Increasing the Reading Achievement of Elementary English Language Learners: The Critical Role of Oral language and Phonological Awareness in Learning to Read in a Second Language

By

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Abstract
Today, American public schools are facing a major demographic shift—the number of students from diverse ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds has dramatically grown over the past two decades. These students, many of whom enter school without being able to speak English, are expected to perform at grade level while simultaneously learning to speak, read, and write in a new language. However, data reveal a widening gap between the reading achievement of native speakers and students who speak English as a second language. In short, ELLs (English Language Learners) are struggling to achieve grade-level reading proficiency.

While researchers in first language (L1) reading acquisition have investigated extensively the mechanisms involved in how children learn to read in their first language, second language (L2) reading research has only recently become its own discipline. Investigations in L1 reading have provided much of the research for L2 reading. Identifying the necessary components and effective instruction for improving the reading achievement of L2 learners is no small feat. Reading is a multidimensional process for first language learners, but this process becomes even more complex when considering the myriad of factors involved in second language reading: linguistic differences, literacy background, language exposure, oral language proficiency, etc. Much research has targeted the components of reading—this research indicates that phonological awareness and oral language skills are especially critical during the early stages of reading and beyond.

In this essay, I define reading and illustrate the processes involved in fluent reading. I also present leading models of L1 and L2 reading. I describe the dual nature of L2 reading and synthesize current findings on L2 reading development. Next, I investigate research on the effects of phonological awareness and oral language on L1 and L2 reading achievement. Lastly, I suggest appropriate instruction to support the growth of phonological awareness and oral language for ELLs in a K-3 classroom.
Increasing the Reading Achievement of Elementary English Language Learners: The Critical Role of Oral language and Phonological Awareness in Learning to Read in a Second Language

1 Introduction

The oral-language foundation that each student possesses is the soil. . . . Informal and formal instruction in sounds and letters are like seeds. . . . Students who are learning oral English at the same time they learn its written features are doing double duty—the phonemic and alphabetic seeds in English are being planted just as the soil of the English language is being prepared. Without a foundation of oral language, an understanding of text in that language will not flourish. (Helman, 2009, p. 117)

The landscape of many classrooms across the United States has dramatically changed over the last two decades. If you were to glance into any one of these classrooms, you are likely to find students from every continent on the globe, bringing with them a myriad of languages, including Spanish, Karen, Hmong, Arabic, Somali, Chinese, Oromo, etc. Increasingly, American public schools are servicing students from diverse ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. Just within the St. Paul public school district, more than 13,000 students are classified as “limited English proficient (LEP) and speak more than 131 languages (Zittlow, 2012). All of these students are expected to perform at grade level while learning to speak, read, and write in a new language.

Literacy skills are fundamental to academic and life-long achievement. Most if not all subject areas in school and in the workplace require the ability to interact with, synthesize, summarize, and analyze text. Illiteracy is damaging to not only a student’s self-esteem, but also significantly reduces his or her opportunity to obtain a job and become a productive part of
society. According to the Assessment of Adult Literacy (2003), “85% of all juveniles who
interface with the juvenile court system are functionally illiterate” and “two-thirds of students
who cannot read proficiently by the end of fourth grade will end up in jail or on welfare”
(Literacy statistics and juvenile court section). Additionally, Stewart (2004) points out that many
of the referrals for special education revolve around reading, problems that appear to factor into
the 40% high school dropout rate for bilingual students (p. 31).

Clearly, reading ability impacts the achievement and long-term success of students
learning English as a new language. Recent research reveals that readers who struggle early-on
in their academic careers will continue to struggle throughout the rest of the schooling (Lonigan,
continuity between the [reading] skills with which children enter school and their later academic
performance” (p. 596). In addition, Juel reports, “The probability that children would remain
poor readers at the end of the fourth grade if they were poor readers at the end of the first grade
was .88” (as cited in Lonigan, 2000, p. 596).

The data demonstrates that we can identify struggling readers early on, but it fails to
address what type of instruction and scaffolding teachers should utilize in a classroom with
diverse needs. It also does not clearly identify which component reading skills English learners
struggle with the most and at which developmental level each of these skills becomes important
for fluent and meaningful interactions with texts.

With these questions in mind, I began to work with students on their decoding and
comprehension skills in a high-needs school in St. Paul, MN. I found that many ELLs faced
limited oral language skills, a challenge exasperated by limited opportunities to play with
language and use it in productive ways. According to Ballard & Tighe (2011), students need
more time allocated to meaningful practice using the language because often, teacher talk
dominates the classroom. For example, Zahed-Babelan and Kia (2010) found that it was teachers who were doing the talking—up to 75 percent of class time (as cited in Soltero, 2011, p. 118). In another study, Arreaga-mayer and Perdomo-Rivera (1996) found that ELLs spent only 4 percent of their school day engaged in academic talk and only 2 percent of class time discussing content (as cited in Zwiers, 2011, p. 8).

As a result, students have limited opportunities to develop their oral language skills which have been shown to help form the foundation of literacy. Often, they struggle with decoding words and building phonological awareness skills despite variations in oral language. Furthermore, many ELLs’ comprehension lags behind their native speaking classmates. Classroom assessments and data can reveal significant gaps in ELL’s ability to both decode and comprehend text. Current data suggests a growing literacy problem influencing many ELLs across the state of Minnesota (Figure 1).

![MCA-III Reading Proficiency Trends: ELL vs. Non-ELL Students](image)

*Figure 1. Percent of ELL and non-ELL students meeting or exceeding grade level reading proficiency expectations based on group identity. Adapted from Minnesota Report Card.*

Statewide, there are very significant disparities between ELLs and non-ELLs’ reading proficiency on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment Series III (MCA-III). In 2015, approximately 63 percent of non-ELL students met or exceeded the expected reading proficiency
level by grade whereas only 17 percent of ELL students met or exceeded statewide. Saint Paul Public School (SPPS) District, which is the second largest district in Minnesota, is representative of this widening gap between ELL and non-ELL reading achievement. Only 17 percent of ELLs were proficient on the MCA-III reading assessment in SPPS in 2015 while almost 50 percent of non-ELLs were proficient (Minnesota Report Card, 2015).

The data indicates that ELLs are struggling to achieve grade-level reading proficiency. How can school districts and teachers within the confines of their classroom address the growing gap between the reading proficiency of native English speakers and ELLs? Research in the field of linguistics and second language reading is just beginning to address some of these challenges and provide practitioners with instructional tools and resources to close this gap.

Until the 1980s, reading theory in SFL (second or foreign language) was a “derivative of L1 reading theory” and has only recently become its own discipline (Alderson, Haapakangas, Huhta, Nieminen, & Ullakonoja, 2015, p. 70). Much of this research has centered on the necessary components of reading in both a first and second language. This research suggests that phonological awareness and oral language skills are especially critical during the early stages of reading and beyond. Therefore, in this essay, I examine the complex nature of reading development in the contexts of both first and second language acquisition in order to identify the best instructional practices for supporting the literacy development of ELLs.

First, I identify the ELLs who make up these classrooms and consider the role of home language in acquiring literacy skills in a second language. Second, I discuss various models of reading in an L1 and L2. Third, I describe the components of reading across first and second language learning as discussed by the National Reading Panel (NRP). Fourth, I introduce the role that phonological awareness and oral language proficiency play in the reading achievement of both native speakers and young ELLs during the beginning and later stages of reading. Finally, I
discuss the best practices in L2 reading that support most effectively the development of phonological awareness and academic oral language skills for ELLs. Based on my research, I will argue that ELLs must develop strong phonological awareness and oral language skills to successfully read and comprehend text at grade-level. Lesson plans at the end of the paper will provide a practical application demonstrating how to most appropriately teach these skills in an ESL classroom.

2 Who Are Our Learners?

ELLs come from a wide variety of cultures and may have experiences with many different languages. The cultural and economic characteristics of these students have an impact on their academic achievement. Some students may have parents that are migrant workers who do not have formal education. Li & Edwards (2010) report three specific factors that may cause group achievement averages to be lower than native speaker averages: living in a low income household, having limited parental education, and being an ethnic or racial minority (p. 46). ELLs are “more likely than native English-speaking children, on average, to live in poverty and to have parents with limited formal education. In addition, these students are more likely to belong to an ethnic or racial minority” (p. 46).

Despite these challenges, schools can provide appropriate and effective instruction by taking students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds into consideration. Schools that instill more culturally responsive instruction which recognizes the contrasts between the school environment and home culture and linguistic practices may be better prepared to meet the needs of all learners. Culturally responsive teaching “connects students’ cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles to academic knowledge,” and in so doing, teachers are able to “negotiate classroom cultures with their students that reflect the communities where those students develop and grow” (Kozleski, 2010, p. 1). Additionally, teaching diverse students while
looking through a cultural lens allows teachers to recognize that the culture and language background of these students is an asset rather than a detriment to their literacy development.

2.1 Getting To Know Your Students

While all students have their individual characteristics, ELLs present even greater individual differences due to their numerous cultures and languages. Teachers will need to have knowledge of a number of important student characteristics if they are to know how to best influence and encourage their ELLs reading development. Cloud et al. (2009) lists six characteristics of ELLs that teachers may want to familiarize themselves with prior to literacy instruction (p.21-30):

1. Level of proficiency in English upon entry to school
2. Prior literacy skills and training
3. Prior schooling
4. Grade level
5. Family Background
6. Similarity of the home language and culture to the mainstream culture

First, Cloud et al. (2009) emphasizes the need for teachers to know the level of their students’ English proficiency. This knowledge allows teachers to scaffold both their own language and instruction appropriately. Additionally, they need to determine their students’ level of social and academic language. Cummins (1999) made the distinction between social language, or basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and more academic language, known as cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) in the late 1970s. He cautioned teachers not to assume that a high degree of fluency and accuracy in more everyday language coincided with the development of more abstract, academic language (p.2). Furthermore, some ELLs with no experience with English may need a partner to help guide them through their day while others may have stronger social language but struggle with academic language which
could inhibit their ability to comprehend the language of different content areas. Teachers need to determine which stage of literacy development their ELLs are in and any prior literacy training they may have. Some students may have learned how to read in their first language which could give them a head start on reading in their second language. Other students may not have any literacy skills in their first language. Teachers will need to do a great deal of modeling, scaffolding, and developing of background knowledge to help these ELLs progress (p. 21-30).

Cloud et al. (2009) also stresses the importance of teachers learning about their ELLs prior schooling. Some ELLs may be comfortable with the routines and norms of American schools while others may need more assistance. Some students may have developed endurance for reading and writing from previous schooling while others may have little exposure to reading for extended amounts of time. For example, many schools have students participate in independent reading blocks in which students gradually increase the amount of time dedicated to independent reading and writing depending on the grade level. Teachers may also need to reorganize their curriculum to help ELLs in the higher grades accelerate their learning to make up for the limited schooling they came with and to assist them as they learn new content and language at the same time (p.21-30). Sometimes, even identifying which grade a newcomer should be in can be challenging. For example, a student in 7th grade in Liberia might be classified as a 4th or 5th grader in the United States.

Lastly, family background also has an impact on students’ development as much as the foundational skills in literacy students learn in their home (Cloud et al., 2009). Families bring with them different perspectives and attitudes about literacy and what activities best support their children’s pre-literacy skills. Also, a part of family background is the students’ home language and culture which can affect their second language reading
achievement as well. Knowing about students’ home languages can help teachers understand specific issues that may appear in their reading or writing. For instance, some students who speak a dialect of English may write “dem” for the word “them” because in their language /d/ and /th/ are allophones. In addition, differences between school and home culture can affect how teachers, students, and schools in general relate to each other (Cloud, et al., 2009, p.21-30). For this reason, teachers need to have an understanding of their students’ common cultural practices and norms so they may most appropriately interact with their students and their families.

2.2 Home Language Considerations

While many ELLs come to school with limited knowledge of English, they are not linguistically impoverished. They come to the task of reading in their L2 with a well developed first language. It is in this language that they have learned how to navigate the world and express themselves. Research in the field of second language acquisition and second language reading argues that ELLs taught to read in their first language acquire higher levels of academic oral and written English, including decoding and reading comprehension skills, than students who are taught to read and write strictly in English (Cloud et al., 2009, p. 82-88; Roberts, 2009, p. 16-20; Li & Edwards, 2010, p. 22-26). As Cloud et al. emphasizes, students only need to learn how to read once. If students develop their literacy skills and strategies in their first language, they will be able to draw upon these skills to aid them in their second language reading.

Li & Edwards (2010) describe five meta-analyses that studied the effects of bilingual education on the achievement of L2 reading (p. 22). They claim that research demonstrates bilingual education does in fact promote academic achievement in student’s second language. More specifically, they emphasize one meta-analysis conducted by the National Literacy Panel (NLP) which studied 17 experiments comparing reading instruction that used students’ primary
and secondary languages with L2 immersion. The NLP found that teaching ELLs to read in their first language had a positive effect on their reading achievement in the second language. Both Li & Edwards (2010) and Cloud et al. (2009) suggest that students are transferring the skills and knowledge they have in their first language to support their L2 reading. From these studies, they deduce that teaching students to read in their first language can support L2 reading by 12-15 percent. While not a major contributor, it does appear that the literacy skills in the L1 do provide some benefits toward reading achievement in the second language (p. 22-26; p. 29-30).

However, many questions remain. How can teachers most effectively use the L1 to support L2 reading? What skills in the L1 should be emphasized? How much instruction do students need in their L1 and how developed do their L1 literacy skills need to be in order to assist them as they read in their second language? Furthermore, while bilingual education may be a contributor to developing strong L2 reading skills, many schools lack the resources to offer a bilingual program. In addition, some researchers caution that there is a fallacy in thinking that transfer is automatic. Grabe (2001) summarizes current thought on the understanding of transfer:

> Few researchers would deny that transfer of literacy skills from L1 to L2 occurs, but many researchers believe that positive transfer occurs consistently only after students have had much practice in the L2, have automatized basic L2 language skills, and have been trained to use these potential transfer effects” (p.32).

We need further research to determine more thoroughly the impact L1 literacy experiences have on learning to read in a second language.

Many of these same researchers support the idea that developing L1 literacy skills also helps students develop metalinguistic awareness. Roberts (2009), for instance, argues that students are better able to see things from many different perspectives and have a greater knowledge of the nature of language which can assist them as they read more difficult texts (p.
21). Grabe and Stoller (2011) also support this view: “Many L2 students begin to read after they have been learning literacy skills in their L1s. As a result, they develop a greater awareness of how they have learned to read, what strategies work for them, and how language knowledge can support literacy development (p. 45).

3 What Is Reading?

Researchers commonly understand reading in relation to comprehension or fluent word decoding. Broadly speaking, reading is “the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print” (Grabe, 2009, p. 14). However, many researchers agree that such a simple statement fails to illustrate the complex nature of reading as it does not take into account the purposes and numerous processes involved in fluent reading. In other words, no one process can explain what fluent readers do as they read; rather, fluent reading is a combination of processes working together. Grabe (2009) provides a more comprehensive depiction of reading by listing the following processes (p.14-16):

1. A rapid process
2. An efficient process
3. A comprehending process
4. An interactive process
5. A strategic process
6. A flexible process
7. A purposeful process
8. An evaluative process
9. A learning process
10. A linguistic process.

Grabe (2009) can help teachers identify the processes in fluent reading in order to isolate and focus on the skills embedded within each process (p.14-16). Reading is a rapid and efficient process in which a number of skills, including automatic word recognition, syntactical parsing, meaning formation, comprehension building, inferencing, critical evaluation, and linkages to
prior knowledge, all synchronize into a smooth system often undertaken without the reader’s awareness. Reading is both a comprehending and interactive process as readers work to understand the writer’s message while bringing with them their own background knowledge and interpretation of the text. Moreover, reading is a strategic, yet flexible process as readers must not only organize information and check for understanding, but also alter their reading style as purposes shift. Reading is purpose driven—readers change how they read depending on their general purposes, and they often read in response to some pre-defined task whether it be collecting information for an essay or extracting a set of procedures from a text. Reading is a process of constant evaluation—readers are developing and evaluating their opinions in response to the text. Perhaps most important, reading is a learning process. By the time students get to fourth grade, they are no longer learning to read, but rather teachers are expecting them to read to learn about concepts within different subject areas. Finally, at its primordial level, reading is a linguistic process. To be a successful reader, students must have some understanding of the graphemes and phonemes of that language and the syntactic, morphological, and phonological structures that can infringe decoding and comprehension (Grabe, 2009, p. 14-16).

4 Models of Reading

4.1 L1 Reading Models

Models of reading in a first language have revolved around two categories: metaphorical and more specific, componential reading models (Grabe & Stoller, 2011, p. 31-34). Metaphorical models are more general and attempt to account for the many different processes involved in comprehending textual information. In other words, these models “represent generalizations that reflect primary processing assumptions about how reading is carried out” (Grabe, 2009, 89). While metaphorical models are useful because they make these processing ideas more accessible, some researchers argue that such models “obscure important details, ignore critical distinctions,
and typically do not accurately reflect more current views of reading” (89). On the other hand, researchers in L1 reading have also designed models that are more specific to explain and interpret the results of reading research. While the metaphorical models describe the different processes fluent readers go through to comprehend text, specific models of reading are empirical in that they attempt to account for and interpret the results of research conducted in the field. These more specific models “help dissect closely interwoven competency elements inherent in the ability to read” (Koda, 2005, 195). Furthermore, Koda (2005) strongly defends these more specific models: “By comparing and contrasting ways in which component skills contribute to reading performance in L1 and L2 within individual readers, we should be able to pinpoint specific deficiencies attributable to limited L2 linguistic sophistication” (p. 195).

