TEACHING LITERACY

IN SPANISH

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*The least complicated entry into literacy learning
is to begin to read and write the language that
children already know and speak. What they
already know about language can be used to
power their literacy learning.*

(Clay, 1993)

Introduction

In 1998, the National Research Council, the
principal operating arm of the National
Academy of Sciences and the National
Academy of Engineering, issued a report
entitled "Preventing Reading Difficulties."
This report's chapter on "Teaching Reading
to Language Minority Children" concluded
that "initial literacy instruction should be
provided in a child's native language when-
ever possible. Further, literacy instruction
should not be introduced in any language
before some reasonable level of oral profi-
ciency in that language has been attained"
(p. 238). This report supports and further
validates the results of numerous research
studies conducted over the past thirty years
that conclude that initial literacy instruc-
tion is most effective when it is provided in
the native language of a child (Cummins,
1981; Escamilla, 1987; Krashen & Biber,
1988; Lindholm, 1993; Modiano, 1968;
Rodríguez, 1988). For the more than 6 mil-
lion Spanish-speaking children in U.S. pub-
lic schools (Brown, 1992), this means initial
literacy instruction in Spanish.

Teaching Spanish-speaking children to
read and write first in Spanish has long
been a cornerstone of the effective imple-
mentation of programs of bilingual educa-
tion in the United States. Further, it has
been established that there is a high and
positive correlation between learning to
read in Spanish and subsequent reading
achievement in English (Collier & Thomas,
1995; Greene, 1998; Leasher-Madrid &
García, 1985; Ramírez, Yuen, & Ramey,
1991; Thomas & Collier, 1997). The positive
relationship between reading well in one
language and learning to read well in a sec-
ond language has come to be called the
transfer effect: Skills and strategies learned in
literacy in one language transfer to reading
and writing situations in a second language
without having to be relearned.

The knowledge that a child's first lan-
guage is the best entrance into literacy pro-
vides a "best practice" model to schools as
they plan and implement bilingual and
dual language programs for Spanish-speak-
ing students. However, knowing that you
should teach children to read and write in
Spanish is only a beginning. Setting up best-
practice literacy programs in public schools
requires that teachers and school leaders
also know *how* to teach reading in Spanish.
Further, it is important that teachers know
how the teaching of reading in Spanish is
similar to, and yet different from, teaching
reading in English.

This article will discuss approaches to lit-
eracy instruction that may be considered to
be universal or applicable to both Spanish
and English. It will also give examples of

the ways in which literacy instruction in Spanish should be different from English instruction. The article will use examples from a current approach to literacy instruction known as balanced literacy to illustrate why Spanish/English bilingual teachers need specific knowledge about teaching methods related to Spanish reading. The article will also discuss issues in adapting English literacy methods for use with Spanish speakers.

Bilingual Teachers and Spanish Academic Proficiency

It is important to note that only 10 percent of the teachers serving English Language Learners are certified in bilingual education (August & Hakuta, 1997). Further, the majority of Spanish/English bilingual teachers in the United States have had limited opportunities to learn academic language in Spanish (Figueroa & García, 1994; Waggoner & O'Malley, 1984). For the most part, prospective and practicing bilingual teachers have attended U.S. public schools in which the teaching of Spanish academic language either was limited to early elementary grades (via transitional bilingual programs) or was not available at all. After attending K–12 schools in which academic Spanish was not well developed, the majority of Spanish/English bilingual teachers attended U.S. colleges in which classes and teacher preparation programs were also predominantly offered in English (Guerrero, 1997).

Course work in teacher preparation included methods classes in the teaching of reading and language arts. The focus in these classes has been on methods for teaching reading in English. Few universities and colleges offer specific course work in "Methods of Teaching Reading in Spanish." In many of these classes, prospective bilingual teachers are simply told to learn best-practice strategies in English and do them in Spanish. This universalist approach, labeled by some as "one size fits all," has been widely criticized (Ferdman, 1990; Reyes, 1990). However, it remains pervasive in teacher preparation programs.

After becoming certified, teachers continue to learn how to teach reading in Spanish by learning about English literacy methodology through local school district in-service programs. Here, too, bilingual teachers are exposed to best-practice strategies for teaching reading and writing in English and are told simply to utilize them in Spanish. Opportunities for teachers to discuss and learn about approaches to literacy teaching in Spanish are, unfortunately, rare or nonexistent. Equally scarce are opportunities for U.S. bilingual teachers to observe teachers from Spanish-speaking countries and to exchange ideas and strategies with them.

Given all of the above, Guerrero (1997) has concluded that it is unreasonable to expect that bilingual teachers have extensive knowledge of academic Spanish or knowledge about how to best deliver literacy instruction in Spanish. He goes on to say that the solution to this situation is not to blame the teachers for opportunities that they have not had. Rather, it is more important to create opportunities to develop academic Spanish and to learn effective strategies for teaching literacy in Spanish. The remainder of this article will discuss approaches to literacy instruction that bilingual teachers need to consider when planning literacy programs for Spanish-speaking students.

