Language Power: Building Language Proficiency

Program Implementation Report

Fresno County Office of Education

2012–2013

# Language Power: Building Language Proficiency

Introduction by Dr. Eugenia Mora-Flores

Language development is a complex process that begins in the home. Children are natural language learners, exploring and interacting with the world around them. Once they begin formal schooling, their language experience continues in even more complex ways. For some students, the transition can appear seamless, as the language of school may compliment the language of home. Their language continues to develop as they are taught the language of academic success. For others, their home language may be different from the language of school, and they will need more support in making a successful transition.

When students come to school with a language other than English, they need ample opportunities to learn about, practice, and develop their new language. Research has repeatedly shown that the most effective ways of developing students' second language and literacy skills are by building upon the first language, explicitly demonstrating how the English language works, learning language through rich content, and providing varied and frequent opportunities for students to use academic English.

Language Power is an effective resource for teachers, tutors, parents, and students to support English language and literacy development. It provides an enjoyable, content-rich vehicle for learning English.

Every lesson is filled with opportunities for students to use English. Throughout the lessons, these opportunities are highlighted as Talk Time. During Talk Time, students try out language, taking risks with content by sharing their learning in oral and written forms. Every Talk Time is prefaced with teacher modeling, rich text support, and repeated exposure to key vocabulary and content. Learning language through content makes the experience more authentic and effective. Students can see language as they hear it and read it, making it easier to write and use language across the curriculum.
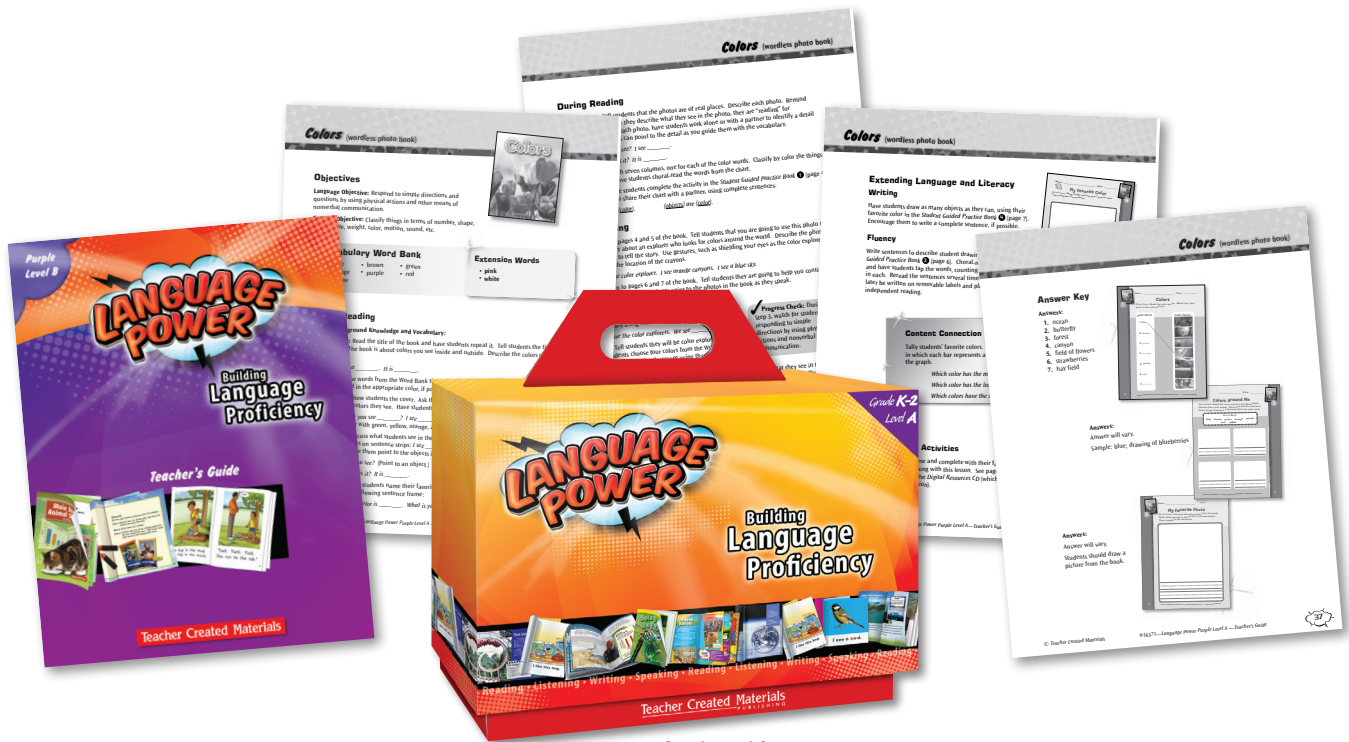
Teacher's Guide

Introduction by Dr. Eugenia Mora-Flores *(cont.)*

As students progress through *Language Power* they will encounter a gradual increase in the level of content and language difficulty. They will be asked to use more oral and written language and read and comprehend more complex texts. In addition, throughout the program, students are offered opportunities to challenge themselves. Extension vocabulary words are included in every lesson along with Extending Language and Literacy.

