

LITERACY FOUNDATIONS FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO
EVIDENCE-BASED INSTRUCTION

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FOREWORD BY SHARON VAUGHN

5

Phonics Development Among English Learners

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By completing this chapter, the reader will

- Learn evidence-based phonics instruction strategies for English learners (ELs)
- Understand the six syllable types of English and connections to other languages
- Incorporate adaptations for phonics instruction for ELs
- Determine the skills necessary for phonics knowledge screening tools
- Design phonics instruction lessons for ELs based on data

Julio is in the second grade and is currently in an English as a second language classroom setting. He arrived in the United States 1 year ago. He has learned basic English and can communicate in simple sentences. His parents only speak Spanish, and most of his English language opportunities occur within the school setting. Julio's teacher would like to begin to teach him to read and has determined that he can read in his native language and is beginning to understand English letter–sound correlations. She wants to make sure that each literacy lesson is meaningful for Julio. In order to do this, Julio's teacher will make sure he understands that English is an alphabetic language like Spanish and will teach him to use his native language and literacy knowledge to understand the structure of English literacy. Close monitoring of his progress will be necessary and incorporating connections across languages can be beneficial.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is designed to assist educators in understanding phonics instruction and the special considerations necessary for effective instruction among English learners (ELs). The chapter begins with a definition of phonics and provides the reader with a description of the skills necessary for successful phonics knowledge. As the reader gains knowledge of these components, a description of the necessary adjustments for instruction among ELs is provided. The phonics connections across languages are also included to help the reader understand the importance of using native language knowledge for second language literacy development. This is one of the principles for effective instruction that is described. Finally, a practical guide for implementing effective phonics instruction with ELs and the strategies necessary are comprised within the chapter. Therefore, each component of phonics instruction is defined, the relevant research is cited, and practical suggestions for effective implementation of each strategy is presented in detail to achieve enhanced literacy instruction for ELs.

PHONICS

The Florida Center for Reading Research (2020) defined *phonics* as “the study of the relationships between letters and the sounds they represent; also used to describe the reading instruction that teaches sound-symbol correspondences.” In the second case, phonics is a method of instruction that teaches students how to link the letter or symbol to its corresponding sound and blend them together to read words.

Literacy development depends on the ability to understand that letters represent the sounds of spoken language. In short, for students to read words, they must know the letter and sound correlations. Experienced readers instantly recognize letter and sound correspondences, and they easily blend the letter and sounds together to form syllables and words.

Phonics is differentiated from phonological awareness. Phonological awareness involves identifying, blending, segmenting, deleting, or manip-

ulating sounds in spoken words, whereas phonics requires the student to build a relationship between the sound and the letter or symbol. In short, phonological awareness activities help to build the processing and manipulation of sounds so the individual can subsequently understand sound and symbol correlations. Phonics tasks have a visual component because they involve the use of graphemes. Reading research identifies the following key elements for effective phonics instruction:

- *Letter recognition*: the ability to correctly identify and name the letters of the alphabet
- *Grapho-phonemic knowledge (letter-sound correspondences)*: the ability to articulate the correct sound or sounds associated with each letter or symbol
- *Decoding*: the ability to translate a word from print to speech, employing grapho-phonemic knowledge and stable patterns; also called *sounding out* words
- *Morphological awareness*: the ability to understand that smaller meaning units known as *morphemes* exist within many words

This chapter examines each of these key elements.

Letter-Name Knowledge

What do good readers do as they read? Good readers look at the symbol on the page, translate the symbol into its sound correspondence, read the word, and connect the word to its meaning. Ehri and McCormick (2013) described the automaticity of letter recognition as a step toward recognizing the common patterns of letters and then instantly recognizing words through repeated reading opportunities. Chiappe, Siegel, and Wade-Woolley (2002) looked at kindergarten and first-grade students with varying degrees of English language proficiency (native speakers and ELs). The findings identified letter identification in kindergarten as a predictor for decoding skills in first grade among both groups of emergent readers. Results of their study suggested explicit instruction in phonological awareness and phonics as a benefit for children from diverse backgrounds. Schatsneider, Fletcher, Francis, Carlson, and Foorman (2004) described letter-name knowledge as a variable and predictor for reading achievement. Therefore, letter-name knowledge is recommended as a strategy for reading and should be addressed in an explicit manner for ELs.

Grapho-Phonemic Knowledge

As students learn the letters, it is important for them to understand the sound or sounds associated with each letter, which is known as *grapho-phonemic knowledge*. A grapheme is the written symbol, and a phoneme is an

individual sound. Grapho-phonemic knowledge is the understanding that the letter (grapheme) has a corresponding sound (phoneme) or sounds associated with it. Share and Stanovich (1995) described how students use their known sound and symbol correspondences and phonological sensitivity to read unknown words. They further develop their reading accuracy with practice, which can lead to more effort spent on the meaning of words. The goal is for students to instantly recognize letters and their corresponding sounds and then blend them together to read words with automaticity. Students who do not read words accurately and with automaticity, continue to have these difficulties 10 years later, which clearly has a negative impact on reading comprehension (Nippold, 2017).

Decoding

Decoding involves accurately translating words from print to speech. Beginning readers use letter–sound correspondences to sound out each grapheme in a word and then blend the sounds together to produce meaning. As these readers become more proficient, they increase their speed and accuracy. Frequently appearing words become part of the readers’ sight word repertoire so that cognitive efforts are focused on novel words. This also frees up cognitive abilities that allow readers to attend to the meaning of the text. Decoding is essential because, as Archer and Hughes (2020) stated, “There is no comprehension strategy powerful enough to compensate for the fact you can’t read the words.”

