject in Ms. O'Brien's class. Gayle's learning profile indicated that she was a social student who displayed deficiencies in reading, writing, and attention. Gayle also exhibited particular perceptions about learning Spanish. She participated infrequently in class, and when she did participate, it was to answer questions in English regarding translation, grammar, culture, or management of the task at hand. It was concluded that Gayle's lack of participation was related to her lack of confidence in her knowledge of Spanish and her fear of answering incorrectly. In addition, it was found that Gayle's learning profile was consequential to the outcome of her activity, the performance on the writing task and participation in class. Figure 13 applies Engstrom's activity triangle to align Gayle with the object and outcome of her activity (Chapter 7 will combine the additional features of Gayle's activity system). It is also interesting to compare Gayle's outcome in Figure 13 with the outcome of Nate's activity system previously depicted Figure 12. Although the object of Nate and Gayle's activity was the same, their learning profiles were different, which, in turn, produced differential outcomes. This differential performance will be further discussed in the next two chapters.

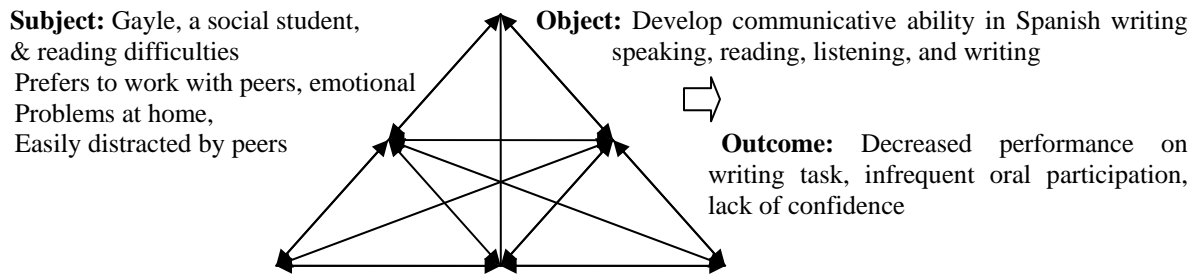


Figure 13 Gayle's activity system

6.1.5 The Role of the Researcher

The researcher interacted with the class by assisting the participants during classroom activities. At the beginning of the study, the researcher introduced herself as a teacher from a local university who wanted to know more about how the students learned Spanish. After several routine visits, the students became accustomed to her presence and began to initiate conversations with her. Over time, many of the students asked the researcher about assignments and requested assistance with classroom activities. On one occasion, when Ms. O'Brien was late to class, the researcher conducted the opening activity. During another observation, the researcher taught the entire lesson because Ms. O'Brien was absent and the substitute did not speak Spanish. Thus, the researcher acted as a participant observer and assisted the class when asked while making it clear that her presence was for observation.

When the class engaged in individual or small group activities, the researcher stayed near Gayle and Nate to observe their performance and provide them with assistance as needed. During the activities, the researcher asked questions to check for comprehension and to assess Nate and Gayle's ability with the content of the lesson. To assist Nate and Gayle with managing the activities, the researcher clarified directions, helped find lost assignments, and reminded them to stay on task. When Nate and Gayle could not comprehend the language of the activity,

the researcher provided forced-choice questions and reminded them to look at the linguistic resources that were provided, such as word banks and vocabulary written on the white board. When Nate and Gayle struggled with the writing assignments, the researcher guided them through the process of thinking, organizing, expressing ideas in Spanish, and spelling in Spanish. When Nate and Gayle struggled with grammar tasks, the researcher reminded the students of the formula for the grammatical rule, and helped them apply it to a few examples. At the end of each class, the researcher spoke briefly with Gayle and Nate. During these quick conversations, the researcher checked for comprehension of the class content and asked Gayle and Nate to reflect on the class activities and their performance.

After class, the researcher spoke briefly with Ms. O'Brien to reflect on the participants' performance. The researcher only offered instructional recommendations when she was asked by the teacher. At times, Ms. O'Brien expressed frustrations and asked, "Am I doing something wrong? I don't understand why they don't get it?" To respond to this frustration, the researcher provided an article written by a teacher of middle school students with LLDs and a website of suggested instructional accommodations (DiFino and Lombardino, 2004, Hurst 1996; Kennewig, 1986; Sparks et al, 1991; Spinelli, 1989;). However, after sharing these resources, the researcher did not notice any change in Ms. O'Brien's instruction. Her lessons still involved a number of decontextualized grammar exercises and she justified her emphasis on grammar practice by stating that, "It's important for them to know the sentence types." After hearing this comment, the researcher wondered why Ms. O'Brien did not discuss her challenges with the special educator or refer to the recommendations in the article, such as using manipulatives, and multi-sensory, contextualized activities to assist the students.

Thus, during the classroom observations, the researcher's role was that of a participant observer. While observing and recording the interactions in Ms. O'Brien's classes, the researcher assisted Nate and Gayle with difficulties, assessed Nate and Gayle's ability to complete activities, and, at times, lead the class and provided suggestions to the teacher when the opportunity arose.

6.1.6 Summary

This section of the classroom observation findings described the setting of Ms. O'Brien's classroom; illustrated the interactions and roles that the teacher, the parents, and the researcher played in Nate and Gayle's foreign language learning; indicated the accommodations available for students with LLDs; and revealed the instructional practices and concepts that were difficult for Nate and Gayle.

Though conducting classroom observations, it was found that Ms. O'Brien applied a traditional, structured approach to teaching foreign language. Through this approach, Ms. O'Brien positioned herself as the provider of all information and the center of all activity, and situated her students as passive learners. In her instructional practices, Ms. O'Brien emphasized the linguistic components of Spanish and instructed content through decontextualized exercises. The majority of Ms. O'Brien's instructional practices occurred through teacher-fronted or individual student activities, and there were very few incidences of small group activities

In addition, this section of the findings illustrate the social interactions and roles that the teacher, the researcher, and the parents played in Nate and Gayle's learning. First, the observations found that Nate and Gayle's oral participation was infrequent, and at times, when Ms. O'Brien selected Nate and Gayle to participate, she translated the question in English.

Second, the findings indicated that Ms. O'Brien's interactions with the parents of Nate and Gayle had a positive effect on Nate and Gayle's performance in Spanish class. Third, through impromptu discussions, the researcher noted that Ms. O'Brien displayed contradictory views of both the performance of students with LLDs and the design of accommodations for students with LLDs. Fourth, through interactions between the students and the researcher, it was found that Nate and Gayle struggled with developing syntax, applying grammatical forms to new contexts, denoting meaning of vocabulary and grammatical forms, and reading and writing in Spanish. These difficulties reflected the same challenges that these students faced in learning English. By providing guiding questions, the researcher was able to provide individual assistance for Nate and Gayle in completing grammar exercises and reading and writing activities.

Finally, these findings reveal that Ms. O'Brien was not designing accommodations for instructional practices that introduce, present, and practice lesson content. The accommodations designed by Ms. O'Brien were for formal assessments and assignments, which was what was recommended in the students' IEP documents. These accommodations reduced the content and choices of responses in the activities, but did not assist students with meaning, structure, or application of the foreign language.

Similar to the previous section on Ms. O'Brien's class, the next section of this chapter will describe the classroom environment, interactions, and accommodations available for Tina in Mr. Domico's seventh grade Spanish class.

6.2 MR. DOMICO'S CLASS

Mr. Domico's seventh grade Spanish classroom was a large room surrounded by maps, colorful flags, and posters displaying Spanish vocabulary and phrases and cultural images from various Spanish speaking countries. The classroom space was filled with rows of thirty student desks, leaving little room to move around the classroom. The rows of desks faced a large, green chalkboard that served as the primary tool for Mr. Domico's Spanish lessons. Mr. Domico's desk was situated in the back corner of the room, behind the students' desks. When the students came into Spanish class, they sat at their assigned desks. Tina, the seventh grade focus student of this study, sat seven seats back, at the end of one of the rows of desks, which provided little visibility to the chalkboard. Mr. Domico taught several seventh and eighth grade Spanish classes in this room. Tina's seventh grade Spanish class began at 12:55 and concluded at 1:36.

At the beginning of the year, Mr. Domico informed the researcher that thirty students were registered for the class, and fifteen of these students had identified IEPs. Because of the large number of students with IEPs, Ms. Appel, a Special Education Aide, attended each class and worked with the students with identified IEPs. Ms. Appel worked with Mr. Domico for the past three years, knew the curriculum content, but did not have any background in Spanish language.

6.2.1 Instructional Practices

During the three month data collection period, 24 attempts were made to conduct observations of Tina interacting Mr. Domico's seventh grade Spanish class. Of these 24

attempts, only sixteen observations were actually performed because Tina was absent for six of the attempted observations. A pattern was observed that illustrated Mr. Domico's conduct of a typical seventh grade Spanish class. His seventh grade Spanish classes often began with the students entering the classroom, sitting down in their assigned seats, and taking out their homework. Then, Mr. Domico spent about five minutes walking around to check each student's homework. Finally, Mr. Domico began the lesson that related to the seventh grade curriculum in reading and language arts. Appendix H displays the instructional practices observed in the sixteen observations and includes the associated daily objectives, the hazlo ahora [do now] introductory activities, and the corresponding content-based lesson activities. To analyze the lesson content, the instructional practices were coded according to their type and grouping of students.

6.2.1.1 Instructional practices that introduce the lesson

Similar to Ms. O'Brien, Mr. Domico included an hazlo ahora [do now] activity that was written on the board each day. When looking at the type of hazlo ahora activities illustrated in Appendix H, it is evident that Mr. Domico used these introductory classroom activities differently from Ms. O'Brien. Out of the sixteen lessons observed, eight hazlo ahora activities were used to manage the task of taking out homework (Saque la tarea [Take out your homework]), two included one-word form-focused display questions relating to grammar (¿Qué es un pronombre del sujeto? [What is a pronoun of a subject?]), and the remaining five classes had no introductory activity. Only one hazlo ahora activity included a referential, open-ended question (¿Qué hiciste este fin de semana? [What did you do last weekend?]). This question, however, had no connection to the lesson objective to identify and define meaning units.

As mentioned previously, the purpose of the hazlo ahora activity was to prepare students for the language and content of the lesson, help them transition into Spanish class, and focus their attention on particular linguistic and academic concepts. Because the majority of hazlo ahora activities involved decontextualized grammar, the act of taking out homework, or unrelated open-ended questions; the introductory activities did not assist Tina with preparing for the language and content of the lesson, transitioning into Spanish class, or focusing her attention on particular linguistic and academic concepts.

6.2.1.2 Instructional practices that present and practice content

In addition to the hazlo ahora activities, Appendix H displays the activities observed in Mr. Domico's Spanish classes to present and practice content. Of the sixteen lessons observed, 34 activities were recorded and coded for the grouping of students and the type of activity. Of the 43 activities, 60% were teacher-fronted, and the remaining 40% required the students to work individually. Over the three month data collection period, there were no incidences of small group or pair work. Similarly, in Ms. O'Brien's class, the majority of class activities were teacher fronted (50%) or individual (44%); and only 6% of the activities involved interactive small group or pair work. Therefore, the findings show that the Spanish teachers in the study included only a small percentage of group work in their instructional practices.

This lack of variation in instructional grouping may be one reason why assistance was not available for Tina during the lesson. During teacher-fronted activities, Mr. Domico was involved initiating a discussion, presenting new content, or leading a task. Therefore, he did not have the opportunity to determine the students who struggled, to assess the concepts that were difficult, and to assist them accordingly. When the students worked individually, it was difficult for Mr. Domico to provide assistance to all 30 students during a 40 minute class period, even though he

did have the help of an aide. In addition, it was observed that Tina struggled to pay attention and stay on task during teacher-fronted and individual activities. By providing a balance of small group work and teacher-fronted and individual activities, Mr. Domico might have been able to assist Tina with her attention difficulties during lessons.

Figure 10 shows the various types of activities observed in Mr. Domico's class over the three month data collection period. To determine the distribution of activities, the activities were totaled, identified, and coded. Of the 40 activities that were observed, ten different types of activities determined (Appendix H). The number of activities of each type was tallied and divided by the total number of activities to determine a percentage. The analyses revealed the following distribution of types of activities: 20% were managerial, such as taking out homework; another 20% involved English questions about Spanish grammar, 15% incorporated exercises on decontextualized grammar, 12% engaged students in translating poems stories or vocabulary, 10% required students to write random sentences for the purpose of practicing verbs, 8% included the teacher reading aloud, 5 % focused on the theme of holiday activities, another 5 % involved meaningful vocabulary practice, 3% utilized computer practice of verb conjugations, and the remaining 3 % was a project that instructed the students to create a comic strip.

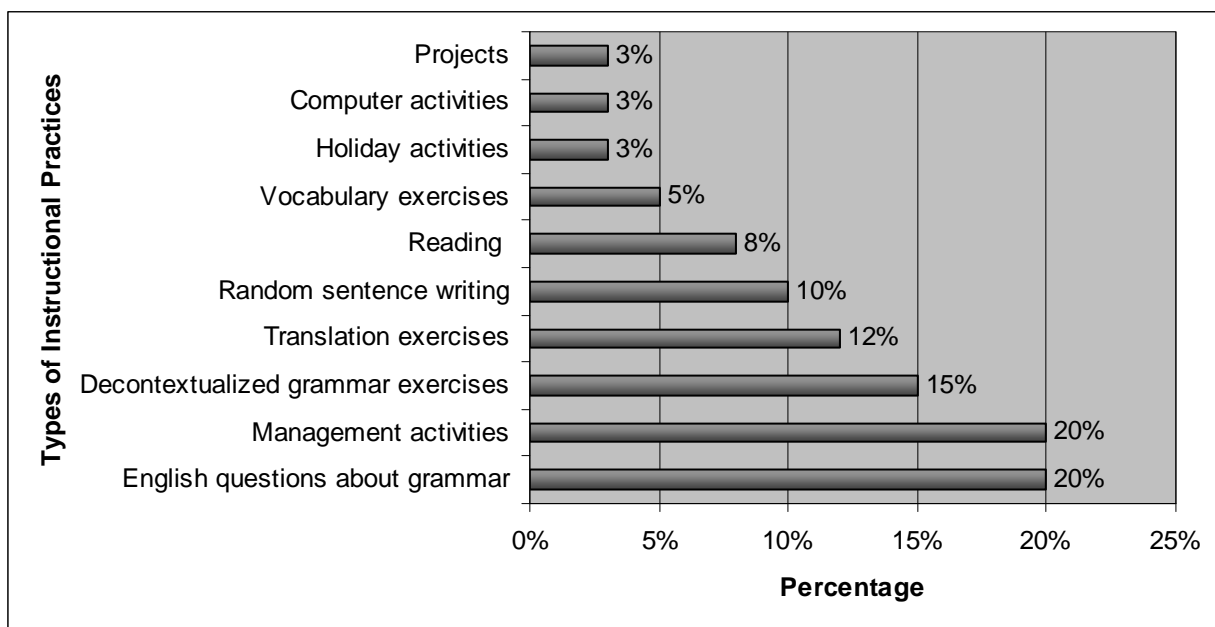


Figure 14. Types of Instructional Practices that Present and Practice Content in Mr. Domico's Class

Although there were ten different types of instructional practices in Mr. Domico's lessons, almost all of the lessons focused primarily on the analysis of grammar and impersonal and decontextualized exercises. English questions about grammar, grammar exercises, translation, random sentence writing, vocabulary practice, and computer conjugation are all instructional practices that involved decontextualized practice of Spanish. When summing these language-related instructional practices, they comprise 61% of the total instructional practices observed in Mr. Domico's class. Thus, the majority of the lessons in Mr. Domico's class were form-focused, and there were very few instructional practices that allowed the students to practice grammar and vocabulary in meaningful ways.

Tina's perceptions and the classroom observations explain the effective assistance provided by this vocabulary exercise. In the interviews, Tina expressed that she liked the vocabulary exercises because it helped her remember the words. In accordance with Tina's perceptions, the researcher reported that Tina comprehended the vocabulary after participating in

the activity. This exercise also met several of the criteria for instructional accommodations suggested for LLDs (DiFino & Lombardino, 2004, Hurst, 1996, Mabbott, 1994; Sparks et al., 1992) in that it was personalized, multi-sensory, and contextualized. First, Tina was asked to hypothesize, use higher level thinking, and apply prior knowledge to work with vocabulary to guess the meaning of each word. This hypothesis task was effective because it was low-anxiety (any answer was correct), involved personalization by immediately connecting Tina with the word, and it guided Tina through negotiating meaning of words that she did not know. Second, the drawing aspect of the activity was visual, kinesthetic, and personal. Third, the vocabulary exercise taught Tina to use the dictionary and prior knowledge to develop strategies to overcome unknown words. Finally, the sentence writing aspect of the vocabulary activity guided Tina from identifying the meaning of a word to combining the word with language function and syntax to create a sentence in context.

The second meaningful activity in Mr. Domico's class involved a comic strip project. For this activity, the students chose a conversational context, and wrote a dialog involving individuals of their choice. The students recorded the dialog in the form of a comic strip, and illustrated corresponding images with conversation bubbles. A copy of Tina's comic strip project is displayed in Figure 11.