4.1.1 Metaphorical Models: Bottom-Up, Top-Down, and Interactive Models

Bottom-up, top-down processes, and interactive models, often termed more specifically as reading skills, have been thoroughly described throughout reading research and continue to be a point of contention. Bottom-up skills are word-level skills that allow readers to decode (Grabe & Stoller, 2011, p. 31-34; Grabe, 2009, p. 88-91; Lems, 2010, p. 33-34). These skills include print knowledge and letter-sound correspondence that are essentially the phonological and phonemic awareness skills that readers need to quickly decode and produce fluent reading. Bottom-up skills are more mechanical in that readers are decoding in more of a piecemeal fashion, by letter, word, and sentence without the interference of background knowledge.

On the other hand, the top-down approach argues that reading is connected to the reader’s goals or purposes. Readers are monitoring their comprehension and directing their attention to the most relevant information while using their background knowledge to construct meaning. Top-down skills assist readers in making inferences, summarizing, and evaluating text (Grabe & Stoller, 2011, p. 31-34; Grabe, 2009, p. 88-91; Lems, 2010, p. 33-34).
Today, few researchers argue that reading is strictly a bottom-up or top-down process. Interactive models, also metaphorical, approach reading from the perspective that both bottom-up and top-down are involved in reading comprehension. In other words, word recognition needs to be efficient, but background knowledge also plays a role in comprehension. In this interactive process, both skills simultaneously work together.

However, researchers criticize this approach due to its contradictory-nature. Grabe & Stoller (2011) and Grabe (2009) both emphasize that certain aspects of each process are not compatible with each other. For example, automatic word recognition cannot be continually disrupted with the reader’s background knowledge and inference-making. These researchers are calling for more of a hybrid or modified interactive model. In this modified interactive model, fluent word recognition does not involve background knowledge or any information gathered from context as it slows down processing efficiency. This more bottom-up driven approach, however, does recognize the usefulness of top-down skills in that readers may need to use their background knowledge to integrate information from multiple sources or to scan for the main idea of a paragraph or a whole text (Grabe & Stoller, 2011, p. 33-34; Grabe, 2009, p. 90).

Lems (2010) argues that often ELLs struggle with bottom-up skills because those skills are language specific while top-down skills may benefit from positive cross-linguistic transfer (PCI), the “facilitating effects of the first language on second language literacy,” (p. 29, 34). Top-down skills are less language specific, and L2 learners can use the skills they have attained in their first language literacy and apply them to a text in their second language. In other words, the process of finding the main idea in any language is similar while orthography and the phonemic and phonological awareness skills are more language specific and may inhibit L2 reading to a greater degree. Lems (2010) cautions that using these top-down skills is dependent upon a reader’s ability to use these more language specific skills. “The top-down skills readers
may bring with them to a second language text “cannot be fully utilized until the lower-level, language specific processes are in place” (p. 34).

### 4.1.2 Specific Models of Reading: Interactive Compensatory, Verbal Efficiency, and the Simple View

As the focus of this paper is on phonological awareness and oral language, I chose specific models of reading which address bottom-up skills and/or have a linguistic foundation in reading. Three such specific models demonstrate this bottom-up approach or consider reading from a language perspective: the Interactive Compensatory Model, the Verbal Efficiency Model, and the Simple View of Reading Model.

Proposed by Stanovich (1980), the Interactive Compensatory Model argues that reading involves many automatic processes; however, when these processes become less efficient, other processes will compensate to allow the reader to continue to extract meaning from the text. For example, if a student struggles with automatic word recognition, he or she may utilize other processes such as context clues to facilitate comprehension. This model emphasizes that lower-level processes are automatic and independent, but when comprehension breaks down, lower and higher-level processes interact more heavily to compensate for the inefficiency (Grabe & Stoller, 2011, p. 35; Grabe, 2009, p. 96).

Developed by Perfetti in 1985, the Verbal Efficiency Model is similar to the Interactive Compensatory Model in that both models assume that lower-level processes are automatic for skilled readers. Word-recognition skills are the basis for this model—when word-recognition skills are efficient, cognitive resources are freed up and are able to be used for other comprehension processes. This model claims that when readers have poor word-identification skills, the higher-level comprehension skills are also negatively impacted, supporting Lem’s argument (2010, p. 34).
Furthermore, Grabe (2009) suggests that when words are well known (i.e. high-quality lexical representations), word recognition requires few resources, but when readers do not have a strong knowledge of words (low-quality lexical representation), the result is slow word recognition and weak phonological awareness. Word recognition involves more than just decoding; rather, readers use three information sources to assist them during fluent reading: phonological information, orthographic information, and semantic information, all of which are language specific and can obstruct the word-recognition process if any one skill is deficient (p. 97).

Many studies of readers in their first language have tested the Simple View of Reading model, and it is the only model that researchers have begun to test with L2 readers as well. Perhaps the most accepted model in reading research today, the Simple View of Reading emphasizes the importance of decoding skills in the early stages of reading. According to this model, reading comprehension consists of two important components—decoding and linguistic comprehension (Hoover & Gough 1990, p. 128). Decoding is the “ability to derive a representation from printed input that allows access to the appropriate entry in the mental lexicon,” and linguistic comprehension or listening comprehension is “the process by which spoken language at the word, sentence, and discourse level is understood and interpreted” (Costenaro, 2013, p. 126). Using a statistical assessment, this model argues that reading comprehension (R) is the product of word-recognition, or decoding (D) and comprehension abilities (C). In Figure 2, Wren (2001) depicts these two skills as the foundation of reading comprehension. Within his model, he divides all other component skills with the most important skills (i.e. linguistic knowledge, cipher knowledge, lexical knowledge) on top supporting other component skills students need to comprehend text (p.13-17).

Wren (2001) describes the components of reading comprehension as proposed by the simple view of reading. The first component is language comprehension which primarily consists of linguistic knowledge, that is, the formal structures of language (i.e. phonology, syntax, and semantics), and background knowledge, the knowledge students have attained from their experiences in the world. Two categories, cipher knowledge and lexical knowledge, both support the ability to decode text. Cipher knowledge consists of the systematic relationship between the written word and the spoken word (i.e. phonemes) (p. 13-14).

Essentially, early readers are learning how to sound out words and what are acceptable and unacceptable letter combination in their language. Lexical knowledge includes those instances where there is a breakdown between the written and spoken word or where the written word does not follow the same systematic patterns (e.g. colonel). Under these two decoding
skills are other related skills: letter knowledge, phoneme awareness, knowledge of the alphabetic principle, and concepts of print.

Wren (2000) further explains other components that are a subcategory of lexical knowledge. Letter knowledge, known as one of the best predictors of future reading achievement for both native and non-native speakers, is the ability to recognize and discriminate each letter. Phoneme awareness, which falls under the umbrella of phonological awareness, is the ability to isolate, delete, and manipulate phonemes. For example, readers need to know that “pin” and “pack” both begin with /p/, while “map” ends with this same sound. Related to phoneme awareness is knowledge of the alphabetic principle. Beginning readers must understand that words are composed of phonemes and letters symbolize these phonemes. For instance, when children in the early stages of reading are writing, they should recognize that the letters they write are representative of a sound. Finally, beginning readers need to have knowledge of different concepts of print, such as knowing teachers read text from top to bottom and left to right. Readers with developing concepts of print may hold a book upright and point to the text as they pretend read (p. 14-42).

The elements above describe the simple view of reading and support good reading comprehension. While many skills have been described as a part of this model, the simple view primarily is two dimensional and depends upon two important skills: decoding and language comprehension. Both skills are necessary for good comprehension. Students will struggle with reading comprehension if they are deficient in decoding skills, language comprehension, or both.

4.2 L2 Reading Models

Describing what skills students who are reading in their first language need to develop to become proficient readers is complex. Learning to both speak and read in a second language simultaneously increases the complexity of this process. Such a model would need to account for
the plethora of second language factors and influences. L2 readers may have literacy skills in their first language or they may not. Many L2 readers may be refugees with interrupted education or may have very limited oral language skills. These readers come from a variety of first language backgrounds which may interfere with or facilitate second language literacy.

Because of its multidimensional nature, only Bernhardt (2005) has proposed a second language reading model: the Compensatory Model. In this model, first language literacy abilities account for 20 percent of the second language reading comprehension, and L2 proficiency, defined by knowledge of grammatical forms, vocabulary, cognates, etc, accounts for 30 percent, leaving 50 percent of L2 reading proficiency unaccounted for (p. 138). Bernhardt (2005) suggests that this 50 percent may include comprehension strategies, engagement, content and domain knowledge, motivation, etc. Bernhardt adds that with this model knowledge sources may assist or take over for other inadequate knowledge sources. For example, students with stronger word recognition skills do not need to use as many resources to read fluently. Therefore, they may have more resources available to comprehend complex syntactic patterns while less fluent students may not have these same resources.

While this model does attempt to incorporate the multitude of factors related to learning to read in a second language, it has not been tested nor does it explain which specific components skills are involved and to what degree each of these skills cause variance in L2 reading. It does, however, recognize the impact of a student’s L1 on their L2 literacy and that their knowledge of the second language affects their ability to comprehend text, a finding in line with the simple view of reading (Lems, 2010, p. 23-24; Bernhardt, p. 138-140).

Although research has not yet tested a well-developed model of reading in a second language, it does appear that L1 reading models, specifically the simple view, may be applicable to L2 reading contexts as well. Verhoeven and Leeuwe (2012) acknowledged several studies
concerning the simple view and concluded that such a model served as an explanatory framework that accurately described the mechanisms behind both L1 and L2 reading. However, they found that many of those studies lacked a longitudinal approach, eliminating the possibility of analyzing the effects of time and experience students had with literacy. Therefore, in their own study, which revisited the simple view of reading, they assessed word decoding and listening comprehension skills for both L1 and L2 learners in first through sixth grades to determine if there were effects on these readers’ comprehension. Also, they sought to determine whether there was empirical evidence for the simple view in second language reading. In their longitudinal analysis of data, they found that the simple view was equally valid for both groups of learners. They assert that reading comprehension was highly dependent on readers’ oral language skills for both groups. This dependence appeared to increase as students’ decoding abilities became more automatic. In short, this evidence suggests that L1 models, particularly the simple view, can be applied to L2 reading as all students need similar component skills to become fluent readers with strong comprehension. L2 researchers need to conduct more studies to confirm the applicability of L1 models of reading in second language literacy (p. 1808-1816; Grabe, 2009, p. 104).

Additionally, there seem to be some discrepancies in defining “oral language” skills. In the simple view, it appears that the researchers are only referring to the comprehension of oral language, but the use of the word “oral” can be misleading. Perhaps, it may be more accurate to extend the notion of oral language to include both listening and speaking abilities. On the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs test, the language assessment test all ELLs are required to pass before exiting ESL programs in K-12 education, WIDA specifically measures the academic language students need to both listen to and use in speaking. In other words, ELLs’ ability to comprehend and produce academic language are both measures of English proficiency. Therefore, it seems more
valuable to extend the concept of oral language to include both the listening and speaking using academic language.

While it might seem odd that listening comprehension could impact reading comprehension to such a degree, researchers suggest that this notion exists because these two skills are in fact quite similar and may be more important for ELLs who are developing their ability to comprehend English using any modality. Lems (2010) identifies these similarities between listening and reading processes (p.51):

1. Both require active construction of meaning, with interactions between the text (oral or written) and the reader/listener.
2. Both listening and reading require phonological awareness.
3. Both the reading and listening processes benefit from larger vocabularies.
4. Reading and listening comprehension require the concept of a word.
5. Both listening and reading require knowledge of English syntactical patterns.

Lems et al. (2010) contends that both listening and reading comprehension require readers to interpret language and construct meaning. Furthermore, students will need a knowledge of language—vocabulary, phonology, syntax, morphology, semantics, and orthographic knowledge, whether they are listening to or reading different language styles and structures (p. 50). Once again, listening comprehension should be extended to speaking, as students will not produce language they do not already understand or that is not a part of their active vocabulary or internal grammar. Verhoeven and Leeuwe (2012) surmise that “because L2 learners start out literacy instruction from a disadvantaged position in oral comprehension, continued attention to their L2 oral proficiency can be seen as highly important” (p. 1816).
4.3  Reading in a Second Language: A Dual System

Research has described in detail what ELLs bring to the task of reading and different models of first and second language reading. However, disagreement exists over which model better represents L2 reading and which component skills are necessary for fluent reading.

Many researchers agree that second language reading is a complex process in which many interrelated skills work together while students draw upon both their cultural and linguistic experiences (Lems, 2010, 4; Cloud, 2009, 16). Lems (2010) argues that there are “two large scale-long-term developmental processes occurring when ELLs are learning to read in a second language: one is the learning of literacy, and the other is learning the new language” (p. 4).

Researchers have not yet thoroughly investigated the exact nature of this dual system, but Cloud et al. (2009) has synthesized four important findings based on the NLP and the Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence (CREDE) (p. 16):

1. Second-language literacy development is complex.
2. Second- and native-language literacy development are similar in some important ways.
3. Second language literacy development differs from native-language literacy development.
4. The necessity of certain reading skills depends on the learner’s stage of development.

Not only is second-language literacy development complex, but also native speakers and ELLs both depend upon a core set of literacy skills to develop into fluent readers. For example, Shanahan & August support this claim, stating that “common underlying abilities” are important for both first- and second-language [literacy] development (as cited in Cloud et al., 2009, p. 18). All students use their background knowledge and real world experiences to connect with and respond to texts. All students also need to develop knowledge of the sounds and corresponding symbols so they may begin to decode. In addition, reading is language based, and all learners need to develop language skills to comprehend different texts.
On the other hand, native-language literacy development differs from second-language literacy development in that native speakers come to the task of reading with advanced knowledge of the linguistic properties specific to the English language while ELLs begin reading English at all different levels of proficiencies in English. In addition, ELLs may come to the task of reading with prior knowledge that differs significantly from mainstream students. They may not be able to connect or relate to a text in the same way because of their different world experiences. Some ELLs may be able to draw upon their first language literacy experiences to support their second language reading.

While some skills are important at all stages of learning to read, other more specific skills need to be in place during certain stages of literacy development for all learners. For example, students at the beginning stages of reading must become aware of the small units (i.e. phonemes) of language and how sounds correspond to letters. As students move through the stages of literacy development and texts become more difficult with longer, complex sentences and more technical, academic vocabulary, students will need to develop a more sophisticated knowledge of grammar and vocabulary as the emphasis moves from decoding to comprehension. In short, reading is a developmental process that needs to be guided by the stage of the student’s current level of literacy development.

5 Components of Reading across First- and Second-Language Learners

Thus far, I have discussed models of first and second language reading, along with a description of second language reading. Much second language reading research has focused on the component skills that are integrated into both L1 and L2 models. Lems et al. (2010) point out that while we do not know how much instruction is necessary for each component skill, researchers agree on a set of core literacy skills needed for fluent reading which may only need to be acquired once or may be more language-specific (p. 5).
In a recent report, the National Reading Panel (NRP) put forth five key components of literacy: phonemic awareness, word reading, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. While the panel’s findings draw extensively from research on English-speaking students, many second language researchers indicate that the same set of skills in first-language reading also influences learning to read in a second language (Helman, 2009, p. 121). Phonemic awareness, one area of phonological awareness, is the ability to focus on, isolate, and manipulate English phonemes, the smallest units of speech (August et al., 2003, p. 10; Helman, 2009, p. 120).

During my time with the Minnesota Reading Corps, there was a strong focus on students learning letter sounds, rhyming, phoneme segmentation, and phoneme deletion. Research indicates that phonemic awareness skills have a significant impact on students’ ability to decode and read words. While English speaking students come to the task of reading with substantial knowledge of the English language and sound system, many ELLs may struggle to both perceive and pronounce certain phonemes, especially the continuum of vowel sounds.

Word reading and vocabulary, two other vital skills suggested by the NRP, could be more difficult for ELLs than for native English speakers as they may not understand English sentences or the vocabulary and cannot utilize context in the same way native speakers can. “[Native] speakers can use context and probabilities effectively, and they can correct themselves efficiently. Non-English speakers do not have this basis for knowing if they are reading correctly because the crucial meaning-making process is short-circuited by a lack of language knowledge” (August et al., 2009, p. 15). Some studies with L1 learners have shown that a lack of developed vocabulary is a major detriment to reading comprehension (August et al., 2009, p. 18). For example, in one study, Cunningham and Stanovich (1997) found that more than 30% of reading comprehension variance in 11th grade was the result of vocabulary knowledge in first grade. Certainly, these difficulties are
compounded as ELLs typically come to the task of reading with far fewer academic vocabulary words in their lexicon.

As can be seen, developing literacy skills is a multidimensional process requiring the mastery of a number of components and subcomponents. Children must first build their knowledge of the graphemes and the English sound system. Then, they can apply that knowledge to read words accurately and automatically. Once children can decode efficiently, they can further develop their vocabulary and comprehension strategies to make sense of text. However, what of the role of oral language in literacy development? What effects are there on literacy when a student lacks the linguistic mastery of the language of that text? The next section will define and introduce oral language as a vital skill for both L1 and L2 reading achievement.

6 Oral Language as a Component of First- and Second Language Reading Development

6.1 Oral Language Proficiency and Reading Development

Although the NRP did not identify oral language as one of the strongest predictors of early reading achievement, some researchers have claimed that these findings may not be accurate for ELLs. “Some researchers have suggested that the findings of only a ‘potentially important’ role for oral language may not apply to ELLs, for whom early oral language development—in their primary and second language—could be particularly essential” (Kieffer, 2012, p. 146).

