

## ABSTRACT

A Multisensory Approach to Reading Instruction in Both English and Spanish

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Around 10 million students all over the world have difficulties learning to read, but 90% of these students can overcome their challenges with proper intervention. Orton-Gillingham Multisensory Instruction is a teaching approach that has been tested and proven to be beneficial for struggling readers in English. The goal of this study is to bring awareness to the positive effects of the OG approach and to propose a similar method be created for the Spanish language which could greatly contribute to the field of bilingual education. The research implemented in this study supported the belief that teaching phonological awareness is beneficial in both languages further supporting bilingual instruction. As educators, we are charged with guiding all children to grow in mind and character even though we all have unique gifts, talents and learning styles.

A Multisensory Approach to Reading Instruction in Both English and Spanish

by

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A Thesis

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate best practices for reading instruction in both English and Spanish while reviewing current literature in the field of bilingual education. Additionally, this study seeks to find the best instructional approach to allow all students to be successful, including students with learning disabilities. In so doing, similar methodologies could be implemented within a bilingual school setting in order to create an inclusive and safe environment for all.

I was trained to be an elementary school teacher at Biola University, where I graduated with a degree in Liberal Studies and Spanish, as well as a concentration in special education. As part of my educational training at Biola, I had to observe in a variety of elementary school classrooms within the surrounding districts, and throughout my observations, I witnessed many struggling readers, which included both students with learning disabilities and those without. Later, I found out that many students with classified disabilities were discouraged from studying another language. After graduating from Biola, I had the opportunity to formally study and be trained in the Orton Gillingham Instructional Approach. This approach was specifically designed to support students with dyslexia and other learning differences in their ability to read in English. Although specifically created for students with learning disabilities, it has been proven to be helpful for all students. Throughout the course I wondered if there was a Spanish equivalent. However, I found out that it does not exist, and later discovered that most

schools implementing this approach do not require or advocate for students with learning disabilities to take a foreign language. During this time, I decided that I wanted to conduct further research on the approach and how it could be implemented in a bilingual setting while still producing positive results for all students.

This study was conducted through a thorough review of existing research in the area of instructional methods for teaching students how to read in both English and Spanish, the history of bilingual education, successful methodologies for teaching students with learning differences, and, the Orton Gillingham approach. Research implications are discussed and suggestions for future directions in terms of research and program development are outlined.

In this thesis are five chapters. In addition to chapter one, which serves as an introduction, chapter two provides the historical background of bilingual education, how bilingual schools were formed, what their purpose was, and society's changing viewpoints of this educational model throughout history. Chapter three begins by defining dyslexia, explaining how it affects student learning, and outlining best practices for teaching students with dyslexia and other learning differences. It concludes with a discussion of the arguments for and against students with learning disabilities learning a second language. This leads to chapter four, which introduces the Orton Gillingham approach, explaining who created the approach and its purpose along with the data demonstrating the benefits of its implementation. This is followed by a discussion regarding language transfer. I conclude the chapter with my proposal for a bilingual implementation of the OG approach. And, chapter five presents the theoretical

implications of this study and suggestions for future directions in program development and research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Historical Approaches to Bilingual Education

The United States is commonly referenced as a melting pot, signifying the fusion of many different cultures made up of traditions, practices and languages. Throughout the long history of the United States, there have been a variety of languages spoken, such as English, Italian, German, Dutch, Polish, French, Spanish, Chinese, and Japanese. These are nine out of the two hundred languages that have been shared on U.S. land (Nieto, 2009). Yet, it seems that the U.S. government has contradictory feelings about accepting the reality that we are, and forever have been, a multicultural, multilingual country. Prior to the 20th century the use of English was strongly encouraged for all those that lived here. In response to this treatment, many immigrants would try to assimilate into the American culture which included attempting to learn the English language exclusively, even if it meant losing their heritage language, in order to survive and fit in. This is because during the 19th century education was not set up to actively promote bilingualism, rather they promoted assimilation (Ovando, 2003). In fact, most US immigrants today, by the third generation, rarely speak the language of their ancestors (Schmidt, 2000). There are many reasons why people move to the United States, but regardless of one's motivation, the consequence is frequently the same – the transformation of one's identity. Many times, children of immigrants face feelings of frustration for abandoning everything they knew (Nieto, 2009). Throughout our country's past and even during the present time, immigration is one of the most significant

contributions to this country. Since the formation of the United States, there has been a constant push to anglicize those who were seen as foreigners, who did not speak the language of the land, English. Although never formally designated the official language of the US, it has always been the language of power and status, placing immigrant languages on an inferior footing. Yet, the constant inflow of immigrants created the need to educate in foreign languages. Thus, the long history of US bilingual education began (Goldenberg & Wagner, 2015; Nieto, 2009).

The large quantity of diverse languages in the United States was present even when the Native Americans were in control of their land. In the 15th century the Native Americans spoke anywhere from 250 to 1,000 languages (Ovando, 2003). The history of bilingual education stretches back in time to the 17th century with Polish immigrants of the first settlement in Virginia. There were German schools in Ohio, Oregon and Pennsylvania and Scandinavian schools in North Dakota, South Dakota, Illinois, Minnesota and Wisconsin. There were Czech bilingual schools in Nebraska and Texas. Italian and Polish was taught in Wisconsin. French schools appeared in Louisiana, Ohio and throughout the northeast (Goldenberg & Wagner, 2015). Now the Spanish language is becoming more dominant, being spoken among a larger population of people. The push for everyone to assimilate to the American way was a constant throughout history and is evident in the creation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs policy in 1880 which made it impossible for children to feel valued in their own skin, speaking their native tongue, and embracing their culture (Nieto, 2009). Although there was a variety of languages now being spoken in the United States, European languages were most likely than others to be treated with respect, and their speakers would tend to be accommodated for throughout

schools and by the government (Ovando, 2003). The Native American students were forced to use only English in school, and although Americans did not succeed in erasing their Native American languages, they created an internal feeling of shame in wanting to communicate in these languages (Nieto, 2009). For this reason, many minority groups created enclaves during the 19th century so they could promote their language, religion, and cultural loyalties without the harsh criticism by those who were against language diversity (Ovando, 2003).

Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries could be known for the inconsistent and contradictory stance that was held by the government regarding the ideology, policies and politics regarding language diversity in America. Some states chose to allow bilingual education, while others mandated English-only instruction (Ovando, 2003). By the start of the 1900s, more than 6% of the 16 million elementary students in school received bilingual education (Goldenberg & Wagner, 2015). In 1906 the opinions surrounding bilingual education changed drastically and the Nationality Act was passed in Texas, which meant that English was now the only language that could be taught and used for instruction in school (Nieto, 2009). This was an attempt to assimilate all cultures to one American culture. Yet, for those immigrants who were not white, complete assimilation was not an option. Those who were not white Americans and who did not speak English, were many times made to feel inferior, and the belief transferred to bilingual education (Nieto, 2009). Due to the World War I, there was a push for monolingualism as a way to demonstrate the importance of a united country (Ovando, 2003). In 1917 all immigrants that entered the United States from Asia, except for Japan and the Philippines, had to pass a literacy test, which was known as the Burnett Act. Several years later during the early

1920's, an organization called the League of United Latin American Citizens had a goal to fight against the discriminatory treatment they faced in the school environment. Without a strong education, students would quickly miss out on possibilities and opportunities that the United States could offer them. Theodore Roosevelt (1926) supported the idea that the United States should be a one-language society, but the true purpose for this language restriction was only to deprive minorities of their individual rights and to portray an image of a white English- speaking society to the rest of the world. In 1927, Hawaii took a stand for the constitutional rights that all humans have to speak and practice their native language and the Supreme Court invalidated the law that had previously banned foreign language instruction (Nieto, 2009). Contrary to the governments actions in response to WWI, the country finally realized the United States' inadequacies in foreign language instruction and the way's in which we had to change our education system (Ovando, 2003).

The battle of equal rights for all continued, and in 1954 the court case Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka called for the desegregation of all schools (Nieto, 2009). This court case was a groundbreaking historical moment because it was the very first time where there was a legal acknowledgment that people of color were being treated unfairly. This court case was pivotal, eventually leading to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which outlawed discrimination completely. In 1968 the Bilingual Education Act was passed, which is also known as Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and any school that chose to implement a bilingual education curriculum would be awarded extra funding. The offer of extra funding helped to encourage schools to change their pedagogy and approaches to instruction in order to ensure that instruction is catering

to the needs of all students, including low income and non-English speaking students. This was the very “first bilingual and bicultural program that was approved at the federal level” (Nieto, 2009, p. 63). After the signing of this act, the concept of bilingual education was inconsistent for the next 30 years through many different presidential administrations (Goldenberg & Wagner, 2015).

In 1974 one of the most important court cases occurred, *Lau v Nichols*, which seemed to be in favor of bilingual education, and the following year, the Lau Remedies were created as a blueprint for schools that set professional standards for teachers to follow (Ovando, 2003). If educators chose not to follow the guidelines, their school would suffer by receiving less funding by the federal government. That same year, in 1975, the Office of Civil Rights provided school districts with the specific guidelines to comply with the Supreme Court *Lau* decision (Nieto, 2009). Entering into the 1980s, the fight continued with many controversial points of view. The 1981 case *Castañeda v Pickard* was considered to be the second largest case in regards to education in the English language. This case created a three step program that would help to determine whether schools were doing what was necessary to support language-minority students (Nieto, 2009; Ovando, 2003). Contradictory to this effort, a slogan became popular that stated, *back to the basics*, which was supported during the Reagan administration in an effort to eliminate instruction in languages other than English, and to make English the official language of the United States, an effort that finally succeeded in 1983. This desire to eliminate bilingual education did not last forever, and 11 years later, in 1994, the Bilingual Education Act was reauthorized under the Improving America’s Schools Act. At this time, bilingual education began to be seen as a resource that allowed all students

to build bilingual skills and an understanding of different cultures. It was not only a way to help immigrants and second language learners to improve their English-language skills, but it was also a means for native English speakers to increase their intercultural and linguistic skills, making them more qualified and competitive in a global context (Nieto, 2009).

Although bilingual education has been a controversial construct throughout the entire nation, due to the nature of immigration to the state, California has been largely involved in the debate and action surrounding bilingual education. In 1994 through Proposition 187, the state attempted to put an end to bilingual education by making it illegal for children of undocumented immigrants to attend public schools, which was quickly proven to be unconstitutional (Nieto, 2009). Two years later, California ended all bilingual programs throughout the entire state and switched to English only instruction through the passing of Proposition 227. A study that was conducted in 2006 on the effects of Proposition 227 demonstrated that even after 10 years of being in a California school, an English language learner had less than a 40% chance to become proficient in the target language. Additionally, Arizona and California both conducted studies demonstrating an increased achievement gap between native English speakers and second language learners. This evidence is further supported by several other studies that indicate that English-only instruction has not been successful for language minority students. One conducted in 2008 demonstrated that only a little more than fifty percent of Hispanic males graduated from high school (Nieto, 2009). A study in 2009 in the state of Massachusetts pointed to an increase in out of school suspension, grade retention and drop-out rates for second language learners of English. Yet, in states that continued the

bilingual education model, the achievement gap has decreased significantly (Goldenberg & Wagner, 2015).

The debate in California has had a direct influence on the action of the rest of the nation. As such, Proposition 187 was the precursor to the vote by the House of Representatives in 1996 to change the official language to English, although later denied by the Senate. Spanish was the first language that was banned and other languages continued to be prohibited in both 2000 and 2001. The controversy of bilingual education reached an all-time high in 2002 during George W. Bush's administration, with the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act. Although at first glance this act seems to benefit struggling students, it put bilingual education at risk (Goldenberg & Wagner, 2015). The office of Bilingual Education converted to the Office of English Language Acquisition (Goldenberg & Wagner, 2015). And for the past twenty years, the debate has continued. The times in which the resistance peaked ran parallel with the increase in the amount of people immigrating to the states. As a consequence, Americans were focused on preserving an American identity which many believed would be compromised by an open acceptance of people different than the first settlers and the founding fathers (Nieto, 2009). Martinez (2007) adds that this push for English-only instruction seems to highlight the idea that white, English-speaking people are superior. Consequently, ending bilingual education would be a legal way for the government to attempt to minimize the number of immigrants, specifically those from Mexico (Nieto, 2009).

