

**The Misunderestimation of Manuel: Issues in Reductionist Paradigms and Parallel Monolingual Frameworks in the Quest to Improve Policy and Practice for Bilingual Learners**

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## **The Misunderestimation of Manuel: Issues in Reductionist Paradigms and Parallel Monolingual Frameworks in the Quest to Improve Policy and Practice for Bilingual Learners**

### ***Introduction: Manuel***

This paper will present a case study of one child who I call Manuel. Manuel is a 4<sup>th</sup> grader in an elementary school in a large urban school district in Colorado. This school district is representative of most large urban school districts in that it is majority Latino (58%), has a large and growing number of English Language Learners (over 25% of the entire population of the district), has a majority of children living in poverty (over 70%), and according to the Colorado Department of Education has more underperforming schools than any other school district in the state (<http://DPSk12.org>, retrieved Apr. 12, 2009). Manuel's school is typical of schools in this school district. The school is 75% Latino, 70% ELL, and 87% free and reduced lunch. During the 2007-2008 school year, the school earned a ranking of Low from the Colorado Department of Education ([http://testingdpsk12.org/test\\_results.htm,retrieved](http://testingdpsk12.org/test_results.htm,retrieved), Apr. 12, 2009).

In an effort to improve academic achievement at the school, particularly in the area of literacy, the school became a member of the Literacy Squared<sup>®</sup> Research project in 2005. The project is an intervention designed to encourage the acquisition of biliteracy in children, and schools in the project are asked to maintain literacy instruction in two languages from first through fifth grade. Teachers in the project attend regularly offered in-service sessions four times per year, and data collected in the project include annual measures of reading and writing. Spanish and English writing samples are collected in December and January each project year via the utilization of writing prompts in both languages.

On the Spring of 2008 reading assessment, Manuel scored a 4 on the Evaluación de Lectoescritura (EDL) and a 12 on the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). These informal reading measures indicate that as a 4<sup>th</sup> grader, Manuel is well below grade level benchmarks in both languages. In fact, these data indicate reading levels at about the first grade in both languages. The writing sample below represents Manuel's English writing sample in January of 2009. Each year in May, Literacy Squared<sup>®</sup> Teachers come together to analyze and score the writing of 2,000 children like Manuel. What might teachers say about Manuel's writing with regard to ideas, conventions, spelling etc.?

Our experiences from this research project and others (Escamilla, 2006; Escamilla & Coady, 2001; Coady and Escamilla, 2005) indicate that teachers and others are likely to conclude that Manuel's writing sample is 'UNREADABLE.' Marked as 'UNREADABLE', no further analysis is done on the sample, and the child receives a 0 or unsatisfactory in his writing. These data, combined with the aforementioned reading data, might indicate to school officials and others that Manuel is a low achiever in both of his languages.

In this paper I argue that Manuel's writing is far from 'UNREADABLE', and the current prevailing policies of reductionist approaches to teaching Bilingual Learners<sup>1</sup> include little attention to a comprehensive instructional program and an ever present and constant pressure to focus on the teaching of English (even in programs labeled as 'bilingual'). These policies, coupled with frameworks of parallel monolingualism, have

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<sup>1</sup> Bilingual Learner – In this paper I am choosing to use the word Bilingual Learner rather than the more common term English Language Learner to signal to the reader the need to consider language and literacy development in two language children in its totality which for Manuel includes Spanish as well as English. He is a Bilingual Learner, more than an ELL.

limited teachers and policy makers in their understanding of bilingual/biliterate development. Throughout this paper, I demonstrate that contrary to being 'UNREADABLE', Manuel's writing includes many skills and strategies to communicate in English. Further, as will be demonstrated, Manuel has strong voice in his writing, and his writing has much to teach us about current high stakes testing and standards based school environments in which 5 million Bilingual Learners are currently participating. Contrary to being 'UNREADABLE', what appears in the analysis of Manuel's writing sample is instead, the 'misunderestimation of Manuel.' I will return to the analysis of his work later in this paper.

**Manuel: Jan. 2009**

6384-E \_\_\_\_\_ 4th grade 2008-09

If you could be someone else for a day, who would you be? Why would you want to be that person?

