

Theory of Early Literacy Instruction for
Hispanic English Learners: A Synthesis of Research

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THEORY OF EARLY LITERACY INSTRUCTION FOR HISPANIC ELS

In Teton County schools, ELs make up over 35% of the population, K-12 with a larger percentage in the lower grades. Our population is almost entirely Hispanic and qualifies for free and reduced lunch, not so different from national averages which measures approximately 72% of ELs to be Hispanic (Planty et al., 2008), and 75% qualifying for free and reduced lunch (Zehler et al., 2003). These students are experiencing a significant achievement gap, beginning in the early grades. For example, currently, 60 first grade ELs at Jackson Elementary are reading below benchmark on the Winter DIBELS, Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) measure (Good et al. 2002).

ORF scores in first grade are highly correlated with reading skills and reading comprehension for all children (National Reading Panel [NRP], 2000; Juel, 1988). EL research supports ORF as a strong indicator for ELs reading success (Gersten et al., 2007). Most importantly, oral reading fluency has also been found to be a reliable measure distinguishing Latino students with reading difficulties from other ELs (Al Otaiba et al., 2009). Since, ORF in first grade is a strong predictor of later reading performance, Teton County is in need of addressing the literacy needs of Hispanic EL striving readers in the primary grades, pre-k-second, in order to most effectively close the achievement gap. I define Hispanic EL striving readers as ELs who enter first grade with poor phonemic awareness, and below benchmark alphabetic decoding ability in any language. This synthesis of research identifies current theories for early literacy instruction for these learners on the most recent research with the goal to establish a theory of practice for early literacy interventions for Hispanic ELs who are striving to read.

When considering developing a theory for instruction for these learners, it is important to

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consider recent research that is specific to the population. What is necessarily best practice for all learners in general, may not be true for low income, Hispanic EL. Districts can be influenced by comprehensive reports that analyze recent research for best practices. For example, the publication of the National Early Literacy Panel (NELP) report *Developing Early Literacy* (2009) distilled and analyzed the effectiveness of 500 early literacy research studies completed through 2003. Three of the top set of predictors, for improved reading outcomes in later grades, is linked to the alphabetic code - letter knowledge, ability to attend to sounds, and early writing - and the remainder are processing abilities like the rapidity one can access or recall verbal information such as color names, letters and digits (RAN) (NELP, 2009).

This finding has triggered a strong reaction among prominent early literacy oral language researchers who fear that these findings will influence inappropriate instruction, like the practice of RAN and overemphasis on teaching letter sounds with less focus on content and vocabulary (Dickenson et al., 2010; Paciga et al., 2011). They hypothesize that NELP's report considered code based predictors as more effective than oral language and vocabulary due the difficulty to assess vocabulary and oral language and the ease of assessing letter name and sound (Dickenson et al., 2010).

In addition to the NELP report polarizing researchers in early literacy into two theoretical camps, those that support a more code-based instruction and those that favor content and oral language or vocabulary emphasis, it did not specifically address the needs of ELs as NELP didn't desegregate data based on low income, Hispanic ELs. Both code-based instruction and oral language development, grounded in explicit vocabulary instruction are research-based, appropriate instructional practices that can have significant impacts on literacy development for ELs, in the short and long term. Although not plentiful, there are current research studies that

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have begun to prioritize literacy components and practices that are necessary to improve literacy outcomes for Hispanic ELS.

The IES Practice Guide for Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades provide administrators a better theoretical framework in which to form curriculum decisions. However, even here, research can easily be generalized to include our students when in fact the research was completed mostly in Canada with ELS of varying socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, which would produce different effects. For example, the report includes results from a variety of studies which demonstrate that ELS can perform at comparable levels of proficiency to native English speakers on measures assessing phonological awareness, word reading, and reading connected text fluently (Gersten et. al., 2007). These studies, which have a variety of ethnic groups and social classes represented (Lesaux, 2003), do not provide adequate models to provide services to low-income Hispanic ELS as these striving readers face the greatest obstacles in learning to read when comparing outcomes based on EL ethnic group and class (Yesil-Dagli, 2011).

Current research featuring Hispanic, low-income ELS found that their needs are greater than other ELS. Yesil- Dagli's (2011) found low SES Hispanic ELS read fewer words had a slower growth rate than other demographics studied. This finding is supported by Galindo (2012), who used the database created by the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study Cohort (ECLS-K) to analyze 21,000 kindergarteners who were followed from fall 1998 to spring 2004, to describe patterns of cognitive development in reading and math. She found larger gaps in achievement among three groups of students: (a) Those who were not proficient in oral English at the fall of kindergarten, (b) Hispanic students, and (c) Students in the lowest SES quintiles (Galindo, 2010). Teton County EL students, many who are members of all three groups, are

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facing significant academic challenges that holds the district responsible to synthesize current research to find best practices strategies to improve instruction for this specific population.