Synthetic, Analytic, and Socio-psycholinguistic Orientations to Reading: Spanish and English

Spanish and English share three similar philosophical orientations to literacy teaching. Methods for applying each orientation, however, vary widely across languages. These include synthetic methods, analytic methods, and the socio-psychological process (Freeman & Freeman, 1997). These orientations have similar meanings in English and Spanish. Each orientation has its proponents and critics.

Synthetic methods are more commonly called part-to-whole methods (Chall, 1967; Braslavsky, 1962). These are methods that

start with teaching children parts of words, such as letters and letter sounds. They commonly use letters, syllables, and letter sounds to build up to words. In English, synthetic methods include phonemic awareness, phonological awareness, alphabetic awareness, and phonics-based approaches (Adams, 1990; Foorman, 1995). In Spanish, synthetic methods include *el método alfabético* (the alphabetic method), *el método silábico* (the syllabic method), and *el método onomatopéyico* (the onomatopoeic method). (See Freeman & Freeman, 1997, for a thorough discussion of these synthetic methods for teaching literacy in Spanish.)

Analytic methods are more commonly called whole-to-part methods. These methods start with whole words and break them down for analysis into their various parts. In English, analytic methods are often called sight-word methods (Chall, 1967). In Spanish, analytic methods include *el método global o ideovisual* (the global or visual-concept method), *el método de palabras generadoras* (the generative word method), and *el método léxico* (the lexical method) (Freeman & Freeman, 1997). These orientations focus on word recognition as a goal of reading instruction. Teaching methods to implement these various orientations vary greatly across languages. As will be discussed more thoroughly throughout this article, it is important to note that the more focused a particular approach is on teaching sounds, syllables, and recognition of individual words, the more language-specific the teaching techniques are. Implementing these methods requires a thorough knowledge of the language of instruction. It is not enough simply to know the method in English and apply it in Spanish.

The *socio-psychological process* focuses on the construction of meaning. This orientation to literacy holds that children first develop global understandings about text and gradually come to understand the parts. Reading, in the socio-psychological view, is an enriching experience, not a process of skills mastery. In applying this philosophical orientation, literacy is developed in the context of reading whole stories and texts. The focus is on text interaction, not solely on word recognition. In English, socio-psychological views of reading have been labeled whole-language (Goodman, 1986). In Spanish, this orientation is referred to as *lenguaje integral* (Ferreiro, 1994; Goodman, 1989). The socio-psychological process orientation to literacy instruction is universal, in that the methodology of a focus on the construction of meaning as central to reading instruction will transcend language. Approaches to literacy instruction from this orientation can be applied in either English or Spanish without the need to focus on language-specific constructs or linguistic functions.

Unfortunately, over the past 30 years, these philosophical orientations have often been portrayed in the literature as being dichotomous—incompatible and mutually exclusive. As such, they have been pitted against each other. Teachers, parents, administrators, and policymakers have been asked to take sides and declare themselves to be "whole-language schools" or "phonics schools." Competition among the methods has helped to create a situation known as the reading wars (Chall, 1967, 1999; Fillipo, 1997; Cassidy & Weinrich, 1997). The reading wars have occurred in Latin America around Spanish reading instruction as well (Braslavsky, 1992; Castedo, 1995; Solé I Gallart, 1995).

It is important to note that these orientations are not as dichotomous as they might appear. It has always been a goal for synthetic and analytic approaches to lead to comprehension of text. Similarly, the socio-psychological orientation has never been opposed to skills instruction, as long as such instruction is done in the context of constructing meaning and reading real literature and whole stories. Thus, while the points of departure for beginning literacy instruction may be widely divergent, the goal is the same for all orientations in both languages.

Balanced Literacy Instruction: A Response to End the Reading Wars

Recent attempts to resolve the reading wars have created a different orientation to literacy teaching known as a *balanced approach to teaching reading* (Adams & Bruck, 1995; Cunningham, 1991; Cunningham & Allington, 1994; National Research Council, 1998). Proponents of this approach argue that a balanced approach utilizes synthetic, analytic, and socio-psychological orientations in a way that combines the best of all three.

Proponents of balanced approaches to reading instruction assert that balance does not mean mindless eclecticism or rejection of scientific inquiry. Balance means taking an intelligent approach to reading practice informed by scientific research. Balance involves a program that combines phonological awareness skills and decoding with language- and literature-rich activities. In short, it combines in a thoughtful way synthetic, analytic, and socio-psychological orientations to literacy instruction. An informed approach to reading instruction begins in kindergarten and continues until the child is a fluent reader. Such an approach is thought to be appropriate for children from *all* language, cultural, and social backgrounds (Adams, 1990; Foorman, 1995; Honig, 1996).

The idea of a balanced approach to literacy instruction has great appeal to many educators and policymakers. The appeal has been particularly strong in large urban school districts that are desperate to improve literacy achievement among their students, particularly students from cultural and linguistic minority groups and economically disadvantaged students. The numbers of schools and districts implementing balanced approaches to literacy instruction is growing rapidly. At the forefront of this movement are the California Department of Education, the Dallas Independent School District, the Houston Independent School District, and the Denver Public Schools. Each of these educational settings has adopted some form of balanced literacy program. As a result, each has also created intensive staff development programs to implement balanced literacy instruction. All the states and districts listed above have large numbers of Spanish-speaking students, and therefore must consider how best to implement a balanced literacy program in Spanish.