Morphological Awareness

Morphological awareness is the ability to understand that smaller meaning units known as *morphemes* exist within many words. A morpheme is the smallest unit of meaning in a language. Morpheme knowledge can enhance understanding of words and can assist with reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension (Ramirez, 2017). For ELs, the greater the overlap across languages, the stronger the association of the skills (Pasquarella, Chen, Gottardo, & Geva, 2014)

PHONICS AND ENGLISH LEARNERS

According to the National Reading Panel report (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) and the Center for Instruction (Francis, Rivera, Lesaux, Kieffer, & Rivera, 2006), learning to read requires explicit instruction in phonics that is incorporated with fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension instruction. The National Literacy Panel for Language-Minority Children and Youth (August & Shanahan, 2006) found similar results; however, special considerations regarding oral language proficiency, vocabulary, background knowledge, and attention to address-

ing new sounds of the language was described as beneficial for ELs. For example, young Spanish-speaking students learning to read in English might make the best progress when given more work with particular phonemes and combinations of phonemes in English that do not exist in their own language. These types of tailored reading interventions make reading instruction more effective.

CONNECTIONS ACROSS LANGUAGES

Phonological awareness and phonics skills are similar across alphabetic languages. For this reason, children can use native language literacy skills to learn to read in the second language. Yet, the amount of transfer depends on several factors. First, alphabetic systems can be either shallow (transparent) or deep (opaque) (Moats, 2009). In shallow alphabetic orthographies, the sound–symbol relationships in the alphabetic writing system are mostly regular and predictable, with one sound represented by one symbol or letter. Examples of shallow languages include Finnish, Italian, and Spanish. Deep alphabetic systems have multiple sounds for letters and/or multiple letters for a single phoneme, such as the English language.

Second, the amount of overlap between the student’s native language and English will also determine how much transfer a student can derive from the native language. Many Western European languages share Greek and Latin origins, providing for many points of transfer (shared orthographies, morphologies, and semantics). When the native language has less overlap with the second language, the opportunities for transfer are diminished but still exist (Moats, 2009).

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE PHONICS INSTRUCTION FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS

Effective phonics instruction needs to be systematic and explicit and should begin with the simplest phonics tasks (letter name/letter sound), then progress to more complex skills as students demonstrate proficiency. Explicit phonics instruction means that the letter–sound relationships are directly taught. Activities should be introduced and modeled several times as a whole group and then be used for guided practice under teacher supervision in small groups or individually. Finally, activities may be moved to centers to be completed independently. Systematic phonics instruction may include teaching the letters/symbols and sound correlations before moving to teaching syllable patterns within words. Building the automaticity of reading words can progress to reading sentences and paragraphs. ELs may have native literacy knowledge that could benefit second language literacy. Therefore, teachers need to be cognizant of the native language skills students may bring into the classroom and take full advantage of these when possible. In these cases, instruction should be focused on areas where the

two languages diverge, spending time on new concepts rather than information they already know.

STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING PHONICS TO ENGLISH LEARNERS

The principles of effective phonics instruction previously discussed need to be coupled with evidence-based strategies that can be easily implemented in the classroom during language arts instruction to help students become successful, lifelong readers. The strategies that follow are organized by the elements of phonics previously discussed, starting with the easiest tasks. The step-by-step process for each strategy facilitates implementation by the teacher, regardless of experience level. In addition, this guide also provides key information on linguistic differences between languages, with a particular emphasis on English and Spanish (as the vast majority of ELs speak Spanish). Teachers should use this information as a guide to individualize instruction for those students who bring a degree of literacy in the native language to the classroom.

Instructional Strategies to Develop English Learners' Letter Knowledge

Instruction for ELs can begin with opportunities for them to understand that English has 26 letters and those 26 letters represent 44 sounds. Educators should point out differences between the English alphabet and sounds and the alphabet and sounds of the English learners' home language. For example, Spanish has 30 letters if you include the digraphs *ch*, *ll*, and *rr*. The digraphs are traditionally included in early phonics instruction due to their direct one-to-one correspondence to a single phoneme. Spanish has more one-to-one letter-sound correspondences than English.

Educators who work with ELs do not need to be proficient speakers of each language spoken in their classroom. However, they should endeavor to learn about those phonics systems, so that instruction can be focused on where English and the native languages differ. Online resources can often provide this information. For example, <http://www.mylanguages.org> offers insights into nearly 100 different languages. The alphabet tab for each language lays out the letter in the native language and the English equivalent where applicable.

To help ELs make connections with their home language, prompt them to compare the letters of their native language with English. The following example compares the English alphabet with Spanish.

English: a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r, s, t, u, v, w, x, y, z

Spanish: a, b, c, ch, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, ll, m, n, ñ, o, p, q, rr, s, t, u, v, w, x, y, z

The letters look the same in English and Spanish with the exception of four extra letters and digraphs in the Spanish alphabet. English and Spanish have five letters that represent vowel sounds. In Spanish, the vowel sounds do not change. In English, the vowel sounds do change. For example, the vowel *e* can be produced as a long sound (*be*) or as a short vowel (*met*). In some cases, it is silent when it is at the end of a word in a pattern that has a vowel, a consonant, and a final *e* (*kite*).

Teach students the names of the letters of the English alphabet by having them recite it in sequential order. Another activity to reinforce alphabet knowledge is to have students practice placing the letters in alphabetical order. Distribute paper cutouts or plastic letters of the entire alphabet to students. They can replicate the classroom alphabet strip on their desk or place the letters on top of individual alphabet strips at their desk. This activity has the added benefit of addressing the sequential order of the alphabet.

Another useful letter naming activity is for students to sing the alphabet song in English, while looking at the letters (on individual alphabet strips on their desk) and following along with their fingers as they continue to sing the alphabet. If students have individual plastic letters, then have students place them in sequential order on their desks before beginning the song (using an alphabet strip to assist them if necessary). Students can physically move those letters as they sing, which can provide additional opportunities for learning the English letter names. Another activity for building automaticity of the alphabet is to have students name the letter that occurs before or after a particular letter. For instance, the teacher might prompt

Tell me the letter after h. [waits for student response] *Yes, the letter after h is the letter i.*

Tell me the letter before b. [waits for student response] *Yes, the letter before b is the letter a.*

Tell me the letter after q. [waits for student response] *Yes, the letter after q is the letter r.*

Have students provide their responses in complete sentences. If students have very limited oral proficiency, then provide them with a sentence stem to scaffold their responses. A sentence stem is a set response students can repeat that only lacks the last word or phrase for them to complete independently. For example, as in the previous activity, the teacher might prompt as follows:

Tell me the letter after b. [Waits for student response. If the student responds with only the letter name or no response is forthcoming, then the teacher says the following.] *Repeat after me, "The letter after b is ____."*

Guess Who? is another activity to help students learn letter names with the added benefit of building oral language skills. The teacher thinks of a

letter and the students try to guess it by asking a series of questions. Model some question stems that students could ask to facilitate the activity and show them how to ask effective questions. For example, “Is this letter a ____ (vowel, consonant)?” and “Does this letter come before the letter ____?” are examples of question stems. For this activity, the teacher would say

I am thinking about a letter that is close to the very beginning of the alphabet.

