8-31-2012

Effects of explicit phonics instruction on the decoding, spelling and comprehension skills of bilingual students making the transition to English reading

Katie E. Palacios

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.stritch.edu/etd

Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation
Palacios, Katie E., "Effects of explicit phonics instruction on the decoding, spelling and comprehension skills of bilingual students making the transition to English reading" (2012). Master's Theses, Capstones, and Projects. 331.
https://digitalcommons.stritch.edu/etd/331

This Graduate Field Experience is brought to you for free and open access by Stritch Shares. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master’s Theses, Capstones, and Projects by an authorized administrator of Stritch Shares. For more information, please contact smbagley@stritch.edu.
The Effects of Explicit Phonics Instruction on the Decoding, Spelling and Comprehension Skills of Bilingual Students Making the Transition to English Reading

By

Katie E. Palacios

A Graduate Field Experience
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts Literacy and ESL
At Cardinal Stritch University
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

2012
This Graduate Field Experience
Has been approved for Cardinal Stritch University by

Leah Romaine
(Advisor)

7/13/2012
(Date)
Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of explicit phonics instruction, embedded in a balanced literacy approach, on the English reading abilities of bilingual students making the transition from Spanish to English literacy. Ten Hispanic bilingual second-grade students participated in this study, including four males and six females. Students were pre- and post-tested on measures of phonics, word reading accuracy and comprehension. Over the course of six weeks, students participated in a balanced literacy instructional program that included instruction in spelling, vocabulary, phonics and comprehension. These areas were then assessed on a weekly basis. The intervention resulted in students’ improved comprehension, spelling and vocabulary abilities; however, a clear need for additional systematic, explicit English phonics instruction was also apparent.
Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction ................................................................................................................. 6
  Project Goal ................................................................................................................................. 6
  School Setting and Student Population ....................................................................................... 7
  Student Language and Academic Data ......................................................................................... 9
  Project Overview ....................................................................................................................... 10
  Best Practices in Phonics Instruction ......................................................................................... 11
  Project Design ............................................................................................................................. 13

Chapter Two: Literature Review ...................................................................................................... 16
  Phonological Awareness, Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Skills of ELLs ......................... 18
  Explicit Phonics Instruction ....................................................................................................... 26
  Integrating Phonics Instruction and a Balanced Literacy Approach ........................................ 61
  Conclusion ................................................................................................................................ 75

Chapter Three: Procedures for the Study ...................................................................................... 77
  Sample Population ....................................................................................................................... 77
  Data Collection ............................................................................................................................ 78
  Procedures ................................................................................................................................ 80
  Conclusion ................................................................................................................................ 85

Chapter Four: Results .................................................................................................................... 86
  Aggregate Pre-test Results ........................................................................................................... 86
  Aggregate Intervention Results .................................................................................................. 89
  Aggregate Post-test Results ....................................................................................................... 90
  Individual Case Studies ............................................................................................................. 92
Chapter One: Introduction

Reading proficiency is a strong predictor of future success for students today. Schools strive to produce proficient readers who graduate high school, attend college and prepare themselves for the career of their choice. However, a wide achievement gap exists between students based on income, race and ethnicity (Johnson, 2002). English language proficiency is another factor that contributes to success or failure in literacy learning. The number of English Language Learners (ELLs) in American schools today continues to grow, with many ethnicities and languages being represented throughout the country. Some of these students are already educated in their native language or attend bilingual programs in which they become literate in their native language before they are formally taught English literacy. Others attend transitional programs in which they begin instruction in their native language with the goal of transitioning to all-English instruction as quickly as possible. Still other ELLs are placed in monolingual English-only classrooms with or without the support of an English as a Second Language (ESL) instructor. Literacy learning for these students is complicated; therefore, teachers must understand the unique educational and language acquisition needs of ELLs in order to advance their English literacy skills.

Project Goal

This project focused on teaching English reading to bilingual students who were already proficient readers in their native language, Spanish. Based on Cummins’ (1981) Common Underlying Proficiency theory, the literacy knowledge and skills that students learn in their home language – in this case, Spanish – serves as a literacy foundation upon which literacy in a second language – in this case, English – can be built (as cited in Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2006). Thus, Spanish reading proficiency supports English reading proficiency if instruction attends to what
students already know and explicitly addresses new concepts or skills unique to the second language. Explicit phonics instruction is one of many instructional strategies that have proven effective for both native English speakers and English language learners (Denton, Anthony, Parker & Hasbrouck, 2004; Liaw, 2003; Stuart, 1999; Stuart, 2004). This project addressed the unique needs of bilingual learners as they transitioned from literacy instruction conducted wholly in Spanish to literacy instruction in both Spanish and English using explicit phonics instruction as part of a balanced literacy approach. The goal of the instructional program employed by the school in which the children were enrolled was for students to begin the transition to English reading in second grade and eventually be reading on grade level in English as well as in Spanish. This research thus sought out to determine how the use of explicit phonics, vocabulary and comprehension instruction, combined with skills and strategies that were already familiar to the students from Spanish reading instruction, impacted students’ English decoding, spelling and comprehension skills.

**School Setting and Student Population**

I conducted this study over the course of six weeks in a bilingual second grade classroom in an urban school district in Wisconsin. The school served approximately 730 students from Head Start (three-year-olds) through eighth grade. The diverse student population consisted of approximately 76% Hispanic, 14% African American, 7% Caucasian, 1% Asian and 1% American Indian students. About 95% of the students were considered economically disadvantaged and received free or reduced lunch at school. Approximately 65% of students were proficient English speakers. Of the remaining students, 33% spoke Spanish as their first language, 0.4% spoke Hmong and 1.5% spoke another language (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2011).
This school, like many others in the district, followed the maintenance bilingual model for Spanish-speaking students. This means that students in the bilingual program initially received 90% of their instruction in Spanish, with 10% devoted to informal English learning. Each year, the percentage of instruction conducted in English increased by 10%. Students were eligible to transition to formal English reading during the second semester of second grade if, according to district guidelines, they had reached a LAU level of 2.0 and were proficient at a 2.1 Spanish reading level. Beginning in third grade, bilingual students received 50% of their academic instruction in English and 50% in Spanish, thus maintaining their native language. There was one bilingual classroom at every grade level, beginning in four-year-old kindergarten. At this school, ESL was content-based in the bilingual classrooms, which meant that ESL and classroom teachers supported students’ English learning in the content areas. At the lower levels students learned English through science and social studies content. In the upper elementary and middle school classrooms students received ESL support during their reading and writing blocks.

The district in which this school was located was considered a District Identified For Improvement (DIFI) at the time of this study. Thus, the school had many programs that provided resources for teachers and students. The Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) class size reduction program allowed five-year-old kindergarten through third-grade classrooms to have an average of 32 students and two teachers. The school also benefited from the federal Title I and Title III programs. Title I provides financial assistance to states and school districts that serve educationally at-risk students. Title III, the Immigrant Children and Youth Grant, provides additional financial assistance to school districts that serve immigrant children, defined as children born in another country who have been in American schools for less than three complete years. Most curricular decisions in this district were made at the district level and
passed on to the schools. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) dictated the
number of minutes teachers needed to instruct in each subject area and mandated that the
Common Core State Standards be used to guide decisions related to instruction and assessment.

Because of the large number of students attending this school at the time of the study, the
administrative team consisted of a full-time principal and two full-time assistant principals. The
teaching staff included 32 full-time regular education teachers, seven special education teachers,
three speech pathologists, three ESL teachers and specialists for music, physical education and
art. Seventeen assistants provided classroom support and monitored students during recess and
lunch times. The school also offered an after-school Community Learning Center (CLC),
supported by the local Boys and Girls Club.

**Student Language and Academic Data**

At the time of this study, my classroom consisted of 29 second-grade ELLs who spoke
Spanish as their first language. Most of my students’ parents did not speak any English or had
limited English proficiency. All students spoke Spanish exclusively in their home environments,
with the exception of one student who spoke Spanish with his father and English with his
mother. Of the 29 students, 15 were on my classroom list, and 14 were on my SAGE partner
teacher’s list. However, during the ESL instructional block, we divided all students among
ourselves and our ESL teacher, placing them in groups based on ability and needs, taking both
Spanish reading levels and English LAU levels into account. At the time of the study, Spanish
reading levels in my classroom ranged from 1.2 (reading at a second semester of first grade
level) to 2.2 (reading at a second semester of second grade level). Spanish reading groups were
created based on decoding, fluency and comprehension needs of the students on each teacher’s
classroom list. English groups were created based on LAU levels and individual needs in the
areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing. When this study began, the only known LAU levels were from the previous year’s ACCESS for ELLs (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners) test (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment, 2011). These levels ranged from 1.9 to 4.5 in my classroom. When the study concluded, new LAU levels were available from this year’s ACCESS test, given in January 2012. The new scores showed that at the time of the study, the LAU levels in my classroom ranged from 2.6 to 5.8. According to district guidelines, students could be eligible to begin formal English reading when they reached a LAU level of 2.0 and were proficient at a 2.1 Spanish reading level. Teacher observations of classroom performance were also considered. Based on these criteria, nineteen students were eligible to make the formal transition to English reading beginning in February 2012. All students continued to receive Spanish literacy instruction every day in second grade.

Project Overview

Data from the reading subtest of the 2010 Wisconsin Knowledge Concepts Examination (WKCE) showed 40.9% of ELL fourth-graders at the focal school possessed only minimal or basic proficiency relative to grade level reading abilities (Wisconsin Department of Public Education, 2011). The goal of this study was thus to lay a strong foundation in English language literacy skills so that my students would demonstrate reading proficiency in their second language over the course of their academic careers. Therefore, this project focused on providing explicit phonics instruction in English as part of a balanced literacy approach as students were transitioning to formal English reading. Research suggests that explicit phonics instruction benefits bilingual students in the areas of phonological awareness, phonics, reading accuracy and spelling (Denton et al., 2004; Reese, Gallimore & Guthrie, 2005; Stuart, 1999, 2004).
Embedding phonics instruction in a balanced literacy approach has been shown to improve comprehension and student attitudes toward reading in English (Araujo, 2002; Liaw, 2003). This project explored these areas of best practice and examined the effectiveness of using students’ native language to support their transition to formal literacy instruction in their second language literacy.

**Best Practices in Phonics Instruction**

Phonological awareness, being aware of the sounds in spoken words, is an important skill necessary for subsequent phonics learning (Vukelich, Christie & Enz, 2008). Verhoeven (2007) explored the relationship between second language learners’ bilingual language development and their phonological awareness skills. He found that children who were proficient in both their first language (L1) and their second language (L2) demonstrated higher levels of phonological awareness than their monolingual peers and concluded that this was due to the fact that bilingual students have two channels of linguistic input. He believed that a child’s level of bilingual development affects his degree of phonological awareness, which is a strong predictor of later reading success. Therefore, establishing a strong literacy foundation in students’ L1 through bilingual education helps them to become successful readers in their L2.

While it is understood that a strong literacy foundation in a child’s first language provides linguistic support as the child transitions to a second language, teachers need effective strategies to help struggling students. Researchers have conducted several studies to observe the effects of phonics instruction on students who were learning to read in their second language (Denton et al., 2004; Liaw, 2003; Reese et al., 2005; Stuart, 1999, 2004). Explicit phonics instruction has led to increased scores on measures of phonological awareness, phonics, reading accuracy and spelling for ELLs (Denton et al., 2004; Stuart, 1999, 2004). Reese et al. (2005) examined
individual ELLs as they transitioned from Spanish literacy instruction to literacy instruction conducted fully in English. They noticed that the students from the study who had attended a kindergarten with a Spanish literacy program emphasizing systematic phonics instruction outperformed their peers in first grade and then continued to out-perform their peers in eighth grade. The kindergarten phonics intervention represented the only difference between these students and their peers in the study. They also found that high-achieving students in L1 transitioned to L2 literacy earlier, experienced only a slight decline in reading scores during the transition, and were able to increase their scores to pre-transition levels by the end of middle school, providing more evidence for cross-linguistic transfer of skills. Stuart (1999) believed that because bilingual students have access to two phonological systems and generally have more well-developed phonological skills, teaching phonics actually builds on the strengths that these students already possess. Although his study did not demonstrate the extent of longitudinal benefits such as those suggested by Reese et al. (2005), Stuart (2004) did find that ELLs who had participated in a 12-week phonics intervention in kindergarten still outperformed their peers in phonemic awareness, phonics and spelling tasks at the end of their second-grade year. Brice and Brice (2009) found that both high-reading monolingual and high-reading bilingual students performed better on phoneme and grapheme identification tasks than low-reading students from either language-ability group. This suggests that explicit instruction in phoneme and grapheme identification (phonics) is beneficial to all students in the early stages of literacy development.

While phonics instruction alone has been shown to affect specific areas of literacy learning, such as decoding and spelling, Liaw (2003) demonstrated that using a balanced literacy approach that included phonics instruction supported students in phonics and vocabulary development while also developing their self-confidence as readers in English. Combining this
EXPLICIT PHONICS INSTRUCTION FOR ELLS

approach with explicit phonics instruction has been shown to support students’ improvement in their phonics skills and encourage them to see and talk about themselves as readers, even if they were not yet reading conventionally (Araujo, 2002).

Based on current research related to phonics instruction and ELLs, the purpose of this project was to incorporate explicit phonics instruction in a balanced literacy approach to help students transition smoothly to English reading. The students who participated in this project had already received literacy instruction in their native language, Spanish, for approximately three and a half years. According to the common underlying proficiency theory, concepts learned in students’ L1 can and will transfer to L2, as long as commonalities and differences between the languages are discussed (Brice & Brice, 2009; Denton et al., 2004; Verhoeven, 2007). This project built on L1 knowledge students already possessed, such as Spanish phonics knowledge, in order to develop literacy concepts in their L2.

Project Design

In this project, I provided six weeks of explicit phonics instruction in English as part of a balanced literacy approach, which included teaching sight words, new vocabulary, repeated readings and reading for meaning. Each of these strategies had already been used to develop students’ literacy in their native language throughout four-year-old kindergarten, five-year-old kindergarten, first grade and the first semester of second grade. This study sought to demonstrate how using a consistent approach would aid students in transferring literacy skills from Spanish to English.

One primary difference between Spanish and English is how letter sounds – especially vowels – are pronounced. Explicit phonics instruction was used to compare and contrast letter sounds and scaffold students’ understanding of English phonemic patterns and decoding skills.
Students’ ability to recognize and apply English phonics concepts was strengthened as words were studied within connected text. Repeated readings of decodable and guided reader texts also supported these skills. In addition to phonics, I emphasized sight words, new vocabulary words and graphic organizers as tools to support students’ comprehension of connected text.

The weekly lesson plan, which focused on phonics instruction, sight words, vocabulary and comprehension, was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phonics</td>
<td>*Spelling pretest</td>
<td>*Explicit phonics lesson</td>
<td>*Find and point out words in weekly story that follow the week’s phonics focus</td>
<td>*Explicit phonics lesson (Spelling patterns, word endings)</td>
<td>*Spelling post-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Explicit phonics lesson</td>
<td>*Decodable readers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Decodable readers</td>
<td>*Decodable readers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sight Words/Vocabulary</td>
<td>*Introduce weekly vocabulary words</td>
<td>*Write words or sentences in notebooks</td>
<td>*Read and discuss comprehension page of student book</td>
<td>*Vocabulary Readers emphasizing vocabulary words in context</td>
<td>*Review vocabulary words within the context of the weekly story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Write words or sentences in notebooks</td>
<td>*Vocabulary Readers emphasizing vocabulary words in context</td>
<td>*Emphasize new and past vocabulary and sight words in weekly story</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Vocabulary Readers</td>
<td>*Vocabulary Readers emphasizing vocabulary words in context</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>*Relate vocabulary reader to weekly theme</td>
<td>*Read through weekly story; relate to weekly theme</td>
<td>*Graphic organizer with weekly story</td>
<td>*Weekly assessment (vocabulary, comprehension, phonics)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This project was designed to incorporate phonics instruction and a balanced literacy approach to ease the transition for bilingual students to formal English reading instruction. It honored students’ first language by using an approach similar to that which was already being used during Spanish reading to teach English reading. Students were able to more easily transfer
concepts already learned in their L1 to their L2 because the instructional format was already very familiar. The phonics focus aimed to increase English decoding skills, while the emphasis on reading for meaning and graphic organizers maintained students’ focus on the fact that the ultimate purpose of reading is to make meaning from text. Sight words and more difficult vocabulary words, which did not necessarily follow phonics rules, were introduced to increase English reading fluency and comprehension. Discussion was embedded in each of these reading strategies, giving students the opportunity to develop English speaking and listening skills along with reading and writing skills.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Because the process of learning how to read is a complicated, unique process for students learning English as a second language, teachers cannot assume a one-size-fits-all approach to literacy instruction will be effective. Bilingual students may not only struggle with reading skills like decoding, fluency and comprehension in their home language, but they may also simultaneously struggle to learn these skills in a second language. A variety of instructional models are currently in use in an attempt to promote second language literacy development. Some ELLs receive all of their instruction in monolingual, English classrooms throughout their academic career while others attend schools that employ a developmental maintenance model, in which they receive instruction in both their native language and English at all grade levels. In contrast, other schools operate transitional bilingual programs, which provide ELLs with instruction in their first language until they reach a required proficiency level at which point the students transition to all-English instruction. While the instructional model employed by a school is often mandated by district policy, the challenge facing educators is how best to teach this diverse population how to read in English within the framework of the prescribed model. One specific instructional approach that has been found to have positive effects on ELL’s English literacy development is explicit phonics instruction (Araujo, 2002; Denton et al., 2004; Liaw, 2003; Reese et al., 2005; Stuart, 1999, 2004).

Phonics refers to teaching letter-sound correspondences (Vukelich et al., 2008). Even before they begin their formal education, very young children develop a sense of phonological awareness, which lays the foundation for later phonics learning. Vukelich et al. (2008) state the difference between phonological awareness and phonics is that “phonological awareness instruction can be provided in the dark” (p.146). This is because phonological awareness focuses
on being aware of the sounds in spoken words. Children’s acquisition of speech sounds begins with their ability to segment sentences into words, words into syllables, syllables into onset and rime units, and finally onset and rime units into individual sounds, called phonemes. Phonological awareness sets the stage for phonemic awareness, the ability to manipulate individual sounds in order to isolate, blend, add, substitute and delete phonemes orally. Phonemic awareness is a strong predictor of success for learning how to read (Vukelich et al., 2008). ELLs are at-risk readers because they are learning to read in their second language. Knowing how these children’s phonological awareness is affected by their bilingualism is the first step toward understanding how to support them through phonics instruction (Brice & Brice, 2009; Verhoeven, 2007).

Phonics instruction involves teaching phoneme-grapheme correspondences. Once students are aware of the various sounds in speech, they can begin learning the letters that represent these sounds in writing. Phonics instruction, therefore, contributes to both spelling and decoding abilities. It is known that phonological awareness, phonemic awareness and phonics skills are necessary for the acquisition of literacy (Brice & Brice, 2009; Liaw, 2003; Verhoeven, 2007). Studies have found explicit phonics instruction to be effective for struggling English speakers (Beverly, Giles & Buck, 2009; Connelly, Johnston & Thompson, 2001; White, 2005), but little research has been done as to the effectiveness for ELLs. The following studies investigated the phonemic awareness, phonological awareness and phonics skills of bilingual learners (Brice & Brice, 2009; Verhoeven, 2007), found explicit phonics instruction to be an effective intervention for second language learners (Denton et al., 2004; Reese et al., 2005; Stuart, 1999, 2004) or discovered the benefits of teaching phonics within a balanced literacy approach (Araujo, 2002; Carlo et al., 2004; Liaw, 2003).
Phonological Awareness, Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Skills of ELLs

In order to understand the effectiveness of explicit phonics instruction on second language learners, one must understand how being bilingual affects one’s phonological awareness, phonemic awareness and acquisition of phonics skills. Brice and Brice (2009) stated that “differences between Spanish and English may cause difficulties for young children in the perception and discrimination of phonemes necessary for phonological awareness and beginning reading” (p.213). Verhoeven (2007) disagreed. He believed that bilingual students have an advantage over their monolingual peers in terms of their phonological and metalinguistic awareness. He hypothesized that because ELLs have access to more than one phonological system, they would have higher levels of phonological awareness. These two studies assessed phonological awareness, phonemic awareness and phonics skills in two very different groups of bilingual students and looked at the interaction between these skills and language development, both in a child’s first language (L1) and in their second language (L2). Brice and Brice examined the English phonemic awareness and phonics skills of high-reading monolingual students, low-reading monolinguals, high-reading bilingual (Spanish-English) speakers and low-reading bilinguals in kindergarten. Verhoeven studied the L1 and L2 language skills of Turkish children attending kindergarten in the Netherlands, assessing their phonological awareness at the end of their kindergarten year.