I wud be huahkarios i wud like to be hem be kuse hes is pofisintimat I was mosiy the bumist kib but as the yer went by I gat smort r naw im <sup>back</sup> the wer i was all ovr wgen. I rily naytvt be kuse im rily stupib plus, im am in parsory pofisintimath and heran is in pofisint in math and. I am uha kfor in riting and ridng. hem to but hes a lat smort r ven my im stupibist in the hol intir ~~st~~<sup>school</sup> thats the +ruth thats wy I want to be hem this is the +rot. I v hirt tolden ydety this I havit told asol.

## ***Background and Theoretical Framework:***

### *Reductionist Policies and Practice*

Over the course of the past 40 years, federal, state, and local policies have become increasingly reductionist<sup>2</sup> with regard to second language learners. In the 1960's- 1988, federal policy favored some type of Bilingual Education program. The policies, ironically, were developed absent a research base to support them. In many places, state and local policies paralleled federal policy, and Bilingual Education Programs were widely implemented, often without the infrastructure, prepared teachers, or resources to do this successfully (Ovando, Collier & Combs, 2006). Nonetheless, some attention was paid to the potential benefits of using non-English speaking children's L1 in school, and there was some appreciation for the potential of developing students' bilingualism/biliteracy in U.S. schools. In 1988, federal policy shifted radically from a positive orientation about bilingual education to a mandate of English acquisition as the major focus of bilingual education programs, in which such acquisition should occur in a short period of time, not to exceed three years.

From the 1960's- 1990's there was on-going debate and discussion about whether Bilingual programs or ESL programs were more or less effective for Bilingual Learners. While many argued that the debate about program efficacy should include attention to the developing bilingualism of students in the programs, as well as address the psychological and emotional needs of second language learning, policy makers, politicians, and

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<sup>2</sup> The word reductionist here is defined as an attempt to make the complex simple. In the case of federal policy and local practice with regard to Bilingual Learners reductionists policies and practices have increasingly simplified the educational needs of Bilingual Learners to the acquisition of English, particularly English literacy in a short amount of time.

practitioners outside the field argued that the efficacy of such programs should be limited to outcomes-based measures, specifically the acquisition of English language and literacy (Crawford, 2004, Cziko, 1992). The simplification of the needs of second language learners to English language acquisition is a prime example of a reductionist paradigm.

In the 1990's, debate and discussion about bilingual programs as the unit for studying the efficacy of bilingual/ ESL instruction increased. The critique of 'programs' as the unit for study as a concept was thought to be problematic because there was, and continues to be, great within and across school variability in bilingual programs, in addition to labeling issues (some bilingual programs were, in reality ESL, while some ESL programs used bilingual strategies etc.) (Ramirez, Yuen, & Ramey, 1992). In the early part of the 21st century, the critique of the efficacy debates as non-productive in moving the field forward (August & Hakuta, 1997; Crawford, 2004) turned our attention away from 'most effective programs' to 'best practice', with more of a focus on individual classroom practices, rather than toward comprehensive programs for a Bilingual Learners. The decreased emphasis on comprehensive school programs for Bilingual Learners and the concomitant emphasis on a generic 'best practice,' short-term second language learning experience represents a second example of a reductionist policy and practice for Bilingual Learners.

Best practices, even those officially sanctioned by the U.S. Department of Education (see, for example, "Doing What Works – English Language Learners" [Http://www.DWW.ed.gov](http://www.DWW.ed.gov), 2008), have been primarily based on English instructional practices and 'good teaching is good teaching' paradigms. Even though many of these programs are accompanied by a footnote that the program or practice can be done in

Spanish, there is scant attention to “What Works,” including the development of bilingualism and biliteracy.

The focus on ‘best practice’ as classroom based without contextualizing individual instructional practices in a larger program and community context, combined with the view that good teaching is universal with no need for accommodation for second language learners, is a third example of a reductionist paradigm.

Reductionist policies are important to understand, as currently 87% of children who carry the label English Language Learner (ELL) are in English medium instructional programs with no instructional support in their native language (Kindler, 2002; NCES, 2006). This represents a reduced opportunity for them to learn to become bilingual coupled with no evidence to support the efficacy of the reductionist programs, and some evidence that English only programs are having a negative impact. For example, a recent study in Massachusetts found that the drop-out rate for Bilingual Learners has doubled since the passage of Question 2 in 2002, which essentially banned Bilingual Education in the state.