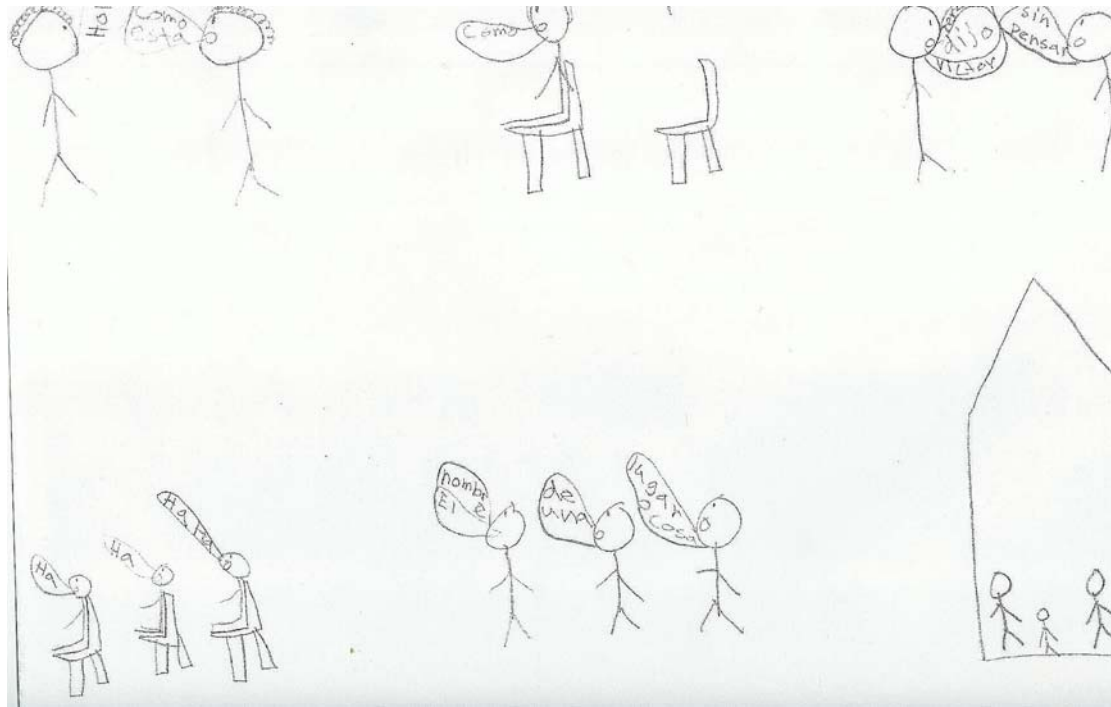


Figure 15 Tina's Comic Strip Project

This project was effective for Tina because it fulfilled several of the characteristics of accommodations listed in previous literature (DiFino & Lombardino, 2004, Hurst, 1996, Mabbott, 1994; Sparks et al., 1992). Similar to the vocabulary exercise, the comic strip was personalized, contextualized, and encouraged Tina to apply visual, kinesthetic, and spatial learning styles. This task also allowed Tina to work at her own level of ability and assessed what she *was able to do* with the language, promoting an element of success. As seen above in Figure 11, without any assistance and accommodations, Tina was able to depict a comic strip that included a greeting (“¿Cómo estás?” [how are you]), and a phrase that indicated dialog in the past (“dijo Victor” [said Victor]).

Therefore, the majority of the activities to present and practice content in Mr. Domico’s class focused only on decontextualized analysis of the language, however a few of the activities

observed were meaningful, personalized, and contextualized, and thus assisted Tina with vocabulary retention and applying the vocabulary and grammar to communicate in Spanish.

6.2.1.3 Writing Activities

Because this study evaluated student performance through writing assessments, this section describes the observed instructional practices that involved teaching writing skills. The modified ACTFL rubric (Appendix D) utilized to score the assessments evaluates the students' writing according to six criteria. These criteria evaluate students' ability to a) apply functions, b) combine discourse, c) address an audience, d) write comprehensibly, e) use expanded vocabulary, and f) control the grammatical structures of the language (see Chapter 3). Figure 10 illustrates several instructional practices that were included in the lessons to develop the skills indicated in the ACTFL rubric. These instructional practices were English discussions of Spanish grammar, grammar exercises, random sentence writing, vocabulary exercises, computer conjugation exercises, and projects. As discussed previously, most of these instructional practices emphasized the knowledge of grammar rules and vocabulary, with the exception of the comic strip project. These instructional practices required students to develop vocabulary knowledge, identify the grammar rule, conjugate verbs, or write unrelated sentences using the correct subject-verb agreement or the appropriate structure for comparisons. Only one activity, the comic strip project, asked the students to create with the language, and promoted meaningful, presentational communication as defined by the ACTFL National Standards for Foreign Language Learning (1996).

By analyzing the types of instructional practices included in Mr. Domico's class with reference to the ACTFL criteria, it seems that because the activities are mostly form-focused, Tina should improve in the areas of vocabulary and control on the rubric. Previously, in Chapter

4, Table 4 indicated that Tina improved by 1.0 point in all areas, *but* control of the language, scoring a 0.0 in both September and December. Tina's lack of improvement in her control of the language could relate to her identified LLD, but her low score also suggests that the instructional practices utilized in Mr. Domico's class did not assist her in applying grammatical knowledge to her writing. With reference to vocabulary, Tina scored a 1.0 in September and a 2.0 in December indicating that she had increased her ability to include a variety of words in her writing. This improvement in the area of vocabulary could relate to the meaningful vocabulary exercises that were included in Mr. Domico's classes. Tina enjoyed these exercises because they were meaningful, fun, low anxiety, and multi-sensory. The researcher also reported that the vocabulary exercises helped Tina retain the vocabulary. Therefore, Tina's vocabulary score in her writing could be related to the assistance provided in the meaningful, multi-sensory exercises included in Mr. Domico's class.

In summary, the analysis of lesson activities shows that the majority of writing activities in Mr. Domico's class involved form-focused practice of vocabulary and grammar, and did not support all six criteria of writing skills on the ACTFL rubric. To support Tina's development of the writing criteria indicated on the ACTFL rubric, Mr. Domico should include writing activities that develop function, text type, impact, comprehensibility, *and* vocabulary and grammar skills. In addition, by comparing these classroom observations with Tina's performance, the findings illustrate that the form-fused activities only assisted her with vocabulary development and not grammatical accuracy. To more effectively assist Tina with grammatical accuracy, Tina required accommodations that guide Tina through identifying grammatical structures, understanding their meaning, and applying them to functional contexts.

6.2.1.4 Summary

In summary, the classroom observations demonstrated that Mr. Domico's instructional practices included (a) hazlo ahora activities that focused on managing the completion of homework assignments, (b) a majority of teacher-fronted instruction, (c) traditional reading activities, (d) a focus on decontextualized grammar instruction, and (e) minimal communicative writing activities. Figure 16 employs Engstrom's activity triangle to illustrate the role of the instructional practices in Tina's activity system. The following chapter will combine, describe, and analyze the remaining features of the activity system.

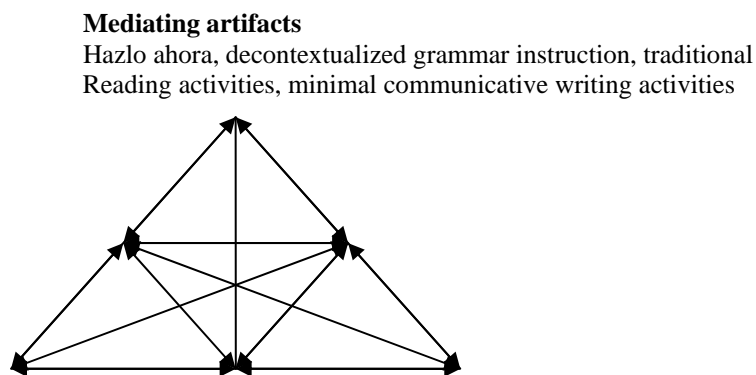


Figure 16 The role of instructional practices in Tina's activity system

6.2.2 The Role of Mr. Domico

The findings from the classroom observations shed light on Mr. Domico's teaching approach, his perceptions of teaching Spanish to students with LLDs, and his interactions with Tina. The purpose of this section is to illustrate the role Mr. Domico played in Tina's learning.

6.2.2.1 Teaching approach

Through the analysis of impromptu discussions and activities observed in Mr. Domico's class, it is evident that, although the curriculum is content-based, Mr. Domico utilizes a more traditional, structural approach to teaching Spanish. As mentioned previously, all of the observed lessons incorporated teacher-fronted instruction or individual student work, and there were no incidences of small group interactions. With reference to the type of instructional practices that present and practice content, 61% focused on developing vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. During impromptu discussions with the researcher, Mr. Domico expressed that he preferred to teach "Spanish grammar, language, and culture," not curricular content, such as science and social studies in Spanish. This evidence shows that Mr. Domico was traditional in his approach to teaching foreign language, and did not support the current content-based curriculum implemented at the school.

In all of the observed lessons, Mr. Domico was the center of all communication and instruction, and the students were treated as passive learners. When Mr. Domico presented content, he first informed students of the grammatical concepts and provided lists of vocabulary, and then required students to work individually and practice new linguistic knowledge in mechanical exercises.

When asked about methods such as Total Physical Response and Total Physical Response Storytelling, Mr. Domico claimed that they can be very effective in helping *some* students retain vocabulary. He had used Total Physical Response in the past with students, but believed that the method would not work with students with IEPs because they would misbehave. When the researcher shared an article and a website that suggested methods for instructing students with IEPs, Mr. Domico responded similar to Ms. O'Brien and claimed that

he could not implement the suggestions because they would take up too much instructional time and bore the regular education students.

Thus, Mr. Domico maintained a traditional approach to teaching Spanish that incorporated teacher-fronted and individual activities, lacked small group interactions, and focused on decontextualized, linguistic analysis of the foreign language.

6.2.2.2 Perceptions of students with LLDs

The researcher's discussions with Mr. Domico reveal severe frustration with teaching students with LLDs. In early September, the researcher met with Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico to inform them about the study. Mr. Domico was very supportive of the study because he was challenged and frustrated by a class that had 15 students with LLDs (the 7th grade class observed in the study). After this initial meeting, Mr. Domico reiterated his frustrations with teaching students with LLDs during four other conversations with the researcher. On September 17, Mr. Domico commented after teaching the class with 15 students with LLDs, "I just want to rip my hair out! I have to move so slow, and it takes forever for students to 'get it!' This class just puts me at my wits end!" He further explained that he was frustrated because other classes finished the planned lesson activities and their homework during class, and the class with 15 LLDs frequently finished class activities and homework at home because they did not complete them during class. He was also aggravated that the students with LLDs did not understand the grammatical concepts in their native language and therefore required more repetition and additional examples. Mr. Domico also complained that students with LLDs required him to note-take, walk up and down the aisles to assure that they are on task, and deal with more behavior issues. On September 24, Mr. Domico further expressed his frustrations:

This is the lowest class I have ever had! The kids just don't put in any effort. I've had students with IEPs before and they have done well, but this year some just aren't trying. I'm having a hard time because there are so many students with IEPs and I only had one class on teaching students with disabilities in college.

During another conversation with the researcher on October 3, Mr. Domico reiterated his frustrations with teaching content, instead of language, and teaching students with LLDs:

I want to teach Spanish, not content areas such as science and social studies. I hope you find something in your study because when the special ed. kids are pulled out, this is a different class. Students aren't raising their hands to ask me questions, you could hear a pin drop, it's so quiet. I'm not one to slow down.

On November 19, Mr. Domico discussed the importance of having Ms. Appel as an aide because she was able to assist the students with LLDs during teacher-fronted and individual activities and pull them aside into another room to work with them separately. Ms. Appel had worked with Mr. Domico for three years, and although she had never studied Spanish, she was familiar with the curriculum and the types of accommodations that the students needed on assignments. Mr. Domico felt that it was important to remove the students with LLDs from the whole group because they hindered the progression of content for the other students who wanted to continue Spanish in the 8th grade. Similar to Ms. O'Brien, Mr. Domico was concerned that slowing the pace of instruction and accommodating for LLDs would bore the regular education students, and the regular education students are encouraged to continue with language, whereas the students with LLDs are typically discouraged to continue with foreign language study.

6.2.2.3 Mr. Domico's interactions with Tina

The classroom observation data described the support Mr. Domico provided for Tina during instruction. Throughout the three months, Mr. Domico provided encouragement, supplied Tina with previously written lesson notes, reminded her of the directions for

assignments, altered tests and assignments, and occasionally clarified confusing grammatical concepts. Mr. Domico's interactions with Tina follow the suggested accommodations indicated in the IEP. According to the IEP, Mr. Domico must give Tina (a) limited choices on tests, (b) repeat directions, (c) encourage her to ask for assistance, (d) support her with writing in her planner, (e) give extra time on assignments, (f) warn her of schedule changes, (g) provide clear boundaries, (h) supply text books at home, and (i) develop study guides. The IEP document did not suggest any modifications for the presentation or application of new content. Therefore, Mr. Domico only provided the required accommodations for formal assignments and managerial tasks, as per the recommendations in the IEP.

6.2.2.4 Summary

In summary, the classroom observations and impromptu conversations with the researcher revealed Mr. Domico's role in the classroom. Because Mr. Domico incorporated a traditional approach to foreign language teaching, he maintained full control of classroom activities, content, and talk, which situated students in a more passive role within the classroom. Although Mr. Domico encouraged Tina, the assistance he provided for Tina followed the generic suggestions of the IEPs and lacked specificity to foreign language learning. In addition Mr. Domico's perceptions of students with LLDs revealed frustration and which, in turn, could have affected his interactions with Tina, and thus her overall performance in the class. Figure 17 applies Engstrom's activity triangle to position Mr. Domico's role within Tina's activity system. The relationship between Mr. Domico's role and Tina's activity system will be further discussed in Chapter 7.

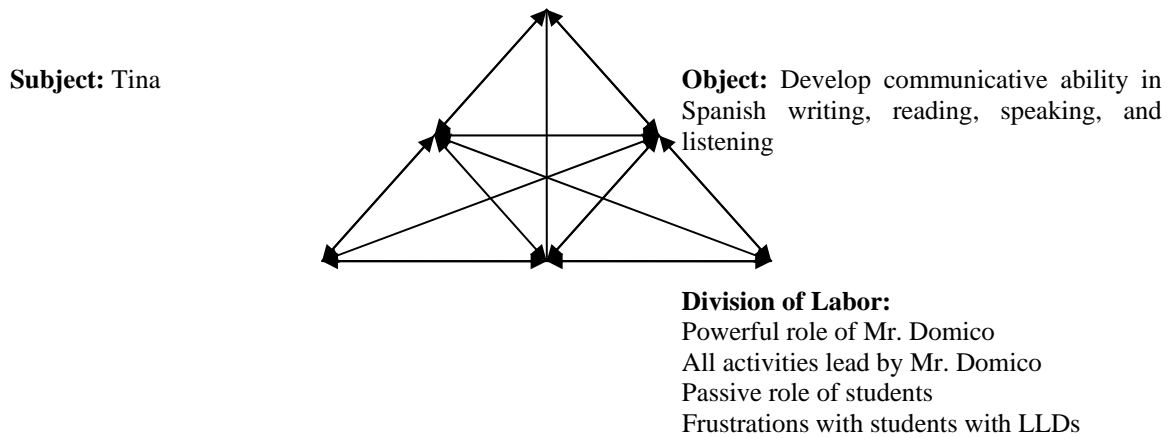


Figure 17 Mr. Domico's role in Tina's activity system

6.2.3 Tina

In addition to Mr. Domico's role, the class observations describe Tina's behavior, perceptions, and interactions in Mr. Domico's 7th grade Spanish class. Tina was a unique student who enjoyed reading and working intrapersonally during class activities. She was assigned an IEP because she has been diagnosed with mild Asberger's syndrome, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and displayed a discrepancy between her ability and achievement in reading and writing. As a student with mild Hansberger's syndrome, Tina struggled with emotional and socialization issues such as attending school, participating in classes, and working with other students. Due to her ADHD, Tina had difficulty attending to classroom tasks, completing assignments on time, and organizing materials. Tina enjoyed reading during her free time, however she struggled with word recognition and language decoding. Although Tina enjoyed reading, she was assessed to have a fluency rate of 110 correct words per minute, which is at the lower end of the norm for 7th grade students (7th graders should read between 110-150 words per minute). With reference to her writing, Tina struggled with spelling, handwriting, organizing, and focusing on the topic. In addition, Tina had difficulty

with applying language meaningfully, writing comprehensibly, and appropriately addressing the functional aspect of her writing. As indicated her IEP, in addition to academic accommodations, Tina required encouragement and assistance with participating in activities, taking notes, organizing materials, completing tasks, taking tests, and finishing assignments.

6.2.3.1 Performance in class activities

The classroom observations show variability in Tina's performance during activities, which indicate areas that required more specific accommodations. During teacher-fronted explanations of content, Tina had difficulty attending, seeing the board, and taking notes. As indicated previously, Mr. Domico's lessons involved lengthy teacher-fronted activities which required her to listen for long periods of time. Tina's IEP indicates that due to her ADHD, she struggled with attending to one activity for a long period of time. Therefore, because Mr. Domico did not vary his presentation of content to include different types and grouping of instructional practices, Tina was unable to focus on the entire presentation of content. In addition, Tina struggled to focus during teacher-fronted instruction because her efforts were spent on handwriting. Therefore, to assist her with note-taking and focusing on instruction, the researcher and Ms. Appel recorded notes for Tina and reminded her frequently to listen and focus on the instruction. During individual projects and activities, Tina frequently lost focus and needed clarification on directions. Mr. Domico, Ms. Appel, and the researcher gave Tina several reminders to stay on task and clarified directions on the assignments. On several occasions, Tina initiated help on her own by asking for clarification from Mr. Domico, Ms. Appel, or the researcher on classroom activities and homework.

When participating in writing activities, Tina needed assistance with organizing her thoughts, and articulating and spelling words in Spanish. To help her with expressing herself in

Spanish, the researcher asked Tina what she wanted to say in Spanish (lines 1-9, Example 9), reminded her to refer to her vocabulary lists and word banks as resources. In addition, when Tina could not think of a word, the researcher provided the first sound, which helped Tina remember the entire vocabulary word. Tina was able to remember cognates and action words such as saltar, bailar, and cantar on her own. This was interesting to note considering teachers usually provided a visual or action to demonstrate the meaning of these words in Spanish. When Tina had difficulty spelling words, the researcher sounded them out syllable by syllable, which helped her identify the symbols for the sounds that she produced (line 18, Example 9).

Example 9. *Researcher assisting Tina with writing during comic strip project*

1	Researcher	What are you saying to Joe?
2	Tina	I am saying, Hi and what is your name
3	Researcher	Ok, how do you say that in Spanish
4	Tina	Hola, and...Como se llama?
5	Researcher	Ok, good, lets go to the next picture, what happens after you introduce
6		each other? Your picture shows that you are in different places, are you in
7		different places, or the same place?
8	Tina	I'm in different places. I'm in the classroom and here I am outside
9	Researcher	Ok, lets say that in Spanish. How do you say that in Spanish?
10	Tina	I don't know
11	Researcher	Ok, Ill help you I'll give you choices. Is outside, la clase, la escuela, or el
12		aire libre?
13	Tina	El ah, libre
14	Researcher	good, ok, How did you figure that out?
15	Tina	Because the other ones mean classroom and school
16	Researcher	Right, ok.
17	Tina	How do you spell that?
18	Researcher	En...el...a...e...re...li..b..r..e..

Tina had difficulty writing and remembering the meanings of the words for translation activities. These challenges frustrated Tina because it took time to find the words in the dictionary and write them out with legible handwriting. To assist her with writing and word

retention, the researcher suggested that Tina draw a picture or symbol instead of writing words. The visual helped Tina retain the meaning of vocabulary, working at a faster pace, and understand what she was reading and writing.