Brice and Brice (2009) recognized the critical role that literacy plays in academic success and emphasized that Hispanic students with limited English proficiency (LEP) are at higher risk for reading failure because they are learning to both speak and write a second language simultaneously. The authors thus believed that because students need to possess phonemic awareness and phonics skills to successfully decode words, these areas needed to be studied
specifically in relation to the language needs of bilingual Spanish-English-speaking students. The authors collected data on the phonemic awareness and phonics skills that were present in four groups of kindergarten students (high-reading monolinguals, low-reading monolinguals, high-reading (Spanish-English) bilinguals and low-reading bilinguals) in an attempt to answer five research questions: (a) Is there a noticeable difference in phonemic awareness and phonics skills between high ability and low ability readers?; (b) Is there a noticeable difference in phonemic awareness and phonics skills between monolingual and bilingual students?; (c) Is there a statistical interaction of reading abilities versus language abilities?; (d) Is there a noticeable difference in voiced versus voiceless phoneme identification between high ability and low ability readers?; (e) Is there a noticeable difference in voiced versus voiceless phoneme identification between monolingual and bilingual students?

The theoretical framework for this study included four theories pertaining to second language development and phonemic awareness skills. According to the motor speech theory, bilingual children can only perceive sounds in their second language which they are able to pronounce. Therefore, the authors believed that in order for these children to hear and be able to manipulate English phonemes, they must first achieve native-like pronunciation in English. The interlanguage theory supports the authors’ belief that phonological transfer occurs successfully only when the interference of phonological differences between a child’s first (L1) and second (L2) languages can be minimized. A third theory to which the authors subscribed was the contrastive analysis theory. According to this theory, a child’s L1 and L2 can be compared and contrasted in order to explain errors made in L2. The speech learning model, one such contrastive analysis model, states that sounds which are similar in two languages are actually harder to acquire than completely new sounds. Thus, Spanish speakers may have more difficulty
with English phonemes because of the phonological similarities between these two languages. The last theory guiding this study was the acoustic difference theory, which states that voicing is an important factor in the perception of phonemes. Because the voicing of individual phonemes can be different from English to Spanish, phonological awareness may be more difficult for Spanish-English bilingual students to master. These four theories shaped Brice and Brice’s (2009) theoretical framework, giving them a starting point for examining their five research questions and exposing areas in need of further research.

The sample group consisted of 80 randomly chosen kindergarten students, ranging in age from 5 years 5 months to 6 years 7 months on the day they participated in the study. Of these 80 participants, 20 were English monolinguals with high reading levels, 20 were English monolinguals with low reading levels, 20 were English-Spanish bilinguals with high reading levels and 20 were English-Spanish bilinguals with low reading levels. Fourteen of these students received special education services. Most of the students who qualified for special education were evenly distributed between the two low-reading groups, but one was in the high-reading monolingual group. High and low reading groups were determined by two benchmark assessments from a widely used, published assessment of early literacy skills. Researchers also asked teachers to rate students’ reading risks for failure and their ratings were consistent with the assessment results. Researchers identified bilingual students through the use of district classifications (identified as LEP), a Home Language Survey indicating that Spanish was spoken in the students’ homes and teacher interview data that reported that students spoke both English and Spanish in the classroom.

Each participant was given one test protocol during one data collection session. These sessions took place during the school day, but away from the classroom, in a quiet area of the
school and lasted between 15 and 35 minutes, depending on the skill levels and response times of each student. The test protocol consisted of two researcher-created stimuli word lists, 34 words for initial phoneme identification and 34 words for final phoneme identification. Students provided the initial or final sound of each word and pointed to the letter representing that sound on a grapheme chart. The researchers coded student responses as correct, incorrect (with incorrect responses recorded) or no response and video and audio taped each test protocol while recording the results on a data collection form.

Brice and Brice (2009) answered their five research questions and confirmed what previous research had already postulated by analyzing the data they collected. First, they found that high readers performed significantly better than low readers on the phoneme-grapheme identification tasks. They concluded that the identification of English phonemes and graphemes represented an important beginning reading skill for both monolingual and bilingual students. Monolingual students slightly outperformed bilingual students on the phoneme-grapheme tasks, although the authors had expected to see a greater gap between these two groups. This finding led researchers to suggest that early intervention should focus on phoneme and grapheme identification in kindergarten in order to further diminish this slight gap. In terms of the interaction effects of reading abilities and language, the authors found that at the kindergarten level, the language abilities of the students did not affect their phoneme-grapheme identification results as much as reading abilities did. Students of all reading abilities identified voiced phonemes more than voiceless phonemes, which led the authors to conclude that the concept of voicing is an important phonological skill that must be taught to both monolingual and bilingual readers. Bilingual students did not perform as well on this task, again confirming the need for explicit instruction in this area and a need for further investigation on the voicing differences
between Spanish and English. Overall, reading levels, more so than language distinctions, influenced the overall identification of voiced versus voiceless phonemes.

Brice and Brice (2009) thus concluded that all bilingual students who possess high or low reading abilities were likely to struggle with phonemic awareness and phonics skills because of interference between their L1 and English (L2). The authors proposed that the reading achievement gap that was shown to exist between monolingual and bilingual readers at the kindergarten level might be reduced with explicit phonemic awareness and phonics instruction. While Brice and Brice emphasized the need for additional research on Spanish-English cross-linguistic transfer, they also emphasized the need for research examining other languages beyond English and Spanish, as well as research examining phonemic awareness of students with disabilities and low reading abilities. Finally, the authors called for additional research examining how teachers can incorporate the explicit instruction of phoneme voicing into their reading instruction.

In contrast to the population whom Brice and Brice (2009) studied, Verhoeven (2007) explored the relationships between the bilingual language development and the phonological awareness of minority Turkish children attending kindergarten in the Netherlands. Like Brice and Brice, Verhoeven studied how a participant’s bilingualism affected the student’s phonological awareness. He also studied how students progressed in their L1 and L2 during their kindergarten year.

Verhoeven (2007) posed three research questions for this study: (a) How do the Turkish (L1) and Dutch (L2) language skills of Turkish children attending kindergarten in the Netherlands develop between the ages of five and six years old?; (b) Is there evidence of interdependence between the children’s L1 and L2 skills? (c) How do individual differences in
these bilingual children affect their phonological awareness? Verhoeven believed that because bilingual children have two channels of input, they tend to have higher levels of metalinguistic and phonological awareness than their monolingual peers. He also subscribed to Cummins’ (1981) interdependence theory (as cited in Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2006), which states that proficiency in one language can transfer to another language. He believed this to be true not only from L1 to L2, but also from L2 to L1, assuming proficiency in L1.

For this quantitative study, Verhoeven (2007) gathered data using a variety of assessments. These assessments measured students’ perceptions of phonemic differences, their ability to match a spoken word with a picture and to describe pictures, their comprehension of color, shape, quantity, space and cause-effect words, their ability to reproduce sentences with a variety of grammatical morphemes and syntactic structures and their comprehension of explicit and implicit information for orally presented stories. The phonological awareness tests included assessments on rhyming, word objectification, phoneme segmentation and word blending. A bilingual research assistant administered all tests in the children’s L1 and L2, presenting instructions in both languages.

The sample consisted of 75 Turkish children born and living in the Netherlands, who were part of 27 kindergarten classrooms in nine fairly large cities throughout the country. The mean age of the children was five years, five months. Students received instruction in their L2 (Dutch) from the beginning of the year. This longitudinal study took place throughout the students’ kindergarten year. Research assistants assessed students on language proficiency in L1 and L2 at the beginning and end of the year. They assessed phonological awareness knowledge at the end of the students’ kindergarten year.
Verhoeven (2007) used a variety of statistical analysis to examine the relationship between students’ L1 and L2 abilities over time. He noticed that students’ Turkish language abilities were stronger than their Dutch language abilities over the course of the study, but the gap between students’ L1 and L2 proficiencies decreased as students made progress in both languages during their kindergarten year. At the conclusion of the study, he observed large differences between the two languages for productive vocabulary, the ability to reproduce complex sentences and story comprehension. He found evidence of language interdependence, namely bilingual students performing like native speakers on many tasks but showing some asymmetries that demonstrated their L2 skills to still depend on their stronger L1 skills at times. Verhoeven found that children with high levels of L1 and L2 proficiency had higher scores on all four phonological awareness tests. Therefore, he concluded that the level of an individual’s bilingual development does impact his phonological awareness, with the strongest effects for tasks that made greater demands on phonological awareness. He also noticed that at the end of kindergarten, L2 (Dutch) was a stronger predictor of phonological awareness than L1 (Turkish) knowledge.

Verhoeven (2007) noted that future research should try to replicate the study with larger groups of students from various ethnic communities and minority languages. He suggested comparing patterns of bilingual development to patterns of monolingual development in otherwise comparable peers. He also recommended explicit instruction of phonological awareness in both L1 and L2 in order to gain a better understanding of the process of cross-linguistic transfer of this skill.

Both Brice and Brice (2009) and Verhoeven (2007) examined phonological awareness in bilingual students. The results of these studies were similar in that they both showed that more
proficient students, based on reading levels or language levels, performed better on the various assessments used in the studies. The authors disagreed, however, on the effects of bilingualism on the development of phonological awareness. Brice and Brice concluded that, because Spanish and English are phonologically very similar, and because similar sounds are more difficult to acquire than completely new sounds, L1 (Spanish) could interfere with L2 (English) learning. They also found that voicing of the same letter varied across the two languages, making voiceless phonemes more difficult for Spanish-English bilingual children to identify. Verhoeven, on the other hand, found that children relied on their L1 skills to help them develop their L2 skills, therefore providing support for the language interdependence theory.

While these studies provided slightly different results, they explored the phonological knowledge that bilingual children possessed as they began to learn English. Both studies included students who spoke their L1 at home and only began speaking L2 at school. The fact that higher proficiency levels in either or both languages was associated with a higher level of phonological awareness provides teachers with important information. Brice and Brice (2009) found academic proficiency levels to have a more significant influence on students’ English literacy skills than a student’s monolingual or bilingual status. Based on these findings, teachers in maintenance or transitional bilingual schools should support students’ L1 development in support of their L2 proficiency. Specifically, providing students with opportunities to compare and contrast their two languages in order to increase their awareness of the similarities and differences between the two languages may support both L1 and L2 literacy development. In light of Verhoeven’s (2007) proposition that bilingual students have two input channels and more well-developed phonological awareness systems, teachers should consider how explicit phonics instruction can build on these phonological strengths (Stuart, 1999).
Explicit Phonics Instruction

Effects of phonics instruction on monolingual students.

Explicit phonics instruction has been a component of successful efforts to support struggling English speakers’ literacy development, with evidence of positive effects on students’ reading accuracy, fluency and comprehension (Beverly et al., 2009; Connelly et al., 2001; White, 2005). Connelly et al. (2001) investigated the effects of phonics instruction versus a non-phonics book experience approach on the comprehension of beginning readers. White (2005) examined the effectiveness of an analogy-based phonics program on students’ word reading and comprehension abilities. Beverly et al. (2009) examined whether or not combining explicit phonics instruction with practice reading decodable texts would improve students’ word reading accuracy and fluency in order to ultimately impact their overall comprehension. All of the above authors hypothesized that explicit phonics instruction would improve students’ text reading and comprehension abilities.

Connelly et al. (2001) investigated the effects of two particular instructional approaches to reading. Specifically, they studied the effects of a phonics-based program and a book experience literacy program on students’ phonological awareness, reading rate, reading accuracy and reading comprehension. The authors understood that phonics-instructed students tended to be slower readers, because they attempted to sound out all unknown words, which also led them to make more nonword errors than non-phonics-instructed students. Children who were exposed to a more global book experience were taught to use story context in order to identify unknown words. The authors believed that word recognition skills, however students acquired them, were key in predicting successful reading comprehension. Therefore, they sought to understand how
two very different instructional approaches (a phonics program and a book experience program) affected the reading comprehension of students with similar word recognition skills.

Students from two schools in Scotland and two schools in New Zealand participated in the study. The schools were well-matched in terms of the socioeconomic status (SES) of parents, with the majority falling in the lower middle SES, and the size of the cities in which they were located. Thirteen male and nine female students participated in a phonics-based literacy program in Scotland, where phonics was a prevalent practice and students were generally encouraged to sound out all unfamiliar words. Ten male and 16 female students participated in a book experience literacy program in New Zealand, where students were not encouraged to sound out unfamiliar words, but rather were taught to use context first and then rely on the initial letter name for words that were still unknown. All students were six to seven years old and in their second year of school at the time of the study. Their mean reading ages and vocabulary scores, as determined by standardized measures, were matched between all schools. Students from both instructional programs were matched on word recognition skills, aural vocabulary knowledge, short-term memory assessments, time in school and chronological age. No ELLs were included in the sample population. The teachers in each classroom had at least five years of experience teaching this specific age group.

In Scotland, phonics was the most common approach schools used to teach literacy. The emphasis was always at the letter-sound and word levels. The teachers in this study did not encourage children to use context clues to decipher unknown words, but rather to sound out all unfamiliar words. A typical phonics-based literacy lesson consisted of a whole group portion, a small group portion, which included teacher-led small groups, and a whole group wrap-up at the end of the lesson. During the first whole group portion, teachers provided specific phonics
lessons and taught students rules and spelling patterns they could use to decode new words. Students read lists of words from the board, with spelling patterns identified and highlighted, and completed worksheets to reinforce this whole group lesson. Teachers taught new letter-sound correspondences more than once, and up to several lessons in a row for more difficult concepts. The teacher-led small groups consisted of students reading books with a specific phonics emphasis. Although the books claimed to emphasize comprehension and vocabulary development, the authors did not observe teachers using them in this way. These stories introduced letter-sound correspondences in a different order and at a slower rate than the whole group lessons. Words were included that highlighted the phonics element students were studying, along with high frequency exception words that could not be sounded out. Students completed phonics worksheets that corresponded to the whole group lesson focus and answered comprehension questions that mostly assessed recall of information, although some questions required that students provided evidence for their answers. Comprehension worksheets were also part of small group lessons. During small group time, some students worked at computers. The software for the computers consisted mostly of phonics programs, although the authors did observe some comprehension and writing programs. Teachers usually finished each day’s lesson with a whole-group story or a discussion on a phonics element that still needed clarification.

Connelly et al. (2001) noticed that comprehension was not emphasized in these phonics-based lessons. In teacher-led small groups, they noticed the teacher evaluating students’ decoding skills, rather than discussing the story in an attempt to promote comprehension. The authors also observed the introduction of formal spelling instruction, beginning in the students’ second year in school. During the first year, invented spelling was accepted, but after formal spelling instruction began teachers would encourage students to ask for help if they wanted to
write a difficult sentence. Teachers wrote these particular sentences on the board so that students could copy them. The spelling words contained the phonics focus element(s) students were currently studying, along with some high frequency exception words.

In New Zealand, teachers utilized a very different approach to literacy instruction. In the book experience program, students were supported in their efforts to read for meaning. Teachers did not encourage words to be sounded out. Rather, they promoted the use of context to determine the meaning of unknown words. Students received implicit phonics instruction when they could not discover the meaning of a word simply by using the context. Teachers encouraged students to then use the initial letter name of the word to help them. The book experience approach consisted of three different book experiences. During shared reading, the teacher read a book with the entire class. The teacher activated prior knowledge by previewing the topic of the book, asked students to make predictions as they read, discussed the content of the story throughout the reading and introduced new words in the context of the story. The guided reading portion of the lesson was teacher-led and included small groups of students. Each student had their own book and teachers encouraged them to read silently so that they could then answer teacher-provided comprehension questions. Once a month, teachers completed a running record for each student, which included recording their reading and error rates and notes on the quality of their responses. This allowed for more individualized instruction during small group time. When students were not in the teacher-led small group, they were engaged in independent reading or completing comprehension worksheets. Independent reading consisted of easier, self-selected texts that students had previously encountered in the shared or guided reading setting. Students read their books silently and took them home every day. The goal of independent reading was to promote the enjoyment of reading.
In the book experience classrooms, the authors observed students engaged in creating their own stories. However, unlike in Scotland, where teachers provided formal spelling instruction, teachers in New Zealand encouraged students to use dictionaries during their second year of school in order to spell all words in their writing correctly. The teachers at these two schools believed that letter-sound correspondence knowledge would transfer from students’ writing to their reading.

In order to determine the effectiveness of these two instructional programs, Connelly et al. (2001) administered several literacy assessments. These assessments measured phonological awareness, word reading accuracy, reading rate, reading reaction times for familiar words, regular and exception word reading, nonword reading and reading comprehension. The authors discovered expected as well as unexpected results. The phonic-instructed students scored higher on the phonological awareness measure than the book experience students. There were no noticeable differences between the groups on word reading accuracy within connected text, although both groups had a reading age for word accuracy that was significantly below their chronological age at the time of the assessment. The book experience students were faster readers than the phonics-taught group and the phonics students had a significantly lower reading age for reading rate than their chronological age. The book experience students also demonstrated a significantly faster reaction time when reading familiar words than their phonics-taught peers. The phonics group read more of the regular words correctly, while the book experience group read more of the exception words correctly. The phonics students were also significantly more accurate when reading nonwords than the book experience students. Finally, on the comprehension measure, the book experience group showed a significantly lower reading
EXPLICIT PHONICS INSTRUCTION FOR ELLS

age for comprehension than their chronological age. The phonics group did not demonstrate a
difference between their reading age and their chronological age for comprehension.

Connelly et al. (2001) anticipated many of the above results based on their theoretical
beliefs and background. For example, they had expected the slower reading rates with the
phonics group, because these students had learned to sound out unfamiliar words. Their slower
reaction rate to known words was also expected, because they observed how these students
sounded out even familiar words before pronouncing them. The fact that the book experience
students read more exception words correctly while the phonics students read more regular
words and nonwords correctly made sense to the authors because the phonics students relied on
regular letter-sound correspondences more than the book experience students. However, the
authors also discovered that the phonics group was more willing to attempt unknown words than
the book experience group, even when context was provided. Therefore, the authors concluded
that the fact that context is available to students does not automatically mean that they will use it
when they are faced with unknown words, even if they have been trained to rely on this context.

There were also other unexpected results. The phonics group outperformed the book
experience group on the measure of reading comprehension. The authors attributed this to the
fact that they also observed the phonics group making more contextually appropriate errors. The
authors defined contextually appropriate errors to mean errors that made a sentence complete or
errors that fit the context of the story. Thus, the phonics group used their knowledge of phonics
and context to help them in identifying unknown words. This gave them an advantage in
comprehension because while they spent more time sounding out new words, they also verified
that these words made sense in the story, giving them more opportunities to understand and
remember what they had read. The previous results (that the book experience group produced
more refusals when unfamiliar words were presented) confirmed that these students did not have as many opportunities to understand the content of the story.

Connelly et al. (2001) concluded that explicit phonics instruction in early elementary school does not negatively affect the comprehension development of young students. In fact, they argued that training students to use phoneme-grapheme correspondences to sound out words encourages them to also use context clues, in order to make sure the word they pronounce makes sense in the story. The authors found that the phonics-instructed students also demonstrated higher levels of phonological awareness and even though their reading rates were slower than those of their peers in the book experience group, the phonics group read more regular and nonsense words accurately. Overall, Connelly et al. observed positive results in the area of literacy for monolingual students instructed using a phonics-based approach.