As evidenced by its contentious history, bilingual education continues to be a controversial topic throughout the nation. People often view bilingualism as a weakness or an obstacle to be overcome instead of resource to be maintained, mistakenly blaming

bilingualism itself for academic struggles, instead of correctly faulting the method of instruction for a student's lack of success. In the field of education, bilingualism was many times linked to students who did poorly in school, when in reality bilingualism can produce multiple benefits at both the individual and societal level, including cognitive strength, improved working memory, greater awareness of structure and form of language, and better abstract and symbolic representation skills (Goldenberg & Wagner, 2015). Contrary to the popular beliefs of the past, those who are bilingual and partake in bilingual education are less likely to drop out of high school and receive economic benefits by working in higher paying jobs specifically due to their bilingualism. Yet, with all the clear benefits of bilingual education, there continues to be resistance which is rooted in ethnic prejudice.

Although the battle continues for bilingual programs to receive the credit that they deserve for the many benefits that they instill in students, these programs have survived the conflict and they account for about three percent of the elementary schools and programs (Goldenberg & Wagner, 2015). The benefits of bilingual instruction are both psychological and educational including the ability to instill self-confidence in students (Nieto, 2009). Although there are many advocates of this inclusive approach, bilingual education has still been blamed for the lack of academic skills of minority students. Yet, the government, society and the structure of the school system are failing these students. Throughout history bilingual programs have been banned, reopened, celebrated, as well as condemned, and when they were shut down, English-only instruction was implemented with a class dedicated to struggling readers. After a year of being a part of the special classroom, the students would be thrown back into the mainstream classroom.

If the teacher of the mainstream classroom had little knowledge of the student's needs and how to meet those needs, struggling students would continue to fall further behind academically. Although sufficient exposure to the target language is important, rushing the learning process and trying to create a fluent English speaker in only a year has not proven to be a successful method (Nieto, 2009). The responsibility of helping these struggling students should fall on the shoulders of the school board and the educators, not on the parents or the children. Educators need to be properly and thoroughly trained so they can be qualified to meet the needs of any child that may enter their classroom.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Learning Differences in the Context of Bilingual Education

#### *What is Dyslexia?*

Dyslexia is classified as a neurological deficit that affects a wide range of reading issues, such as a lack of accuracy and fluency in word recognition, and by poor spelling and decoding abilities (Gildroy & Deshler, 2005; Shawitz, 1996). A large population of school aged children suffer from one or more learning disabilities . Of that population of students who struggle with learning disabilities, 80% of them have specific reading challenges (Gildroy,& Deshler, 2005). While students with dyslexia face challenges, including difficulties with reading, writing, and spelling, they demonstrate significant strengths in reasoning, problem solving, concept formation, critical thinking and vocabulary (Shawitz, 1996). Dyslexia does not negate their intelligence, rather it creates specific challenges that need to be overcome to master the skills that are necessary for them to be successful. Even when students are provided with excellent and effective instruction, The National Research Council has identified the most common and significant challenges that students face when learning to read. These three challenges are: learning to read accurately and fluently, failing to acquire verbal knowledge and thinking skills that lead to the ability to understand the text, and lastly, lacking motivation to learn to read or even the willingness to fail, which in the end allows them to learn and grow (Shaywitz, 1996). Learning to read is a monumental accomplishment for children, despite the challenges that are encountered during the process, and for students with

dyslexia, they have to rise above unique difficulties which have contributed to the widespread attention attributed to this learning disability.

Dyslexia is a learning disability that has been thoroughly studied for decades, yet the research on dyslexia has transformed over the past 50 years, with beginning research of the field dating back to 1896. In this year, a doctor in Sussex, England published the very first description of the learning disorder that would come to be known as developmental dyslexia. His work was based on a student that was always identified as bright, but whose academic standing was far behind other students his age due to the challenges he faced when reading (Shaywitz, 1996). The research conducted by Sussex demonstrates that there was a general belief that a students' challenges demonstrated a lack of intelligence. Additionally, to be successful in reading, a child would only need to be smart, motivated, and educated, to encounter success. Dyslexia debunks this belief because many students with this learning disability are highly intelligent and can compete well with other students outside the realm of reading. This specific learning disability is often characterized as a condition. Dyslexia was commonly believed to originate within the visual-spatial system which is signaled by letter and number reversal, and the belief was that students could be healed of this learning challenge through strengthening therapy of the visual-spatial system. These students also demonstrated uncertain hand preference (Vellutino, 1987). These perceptions and original beliefs about dyslexia proved to be extremely flawed.

As children are growing and begin to learn letter sounds and start to combine the sounds they know to help them decode words in order to read, they may switch the order of the letters, and while writing they may reverse the order and the direction of certain

graphemes. Identifying this challenge can be terrifying for both teachers and parents, but, it is not a challenge that only students with dyslexia face, rather it is a natural part of the learning process most children experience. If the obstacle persists over time, that is when there may be room for concern (Shaywitz, 1996). Clearly identifying what dyslexia is and how it affects students was important for many educators at the time, and it became of large interest to Dr. Samuel Torrey Orton as well.

As a U.S. neuropsychiatrist and pathologist, Orton became fascinated by the difficulties that some students faced, such as reading failure and processing issues, and thus, he dedicated part of his career to exploring what may have caused these issues (Ritchey & Goeke, 2006; Vellutino, 1987). At the beginning stages of his research, Orton speculated that approximately 10% of all students had some form of a reading disability. This research was groundbreaking due to the lack of attention given to the barriers that students with learning disabilities must overcome every day, both in and out of the classroom (Ritchey & Goeke, 2006). The problems that children with learning difficulties face are caused by a maturational lag which is due to a failure in one of the hemispheres of the brain. The hemisphere that experiences the failure is the one that helps to dominate the development of language. Dyslexia also seems to include a subtle language deficiency due to the challenges that are linked to the ability to represent and access the sound of a word to recall its meaning.