Grammar exercises were overwhelmingly difficult for Tina because she had not yet internalized the rules and did not have the vocabulary knowledge necessary. She needed guidance with reviewing the rules, applying the structures to sentences, using the grammar charts, and understanding the meaning of what she was writing. When working individually with Tina on grammar exercises, the researcher used guiding questions to remind her of the rule and assisted her with applying it to the exercise. Example 10 displays the guidance that the researcher provided during the random sentence writing activity to practice the use of “ser” and “estar,” two different verbs meaning “to be” in Spanish.

Example 10. Researcher assisting Tina during random sentence writing exercise

-
- | | | |
|----|-------------|---|
| 1 | Researcher: | What's a nationality? |
| 2 | Tina: | Like, where they come from. |
| 3 | Researcher: | Right! Where do you come from? |
| 4 | Tina: | Um |
| 5 | Researcher: | Are you Russian, American, Mexican, Spanish, African? Where are you |
| 6 | | from? |
| 7 | Tina: | I'm Italian. |
| 8 | Researcher: | Italian! Ok, so how do you say “I am”? |
| 9 | Tina: | um |
| 10 | Researcher: | Look at your chart |
| 11 | Tina | Yo...yo es |
| 12 | Researcher: | Yo es or yo soy? |
| 13 | Tina: | Yo soy...yo soy...Italian |
| 14 | Researcher: | Italian...a....Italiana because you are a girl, right? |
| 15 | Tina: | Yes |
-

After several repetitions with assistance, Tina was able to apply the rules on her own. However, at this time, Tina was not able to produce the meaning behind the grammar that she used. To assist her with the meaning of the structures, the researcher provided guiding questions that led Tina to the meaning. However, at the end of the exercises, she was still unable to independently understand the meaning of the grammatical exercises that she was writing.

6.2.3.2 Perceptions

During the three months of observations, the researcher frequently engaged Tina in conversation about specific activities in Mr. Domico's class. These perceptions further support the researcher's observations of the activities that were difficult for Tina and show the areas in which Tina perceives that she needed assistance. After the researcher suggested to use visuals to help her remember vocabulary and to avoid handwriting and spelling, Tina commented that they helped her remember. She mentioned that Spanish was hard because she had difficulty remembering the meaning of the words, expressing herself in Spanish, and producing the correct spelling. She also complained about the amount of time it took to translate words using a dictionary, a task that was frequently assigned for homework. When asked what was easy, she said, "I don't know...Spanish is one of my hardest classes...the projects are fun but hard at the same time."

6.2.3.3 Oral participation

The analysis of Tina's oral participation illustrates that, similar to Nate and Gayle, Tina participated in Mr. Domico's class infrequently. Table 11 below displays Tina's oral participation during seven selected classes. To show the quantity of Tina's voluntary oral participation, Table 11 includes the number of times Mr. Domico asked questions to the class,

and the number of times Tina volunteered to participate by raising her hand, the number of times Tina was selected to answer these questions by raising her hand. Table 11 also indicates the number of times Tina was selected to answer when she volunteered, and the total instances that Mr. Domico selected Tina to participate orally when she did not volunteer. In addition, the content of the questions are included to show the types of questions that Tina volunteered to answer and was selected to answer.

Table 11. Tina’s Classroom Participation During Seven Selected Class Observations

	Oct.15	Oct.22	Oct.29	Nov. 1	Nov.7	Nov.12	Nov.15	Total
Mr. Domico’s Q’s to students	28	68	0	13	23	2	25	159
Tina volunteered to answer	0	1 *	0	4	0	0	1*	6
Type of Qs Tina answered	L2.R	L2.G	X	L1.R	X	0	L2.G	
Mr. Domico Selected Tina to answer when she volunteered	X	1	X	2	X	X	0	2
Mr. Domico Selected Tina to Answer when she Did not volunteer	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total Qs Tina answered	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	4

* with encouragement of the researcher

L2.R=Read aloud in Spanish

L1.R=Read aloud in English

L2.G=Provide homework answers on Spanish grammar

Table 11 shows that Tina's overall oral participation was infrequent in Mr. Domico's Spanish class. Out of 159 total questions asked by Mr. Domico, Tina participated only four times, three times voluntarily and once involuntarily. Out of the seven class periods observed, Tina only participated orally during three, leaving four class periods that she did not participate at all. Tina volunteered to answer Mr. Domico's questions six times, and of the six questions that Tina was comfortable volunteering to answer, four of these involved reading aloud in English, and two of these involved questions in Spanish about grammar in which Tina required encouragement from the researcher. It is interesting to note that when Mr. Domico's questions were in English, and the answer required reading in English, Tina was more eager to raise her hand; whereas, for other types of questions in Spanish that involved Spanish answers, Tina never raised her hand.

This lack of oral participation in Tina's classroom interactions is supported in the classroom observation findings summarized previously regarding Nate and Gayle's oral participation. The observations of Nate and Gayle indicate that they also participated infrequently. The few incidents when Nate and Gayle participated, it was either to answer a question in English, to translate a word, or answer a question in Spanish after having multiple opportunities to practice the response.

The lack of oral participation in Tina's classroom interactions is also explained in the student and teacher interviews (Chapter 5). During the student interviews, Tina expressed that she did not participate in Spanish class because she "did not know the words to say." In the teacher interviews, Mr. Domico indicated that his students with LLDs disliked participating orally because they were nervous or afraid of answering incorrectly. Ms. Caldwell, the special educator, also stated that her students with LLDs were hesitant to participate orally in Spanish

class. Similar to Mr. Domico, Ms. Caldwell attributed this lack of participation to a fear of answering incorrectly and therefore being viewed as the special education student who always answers incorrectly.

6.2.3.4 Summary

In summary, the classroom observations and student and teacher interview findings describe Tina's profile as a learner in Mr. Domico's class. Tina was a social student who was identified to have deficiencies in reading, writing, attention, and social interactions. She also expressed particular perceptions about learning Spanish in the student interviews. The classroom interaction analysis illustrated that Tina participated infrequently in class, and when she did participate, it was to read aloud or provide homework answers on Spanish grammar. It was concluded that Tina's lack of participation was related to her lack of confidence in her knowledge of Spanish and her fear of answering incorrectly. In addition, it was found that Tina's learning profile was consequential to the outcome of her activity, the performance on the writing task and participation in class. Figure 18 utilizes Engestrom's activity triangle to align Tina with the object and outcome of her activity system (Chapter 7 will describe, combine, and analyze the additional features of Tina's activity system). It is also interesting to compare Tina's activity system with that of Nate and Gayle that have been depicted previously in Figures 12 and 13. Although the object of Tina's activity is the same as the objects depicted in Nate and Gayle's activity systems (Figures 12 and 13), the outcomes are different. As depicted in Figures 12, 13, and 18, these differential outcomes are directly related to the learning profiles of the student, which will be discussed further in the next two chapters.

Subject: Tina, an introverted student with difficulties in writing, reading, attention, And social interaction
Prefers to work individually with help From teachers
vocabulary activities were helpful

Object: Develop communicative ability in Spanish speaking, reading, listening, and writing



Outcome: Increased performance on writing tasks in all areas but control, infrequent oral participation, lack of confidence

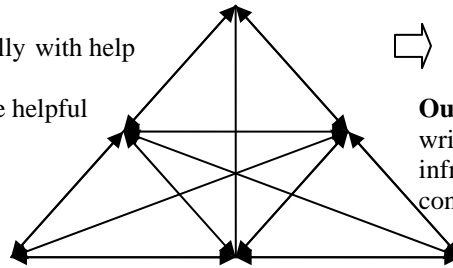


Figure 18 Tina's activity system

6.2.4 The Role of the Researcher

In addition to recording observations of the 7th grade Spanish class, the researcher interacted with Mr. Domico, Ms. Appel, Tina, and the other students with IEPs. At the beginning of the study, the researcher introduced herself as a teacher from a local university who wanted to know more about how the students learn Spanish. After several routine visits, Mr. Domico, Ms. Appel, and the students became accustomed to her presence. During the presentation of new content, the researcher observed the classroom at the back of the room. When the students worked on individual activities, the researcher sat next to Tina and worked with her. Ms. Appel was relieved to have the researcher work with Tina because she was overwhelmed by assisting the other students with IEPs.

When the class content was challenging, Ms. Appel occasionally removed a small group of students with IEPs to the small special education classroom next to Mr. Domico's room. When the students with IEPs moved to the special education classroom, the researcher followed and worked with Tina. During these small group sessions, the students asked the researcher many questions about how to say words and how to form grammatical structures. The students with IEPs called the researcher "the Spanish expert" because she was able to answer the

students' questions. Ms. Appel could not always answer their questions because she had not previously studied Spanish and had been learning along with the students for the past three years. Through these pull-out sessions, the researcher established a relationship with all of the students with IEPs in the class. The students began spontaneously initiating conversations with the researcher. In mid-November, when the students received their grades on a test, one of the special education students not participating in the study ran energetically to the researcher to inform her of his high grade. These observations indicate that, over time, the researcher assumed the role of a participant-observer.

Over the three month data collection period, the researcher worked individually with Tina for 14 class periods, which allowed the researcher to determine where Tina struggled and the types of assistance that helped her with her difficulties. The researcher noted that Tina had difficulty remembering new vocabulary. To assist Tina with recalling vocabulary, the researcher suggested that Tina draw visuals associated with the meaning of new words. After drawing these visuals, the researcher quizzed Tina two days later by showing her the visuals and asking her the word in Spanish. Tina was able to say the word for each picture quickly without assistance; therefore it seemed that the visual representations assisted Tina in remembering new vocabulary. One of the class activities asked the students to work with new vocabulary by guessing the meaning of the new words, looking up the word in the dictionary, drawing a visual, and writing the word in a sentence (lines 1-20, Example 11). This activity also seemed to help Tina remember new vocabulary. After participating in this activity, the researcher asked comprehension questions about the meaning of the vocabulary, and Tina was able to remember all 15 words (lines 21-33, Example 11).

Example 11. Researcher and Tina interacting during vocabulary activity

1 Researcher: Respuesta, respuesta...Can you guess what that word means?
2 Tina: Um...res...
3 Researcher: Oh, I can think of an English word that sounds like that.
4 Tina: What?
5 Researcher: Another word for answer
6 Tina: Response
7 Researcher: Does that look like response?
8 Tina: Yeah!
9 Researcher: Possible [Spanish pronunciation]
10 Tina: Possible!
11 Researcher: Yes...that's called a cognate, it has the same meaning in English
12 And Spanish
13 Researcher: Ok the next one is primavera. Let's make a sentence with
14 Primavera
15 Tina: Its spring
16 Researcher: Ok, how do you say "is" in Spanish, it's a cognate, what does that
17 mean?
18 Tina: It sounds like it in English.
19 Researcher: is...is
20 Tina: oh es
21 Researcher: ok, how do you say, "It's spring"
22 Tina: es primavera
23 Researcher: Read for a little mini quiz?
24 Tina: Ok
25 Researcher: ¿Como se dice plate?
26 Tina: Plato
27 Researcher: ¿Como se dice spring?
28 Tina: Primavera
29 Researcher: ¿Como se dice magazine?
30 Tina: Revista
31 Researcher: ¿Como se dice curly?
32 Tina: Rizado
33 Researcher: ¿Como se dice dirty pig?
34 Tina: Puerco, puerco
35 Researcher: High five!! Nice job!!

The researcher also provided various forms of assistance to help Tina with writing in Spanish. During writing activities, Tina struggled with articulating her thoughts in Spanish. To help Tina express herself in Spanish, the researcher offered forced choice questions that included several words or phrases. After Tina heard these choices, she was able to choose the correct

word to articulate what she wanted to write. The researcher also helped Tina remember previously learned vocabulary by saying the first sound of the word. The initiation of the sound triggered Tina's memory and she immediately remembered the word or phrase. When beginning writing activities, the researcher also reminded Tina to use the resources that were provided, such as vocabulary lists, word banks, and example sentences and phrases. To assist Tina with spelling, the researcher helped Tina to sound out the words. By sounding out the words, Tina was able to include all syllables and refrain from reversing letters in her writing.

When participating in grammar exercises, Tina had difficulty understanding and applying the form and attending to the meaning of the grammar concept. Individual explanations of grammar concepts helped Tina understand the patterns of the language. When attending to the conjugations of verbs, the researcher provided guidance by asking questions that simplified the process. For example, the researcher asked Tina, "What is the subject?" then, "What does the verb chart show?" and "What is the rule?" After conjugating the verbs, Tina could identify the meaning of the pronouns and the infinitives of the verbs, however she could not determine the meaning of the conjugations. To help Tina understand the meaning of the conjugations, the researcher asked assisting questions such as, "What is the meaning of the pronoun?" "What is the meaning of the infinitive?" and finally, "What does the conjugation mean?" After answering these guiding questions, Tina was able to deduce the meaning of the verb conjugations.

In addition to language related concepts, the researcher assisted Tina with basic classroom interactions. Tina had difficulty taking notes because she could not see the board, wrote very slowly, had poor handwriting, and struggled with spelling. At times, Tina focused the majority of class time on taking notes and missed the instruction presented by Mr. Domico. To assist Tina with attending to Mr. Domico's instruction of content, the researcher took notes

for her. During class instruction and individual work, Tina frequently lost focus. When Tina became distracted, the researcher reminded her to listen to the instruction and to focus on classroom tasks. When Mr. Domico read aloud, the researcher pointed out the written words for Tina to follow. The researcher also helped Tina organize her notes and language resources, and reminded her to write down her homework assignments in her planner.

During classroom observations, the researcher worked individually with Tina to assess her understanding of instruction, to identify her challenges with content, and to provide assistance with completing tasks. These data indicate that, similar to Nate and Gayle, Tina was able to complete part of the activities, however she struggled with focusing, retaining vocabulary, articulating thoughts in Spanish, and understanding and applying grammatical concepts. To assist Tina with these difficulties, the observation findings show that guiding questions, individual teacher-student interaction, and multi-sensory tasks helped Tina to complete activities, which assisted her in learning Spanish.

6.2.5 Summary

This section of the classroom observation findings described the setting of Mr. Domico's classroom; indicated the significant interactions and roles that the teacher, and the researcher played in Tina's foreign language learning; identified the accommodations designed for students with LLDs, and illustrated the difficulties that Tina experienced in her learning of Spanish.

By analyzing the classroom setting, it was found that, similar to Ms. O'Brien, Mr. Domico implemented a traditional structural approach to teaching Spanish, despite the content-based curriculum. Within this approach, Mr. Domico incorporated a majority of decontextualized, form-focused instructional practices within teacher-fronted and individual

groupings of students. Mr. Domico situated himself as the provider of all new knowledge and the center of all activity, and positioned his students as passive learners. He incorporated few meaningful, multi-sensory activities, and there were no incidences of small group activities. The few meaningful, multi-sensory activities seemed to assist Tina in her learning of new vocabulary and her ability to communicate using the language concepts emphasized in the lessons.

In addition to the classroom setting, this section revealed interesting findings relating to the interactions and roles that the teacher and the researcher played in Tina's foreign language learning. First, similar to Nate and Gayle, it was found that Tina's oral participation during teacher-fronted activities was infrequent. This infrequency of oral participation of students with LLDs was deemed problematic because it hindered the students' ability to practice their oral proficiency in Spanish. In addition to Tina's oral participation in class, the findings revealed that the researcher interacted with Tina frequently to assist her with remembering vocabulary and applying vocabulary and grammar to her writing. While interacting with Tina, the researcher reported that Tina benefited from guiding questions, visuals, and individual assistance. Finally, the observations reported on the impromptu conversations between the researcher and Mr. Domico. These conversations revealed that, although Mr. Domico recognized that Tina performed extremely well in his class, he was frustrated with teaching students with LLDs and the content-based curriculum.

Similar to the findings reported on Ms. O'Brien's class, the findings in this section illustrated that Mr. Domico designed accommodations for LLDs during formal assessments, not during the introduction, presentation, or practice of new content. In addition, it was found that the accommodations that Mr. Domico designed for the assessments were in agreement with the

IEP documents, and simply minimized content and choice, and did not assist students with the meaning and application of Spanish language concepts.

Finally, this section of the findings indicated the areas in which Tina struggled. Tina's IEP reported that she had difficulty with attention, socialization, organization, reading, writing, and spelling. The findings reveal that Tina confronted the same difficulties attending in Spanish, however she also grappled with remembering the Spanish meaning of vocabulary and grammatical forms.

In the next chapter, the findings from the literacy assessments, student and teacher interviews, and classroom observations will be addressed and discussed to help provide a comprehensive image of the foreign language learning experience of students with LLDs and the associated accommodations developed to assist this learning experience.

7.0 AN ACTIVITY THEORY PERSPECTIVE: COMMON FEATURES OF NATE, GAYLE, AND TINA'S ACTIVITY SYSTEMS

In this chapter, an Activity Theory perspective was applied to the findings of the study to address the research question, “How do the instructional practices, classroom interactions, and materials that teachers use to accommodate students with LLDs relate to student performance?” As described previously in Chapters 2 and 3, an Activity Theory perspective was employed to provide a comprehensive image of the social, cultural, and historical features that were consequential to the participants’ learning of Spanish. Deeply rooted in the sociocultural perspective of developmental psychology, activity theorists claim that human development is directly related to the social, cultural, and historical components of an activity system (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Lantolf, 2000). Therefore, to depict a comprehensive image of the components related to student learning in this study, the classroom observations, interviews, and literacy assessments were viewed as critical features of the activity system. To view the activity system, a graphic developed by Engestrom (1999) was applied to multiple data points (see Chapter 2 for further explanation of Activity Theory). Engstrom’s triangular model of an activity system was depicted to display the common *mediating artifacts, rules, communities, and divisions of labor* that were observed in both Ms. O’Brien and Mr. Domico’s classes. In this way, important similarities and differences of the instructional context can be extrapolated from the data.

Figure 19 displays the common features observed within the activity systems of the foreign language learning of Nate, Gayle, and Tina. In agreement with Engestrom's model, the *subjects*, Nate, Gayle, and Tina are situated at the left of the triangle, directly across from the *object* of study, to develop the students' communicative ability in Spanish writing, reading, speaking, and listening in Spanish. In this analysis, the *object* of study does not necessarily refer to the internal *object* of each individual student. Instead, the *object* is determined in terms of the activity system as it was observed.