According to Lori Helman (2009), professor of literacy education at the University of Minnesota, “without a foundation of oral language, an understanding of text in that language will not flourish. So learning oral English and the written code become simultaneous goals for ELLs” (p. 117). Moreover, while Shanahan and Beck’s (2006) review of the literature concerning literacy instruction for ELLs indicates that instruction emphasizing literacy components did confer a learning advantage, the effect sizes were lower and more variable than for native English speakers. They
suggest, “Combining high-quality instruction in the literacy components with efforts to enhance oral language development in English would lead to higher effect sizes” (p. 437). However, they note that more research needs to validate this claim.

Perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of studying oral language and literacy development is the fact that both areas incorporate a number of skills that are often difficult to detangle from each other during the research design process. Moreover, each of these skills is “dynamic and varies at different developmental stages” (August et al., 2003, p. 3). For example, early reading for native speakers usually emphasizes decoding and word reading while later reading focuses on fluency and reading comprehension.

There are also changes in oral language proficiency during the developmental process. Both L1 and L2 children learn rhyming and basic morphological rules and over time more elaborative syntactic, morphological, and cohesive structures are acquired (August et al., 2003, p. 3). However, ELLs may have very limited phonological, syntactic, and morphological knowledge during the beginning reading stages. Therefore, the need for accountable talk and the development of oral academic language for ELLs should be of the utmost importance in ESL and mainstream classrooms. Further, the simple view of reading also supports the notion that oral language, specifically listening comprehension, has a vital role to play in L2 reading development.

6.2 Effects of Oral Language on Reading Achievement in an L1

Much research on the development of reading skills comes from studies with monolingual speakers. According to Kieffer (2012), “substantial longitudinal evidence suggests that native English-speaking children who have developed higher levels of oral language proficiency by kindergarten are more successful in learning to read in the primary grades than those who enter school with underdeveloped oral language” (p. 146). For example, in one study produced by Catts et al., oral language accounted for 13.8 percent of unique variance in second-grade reading
comprehension and 19.7 percent in word recognition, but once IQ was controlled, percentages dropped dramatically (as cited in Roth, Speece, & Cooper, 2002, p. 259).

Some studies found that children with reading problems had difficulties with syntax and semantic relations, while others found that vocabulary played a role in early reading competence even when phonological sensitivity was accounted for (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2005, p. 429). Other studies found only an indirect or negligible role of oral language proficiency in early reading development. Bradley & Bryant (1983) reported that measures of syntactic and semantic knowledge did not uniquely predict first-grade reading scores (p. 429).

On the other hand, other researchers found that reading is related to a significant number of other skills, including letter naming, vocabulary, syntactic and semantic knowledge, and narrative skills (p. 428). Interestingly, some researchers have reported a developmental path where the importance of certain skills fluctuated depending on the given developmental stage. For instance, Storch & Whitehurst (2002) “revealed that the direct association between oral language skills, including vocabulary and accuracy of word decoding, disappeared after kindergarten but that oral language reemerged to significantly predict reading comprehension in third and fourth grade (p. 940). Clearly, the relationship between oral language and L1 reading achievement remains contentious and dependent upon which stage students are in in their reading development. The next section will take a closer look at two specific studies that evaluated the relationship between oral language and other early literacy components during the development process for L1 learners.

6.2.1 Studies on L1 Oral Language Proficiency and Reading Achievement

While most L1 and L2 literacy researchers agree that learning to read requires the mastery of a number of skills, including oral language, few have identified exactly which skills play the most prominent role or at what developmental level those skills are more influential. To investigate whether preschool oral language skills are associated with reading performance, the NICHD Early
Child Care Research Network (2005) used structural equation modeling and a normative sample of children to measure both students’ word recognition and reading comprehension skills. Researchers used comprehensive oral language assessments and vocabulary assessments to disentangle the relationship between types of oral language skills and reading development.

In their longitudinal study of students aged three to nine years old, researchers created two working models: 1) an indirect model in which oral language is predicted to relate to reading through code skills; 2) a comprehensive model where oral language is projected to influence reading both directly and indirectly. In order to determine whether code skills mediate the relationship between oral language and later reading or whether oral language relates more directly to later reading achievement, researchers conducted an analysis of 1,137 children of diverse economic and ethnic backgrounds. Language measures examined child language processing skills in syntax, vocabulary, morphology, and communication abilities at 36 and 54 months. Phonological awareness was assessed, and the reading achievement (as measured by word recognition, decoding, and comprehension) of students at 54 months, and in first and third grade were also tested.

The results indicated that early comprehensive oral language skills at age three directly related to both comprehensive language and vocabulary at 54 months and to code-related skills in phonological awareness. Interestingly, 54-month comprehensive oral language competence, with the exception of vocabulary, related both directly and indirectly to word recognition in first grade and reading comprehension in third grade. While at the 54 month marker vocabulary skills did not independently relate to word decoding, vocabulary in first grade related positively and significantly to reading comprehension in third grade. The authors concluded that preschool oral language skills play an important role alongside code skills in predicting reading achievement during the beginning stages of reading into later stages when students are reading to learn (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2005, 440).
Roth et al. (2002) examined the predictive relationship between a broad spectrum of oral language skills measured in kindergarten and the reading ability of children in first and second grade. Additionally, the research study addressed whether different aspects of oral language are important for reading skills at different points in the developmental process. To examine the different domains of oral language (structural language, meta-semantics, and narrative discourse) in relation to reading development, Roth et al. adopted a broad language framework and a parsimonious regression modeling strategy.

In their longitudinal study, 66 native English speaking children of diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds were given reading assessments in kindergarten, 48 were assessed again in first grade, and 39 were assessed one last time in second grade. To test the different reading domains, they used three measures—oral language, background, and reading variables. Structural language, receptive vocabulary, word definitions, word retrieval, and receptive and expressive morphology and syntax were measured under the umbrella of oral language. Phonological awareness and metasemantic tasks, including phoneme blending and deletion, measured metalinguistic skills. To test narrative discourse and comprehension (literal and inferential), students were required to tell a familiar story, and then after the production task, listen to three stories and answer two literal and inferential questions about the content of the story. A test measuring nonverbal intelligence was used to assess IQ and a parent questionnaire assessed background measures, including race, gender, SES, and family literacy.

During kindergarten, students’ print awareness, letter-word identification, and word attack skills were assessed and in first and second grade these measures were used again (except print awareness) including a passage comprehension subtest. Using multiple regressions, a two staged analysis was used in which the first stage identified measures of oral language and background
variables that contributed to reading variance. In stage II, significant variables from the previous
stage were tested concurrently to determine their influence on reading ability.

Results of the longitudinal study indicated that phonological awareness skills measured in
kindergarten predicted both word and pseudoword reading in first and second grades. However,
phonological awareness failed to predict reading comprehension in first and second grades.
Interestingly, the researchers found that semantic abilities along with the autoregressor were the
most predictive indicators of first and second grade reading comprehension. Additionally, oral
vocabulary and word retrieval, both measures of oral language, combined to account for 23 percent
of the variance in second-grade reading comprehension. The authors explain that the two semantic
skills, oral definitions and word retrieval, were more powerful predictors of comprehension than
phonological awareness, as having students provide an oral definition is a skill that requires higher
levels of semantic knowledge because “one must be able to reflect on the lexicon and state explicitly
what is known implicitly” (Roth et al., 2002, p. 268).

Roth et al. (2002) also found that metalinguistic skills as measured by comprehension and
production of lexically ambiguous sentences also contributed unique variance to first grade word
reading as much as phonological awareness skills. The authors infer that “the ability to manipulate
the meaning component of language is one of the significant indicators of single-word reading in
first grade” (p. 269). In general, the researchers concluded while phonological awareness predicts
word reading, “oral language variables other than phonological awareness are predictive of
beginning reading for both word-level reading and text comprehension” in monolingual English
speaking children in kindergarten and early elementary school (Roth et al., 2002, p. 269).

Taken together these two longitudinal studies demonstrate the influence that oral language
skills have on word recognition and later reading comprehension in students reading in their primary
language. Oral vocabulary, semantic knowledge, word retrieval, morphology, and language
processing skills all appear to play a significant role in reading comprehension in second and third grade. While it appears the L1 and L2 students utilize a common core of skills to become successful readers, L2 learners may come to the task of reading with significant limitations in these areas of linguistic knowledge. Before considering the effects oral language has upon L2 learners in their reading development, we must first consider the differences between L1 and L2 reading and what these limitations entail.

### 6.2.2 Learner Issues in L2 Reading Concerning Oral Language Proficiency

While researchers have identified many differences between L1 and L2 readers, including varying social-cultural backgrounds, motivations, and transfer affects from the L1, the scope of this paper focuses on the differing amounts of linguistic knowledge. Students reading in their primary language and those reading in their second language begin the process of reading at very different starting points. “Students vary considerably in their L2 lexical, grammatical, and discourse knowledge, and L2 readers will differ widely from L1 readers in terms of linguistic resources that support comprehension (Grabe, 2009, p. 130). Typical L1 children begin reading with a large store of approximately 5,000 to 8,000 active vocabulary words in their lexicon whereas L2 students have knowledge of a significantly smaller number of words (Grabe, 2009, p. 130; Verheoven, 1990, p. 92). Grabe notes that “L2 readers will have less complete lexical representations for most words, which may slow word recognition, syntactic processing, and semantic linkages into the network of main ideas that emerge from reading a text” (p.133).

Moreover, beginning L1 readers have already established some understanding of English morphology and how sounds form patterns to make words. Not only will L2 learners struggle to recode letter strings phonemically because of their lack of oral language, but they may also fail to utilize orthographic constraints that remain unknown to them in the less familiar language (Verheoven, 1990, p. 92). L2 students may also have less practice reading in the new L2
orthographic print and may not have established the same knowledge of the syntactic structure of the L2 language.

In addition, the level of L2 proficiency affects L2 reading ability. “If readers are devoting most of their cognitive resources to figuring out the language, there are few cognitive resources left over for fluent comprehension processes that would normally support the L1 reader” (Grabe & Stoller, 2011, p. 43). Verheoven (1990) expands upon this relationship between L2 proficiency and L2 reading ability:

Because of inefficient sentence processing, L2 learners may have insufficient capacity to retain strings of words in short-term memory. At the same time, because they have less experience reading the second language, their textual knowledge will be limited. Thus, L2 learners may have poor understanding of discourse devices (i.e. sentence coherence, anaphoric reference, and inferences) thereby compromising their higher-order comprehension processes (p. 93).

Clearly, the amount of L2 linguistic knowledge second language learners bring to the task of reading influences their reading abilities. Similar to L1 readers, the development of oral language skills in L2 readers not only incorporates a great deal of the linguistic knowledge students utilize as they work to recognize and comprehend text but also plays a vital role in the reading achievement of ELLs. The next two sections will introduce the role of second language oral proficiency in L2 literacy and synthesize several studies that address the effects oral language skills have on L2 reading.

6.3 Effects of Oral Language on Reading Achievement in an L2

The development of oral language skills for ELLs is vital for building not only interpersonal communication skills in the classroom but also for successfully navigating academic language which tends be more decontextualized and abstract than language used in social conversation. Genesee,
Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian (2009) emphasize that the relationship between English oral proficiency and English reading achievement is stronger for measures that are linked to more academic aspects of language proficiency and that this relationship seems to be strengthened substantially across the grades (p. 367). Based on this report, it is clear that English oral proficiency affects the academic success of ELLs and that instruction should include daily oral language practice that goes beyond social language.

Geva & Shanahan (2006) report that oral language skills may impact specific components of literacy, including word and text level skills. For example, summarizing several studies, Geva & Shanahan found that “measures of oral language proficiency in English explained a significant, although modest, proportion of unique reading variance (3%-4%) in students’ English word and pseudoword reading scores” (p. 127). Moreover, Geva’s synthesis also revealed significant evidence that oral language proficiency impacts reading comprehension of ELLs. “Well-developed oral language proficiency in English is associated with well-developed reading comprehension in English. The available research suggests that comprehension is related to diverse components of English language-proficiency…” (p. 135).

6.3.1 Studies on L2 Oral Language Proficiency and Reading Achievement

Verhoeven (1990) conducted one of the earliest studies on the literacy acquisition of second language learners. Recognizing the lack of research that incorporated both word recognition and comprehension processes in one design, Verhoeven’s study included both of these measures along with a developmental view of second language literacy. His study centered on two main questions: 1) What differences exist between word recognition and the reading comprehension processes of Turkish and Dutch children learning to read in Dutch and what changes occur in performance between the two groups after 5, 10, and 20 months of literacy instruction? 2) Are there interactions between word recognition processes, reading comprehension processes, oral language efficiency,
and sociocultural orientation in Turkish children’s acquisition of reading in their second language, Dutch?

Conducted in the Netherlands, the study examined the development of literacy acquisition of Dutch in the first two grades in primary school. A group of 74 Turkish and 105 Dutch children matched for socioeconomic status (SES), sex, and age were tested on measures of word reading, comprehension, and oral language proficiency. For the word reading task, students read lists of words divided into three groups based on familiarity and orthographic complexity. The comprehension task measured three aspects of cohesion in Dutch texts, including sequential principles in coherence, anaphoric reference, and implicit relations. Oral L2 proficiency tasks included receptive and productive vocabulary tasks to measure lexical knowledge, and a sentence imitation task to measure syntactic knowledge.

Results indicated that after 5 and 10 months of instruction, Dutch children showed an overall better performance on word decoding than Turkish children, and while both groups performed better on shorter and more familiar words, Dutch children were more able to make use of orthographic constraints and word familiarity. Interestingly, this difference between the two groups disappeared after 20 months of literacy instruction as the orthographic complexity had the same impact on both groups although Dutch children profited more from word familiarity. The Dutch children performed better on all three comprehension tasks at 10 and 20 months of instruction, although both groups showed similar gains. Interestingly, after first grade, 67 percent of the variance in comprehension abilities was explained by word reading efficiency and L2 oral proficiency (according to Dutch syntax and lexical knowledge). At the end of grade two, comprehension measures explained similar variance levels although at this point L2 oral proficiency measures became more important, and there was a strong direct effect of syntactic knowledge and an indirect effect of lexical knowledge on word reading efficiency (Verhoeven, 1990, p. 105-106).
In other words, not only does oral language proficiency appear to be a significant predictor of reading comprehension as students move through grade levels, but also syntactic and lexical measures contribute moderately to comprehension at the end of first grade, and syntactic measures become even more predictive at the end of second grade. Verhoeven (1990) concluded, “Children learning to read in a second language should be helped to build up their oral skills, and that reading instruction should be matched to those skills” (p. 90).

A decade later, Verhoeven & Droop (2003) conducted a similar study examining the influence of different aspects of children’s language proficiency on reading comprehension, including students from both high and low SES backgrounds. Their study investigated whether there were differences in the development of oral language, word decoding, and comprehension skills of L1 and L2 learners and whether differences occur between Dutch children from high and low SES backgrounds. Additionally, the researchers sought to determine whether there were interactions between oral language, word decoding, and reading comprehension capacities between first and second language learners.

In the study, 143 Dutch children (60 in high-SES group, 83 in the low-SES group), 60 Moroccan children (all in low-SES group), and 62 Turkish children (also all in the low-SES group) were given standardized tests (two or more when possible) that measured reading comprehension, decoding skills, and oral language proficiency. The researchers gave the tests at three specific points (beginning of third grade, end of third grade, and end of fourth grade). Text coherence, vocabulary, and text cohesion measured reading comprehension.

To test decoding skills, the researchers gave the children three separate lists of words that increased in orthographic complexity from list to list. They asked the children to read each list for one minute. Then, they scored them on the number of words read correctly during the one minute. Oral language proficiency measures included tests of receptive and productive vocabulary,
morphosyntactic knowledge, and oral text comprehension. The vocabulary test was a word definition test in which students chose a picture that accurately depicted the meaning of the word (receptive vocabulary) and then provided complete definitions for a list of 25 words (productive vocabulary). The morphosyntactic knowledge measured students’ understanding of plurals, conjugations of verbs, and pronominal reference. The researchers provided pictures and sentence frames to elicit the correct morphological elements (Verhoeven & Droop, 2003, 87).

While results indicated that all groups appeared to make progress over the two year study, there were clear differences between the groups. First, the minority groups scored lower than the Dutch children did on all of the measures of reading comprehension with the Dutch high-SES scoring higher than the low-SES Dutch children on reading comprehension, vocabulary, and decoding skills. Second, while the minority children performed at the same level as the Dutch high-SES children on decoding simple orthographic patterns (CVC), they performed poorer on more complex patterns (polysyllabic words and CCVCC patterns). However, after two years of instruction, the minority students appeared to be just as efficient at decoding as the Dutch children. Here, the reader should note that the Dutch language is transparent and may be easier to decode than English which is an opaque, deep language. Researchers may need to complete more research to determine whether this pattern holds true for learners of English. Third, researchers found a significant effect of oral text comprehension and vocabulary knowledge on reading comprehension at the end of both third and fourth grade, and this relationship was much stronger for the minority children than the Dutch children.

Vocabulary knowledge represented the largest difference between the Dutch and minority groups. The researchers contend that the growing differences between the Dutch and minority groups’ productive and receptive vocabularies was due to the minority groups’ limited oral language proficiency in Dutch (p. 88-99). More specifically, the researchers surmise that instruction for young
second language learners should include a “strong general focus on the development of oral language proficiency and on vocabulary acquisition in particular” (p. 101).

