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**English as a foreign language pre-reading skills readiness at
Kindergarten level**

Degree thesis

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ABSTRACT

This study examined varied methodologies available for the development of pre-reading skills, making an emphasis on phonics and how it may affect reading fluency. A Kindergarten student was evaluated on her knowledge of phonics, phonemic awareness and phoneme isolation during a period of 28 weeks. Information was gathered from in-class observation as well as from analyzing student work, and using oral and written evaluations. The researcher predicted that using varied methodologies together, over a single approach enhances the early pre-reading process which is consistent with the opinions of Bramberger (as cited in Corporación Futuro, 2012). By itself, phonics instruction presented advantages as well as disadvantages which will only become more apparent once the student reaches reading age. Additionally, it was examined how the knowledge that teachers have of the TESOL/NCATE standards may have an impact on the development of their students. Overall, the researcher recommends for phonics instruction not be thought of as a standalone approach when preparing students to read, relying on the TESOL/NCATE standards as a guide.

INTRODUCTION

This is a thesis presented as part of a Master's program in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), which has been divided in two different chapters. The first chapter focuses on reading and the importance of pre-reading skills. The second chapter looks into the TESOL/NCATE standards and their application within the course.

Reading is a crucial language skill; hence, the pre-reading skills that English language learners develop are of great importance. In order to understand reading and what it requires, it is imperative to focus on what reading is, and the skills required for fluent reading. Along with research on the topic, a student portfolio is presented and analyzed, providing insightful information on the development of phonics instruction and its possible effect on reading.

Nowadays it is common to listen to teachers complain about students who lack proper reading skills, and who fail to understand the meaning of texts. This preoccupation on the subject has led teachers, parents and education authorities to investigate the root of the problem. Debate has risen on how students are taught how to read, and if they possess the right tools when they begin to read. Therefore, focus turns to instruction, whether it is synthetic or global. Many teachers believe that one approach works better than the other; however, both should be integrated as an entire approach to learn how to read.

The objective of the research is to demonstrate how phonics instruction is just a part of learning, and how it needs to be incorporated to different activities which in turn reinforce phonemic and phonological awareness, sight-word recognition, and development of vocabulary, among others. In order to achieve this, data was collected from different resources within a Kindergarten English language learning class, thus providing helpful information on the subject.

Additionally, the obtained data will allow a comparison between knowledge that children have of phonics when they reach Kindergarten, and the knowledge they have prior to the school year termination. This will permit the development of a hypothesis whose focal point is how reading will be affected in future years for a learner who understands and works with phonics.

Using the gathered information it was possible to determine how different approaches that students use when learning phonics contribute to the pre-reading learning process. Additionally, by analyzing the in-class contribution of a student to the whole learning process, it was possible to infer that on its own, phonics instruction is not 100% beneficial.

The second chapter of the thesis is based on the TEFL program, creating a portfolio with varied instruments that demonstrate knowledge of the TESOL/NCATE standards and their application. These standards contain five domains which focus on: language, culture, planning for instruction, assessment and professionalism. Each domain possesses a set of standards along with indicators which allow teachers to become knowledgeable on every aspect that the domain encloses.

Information on all the domains and standards is provided, however, artifacts are provided only for one indicator within each standard. These artifacts serve as examples of how the standard can be applied within a course for teachers, and how the prospect teachers can apply them inside the English language learning classroom. The main objective for this chapter is to present information on each standard along with practical examples that allow a deep comprehension of the subject. By having better understanding of what each standard requires, planning for a Kindergarten English class became easier and more productive. When teachers are given the right tools to work with, the learning process becomes enhanced and far more beneficial for students.

METHOD

The focus of the study is to better understand which practices are beneficial when preparing children to read in a language which is not their own. Therefore, the interest to learn about the teaching of pre-reading skills motivated the conduction of this research. Despite the vast available information on the benefits of teaching of pre-reading skills, most teachers and educational institutions fail to find an approach that successfully allows students to learn how to read.

In Ecuador, educational policies are trying to eliminate old and traditional ways of teaching, venturing to new approaches. However, national changes will probably take a few years to work properly, and even so, no one can provide enough proof that they will be beneficial in the long term.

Unfortunately, students cannot wait until successful practices are implemented, and so, they need to be provided with tools that will allow them to become fluent readers. By gathering data from the learning process of a kindergarten student, this research seeks to find as many beneficial ways as possible to instruct phonics at an early age, which in turn becomes a predictor for future reading fluency.

The methodology deployed in this study includes a variety of complimentary research methods that include qualitative and quantitative information. For the qualitative part, information was gathered mainly through observation of a student and her participation in the English classroom. Additionally, her mother presented oral information on how the child developed at home.

Observation of the student during class was a long and slow process since it required careful examination of her answers, how fast she grasped a concept, participation, etc, all through a period of 28 weeks. However, the qualitative research became useful not only when examining the results, but also when quantitative data needed to be cross-analyzed.

Quantitative data was gathered through a collection of in-class work, assignments, written and oral evaluations. The class work was taken from the Phonics book by Pearson Learning. The written and oral evaluations were tools

designed by the researcher in order to obtain relevant information on the child's specific development of her early pre-reading skills, focusing on phonics.

The research instruments

Two main instruments were used during this study. An initial evaluation was given to the student when she began the school year. This tool allowed the researcher to check on her previous knowledge of letters and her phonemic awareness. The evaluation simply evaluated if the student was able to recognize the letters of the alphabet or the sound they made. The same evaluation was administered later on, near course end, to check on the student's progress.

To evaluate the student's ability to discern letters and sounds, a term evaluation was given. This evaluation includes questions that allowed the researcher to check on how well the student is able to visually discriminate letters, her recognition of case, her ability to spell, as well as her capability to identify and match letters with sounds.

Collecting and analyzing the data

Data was collected during the course of 28 weeks, time during which the student was observed, her work gathered, and she was tested both formally and informally on her knowledge and understanding of phonics. Except during the written test, the student had no knowledge that she was being evaluated, which was done in order to decrease her anxiety level when facing an evaluation.

The data helps evaluate the different tools used inside a Kindergarten classroom to instruct students on pre-readings skills. The findings allow the researcher to analyze which tools are valuable for students when developing early reading awareness and which could be implemented in conjunction with others to enhance the learning process.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading is an ability that does not come as naturally and readily as speaking does, therefore, most children learn it in a systematical way. Due to the complexity of this skill, several methods and approaches to instruct reading are used around the world. These methods focus on the importance of creating versatile and well balanced pre-reading skills, which are important tools in developing reading.

To comprehend the different ways in which learning to read can be affected, it is necessary to understand what reading is, which factors influence it, what are the most common required pre-reading skills and the different techniques available for instruction. Additionally, the difference between phonics and whole language instruction has to be addressed in order to provide a comprehensive view of the most controversial learning approaches when it comes to reading.

Whichever approach teachers use to instruct reading, it must be understood that it serves as a means to an end. The final goal of reading is the ability to comprehend a text. Thus, it is imperative to build strong pre-reading skills so students can guide their energy and attention to comprehension and not to overcoming reading difficulties.

A definition of reading

There are several definitions of what reading is and the processes it involves. However, most agree that it is a process which entails word recognition, comprehension and the ability to construct meaning from written texts. Simpler and older definitions identify reading as the ability to translate printed material into oral language, leaving aside recognition and comprehension which are necessary for the understanding of a text.

Using the most complete definition, it is possible to say that in order to read, an individual must be able to identify words in print, use them to construct meaning and coordinate all of this together creating understanding. Even though this seems logical, reading does not always fit the three categories. For example, it is possible to read a letter identifying all the words in print, but failing to comprehend the idea of what is being expressed. Also, it is possible to

construct meaning without identifying all the words in a text, like when a word is unknown to the reader, but the context provides guidance. These examples can all be thought of as reading, however, reading to its fullest can only be achieved when words are recognized, meaning understood and comprehension developed.

Word recognition is a pre-reading skill that can also be taught at home, however, it is more common to see it as part of formal instruction when children reach Kindergarten. In order to be developed, children need to learn about the alphabetic principle, or how letters represent certain sounds. After which, they can apply this knowledge to decode sound-letter relationships.

At a more advanced level in English language learning, students need to know how to manipulate sounds in words while working with phonemic awareness. Phoneme segmentation and manipulation are skills that are developed during the first and second grade of primary instruction. Both rely on the students' knowledge of phonics and its primary components. Additionally, an important part of word recognition, is the ability that children possess to identify high-frequency words, like the word *is*, *the*, *I*, etc, which is useful when students learn how to read short texts.

Special attention should be placed on reading comprehension, which is affected by several factors. Without proper reading comprehension, word recognition and construction of meaning are not complete. Consequently, it is important that young learners master all three in order to become fluent readers.

Reading comprehension

One of the final goals of reading is the understanding of the text being read. Reading comprehension is defined as the interaction between old and new information (Anderson & Pearson, 1984), and it is vital for the reading process. When learning to read, comprehension is important since it allows students to connect what they already know with the presented information in order to produce a new idea. Some factors that influence reading comprehension are emotions, meta-cognitive knowledge, competency, and critical reading. Meta-cognitive knowledge allows students to activate prior knowledge and assists in the understanding of new information (Pecjak & Podlesek, 2011).

To develop good reading comprehension, students need to be able to know how they learn better and with what learning strategies they acquire more knowledge. For example, some students use summarizing as a strategy to understand what they are reading. If they are aware of this process it is more likely for them to apply this method to new situations contributing to new learning, therefore to a better reading comprehension.

The majority of students do not know how to identify what they do or what process they follow when trying to comprehend a text (Pecjak & Podlesek, 2011). This reduces the understanding of reading because every time they read they will apply different methods or strategies trying retain as much information as possible. Motivating students to be familiar with reading comprehension strategies or methods that worked for them when reading new books or texts will improve their reading comprehension.

Teaching critical thinking is a useful instrument to help students understand more about their reading. For example, inference is necessary for reading comprehension since it allows the reader to draw conclusions from the text. Critical reading allows the student to go beyond the text, not to only understand vocabulary but to interact with the new information and the students' prior knowledge. A good way to teach students how to use critical thinking when learning is to model this thinking first and then asking the students to do this by their own (Huang, 2011).

Another factor that influences reading comprehension is emotions. This factor has an effect on how much students comprehend of what is being read. When negative emotions occupy the student's working memory, focus will be placed on what the student is feeling and thinking rather than reading and creating connections (Shell, Brooks, Trainin, Wilson, Kauffman, & Herr, 2010). Negative emotions may be linked to something external or something due to reading such as difficult vocabulary, extensive texts, or topics that are not interesting to the student. For example, deficiency in word recognition can frustrate students leading to think more about their frustrations, thus not understanding what they are reading.

Reading comprehension is also affected by competency. Competency is a person's belief that one is capable of doing or achieving something (Bandura, 2007). Relating this to reading, competency is a student's idea of his own capacities and abilities to read or attain a reading goal (Pecjak & Podlesek, 2011). Competency involves perseverance and effort. If a student feels more competent in reading he will be more likely to improve in reading comprehension or other aspects of reading. Teachers should help scholars feel more confident in this subject by providing positive feedback and facilitate strategies or methods to improve their reading.

During a child's early literacy years, it is possible to develop their understanding of meaning and comprehension by providing learners with information on different topics, exposing them to varied vocabulary as well as ensuring an understanding of print and how it works. These activities can be encouraged at home. Children that are read to by their parents are gaining vocabulary, as well as age-appropriate knowledge on different topics which go in accordance to their surroundings. Additionally, children can learn about the author of a book, where is the title located, distinguish between front and back cover, as well as what is a sentence and what is a word. All this knowledge is often referred as recognition of print.

When children reach Kindergarten it is not uncommon for them to be evaluated on how well they know and understand the concept of print. Common evaluations test the knowledge that students have of books. For example, the teacher may hold a book upside down, or open it from the back cover, and ask the student to correct her if she is doing something that is not appropriate. Special considerations are usually taken with English language learners (ELLs), who will learn the correct terms and vocabulary requested during the school year.

Overall, it can be said that reading and its comprehension is a complex skill; therefore, there are a few factors which will influence reading readiness, and even some that may become predictors of reading capabilities. The study by Gallagher, Frith and Snowling (as cited in Barlow-Brown & Connelly, 2002) shows that by the time learners reach the age of six, the knowledge they have on letters will become one of their best reading predictors. Hence, it is valuable

to understand which factors have an impact on the reading capabilities of children, in order to develop them to their fullest.