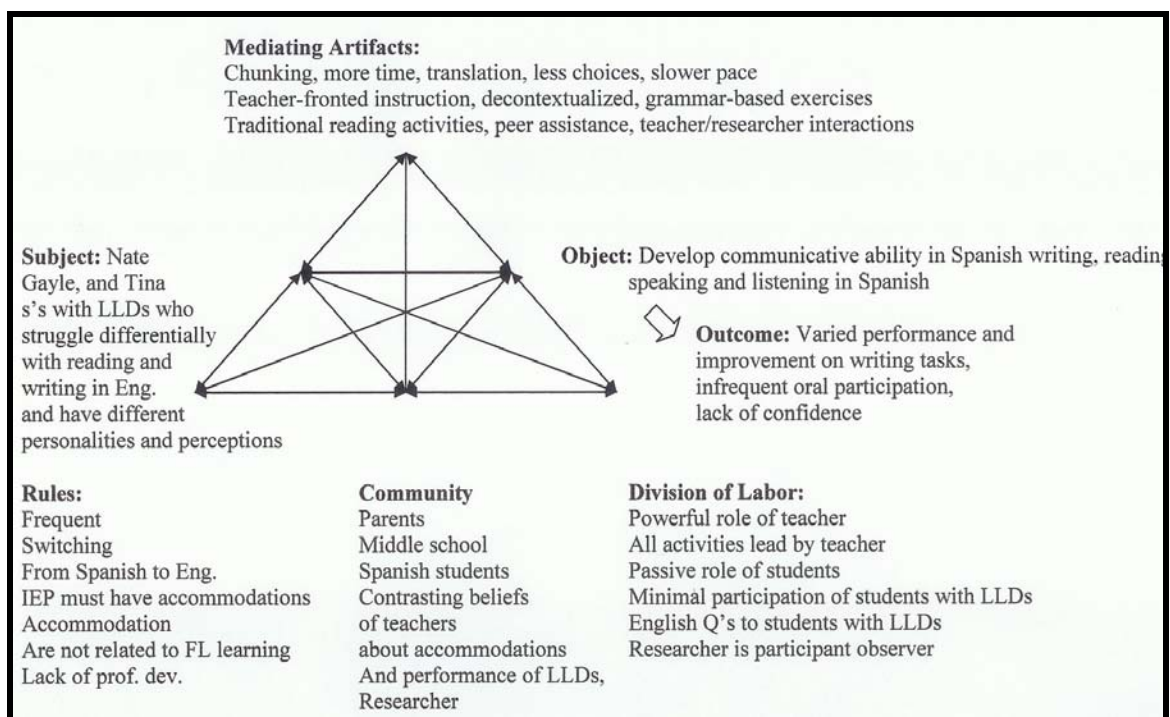


Figure 19. Common Features in the Activity System of Nate, Gayle, and Tina's Foreign Language Learning

In this system, the *subjects* were identified to have varied deficiencies in their abilities to read and write in English, differential learning profiles and personalities, and various perceptions of their foreign language learning. Thus, the *object*, which focuses the activity of the subjects and leads to the goals-directed action, led to differential *outcomes*. The *outcome*, as the data

indicated, resulted in the varied performance on the Spanish writing tasks of these three students, although the object of activity was the same. Outcomes that were also documented in this study were the infrequent oral participation in Spanish class; the lack of confidence in their speaking, writing, and reading of Spanish; frustration and difficulty with reading, writing, listening; differential success on assessments; and struggles with decontextualized grammatical exercises. The point of this analysis is that, although the focus of activity was the same and these students participated in the same instructional mediation, outcomes, were far from uniform. These *outcomes* show a range of performances including the students' differential ratings on assessments, preferences for learning tasks, and attitudes to learning Spanish. Figure 19 depicts the activity system observed in the classes in this study.

7.1.1.1 Mediating artifacts

Figure 19 illustrates the *mediating artifacts* that assisted the foreign language learning of Nate, Gayle, and Tina. The *mediating artifacts* that were available to assist the learning of the three participants with LLDs were a) the generic accommodations in the IEPs that did not relate to the form, meaning, and functional application of the foreign language, the differential profiles of the students, and/or the introduction, presentation, or practice of lesson concepts, b) teacher-fronted instruction, c) decontextualized grammar-based exercises, d) traditional reading exercises, e) the writing activities, and e) and interactions with peers, teachers, parents, and the researcher.

In looking at the *mediating artifacts*, it is evident that there was no assistance that related directly to the comprehension and functional use of the foreign language. In addition, with the exception of peer, teacher, parent and researcher interactions, it is apparent that these *mediating artifacts* did not provide students with assistance with the form, meaning and functional use of

the foreign language during the various phases of the lesson. Therefore, because there was no specific assistance with the comprehension or functional use of the foreign language during the lesson; the participants lacked the ability to understand and apply the foreign language to communicative interactions. Due to this lack of ability, the students participated infrequently during teacher-fronted instruction, which comprised the majority of the instruction observed. To increase student participation in the foreign language class, the *mediating artifacts* in the activity system must include activities that assist students with comprehending and functionally applying the foreign language during the instruction of foreign language lessons.

Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico's consistent use of decontextualized grammar exercises, another form of mediation, was perceived by the students to be frustrating and not beneficial to their learning. When looking specifically at the *outcome* of all three students' writing scores, it is evident that only Nate's scores increased in the area of grammatical control. This shows that a focus on decontextualized grammar assisted only a few select students with LLDs with their grammatical control of writing. Recommendations for instructional practices that assist students with LLDs with the function, organization, and control of their writing will be discussed in the next section.

Traditional reading exercises are also included as *mediating artifacts* in Figure 19. These exercises asked students to either translate or read and answer factual questions that could have been copied directly from the text. The activity system displays that these *mediating artifacts* resulted in the *outcome* of students reporting that they were frustrated and unable to read and understand the foreign language presented in texts and in instruction. Therefore, to more effectively assist students with LLDs in their comprehension of texts, teachers should eliminate translation approaches to reading activities. Recommendations for more effective approaches to

foreign language reading instruction for students with LLDs will be suggested in the next section.

Finally, the last significant *mediating artifact* in the activity system is the individual assistance provided by peers, teachers, parents, and the researcher. In the interviews, the participants reported that individualized interactions between peers and teachers (the researcher included) assisted their learning. In addition, the classroom observations reported that interactions with teachers and the researcher benefited students by providing assistance and formative assessment of student learning. In the classroom observations, it was found that peers both positively and negatively influenced the performance of the students. Finally, the findings demonstrated that parental interactions positively influenced the students' performance in Spanish class. Therefore, to change the *outcome* to include an increase in student performance, it is recommended that more opportunities for individual assistance and parental contact are included in the instruction of students with LLDs, which will be discussed further in the next section.

7.1.1.2 Rules

In both classes, Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico perpetuated certain *rules* with reference to the amount of Spanish used in classroom instruction and the types of accommodations legally applied to students with LLDs. More locally, at the classroom level, both teachers adhered to a rather traditional approach to foreign language instruction. Both teachers utilized frequent switching from Spanish to English to make the foreign language understandable to the students, applied traditional methods of reading and writing instruction, and taught and lectured on decontextualized grammatical concepts. At the national level, these teachers were bound by the legal mandate, IDEA, which requires all teachers to read IEP documents and implement the

recommended accommodations for students who have identified LLDs in their classes. However, as mentioned previously, the accommodations recommended in the IEPs were not foreign language specific and related mostly to formal assessments rather than instruction. In addition, the recommendations in the IEPs also were likely to apply similar accommodations for students who contained similar language-related deficiencies. Thus, these *rules* provide a partial explanation for the lack of foreign language-related *mediating artifacts* included in the apex of the triangular model. To influence the type of *mediating artifacts* included in this activity system, the *rules* (at both the national and classroom level) need to recognize the importance of providing assistance with the meaning and functional application of the foreign language in both the instruction and assessment of students with LLDs. Recommendations for this change in the *rules* are addressed in the next section.

7.1.1.3 Community

The significant members of the *community* of both Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico's classes consisted of between twenty-eight to thirty middle school Spanish students, the teacher, the researcher, the parents, and an aide (in Mr. Domico's class). It was found that the participants' peers both positively and negatively influenced the students' learning. At times, the students benefited from asking peers for assistance, at other times, the students' peers distracted them and influenced them to display a negative attitude toward learning Spanish. With reference to the parents, the observations of all three participants indicated that frequent communication with the parents of LLDs positively influenced the behavior and performance of the participants. Finally, it was shown that the students with LLDs benefited from individual assistance from the teacher and the researcher. Thus, by analyzing the *community* members of the activity system, it

is apparent that peers, teachers, and parents play an integral role in improving outcomes of foreign language instruction for students with LLDs.

7.1.1.4 Division of labor

When analyzing the *division of labor* in the classroom communities, it was found that both teachers encompassed the majority of the power in their classrooms. The power held by the teacher was determined by the inordinate amount of teacher-fronted instruction, the lack of small group and pair work, and the lack of student choice in the instructional groupings and type of activities included in the classroom. The activities observed reflected the teachers' beliefs of what constituted effective foreign language instruction, and not the students' perceptions of beneficial activities as expressed in the interviews. Another aspect of the activity system that suggests a particular type of division of labor (here the work of participating in the foreign language class) was the oral participation of students with LLDs. When the teachers selected students with LLDs to participate, the questions were posed in English, involved translation to English by the students, or were asked in Spanish and then translated immediately for the students. When the teachers asked other regular education students to participate, the questions were most often posed in Spanish without translation. This discursive pattern positioned the students with LLDs as less proficient and weaker than the regular education students in the class because it implicitly indicated that the students with LLDs could not understand or answer the question in Spanish without the assistance of translation. Without the opportunity to observe student performance on Spanish-only activities, the teachers were not able to accurately assess what these students could or could not do.

This *division of labor* situated the teacher as the person in control, the students as passive learners, and the students with LLDs as those who could not participate in oral interactions

without the use of translation into English. I argue that this *division of labor* was consequential to the *outcome* in this activity system. Because the teacher maintained control of the class and of all corresponding decisions related to instruction and accommodations, the students were unable to voice or take part in any decisions relating to their learning. If the teacher relinquished some of the control of the class, and allowed students to have an active role in their learning, the *mediating artifacts*, might have reflected more of the students individualized needs. When the *mediating artifacts* reflect the students' needs, they are more effective in directing the *subjects* towards their *object* of developing communicative ability. Therefore, to more effectively meet the needs of students with LLDs, teachers need to allow students to have a voice in what they learn, how they learn, and how they display their knowledge.

By comparing the activity systems of Nate, Gayle, and Tina's foreign language learning, Figure 19 illustrates that, although these students were part of a similar activity system, the *outcome* of their learning was quite different. Later in this chapter, this concept of differential performance of students within the same class will be addressed in a discussion of instructional accommodations.

7.1.1.5 Summary

Finally, the analysis of comparative activity systems reveals the disconnection between the *object* and the associated *outcome* of these students. To better align the *object* and *outcome*, the *mediating artifacts* and *rules* need to be altered so that the *outcome* of students' activity (developing writing, reading, listening, and speaking proficiency in Spanish) is similar to the object of the teachers' activity. That is, if the *object* in an activity system is that which focuses an individual on a particular set of goal-directed actions, the *outcome* must coincide with this *object* to claim that a successful *outcome* has been achieved. It is ironic that, although both

teachers focused on the objective activity of developing proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking in Spanish, the *mediating artifacts* provided, the *rules* of classroom participation, and the *division of labor* in these classes often worked against a positive *outcome* for these three students with LLDs. The next chapter suggests how teachers can design effective accommodations that serve as *mediating artifacts* that align with the *object* of developing Spanish writing, reading, listening, and speaking proficiency in Spanish. After these accommodations are explained, the next chapter will conclude by revisiting the activity system of the foreign language learning of Nate, Gayle, and Tina, and including the recommended modified instructional practices.

8.0 DISCUSSION

This study of the foreign language learning of three middle school students with LLDs has several implications for the field of foreign language education. First, by summarizing the findings from the student interviews, classroom observations, and writing assessments, this study provides a profile of the perceptions, classroom participation, and writing development of these three students as they learn a foreign language. Second, the findings of this study include implications for instructional accommodations of students with LLDs enrolled in foreign language classes. Finally, though revisiting the activity theory framework, the implications of this study illustrate a potential activity system that would effectively assist students with LLDs learning a foreign language.

8.1 A PROFILE OF STUDENTS WITH LLDS LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

8.1.1 Perceptions of Students with LLDs

The findings of this study contribute to the existing literature on the perceptions of students with LLDs learning a foreign language. As presented in the literature review (Chapter 2), the majority of previous studies on the foreign language learning of students with LLDs have

examined student performance. However, only a few of these studies interviewed the students with LLDs on their perceptions of learning a foreign language (Arries, 1999; Mabbott, 1994). Although these studies elicited interview data from students with LLDs, the participants were university students or adults. Therefore, within the field of foreign language, this study was the first to elicit the perceptions of foreign language learning of middle school students with LLDs.

The interviews of the three middle school students in this study revealed several findings about the perceptions of middle school students with LLDs learning a foreign language. First, the interviews found that the participants' general perceptions of their Spanish learning differed, and these differences were directly related to the students' personalities, learning styles, and interests. Second, the interviews showed that these students need assistance with the semantic aspects of the foreign language. When asked about helpful activities, the students stated that multi-sensory (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic), contextualized activities such as role-play, visuals, and projects provided them with the necessary assistance to comprehend the meaning of the new words they learned. The claim that students with LLDs need context to comprehend and articulate meaning in the foreign language is also supported in Mabbott's study of adult learners (1994). Third, in the analysis of the perceptions of these three middle school students, this study revealed that reading texts, communicating in writing, and completing decontextualized grammatical exercises were frustrating and challenging. This finding supports the findings in Mabbott (1994). In her study, Mabbott reports that her adult foreign language learners with LLDs complained about memorizing meaningless verb forms and dialogs, and having to deal with mechanical exercises in their textbooks. Thus, this study showed that these middle school students share instructional needs and difficulties that are similar to those found in studies of adults with LLDs learning a foreign language. Given that these three students and the adult

learners in Mabbott's study share the similar reactions to the need for meaning-focused learning, it may well be that students with LLDs in foreign language classes would be well-served by careful attention to meaning in all aspects of their language learning. Clearly, this is advisable for the instruction of all learners, but students with LLDs seem to be greatly hindered in their learning when asked to complete language exercises for the sole purpose of morphological or syntactic manipulation.

8.1.2 Class Participation of Students with LLDs

In addition to perceptions, this study sheds light on the class participation of these three middle school students. As mentioned previously, the majority of studies on students with LLDs have examined student performance on quantitative measures of foreign language knowledge. Previous studies in the field of foreign language have not looked at the patterns of participation of students with LLDs in foreign language classrooms.

By examining student performance in Spanish classrooms, this study has shown that students with LLDs may participate infrequently during teacher-fronted, large group discussions. By triangulating the student and teacher interviews with the classroom observations, this study found that the students' lack of participation was due to anxiety and lack of vocabulary, not a lack of knowledge.

Thus, the findings of this study contribute a more comprehensive understanding of the classroom participation of three students with LLDs in foreign language classrooms, and might transfer to the experiences of others who have observed and studied students with disabilities in the foreign language classroom.

8.1.3 Writing Performance of Students with LLDs

Through the analysis of writing assessments, this study provided a detailed profile of the writing development of three middle school students with LLDs. As mentioned in the literature review, previous studies have determined student performance on quantitative measures of linguistic components of the language (Bruck, 1980; Cummins, 1983; Sparks et al., 1992; Sparks et al., 2003; Mabbott, 1994). However, up to now, there have not been any studies that conducted an in-depth examination of the communicative, functional, lexical, and syntactic development of the foreign language writing of middle school students with LLDs.

This examination of student performance revealed that, despite their identified LLDs, these middle school students were able to develop their writing ability in at least one area of the ACFTL rubric for presentational communication after several years of foreign language study. Surprisingly, the findings in this study also discovered that the students with LLDs perform as well as or better than their non-LLD peers. Lastly, in the analysis of linguistic features of writing, it was found that, the writing ability of these students grows over time in function, lexicon, and syntax, despite their identified LLDs. Such growth in syntax was not found in another study of a non-LLD student who was enrolled in the same content-based Spanish program and had not had as many years of foreign language study (Hendry, 2009). Therefore, despite their identified LLDs, these students were able to develop in their writing ability, and, at times, this development exceeded non-LLD students enrolled in the same program.

The analysis of student writing also indicated differential performance among the three participants. Two of the students improved in their overall writing scores, while one student decreased. However, it was determined that this decrease was related to personal issues and the proximity of negative students, not necessarily due to a lack of ability. With respect to specific

features of each student's writing, students also performed differentially. Some students performed stronger in control, while others were strong in function and text type.

8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INSTRUCTION

8.2.1 Instructional accommodations in the IEPs

An important implication of this study relates to the accommodations provided for the students with LLDs. The student and teacher interviews and classroom observations show that the accommodations listed in the IEP documents need to be revised to more effectively meet the needs of these students with LLDs learning a foreign language. According to the National Center for Learning Disabilities, Inc., accommodations are adaptations to activities that allow students with LLDs to participate at the same level as their non-LLD peers (National Center for Learning Disabilities, Inc., 2006). To assist these students with completing the same activities as their non-LLD peers, accommodations must reflect the student's specific needs. As described previously in the summary of the IEP components, the participants in this study struggled with reading, writing, paying attention in class, and participating in social activities. In addition to the IEP documents, the classroom observations and student interviews indicated that Nate, Gayle, and Tina also struggled with foreign language specific skills, such as comprehending and expressing meaning, and forming and applying grammatical structures in the foreign language. Therefore, to more effectively assist these students with LLDs in participating in activities at the same level as their peers, teachers need to design accommodations that are specific to the foreign language learning.

Currently, the accommodations in the IEP documents include generic recommendations for teachers that apply mostly to formal assessments, and do not relate to instruction. For example, the generic accommodations in the IEPs involve clustering questions, limiting choices for responses, and allowing the students to have more time on formal evaluations. These accommodations relate to the activity itself, rather than the meaning, form, and function of the foreign language; and can be applied to all content areas, not simply foreign language. In addition, these accommodations do not suggest adaptations that teachers can include in the introduction, presentation, or practice of lesson content; they merely relate to specific activities that involve responses. Although each IEP document is created individually for each student, the accommodations for foreign language that are included in each IEP tend to be similar for students who display similar language-related deficiencies. Therefore, to appropriately accommodate for students with LLDs learning a foreign language, IEPs must include modifications that are specific to foreign language instruction, individualized for each students' differential needs, and reflect all areas of the lesson. For example, when reading stories in a foreign language with a student who struggles with reading comprehension, the IEP accommodation could require that teachers include visuals to negotiate meaning of the story and graphic organizers to assist the students with the overall comprehension of the setting, plot, and resolution.