Students can continue their learning and involve their families in the experience through the hands-on, minds-on Family Literacy Activities. This range of options offers students at all levels of second language acquisition an opportunity to learn at their pace and through their own learning style.

An effective language development program must include language-rich, content-rich, highly engaging lessons. *Language Power* exceeds this goal. Students benefit from the variety of texts and the opportunities to engage in learning with their peers, teachers, and families.
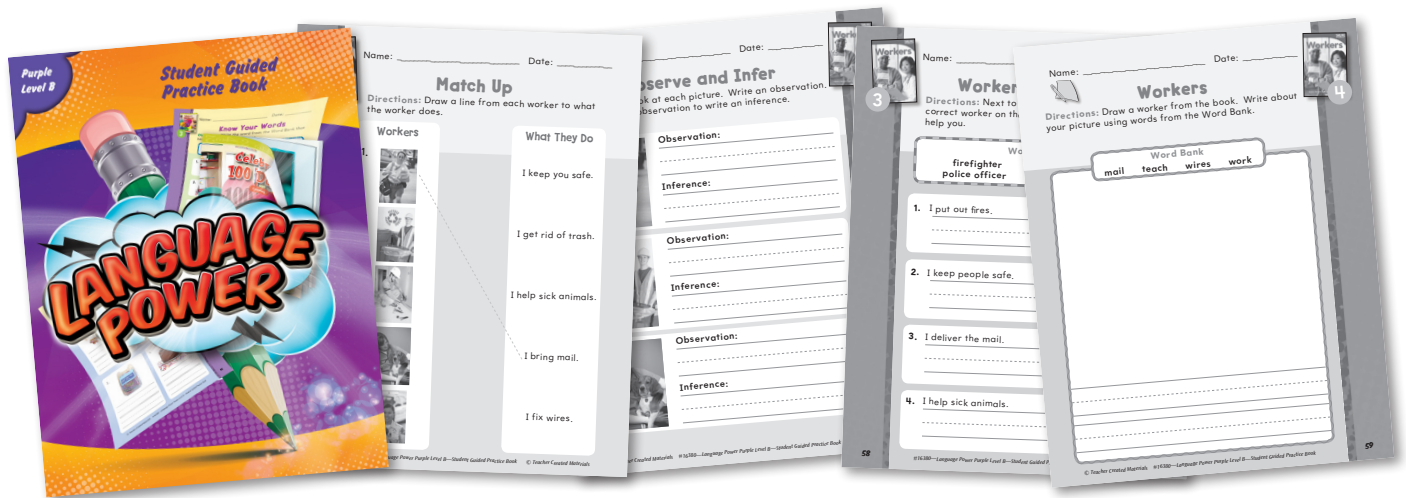
Student Guided Practice Book

Program Research and Overview

Language Power is an English language development program that builds students' background knowledge around relevant content-area topics and themes; engages students in meaningful language experiences with structured, comprehensible input and output; and provides students with an authentic purpose for learning academic language functions and forms. The program and lessons are systematically structured to differentiate for students' language proficiency levels, and scaffold the acquisition of the language objectives.

Language Power provides students with meaningful language experiences through the use of thematic text sets that are based on common curriculum themes. English language learners benefit from a thematic approach to learning because when students can connect learning to a larger context, it makes the information more meaningful (Haas 2000). In each theme, students have multiple exposures to vocabulary and language structures and receive varied opportunities to use the language in context and across the curriculum. Additionally these themes build students' background around content-area standards supporting their academic achievement in other curricular areas.
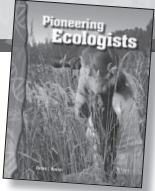

Sample of texts from one
***Language Power* text set**

Program Research and Overview *(cont.)*

In each of lesson of *Language Power*, students master the language objectives through opportunities for comprehensible input with listening and reading activities and structured output with speaking and writing activities. Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrell (1983) introduced the concept of comprehensible input as a component of language acquisition. They argue that for language to be learned, the message must be understood. Therefore, English learners need access to language and content through strategies that are highly contextualized, scaffolded, and multimodal. *Language Power* provides these opportunities in a before, during, and after reading lesson framework. To prepare students for the language and content in each lesson, key vocabulary and concepts are frontloaded and students' prior knowledge is activated. Then students take in language through the reading of the text and teacher models language structures and functions. The text and content serve as the rich-context for the language learning.

Pioneering Ecologists

Objectives

Language Objective: Listen attentively to more complex stories and information on new topics across content areas and identify the main points and supporting details.

Content Objective: Know that people of all backgrounds and with diverse interests, talents, qualities, and motivations engage in fields of science and engineering; some of these people work in teams and others work alone, but all communicate extensively with others.

Vocabulary Word Bank
- climate
- ecology
- ecosystem
- endangered
- extinction
- game
- global warming
- habitat

Extension Words
- ecologist
- pioneer

Before Reading

Building Background Knowledge and Vocabulary:

1. Explain that students will use what they already know about a topic to help them understand new information. Explain that this is an important strategy when learning complex concepts.
2. **Talk Time:** Show students the cover of the text. Ask students about the meaning of the title.

   What is a pioneer? A pioneer is _____.

   What does a pioneer do? A pioneer _____.