As with many educational innovations, balanced literacy approaches in the United States originated in another English-speaking country (New Zealand) and were developed in English (Reutzel, 1998). They are not yet being discussed or widely implemented in Latin American countries. This means that, once again, bilingual educators are learning about an English literacy program that, with little or no guidance, they will have to implement in Spanish.

As stated before, balanced literacy is thought to combine the most powerful elements of the other major approaches to literacy instruction. Components of balanced literacy programs vary slightly from district to district. Reutzel (1998) offers the most comprehensive definition of balanced literacy, and with it, an important caveat. Balanced literacy programs have only recently been implemented in the United States, but they have been implemented for many years in New Zealand (Department of Education, 1985). Balanced literacy programs are more than just inclusions of phonics and whole-language, as they have been developed in the United States. Fully developed balanced approaches consider all of the following:

1. Environmental design
2. Assessment
3. Modeling
4. Guidance
5. Interactivity
6. Independence
7. Practice
8. Oral language acquisition
9. Writing and reading processes
10. Community building
11. Motivation
12. Phonological awareness
13. Print awareness
14. Alphabetic and orthographic awareness
15. Orthographic awareness.

The reader can easily see elements of synthetic, analytic, and socio-psychological orientations to literacy teaching in this list. Given the current trends toward the implementation of balanced reading programs in schools, and the potential of that approach, it is important to ask: How do teachers implement balanced literacy programs in Spanish? Is balanced reading in Spanish the same as in English? Is balanced reading the same for children of all ages and cultural and social backgrounds, as Adams (1990) suggests? What needs to be changed or adapted or both?

I would argue that many important components of balanced literacy programs *cannot* be implemented the same way in Spanish as in English. Research on Spanish reading indicates that a common framework for literacy development in both English and Spanish might be effective because both languages are alphabetic (Jiménez & Haro, 1995; Goldenberg, 1990, 1998; Jiménez, García, & Pearson, 1996). However, the same researchers are quick to caution that there must be accommodations for each language. For example, in Spanish, the basic building block of reading is the syllable, in contrast to the letter or phoneme in English. Further, the two languages differ greatly in their spelling systems, writing conventions, and discourse patterns.

Balanced literacy programs include many synthetic and analytic methods (e.g., phonemic awareness, print awareness, alphabetic awareness), making it critical that consideration be given to how the Spanish language works. Overall, it is important for schools and teachers to discuss the ways in which English-language balanced literacy programs need to be modified if they are to be effective for Spanish speakers.

An additional issue in the United States relates to the interaction in bilingual schools between the Spanish and English languages. It is commonly suggested to teachers that effective balanced literacy programs need to be structured for at least 2 to 3 hours every school day. This is more than half the school day in many cities. For Spanish-speaking children, the issue becomes when and how instruction in English as a Second Language should occur. In the United States, Spanish speakers are expected to learn oral English at the same time they learn to read in Spanish. Thus, bilingual teachers must consider how to integrate oral language acquisition in both Spanish and English into their balanced literacy programs. Conversely, if schools decide that ESL is to be separate from balanced literacy, teachers must consider when it will be taught and how it will fit into the school day.

For balanced literacy to have a positive impact on Spanish-speaking children, schools and teachers must have knowledge about how best to teach alphabetic, orthographic, and phonemic awareness in Spanish, as well as how to integrate the teaching of English into the balanced literacy program and school day for Spanish speakers. Further, they must understand reading and writing processes, how to create print environments that honor and validate Spanish as well as English, and how to motivate students to want to become biliterate. In short, to be effective, schools and teachers must have ongoing, specific conversations about how to implement balanced literacy programs for Spanish-speaking children. An example of the kinds of discussions needed to implement balanced literacy for Spanish speakers is discussed next.

Balanced Literacy—Language-Specific Issues and Modifications from English Methods: *Phonics They Use*

A personal anecdote will serve as an introduction to this section. During the past school year, I was involved in a partner school project with a group of teachers from an inner-city school. The partner school is 87 percent Latino, 44 percent limited English proficient, and 97 percent free and reduced lunch. The school mirrors the school district's demographics. The district is 49 percent Latino, 25 percent limited English proficient, and 70 percent free and

reduced lunch. The school was one of several in the district selected to participate in an intensive in-service program designed to teach strategies and methods for implementing a balanced literacy program. As time allowed, I participated in these in-service sessions with teachers from the school.

The in-service program was well organized and informative; however, it was offered entirely in English. Handouts, professional literature, and teaching examples were all presented in English. In contrast, over 75 percent of those attending the in-service program were bilingual teachers who were teaching reading only in Spanish and were also charged with teaching ESL.