The passage and subsequent implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2002 represent an additional example of a reductionist policy. Since its inception, NCLB has simplified good teaching and best practice to that which is necessary to do well on high stakes tests. In most states, current high stakes tests are almost always given in English only. While a few states allow children to take high stakes tests in Spanish for a limited amount of time (usually 1-3 years), no state uses the high stakes testing system to demonstrate bilingual/biliterate development in its students. Current testing practices privilege English as the only language in which children can demonstrate acquisition of

language, literacy, and content, and punish schools and teachers whose children do not score well, thus reducing school programs to test preparation factories (Amrein & Berliner, 2002).

The era of high stakes testing has encouraged, and in many cases mandated, that schools use the results of these tests to make instructional decisions for students with the understanding that data driven decisions are both objective and scientific. Data derived from student outcomes on high stakes and other tests represent yet another type of reductionism, as students who do not do well on these tests are generally given a limited curriculum and have reduced opportunities to learn. Berliner & Biddle (1995) have documented that many children who do not do well on high stakes tests are assigned to classrooms where teachers are mandated to do little more than teach reading and math all day long. For Bilingual Learners, this generally means reading and math in English only all day long. The following is a sample of reductionist learning opportunities in the current environment of NCLB:

- More reading and math
- No recess
- For Bilingual Learners - more English
- Less PE, art, music
- No attention to bilingualism

The above information is not new and has been extensively discussed and written about in the literature (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Amrein & Berliner, 2002). Reductionist policies for Bilingual Learners have been thoroughly critiqued and are thought to be a major barrier for improving schooling for Bilingual Learners. I argue that the reductionist policies, especially the focus on English language and literacy acquisition at the expense of developing bilingualism and biliteracy, may be one of the reasons that

Manuel's writing sample would be deemed 'UNREADABLE,' and as a result 'unsatisfactory,' but it is not the only reason. I would argue that it is not only the reductionist educational paradigm and narrow focus on English acquisition of the past few decades that has contributed to the misunderestimation of Manuel, but also the current miasma in combination with a view of developing bilingualism that focuses on viewing the developing bilingual through a parallel monolingual lens.

### *Parallel Monolingualism*

Over the past few decades, paradigms about bilingualism in the U.S. have privileged sequential bilingualism with concomitant views that the bilingual is two monolinguals in one mind. Parallel monolingual frameworks are currently being applied in the majority of U.S. bilingual and dual language schools, and they assert that all children have an identifiable L1, languages must be strictly separated in instructional contexts, children must be taught their two languages in separate contexts, code-switching should be discouraged, and L1 literacy instruction needs to precede L2 literacy instruction for several years so as not to confuse children.<sup>3</sup> Assessment systems with parallel monolingual frameworks are given in one language before the other and student outcomes are analyze L1 and L2 separately.

There is on-going debate and discussion about policy and practice issues with regard to parallel monolingualism and the over-reliance on sequential bilingual theories in the implementation of Bilingual and Dual Language Programs in the U.S. For example, most U.S. Dual Language programs are based on sequential bilingual theories and recommend strict separation of languages in program instruction (Center for Applied

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<sup>3</sup> For a more complete analysis of this parallel monolingual framework see Escamilla & Hopewell (in press).

Linguistics, 2008). Sequential bilingual viewpoints posit that children without an identifiable L1, and/or children who code-switch from one language to another, are limited in one or both of their languages (McSwan, 2006).

In contrast to the framework of bilinguals as parallel monolinguals is a more holistic view of bilingualism (Grosjean, 1989; Valdés & Figueroa, 1994). Holistic bilingualism considers the totality of the bilingual experience as a unique and unified whole rather than as a fractional representation that perpetuates the idea that the bilingual resembles two monolinguals in one person. The co-existence of two or more languages in one brain contributes to a uniquely endowed human being whose experiences and knowledge can never be measured or understood as independently constrained by each language separately. I argue for the need for a more holistic view of bilingualism and bilingual development, as the current focus on parallel monolingualism has created a deficit paradigm that rivals the reductionist policies and practices.

As will be demonstrated in the case of Manuel, it is likely that reductionist school programs combined with parallel monolingual frameworks limit our ability to understand his developing strengths and skills as a bilingual/biliterate learner. The cartoon inserted below illustrates issues with regard to Manuel as a Bilingual Learner.



In this paper, I use the case study of Manuel and his English writing to demonstrate the problems with reductionist policies and programs for ELLs combined with prevailing frameworks of parallel monolingualism. Using reductionist frames and parallel monolingual views to analyze this child’s writing, I demonstrate the misundereestimation of Manuel.