Influential factors in reading readiness

There are two major factors that are influential when children begin to read: phonological awareness and letter knowledge (Barlow-Brown & Connelly, 2002). These factors can be thought of as part of an umbrella. At the base of it is letter knowledge, or the capability to recognize that letters are different and that they each have a different name. At the top of the umbrella is phonological awareness, a broad term that encompasses other sub-skills like phonemic awareness.

Phonological awareness is a skill that is necessary to read (Lipka & Siegel, 2007). It is the ability to know that words are made up by different sounds, and how each sound functions within a word. It relies on the capability of the learner to identify and manipulate parts of spoken language, using alliteration, rhyme, and separation of words into syllables. According to a study done by De Jong and Van der Leij (as cited in Barlow-Brown & Connelly, 2002), phonological awareness is developed only after the letters of the alphabet are properly identified.

Within reading practices, phonological awareness is important for word recognition, which can happen in two ways. The first one is recognizing words in a phonological way, or how they are pronounced. For example, students that are able to recognize their name in print will become aware of its phonetic components. Another way is through the division of words into single letters or syllables (Vousden, et al., 2010). This happens when a child spells each letter in a word before reading the word as a whole: *h-o-u-s-e* reads *house*.

Phonological awareness is a complicated skill even for native speakers, so, when working with ELLs, difficulties may arise during the pre-reading and reading process. This may happen since English as a language has many phonological irregularities, unlike Spanish, where combinations of letters always present the same sounds.

As a subcategory of phonological awareness, phonemic awareness is the skill to manipulate individual sounds in spoken words. It is the understanding that words are made of different sounds, which, when placed together, make a word. It is strictly an auditory task, as it focuses on the capability of an individual to distinguish between sounds and blends in a word. Its instruction is effective when students learn about phoneme manipulation, focusing on one phone at a time.

For tasks that are presented in a written form, focus turns on phonics, or the letter-sound relationship within written words. Instruction on phonics allows children to create expected relationships between sounds and letters, which can lead to a positive start regarding reading fluency.

Even though these factors are influential when learning how to read, they are not the only ones that affect reading skills. Others, like fluency and working memory are also important and should be taken into consideration when instructing learners on reading.

Pre-reading skills

There are several pre-readings skills which are developed among the first years of literacy instruction. When referring to ELLs, most of these skills will be taught in Kindergarten. The skills include: letter-sound recognition, concepts of print, phonological awareness and phonemic awareness.

For phonological awareness the skills that should be assessed are: recognition of words in a sentence, rhyme, and recognition of syllables.

- Recognition of words in a sentence: Fluent readers are able to identify words in a text with great accuracy and speed. As a result, the ability to recognize words in a sentence is a pre-requisite for text comprehension. Students can develop word recognition through repeated exposure to the same word. In the English language, about 100 words (high-frequency) make up 50% of the words read (Eduplace, 1997).
- Rhyme: The ability to rhyme is crucial for reading since it helps students develop decoding skills, which is possible when learners manipulate sounds to create rhymes, making them aware of patterns.

- Recognition of syllables: Syllable awareness is thought of as fundamental for early reading. From the perspective of psycholinguistics, as presented by Ziegler & Goswami (as cited in MacBride-Chang, C., Tong, X., Shu, H., Wong, A., Leung, K., & Tardif, T, 2008), syllable awareness is relevant for English word recognition. Since English language presents so many phonological irregularities, syllable awareness matters more for early reading acquisition.

Within phonemic awareness, students should be instructed on phoneme matching, phoneme isolation, and become initiated in phoneme blending.

- Phone matching: It is the ability to identify words that begin with the same sound. It is important since it helps students create a strong relationship between a sound, a letter and a word. Additionally, it helps students group words based on their beginning sounds.
- Phoneme isolation: Is the ability to isolate a single sound within a word, and is necessary for early literacy. It allows children to locate sounds at the beginning, middle or end of a word. At a more advanced level it permits students to work with phoneme segmentation, since the ability to break down words into individual sounds is developed.
- Phoneme blending: Is the capability to blend individual sounds in order to form a word. During Kindergarten its instruction should take place near the end of the year, since it is to be fully instructed through the first and second grade. It is considered probably as one of the most difficult tasks inside phonemic awareness, but it is the most important to be mastered. It is a skill needed when students encounter unknown words, so they can read them through pronunciation.
- Additional to the mentioned skills, phonemic awareness also includes: phoneme manipulation, segmentation, deletion, addition and substitution. However, these are taught during the first and early second grade.

The mentioned pre-reading skills are influenced by the level of understanding that students have on letters and their recognition (Wagner & Torgesen, 1987), as a result, students who do not have basic knowledge of the letters seem to be

at disadvantage (Gundlach, 2008) when learning how to read. Therefore, early focus on phonics and phonemic awareness is important as it improves not only reading on the native tongue, but also on the other language being acquired (Stuart, 2010). This means that the preschool print experience plays a significant role on early literacy development, where higher levels of exposure to print, along with letter knowledge and phonological sensitivity become predictors of reading success (Barlow-Brown & Connelly, 2002).

Pre-reading skills in Kindergarten

Understanding letters and the sound each one of them makes is a process that develops almost naturally within a child's native language. However, English-language learners need additional exposure to pre-reading skills in order to develop their early literacy abilities. During Kindergarten, students increase their knowledge of phonics, preparing themselves to work with various components of phonemic awareness by the time they reach the first grade.

A study conducted by Sénéchal (2006) states that alphabet knowledge has been found to directly predict reading fluency in future years. Researchers like Byrne and Fielding-Barnsley (1989) and Pullen and Justice (2003) support that phonemic awareness is influenced by the acquisition of the alphabetic principle, or the knowledge that letters and their combinations represent sounds within a language. On a much recent study, it was found that phonemic awareness with alphabetic instruction is more effective than phonemic awareness without alphabetic instruction (Foorman, Chen, Carlson, Moats, Francis & Fletcher, 2003). Overall, studies agree that phonemic awareness is a predictor of early literacy growth (Hulme, Hatcher, Nation, Brown, Adams & Stuart, 2002; Stahl & Murray, 1994), as well as that poor phonemic awareness translates into learning difficulties (Tallal, 2003), making letter instruction so much more important.

As research shows, phonics plays an important role in reading instruction, and is praised among teachers in several institutions; however, it also plays part in one of the most controversial situations within reading practices.

The “reading wars”

Every teacher has a different idea of which method is the most efficient and effective when it comes to teaching children how to read. Some teachers believe that children need to learn phoneme-grapheme correspondence in order to become good readers. Others believe that when students are given a rich reading environment, they will intuitively learn a reading code. The first approach is known as phonics instruction, while the latter is the whole language approach, and each one represents a side of “the reading wars”.

The whole language approach is a "top down" method where the learner has to construct meaning of a text based on prior knowledge of the words. In simplest terms, learners read by recognizing words in a piece of text. This learning philosophy comes from the idea that language is not meant to be broken into letters to later on be decoded, but that words function with each other in context. This method is part of the constructivist approach, where students construct their own knowledge using the tools provided by the teacher.

Teachers, who support this method, do not believe in emphasizing on spelling and grammar correctness. This is because focusing on errors turns the process to mechanical learning. However, overlooking mistakes will later on be reflected on lack of improvement of reading skills. Additionally, this approach may not be beneficial for students that suffer processing disorders such as dyslexia, since they require decoding skills like phonics and phonemic awareness.

A study by Brown and Cain (as cited in Scholes, 1998), showed that in the state of Florida, where curriculum was based on the whole language approach, only 23% of the fourth graders were able to read at a proficient level. This led the Commissioner of Education to implement phonics-based instructional material. Similarly, California renounced the method in 1996, and returned to phonics. Based on the assumption that if students whose native tongue is English have complications with the system, is it reliable enough to use it with ELLs?

The disagreement over the best type of reading instruction took the National Reading Panel to conduct a study on the components that have to be present in any effective reading program. In 2000, the findings released showed five components: phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary

instruction and reading comprehension (Reading horizons, 2012), which will be explained later on.

Pikulski & Tobin (as cited in Dickinson & Neuman, 2002) support the idea that some children will begin school learning how to read, but that most of them will need systematic instruction. Although phonics instruction seems to be the answer to this need, it by itself is not enough.

According to a study conducted by Shapiro and Solity (2008), the combination of small sight vocabulary along with small-unit-phonics instruction improves student performance. In most cases, teaching single letter units is more appropriate than teaching larger ones. However, larger units are especially helpful when instructing words which are irregular in their pronunciation. If students are about to use larger units, they must have a good domain decoding monosyllabic and polysyllabic words. Consequently, it is recommended to start the grapheme-phoneme correspondences with the most practical and easiest ones. Additionally, students should be given a pattern to work with, making it possible not to teach all the letters, but allowing students to develop a self-teaching method.

Skillful reading calls for balance between learning phonics, and providing students with a meaningful context where they have enough opportunities to practice what they are learning, and see how useful it is which is especially true with ELLs.

ELLs and reading

Pre-reading skills can be developed inside the Kindergarten classroom, however, it is imperative to understand that ELLs may encounter difficulties when learning how to read in a language which is not their own. Most of the students already possess the pre-reading skills they need in order to learn how to read in their mother tongue when they begin reading in foreign language. Nevertheless it is important to comprehend that no two languages are the same. In Spanish for example, the rules of grapheme-phoneme correspondence differ from those in English.

English has a complex orthographical system; almost 13% of the words used in the English language tend to be irregular. Therefore, common pronunciation rules do not necessarily apply (Hanna, Hodges, & Rudorf, 1966). Voudsen, Eleffson, Solity and Chater (2010), make emphasis that in English language, there are different ways to pronounce the same phoneme combinations. For example, the word *beach* and *great* share the *ea* phoneme combination, but are pronounced in a different way.

Additionally, in English there are various manners to decode words: whole words (peach), bodies (p-each) and graphemes (p-ea-ch). When the orthography is more regular, as observed in Spanish, it is more effective to use small linguistic units. However irregular orthographies like English can be better encoded in larger units, as in “p-each”. Therefore, it can be said that in English, it is more complex, but not less beneficial, to choose a representational unit to transform from print to sound.

The difficulties that ELLs may encounter when learning how to read in English make a point to use not only phonics instruction inside the classroom, but the whole language approach as well.

A focus on phonics

Regarding phonics instruction during Kindergarten, it is commonly suggested that children at this age may not be ready for it. However, data collected in a study conducted by the National Institute of Child Health & Human Development ([NICHD], 2010) shows that the effects of early phonics instruction are positive, and significant for future reading development. But for it to be effective, early phonics instruction should be direct, frequently practiced, meaningful and systematic.

When learning about phonics, most children need to be taught grapheme-phoneme relations in a direct and clear way. For example, they need to understand that the letter *s* is related to the /s/ sound, found in words like sun, snail, sailboat, etc. As with regular learners, ELLs have a better chance of association when they are presented with a picture of an object that begins with the letter being taught, which is enhanced when the object itself takes the shape of the letter. In the case of the provided example, a teacher can present the

picture of a snake in the shape of letter s, and have students repeat the word snake along with the sound of the letter.

Furthermore, children need several and meaningful opportunities to apply their phonic skills. Inside a Kindergarten classroom, this translates into using songs, rhymes, reading books, using worksheets and doing hands-on workshops. The purpose of these activities is to constantly remind the learners about the sound of each letter, and to provide them with useful vocabulary not only for discerning the sound, but to increase vocabulary exposure as well.

Finally, instruction has to be systematical, and according to the NICHD (2010), systematical phonics instruction:

Clearly identifies a selected and useful set of letter-sound relationships and then organizes the introduction of these relationships into a logical instructional sequence. Furthermore, a systematic program of instruction provides children with ample opportunities to practice the relationships they are.

Systematic phonics is believed to be beneficial for students who present difficulties reading. It applies to learners in Kindergarten as well as through the 6th grade. According to the NICHD (2010) children who are taught phonics in a systematical way are better at decoding and spelling, as well as with their comprehension of texts.

If systematical instruction follows a pre-planned sequence, it is possible to say that incidental instruction does not follow a plan, and is instructed according to what the teacher perceives the students need at different moments in time.

Within these two types of instruction, different teaching approaches can be defined, where the varied options rely on how the units are analyzed, how grapheme-phoneme combinations are presented, or how words are presented inside the reading of texts.

In synthetic-phonics students learn that letters have a sound, and which sounds come from combining different letters. Additionally, they learn how to blend sounds in order to form words. In analytic-phonics, students are instructed on how to analyze grapheme-phoneme combinations in words they have already

learned. The difference with synthetic phonics is that in this approach students do not pronounce sounds in an isolated manner.

With phonics through spelling, children learn about word segmentation, and how a letter represents a phoneme. In this approach, students take a word, segment it into phonemes and are able to write it down just by breaking down the different sounds found in each part of the word. Phonics may also be taught using an analogy-based approach where children learn how to use word families in order to identify words they are not familiar with.