Like Connelly et al. (2001), White (2005) also evaluated the effects of a specific instructional approach to literacy. In his study, White examined the effectiveness of an analogy-based phonics program on second-grade students’ word reading and reading comprehension abilities. He subscribed to many theoretical viewpoints about rime-based instruction, including the belief that most children are able to divide spoken syllables into onsets and rimes before they are able to divide consonant clusters into their individual phonemes. Therefore, reading unknown words by analogy is easier for beginning readers to do than to sound out each letter in a word and then blend sounds back together again. White also believed that the vowel sounds found within specific spelling patterns are more regular, and thus easier to recognize, for beginning readers. Therefore, this study sought to determine the effectiveness of analogy-based phonics taught by regular education teachers in their classrooms. The author designed the study to investigate whether or not there was a relationship between the number of analogy-based phonics lessons
taught and students’ performance on standardized tests of word reading and comprehension, while controlling for previous literacy achievement. He also examined his data to determine how well students who had experienced this intervention were able to read wall words and new words at the end of the year, with no teacher prompting to compare these words to a known word, and whether or not the number of analogy-based phonics lessons completed contributed to students’ abilities to read these words.

White’s sample population consisted of 280 students in second-grade classrooms at four public elementary schools in Hawaii. Almost all of the students spoke a nonstandard dialect of English, called Hawaiian Creole English, with 54% of the population being entirely or part Hawaiian. All four participating schools were ranked in the lowest 40% of schools in the state. Fifteen teachers, who were already trained in a comprehension-based reading program targeting at-risk students, participated in this study.

The public schools of Hawaii adopted a commercially available analogy-based phonics program that included 150 pre-developed lessons. Prior to the intervention, 12 of the 15 teachers attended training seminars presented by the program’s author. The daily lessons included 20 minutes of whole-group instruction each day for 30 weeks. Therefore, it was possible for teachers to teach 150 lessons throughout the course of the year, although the author found that the number of lessons actually taught varied among all teachers. Each week, teachers introduced six or seven new wall words and then systematically reviewed them. Of the 200 wall words which were presented throughout the year, 120 were regular, one-syllable words. These base words were used to instruct students on how to decode by analogy. The other 80 wall words were irregular high frequency words, multisyllabic and affixed words and words that included all initial consonants, digraphs and blends. Students learned how to read and spell word walls using
a multisensory approach that included chants and practice spelling tests. At the beginning of the year, teachers taught word families in order to give students experience with rhymes and initial consonants. In the 10th week of instruction, teachers introduced decoding by analogy and students practiced using known rhyming words to decode new, unfamiliar words. The intervention embedded this explicit phonics instruction in a balanced literacy approach, where students were engaged in reading connected text and classroom discussions. Throughout all reading and writing lessons, teachers continuously encouraged the decoding by analogy strategy.

White (2005) used standardized reading tests to analyze pre- and post-test scores for the study’s participants. Students took a pre-test at the end of their first-grade year. They participated in a similar, second-grade level test following the intervention. White also created a word-reading assessment that included 15 wall words and 25 new one-syllable words. The wall words included a sampling of six regular, six irregular and three multisyllabic words. Half of the unknown words started with a single consonant, while the other half began with consonant digraphs or blends. Six teachers from the study randomly selected a total of 60 students to participate in this assessment. White and a second examiner administered the test. Then the examiner re-administered words that students read inaccurately the first time, suggesting that they think of a known word that might rhyme with the unknown word. Finally, for words that were still read incorrectly, the examiner suggested the decoding by analogy strategy by presenting students with a wall word to help them.

After analyzing the post-test results, White (2005) determined that the number of analogy-based phonics lessons teachers taught impacted student learning. He found that the number of lessons taught had significant positive effects on both word reading and comprehension development. In fact, for every 100 lessons taught, student word reading scores
increased by 3.1 raw score points and comprehension scores increased by 1.8 raw score points. On the author-created assessment, a typical student who had been exposed to 100 lessons read 89% of the tested wall words, 58% of new words on the first try, 9% more unknown words when the examiner suggested using a rhyming word and 16% more words when the examiner offered an appropriate wall word for use with decoding by analogy. These results demonstrated the effectiveness of teaching wall words, as the majority of students were able to read them and use them for analogy decoding with unfamiliar words. Finally, when the author compared the scores of students who had completed 110 lessons with students who had completed only 20 lessons, he found that the students with more explicit instruction read more wall words than the other students, illustrating a relationship between how many lessons a student had experienced and how many wall words that student was able to read at the end of the intervention.

As a conclusion to his study, White (2005) offered several elements that, cumulatively, may have contributed to the success of the analogy-based phonics intervention. First, the teachers’ strategic instruction repeatedly prompted students to use this strategy, thus allowing them many opportunities to use and internalize this method. Along with this, teachers embedded examples of decoding by analogy skills into writing and other curricular areas, so teachers did not have to create extra lessons in order to extend this learning in the classroom. Second, teachers introduced this particular decoding strategy in the context of multi-syllabic words, allowing students to transfer this skill to more difficult words right away. Finally, this approach to decoding utilized multisensory activities which fully engaged students in their learning. Overall, White accomplished his goal of demonstrating how decoding by analogy could be used by any teacher in any classroom, with prewritten lessons designed to teach regular one-syllable wall words, extend the learning to two- or more syllable words and give students the knowledge
that known words can be used to decode unknown words. Most importantly, he observed growth in students’ word reading and comprehension skills, which increased with the number of lessons taught.

Beverly et al. (2009) also studied the effects of a phonics intervention on beginning readers. Like Connelly et al. (2001) and White (2005), Beverly et al. believed that the instructional approach to literacy used in the classroom greatly affected literacy outcomes. However, the researchers also believed that the texts used to practice word recognition played an important role in classroom learning. In fact, they believed that explicit phonics instruction alone would not be effective if students were given texts that were too difficult for them to practice decoding. Decodable texts are designed to emphasize letter-sound correspondences, specific spelling and vowel patterns and high frequency irregular words in the context of controlled text. Beverly et al. believed that if beginning readers were taught to sound out words and then practiced reading text without the above features, they would not advance in their literacy learning. Therefore, the authors conducted this study to investigate whether first graders receiving systematic phonics instruction in addition to practice reading decodable texts would outperform other first graders who only received phonics instruction or who were exclusively exposed to authentic literature in the areas of word recognition, reading fluency and reading comprehension. Beverly et al. hypothesized that both phonics groups would outperform the literature group in fluency and reading accuracy. While comprehension was not a skill they originally targeted in their study, they assessed this ability in order to examine whether or not students would demonstrate comprehension gains because of improved reading accuracy.

Thirty-two first-grade children from two southern public schools participated in this study. Of the 14 girls and 18 boys, 15 children were African American and 17 were white.
Fourteen participants were considered to be at-risk for reading difficulties based on their backgrounds. The sample population was divided into three groups for this study. One group, designated the Texts group, received phonics instruction in addition to reading practice with decodable texts. The Phonics group received phonics instruction without decodable texts. The third group, designated the Literature group, was exposed solely to authentic literature read-alouds. At-risk participants were distributed across the three groups. In the end, each group included six girls, five African Americans and six participants who did not demonstrate speech, language or reading delays.

The intervention consisted of 16 sessions, provided twice a week over eight weeks. Each session lasted 30 minutes. For the first 10 minutes of each session, both the Texts and Phonics groups received explicit phonics instruction from a commercially available phonics program, using a multisensory approach similar to that used by White (2005). For the remaining 20 minutes, the Texts group practiced reading with decodable readers, while the Phonics group finished the session with the Literature group. The Literature group listened to their teacher read authentic literature aloud, pausing to ask prediction questions, for the entire 30-minute session. Books that emphasized phonological awareness, such as alphabet, rhyming or poetry books, were not used with the Literature group.

The sample population in this study participated in two pre- and post-assessments. In January of their first-grade year, students were given a standardized test of reading in order to measure their reading rate, accuracy, fluency and comprehension. Researchers also used a benchmark reading assessment to measure word reading ability. The students participated in the same assessments at the end of the intervention in April.
When the intervention began, Beverly et al. (2009) hypothesized that the Texts group would demonstrate the most gains in accuracy and fluency because they had been exposed to explicit phonics instruction as well as decodable texts that extended their phonics learning. However, the authors observed similar patterns in reading rate, accuracy and overall fluency for both the Texts and Literature groups. Therefore, they could not conclude that the decodable texts contributed to increases in these areas. Another unexpected result was that the Phonics group demonstrated little to no increase in the area of reading accuracy and, in fact, exhibited the smallest overall reading gains of the study’s participants. All three groups increased their word reading abilities by approximately 35 words. These results were surprising in that the authors had not anticipated gains in word recognition by the Literature group, since this was not a focus of their particular intervention. In the area of reading comprehension, the Literature group demonstrated the largest gains. In this group, students from all reading levels (average, below average and significantly below average as determined by their pre-test results on a standardized reading assessment) increased, with the smallest gains observed in the significantly below average group. While the phonics group showed no overall gains in comprehension during the intervention, the average readers did slightly increase their comprehension. The Texts group also demonstrated no overall gains in comprehension. However, the below average and significantly below average students did increase their comprehension, while the average readers did not. This was a significant finding for Beverly et al. because comprehension was not part of the Texts intervention. In fact, teachers avoided comprehension instruction by not answering students’ questions about word or text meaning. Because many of the students in this group increased their comprehension, the authors concluded that there was a significant relationship between their decoding abilities and text comprehension.
The authors concluded that this study demonstrated the effectiveness of phonics instruction, in addition to the use of decodable texts, for increased reading and comprehension abilities in beginning or below average readers. However, average readers did not benefit from this particular instructional strategy. The authors concluded that the Literature group demonstrated the most significant gains in comprehension because this group was exposed to more challenging text, with rich vocabulary and complex sentence structures. Therefore, they concluded that average readers benefitted most from this instructional strategy. Overall, Beverly et al. (2009) recommended a balanced literacy approach, in which the explicit instruction of reading skills is embedded in reading authentic texts for meaning.

The previous studies demonstrated the effectiveness of explicit phonics instruction on the literacy development of monolingual students. Connelly et al. (2001) observed that phonics-taught students demonstrated slower reading rates but better overall reading comprehension as compared to students who were exposed to a book experience program. White (2005) determined an analogy-based phonics program to be effective if lessons were taught with fidelity because it introduced regular, one-syllable words to students that could be used to help students decode unknown words. Beverly et al. (2009) found that explicit phonics instruction in addition to practice reading decodable texts was beneficial for below-average and significantly below-average reading students, but that a more authentic literature approach was more valuable for average readers. All three groups of authors agreed that explicit phonics instruction contributed to reading gains in beginning, monolingual readers.

**Effects of phonics instruction on ELLs.**

Several studies have also confirmed that explicit phonics instruction helps increase ELLs’ scores on measures of decoding, reading accuracy, phonological awareness tasks, dictation and
spelling (Denton et al., 2004; Stuart, 1999, 2004). While the populations and methods were
different, each of the following studies produced similar results – the ELLs that received a
phonics intervention outperformed their peers on various reading measures.

Denton et al. (2004) studied the effects of two different reading tutoring programs on
Spanish-speaking students learning to read in English in transitional bilingual programs. One of
the tutoring programs focused on the explicit instruction of phonics, while the other program
focused on repeated readings and fluency practice. The two programs were used to target ELLs
who needed specific decoding practice in English as well as those who already possessed
sufficient decoding skills and would benefit from fluency practice. Although the authors only
intended to compare tutored versus nontutored students, they found that the phonics-based
program had positive effects on students’ reading abilities, especially in the area of decoding.

Reese et al. (2005) studied the effects of a Spanish phonics intervention that was used with 25%
of the transitional bilingual students at a school. These students attended a kindergarten program
with a strong Spanish literacy curriculum, including an emphasis on phonics. The authors studied
these students, along with others who did not participate in this program, throughout their
elementary school years as they transitioned out of Spanish literacy and into all-English
instruction. They found that the students who had participated in the intervention outperformed
their peers in first grade and then again in eighth grade by nine percentile points on standardized
English tests. Stuart (1999) introduced a commercially available phonics intervention program to
students beginning their first year of school in England. He included 96 English-language
learners in the study in order to examine the effects this explicit phonics program would have on
their English reading abilities. A delayed post-test, administered at the end of the students’
second year of school, showed that the intervention group scored higher on measures of
phoneme awareness, phonics, reading accuracy, dictation and spelling. Stuart’s (2004) follow-up study, at the end of the students’ third year in school, showed this intervention group continuing to outperform their peers on measures of phoneme segmentation, nonword reading and spelling. These studies, which have been described in greater detail below, support the use of explicit phonics instruction as a means to support second language learners’ literacy development.

Denton et al. (2004) examined the effectiveness of two different English reading tutoring programs on the English reading abilities of Spanish-speaking students enrolled in transitional bilingual programs. One was a published phonics-based program that was designed to teach decoding skills. The other was a published fluency intervention program with an emphasis on repeated reading of English text. The authors designed the study as a means to compare the progress of tutored students versus matched nontutored students from the same classrooms in an effort to show whether or not tutoring of any kind increased the progress made by the ELLs in the experimental groups. The question they set out to answer was: Did students in the tutored groups show more growth in English decoding and comprehension during their 10 weeks of tutoring than did their nontutored counterparts from the comparison groups?

In light of historical research demonstrating the cross-linguistic transfer of literacy skills, the authors hypothesized that providing supplemental reading instruction in the form of English tutoring would benefit Spanish-speaking students who were learning to read in English. Furthermore, the authors drew upon research demonstrating the importance of explicit instruction across facets of literacy (phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension), as they selected the focal intervention programs that would be used in the study. In turn, they chose programs that addressed the specific elements discussed above – a focus on decoding, repeated readings, vocabulary development and conversations to promote
comprehension – based on research that had already validated these instructional strategies for struggling native English readers as well as ELLs.

For this mixed methods study, the authors collected quantitative data in the form of assessments given to each of the participants before and after the intervention period. A standardized, norm-referenced literacy assessment measured word identification and passage comprehension skills. The authors also collected qualitative data in the form of interviews with nine of the 17 classroom teachers involved in the study. The interviews gathered information about practices related to classroom reading programs, such as language of instruction, whether or not teachers provided explicit decoding (phonics) instruction, and how teachers provided English vocabulary and comprehension instruction.

The sample group consisted of 93 students – 48 males and 45 females – from grades two through five from 17 bilingual classrooms in five different schools in a Texas school district. All students were Hispanic and 7 to 12 years of age at the time of the study. The participants were chosen based on five specific criteria. They had to (a) be bilingual, (b) speak Spanish as their native language, (c) be recommended for tutoring by their classroom teachers, (d) have adequate oral proficiency in English and at least basic proficiency in Spanish reading as determined by standardized assessments administered by the school, and (e) have parental permission to participate. These 93 students were then placed in one of two reading ability groups, based on their results from the word identification piece of the standardized literacy assessment. Those students scoring below a first grade equivalency were placed in an emergent decoding group. Those scoring at or above a first grade equivalency were placed in an established decoding group. Within each group, the students were paired according to their overall pre-test scores on all parts of the standardized assessment. One student from each pair in the emergent decoding
group was then randomly placed in the phonics-based program, with their partner assigned to the phonics-based comparison group. From the established decoding group, one student from each pair was randomly placed in the fluency intervention program, with their partner assigned to the fluency comparison group.

The procedures for this study differed slightly for each of the two tutoring programs. The phonics-based program focused on providing explicit phonics instruction, practice reading decodable text, embedded vocabulary development and comprehension instruction. The students that participated in this tutoring program received 10-15 minutes of tutor-directed decoding practice, 10-20 minutes of practice reading decodable text and time to complete comprehension worksheets during each of the sessions. The tutors monitored their progress using unit tests included in the program. Pre-tests showed particular English elements with which students struggled, and only these units were taught. Students were given extensive practice with decodable readers, along with immediate feedback and error correction from their tutors.

The fluency intervention program was designed for students who were already proficient at decoding English text. This program focused on the repeated reading of connected text, vocabulary and comprehension development during reading, and goal-setting and progress monitoring done by the students in the area of reading fluency. The students that participated in this tutoring program selected expository passages at their instructional reading level to read. Their tutor timed them reading the passage the first time through. The tutor then taught important vocabulary and high frequency words by activating students’ prior knowledge. Students graphed their fluency level (in words correct per minute – WCPM) for the initial read, comparing this to previously established fluency goals. Students then practiced their passage over and over, with the option of listening to it on audiotape while following along silently, until they reached their
goal. Then, students completed several multiple-choice comprehension questions. Finally, students read their passage orally to their tutor while he/she asked oral comprehension questions and provided instruction as necessary, and then graphed their final WCPM, comparing this rate with their goal.

All students, regardless of program, received tutoring three times per week for 10 weeks. They left their class for 40-minute periods to participate. Due to scheduling difficulties, only six students received individual tutoring, while the rest were tutored in groups of two, three or four.

Denton et al. (2004) calculated the scores and standard deviations from the standardized assessments for each of the treatment and comparison groups. They then examined the interaction between group and change in raw scores on each of the subtests. There were noticeable differences between the experimental and control groups for the phonics-based tutoring program. In the area of decoding, the students that participated in the program did better reading words out of context than their nontutored peers. These findings concurred with other studies that have investigated the effects of explicit phonics instruction on the English decoding skills of Hispanic students. Denton et al. concluded that even a small amount of explicit phonics instruction that builds on ELLs’ strengths and focuses on elements of English that differ from students’ native language when delivered over a short period of time can have significant effects on their English decoding abilities. Furthermore, the authors’ results suggested that such an approach demonstrated to students that what is already known in their L1 could transfer to their L2. This then helped students to understand the similarities that existed across reading in two languages and highlighted the need to concentrate on English elements that are phonologically different from their native language. The authors did not notice any significant differences in the area of comprehension with this program. The authors hypothesized that the short duration of the
study did not allow enough time for students to improve their fluency levels, and that their limited fluency did not support overall comprehension gains.

The authors found no evidence that the fluency intervention program improved students’ decoding or comprehension abilities. In fact, the authors hypothesized that perhaps the focus on fluency was actually a disservice to these ELLs, because while they were able to demonstrate fast reading, they were not given the time to process what they were reading in their second language to support comprehension. In light of this finding, the researchers concluded that more research should be done as to what optimal fluency levels are for ELLs learning to read in English.

Denton et al. (2004) supported contentions by previous research that more research was needed with regard to the effectiveness of intervention programs for second-language learners. In particular, they encouraged additional research to determine the effects of programs that combine explicit phonics instruction with repeated readings for fluency development and suggested the need to examine how this type of instruction would affect ELLs’ decoding skills and comprehension of connected text.

Like Denton et al. (2004), Reese et al. (2005) also studied the effect of a phonics intervention on Spanish-speaking bilingual students in a transitional bilingual program. These students did not participate in separate tutoring, but received a strong Spanish literacy program in kindergarten that focused on phonics instruction. As part of a larger study that tracked students from kindergarten through their eighth grade year, the students in the study received instruction in Spanish (L1) first and eventually transitioned into all-English (L2) instruction.

Reese et al. (2005) noticed that the reading achievement of Spanish-speaking bilingual students often faltered relative to their monolingual peers when they transitioned from reading in
EXPLICIT PHONICS INSTRUCTION FOR ELLS

their native language to reading in English. While some of these students recovered somewhat in their literacy learning, others remained behind throughout middle school. Because the authors were concerned with this trend, they studied individual ELLs to determine what specific factors may have contributed to this sudden drop in reading scores and what factors may contribute to the recovery of these important skills in a second language. The authors posed three research questions: (a) How well do Spanish-speaking students perform in Spanish and English reading from elementary grades through middle school when they are placed in transitional bilingual instructional programs?; (b) Do individual ELLs show similar patterns of recovery, regardless of their initial literacy performance?; (c) Do two instructional interventions (a strong kindergarten literacy program and a school-wide English language arts reform effort) contribute to gains in reading performance over time for participating students? The authors hypothesized that while reading scores would drop when students initially transitioned into English, they would eventually rise again to surpass pre-transition scores. They also hypothesized that an effective kindergarten literacy program with an emphasis on phonics and involving a strong home-school connection would support students’ literacy progress in the early elementary grades and throughout the middle school years. Finally, the authors believed that the school-wide English language arts reform efforts would not be effective immediately but would impact students more in the intermediate grades.

Like Verhoeven (2007) and Denton et al. (2004), Reese et al. (2005) believed in the interdependence of skills across languages, that skills learned in one language can transfer to a second language, without having to be relearned. The authors also believed that systematic, explicit phonics instruction, especially at the lower elementary level, was effective for continued reading success throughout school. It was this belief that led them to look at the kindergarten
early literacy intervention and hypothesize that a kindergarten program focusing on phonics would greatly increase student reading scores in Spanish at first, and continue to give them an advantage in English in the future.