More recently, Yeung and Chan (2013) conducted a study to determine whether phonological awareness (at a subsyllabic level) and oral language proficiency in an L2 significantly accounted for differences in L2 reading ability. The authors speculated that kindergarteners in Hong Kong struggle with reading successfully in English because they have underdeveloped oral proficiency in English (p. 4).

To test their research questions, they recruited 161 students in their last year of preschool education to participate in the study. These children received instruction in Cantonese and received two-to-three 20 to 30 minute English lessons per week that included English writing but no formal, systematic phonics teaching. They assessed the students individually on measures of word reading, oral language proficiency (expressive and receptive vocabulary), syllable deletion, rhyme detection, phoneme identification, and letter knowledge. To measure word reading, they instructed participants to read aloud 30 common English words and a point was given for each word (no information on orthographic complexity).

A picture vocabulary test measured students’ oral language proficiency. In this test, the researchers presented the vocabulary words orally, and students chose the correct picture. Additionally, they assessed oral language using a picture-naming task in which they showed students 15 common pictures, and students provided the correct English word. They did not measure morphological and syntactic knowledge in the study. For the English syllable deletion, rhyme detection, and phoneme identification, they either showed or orally presented the children with a series of words or pictures and asked them to delete a syllable, identify a rhyming word, or complete a word by providing the missing phoneme. Lastly, they presented the children with out-of-order lower case letters and asked them to identify each of the 26 letters.
Results revealed that both oral language and phonological awareness uniquely predicted English word reading. Phonemic awareness and picture naming (measuring phonological awareness and oral language) were the strongest predictors of English reading. Additionally, oral language proficiency explained 14 percent of unique variance. It appears that knowledge of English phonology and vocabulary knowledge play an important role in English L2 word reading.

However, these results must be considered cautiously for a number of reasons. Yeung and Chan (2013) point out that their study shows that students’ oral language and phonemic awareness skills and their word reading ability are only correlated rather than causal. In other words, oral language and phonemic awareness skills are not necessarily the cause of strong word reading skills, but rather oral language proficiency, phonological awareness, and reading development have a bi-directional relationship where researchers may not assume casual connections. In addition, the researchers only tested receptive and expressive vocabulary under the umbrella of oral language proficiency unlike other studies that took a more comprehensive approach to measuring oral language proficiency. While the study demonstrates evidence for the need for explicit vocabulary instruction, second language learners may need instruction that goes beyond vocabulary, including more in-depth linguistic knowledge (e.g. morphology, syntax, semantics, etc). Furthermore, the study fails to address the developmental aspects of second language reading. While phonological awareness and vocabulary may be vital for word reading during the very beginning stages (preschool), their influences may differ for students in first through third grade. Finally, the study only considers the impact that these literacy components have on word reading and does not address the influence oral language proficiency may have on reading comprehension as well.

The studies described above demonstrate that the influence of oral language depends on a student’s stage of reading development. In addition, some components of oral language are more predictive than others. Most importantly, oral language skills appear to have a substantial impact on
the ability of both L1 and L2 learners to read and comprehend at grade level. Syntactic, morphological, and semantic knowledge along with productive and receptive vocabulary all appear to affect L2 reading achievement and this effect increases as students move through their elementary years. Mainstream and ESL teachers should develop effective instruction that incorporates all of these components and subcomponents of L2 literacy to ensure second language learners can be successful readers. Most importantly, ELLs need the opportunity to talk in order to build their academic language, which appears from these studies to heavily affect reading achievement, particularly, comprehension. The next sections address the effects that phonological awareness has on both L1 and L2 reading achievement for students at the beginning and later stages of reading development.

7 Introducing Phonological Awareness as a Component of Reading Development

While oral language is vital in the beginning and more likely, later stages of reading as comprehension becomes more prominent, research in first and second language reading development has demonstrated a relationship between phonological awareness and reading achievement. In the 1980’s, Gillon (2007) and other researchers began to discuss the term phonological awareness amongst other concepts such as phonological processing, phonemic awareness, and phonology (p. 2). They generally define phonological awareness as “the ability to reflect on and manipulate the phonemic segments of speech. It is a metalinguistic ability that [does] not come free with the acquisition of language” (Tunmer, 1991, p. 105). Phonological awareness is a broad term that includes the ability to reflect on both larger segments of speech, such as syllables, and on smaller segments including phonemes, the smallest sounds in speech. In the speech stream, children are able to discriminate between phonemes and are able to attach meaning to words that may differ in only one phoneme; however, as Tunmer notes, children do so at a subconscious level and fail to realize that the difference between words is at an abstract
phonemic level (p. 106). Not only must children become aware of this abstract entity, “they must also develop the ability to invoke control processing to perform mental operations on the products of the mental mechanism responsible for converting the speech signal into a sequence of phonemes” (p. 106).

Perhaps, inherent in the development of language and the nature of words themselves is the comprehension of written and spoken words. Certainly, other species have techniques to communicate and relay pertinent information for survival. According to Liberman (1989), human beings differ in that they have a specialization for language, in particular, a developed phonological system that collaborates with a phonemic system to form speech. While this process appears complex, the native speaker quite naturally can exploit this system without actually being aware of the written form or that within the speech stream these phonological units have an internal structure (p. 3). Additionally, Liberman (1989) argues that “for would-be readers, given the complex relation between phonological structure and sound, and the automaticity with which this relation is dealt in speech, they find it that much harder to be aware that the word does have an internal structure” (p. 10). Adding to this difficulty is the fact that these phonemes are embedded in a continuous speech stream where they overlap and are coarticulated, making it difficult to separate and isolate these individual sounds (Ehri, 2006, p.116).

7.1 A Hierarchy of Phonological Awareness Skills

Research indicates that the ability to manipulate phonemes in the speech stream follows a developmental or sequential pattern. Figure 3 depicts this hierarchy of phonological awareness skills. Detection and manipulation of phonemes becomes more difficult as these units become smaller (Costenaro, 2013, p. 78; Minnesota Center for Reading Research, 2010).
Children become increasingly sensitive to smaller and smaller parts of words as they grow older. Today, research has been able to better identify these smaller parts and attribute them to specific stages of phonological awareness.

The development of phonological awareness can be separated into 3 distinct stages: syllabic (rhythm and rhyme; syllable blending and segmentation), onset and rime (onset-rime awareness), and phonemic awareness stages (isolating, blending, segmenting, deleting, and manipulating phoneme) (Gillon, 2007, p. 4-7; Fitzpatrick, 1997, p. 8-12). The least complex stage of phonological awareness is syllabic in nature. Syllables provide the rhythm in English. Syllable awareness, therefore, requires awareness that syllables divide words into parts. If children can clap the beats in their name, they are tuning in to the rhythm of English. Gillon notes 3 principles of syllable division: the existence of vowels, stress patterns, and the non-clustering of consonants (p. 5). Each syllable must have a vowel present (i.e. the ‘o’ and ‘u’ in

Figure 3. The phonemic awareness continuum from simple to complex skills. Adapted from “Path to Reading Excellence in School Sites (Press) Intervention Manual,” Minnesota Center for Reading Research, University of Minnesota, 2010. Adapted with Permission.
donut), the syllable division must follow the stress pattern of the word, and syllables must be divided in a way that creates only acceptable clusters of consonants (i.e. ‘children’ is broken into /chil/ and /dren/, not /chi/ and /ldren/). Being aware of the number of syllables in a word or isolating a syllable is a demonstration of syllable awareness and an important skill for both reading and spelling.

The next, more complex skill on the continuum is the awareness of onset and rime within syllables. To have onset-rime awareness, children must recognize the onset and rime within a word. For example, in the word sleep, sl is the onset and eep is the rime. Children with an awareness of onset-rime are able to sequence syllables in order, blend syllables together, and recognize that some words share common endings (i.e. cat and rat).

The most complex stage of phonological awareness revolves around the concept of a phoneme, the smallest component in the speech stream. During this stage of development, children are mastering the ability to isolate individual phonemes, blend several phonemes together, segment a word into each of its phonemes, and also delete or manipulate phonemes in a word. For instance, children could be asked to identify the beginning or ending sound in the word book or to replace the /b/ with /l/ to create a new entity. The skills documented within each of these three stages have a strong impact on beginning reading acquisition for both native and ELL speakers.

7.2 Current Views on the Relationship between Phonological Awareness and Reading Acquisition

There are primarily two views on the relationship between phonological awareness and literacy acquisition. The first view holds that there is a causal relationship between phonological abilities and reading development. In Bradley & Bryant’s (1983) 2-year study of 263 4-year and 5-year olds, for instance, a subsample of 65 children were split into 4 groups with Groups I and
II receiving training in categorizing phonemes. Group II also received training in how sounds were represented by letters. Group III was not taught sound categorizing but instead was taught how to categorize words according to meaning. Group IV was the control group and did not receive any phonological or phonics training. At the end of the project, Group II was significantly better on standardized tests of reading than Groups III and IV (P < .05) and on a standardized test of spelling (P <.01). Also, Group I was significantly better than Group IV on the two standardized reading tests and spelling test (P < .05). The researchers suggest that a causal relationship between sound categorization and reading and spelling is present (p. 420).

The second view claims that phonological awareness stems from and contributes to reading development. Stanovich explains this view: “Children must achieve at least some minimal level of explicit phonological awareness to acquire basic reading skills that, in turn, enables them to acquire the spinoff skills of reading that provide the basis for more advanced metalinguistic performances” (as cited in Tunmer, 1991, p. 108). In one study, the relationship between phonological segmentation ability and pseudo word recognition was measured to determine whether some minimal level of phonological awareness was necessary to be able to read. The study made several conclusions about phonological awareness and literacy acquisition:

Explicit phonological awareness is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for acquiring the grapheme-phoneme correspondence rules. Although there were many children who performed well on phoneme segmentation but poorly on the pseudo word decoding, there were no children who performed poorly on the phoneme segmentation but well on the pseudo word decoding (Tunmer, 1991, p. 109).

Interestingly, after students begin to make some progress in reading, phonological awareness abilities appear to improve. Perfetti, Beck, Bell, and Hughes’s (1987) study of 82 first
grade readers tested on their phonemic knowledge 4 times throughout the year found that the relationship between phonological awareness and reading acquisition may be reciprocal in nature. Progress in reading appeared to result in progress in the ability to perform a phoneme deletion task that, in turn, appeared to bring about future gains in reading” (p. 317). However, Perfetti et al. caution that this only appeared to be true for the deletion task which is a more complex and cognitively demanding task. It seems the exact nature of this relationship remains unresolved, but it does appear that phonological awareness has an important role in acquiring basic literacy skills.

In Lesaux & Seigel’s (2003) study of 790 L1 speakers and 188 ESL speakers, the development of reading and those known skills that are predictors of reading development were examined. The ESL students spoke a variety of languages and came from a wide-range of SES backgrounds. All students who were assessed and found to be at-risk for reading failure were given explicit instruction in phonological awareness and systematic phonics instruction in first grade. While the results demonstrated that kindergarten letter identification, phonological processing, rapid naming, and syntactic awareness are significant in predicting both word reading and comprehension for native speakers in second grade, phonological processing explained the most variance, indicating that phonological awareness may be even more vital for ELLs. Equally important, results showed that although kindergarten ESL students performed poorly on various reading tasks, by second grade, they had caught up to the native English speakers’ performance on the given tasks. Lesaux and Siegel concluded that kindergarten phonological awareness instruction embedded in a balanced literacy program is just as effective for ESL speakers as it is for L1 speakers and that a model of instruction that utilizes small groups may meet the needs of students most effectively.
In a follow-up study, Likpa & Siegel (2007) sought to examine whether the same predictors of reading achievement would be present in ESL and L1 students in kindergarten and in third grade. This study differs from previous studies in that it has a longitudinal nature and also involves the testing of students in third grade, a time when students are expected to be reading fluently with good comprehension. The researchers narrowed their focus to testing 3 specific components of reading: phonological awareness, syntactic awareness, and working memory. The sample included 703 L1 students and 128 ESL children who came from different linguistic backgrounds. Some 33 languages were spoken by the children and approximately 44% reported that they could read and write in their L1. The sample included students of different SES backgrounds to reduce the likelihood that the results from the ESL children would be related to their economic background. Students were given a battery of tests to assess early literacy skills, phonological processing, grammatical sensitivity, lexical access, and working memory. All children were provided phonological awareness instruction in kindergarten, and those students identified as at-risk received additional training in small groups.

Results showed that both ESL and L1 children showed comparable correlations between phonological awareness and literacy in kindergarten. While multiple measures were significant in explaining variation for L1 third grade students, only letter identification and working memory were significant in explaining variation for ESL third grade students. Likpa & Siegel (2007) suggest that these two component reading skills were more sensitive to individual differences since other measures were quite low with little variance as a result of students’ limited oral language proficiency. Perhaps more significant, the researchers found that letter identification and phonological awareness measured in kindergarten predicted reading difficulties in third grade for the sample as a whole (p. 126). They argue that the early literacy and reading program which emphasized both phonological awareness and letter identification contributed significantly
to the ESL students’ reading abilities (p. 127). It is clear that a curriculum that targets early literacy components, especially phonological awareness and letter identification, has a positive effect on the future reading achievement of both English and ESL students.

In a third study, Nakamoto, Lindsey, and Manis (2007) investigated the growth of Spanish ELLs’ word decoding and comprehension from first to sixth grade to determine the extent to which specific literacy constructs, including English phonological awareness, rapid automatic naming (RAN), and oral language measures in first grade would predict later reading growth. They also set out to analyze the levels of association between the predictors and different developmental stages in learning to read. The initial sample included 303 Latino kindergarten children learning both Spanish and English in a transition bilingual curriculum that utilized phonological awareness activities, multisensory experiences with letters, and oral language training in both languages in kindergarten and first grade. SES was quite low as indicated by the fact that most of the students qualified for free lunch. Children were given a battery of tests that measured their early literacy skills, including letter and word reading, expressive vocabulary, passage comprehension, sentence recall, sound matching tasks, and syllable and phoneme deletion. Data was collected and averaged at each time point and specific skills were chosen to form a basic reading skills cluster to reveal each child’s decoding abilities and then separate skills were averaged to form a reading comprehension cluster.

Results showed that for the basic skills reading cluster, phonological awareness, RAN, and oral language were all significant predictors of reading growth. Children who demonstrated lower phonological awareness and poorer RAN in first grade were associated with more rapid deceleration of later reading growth. Nakamoto et al. (2007) conclude that “the ultimate level of reading attainment is lower in children with lower levels of phonological processing skills, marking [differences in] phonological skills as a significant risk factor for later word level
reading difficulties” (p. 713). All three constructs were also significant unique predictors of reading comprehension, but phonological awareness and RAN were not significant predictors when oral language was entered into the model. These results demonstrate that reading instruction that supports phonological awareness, letter knowledge, and oral language significantly impacts future reading growth, especially on decoding abilities during the early stages of reading. The researchers, however, do emphasize that for long term reading success dependent upon reading comprehension, instruction should support the growth of oral language skills as early as possible (Nakamoto et al, 2007, p. 715).

To summarize, phonological awareness is a critical skill for the reading achievement of both native speakers and ELLs, especially during the early stages of reading. The ability to analyze sounds within speech significantly impacts all learners’ development of letter-sound correspondence and decoding words. However, it appears that oral language abilities, especially for ELLs, have a major impact on reading comprehension at all stages but especially during the later elementary years when both text structure and academic vocabulary become more complex. Nakamoto et al. (2007) found that although the decoding skills of both native speakers and ELLs were generally comparable, the growth of reading comprehension abilities of ELL students began to decline and lag behind the native English speakers starting in third grade (p. 711). They conclude that the focus of instruction should be on comprehension strategies and oral language skills to improve ELLs’ comprehension skills which they will need to be college and career ready.

### 7.3 Distinguishing Phonological Awareness, Phonemic Awareness, and Phonics

Often referred to synonymously, the terms *phonological awareness* and *phonemic awareness* are both components of reading that utilize the sound elements of a language. However, phonemic awareness is a type or subset of phonological awareness that accounts for only the smallest pieces of language (i.e. phonemes). According to Phillips & Torgesen (2006),
phonemic awareness “involves a more or less explicit understanding that words are composed of segments of sound smaller than a syllable . . . (p. 102). For example, asking a student to segment the word *phone* into its individual phonemes / ph /, / o /, and / n / is an example of a phonemic awareness skill. This awareness heavily influences a child’s ability to connect graphemes with the sounds of language and later develop basic literacy skills. Students who are unable to segment those sounds will struggle to sound out the word when they come across it in a text and may even be unaware that each sound is represented by graphemes. However, researchers consider neither of these skills as ‘phonics’ which refers more to the relationship between the sounds and the graphemes. Often, letter-sound correspondence utilizes this term rather than phonemic awareness. For instance, students would have to know that the *ph* blend creates an / f / sound when they attempt to read or write the word *phone*.

### 7.4 Phonics Instruction as a Component of a Balanced Reading Program

Prior to Rudolph Flesch’s “Why Johnny Can’t Read,” and Jeanne Chall’s book “Learning to Read: The Great Debate,” early reading instruction centered on the whole language or whole-word method. This method of teaching reading stressed “real literature and daily writing . . . over explicit teaching of basic reading skills. Skills instruction occur[ed] in wholly committed whole-language classrooms on an as-needed basis only…” (Pressley, 2006, p.15). With Chall’s three years of research along with countless other studies that followed, the debate about whole language versus phonics began to subside, and most researchers agreed that effective reading instruction should incorporate elements of both approaches.