At one of the in-service sessions, all the teachers were given copies of Pat Cunningham's book *Phonics They Use* (1995). As a group they read the book and discussed how they could use its many teaching ideas in their own classrooms. Many of the bilingual teachers asked if these ideas were appropriate in Spanish. They were told that the teaching ideas would also work in Spanish. However, not once were bilingual teachers engaged in specific conversations about how to adapt Cunningham's ideas into Spanish literacy instruction.

After the in-service sessions were over, I worked with a group of teachers from the partner school. We generated the ideas presented below about how to modify Cunningham's book for use in Spanish. The reader should note that these ideas represent weeks of work, and that bilingual teachers were expected to individually make these adaptations into Spanish without being given any guidance or extra time. The English literacy teachers had ready-made tools supplied to them, while the Spanish/English bilingual teachers were left to their own devices.

The ideas below are not presented as a criticism of the Cunningham book, which is an excellent resource for teachers. However, it was written for teachers who teach in English. This discussion is meant to illustrate the many important differences between English and Spanish that need to be acknowledged and explained if the ideas for teaching in English are to be successfully transferred to teaching in Spanish. It is also meant to demonstrate the complexities involved in the adaptation of reading approaches across languages. This discussion concerns only one part of the Cunningham book, the section on word walls.

Cunningham suggests that teachers utilize high-utility word walls to help children develop fluency in reading/writing (p. 100). She then provides numerous examples of possible high-utility wall words. To maximize utilization of this strategy, the following need to be considered for Spanish instruction.

1. Separate Word Walls in Spanish and English

Perhaps the most important point is that in many bilingual classrooms, teachers attempt to put Spanish and English side by side or to do two things at once by creating word walls that include both Spanish and English words. This is a questionable practice. For one reason, a two-language word wall could contain words such as *come* (come in English) and *come* (eat in Spanish). While the words are spelled the same, they are read and pronounced differently in different languages, and have vastly different meanings. The attempt to increase reading fluency could create confusion instead.

The vowels in Spanish and English have different sounds. *E* in English (e.g., eat) is not the same as *E* in Spanish, which makes an long *A* sound (e.g., *elefante*, elephant). *I* in English (e.g., ice cream) is not the same as *I* in Spanish, which makes a long *E* sound (e.g., *indio*, Indian).

Teachers who are responsible for teaching literacy in both Spanish and English should make sure that they have *separate* word walls for each language. Attention to separate word walls is an important aspect of balanced literacy related to the environmental design (Reutzel, 1998).

2. Frequently Used Words on Word Walls

Cunningham suggests having frequently used words on word walls. She defines frequently used words as those that make up 50 percent of the words children read and write. Spanish also has words that are frequently used, but they are different from the English words. Frequently used words in English are often words that are phonetically irregular and need to be learned as site words. Frequently used words in Spanish are very often phonetically regular, but learning them as site words helps to increase reading fluency. The following is a widely used Spanish frequent words list (Cornejo, 1972). The list is divided by grade; however, teachers should make their own decisions about which words to use in their own word walls.

3. Word Walls Illustrating Initial Consonant Sounds

Cunningham recommends that word walls in early elementary classrooms contain examples for each initial consonant. The same is true in Spanish, with two exceptions. In Spanish there are some letters that do not occur (or seldom occur) in initial consonant positions even though they are a part of the Spanish alphabet. These letters are *rr* and *ñ*. It would be much more helpful to children if these letters in the medial positions of words were highlighted on word walls as shown below:

Examples: Pe*rr*o or Pe*rr*o
carro or ca*rr*o
niña or ni*ñ*a
piña or pi*ñ*a

CORNEJO'S SPANISH WORD FREQUENCY LIST
(by grade)

Pre-Primer	Primer	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
a	alto	bonita	ayer	amar	árbol	amistad
azul	flor	arriba	aquí	aquí	bandera	azucar
bajo	blusa	fruta	año	debajo	abeja	contento
mi	ella	globo	cerca	familia	escuela	corazón
mesa	ir	estar	desde	fiesta	fácil	cumpleaños
pan	leche	café	donde	grande	fuego	edad
mamá	más	letra	hacer	hermana	hacia	escribir
lado	niño	luna	hasta	jueves	idea	felicidad
la	padre	luz	hijo	lápiz	jardín	guitarra
papá	por	muy	hoy	miércoles	llegar	estrella
me	si	noche	leer	once	manzana	igual
no	tan	nombre	libro	quince	muñeca	invierno
esa	sobre	nosotros	martes	sábado	naranja	orquesta
el	sin	nunca	mejor	semana	saludar	primavera
en	tras	ojo	mucho	silla	sueño	recordar
cuna	color	pelota	oir	sobrino	señorita	respeto
dos	al	porque	papel	vivir	tierra	tijeras
mi	día	rojo	paz	zapato	traer	último
de	bien	té	quien	tarde	ventana	querer
los	chico	taza	usted	traje	queso	otoño

4. Word Walls with Articles

In Spanish, the use of articles with nouns varies because of gender (feminine and masculine) and because of singular and plural usages. Children need to learn in reading and writing that article/noun agreement is important. For this reason, word walls in Spanish are more powerful if they include articles with nouns (e.g., *el libro*, the book; *la mesa*, the table; *los libros*, the books; *las mesas*, the tables).