There is one teaching method that is not considered to be systematic or explicit, and it is embedded phonics. With this approach children learn with letter-sound relationships while they are reading a text. For example, the teacher provides a very short simple text, usually made from a few sentences, and asks the class to point each word and follow along her reading.

Advantages and disadvantages of each approach

Every approach has been proven to work to an extent, thus it is important to recognize which factors make one type of learning beneficial, as well as which are the disadvantages it may present.

Alphabetic methods are those where the students learn letters by their name. It may seem like a simple and straightforward approach, however it presents with several inconveniences. In the English language the name of each letter does not necessarily coincide with the sound it makes. This may confuse students when they learn how to read. This method has been widely used in the past, and should no longer be the sole method of instruction.

Syllabic methods teach based on syllables. Being English a very irregular language, it is not recommended to teach using this method. Additionally it relies heavily on the students' ability to memorize, which may turn into a lack of interest for learning. Most importantly, reading becomes a mechanic process, where the significance of words may be overlooked.

Phonemic methods rely on children being able to associate a symbol to a sound, and not to a name. This is a valuable methodology since it develops the capacity of a child to articulate and pronounce a given word, even if the child

has not seen or heard the word before. However, just like the method that involves learning by syllables, reading may become mechanical, and concepts may be ignored.

A method that is not widely used is that of using signs and gestures along with the sound of the letter to help activate different parts of the brain during the learning process. This method may be used along with the signs used for the hearing impaired, or sign language.

Global methods are characterized by the fact that they present children with units that have a meaning, and may be related to their environment. For example, children may be presented with a word, along with its meaning. This word is learned in a visual way. This helps students focus on meaning rather than how the word is built. The disadvantage with this method is that if students have not seen the word before, they will struggle with it. The same is true with global methods that involve learning phrases, or learning through context. Additionally, students may try to match the words they know with those they are reading, and end up predicting their lecture in an incorrect way.

Even though the mentioned approaches are all ways to teach phonics, caution is required when teaching phonics for English as a foreign language class. The same approaches used inside a class with native speakers may not always be the right one for a group of foreign language learners. It is important to understand that although phonics instruction is valuable, it should be used along with instruction of phonemic awareness, reading comprehension, knowledge of print, etc.

Different methods should be used, creating “mixed” methodologies, where students in both synthetic and global ways. To achieve this, material in class should be multisensory, moving away from dogmatic teaching using varied methods as an aid to teach.

TESOL/NCATE standards

Even though methodologies are important inside the classroom, it is also valuable to understand who the students are, and which approaches are beneficial for them especially in an English language learning classroom. In the

field of education, many students are enrolled in schools, with limited or no knowledge of English. These students are referred to as ESOL students. This means they are learning English, for they speak another language. According to the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (as cited in TESOL/NCATE, 2010), ESOL students have grown over 65% from 1993 to 2004 in the United States. This translates into a need for ESOL educators to be prepared to teach students with diverse backgrounds and distinct needs.

TESOL

Teachers of English for Speakers of Other Languages, Inc (TESOL) is an international organization that was established in 1966. It was created over the lack of an organization able to unite individuals at different educational levels who shared and interest in teaching English to speakers of other languages. Their mission is to “advance professional expertise in English language teaching and learning for speakers of other languages worldwide” (TESOL, 2007). This mission took TESOL, in 1999, to become a member organization of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Along with NCATE, TESOL approved in 2001 the TESOL/NCATE Standards for P-12 ESL Teacher Education Program (TESOL/NCATE, 2010).

In the United States, the main source for the development of ESL standards is TESOL. The standards they provide serve as a guide for teacher education programs, and other standards like the ones by the American council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). Programs developed with TESOL in mind target a group of teachers that will teach students that use a language other than English, but that require it in order to function in the U.S society and classroom. Overall, the standards for P-12 Teacher Education Programs address the need for a consistent preparation of teachers in the field of teaching English as a second language.

Even though the standards have been developed with the population of the United States in mind, if they are understood it is possible to successfully apply them to the reality of other countries.

CHAPTER I: EFL STUDENT CASE STUDY

Pre-reading skills are an essential part of reading fluency and must be thoroughly developed to ensure proper reading abilities. Even though there are different pre-reading skills, and they are all equally important, this student case study focuses on early phonics instruction.

This student portfolio seeks to provide information on the phonics learning process of a student learning English as a foreign language. This information is required to decide on which methodologies are valuable when working with pre-reading skills.

The information made available through this portfolio is important to implement new approaches to teaching how to read. Reading is not meant to be a mechanical process, but it involves understanding and comprehension which is something students seem to lack. Reading comprehension has decreased, and educators believe it is because of the methodologies used to teach children how to read. Therefore, the initial reading process must be revised and enhanced in order to avoid future complications.

1.1 Student selection and setting

The subject of this following portfolio is Ana, a 5 year old girl who has not had any prior instruction in English as her previous school did not offer it in their curriculum. Her mother tongue is Spanish, and even though her family can speak English, the language is not spoken at home. She is currently enrolled in a bilingual school, which offers English instruction 11 hours a week, where 5 hours are dedicated to Phonics. The English course she is taking has been designed to help students develop basic language skills that are needed inside the classroom as well as in a few day-to-day situations. Special attention is given to listening and speaking tasks that are necessary to complete daily classroom requirements. Throughout the year, pre-reading and writing skills are also introduced, as well as vocabulary related to thematic units. Overall, the course is targeted to beginners with no literacy in English.

In class, Ana shows high motivation to learn the language as she wishes to watch and understand lyrics of songs and her favorite movies in English. She presents with speaking skills that are above those of her classmates since she is able to form almost complete sentences entirely in English. As far as listening, she understands a class dictated completely in English, only requiring extra explanation and or signaling in few occasions. Her vocabulary and knowledge of English letters has increased significantly since school began. Even though Ana was constantly evaluated on various language abilities, focus was placed on her pre-reading skills including: letter/sound recognition, phonics and phonemic awareness.

1.2 Pre-test evaluation

Artifact 1: Letter/Sound Recognition Assessment (Pre-test)

Letter/Sound Recognition Assessment

Name: Ana P Date: Sept 14/2011

Directions: Sit side by side with a student. You may use either flashcards or a list containing the alphabet (one letter per row and a separate row for uppercase and lowercase letters).

Place list in front of student, revealing one row at a time or show a letter flashcard asking the student, "What letter is this?" (If the child responds A, without saying capital or lowercase, ask, "Is it capital A or lowercase A?" Ask, "What sound does it make?"

Using a form like the one below, place a check mark if the child identifies letter or sound correctly, a dash if there is no answer, and if the child identifies an incorrect letter or sound, record what they actually say. This can provide useful information to guide instruction.

Letter	Capital identified	Lowercase identified	Letter-Sound Identified
Aa	—	—	—
Bb	—	—	—
Cc	—	—	—
Dd	—	—	—
Ee	—	—	—
Ff	✓	—	✓
Gg	—	—	—
Hh	—	—	—
Ii	—	—	—
Jj	—	—	—
Kk	—	—	—
Ll	✓	—	✓
Mm	✓	—	✓
Nn	✓	—	—
Oo	✓	—	—
Pp	—	—	—
Qq	—	—	—
Rr	✓	—	—
Ss	✓	—	✓
Tt	✓	—	✓
Uu	✓	—	—
Vv	—	—	—
Ww	—	—	—
Xx	—	—	—
Yy	—	—	—
Zz	✓	—	—

* Provided simple sounds in Spanish.
 Additionally names not fully in English
 but based on Spanish-English relation.

Alicia Garcia G
 Sept 14/2011

55% of the students have been in the same school since pre-Kindergarten, but the remaining students are from different institutions, where English may not be

taught. For that matter all students were given an oral evaluation of their language skills in English at the beginning of the school year. The oral evaluation was based on brief recognition of the letters of the English alphabet regardless case and the sound they make. A checklist was used to mark the correct answers of each student, without them realizing they were being tested on alphabet knowledge.

The result of the evaluation was used as the baseline of the student's knowledge in English language before official instruction began, as familiarity with letters is essential to the development of reading skills. The pre-test was conducted on September the 14th, 2011; two weeks after adaptation period began.

As the pre-test shows, Ana was unable to recognize most of the alphabet letters and name them in English. However, she displayed knowledge on letters that have similar sound to those in Spanish, showing some previous instruction in letter recognition. She was also able to provide sounds of what she believed each letter sounds like in English. Overall, when compared to the students who had previous English instruction, Ana lacked basic knowledge of the alphabet.

1.3 Post-test evaluation

Artifact 2: Letter/Sound Recognition Assessment (Post-test)

Letter/Sound Recognition Assessment

Name: Ana P Date: April 12/2012

Directions: Sit side by side with a student. You may use either flashcards or a list containing the alphabet (one letter per row and a separate row for uppercase and lowercase letters).

Please sit in front of student, revealing one row at a time or show a letter flashcard asking the student, "What letter is this?" If the child responds A, without saying capital or lowercase, ask: "Is it capital A or lowercase A?" Ask, "What sound does it make?"

Using a form like the one below, place a check mark if the child identifies letter or sound correctly, a slash if there is no answer, and if the child identifies an incorrect letter or sound, record what they actually say. This can provide useful information to guide instruction.

Letter	Capital identified	Lowercase identified	Letter-Sound Identified
Aa	/	/	/
Bb	/	/	/
Cc	/	/	/
Dd	/	/	/
Ee	/	/	/
Ff	/	/	/
Gg	/	/	/
Hh	/	/	/
Ii	/	/	/
Jj	/	/	/
Kk	/	/	/
Ll	/	/	/
Mm	/	/	/
Nn	/	/	/
Oo	/	/	/
Pp	/	/	/
Qq	/	/	/
Rr	/	/	/
Ss	/	/	/
Tt	/	/	/
Uu	/	/	/
Vv	/	/	/
Ww	/	/	/
Xx	/	/	/
Yy	/	/	/
Zz	/	/	/

* one sound only
corrected herself

During the course of the year, the students enrolled in the English class learned about the alphabet, letter recognition and the sound each letter makes. Extra emphasis was placed on alphabet knowledge as the students prepared for the school's Spelling Bee contest. Similar to the pre-test, the post-test evaluates letter recognition, but in addition, the students were also tested for detection of letters in their upper and lower case , and letter-sound identification.

In the post-test evaluation, which was conducted on April the 12th, 2012, Ana was able to correctly identify almost all the letters of the alphabet as well as their sound, and showed significant improvement from her pre-test knowledge. However, she has yet to identify the sound that letters Vv, Yy, Zz, and Xx make, even though she recognizes each letter and its form correctly. This is mainly because those four letters have not been covered thoroughly during class, as they are part of the third school term.

Additionally, when asked about vowels, Ana was unable to provide both sounds for each vowel, except for letter Oo which has only one. She also showed confusion between the sound of /s/ and /c/, but corrected herself when she saw the picture alphabet placed in the class wall.

The result of her post-test evaluation is consistent with her performance in class and daily oral evaluations, the correct completion of her assignments and the extraordinary results of her term exams. The outcome of Ana's evaluation is a reflection of her interest and achievement in learning about letters and phonics since she has a personal motivation to read and write in English.

1.4. The course program

Students enrolled in the English course receive fourteen hours a week of instruction, from which five are devoted to phonics. Children learn a letter each week, and have different activities for the letter on each day of the week. On Mondays, students learn how a letter looks, and the sound it makes. They will be required to discriminate the letter within a text, from the alphabet, or in writings across the classroom. On Tuesdays, students are exposed to vocabulary with the letter, as well as to a rhyme or song that makes emphasis on the sound of the letter. Activities completed on Tuesdays include matching the letter to a word, or crossing out the words included in the vocabulary.

On Wednesdays, students read a book along with the teacher. The series Alphatales by Scholastic, provides fun stories where the letter of the week is constantly repeated, as well as its vocabulary. This helps students to practice the sound of the letter and different words, as well as to apply their knowledge of print. On Thursdays, students play with flashcards and practice their writing skills on their phonics book, as well as with different materials such as writing on cardboard or on the whiteboard, playing with finger-paint on the tables, etc. Finally, on Fridays, students get to work on a hands-on project, which represents an object that begins with the letter of the week. For example, students can build a *quail*, when learning about letter Qq and the sound it makes.

After three weeks, and three letters, students have a review week. During this week they get to work with the learned letters, increasing their phonological awareness and skills. During the entire learning process, students take home two assignments related to phonics each week. The assignments allow students to reinforce the letter knowledge at home.