You can ask three questions, and when you know the letter, you can say it. If you guess the correct letter, then you win the game. If you do not guess the correct letter, then I get a point. The person who achieves 10 points first will win the game.

Some examples of questions could include the following:

- *Is it a vowel?*
- *Is it a consonant?*
- *Is it before the letter ____?*
- *Is it after the letter ____?*
- *Is it between the letters ____ and ____?*
- *Is it a tall letter?*
- *Is it a round-shaped letter?*

Once again, this activity will help ELs use their language skills by asking questions. You can use sentence stems to assist ELs in creating the necessary questions for this activity. Students can also practice their deductive reasoning skills by determining the targeted letter name in this game-like activity. With practice and teacher demonstrations, students will ask more strategic questions and learn how they can use the information from previous questions to narrow down their search possibilities. Throughout all of these activities, it is important to emphasize that the letter names do not ever change. This is a consistent and reliable concept for ELs.

As students demonstrate a degree of proficiency for at least some of the letter names, it is important for them to learn the sound or sounds associated with those letters. The activities in the next section progress students from letter knowledge to the letter–sound associations, also known as *grapho-phonemic knowledge*.

Instructional Strategies to Develop English Learners’ Grapho-Phonemic Knowledge

Emergent readers may not yet understand the alphabetic principle—the concept that letters represent speech sounds or that these sounds are the building blocks of spoken words (Moats, 2009). The following activities help

students bridge this gap and provide them with a solid foundation that will assist them at the next level of phonics—decoding. Cárdenas-Hagan (2018) described steps for explicit instruction of letter–sound knowledge for ELs.

1. Teacher says three words that begin with a common sound.
2. Students repeat the words.
3. Students determine the common sound.
4. Teacher discusses the formation of the sound and its features.
5. Teacher leads a discussion regarding the commonalities or differences of the sounds in the native and second languages.

This explicit, step-by-step approach scaffolds children’s learning by breaking down the process for learning a new sound into its component parts and making instruction more comprehensible for the students through the use of repetition and multiple examples. The following example shows how a typical lesson might be designed for the sound /b/:

Listen to these words with the common initial or beginning sound: ball, bus, boot.

Repeat the words. (ball, bus, boot)

What was the common sound that you heard? Yes, the sound was /b/.

Let’s look at each other or look in a mirror as you determine how to produce the sound. You used your lips. Touch your throat and see if your vocal chords vibrate. Yes, they do. The /b/ sound is a consonant sound that is voiced. The letter name is b and the sound is /b/.

Now let’s determine if this is a sound you have in your native language. For example, in Spanish you have the sound /b/. It is the same sound as the English sound. It is also a voiced consonant sound. We can use the word bat to help remember this sound. In Spanish, the word would be bate. Say the letter name in English. B. Say the keyword. Bat. Say the /b/ sound. Good job.

In the previous example, students reflect on the similarities of the letters and sounds in their native language and English. Table 5.1 describes the letters and sounds that directly or indirectly transfer from Spanish to English. Those that indirectly transfer may have the same letter, but a variation of the sound exists in English. Instructors may consider explicitly highlighting and demonstrating the concepts that directly transfer. For example, in a class that has a native Zulu speaker who has some basic phonics knowledge in his or her native language, the teacher can demonstrate the direct transfer of the /z/ sound by saying

Some letters share the same sound in English and Zulu. You can use what you already know about these letters in Zulu to help you read in English. One of those letters is z. The letter z makes the /z/ sound in English and Zulu.

Table 5.1. Letters and sounds that directly or indirectly transfer from Spanish to English

Spanish letter	English letter	Spanish sound	English sound
a	a	/ah/	/ă/, /ā/, /ü/
b	b	/b/	/b/
c	c	/k/	/k/
d	d	/d/	/d/
e	e	/ē/	/ě/, /ē/
f	f	/f/	/f/
g	g	/g/ or /h/	/g/ or /j/
h	h	silent	/h/
i	i	/ē/	/ī/, /ī/
j	j	/h/	/j/
k	k	/k/	/k/
l	l	/l/	/l/
m	m	/m/	/m/
n	n	/n/	/n/
o	o	/ō/	/ō/ tone difference
p	p	/p/	/p/
q	q	/k/	/kw/
r	r	/rr/	/r/
s	s	/s/	/s/
t	t	/t/	/t/
u	u	/ōō/	/ü/, /ū/
v	v	/v/	/v/
w	w	/w/	/w/
x	x	/ks/, /s/, /h/	/ks/, /z/
y	y	/y/	/y/
z	z	/s/	/z/

Next, those concepts that can partially or indirectly transfer can also be explicitly taught. Continuing with the same example with a native Zulu speaker, a partial transfer example prompt could be

The letter c exists in both Zulu and English. In Zulu, however, the c makes the /ch/ sound, whereas in English it will make either the /k/ or /s/ sound. Because this is a difference between our two languages, you will want to be extra careful when reading words with the letter c.

Finally, there are many new reading concepts in English that can be taught in a systematic and explicit manner. For example, for native Spanish speakers, the short vowel sound /i/ will be completely novel. The teacher will need to provide modeling for the correct pronunciation of this new sound and a lot of opportunity for practice.

The explicit and systematic instruction of letter–sound associations previously described serves to facilitate the successful acquisition of this knowledge by ELs, whether there is complete, partial, or no overlap between the native language and English. Once students are armed with this information, they are ready to move on to the next rung on the grapho-phonemic continuum—decoding.