Article usage in Spanish has different rules for words that do not end in vowels (e.g., *la navidad*, Christmas; *el reloj*, the watch). Further, there are words that are simply exceptions to the rules (e.g., *el mapa*, the map; *el problema*, the problem). In Spanish, learning rules for noun/article agreement is very important. Word walls with articles and nouns can greatly assist in teaching these concepts.

5. Word Walls That Model Upper- and Lower-Case Letters

Modeling of reading and writing in many contexts and in many ways is an important component of balanced literacy instruction (Reutzel, 1998). Cunningham recommends word walls that illustrate both upper- and lower-case letters (e.g., *A/a; D/d*) as one type of modeling. The same idea could be applied in Spanish, with several caveats. In Spanish, there are several letters that are represented by two letters: *Ch, Ll,* and *rr*. Capitalization of these letters requires that only the first letter be upper case. It is not appropriate to provide the following as a model on a word wall: *LL, CH, RR*. Word walls should model these letters as follows: *Ch/ch; Ll/ll*. The letter *rr* never occurs at the beginning of a word and therefore should never be modeled in the upper case. Further, *ñ* is only rarely capitalized, and in some countries when letters such as *ñ* are capitalized, they lose their tilde (the mark above the *ñ*).

6. Word Walls with Examples for Each Initial Consonant and Vowel

Cunningham suggests that a word wall contain an example word for each initial consonant. Presumably, she does not suggest common words for vowels because of the way vowel sounds change in English. In Spanish, it would be appropriate to provide examples for each initial consonant *and* vowel. Vowel sounds in Spanish are phonetically regular and occur much more frequently in Spanish words than in English words. Including vowels in Spanish is also important because they emerge in writing in Spanish before they do in English (see the letters and words listed below).

It is important to note here that in Spanish, it is often confusing to teach the names of the letters as well as the letter sounds. In learning to read and write, knowing the sound of a letter is much more useful to emergent readers and writers than knowing a letter's name.

Vowels in the order of the frequency of their use in Spanish are as follows:
O/o – el oso (the bear)
I/i – el imán (the magnet)
E/e – el elefante (the elephant)
A/a – el avión (the airplane)
U/u – las uvas (the grapes)

Consonants in the order of the frequency of their use in Spanish are as follows:
M/m – La mariposa (the butterfly)
S/s – El sol (the sun)
D/d – El dedal (the thimble)
F/f – La flor (the flower)
T/t – El tambor (the drum)
C/c (fuerte) – La casa (the house)
C/c (suave) – La ciudad (the city)
N/n – El nido (the nest)
P/p – La papa (the potato)
L/l – El limón (the lemon)
R/r – El ratón (the rat)
G/g (fuerte) – El gato (the cat)
G/g (suave) – El gigante (the giant)
B/b (de burro) – El bebé (the baby)*
V/v (de vaca) – La ventana (the window)*

J/j – La jaula – (the cage)

H/h (muda) – El hilo (the string)†

Ch/ch – El chivo (the goat)

N/ñ – La niña (the girl)

Ll/ll – La lluvia (the rain)

K/k – El kiosko (the kiosk)

Y/y – El yoyo (the yoyo)

Z/z – El zoológico (the zoo)

W/w – *Not* a letter in Spanish; used only when writing foreign words (e.g., *Washington*)

* The letters *B* and *V* make the same sound in Spanish. To help children differentiate the two letters, teachers in Mexico often refer to these letters as *b de burro*, meaning *b*, and *v de vaca*, meaning *v*. Having this language visually displayed on a word wall could also be helpful for children.

† *H* in Spanish does not make a sound. It can easily be represented on a word wall using a picture of a face with eyes, a nose, and no mouth.

7. Word Walls with Examples of High-Utility Words That Are Frequently Misspelled

Cunningham suggests that teachers have word walls that contain common vowel spelling patterns. Again, because of the phonetic regularity of vowels in Spanish, this may not be useful for Spanish-speaking students. However, there are letters and letter combinations that have the same sound and thereby create spelling problems for Spanish speakers. These words are commonly misspelled. In Spanish, frequently confused letters are often called "Monster Letters." They include: *b/v; c/s/z; g/j; h* and *ll/y* (see example below). Having a word wall with commonly misspelled words in Spanish could be very useful.

Examples: Llo boi a la hescuela y despues seno con mis ermanos.

(Yo voy a la escuela y después ceno con mis hermanos).

I go to school and then I eat dinner with my brothers.

8. Word Walls for Contractions

Cunningham suggests having a word wall for common English contractions (e.g., *can't, didn't*). Having a contraction word wall in Spanish makes no sense. There are only two contractions in Spanish (*a + el = al* and *de + el = del*).