   If the scientists in this text are called pioneering ecologists, what are they? They are _____.
3. Introduce the vocabulary words to students by taking a text walk through the book. Show photographs from the book to reinforce word meaning.
4. Ask students to think about how their knowledge of ecosystems might assist them in making sense of new information in the text. Explain that, as they read, they should connect new information to what they already know in order to increase their understanding.
5. **Talk Time:** Have students write what they already know about ecosystems in the *Student Guided Practice Book* ❶ (page 44). Then have students write what they want to know. Ask students to share their ideas with the class.

   I know _____.

   I want to know _____.

During Reading

1. Read the text as a class. Pause periodically to ask students how the text relates to what they already know. As students read, remind them to write what they have learned on the activity sheet.

After Reading

1. **I Do:** Have students turn to the activity in the *Student Guided Practice Book* ❷ (page 45). Model how to determine and write Aldo Leopold's major accomplishment.

   Aldo Leopold experimented with rainwater. Pages 10 through 12 give details about Aldo Leopold. The first two pages give details about how he was involved in ecology. His major accomplishments are listed on page 12. Leopold helped to create two laws—the National Environmental Policy Act and the Endangered Species Act of 1973.
2. **We Do:** Guide students in determining and writing Ruth Patrick's and Eugene Odum's major accomplishments.

   What page has information on _____? Page _____ has information about _____.

   What was _____'s major accomplishment? _____'s major accomplishment was _____.

   ✓ **Progress Check:** During Step 2, listen for students identifying the main points and supporting details.
3. **You Do:** Have students independently write the major accomplishments of the remaining ecologists.
4. **Talk Time:** Ask students to share their answers with a partner. Encourage students to speak in complete sentences.

   _____'s major accomplishment was _____.
5. **Talk Time:** Have students complete the activity in the *Student Guided Practice Book* ❸ (page 46). Have students share their answers in small groups.

   If I were an ecologist, I would help the environment by _____.

***Language Power* Grades 6–8 Level C Teacher's Guide**
Before, During, and After Reading Lesson Framework

As students engage in language input, they prepare for comprehensible output. The comprehensible output hypothesis states that language is developed when we attempt to communicate but fail, and have to try again. Through trial, error, and feedback students arrive at the correct form of language, their conversational partners understand them, and language output is achieved (Swain 1985). Within the *Language Power* lesson framework, students have ample opportunities to use the targeted language in pairs and small groups for speaking and writing. As students interact with language in these modes of output, the teacher provides feedback. Students may also ask for clarification or the teacher may offer comprehensible language input to support students' new attempts at output.

Program Research and Overview *(cont.)*

As students acquire proficiency with a language objective, English learners rely on varied levels or types of support. This support is best provided using a Gradual Release of Responsibility Model. Teacher support starts out highly structured and moves toward helping students become independent learners (Gallagher and Pearson 1983). As students progress through the before, during, and after reading framework in *Language Power*, the teacher gradually releases responsibility to the students for demonstrating mastery of the language objective. This is achieved through an "I Do; We Do; and You Do" framework. In the "I Do" phase of each *Language Power* lesson, the teacher demonstrates language and literacy objectives. In the "We Do" phase, the teacher provides high levels of support while students engage in all four language domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) around the language and literacy objectives. In the "You Do" phase of the lesson, the students independently demonstrate their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills for the targeted language and literacy objectives.

After Reading

1. **I Do:** Explain that setting affects many elements of a story. A story set in the 1800s is not going to be the same as a story set in the present day. Have students turn to the activity in the *Student Guided Practice Book* ❸ (page 64). Model how to answer the first question.

   The people in the 1800s were quite different than the people today. People dressed differently. People talked differently. People acted differently. I know that 7-year-olds and 13-year-olds are not allowed to work today like they were in the 1800s. Laws have been passed to protect children from being taken advantage of. So, if the setting changed to the present, the characters would not be newsies.

2. **We Do:** Guide students in answering the next question. Help students describe how the conflict would be different if the setting changed to the present.

   Would the conflict be the same?

   What do kids fight about today? Kids fight about _____.

   Progress Check: During Step 2, listen for students analyzing the setting and its influence on the meaning of the conflict in a literary text.

3. **You Do:** Have students answer the remaining questions independently.

4. **Talk Time:** Have students share their answers with the class.

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Gradual Release of Responsibility Model

In addition to the lesson, the *Language Power* program is differentiated in structure and designed to accommodate varied levels of language proficiency. Kits are available for grade level ranges K–2, 3–5, and 6–8. Each grade level range is provided at three different language proficiency levels: beginner, intermediate and advanced. Many of the curriculum themes extend across proficiency levels within a grade band. For a heterogeneous classroom with a range of English language proficiency levels, teachers are able to use the program for small-group ELD instruction. For a homogenous class with a narrow range of proficiency levels, they may use one proficiency level kit for whole-group instruction.

