



# Empowering Struggling Readers: The Impact of Small-Group, Direct Instruction on Second Grade Hispanic Females

RWE Conference  
October 20, 2007  
San Antonio, Texas

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# Introduction

- This study investigates the impact of small group direct instruction on 22 second grade Hispanic female struggling readers placed in English immersion and Bilingual classrooms.

# Importance

- This research addresses educational inequity for Hispanic females who are acquiring literacy skills in their second language and have limited literacy skills in their first language.
- Hence, it presents the effectiveness of small-group, direct instruction to empower these struggling readers.

# Research on Reading Instruction for ELLs

- Cummins (2003) states that two of the most important issues in educational research are:
  - teaching English language learners (ELLs) to read and
  - increasing their academic achievement.
- Reading readiness is the foundation of academic success (August & Shanahan, 2006).

# Research on Reading Instruction for ELLs

- The academic and literacy achievement of ELLs can be increased through interventions that focus on
  - English reading instruction (Fitzgerald & Noblit, 1999; Geva & Wang, 2001) and
  - small group instruction (Foorman & Torgerson, 2001).

# Research on Reading Instruction for ELLs

- Previous studies of small-group, direct instruction in English reading found that struggling readers who received an English reading intervention daily made significant gains in letter naming, phonological awareness, reading and academic achievement (Vaughn et al., 2006).

# Location of the Research

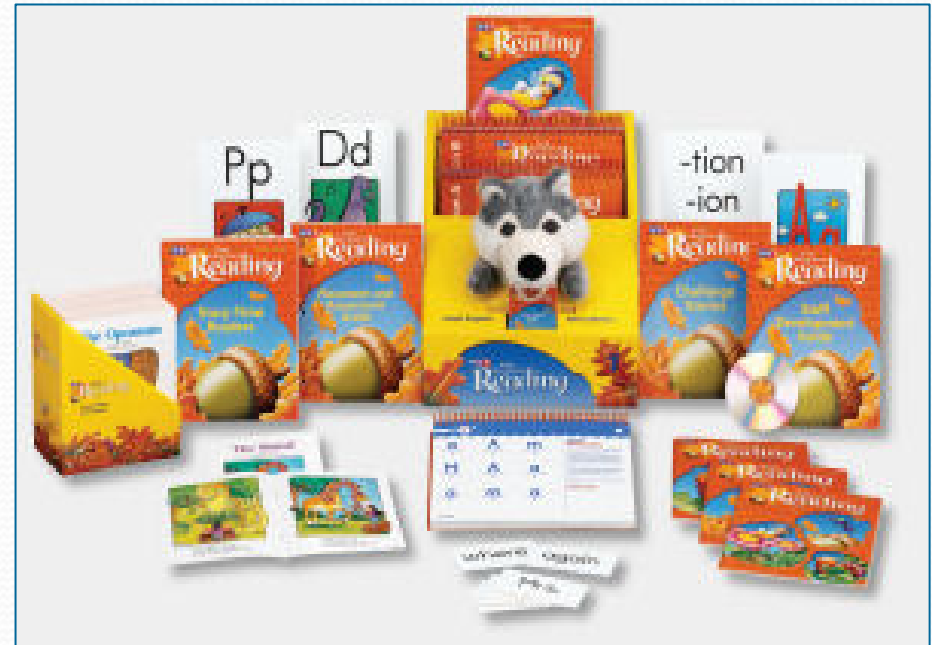
- Large school district in southeast Texas
  - Urban
  - Recognized (state accountability system)
  - 65% Hispanic
  - 89-98% low socio-economic status
  - 7 elementary schools

# Research Method

- This study is part of an on-going, longitudinal, randomized-trial project targeting Hispanic English learners' English language and literacy acquisition.
- A pre-post test design was employed to address the growth of English and Spanish reading ability during second grade.
- The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) test was administered three times during the school year (beginning, middle and end).
- Results from BOY were used to identify struggling readers. These struggling readers were then placed in small groups and received a direct instruction intervention in English for 45 minutes everyday.

# Early Interventions in Reading

- Highly trained paraprofessionals deliver instruction
- 45 minute sessions
- 5 days a week
- In addition to core reading instruction



# Early Interventions in Reading

- Daily, explicit, and systematic instruction
- Small groups of 3-5 students
- 3 Critical Components
  - Pacing
  - Error Correction
  - Mastery



# Pacing

- The objective is to go as fast the students can go without going faster than they can handle.
- Pacing should be fast enough to keep students on task, but not so fast that they begin to guess and make mistakes.
- Good pacing increases students' academic engagement.

# Error Correction

- Teacher gives immediate corrective feedback to the students when they make an error.
- All errors are corrected as soon as they happen.
- Teacher uses scaffolding.
  - Teacher provides information to help move the student to the correct answer

# Mastery

- A skill is considered mastered when every student is able to perform the skill independently without making any mistakes.
- The goal in each activity is to teach the skills to mastery before moving to the next activity.
- Prevents lessons from becoming too difficult.

# Lessons

- All lessons are scripted.
- Each lesson has 7-9 activities.
- Most of each lesson consists of review and practice so that students can assimilate new information.
- Each lesson begins with group practice and ends with individual practice.