While an extensive amount of research has been conducted on the development of language and literacy skills for non-EL students, and ELs in general, researchers have only recently begun to study the English-reading development of EL Hispanic students (Gerber et al., 2004). Most of the research conducted has focused on the language of instruction (English vs. native language) and the timing of transition from the native language to English (early vs. late: August & Hakuta, 1997; Garcia, 2000; Padilla, Fairchild, & Valadez, 1990; Ramirez, Yuen, & Ramey, 1991). Although resolution to these debates is critical to designing effective programs for ELs, their resolution will do little to inform us about how to promote reading success among ELs who are striving to learn to read, regardless of the language of instruction.

Another area of EL research focus is cross-linguistic transfer, that is, whether phonological, alphabetical and/or oral language skills of children in their first language predict their English reading acquisition (e.g., Dickenson et al., 2004; Ciscero & Royer, 1995; Durgunoglu, 2002; Durgunoglu et al., 1993). These studies confirmed metalinguistic knowledge (phonemes, syllables, grammar, comprehension strategies will transfer if language learners know literacy tasks in their native language. Although phonological awareness transfers (Dickenson et al., 2004) vocabulary and other literacy skills do not transfer to a second language due to low language proficiency in the second language (Durgunoglu, 2002), which is the reality of our striving readers who may have little transfer from Spanish to English because students' proficiency in English is low.

Finally, the other area of research for Hispanic EL literacy studied specific language and literacy interventions (e.g., De la Colina, et al., 2001; Gerber et al., 2004; Vaughn,

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Mathes, Linan-Thompson, & Francis, 2005). These interventions were narrow in scope, focusing on storybook reading, or a comprehension strategy and short in length. In fact when Linan-Thompson, Pollard-Durodola, Mathes, & Cárdenas-Hagan (2006) conducted a synthesis of reading interventions provided to native Spanish-speaking ELLs who were struggling readers in kindergarten through third grade they only found 8 intervention studies, including those above, to have an appropriate comparison condition.

More recently, Cheung & Slavin (2012) found in their analysis of 13 instructional studies, K-6, which improved reading for Spanish-dominant ELs that there was no difference in outcomes by the end of elementary school for children who were either taught in Spanish and transitioned to English or taught only in English. What was key to the success was the quality of instruction using curriculum like *Success For All*, *ELLA*, *PALS*, *Vocabulary Connections*, *Direct Instruction*, and *Proactive Reading*. These researchers found comprehensive interventionist professional development, cooperative learning opportunities, support in language development to be key when delivering these interventions. In other words, meeting the needs of these learners requires a multi-faceted approach that Teton County can't assume is met uniquely through the dual immersion program. When low SES, Hispanic ELs strive to learn to read, their needs must be met through tier-2, small group interventions, which target literacy and language.

When looking for instructional protocols the researchers Sharon Vaughn, Patricia Mathes and Sylvia Linan-Thompson with other colleagues have contributed the most to understanding how to increase reading potential for low SES, Hispanic first graders. Besides publishing a concise, theory and practice book, *Research-based Methods of Reading Instruction for English Language Learners, Grades K-4* (Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2007) which is an excellent resource for Teton County teachers to choose research-based instructional practices, they

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conducted a series of four studies (two English, two Spanish) of Texas Hispanic first graders to directly examine reading intervention with ELs who are native Spanish speakers and striving readers.

Vaughn, Mathes, Linan-Thompson, and Francis (2005) evaluated a supplemental program, *Proactive English*, in which trained bilingual teachers, who were given extensive professional development, provided systematic and explicit instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics, oral language development and word to text reading in English in small groups for 50 minutes daily, five days a week in addition to their core reading lessons. Vaughn, Mathes, et al. (2006) carried out a small-scale randomized study, with 56 of the 216 students in four low SES schools from two districts in Texas. Students needed to have a score below the 25th percentile on the Woodcock Letter-Word Identification pretests in both English and Spanish at the beginning of first grade to be eligible.

Students in the control classrooms also received one or more types of supplemental reading intervention in addition to their core reading instruction. The treatment and control students were well matched on both English and Spanish pretest measures. The mean effect size for all 14 English measures was 0.68, and the Spanish measures were also in favor of the treatment group.