Language Level	Grades K–2 (Content)	Grades 3–5 (Content)	Grades 6–8 (Content)
Beginner	Level A	Level A	Level A
Intermediate	Level B	Level B	Level B
Advanced	Level C	Level C	Level C

Structure of the *Language Power* Program

Program Research and Overview *(cont.)*

The assessments in *Language Power* drive and inform instruction and allow teachers to capitalize on the differentiated design of the program. To place students in the program and assess students' mastery of the language objectives taught, *Language Power* includes both formative, progress monitoring, and summative assessment opportunities. The *Language Power* Pretest serves as a guide to place students in the appropriate English language proficiency kit level. For example, a student in grade 1 may be placed in a beginner, intermediate, or advanced kit for the K–2 grade range based on their Pretest scores. As students progress through the lessons in the kit, their progress towards mastering the language objective is monitored with Student Guided Practice Book activities, talk time opportunities, lesson Progress Checks, and a fluency rubric. At the end of each theme, there is a performance-based Theme Assessment and rubric that serves as the summative assessment for the vocabulary, language structures, and language functions taught in the unit. Finally, a Posttest serves as a measure of student progress at the completion of the kit level.

Language Power Assessments

Progress Check

Progress Check Logs

Student Guided Practice Book activity sheets

Theme Assessment

Fluency Rubric

Program Research and Overview *(cont.)*

To create a bridge between home and school, *Language Power* empowers families to support their child's language development by providing Family Literacy Activities for each lesson and Parent Tip Cards that offer engaging activities for literacy and language learning in the home. These are provided in English and in Spanish.
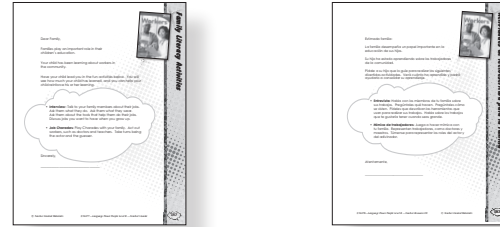
Parent Tip Cards

Family Literacy Activities
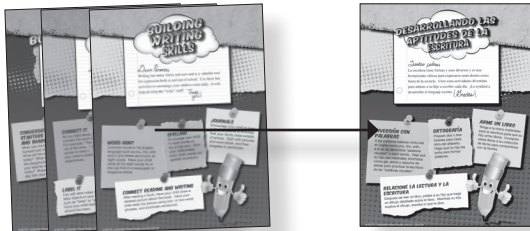
English

Spanish
(on reverse)

English

Spanish
(on the Digital
Resource CD)

Purpose of the Data Report

Teacher Created Materials and the Fresno County Office of Education, Migrant Education Region IV Program partnered during the 2012–2013 school year to implement *Language Power* with the goal of increasing English language proficiency among K–8 Migrant Education students. The program was implemented through a home literacy program. To inform future Fresno County Office of Education Migrant Education program decision making and implementation, students' increased mastery of the program's language objectives was measured.

Fresno County Office of Education, Migrant Education Region IV

Migrant Education Region IV provides supplementary instructional and support services to enable migrant children to obtain a quality education. The program serves over 26,000 students, ranging from preschool up to age 22. The program services are designed to meet the unique needs known to accompany migrancy, such as interruptions in schooling, which can lead to overall frustration and low academic performance, coupled with factors like low socio-economic status and limited English skills. According to the Migrant Education Region IV website, through the program, "these children can be provided with supplemental educational and support services to help overcome their difficulties." Furthermore, the program believes that, "migrant children can close the achievement gap in education and develop their skills and options for the future" (migrant.fcoe.org).

Program Implementation Plan

The purpose of using *Language Power* in the Migrant Education Region IV home literacy program was to increase English language proficiency among participating migrant students. While some variations on implementation occurred, most tutors met with students at their homes two days per week, 30–60 minutes total per week.

During the tutorial session, the tutors used the *Language Power* lessons to provide instruction and engage students in reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities. To accompany the Language Power lessons and sustain language development, every individual student received a backpack with 30 pieces of fiction and non-fiction text, a Student Guided Practice Book, Audio CD of the text, and a Parent Tip Card.

Many of the tutors utilized a customized pacing plan for implementing the program. Within the plan the tutors completed one *Language Power* lesson with students each week. During the first day of instruction, the tutors delivered the Before Reading section to build background and activate prior knowledge. Then they completed the During Reading section, where students would interact with the vocabulary and language structures in the text. If time was available, the tutors worked with students on the Content Connection in the lesson.

On the second day of instruction each week, the students and tutors engaged in a second reading of the text and then completed the After Reading, Writing, and Fluency portions of the lessons. In the After Reading section of the lesson, the tutor releases responsibility and the students complete independent activities to practice the language objective. Students then apply and extend upon the language they have learned during the Writing portion of the lesson. Next, in the Fluency portion, students practice reading the text with expression, phrasing, automaticity, and accuracy.

Custom Pacing Plan

To facilitate ongoing family literacy between tutorial sessions, the student and parents would complete the Family Literacy Activities that accompanied the *Language Power* lesson, engage in the activities on the Parent Tip card, or listen to the audio of the text.

Through the systematic lesson design and pacing plan, the tutors were able to easily utilize the program to provide students with rich language learning experiences to increase their English language proficiency levels.