The sample group originally consisted of a random selection of 121 Spanish-speaking students (66 boys and 55 girls) in 11 classrooms throughout four schools in two school districts from the Los Angeles area. These students entered kindergarten in transitional bilingual classrooms, which meant they received literacy instruction in Spanish when the study began and eventually transitioned to English-only instruction.

The sample students’ families were all comparable in terms of their geographic origins, their length of residency in the country, the degree of formal, parental education, the language spoken at home, and the jobs held by parents. Most of the parents (84%) came from Mexico, with the rest emigrating from Central America. At the beginning of the study, the mothers had lived in the United States for an average of 9.6 years, while the fathers had lived here for an average of 11.7 years. The average number of years of formal schooling for both parents was seven years. Most of the children (75%) in the study were born in the United States. All families spoke Spanish at home, but some also used English. None of the children tested fluent in English when they entered kindergarten, although some had some prior knowledge of this language. Almost all parents worked in skilled or unskilled labor jobs, with 43% of mothers working outside the home when the study began.

Like many immigrant populations, the sample population in this study was very mobile. After the first year, nine students moved out of the area and could no longer participate in the study. At the end of elementary school, less than half of the participants still attended their
original schools. By the end of this study, only 91 of the original 121 students were still able to participate.

Reese et al. (2005) conducted this study as part of the UCLA Home-School Project, a longitudinal study of Latino youth. Each of the 121 students participated in a Spanish literacy assessment at the beginning and end of kindergarten. This assessment included subtests for identifying letter names and sounds, reading real and nonsense words, writing letters, words and stories, demonstrating knowledge of important concepts of print and demonstrating comprehension of a story read orally. The students then participated in standardized tests every year in Spanish and English (although some students moved out of the district and their test scores could not be obtained). The authors observed students as they transitioned from Spanish to English literacy. The transition took place when students demonstrated oral English fluency based on a standardized measure and when they were reading at approximately the third-grade level in Spanish. Once students transitioned to English, they no longer received instruction in Spanish. If students did not transition by the end of elementary school, they were automatically placed in English-only instruction in middle school.

Two instructional interventions were evaluated in an effort to determine their impact on the literacy development of the research sample. The first intervention affected one quarter of the sample population, who attended a kindergarten with a Spanish literacy program that included an emphasis on systematic phonics instruction and a strong home-school connection. After observing this group of children from kindergarten through eighth grade, the authors concluded that these students did have an advantage over the other students in the study. In fact, they outperformed their peers in first grade and outperformed them again in eighth grade, by
approximately nine percentile points. These results supported the authors’ initial hypothesis that explicit phonics instruction would support overall reading achievement.

The second intervention the authors studied was a school-wide English language arts reform effort, which affected another quarter of the study’s participants. Teacher work groups at this school looked at student writing, created rubrics to assess it and developed grade-level standards for language arts. While the school did see improvement in students’ reading and writing for the next five years, this improvement did not show up in the reading assessments taken by the study participants. The authors hypothesized this was due to the fact that their participants were one grade ahead of where this reform had the most impact each year.

The authors looked at the variation in reading achievement trajectories by placing students in one of three groups – high achievers, average achievers and low achievers – according to their Spanish literacy scores at the end of kindergarten. In general, they found that while the high-achieving students experienced a decline in reading scores around the transition grades, they transitioned earlier and were able to increase their scores, eventually reaching pre-transition literacy levels by the end of middle school. However, the average- and low-achieving students showed a decline in Spanish reading scores before their transition to English and continued to decline after the transition. These students never recovered their pre-transition reading levels.

Reese et al. (2005) found the overall results of this study to be unexpected. While they expected a decrease in reading achievement during the transition from Spanish to English, they did not anticipate that this decrease would be sustained throughout the middle school years and that the majority of students would not recover from it. The authors proposed four possible explanations for these results. First, because they subscribed to the language interdependence
model, they believed the reason students did not reach pre-transition levels in English reading may have been because once they were transitioned to English they were no longer instructed in their native language. In light of the Common Underlying Proficiency theory (Cummins, 1981, as cited in Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2006), the authors believed that if students did not develop complex literacy skills in Spanish, they would struggle to develop English literacy skills. The authors also suggested that perhaps the Spanish literacy scores were exaggerated in comparison to the English scores. Thus, trying to compare later English scores to earlier Spanish scores to determine whether or not students had reached or exceeded pre-transition levels was ineffective.

A third explanation was not supported by the authors, but rather by those who believed that bilingual programs do not provide enough English language development for students to be successful in this language. The authors proposed that the results may have been different if students had been part of a dual-language program, receiving literacy instruction in English and Spanish simultaneously since kindergarten. Finally, the authors noted that they did not evaluate the programs of instruction in the classrooms that participated in the study. It is possible that some programs were not implemented correctly or were not quality instructional programs.

The authors proposed that more research be done to study individual language learners especially in relation to their experiences transitioning to literacy in a second language, the slowed progress that often occurs during the transition years and the recovery that occurs in years following the transition years. They also emphasized the need to evaluate program quality, rather than program design, for language-minority students. They believed programs should be unique to the communities they serve, in terms of goals, demographics and resources.

While the studies previously discussed examined the impact of various instructional and intervention programs on the English literacy abilities of Spanish-English bilingual students,
Stuart (1999) conducted his research in English with students whose native language was Sylheti, Cantonese, or other less frequently encountered home languages. Unlike the interventions performed by Denton et al. (2004) and Reese et al. (2005), Stuart (1999) used a whole class phonics intervention that was commercially available. However, like the previously discussed studies, Stuart (1999) found that ELLs who participated in the structured, large group phonics program outperformed ELLs who had not received this instruction on measures of phonological awareness, phonics, reading accuracy, writing dictation and spelling.

Stuart (1999) conducted this study in order to extend previous studies’ findings that teaching phonological awareness and letter-sound correspondence resulted in improved reading and spelling development. Participants were inner-city second language learners, who had not been included in similar studies in the past; however, Stuart (1999) invited native English speakers as well as ELLs to participate in the study during their first year of school. He examined the effects of a commercially available phonics program that could be implemented with an entire class and that required minimal training for classroom teachers. Thus, if the study led to the desired results, the methods would be easily accessible to teachers wishing to recreate these results. The study investigated whether or not a whole group teaching approach would be effective in teaching phoneme segmentation skills and knowledge of letter-sound correspondences to inner city children, even those whose first language was not English, during their first year of school. If this was the case, the study also sought to investigate the effects this acceleration would have on students’ reading and spelling skills at the end of their second year of school.

Like Verhoeven (2007), Stuart (1999) also subscribed to the belief that bilingual students who have access to more than one phonological system are often at an advantage in terms of
higher levels of phonological awareness. Therefore, he believed that teaching second-language learners to read using a program that focused on phonological awareness and phonics would actually build on existing strengths. Alternatively, holistic approaches that stressed reading for meaning, such as the big book method, would emphasize areas of weakness for these students.

For this quantitative study, students participated in one of two intervention groups – the big book intervention or the phonics intervention. Both groups completed pretests on nine control measures of oral language, auditory perception, rhyme awareness, alphabet knowledge and mathematics, and nine experimental measures of phoneme awareness, phonics knowledge, reading and writing. Immediately following the interventions, all students completed post-tests on the same nine control and nine experimental measures. One year later, all students participated in delayed post-tests, which included all of the above measures and three additional experimental measures of reading, writing and spelling. These three assessments were either designed for older students (six and up) or were too difficult to have been given as part of the pretest or immediate post-test batteries. During each of the testing periods, the researchers saw individual students four times, in sessions that lasted up to 25 minutes. All tests were given in the same predetermined order.

Although 122 children were originally enrolled in this longitudinal study, data collection only included test scores from the 112 children who were present throughout the entire study. The mean age of these students was five years old. Sixteen students spoke English as their first language. The majority of the English language learners (89) spoke Sylheti, while three spoke Cantonese and four spoke other languages. In order to maximize motivation and appropriate participation throughout the study, the primary schools included in this study were asked in which of the two interventions they would prefer to participate. The social, ethnic and linguistic
composition and test scores of each school were very similar to one another. One class in each of three different schools participated in the big book intervention, while three classes from two other schools participated in the phonics intervention. Of the 112 students in the study, 57 were placed in the big book intervention and 55 were placed in the phonics intervention.

After the initial pretesting, students participated in the interventions for 12 weeks. Teachers implementing the big book intervention were already familiar with this method of teaching. The researcher asked these teachers to emphasize word level work, by introducing letter names and sounds and asking students to notice and learn letters and words in their classroom environment. Teachers participating in the phonics intervention received a phonics handbook along with a training video and had the opportunity to attend one training seminar given by one of the authors of the program. Two of the three teachers from this intervention attended the training. During the intervention, all teachers were asked to devote one hour each day to reading and writing, using their specific intervention. The students began this hour by participating in whole group activities, then split into small groups for follow-up activities. Only one teacher split this hour into half an hour of whole group in the morning and half an hour of small group sessions in the afternoon. A research assistant visited each classroom on a regular basis, to ensure that all students were receiving the appropriate intervention for the correct amount of time each day. Immediately following the 12-week intervention period, students participated in post-tests, which included the same assessments they had already been given. Exactly one year later, all measures were repeated, along with three new experimental measures, in a delayed post-test.

Data analysis revealed that students were not well-matched on several of the experimental pretest measures. The students assigned to the phonics intervention were
considerably ahead of the big book group on the following tasks: initial phoneme identification, letter-sound recognition, letter-sound recall, and writing sounds to dictation. In order to control statistically for these pretest differences, Stuart (1999) examined gain scores from pretests to immediate post-tests and from immediate post-tests to delayed post-tests in order to compare growth shown by both groups.

For the control measures, there were no measurable differences between the two groups for auditory perception or rhyme awareness throughout the study. When oral vocabulary was measured against English test norms, the big book group had a slight advantage over the phonics group on the pretest, but the phonics group showed signs of catching up during the following year. When oral vocabulary was measured against ESL test norms, the big book group had a significant pretest advantage, but the phonics group’s gain scores showed them catching up to the big book group so that there were no significant differences in oral vocabulary between the two groups by the end of the second year in school. During the intervention, the big book group made significantly more progress in math knowledge than the phonics group did, although the reason for this was unknown. However, by the end of the second year in school there were no significant differences between the two groups in math. There were unexpected results in the control measure of alphabet knowledge. During the intervention, the phonics group made significantly more improvement in a letter recall task than the big book group. This suggested that, even though phonics teachers were not specifically instructed to teach letter names, the phonics intervention somehow improved letter name knowledge in these students. There were no significant differences by the end of the second year in school on this measure.

Results from the experimental measures of phoneme awareness, phonics, reading and writing showed that the phonics group scored significantly better than the big book group on all
measures at the end of the second year in school. On the delayed reading post-test, which was
different from the pretests and immediate post-tests, the phonics intervention students scored
significantly better for reading accuracy than the big book intervention students. The differences
in reading comprehension, which seemed to favor the phonics group, failed to reach statistical
significance. The phonics group also scored significantly better than the big book group on a
dictation writing test, with no student from the phonics group scoring lower than 24/37, while
students from the big book group scored as low as 0/37. On the delayed spelling post-test,
students from the phonics group spelled almost twice as many words correctly as the big book
group.

The author drew four conclusions about the positive effects of the phonics intervention
during this study: (a) teaching phoneme segmentation and blending skills and grapheme-
phoneme correspondences early, in a structured, focused and quick manner accelerated the
development of these skills in five-year-olds; (b) these results held true for English language
learners with initially poor receptive vocabularies for English; (c) these skills (phoneme
awareness, phoneme segmentation and blending, letter-sound correspondence) influenced the
development of reading and writing skills and gave students a lasting advantage in reading and
writing; (d) teachers needed very little training to use the focal phonics program materials
appropriately and effectively.

Stuart (1999) suggested three questions for further research. First, would the knowledge
of how the alphabet functions to represent spoken language gained by the phonics group during
the 12-week intervention be enough to help them maintain word recognition skills in the future?
Second, would this early advantage in reading skills have beneficial effects on the oral
vocabulary development of young English language learners? Finally, the author wondered if the
phonics group could maintain their early advantage over the big book group in reading and spelling in the future and whether reading comprehension would also be positively affected.

In order to answer the questions he posed in his 1999 study, Stuart (2004) conducted a second study in which he assessed students from the original phonics and big book groups one year after they had completed the delayed post-tests. He had already confirmed that a phonics intervention was beneficial for ELLs, with results similar to the Denton et al. (2004) and Reese et al. (2005) studies. However, like Reese et al., he also sought to understand the effects that early phonics training had on English language learners later in their academic career. Therefore, his 2004 study examined the long-term effects of phonics instruction on ELLs at the end of their third year in school.

Stuart’s (2004) purpose for conducting this second study, 30 months post-intervention, was to determine whether the early advantages gained by the phonics group were retained in the long term. He also studied whether or not processing differences in printed word recognition were evident between the two intervention groups and whether the phonics group’s previous advantage in word recognition skills had ultimately had a positive impact on students’ reading comprehension. Finally, Stuart (2004) examined the effects that improved comprehension might have on the phonics group, including a better reading self-concept, increased motivation to read more and a difference in oral vocabulary between the two groups.

In his original study, Stuart (1999) stated his belief that students who have access to more than one phonological system, such as bilingual students, are often at an advantage in terms of higher levels of phonological awareness. Therefore, he believed that teaching second-language learners to read using a program that focused on phonological awareness and phonics would build on existing strengths. In this study, Stuart (2004) acknowledged the dual-route theory
regarding processing differences in printed word recognition. This theory states that skilled readers are able to access two different processes when recognizing printed words. Lexical processing involves recognizing a word that has been seen before and stored in an orthographic lexicon which connects directly to semantics. Sublexical processing involves recognizing the phonemes which can be mapped onto corresponding graphemes and blended together to form a word, which then accesses the word’s meaning. Stuart (2004) believed that students who had received early training in phoneme awareness and phoneme-grapheme correspondence knowledge could rely more heavily on sublexical processes. This belief was supported by previous research which showed that students who were taught to read using a systematic phonics approach tended to mispronounce words or read them as nonwords based on the letter-sound relationships. On the other hand, students who were taught to read without explicit phonics instruction were often only successful reading words they had previously been taught.

Stuart (2004) collected data from four standardized tests, six experimental tests and a national literacy assessment. Among the standardized tests were two which Stuart (1999) had given as pre-, post- and delayed post-tests in the original study, along with two others which he previously administered as delayed post-tests. The experimental tests assessed phoneme segmentation, letter-sound recall, reading of nonwords, regular and exception words, reading self-image and author recognition. The national literacy assessment addressed reading and spelling abilities.

Of the 112 students who were included in the 1999 study, 11 were excluded from the study after the students’ second year in school. Thus, 101 students were included in the 2004 study: 48 in the original phonics group, 33 in the big book group and 20 in a new group called the late phonics group. The late phonics students were originally part of the big book group, until
one school’s head teacher saw the benefits of phonics instruction and introduced it to her school. Thus, these students received one year of intensive, structured phonological awareness and phonics instruction following the delayed post-tests. When scores from the delayed post-test were compared on all nine experimental measures, there were no significant differences to be found between the students in the new late phonics group and those that remained in the big book group. Eighty-five English language learners remained in the study: 39 from the original phonics group, 33 from the big book group and 15 in the late phonics group.

As a follow-up to the original interventions that took place in the children’s first year of school, this study examined the results of both standardized and experimental measures to determine the effect of early and late phonics training on students at the end of their third year in school. Trained testers assessed all students individually during four separate sessions. No new interventions were conducted during this study.

Stuart (2004) analyzed the data in order to determine whether or not the original phonics group had retained their early advantages in reading and whether the late phonics group had begun to catch up. The data showed that both the original and the late phonics groups significantly outperformed the big book group on the phoneme segmentation and nonword reading tasks, with no significant differences between the original phonics and late phonics groups. The original phonics group significantly outperformed the big book group on the regular word-reading and spelling assessments, while the late phonics group significantly outperformed both the original phonics and the big book groups on the letter-sound recall task. The results of the letter-sound recall assessment were similar to the results during the initial study, when the original phonics group significantly improved on this measure during the intervention, but not in the following year. While these particular results were unexpected, Stuart (1999) suggested that
perhaps inadvertently the phonics intervention had helped improve letter name knowledge in these students.

Stuart (2004) used a formal reading assessment that included regular words, exception words and nonwords to determine whether the early PA and phonics teaching the original phonics group received had led them to different patterns of processing in printed word recognition. Both the original and late phonics groups significantly outperformed the big book group for regular words and nonwords. Since children with well-developed sublexical processing show regularity effects – which means they read regular words better than exception words, which cannot be sounded out using grapheme-phoneme correspondence rules – the size of the regularity effect for each child was calculated by subtracting their score for correct reading of exception words from that for reading regular words. Both the original and the late phonics groups had larger regularity effects than the big book group. Regularization errors were also analyzed, since students who rely on sublexical processing often pronounce unfamiliar exception words as if they were regular words following the grapheme-phoneme correspondence rules. In this case, only the original phonics group made more regularization errors than the big book group.

To examine differences in reading comprehension, Stuart (2004) used the reading accuracy and comprehension measures of a standardized assessment. In analyzing the data, he found no significant effect of intervention group for either reading accuracy or reading comprehension. These results were unexpected, since the original phonics group had significantly outperformed the big book group on measures of reading accuracy one year earlier. Stuart suggested the added demand of reading in context may have diminished the original phonics group’s previous advantage in this area. The results also differed from other studies
EXPLICIT PHONICS INSTRUCTION FOR ELLS

(Beverly et al., 2009; Connelly et al., 2001; White, 2005) that found that using a systematic phonics approach helped increase reading comprehension. However, Stuart’s (1999; 2004) studies included a majority of English language learners. After analyzing the differences between monolingual and bilingual learners on measures of reading accuracy and comprehension, Stuart (2004) concluded that oral vocabulary is a more important predictor of reading comprehension for bilingual than for monolingual students.

There were no significant differences found between the groups on the reading self-concept scale or on the vocabulary measures. Stuart (2004) suggested that these results reflected the fact that there were no significant differences in reading comprehension among the three groups. Planned comparisons did show that the late phonics group scored significantly better than the original phonics or big book groups on the author recognition assessment.

Finally, Stuart (2004) analyzed reading and spelling data from the national literacy assessment. There was no significant effect of intervention group on the reading assessment, but the original phonics group scored significantly higher than the big book group on the spelling assessment.

Stuart (2004) suggested that question types for ELLs versus non-ELLs be researched further. He postulated that the nature of the open-ended questions used on the standardized comprehension test may have been more difficult for ELLs, who scored better when given choices like ‘yes/no’ and ‘true/false.’ He posited that the immature language skills of these students did not allow them to adequately respond to open-ended questions.

Each of the above studies demonstrated the positive effects of explicit phonics instruction on the phonological awareness, phonics, reading accuracy and spelling abilities of ELLs (Denton et al., 2004; Reese et al., 2005; Stuart, 1999, 2004). However, these studies also suggested that
explicit phonics instruction did not lead to increased reading comprehension abilities. Stuart (2004) expected an increase in comprehension for the phonics intervention students in his second study. The original phonics intervention group had previously outperformed their peers on a reading accuracy measure, so Stuart assumed this result would lead to higher comprehension levels two years after students participated in the intervention. However, he later concluded that while the phonics intervention increased these students’ decoding abilities, the additional demand of reading in context negatively affected the students’ comprehension. Denton et al. (2004) also found no improvement in comprehension for the tutored ELLs; however, these researchers attributed this lack of progress to the fact that the duration of the phonics intervention was not sufficient to allow students to increase their fluency because the focus was on decoding. However, they also found no improvement in comprehension for the students who participated in the fluency intervention. Here, they concluded that over-attending to fluency (rate of reading) distracted students from the comprehension of the text. In response to concerns like these, the studies that follow examined the impact of explicit phonics instruction delivered in the context of a whole language or balanced literacy approach (Araujo, 2002; Liaw, 2003) and addressed the importance of vocabulary development on ELLs’ English literacy skills (Carlo et al., 2004).

**Integrating Phonics Instruction and a Balanced Literacy Approach**

In order to address more than decoding skills, phonological awareness and spelling, researchers like Liaw (2003) and Araujo (2002) studied the effects of a whole language or balanced literacy approach that included attention to explicit phonics instruction on the English literacy abilities of second language learners. Liaw studied fifth-grade students in Taiwan, learning English as a foreign language. Araujo studied Portuguese children in a bilingual kindergarten in the eastern United States who were learning English as their second language.
Both researchers found evidence of increased phonics and reading scores and noted that students came to think of themselves as readers with a better self-concept regarding reading in English.