Vaughn, Cirino, et al. (2006) replicated a pair of similar randomized experiments with two separate samples of at-risk first-grade ELLs to investigate the effectiveness of both the English and Spanish interventions as reported in the two previous studies (Vaughn, Linan-Thompson, et al., 2006; Vaughn, Mathes, et al., 2006). At the end of the study, treatment students outperformed their counterparts in the control condition on measures of phonological

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awareness, word attack, word reading, and spelling, with mean effect size across all 16 English measures was .27.

Outcomes from this research make clear that native Spanish speaking students who are striving readers benefited from participation in Tier 2 supplemental instruction. In addition, Saunders et al. (2006) found that a separate block (Saunders et al., 2006) of time is effective for kindergarten ELs to develop language. The instructional implications are many. These studies demonstrate that the same phonological and phonemic code-base instruction that is successful for non-ELS is effective for these striving EL readers with the addition of first language support, use of realia, and vocabulary instruction. The intervention included intensive training of bilingual paraprofessionals who employed ESL strategies like explicit instruction and vocabulary development. Their interventions along with recommendations by the *IES Practice Guide* (Gersten et al., 2007) and can guide district leaders in understanding that in order to close the reading achievement gap, additional time, in a small group intervention is recommended, that adds vocabulary and academic language to traditional phonics programs.

Vaughn and her team of researchers were the first to supplement a code-based phonemic intervention with ESL supports that used student's background knowledge to extend vocabulary. Ironically, they didn't measure pretest and posttest vocabulary growth, or its impact on phonological awareness. Importantly, a number of recent researchers have found that vocabulary knowledge and English ability has a significant effect on kindergarten and first grade ELs phonological awareness and word reading in English (Galiando, 2010; Scarpino et al., 2011; Swanson et al., 2008; Vadsay & Sanders, 2011; Yesil-Dagli, 2011).

Yesil-Dagli (2011) investigated the predictive role of English letter naming fluency, initial sound fluency, and vocabulary skills at the time of kindergarten entry for 2,400 first grade

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Florida students who use Reading First on their English oral reading fluency. He also examined the variability in language and literacy skills of these students by their demographic characteristics. Hierarchical Linear Modeling was used to analyze the curvilinear growth of ELS first grade oral reading fluency. The results of this study revealed that kindergarten English letter naming fluency was the best predictor and *vocabulary skills* were the second best predictor of oral reading fluency in the first grade, followed by initial sound fluency.

Noteworthy, is that Yesil-Dagli's results differ from the NELP Report (2009) which found letter knowledge, ability to attend to sounds, and early writing as the first three predictors of first grade reading success. Yesil-Dagli's findings support the oral language theorists who found fault with these findings (Dickenson et al., 2011; Teale, 2010 and Neuman, 2010). ELS reading success in English hinges on vocabulary knowledge in English, which has drastic program and curriculum implications for the primary grades.

Vadsay & Sanders (2011) found that pretest and posttest vocabulary positively predicted word reading and spelling in their phonemic intervention with 200 first grader ELS (Vadsay & Sanders, 2011). Their findings inspired them to more research and ultimately the publication of the resource *Early Vocabulary Connections*, a root-word vocabulary, decoding and fluency intervention, whose efficacy was determined in a study involving kindergarten ELS. (Nelson et al., 2011) with a follow-up study six months later which indicated a distal effect on words learned, meaning the target words taught in the intervention may offer kindergarten and first grader ELS a solid foundation in root words in which to increase vocabulary size (Vadsay et al., 2013).

Fortuitously, there have been a growing number of research studies, which have determined effective vocabulary instructional methods and their effectiveness for ELS in the

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primary grades (Beck & Mckeown, 2007; Biemiller & Boote, 2006; Blachowicz& Obrochta, 2005; Hickman et al., 2004; Marulis & Neuman, 2010, Pollard-Durodola et al., 2011; Silverman, 2007). Storybook reading with explicit instruction and practice of key tier two vocabulary has emerged as the most effective strategy. Silverman (2007) expanded this instruction to include multi-media. Blachowicz & Oborchta (2005) take children on virtual fields trips, building schema. Pollard-Durodola (2011) and Neuman (2013) provide vocabulary methods that build content knowledge networks in support of Common Core standards.

Coyne (2010) and his team of researchers conducted a kindergarten, Tier-2 small-group vocabulary intervention study that provided additional review and practice of the classroom resource, *Elements of Reading: Vocabulary*, a widely available evidence-based vocabulary program, based on the work of Isabel Beck and Margaret McKeown (2007). The intervention for 15–20 minutes per day, 4 days per week resulted in at-risk students experiencing statistically significantly greater vocabulary learning than would have been predicted if they had received only Tier 1 classroom support. Most importantly, the at-risk students who received Tier 2 intervention learned target vocabulary equally as well, on average, as their not-at-risk peers (Coyne et al., 2010).