***Analysis:***

*Manuel’s school: The reductionist view*

As previously stated, Manuel is currently in a 4<sup>th</sup> grade classroom at a participating Literacy Squared<sup>®</sup> school. The school was rated ‘low’ by the Colorado Department of Education for the 2007-2008 school year, but the rating included an accolade of ‘high academic growth’ for that school year. The table below shows the reading and writing data for the state, district, and school on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) over the last two years. The CSAP is the Colorado high stakes assessment program. In this system, English reading and writing is titled, “Reading and Writing,” and Spanish reading and writing is titled, “Lectura and Escritura.” The numbers represent the percent of students scoring proficient and/or advanced on the CSAP.

**Spring 2008  
3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Grade CSAP Outcomes  
Manuel's School**

Grade	Content	State	District	Manuel's School
3rd	Reading	70	41	49
	Writing	51	47	46
	Lectura	59	52	55
	Escritura	50	31	37
4th	Reading	66	42	23
	Writing	52	30	20
	Lectura	39	36	N/A
	Escritura	21	20	N/A

The school is an early exit transitional bilingual program, but because of the Literacy Squared<sup>®</sup> project, children continue to receive literacy instruction in Spanish, as well as English, through the fifth grade. Because of the mandates of No Child Left Behind and state education policy, all children who have been in Colorado for more than three consecutive years must take the CSAP in English. This policy places a great deal of pressure on teachers to focus their literacy instruction in the fourth grade on English literacy. The N/A in the table above indicates that scores could not be reported because so few 4<sup>th</sup> grade students took the Lectura and Escritura exams, despite the fact that over 70% of the children in the school are English Language Learners. Reductionist paradigms are evident in both the early exit school program and the Colorado Department of Education's emphasis on assessment in English only as soon as possible.

When looking at the achievement of Manuel's school, it is important to note that while the third grade English reading and writing scores were well below the state average, they were above the district average in reading and near the district average in writing. In Lectura and Escritura, Manuel's school was also below the state average, but above the district average. In fourth grade, the school was below the state and district

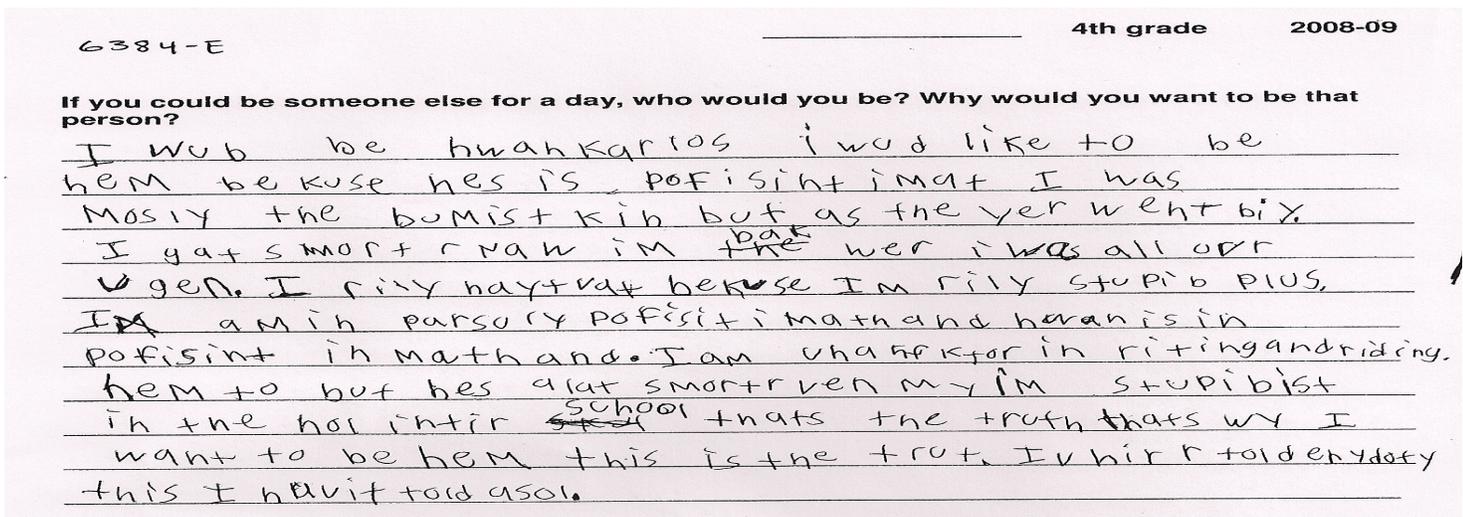
average in English reading and writing, and because so few students took Lectura and Escritura, comparisons could not be made. When comparing scores between third and fourth grade, fourth grade reading and writing is lower than third grade.