9. Word Walls for Common Blends

Having a word wall for common blends in Spanish, as in English, makes good sense. Examples include the following:

Fr – el frío (the cold)

Fl – la flor (the flower)

Br – la brisa (the breeze)

Bl – la blusa (the blouse)

Gr – el grito (the scream)

Gl – el globo (the balloon)

Pl – el plato (the plate)

Pr – el prima (the cousin)

Tr – el tren (the train)

Cl – el clavo (the nail)

Cr – creer (to believe)

Tr – la trucha (the trout)

10. Word Walls with High-Frequency Words That Need Accents/Tildes/Diereses (See Cornejo's list in item 2, above)

There are no accent marks in English, and thus the issue of how to teach students about accents, tildes, and diereses does not arise. However, in written Spanish, various types of accent marks are important. They change word meanings and are important markers of time. For example, *la papa* means potato, but *el papá* means father and *el papa* means the pope. Further, a word like *hablo* means I talk (present tense), but *habló* means he, she, or you talked (past tense). It is critical that teachers teach Spanish speakers rules about when and how to use accents in their writing. At the beginning stages of literacy, teachers may assist students in learning how to use accents by having word walls that show high-frequency words that utilize the markings.

Examples: High-frequency words that need
an accent mark
mamá, papá, está, día

High-frequency words that need
the tilde
mañana, piña, niña

High-frequency words that need
the dieresis
pingüino, bilingüe

11. Word Walls to Demonstrate How to Join Syllables to Make Words

Sample word walls for the most common
vowel spelling patterns in English are not
appropriate in Spanish. What is helpful to
children as they learn to read and write is
to learn how syllables are formed and how
they combine to make words. A word wall
with examples of how to join syllables
together to make words would be very use-
ful to Spanish speakers. For a more detailed
explanation of how to help children learn
to combine syllables to make words and
other issues related to teaching word recog-
nition and comprehension, see Ferreiro,
Pellicer, Rodríguez, & Vernon (1991).

Examples: pa + to = pato
ga + to = gato
ma + to = mato
ma + lo = malo
pa + lo = palo

12. Word Walls with Words That Children Frequently Use in Their Writing

Word walls with children's favorite or
often-used words can be used in both
Spanish and English (e.g. *favorito, familia,
hermanos, escuela*). However, as stated
above, words in the two languages should
be placed on separate word walls.

13. Review Rhyme with Word Wall

Cunningham suggests that word walls be
used to teach about word families (p. 105)
(see the English example below). While a
similar technique could be used in teaching
Spanish, it is important for teachers to
know that word families in Spanish are not
the same as word families in English (see

the Spanish example below).

English: at
b + at = bat
c + at = cat
m + at = mat
r + at = rat

Spanish: zapato (shoe)
zapatería (shoe store)
zapatero (cobbler, shoe
repairer)

pan (bread)
panadero (baker)
panadería (bakery)

libro (book)
librería (bookstore)
librero (bookseller)

pez (live fish before it has
been caught)
pescado (fish after it has been
caught)
pescador (fisherman)
pescadería (fish market)

The above examples are all meant for teach-
ers who are teaching in primary grades.
Cunningham also provides suggestions for
word walls for intermediate grades, which,
with teaching ideas and suggested modifica-
tions for teaching in Spanish, are summa-
rized below.

1. Word Walls for Commonly Used Homophones

Commonly used homophones make useful
word walls in Spanish as well as in English.
Again, homophones are different in
Spanish and in English. Examples for the
highest utility homophones in Spanish are
as follows:

Haber / A Ver (dos palabras)
Ola / Hola
Hacer / A Ser (dos palabras)
cayó / calló
haya / halla
coser / cocer
casar / cazar
azar / asar / azhar

2. Word Walls for Commonly Used Compound Words

Commonly used compound words make useful word walls. Compound words, too, are different in Spanish and in English. Examples of compound words in Spanish are as follows:

> cumpleaños
> rascacielos
> tocadiscos
> portavoz
> sacapuntas
> guardarraya
> guardarropa
> guardaespaldas
> sobrecama
> sobremesa
> sobresaliente
> rompecabezas
> paraguas
> parabrisas
> anteojos
> paracaídas
> fotosíntesis

3. Word Walls for Hard-to-Spell Words

Hard-to-spell words make useful word walls. Hard-to-spell words and word patterns are different in Spanish and in English. Useful rules and examples for hard-to-spell words in Spanish are given below. For a more detailed discussion of Spanish spelling rules, see Aguilar (1997) or the Secretaría de Educación Pública (1995).

Rules for H: Se escriben con *h* (you write with an *h*):

Todos los tiempos del verbo *haber*
> he hube habré, había, habría, hay, hubiera, etc.

Todas las palabras que principian con los diptongos *ua, ue, ui, ia, ie*
> huarache, huevo, huir, hiato, hielo

Todos los tiempos del verbo *hacer*
> hago, hice, haré, hacía, hecho

Todas las formas de los verbos *hablar, hallar, habitar*
> hablo, habité, hallé

Las interjecciones
> ¡bah! ¡ah! ¡eh!