1.5 Resources and materials

Information was gathered from September 2011, until April 2012. The sources of information are varied, as the selected artifacts come from a phonics book, a homework booklet, in class work such as workshops and a term evaluation. The examples obtained range from letter identification, to spelling of a word. They present valuable input on the knowledge that the student has on phoneme-grapheme correspondences, as well as her ability to work with beginning sounds.

Phonics book: This student book is part of the phonics sequence by Modern Curriculum Press from Pearson Learning Group. It delivers phonics instruction in a systematic and explicit way by presenting letters and their sounds, fostering phonemic awareness, early literacy skills and phonics. Each lesson begins with simple letter recognition, which allows the students to strengthen their alphabetic awareness. Once students successfully recognize the letter, it is reinforced with handwriting, developing understanding of print. Children are also able to develop their ability to listen, focus and recognize phonemes in words,

through activities that require audio and visual discrimination. Finally, students are given the opportunity to reinforce sound to symbol correspondences, as well as their writing skills using pictures. Throughout the book, there are opportunities for students to review their understanding of skills and concepts using fun review pages.

It should be clarified that although the book is called Phonics, level K, it includes activities related to the development of phonological and phonemic awareness, and not simply to phonics.

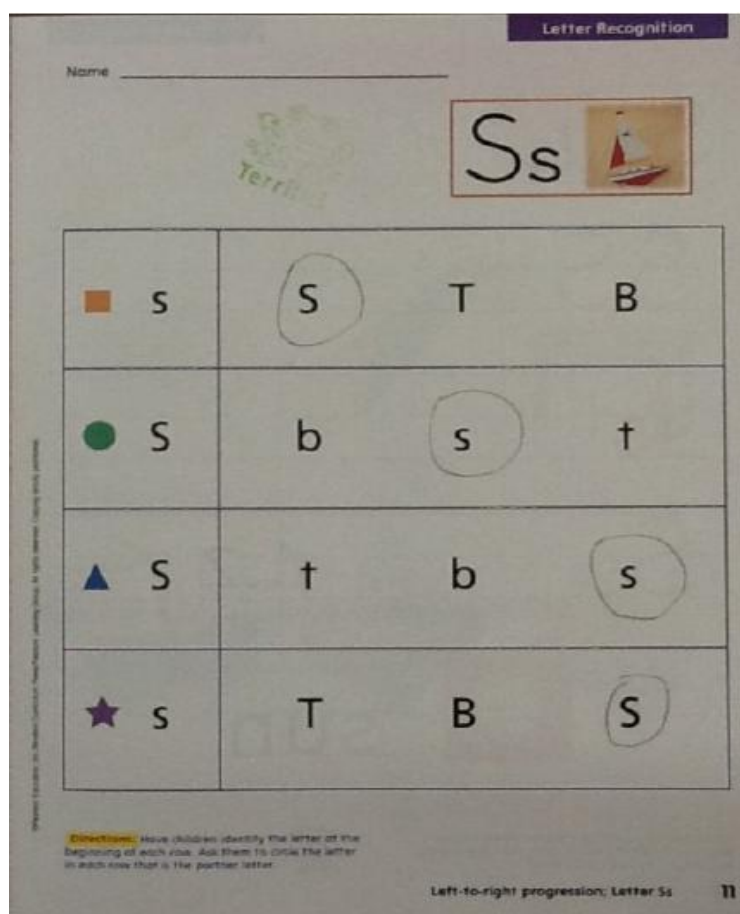
Homework booklet: A teacher-created tool which contains activities that help students reinforce the knowledge they obtained during class. The activities are based on those found on the phonics book, adding vocabulary from areas across the curriculum, expanding vocabulary and recognition skills. The activities included are designed to be completed at home by the students without the need of parental support, or further explanations. This is due to the small amount of parents that are bilingual, as well as for students to become responsible of their learning.

Hands-on workshops: Students at an early age enjoy activities that require them to use different materials. Therefore, arts and crafts projects are implemented in class in order to provide different activities that support alphabet instruction. These activities help increase alphabet knowledge and phonological awareness.

Term evaluations: Term evaluations are a tool used throughout the school, beginning at a very young age. Students are formally evaluated on the knowledge they have gathered through the term, which consists of a three month period. The evaluations include questions presented in the same way that class work is completed, making it familiar for the students at a very young age. In order to increase the reliability of the evaluations, students are also tested in an oral way, complementing their answers of the written evaluation.

1.6 Samples of student work

Artifact 3: Letter Recognition: Letter Ss



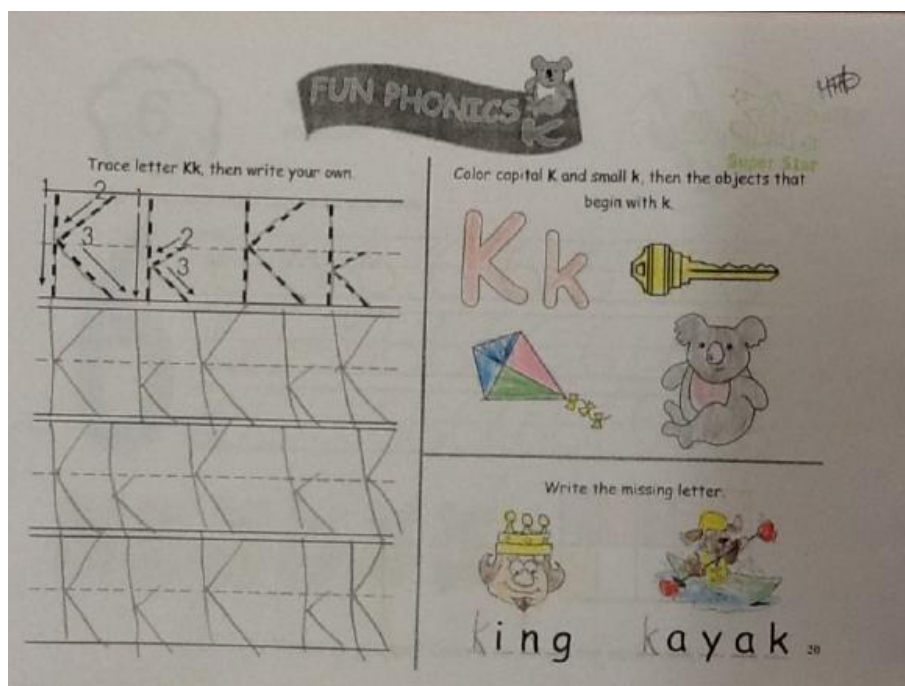
The basic pre-reading skills include the students' capability to recognize letters as a unit, and within a word. Based on the pre-test result, it was clear that the students had no previous instruction in all the letters of the alphabet, therefore it was important to cover them all. For the Phonics section of the English course, the first letter covered was Ss. This is due to the simple sound it makes, and the similarity with its sound in Spanish. The lesson on letter recognition was instructed on September the 15th, 2011.

Students were initially shown how the letter Ss looks like, and the sound it makes. Through a simple game in class, they were asked to find as many letter Ss as they could inside the classroom. This enhanced their recognition of the letter in their surroundings and outside the textbook. Additionally, the distinction between the upper and lower case of the letters was briefly introduced, since with this letter the difference relies solely on its size. Once identification of the letter was affirmed, the students proceeded to work on their Phonics book.

In the first exercise of the lesson, the students were required to identify the letter Ss. First, they recognized the letter at the beginning of the row; this was done by repeating the name of the letter, while using shapes as a guide. The students were then asked to circle the partner letter in each row to become familiar with the written form of the letter.

Ana was able to name the letter Ss correctly, and recognize its written form. Even though she was still unsure of which one was upper or lowercase, she understood that they are different in size, but not in shape.

Artifact 4: Letter Recognition/Phonics: Letter Kk



Homework assignments are an integral part of formal instruction that allow students to review at home what they learned in class with a guide provided by their teacher. These assignments are designed to allow the students to use them as a self-learning and evaluating tool and do not require any help from the parents. For this homework on recognition of letter Kk, students were requested to trace the letter Kk in its upper and lowercase form, to color the letter and the objects that begin with it, and to write the missing letter for each word provided. The purpose of the assignments is for the students to recognize the letter Kk in its written form, and be familiarized with the initial sound it makes. The multiple activities serve as reinforcement for letter identification.

Ana completed her assignment accurately, and when she was evaluated orally, she recognized the letter and the sound it makes. She was also able to name two of the vocabulary words in the assignments: *koala* and *king*. However, she showed a stronger recognition between the letter *Kk* and the word *koala*, which is an improvement from previous oral evaluations when she seemed confused with the sound of the letter *Kk* and *Hh*.

The assignment was sent on October the 25th, 2011, six weeks after formal phonics instruction began. By the time Ana completed this assignment, she had completed similar ones with letter *Ss*, *Tt*, *Bb*, *Hh* and *Mm*.

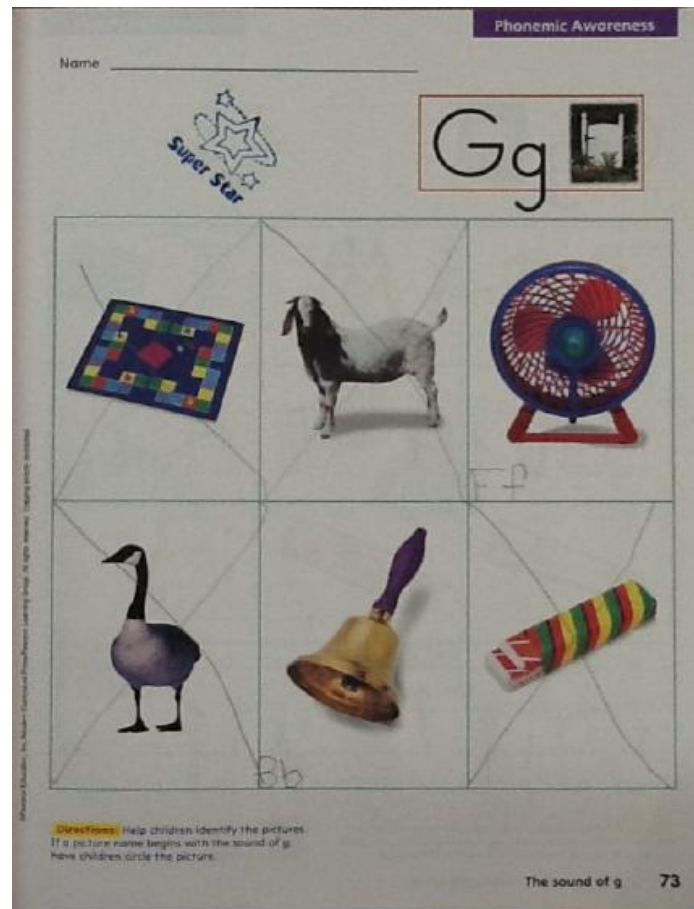
Artifact 5: Capital and lowercase identification letters *Hh/Mm/Kk*



Three months into the course, the students had become familiar with six letters: *Ss*, *Tt*, *Bb*, *Hh*, *Mm* and *Kk*. They recognized the shape of the letters, how to write them, and the sound they make. More importantly they could differentiate between upper and lowercase letters. Their knowledge was enforced in a review activity in class for the letters *Hh*, *Mm* and *Kk*, that required students to match upper and lowercase letters.

When Ana learned about the letter *Tt*, she understood that it is not just the size of the letter that is important, as with the letter *Ss*, but the shape too. During class, on November the 10th 2011, Ana completed a review page on capital and lowercase identification. During the activity she identified the shown pictures correctly, and was able to successfully match lower and uppercase letters for each example without hesitating.