Dyslexia has been mischaracterized throughout history as a particular problem with reading and spelling, but at its core, the student's main challenge lies in the inability to decode. The process of learning to read is a big milestone within a student's educational journey that begins with learning mappings between print and sound. The

time spent mastering the skill of decoding tends to delay one's fluency in reading, which is also important (Snowling, Hulme, & Nation, 2020).

Another common and inaccurate belief about students with learning disabilities is that their reading skills plateau after they enter the fourth grade (Gildroy,& Deshler, 2005). The dilemma with this belief is that the failure is completely due to the lack of skill a student has when it is the teacher's job to closely monitor the learning of all students so that intervention can be implemented when necessary. Even students without learning disabilities face challenges in school, which is why there is a need for qualified educators. The teacher is meant to be the one that supports each student and helps to create a path to success. Some students may reach success faster than their peers which can cause teachers to struggle with identifying the best way to teach a group of students with largely different strengths and weaknesses. Differentiation is meant to be implemented into all lessons so all students are learning at the level that is specific to them. The teacher then must closely monitor every student in terms of the skills they are struggling with, and working to improve, in order to determine if the student needs further intervention. There are limitations to what a classroom teacher can do, which is why it is crucial for some students to receive the assistance of an in-class aide. Alternatively, a student may be pulled out from the classroom a couple of times throughout the week to get individual or small group work time. Before offering more specific intervention, the classroom teacher needs to implement techniques and strategies to see if support can be provided without separating the student from the rest of the class. All students are capable of success, but they all need different kinds and levels of support to achieve it.

### *Dyslexia in the Presence of Other Learning Differences*

Since the discovery of dyslexia, it has come to be classified as a more complex learning difference due to its presence alongside other learning challenges (Snowling, Hulme, & Nation, 2020). A common condition that tends to co-exist with dyslexia is attention deficit disorder (ADD), which can drastically interfere with a student's ability to learn in the classroom (Oakland, Black, Stanford, Nussbaum, & Balise, 1998). Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is a behavioral and learning disability that causes children difficulty in staying actively engaged, as many struggle with impulse control and hyperactivity (DuPaul, Weyandt, & Janusis, 2011). ADD is similar to ADHD except they do not suffer from hyperactivity, but rather an internal distraction, which can cause challenges for children both in and out of the classroom. Many students with ADHD/ADD also face challenges in reading and tend to fall behind in comparison to other students (Ostoits, 1999). It is common for educators to see these students as less intelligent, but many times students with learning differences struggle because they are not able to learn the same way as other students, without disabilities, are able to learn. It is important that educators take note of the specific learning styles of their students so that all students are given opportunities to succeed (DuPaul, Weyandt, & Janusis, 2011; Ostoits, 1999). One effective way to support these struggling readers is to directly teach the skills that require more attention, as well as taking time to learn more about the specific learning styles of the struggling students. Common preferred learning styles of students with learning disabilities like ADHD are working in small groups, visual illustrations, spatial strategies and tactile or kinesthetic resources. With the hyperactive component of ADHD, best teaching practices usually include activities that are

multisensory, interesting, relevant, and motivating, which will make it easier for students to remain engaged (Ostoits, 1999). The teacher needs to identify what is causing interruptions in learning, and what accommodations could be made to aid in the students' success. Some examples of accommodations are using an audiobook, allowing a student to read aloud in the corner while the rest of the class reads silently, or teaching them to use their finger to track their reading so they do not lose their place. The smallest tools can be transformative for students and could create a viable pathway to success (Ostoits, 1999).

### *How Does Dyslexia Affect Learning?*

During adolescence, it is important for students to fit in and be liked by their peers in and outside of the classroom, and it can be devastating for a child to realize the obstacles they face when trying to read are not the same challenges their classmates face. Overtime, this feeling can affect a child's mental and emotional well-being (Gildroy & Deshler, 2005). Students become exhausted and learning transforms into a stress-producing task that causes a large portion, up to 10% of students with learning disabilities, to drop out of high school. It is important for educators to find a way to support these students, because literacy skills are aligned with lifetime success. If educators take the time to find the best way to support their struggling readers, they can change the trajectory of their lives.

Educators are generally taught to ensure that students are reading at their proper grade level, but students with dyslexia and other learning differences, tend to face challenges that the average student would not. They struggle with being able to automatically recognize words, and many times their attempts to identify unknown words

lead to errors (Schatschneider & Torgesen, 2004). At times, students with dyslexia also have a minimized sight word vocabulary which further hinders their ability to read fluently. For this reason, early identification of the learning disability is crucial for the future success of the student, because allowing these large phonemic challenges to persist will block their ability to grow in their reading fluency, vocabulary, and overall reading comprehension skills. It is important to note that although students with dyslexia face many issues, they also tend to have extensive vocabularies and the ability to converse at academically high levels amidst their struggles (Gildroy & Deshler, 2005). Nonetheless, a child's phonemic awareness ability is the strongest language-related predictor of successful reading through the 12th grade (Oakland, Black, Stanford, Nussbaum, & Balise, 1998).

### *Best Teaching Practices for Students with Dyslexia*

The role of the educator is to provide necessary information to their students in a way that best allows them to be successful, no matter what challenges those students face. To be able to meet the needs of students with dyslexia, it is important to understand what tools they need and how the teacher can provide them. Prior research proves that students with dyslexia need intensive, systematic, and explicit instruction in reading to be successful (Gildroy & Deshler, 2005). In all languages that use the Roman alphabet as their foundation, phonological awareness is key to being a fluent reader, and as it has been stated previously, phonological, and phonemic awareness are the areas of weakness for students with learning disabilities, specifically those with dyslexia. Phonological awareness is described as "being able to segment and manipulate spoken words into smaller parts" (Gildroy & Deshler, 2005, p. 6), as well as understanding that the smaller

speech sounds can be replaced to create new words with different meanings. In addition to strong and explicit phonemic instruction there also needs to be a continuous focus on the alphabetic system (Oakland, Black, Stanford, Nussbaum, & Balise, 1998). The alphabetic principle is a crucial concept for young students to grasp even before they start learning to read (Gildroy & Deshler, 2005). One reason that this ability is so important is because it builds the skill of decoding unknown words. If a student can look at the unknown word, identify some of the sounds within the word, then refer to the context that the word is in, their probability of success will be high.