Fortuitously, Teton County has implemented a vocabulary initiative that will show significant effects among the ELs. Vocabulary teaching is fun and interactive. Each unit of instruction has roughly 30 tier 2 words that teachers will teach and assess. First grade teachers I am working with to implement a vocabulary routine have made comments like, “This vocabulary instruction levels the playing field.” These teachers continue to make improvements in vocabulary instruction routines that will be shared in Teaching Channel videos.

Currently, Tier-two at Jackson Elementary targets phonological awareness, phonics and

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fluency. Additional support services in vocabulary and academic and oral language need to be implemented for learners who are not growing enough with tier-one instruction alone. ELD services need to measure progress in these areas to ensure students who may need a more targeted intervention receive it. For example, there are three students in my first grade EL pullout class or 11 students who meet for 30 minutes a day, that would benefit from a small group academic and oral language intervention.

Tier-two intervention time needs to expand to include more oral and academic language and vocabulary interventions, which are combined with phonics instruction (Vaughn et al. 2006). When speaking to paraprofessionals about how they teach academic language, there was a confusion about the definition of the term. Academic language refers to syntax and grammar but was confused with the teaching of academic terms like plot and character. Professional development is required to demonstrate how these specific literacy components are added to currently used interventions like PALS, LLI, and Phonics for Reading.

Current research reviewed in this synthesis provides administrators and teachers with a beginning framework to provide instruction for our Teton County ELs. The theory of instruction requires not only district support to change instructional practices and revamp the multi-tiered systems of support, but also requires early childhood efforts that go beyond what is now offered by Teton Literacy and Head Start. This summer I am working with Teton Literacy to provide instruction for the Practice Kindergarten Summer Program.

Although Head Start is excellent at providing parent education and commitment to learning, they could be more effective in preparing our specific low-income, Hispanic ELs for school success, at least partially by explicitly focusing on English language skills. Exposing children to more extensive vocabulary, more grammatically and syntactically complex

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conversation in English and Spanish is necessary to prepare them to be successful in school. If our ultimate goal is for these children to read in English in kindergarten, their English *literacy* education must begin before.

Finally, providing all that these learners need requires additional time beyond the school day. In order to broaden parent education and provide the necessary language and literacy support many of these striving ELs require, it is essential to look at weekends, summers, before and after school for programming opportunities.

I am confident that with education, creative programming and a team of dedicated professionals, Teton County could apply the research-based practices in the theory of instruction shared above to make a significant closure in the achievement gap.

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The authors led a control and intervention low-income groups of children in both kindergarten and first grade to study the effects of their tier-two, "rich vocabulary" instruction. The control groups received instruction of the words after read-a-louds, whereas the experimental groups received "rich instruction" combined with *Text Talk* where words were charted and used out of context from the read-a-louds. The control groups received six minutes of instruction with five encounters per word, compared to 27 minutes with 20 encounters per word in the intervention groups. Findings showed that significantly more vocabulary was learned in the instructed group compared to the group that received no instruction. Since, verbal and picture assessments yielded similar findings, this study is useful to these researchers for creating a vocabulary intervention using clickers as an assessment that includes elements of Beck & Mckeown's "rich instruction".

Biemiller, A, & Boote, C. (2006). An Effective Method for Building Meaning Vocabulary in Primary Grades. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 98, 44-62.*

The research studied the teaching vocabulary through read alouds with kindergarten to grade three ELs. The first study provided information about the relationship of pretesting, number of times a story was read (two or four) and explanation of words as independent variables. This was compared with readings with explanations to see if these two independent variables, pretesting and number of times read had any effect on word learning. The second study differed from the first to include more learning of words during the classroom time. Also transfer of word meaning

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knowledge from the pretest set of words found in the study books was an independent value to test results on using the words in a new context sentence. Also retention of words over time was examined in study two. In grades one and two the percentage of meanings learned was constant when books were read 2x or 4x. However more words can be taught with repeated readings as new words are introduced with each new read.

The study did reveal that 25% of words were known at pretest and 42% known at posttest making the results very significant for vocabulary gains. Overall there was no significant difference in gains in the amount of times a book was read, two or four, except for kinder where they gained six percent more words when the book was read more. Grade one increased by seven percent but grade two actually was 5% lower when read four times instead of two. Gains were larger when words were instructed.