Liaw’s (2003) study attempted to help teachers in Taiwan comply with newly implemented national curriculum mandates, which required phonics instruction in all elementary and junior high school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes. The guidelines did not specify how phonics should be incorporated into the whole language approach that many teachers were already utilizing. Liaw’s research focused on integrating phonics instruction successfully in a whole language EFL classroom and attempted to address two research questions: How were phonics instruction and whole language principles integrated in elementary EFL classrooms in Taiwan? How did phonics instruction in a whole language elementary EFL classroom affect the children’s development of English language skills?

Liaw (2003) based her study on the principles of whole language and phonics instruction. She understood the whole language approach to look differently in native language (L1), second language (L2) and foreign language (EFL) classrooms. In the EFL classroom, the whole language philosophy hinged on the beliefs that language arts should be integrated, that language is used as a means to an end, that students are surrounded by and immersed in literacy and authentic print, that students learn by doing and take responsibility for their own learning, that teachers respect and value each student as an individual, that students work collaboratively, and that assessments should be authentic and appropriate. The author further believed that phonics was an important part of the development of English literacy. She subscribed to a contemporary phonics approach that included instruction in the alphabetic principle and phonological awareness, both of which provided sufficient practice reading words and led to automatic word recognition. Worksheets and rules were not the focus of phonics instruction. She believed that
phonics should be one part of reading instruction and could be integrated into a whole language approach (Araujo, 2002; Liaw, 2003).

Liaw (2003) and her research assistants served as participant-observers in a fifth grade EFL classroom in Taiwan, collecting both qualitative and quantitative data, while maintaining low involvement. The data collection process involved videotaping all teaching sessions and writing general field notes to describe classroom teaching and learning. Both were later transcribed and analyzed by Liaw and the research assistants in weekly discussions. Students collected samples of their work in learning portfolios, at a rate of one artifact per week. Students also participated in three formal assessments, one each month, in which they demonstrated their abilities in phonics skills by decoding sounds in isolation, identifying words from readers and reading in a familiar context. Additionally at these three points, the researchers assessed students’ vocabulary comprehension and storybook reading, using researcher-designed assessments. Students were divided into four groups and assessed individually by their EFL teacher, Liaw, and two research assistants, who then met to discuss student scores until they were in total agreement.

Thirty-seven randomly chosen fifth-grade students from an elementary school in central Taiwan participated in this study. In the research context, fifth grade was when students began learning English in school, but some students may already have attended private English classes prior to the beginning of this study. In fact, of the 37 students in the study, only 10 had no prior English learning experience. Eight students had been studying for less than a year, while some children had been studying the language for up to four years. The average for this group of students was 1.1 years of English language learning at the time of the study.
The teacher that participated in this study had over 10 years of English teaching experience. She was an advocate of using children’s books and storytelling for EFL instruction. She worked directly with the researcher to familiarize herself with the principles of whole language instruction and attended workshops related to a published phonics program.

Before the study began, the teacher worked closely with the researcher to establish similar understandings about phonics instruction and the whole language philosophy. Together, they decided to teach the 42 English sounds in the sequence outlined by the published phonics program whose workshops the teacher had attended. Students learned the letter sounds first, not the names. The first sounds to be taught were chosen because they could be combined and quickly turned into words. The teacher and researcher designed the class periods and assessment activities to reflect two important concepts of reading: decoding in isolation and reading in context.

After the semester began, the researcher and two research assistants observed and videotaped the EFL classroom every Tuesday morning for two 40-minute periods. The first period was dedicated to explicit, direct instruction of sounds and letters. The students learned two to four sounds each week. The teacher used pictures, flash cards, actions, games, seat work and hand puppets to reinforce the phonics concepts. The second period gave students the opportunity to learn sounds and words in context by reading connected texts. The contrived and authentic texts, including three sets of decodable readers, contained repetitions of taught sounds and patterns. During this period, the teacher focused on reading comprehension. Students played games, reenacted the stories, participated in story retellings and role-plays, and discussed what they read. Cooperative grouping, an important piece of the whole language approach, was used during this period. The classroom environment was also planned to provide students a literary
environment in which to learn language naturally. Students were allowed to check out English books from the classroom library to take home to share with their families.

Although the researcher recorded student scores from the three formal assessments in number grades, these were converted into categorical grades before being given to parents and students. The categories included: Outstanding, Excellent, Good, Fair, and Needs Improvement. The assessment results showed that students made progress in all three areas of language skills – phonics, vocabulary and story reading. The positive gains made in phonics skills and vocabulary recognition were similar to those observed by other researchers in whole language monolingual classrooms. Phonics instruction and whole language principles had been woven together to help children further develop their language skills. Even though students improved overall on the story reading assessment, the number of students scoring Outstanding went down from 21 in the first month to only 4 in the third month, with three students still scoring Needs Improvement. Instead of interpreting these results as a lack of improvement in children’s reading proficiencies, Liaw (2003) proposed that this decline may have been due to the fact that students were able to choose the books they would read to the evaluators during the assessments. During the third testing period, more students chose books that were challenging for them, including longer texts that reflected more complex sentence patterns. Liaw thus suggested that the study’s design may have increased these students’ confidence and willingness to attempt to read more difficult text. The author also noted that the initial differences between the students’ English language proficiencies decreased during the course of this study.

Like Liaw (2003), Araujo (2002) also believed in a balanced literacy approach. She examined how ELLs became literate in their second language when their teacher integrated conventional phonics instruction with an emergent reading and writing orientation. She found
literacy development to be linked to classroom literacy instruction and that ELLs used both conventional and emergent literacies to serve their own purposes as readers and writers, much like native English speakers do. Like Liaw, Araujo also believed in the power of cooperative learning. She observed that as young bilingual students worked together to become readers and writers, they gained confidence in their ability to decode words, to make sense of stories from pictures and to retell stories with invented spelling and pictures.

In her study, Araujo (2002) described how children constructed literacy understandings in the context of the literacy instruction they received. She studied the interrelationship between oral language, reading and writing development. Her study addressed two research questions: (a) How did classroom literacy instruction affect and support children’s developing reading, writing and oral language abilities? (b) What did this literacy development look like in the classroom?

Araujo’s (2002) study reflected social constructivist theory, which claims that language mediates learning and that children construct knowledge through engagement in peer interactions and scaffolded interactions with adults. Araujo believed literacy learning to be context-specific and socially constructed; therefore, classroom literacy practices should contribute to literacy learning and cooperative learning should be an important piece of these classroom practices. She also believed that speaking, reading and writing are interrelated in the emerging literacy of ELLs, just as they are for native speakers.

Araujo (2002) served as a participant-observer in a kindergarten Portuguese bilingual classroom. During the school year, she observed the classroom 65 times. Her data collection methods included taking field notes to identify literacy events, audio taping some of these events, collecting student artifacts, including journal entries, phonics workbooks pages, tests scores and
report cards, taking photographs and conducting informal interviews with the teacher throughout the year.

Twenty full-day kindergartners in a Portuguese bilingual classroom participated in this study. The children qualified to be in the bilingual program because they scored below 40% on the listening and speaking portions of a standardized English language assessment. The children lived in a predominantly Portuguese immigrant community in the eastern United States. The majority of the staff at their school was also of Portuguese descent. The teacher was an experienced bilingual kindergarten teacher with 18 years in her current school.

Araujo (2002) observed three literacy events in the classroom – Circle/Reading, Phonics/Handwriting and Journal Writing. She noted that the teacher engaged in two literacy orientations with her students. She encouraged both emergent and conventional literacy throughout the school year. During the Circle/Reading time, Araujo observed that the teacher activated students’ prior knowledge, promoted oral discussion, specifically the use of complete sentences, and used the language experience approach (LEA) with her students. She also allowed children to use their L1 before she rephrased what they said in L2 and helped them make text-to-life connections in both languages. She encouraged emergent literacy during this time by demonstrating how to derive meaning from pictures and to read predictable story lines. She also taught conventional literacy by showing students how to match spoken words to print.

During the Phonics/Handwriting events, the teacher created wall charts of words that started with the specific sound or letter the children were currently studying. Children practiced conventional reading and writing during this time as the teacher taught them how to blend sounds together to decode and write words. She used picture cards with Portuguese vocabulary
to connect to and teach English vocabulary. Handwriting books were used to teach correct ways to form upper- and lowercase letters.

During the Journal Writing time, the teacher encouraged, but did not model, emergent writing. It was during this time that students were able to work cooperatively to label pictures or respond to literature by retelling a story. They were allowed to draw, copy words from books or their classmates, or listen for sounds as they used invented spelling to write words. The teacher provided scaffolds through her teacher talk, but did not check student work for accuracy during this literacy event.

Araujo (2002) analyzed her data throughout the study. She processed her field notes and transcribed her audiotapes, using the artifacts, photographs and interview data to confirm or identify any discrepancies there might have been between literacy practices recorded in her notes and literacy events recorded on audiotape. For the Circle/Reading events, Araujo recorded and analyzed data from her field notes and audiotapes for an entire session twice per month. For the Phonics/Handwriting events, she examined the literacy charts and big books that were created or included in the lessons, and used classroom artifacts, photos and her field notes to identify embedded literacy practices in the classroom. For Journal Writing events, she collected student journal entries and used this data to examine the students’ writing strategies and purposes.

The overall results supported Araujo’s (2002) original hypothesis that literacy development is linked to classroom literacy instruction. She found that oral native language support and a balanced literacy approach that combined whole language and phonics instruction helped ELLs to develop complex understandings about written language and to make meaning from text. During Circle/Reading time, she observed students learning how to read predictable text and derive meaning from pictures. They could match spoken words with print and
recognized sight words. In fact the class as a whole made great gains in word recognition. In January of their kindergarten year, the class recognized 34 high frequency words. In June, they recognized 171 words. Nevertheless, three children still did not recognize any words at the end of the year. All children, however, viewed themselves as readers, even if they were not yet able to read conventionally. Students understood that their background and prior experiences, opinions and picture-reading skills were all part of the reading process.

During Phonics/Handwriting time, Araujo observed children trying to label their pictures with the invented spelling that was allowed during journal writing time. However, because the teacher emphasized conventional literacy during phonics time, she encouraged the children to draw pictures of things that started with the letter or sound being studied and asked them not to write words during this time.

During Journal Writing time, children learned to write for a variety of purposes, including labeling or naming a picture, retelling a story, expressing personal opinions and telling about themselves in relation to text. They also used a variety of writing strategies, including embedding invented spelling into their drawings, using invented spelling alone, producing invented spelling that reflected book-like language and copying words from the book or their peers. Children learned to spell sight words, understanding that they should not only write words the way they sound, but they should also pay attention to how they look. According to Gillet and Temple’s (1990, as cited in Araujo, 2002) stages of writing development, nine students were transitional spellers, one was a letter-name speller, three were in the early phonemic stage of writing development and only seven children had not yet begun experimenting with writing.

Araujo (2002) concluded that talking and writing in response to literature helped these children construct literacy knowledge. She observed children using both emergent and
conventional literacies to serve their own purposes as readers and writers. She cited Torgesen and Hecht’s (1996, as cited in Araujo, 2002) self-teaching hypothesis which states that children can teach themselves how to read, if they are immersed in a print-rich environment, and possess phonological awareness and a basic knowledge of phonics. Araujo documented the positive effects that phonics instruction embedded in a balanced literacy approach can have on ELLs’ English literacy development.

Both Araujo (2002) and Liaw (2003) found more than just positive academic effects on English language learners when they received phonics instruction as part of a balanced literacy approach. The students developed identities as readers, even if they were still not reading words. They possessed a level of self-confidence that allowed them to choose books that were challenging for them to read in their second language. Their oral vocabularies increased from the discussions and cooperative learning that took place in their classrooms. These researchers believed in the effectiveness of phonics instruction, but recognized the benefits of this approach to reading when embedded in a whole language framework. They demonstrated how powerful this combined approach can be for ELLs. Carlo et al. (2004) studied a specific aspect of the balanced literacy approach – vocabulary development. His study investigated the effects of vocabulary development on the comprehension of ELLs.

Unlike Liaw (2003) and Araujo (2002), Carlo et al. (2004) did not include explicit phonics instruction in the intervention they conducted. Carlo et al. understood that ELLs often struggle with learning new vocabulary and that this population of students cannot use context as effectively as their English only (EO) counterparts to determine the meaning of unknown words. Furthermore, when students encounter text in which a high percentage of words are unknown, their comprehension is impeded. Therefore, the authors conducted this study to investigate the
relationship between vocabulary development and comprehension for ELLs. Specifically, they wanted to know if increased vocabulary knowledge would lead to increased comprehension. The authors investigated the effects of a combined approach to vocabulary development for both ELLs and EOs. The teachers in this study provided both direct instruction of specific academic words as well as instruction around word-learning strategies in the hope of improving word knowledge as well as overall reading comprehension.

Carlo et al. (2004) believed that ELLs lack depth of vocabulary knowledge, which they considered to be just as important as breadth of knowledge. For example, ELLs may not understand the literal meaning, the morphological possibilities, the semantic associations or the many connotations of a word, even with high-frequency English words. Therefore, they designed this study around their own previous research in the field of vocabulary development, taking approaches that had proven to be effective with EOs and combining them with approaches that had previously only been used with ELLs. This intervention focused on presenting academic and high frequency words that could be found across content areas, so that students would have multiple exposures to new words learned. The authors chose the specific target words from texts that would be engaging, appropriate and, therefore, meaningful to the fifth-grade students that participated. They used words from several texts that were available in both Spanish and English in order to promote ELLs’ comprehension of the context in which these words were found in English. Their intention was to promote depth of word meaning knowledge by providing explicit instruction in the use of context to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words. The strategies they focused on included polysemy, morphological structure, cross-language relationships, such as cognates, spelling and pronunciation.
Monolingual and bilingual students participated in this study. Of the 254 participants, 142 were ELLs and 112 were EOs. Of these students, 94 ELLs and 75 EOs from 10 classrooms were randomly assigned to the intervention group. Another 48 ELLs and 37 EOs from 6 classrooms were assigned to the comparison group. This group did not receive any additional vocabulary development aside from the prescribed fifth-grade curriculum. All students were fifth-graders from four schools in California, Massachusetts and Virginia. Both schools in California were composed of mainly Mexican-American students in both bilingual and mainstream settings. In Massachusetts, the students were mainly Puerto Rican or Dominican, also in bilingual and mainstream settings. The school in Virginia was an English-medium school with Spanish speakers from the Caribbean and Central America, along with native speakers of other languages and native English speakers. The teachers from the intervention classrooms met biweekly with the researchers. These meetings provided support for the teachers and information to the researchers about the ongoing effectiveness or problems associated with the intervention. No modifications were made to the intervention curriculum as a result of these meetings.

The intervention lasted 15 weeks, with 30-45 minutes of vocabulary instruction provided daily, four days a week. Every week followed a similar pattern, with 10-12 target words presented at the beginning of the week and built into activities throughout the week. Every fifth week of the intervention was devoted to reviewing the target words from the previous four weeks. While teachers did not provide explicit vocabulary instruction on Mondays, the ELLs received the weekly text in Spanish, both written and audiotaped, in order to preview it for the following day. On Tuesday, teachers introduced the weekly text in English to all students. They then provided instruction in inferring the meaning of the week’s target words in context. On Wednesday, students were divided into heterogeneous language groups of four to six students.
Each group participated in two types of cloze activities. In the first, they needed to provide specific target words in sentences with a similar theme to the week’s main instructional text. In the second, the target words were missing from sentences with distinct themes and contexts. These activities exposed students to the fact that many words have different meanings in different contexts. On Thursday, students participated in activities that promoted depth of knowledge for the target words. These activities included word associations, analysis of semantic features and finding synonyms and antonyms. Finally, on Friday, teachers provided activities to promote general word analysis abilities, such as identifying root words, derivational affixes and cognates.

All students that participated in this study also participate in several assessments. Some students took the first assessments during the spring of their fourth-grade year. Others did so in the fall of their fifth-grade year. All students participated in post-tests the spring of their fifth-grade year. Among the assessments was a standardized assessment of picture vocabulary, a polysemy production task, in which students provided sentences to illustrate the various meanings of several words, and a reading comprehension task that included cloze passages with content words deleted. Of the 18 words on this assessment, 10 had been taught during the intervention. Students also participated in a word mastery task, which assessed the vocabulary words that were taught directly as part of the intervention, a word association task, in which they chose three words that were most closely related to a target word, and a morphology task, in which students provided the base of a derived word. While the final five tasks were not standardized achievement tests, they did provide information regarding students’ growth during the intervention, and allowed the authors to compare the scores of the experimental and control groups.
Carlo et al. (2004) found that on the standardized vocabulary assessment, the English only group scored slightly higher and demonstrated greater gains from fall to spring. However, there appeared to be no influence of treatment group, only language. On the word mastery, word association, polysemy and comprehension tasks, the intervention group made more gains than the comparison group. Native English speakers scored higher on the word association and polysemy tasks. When the authors looked at scores for the morphology, word mastery and word association tasks together, the intervention group had more gains than the comparison group at some of the school sites. The authors attributed this to either the different populations served by each school or program implementation differences. However, at the end of the study the authors concluded that the fidelity of implementation did not significantly affect any of the results. However, the demographics of each school setting may have contributed to the differences they observed between sites.

Carlo et al. (2004) concluded that a challenging curriculum focused on the direct instruction of academic vocabulary and strategies for inferring meaning from context produced equally high performance in both ELLs and EOs. They also discovered that vocabulary development led to increases in comprehension, although these increases were not as significant as those in word knowledge. However, these results were surprising because the intervention did not specifically focus on teaching comprehension. This study was successful in demonstrating how different approaches to vocabulary development that had previously been shown to be effective with only ELLs or EOs could be integrated and be effective for both populations. However, the authors indicated that some results may have been affected by students’ language proficiency because they did not test the interaction between English language proficiency and the intervention effects. While the long-term effects of this intervention are unknown, it does
suggest the effectiveness of integrating language development into a balanced literacy approach for ELLs.

**Conclusion**

The results of the above studies highlight the importance of explicit phonics instruction, embedded in a balanced literacy approach, for ELLs. Bilingual students benefit from phonological awareness activities in English and can use their native language phonological awareness skills as a resource in the parallel development of these skills in English. Language learners also benefit from explicit instruction comparing and contrasting their native language to English (Brice & Brice, 2009; Verhoeven, 2007). Beginning monolingual readers have benefitted from explicit phonics instruction (Beverly et al., 2009; Connelly et al., 2001; White, 2005) and consequently similar positive effects have been observed in populations of ELLs (Denton et al., 2004; Reese et al., 2005; Stuart, 1999, 2004). Phonics may be even more effective for this population of students when presented in the context of a balanced literacy approach with an emphasis on vocabulary development (Araujo, 2002; Carlo et al., 2004; Liaw, 2003). The intervention discussed in this paper sought to study the effects of explicit phonics instruction, embedded in a balanced literacy approach that emphasized vocabulary development and comprehension, on the English literacy skills of second-grade bilingual students beginning the transition from Spanish to English literacy.

The following chapter introduces the sample population for this study. It also explains the procedures and the assessments that were used to examine the effectiveness of the intervention. The study was designed with the above research in mind and was intended to put theory into practice in order to observe how ELLs’ literacy learning is affected by explicit phonics.
instruction that accompanies a district-mandated literacy curriculum that includes vocabulary development and comprehension activities.
Chapter Three: Procedures for the Study

I conducted this investigation based on the research that has suggested that explicit phonics instruction, embedded in a balanced literacy approach, produces positive effects on second language learners’ acquisition of English literacy skills (Araujo, 2002; Denton et al., 2004; Liaw, 2003; Stuart, 1999, 2004). This chapter will introduce each of the study’s participants, discuss formal and informal methods of data collection and explain the procedures the participants followed during this six-week intervention.