The starting point for any child learning to read begins with the letter names and the individual sounds that they make. Once a student has mastered enough sounds where words can be formed, the student can begin blending sounds together to form words. Usually, children will start by reading consonant-vowel-consonant words like cat, bat, top, pan, etc. Next, they are directly taught sight words as whole units instead of looking at the individual sounds within the word. Sight words tend to be the words that are common and used frequently, but are also more difficult to sound out accurately. Some examples of sight words are that, was, with, of, and you. Once students are able to read texts accurately, a huge milestone has been achieved. It is best to then directly teach digraphs and consonant blends and review letters that may have more than one sound, like c and all the vowels. Gildroy & Deshler (2005) define reading as “the ability to translate an abstract written code into words and sentences while simultaneously and flexibly using comprehension strategies to understand the writer’s meaning” (p. 1). A student cannot achieve a level of mastery with reading comprehension if they are spending the majority of their time trying to decode the words on the page. Therefore, a

strong understanding of phonological and phonemic awareness is key in any child's success in reading. Gildroy and Deshler created an equation that further explains and demonstrates the importance of all aspects of reading, language comprehension multiplied by word recognition produces reading comprehension (Gildroy & Deshler, 2005). It is the job of the educator(s) to find a pathway for struggling students to master the literacy skills necessary to become competent readers.

The best way a classroom teacher can prepare all students for success is by implementing activities that are known to help the growth of phonological awareness for students with learning disabilities. Current studies in teaching English to students with dyslexia demonstrate that the same activities that cater to the needs of struggling readers, are also beneficial for the average reader (Vellutino, 1987). There are several activities that can help students strengthen or even grow phonological awareness skills, for example, rhyming games, sound segmentation, or word segmentation. All these activities will help students to understand that every letter also has an individual sound (Gildroy & Deshler, 2005). Furthermore, instruction needs to be repetitive until mastery of each individual skill has been achieved (Gildroy & Deshler, 2005; Oakland, Black, Stanford, Nussbaum, & Balise, 1998).

In addition to the specific skills that need to be addressed and mastered for students with dyslexia to succeed in reading, they also will be able to learn the information with more ease if they are taught using a multisensory approach. This specific approach helps students grasp verbal information through non-verbal representations that are mentally stored (Oakland, Black, Stanford, Nussbaum, & Balise, 1998) When students with dyslexia are taught with a multisensory approach, teachers are

able to set up their lessons to enable students to experience success more frequently. Many time students with learning disabilities have strengths in other areas, for example, these students tend to be creative and have stronger sensory receptors (Ohene-Djan, & Begum, 2008). Due to the large amounts of studies proving that multisensory instruction is beneficial for students' growth in reading, an online system was created called The Dyslexia Activity System (DAS). DAS implements multisensory activities through an engaging learning environment. Some of the skills that they focus on are letter and number recognition, number sequencing, phonics and more. Additionally, the Orton Gillingham multisensory approach was created specifically to help students with dyslexia, and it's focus is on strengthening and building phonological skills through a direct, explicit, systematic manner (Sayeski, Earle, Davis, & Calamari, 2019).

### *Students with Dyslexia Learning a Second Language*

Students with dyslexia face difficulties when learning to read. Thus, they need a specific instructional approach that caters to their needs and fills in the gaps of their learning process. Society tends to minimize their capabilities due to their struggle, therefore when the topic of learning an additional language arises, there tends to be mixed feelings. Learning another language can be beneficial for students, even students with dyslexia. Some of the benefits are improving motivation, providing access to different cultures, and allowing immigrant students to enhance their knowledge of their family's native language (Crombie, 2000). In contrast to the benefits that can arise through learning a second language, there could be additional negative effects for those with learning disabilities. Failure is a part of learning; in fact, many people would say it is a crucial component in the learning process. However, failing can also severely diminish

a struggling reader's confidence, which many times is already very low. In contrast, if the educator is closely monitoring the students' successes and failures, the student can be supported immediately with the assistance they need.

The obstacles that students with disabilities face are the same no matter the language of instruction. Some of the common challenges that they face are poor working memory, poor self-esteem, lack of organizational skills, difficulties with motor skills, automaticity, object naming, a limited attention span, and a slower speed with processing information (Crombie, 2000). The previous list provides the reasoning to why some educators are hesitant with requiring or even allowing students with learning disabilities to take a second language. Although the reason comes from a place of care, not wanting to see students struggle or question their worth due to their lack of success, revoking an opportunity due their disabilities is unjust, unkind, and is ultimately failing the student. Levine (1987) expresses a strong opinion on students with learning difficulties learning a second language, and he stated that if a student is unable to benefit from learning a foreign language, then the teacher needs to provide more intensive instruction. This viewpoint illuminates and strengthens the premise that it is the job of the teacher to ensure the success of all students. If a student is failing, the teacher first needs to examine how the information has been communicated. If the methodology is working for all students except the students with learning differences, changes still have to be made until all students are successful (Crombie, 2000).

Ganschow, Sparks and Javorsky (1998) discuss the language transfer theory, and start by providing context to the importance of skill acquisition in your native language as well as a foreign language. Generally, when students are struggling to read in their

second language, they could be having difficulty in their native language as well. Being successful in learning a foreign language requires a level of linguistic ability in their first language, which students with dyslexia tend to lack. Ganschow et al's Linguistic Coding Differences Hypothesis proposes that poor readers and writers tend to have difficulties with the structural differences versus the semantic differences (Crombie, 2000).

Students' language abilities within their foreign language are usually a reflection of their native language skills (Crombie, 2000). Although this demonstrates that bad habits in language development have the ability to transfer to the acquisition of a foreign language, the important data is that skills can transfer between languages. Therefore, if educators make sure to use a sound instructional method in one language, the student could also be successful in a second language classroom. As has been stated previously, multisensory instruction is the best way to ensure students with learning differences are successful, which can be replicated in a foreign language classroom to produce the same benefits. The students with dyslexia did not surpass the students who do not have a learning disability, but they made significant gains throughout the two-year period (Crombie, 2000). When their progress was compared to students who only received formal instruction in Spanish, the students with learning differences improved the most.