Key findings are that Biemiller was able to suggest adding 400 word meanings per year is a reasonable goal. With 22% learned, 1,800 word meanings would have to be taught for 400 to be learned. This would mean 25 words per week. This study clearly spoke to the effectiveness of explicitly teaching vocabulary during reading, but left large questions about methodology, more specifically how the words are practiced and reinforced apart from the storybook reading and definitions. Implications for teaching include giving teachers guidance on how many words to teach, more support for storybook reading and vocabulary strategy of teaching vocabulary and that a storybook needn't be read multiple times in higher grades.

Blachowicz, C. L.Z, & Obrochta, C. (2005). Vocabulary visits: Virtual field trips for content vocabulary development. *The Reading Teacher*,59. 262-268.

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The authors used read- a-louds or shared reading of five science and social studies books to develop vocabulary about a specific content topic in 1st grade. The read-a-louds and the direct instruction of vocabulary, and active learning with visuals and other activities that incorporate the senses, re-enact a field trip experience. A visual poster of words and images was made for students and they free write as many words as they know about the topic (pre-test). After the intervention, their lists increased dramatically from first write ($t=-8.43$, significance level=.0001). We researchers found this study to inform our vocabulary instruction practices because of the theme based nature of the intervention but would use technology, a flip chart for the Promethean board to create the chart. Moreover, in addition to images and the total physical response methods of reinforcing words, we would use realia and additional word games with the word images.

Cheung, A. C. K., & Slavin, R. E.. (2012). Effective Reading Programs for Spanish-Dominant English Language Learners (ELLs) in the Elementary Grades: A Synthesis of Research. *Review of Educational Research*, 82(4), 351–395.

This research synthesized research on outcomes of all types of programs likely to improve English reading outcomes for Spanish-dominant English language learners in elementary school. This modern evaluation did not find any differences in outcomes by the end of elementary school for children who were either taught in Spanish and transitioned to English or taught only in English. For example, *Success For All*, a whole-school reform approach with specific adaptations for English language development, was found to have positive effects with a weighted mean effect size of .35 across three studies. Two forms of cooperative learning had positive effects on ELLs; one, BCIRC, had an effect size of .54, and the other, PALS, had an effect size of .36 for ELLs. Positive effects were also reported for Direct Instruction (ES = .28)

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and ELLA (ES = .15). SFA, cooperative learning, DI, and ELLA are all cost-effective whole-class or whole-school interventions that exist at some scale in schools serving many ELLs. Another category of promising and scalable interventions includes small group (ES = .48) and one-to-one tutoring (ES = .19) for English language learners who are struggling in reading. Programs of this kind focusing on phonics and language development have shown promise, especially the structured small group programs, *Enhanced Proactive Reading*, evaluated by Vaughn, Cirino, et al. (2006); Vaughn, Linan-Thompson, et al., (2006). In the past, the focus of teaching this population focused on language of instruction, with reviewers debating the merits of bilingual versus English-only approaches. The findings support the conclusion that quality of instruction is more important than language of instruction. The ramifications for Teton County are to consider expanding a number of these interventions, one being *Early Vocabulary Connections* (reviewed below) and PALS, which is used currently in Extend Day instruction. Moreover, more research about *Success For All* and *Enhanced Proactive Reading* is needed to consider it as a possible intervention.

Coyne, M. D., Capozzoli, A., Ware, S., & Loftus, S. (2010) Beyond RTI for Decoding:

Supporting Early Vocabulary Development within a Multitier Approach to Instruction and Intervention. *Perspectives on Language and Literacy*, 18-21.

Researchers worked with 20 kindergarten classroom teachers across seven schools that served large numbers of students at risk for learning difficulties. Tier 1 vocabulary instruction used *Elements of Reading: Vocabulary*, a widely available evidence-based vocabulary program, based on the work of Isabel Beck and Margaret McKeown (2007). Three to six students per class needed extra support in learning the words. These students received Tier 2 small-group

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vocabulary intervention in addition to the classroom instruction for 15–20 minutes per day, 4 days per week. The supplemental Tier 2 intervention, provided by paraprofessionals, gave more explicit instruction with many opportunities for individual responses followed by immediate corrective feedback. Data was analyzed using a regression-discontinuity approach, which allowed estimation of the benefit of the Tier 2 intervention for those students who were identified as at risk for not responding to the Tier 1 instruction by itself. Overall, at-risk students experienced statistically significantly greater vocabulary learning than would have been predicted if they had received only Tier 1 classroom support. Most importantly, the at-risk students who received Tier 2 intervention learned target vocabulary equally as well, on average, as their not-at-risk peers. This study supports vocabulary instruction in tier-2 settings.