The literacy curriculum at Manuel's school also illustrates the reductionist paradigm. Like all other schools in the district, Manuel's school is mandated to use the district literacy curriculum. It is noteworthy that the curriculum for teaching writing is based on Lucy Calkins (2006). Lucy Calkins's work, while highly rated, is based on teaching monolingual English children, and teachers in this school district are told that Calkins is a 'best practice' program, that 'good teaching is good teaching', and that they should just adapt Calkins into Spanish if students are still in 'need' of writing instruction in Spanish in 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Further, Manuel's school was recently evaluated by the Colorado Department of Education and received one of the highest ratings possible for its adherence to standards, its growth in English outcomes on the state CSAP test, and for its use of data to make instructional decisions. Data growth charts line the walls in the halls of this school as an ever-present reminder that the future of the school depends on CSAP and other test results. The reading program is available in Spanish as well as in English, but the Spanish program is an adaptation of the English program, and there is no transitional reading program.

*Manuel's writing: Three perspectives*

Manuel entered into the Literacy Squared<sup>®</sup> research project when he was in second grade (2006). His Home Language Survey indicated that Spanish was his primary home language, yet it is apparent that he did not receive bilingual instruction until the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. It was that year that he was provided with literacy instruction in Spanish. For the

purposes of classification on ELL criteria, Manuel is considered to be a FEP (fully English proficient – LAU 3), and he has been staffed into special education. Manuel produced the writing sample (included below) in Dec. 2008. He was asked to write to the following prompt: “If you could be someone else for a day, who would you be and why would you want to be that person?” The following analyses look at Manuel from three different perspectives: the unreadable, the reductionist + parallel monolingual, and finally, the holistic bilingual.



*Manuel's English Writing Sample (written in standard convention)*

I would be Juan Carlos. I would like to be him because he is proficient in math. I was mostly the dumbest kid, but as the year went by I got smarter. Now I'm back where I was all over again. I really hate that because I'm really stupid, plus I am partially proficient in math and Juan is proficient in math. And, I am unsatisfactory in writing and reading, him too but he's a lot smarter than me. I'm stupidest in the whole entire school. That's the truth. That's why I want to be him. This is the truth. I've never told anybody this, I haven't told a soul.

*Manuel: The unreadable*

When we began the Literacy Squared® research project and when our teachers began to read writing samples such as the one above, it was not unusual for them to opt to not score writing such as Manuel's, and to simply write 'unreadable' at the top. Moreover, it is quite likely that Manuel's writing when scored by the Colorado Department of Education would also be rated as 'unreadable.' An unreadable sample yields a score of unsatisfactory, indicating that the child has very poor writing skills in all areas including content, punctuation, and spelling. The 'unreadable' score, I submit would be rendered by teachers and others who were reading and interpreting this child's writing through a monolingual English lens. This lens is limiting and represents a reductionist view in that it does not enable the rater to appreciate the bilingual strategies that Manuel is using to express himself in writing. In fact, it could well be that in addition to the label of 'unreadable,' monolingual raters would infer that Manuel has no rule governed strategies to use in writing and that his writing represents random strings of letters. In short, in this view, Manuel apparently has no strengths in his writing.

*Manuel: Reductionism + parallel monolingualism*

Through the Literacy Squared® research, we have endeavored to help teachers learn to read and interpret the writing of Bilingual Learners through a bilingual lens. The bilingual lens has moved our thinking beyond that of 'unreadable,' but in many cases it is still heavily influenced by reductionist paradigms and parallel monolingual frameworks. For this writing sample, using the Literacy Squared® writing rubric, and using a bilingual lens to read his sample, Manuel would likely receive an overall score of 4 out of 14.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The Literacy Squared® writing rubric quantitatively evaluates children's writing in three areas: content, punctuation, and spelling. The maximum score a child may receive on the rubric is 14. There is also a companion qualitative rubric.

This score would be derived from combined content, punctuation, and spelling scores, and Manuel’s score of 4 would come from his content. It should be noted that, while not a good score, a score of 4 illustrates that the reader can understand that Manuel has ideas to write about and has rule governed strategies to use when writing. The following represents another way to analyze Manuel’s writing, first using a bilingual lens to better understand his message, and secondly using a bilingual frame for analysis.

