

READING METHODS COMPARISON

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This working paper explores contemporary research related to methods for teaching reading in Spanish and English in bilingual, foreign language, and English as a second language (ESL) classrooms. Changes stemming from innovations in research and learning are identified and a table is provided to compare methods of teaching reading in Spanish and in English.

### Contemporary Research into Reading Methods for Second Language Learning

Pérez and Torres-Guzmán (2002) identified the interplay of concepts between traditions of Spanish reading and English reading in the bilingual classroom. Research into the nature of human language acquisition and second language learning has had a significant impact on the instructional practices for teachers in bilingual education programs (Budwig, 2004; Grabe, 1991; Oxford & Crookall, 1989). A significant body of research supports the concept that increased literacy in native language (L1) allows a greater transfer of knowledge and understanding of language, metacognitive and cognitive strategies, and content into the second language (L2) (Cummins, 2000; Krashen, 2004; McGhie, 2007; Rodriguez & Higgins, 2005; Terrell, 1991). This research has resulted in increased interest in teaching of Spanish as an L1 when appropriate for English language learners (ELLs).

In the United States, foreign language teachers teach a second language (L2) to native English speakers. For many years the traditions for foreign language teaching were rooted in the traditions surrounding the teaching of Latin. With the onset of World War II, native English speakers had to learn foreign languages more quickly and new methods of instruction were introduced (Griffiths & Parr, 2001; Sole, 1994). Researchers exploring second language learning (SSL) and instruction learned from extensive studies into the process of acquiring L1 and applied

key elements from the L1 research to transform L2 instruction (Budwig, 2004; Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams, 2003; Krashen, 1998; Rodriguez & Higgins, 2005; Sole, 1994).

The consensus from the research is that the best way to learn reading is to read. Good readers also become good writers (Krashen, 1998). See Table one for three sets of methods used in the teaching of reading. The eclectic method (in both foreign language teaching and Spanish teaching of reading is currently the most used approach and involves helping students learn and use the language learning strategies (LLS) (Griffiths & Parr, 2001).

Table 1—Reading Methods Comparison

Foreign language approach in the USA to teaching Spanish or another L2.	Approaches in teaching reading in English as a second language (ESL)	Spanish reading methods (from Spain and Latin America)
Grammar translation	L1 instruction in content areas	Alphabet or spelling method
Audiolingual method	L2 instruction emphasizing comprehensible input—student’s level plus next level of challenge (i + 1)	Onomatopoeic method
Direct method	Explicitly teach metacognitive, cognitive, and affective-social strategies to improve reading.	Phonics method
Communicative teaching	Use graphic organizers to predict, summarize, review, and sequence events.	Syllabic method
Eclectic Method	Reduce affective-filter by scaffolding reading and assisting	Whole word method (generative word method)

	ELLs to make connections with their background and to transfer knowledge from L1.	
Language Learning Strategies (LLS)	Encourage cooperative learning, multidisciplinary thematic units, and literature circles to engage readers in the act of reading.	Global method
		Eclectic method
Adapted from Griffiths & Parr (2001)	Adapted from Echevarria, Vogt & Short (2004)	Adapted from Pérez & Torres-Guzmán (2002).

(Note: The rows in Table 1 do not signify a correlation between the content of the rows.)

### Summary

This working paper explored contemporary research related to methods for teaching reading in Spanish and English in bilingual, foreign language, and ESL classrooms. Changes stemming from innovations in research and learning were identified and a table was provided to compare methods of teaching reading in Spanish and in English.

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