Almost thirty years later, to address illiteracy and low reading growth among school districts, especially among districts with students of low SES, Congress commissioned the NRP which in 2000 released its report regarding the best methods to teach children to read. They found that systematic phonics instruction helps children to read more effectively than programs
that provide unsystematic or no phonics instruction (NRP, 2000, p.92). Phonics instruction had the most prominent positive effects when it began in kindergarten or 1st grade prior to children learning to read independently (p.93). For kindergarteners at risk of developing reading problems, phonics instruction produced the largest effect size, $d = .74$ (p.94). Systematic phonics instruction led to significant gains in decoding, word reading, and reading comprehension although reading comprehension did not grow significantly for children in 2nd through 6th grade. Lastly, spelling among students in kindergarten and 1st grade grew significantly with an effect size of $d = .67$ (p.94).

While the NRP’s findings were based on English speaking children, the NICHD Early Child Care Research Network released its own report based on the results from studies of language-minority students. In their findings, they argue that “instruction that provides substantial coverage in the key components of reading-identified by the NRP (e.g. phonics) has clear benefits for language-minority students . . . just as it does for native English speakers” (August & Shanahan, 2006, p.3). While the Panel found the same reading skills important for native speakers are also important for ELLs, both Irujo (2007) and Linan-Thompson & Vaughn (2007) agree that systematic phonics will not facilitate reading growth or reading comprehension if instruction in oral language is not also present (p. 3; p. 34).

### 7.5 The Relationship between Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Spelling

For all students, learning to read in English requires more than just an ability to recognize, distinguish, and manipulate the sounds in the language. Students also need to develop an understanding of the relationship between sounds and the graphemes that represent them. There is clear relationship between the skills embedded in phonological awareness, phonics, and spelling, all skills students need to become proficient readers and writers. Phonological awareness allows students to identify and manipulate sounds in words, an important skill that
students can then utilize during phonics instruction when they are mapping those sounds to the written representations during reading or writing tasks. Starrett (2007) clarifies the relationship among these literacy skills: “Phonics instruction lends itself nicely to inclusion in spelling and writing since all three are interrelated. Reading is decoding . . . spelling is encoding (i.e. making letters from sounds). Writing is decoding of sounds into written letters. Each subject area reinforces the other” (p. 7). Each of these skills contributes to proficient reading and therefore each should be a component of an eclectic, balanced literacy approach.

While phonics has been shown to be beneficial for all students, Irujo (2007) and August & Shanahan (2006) both caution educators to be wary of designing programs that focus too heavily on letter-sound correspondence without the application of phonemic awareness, especially for ELLs (p.3; p. 96). Irujo (2007) asserts the need for phonemic awareness instruction: “Before phonics instruction begins, [ELL] students must have the phonemic awareness skills they need in order to perceive sounds in words. This is particularly important for sounds that are problematic because of the native language” (p.3) In addition, teachers need to be aware of the spelling conventions in their ELLs’ native language, especially if the native language has regular sound-symbol correspondence (i.e. Spanish), a characteristic that may differ from English which has many different letter combinations for the same sound (p. 3). To summarize, typical phonics instruction may need to be modified to meet the literacy needs of ELLs.

8 Integrating Academic Oral Language and Phonological Awareness into L2 Reading Instruction

8.1 Introducing Academic Oral Language

Many of these oral language studies in the field of both first and second language reading research measured and defined oral language in different and often vague ways. There appears to
be a mismatch between the terminology researchers in the field use to discuss oral language and how those developing instructional materials and strategies approach the concept. Generally, it has been defined as the ability to produce and comprehend spoken language, but this definition seems rather inadequate, especially in K-12 where students are not only expected to produce and comprehend language, but more specifically required to master the academic language of all major content areas. As noted, students in K-12 ESL programs will need to demonstrate proficiency in academic language in order to exit any program.

Therefore, I propose that this broad need for oral language skills reflect a more academic nature; it is necessary to define what is meant by academic language or academic oral language. Cloud et al. (2009) defines academic language as the “ability to talk, read, and write about academic content that is less familiar and more abstract, using more sophisticated, low-frequency technical vocabulary. . . and complex grammatical forms” (p. 125). Content words such hypothesis, calculate, and experiment and sentences with structures such as passive voice often used in the sciences demonstrate academic language. Academic language is not just an expectation of school but an expectation of employers as well. For example, Zwiers (2011) notes many skills in the workplace require academic language and academic conversations: communicating effectively, asking critical questions, analyzing, synthesizing, and organizing ideas, comparing multiple perspectives, etc (p. 10). The instructional strategies that follow are targeted at developing all students’ academic oral language.

8.2 Promoting Academic Oral Language Development during Literacy Blocks

On the surface, many ELL students may appear to have acquired the oral skills they need to be successful during their schooling years; however, as language demands and the complexity of language used across content areas increases, problems associated with limited vocabulary and syntactic knowledge leave students with significant gaps in their linguistic knowledge.
While it may be difficult to extract the best instructional approaches to address these gaps, several researchers have synthesized studies that may offer some insight. They suggest that a combination of direct and interactive approaches which include both explicit instruction and interaction with peers and teachers is the most effective instructional approach for helping ELLs develop their academic language in writing and speaking. The next section will describe this focused approach (with both explicit and interactive instruction) to L2 literacy instruction along with several teaching methods useful for ELLs.

### 8.2.1 Explicit Language Instruction: A Focused Approach

Helman (2016) has identified three critical strands to a focused approach to explicit language instruction: cognitive tasks, target language, and instruction and application (Figure 4). Cognitive tasks are the language functions which allow students to connect their thinking and their language. For example, students may need to use and understand the language of description to express their thinking about a character’s motivations in a text. Considering the function of the language forces teachers to also identify the forms, or the language structures and patterns involved in that particular task. The second strand of explicit language instruction revolves around vocabulary acquisition. Helman notes that “to be successful readers, students must be able to decode the text accurately and automatically, know word meanings, and follow sentence structure. To discuss and write about ideas, they must be able to encode and produce needed vocabulary…” (p. 58). Helman suggests a construction metaphor of bricks and mortar to identify and classify academic vocabulary words. *Brick* words (basic to specialized) are used to talk about a specific content topic and *mortar* words make up the functional language that connects individual words to express a meaning. The third strand, instruction and application, encourages teachers to think about the type of modeling, guided practice, and application of learning that would best scaffold and support their students’ learning. These critical strands of
explicit language teaching strongly support both English language development and reading achievement (p.57).

The next sections will describe several teaching practices useful for creating effective instruction that supports oral academic language including sentence frames, instructional conversations, and academic conversations.

8.2.2 Instructional Strategies for Promoting Oral Academic Language Development

8.2.2.1 Sentence Frames

As oral language skills have been shown to have a significant impact on students’ reading achievement, it is important that teachers find methods to facilitate students’ oral production skills across various proficiency levels and content areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linguistic Complexity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-3 sentences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| • _____ has/is _____.
| • _____ and _____ are the same because _____.
| • _____ and _____ are different because _____.
| Academic Paragraph (4-6 sentences) |
| • _____ and _____ are similar because both/neither _____.
| • Both _____ and _____ have/are _____.
| • _____ and _____ are different because _____.
| • _____ has/is _____, but _____ has/is _____.
| • _____ has/is _____-er than _____.
| Academic Paragraph (4-6 sentences) |
| • One similarity/difference between _____ and _____ is _____.
| • Another similarity/difference between _____ and _____ is _____.
| • Both _____ and _____ have common characteristics, such as _____.
| • _____ is/has _____, while _____ is/has _____.
| • _____ is/has _____; in contrast, _____ is/has _____.

*Figure 5.* Sentence frames with the academic vocabulary of comparing and contrasting embedded within. Colors represent entering, developing, and expanding proficiency levels. Adapted from “ELA Matrix 2.0,” Excell Academy ELA Matrix Team, 2016. Adapted with Permission.

Sentence frames can help students practice language and develop their syntactic knowledge and vocabulary at increasingly more complex levels. Once teachers have established the content standard for which they will be creating learning and language objectives, they can construct sentence frames to give their students the ability to talk in a structured, academic manner about the content of the lesson. For example, students may need to compare and contrast elements from a text, such as characters. Figure 5 illustrates sentence frames that would allow students to
express their understanding of the learning objective at different proficiency levels in writing. The first column shows sentence frames with simple vocabulary and structure while the next two columns have increasingly more complex vocabulary and structure. In addition, after students practice orally, they can write sentences or an academic paragraph, choosing a column with sentence frames at their level.

Teachers may want to consider using an I-do, we-do, you-do approach to introducing and utilizing sentence frames in their lesson. Modeling each sentence frame beginning at the lowest proficiency levels and then gradually introducing more complex frames as students acquire the language will not only build their confidence but also give them more tools to use to express their ideas. Once teachers have modeled the sentence frames and have provided examples of its use in a whole group, they can slowly release students to practice with partners and eventually independently in writing.

8.2.2.2 Instructional Conversations

Very often, classroom language is based on a model where teachers initiate a conversation, students respond, and teachers evaluate students’ knowledge based on their responses (IRE model). Williams (2013) argues that such a system “is dominated by teacher talk and [that] its narrow framework does not encourage students to use language to learn” (p. 753). One teaching approach that may provide students with more opportunity to develop their language skills than what the IRE model offers is instructional conversations (ICs). Rather than passively listening and responding to questions with definite answers, ICs allow students to develop and construct their knowledge in a discussion forum where they have a real stake in what is said. Goldenberg (1992) describes ICs as “discussion-based lessons geared toward creating richly textured opportunities for students’ conceptual and linguistic development” (p. 317). Not only do ICs provide authentic settings and purpose for language use, they also
“provide students with the means to provide and construct new knowledge” (Williams, 2013, p. 754). Figure 6 illustrates the elements of an IC.

### Elements of the instructional conversation

**Instructional elements**
1) *Thematic focus.* The teacher selects a theme or idea to serve as a starting point for focusing the discussion and has a general plan for how the theme will unfold, including how to “chunk” the text to permit optimal exploration of the theme.
2) *Activation and use of background and relevant schemata.* The teacher either “hooks into” or provides students with pertinent background knowledge and relevant schemata necessary for understanding a text. Background knowledge and schemata are woven into the discussion that follows.
3) *Direct teaching.* When necessary, the teacher provides direct teaching of a skill or concept.
4) *Promotion of more complex language and expression.* The teacher elicits more extended student contributions by using a variety of elicitation techniques—invitations to expand (e.g., “tell me more about that”), questions (e.g., “What do you mean?”), restatements (e.g., “in other words, ---”) and pauses.
5) *Elicitation of bases for statements or positions.* The teacher promotes students’ use of text, pictures, and reasoning to support an argument or position. Without overwhelming students, the teacher probes for the bases of students’ statements (e.g., “How do you know?” ‘What makes you think that?” “Show us where it says _______”).

**Conversational elements**
6) *Fewer “known-answer” questions.* Much of the discussion centers on questions and answers for which there might be more than one correct answer.
7) *Responsibility to student contributions.* While having an initial plan and maintaining the focus and coherence of the discussion, the teacher is also responsive to students’ statements and the opportunities they provide.
8) *Connected discourse.* The discussion is characterized by multiple, interactive, connected turns; succeeding utterances build upon and extend previous ones.
9) *A challenging, but nonthreatening, atmosphere.* The teacher creates a “zone of proximal development,” where a challenging atmosphere is balanced by a positive affective climate. The teacher is more collaborator than evaluator and creates an atmosphere that challenges students and allows them to negotiate and construct the meaning of the text.
10) *General participation, including self-selected turns.* The teacher encourages general participation among students. The teacher does not hold exclusive right to determine who talks, and students are encouraged to volunteer or otherwise influence the selection of speaking turns.


In their study of ICs and literature logs, Saunders and Goldenberg (1999) examined the effects of these two instructional approaches for transition and non-transition (limited and fluent English) students on story comprehension (factual and interpretive) and theme understanding (theme explanation and exemplification essays). Three 5th- and two 4th-grade classes of 26-31 students were divided into four treatment groups: 1) control group 2) literature logs only 3)
instructional conversations only 4) literature logs + instructional conversations. Over the course of 10-15 calendar days, students were given pre-tests, lesson treatments, and post-tests.

Results revealed that the combined use of ICs and literature logs was helpful for all students’ factual and interpretive story comprehension and that the effects of both literature logs and ICs on understanding of a story’s theme was more pronounced for the ELLs than the fluent English speakers. Interestingly, the effects of instructional conversations were stronger than the effects of the literature logs on factual and interpretive comprehension. Considering these results, instructional conversations may be a vital resource for teachers to use to help students build the linguistic knowledge they need to be successful academically. At first glance, ICs may appear simple, but they require a teaching agenda that ‘weaves’ together the contributions and background knowledge of the students in such a manner that instruction and conversation are welded together to expand students’ oral language skills while simultaneously developing literacy skills. In effect, each individual becomes a contributing member of greater dialogue, each working to express their ideas and in-so-doing, help develop their own academic oral language along with their classmates.

8.2.2.3 Academic Conversations

Perhaps the strongest proponent of academic oral language development within the classroom today is Jeff Zwiers, a senior researcher at Stanford University, whose focus is on developing teachers’ practices for enhancing students’ academic language and literacy. In his research, Zwiers (2011) found five core skills that made conversations within the classroom more academically enriched. These five core skills feature sentence prompts to fuel conversation (Appendix A).

These five skills include elaborating, supporting ideas, building and challenging ideas, paraphrasing, and synthesizing main points (p. 31-41). Elaboration forces students to provide
more information and detail about a particular topic. One activity to support this skill is through the use of graphic organizers. For instance, students could elaborate on their ideas about the uses of an unusual object from history. A second skill of academic conversations is supporting ideas through the use of examples from a text, the world, or from personal experiences. To take it a step further, students could be asked to evaluate the strength of their evidence. For this task, students could use a graphic organizer to generate examples from multiple sources that support an idea. The third skill is building on or challenging a partner’s idea. One challenge many students have is making comments or connections that are relevant to the lesson. For this skill, students could use persuasive sentence frames to discuss two conflicting quotations or current events. The fourth skill involves paraphrasing, the act of understanding and organizing the speaker’s ideas and then summarizing those ideas in one’s own words. This skill requires students to not only be good, engaged listeners, but also resist the temptation to interject their own opinions. One scaffold to support ELLs with this task is to provide them with an interview grid with questions that require more complex answers that they need to discuss with partners and then paraphrase their partner’s answers. To simplify the task for lower level speakers, teachers could include sentence stems (Zwiers, 2011, p. 31-41).

The last skill Zwiers (2011) suggests involves synthesizing the major ideas of a conversation. Students are constantly being bombarded by ideas that may or may not be beneficial to a larger discussion; in other words, some of these ideas are useful and can be connected to deeper ideas. Zwiers recommends teaching children the parking, promoting, and pruning ideas method (p. 55). In order to synthesize ideas, students need to choose to do one of three things: set their idea aside for another time, share their idea, or discard it because of lack of helpfulness or usefulness. In this way, students are able to walk away from a conversation better able to pull out only the most valuable information (p. 55).
Creating lessons that take a focused approach utilizing differentiated sentence frames, instructional conversations, and academic conversations will help both native speakers and ELL students within the general education classroom to develop a more academic, sophisticated tone that allows them to better express their thinking during conversations with others and interactions with texts.

8.3 Fostering Phonological Awareness Skills in Beginning Readers

As previously stated in this paper, students who lack phonological awareness skills are at-risk for future reading failure, but through early identification and explicit, systematic instruction, both native speakers and ELLs students’ literacy skills can flourish. ELLs may struggle more with developing these skills because they do not have the same developed phonological system as native speakers, and their oral language skills and exposure to English speech may be limited.

Additionally, Irujo (2007) argues that it might also be difficult for ELLs to develop phonological awareness skills because of their lack of experience with English. Being able to distinguish sounds that differ from their native language may be problematic. Time dedicated for simple play with songs, poems, chants, read-alouds is necessary for students who need to be introduced to the sound patterns in English. Moreover, teachers should recognize that students from different language backgrounds may need additional help with certain sounds that either do not exist in their native language (e.g. /r/ in English for Hmong speakers) or are considered the same sound in their language (i.e. allophones such as /r/ and /l/ in Japanese) (p. 2).

Some ELLs will come with some phonological skills already developed from interactions at home or from a pre-kindergarten program. Therefore, Cloud et al. (2009) recommends identifying students’ knowledge of syllables and their ability to isolate, delete, and manipulate phonemes and then tailor instruction to meet the specific needs of small, leveled ELL groups
(49). In other words, teachers will need to analyze phonological assessment data and format instruction around the results of that data for each group of students. The Two Peas Phonological Awareness Assessment can be a useful tool for gathering assessment data on each child’s phonological awareness skills (Appendix B). The next section will recommend specific instructional strategies and activities that could be used in a kindergarten through third grade classroom with beginning readers.

8.3.1 Instructional Strategies and Activities to Support ELLs’ Phonological Awareness

To acquire basic decoding and encoding (i.e. spelling) skills, ELLs need to perceive individual phonemes which are abstract and flow into one another, quickly disappearing within the speech stream. Designing activities that both expose students to oral language while making those sounds slow down and become as concrete as possible will help them to better recognize and concentrate on each sound.