Instead of denying students with dyslexia the opportunity to learn a second language, they can be provided with options of languages that are more orthographically transparent (Goldenberg, Tolar, Reese, Francis, Ray Bazán, & Mejía-Arauz, 2014).

Therefore, Spanish and Italian would be suitable options for students with learning difficulties, but it is still important to make the students aware of the challenges they may face (Crombie, 2000). In contrast, it would be just as important to uplift students by

making sure their needs will be met even within the learning of a foreign language. This again, is the educator's job, to make sure all students are prepared for success. It will be necessary for the teacher to find ways for the students to continue to progress in their learning. One way to accomplish that would be to adopt a multisensory approach to instruction, which will be crucial for students with learning differences and will be beneficial for all students (Crombie, 2000).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Multisensory Instruction as a Biliteracy Approach for All Learners

#### *The Orton Gillingham Approach*

*The Orton-Gillingham Multisensory Reading Instruction is an approach to teaching students how to read, focusing specifically on helping struggling readers who have dyslexia or other similar learning disabilities (Sayeski, p241, 2019). The approach was based on the principles established by Samuel T. Orton and Anna Gillingham. Orton was a neuropsychiatrist and pathologist who was particularly interested in the causes of reading failure and related processing issues which was groundbreaking research in the field of learning disabilities since this field was still new during the early 20th century (Ritchey & Goeke, 2006). Orton estimated that approximately 10% of students had reading disabilities and further speculated that reading problems were caused by strephosymbolia, which is a reading difficulty characterized by a tendency to transpose or reverse letters while reading or writing. In addition, this reading difficulty can cause a lack of brain hemisphere dominance which can result in information being processed in both hemispheres, occasionally producing mirror images, and thus pronouncing <b> like <d>, or vice versa. He believed that the instructional approach for these students should focus on their auditory competence by teaching phonetic equivalents instead of simply memorizing the sounds that match the letters based on visual drills and activities. Once the students have mastered a sufficient amount of sounds to form words, they will begin blending sounds together to create and read words. Although his speculations have*

*been proven to be inaccurate, his thoughts on instruction have remained useful and beneficial to students to the present day (Ritchey & Goeke, 2006).*

Anna Gillingham began her career as an educator, and while working at The Ethical Culture School, she met Bessie Stillman and eventually took on the role of principal (Childs, 2022). The school created an experimental elementary department specifically for children with very high IQ's. Gillingham realized that although these students were very bright, they faced specific difficulties with crucial concepts that could be detrimental to their future success (McClelland, 1989). In 1912, Gillingham encountered students who suffered from word-blindness, which was the term used for students who were unable to recognize and understand words that are seen. Before the OG approach, teachers would use the whole word method which was not beneficial for students who suffered from dyslexia, because their disability kept them from being able to retain whole words. After diligent research, a test-kit called the Pre-Reading Selection Program was created and copyrighted in 1956. There was a large variety of tests that were combined to help determine the needs of her students, which included an IQ test and other auditory and visual tests. A notable component of the visual tests is that students can succeed regardless of their native language, which could profoundly aid in the reduction of misdiagnosed students if the language barrier was already avoided in the implementation of the assessment. Gillingham dedicated the remainder of her career to ensure that all students could receive reading support and thus, created this instructional approach (McClelland, 1989).

When Gillingham was 69 years old, she began consulting at different schools throughout the country to institute her preschool testing program and to train teachers for

teaching individual students. She had three separate training courses: one for individual remedial teachers, one for the teachers of children in the special preselected groups, and one for classroom teachers. Manuals were created to guide educators in this approach, but were only used for her personally trained teachers. The curriculum that Anna Gillingham and Bessie Stillman created together remains the backbone of the Orton-Gillingham instructional approach. There have been additional programs built off the research that aided in the formation of the OG approach that are thriving. These programs are beneficial for students, but many do not require their educators to receive formal OG training, receiving a certification demonstrating that they are knowledgeable in and can effectively implement the components of this teaching approach (McClelland, 1989).

As previously explained, dyslexia is a language based learning disability characterized by difficulties with accurate and fluent word recognition, spelling and reading. People who suffer from dyslexia tend to have difficulties discriminating sounds within a word which is crucial in one's ability to read. Margaret Rawson assisted Gillingham in her efforts to meet the needs of these students by creating a multisensory technique that was also sequential and alphabetic-phonetic. The English language is filled with non-phonetic words, but the goal was to create a system that would allow children to focus more of their energy on memorizing words that are non-phonetic, instead of memorizing every word they encounter. Gillingham's desire to help struggling students continued to grow, and she began extensive research into the specific difficulties her students were facing. Since she already had a previous background in psychology from her university studies, she became the school psychologist, and during her time in that

position she began working with Dr. Orton to ensure that she was creating a system that was neurologically and pedagogically sound (McClelland, 1989).

The Orton-Gillingham approach is infinite and adaptable to the specific situation or set of needs that a student has (Sheffield, 1991). It covers all aspects of our written language and was molded and crafted from the roots of the English language itself. Teachers who are following the OG approach should be including writing in the learning process, and they should be directly teaching reading, handwriting, spelling and expressive writing while constantly linking new knowledge to previous knowledge. Multisensory activities are essential for students with dyslexia because the learning disability causes their visual memory to be unreliable. For this reason, if implementing the multisensory teaching method, a student does not have to rely solely on his or her visual memory but can rely on the other senses for success. A significant aspect of the OG approach that is not common in other instructional methods, is the way teachers make sure the student understands why his answer or response was incorrect in order to ensure he does not continue making the same mistake. If students can learn to understand why mistakes are being made, this empowers them to better understand the language, which aids in their future success (Sheffield, 1991). Explicit instruction is provided for these students in phonology and phonological awareness, sound-symbol correspondence, syllables, morphology, syntax, and semantics (Ritchey & Goeke, 2006). The key component is that the lessons are built with multisensory activities that involve visual, auditory, and kinesthetic/tactile learning pathways, often referred to as the Language Triangle. This approach requires that students master one component before moving onto the next.