Artifact 6: Phonemic Awareness: Letter Gg



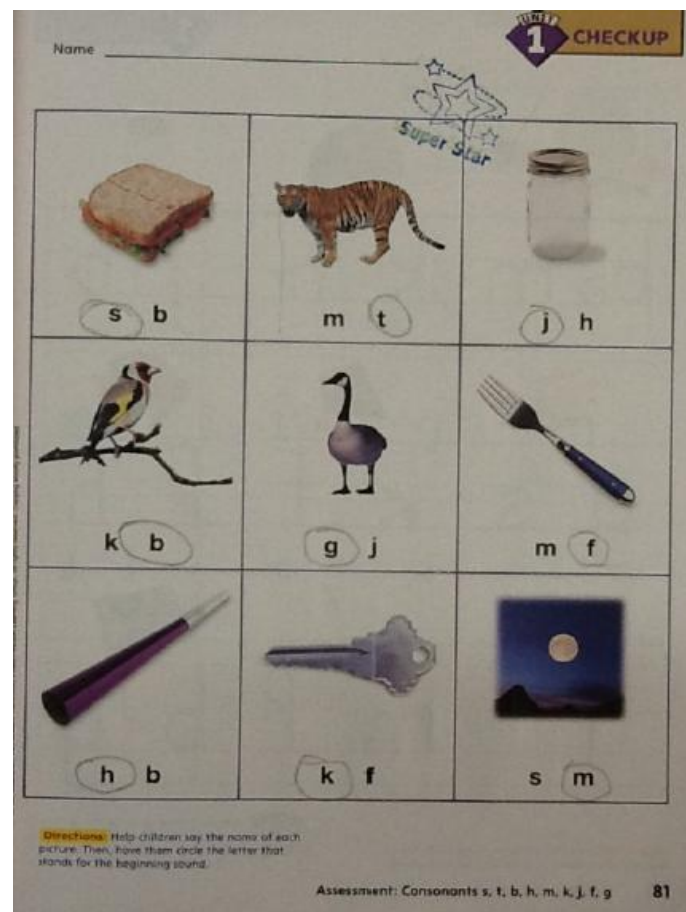
Phonemic awareness is the ability to distinguish and manipulate individual sounds, or phonemes. During Kindergarten, students are presented with different phonemes and work with them by identifying them on the beginning of a word. It is important for the students to be able to discriminate sounds, and relate them to a letter in written form, since only after they have mastered these abilities, then they can begin their reading process.

This activity was developed as part of the second lesson on the letter *Gg*, on November the 30th, 2011. Date by which, the students had already been exposed to how the letter sounds, and to examples of words that begin with it.

For the class exercise, the students reviewed the words with the teacher, emphasizing the sound of *Gg* on each word. After all the examples had been examined, the students were asked to cross out the words that begin with the letter *Gg*. In order to provide further discrimination and a short review on phonics, the words that did not begin with the letter *Gg* were to be identified and the correct letter for each to be written down.

During class, Ana identified the words of the vocabulary correctly, and crossed out those that began with the letter *Gg*, but she completed it only after receiving extra help from the teacher with the pronunciation of some words. Like her classmates, she has difficulty distinguishing between the letters *Gg* and *Jj*.

Artifact 7: Phoneme Isolation: Initial Sounds



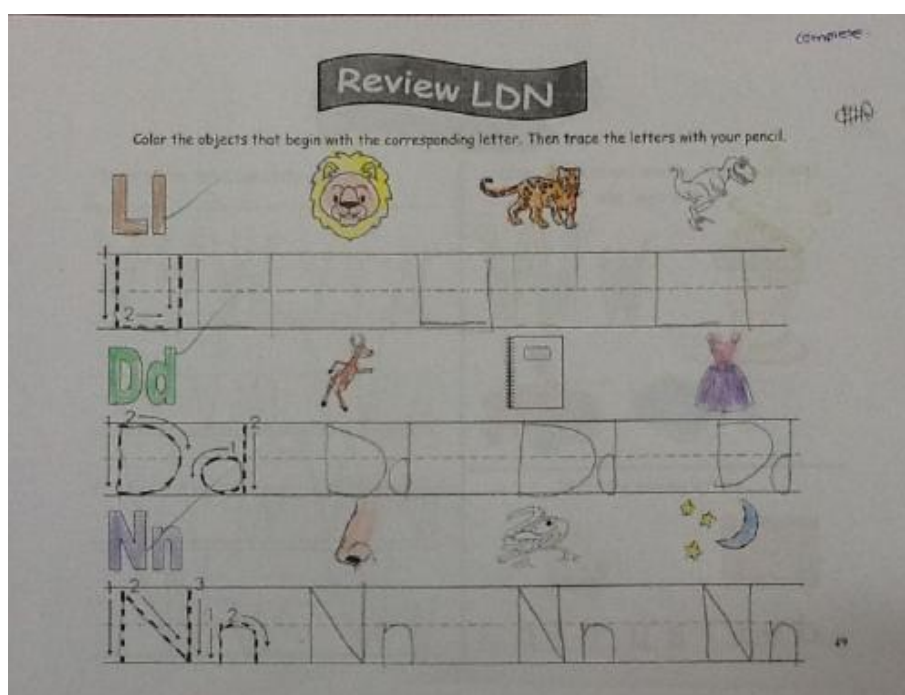
This lesson was designed as part of phonemic awareness development, regarding phoneme isolation, or the ability to separate a single sound from within a word. It was conducted on December the 8th, 2011, in order to evaluate phoneme isolation by having students match phonemes with graphemes. Students who are adept at phoneme isolation are able to find where in a word a

specific sound is located. The purpose of this activity was for the students to review all the letters they have learned to date, while they isolated phonemes, specifically initial sounds.

The activity was guided, and completed as a group. The teacher named the picture, and reviewed the sounds of the option letters with the students. Finally, the students had to select the letter which they believe stands for the initial sound of the word.

Ana performed adequately with this activity, but when tested orally, she still showed some confusion between the letters *Gg* and *Jj*. However, she used the pictures to represent a sound, and was able to correct herself without additional assistance. This shows not only improvement in her English, but also her ability to use the given tools for self-learning.

Artifact 8: Phoneme matching: Words that share an initial sound

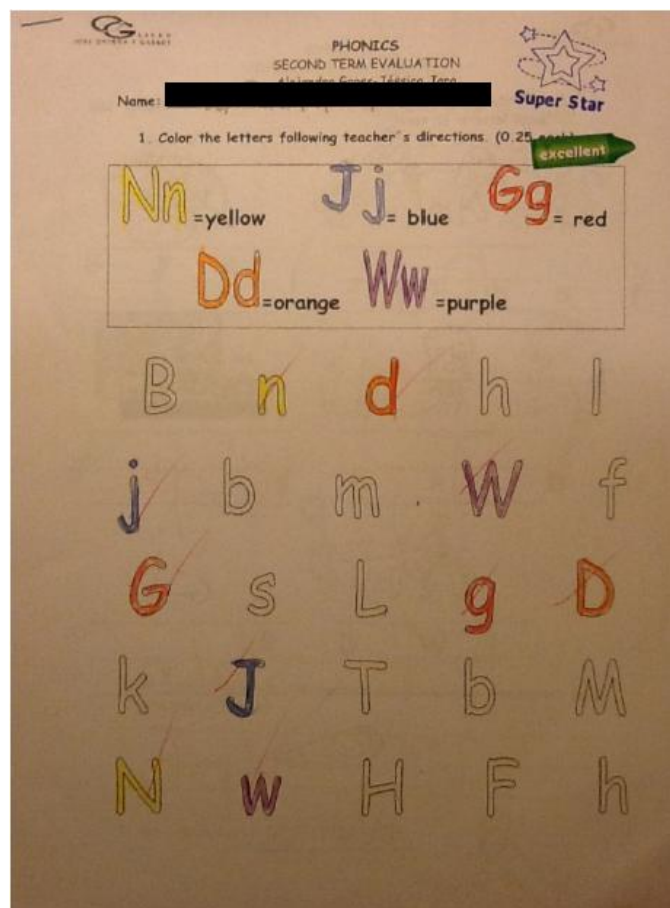


Once the students have become familiar with phoneme isolation, it is possible for them to work with phoneme matching, which is the ability to identify words that begin with the same sound. In order for an exercise of this kind to be meaningful, students are presented with various options so they can discriminate different sounds.

The purpose of this assignment sent on February the 21st, 2012, was to assess the knowledge of students on the letters *Ll*, *Nn* and *Dd*, as well as to evaluate their ability to identify words that begin with the same sound. Each row presents a letter as well as two words that share an initial sound, and one that does not. The student had to find and color the two words that begin with the same letter and trace the letter that was represented on each row. The purpose of the assignment was to reinforce picture, sound and letter recognition, while further develop their abilities to match phonemes.

When tested orally on her assignment, Ana provided initial sounds, named the words and identified the letters requested readily. More importantly, Ana was absent the day the assignment was given, and she completed it at home without any instruction from the teacher.

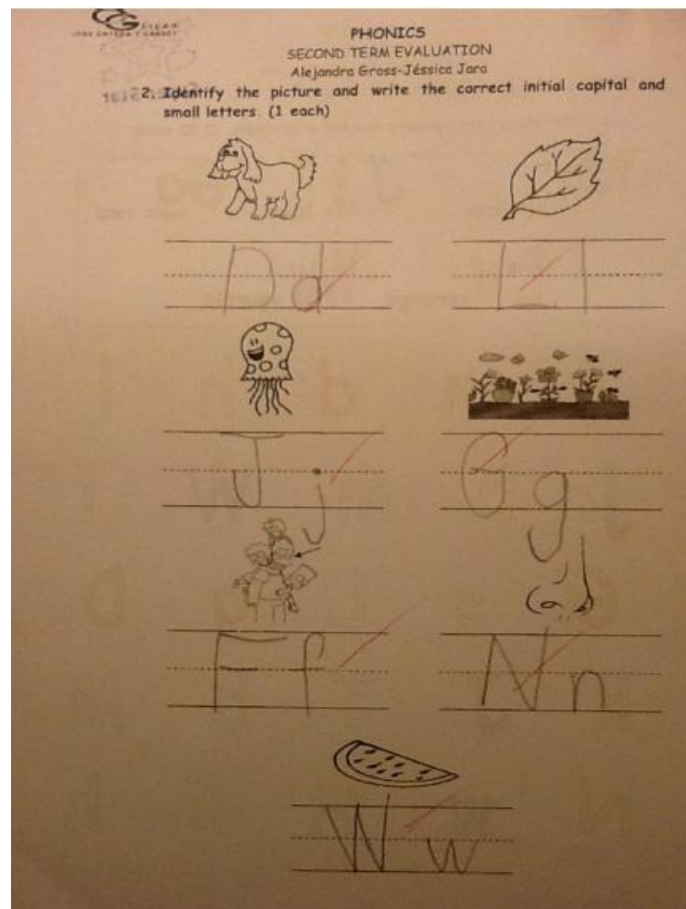
Artifact 9: Second term Phonics evaluation:



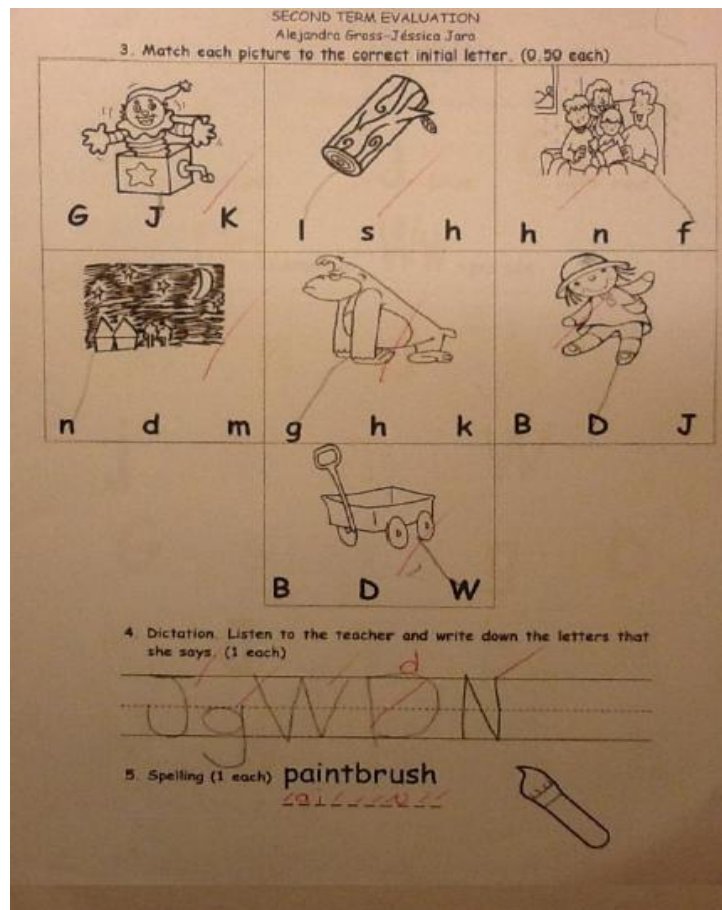
At the end of every term, the students are evaluated in written form, providing a guide for the teacher to follow up on their progress, as well as a tool for parents

to review at home. The evaluation given on March the 14th, 2012, measures the progress of the students' knowledge through:

Visual discrimination: The purpose of this part of the evaluation was to check on the knowledge that students had on upper and lowercase letter recognition. The question asked students to listen carefully to the instructions provided by the teacher, in order to color letter pairs of a certain color. Here, Ana was able to recognize all the letters without additional context, both upper and lowercase, and colored them according to instruction.