Professional Development for Tutors and Program Managers

To support implementation of the *Language Power* program and increase tutor efficacy, ongoing professional development services were provided during three, 3.5-hour sessions scheduled throughout the school year. During the initial professional development session, teachers learned the structure of the program and how to utilize the lessons and resources in the program. The presenter provided step-by-step instruction for administering the Pretest and using the program pacing.

During the mid-year professional development session, tutors and program mangers explored more deeply the pedagogy and research for English language acquisition related to BICS, CALP, and academic language proficiency. They acquired additional methods and strategies for academic language development and reading comprehension. Additionally, tutors practiced administering the content theme assessments and discovered how to use them as a formative assessment tool.

In the last professional development session, tutors acquired teaching practices for developing students' reading strategies. Tutors also collaborated around best practices for parent involvement and shared their feedback on students' responses to the text sets. Finally, tutors learned how to administer the Posttest and submit data.

Language Power Pretest and Posttest Administration and Scoring

To measure students' increased mastery of the program's language objectives, the *Language Power* Pretest was administered at the start of the tutorial program, with the Posttest being administered at the conclusion of the program. The *Language Power* program includes one Pretest and Posttest per grade level range. Students were placed in a beginner, intermediate, or advanced level kit corresponding to their grade-level range based on their Pretest results and their 2012 CELDT levels.

The assessments are structured so that all students in a given grade-level range could be assessed at all three language proficiency levels (beginner, intermediate, and advanced) for each language domain (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). The assessments for each grade level range include four items per language proficiency level, per language domain (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Hence, there are a total of 12 items per domain.

The Pretest and Posttest were administered in a one-to-one format with the student and tutor. The tutor administered four items for each domain, at each language proficiency level. The tutor stopped administration of the domain items at the end of the language proficiency level if the student only had 0–2 items correct at that level. The tutor would proceed with administration of the next level of items for that domain if the student had 3–4 items correct. The first level in which a student did not score 3 or 4 correct was considered the instructional level.
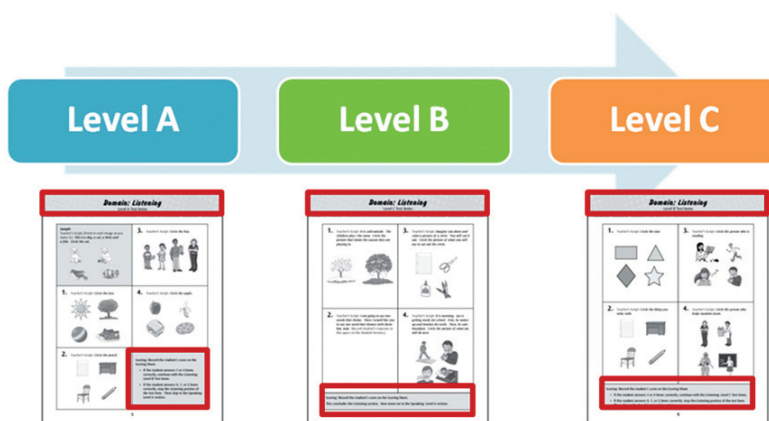
To score the assessments, students are given a categorical score of 1–3 in each domain, based on students' tested instructional levels. The categorical point values by level are: Level A (beginner) = 1 point, Level B (intermediate) = 2 points, and Level C (advanced) = 3 points. To calculate the overall, Pretest and Posttest score, the point values for the four domains were added together and averaged (divided by 4) to give each student a categorical point score in the range of 1–3. This score represents students mean language proficiency level based on the language objectives in the program that were assessed. The Pretest/Posttest scoring sheet shows how the Pretest and Posttest scores are calculated.

Domain/Level	Item #	Pretest ✓ for Correct	Posttest ✓ for Correct
Reading/Level A	1		
	2		
	3		
	4		
Reading/Level B	1		
	2		
	3		
	4		
Reading/Level C	1		
	2		
	3		
	4		
Reading Level:		A B C	A B C
Writing/Level A	1		
	2		
	3		
	4		
Writing/Level B	1		
	2		
	3		
	4		
Writing/Level C	1		
	2		
	3		
	4		
Writing Level:		A B C	A B C

|	Listening			Speaking			Reading			Writing			Kit Level		
Pretest Scoring Summary	A 1pt.	B 2pts.	C 3pts.	A 1pt.	B 2pts.	C 3pts.	A 1pt.	B 2pts.	C 3pts.	A 1pt.	B 2pts.	C 3pts.	1.0-1.5 A	1.75-2.5 B	2.75-3.0 C
Pretest Points	Total points ☐ ÷ 4 = ☐ Average														
Posttest Scoring Summary	A 1pt.	B 2pts.	C 3pts.	A 1pt.	B 2pts.	C 3pts.	A 1pt.	B 2pts.	C 3pts.	A 1pt.	B 2pts.	C 3pts.	1.0-1.5 A	1.75-2.5 B	2.75-3.0 C
PosttestPoints	Total points ☐ ÷ 4 = ☐ Average														

Data Analysis Methods

Student's quantitative change in language proficiency on the *Language Power* Pretest and Posttest was determined by the increase, decrease, or sustained categorical score in each domain. Students who received a categorical score of 1, beginner level in a given domain could have gained a maximum of 2 points. Students who received a categorical score of 2, intermediate level in a given domain could have gained a maximum of 1 point. Students who received a categorical score of 3, advanced level could only demonstrate sustained growth with a maximum score of 3 on both the Pretest and Posttest.