In order to fully understand how the OG approach functions, it is important to identify and define specific aspects of the English language that are referenced frequently within literacy instruction. Phonemic awareness is “the ability to notice, think about, and work with the individual sounds in spoken words” (National Institute for Literacy). Before children are even able to read, they need to be exposed to the sounds that the letters make. A common activity designed to help students strengthen their phonemic awareness centers around initial sound identification to help teachers know the strength of a student’s phonemic awareness. Additionally, they should be able to blend sounds together to create words, as well segment a word into its separate sounds from a word provided by the teacher. Phonics-based instruction is also important because it teaches students that individual sounds can be joined to create words. If a student cannot grasp phonemic awareness, phonics instruction will be challenging, which is why both are necessary for the student’s success. It is also important to identify the differences between phonemic and phonological awareness, which tend to get confused. Phonemic awareness is a narrow term that focuses specifically on the individual sounds within words and how they can be manipulated to either produce the same meaning or completely change the meaning by changing an individual sound. Phonological awareness is a broader concept than phonemic awareness because it includes identifying and manipulating larger parts of spoken language which could include words, syllables, or onsets and rimes (National Institute for Literacy).

The OG approach does not only support students in reading, but it also supports them in their ability to write with accurate spelling. OG activities such as segmenting words allows students to improve in their spelling through learning and memorizing the

ways in which sounds and letters work together in a predictable way. Once the student successfully masters the skill, it can then be transferred into their own writing. In more scientific and academic terms, students should learn and understand the alphabetic principle which states, there are systemic and predictable relationships between written letters and spoken sounds. There are many critics who say it is pointless to spend time teaching phonics when English spellings tend to be irregular, and although this is true, that does not negate the beneficial qualities of teaching students a variety of phonemic-based strategies to help them successfully read words (National Institute for Literacy).

Fluency is another battle that students with learning difficulties like dyslexia must face (National Institute for Literacy). Fluency is defined as the ability to read accurately and at a fast pace. Once students can read, the next benchmark they should reach is reading comprehension. There is a critical shift that all students need to make, which is a result of the changing purpose of reading as a student ages. Initially the purpose is simply to successfully decode the words on the page, and then shifts from decoding the words to understanding the meaning and purpose of the words. It is not enough to be able to read a sentence without making a mistake, the student also needs to be able to analyze the words. Learning to read is only a pathway expansion of your learning. Once a student knows how to read, he or she will be asked why was it written in that way? Does that sentence have a double meaning? What implications could this passage have on the closing of the novel? Increasing a child's fluency will allow students to invest energy in higher order thinking skills. In a study conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the results demonstrated the importance of making fluency a priority in reading education because those who scored low on fluency also scored low in

reading comprehension (National Institute for Literacy), which is the ultimate goal of reading.

In addition to fluency, vocabulary is critical to reading comprehension because it connects simple word recognition to the ability to understand the meaning behind the words in a specific context. Fluency is not something that is constant for any given student, it can vary based on what is being read, the level of familiarity the student has with the text, as well as the amount of practice. There are many schools that do not dedicate time to practicing fluency, deeming it unnecessary, even though research demonstrates otherwise. The National Assessment of Educational Progress has recently conducted a study amongst a group of fourth graders demonstrating a clear connection between fluency and reading comprehension. The results indicated that 44% of test takers scored low in fluency, and the students that scored low on fluency, also did poorly on comprehension (National Institute for Literacy).

Reading fluency and accuracy are critical components and areas of focus within the OG approach. As such, the approach utilizes a deck of cards that contain all the sounds and letter combinations found in the English language as a means of direct instruction. This enhances their ability to read something fluently that they have not been exposed to previously, allowing them to focus more on understanding what they are reading (Sheffield, 43). Multisensory teaching also helps students with dyslexia understand that a letter has both a name and a sound. When these students are reading, there is an intentional and constant search for a visual memory of the word that they are reading. As new methodologies began to be implemented, it was clear that relying on visual memory was not a sufficient or reliable form of instruction for any student. For this

reason, the OG approach was created to help these students by providing the tools necessary to be successful readers. The auditory component of the multisensory approach can be challenging for some students. For example, a student reading a text out loud may have difficulty fully understanding the text while struggling to pronounce the words, although this skill can be strengthened. In addition, students with dyslexia may also struggle to retrieve information they are attempting to understand. The OG approach is meant to teach students to the point of over-learning to ensure they are able to reach a level of mastery. Evidence demonstrates that the kinesthetic-tactile learning channel is the strongest for everyone, yet for students with dyslexia, it is crucial for their success (Sheffield, 43).<sup>1</sup>

### *Language Transfer*

*In the past, the mentality seemed to be that the best, quickest, and most precise way to teach non-native students English was to put them in an English only classroom and force them to only use and hear the language that is foreign to them. More recent studies would disagree with this ideology, and state that on the contrary, teaching students to improve their language abilities in their first language will benefit their target language progress (Escamilla, 1999). This concept is known as the transfer effect which states that the skill and strategies that are learned by a student to improve their first language literacy skills will transfer to their reading and writing skills in their second language. This is why bilingual schools were originally created, to allow students to grow and mature in their native language before taking on the challenge of learning a foreign language. The native language serves as a bridge to connect the known language*

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<sup>1</sup> In the Appendix there is a sample lesson in English as well as a copy of the scope and sequence that is essential for tracking students' progress in English literacy.

*to the unknown language to ease the transition (Nieto, 2009). For students who naturally have strong literacy skills in their native tongue, there are little to no obstacles to face when transferring their skills. On the contrary, there are differences in orthography between Spanish and English which can cause a struggle when attempting to transfer specific skills (Martínez, 2011).*

A study done by two researchers from Stanford University compared the results of similar students, some who received instruction in two languages as part of a bilingual program, and other students who only received instruction in English (Goldenberg & Wagner, 2015). The results demonstrated that the students who received bilingual instruction were more likely to be proficient in reading by the time they were in high school in comparison to those who received English-only instruction. It is easier for children to develop their academic skills in their primary language, then once their skills are strong, skill transfer occurs with fewer challenges. Additionally, researchers from Stanford University examined data from a bilingual program in the Rio Grande Valley in Texas, and found that bilingual education can promote the benefits of bilingualism without impeding the progress of English language acquisition (Goldenberg & Wagner, 2015).