Thus, to more effectively meet the needs of these students with LLDs learning a foreign language, the accommodations in the IEP documents need to be revised to (a) relate specifically to foreign language learning; (b) assist students throughout all aspects of the lesson to include the introduction, presentation, and practice components of lessons; and (c) reflect the abilities, learning profiles, and interests of each individual student.

8.2.2 Specific Accommodations for Foreign Language Learning

To include assistance for these students with LLDs that is specific to foreign language learning, the accommodations in the IEPs should help and support students (a) understand the meaning of the words they are learning and using, (b) comprehend the structure of the language, and (c) functionally apply vocabulary and grammatical concepts. Although these teaching practices are representative of professionally endorsed teaching practice for all students learning a foreign language, the findings in this study demonstrated that the students with LLDs struggled with identifying and expressing meaning in the language. Therefore it is important to ensure that the accommodations assist students with their deficiencies in comprehending, retaining, and articulating themselves in the foreign language.

The findings from the student interviews and the classroom observations indicate that the students struggled with understanding and retaining the meaning of the foreign language when reading and discussing texts, learning new vocabulary, applying new vocabulary in writing activities, completing grammatical exercises, and participating in teacher-fronted activities. The participants in this study also struggled with understanding the grammatical patterns that are used to communicate meaning in Spanish during listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills. These students had difficulty with applying grammatical concepts to functionally communicate in Spanish. The student writing assessments indicated that the students with LLDs needed assistance with specific writing skills, such as controlling grammar, organizing ideas, addressing an audience, expanding vocabulary, and spelling.

Therefore, to more effectively meet the needs of these students with LLDs learning a foreign language, it is recommended that accommodations include assistance with the meaning of the language, the knowledge of grammatical concepts of the language, the functional

application of these grammatical concepts within communicative contexts, and the skills involved in reading and writing activities. These ideas will be developed with specific reference to students with LLDs below.

8.2.2.1 Accommodations for ensuring comprehension

The wealth of literature on comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982; Long, 1981), for assisting foreign language students with understanding the meaning of unknown language, provides resources for designing accommodations for these students with LLDs who struggle with comprehending the foreign language. Comprehensible input is a concept in second language acquisition that claims that students acquire a second language when they receive input in that language that is understandable and slightly beyond their current understanding (Krashen, 1982; Long, 1981). To provide comprehensible input in the foreign language, current literature suggests that teachers utilize a variety of techniques such as: (a) speaking slowly, (b) rephrasing key ideas, (c) repeating important words, (d) checking for comprehension, (e) instructing students to ask questions, (f) activating students background knowledge, (g) previewing lesson content to prepare students for activities, and (h) illustrating the meaning of language through visuals, charts, realia, and kinesthetic movement (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992). These suggestions for developing understanding of foreign language should be reviewed by teachers and special educators and included in IEP documents to assist students with LLDs whose individualized needs include understanding the meaning of the foreign language presented in class activities.

8.2.2.2 Accommodations for knowledge of grammatical concepts

When designing accommodations for assisting students whose individualized needs reflect phonological, orthographic, and syntactic knowledge of the foreign language, it is

recommended that teachers utilize contextualized, multi-sensory activities that reflect functional, communicative settings, and visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning styles in their instruction (DiFino and Lombardino, 2004, Hurst 1996; Kennewig, 1986; Sparks et al, 1992; Spinelli, 1989). Previous research has shown the benefits of teaching through the use of multi-sensory, multi-modal activities in instruction that reflect visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning styles (Hurst, 1996; Sparks et al, 1992). The Orton-Gillingham method utilizes structured, sequential, multi-sensory techniques to instruct students with dyslexia to read in their first language. Sparks et al. (1992) initiated a study with a high school Spanish teacher who applied the Orton-Gillingham method to assist students her students who were at-risk. The study found significant gains in the participants phonological processing, verbal memory, vocabulary, and foreign language aptitude. Hurst (1996) also discusses the benefits of applying the Orton-Gillingham method in her teaching of eighth grade students with LLDs. After incorporating the Orton-Gillingham approach, Hurst's reported that the multi-sensory approach had positive effects on the performance and perceptions of her middle school students. Thus, to develop accommodations for phonological, orthographic, and syntactic abilities in the foreign language, it is recommended that teachers include structured, sequential, multimodal, multi-sensory activities in their explicit teaching of linguistic elements of the language.

In addition to semantic and syntactic/orthographic accommodations, it is advised that teachers assist students with LLDs who struggle to understand the meaning and communicative application of grammatical structures in the foreign language. The results of this study illustrated that students with LLDs had difficulty understanding the meaning of the grammatical concepts that they were learning and struggled to apply this knowledge to communicate appropriately in the foreign language. Previous research on the foreign language learning of

students with LLDs has focused on the development of linguistic knowledge of the foreign language, however few studies have indicated that students need assistance with the application of the linguistic concepts themselves. When recommending alternative teaching techniques for students with LLDs, Difino and Lombardino (2004) and Mabbott (1994) advise that teachers instruct grammar inductively within a communicative context so that learning the grammar of the foreign language is meaningful and concrete, and less analytical and abstract. In her study of adult learners, Mabbott (1994) discovered that the students with LLDs who learned within an either an immersion setting or through a communicative approach outperformed students with LLDs who were involved in a traditional, grammar-translation approach. In addition, the participants in Mabbott's study reported that classes that were taught in a communicative setting were preferred to classes that were focused explicitly on analysis of grammatical structures of the language. Thus, the findings of this study as well as previous research suggest that teachers apply structured, multi-sensory, contextualized activities to teach grammatical concepts to students with LLDs who struggle with the meaning and application of the foreign language.

8.2.2.3 Accommodations for functional application of vocabulary and grammatical concepts

The findings of this study imply that the students with LLDs need assistance with the functional application of vocabulary and grammatical concepts. The PACE model (Presentation, Attention, Co-construction, Extension), a teaching method developed by Donato & Adair-Hauck (1994) to teach linguistic concepts of the language through observations of the use of these grammatical concepts in whole texts, could potentially assist students with LLDs in their understanding of the form, meaning, and application of linguistic concepts.

This method utilizes stories from the target culture as a context to develop students' knowledge of linguistic concepts. Through this story-based method for teaching linguistic concepts, teachers apply visual supports, kinesthetic activities, and comprehensible input to assist students with comprehending a story that contains multiple representations of a highlighted linguistic concept. After comprehending the story, the teacher highlights specific language from the story that displays multiple representations of a particular linguistic concept. Following the presentation of the story, the teacher asks probing questions to draw students' attention to the salient linguistic concept. Together, the teacher and the students construct a generalization about the form, meaning, and functional use of the focused linguistic concept. After discovering generalizations about the highlighted linguistic concept, the teacher provides the students with multiple activities that are related to the story. These post-story telling activities allow students to practice the salient linguistic concept in a meaningful context (within the topic of the story).

Thus, the PACE method is recommended as an instructional practice to assist students with LLDs in gaining knowledge of abstract, grammatical concepts. Through a multi-sensory, contextualized approach, the PACE method provides students with LLDs with concrete, meaningful opportunities to understand linguistic concepts, comprehend their meaning, and apply them within a functional context.

8.2.3 Accommodations During Introduction, Presentation, and Practice of Lesson Concepts

To assist students with LLDs with learning a foreign language, it is recommended that teachers design accommodations for the introduction, presentation, and practice components of lessons. Currently, the accommodations in the IEP documents focus primarily on formal

assessments and assignments. As indicated in the findings of this study, in addition to formal assessments, the students with LLDs needed assistance with each component of the lesson to include the introduction, presentation, and practice with new material.

8.2.3.1 Accommodations during introduction of concepts

As mentioned previously, the classroom observations indicated that the participants in this study struggled with organizing information, focusing during class activities, and comprehending and expressing meaning in the foreign language. DiFino and Lombardino suggest that teachers alert students of goals, lesson objectives, and activities in advance to assist students with LLDs in planning time in and outside of class more efficiently (2004). The introductory activities included in the lessons observed provided an opportunity for Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico to focus the attention of students with LLDs on the lesson objectives, organize and prepare for the content that is to be taught each day, and assist students with comprehending new vocabulary and expressing themselves in Spanish. However, the introductory activities that were observed did not assist the students in this study with making meaning in the language, and only Ms. O'Brien's class included objectives that helped the students focus on and organize new knowledge and activities of the lesson. In addition, the majority of the introductory activities involved translation, grammar responses out of context, or homework correction. A few activities required comprehension of Spanish, however they lacked the visual or linguistic clues to assist students' understanding, and failed to prepare them to comprehend and express themselves in Spanish later in the lesson.

To help these students with LLDs who struggle to focus and prepare for lesson content, introductory activities should be included in every lesson and designed to (a) introduce language in a context, (b) provide visual, linguistic, and kinesthetic clues for comprehensible input, (c)

access prior knowledge or student interest, (d) draw attention to both content and language-related concepts, and (e) provide students with opportunities to communicate with the language, and (f) state explicitly in English the purpose of the lesson in terms of an objective.

8.2.3.2 Accommodations within student groupings

The findings of this study also indicate that teachers should vary their grouping of students in order to accommodate for LLDs during classroom activities that present and practice new content. In the interviews, Nate, Gayle, and Tina reported that they benefited from individual assistance from peers and their teachers. However, the classroom observations indicated that Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico's classes were dominated by teacher-fronted and individual student work. There were very few incidences of activities that included small group or pair interactions.

A lesson that includes a balance of small group and pair work, along with individual and teacher-fronted activities, allows teachers opportunities for formative assessment of student learning; and provides students with LLDs assistance from a variety of sources (interactions with the teacher, their peers, the activity, or the materials). When teachers include only teacher-fronted and individual student activities, they are unable to formatively assess student knowledge and provide assistance to all students because they are occupied with leading the activity or simply do not have enough time to work individually with all students. When students work in smaller groups, teachers are able to circulate among the students throughout the class period and interact with students, both LLD and non-LLD, in small groups because they do not have the responsibility of leading the activity. In addition, when the students work together they can assist each other with the activity. Finally, a variety of groupings in a class lesson allows teachers more opportunity to recycle content in different ways which offers multiple

opportunities for students with LLDs to comprehend and make sense of new knowledge. Thus, because the participants in this study benefited from peer and teacher assistance, it is recommended that teachers vary their activities to include a balance of teacher-fronted, small group, and individual activities.

8.2.3.3 Accommodations to encourage oral participation

The findings of this study also imply that students with LLDs need accommodations for oral participation in whole group activities. As previously discussed, the classroom observations reported that the oral participation of the participants during teacher-fronted activities was infrequent, and the questions asked of the students required only one-word answers in English with little opportunity for students to speak or elaborate in Spanish. For example, when analyzing the students participation in class, the observations revealed that Nate only participated seven times and Gayle participated a mere six times out of a possible 145 opportunities. Similarly, in the seventh grade class, Tina only answered four times out of a possible 159 questions that were asked by the teacher. These few questions that were asked by the teachers and answered by the students with LLDs were phrased in English about classroom tasks, or asked the students to translate words from Spanish to English.

This pattern of student participation was a concern because it limited the opportunity for the participants to practice their oral proficiency and to think critically about the concepts of the lesson. Previous studies have shown that the discourse between students and teachers during instruction plays an integral role in the students' development of both critical thinking and communicative ability in the foreign language (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). Additional studies (Hall, 1995; Mehan, 1979) have discussed the limitations of perpetuating classroom discourse that incorporates only teacher-(I)nitiated questions, student (R)esponses, and teacher

(E)valuations, or an IRE framework (such as the questions and answers observed in this study between the teachers and the students with LLDs). In addition to promoting critical thinking and communicative ability, Vygotsky (1978) claims that language is a primary form of assistance that guides students from what they can do on their own to what they can do potentially. Therefore, because classroom discourse, and language itself, plays an important component in students' development of critical thinking and communicative ability, and it was observed that the participants in this study were rarely participating in the classroom conversations, then accommodations need to be designed that encourage oral participation from the students and ensure the types of questions for LLDs initiate critical thinking and communicative ability.

The teacher and student interviews revealed that accommodations for oral participation should also reduce anxiety and promote student self-confidence. When discussing student participation, the teacher and student interviews explained that the lack of participation of students with LLDs was due to their fear of answering incorrectly. Therefore, the minimal oral participation of the participants in this study was often due to a lack of confidence, not necessarily to a lack of ability. This lack of confidence could have been related to the types of questions asked of the students with LLDs. As mentioned previously, when asking questions, the teachers immediately translated the Spanish to English for the students with LLDs, which is an example of oversimplification of content. This oversimplification was detrimental to the learning of students with LLDs because it did not push them beyond what they were able to do on their own. When a teacher provides too much assistance, they can hinder student learning, and affect their self-confidence. Oversimplification is also problematic because it implicitly suggests that the students needed translation to understand Spanish, automatically situating them as unjustifiably weaker than the regular education students in the class. Thus, these findings

indicate that accommodations should also to be designed that allow students to participate successfully, which, in turn, encourages students to develop self-confidence in their oral participation.

In summary, to better accommodate for students with LLDs with oral participation in class activities, teachers need to (a) incorporate classroom discourse that encourages students with LLDs to participate and develop critical thinking and communicative ability, (b) vary the grouping of students so that they have opportunities to participate and feel confident in small group situations, and (c) provide techniques for providing oral assistance to students in the foreign language that does not oversimplify the content.

Instructional strategies that could provide assistance for students with LLDs who struggle to participate during whole group discussions are (a) allowing time for students to prepare to participate orally, (b) providing the linguistic support related to the conversational topic, and (c) including activities that encourage communication. As indicated in the IEP documents, students with LLDs need more time than their non-LLD peers to prepare for activities, such as classroom participation. Because students with LLDs have deficiencies with language, they need more time to think about what they want to say, and determine how to articulate their thoughts in the foreign language. “Think-Pair-Shares” (activities that ask students to think about the response to a question independently, discuss that response with a peer, and then share their response with the entire class) can assist students with LLDs with participating orally. These activities help students with LLDs participate because they allow students the time to prepare a response for a whole group discussion. However, because students with LLDs also struggle with comprehending and expressing meaning in the foreign language, the “think-pair-shares” should incorporate linguistic support in the form of word-banks, models of language, charts of

grammatical formulas, and group brainstorming of the vocabulary, grammar, and functions necessary to communicate about a particular topic.

Although not intentionally designed for students with LLDs, task-based activities can also encourage the participation of students with LLDs. In an attempt to promote three modes of communication in foreign language classes, Lee (1995) demonstrates how task-based activities can assist students with participating in class discussions. He shows that task-based activities assist students with participating because they provide students with time to think about what they want to say and include the linguistic support to articulate their thoughts in the foreign language. To structure class discussions that incorporate the participation students in the foreign language, Lee (1995) suggests that teachers include task-based activities that (a) determine the outcome of the conversation, (b) dissect the topic into sub-components, (c) design graphic organizers that assist students with discussing the sub-components of the topic, and (d) incorporate lexical and grammatical assistance. Although beneficial for all language learners, the instructional support that derives from task-based activities is particularly important to students with LLDs. Given that the students observed struggled with remembering the meaning of vocabulary and had difficulty in transferring grammatical concepts to communicate activity, task-based activities have the potential to provide the language support necessary to participate in class, an essential component to future language proficiency (Hall, 1995; Sfard, 1998; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988).

8.2.3.4 Accommodations for reading activities

The student interviews and classroom observations of this study indicated that the students with LLDs who displayed reading deficiencies in their first languages also needed assistance with reading activities in the foreign language classroom. This study, as well as others

(Bruck, 1980; Cummins, 1983; Dinklage, 1971; Gajar, 1987; Mabbott, 1994; Sparks et al., 1993; Sparks et al., 1995; Sparks et al., 2003), indicate that students who have reading deficiencies in their first language will confront these same difficulties when they learn a foreign language.

Supported by the findings of this study, previous research has suggested that teachers include multi-sensory activities, visuals, and graphic organizers to assist students with decoding, comprehending, and interpreting texts (DiFino & Lombardino, 2004; Hurst, 1996; Mabbott, 1994; Sparks et al., 1991; Sparks et al., 1992). Although these accommodations help students with understanding the meaning, two problems were illuminated in this study with reference to assisting students with LLDs with reading in a foreign language. First, it was observed that the teachers were not applying the accommodations recommended by previous research because they were not included in the IEPs and these accommodations were perceived to slow down instruction. Second, these accommodations did not assist students with developing strategies to decode, comprehend, and interpret texts.

Research in the field of foreign language has indicated strategies for developing reading competency for regular education students in the foreign language (Knutson, 1997; Koda, 1989). Because these strategies were developed to assist students with decoding, comprehending, and interpreting texts, it is recommended that teachers apply them to their reading instruction to accommodate for students with LLDs. When teaching foreign language reading, it is suggested that teachers apply pre-reading strategies such as hypothesizing, contextualized guessing of unknown vocabulary, and familiarizing the students with the topic. To assist with comprehension, in addition to providing the multi-sensory activities (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic) suggested in previous research, it is advised that teachers guide students through the process of skimming for the main idea and scanning for the details by using appropriate

questioning strategies and graphic organizers. Finally, to assist students with the application and interpretation of new information, it is recommended that foreign language teachers include post-reading tasks that encourage students with LLDs to elicit and apply information gathered in a written text. Although these reading strategies were developed for all language learners, it is recommended that teachers include them as accommodations for these students with LLDs because they address the specific needs of students who have deficiencies in decoding, comprehending, and interpreting written texts.

8.2.3.5 Accommodations for writing activities

Previous research has shown that students with LLDs need assistance with writing skills, (DiFino & Lombardino, 2004; Hurst, 1996; Mabbott, 1994; Sparks, 1999), however, with the exception of phonologic, orthographic, and syntactic skills, these studies fail to address accommodations for the skills necessary to communicate meaning in writing. That is, although certain language components have been researched, the semantic component is notably absent from previous studies. As indicated by the observations, interviews, and writing assessments, although students are able to perform as well as their non-LLD peers, they need accommodations with specific communicative elements of their writing. In discussing the development of foreign language writing skills in non-LLD students, Scott (1996) and Koda (1993) recommend that teachers include activities that assist students with brainstorming and organizing thoughts, articulating these thoughts in the foreign language, addressing an audience, and organizing discourse. To assist students with these writing skills, Scott (1996) and Koda (1993) recommend that teachers use word banks with accompanying visuals, graphic organizers such as concept maps and flow charts, and checklists for revision of ideas and grammar. Although these recommendations are intended for all students, it is especially important to include these writing

activities in the instruction of students with LLDs to assist them with both linguistic and communicative development in their foreign language writing ability. As shown previously in the descriptions of the IEPs and the findings, the participants in this study struggled with writing in their first language and had similar difficulties organizing their thoughts and expressing them in Spanish. Therefore, to accommodate for students with LLDs who struggle with writing in the foreign language, teachers should include activities that guide students through the process of developing ideas, and organizing and articulating these ideas in Spanish writing.

