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Latino students compose the greatest percentage of minorities in public schools, as well as the population with the greatest English reading difficulties. Cross-cultural second language (L2) research indicates that children's native language affects the ease of reading acquisition in a second language.

This study pursues three goals: 1) to assess K-3 teachers' actual and perceived knowledge of English-Spanish similarities and differences in selected areas (phonemes, letter-sound correspondence, morphology) and of Latino culturally relevant children's literature; 3) to investigate teachers' ability to calibrate their knowledge by examining the relationships between actual and perceived knowledge; and 4) to explore the value teachers place on these areas of knowledge.

K-3 teachers were invited to complete a battery of measures. Teacher's knowledge of English-Spanish similarities and differences in the three linguistic scales was assessed using a questionnaire developed by the researcher. Teachers' knowledge of culturally relevant literature was assessed using a new version of the Title Recognition Test (TRT). The battery also included measures of teachers' perceptions of their own knowledge in the areas listed. Measures tapping the value teachers place on these two domains of knowledge were also included.

The results indicate that an ethnically diverse sample of teachers in predominantly Latino communities have poor familiarity of Mexican-American culturally relevant children's literature. In contrast, as a group, teachers scored fairly well on English-Spanish linguistic similarities and differences in phonology, letter-sound correspondence, and morphology. However, the pattern of results indicates that teachers may be relying on their vocabulary knowledge or other pieces of information to make decisions regarding English-Spanish contrasts. Although teachers were able to

answer a fair number of items, their knowledge appears to be undeveloped.

Teachers in this sample were well calibrated in the knowledge assessed by the questionnaire. Except for English-Spanish morphology, the majority of them perceived themselves as highly knowledgeable in all areas and therefore may be less receptive to learning more about cultural literature and English-Spanish similarities and differences. This was evident in many teachers' inability to recognize many "popular" book titles.

An important finding of this study was the positive value teachers place on the English-Spanish linguistic knowledge assessed in this questionnaire. The fact that practicing teachers know and value the areas of English-Spanish linguistic knowledge may be an indication of their potential usefulness in informed language arts instruction, and as important variables in the reading outcomes of second language readers.

Policy Recommendations & Future Research

Although the results of this study indicate that teachers know and value knowledge of English-Spanish similarities and differences, many important questions remain. Specifically, future research needs to address what the suggested knowledge base for English-Spanish linguistic knowledge should be. In other words, how much should we expect teachers to know? Secondly, and intimately related, is how, or if, knowledge is translated into practice. Specifically, how do teachers effectively use, or can use, this knowledge in their instruction? Finally, studies need to determine whether teacher and/or student knowledge of these linguistic areas actually leads to positive student outcomes for Spanish speaking students learning to read in English.

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