Instructional Strategies to Develop English Learners' Decoding Skills

Decoding words is the foundation on which many higher level reading skills build (accuracy, fluency, and comprehension). A solid knowledge base of letter–sound correspondences discussed in the previous section, along with ample practice to build automaticity, are crucial for students to become proficient at decoding.

Identification of syllable type is a proven strategy for facilitating decoding of words (Moats & Tolman, 2019). The vast majority of words in the English language are comprised of six syllable types (closed, open, vowel-*r*, vowel pair, vowel-consonant-*e*, final stable syllable). Applying the six syllable types to word decoding provides novice readers with information on how to correctly read thousands of unfamiliar words. It also helps teachers organize decoding and spelling instruction (Moats & Tolman, 2019). When this knowledge is combined with syllable division conventions, students learn how to successfully read longer words. The following paragraphs discuss syllable types and syllable division instruction, with modeling and examples provided to facilitate implementation in the classroom.

ELs will need to understand that English has six types of syllables, several of which are discussed next. This is especially necessary for those ELs whose native language is transparent and has reliable letter–sound correlations that do not vary. The concept of a syllable directly transfers across many languages. To explicitly teach this concept or make a connection across languages, teachers can demonstrate the features of a syllable. To do so, the teacher might say

Say the word mom.

How many times did you open your mouth? (one)

How many sounded vowels did you hear? (one)

You heard one.

Every time you open your mouth, you are producing a syllable.

Every syllable has one vowel sound.

Therefore, a syllable is made by opening your mouth. Every syllable has at least one vowel sound.

You have this concept in many languages. For example, a syllable in Spanish is formed by opening the mouth, and every syllable has one vowel sound.

Once students understand the concept of a syllable, they are prepared to learn the syllable types of the English language for correctly reading words. Instructors should teach each syllable type in sequential order, giving students ample practice to identify and practice reading each one individually and then in combined lists that provide various words from the current

and previously taught syllable types. Students will then identify the syllable type and decode the words.

Closed Syllable The English language can be categorized into six types of syllables. The first syllable type is a closed syllable, which has one vowel followed by at least one consonant. The vowel sound will be short. The following example exemplifies how to teach an introductory lesson on closed syllables in an explicit and systematic manner.

Look at these words as I write them on the board: met, son, him, at, hem.

How many vowel sounds do you see in each word? (one)

Yes, you see one vowel.

What is followed by each vowel? (a consonant)

Yes, each word has one vowel followed by at least one consonant.

Every time you produce a consonant sound, your mouth is blocked by the tongue, teeth, or lips.

Consonant sounds close the mouth.

These words end in a consonant, and they are called closed syllables.

A closed syllable has one vowel and at least one consonant.

The vowel sound will be short. You can code it with a breve, which in your language of Spanish or other Latin-based languages means short.

We can also determine the meaning of each of these words because you may not know them in depth in the English language.

Open Syllable An open syllable ends in one vowel, and the vowel sound is long. Use the following multisensory example to introduce the open syllable concept to students.

Look at these words as I write them on the board: me, so, hi, a, he.

How many vowel sounds do you see in each word? (one)

Yes, you see one vowel.

Take out your mirror, look at your mouth, and say these vowel sounds after me: /ā, ē, ī, ō, ū/

Is your mouth open or closed as you produce these sounds? (open)

Yes, your mouth is open for vowel sounds.

Vowel sounds open the mouth.

Because these words end in a vowel, they are called open syllables.

An open syllable has one vowel, and the vowel sound will be long.

You can code it with a macron, which is a line above the vowel.

We can also determine the meaning of each of these words because you may not know them in depth in the English language.

Once students have learned both the open and closed syllable types, prepare a word list that has both types of words. Ensure that your students can differentiate the words, identifying both the type of syllable and the correct pronunciation of each item. The instructor can have students code the vowel sounds with the markings of a breve or a macron. A breve is a short vowel marking that appears as a curved line above the vowel when coding syllable types. A macron is a long vowel marking that appears as a line above the vowel when coding syllable types.

The breve may be simple for some ELs to understand because the word *breve* in Spanish and other languages reflects something short. A brief list of mixed long and short vowel words follows as an example for syllable type identification, reading, and coding practice.

me	met
so	son
hi	him
a	at
he	hem

Language Connections

An adaption for syllable type instruction among ELs is to have students make a connection to their native language and determine if the syllable patterns are present in both languages. ELs can also benefit from understanding the meanings of the words they are reading. Some of the words in the previous example are cognates, which are words whose spellings and meanings are similar across languages. For example, the word *telephone* is a cognate with many languages. It is spelled in a similar way and has the same meaning. Table 5.2 lists just a few of the many languages that share a cognate for *telephone* with English and can help students as they learn to read and understand words in English.

Table 5.2. Languages that share a cognate for the English word *telephone*

Language	Spelling	Pronunciation
Spanish	teléfono	Tě—lay—fo—no
Portuguese	telefone	Tě—lee—fon—nee
German	telefon	Tě—lí—fon
Russian	Телефон	Tay—lay—fohn
Farsi	تلفن	Tě—lě—fohn
Greek	Τηλέφωνο	Tě—lay—fo—no

Instructors can also discuss and practice the pronunciation of the words. In Spanish, the word *a* is pronounced as /ah/. In English, it is pronounced as /ā/. Another question to ask is whether the words are similar in spelling but not in meaning. For example, the word *son* has the same spelling in Spanish and English. Yet, the meaning is different in Spanish. In Spanish, the word *son* means *are*. In English, it means the male child of a parent. The pronunciation in Spanish is /sōn/ with a long *O* sound. In English, it is /sŏn/ with a short vowel sound. Once again, understanding the similarities and the differences between the native language and English can enhance phonics instruction for ELs.