To analyze students' language proficiency growth as a result of participating in *Language Power*, the students were grouped in each domain by Pretest categorical scores (0–3). The students in each categorical score group were then counted. For example, in the listening domain the number of students classified as beginner with a categorical score of 1 were grouped and counted. Next the students in each categorical Pretest score group were then disaggregated by the quantitative gains demonstrated on the Posttest (2 points, 1 point, or sustained growth). The number of students for each quantitative gain was divided by the number of students in the Pretest categorical score subgroup. The percent of students that demonstrated sustained proficiency or gains of 1 or 2 points in each domain was then calculated.

Results

The data from the *Language Power* Pretest and Posttest provides evidence that the majority of Fresno County migrant students participating in the home tutorial program made significant gains in their language proficiency. The majority of students at each proficiency level increased a maximum of 2 levels, 1 level, or demonstrated sustained proficiency levels in the language domains of listening, speaking, and reading. Approximately one third of students also made gains or demonstrated sustained proficiency levels in their writing skills. *Figure A* shows by domain the percent of students that demonstrated gains on the *Language Power* Posttest.

Figure A.

Language Power
Student Gains and
Sustained Proficiency Levels
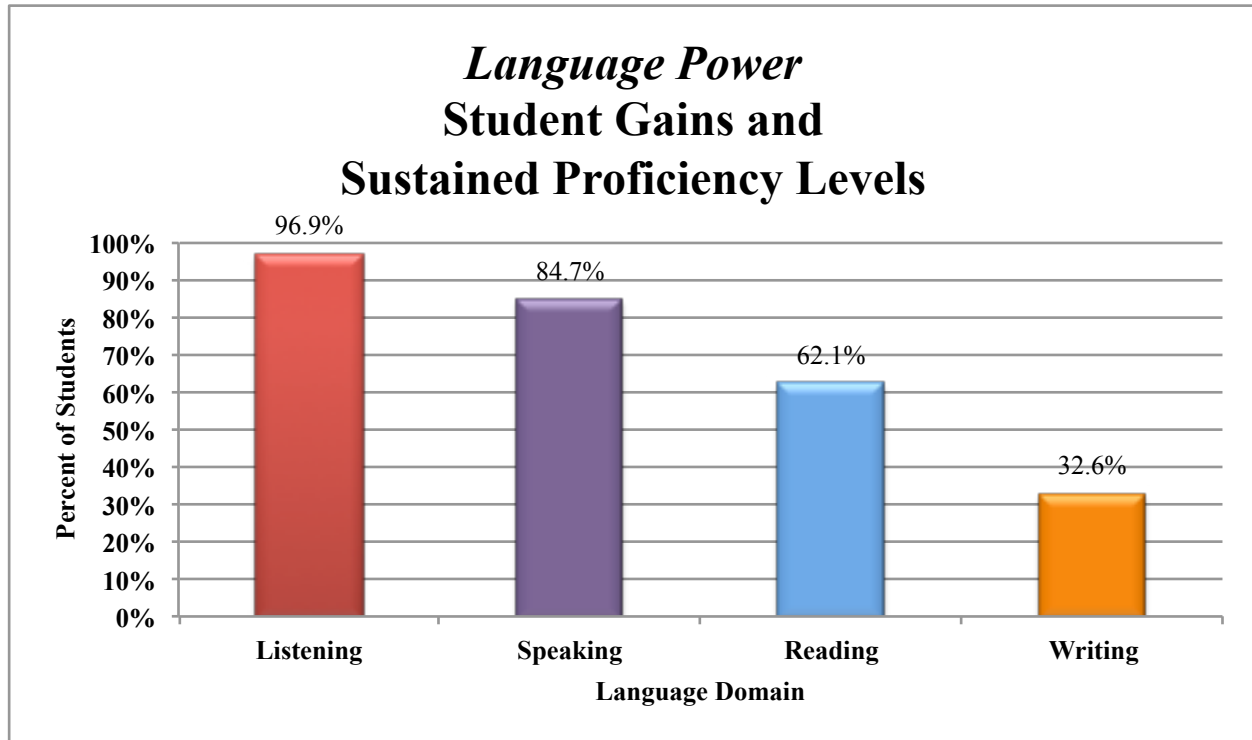
When the data was disaggregated by students' language proficiency categorical scores on the *Language Power* Pretest, the data showed student gains across each of the four language domains. This illustrates the efficacy in the *Language Power* approach, teaching academic vocabulary and language forms and functions in a cross-curricular and thematic context and giving students an authentic purpose to acquire language across all four domains. The focused instruction in each domain that is included within every lesson of the program led students to make measureable gains in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Additionally the data disaggregated by students' categorical scores on the Pretest show that a larger percentage of students made greater gains in the listening and speaking domains than in the reading and writing domains. This reflects the natural developmental progression of language acquisition where students first acquire listening and speaking proficiency and then acquire reading and writing proficiency. *Tables 1–4*, organized by proficiency levels, reflect these conclusions. Each table shows the number and percent of students that made categorical gains in each domain. The corresponding *Figures (B–D)* below the tables present this data in the form of a bar graph.