<b>Typical to developing writers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•b/d reversal (wub/wud; kib/kid; stupibist/stupidest; bumist//dumbest)</li> <li>•misspelling of high frequency words in English (bekuse/because; yer/year; ovr/over; wer/where)</li> <li>•word spacing</li> </ul>
<b>Spanish influenced</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•trut/truth;</li> <li>•my/me</li> <li>•enydoty/anybody</li> <li>•wy/why</li> <li>•hyposegmentation – alat/a lot; ihuvittoldasol/ I haven’t told a soul; haytrat/ hate that</li> </ul>

Using a bilingual lens enables the rater to first note the power of voice in Manuel’s writing. His message, albeit heartbreaking, is really quite clear – he thinks he is the ‘stupidest kid in the entire school.’ Even with enhanced abilities at interpreting this sample, our Literacy Squared<sup>®</sup> research team has indicated that teachers continue to view this writing in reductionist ways, including a view of cross-language interference (Geisler, Escamilla, Hopewell & Ruiz, 2007; Soltero, Escamilla & Hopewell, 2009).

For example, Manuel’s approximations of words like Juan Carlos (hwankarlos), him (hem), by (biy), dumbest (dumist), rily (really) and ugen (again) might result in an interpretation that Manuel needs more intensive phonemic awareness and that this type of

instruction will help him move forward with his English. Further, his approximations at words like ‘profisint’ (proficient) and ‘unahfaktori’ (unsatisfactory) might result in a diagnosis for more phonics and/or explicit spelling. Finally, the use of Spanish phonetic principals to spell English words might lead to the interpretation that Spanish is interfering with English, and therefore it would be in Manuel’s best interest to be transferred to an all English program so that he would not be confused. Evidence provided for Spanish to English interference might be his spelling of words like ‘rily’ (really), ‘bak’ (back), ‘my’ (my), and ‘biy’ (by).

All the above comments would most likely include comments about his lack of word spacing, his seemingly random use of punctuation, and capitalization, and penmanship that is difficult to decipher. Reductionist and parallel monolingual paradigms might lead teachers at this school to conclude that Manuel needs Biddle and Berliner’s (1995) reduction and intensification curriculum (more reading and writing, more phonics, and perhaps, no more Spanish).

It is important to note that the above interpretation of Manuel’s writing is data driven. However, it has been heavily influenced not only by what Manuel wrote, but by teachers’ interpretations of the writing. The interpretation of Manuel’s writing as errors to be corrected, lack of punctuation, and Spanish interference is still quite deficit oriented. Deficit orientations also result in yet another misunderestimation of Manuel.

*Manuel: A holistic bilingual interpretation*

A holistic bilingual interpretation of Manuel would start with an attempt to read and interpret Manuel’s message. In this case, a holistic view of Manuel indicates that he is quite aware of his status in the school; he is an underachiever. While Manuel’s

teachers and others are busy hanging data charts on the school's walls, Manuel is analyzing his status vis a vis the school's expectations and has decided he has fallen short. A holistic view of Manuel's writing indicates that he is a bright child and is able to express himself in complete thoughts. While he lacks standard conventions and spelling, he has quite a strong voice that can only be heard if teachers, using a bilingual lens, start their analysis by looking for his message (Berg, 2007). Further, Manuel's writing shows quite sophisticated use of phrases and vocabulary (e.g. "I haven't told a soul," "I am the stupidest in the whole entire school," "I got smarter as the year went by but now I am back where I was all over again"). A holistic assessment acknowledges Manuel's ability to write from the heart and to write articulately. It then analyzes his contentions and spelling issues. Again, the first analysis in this paradigm views Manuel's writing as a set of powerful ideas.

The analyses presented above may view Manuel's spelling issues as a collection of problems that not only represent a lack of proficiency in English, but also interference from Spanish. I would argue that Manuel's spelling represents a utilization of multiple strategies, including within word and across word bilingual strategies. For example, when Manuel says he would be "Hwan Karlos," he is using both English and Spanish phonetic principles to express himself. The H and W come from English and the 'an' from Spanish. Similarly, the use of 'k' for Carlos is likely an English phonetic principle applied in Spanish. Similarly, his writing of the word *hem* for him, *gat* as got, *naw* as now, and *ugen* for again are likely approximations that show his knowledge of the rather arbitrary way vowels are used in English.