Sample Population

Ten Hispanic second-grade students who received instruction in a developmental bilingual classroom participated in this intervention. These students received approximately 60% of their daily instruction in Spanish, including Spanish literacy, and 40% in English, including music, gym, art and English literacy. This group of students included four males and six females. All students spoke Spanish as their primary home language (L1), and all students qualified for the federal free-reduced lunch program based on their family’s income level. At the time of the study, students ranged in age from 7.7 to 8.5 years old. Spanish reading levels, according to an informal Spanish Reading Verification assessment (Echevarria et al., 2010), ranged from a basic 2.1 (reading at a first semester of second grade level) to a proficient 2.2 (reading at a second semester of second grade level). See Appendix A for a break-down of Spanish reading levels for the students in this study. English LAU levels in this group ranged from 3.3 to 4.2 (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment, 2011). See Appendix B for a complete list of LAU levels for the students in this study. Participants were chosen based on their Spanish reading levels, their LAU levels and the fact that they were eligible to begin the official transition to English
literacy just prior to the beginning of this study. The table below details specific information about each participant at the time of the study (pseudonyms are used to maintain confidentiality):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age (years.months)</th>
<th>Spanish Reading Level</th>
<th>English LAU Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>José</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>2.2 Basic</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaqueline</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>2.1 Basic</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuel</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>2.1 Proficient</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esteban</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>2.2 Proficient</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josefina</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>2.2 Proficient</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>2.1 Proficient</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethany</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>2.1 Proficient</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elia</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>2.1 Proficient</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>7.10</td>
<td>2.2 Basic</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carla</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>7.10</td>
<td>2.1 Proficient</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Collection**

Students participated in pre- and post-test assessments in order to measure the effects of the intervention. The Qualitative Reading Inventory – V (QRI-V; Leslie & Caldwell, 2011), an informal reading assessment, was used to evaluate students’ English reading abilities. Before the intervention began, students read lists of words in order to determine their highest independent word-reading level. I then administered a narrative passage at this level. Students’ word-reading accuracy within the context of a story, as well as their performance on a series of implicit and explicit comprehension questions related to the story, informed their overall score on this assessment. Students continued to read passages at higher or lower levels, depending on their
performance, in order to determine an instructional reading level. After the six-week intervention, students read the same narrative text that was previously determined to be representative of their instructional English reading level and continued to read and respond to passages until a new instructional level was determined.

The second pre- and post-assessment measured students’ phonemic decoding skills. This assessment, called the Reading Dr. Seuss Words! test, was an informal phonemic decoding assessment based on the work of Santa and Hoien (1999). In order to complete this assessment, students read five lists of nonwords, with each list containing 10 nonwords that reflected a single closed, short vowel syllable pattern. Nonwords on each list increased in complexity from simple CVC words (such as dat) to more complex CCCVCC words (such as splack). Students’ scores on this assessment reflected the total percentage of nonwords read correctly from each of the five lists.

Students also participated in spelling pre- and post-tests each week throughout the intervention. The Journeys curriculum (Baumann et al., 2011) provided a list of 12 spelling words for each lesson. These words exemplified the specific phonics focus element for the week. I chose words from this list, but also included words from the primary instructional text of the week and words the students struggled with in the QRI-V (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) and Reading Dr. Seuss Words! (Santa & Hoien, 1999) assessments that also contained the specific phonics pattern(s). During the pre- and post-tests, I read each word, used it in a sentence and read the word again. If students asked to hear the word again, I repeated it as many times as necessary. I pointed out words that were also homophones, such as would, stressing that there were two (or more) possible spellings, but the correct spelling for this word was based on the definition as I used it in the sentence. I read the words in a different, random order for the post-
test. I utilized these assessments to informally measure progress students made on the specific phonics elements they studied each week.

Students also completed weekly assessments taken from the *Journeys* (Baumann et al., 2011) curriculum throughout the intervention. These assessments included a vocabulary section, a comprehension section and a phonics section. The vocabulary questions assessed student knowledge of each week’s specific vocabulary and high-frequency words. The comprehension questions addressed each week’s main selection. The phonics sections were a series of cloze activities in which students chose the correct word to finish the sentences from among a list of words that all included the week’s focal phonics element(s). See Appendix C for a sample of this assessment. Students read these assessments on their own, but I answered individual questions regarding unfamiliar vocabulary or English sentence structures that were not being assessed.

**Procedures**

In previous years, students transitioned to English literacy through a curriculum-based ESL approach. This meant that teachers supported language acquisition through themed units, with students grouped homogeneously according to English LAU levels. The themes generally hinged on science- or social studies-based topics, and incorporated attention to English literacy development through exposure to chants, read-alouds, guided reading books and journaling. Teachers chose English word-wall words for each week of instruction, based on words that students encountered in the chants or texts, or high-frequency words the teachers wanted to teach explicitly. If these words contained a recognizable phonogram, instruction may have included explicit phonics lessons with that specific word family. However, the curriculum did not incorporate any systematic attention to phonics instruction. This intervention, therefore, strove to embed explicit phonics instruction in a balanced literacy approach.
I modeled the weekly instructional routine for this English reading intervention on the routine that was already in place for Spanish reading. The students in my class were familiar with this balanced literacy approach, which included phonics, vocabulary and comprehension instruction, as they had experienced it during Spanish reading in first and second grade. According to the common underlying proficiency theory, concepts learned in students’ L1 can and will transfer to L2, as long as commonalities and differences between the languages are discussed (Brice & Brice, 2009; Denton et al., 2004; Verhoeven, 2007). Therefore, I designed this intervention to build on what students already knew and presented new information in a recognizable format.

For this intervention, I used the English reading curriculum, *Journeys*, which was the district-adopted reading program for the monolingual classrooms (Baumann et al., 2011). Because my second-grade students had just begun their transition to formal English reading instruction, I used the first-grade *Journeys* curriculum. The weekly lesson plan for this six-week intervention was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phonics</strong></td>
<td><em>Spelling pretest</em></td>
<td><em>Find and point out words in weekly story that follow the week’s phonics focus</em></td>
<td><em>Explicit phonics lesson (Spelling patterns, word endings)</em></td>
<td><em>Spelling post-test</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Explicit phonics lesson</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Decodable readers</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sight Words/ Vocabulary</strong></td>
<td><em>Introduce weekly vocabulary words</em></td>
<td><em>Read and discuss comprehension page of student book</em></td>
<td><em>Emphasize new and past vocabulary and sight words in weekly story</em></td>
<td><em>Review vocabulary words within the context of the weekly story</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Write words or sentences in notebooks</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Vocabulary Readers emphasizing vocabulary</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A more detailed account of the intervention components addressed during each instructional day has been provided in the pages that follow.

**Monday.**

Each week began with a spelling pre-test. Spelling words were chosen based on the phonics focus of the week, as determined by the *Journeys* curriculum (Baumann et al., 2011). I chose some of the spelling words from the curriculum’s suggested weekly list. Others I chose because they appeared in the weekly story or because they had been errors on the pre-assessments. When the students studied the word endings *–ed* and *–ing*, for example, I included the words *grab* and *grabbed* in order to have most of the short vowel sounds represented that week. My instruction included a mini-lesson on the short vowel sounds ā, ī, ō, and ŭ, even though the main focus of the week was word endings. Another week, I included the word *happy* on the spelling list because it was also a vocabulary word for that week. The phonics focus was word endings *–er* and *–est*, therefore I included the words *happy*, *happier* and *happiest*. This provided the students with purposeful exposure to an important sight word, while also providing me with an opportunity to introduce the concept of changing the final *–y* to an *–i* before adding word endings in English.

Students studied 12 new words every week. A sample word list from one of these assessments can be found in Appendix D. After the pre-test on Monday, the students recorded the correct spellings of new words in their notebook, in a table that highlighted the phonics element(s) that would be the focus for the week. For example, when the students studied word

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>words in context</th>
<th><em>Relate vocabulary reader to weekly theme</em></th>
<th><em>Read through weekly story; relate to weekly theme</em></th>
<th><em>Graphic organizer with weekly story</em></th>
<th><em>Weekly assessment (vocabulary, comprehension, phonics)</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
endings, they recorded words in a table that had the headings “root words,” “-ed” and “-ing.” Students then read a story from a decodable reader that was part of the curriculum, which emphasized words containing the phonics focus element(s). Students recorded words from this short story on a similar table.

**Tuesday.**

On Tuesday, students studied new high-frequency words. Each week, eight new words were introduced in the curriculum and were found in the decodable readers, the vocabulary reader, the leveled readers and the main selection for that week. I continually looked for purposeful ways to make connections between the focal phonics element for the week and other components of the literacy block. For example, on two occasions a new vocabulary word also contained the phonics focus element for the week, and in both cases, I included the vocabulary word on the students’ spelling list. After I introduced the vocabulary words to the students, using cards that promoted oral discussion around each word, students wrote the words in their notebooks. Some weeks, the students generated sentences with the new words, which I recorded on the board and they copied into their notebooks. If there was time in class, students read the vocabulary reader that highlighted each of the week’s new words in a story. If there was not enough time in class, students took these readers home as homework. I always related the theme of these vocabulary stories to the theme of the weekly main selection.

**Wednesday.**

On Wednesday, the students began by reviewing the new vocabulary words on the Comprehension page of the student books (Baumann et al., 2011). This page provided a paragraph or two related to the theme of the main selection, using all eight of the new vocabulary words for the week. The students and I read this page aloud and discussed the meanings of the
new words in this context. We then read the main selection for the week. While reading, students again discussed the specific meaning of the new vocabulary words, which were highlighted yellow in their books. I also pointed out words that followed the week’s phonics focus, including spelling words. For example, when the phonics focus was spelling patterns for the long i sound (igh, y, ie), I pointed out the words try and fly several times throughout the main selection. Both of these long i words were on the spelling list. I also pointed out, and asked the students to sound out, the word higher. While not a spelling word, the students had studied the word high the previous week as part of that story’s vocabulary words, and the igh spelling pattern represented a part of the phonics focus for the current week. Students practiced sounding out these words and discussed their meaning within the context of the story. This again represented an attempt to consistently reteach and readdress the focal phonics pattern in the context of meaningful, connected text. Reading for meaning was emphasized during this initial read-through of the story.

Thursday.

Thursday began with a phonics lesson, focusing on the phonics element(s) being studied that week. This explicit phonics instruction came in various forms. Some weeks, students read a second decodable story, while other weeks they listed words in their notebooks that followed similar spelling patterns as their spelling words. After this mini-lesson, students reread the main selection of the week, completing a graphic organizer to aid comprehension. The comprehension skills that were taught during the intervention were drawing conclusions, cause and effect, understanding characters, compare and contrast, text and graphic features and story structure.
Friday.

On Friday, students took a spelling post-test, reread the main selection of the week, and completed a weekly assessment from the *Journeys* curriculum (Baumann et al., 2011). This assessment focused on vocabulary words, comprehension of the main selection and phonics elements. A sample assessment of this kind can be found in Appendix C.

**Conclusion**

Ten second-grade English language learners participated in a six-week intervention that integrated explicit phonics instruction in a balanced literacy approach during English literacy instruction. The Qualitative Reading Inventory – V (QRI-V; Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) and the Reading Dr. Seuss Words! Assessment (Santa & Hoien; 1999) served as pre- and post-assessment measures to monitor the progress made by the students. Weekly spelling pre- and post-tests supported my ability to track specific growth in weekly phonics focus elements. A familiar weekly routine that emphasized phonics instruction in the context of a balanced literacy plan supported the students’ transition to formal English reading. Chapter Four will discuss the results of this intervention.
Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this investigation was to determine the effectiveness of explicit phonics instruction on the decoding, spelling and comprehension abilities of bilingual students making the transition to English literacy. This chapter presents data that reflect students’ levels in each of these areas before the intervention began, that describe their progress throughout the six-week intervention and that demonstrate the students’ abilities across decoding, spelling and comprehension skills at the end of the intervention period. In addition to presenting an aggregate portrait of how the small group of ten students grew over the course of this intervention, the individual results of three students will also be presented as a means of further exemplifying trends that I observed across the sample.

Aggregate Pre-test Results

All students in this study participated in two pre-test assessments. The first, Reading Dr. Seuss Words! (Santa & Hoien, 1999), measured students’ phonemic decoding skills. As a group, the students struggled with all of the short vowel nonsense words on the assessment. No student was proficient (70% or above) on all of the word lists. Students were able to decode short a words with greatest accuracy, with nine students scoring proficient on this list during the pre-test. Five students were proficient on the short o list. Four students were proficient on each of the short e and short u lists and two students were proficient on the short i list. Because this assessment incorporates nonwords of increasing complexity from CVC to CCVCC, student results reflected difficulties with the short vowel sounds as well as some consonants and digraphs. For example, many students pronounced the ‘ch’ digraph as /sh/ and the ‘th’ digraph as /t/. Students also confused the sounds associated with some English letters with the sounds associated with those same letters in Spanish. For example, many students pronounced the letter
‘j’ as the /h/ sound and the letter ‘y’ as the /j/ sound. Additionally, some students tried to make real words out of the nonwords. Several students read *did* for *dit* and *mop* for *mot*. For the nonword *thit*, students read *thin*, *thick* and *things*. In these cases, the students applied accurate sound-symbol correspondence to the English vowel pattern, but they replaced an ending consonant sound with a sound that would make the nonword a word that held meaning. Given that many students’ errors on this assessment reflected their difficulty with sound-symbol correspondence of consonants, the results of the assessments were examined not only in terms of overall percentages correct on each nonword list, but also in terms of those errors that were purely related to the vowel sound contained in a nonword. When only considering whether the students accurately pronounced the vowel sounds in the stimulus nonwords, all students scored higher on some, if not all, lists. See Appendix E for a list of pre- and post-test scores for the Reading Dr. Seuss Words! (Santa & Hoien, 1999) assessment.

The second pre-test assessment, the QRI-V (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011), measured word reading accuracy in the context of connected text, as well as text comprehension. In order to be considered instructional at a specific reading level, students must have read that leveled narrative passage with at least 90% accuracy and at least 67% comprehension. Students’ instructional reading levels are determined by the lower of these two scores. Therefore, students are considered to be at frustration at a level if their accuracy score is below 90% or if their comprehension score is below 67%. While the majority of students did not experience frustration with word reading accuracy, their miscues provided evidence for why their comprehension scores were much lower on this English assessment than their Spanish reading comprehension (See Appendix A for students’ Spanish reading levels at the time of this intervention). For example, the majority of students mispronounced words with inflectional suffixes, reading *talk-*
ed for talked, or omitted word endings, reading want for wanted. All of the students who read the PP1 level narrative text pronounced the word jig as hig. Therefore, when they were asked what the pig was doing in the story, two of these students said, “Standing” or “Spinning,” while the third student said, “Dancing.” Their comprehension was thus negatively affected by their mispronunciation of this unfamiliar word. Students also made many grammatical errors, such as reading past-tense verbs in the present tense. For example, on the primer level narrative, several students read dig for dug and eat for ate. They also had difficulty with contractions, saying I for I’ll. While the amount of errors they committed did not always affect their accuracy level, it affected their comprehension in that all students’ English reading levels were lower than their Spanish reading levels at the time of the study. Before the intervention began, one student was at frustration at the Pre-primer 1 (PP1) level, two students were instructional at the PP1 level, one student was independent at the Pre-primer 3 (PP3) level, three students were instructional at the PP3 level, two students were instructional at the first grade level (Level 1) and one student was instructional at the second grade level (Level 2). See Appendix F for a breakdown of pre- and post-test scores on the QRI-V.

Students’ miscues on the QRI-V (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) pre-assessment suggested a need for explicit instruction in the areas of phonics and high frequency words. While many of their miscues were similar in letter-sound correspondence to the correct words from the text, they also revealed a lack of attention to word endings, verb tenses and grammatical correctness. Thus, these results demonstrated that these second grade bilingual students needed a balanced literacy approach that embedded explicit phonics instruction into a curriculum that continued to attend to the development of their comprehension abilities. The following section describes student progress throughout the intervention.
Aggregate Intervention Results

During the intervention, students participated in weekly spelling pre- and post-tests. These tests were created around words that followed the specific phonics focus for the week, and I provided explicit phonics instruction on these and similar words throughout the week. Many of the spelling words were taken from the *Journeys* (Baumann et al., 2011) curriculum, while others were chosen because they presented a challenge for students during the pre-assessments. Because the English short vowel patterns had been addressed in units covered prior to this intervention, the spelling lists did not specifically incorporate attention to these vowel sounds. However, I embedded additional spelling words that addressed these short vowel patterns in conjunction with focal spelling patterns that were prescribed by the curriculum. For example, I included the words *grab* and *grabbed* when the phonics focus was word endings. This gave me the opportunity to present explicit phonics instruction in the students’ specific areas of need, specifically English short vowel sounds. As a group, students generally increased their scores each week from the pre- to the post-assessments. In general, the majority of post-test scores were proficient (70% or above), with some exceptions from various students throughout the intervention. See Appendix G for all spelling pre- and post-test scores.

I also collected formative data throughout the intervention using an informal assessment provided by the *Journeys* curriculum (Baumann et al., 2011). This weekly multiple-choice assessment included a section on the new vocabulary words from the week, comprehension questions from the weekly main selection and a phonics section, which included cloze activities in which students chose the correct word to finish the sentence from among a list of words exemplifying the week’s focal phonics element(s). One such assessment can be found in Appendix C. In general, the students performed better on the vocabulary sections of each week’s
assessment than on the comprehension or phonics sections. Six students scored proficient (70% or above) on the vocabulary sections for all six weeks of the intervention. On the comprehension section of the assessments, four students scored proficient across all six weeks. The other six students received a score lower than 70% on comprehension at least one week out of the intervention. Only one student scored proficient all six weeks on the phonics section, while other students’ scores varied, sometimes dramatically, from week to week. No students demonstrated consistent increases or decreases during the six-week intervention period on the phonics measure. See Appendix H for a complete list of scores on each measure for each week of the intervention.

**Aggregate Post-test Results**

At the conclusion of the intervention, students once again participated in the Reading Dr. Seuss Words! (Santa & Hoien, 1999) informal reading assessment. While many students’ scores increased from pre- to post-test, the majority of students received lower scores on at least one list of short vowel words. In fact, seven students scored lower on the short a nonwords list, the list on which students had demonstrated the highest levels of proficiency on the pre-test assessments. Only one student’s scores increased or remained the same for all lists from pre- to post-assessments. In contrast to the pre-assessment, when only short vowel sounds were assessed many students actually scored lower on this post-assessment. In fact, eight students scored lower on the short a list, two students on the short e list, five students on the short i list, three students on the short o list and two students on the short u list.

Some of the student errors on this post-test were similar to those made on the pre-test. For example, there was still evidence of confusion between the digraphs ‘ch’ and ‘sh.’ Students read *chet* for *shen* and *shock* for *chock*. This time, there did not seem to be as much confusion
with ‘th’, although some students continued to pronounce this digraph as /t/. Some students also continued to read the nonwords as real words. For example, some read joke for yock or treat for tret. These examples also illustrate another trend in student errors on the post-test – substituting long vowel sounds in short-vowel patterned words. Other examples of this were blopes for blops, sprotes for sprots and dite for dit. Overall, the post-test scores on this measure did not demonstrate measurable growth for students in the area of phonics.

On the QRI-V (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) post-assessment, three students increased their instructional reading levels, one student decreased her instructional reading level and six students remained at the same instructional reading level, although their word reading accuracy or comprehension scores may have changed. In the end, two students were at frustration at a PP1 level, one student was instructional at the PP1 level, one student was instructional at the PP3 level, one student was instructional at the Primer level, three students were instructional at Level 1 and two students were instructional at Level 2. See Appendix F for a breakdown of pre- and post-test scores on the QRI-V.

I analyzed the miscues students made on this assessment during the pre- and post-tests. The students who had more miscues on the post-assessment were also those who increased their instructional reading levels. Other students had the same or fewer numbers of miscues than they did on the pre-assessment; however, these students maintained a consistent reading level, with the exception of one who decreased her reading level. Students made more non-meaning change miscues on the post-assessment than they did during the pre-assessment. For example, one student read I for I’ll during the pre-test, but read I will for this contraction on the post-test. Another student substituted the word dancing for the word doing in the sentence, “I see a pig
doing a jig.” Both of these examples also illustrate how many letter-sound correspondences were maintained in the post-assessment miscues.

**Individual Case Studies**

In order to illustrate trends in students’ performance and growth over the course of the action research, a more in-depth discussion of the results from three participants has been presented below. These students were selected to be the foci of individual case studies due to the fact that they were representative of other participants from the sample who increased their overall instructional reading levels, decreased their levels or remained at the same instructional reading level throughout the intervention. Data for the decoding, spelling and comprehension skills of these three students are discussed in the following pages.