Vowel Pair Syllable Some words have two vowels next to one another. This makes a pair and is therefore called a *vowel pair syllable*. Each of the English vowel pair syllables must be explicitly taught, especially because some vowel pairs have multiple pronunciations in English. For example the vowel pair *oo* has two pronunciations, and the vowel pair *ea* has three pronunciations. Examples of English vowel pairs are as follows:

ai, ay, ea, ee, ei, eu, ie, oa, oe, oi, oy, oo, ou, ue

Language Connections

Teachers can help students connect with the different syllable types by pointing out when a particular syllable pattern exists in the students' native language and whether the pronunciation is the same or different. In those cases in which the pronunciation differs, the teacher should determine if the sound exists in both languages but uses different symbols to represent it. The teacher and students can also explore whether words with the pattern are cognates with similar spellings and meanings. If they are not cognates, then they should discuss the meaning of the word in English and compare it with the word in the native language. For instance, the teacher prompts

Say the words boy, toy, soy.

What did you hear at the end of each word? (/oy/)

Look at the words as I write them: boy, toy, soy.

What letters are the same? (oy) Yes, the letters are o and y.

This is a vowel pair syllable that has two adjacent vowels. Y acts like a vowel in these words.

Does this vowel pair pattern exist in your native or first language?

If so, how do you pronounce it?

Is it the same or different?

Do any words with oy look the same in your language?

The word soy is the same in English and Spanish. The pronunciation is the same in English and Spanish. The meaning is different. In Spanish, the meaning for the word soy is am. In English, it means a type of sauce for Chinese food.

Vowel-R Syllable The English language also has the pattern of a vowel followed by the letter *r*, which is a vowel-*r* syllable. The vowel-*r* syllables must also be taught because the vowel makes various sounds. For example, the vowel-*r* syllable has pronunciations that are challenging to read and produce in the English language, especially when the individual's English language experience has been limited, as in the case of many ELs. Most of the time the vowel-*r* syllable will be produced as /er/ as in the words *her*, *sir*, and *burn*. Yet, the vowel-*r* syllable for words with *ar* will have various pronunciations.

One way to explain this is to demonstrate how the accent patterns will change the pronunciations. Following is an example of how this might be taught to ELs.

Today we are going to learn about two different ways to pronounce the vowel-r combination of ar. Even though there are two ways to read and pronounce the combined letters a and r, the good news is that the rules are dependable and you can easily learn how to correctly read these words. Let's take a look at the following list that has one of the pronunciations.

Say the words car, far, bar.

What was the common sound that you heard? (/ar/)

Look at the letters in the words as I write them.

What letters did I use? (a and r)

Yes, the letters a and r.

This is a vowel-r syllable.

Do you have this vowel-r pattern in your native or first language?

If so, is it pronounced in the same way?

In the case of Spanish, you trill the letter r, unlike the sound in English.

Do any of the words look the same in your native or first language? (yes)

The word bar looks the same in Spanish and English.

The pronunciation is different because the letter r is trilled in Spanish and not in English.

Is the meaning the same or different?

The meaning is the same.

Once students understand the first pronunciation of vowel-*r* combination *ar* as /ar/, the teacher should pivot the lesson to words in which the vowel-*r*

combination appears in the unstressed syllable and has the pronunciation of /er/. To provide instruction on this concept, the teacher could prompt

Now say these words after me: collar, dollar, polar.

What was the common sound? (/er/)

Look at the letters in the words as I write them.

What letters did I use? (a and r)

Yes, the letters a and r.

So, when the vowel-r combination is written within a word and it is in the unaccented syllable, then it is produced as /er/.

Do you have this unaccented syllable ar pattern in your native or first language?

In Spanish, the letters a and r can be in the unaccented syllable (e.g., dólar). Yet, the pronunciation remains the same, /arr/.

Now that the rules for both pronunciations have been introduced and understood by the students, the teacher might ask the class to compare a variety of words with this pattern:

carcollar

dartdollar

lardliar

In the first column, each vowel-*r* combination appears in the accented syllable and the pronunciation is /ar/. In the second column, each vowel-*r* combination appears in the unaccented syllable and the pronunciation is /er/. Next, the teacher can ask students to compare words with the pattern *or* such as

bornvalor

stormdoctor

cordharbor

In the first column, vowel-*r* combination *or* appears in the accented syllable and the pronunciation is /or/. In the second column, each vowel-*r* combination *or* appears in the unaccented syllable and the pronunciation is /er/. The teacher should then ask, “Do you have this unaccented syllable pattern in your native or first language?” In Spanish, words such as *valor* and *doctor* represent the vowel-*r* pattern. The pronunciation for the letters *o* and *r* does not change in Spanish and is produced as /orr/. To explain a final pattern of *or*, the teacher could share

Words such as worth, worthy, and world have the vowel-r combination or followed by the letter w. In this case, the pronunciation of vowel-r combination is /er/, despite the fact the or appears in the accented syllable.

Do you have a similar pattern for words that have a letter w before the or? If so, explain the pattern.

To summarize, the vowel-*r* syllable type in English is complex but has several dependable rules that facilitate correct pronunciation.

- *er, ir, ur*—always pronounced /er/
- *ar*—pronounced /ar/ when in the stressed syllable (or single-syllable words); pronounced /er/ when in an unstressed syllable
- *or*—pronounced /or/ when in the stressed syllable (or single-syllable words); pronounced /er/ when in an unstressed syllable (*doctor, tutor*) but with several important exceptions (*world, word*)

Final Stable Syllable A final stable syllable is another syllable type in the English language and occurs at the end of words. Many of the final stable syllables have the pattern of a consonant followed by *-le*. Following are examples of final stable syllables with a consonant-*le* pattern.

- Bubble
- Uncle
- Candle
- Ruffle
- Angle
- Ankle
- Apple
- Hassle
- Castle

Other final stable syllables can be endings such as *-dure, -ture, -sion, and -tion*, which occurs in words such as

- Procedure
- Picture
- Vision
- Nation

A lesson introducing the final stable syllable type might begin as follows:

Say these words after me: purple, dimple, apple.

What did you hear that was the same in each of these words? (-ple)

Look at these words as I write them on the board: purple, dimple, apple.