Phonics: This section of the exam evaluated students on their capability to recognize vocabulary and identify beginning sounds, and provide the corresponding letter for each. Most of the students had trouble identifying which letter *garden* and *jellyfish* begin with, but Ana answered correctly to both words. This shows improvement from previous oral evaluations and class work, where she was confused with the letter *Gg* and *Jj*.



Phoneme isolation: In this question, the students had to isolate beginning sounds, matching each picture with its correct initial letter. Evaluating phoneme isolating skills is important since it is a crucial step in the development of early literacy. Here, Ana displayed no difficulty isolating the beginning sound of each word, and matching the object to the corresponding letter.

Upper and lowercase recognition: The purpose of question # 4 of the evaluation is to check on the listening skills of the students. Phonemic item dictation increases the students' capability to identify isolated sounds, and reproduce them in written form. When working with beginners, it serves as a tool for them to respond in a quicker way to the names of the letters of the alphabet. In this question, Ana seemed to be distracted and made an auditory discriminating mistake between upper and lower case of the letter *Dd*, however, in other occasions she presents no difficulty distinguish between upper and lowercase letters.

Spelling: On the last question of the evaluation, the students were tested orally and individually. They were presented with a word, along with a picture which

they had to recognize and then spell. For this question Ana was able to name only those learned thoroughly in class, and missed the vowels, which she has not been exposed to in depth. This suggests that at home she reviewed only what was taught in school, despite of her willingness to learn.

Artifact 10: Letter-sound identification: *Rr* is for rooster workshop



Students have different learning styles; therefore different teaching methods are required for optimal results. Phonics is no different from other aspects of language instruction, and hands on activities are necessary. The association between graphemes and phonemes becomes easier when students find an object that includes a relevant sound, for example /r/ as in rooster.

This workshop conducted on March the 30th, 2012, reinforced the sound of the letter *Rr* and is similar in nature to the workshops developed for the rest of the letters in the alphabet. It becomes a different learning tool for students, which usually provides more meaning to their English instruction.

Ana was absent for this activity, but completed it at home, and was able to share her learning experience with her classmates when she returned. Like the rest of her class, she created a strong relationship between the sound /r/ and the word rooster.

1.7 Self-evaluation

Artifact 11: Student self-evaluation

The form is titled 'Artifact 11: Student self-evaluation' and contains four questions. Each question has three response options: 'yes' (smiley face), 'a few' (neutral face), and 'no' (sad face). The questions are:

1. Did you know the letters of the alphabet when you came to school?
2. Do you know the letters of the alphabet now?
3. Do you know the sound that all the letters of the alphabet make?
4. Can you think of a word with each letter?

The form is decorated with stars and circles. The response options are: yes, a few, no.

Ana is a self-driven student who is honest about her progress in class. She openly acknowledges things she does not understand, or that cause her confusion. Due to Ana's age, the self-evaluation was formatted in a way in which the teacher could ask her the questions, and she could color her answers. Before Ana took the English course, she had no previous formal instruction of the language and displayed very limited knowledge in the letters of the alphabet. After 8 months of instruction, she recognizes all the letters of the alphabet and almost all the sounds each one makes. Ana considers that she knows more than just a few sounds of the letters, so she picked yes as her answer to question # 3. However, she shows occasional confusion between the sounds of /c/ and /s/ and /c/ and /k/.

Ana is certain that she can provide a word with each letter. When evaluated on this topic, she was able to provide words with most of the letters in the alphabet, except the vowels, which have not been covered to their extent in class, as well as letters Vv, Yy, Xx and Zz. Her response was based on her confidence in the letters she was taught, but not considering the letters that have not been formally introduced in class.

Overall, Ana is very satisfied with her progress and is ready to participate in the Spelling Bee contest. Though she has shown remarkable improvement through the school year, she understands that additional work is required especially with the letters and sounds that confuse her, which include letters *Cc*, *Ss*, *Zz*, *Gg*, *Jj* and *Kk*.

CHAPTER II: TEFL PROGRAM PORTFOLIO

2.1 Standards based position paper

Understanding how each standard works makes it possible for teachers to apply them to any given environment. It is important to be knowledgeable on the components each one of the domains not only to guide a class according to it, but also to better understand the students that form each class, and work along with their needs and for their benefit.

Taking the NCATE/TESOL domains as a guide, an example for each standard was chosen to demonstrate how the content of a program can be applied when teaching English. Different artifacts were used to explain and support an indicator from each standard.

Domain 1: Language

Standard 1.a. Language as a System

Indicator: 1.a.3: Demonstrate knowledge of rhetorical and discourse structures as applied to ESOL learning.

Artifact 12: The Tense and Aspect System - Ungrammatical Sentences

- a. William has bought it last Saturday.

The sentence is ungrammatical because:

The sentence is written in Present Perfect (has bought) which is not compatible with the rest of the sentence, which we believe must be written in the simple past tense, due to the use of the words *last Saturday*. These words show a completed action in the past.

The correct way of writing the sentence: William bought it last Saturday.

To make our students aware of the mistake, we would show them that the words *last Saturday* are the key to show that the event already happened. Therefore, the entire sentence should be written in a simple past tense.

Activity: Difference between the use of Present Perfect and Simple Past.

We would give each student a set flashcards with adverbials that occur on the past tense (i.e., last year, yesterday) and verbs on the present tense (i.e., sing, eat, walk). The students would be required to create a sentence using the adverbials and changing the verb to the past tense.

The activity will also be developed with adverbials that occur on the present perfect (i.e., yet, already, for, since).

In the class Structure of English, the assignment on tense and aspect system met the standard indicator since it helped develop strategies that allow monitoring the use of English at a structural level, and writing conventions. The activity required students to check the problematic sentences, correct them and help increase their awareness to similar mistakes for future avoidance. This type of exercise is useful when teaching grammar, as it reinforces knowledge in writing conventions while new and diverse activities for the students are created.

Generous usage of examples in common grammatical mistakes with explanations on how the students' native language can affect their English learning can allow the students to understand the reasoning behind each error. This in turn can reinforce their own knowledge in discourse structures through examples and repetitions, thus avoiding future mistakes.

When working with students that are learning how to read, it is important that they develop their own methodologies to recognize their mistakes and find a way of avoiding them in the future. Reading is a skill that is constantly being reinforced since learners will be exposed to new or unknown vocabulary as the level of difficulty of their reading material is increased.

Standard 1.b. Language Acquisition and Development

Indicator: 1.b.1: Demonstrate understanding of current and historical theories and research in language acquisition as applied to ELLs.

Artifact 13: Language Acquisition – Differences between Children and Adults

According to Thomas Scovel (Scovel, 1997, as cited in Brown 2007, p.59), there is a connection between lateralization of the brain and second language acquisition. Brain-mapping suggests that when a second language is learned at an early age, the same regions of the brain are used to learn the first and second language. However, according to a study made by Dehaene et al. (1997) when a second language is acquired after puberty there is variable activation in both brain hemispheres. Based on brain imaging results, adults and children should be taught differently. Therefore, understanding how the brain processes a new language can help teachers develop activities that stimulate certain areas of the brain for better learning.

Not all English Language Learners acquire a new language in the same way; therefore it is important to understand how to provide optimal learning environments for the students. The assignment on second language acquisition completed for the class Teaching English to adolescents and adults meets indicator 1.b.1 of Language Acquisition and Development since it describes research that emphasizes that the difference between adult and children's language acquisition goes beyond than just their age.

It is important to be mindful in applying the appropriate teaching methods with young learners, which should be suitable for their age and developmental stage, taking into consideration other variables including their cognitive development, emotions and their language acquiring environment.

This applies directly to teaching pre-reading techniques, which cannot be developed in the same way for learners of all ages. For example, young learners are more receptive to activities that involve creative workshops, or to dancing to rhyming songs, than most adult learners.

DOMAIN 2: CULTURE

Standard 2. Culture as it Affects English Language Learning

Indicator: 2.b: Understand and apply knowledge about the effects of racism, stereotyping, and discrimination to teaching and learning.

Artifact 14: Bullying- You cannot be my Friend

Skin color, religious beliefs or even a weak personality are traits that can make someone a victim of a bully. The backgrounds of bullied children will vary depending on the child, the age of the children involved and the social environment that surrounds them. However, the research conducted by Baldry and Farrington focuses on victims being either male or female. There is a lack of information on who has characteristics that make a person a feasible victim of bullying. Research should focus with more depth on the traits that separate a child from being a bully, or simply a victim. It can be discussed that characteristics that make an individual different suffice in some environments as a valid reason to be bullied. Being different can range from physical appearance to religious beliefs, to intellectual capacity. Even though the reasons vary, typical victims of bullying tend to be anxious and suffer from low self-esteem.

Research conducted for this assignment on bullying provided helpful information on the effects that discrimination, stereotyping and bullying have in learning. It showed how important it is to develop conflict resolution strategies inside the classroom, and create a positive classroom environment through addressing common issues that derive from bullying.

At school, children need to be aware of which actions are hurtful to others and to avoid them. It is important to introduce awareness to these kinds of problems at an early age to prevent future conflicts. Inside the English classroom, it is valuable to show students that they all have their specific valuable skills and qualities, and they should accept the difference between each individual, especially when it comes to the language they speak, as it represents their culture. As a result, this promotes a harmonious environment, free of bullying.

To teach students about respect, while working on their pre-reading skills, students can be exposed to child-friendly literature on the subject. For example, during the week of letter L, students can read the book Lulu, the lamb who loved to laugh; a story that shows how a lamb that made fun of her friends discovers that it is hurtful to do so.

DOMAIN 3: PLANNING, IMPLEMENTING, AND MANAGING INSTRUCTION

Standard 3.a. Planning for Standards-Based ESL and Content Instruction

Indicator: 3.a.2: Create supportive, accepting classroom environments.

Artifact 15: Lesson Plan – The Benefits of Yoga

Yoga *~ Health: the benefits of yoga ~*

Foreign language proficiency level: Intermediate
Language skill focus: Reading comprehension

1) TEFL language objectives:

a. Speaking:

1. Briefly share previous knowledge on the benefits of Yoga for health.
2. Talk about the benefits students think they could obtain, or wish to obtain.

b. Reading:

1. Read about a real life case in which Yoga has helped someone improve his/her health.

c. Writing:

1. List the benefits that the person from the case obtained, and brainstorm on the possible reasons of his/her well-being.

2) TEFL methods and strategies to be used:

- a. E9 – Reading with a specific purpose
- b. E22 – Summarizing
- c. E26 - QAR
- d. C6 - Think/Share
- e. D2 - K-W-L

The artifact included is a lesson plan using Yoga instruction as part of a health unit, while developing a suitable environment for learning English language skills. The lesson is student centered, with the teacher as a helpful guide and counselor. It requires the students to work collaboratively in order to meet different objectives. This stresses the importance of allowing students the opportunity to take responsibility over their own learning

While designing this lesson plan, different ways are provided to motivate the students to take initiatives on their own learning, while keeping the lesson on track. It can be complicated to replicate this with younger students, but once they are accustomed to take control of their own learning, the class is able to follow a lesson plan without much intervention from the teacher. In addition, lesson plans that take into consideration the students' knowledge and their diverse needs can create a supportive environment as well as one that nurtures the students and encourages them to utilize tools available for their future learning.

Focusing on the pre-reading necessities of students, they can take initiatives of their own phonics learning through the use of interactive materials that allow them to explore how a letter looks and sounds. Activities where students can look for the letter of their choice in magazines, cut it out and glue it in a creative way, are great examples of ways to enhance individual learning while staying within the lesson plan.

Standard 3.b. Implementing and Managing Standards-Based ESL and Content Instruction

Indicator: 3.b.5: Develop students' speaking skills for a variety of academic and social purposes.

Artifact 16: Lesson Plan for English for Specific Purposes

English as a foreign language proficiency level: Upper-intermediate

Student's First language: Spanish

English Language focus: English for Medicine

Length of Lesson: 2 hours each day, Monday-Wednesday-Friday

According to the goals and objectives already established previously, during this week students will put in practice what has been taught, from week 1 to week 9, by integrating the four main language skills and the application of each one of them. The topic for this week is liver cancer and its treatments.

List the methods and strategies to be used:

1. Reading: To read two similar cases of two different patients. Compare and contrast the same type of cancer (liver cancer) and different treatments applied to patients
2. Speaking: In pairs, students will present their work done during the first hour and their opinions on it.
3. Listening and Speaking: To listen to a real patient who will expose her/his symptoms in order to figure out the type of liver cancer she/he is suffering from. Students will take notes and ask questions related to her/his symptoms, the medicine she/he has taken, among others.

This is a lesson plan created for students learning English for medical purposes. The content addressed skills that are needed for successful communication in English, which are presented in a way that is meaningful to the students. The assignment showed the importance of developing students' speaking skills for a specific use, while providing a guide on how the skill can be extended for different purposes.