**Esteban.**

Esteban increased three instructional reading levels from his pre- to post-assessments in the QRI-V (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011). In analyzing his decoding skills, I looked at his word reading accuracy on this assessment, along with his performance on the pre- and post- Reading Dr. Seuss Words! (Santa & Hoien, 1999) assessments and the phonics portions of the weekly *Journeys* (Baumann et al., 2011) tests. Esteban read both the PP1 (pre-assessment instructional level) and the Primer (post-assessment instructional level) narratives on the QRI-V (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) assessment with 91% accuracy. He had three meaning-change miscues at the PP1 level, all with similar letter-sound patterns as the correct words. At the Primer level, he had 11 miscues, including one which did not change the meaning of the text and one that he self-corrected. Ten of these miscues had similar letter-sound patterns as the correct words. For example, he read *them* for *the*, *seeds* for *seed* and *where* for *were*. On the nonsense words phonemic decoding assessment, Esteban demonstrated similar patterns when the short vowel lists
were examined holistically as when only the vowel patterns were considered. He increased his pre- to post-test scores for short e and short u, while maintaining the same score for short o. His scores decreased on the short a and short i lists. For both of these lists, Esteban consistently pronounced the sound of the short vowel as he would if he were reading in Spanish during the post-assessment. For example, he read lon for lan and deet for dit. On the weekly phonics assessments, Esteban’s scores varied drastically throughout the intervention. His scores ranged from 20% to 90%.

During the weekly spelling tests, Esteban’s scores were all below 70%. His pre-test scores ranged from 0% to 25%, while his post-test scores ranged from 25% to 67%. Each week, his scores increased from the pre- to the post-tests. One week his score increased 59%. Many of his spelling errors represented Spanish spellings for similar sounds.

In order to determine Esteban’s comprehension strengths and weaknesses, I analyzed the comprehension portion of the QRI-V (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) and the comprehension sections of the weekly Journey’s (Baumann et al., 2011) assessments. During the pre-test, Esteban demonstrated 80% comprehension of the PP1 level narrative on the QRI-V (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011). During the post-test, Esteban demonstrated 83% comprehension of the Primer level text. Throughout the intervention, Esteban’s comprehension of the weekly stories was above 70% each week, with the exception of one lower score. His scores ranged from 50% to 100%.

**Carla.**

Carla decreased two instructional reading levels from her pre- to post-assessments in the QRI-V (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011). During the pre-assessment, she read the PP3 level passage with 91% accuracy. All six of her errors were meaning-change miscues and all had similar letter-sound patterns as the correct words. She read look and look-ed for the word looked throughout
the passage. On the post-assessment, Carla read the PP1 level narrative with 100% accuracy, with no errors to analyze. On the Reading Dr. Seuss Words! (Santa & Hoien, 1999) decoding assessment, Carla increased her scores from pre- to post-assessment for the short $e$, $i$, and $u$. Her score remained the same for short $o$ and her score decreased slightly for short $a$. When only correct short vowel sounds were analyzed, Carla’s scores increased on all pre- and post-test lists; however, she continued to have difficulty accurately attending to the digraphs ‘sh’ and ‘th,’ as well as the sound of the letter ‘y.’ For example, during the pre-test she read $seen$ for $shen$ and during the post-test she read $chen$ for $shen$. Also, during the pre-test she read $ted$ for $thed$ and during the post-test she read $tun$ for $thun$. During both pre- and post-tests, she read $jock$ for the word $yock$. During the intervention, Carla’s scores on the phonics portions of the weekly tests ranged from 60% to 100%, with one score missing due to absences during the final week of the intervention.

Carla’s spelling test scores increased from pre- to post-test each week throughout the intervention. Her pre-test scores ranged from 17% to 83%. Carla received 100% on the post-tests four of the six weeks, and 83% on the post-test assessment a subsequent week. Carla was frequently absent during the final week of the intervention and thus did not participate in the assessment during the final post-testing.

Carla displayed decreased comprehension on the QRI-V (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) measure. During the pre-assessment, she demonstrated 100% comprehension at the PP3 level. She also read the Primer level narrative text with 83% comprehension. However, she scored 89% on word reading accuracy, which put her at frustration overall for the Primer level. During the post-assessment, she demonstrated 100% comprehension of the PP3 level narrative (with only 88% word reading accuracy), 60% comprehension of the PP2 level narrative (with 100% word
reading accuracy) and 80% comprehension of the PP1 level narrative (with 100% word reading accuracy). Throughout the intervention, Carla’s scores on the comprehension portion of the Journeys (Baumann et al., 2011) tests ranged from 80% to 100%, demonstrating proficient comprehension of the weekly stories.

José.

José was the only student with a Level 2 (second-grade level) instructional reading level on the QRI-V (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) before the intervention began. He remained at Level 2 during the post-assessment. His word-reading accuracy for both assessments was 95%. His eight miscues on the pre-assessment included one that did not change the meaning of the text and six with similar letter-sound patterns as the correct words. For example, he read look-ed for looked and I for I’ll. His eight miscues on the post-assessment included three which did not change the meaning of the text and six that had similar letter-sound patterns as the correct words. This time he read You will for You’ll and I will for I’ll. On the Reading Dr. Seuss Words! (Santa & Hoien, 1999) phonemic decoding assessment, José increased his scores for short a, e and o words. His score for short u did not change and his score decreased for short i. His score increased to 100% on several lists for both pre- and post-assessments when only appropriate pronunciation of the closed, short vowel sound was considered. José’s scores on the phonics portion of the weekly tests ranged from 80% to 100%, demonstrating proficiency at identifying words with the week’s phonics focus in the context of a sentence.

José’s spelling scores increased each week from pre- to post-test. His pre-test scores ranged from 33% to 83%, while his post-test scores ranged from 92% to 100%. José scored 100% on the spelling post-tests four of the six weeks of the intervention.
José’s comprehension decreased slightly on the comprehension portion of the QRI-V (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) Level 2 narrative from pre- to post-assessment. During the pre-assessment, José demonstrated 88% comprehension of the passage. During the post-assessment, he demonstrated 75% comprehension. He demonstrated consistent proficiency on the comprehension section of the weekly tests, with scores ranging from 80% to 100% throughout the six-week intervention.

**Conclusion**

This chapter described group data for the pre- and post-assessments and explained data collected from informal assessments in which students participated throughout the intervention. A description of aggregate trends across data in the areas of decoding, spelling and comprehension was followed by a discussion of the results obtained from three student participants. These three students demonstrated patterns that were observed throughout the entire group and included one student who increased his instructional reading level, one who decreased her instructional reading level and one who maintained his instructional reading level during the six-week intervention. Chapter five will analyze these data and provide explanations for the observed results in light of existing research. Ultimately, recommendations for future research and practice will be made in order to inform the reader’s understanding of the significance of this study to classroom practice.
Chapter 5: Conclusions

This study examined the effects of explicit phonics instruction on the decoding, spelling and comprehension skills of Spanish-English bilingual students as they transitioned to English literacy in second grade. The 10 students who took part in the study participated in two pre-assessments and two post-assessments, as well as informal weekly assessments throughout the intervention.

The intervention consisted of six weeks of explicit phonics instruction embedded in a balanced literacy approach during the English literacy block. Each week, students received instruction around a specific phonics focus element. For example, one week they learned about word endings (–ed and –ing) while another week they studied long /i/ spelling patterns (y, ie, igh). Throughout the week students encountered these focal phonics element(s) in explicit phonics lessons, in decodable readers, and in their main reading selection. Because this intervention focused on providing explicit phonics instruction as part of a balanced literacy approach, students also learned new vocabulary and sight words each week and discussed new words in the context of connected text. They completed graphic organizers in order to support the ultimate goal of reading for meaning.

A variety of formal and informal assessment data were collected to monitor and record students’ progress in the areas of decoding, spelling and reading comprehension in English during the six-week intervention period. In the previous chapter, I discussed data from the pre- and post-test measures, as well as from the weekly intervention assessments. These data were discussed in terms of group results and then further explained relative to the individual results of three students whose overall performance was representative of the other students in the group. This chapter explains the results of these assessments in light of existing research and highlights
EXPLICIT PHONICS INSTRUCTION FOR ELLS

the strengths and weaknesses of this study. Recommendations for further action research on the topic of explicit, systematic phonics instruction as part of a second language literacy curriculum will also be addressed.

**Explanation of Results**

**Aggregate decoding results.**

I examined students’ decoding skills using three very different assessments. The QRI-V (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) assessment enabled my ability to determine students’ word reading accuracy in the context of narrative text at their instructional reading level. Comparisons of pre-test and post-test results on this assessment demonstrated that nine of the 10 participants increased or maintained their instructional reading levels. This would suggest that the balanced literacy curriculum that I used over the course of my six-week action research project, which included explicit English phonics instruction, had a positive impact on their overall English literacy development.

Specific data from students’ post-test QRI-V (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) results further isolated the positive impact that explicit phonics instruction had on students’ overall literacy abilities and indicated that students were applying the phonics skills that had been addressed during the action research time frame. An analysis of students’ miscues from pre- to post-narrative passages revealed that the students who increased their reading levels actually made more word reading errors at the conclusion of the study. However, the vast majority of these errors were similar in letter-sound patterns to the correct words in the text. For example, one student read *old* for the word *hold*, while another read *where* for *were*. These miscues demonstrated students’ increased attention to letter-sound correspondences and more consistent
attempts to sound out words by fully analyzing all of the sounds in the words, a strategy that had been reinforced in the explicit phonics lessons during the intervention.

The results from the Reading Dr. Seuss Words! (Santa & Hoiien, 1999) phonemic decoding assessment were much more varied. During the pre-test, only one student read one of the word lists with 100% accuracy. However, when I only examined whether students correctly decoded the short vowel sound included in the nonword stimulus, several students’ scores increased to 100%. These results suggested that many students struggled with more than the closed, short vowel sounds that were part of the stimulus nonwords. It was anticipated that students might struggle with the short vowel sounds due to the fact that the vowel sounds in Spanish are extremely regular and consistent while the vowels in English can be pronounced in many different ways. Despite the fact that there is a great deal of overlap in terms of how consonants are produced across Spanish and English, some students actually mispronounced the consonant sounds included in the nonwords while accurately pronouncing the vowel sounds. I observed similar results during the post-test. Furthermore, while many students increased their scores from pre- to post-assessment, nine of the 10 students also decreased their score in at least one short vowel list. In fact, while students achieved the highest levels of proficiency on the short a nonword list during pre-testing, eight students actually scored lower on this list during the post-test. Some common mistakes on this list were pronouncing the short a the way it would be pronounced in Spanish and trying to make real words out of the nonwords. For example, more than half of the participants read the word spats as spots. This was likely a result of insufficient exposure to and explicit instruction around this particular vowel sound throughout the intervention.
While short vowel sounds were included in the *Journeys* (Baumann et al., 2011) curriculum, they were introduced in lessons that would have been taught earlier in the year. The goal in the district is to begin to transition bilingual second-graders one year below grade level, but to try to help them reach proficiency as close to grade level as possible each year so that they will be performing at grade level in English within three years. Therefore, as this intervention took place in the spring, I did not begin with lessons from the beginning of the year. I did work to embed short vowel instruction into the patterns that were suggested each week during the intervention. However, I do not feel that this instruction was systematic enough for ELLs. Their confusion around English vowel sounds demonstrated to me the importance of extended, intensely explicit instruction around this particular difference for Spanish speakers. These results also suggested the need to address both what is different between students’ L1 and L2 (short vowel sounds), but also what is similar (some consonant sounds) between the two languages. This must be done in a more systematic way throughout the year, as this strategy proved overwhelming to students in only six weeks.

The results from the phonics portions of the *Journeys* (Baumann et al., 2011) weekly assessments were not necessarily indicative of students’ decoding abilities. Rather, this test assessed comprehension and vocabulary abilities in that it required students to read a sentence and identify the word that would correctly complete the sentence. All of the words that were offered as choices followed the weekly phonics focus (such as the vowel combinations *ow* and *ou*). In order to identify the correct answer, students had to understand the sentence and know the meaning of each of the choices. For example, one sentence read, “My new pet is a black and white ______.” The choices were: *flour*, *grow* and *hound*. The words *hound* and *flour* were not introduced to the students through spelling words, vocabulary words or the main selection. Even
though there was a picture of a dog on the page, many students did not choose the correct option because they did not know the meaning of the word *hound*. The word *grow* was familiar to the students, but did not fit this week’s phonics focus because it did not make the sound /ou/, as in *sound*. Because vocabulary was not being assessed in this section, I told students that if they could correctly pronounce the word, I would tell them the definition. However, few students took advantage of this opportunity, making it difficult to identify whether scores on this assessment were due to challenges or strengths in the areas of decoding, comprehension or English vocabulary knowledge.

Overall, I did obtain evidence of increased attention to focal phonics elements throughout this intervention, even though progress varied among the participants. These results indicated that the intervention was successful in focusing bilingual students’ attention on letter-sound correspondences in English. However, they also demonstrated the need for more systematic, explicit phonics instruction, provided throughout the year (Araujo, 2002; Denton et al., 2004; Liaw, 2003; Reese et al., 2005; Stuart, 1999, 2004), and highlighting both sounds that are different in English than Spanish as well as sounds that are similar (Brice & Brice, 2009; Verhoeven, 2007). While the students in this study made obvious gains in some areas of phonetic decoding, they also showed decreases in previous understandings, indicating the need for consistent, ongoing instruction that both readdresses previously taught concepts and introduces new English phonetic patterns to ELLs.

**Aggregate spelling results.**

The data from the weekly spelling pre- and post-tests indicated very positive results for all students. In general, all students increased their scores from pre- to post-assessments, with the exception of one student who had the same score for both tests one week and one student who
had a slightly lower score on the post-test one week. The pre-test scores ranged from 0% to 100%, demonstrating a wide variety of prior English spelling knowledge among the participants.

Instruction each week included explicit lessons on the focal phonics element(s) as well as incidental instruction helping students recognize the appearance of recently introduced spelling patterns within the context of the main selections. For example, the word *house* was a vocabulary word one week, so I included it in the spelling list the following week when the phonics focus was on vowel combinations *ow* and *ou*. This word appeared in the main selection both weeks, so the students were able to decode it in context and see how each word they read contributed to the meaning of the text.

Spelling post-test scores ranged from 25% to 100%, with at least one student scoring 100% on the post-test each week. Several students’ scores were consistently high throughout the intervention, while other students’ scores varied week-to-week, depending on the phonics element(s) being studied. The students with consistently high scores on the English spelling tests were also those with consistently high scores on Spanish weekly spelling tests. This indicated to me that these students understood the concept of sounding out words in their native language. They were able to segment unfamiliar words into individual sounds, match letters to those sounds and then write the letters down in the order in which they heard the corresponding sounds. This prior knowledge allowed them to successfully transfer this skill to English spelling. The students with inconsistent English spelling scores were also those with inconsistent Spanish spelling scores. These students were successful with Spanish sounds that had only one possible spelling. However, all of these students struggled with sounds that could be represented by more than one letter. For example, in Spanish the /s/ sound can be written with the letters ‘c,’ ‘s,’ or
‘z.’ These students especially struggled in English with vowel combinations and tended to spell many words according to Spanish letter-sound correspondences.

Overall, the increased spelling scores from pre- to post-assessments suggested an increase in students’ awareness of sound-spelling correspondences in English. Because prior knowledge in this area varied so drastically, with some students scoring 0% on the pre-tests, it was significant that all students improved after being exposed to explicit phonics instruction throughout the week. I believe this was the case because the phonics lessons heightened all students’ awareness of different sounds in English and made them more conscious of and careful about listening for sounds. The students who already had well-developed phonological awareness skills in Spanish learned that they needed to apply similar skills in their second language. The students that struggled with Spanish spelling were given another opportunity to develop these skills in English. While not all students experienced significant increases in their accuracy scores from pre- to post-tests, I believe that all were generally more phonemically aware as a result of this intervention. This study did not reveal a strong connection between bilingual students’ spelling skills and decoding abilities in English.

Aggregate comprehension results.

Results from the QRI-V (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) pre- and post-assessments revealed that three students increased their reading level by at least two instructional reading levels, one student decreased by two instructional levels and six students remained at the same instructional reading levels, with some changes in their word reading accuracy or comprehension during the post-test. These results indicated a general increase in reading comprehension skills for the students that participated in this study. When I analyzed the miscues students made in the pre-tests and compared them to the miscues made at their new instructional reading levels during the
post-tests, I noticed more non-meaning change miscues in the post-tests. This would suggest that students were paying more attention to the meaning of the passage that they were reading and their errors indicated increased comprehension at the sentence or story level. During the pre-assessment, only one student self-corrected a meaning-change miscue at her instructional reading level. However, during the post-assessment, three students self-corrected meaning-change miscues. These corrections also indicated increased attention to reading for meaning. For example, one student read *also* for the word *always*, but self-corrected as she read the rest of the sentence. The students who increased their instructional reading levels also made more errors on the post-test, which was not surprising, considering these students were reading more difficult text.

The weekly comprehension assessment results varied, with scores ranging from 50% to 100% throughout the intervention. However, for three of the six intervention weeks, scores indicated proficiency throughout the group, ranging from 70% to 100%. The fact that the group demonstrated higher levels of comprehension on the weekly assessments than on the reading inventory during the pre- and post-tests indicated that rereading and discussing what they read contributed to higher levels of comprehension. Each week we read and discussed the stories as a group several times and the students had the opportunity to take their book home each week to read the stories with their families. New vocabulary words, including high-frequency English words, were also introduced and discussed each week along with the main selection. As a group, the students performed best on the weekly vocabulary assessments. This demonstrated the importance of English language development, along with the explicit instruction of phonics and specific reading strategies, for ELLs.

*Esteban.*
Esteban’s growth in his decoding, spelling and comprehension skills in English closely mirrored his previous development of these skills in Spanish. For example, Esteban increased three instructional reading levels in six weeks, similar to the rapid Spanish reading development I observed in him from first to second grade. In first grade, Esteban demonstrated below grade level Spanish reading skills and was placed in a small group that focused on reading fluency, along with comprehension strategies. When he began second grade, he still struggled with fluency and decoding words with irregular Spanish spellings, but his comprehension had greatly improved. During this English intervention, Esteban continued to struggle with English phonics skills, much as he did with unusual and infrequent Spanish phonics skills. However, on the QRI-V (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) post-assessment, 10 of his 11 miscues demonstrated similar letter-sound patterns as the correct words and Esteban self-corrected one of his errors, indicating that he was reading for meaning. While none of his spelling post-test scores were proficient (at least 70%), he did demonstrate improvement from pre- to post-tests every week. Spelling is another area in which Esteban struggled in his native language. While he was reading at grade-level in Spanish at the time of this study, he had less-than proficient abilities in Spanish spelling. However, Esteban did try to use what he knew about sound-symbol correspondence in Spanish to spell words in English, which resulted in the use of many incorrect vowels. For example, in Spanish the letter e makes the sound of the English vowel a. I observed Esteban using the letter e to represent this sound many times in his spelling tests, both pre- and post-. Six weeks of explicit instruction in new English phonics patterns was not sufficient for Esteban to become proficient in English spelling. Overall, Esteban’s pattern of development in English literacy was much what I had expected, given his similar pattern of development in Spanish literacy. His strength in English
was comprehension and reading for meaning. His weaknesses included spelling English words and using known spelling patterns to decode unfamiliar words in English.

**Carla.**

The results of Carla’s post-assessments contrasted with her weekly in-class performance. On the QRI-V (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) assessment, Carla decreased two instructional reading levels. During the pre-test, Carla was instructional at the PP3 level, with 91% word reading accuracy and 100% comprehension. However, on this same narrative during the post-test, Carla read with only 88% accuracy, putting her at frustration for this level. On the PP2 narrative, she read with 100% accuracy, but demonstrated only 60% comprehension, again putting her at frustration for this level. Finally, she read the PP1 narrative with 100% accuracy and 80% comprehension, making her instructional at the PP1 level, two levels below where she began the intervention six weeks previously. These results were not consistent with her weekly phonics, vocabulary or comprehension scores. Her scores on the phonics portions of the weekly *Journeys* (Baumann et al., 2011) assessments ranged from 60% to 100%, with only one non-proficient (less than 70%) score. This indicated both an understanding of the phonics elements we had studied as well as sufficient sentence-level comprehension to understand this section of the test. Her vocabulary scores ranged from 83% to 100%. She received 100% four of the five weeks she took the test. Her comprehension scores ranged from 80% to 100%. Therefore, Carla did demonstrate proficient phonics and comprehension skills throughout the intervention, but had difficulty on the post-test, which was a “cold read,” meaning no prior exposure to the text. She scored 100% on her spelling post-tests four of the five weeks she took the test.