What letters do you see at the end of each word? (-ple)

Yes, -ple. In what position of the word do you see -ple? (final)

Yes, it the final position of the word.

-Ple is considered a final stable syllable. A final stable syllable appears at the end of words.

The syllable before is accented.

Does this pattern exist in your native or first language?

If so, please describe. Is the pronunciation the same or different?

Are there any words that look similar and have the same meaning? Please explain.

Syllable Division Patterns

As students learn the syllable types in English, it will be important for them to read words with multiple syllables. This requires the student to not only understand the six syllable types of English, but also to understand how to divide the words into their syllable types for reading multisyllabic words. Some students may be able to read monosyllabic words but struggle with reading multisyllabic words and will require explicit instruction in this area (Nippold, 2017). ELs need instruction to help them understand the most common patterns for syllable division and determine the similarities and differences in their native language and English.

VCCV Syllable Division Pattern Instruction in syllable division assists students with decoding longer words. Moats and Tolman (2019) stated, “Without a strategy for chunking longer words into manageable parts, students may look at a longer word and simply resort to guessing what it is—or altogether skipping it.” Familiarity with the syllable types and how to correctly divide longer words into syllables helps students read more accurately and fluently and also helps them solve spelling problems. Instruction in syllable division patterns should start with the most common type of word in English—the vowel-consonant-consonant-vowel (VCCV) pattern. The following example demonstrates how to introduce this pattern (Moats & Tolman, 2019):

Look at the following words as I write them on the board: intend, mascot, bronco.

We will find the vowels and label them with the letter v.

Next, we will find the consonants and label them with the letter c.

What pattern do we have within these words? (VCCV pattern)

Yes, we have a VCCV pattern.

Divide the words between the two consonants.

What type of syllables do we have? (closed syllables)

Yes, we have closed syllables.

Code the vowels according to the syllable type.

Read the word.

Is this a word you know?

Do you have any of these words in your native language?

If you speak Spanish, then each of these words looks very similar to Spanish and you divide them according to the same pattern.

Did you pronounce the word correctly? Is the accent on the correct syllable?

Use the word in a sentence.

It is important to teach students to be flexible when dividing words into the various syllable division patterns. Words with the VCCV pattern are typically divided between the two consonants. The accent is most often on the first syllable, but English also has words that will be accented on the second syllable. Once ELs have mastered this syllable pattern, it will be important to also teach that some words in English will require the division to occur after the first vowel. Words such as *matron*, *between* and *decline* are some examples of this pattern.

VCV Syllable Division Pattern The vowel-consonant-vowel (VCV) pattern is another common syllable division pattern in English (e.g., *total*, *rebel*, *navel*). The syllables in VCV words are normally divided after the first vowel. The following script is a discovery inquiry lesson for students to learn how to divide this syllable pattern:

Look at these words as I write them on the board: legal, final, omit.

We will find the vowels and label them with the letter v.

Next, we will find the consonants and label them with the letter c.

What pattern do we have within these words? (VCV pattern)

Yes, we have a VCV pattern.

Divide the words after the first vowel.

What type of syllables do we have? (open and closed syllables)

Yes, we have an open syllable and a closed syllable.

Code the vowels according to the syllable type.

Read the word.

Is this a word you know?

Do you have any of these words in your native language?

If you speak Spanish, then each of these words looks very similar to Spanish and you divide them according to the same pattern.

Did you pronounce the word correctly? Is the accent on the correct syllable?

Use the word in a sentence.

It is important to teach students to be flexible when dividing words into the various syllable division patterns. Words with a VCV pattern are typically divided after the first vowel. The accent is most often on the first syllable, but English can also have words that will be accented on the second syllable. Once ELs have mastered this syllable pattern, it will be important to also teach that some words in English will require the division to occur after the consonant. Words such as *tremor*, *modest* and *solid* are some examples of this pattern.

VCCCV Syllable Division Pattern The vowel-consonant-consonant-consonant-vowel (VCCCV) pattern is the final syllable division pattern included in this chapter. The lesson that follows suggests a manner to introduce this concept to students.

Look at these words as I write them on the board: nostril, ostracize, monstrous.

We will find the vowels and label them with the letter v.

Next, we will find the consonants and label them with the letter c.

What pattern do we have within these words? (VCCCV pattern)

Yes, we have a VCCCV pattern.

Divide the words after the first consonant.

What is the first type of syllable? (closed syllable)

Yes, we have a closed syllable.

Code the vowels according to the syllable types within the word.

Read the word.

Is this a word you know?

Do you have any of these words in your native language?

Did you pronounce the word correctly? Is the accent on the correct syllable?

Use the word in a sentence.

Although the rules outlined here are fairly regular and dependable, there are exceptions that should be pointed out to students. Students need to know that they must be flexible in their approach to syllable division. If their initial attempt following the rules outlined does not result in sensible syllables, then they should attempt an alternative point of dividing the word. For example, words with a VCCCV pattern are typically divided after the first consonant. The accent is most often on the first syllable, but English also can have words that will be accented on the second syllable. Once ELs have mastered this syllable division pattern, it will be important to also teach that some words in English will require the division to occur after the

second consonant. Words such as *handshake*, *sandbox*, and *hindleg* are some examples of this pattern.

Instructional Strategies to Develop English Learners' Morphological Awareness

Instructors can incorporate morphological awareness as a strategy for increasing word reading accuracy and comprehension of word meanings. Many morphemes in European languages share the same Latin and Greek roots, which means that there is considerable overlap (and more important for ELs, significant opportunity for transfer from the native language). For instance, the word *telephone* is comprised of two Greek roots: *tele* (meaning distant) and *phone* (meaning sound). As shown in the example earlier in this chapter, many languages employ these same Greek affixes to form words. By systematically teaching Greek and Latin morphemes, educators add an additional strategy for developing ELs' phonics knowledge in addition to their word knowledge. Approximately 60% of words in English have Greek or Latin roots, and this percentage is even higher for many European languages (Dictionary.com, 2019).