De la Colina, M. G., Parker, R., Hasbrouck, J., & Lara-Alecio, R. (2001). Intensive intervention in reading fluency for at-risk beginning Spanish readers. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 25(4), 503–538.

This research translated the fluency intervention Read Naturally from English into Spanish (before the resource had Spanish? Because I have used it as an intervention in Spanish) and used it in a short term intervention lasting 12 weeks with 74 Texan Hispanic EL first and second grade students. The resource contains the three research based elements of fluency, repeated reading, teacher modeling, and progress monitoring. The students were divided into 12 groups by grade according to level of engagement (average number of timed reading attempts per week) averaged 4.7 across all students, and ranged by student from 1.5 to 7.8 per week, a very large, five-fold difference. Students who read more were grouped together. The level of engagement depended in part on teacher-controlled variables: Active practice opportunity; efficient organization of

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materials; and (as I have used this resource- I'm guessing), building background and schema around text topics). There were six findings in the study: 1. Most students improved measurable in oral reading and comprehension, 2. Improvements made by the higher engagement groups were large enough to make a difference in classroom performance, 3. Highly engaged students in both grades one and two showed more progress over time, 4.

Dickinson, D. K., McCabe, A., Clark-Chiarelli, N., & Wolf, A. (2004). Cross-language transfer of phonological awareness in low-income Spanish and English bilingual preschool children. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 25(3), 323-347.

This study investigated the phonological awareness of low-income Spanish-English bilingual children, because phonological awareness has been found to be an important prerequisite for literacy acquisition and because such children have been identified as at risk for successful literacy acquisition. The study included 123 Spanish-English bilingual preschool children attending Head Start programs. Children's receptive vocabulary was assessed using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-3rd Edition and the Test de Vocabulario en Imágenes Peabody and phonological awareness was tested using English and Spanish versions of the Early Phonological Awareness Profile, which includes deletion detection and rhyming tasks. Emergent literacy was assessed in the child's stronger language using the Emergent Literacy Profile, which includes tests of environmental print knowledge, printed word awareness, alphabet knowledge, and early writing. One finding that is concurrent with other research reviewed for this paper (Ciscero & Royer, 1995; Durgunoglu, 2002 ; Durgunoglu et al., 1993; Linklater et al., 2009; Quiroga et al., 2002) is the transfer of phonological awareness from Spanish to English and vice versa. Implications for instruction are that early phonological practice in Spanish at home and in pre-k

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will transfer to kindergarten English literacy. Another finding is that preschoolers' English vocabulary and not Spanish vocabulary predicted their concurrent English phonological awareness abilities. The results do not support the notion that vocabulary development in either language supports metalinguistic awareness that transfers to the other language. Instructional implications are to teach English vocabulary in pre-K when the goal is for students to read in English in kindergarten.

Linan-Thompson, S., Cirino, P. T., & Vaughn, S. (2007). Determining English language learners' response to intervention: Questions and some answers. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 30(3), 185-195.

In this follow-up study of Texan Spanish/English bilinguals, the researchers used an extant database using more stringent criteria to observe whether 142 first grade students in an intervention and control group whose intervention group significantly outperformed the control group, would after grade 1, meet the more stringent benchmarks. The benchmarks for this study was a score of 95 on the Word Attack and Passage Comprehension subtests of the Woodcock Language Proficiency Battery and 40 Counted Words Per Minute (CWPM) on the DIBELS subtest, Oral Reading Fluency (ORF), and two discrepancy slope criteria with growth on these measures at or above the mean of not-at-risk peers. Of the 81 bilingual students tested, 80% didn't meet any of the criteria. But the discrepancy slope criteria in grade 1 were most predictive of set benchmark criteria in grade 2.

This study weighs in to why there could be an over representation of ELs in RTI. Even Bilingual students who respond favorably to an intensive intervention which taught phonological awareness, word reading fluency, comprehension and spelling for 50 minutes, 5 days a week for

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7 months outside classroom instruction time, need more time to catch up to the benchmarks of their peers. This study's value is it indicates that more research is needed to determine if ELS profit enough with classroom instruction alone, or whether they need special education services. It also raises the questions of variability of student's oral language and exposures to print outside school.

Marulis, L. M., & Neuman, S. B. (2010). The effects of vocabulary intervention on young children's word learning a meta-analysis. *Review of educational research*, 80(3), 300-335.