8.2.4 Accommodations for assessment

It was found that the IEPs designed for students with LLDs included accommodations for formal assessments, however these forms of assistance were very generic. Some examples of these accommodations were chunking information, limiting choices, and providing more time on tests. Although helpful to enable these students to take tests, these accommodations failed to help students with comprehension, grammatical form, and functional application of the foreign language. When comparing the IEPs of various students, it was also found that the accommodations were similar for all students with LLDs learning a foreign language, and did not reflect the students' special needs. The IEPs should also include the possibility of alternative forms of assessment, which would provide additional varied opportunities for students with LLDs to show their knowledge. To effectively assess these students with LLDs learning a foreign language, teachers need to assess students differentially. Thus, when assisting students with assessments, it is recommended that teachers design accommodations that are specific to the foreign language, individualized for each student, and include alternative forms of assessment that evaluate student progress differentially.

As indicated in Appendix A, the accommodations suggested for the assessment of students with LLDs are generic to all classes and include suggestions such as limited choices, explanations of directions, encouragement, extra time, and study guides. These accommodations fail to take into account the specific challenges that students might confront with the foreign language during assessments. To effectively meet the needs of students with LLDs during assessments, teachers need to take into account the type of assistance that might be required to help students comprehend the foreign language or functionally apply the foreign language so that they can complete the evaluative activity. An example of a foreign language specific accommodation on a writing assessment might be a grammatical formula, a word bank, model sentences, or a graphic organizer that helps students brainstorm thoughts or organize their ideas. An example of a foreign language specific accommodation on a reading assessment might be visuals accommodating the meaning of the language or a word bank of related vocabulary and their associated meanings, or a graphic organizer assisting students with identifying the main idea or details of the story. To accommodate for students during assessments, it is advised that teachers include sufficient assistance with foreign language-related features of the activity.

Accommodations in current IEPs do not take into account that students with LLDs progress differentially, and should be assessed accordingly. In studies on the writing progress of regular education students, Hendry et al. (2009) discussed similar findings relating to the differential progress and assessment of students. When examining the writing of six middle school students over time, Hendry et al. (2009) discovered that a newcomer, and high and low achievers progressed differentially in their writing, and thus should be assessed accordingly. In examining the writing of students with LLDs, this study found that the three participants also improved differentially with reference to their writing. Therefore, in assessing students with

LLDs, it is more appropriate to assess differentially, evaluating student progress individually over time, and not compared to a general standard of performance. For example, assessments could be dynamic, evaluating the assistance that is provided to the student over time, or in the form of a portfolio, documenting student performance over time.

To evaluate students with LLDs differentially, teachers may consider using Dynamic Assessment procedures. According to Lantolf & Thorne (2006), Dynamic Assessment is a method of evaluating student development over time by analyzing the amount and type of assistance, or mediation, provided to the students. This form of assessment is effective for students with LLDs because it focuses on the potential development of the learners, provides information on the types of assistance needed, and values what students are able to do in the future through mediation, rather than emphasizing what they cannot do without assistance. Additionally, Dynamic Assessment benefits students with LLDs because students are not held to the same standards of other students, but rather evaluated on their improvement over time with reference to amount and type of mediation that they receive to complete a specific task. By using Dynamic Assessment, the progress of students with LLDs can be monitored based on changes in the type of mediation they receive over time and their use of this mediation independently as assessments unfold.

In addition to dynamic assessment, teachers should consider including a variety of alternative assessments. As suggested in previous studies, assessment measures such as portfolios, self-assessments, peer-assessments, project-based, and performance-based assessments are more effective in evaluating the performance of students with LLDs learning a foreign language (DiFino & Lombardino 2004; Mabbott, 1994). With alternative forms of assessments, students with LLDs have the opportunity to display their knowledge through a

measure with which they are most comfortable. In addition, portfolios and self-assessments encourage students to understand how they are evaluated and to set goals for future work.

8.2.5 Differentiated Accommodations

Although the previous sections suggest accommodations for students with LLDs during the introduction, presentation, participation, and evaluation components of lessons, the literacy assessment, interview findings, and classroom observations of this study indicate that instructional accommodations should be individualized and differentiated for each student with LLD.

The literacy assessments illustrated that, although Nate, Gayle, and Tina were all diagnosed with similar deficiencies in reading and writing, they performed differently with reference to their composite scores on writing (see Tables 2 & 3, Chapter 4). Nate increased his composite score by five points, and outscored Gayle and Tina by ten and seven points respectively. Gayle's composite score decreased by four points, and scored ten points lower than Nate and three points lower than Tina. Similar to Nate, Tina's score increased by five points, however her score in December was seven points below Nate's and three points above Gayle's composite score.

The three participants scored differently on the specific components of their writing, despite their related linguistic deficiencies (see Table 4, Chapter 4). In September, Nate met expectations in all categories; scored high in the areas of function, text type, and impact; indicating a need for assistance with vocabulary, comprehensibility, and control. In December, Nate's overall score increased; he improved specifically in the areas of vocabulary, comprehensibility, and control; showing a need for accommodations with function, text type, and

vocabulary. In September, Gayle met expectations in all categories; scored higher in function and impact, which indicated a need for accommodations in text type, vocabulary, comprehensibility, and control. In December, Gayle's overall score was lower, showing a decrease in function and impact. When alluding to class observations, this decrease was largely due to affective issues, not necessarily a lack of ability in writing. Therefore, to help her focus on her writing performance in Spanish class, Gayle may have needed assistance with issues of motivation, class behavior, and her feelings toward her work. Tina's scores in September met expectations only in the areas of function, impact, and vocabulary; and showing the need for assistance with text type, comprehensibility, and control. In December, Tina's overall score increased, which included strong scores in the areas of function, impact, vocabulary, average scores in the areas of text type and comprehensibility; indicating the need for accommodations with the control of her writing.

Therefore, despite their similar LLD profiles, the participants in this study received differential scores on their writing. These differential scores indicate that, although students with LLDs might have similar linguistic deficiencies, each student needs differential assistance with reference to their writing development.

The student interview findings also support the claim that students with LLDs require differential accommodations despite their similarly diagnosed linguistic deficiencies. The student interview findings illustrate that, although students with LLDs share some similar beliefs about foreign language learning and helpful classroom activities and materials, their perceptions about accommodations and foreign language learning differ according to their personalities, interests, and learning styles. All three participants stated they were frustrated in Spanish class during reading and writing activities, and that they needed assistance with determining the

meaning of the foreign language vocabulary and grammar necessary to comprehend and communicate. In addition, Nate, Gayle, and Tina found decontextualized grammatical exercises to be difficult. This difficulty is not surprising, since all students claimed that remembering the meaning of words posed the greatest challenge.

Although the students agreed on these helpful components for their foreign language learning, Nate, Gayle, and Tina illustrated different perceptions of their learning Spanish and displayed differences in some specific components of helpful activities and materials. Nate was a shy, quiet individual, who preferred to work alone on grammatical exercises, or to receive individual assistance from the teacher or his peers. In his illustration of the Spanish class, Nate displayed himself asking for help from the teacher, with a few students in the background; indicating that he valued individual assistance from the teacher. In contrast, Gayle was a more social individual who enjoyed participating in interactive group activities because they allowed her to talk with her peers. Gayle's depiction of learning Spanish included several students, an interaction with a disruptive student, and the teacher; indicating the significance of social interaction with her peers and the distraction of particular students in her learning. Finally, Tina was a student who displayed social-emotional deficiencies, and preferred to read, to work individually, and to receive assistance from the teacher. Tina's drawing of learning Spanish only included the teacher, herself, and several vocabulary words on the board. These strikingly different illustrations of learning Spanish indicate that each student had different perceptions of their learning and by extension, differing needs with reference to assistance.

To meet the needs of all students with LLDs, one particular, prescriptive set of accommodations is not possible even for students with similarly diagnosed reading and writing deficiencies. This finding is reiterated in a study conducted at the university level on learning

styles of students with LLDs learning a foreign language (Castro & Peck, 2005). In their study, Castro and Peck found that knowledge of the learning styles of students with LLDs provides helpful information for identifying students who struggle and designing instructional practices that accommodate their learning of a foreign language. Thus, accommodations for students with LLDs should be individualized to reflect the personalities, learning styles, and interests of each individual student, despite their similar linguistic deficiencies. Sadly, although the IEP documents are entitled, “Individualized Education Plans,” the accommodations designed for students with LLDs learning a foreign language are all too often generalized and undifferentiated statements of accommodations for students who display similar LLDs.

8.2.6 Accommodations: What are they and what does it mean to accommodate?

The findings from the interview and classroom observation data revealed that the Spanish teachers and the special educator did not contain a comprehensive understanding of the general concept of accommodating for students with LLDs in foreign language classrooms. For example, when discussing accommodations, the teachers frequently contradicted themselves. When identifying helpful strategies for students with LLDs, the teachers mentioned instructional practices that were representative of professionally endorsed teaching practices, rather than describing individualized assistance that was aligned with students’ needs. In addition, the findings indicate that, unless the students were participating in a formal assessment, the teachers were not making intentional accommodations for LLDs. Finally, the findings of this study show that the instructional approaches of these teachers were contradictory to the fundamental principle of accommodating – providing assistance. The teachers in this study considered learning as the individual acquisition of concepts, rather than participation in a community that is

mediated by the individuals, tools, and contexts of that community. Thus, this section indicates that foreign language teachers participate in professional development opportunities that guide them in understanding the purpose, design, and application of instructional accommodations for students with LLDs.

Throughout the interviews and impromptu conversations, the teachers demonstrated contradictory perceptions of the instructional practices designed specifically for students with LLDs learning a foreign language. At times, when discussing accommodations, the teachers in this study referred to the recommendations in the IEP documents, such as providing more time, minimizing the choice of responses, and chunking of information on formal tests. On other occasions, the teachers in this study stated that activities such as TPR, visuals, and role-play could help students with LLDs. Ironically, with the exception of the adaptations previously mentioned for formal tests, these accommodations were never observed during the classroom observations of these teachers. These teachers also contradicted themselves when discussing whether or not these students with LLDs needed accommodations for foreign language at all. Some days teachers claimed that the students with LLDs performed just as well as their regular education peers; at other times they were frustrated that the students with LLDs slowed down the pace of the class and reduced the amount of content the teacher could present. These contradictions show that the teachers in this study did not have a clear concept of the meaning of accommodations, how to develop them, and when to apply them during lessons.

When asked about instructional practices that are helpful for students with LLDs learning a foreign language, the teachers in this study suggested accommodations that were representative of professionally endorsed teaching practices for all students learning a foreign language. For example, in the interview, Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico suggested that word banks, graphic

organizers, and checklists would assist students with LLDs in learning a foreign language. Although these instructional practices could, in fact, support the learning of students with LLDs; they are also considered to be professionally endorsed teaching practices for all students. However, when these professionally endorsed teaching practices are aligned with the specific needs of each individual student, then, these practices also become accommodations for students with LLDs. Thus, it is suggested that foreign language teachers understand that accommodations serve two purposes in the instruction of foreign language: first, they are professionally endorsed teaching practices for all students; and second, they become accommodations for students with LLDs *only* when they are aligned with the individual needs of the students.

It was also found that the teachers in this study were not designing accommodations during all areas of instruction, and the accommodations that were designed did not reflect the needs of each individual student. The IEP documents of these students identify that Nate, Gayle, and Tina have deficiencies in reading, writing, attention, and social emotional situations. However, during introduction, presentation, and practice of lessons, it was observed that Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico were not providing accommodations to Nate, Gayle, and Tina. In addition, during formal assessments, Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico provided assistance such as limited choices, extra time, and generic study guides. These accommodations for assessments did not reflect the individual needs of Nate, Gayle, and Tina. To better assist the needs of these students, it is recommended that teachers understand how to design accommodations for all components of lessons, and that are internally defined by the individual needs of each student (Castro & Peck, 2005).

Finally, the findings demonstrate that the teachers in this study maintained an instructional approach that contradicted the general concept of accommodating and providing

assistance for students with LLDs. The teachers' lack of small group activities, negative perceptions toward accommodations, and neglect to integrate student perceptions of their learning into instruction; suggest that Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico viewed learning through the "acquisition metaphor," as referred to by Sfard (1998). According to Sfard (1998), this metaphor views learning as a continuous process of gaining knowledge through self-regulation of concepts that are acquired through new knowledge. This acquisition metaphor for learning does not value the importance of the learner's participation and interaction with the members, tools, and context of the learning community, all of which are forms of assistance. Thus, in their instructional approaches, Ms. O'Brien and Mr. Domico devalue assistance as an integral component of the learning process, which contradicts the general concept of accommodating for students with LLDs.

This "acquisition metaphor" has been widely criticized by theorists that support the "participation metaphor" for learning (Rogoff, 1990; Lave & Wenger, 1991), who claim that learning is establishing relationships between members of a learning community, and this learning affects the learning of all community members. In her article, Sfard (1998) argues that, to design effective instruction, educators should consider both acquisition and participation metaphors in their approaches to learning. Thus, in the context of this study, to design more effective instruction and accommodations for students with LLDs, it is recommended that teachers adopt a balanced approach to teaching that values students' acquisition of concepts and participation within a community of learners.

It is not the intent of this study to speak negatively of the instruction and lack of appropriate accommodations for students with LLDs. Throughout the study, it was recognized that the reality of Spanish classrooms place many demands on teachers, and inclusion of students

with a variety of disabilities is only one among many issues that compete for a teacher's attention during the school day. Therefore, assistance needs to be provided for teachers to help them understand the concept of accommodation and how they may accommodate in ways that are specific to foreign language learning and for the individual needs of a diverse group of students with LLDs.

To assist foreign language teachers with understanding, designing, and applying accommodations, it is advised that school districts and professional organizations provide more support for foreign language teachers who work with students with LLDs. This need for professional development and support for teachers is also reiterated in DiFino and Lombardino (2004). The type of support should be initiated at the school, district, state, and national level, and should occur in the form of teacher and special educator collaboration, IEP meetings, in-service days, professional development courses, and national mandates. The nature of these professional development sessions could include understanding the abilities that students with LLDs bring to foreign language learning and how to build on these abilities and strengths. Data can be shared with teachers on the learning profiles of students with LLDs to dispel myths concerning their inability to make progress in a foreign language. Discussions focusing on IEPs and how to design them with specific reference to foreign language learning need to be addressed and implemented. Related to the writing of IEPs, is the need for more research on the unique accommodations related to foreign language instruction so as to move beyond generic, 'one size fits all' models of accommodations. In consideration of approaches to learning, it is imperative that teachers recognize that students learn through both acquiring concepts, and through participating with the members and tools within a community of learners. Finally, teachers can learn how to collect data on their students with LLDs to monitor closely and

objectively their successes and challenges, rather than base judgments on anecdotal observation or dubious dispositions about who is entitled or not to learn a foreign language. It is only through this type of research, information, and teacher support, that the teachers will be able to effectively meet the needs of their students with a variety of LLDs who have the ability and the right to learn a foreign language.

8.2.7 Identification of Students with LLDs

In addition to establishing a comprehensive understanding of the purpose and application of accommodations, this study reiterates the need for a more specific method for identifying and defining students who are labeled LLD. The traditional method in which students are diagnosed with LLD relies on an aptitude-achievement discrepancy, utilizing a student's IQ score in relationship to their achievement in academic areas (Sparks, 1996). This method of diagnosis can lead to identifying a heterogeneous group of learners with a broad spectrum of learning issues, ranging from severe mental retardation to simple underachievement in academic performance, both of which are not directly linked to ability to learn language.

As indicated in this study, the three students were identified to have LLDs, however their profiles were vastly different. Nate was diagnosed to have difficulties with reading fluency, comprehension, spelling, and identifying definite and indefinite articles in his writing. On the other hand, Gayle struggled with reading comprehension, discriminating sounds, organizing her ideas in writing, and attending during classroom activities. In contrast, Tina was identified to have reading, writing, attention, and social-emotional deficiencies.

As mentioned in the classroom observations in Chapter 6, the accommodations intentionally designed for these students were the same, despite their different LLD learning

profiles. These similar accommodations could have been designed because all three students fell under the same umbrella identification of “LLD.” Therefore, it is recommended that a more detailed method of diagnosis is determined and utilized to identify students with LLDs. A comprehensive identification method for students with LLDs will provide educators with specific information about each student, and this information will be able to assist teachers with designing appropriate accommodations to meet the specific needs of each individual student.

8.3 ACTIVITY THEORY PERSPECTIVE: AN ANALYSIS OF RECOMMENDED ACCOMMODATIONS

To reveal the possible outcomes that could emerge when the recommended accommodations are applied to middle school foreign language classrooms, this section will revisit an activity theory perspective. Using the activity theory framework, Figure 20 reconstructs an activity system of middle school foreign language students with LLDs (previously shown in Figure 19) to include the different *mediating artifacts, rules, and divisions of labor* that were recommended in the previous section.