Results *(cont.)*

Table 1.

Pre-Beginner* Students that Demonstrated Gains for Each Domain

Domain/Point Gain	Total Students	1 pt gain	2 pt gain	3 pt gain
Listening	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Speaking	1	0/1 = 0%	0/1 = 0%	1/1 = 100%
Reading	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Writing	0	n/a	n/a	n/a

* For the purpose of data analysis, students who received a categorical score of 0 on the Pretest were classified as Pre-Beginner.
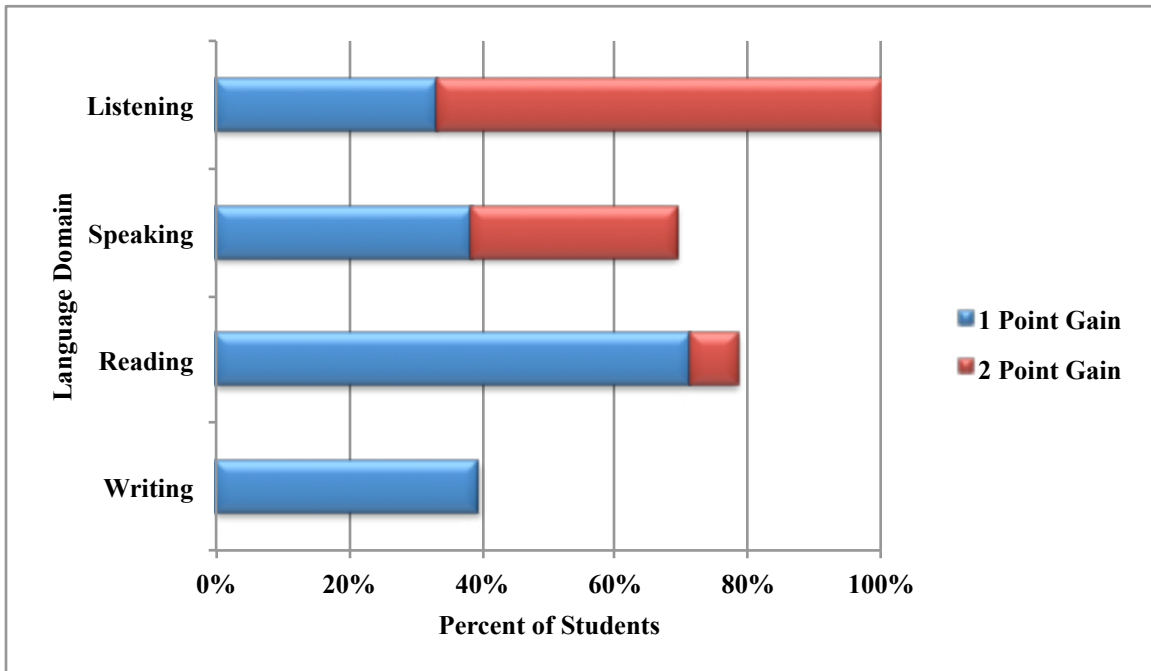
Table 2.

Beginner Students that Demonstrated Gains for Each Domain

Domain/Point Gain	Total Students	1 pt gain	2 pt gain
Listening	3	1/3 = 33.3%	2/3 = 66.7%
Speaking	13	5/13 = 38.5%	4/13 = 30.8%
Reading	14	10/14 = 71.4%	1/14 = 7.1%
Writing	28	11/28 = 39.3%	0/28 = 0%

Figure B.

### Total Percent of Beginner Students that Demonstrated Gains for Each Domain

Table 3.

Intermediate Students that Demonstrated Gains for Each Domain

Domain/ Point Gain	Total Students	1 pt gain	Sustained Proficiency Level
Listening	14	11/14 = 78.6%	3/14 = 21.4%
Speaking	32	23/32 = 71.9%	7/32 = 21.9%
Reading	54	25/54 = 46.3%	27/54 = 50.0%
Writing	54	11/54 = 20.4%	39/54 = 72.2%

Figure C.