By providing students with activities that are interesting to them, their learning experience can be enhanced, allowing them to have a better understanding of the skills being worked on, hence improving their communication. In a Kindergarten class, students tend to enjoy singing and using newly learned words as often as possible; thus, numerous opportunities are provided daily, helping the development of their early speaking skills. When working with phonics, providing a variety of activities helps students learn not only about the sound a letter makes, but also to use the vocabulary they acquire, enriching their production of early speaking skills.

Standard 3c. Using Resources and Technology effectively in ESL and Content Instruction

Indicator: 3.c.4: Use technological resources (e.g., Web, software, computers, and related devices) to enhance language and content area instruction for ELLs.

Artifact 17: Technology use in Kindergarten EFL students



Technological resources play an essential part in current education since they can complement language instruction. The assignment meets the standard as it demonstrates how the use of technological resources inside the classroom can help meet the language learning needs of students. By becoming knowledgeable on the use of diverse options like educational sites, iGoogle, and blogs, a variety of English learning choices are available for ELLs in a multimedia and didactic way, which makes learning much more interesting. These tools can be adapted for young students for their own academic purposes based on their interests, as well as a personal educational resource at home.

Pre-reading skills can be learned through various fun websites that enhance sounds and provide learners with colorful images. Inside a classroom with enough technological resources, such as an interactive whiteboard, or personal computers, learning to read takes on a whole new level and definition. Pages like the one offered by Starfall, allow students to play with the letters of the

alphabet in an interactive and engaging way. Such tools need to be exploited as children feel a fascination towards technology.

DOMAIN 4: ASSESSMENT

Standard 4.a. Issues of Assessment for English Language Learners

Indicator: 4.a.3: Demonstrate an understanding of key indicators of good assessment instruments.

Artifact 18: Validity and Reliability

Not all tests are able to measure what they are supposed to, and the degree to which they meet this requirement is known as validity. A test is said to be valid when it measures what it is meant to measure. Fortunately there are several ways to assess a test for validity. When going over a test it is important to focus on its content, and whether it represents a substantial part of the topic being studied. For example, a test that evaluates writing will need to include a proper sample of writing exercises in order to show validity. Content validity can be checked by making sure that the items in the test are evaluating what they have to. Taking a regular small class quiz as an example, it would be simple to check the class syllabus to see if each item of the quiz is appropriate.

In order to make tests more valid a few considerations could be taken. Hughes (2003) recommends that teachers should write clear specifications for their tests. These specifications should be made including all the items to be measured. Additionally the items should represent a good sample of the content included in the test. Finally, teachers should use direct testing and be aware of using proper scoring.

In English language tests, the consistency with which a test measures is known as reliability. A test is said to be reliable when no matter when it is taken, the results that students get are more or less the same. Therefore, a test in which students score differently from one day to another is said to be unreliable. Given the nature of tests and test taking, a means to compare the reliability between different evaluations is needed. To quantify how reliable a test is evaluators can use the reliability coefficient.

This assignment on validity and reliability completed in the class Testing and Evaluation in TEFL provides a clear explanation on the difference between valid and reliable tests, and how to assess instruments based on each of them. It provides enough key indicators that allow the creation of evaluations for students in general. This assignment presented information that permits me to

make knowledgeable assessment decisions when I have to design or pick an evaluation tool at work.

Working with young learners, the creation of evaluations goes beyond writing a good test. Factors such as the use of alternate activities and measuring items must be taken into consideration, making the assessment tasks relevant for the English language learners as well as appropriate for their age. Nevertheless, the tests need to be reliable and valid in order to provide objective information on the progress of the student.

Taking the provided information as a reference, the evaluations used in the student portfolio meet the standards for valid and reliable testing. It is important to understand that even though a student may present excellent scores in a phonics evaluation that does not necessarily transmit into immediate reading fluency. Other factors affect reading readiness, therefore, comprehension, word recognition, etc, were evaluated through varied means.

Standard 4.b. Language Proficiency Assessment

Indicator: 4.b.2: Understand the appropriate use of norm- referenced assessments with ELLs.

Artifact 19: Kinds of tests

Test	Characteristics	Strengths	Weaknesses	Examples
KET <i>Key English Test</i>	Basic level test that shows that English can be used to communicate in simple situations.	Covers four language skills using everyday language.	Speaking section is taken with another candidate.	<i>Listening - Paper 1</i> Listen to 5 short conversations. Mark the right answer.
PET <i>Preliminary English Test</i>	Intermediate level test, which allows the opportunity to work, travel or study.	It is acknowledged as proof of ability to use English in different job positions.	Not enough listening and speaking time.	<i>Reading - Paper 3</i> Read the text and the questions. Mark the correct letter.

This assignment on kinds of tests meets the standard since it summarized relevant information regarding language requirements for ELLs, which allowed understanding of the use of each assessment. For each type of test, its strengths and weaknesses were evaluated, providing useful data that will allow

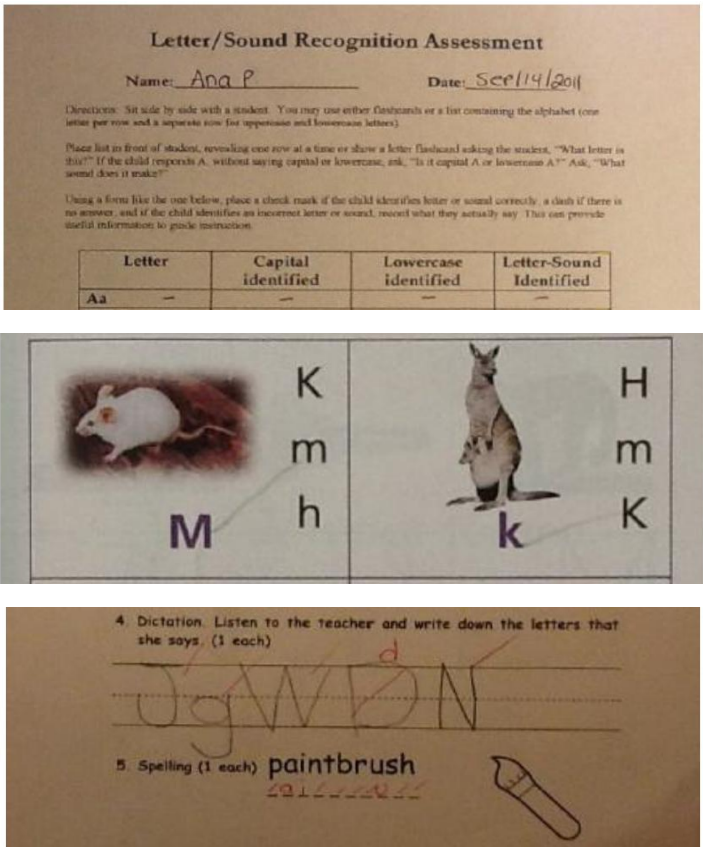
better utilization and interpretation of different language proficiency assessment tools.

Becoming familiar with international English level requirements is essential for a bilingual school. Therefore, it is important to become familiar with the different types of assessment that students undertake. As it has been mentioned, pre-reading skills play an important role for future reading fluency and comprehension; hence, it is important to create lesson plans which follow a continuum of those from other grades, allowing the school to use standardized tests to appropriately evaluate learners by their language skill.

Standard 4.c. Classroom-Based Assessment for ESL

Indicator: 4.c.1: Use performance- based assessment tools and tasks that measure ELLs' progress.

Artifact 20: EFL student portfolio



This artifact presents a portfolio for an EFL student, which allows the measuring of the student's progress along a certain period of time. It displays a collection of assessments tools and student work which serve as examples of the student's learning process. More importantly, it shows how portfolio evaluations based on the use of different rubrics can promote literacy development.

After completing this EFL student portfolio, the need and importance of assessing the student's skills in a diverse way became apparent. For teachers, this translates into using a variety of items to show students' language skills in a comprehensive way. Within a portfolio these items include: class work, assignments, evaluations, checklists, logs, etc.

DOMAIN 5: PROFESSIONALISM

Standard 5.a. ESL Research and History

Indicator: 5.a.2: Demonstrate knowledge of the evolution of laws and policy in the ESL profession.

Artifact 21: English Language Curriculum Development

Curriculum development in language programs in Ecuador

Unfortunately Ecuador lacks a solid English curriculum to use as a platform for a school's language program. The last known and published curricular reform for the English department, CRADLE, dates back to 2007. The current curriculum states that English taught as a subject is optional throughout elementary school (Ministerio de Educación 2007), and it only becomes a permanent part of the education program beginning in the 7th grade with barely five hours a week. Even though the curriculum presents itself with interesting and viable purposes, it is not a helpful tool to develop a syllabus for each independent grade level from kindergarten until the 6th grade. For this reason, schools tend to develop their own curriculums to follow, making English learning a varying factor though the country. Therefore, the most common way to develop a language program is to use the curriculums offered by the books used by each school.

This assignment on English language curriculum development focused on research on the history of English language learning in the country of Ecuador. Since the first project on English learning began, policies have slightly shifted but there is still no regulation regarding English instruction at a national level. This slow evolution is demonstrated through the provided artifact, meeting standard 5.a.2.

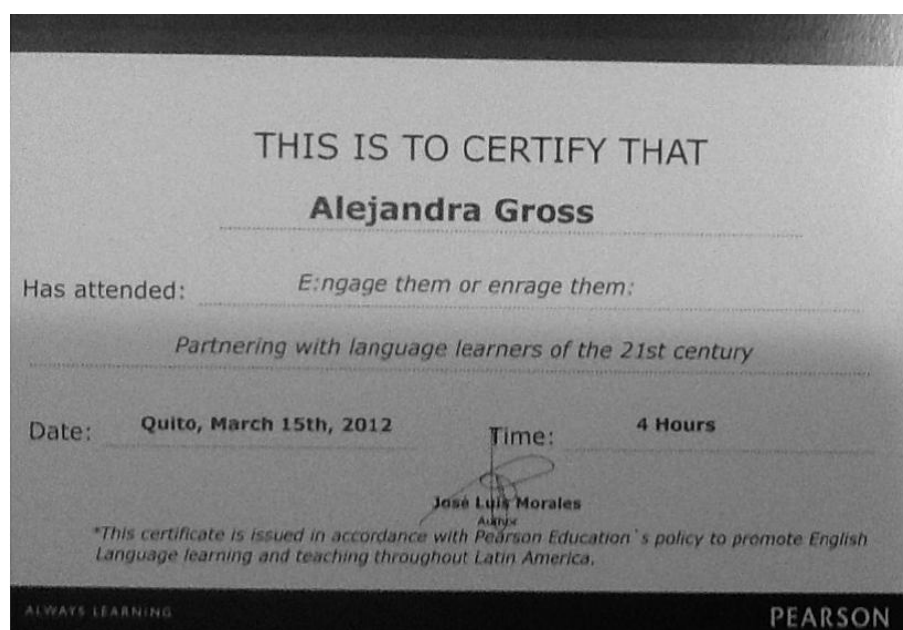
The information that research presents allows further knowledge and understanding of the educational public policies. This in turn, permits an informed analysis of how teaching and learning English has changed through the years, and within the society. Additionally, it allows developing strategies which may increase the English language levels of students, surpassing the minimum requirements presented in the public policies.

Finally, through the understanding the history of English education in Ecuador, and along with available research studies, it is possible to appreciate past practices and incorporate new data helping promote further improvement in English language learning and instruction.

Standard 5.b. Professional Development, Partnerships, and Advocacy

Indicator: 5.b.1: Participate in professional growth opportunities.

Artifact 22: Seminar attendance certificate



Participating in seminars is an important part of professional growth. The seminar *Engage them or enrage them: Partnering with language learners of the 21st century* discussed the importance of engaging students in English language learning, focusing on the use of technology to motivate student participation.

The information given during this seminar makes it possible for the attendees to share their newly found knowledge with colleagues, presenting different learning opportunities based on the use of technological tools. Additionally, it provided strong foundations to present the implementation of a technology based classroom in order to instruct English.

2.2 TESOL/NCATE standards

The TESOL/NCATE standards are divided into five domains: language, culture, instruction, assessment, and professionalism. All the standards are aligned with the NCATE principles for standard development. Additionally, each standard possesses a performance indicator that works at three different levels of proficiency: approaches the standard, meets the standard, and exceeds the standard.

Domain 1: Language

The focus of this domain relies on the knowledge, understanding and use of theories and research related to language structure and acquisition that the candidate has. It seeks to help ELLs develop language and literacy.