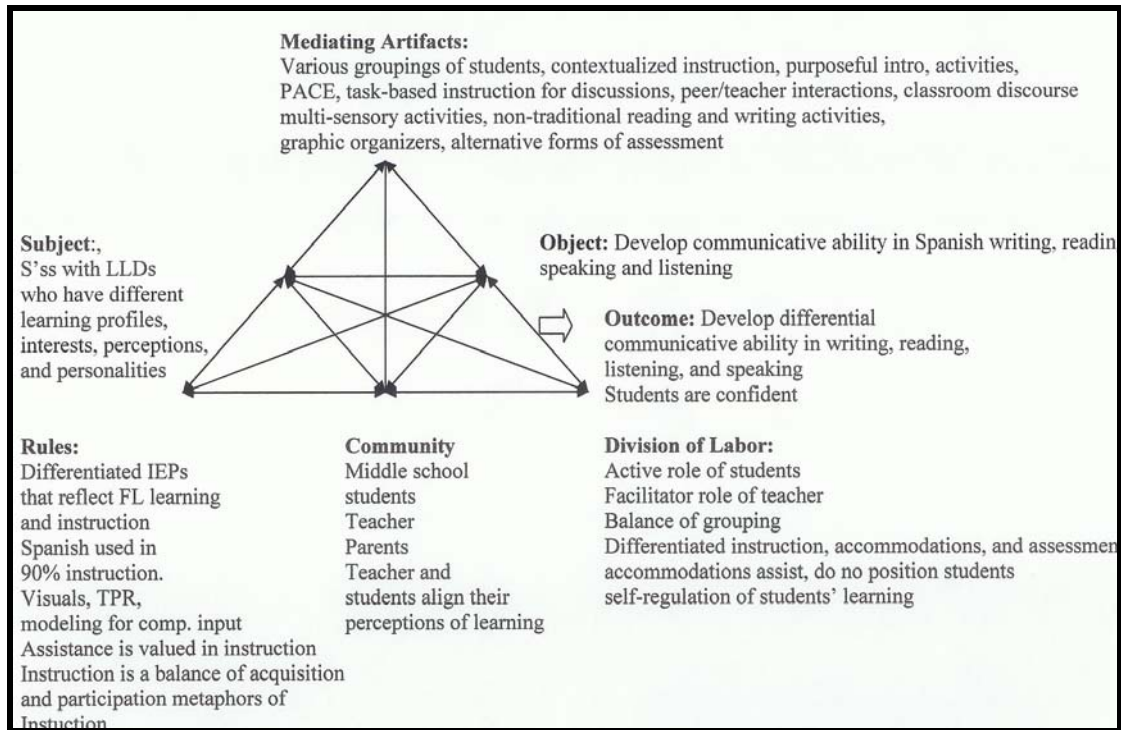


Figure 20. Proposed Activity System for Nate, Gayle and Tina's Foreign Language Learning

Within this proposed activity system, the *subjects* and associated *object* have not changed from the activity system presented in Figure 19 that included common features found from the data collected in the study. As illustrated in Figure 19, the *subjects*, are middle school students with various learning profiles, personalities, and perceptions. The students' corresponding *object* of activity also remains the same, to develop communicative ability in Spanish through writing, reading, listening, and speaking skills.

In addition, the *community* of the middle school Spanish classroom also remains constant. The community consists of the teacher, the parents, and between twenty-eight to thirty middle school students who displayed various learning profiles, personalities, and perceptions about learning Spanish. Although the community members are the same in this new, proposed activity system, the perceptions of the teachers have changed slightly. As mentioned in the implications

in the previous section, there was a disconnection between the perceptions of the students and the teachers. The activities that Nate, Gayle, and Tina felt were helpful, interesting, and engaging were not reflected in the teacher's perceptions or observed instruction. Therefore, in this proposed activity system, the students and teachers are aware of each other's perceptions of effective and engaging instructional practices. To promote effective instructional practice, the teacher and students attempt to align their perceptions of the instructional practices that assist and engage students with LLDs learning a foreign language.

To evoke a change in the activity system, and attempt to synchronize the *outcome* with the *object* of activity, Figure 20 includes the *rules*, *mediating artifacts*, and *division of labor* that were presented in the previous section on recommended instructional accommodations. With reference to the local classroom and national *rules* that guided the activity, the proposed activity system suggests several changes. First, at the local classroom level, the middle school Spanish teachers apply almost 90% of the foreign language in instruction and utilize visuals, kinesthetic movement, and modeling to make the instruction comprehensible. This change from the frequent switching from Spanish to English that was illustrated in Figure 19, will help to promote better speaking and listening skills in the *outcome* of the activity system. At the national level, Figure 20 proposes that the IEP documents include accommodations that are (a) specific to foreign language; (b) relate to instruction and assessment; and (c) reflect the individual learning profiles, interests, and perceptions of students. Figure 20 also suggests an additional national rule for teachers. It proposes that the certification requirements for teachers include professional development that educates teachers on what it means to accommodate for foreign language students, and how to design these accommodations to help students with foreign language skills.

To more effectively synchronize the *object* and associated *outcome* of the activity of middle school students with LLDs learning a foreign language, Figure 20 also recommends a change in the *mediating artifacts*. Some of these recommended *mediating artifacts* are (a) various groupings of students to incorporate more individual assistance from peers and teachers, (b) contextualized instruction to help students deduce meaning from the foreign language, (c) PACE methods to contextualize grammatical instruction, (d) task-based activities to encourage and support participation in discussions, (e) multi-sensory activities, (f) current methods to teach reading and writing strategies, and (g) alternative forms of assessment. By changing the *mediating artifacts* from those observed in the activity system of Nate, Gayle, and Tina (Figure 12), to include more support for students in their quest towards the *object* of developing communicative ability in writing, reading, listening, and speaking activities in Spanish will be better aligned with the associated *outcome*.

In addition to the *rules* and *mediating artifacts*, Figure 13 proposes a different *division of labor* between the community members than what was illustrated previously in Figure 19. In Figure 20, because the *mediating artifacts* include a variety of grouping of students and alternative forms of assessment, the students take a more active role in their learning. Because the students are more actively engaged in their learning, the teacher acts more as a facilitator and is able to work individually with smaller groups of children. During these individual interactions, the teacher formatively and dynamically assesses students, provides feedback, and assists students differentially. These individualized interactions, combined with student ownership of their learning, helps students to develop differentially in their communicative ability to write, read, listen, and speak in Spanish. This differential development in the

communicative ability of the *subjects* is the *outcome* of this activity system, which is more synchronous with the *object* of activity than what was illustrated in Figure 19.

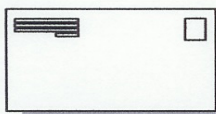
Thus, by altering a few features of the activity system of middle school students with LLDs learning a foreign language, the *object* of activity is more synchronous with its associated *outcome*. Future research is needed that implements the proposed activity system in Figure 20 in a middle school foreign language classroom. Such a study would confirm that the recommended *mediating artifacts, rules, and division of labor* can be feasibly implemented in middle school foreign language classrooms and are effective in meeting the *object* of developing communicative ability in writing, reading, listening, and speaking in a foreign language.

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE MODIFICATIONS FROM AN IEP

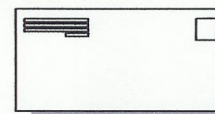
Modifications and SDI	Location	Projected Beginning Date	Frequency	Anticipated Duration
adapted tests as needed (limited choices)	Science, Social Studies, Spanish	4/20/2007	As tests are scheduled	4/19/2008
Directions repeated by Tiffany and re-explained by teacher	All classes	4/20/2007	When she seems to be off task or not focused	4/19/2008
encouragement to seek teacher assistance	Core Classes	4/20/2007	When she does not understand directions or assignments	4/19/2008
encouragement to use Homework Tracker	Core Classes	4/20/2007	Daily	4/19/2008
extra time to complete assignments	In all academic classes	4/20/2007	as requested by teacher	4/19/2008
Inform Tiffany ahead of time when schedule changes	all classes	4/20/2007	As the schedule changes	4/19/2008
Provide clear, firm boundaries	all classes	4/20/2007	when she does not follow directions	4/19/2008
Tracker Check	10th Period	4/20/2007	Daily	4/19/2008
quality of homework will be adjusted to include tasks that are most important to Tiffany to have repetition	Core Classes	6/6/2007	As skills need reinforced	4/19/2008
Provide additional text books for home	Core Classes	6/6/2007	At the beginning of the school year	4/19/2008
Study guides provided	Science, Social Studies, Spanish	6/6/2007	Per Unit	4/19/2008
Provide reminder sheet in locker reminding Tiffany of homework, pencil, book bag, homework, binder, pencil, textbook	In the locker	6/6/2007	For Tiffany to check during locker breaks	4/19/2008

APPENDIX B: SAMPLE WRITING ACTIVITY FOR 6TH GRADE

Nombre: _____ La fecha: el ____ de _____



A pen pal letter



Directions:

Imagine that you have a pen pal in Mexico. Write a letter in Spanish to him or her talking about your birthday and your favorite holidays. Include the following information in your letter:

1. **Greet** your friend and ask them how they are doing
2. **Tell** them the date of your birthday
3. **Ask** them when their birthday is
4. **Tell** them the holidays that you like and do not like and why
5. **Tell** them the date of the holidays that you like - ask them what holidays they like
6. **Include** any other questions that you would like to ask them
7. **Say** good bye and close your letter

Word bank:



Holidays	Question words	Letter words	Verbs
la Navidad – Christmas	Cuando – when?	Querido - Dear	Me gusta – I like
el día de Año Nuevo –New Years	Que – What?	Adios – good-bye	No me gusta – I do not like
el día de Gracias - Thanksgiving	Porque - because	Con cariño – with care	Es - is
Halloween			
las Pascuas - Easter			
Hanukah			
Mi Cumpleaños – My birthday			
Fiesta - Holiday			

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE WRITING ACTIVITY FOR 7TH GRADE

Nombre. _____ La fecha. el ____ de _____

A pen pal letter

Directions:
 Imagine that you just received a letter from a pen pal in Spain. This pen pal wants to know more about you. Write a letter in Spanish to him or her describing yourself and what you like and do not like. Include the following information in your letter:

1. **Greet** your friend and ask them how they are doing
2. **Describe** what you look like
3. **Tell** them the activities/sports/school subjects/foods that you like
4. **Ask** them what activities/sports/school subjects/foods that they like
9. **Include** any other questions that you would like to ask them
7. **Say** good bye and close your letter

Word bank:

verbs	Question words	Letter words	Nouns
me gusta – I like	¿Cómo?	Querido - Dear	ojos azules, ojos, cafés, ojos verdes
no me gusta – I do not like	¿Qué? – What?	Adiós – good-bye	pelo rubio , pelo castaño
Tengo – I have	porque - because	Con cariño – with care	fútbol, golf, béisbol, tenis, voléibol, hockey,
Ser – to be			hamburguesas, papas fritas, ensalada, helado, chocolate, pollo, vegetales, fruta
Estar – to be			

**APPENDIX D: MODIFIED ACTFL RUBRIC FOR PRESENTATIONAL
COMMUNICATION**

	Exceeds Expectations/3	Meets Expectations Strong /2	Expectations Weak /1	Does not Meet Expectations /0
Language Function Language tasks that the student is able to handle in a consistent, comfortable, sustained, and spontaneous manner: Describe, compare, evaluate, explain	-Describes using different vocabulary -explains -Effectively asks questions -Uses the connector "porque" to make text more cohesive -Expands in quantity and quality	-Describes using some extensive vocab - Asks questions -Falls short of explaining the reasons for evaluation. " -Few uses of the connector "porque" to make text more cohesive -Expands in quantity and quality	-Describes -Does NOT explain Does not elaborate using "porque" -Does NOT use of the connector "porque" to make text more cohesive -Very few sentences creating meaning in a basic way	-Stays at the description level without using comparing or evaluating -Mostly memorized language with some attempts to create.
Text Type Quantity and organization of the language discourse:	-Mostly connected sentences using the connector "porque" and phrases such as tambien -Varied sentence structure	-Strings of sentences; some connected sentence-level discourse using "porque" and tambien -Attempts to vary sentence structure	<i>Simple sentences</i> and some strings of sentences; does NOT use "porque" or tambien -No variety of sentence types	-Simple sentences and memorized phrases -NO use of "porque" or tambien -No variety of sentence types
Impact Depth of presentation and attention to audience	-Accomplishes task effectively taking into consideration the reporting nature of the assignment and the Spanish-speaking audience: describes, compares, evaluates, and explains	-Accomplishes task taking into consideration the reporting nature of the assignment and the Spanish-speaking audience: describes, compares, evaluates, and attempts to explain reasons	-Simple list of sentences without much consideration of audience. -Few evaluations and NO explanations	-Focuses on successful task completion, by simply listing with - No evaluations, or explanations.
Vocabulary Uses extensive vocabulary related to topic	- Uses extensive vocabulary to provide information and explanation - Uses a variety of verbs -Most words are spelled correctly with proper accent marks	-Vocabulary is sufficient to provide information and limited explanation. - some variety of verbs -Few errors in spelling and punctuation	-Vocabulary is sufficient to provide information and limited explanation. - NO evaluations - NO uses of different verbs -Few errors in spelling and punctuation	-Vocabulary conveys basic information: -Many errors in spelling and punctuation
Comprehensibility Who can understand this person's message?	- Understood by those unaccustomed to the speaking/writing of language learners.	- Generally understood by those unaccustomed to the speaking/writing of language learners	-Mostly understood by those accustomed to the speaking/writing of language learners.	-Understood with occasional straining by those accustomed to the speaking/writing of language learners.
Language Control Accuracy, form, degree or fluency	-Accurate in use of descriptions And gender/number agreement - very few errors in verb conjugations	- Mostly accurate in use of descriptions and gender/number agreement - few errors in verb conjugations	-Most accurate when producing simple sentences -Few errors vocabulary -Few errors in negative sentences -Errors in verb conjugations -Overuse of the verb "ser:"	-Mostly accurate with memorized language, including phrases. -Many errors vocabulary -Errors in construction sentences -Errors in negative sentences -Errors in verb conjugations -Overuse of "ser"

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR TEACHERS

1. What are your observations of students with LLDs in your classes when students are listening to whole group instruction?
2. What are your observations of students with LLDs in your classes when students are doing a writing task?
3. What are your observations of students with LLDs in your classes when students are participating in a speaking task?
4. What are your observations of the participation of students with LLDs in whole group discussions?
5. Describe how students with LLDs perform in your classes on assessments and assignments?
6. What type of accommodations do you include in your instruction for students with LLDs?
7. What type of accommodations do you include in assessments and assignments for students with LLDs?
8. What resources assist you in making accommodations for students with LLDs?
9. Did you take a class in your certification program on students with disabilities? If so, describe..if so, did it help to prepare you? How could it prepare you more?
10. What activities do you think are helpful for students with LLDs learning a Spanish?
11. What type of instruction do you think help students with LLDs speak in Spanish?
12. What type of instruction do you think helps students with LLDs write in Spanish?
13. What type of instruction do you think helps students with LLDs read in Spanish?
14. What type of instruction do you think helps students with LLDs listen in Spanish?
15. What type of instructional materials (for example, white boards, charts, graphic organizers, text books, worksheets/packets, word banks, check lists, multi-sensory activities, dictionaries) do you think are helpful for students with LLDs learning Spanish?
16. Do you notice students with LLDs making connections between their L1 and L2 in your classes? If so, describe
17. What were thinking during X lesson?
18. Do you recall any activities that you think were helpful for the student to complete the activity? If so, describe...
19. I noticed that you included X in today's lesson, do you think this was helpful to the students with LLDs?
20. What do you think about using accommodations such as (choral repetition, visuals, contextualization of words and concepts, comprehension q's, authentic realia, colors/patterns, kinesthetic printed materials with oral and aural activities, student ownership, encouragement, graphic organizers, frequent formative alternative forms of assessment) in your instruction to accommodate students with special needs?

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR STUDENTS

“That’s me” “that’s me sometimes” “That’s not me”

1. The “hazlo ahora” activity helps me get organized for class
2. The conjugation computer activity helps me learn Spanish (tiffany only)
3. What computer activities do you do in Spanish?
4. These computer activities help me learn Spanish.
5. White board activities help me learn Spanish
6. Tic tac toe, jeopardy, and bingo games help me learn Spanish
7. Poems help me learn Spanish
8. Reading and listening to stories helps me learn Spanish
9. When I am in a small group with a Ms. O’Brien/Mr. Domico, I understand what we are doing in Spanish much better
10. When I am in a small group with Ms A, I understand what we are doing in Spanish much better
11. When I work one on one with Ms. O’Brien/Mr. Domico, I understand what we are doing in Spanish much better
12. When I work one on one with Ms. A, I understand what we are doing in Spanish much better.
13. Projects such as drawing a comic strip help me learn Spanish
14. Projects such as designing and writing a card help me learn Spanish
15. Projects such as designing an alien help me learn Spanish
16. Drawing a picture of a vocabulary word helps me remember Spanish vocabulary
17. Making flash cards help me learn Spanish
18. Singing songs help me remember Spanish words and verbs (can you sing one?)
19. Talking with my friends helps me learn Spanish (What do you talk about? In Spanish or English?)
20. Do you know what a word bank is? A word bank helps me write in Spanish
21. A graphic organizer such as a Venn diagram helps me organize my thoughts to write in Spanish.
22. Are there other graphic organizers that help you learn Spanish?
23. I always participate in Spanish class
24. If yes, what do you say when you participate?
25. If yes, when do you participate?
26. If no, why not?
27. I like participating in Spanish class
28. Why or why not?
29. I feel embarrassed participating in Spanish class
30. Why or why not?
31. I like learning Spanish
32. Why or why not?

Open ended answers

Choices: scared, excited frustrated, interested, smart

33. Imagine you are writing a letter to a pen pal in Spanish, How do you feel? What helps you write in Spanish?
34. Imagine that you are doing a talking activity asking friends for information, how do you feel?
35. Imagine you are reading a poem or story in Spanish, how do you feel?
36. Imagine you are learning new vocabulary in Spanish class, What helps you remember new vocabulary (drawing the meaning, looking to see if it looks like the English word, acting it out, singing a song,,)
37. _____ is the hardest activity in Spanish class
38. _____ is the easiest activity in Spanish class
39. In Spanish class, I am frustrated when we _____
40. In Spanish class, I am having fun when we _____
41. In Spanish class, I am confused when we do _____
42. In Spanish class, I am very excited when we _____
43. It really helps me learn Spanish when we _____
44. It really helps me learn Spanish when the teacher _____
45. Draw a picture of you learning Spanish in your class

Metalinguistic awareness

46. Do you see anything similar between Spanish and English when you learn about new vocabulary in Spanish ?
47. Tell me some examples
48. Do you see anything similar between Spanish and English when you learning about grammar, verbs, making questions?
49. Tell me some examples
50. Does learning Spanish make learning English easy? Why or why not?
51. Does learning Spanish help you in any other class?