### Total Percent of Intermediate Students that Demonstrated Gains for Each Domain
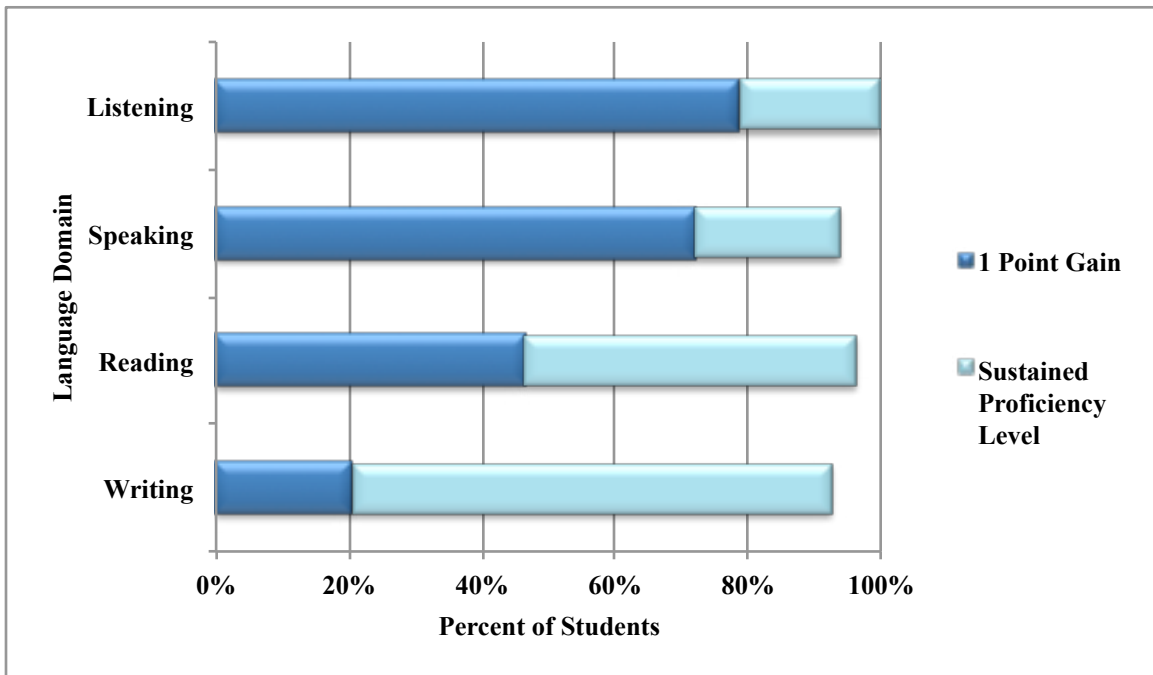
Table 4.

Advanced Students that Sustained Proficiency for Each Domain

Domain/ Point Gain	Total Students	Sustained Proficiency Level
Listening	82	79/82 = 96.3%
Speaking	52	50/52 = 96.2%
Reading	27	23/27 = 85.2%
Writing	13	9/13 = 69.2%

Figure D.

Total Percent of Advanced Students that Sustained Proficiency for Each Domain
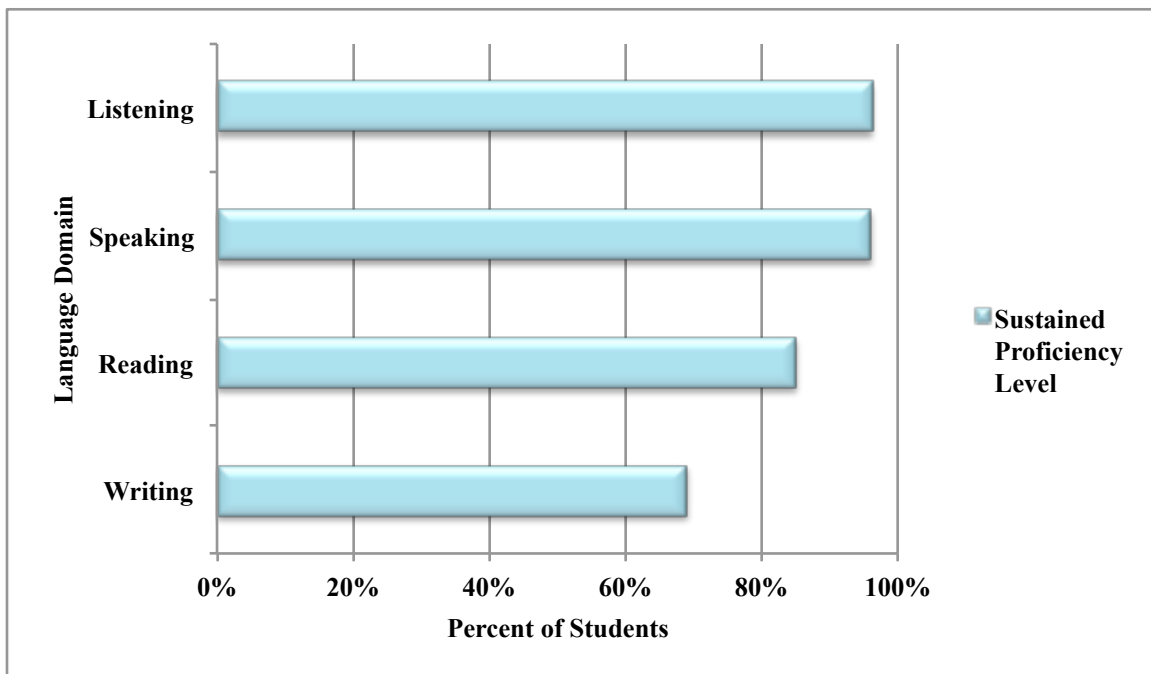
Conclusion

These data results indicate positive outcomes based upon students' participation in the Fresno County Office of Education, Migrant Education Region IV *Language Power* Home Literacy Program. Overall, the majority of students made significant gains or sustained their proficiency level in the domains of listening, speaking, and reading and approximately one third of the students made significant gains or sustained proficiency levels in writing. These gains represent progress toward mastery of the listening, speaking, reading, and writing objectives in the program, and consequently, progress toward higher levels of English language proficiency amongst Fresno County students.

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