Rules for Ll: Se escriben con *ll* (you write with *ll*):

Todas las palabras que comienzan con
fa, fo, fu
> falleció, fallaste, folletos

Todas las palabras que terminan con *illo* y *illa* (palabras diminutivos)
> costilla, boquilla, panecillo, chiquillo

Los vocablos que comienzan con
lla, lle, llo, llu
> llamada, llanta, llenar, llorón, lluvia

Rules for B: Se escriben con la letra *B* (you write with a *b*):

Los verbos *haber, saber, caber, deber, beber, trabajar, robar, acabar*

Las terminaciones *aba, abas, ábamos*, de los verbos conjugados en copretérito del modo indicativo
> jugaba, llevabas, caminábamos

Las palabras que llevan *b* antes de otra consonante (*br, bl,* y *bs*)
> brisa, blusa, absolutismo, cobre

Las palabras que tienen las sílabas compuestas *bla, ble, bli, blo, blu*
> bloque, cable, blando, tabla, broma, brusco, bruma, libre

Rules for V: Se escriben con la letra *V* (you write with a *v*):

Todos los verbos que terminan en *servar*
> reservar, observar, conservar

Todos los adjetivos que terminan en *ava, ave, eva, ivo, iva, evo*
> brava, suave, primitiva, agresiva

Los verbos *ir, estar, andar,* y *tener* en sus conjugaciones en pretérito
> con sus compuestos y derivados
> estuve, anduve, tuve, ve, va, van

Las palabras que compiezan con *ven*
> ventaja, veneno, vencedor, vencer, vengar, venir, venta

4. Word Walls for Accent Rules

As stated above, English does not use accent marks. However, they are very important in writing in Spanish (and also very difficult to teach and learn). A useful word wall for intermediate students may be one that illustrates basic accent rules.

Examples:

- Palabras esdrújulas – Todas las palabras que reciben el acento en la antepenúltima sílaba siempre llevan acento. (Words that place the accent (stress) on the third to the last syllable require an accent.)

     Último, exámenes, mayúscula, capítulo, cándido

- En algunas palabras monosilábicas el acento sirve para distinguirlas cuando se hallan en función gramatical diferente. (In some monosyllablic words the accent mark serves to distinguish the word when it is used as a different part of speech.)

     El (artículo) (article), él (pronombre) (pronoun)

     Se (pronombre) (pronoun) sé (verbo) (verb)

     Tu, mi (adjetivos) (adjective), t', mí (pronombres) (pronouns)

     Si (conjunctivo) (conjunction), sí (adverbio)

- Cuando se usan las palabras *donde, cuando, como, que, por que, o cual* en una oración interrogativa. (When you use the words *where, when, how, what, why,* or *which* in a sentence that asks a question, you use a question mark.)

     ¿Por qué no tenemos escuela mañana?
     ¿Cuál es tu libro favorito?
     ¿Cuándo empieza el baile este sábado?

5. Word Walls That Illustrate Contrasts in English and Spanish

A paramount issue for Spanish/English bilingual teachers in the United States is when and how students will begin transition, even if they continue from Spanish literacy to English literacy. In the intermediate grades, a useful word wall might be one that contrasts English and Spanish conventions. This might be helpful as students make transitions from Spanish to English.

Examples:

- Words with capitals in English, but not in Spanish
     days of the week
     months of the year

- Punctuation in English and Spanish: In Spanish, question sentences and exclamation sentences have punctuation marks at the beginning and end of a sentence. In English, they appear only at the end.
     !Qué bonito día!
     What a beautiful day!

     ¿Cuál es tu apellido?
     What is your last name?

- Date notation devices in Spanish and English
     In English, 2/3/96 is February 3, 1996; in Spanish, 3/2/96 is February 3, 1996.

These lists of ideas and examples are by no means exhaustive. However, they are meant to give bilingual teachers ideas for applying appropriate teaching techniques, such as those proposed by Cunningham, in authentic ways in Spanish. If bilingual teachers are to provide the same quality of literacy instruction to Spanish-speaking students as they do to English-speaking students, they must have the same tools, information, and support systems.

To summarize this section, it is important to state once again that methods of teaching reading that have a synthetic or analytic orientation, such as those represented in balanced literacy methods—including phonemic awareness, alphabetic awareness, and phonological awareness—are language-specific. That is, sound methodology and teaching techniques need to be developed by studying the particular language and knowing how it works. For these methods, it is not enough to apply English methods in Spanish. There are, however, a number of approaches in a balanced literacy program that could be considered to be universal. These methods are discussed briefly below.

Balanced Literacy: Universal Approaches Applied in Spanish

As stated previously, many teaching approaches that are recommended for English balanced literacy programs can be applied in Spanish balanced literacy programs without extensive modification. These include modeling, shared reading, guided reading, interactive teaching, independent reading, writing and reading processes, community building, and motivation (Reutzel, 1998). The power of these approaches, in Spanish, is dependent on the ability of the school and teacher to give equal status and time to Spanish literacy instruction. Throughout the history of bilingual education in the United States, providing equal status across languages has been difficult for Spanish/English bilingual teachers (Escamilla, 1992, 1994; Shannon, 1995; Shannon & Escamilla, 1999). Unless both languages have equal status, it is difficult to motivate students to want to learn to read and write in two languages.