# Five Strands of Reading

- Phonemic Awareness
- Letter-Sound Correspondence
- Word Recognition and Spelling
- Fluency
- Comprehension

# Phonemic Awareness

- Lays the foundation for letter-sound correspondence and word-recognition activities
- Provides a tool for spelling
- Skill sequence
  - Initial sound
  - Last sound
  - Medial sound
  - Auditory blending
  - Segmentation
  - Stretch and blend
  - Vowel discrimination

# Letter-Sound Correspondence

- No more than 3 letter-sounds are introduced per week
- Teaches letter-sounds only (not letter names)
- Introduces the most common letter sounds first
- Lessons include:
  - Letter-sound introduction
  - Letter-sound review
  - Letter-sound dictation

# Word Recognition and Spelling

- Sequences become cumulatively more difficult.
- Activities begin as teacher-led, and then students take over reading words more independently.
- Students sound out words.
  - It is very difficult at the beginning, but students practice a little everyday.
  - Students move into reading fast first and then chunking activities.
- Students are also taught tricky words

# Word Recognition and Spelling

- Spelling
  - Builds on Stretch and Blend activities from sounding out strand
  - Students write each sound in the order in which they heard it

# Fluency

- There are two components of fluency:
  - Accuracy: Fluent reading of unknown words and immediate recognition of previously encountered words
  - Speed: Smoothness of reading connected text
- Fluency goal increases two words per minute per week

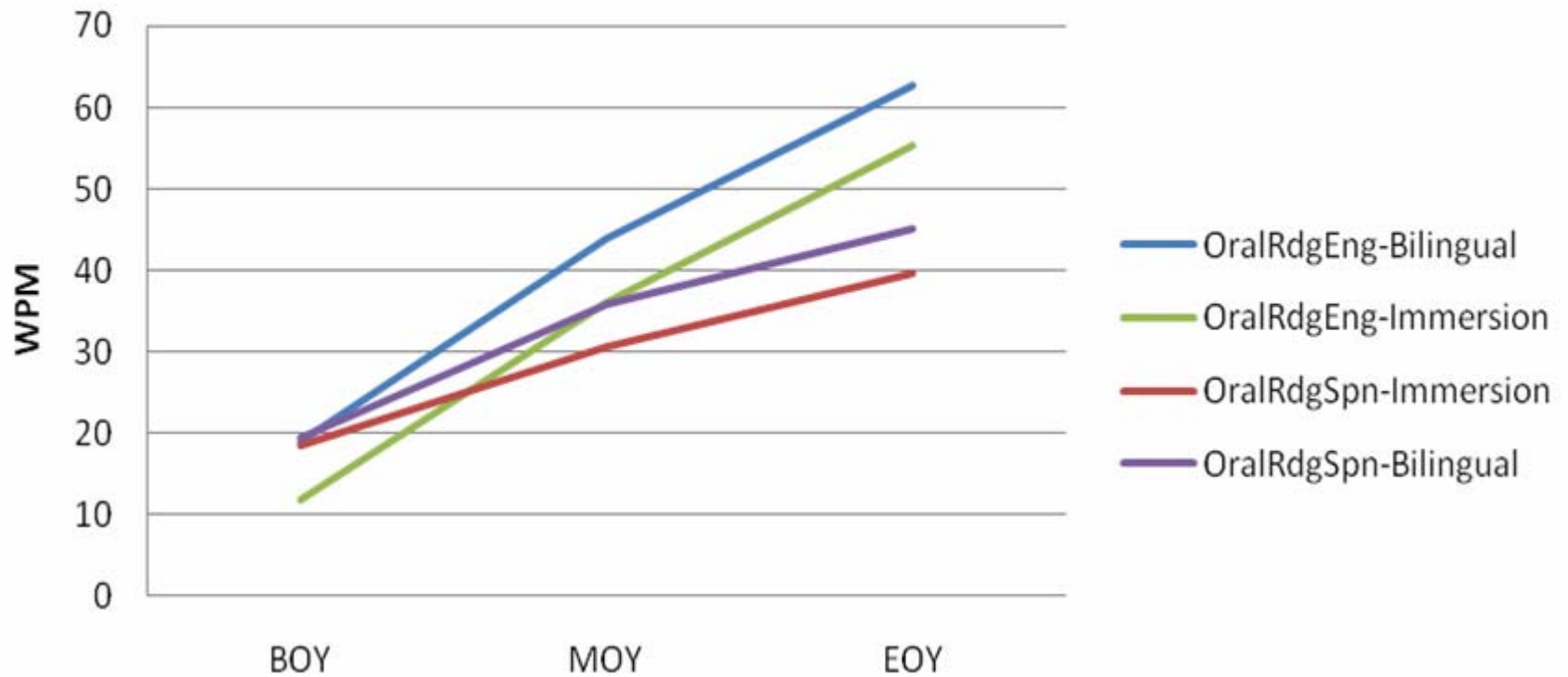
# Comprehension

- Comprehension strategy instruction teaches students to:
  - Process text strategically
  - Organize concepts and information for retrieval
  - Monitor their understanding of the text

# Results

- English immersion classrooms (n=10): significant progress was detected in English reading fluency ( $p = .002$ , effect size [ES] = 2.95) and Spanish reading fluency ( $p < .001$ , ES=.93).
- Transitional bilingual classrooms (n=12): significant progress has been identified in both English reading fluency ( $p < .001$ , ES= 2.69) and Spanish reading fluency ( $p < .001$ , ES=1.15).
- No differences were found between students in immersion and bilingual classrooms

## ORF 2nd grade



# Conclusions

- This study indicates that ELL readers with initial low literacy in both languages can profit from instruction that builds in complexity over time and that provides such features as reviews, practice, discussion with the teacher, and repeated reading and reading of text structures to improve comprehension.

# Conclusions

- The findings are in line with outcomes observed with monolingual English speakers who were at risk for reading failure who received this same supplemental reading intervention (Mathes et al., 2004).
- In examining relative progress in both English and Spanish, we found that gains in English appear to influence gains in Spanish.
- Receiving L1 instruction did not hinder L2 literacy development for the struggling readers in our sample.



# Acknowledgements

- This research is supported by Grant R305P030032, funded by Institute of Education Sciences. We thank the coordinators, school administrators, teachers, school personnel, students, and parents who are involved in this project.