8.3.1.1 "Make It Concrete Kit"

One way to make sounds more substantial is by creating kits with materials that will amplify phonemes. Roberts (2009) lists necessary materials used to make these kits (p.129):

**Phone (PVC):**
- 3-inch length of 1 1/4\(^{th}\)-inch diameter PVC pipe
- Two 1 ½-inch
- 90-degree PVC elbows

**Mirror:**
- 4-inch by 4-inch acrylic mirror

**Color Tiles:**
- Six 1-inch plastic color tiles

**Large Rubber Band**

**Interlocking Cubes:**
- Four 3/4\(^{th}\)-inch unifix cubes of different colors

Using the tiles to represent sounds, teachers can introduce a word that begins with a specific letter. They can model the sound and have students repeat that sound while placing the tile in front of them after they say it. After students have repeated the sound, have them use their
mirrors to see how their mouths make the sound. Manipulatives that begin with that same letter can teach vocabulary and phonological awareness at the same time. Students can say the name of the object, the beginning sound, and repeat the name once more. These same objects can be used during centers for independent practice. For students who struggle to hear the sounds, the phones can be used to magnify the sound. The unifix cubes can be used for more complex phonological awareness tasks such as manipulation, isolation, or deletion of phonemes. Using the cubes to represent phonemes, teachers can say a word and then connect each cube as they say the individual phonemes. They can also do the reverse—say the word and disconnect one cube at a time as they segment and say each phoneme. For instance, if they are focusing on /r/, teachers could say the word *rat* and connect each cube as they say each phoneme in the word. Then, they could delete a phoneme to make a new word *at*. These kits are flexible enough to be able to be used with students at all stages on the continuum (Roberts, 2009, p. 134-136).

### 8.3.1.2 Elkonin Boxes

Elkonin boxes are graphics that help students isolate and segment syllables and phonemes in words. They also give students a clear way to count how many sounds are in a given word. Elkonin boxes are typically depicted as a rectangle split into 3 or 4 parts or smaller boxes. Using objects or pictures that can be related to a text, a teacher provides the boxes that correspond to the number of phonemes. The teacher can say the word and have students repeat slowly, listening for that number of sounds in the right order. As they hear the sounds, they place a marker in the box. For students with more advanced phonological awareness skills, teachers can ask them to listen for a certain phoneme and place the counter in the correct box depending on whether they heard that sound in the beginning, middle, or end of the word (Reading Rockets, 2003, p. 11-13). For students who have letter knowledge and have developed some sense of
letter-sound correspondence, the teacher can provide letters or letter chunks to incorporate both phonological awareness and phonics practice.

**8.3.1.3 Sound Sorts**

Sound sorts are an effective method for ELLs who need to develop both vocabulary and phonological awareness. According to Antonacci (2011), *Sound sorts* is “an instructional strategy that facilitates students’ attention to phonemes” (p. 18-21). Students need to develop metalinguistic awareness, the ability to see language as an object to study, if they are to see speech sounds as objects within words (p. 18). After teachers have provided models of a particular phoneme in either the initial, medial, or ending position, they give students a number of pictures that include that particular structure. Students practice the routine of saying the name of picture, listening for that particular phoneme, and determining whether it matches with the given pattern. For more advanced students, teachers can provide more complex words or have them practice perceiving and sorting a number of phonemes at a time. For example, each student may have a bag of picture cards including words such as *robot, truck, bus*. Teachers may ask them to sort other word cards into groups based on the ending phonemes /t/, /k/, and /s/. Sound sorts expose ELLs to more vocabulary while also forcing students to identify and categorize phonemes. Antonacci cautions that teachers should ‘use their assessment data to change the focus of the sound sort activity depending on student needs” (p. 19).

**8.3.2 Phonological Awareness: Explicit and Sequential**

The above activities and instructional strategies are just three examples that could be utilized to support the literacy development of ELLs. Most researchers agree that phonological awareness activities should be embedded into a much broader balanced literacy block that includes other important early literacy skills since there seems to be some evidence that the acquisition of phonological awareness and reading progress reciprocally (Yopp, 2000, p. 132;
Antonacci, 2011, p. 2; Perfetti et al, 1987, p.137). Additionally, these activities should be purposeful, explicit, and systematic so as to make this abstract skill more concrete and to align with the continuum of skills within the construct of phonological awareness (Ehri et al., 2006, 127).

9 Guiding Principles of Second Language Literacy

While the body of research on literacy instruction for ELLs is limited, this paper has illustrated several studies that demonstrate that students’ lack of oral proficiency and phonological awareness in English impacts early and later reading achievement. Traditional approaches to instruction formulated for native speakers may not encompass the multitude of factors that affect ELLs, specifically the limitations in linguistic knowledge that deprive these students from developing into successful readers. Instructional approaches to help students develop their oral language and phonological awareness have been suggested, including but not limited to sentence frames, instructional conversations, a focused approach, elkonin boxes, and sound sorts (Helman, 2016; Williams, 2013; Goldenberg, 1992; Saunders and Goldenberg, 1999; Zwiers, 2011; Reading Rockets, 2003; Antonacci, 2011). Teachers should successfully scaffold complex language and select from these strategies in order to make their lessons not only more comprehensible to ELLs but also allocate time within each lesson for developing oral language and phonological awareness. Additionally, building a learning community in which ELLs feel comfortable taking risks with their newly acquired language skills and can participate in lessons that allow them to interact and collaborate with their peers creates a positive, motivating atmosphere where oral language and phonological awareness skills can flourish. ELLs are more likely to develop their oral language skills when they have the opportunity to talk during hands-on, purposeful activities that connect to their personal experience and background knowledge. By creating structures of interaction with authentic tasks and guided practice, ELLs
can develop not only their academic language and content knowledge, but also become more fluent readers that can comprehend and navigate the more complex text when reading to learn becomes necessary for academic success during the later elementary and high school years.

9.1 Future Research Concerning Oral Language Development and Phonological Awareness in L2 Literacy Development

While many of the studies demonstrate the need for systematic instruction to develop second language learners’ oral language skills, this paper reveals the need for more extensive research in second language literacy. First, there appears to be little uniformity across the studies as to what elements of oral language should be tested. Some studies took a comprehensive approach to measuring oral language (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2005; Verhoeven & Droop, 2003; Roth, 2002) while others only tested vocabulary knowledge as a measure of oral language (Verhoeven, 1990; Yeung & Chan, 2013). Moreover, some studies measured vocabulary by presenting a picture and having students identify the correct picture or provide the correct word (Verhoeven, 1990; Yeung & Chan, 2013) while others required students to also provide a word definition, a skill that may be more difficult for ELLs but could be a better measure of their ability to tap into their lexicon (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2005; Roth et al., 2002; Verhoeven & Droop, 2003). Second, only a few studies in the research field have a longitudinal nature (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2005; Roth et al., 2002; Likpa & Siegel, 2007; Lesaux & Seigel, 2003; Likpa & Siegel, 2007; Nakamoto, Lindsey, and Manis, 2007); therefore, little is known about the developmental stages of L2 literacy and during which stages certain skills become necessary for reading growth. For example, some studies suggested that oral language may be less significant during kindergarten but may become more vital for later reading comprehension (Storch & Whitehurst, 2002; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2005; Roth et al., 2002; Verhoeven, 1990). Finally, few
studies measure the effects of oral language on both word reading efficiency and reading comprehension. Many studies demonstrate that after two years of reading instruction, many ELLs develop decoding skills comparable to native speakers, but comprehension remains challenging. More research needs to be conducted to determine which oral language components contribute to difficulties with reading comprehension. For instance, one study suggested that word reading efficiency and oral language as measured impacts comprehension at the end of first grade and that oral language actually became more significant by third grade (Verhoeven, 1990). However, the researchers did not specify which oral language components impact reading comprehension at each development point.

Research involving the impact of phonological awareness skills on L2 reading achievement appears more conclusive than the effects of oral language as phonological awareness has been studied in depth with native speakers (Lesaux & Seigel, 2003; Likpa & Siegel, 2007; Nakamoto, Lindsey, and Manis, 2007; Irujo, 2007; Bradley & Bryant, 1983). It is clear that all learners need to develop phonological awareness skills and do so in similar ways. However, the research does not address which components of phonological awareness are most necessary for later reading achievement nor does it address whether these powerful effects are true for older ESL students as well. Many students who enter ESL programs much later may already have strong phonological awareness skills in their L1 and may not need the same amount of instruction. Some students who come to the US later in elementary are taught from a whole language approach. The research makes no mention to what degree these students need phonological awareness skills. It also appears unclear as to at what point phonological awareness no longer contributes to reading growth; a study suggests that when oral language is entered into the statistical model, phonological awareness is not significant (Nakamoto et al., 2007) while other studies demonstrate significance through third grade (Lipka & Siegel, 2007). A need for
more longitudinal studies that specifically target ESL students may provide some clarification. Other questions concern the role of the L1 and whether phonological awareness skills in the L1 transfer to the L2. Students of particular language backgrounds may need more training in phonological awareness, especially if the L1 and L2 are quite different. Often, however, the research includes a diverse group of ESL students so determining the effects of the L1 is not possible (Lesaux & Seigel, 2003; Likpa & Siegel, 2007). Some researchers argue that L1 phonological awareness skills transfer to the L2, but few researchers have made the focus of their study a comparison of ELLs with and without literacy skills in their L1 (Li & Edwards, 2010; Cloud et al., 2009; Grabe, 2001); therefore, it is difficult to determine whether any such transfer does occur and to what degree this transfer has positive effects on L2 literacy development.

10 Practical Application-Lesson Plans

10.1 Class Description

While academic oral language should be scaffolded and supported throughout all grades, phonological awareness is generally supported during the early grades in elementary school, usually kindergarten through third grade. Therefore, the lesson plans that follow were designed for small groups of second grade ELL students (could also apply to first graders) who have a range of proficiency levels. These groups could be push-in or pull-out depending upon the structure of the literacy blocks a school has established. Aspects of these lessons could be applied to a large group in the mainstream classroom as well since both native speakers and ELLs need academic oral language and phonological awareness support during literacy blocks. These lesson plans that follow are for a small pull-out group of five to seven students who speak a dialect of English. All assessments are tied to an English Language Arts (ELA) standard. In addition, the ELL teacher assesses the phonological awareness of each student throughout the year, utilizing the comprehensive phonological awareness assessment during the fall, winter, and spring (Appendix B). The lesson plans that follow focus on three areas of phonological
awareness: isolating, blending/segmenting, and manipulating phonemes. Lastly, because of the flexibility built into the ESL program, the students may switch pull-out groups depending on their academic language growth and literacy skills throughout the school year.

This six day lesson plan is part of a larger unit that second grade mainstream teachers are currently teaching in their classrooms. The ELL teacher aligns his or her learning objectives with what mainstream teachers are teaching during literacy blocks; in this manner, the ELL teacher can reinforce the reading skills and language arts standards being taught in students’ classrooms while incorporating and scaffolding the academic oral language students need to successfully read and express their knowledge of that particular standard. Lastly, the teacher uses words found in both students’ reading texts and in the following lessons to teach phonological awareness skills. The first ten to fifteen minutes of each lesson is dedicated to a phonological awareness skill that uses some of the vocabulary found within students’ texts.

### 10.2 Lesson Plans

#### 10.2.1 Curriculum Mapping

In our department, each ESL teacher meets with specific grade level teachers to discuss upcoming ELA standards that will be taught, texts students will use, and common academic vocabulary. These meetings allow ESL teachers to ensure that they are teaching concepts and defining academic vocabulary in the same way as students are learning in the mainstream classroom. Below, the curriculum map specifies the foundational reading skills and ELA standard being taught, the learning objective and success criteria (both content and language objectives), resources needed, and assessments used to measure student growth.

#### 10.2.2 Necessary Materials

Students will need materials to support growth in their phonological awareness skills, oral language, and literacy skills. First, they will need a copy of the text *The Cow That Went*
*Oink.* Students will use a graphic organizer with sentence frames to describe characters from this text (Appendix C).

**Grade:** 2  
**Class** ESL pull-out group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Character Traits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estimated Time</td>
<td>12 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundational Skills</td>
<td>Phoneme isolation, phoneme blending/segmenting, phoneme manipulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELA Standard</td>
<td>2.1.3.3 Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Objective</td>
<td>Students will be able to describe characters in a story.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Success Criteria | [ ] I know what the words *describe* and *trait* mean.  
[ ] I can list character traits using adjectives such as “kind” and “brave”.  
[ ] I can describe a character using sentence frames with verbs like “feels”, “looks”, and “thinks”.  
[ ] I can explain character traits using “because sentences.”  
[ ] I can write an academic paragraph describing a character. |
| Resources needed | Mirror  
Elkonin Boxes with word list and chips  
Picture Sort (distinguishing medial vowel sounds)  
Word Sort (OW & OU words)  
Doggie, Where’s my bone? (laminated)  
Graphic organizer: describing characters  
Mid-Assessment handout  
“Because” sentences worksheet  
Fan n Pick board with accompanying sentences  
I-do, we-do, you-do worksheet  
Iggy Peck Architect (8 copies)  
Reach Curriculum (fiction & non-fiction texts) |
| Assessments used | Comprehensive phonological awareness assessment  
Graphic organizer: independent sentences  
Mid-assessment  
Informal observations (during oral partner work)  
You-do academic paragraphs |

On page two of this worksheet, students have space to write sentences as a whole group and with partners. They will need a mirror and a laminated elkonin box with chips to practice segmenting and blending sounds. Students will need picture cards to practice hearing medial vowel sounds (Appendix D). Additionally, the teacher will utilize the reading textbook students use in their mainstream classroom. This text, *Reach for Reading*, has a wide array of fiction and non-fiction texts that the ESL department uses to practice language and content objectives. Other materials include a pre, mid, and post assessment to measure academic growth, although this six day lesson plan which offers a snapshot into the whole unit will only show the mid-assessment
(Appendix E). Students’ academic writing will be assessed using the WIDA Speaking and Writing Rubric (Appendix F). Students will use a worksheet to write down their “because” sentences during a gallery walk (Appendix G). The teacher will provide a fan-n-pick board with sentence strips that have a character and a trait describing him or her (Appendix H). After students complete the word sort worksheet to sort ‘ou’ and ‘ow’ words (Appendix I), students will have the opportunity to practice describing characters by writing paragraphs with sentence frames. This worksheet provides students with scaffolded practice using an I-do, we-do, you-do (Whole-group, Partners, and Individual) approach (Appendix J).

10.2.3 Students’ Prior Knowledge

The lesson plans featured in this paper begin on day four of the larger unit which means students have already been exposed to the content of the standard. Students have taken a pre-assessment using the text “The Lion & the Mouse” from their reading textbook and have been taught what the words describe and trait mean. They have worked as a group and with partners to list words that describe characters’ appearance, feelings, actions, and traits. They have successfully completed the first two success criteria of the unit and are now ready to use the academic language of character description in more productive ways. Also, students have been taught what an academic paragraph is and have practiced writing academic paragraphs with a topic sentence, three supporting details, and a closing sentence.

In regards to students’ phonological awareness skills, all students have a concept of words and can recognize and produce rhymes. All students can count and segment syllables and can isolate both initial and final sounds. Few students are able to isolate medial sounds and all students struggle with blending, segmenting and manipulating phonemes.
10.2.4 Day One

For day one of the phonological awareness part of the lesson, the teacher facilitates a phonological awareness exercise in isolating medial sounds. The teacher has chosen this activity because many students are struggling with hearing medial sounds, especially hearing vowel sounds with accuracy.

For this activity, the teacher will say two words which may be from texts students have read in their mainstream class or will read later in the lesson. The teacher will say the two words and have all students chorally repeat the words. Then, the teacher will ask if the middle sounds are the same or different. If the sounds are the same, the students will show two thumbs up. If the sounds are different, students will make one thumb up and one down. For example, the teacher might say the words *sleep, slip*. The teacher will ask, “Are the middle sounds the same or different?” Students should respond with one thumb up and one thumb down. The teacher will provide correction by saying the words slowly, emphasizing the middle sounds. For this lesson, the teacher will use the following word pairs: *sheep, ship; mad, made; teach, reach; laugh, loaf; pig, pick; goat, boat; road, rod; cat, sat; bet, beat; duck, duke.*

After practicing distinguishing these sounds, students can use these same words to isolate and identify the middle sound. For this short activity, the teacher will present a word, such as *goat*. She will have students repeat the word. She will hold three fingers up and have students say the middle sound when all three fingers are down. This allows students to play with the word and provides them with wait-time. After several rounds, the teacher will break the students into pairs with one student in each pair holding a blue or red stick. The teacher will say a word and have either the student with the blue or red stick repeat the word. Then, after wait time, she will have only those few students say the middle sound. This will allow the teacher to check for accuracy and to ensure all students are able to perform the task. The last two rounds the teacher
will have individual students identify the middle sound of a given word. This short phonological awareness lesson should take only fifteen minutes.

For the language and content part of day one, students need to be able to describe a character using sentence frames with verbs like feels, looks, and thinks. The teacher has chosen a short read aloud text that has a series of characters that students could describe. This text, “The Cow That Went Oink,” by Bernard Most, features two animals, a cow and pig. Both animals do not speak the same language as the rest of their species. Both animals are humiliated by the other animals in the farm, but they choose to challenge the other animals by learning to speak two languages. The teacher will read the text aloud. Because this text is quite repetitive, students are able to easily chime in when the teacher points to the text during the read aloud. The teacher will monitor comprehension by asking questions throughout the reading. These questions include: What is the problem in the story? How did the animals treat the cow and the pig? Why might they choose to act this way? How do the cow and pig feel at the beginning, middle, and end of the story? What actions do the pig and cow take to solve the problem? After finishing the text, the teacher will show the words in the beginning, in the middle, and in the end. She will ask students what they remember about the plot of the story and call on individual students to piece together the most important events. Then, she will have students do a think-pair-share by turning to the person sitting next to them and retelling the important events in the story using words such as in the beginning, in the middle, and in the end. This activity, including reading the text and the completing the think-pair-share should take ten minutes.