This meta-analysis by leading literacy experts reviewed 67 studies of vocabulary interventions (including 28 shared reading programs) and their effects on pre-K and kindergarten children's oral language development. Results indicated an overall effect size of .88, demonstrating, on average, a gain of nearly one standard deviation on vocabulary measures. Greater effects were found for trained adults in providing the treatment, with the investigator having the best results, and the lowest results were from the child-care providers. Pedagogical strategies that included explicit and implicit instruction, and author-created measures had better results than standardized measures. However, middle- and upper-income at-risk children were significantly more likely to benefit from vocabulary intervention than those students also at risk and poor. These results indicate that although they might improve oral language skills, vocabulary interventions are not sufficiently powerful to close the gap - even in the preschool and kindergarten years.

Also noteworthy is shared book reading is more effective in supporting children's word learning when combined with explicit instruction (e.g., deliberate teaching of word meanings). This builds on the research findings of Biemiller & Boote (2006), and Beck & McKeown (2007).

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Nelson, J. R., Vadasy, P. & Sanders, E. (2011). Efficacy of a Tier 2 Supplement Root Word Vocabulary and Decoding Intervention With Kindergarten Spanish Speaking English Learners. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 43, 184-211

The study tested a supplemental intervention designed to develop both root vocabulary and reinforce decoding skills with Spanish speaking kinder ELs, building on the work of Biemiller and Boote (2006) showing that explicit instruction in decoding and comprehending roots words assists ELs in their comprehension. The researchers created the intervention program called, *Early Vocabulary Connections*, but the study was conducted under an approved conflict of interest plan. Participating students came from 6 Mid-Western schools. Within classrooms students were assigned Early Vocabulary Connections and a control condition, which taught the same words using, interactive book reading. Treatment and control interventions were different by the treatment having students reading a decodable passage (as opposed to the teacher reading a story book with the target words as in the control groups), testing their knowledge of daily target word in a cloze sentence exercise, comparative/ contrast attributes of pictures depicting examples and non examples of target word meanings and the spelling and word blending. Both interventions presented the same words and taught the words using pictures, synonyms, child friendly definitions, dialogic method, and independent oral use of the words in child-generated sentences. The fact that the results show a significant effect for reading the learned vocabulary, 1.78 points higher on word reading ($d=.69$), this intervention would be favorable over the dialogic approach when the goal is improving reading, not only learning vocabulary. Many phonics programs that are used currently at JES, do not explicitly teach vocabulary. This intervention provides vocabulary instruction and oral practice with phonemic and fluency

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practice. It is a possible intervention to be used, for little cost, in Teton County schools in a tier one or tier two setting.

Scarpino, S. E., Lawrence, F. R., Davison, M. D. and Hammer, C. S. (2011), Predicting bilingual Spanish–English children's phonological awareness abilities from their preschool English and Spanish oral language. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 34: 77–93.

The purpose of this investigation was to build upon the current knowledge of the relationship between receptive vocabulary and overall receptive language during the preschool years and phonological awareness in kindergarten. Results of this study indicated that both English and Spanish vocabulary levels at the end of Head Start explained a significant proportion of variance in English phonological awareness abilities at the end of kindergarten. However, after controlling for Spanish vocabulary levels at the end of Head Start, only English vocabulary levels at the end of Head Start predicted a significant amount of variance in English phonological awareness at the end of kindergarten. Conversely, end of Head Start levels of overall receptive language abilities in Spanish and English did not predict English phonological awareness abilities at the end of kindergarten. These results are similar to those of Dickinson et al. (2004) who also found that preschoolers' English vocabulary and not Spanish vocabulary predicted their concurrent English phonological awareness abilities. The results do not support the notion that vocabulary development in either language supports metalinguistic awareness that transfers to the other language. This finding further supports the *lexical restructuring theory* in that vocabulary abilities specifically, and not language abilities in general, support phonological awareness.

Silverman, R. (2007). A comparison of three methods of vocabulary instruction during read-alouds in kindergarten. *The Elementary School Journal*, 108(2), 97–113.

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Silverman studied kindergarten children by comparing three methods of vocabulary instruction, building on the work of Beck and McKeown (2007) above. The first independent variable was contextual instruction, in which teachers defined words and connected words to children's background knowledge. The second independent variable was analytical instruction, in which teachers compared and contrasted words, thought of antonyms and synonyms of words and used the words out of context. Intervention number three used anchored instruction, in which teachers implemented both contextual and analytical instruction *plus* attention to the spoken and written forms of words. Teachers spent the same amount of instructional time in each of the three methods. Silverman found that children whose teachers used the third intervention learned more target words. This study was informative for teachers to incorporate Silverman's contextual, analytical and anchored instruction in their vocabulary teaching practice.