APPENDIX G: MS. OBRIEN'S CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

	Date	Objective (Swbat)	Intro Activity	Type	Activities	Group	Type
1.	9/17/07		¿Qué es un pronombre del sujeto? [what is a pronoun of a subject?]	Q: one word/ Gram.	1. Discuss definition of a pronoun 2. Discuss conjugation of ar verbs and writes conjugation "hablar" [to speak] uses board	WG WG	Gram. gram.
2.	9/19/07	review question words	n/a		1. T. writes conjugations on board 2. teacher lists ar verbs 2. students write 10 sentences conjugating ar verbs	WG WG I	Gram. Gram. Writing
3.	9/24/07	write dates in Spanish	Cuantos meses en el año?	Span Q one word	1. Video on days of the week 2. Interpers. activity: find bdays 3. Timeline project	WG WG I	Video Interps Proj.
4.	9/27/07	place months in correct season	Escribe en español, the first day of October the 25 th of December	Trans	1. Discussion, favorite month 2. Packets on dates/months		Discuss WSheet
5.	10/3/07	Read a short story and answer comprehension questions	Copy 4 weather expressions in Eng and Spanish	Trans	1. T. reads story aloud s's follow with story in writing 2. TPR body parts 3. Worksheet with story questions	WG WG I	Story Kinesth WSheet
6.	10/11/07	read a short story and answer questions and review weather	Complete packet page on weather	Trans	1. Worksheet: translation of weather vocab 2. Students read personal paragraphs aloud to each other about likes/dislikes 3. Students read story aloud 4. Worksheet of story q's	I WG WG I	WSheet Present. Writing Story WSheet
7.	10/15/07	present and describe aliens	Como se dice shoulder, y knee in esp?	Tran	1. Students present aliens to class	WG	Present Writing
8.	10/18/07	read a story about Tomas and the verb tener	Translate vocabulary from story	Trans	1. Pop quiz translation of vocab 2. Teacher reads story, while s's follow sheet with written story 3. Worksheet with q's on story	I WG I	Quiz Story WSheet
9.	10/22/07	Answer and translate questions about story of Tomas	Answer and translate translate questions from story Tomas	Trans	1. Worksheet with q's on story	I	WSheet
10.	10/29/07	write a short paragraph about the sports your classmates play and talk about how well they play	Conjugate of jugar	Gram	1. Personalized flash card game with sports 2. Write about sports they like/play and friends like/play	SG I	Game Writing
11.	11/1/07	recognize words related to día de los muertos	Review Day of Dead vocab for loteria	Vocab	1. Loteria 2. Dialogue practice on sports/like/play	WG SG	Game Interpers.
12.	11/7/07	compare and contrast Halloween and day of the dead	Define/translate 3 words from day of dead	Trans	1. Talk about difference between holidays and write a comparative essay in English 2. s's work on essay	WG I	Dis Eng Writing Writing
13.	11/8/07	complete a 2 paragraph essay comparing Halloween an Day of	Pull out your paragraph on Day of Dead and Halloween	Eng. Writing	1. Reminds s's of components of comparative essay	WG	Instr. Eng Writing

		Dead			2. s's work on essay	I	Writing
14.	11/12/07	create negative sentences and create questions from a declarative sentence	Underline verbs in sentences (unrelated sentences out of context)	Gram	1. Eng explanation of how to form neg. sentences 2. T explains question formation 3. Grammar packet on question form and neg sentences	WG WG I	Instr. Eng Writing Instru. Eng WSheet
15.	11/15/07	use punctuation to create 3 yes/no sentences and play activity bingo	Using white boards write 3 q's	Create with Span lang	1. White board bingo, interactive game asking q's using	WG	Interpers.
16.	11/19/07	learn about parts of friendly letter	Label parts of letter with Spanish	Gram	1. Packet with friendly letter with unfamiliar context, label parts of letter	I	WSheet
17.	11/21/07	create a thanksgiving card	What 3 things are you thankful for?	Eng. Q.	1. Write Thanksgiving card incl. 3 things thankful for	I	Writing
18.	11/28/07	complete letter for 7 th grade pen pal and work on pronouns	Match Spanish pronouns with English counterparts	Trans	1. Sing pronoun song 2. Write letter to pen pal (sp ed students wrote in English) 3. Packet with pronouns	WG I I	Song Writing WSheet
19.	11/29/07	read a short story "pancho el pintor to practice ar verbs	Fill in blanks with estudiar conjugations	Gram	1. Packet of ar verbs 2. S;s take turns reading story aloud	I WG	WSheet Story
20.	12/3/07	work on pronouns	Complete part a of packet on ar verbs (decontextualized grammar practice)	Gram	1. Review packet of ar verbs 2. Write sentences 3. Listen to ar verb song 4. Cloze activity with ar verb song	WG I I WG I	WSheet WSheet Song WSheet
21.	12/6/07	study for quiz	Conjugate ar verbs	Gram	1. Grammar packet 2. Dice game in whole group	I WG	WSheet Game
22.	12/10/07	use appropriate articles with sp. Nouns based on rules	Place el or la in front of words	Gram	1. Grammar discussion of rules for article use 2. Grammar packet work	WG I	Eng Instr. Gram WSheet

WG signifies a whole group activities, SG signifies small group activities, and I signifies an individual activity

APPENDIX H: MR. DOMICO'S CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

	Date	Objective (Swbat)	Intro Activity	Type	Activities	Group	Type
1.	9/17/07		¿Qué es un pronombre del sujeto? [what is a pronoun of a subject?]	Q: one word/ Gram.	1. Discuss definition of a pronoun 2. Discuss conjugation of ar verbs and writes conjugation "hablar" [to speak] uses board	WG WG	Gram. Gram.
2.	9/19/07	review question words	N/A		1. T. writes conjugations on board 2. students write 10 sentences conjugating ar verbs	WG I	Instruct. Gram. Random sentence writing.
3.	9/24/07		¿Qué hiciste este fin de semana? [what did you do last weekend?]	Span Q open ended., non-related to content	1. students hand in hw 2. t. translates "meaning units" in packet 3. s's work with meaning units in packet translating them	WG WG I	Manage. Gram. Trans.
4.	9/27/07	TINA	ABSENT	NO	OBSERVATION		
5.	10/3/07	TINA	ABSENT	NO	OBSERVATION		
6.	10/11/07	TINA	ABSENT	NO	OBSERVATION		
7.	10/15/07		Saque la tarea [take out your hw.]	Manage.	1. check hw 2. T. reads poem in packet 3. s's translate list of vocab from poem 4. s's translate poem	WG WG I I	Manage. Poem Trans Trans
8.	10/18/07		N/A		1. students work in computer lab and practice conjugating words, no understanding of meaning of verbs necessary	I	Comp. Gram.
9.	10/22/07		Saque la tarea	Manage.	1. T. checks HW 2. reviews HW on conjugations 3. T. reads poem "Primer de Secundaria" to class, s's have written form in packet 4. Translate line by line	WG WG WG WG	Manage. WS. Gram Poem read Trans.
10.	10/25/07	TINA	ABSENT	NO	OBSERVATION		
11.	10/29/07		Saque el comico [take out your comic]	Manage.	1. s's hand in comic on poem 2. s's design own comic strip	I I	Manage. Proj. Creative
12.	11/1/07		Saque la tarea	Manage.	1. s's take out hw 2. s's finish hw in class: working with vocabulary: what you think, define, draw, write a sentence 3. T. reads article from local newspaper in Eng on Day of Dead 4. S's do work puzzle on Halloween	WG I WG I	Manage. Vocab. Read in Eng. Culture Word scramble
13.	11/7/07		Saque la tarea	Manage.	1. T. writes ser/estar conjugations on board in traditional T graphic formation And T. explains different uses of ser/estar 2. s's write 10 sentences using ser/estar	WG I	Dis. Eng Gram Random Sent writing

14.	11/8/07					1. s's continue to write sentences w/ ser/estar, St. w/ LDs work in sep room with aide and researcher	I	Random sent writing
15.	11/12/07		¿Cómo se dice 'we are' en español?	Q trans.		1. review quiz on ser/estar (students had to conjugate and pick ser or estar) students had to write sentences, S's w/ LDs had adapted test with choices and chunked answers 2. Worked on packet of gram exercises	WG I	Dis gram WS gram. Practice
16.	11/15/07		Saque la tarea	Manage.		1. go over hw on ser/estar 2. grammar exercises in packet	WG I	WSgram. Practice WS gram. Practice
17.	11/19/07		Saque la tarea	Manage.		1. T. checks hw 2. grammar exercises with ser/estar in packet 3. s's write on board conjugations of ser/estar in traditional T graphic to prepare for test	WG WG WG	Manage. WS gram practice Gram. Dis
18.	11/21/07	TINA	ABSENT	NO		OBSERVATION		
19.	11/28/07					1. T. checks hw 2. s;s work on vocab of 15 random words: what you think, define, draw, write a sentence	WG I	Vocab
20.	11/29/07	TINA	ABSENT	NO		OBSERVATION		
21.	12/3/07					1. T. reads paragraph aloud 2. s's translate 3. s's code paragraph as to verb, definite art/indefinite article, noun, adj.	WG WG I	Read Trans Coding for parts of speech
22.	12/6/07	TINA	ABSENT	NO		OBSERVATION		
23.	12/11/07		Saque la tarea	Man		1. T. checks hw 2. T. and s's discuss noun/adj agreement and formula for comparisons 3. s's write 10 sentences using comparisons	WG WG I	Man Dis gram in Eng Random sentence writing
24.	12/13/07	TINA	ABSENT	NO		OBSERVATION		

signifies a whole group activity and I signifies an individual activity.

WG signifies a whole group activities and an I signifies an individual activity

REFERENCES

- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). (2007). Diversity and inclusion in language programs. Retrieved August 5, 2008, from <http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=4743>.
- ACTFL Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). (1996 Standards for Foreign Language Learning. *Standards for foreign language learning: Preparing for the 21st century*. Yonkers, NY: ACTFL.
- Arries, J. (1999). Learning disabilities and foreign languages: A curriculum approach to the design of inclusive courses. *The Modern Language Journal*, 83(1), 98-110.
- Bachman, L. F. (1990). *Fundamental considerations in language testing*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Bacon, S. (1998) Conceptual knowledge, biliteracy, and the at-Risk child. In M. Met (Ed). *Critical issues in early second language learning*. Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman-Addison Wesley.
- Bialystok, E. (1988). A psycholinguistic framework for exploring the basis of second language proficiency. In W. Rutherford & M. Sharwood Smith (Eds.). *Grammar and language teaching*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Bruck, M. (1978). The suitability of early French immersion programs for the language-disabled child. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 3, 51-72.
- Bruck, M. (1982). Language impaired children's performance in an additive bilingual education program. *Applied Linguistics*, 3 (1), 45-60.
- Campbell, R. & Wales, R. (1970). The study of language acquisition. In J. Lyons (Ed.), *New Horizons in Linguistics*. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin.
- Canale, M. & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics*, 1, 1-47.
- Carroll, J. (1962). The prediction of success in intensive foreign language training. In R. Glaser (Ed.). *Training and research in education*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, pp. 87-136.
- Castro, O. & Peck, V. (2005). Learning Styles and foreign language learning difficulties. *Foreign Language Annals*, 38 (3), 401-409.

- Celce-Murcia, M., Dornyei, Z., & Thurrell, S. (1995). Communicative competence: A pedagogically motivated model with content specifications. *Issues in Applied Linguistics*, 6, 5-35.
- Cummins, J. (1983). Language proficiency, biliteracy and French immersion. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 8 (2), 117-138.
- De Bot, K. (1998). Types of exposure, the at-risk individual, and the role of multimedia. In M. Met (Ed.) *Critical issues in early second language learning*. Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman-Addison Wesley.
- Dinklage, K.T. (1971) The inability to learn a foreign language. In G. Blaine & C. C. Mc Arthur (Eds.) *Emotional problems of the student*. New York: Appleton Century-Crofts, pp. 185-206.
- DiFino, S., Lombardino, L. (2004). Language learning disabilities: The ultimate foreign language challenge. *Foreign Language Annals*, 37 (3), 390-400.
- Donato, R. & Adair-Hauck, B. (1994). PACE: A model to focus on form. Paper presented at the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, San Antonio, Texas.
- Edwards, D. & Mercer, N. (1987). *Common knowledge: The development of understanding in the classroom*. London: Methuen.
- Engestrom, Y. (1999). Activity theory and individual and social transformation. In Y. Engestrom, R. Miettinen, & R. Punamaki (Eds.). *Perspectives on activity theory*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Evarrs, S. B. & Knotek, S. E. (2005, November). Foreign language and special education. In, *ACTFL 2005-2015: Realizing Our Vision of Languages for All*. Report shared at the 39th annual meeting of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Baltimore, MD.
- Firth, A. & Wagner J. (1997) On discourse, communication, and (some) fundamental concepts in second language acquisition research. *Modern Language Journal*, 81 (3) 285-300.
- Gajar, A. H. (1987). Foreign language learning disabilities: The identification of predictive and diagnostic variables. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 20, 327-330.
- Gibbons, P. (2005). Mediating learning through talk: Teacher-student interactions with second language learners. Paper presented at the Spraket och kunskapen Nordic conference. Gothenburg, Sweden: October 7-8, 2005.
- Hall, J. K. (1995). Aw, man, where are we goin'?: Classroom interaction and the development of L2 interactional competence. *Issues in Applied Linguistics*, 6, 37-62.

- Halliday, M.A.K. (1994). *An introduction to functional grammar*, 2nd ed. London: Edward Arnold.
- Hendry, H., Harr, M. Donato, R., & Tucker, G. (2009). *A profile of writing across time in Spanish by six middle school students*. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Hurst, D. (1996). Teaching Spanish to children with different learning styles: evolution of philosophy. *Hispania*, 79 (1), 123-125.
- Hymes, D. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. P. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.
- Kennewig, S. (1986). Language disability students: Spanish is for you. Paper presented at the Fifth Conference on the teaching of Spanish, Miami University, OH.
- Knutson, E.M. (1997). Reading with a purpose: Communicative reading tasks for the foreign language classroom. *Foreign Language Annals*, 30 (1), 84-97.
- Koda, K. (1989). The effects of transferred vocabulary knowledge on the development of L2 reading proficiency. *Foreign Language Annals*, 22 (6), 529-40.
- Koda, K. (1993). Task-induced variability in foreign language composition: Language-specific perspectives. *Foreign Language Annals*, 26, 332-346.
- Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Oxford, England: Pergamon Press.
- Lantolf, J. (2000). Introducing Sociocultural Theory. In J. Lantolf (Ed.). *Sociocultural theory and second language learning*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Lantolf, J. & Appel, G. (1994). Theoretical framework: An introduction to Vygotskian approaches to second language research. In J. Lantolf & G. Appel (Eds.). *Vygotskian approaches to second language research*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Company.
- Lantolf, J. & Thorne, S. (2006). *Sociocultural theory and the genesis of second language development*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Lave J. & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Lee, James F. (1995). Using task-based activities to restructure class discussions. *Foreign Language Annals*, 28 (3), 437-445.
- Long, M. H. (1981). Input, interaction, and second language acquisition. In H. Winitz (Ed.) *Native language and foreign language acquisition* (pp. 259-278). *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences No. 379*. New York: Academy of Sciences.

- Mabbott, A. (1994). An exploration of reading comprehension, oral reading errors, and written errors by subjects labeled learning disabled. *Foreign Language Annals*, 27 (3), 293-324.
- Mehan, H. (1979). *Learning lessons: social organization in the classroom*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- National Center for Learning Disabilities, Inc. (2006). Accommodations for students with Learning disabilities. Retrieved March 21, 2009, from <http://www.ldonline.org/article/8022>.
- Pessoa, S., Hendry, H, Donato, R., Tucker, G., & Lee, H. (2007). Content-based instruction in the foreign language classroom: A discourse perspective. *Foreign Language Annals*, 40 (1), 102-121.
- Pimsleur, P (1963). Predicting Success in high school foreign language courses. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 23 (2), 349-357.
- Rogoff, B. (1990). *Apprenticeship and thinking: Cognitive development in social context*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Savignon, S. J. (1972). *Communicative competence: An experiment in foreign language teaching*. Philadelphia: Center for Curriculum Development.
- Scarcella, R. C. & Oxford, R. L. (1992). *The tapestry of language learning*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Schinke-Llano, L. Linguistic accommodation with LEP and LD children. In J. Lantolf & G. Appel (Eds.). *Vygotskian approaches to second language research*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Company.
- Scott, V.M. (1996). *Rethinking foreign language writing*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.
- Sfard, A. (1998). On two metaphors for learning and the dangers of choosing just one. *Educational Researcher*, 27(2), 4-13.
- Sparks, R. (2006). Is there a 'disability for learning a foreign language'? *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 39 (6), 544-557.
- Sparks, R. and Ganschow, L. (1993). Searching for the cognitive locus of foreign language learning difficulties: Linking first and second language learning. *Modern Language Journal*, 77 (3), 289-302.
- Sparks, R., & Ganschow, L. (1995). A strong inference approach to causal factors in foreign language learning: A response to MacIntyre. *Modern Language Journal*, 79 (2), 235-244.

- Sparks, R., Ganschow, L., Fluharty, K., & Little, S. (1996) An exploratory study on the effects of Latin on the native language skills and foreign language aptitude of students with and without learning disabilities. *The Classical Journal*, 91 (2), 165-184.
- Sparks, R., Ganschow, L., Javorsky, J., Pohlman, J., & Patton, J. (1992). Test comparisons among students identified as high-risk, low-risk, and learning disabled in high school foreign language courses. *The Modern Language Journal*, 76 (2), 142-159.
- Sparks, R., Ganschow, L., Kenneweg, S., & Miller, K. (1991). Use of an Orton Gillingham approach to teach a foreign language to dyslexic learning-disabled students: Explicit teaching of phonology in a second language. *Annals of Dyslexia*, 41, 97-118.
- Sparks, R., Ganschow, L., Pohlman, J., Artzer, M., & Skinner, S. (1992). The effects of a multi-sensory, structured language approach on the native and foreign language aptitude skills of high-risk foreign language learners. *Annals of Dyslexia*, 42, 25-53.
- Sparks, R., Philips, L. & Javorsky, J. (2003). College students classified as having learning disabilities and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and the foreign language requirement. *Foreign Language Annals*, 36 (3), 326-339.
- Spinelli, E. L. (1989). Beyond traditional classrooms. In H.S. Lepke (Ed.) *Shaping the future: Challenges and opportunities*, Northeast Conference Reports (pp. 139-158). Burlington, VT: Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.
- Sunstein, B.S. & Chiseri-Strater, E. (2002). *Feldworking: Reading and Writing Research*. New York: Bedford/St. Martins.
- Tharp, R.G., & Gallimore, R. (1988). *Rousing minds to life: Teaching, learning, and schooling in social context*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Vygotsky, L.S. (1962) *Thought and Language*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in Society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Yelland, G., Pollard, J., & Mercuri, A. (1993). The metalinguistic benefits of limited contact with a second language. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 14, 423-44.