The teacher will facilitate a short discussion about how the animals feel, look, and think, and students will complete their graphic organizer which should take ten minutes (Appendix D). After asking students how the animals feel, look, and think, the teacher will write students’ ideas on a large graphic organizer similar to the students’ graphic organizer, except it has been pre-
drawn on the white board. The students will copy the ideas from the board onto their own graphic organizer. They will also work with partners to add two more ideas to their graphic organizer.

Once the graphic organizer has several ideas in each category, the teacher will direct students’ attention to the word wall which has new sentence frames posted under second grade. The teacher will have students chorally read each sentence frame, pausing to provide an example of each sentence frame. The teacher will differentiate when necessary according to students’ proficiency levels (see differentiated sentence frames below). For this lesson, the teacher will only use red or yellow sentence frames since ‘because’ will be introduced in the next success criteria. Some students may continue to practice yellow sentence frames if their language abilities are not ready for the more advanced sentence frames during the next success criteria. Chorally reading each sentence frame with examples will take five minutes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linguistic Complexity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>[Character] is</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>[Character] has</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>[Character] is/has _____ and _____</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>He/she/it/they is/are _____</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>[Character] feels/acts/looks _____</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>[Character] thinks _____</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>I know this because _____</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>One trait to describe [character] is _____</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>I know s/he is _____ because _____</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>[Character] feel/feels _____ because _____</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>[Character] is able to _____</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>[Character] thinks _____ when/because _____</strong>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7. Sentence frames with the academic vocabulary of describing characters embedded within. Colors represent entering, developing, and expanding proficiency levels. Adapted from “ELA Matrix 2.0,” Excell Academy ELA Matrix Team, 2016. Adapted with Permission.

After the students have chorally read the sentence frames, the teacher will have students orally practice using the sentence frames. Four students will stand in a circle facing away from each other, but facing their partners who make up the outside circle. The teacher will point to a
character and a sentence frame. Students who are in the inside circle will describe the character using a sentence frame, and then students on the outside circle will describe the same character using the sentence frame, but providing different evidence. After each student’s turn, partners will provide feedback by agreeing with their partner’s evidence and use of sentence frame or by challenging their evidence and use of language. For example, partners may provide contradictory evidence (e.g. I disagree because the other animals appeared to be regretful) or they may ask students to elaborate on their ideas (e.g. What do you mean by . . . ?) Students in the outer circle will rotate so that each student has the opportunity to dialogue with students at different linguistic levels. This oral activity will take ten minutes.

After students have orally practiced the sentence frames, they will spend the last ten minutes of class expressing their understanding of the text and of the standard through writing. The teacher will provide a model (e.g. The animals think pig and cow are unusual because they speak another language), and then students will work in partners to produce additional sentences using the frames. The teacher will have students share an academic sentence as a ticket out the door.

10.2.5 Day Two

Students have been practicing hearing the middle sounds in words. Many students are able to distinguish the middle sound, but struggle to isolate the sounds, especially short vowel sounds. To practice isolating the short vowel sounds in words, this lesson will begin with the teacher first modeling the two sounds: /a/ and /i/. These sounds all students struggle hearing but are easier than other pairs, such as /a/ and /e/. The teacher will look into the mirror and make each sound, emphasizing the placement of the tongue and the shape of the lips. She will then have each student pick up their own mirror and practice saying each sound, first /a/, then /i/. She
will ask students what they notice about the shape of their mouth and where their tongue sits when saying each sound. This exercise should take ten minutes.

After students have become familiar with the shape and tongue placement for these two sounds, the teacher will choose two words with the medial /a/ and /i/ sounds. The teacher will look into the mirror and model saying the two words, holding out the middle vowels. Each student will again look into their mirror and practice saying the two words, paying special attention to shape of the lips and tongue placement when they hear the /a/ and /i/ sounds. The teacher will ask the group what they noticed about the shape of their lips and tongue placement when they heard those two vowel sounds. After the teacher has clarified or answered any questions that the pronunciation of these two sounds, each student will be given a bag of pictures cards along with a laminated t-chart with the /a/ and /i/ sounds. Students will work independently to isolate the sounds and place the pictures cards in the correct column while after they have looked into the mirror and said each word (see Appendix C). This activity should take ten minutes.

For the language and content part of the lesson, students have learned what the words describe and trait mean. They have also brainstormed different mortar words, specifically adjectives that describe characters or identify character traits. They have also been introduced to sentence frames that feature verbs (i.e. brick words) that allow students to describe characters’ actions, feelings, thoughts, and traits. They have practiced using these verbs both orally and in writing. On day two, they are ready to demonstrate their mastery of the first three success criteria, including their academic writing ability for this ELA standard. For the mid-assessment, the teacher reads out loud the text “Domino Soup” from the Reach curriculum. On the board, the teacher has drawn a graphic organizer that has the words appearance, feelings/actions, and character traits written at the top three separate columns. The teacher has written the names of
two main characters from the text: Luz and Grandpa. The teacher asks the students to think about how each of these characters looked and felt during the story based on pictures and the character’s actions. The teacher poses the following question: How did Luz look in the story? How did she feel when _____? How did she respond to _____? What are some of Luz’s character traits? The teacher will call on individual students and write their responses in the corresponding columns of the graphic organizer. Students will copy these ideas down into the same graphic organizer they used during the previous lesson. The teacher will then ask the same questions about Grandpa, the other main character in the story and students will copy from the board. The teacher will have students take two minutes to add their own ideas to their graphic organizer after they have copied the ideas from the board. This activity should take fifteen minutes.

After students have written down ideas from the board and their own ideas, they will use their graphic organizers to address the following prompt: Describe a character from the text. Include traits, feelings, and thoughts based on what the character says, looks like, and does (Appendix H). The academic language of each student writing sample will be assessed based upon the rubric provided by the WIDA Consortium (Appendix I). Students will demonstrate their comprehension of the text by providing textual evidence for why they believe a character demonstrates a certain trait. Students will be given twenty minutes to independently complete this assessment.

10.2.6 Day Three

Students have practiced how to isolate medial sounds in words. While students will need to continue to practice this skill, the class can begin practicing the phonological awareness skill of blending phonemes to make words. To get students warmed up, the teacher will play a game called “Where’s My Bone.” In this game, students are given a laminated paper with a dog split
into three boxes. The teacher will say a word and have students place the dog’s bone on the part
that shows a specific sound. For example, if the teacher says the word pig and then says the /i/
sound, students will place the bone on the dog’s belly. This activity should only take five
minutes.

After students are warmed up, the teacher will explain that they have been practicing how
to isolate sounds, but today they will spend the next ten minutes putting sounds together, or
blending sounds to make words. The words will be from the text students read from the previous
lesson or words that students will be reading in the next lesson. The teacher will model how to
blend words using elkonin boxes and chips. The teacher explains that she will say a word and
then move a chip into each box for each sound that is heard, and then say the whole word by
sweeping across the boxes. The teacher models the word cat, moving each chip into a box as
the phonemes /c/, /a/, and /t/ are heard, and then she sweeps across saying the whole word cat.
After the teacher has modeled, each student will lay their chips and laminated sheets with the
elkonin boxes in front of them and prepare to hear each word. Students say each sound as they
say the word and then say the whole word. The teacher will use the following words for this
activity: cool, moth, hop, pig, sheep, leaf, night, hide, laugh, sad, chick. The teacher will hold
three fingers up before asking students to say the whole word. The teacher will provide
feedback, both confirming the sounds and words students say or making corrections by providing
the correct sounds and having students say the whole word.

After the phonological practice, students will review the previous success criteria and
read the new success criteria. The next success criteria requires students to explain character
traits by writing complex sentences using the conjunction because. One indicator of language
growth is being able to speak and write using expanded sentences. Teaching students to write
using because will encourage the use of text evidence, and also support more complex language
forms. To introduce the concept, the teacher writes 3 sentences on the board, writing the idea in the sentence in one color, *because* in a different color, and the rest of the sentence in another color. This color coding will help students see the language patterns in the sentence. The teacher writes these sentences:

1. I like winter *because* I can build a snowman.
2. Summer is the best *because* I can eat ice cream.
3. Pizza is delicious *because* it has cheese and pepperoni.

She has a student read each sentence, and then students turn to their table partner and discuss what these sentences have in common. After a minute, the teacher asks one group to share their ideas. The teacher will explain that each sentence has the word *because*. The word *because* separates the sentence into two parts, the idea and the reason. She will explain that using *because* makes sentences stronger and longer. It also answers the question “why?” Using *because* requires students to justify their answers with evidence. The teacher explains that in the third sentence, the idea that is being supported is that pizza is delicious and the evidence that supports that idea is that it has cheese and pepperoni. The teacher writes another sentence on the board: Parents should/shouldn’t give their children candy. She has each student choose a position and orally support it using evidence with the word *because*. The teacher goes around the table and each student has the opportunity to share their position and reasoning. The teacher provides feedback by noting students’ use of the word *because* and the quality of their evidence. This short mini lesson and oral activity should take fifteen minutes.

To practice using *because*, the teacher has students participate in a cooperative learning structure called rally robin. Students greet and face their partner, and the teacher states a prompt. The student with the talking stick goes first and answers the prompt using *because*. That student will pass the talking stick to their partner who will then answer the prompt by adding their own ideas. Students in each pair will pass the talking stick back and forth as they respond to the
prompt as quickly as they are able to for one minute. The teacher models how to be a good
listener so that no ideas are repeated, and so students can share their partner’s ideas with the
group after the rally. The teacher reads each of the following prompts, giving each pair one
minute to rally:

**Rally Robin Prompts:**
1. Friends are important.
2. _____ is my favorite movie.
3. If I were a teacher, I would _____.
4. The most tasty snack is ____.
5. Summer is the best season.
6. Parents should let their kids have a phone.
7. _____ is the bravest character.
8. I love my family.

Following this ten minutes of oral practice, students will participate in a gallery walk that
will reinforce using *because*. Students will walk around the room looking for numbered cards
with a prompt. They will read each card and respond by writing a sentence with *because*. The
teacher will have each student share one sentence that they wrote from the gallery walk.

Teachers and students will offer feedback in the form of a sentence frame: I like how you _____.
Next time, you could _____. During this time, the teacher will informally observe students’
understanding of the use of *because* to justify their ideas and can suggest modifications if
students are writing incomprehensible sentences. The gallery walk with feedback should take
fifteen minutes.

**10.2.7 Day Four**

On day four, students will continue to practice segmenting and blending words. To
maintain student engagement, the teacher will re-introduce blending words using a race car and
track. For this task, the teacher will model blending words by placing three pebbles on a race
track. The teacher will say a word and then move the pebbles as she says each sound in the
word. When the teacher has said all the sounds and removed the pebbles, she will say the whole
word by sweeping the car across the track. The teacher will use the same words from the previous lesson to help students build confidence and accuracy. If students seem to have little trouble with the task, the teacher will begin incorporating words with four phonemes: *funny, turkey, horse, hunt, frog,* and *snake.* This activity should take ten minutes.

In regards to language and content, students have learned the importance of using *because* to justify their ideas and have learned how to use it in a sentence both orally and in writing. Day four will continue this lesson, but students will be using *because* to explain character traits and the thoughts and feelings of characters. To begin this lesson, the teacher returns the sentences that students wrote the previous day and has each student take thirty seconds to share one of the sentences they wrote. The teacher asks the group: “What are the parts of these sentences? What is the function of the first part of each of these sentences? What is the function of the second part of the sentence after the word *because*? Why do we use *because* in our sentences?” The teacher will write their ideas on the board and provide clarification when necessary. Students should recall that sentences with the word *because* express an idea prior to the word *because* and that this word explains the reason in the latter part of the sentence. Students should be able to explain that the word *because* allows them to justify their ideas and expand their sentences thereby improving their language skills. This discussion should last only eight minutes.

After this short discussion, students will practice using *because* to describe characters. Students will play a cooperative learning game called fan-n-pick. In this game, each student has a role: fan, pick, answer, and respond. The student who has the fan role is responsible for fanning out the card prompts, and the picker chooses and reads that prompt to the student in the answer role. The responder is expected to provide feedback to the answerer. The students rotate roles after each prompt. The teacher has created sentence prompts that feature characters
students are familiar with from either popular movies or from texts students have read during the year or in their classrooms (Appendix F). Students will have fifteen minutes to play this cooperative learning game.

After students have practiced describing characters using *because*, the teacher will introduce a new sentence frame that will encourage them to identify character traits and use the academic vocabulary word *trait* in a sentence: One trait to describe _____ is _____. I know s/he is _____ because _____. The teacher will have all students chorally read the sentence frame. She will ask students about any academic vocabulary embedded within the sentence frame. The teacher will model how to use the sentence strips in the previous activity to practice the sentence frame. For example, one prompt reads, “Mouse is scared.” The teacher models how to use this prompt in the new sentence frame: One trait to describe mouse is scared. I know she is scared because lion threatens to eat her. Students repeat the fan-n-pick game with the new sentence frame. To end the lesson, students write one sentence they stated during the fan-n-pick game when they used the new sentence frame. The fan-n-pick game along with the one sentence written part of the lesson should take twenty-five minutes.

**10.2.8 Day Five & Day Six**

Students have been practicing segmenting and blending phonemes to make words. According to the continuum, students can begin manipulating phonemes through substitution, deletion, or addition. For days five and six, students will be practicing substituting, or trading sounds to make new words. To introduce this task, the teacher will tell students that they are going to be trading the first sound of a word with another sound to make a new word. The teacher will model an example by saying and showing a picture of the word *two*. Then, she will explain that if she changes the /t/ to a /sh/, the new word will be *shoe*. The teacher will provide several other words and then have students repeat the word. She will ask students to trade the
first sound in the word with a different sound. She will hold three fingers up and ask students
“What word?” after three seconds have passed. For this task, the teacher will use words from the
story, “Iggy Peck, Architect.” These word pairs include guy, pie; boots, roots; chalk, talk; eye,
pie; two, new; chapels, apples; flew, blue; tower, hour; seven, heaven; bore, floor. The teacher
will confirm students’ answers by identifying the first sound that was heard in the given word,
and then explaining the sound that replaced the first sound to make a new word. This activity
should take eight minutes.

Students are primarily working only with the sounds of the words, but it is important for
both reading and spelling that students recognize that one phoneme can be represented by
different graphemes. Rather than note all the different spellings in all the word pairs, the teacher
identifies which vowels students are working on in their classrooms and draw students’ attention
to the spelling of that specific phoneme. For example, in the situation where students are
learning the diphthong [au], the teacher writes the words tower and hour on the board in two
separate columns. She asks students what vowel sound they have in common and what they
notice about the spelling of this sound. She uses a different color marker to write the ‘ow’ and
‘ou’ graphemes in each word. She explains that there are two possible ways to spell this sound:
*ow* or *ou*. She gives each pair of students a bag of words that have this same phoneme and
different graphemes for this phoneme. Students will sort these words into the correct column
according to each word’s spelling (Appendix I). The teacher will walk around the room while
checking students’ sorts and having students read through each column in order to practice
reading words with these spellings. This phonics activity should take eight minutes.

After the phonological awareness and phonics activity, students will review the success
criteria they have already mastered. On this last day of the lesson plan, students are expected to
know how to write an academic paragraph describing a character from a grade level text.
Students already know how to write an academic paragraph. They need to apply those skills to writing an academic paragraph describing characters. The teacher models good academic paragraph writing by providing an exemplar paragraph for students to read and analyze (Appendix J). The teacher reminds students that they have already read the story the exemplar is based upon. Students will re-read a copy of the text, highlighting instances where Mother Owl’s actions, thoughts, or feelings are present. Then, the teacher has students chorally read the sentence frames and the exemplar paragraph (I-Do section of Appendix J). After the choral read, the teacher reads the paragraph out loud while students highlight important academic vocabulary and brick and mortar words, along with the supporting details provided that describe the chosen character, Mother Owl. The teacher asks students about what they notice about the exemplar paragraph, including how the paragraph shows the character’s feelings, traits, and thoughts. This activity should take fifteen minutes.

The teacher has made a copy of the text, “Iggy Peck Architect,” the story students will use to describe two more characters as a whole group and for independent practice during the “we-do” and “you-do” parts of the lesson. The teacher draws sticks to choose different students to read parts of the story while other students follow along. The teacher reminds students to be thinking about character traits and the thoughts, feelings, and actions of different characters, and the teacher encourages students to highlight any clues they see or hear while reading. After the reading, the teacher has students describe the teacher in the story during a think-pair-share activity. For the “we-do” part of the lesson, the teacher draws a stick with a student’s name on it and has that student use a sentence frames on the worksheet to describe Iggy’s teacher in the story. The teacher provides feedback and correction when necessary while writing the student’s sentences on the board in a paragraph form. Students copy the teacher’s model. After the paragraph is complete, the teacher has students chorally read the paragraph. The teacher reviews
the elements of good academic paragraph writing and academic vocabulary students should be using while describing characters. Students will spend the last part of the lesson writing their own academic paragraphs describing Iggy, the main character in the story (you-do). Students can draw upon their text to find evidence of Iggy’s traits, feelings, thoughts, and actions. The ‘we-do’ and ‘you-do’ activities should take a total of twenty-five minutes.