The standards and indicators given by the TESOL/NCATE (2010) for this domain are:

1.a. Language as a System: the candidate understands language as a system, which includes phonology, morphology, syntax, pragmatics and semantics. Additionally, the candidate helps ELLs acquiring their English language and literacy (p.28).

1.a.1. Demonstrating knowledge of the components of language (p.29).

1.a.2. Apply knowledge of the sound system, structure of words, phrase and sentence structure, word/sentence meaning, and the effect of context on language to help ELLs develop skills in English (p.29).

1.a.3. Demonstrate knowledge of rhetorical and discourse structures as applied to ESOL learning (p.31).

1.a.4. Demonstrate proficiency in English and serve as a good language model for ELLs (p.31).

1.b. Language acquisition and development: the candidate is able to understand and apply theories and research in language acquisition, using it as a tool to support the ELLs literacy learning process (p.33).

1.b.1. Demonstrate understanding of current and historical theories and research in language acquisition as applied to ELLs (p.35).

1.b.2. Understand how L1 literacy development differs from L2 literacy development (p.35).

1.b.3. Recognize the importance of ELLs' L1s and language varieties and build on these skills as a foundation for learning English (p.36).

1.b.4. Understand and apply knowledge of socio-cultural, psychological, and political variables to facilitate the process of learning English (p.37).

1.b.5. Understand and apply knowledge of the role of individual learner variables in the process of learning English (p.37).

Domain 2: Culture

The candidates understand that culture affects student learning, therefore they know and use different theories and research as well as principles related to the role of culture in learning, in order to provide environments which are supportive for the ELLs.

The standard and indicators given by the TESOL/NCATE (2010) for this domain are:

2. Culture as it affects student learning: Candidates know, understand, and use major theories and research related to the nature and role of culture in their instruction. They demonstrate understanding of how cultural groups and individual cultural identities affect language learning and school achievement (p.39).

2.a. Understand and apply knowledge about cultural values and beliefs in the context of teaching and learning (p.41).

2.b. Understand and apply knowledge about the effects of racism, stereotyping, and discrimination to teaching and learning (p.41).

2.c. Understand and apply knowledge about cultural conflicts and home events that can have an impact on ELLs' learning (p.41).

2.d. Understand and apply knowledge about communication between home and school to enhance ESL teaching and build partnerships with ESOL families (p.42).

2.e. Understand and apply concepts about the interrelationship between language and culture (p.42).

2.f. Use a range of resources, including the Internet, to learn about world cultures and specifically the cultures of students in their classrooms and apply that learning to instruction (p.43).

2.g. Understand and apply concepts of cultural competency, particularly knowledge about how an individual's cultural identity affects their learning and academic progress and how levels of cultural identity will vary widely among students (p.43).

Domain 3: Planning, Implementing, and Managing Instruction

The candidate understands and uses strategies that are related to planning, implementing, and managing standards-based ESL and content instruction. They are also able to integrate technology as well as choose resources that are appropriate for their ELLs.

The standards and indicators given by the TESOL/NCATE (2010) for this domain are:

3.a. Planning for Standards-Based ESL and Content Instruction: Candidates know, understand, and apply concepts, research, and best practices to plan classroom instruction in a supportive learning environment for ELLs. They plan for multilevel classrooms with learners from diverse backgrounds using standards-based ESL and content curriculum (p.44).

3.a.1. Plan standards-based ESL and content instruction (p.45).

3.a.2. Create supportive, accepting classroom environments (p.45).

3.a.3. Plan differentiated learning experiences based on assessment of students' English and L1 proficiency, learning styles, and prior formal educational experiences and knowledge (p.45).

3.a.4. Provide for particular needs of students with interrupted formal education (SIFE) (p.46).

3.a.5. Plan for instruction that embeds assessment, includes scaffolding, and provides re-teaching when necessary for students to successfully meet learning objectives (p.46).

3.b. Implementing and Managing Standards-Based ESL and Content Instruction: Candidates know, manage, and implement a variety of standards-based teaching strategies and techniques for developing and integrating English listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Candidates support ELLs' access to the core curriculum by teaching language through academic content (p.47).

3.b.1. Organize learning around standards-based subject matter and language learning objectives (p.49).

3.b.2. Incorporate activities, tasks, and assignments that develop authentic uses of language as students learn academic vocabulary and content-area material (p.49).

3.b.3. Provide activities and materials that integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing (p.49).

3.b.4. Develop students' listening skills for a variety of academic and social purposes (p.50).

3.b.5. Develop students' speaking skills for a variety of academic and social purposes (p.50).

3.b.6. Provide standards-based instruction that builds on students' oral English to support learning to read and write (p.51).

3.b.7. Provide standards-based reading instruction adapted to ELLs (p.51).

3.b.8. Provide standards-based writing instruction adapted to ELLs. Develop students' writing through a range of activities, from sentence formation to expository writing (p.52).

3.c. Using Resources and Technology Effectively in ESL and Content Instruction: Candidates are familiar with a wide range of standards-based materials, resources, and technologies, and choose, adapt, and use them in effective ESL and content teaching (p.54).

3.c.1. Select, adapt, and use culturally responsive, age-appropriate, and linguistically accessible materials (p.55).

3.c.2. Select materials and other resources that are appropriate to students' developing language and content-area abilities, including appropriate use of L1 (p.55).

3.c.3. Employ a variety of materials for language learning, including books, visual aids, props, and realia (p.56).

3.c.4. Use technological resources to enhance language and content-area instruction for ELLs (p.56).

Domain 4: Assessment

Candidates understanding the concept of assessment as well as their issues and use standards-based procedures with ELLs.

The standards and indicators given by the TESOL/NCATE (2010) for this domain are:

4.a. Issues of Assessment for English Language Learners: Candidates demonstrate understanding of various assessment issues as they affect ELLs, such as accountability, bias, special education testing, language proficiency, and accommodations in formal testing situations (p.57).

4.a.1. Demonstrate an understanding of the purposes of assessment as they relate to ELLs and use results appropriately (p. 59).

4.a.2. Knowledgeable about and able to use a variety of assessment procedures for ELLs (p.59)

4.a.3. Demonstrate an understanding of key indicators of good assessment instruments (p.60).

4.a.4. Demonstrate understanding of the advantages and limitations of assessments, including accommodations for ELLs (p.60).

4.a.5. Distinguish among ELLs' language differences, giftedness, and special education needs (p.60).

4.b. Language Proficiency Assessment: Candidates know and can use a variety of standards-based language proficiency instruments to show language growth and to inform their instruction. They demonstrate understanding of their uses for identification, placement, and reclassification of ELLs (p.62).

4.b.1. Understand and implement national and state requirements for identification, reclassification, and exit of ELLs from language support programs (p.63).

4.b.2. Understand the appropriate use of norm-referenced assessments with ELLs (p.63).

4.b.3. Assess ELLs' language skills and communicative competence using multiple sources of information (p.64).

4.c. Classroom-Based Assessment for ESL: Candidates know and can use a variety of performance-based assessment tools and techniques to inform instruction for in the classroom (p.65).

4.c.1. Use performance-based assessment tools and tasks that measure ELLs' progress (p.66).

4.c.2. Understand and use criterion-referenced assessments appropriately with ELLs (p.66).

4.c.3. Use various instruments and techniques to assess content-area learning for ELLs at varying levels of language and literacy development (p.67).

4.c.4. Prepare ELLs to use self- and peer-assessment techniques when appropriate (p.67).

4.c.5. Use a variety of rubrics to assess ELLs' language development in classroom settings (p.67).

Domain 5: Professionalism

The candidates are up to date with new techniques, and advances in the ESL field, along with education policies and issues. They are able to demonstrate knowledge of the history of ESL in teaching, and use this information to improve their practices. Additionally, they work with their school staff and community to improve the learning environment of ELLs and their families.

The standards and indicators given by the TESOL/NCATE (2010) for this domain are:

5.a. ESL Research and History: Candidates demonstrate knowledge of history, research, educational public policy, and current practice in the field of ESL teaching and apply this knowledge to inform teaching and learning (p.69).

5.a.1. Demonstrate knowledge of language teaching methods in their historical contexts (p.70).

5.a.2. Demonstrate knowledge of the evolution of laws and policy in the ESL profession (p.70).

5.a.3. Demonstrate ability to read and conduct classroom research (p.71).

Standard 5.b. Professional Development, Partnerships, and Advocacy

Candidates take advantage of professional growth opportunities and demonstrate the ability to build partnerships with colleagues and students' families, serve as community resources, and advocate for ELLs (p.72).

5.b.1. Participate in professional growth opportunities (p.73).

5.b.2 Establish professional goals (p.73).

5.b.3. Work with other teachers and staff to provide comprehensive, challenging educational opportunities for ELLs in the school (p.73).

5.b.4. Engage in collaborative teaching in general education, content-area, special education, and gifted classrooms (p.74).

5.b.5. Advocate for ELLs' access to academic classes, resources, and instructional technology (p.74).

5.b.6 Support ELL families (p.75).

5.b.7. Serve as professional resource personnel in their educational communities (p.75).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The objective of the research was to demonstrate how phonics instruction is part of the reading readiness process, which requires different activities to provide deeper understanding and mastering of the skill. Using Ana's student portfolio it was possible to demonstrate the knowledge that she has accumulated since the school year began. As part of the beginners' course, she has adjusted to the level requirements without difficulty. Her preparation on pre-reading skills is on track and in accordance to the outcome expectations of Kindergarten level English. Additionally, it can be said that if Ana continues with her current progress, she should be able to grasp the concepts of phoneme blending, deletion, segmentation and manipulation once they are taught before the school year ends.

Based on the results of her post-test, Ana can be clearly placed at the top of her class in phonics development. However, as the test shows, she still needs to improve her understanding of open and closed vowel sounds which is essential for reading and writing. Since she has become familiar with the sound most of the letters of the alphabet make, she is trying to read short words. A matter of concern here is the fact that she has become used to "guessing" words by the way they look, which can be useful with high frequency words, but will lead to erroneous reading in the future.

This automatic reading that Ana is applying demonstrates that when developing pre-reading skills, it is important to expose students to varied activities and not just to phonics instruction. Students need to be aware that although they know how letters sound, and are able to recognize different phoneme-grapheme correspondences, there is more to the process than just quickly guessing based on the letters of each word. For example, with enough exposure students will soon recognize high-frequency words, but with words that do not belong to this category, the learning process is not the same.

Taking into consideration Ana's learning process it was possible for the researcher to develop a hypothesis based on her learning. Even though Ana is able to successfully recognize phonemes and their corresponding graphemes, she will not necessarily become a fluent reader in the future. She has the right

tools to continue expanding her pre-reading skills, which will give her enough confidence to move on with the reading process; however, without further guidance there seems to be no strong correlation at the time of the study that determines how fluent Ana will be, as there are varied factors that affect reading fluency.

These factors that influence on the reading process are to be taken into consideration inside the classroom, and as part of the school's reading program they should be evaluated based on the use of the TESOL/NCATE standards. Based on the research it was made evident that teachers need to understand the standards in order to apply them inside a classroom and its curriculum.

First and foremost it is important that English teachers understand how culture affects their classroom, as well as the role the outside surroundings plays on child development. It is necessary that an appropriate learning environment is created so children will learn how to read feeling comfortable with the process it involves.

Instruction of early reading practices should cover different methodologies, which depends on the knowledge that teachers have of the language, and how well they are able to demonstrate and apply this knowledge inside the classroom. Reading should be taught not as a mechanical system, but as a process for finding meaning. It is necessary that teachers create a reading conscience in students so they feel motivated to read outside class, enhancing their learning process.

Therefore, it is necessary that teachers receive appropriate instruction before the school year begins. It is recommended that as a department the English section works with the same standards as to provide continuity in the curriculums, with the correct focus. For example, Ana's development indicates that she is almost ready to begin formal reading instruction, at school this means that the teachers should be able to provide her with a comfortable environment that adapts to her learning necessities.

Learning does not happen only at school; parents at home can prepare their children for the First grade by supplying them with high quality learning materials which can help children reinforce the skills learned at school. Such

materials can include picture books with audio and videos with sing-along songs. In Ana's case, these tools will allow her to reinforce letter-sound recognition.

Additionally, it is important that at home she establishes a pattern of daily reading, which can further broaden her vocabulary and understanding of the language. These daily reading sessions should be guided by a parent, with Ana following along, hence developing her understanding of print.

Overall, Ana's development throughout the year proved that even though she knows and uses phoneme-grapheme correspondences correctly, she requires more pre-reading skills to become a fluent reader. Additionally, her learning process needs to be backed up by the knowledge and correct application of the TESOL/NCATE standards by the teachers in charge of her education.

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