Applying equal status to both Spanish and English in bilingual classrooms means that the print environment in these classrooms gives equal attention to both languages. It means that bilingual classrooms and school libraries are well stocked with books in Spanish as well as English. It means that the Spanish book collection includes works that were originally written in Spanish as well as titles that have been translated from English. It means that the English-language collection includes good literature that was originally written in Spanish and has been translated into English. It means that literature collections include works that reflect the cultural, linguistic, and historical heritage of the community. Teachers and schools need to make certain that the same variety of literature that is accessible to English speakers is accessible to Spanish speakers. This includes books written at various levels of difficulty and representing a variety of genres. Bishop (1994) eloquently writes that multicultural book collections in schools are critical in order to serve as mirrors and windows for children of all cultural groups. Mirrors enable children to see themselves in books, and windows enable children to learn about the lives and stories of other cultural groups.

Unfortunately, research on the availability of literature and other books in Spanish in U.S. schools has established that many schools with large numbers of Spanish-speaking students have library collections that are not adequate in Spanish (Pucci, 1994; DeLaurie, 1998). Further, many classrooms and school libraries lack literature that represents the cultural experiences of Spanish-speaking students (Barrera, Linguori, & Salas, 1992; Barrera & Garza de Cortés, 1997; Barrera, 1992). Barrera & Garza de Cortés (1997) found, for example, that between 1992 and 1995, only 67 children's books were published with themes reflecting Mexican-American experiences. Further, twice as many fiction books as nonfiction works were published. Teachers in schools with bilingual programs need to become advocates for themselves and their students by ensuring that the literature collection in classrooms and school libraries is equitable for students from all language groups. They must also ensure that the literature is representative of the cultures and communities of their schools.

Students learning to read and write in Spanish must have daily opportunities to read and write in Spanish in authentic ways and for real purposes. Choral reading, echo reading, readers' theater, literature studies, author studies, and readers' and writers' workshops are all strategies that can be used effectively in Spanish with little need for modification except for the materials. Again, it is important for bilingual teachers to use culturally relevant and engaging materials as they organize their reading programs. For example, many texts can be modified to become readers' theater projects. However, the impact on students is more powerful if teachers choose materials related to student real-life experiences. For example, *Pepita Habla Dos Veces (Pepita Talks Twice, 1995)* is a book about a Spanish-speaking girl growing up in the United

States and learning two languages. She becomes tired of using two languages and decides to speak only English in spite of her family, friends, and teacher, who tell her it's wonderful to be bilingual. Pepita sees bilingualism as a burden. Pepita's story is typical of the struggle that many children experience as they learn two languages. The book is easily turned from narrative into a culturally affirming readers' theater piece. Similarly, author studies can be conducted on writers such as Gary Soto, Pat Mora, and Alma Flor Ada, as well as Judy Blume, Shel Silverstein, and Tommy de Paola.

Books representing real-life experiences of Spanish-speaking children should be part of the daily literacy experience in schools. *Los Recuerdos de Chave (Chave's Memories,* 1996) is an example of a common experience of Mexican-American children. The book is about a child's memories of yearly family trips to his grandparents' *rancho* (farm) in rural Mexico. Books such as this one make excellent books for literature studies, read-alouds, and independent reading. For suggestions of stories and books written by and about various Latino cultures, see Bishop (1994), Harris (1997), and Escamilla & Nathenson-Mejía (1997).

If equal status is to be given to two languages and if children are to become bilingual and biliterate, they must be assessed in two languages. Achievement in literacy in Spanish must be valued and rewarded by schools in the same way that achievement in English is valued and rewarded. Assessment practices should not be English measures and tools translated and/or adapted into Spanish without careful consideration of how Spanish is different from English. They should be tools that reflect the conventions, the rhetorical and discourse structures, and the cultures of Spanish-speaking students.

Conclusion

To summarize this article, it is important to emphasize once again that teaching children to read in Spanish is *not* the same as teaching children to read in English. While there are a number of similarities, it should not be assumed that a teacher who knows how to teach reading in English is prepared to teach reading in Spanish. Best-practice literacy programs in Spanish need to be grounded in a knowledge base of how the Spanish language works. Spanish literacy programs can and should be further informed by a knowledge base that combines best practice in English literacy with best practice in Spanish literacy.

The number of Spanish-speaking students in the United States continues to grow rapidly. This is one of the fastest-growing school-aged groups. Research and experience have shown that the best entry into literacy for these children is in their native language, in this case Spanish. Many bilingual teachers have not had opportunities to take methods courses that focus on teaching reading in Spanish, nor have they had opportunities to learn formal academic Spanish. Therefore, it is critical that schools create literacy programs that are specifically designed and implemented for Spanish speakers and that engage teachers in learning more about how to teach literacy in Spanish. Teachers need models, examples, and tools that enable them to create exemplary biliterate learning environments for the children they teach. To do this, they must have professional development opportunities, professional books, children's books, and other resources in Spanish that are equivalent in both quantity and quality to these resources in English.

The goal of biliteracy for Spanish-speaking students and others is both worthy and attainable. However, for this goal to become a reality, we must pay careful attention to developing skills and strategies in biliteracy in both our students and our teachers. Moreover, we must build classroom and school environments that honor and validate both languages.

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