These results are consistent with Carla’s Spanish reading proficiency. Her Spanish reading level at the time of this study was 2.1, which represented where a student should be
during the first semester of second grade. Other students were reading at a 2.2 level, indicating abilities necessary for the second semester of second grade, which we were just beginning. Carla was considered to be reading on grade level in Spanish, even though she was not one of the more advanced readers. Her Spanish reading level was also based on a “cold read” assessment, similar to the QRI-V (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011). While Carla demonstrated proficiency in her daily reading progress based on informal, weekly Spanish comprehension tests, she had difficulty comprehending text that she read individually in her native language and which was not discussed in class. She demonstrated this same difficulty in English during the intervention.

Carla was able to fluently decode Spanish text and comprehend what she read. Her spelling scores were also proficient. These observations of her Spanish literacy mirrored her performance in English literacy. During the QRI-V (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) pre-test she read the word looked as look or look-ed every time and during the post-test, she read this same word consistently as look. These miscues represented her confusion with word endings in English. However, during week four of the intervention, when the phonics focus was word endings, specifically –ed and –ing, Carla scored proficient on both her spelling post-test and the phonics portion of the Journeys (Baumann et al., 2011) assessment. While she did struggle with word reading accuracy and comprehension during the post-tests that were administered in English, she demonstrated proficiency in her English decoding, spelling and comprehension skills throughout the intervention. Again, these observations supported the fact that daily discussion, in either language, aided Carla in her comprehension and overall academic performance. However, she would benefit from additional practice transferring this knowledge to authentic texts, which she encounters outside of her literacy instructional block. There were several other students in this sample population that learned in a similar way. For these students, daily explicit phonics
instruction, embedded in a balanced literacy approach, was imperative to fostering their English literacy skills. Many students demonstrated similar patterns of growth throughout the intervention, even if their post-assessment results reflected lower scores. Carla and several of her classmates would ultimately benefit from prolonged exposure to this intervention because it combined explicit instruction in their areas of need with an overall balanced approach to reading for meaning.

José.

José was the only student in the group to begin the intervention at a second grade English instructional reading level. He maintained this reading level throughout the study. José’s progress in English literacy was very consistent throughout the six weeks of intervention. Both his word reading accuracy and phonics assessment scores indicated proficient decoding, phonics and comprehension skills. He only decreased his pre- to post-test score on the short i list of nonsense words, with proficient scores on the other four short vowels. He scored 92% on his spelling post-tests two of the six weeks, with 100% the other four weeks. He demonstrated a slight decrease in comprehension on the QRI-V (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) assessment, but was consistent in the weekly tests with 80% to 100% comprehension throughout the intervention. His vocabulary scores were 100% for five of the six weeks, with 83% the other week.

José’s English literacy progress was also expected, given his Spanish literacy progress. At the time of the study, José was reading at grade level in Spanish. However, like Carla, José demonstrated slight difficulty in comprehension with Spanish text that he had to read by himself, without explicit instruction. His Spanish reading proficiency was basic at the 2.2 level, meaning he was ready for instruction at the second semester of second grade level, but still struggled in the area of comprehension. This same pattern was evident in English during the QRI-V (Leslie &
Caldwell, 2011) post-test, when his comprehension score decreased from 88% to 75%. In light of his consistently proficient scores on the weekly main selections, I believe José also benefitted from the balanced literacy approach that embedded explicit instruction with daily discussion and reading for meaning. I observed similar patterns of proficiency in his decoding, spelling and comprehension skills in English and Spanish. José’s ability to transfer knowledge of “how to read,” including how to sound out words for both decoding and recoding purposes and how to determine which word makes sense in the context of connected text, from Spanish to English provided evidence of the linguistic interdependence theory (Cummins, 1981, as cited in Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2006).

**Connections to Existing Research and Common Core State Standards**

This study addressed the use of explicit phonics instruction to improve the English literacy skills of ELLs. This is a topic that has not been studied extensively. Much of the research related to gains due to explicit phonics instruction has been done with monolingual learners (Beverly et al., 2009; Connelly et al., 2001; White, 2005). The research that has been done with ELLs suggests that explicit attention to English phonics elements can improve these students’ decoding and spelling abilities (Denton et al., 2004; Reese et al., 2005; Stuart, 1999, 2004). I found evidence of this in my study, as several students increased their instructional reading levels after six weeks of explicit phonics instruction and increased their spelling scores throughout the six-week intervention.

The research also suggests that phonics instruction embedded in an overall balanced literacy approach is even more effective (Araujo, 2002; Liaw, 2003), with positive results increasing when ELLs are explicitly engaged in vocabulary instruction (Carlo et al., 2004). It was because of this research that I focused not only on phonics instruction, but also on
vocabulary development and reading comprehension in English with my students. I found vocabulary instruction to be very powerful, and included it even in my explicit phonics and comprehension lessons. As I discussed above, it was difficult to measure students’ phonics gains on the weekly assessments because these sections of the tests often introduced words that were unfamiliar to ELLs. During my explicit phonics lessons, I found that I could not just list words with the long *i* sound, without a comprehensive discussion about what each of the words meant and how it could be used in context. Therefore, I never taught my phonics lessons in isolation. I taught them in conjunction with decodable readers, the main selection and the weekly vocabulary words. The students needed to make connections between the spelling patterns they were learning and when and how the words they were spelling or reading could actually be used in English. While I designed the study to follow a balanced literacy approach, I did not realize the extent to which I would have to integrate vocabulary learning into all other areas in order to effectively advance my students’ decoding, spelling and comprehension abilities.

In the area of phonics, Brice and Brice (2009) and Verhoeven (2007) disagreed as to the best approach to use with second language learners. Brice and Brice believed that phonological and phonemic differences between two languages would be more difficult for students to understand than sounds and letter-sound correspondences that were similar between their native and second languages. Therefore, they suggested that teachers focus on teaching what is different between two languages for ELLs. Verhoeven, on the other hand, believed that because of language interdependence, bilingual students would benefit more from explicit instruction in areas in which the two languages were similar. Therefore, he encouraged teachers to compare students’ L1 and L2 in order for them to make connections between prior knowledge and new knowledge.
I modeled this study to be more reflective of the findings of Brice and Brice (2009). I designed my phonics lessons around English spelling patterns and concepts that were vastly different from Spanish spelling. I also pointed out, as students read, specific phonics elements that do not appear in Spanish, such as the ‘th’ digraph, words ending in double final consonants and the difference between short and long vowel sounds in English. However, as I examined the results of this study, I realized that students did not show definite improvement in any specific phonics areas. Rather, their scores fluctuated and were inconsistent. Considering Verhoeven’s (2007) view that bilingual learners need to be able to connect what they learn in their second language to what is already familiar in their L1, I believe I should have begun phonics instruction with English consonants and spelling patterns that were similar to Spanish. However, I also believe that ELLs need systematic instruction in sounds and spelling patterns that are unique to their second language as would be suggested by Brice and Brice.

This study addressed several of the Common Core State Standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012) for first grade English language arts. Although the participants in the study were second graders, I used first grade materials to begin their transition to English literacy because this was their second language. This study was designed to address the foundational reading skills of Phonological Awareness and Phonics and Word Recognition (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012). However, because I embedded phonics instruction in a balanced literacy approach, students also developed their English skills in the areas of comprehension, vocabulary development and spelling instruction. Therefore, this study also addressed the first grade Literature standards, specifically Key Idea and Details and Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012). Furthermore, it addressed the Language standards of Conventions of Standard English, for the conventional
spelling instruction, and Vocabulary Acquisition and Use (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012). This study was therefore designed based on both current research and current practice in education.

**Strengths and Limitations of Study**

There were many strengths and weaknesses associated with this study. One of the major strengths was the way it was designed to follow the same format for English literacy that students were already accustomed to using for Spanish literacy. Spending a day specifically for phonics instruction, another day for vocabulary development, two days reading and using a graphic organizer to understand the main selection each week and assessments at the end of the week were all strategies the students in this study had experienced during Spanish reading. This made the transition seamless between Spanish and English. While the concepts were in a new language, the general routine was familiar. This was helpful because students did not need to adjust to different activities, just to a different language of instruction.

Another strength of this study was that I was able to work with a small group of only 10 students during English literacy instruction. Students were able to read in pairs, discuss at their tables of three or four and participate often in class discussions. I was also able to answer questions as they came up, clarifying vocabulary words or helping students make connections between Spanish and English.

A third strength of this study was that I was able to design it around the *Journeys* (Baumann et al., 2011) curriculum, which was already in place as the adopted English reading curriculum for the district. The curriculum provided everything I needed to integrate phonics instruction in a balanced literacy approach. The students had access to decodable readers, with the weekly phonics focus emphasized in four different stories each week. They also had guided
readers and a main selection that included the weekly vocabulary words and other words that followed the focal phonics spelling patterns. Spelling words were provided each week. Thus, phonics instruction could be combined with spelling, vocabulary and comprehension instruction without the need for supplementary materials.

While using a prescribed curriculum was a strength of this study, it also turned out to be one of its weaknesses. Because this study began in the middle of the second semester, I began at that point in the curriculum. However, this did not allow students explicit access to some phonics elements they really needed. For example, short vowel sounds had been emphasized much earlier in the curriculum. Therefore, when I began in the middle I had to embed these understandings into other weeks, which proved to be confusing and overwhelming to students. Also, by following the curriculum, I was not always able to address specific needs that I observed in my students. For example, after only one week students continued to struggle with doubling final consonants before adding word endings. However, I continued to follow the curriculum’s pacing guide and moved on to explicit instruction around another phonetic pattern the following week. Ultimately, this did not provide enough time for these second language learners to absorb the new material. It should be noted that the instructional materials that were used during this intervention were designed for use with monolingual English first graders. These findings, however, suggest that perhaps curricular materials designed to address the phonetic knowledge of second language learners should allow for more extended attention to and work with specific phonetic patterns before new patterns are introduced.

Another weakness of this study was the time constraint. Six weeks was not long enough to observe significant change in some of the students. Also considering that instruction only lasted 50 minutes a day and that two of the six weeks were four-day weeks, I believe that the
students felt hurried in their literacy instruction. It would have been more beneficial to conduct this study for the full second semester of second grade, in order to really observe reliable results.

**Recommendations for Future Action Research**

Based on the research I conducted, I have several recommendations for future action research. First, phonological awareness should be included in studies that explore the effects of phonics instruction on ELLs. In order for explicit phonics instruction to be effective, students need to be aware of the different sounds in their second language. This study focused on decoding and spelling, but put significantly less emphasis on students’ ability to simply hear the different sounds that are part of their two languages.

Second, more research needs to be done on systematic, explicit phonics instruction for ELLs. This study revealed the need for more attention to short and long vowel sounds in English. Research that uncovers the order in which phonics elements can most effectively be taught to ELLs is needed. Perhaps in order to understand this, more research needs to be done to clarify whether bilingual students benefit more from instruction in the differences between their first and second languages, as Brice and Brice (2009) suggested, or from instruction that highlights common phonetic elements across the two languages, as Verhoeven (2007) believed. My research did not address similarities, but I hypothesize that this may have led to more positive results in decoding and spelling knowledge.

Finally, more research needs to be done regarding the connection between the decoding and spelling skills of ELLs. My research revealed very positive gains in spelling when specific phonics elements were taught explicitly. However, student gains in decoding were not as pronounced. Future action research should investigate how to improve both English spelling and decoding skills in ELLs.
Overall, more research is needed in the area of English literacy for ELLs. Much of the research that has been conducted has used monolingual participants and then applied these findings in order to make suggestions about the effectiveness of certain practices for ELLs. While the linguistic interdependence theory (Cummins, 1981, as cited in Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2006) has been well-established, there is not enough information about this topic to help teachers effectively apply this knowledge to their instruction of ELLs.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided my explanations for the group results I observed after conducting this study. I also detailed the results of three individual students whose results were representative of others in the class. I discussed the mixed results I observed in students’ decoding skills, the very positive impact that the intervention appeared to have on students’ spelling, and the mostly positive results that I observed in comprehension, especially among several children who improved their English instructional reading levels during the six-week intervention. Considering the results of the study in light of current research in the area of phonics, balanced literacy and ELLs supported the explanation of these findings while explicit connections to the Common Core State Standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012) demonstrated the importance of this research. Finally, I described the strengths and weaknesses of my study and made recommendations as to what topics future action research should address.

As a result of this study, I will continue to embed explicit phonics instruction in my teaching of English literacy. However, I will make this instruction more systematic by first helping my students to understand which sounds and letter-sound combinations are consistent and familiar to them based on their Spanish language and literacy skills. Then, I will explicitly
address more difficult, substantially different, phonics elements that occur with consistency in English. I will continue to approach English reading through the lens of balanced literacy and include explicit vocabulary instruction for my ELL students. This study allowed me to grow in my teaching and learn how to adjust my teaching style and lesson-planning to support the second language literacy of my ELL students.
References


Appendix A

Student Spanish Reading Levels- January 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Comprehension Questions Total=6 points</th>
<th>Vocabulary Questions Total = 2 points</th>
<th>Written Response Total = 2 points</th>
<th>Instructional Spanish Reading Level</th>
<th>Proficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>José</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Basic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaqueline</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Basic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuel</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esteban</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josefina</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethany</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elia</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Basic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carla</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix B

### Student LAU Levels - December 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Overall Score (Composite)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>José</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaqueline</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuel</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esteban</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josefina</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethany</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elia</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carla</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

Sample *Journeys* Assessment

Name ___________________________ Date ____________

High-Frequency Words, Classification/Categorization of Words: Family

Read each sentence. Then mark the space for the word that best completes each sentence.

1. Jim and his pal Fred were walking ________ the sidewalk.
   - after
   - all
   - along

2. They were going to the park ________.
   - about
   - again
   - away

*To the teacher: Read the directions with children.*

© Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved.
3  They got close to a big white ______.
   ○ here
   ○ house
   ○ how

4  Jim and Fred saw a ______
    and his dad in the yard.
   ○ been
   ○ both
   ○ boy

5  The boy and his ______ began to wave.
   ○ follow
   ○ father
   ○ four

6  "I am Dean," the boy said.
   "Can we play ______?"
   ○ take
   ○ thought
   ○ together

Vocabulary
© Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved.
Read each question. Then mark the space for the best answer to the question.

7. Which word names someone in a family?
   - My grandfather is flying to see us.
   - grandfather
   - flying
   - us

8. Which word names someone in a family?
   - My mom took us to see the plane land.
   - mom
   - plane
   - land

To the teacher: Read the directions with children.

Vocabulary
© Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved.
9. Which word names someone in a family?
   We left the baby at home.
   ○ left
   ○ baby
   ○ home

10. Which word names someone in a family?
    I think my father is putting her to sleep.
    ○ think
    ○ father
    ○ sleep
Cause and Effect, Selection Test

Think about the story "Whistle for Willie." Then read each question. Mark the space for the best answer to each question.

1. What takes place at the START of the story?
   - Peter whistles.
   - Willie runs to Peter.
   - A dog runs to a boy.

2. Why does Peter turn round and round?
   - He is cold.
   - He can't whistle.
   - He is looking for Willie.

3. Why does Peter hide in a carton?
   - He sees Willie.
   - He is playing a game.
   - His mom asks him to get in it.
4. What does Peter do right **AFTER** he gets out of the carton?
   - He plays with Willie.
   - He draws with chalk.
   - He turns round and round.

5. Why do Peter's cheeks get tired?
   - The wind blows them.
   - He makes too many faces.
   - He keeps trying to whistle.

6. What takes place when Peter whistles?
   - Willie runs away.
   - Willie keeps walking.
   - Willie stops and looks.

7. In the story, why does Willie run?
   - He sees a cat.
   - He sees Peter.
   - It is time to eat.
8 Why does Peter run home?
   ○ to give the hat back to his dad
   ○ to show he can run as fast as Willie
   ○ to show his mom and dad he can whistle

9 How do you know that Peter is happy that he can whistle?
   ○ He puts on his father's hat.
   ○ He whistles to the store and back home.
   ○ He sits in the box and whistles to Willie.

10 What is "Whistle for Willie" MOSTLY about?
   ○ Peter is training his pet.
   ○ Peter likes to hide in a box.
   ○ Peter is learning to whistle.
Vowel Digraph oo

Read each sentence. Mark the space for the word that best completes each sentence.

1. Jill walked by the ______ with her dog.
   - foot
   - hook
   - woods

2. They went down to the ______.
   - brook
   - foot
   - hook

3. Jill had a ______ to read.
   - book
   - hood
   - look
4 "It's a ______ day to read," she said.
   ○ good
   ○ hook
   ○ wood

5 Her dog said, "______ ."
   ○ Cook
   ○ Stood
   ○ Woof

6 Rose was learning how to
   ______ .
   ○ cook
   ○ foot
   ○ wool

7 She ______ by her mom to see what to do.
   ○ hoof
   ○ stood
   ○ wood

GO ON
8 Her mom ______ rice into the pot.
   ☐ book
   ☐ hook
   ☐ shook

9 Rose's mom ______ the pot off the stove.
   ☐ crook
   ☐ took
   ☐ wool

10 "Do not ______ in the pot," she told Rose.
   ☐ foot
   ☐ look
   ☐ wood
Appendix D

Sample Spelling Word List

(Phonics focus: word endings –er, –est)

1. hard
2. harder
3. hardest
4. fast
5. faster
6. fastest
7. big
8. bigger
9. biggest
10. happy
11. happier
12. happiest
### Appendix E

#### Students’ Pre-test and Post-test Performance on Dr. Seuss Nonword Decoding Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>short a</th>
<th>short i</th>
<th>short o</th>
<th>short e</th>
<th>short u</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>José</td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vowel Sounds</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaqueline</td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vowel Sounds</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuel</td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vowel Sounds</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esteban</td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vowel Sounds</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josefinia</td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vowel Sounds</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin</td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vowel Sounds</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethany</td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vowel Sounds</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elia</td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vowel Sounds</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vowel Sounds</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carla</td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vowel Sounds</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix F

**QRI-V Pre- and Post-Assessment Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Pre-Assessment</th>
<th>Post-Assessment</th>
<th>Instructional Level</th>
<th>Word Reading Accuracy</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Overall Passage Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>José</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>Level 2 Instructional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaqueline</td>
<td>PP1</td>
<td>PP1</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>PP1 Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuel</td>
<td>PP3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>PP3 Instructional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esteban</td>
<td>PP1</td>
<td>Primer</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>Primer Instructional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josefina</td>
<td>PP3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>PP3 Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>Level 1 Instructional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethany</td>
<td>PP3</td>
<td>PP3</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>PP3 Instructional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elia</td>
<td>PP1</td>
<td>PP1</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>PP1 Instructional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>Level 1 Instructional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carla</td>
<td>PP3</td>
<td>PP1</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>PP1 Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PP1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td></td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>PP1 Instructional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix G

Results from Weekly Spelling Pre- and Post-Assessments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ar, er, ir, ur</th>
<th>oo, ou</th>
<th>ow, ou, oi, oy, au, aw</th>
<th>-ed, -ing endings</th>
<th>-er, -est endings</th>
<th>y, ie, igh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre Week 1</td>
<td>Post Week 1</td>
<td>Pre Week 2</td>
<td>Post Week 2</td>
<td>Pre Week 3</td>
<td>Post Week 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>José</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaqueline</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuel</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esteban</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josefina</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethany</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elia</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carla</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix H

Results from *Journeys* Weekly Assessments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phonics</th>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Week 2</th>
<th>Week 3</th>
<th>Week 4</th>
<th>Week 5</th>
<th>Week 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>José</td>
<td>Phonics</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaqueline</td>
<td>Phonics</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuel</td>
<td>Phonics</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esteban</td>
<td>Phonics</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josefina</td>
<td>Phonics</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin</td>
<td>Phonics</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethany</td>
<td>Phonics</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elia</td>
<td>Phonics</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>Phonics</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>Absent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Absent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Absent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carla</td>
<td>Phonics</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>Absent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Absent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>Absent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>