Morphemes can either exist as a prefix, root, base word, or suffix. A prefix is a morpheme that is added to a root or base word and can change its meaning. For example, the prefix *re-* can change the meaning of the word *turn* when it is added to the beginning of the word, as in the word *return*. Many prefixes are common across languages in their form and meaning. A root is a morpheme that can have either another root or base word added to it, as in the words *monograph* or *telephone*. A root can also have a prefix added to it, as in the words *revert* or *construct*. A root can also have a suffix added to it, as in the words *stricken* or *visor*.

Teaching morphemes to ELs will assist them in reading words with accuracy and understanding the word meanings because many of the morphemes are common across languages.

Table 5.3 provides an example of common word parts across languages such as English, Spanish, French, Catalan, Italian, and Portuguese. Keep in mind that many of these same affixes will be valid for languages beyond those listed. To teach morphemes, a teacher could prompt

Today you will learn a word part that will help you read and understand words.

Say these words after me: artist, pianist, dentist.

What did you hear that was the same in each of these words? (-ist)

Look at the words as I write them on the board.

What are the letters used for this word part? (-i-s-t)

In what position of the word do we find this word part? (final position)

This word part is in the final position and is considered a suffix.

Table 5.3. Common morphemes across languages

English		Spanish		French	
Word part	Meaning	Word part	Meaning	Word part	Meaning
tri-	three	tri-	tres	tri-	trois
bi-	two	bi-	dos	bi-	duex
con-	with	con-	con	con-	avec
graph	written	graf	escribir	graph	écrit
phone	sound	fono	sonido	phone	bruit
-ist	sound	-ista	alguien que	-iste	celui qui
-itis	one who	-itis	inflamacion	-ite	inflammation

Catalan		Italian		Portugese	
Word part	Meaning	Word part	Meaning	Word part	Meaning
tri-	tres	tri-	tre	tri-	três
bi-	dos	bi-	due	bi-	dois
con-	amb	con-	con	con-	com
graf	escrita	graf	scrivere	grafo	escrito
fon	sona	fono	suono	fone	som
-ista	el que	-ista	colui che	-ista	aquele que

From Cárdenas-Hagan, E. (2000). *Esperanza training manual*. Brownsville, TX: Valley Speech Language and Learning Center; adapted by permission.

A suffix is a morpheme added to the end of a word or root and can change its form or meaning.

Does this suffix exist in your native language? If so, describe it.

Read the base word.

Read the suffix.

Read the entire word together with fluency.

Do you know the meaning of -ist?

An artist is the person who can draw or paint.

A pianist is the person who can play the piano.

A dentist is the person who can care for your teeth.

So, the meaning of -ist is the person who.

Do you have these words in your native language?

We will practice reading more words with this suffix.

We will also review the meanings of each of the words that we read.

In summary, morphological awareness can enhance students' ability to read and understand words. Many of the morphemes transfer across languages and can help ELs to become more efficient in learning to read English. ELs can benefit from this instruction when it is taught in an explicit and systematic manner.

PROGRESS MONITORING

Progress monitoring is the regular, ongoing scientifically based assessment of students' academic performance. It has two main purposes—to determine the effectiveness of instruction that has been provided to the student and to adjust instruction based on student progress and/or devise more effective programs for students not benefiting from the program provided (Mellard & Johnson, 2008). It is important to monitor ELs' knowledge of phonics so teachers can make continual adjustments in ongoing instruction to maximize the effectiveness of instructional time. Such progress monitoring might begin with examining students' letter knowledge. For example, an instructor might progress monitor the learner's mastery of the English alphabet every few weeks to ensure that he or she achieves adequate progress. Many commercial progress monitoring assessments exist for early literacy skills, and/or such tools may be a part of the reading series adopted by the instructor's school district. Progress monitoring tools are also quite easy to develop so that they closely match the ongoing classroom instruction.

To monitor ELs' letter-sound knowledge, the instructor can develop a simple assessment tool to collect data regarding the consonant and vowel sounds already introduced to the students. Figure 5.1 is a simple example of a partial sound monitoring sheet. Sounds not yet introduced are in dark shading. This table can be extended to cover more complex sounds such as diphthongs and blends.

Next, the teacher should monitor if the students can read words with the six syllable types. It is important to know if the students can read words with multiple syllables and divide the words appropriately. To collect this data, teachers could develop targeted word flashcards (or a word list) and a simple progress monitoring chart (similar to the one for sounds) with the words assessed and dates to track student progress. Another example of a progress monitoring tool is to measure if students understand that words have word parts that can assist them with reading and understanding English. Figure 5.2 is a sample from the *Working With English Language Learners* progress monitoring tool (Cárdenas-Hagan, 2016). Once instructors gather

Letter	Sound	9/5	9/12	9/19	9/26	10/3	10/10	10/17	10/24
Yes	Yes	✓	✓	✓					
A	ā								
B									
C	k	X	X	✓					
C	s								
D	d	✓	✓						
E	ě (fed)		✓						

Figure 5.1. Example of a partial sound monitoring sheet.

**Progress Monitoring
Teacher Form**

Student School ID # _____

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Sex: ___ Male ___ Female

Date of Birth ____ / ____ / ____ Age ____
MM DD YYYY

School _____

Teacher _____

Date of Testing ____ / ____ / ____
MM DD YYYY

Grade ____

Examiner's Name _____

Phonological Awareness

1. Say the word <i>sip</i> .	Change /s/ to /z/.	The word is _____. (<i>zip</i>)
2. Say the word <i>they</i> .	Change /th+/ to /r/.	The word is _____. (<i>ray</i>)
3. Say the word <i>ram</i> .	Change the /r/ to /j/.	The word is _____. (<i>jam</i>)
4. Say the word <i>lend</i> .	Change /ě/ to /ö/.	The word is _____. (<i>lond</i>)
5. Say the word <i>come</i> .	Change /k/ to /th/.	The word is _____. (<i>thumb</i>)
6. Tell me the sounds in the word <i>quit</i> .		/kw/ /ĩ/ /t/
7. Tell me the sounds in the word <i>ring</i> .		/r/ /ĩ/ /ng/
8. Tell me the sounds in the word <i>live</i> .		/l/ /ĩ/ /v/

Expected score 6–8 correct**Phonics**

Read each letter. Say the name of the letter and its sound in English.