**Concluding Thoughts**

According to James Britton (1970), “Reading and writing float on a sea of talk” (p. 164). In other words, all literacy skills stem from or are built upon a foundation of speech. ELLs come to the task of reading often with a lack of strongly developed oral language and phonological awareness skills, a limitation that appears to have a profound effect on their ability to decode and comprehend text. As ELLs move from grade to grade, academic language becomes more complex, and the holes in students’ linguistic knowledge, that is the semantic, morphological, syntactic, and phonological characteristics of the L2, infringe upon their ability to navigate text. The lesson plan that has followed this research demonstrates the type of explicit instruction in phonological awareness and meaningful student dialogue necessary to cultivate students’ oral language and academic proficiency to support later reading growth. The phonological awareness lessons allow students to develop their understanding of English phonemes which will help them in their phonics abilities and academic writing. The lesson plans identified the academic language students need to express their understanding of both texts and of the ELA standard. Additionally, allowing students to read and discuss the characters and events in texts and to use textual evidence to express their ideas helps them build fluency and reading comprehension. Establishing a balanced reading curriculum that incorporates the foundational reading skills (i.e. phonological awareness and phonics) along with opportunities for academic talk ensures that
second language learners will be able to access the content while fostering grade-level literacy skill
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**Appendix A: Academic conversation skills with sentence frames and hand motions.**

**Figure 2.1 Core Academic Conversation Skills, with Symbols, Hand Motions, Prompt Frames, and Response Frames**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conversation Skills (with symbols and hand motions)</th>
<th>Frames for Prompting the Skill</th>
<th>Frames for Responding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elaborate and Clarify</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Pull hands apart)</td>
<td>Can you elaborate on . . .?</td>
<td>I think it means that . . .</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What do you mean by . . .?</td>
<td>In other words, . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can you tell me more about . . .?</td>
<td>I believe that . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What makes you think that?</td>
<td>An analogy for this might be . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can you clarify the part about . . .?</td>
<td>It is important because . . .</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can you be more specific?</td>
<td>It's similar to when . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How so?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How/Why is that important?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I'd love to hear more about . . .</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How does that connect to . . .?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I wonder if . . .</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How so?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can you unpack that for me?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am a little confused about the part . . .</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support Ideas with Examples</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(from this text, other texts, the world, and life)</td>
<td>Can you give an example from the text?</td>
<td>For example, . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can you show me where it says that?</td>
<td>In the text it said that . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What are examples from other texts?</td>
<td>One case showed that . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is a real-world example?</td>
<td>An example from my life is . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is an example from your life?</td>
<td>For instance, . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are there any cases of that?</td>
<td>According to . . .</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is the evidence for that . . .?</td>
<td>An illustration of this could be . . .</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Like what?</td>
<td>On one occasion . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Why do you say that?</td>
<td>In this situation . . .</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How do you justify that?</td>
<td>To demonstrate, . . .</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What does that look like?</td>
<td>In fact, . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Such as?</td>
<td>Indeed, . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What would illustrate that?</td>
<td>. . . such as . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Why is that a good example?</td>
<td>Have you ever . . . ?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Build On and/or Challenge a Partner’s Idea

| What do you think about the idea that . . .? |
| Can you add to this idea? |
| Do you agree? |
| What might be other points of view? |
| What are other ideas? |
| How does that connect to the idea . . .? |
| I am not sure if this is relevant, but . . . |
| How can we bring this back to the question of . . .? |

(Start hands on each other and build up)

| I would add that . . . |
| I want to expand on your point about . . . |
| I want to follow up on your idea . . . |
| (To challenge) |
| Then again, I think that . . . |
| Another way to look at this could be . . . |
| Yet I wonder also if . . . |
| If _____, then _____ |
| What struck me about what you said is . . . |

### Paraphrase

| I’m not sure that was clear . . . |
| I can’t remember all that I said. |
| How can we relate what I said to the topic/question? |
| What do we know so far? |
| What is your take on what I said? |
| I don’t know. Did that make sense? |
| What are you hearing? |

(Move both palms toward each other)

| So, you are saying that . . . |
| Let me see if I understand you . . . |
| Am I right in hearing you say that . . .? |
| In a nutshell, you are arguing that . . . |
| In other words . . . |
| What I am hearing is . . . |
| Essentially, you think that . . . |
| It sounds like you are saying that . . . |

### Synthesize Conversation Points

| What have we discussed so far? |
| How should we synthesize what we talked about? |
| How can we bring this all together? |
| What can we agree upon? |
| What main points can we share? |
| What was our original question? |
| What key idea can we take away? |

(Start both arms out wide and then cup them into a ball)

| We can say that . . . |
| The main themepoint seems to be . . . |
| As a result of this conversation, we think that we should . . . |
| How does this sound . . .? |
| What if we . . .? |
| The evidence seems to suggest that . . . |

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**Appendix A.** Core conversational skills including symbols and hand motions to reinforce the skill. From “Academic Conversations: Classroom Talk That fosters Critical Thinking and Content Understanding.” Zwiers, 2011, p. 32-33. Reprinted with Permission.
## Appendix B: Comprehensive Phonological Awareness Assessment

### Two Peas Phonological Awareness Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### 1. Counting Words in a Spoken Sentence

- How many words are in this sentence? (w/ chips)
  - Ben likes books. (3)
  - I have one toy. (4)
  - Where’s my bag? (4)
  - What’s the big deal? (4)
  - Annie likes to play games. (5)
  - Tomorrow is Saturday. (3)

**Total (App.A)**: __/6 __/6 __/6 __/6 __/6

#### 2. Rhyme Recognition

- Give me a thumbs-up if these are rhyming words.
  - fuzzy/wuzzy (yes)
  - cold/hot (no)
  - lamp/stamp (yes)
  - bless/guess (yes)
  - tape/pen (no)
  - pink/wink (yes)

**Total (K.RFS.2a)**: __/6 __/6 __/6 __/6 __/6

#### 3. Rhyme Production

- What rhymes with __? Record student responses.
  - lake
  - pig
  - hill
  - right
  - nice
  - mall

**Total (K.RFS.2a)**: __/6 __/6 __/6 __/6 __/6

#### 4. Single Syllable Onset-Rime Blending

- What word is this?
  - b-ird (bird)
  - n-light (night)
  - sl-ee-p (sleep)
  - r-ing (ring)
  - f-ace (face)
  - sl-ime (slime)

**Total (K.RFS.2c)**: __/6 __/6 __/6 __/6 __/6

#### 5. Single Syllable Onset-Rime Segmenting

- Say the first part (onset) and then the last part (rime).
  - land (l-and)
  - watch (w-at-cho)
  - dream (dr-eam)
  - big (b-ig)
  - noise (n-ose)
  - club (cl-ub)

**Total (K.RFS.2c)**: __/6 __/6 __/6 __/6 __/6

#### 6. Syllable Blending & Pronouncing

- What word is this __-__?
  - back-pack (backpack)
  - cook-ies (cookies)
  - pen-cil (pencil)
  - wel-come (welcome)
  - ham-bur-ger (hamburger)
  - air-plane (airplane)

**Total (App.A)**: __/6 __/6 __/6 __/6 __/6

#### 7. Syllable Segmenting & Counting

- Say the parts of each word. How many parts do you hear?
  - butterfly (3)
  - glasses (2)
  - magnet (2)
  - watermelon (4)
  - dragonfly (3)
  - blanket (2)

**Total (K.RFS.2b)**: __/6 __/6 __/6 __/6 __/6

#### 8. Phoneme Alliteration & Discrimination

- Which word has a different first sound?
  - wise, wacky, friend, woman
  - rope, fly, runt, rooster
  - juice, joke, jelly, fox
  - moon, milk, movie, paper
  - light, phone, fence, field
  - tub, tent, __bear__, tooth

**Total (App.A)**: __/6 __/6 __/6 __/6 __/6
### 9-Phoneme Isolation of Initial Sounds

"What is the first sound in this word?"

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th><strong>Total</strong></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>pinch (p)</td>
<td>/6</td>
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<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>wish (w)</td>
<td>/6</td>
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<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>football (f)</td>
<td>/6</td>
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<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>house (h)</td>
<td>/6</td>
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<td>--</td>
<td>zipper (z)</td>
<td>/6</td>
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<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>summer (s)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BOY** | **MOM** | **EOY**
---|---|---
**K.RFS.2d** | **1.RFS.2c** | **Total**
---|---|---
### 10-Phoneme Isolation of Final Sounds

"What is the last sound in this word?"

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<th></th>
<th><strong>Total</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>baseball (l)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>street (t)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>fox (x)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>home (m)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>wind (d)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>rag (g)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BOY** | **MOM** | **EOY**
---|---|---
**K.RFS.2d** | **1.RFS.2c** | **Total**
---|---|---
### 11-Phoneme Isolation of Medial Sounds

"What is the middle sound in this word?" *(1)* Is it long or short?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Total</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>game /ai/ (long)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>rib /i/ (short)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>beak /ee/ (long)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>night /le/ (long)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>fog /o/ (short)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>tub /u/ (short)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BOY** | **MOM** | **EOY**
---|---|---
**K.RFS.2d** | **1.RFS.2a** | **2c** | **Total**
---|---|---|---
### 12-Phoneme Blending

"What word do these sounds make?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Total</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>/g//u//m/ (gum)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>/s//o//c/ (sock)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>/g//e//s//t/ (guest)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>/i//e//t/ (teeth)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>/d//r//i//e//v/ (drive)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>/s//t//a//n//d// (stand)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BOY** | **MOM** | **EOY**
---|---|---
**K.RFS.2d** | **1.RFS.2b** | **Total**
---|---|---
### 13-Phoneme Segmenting

"Tell me the sounds in the word ___." *(w/ chips)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Total</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>play (/p//l//a//y/)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>junk (/j//u//n//k/)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>ripple (/r//l//p//l/)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>snack (/s//n//a//c//k/)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>wonder (/w//u//n//d//r/)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>cabin (/k//a//l//b//i//n/)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BOY** | **MOM** | **EOY**
---|---|---
**K.RFS.2d** | **1.RFS.2d** | **Total**
---|---|---
### 14-Phoneme Addition

"Say /p/ to the beginning of play. What's the word?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Total</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>tar, add /s/ (star)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>ink, add /w/ (wink)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>all, add /l/ (ball)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>cream, add /s/ (scream)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>lake, add /fi/ (flake)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>rain, add /g/ (grain)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BOY** | **MOM** | **EOY**
---|---|---
**K.RFS.2e** | **1.RFS.2b** | **Total**
---|---|---
### 15-Phoneme Substitution

"Roar. Change /r/ to /l/. What's the new word?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Total</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>hop, change /h/ to /p/</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>best, change /b/ to /l/</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>wiggle, change /w/ to /g/</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>ramp, change /r/ to /l/</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>hand, change /h/ to /s/</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>park, change /p/ to /s/</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BOY** | **MOM** | **EOY**
---|---|---
**K.RFS.2e** | **1.RFS.2b** | **Total**
---|---|---
### 16-Phoneme Deletion

"Say ___ say without the /_."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Total</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>smartie, without the /s/ (martie)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>flower, without the /i/ (lower)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>horse, without the /h/ (orse)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>bunny, without the /b/ (unny)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>doctor, without the /d/ (actor)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>ranch, without the /r/ (anch)</td>
<td>/6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BOY** | **MOM** | **EOY**
---|---|---
**App. A** | **Total** | **Total**
---|---|---

**Notes:**

Appendix C. Graphic Organizer (Day One)

Name:____________________

**Describing Characters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Appearance</th>
<th>Words / Actions</th>
<th>Character Traits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Character Image]</td>
<td>![Appearance Image]</td>
<td>![Words / Actions Image]</td>
<td>![Traits]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

... (Rows for additional characters)
Describing Characters

____ thinks _______.
____ feels _______.
____ looks _______.
____ says _________.

Model: Elsa feels guilty when she becomes ill.

Whole Group:

1. _____________________________________________________________

2. _____________________________________________________________

3. _____________________________________________________________

Partners:

4. _____________________________________________________________

5. _____________________________________________________________
Appendix D. Picture cards for phoneme isolation (Day Two)

Appendix E: Mid-Assessment

Name: ____________________________

Date: ______________________

**Mid-Assessment: Description**

**Prompt:** Describe a character from the text. Include traits, feelings, and thoughts based on what the character says, looks like, and does.

___________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

Feedback: Scores from 1-6 in each category.

**Word-Phrase Level: Vocabulary**
(Is there Technical, Specific, or General Language? Do you use the right word in the right place?) Examples:

**Sentence Level: Forms and Conventions**
(Do you follow the rules of Academic English? How is your grammar?)

**Discourse Level: Linguistic Complexity**
(Are your sentences different lengths? Are the ideas well-organized?)
## Appendix F: WIDA Writing Rubric K-12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse Level</th>
<th>Sentence Level</th>
<th>Word/Phrase Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Linguistic Complexity</strong></td>
<td><strong>Language Forms and Conventions</strong></td>
<td><strong>Vocabulary Usage</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 6 – Reaching</td>
<td>Language that meets all criteria through Level 5, Bridging</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Level 5 Bridging | Multiple, complex sentences | A variety of grammatical structures matched to purpose and nearly consistent use of conventions, including for effect | Technical and abstract content-area language |
| | Organized, cohesive, and coherent expression of ideas | A broad range of sentence patterns characteristic of particular content areas | Words and expressions with precise meaning related to content area topics |
| Level 4 Expanding | Short, expanded, and some complex sentences | A variety of grammatical structures and generally consistent use of conventions | Specific and some technical content-area language |
| | Organized expression of ideas with emerging cohesion | Sentence patterns characteristic of particular content areas | Words and expressions with multiple meanings or common collocations and idioms across content areas |
| Level 3 Developing | Short and some expanded sentences with emerging complexity | Repetitive grammatical structures with occasional variation and emerging use of conventions | Specific content words and expressions (including content-specific cognates) |
| | Expanded expression of one idea or emerging expression of multiple related ideas | Sentence patterns across content areas | Words or expressions related to content areas |
| Level 2 Emerging | Phrases or short sentences | Formulaic grammatical structures and variable use of conventions | General content words and expressions (including common cognates) |
| | Emerging expression of ideas | Repetitive phrasal and sentence patterns across content areas | Social and instructional words and expressions across content areas |
| Level 1 Entering | Words, phrases, or chunks of language | Simple grammatical constructions (e.g., commands, Wh-questions, declaratives) | General content-related words |
| | Single words used to represent ideas | Phrasal patterns associated with common social and instructional situations | Everyday social and instructional words and familiar expressions |

Appendix G: “Because” Sentences Worksheet

“Because” Sentences

1 Idea + because + 1 Reason

Summer is the best season because the flowers bloom.

1. ___________________________________________________________________

2. ___________________________________________________________________

3. ___________________________________________________________________

4. ___________________________________________________________________

5. ___________________________________________________________________
### Appendix H: Fan n Pick Board with Sentence Strips

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The mother owl is determined.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Olaf is friendly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsa is thoughtful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuelo is tricky.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luz is creative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mouse is scared.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frog is helpful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lion is kind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Woman is responsible.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Word Sort: OU & OW words**

**Directions:** Sort the following words into the correct column. Then, practice reading each word in the columns. Read down the columns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>howl</th>
<th>pouch</th>
<th>growl</th>
<th>cloud</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>town</td>
<td>clown</td>
<td>bounce</td>
<td>pound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crown</td>
<td>cow</td>
<td>flour</td>
<td>mouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plow</td>
<td>blouse</td>
<td>brown</td>
<td>sprout</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>tower</th>
<th>hour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image of tower" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image of clock" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

*Appendix I: Word Sort-OU & OW words*
Appendix J: I-Do, We-Do, You-Do

Name: _______________________________

Character Traits

Sentence Frames:

In the text, “_____,” I can describe _____.
_____ is a character in _____.
One trait to describe _____ is ____. I know s/he is ____ because _____.
_____ feels ____ because _____.
_____ thinks ____ because _____.
_____ looks ____ because _____.
_____ says _____.
_____ is able to _____ because _____.

I DO

Prompt: Write a paragraph of 4 to 6 sentences to describe a character from the text. Include traits, feelings, and thoughts based on what the character says, looks like, and does.

In the text, “Twilight Hunt,” I can describe Mother Owl. One trait to describe Mother Owl is determined. I know she is determined because she keeps trying to find food for her babies. Mother Owl feels scared because a great horned owl is hunting for her. She thinks she must hide because if the great horned owl finds her, she will never be able to return to her babies, and they will starve. She looks weak because she has been hunting all night. She is able to catch a luna moth because she doesn’t give up after she lost many other prey.

WE DO:

Prompt: Write a paragraph of 4 to 6 sentences to describe a character from the text. Include traits, feelings, and thoughts based on what the character says, looks like, and does.
YOU DO:
Prompt: Write a paragraph of 4 to 6 sentences to describe a character from the text. Include traits, feelings, and thoughts based on what the character says, looks like, and does.

Draw a picture of the character you described showing his or her feelings, thoughts, or traits.

2. The phonemic awareness continuum from simple to complex skills. Adapted from “Path to Reading Excellence in School Sites (Press) Intervention Manual,” Minnesota Center for Reading Research, University of Minnesota, 2010. Adapted with Permission.


https://people.stanford.edu/claudieg/video/opportunities-through-language-arts

https://people.stanford.edu/claudieg/video/opportunities-through-language-arts

Hi Mary,

Thank you for your inquiry and your respect of our work. We give you permission to include information regarding our phonemic awareness curriculum and assessment in your master's paper, but we would ask that you please hyperlink the assessment to www.hellotwopeasinapod.com when giving credit to us. Thank you again or checking with us first. We'd love to see your paper when it's published. Perhaps you could send us a link to the webpage when your university publishes it.

Best,

Jen and Kathi