Vadasy, P. F., & Sanders, E. A. (2011). Efficacy of supplemental phonics-based instruction for low-skilled first graders: How language minority status and pretest characteristics moderate treatment response. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 15*(6), 471-497.

Researchers who created the *Early Vocabulary Connections* resource, reviewed above, examined the efficacy of 20 weeks of individual supplemental phonics-based instruction for ELs and non-EL first graders. Students were designated EL if the primary home language was not English (otherwise non-EL). Those performing in the bottom half of their classroom EL/non-EL group in letter knowledge and phonological awareness were randomly assigned to treatment, ($n=93$) and control ($n= 94$) groups. Treatment included letter sound knowledge, decoding, and oral reading practice using the *Bob Books*. Results showed that treatment students outperformed controls on 5 of the 6 posttests. Treatment students averaged 9.42 more letters correct per minute than controls, 5.12 more standard score points on word reading, 15.94 more

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raw points on developmental spelling, 12.52 more words correct per minute on passage reading fluency, and 2.80 more standard score points on comprehension. EL students performed lower than non-ELs at the end of first grade, for phonological awareness and fluency but not letter sound knowledge and decoding. Most importantly, the researchers examined whether ELs with higher levels of vocabulary benefit differently. They found that pretest vocabulary positively predicted word reading and spelling, essentially the phonics intervention tested. ELs with higher vocabulary knowledge were able to perform significantly better in phonological awareness and word spelling. Instructional implications underscore the importance of ELs to learn English vocabulary as early as pre-K, when their goal is to read in English in kindergarten. Possible interventions would target oral language in addition to phonemic awareness or combined as in the case of Vaughn et al.'s four interventions (reviewed below). When phonemic instruction is taught well in tier one, oral language interventions that build vocabulary could be targeted in supplemental small group instruction.

Vaughn, S., & Linan-Thompson, S. (2007). *Research-Based Methods of Reading Instruction for English Language Learners, Grades K-4*. Alexandria, VA, USA: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development (ASCD).

The two researchers have conducted a multitude of empirical studies on teaching young English learners to read. Their studies have led to them publishing this practical, best practices filled book that will assist the teaching of reading to elementary grade English Learners (ELs). Vaughn and Linan-Thompson wrote a general book, *Research-Based Methods of Reading Instruction: Grades K-3* (2004), which contains a deeper analysis of reading research. This book has less

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research and has new lessons not found in the previous book. Vaughn and Linan-Thompson describe three broad instructional practices, explicit teaching, providing practice, and adjusting the language of instruction in chapter one and then give examples of these components in Chapters 2-6. Chapters 2– 6 provide background information and short examples of the five major components of teaching reading to English language learners. Most important to teachers, each chapter has effective classroom lessons that incorporate the material in the chapter and focus clearly on the reading components under discussion.

Yesil-Dagli, U. (2011). Predicting ELL students' beginning first grade English oral reading fluency from initial kindergarten vocabulary, letter naming, and phonological awareness skills. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 26(1), 15-29.

This study investigated how English language and literacy skills of racially diverse, low socioeconomic ELL kindergarteners relate to first grade reading performance. The participants were 2481 ELs who attended Florida Reading First Schools. Half of the participants were male, 82% were Hispanic, and 88% were eligible for free and reduced lunch. The poverty rate was about 22% higher for Hispanics and 17 % higher for African-Americans than it was for Whites and Asians. Two measures were used in kindergarten. The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT-III) was used to measure a student's ability to understand spoken language in relation to pictures, or vocabulary and the second measure, DIBELS, Letter Name Fluency, and Initial Sound Fluency were used to measure literacy skills. Many ELL reading success research investigated cross-linguistic transfer or whether phonological, alphabetical, and/or oral language ability of children in their first language transfers to their second language. Others have evaluated the efficacy of language and literacy interventions on this population. This study diverges from the

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research trends to study how English phonological awareness, vocabulary and alphabet knowledge predict English Word reading in first grade. This study showed that English letter naming fluency is the best predictor of English oral reading fluency for ELL students, comparable to studies with non-ELL students. In contrast to these non-ELL studies, which reported that phonological skills are the second best predictor, this study found oral language to be the second most important predictor of word reading with phonological skills to be third. Implications support the instruction of English vocabulary in kindergarten to prepare them for first grade reading. If they arrive in kindergarten with little English, a vocabulary intervention in combination with a phonemic awareness intervention may be necessary.