	Correct	Incorrect		Correct	Incorrect
1. H	_____	_____	6. NG	_____	_____
2. Ĩ	_____	_____	7. TH+	_____	_____
3. QU	_____	_____	8. R	_____	_____
4. J	_____	_____	9. Ũ	_____	_____
5. Z	_____	_____	10. Ă	_____	_____

Expected score 8–10 correct**Incorrect Letters** _____**Incorrect Sounds** _____**Figure 5.2.** The Working With English Language Learners progress monitoring tool.*(continued)*

From Cárdenas-Hagan, E. (2016). *Working With English Language Learners 2 (WELLS) training manual*. Brownsville, TX: Valley Speech Language and Learning Center; reprinted by permission.

In *Literacy Foundations for English Learners: A Comprehensive Guide to Evidence-Based Instruction*, edited by Elsa Cárdenas-Hagan.

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Read the following words.

	Correct	Incorrect		Correct	Incorrect
1. help	_____	_____	6. quiz	_____	_____
2. add	_____	_____	7. box	_____	_____
3. lip	_____	_____	8. jump	_____	_____
4. thank	_____	_____	9. ring	_____	_____
5. that	_____	_____	10. jazz	_____	_____

Expected score 8–10 correct

Score _____

Letter-sounds read incorrectly _____

Vocabulary

Themes of Transportation, Clothing, and Places

1. I am like a short coat that you wear to keep you warm. I rhyme with the word packet. I am a _____ (jacket).
2. I am the place where airplanes can land and take you to far off destinations. I am an _____ (airport).
3. I am a large powerful vehicle that can be used to pull farm equipment. I am a _____ (tractor).
4. I am a type of aircraft with spinning metal blades attached to the very top. I am a _____ (helicopter).
5. You wear me at night so you can sleep comfortably in the bed. I am _____ (pajamas).

Expected score 4–5 correct

Fluency/Comprehension

Jim is content with his six rings. (7)

Zac is content with his red pots. (7)

Ren is content with his job singing. (9)

Bob is fond of his dog. (6)

Beth is fond of the cat. (6)

Jim, Zac, Ren, Bob, and Beth want to be content.

Number of words read correctly _____/45

Percent correct _____

Questions

Who likes the red pots? (Zac)

Who is a jeweler? Why?

Who likes animals? (Beth and Bob)

What is Ren's job?

What is Beth fond of?

Comprehension Score _____

Figure 5.2. (continued)

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the data from progress monitoring tools, lessons can be modified to specifically target those concepts not yet mastered.

CONCLUSION

ELs can benefit from explicit phonics instruction. Phonics lessons can begin with a focus on learning the names of the English letters and the letter–sound correspondences. Cross-language connections for letters and sounds can be helpful to ELs. These students can then learn the six syllable types of the English language and practice reading words with each of the syllable types. Understanding the various syllable division patterns will also assist ELs when reading words with multiple syllables. Finally, instructors can capitalize on morphological awareness and its potential similarities with native language structure which will aid ELs’ reading accuracy and understanding of English words.



STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Why is it important to teach letter names in English? Likewise, why is it important to teach letter–sound correspondences in English?
2. What are the modifications or adjustments that an educator can include when teaching letter–sound correlations to ELs?
3. Describe each of the six syllable types and strategies to teach them to ELs.
4. What special considerations are important for phonics instruction among ELs?
5. What considerations are important for syllable division instruction among ELs?
6. What is morphological awareness, and how can it assist ELs’ decoding skills?
7. How does ongoing progress monitoring benefit both teacher and student?



EXTENDED READING AND APPLICATION ACTIVITIES

1. Learning the alphabet is one of the early skills for building letter knowledge. Classrooms often have students from various language backgrounds. Consider your current classroom or a previous class that you have worked in, determine if the languages are alphabetic, and make a comparison with the English alphabet. Next, reflect on how this knowledge should influence instruction for this class.

2. Understanding the English syllable types can enhance decoding skills. Determine the syllable patterns of the various home languages spoken by your students. Next, understand if any similarities can be incorporated into your lessons for the six syllable types of English.
3. Good readers understand that words can have smaller units of meaning within each word. Determine which word parts exist in the home languages of your students and incorporate this morpheme connection during instruction for decoding and vocabulary.

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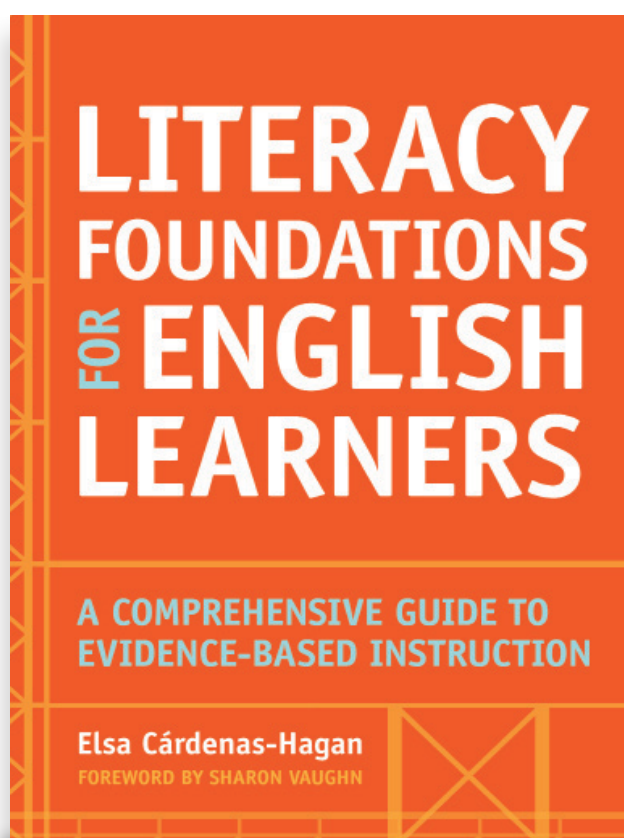
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