In short, the holistic bilingual analysis of Manuel indicates that he has many strengths as a writer, ideas to communicate, and a strong, albeit sad, sense of his status in the school. Further, rather than being caused by Spanish interfering with English, his spelling errors are indicative of a Bilingual Learner who is using multiple strategies to express himself in writing. Rather than random strings of letters, his writing illustrates rule-governed behavior from the spelling and conventions of two languages. With an expanded and more positive view of Manuel as a writer, we can advocate for an enriched language arts and literacy curriculum for Manuel in both of his languages.

***Discussion:***

So, how do we best serve Bilingual Learners in public schools from a policy, practice, and outcome perspective? If anything, events over the past 40 years have taught us what not to do. Despite the rapid increase in the number of Bilingual Learners in U.S. public schools, we have no indication at all that the educational needs of these students will move from their current position in the margins of educational policy and practice to the center of the debate and discourse about school reform and improvement. If anything, Bilingual Learners and their teachers have found themselves in schools with increasingly hostile environments and communities that are increasingly convinced that ‘good teaching is good teaching,’ that English can be acquired in a short amount of time (1-2 years), and that ‘best practice’ programs for Bilingual Learners focus on English acquisition. The extreme pressure to move children from bilingual to English medium programs, coupled with the fact that over 87% of ELLs only have opportunities to learn in English, is evidence of the reductionist view. The reductionist policies and practices of the past 40 years are both short sighted and simplistic. A child does not cease to be a

Bilingual Learner simply because he is placed in a classroom where English is the sole medium of instruction, and there is no evidence that English only instruction accelerates English language and literacy acquisition. In fact, evidence shows that such practices are counterproductive to the acquisition of English. (Greene, 1992; Gersten & Baker, 2000; Slavin & Cheung, 2003). There is no question that the reductionist policies and practices can be blamed for the misunderestimation of Manuel and his writing.

At the same time, it is insufficient to conclude that the current reductionist paradigms are the sole reasons that Bilingual Learners such as Manuel may be misunderstood. It is also likely that current bilingual practice with its parallel monolingual framework is not robust enough to understand the strengths of Bilingual Learners such as Manuel. Even in a school where some form of bilingual education is considered the norm and even encouraged, Manuel is considered to be an underachiever. As a fourth grader, Manuel's reading and writing data indicate that he is not performing at grade level. In fact, his reading and writing data, no doubt, were used as reasons to place him in special education. Included in the reasons for this placement is that Manuel seems to be underachieving in both Spanish and English. Teachers might argue that he has no strong language. As analyzed above, while Manuel does not yet have strong conventions and standard ways to express himself in English, he does have complex ideas and he uses many sophisticated language structures to express himself in English. Moreover, Manuel's writing indicates that he is well aware that he is not perceived as a strong student, and it is apparent that reductionist ideologies and parallel monolingual frameworks have had an impact on his self-esteem. To reiterate, Manuel is representative

of the millions of Bilingual Learners whose potential is neither valued nor nurtured in current school programs and policies.

For all of the positive attributes associated with the nascent Obama administration, it is unclear what direction policy about Bilingual Learners or English Language Learners will take. To date, there is almost an avoidance of the issue. In his confirmation hearing, the new Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, made no reference at all to English Language Learners, and as of the writing of this paper, there has been no appointment of a director of the federal office of English Language Acquisition (OELA). On Apr. 8, Duncan visited the renowned Oyster/Adams Dual Language School in Washington DC. As the bilingual community intently listened to Duncan's remarks for signs of policy about English Language Learners, he made no mention of ELLs or Dual Language Programs. Instead, he chose to focus his remarks on Early Childhood Education, encouraging school districts to use their stimulus money for Early Childhood Programs.

If we hope to improve schooling practices and programs for Bilingual Learners in the future, we can no longer tolerate reductionist paradigms, nor can we simply tweak current policies to accommodate Bilingual Learners. In the words of Geneva Gay (2004) we need radical reform that not only critiques policies that are forced upon us such as the reductionist paradigms discussed above, but also those problematic frameworks such as parallel monolingualism that we have created ourselves. We need more comprehensive programs, more robust theories, and deeper understandings of emerging bilingualism. Manuel and his five million counterparts deserve our understanding, support, and a

pedagogy that acknowledges their strengths as well as their needs. We need to demand a complete overhaul and radical reform, as nothing less will do.

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