#### *Similarities and Differences between English and Spanish*

Orthographically Spanish and English are different (Martínez, 2011). Spanish has a shallow orthography, which means it has strong grapheme-phoneme correspondence, making it easier for people to read. Conversely, English has a deep orthography which creates the necessity for phonics instruction. This difference can also be explained as Spanish having a transparent orthography and English having an opaque orthography

(Goldenberg, Tolar, Reese, Francis, Ray Bazán, & Mejía-Arauz, 2014). Phonics instruction can dramatically increase the possibility of success for second language learners of English, in reading comprehension, spelling, and overall literacy skills because the ultimate goal of phonics instruction is to help students understand the alphabetic principle which enables them to read with fluency and accuracy. More specifically, “phonics instruction teaches students to understand and learn the relationship between the letters (graphemes) of written language and the individual sounds (phonemes) of spoken language” (Martínez, 2011, p.28). Alongside this major difference, the fundamental concepts of teaching literacy in each language also differs. In Spanish, the foundation of reading begins with knowing the vowel sounds in order to form syllables, whereas in English, the foundation is built with phonemes, which include both consonants and vowels to form whole words (Escamilla, 1999). For this reason, the Orton Gillingham instructional approach cannot be directly applied to the Spanish language without also studying the way that the language functions linguistically and the best practices in order to ensure that students are being taught the content they need to be successful readers.

### *Best Practices for Literacy Instruction in Spanish*

As has briefly been mentioned, many benefits arise when students work on strengthening their literacy skills in their native language before focusing on strengthening literacy skills in a second language. In the United States, there are more than 6 million Spanish speaking children in the public school system, which means that those 6 million students should be supported in improving their ability to read in Spanish in addition to beginning to read in English (Escamilla, 1999). Although English and

Spanish can be very different, as was noted in the previous section, there are still many reasons why phonological awareness training would be important for students learning to read in either language. In the United States, phonological and phonemic awareness have been essential components of English literacy instruction, whereas in Mexico, phonological and phonemic awareness are not stressed (Goldenberg, Tolar, Reese, Francis, Ray Bazán, & Mejía-Arauz, 2014). The traditional method to literacy instruction came from Spain to Mexico during the colonial period, and consisted of reading a pamphlet that included the alphabet, practice with syllables and sentences that were frequently on topics related to the Catholic doctrine. In the 19th century new research was conducted to shift instruction to letter by letter reading with additional practice reading syllables, and now instructional methodology has transformed again to focus on teaching reading in a way that makes it communicative and functional in the daily lives of students.

A study was conducted in both Mexico and the United States to compare the level of success the students were able to achieve in literacy (Goldenberg, Tolar, Reese, Francis, Ray Bazán, & Mejía-Arauz, 2014). There was a control group that did not receive formal education in Spanish, a group of U.S. students that received formal literacy instruction in both languages, and then the group of students in Mexico who only received formal literacy instruction in Spanish. The initial hypothesis of this research was that the students who did not receive formal instruction in Spanish would struggle the most of all of the groups, but on the contrary, the group of U.S. students who did not receive formal instruction in Spanish outperformed the group of students in Mexico, which researchers believed was due to the phonological and phonemic skills that the U.S.

students built in English that the Mexican students did not receive. This study serves as further evidence that the transfer of skills between languages is possible, but that it is also beneficial for students' success. Therefore, although the Spanish language has a simpler orthography, strong phonemic awareness skills still can help students achieve higher levels of early reading development, since phonemic awareness has been proven to be the clearest indicator to future growth and success in reading (Goldenberg, Tolar, Reese, Francis, Ray Bazán, & Mejía-Arauz, 2014; Linan-Thompson, Bryant, Dickson, & Kouzekanani, 2005).

### *Balanced Literacy Instruction*

Bilingual education can transform learning for all students, but in order to ensure that high expectations are met or exceeded, instruction between both languages needs to be balanced (Escamilla, 1999). Educators need to be thoroughly trained in instructional methods for teaching reading in both languages and they need to know and understand language and how it functions. Unfortunately, during the time this article was published, only 10% of educators who teach and serve second language learners across the country have received and are certified in bilingual instruction. School districts cannot expect students to succeed and thrive in settings where the teachers are not qualified to meet their needs. Therefore, opportunities need to be leveraged for educators to impact the lives of all students, including non-native speakers of English. It is important to consider how students who are non-native speakers of English should be instructed, and how it should differ from instruction targeted to native English speakers (Escamilla, 1999).

For educators to be prepared to meet the needs of struggling readers of Spanish in their classroom, they need to strengthen their knowledge of the alphabet, orthography,

and phonemic awareness in order to be prepared to teach these components to students. Furthermore, many students may need encouragement by teaching them the benefits that come with being bilingual and biliterate (Escamilla, 1999). For native English speakers growing up in the United States, they may have encountered poor treatment towards people who do not speak English, only adding to their wariness to learn a second language. For native Spanish speakers, they may begin to assimilate into the American culture, denying their heritage and native tongue, in order to fit in and be popular. They too, may need to be reminded of the beauty that is part of being bilingual.

Amidst the obstacles being faced in the world of bilingual education, there are some school districts that are already taking advantage of this balanced approach to literacy instruction including the California Department of Education, the Dallas Independent School District, the Houston Independent School District, and the Denver Public Schools. All of these programs have incorporated intensive staff development courses so that their educators can be well prepared and knowledgeable before working directly with students. Balanced literacy programs are meant to bring together the most beneficial aspects of a variety of teaching approaches and combine them to create something new. Some programs may only include phonics, and whole-language instruction, but further developments in this instructional method have included orthographic and alphabetic awareness, print awareness, motivation, community building, practice, independence, writing and reading processes, assessment, modeling, and more. Overall, the balanced approach is meant to be a synthetic, analytic, and socio-psychological approach that uses scientific research to continue to morph and transform the methodology to ensure that students are always prepared for success. Synthetic

approaches are also referred to as part-to-whole methods, in English, this would refer to phonemic awareness, phonological awareness, alphabetic awareness, and phonics-based approaches, whereas in Spanish the three main areas of focus would be el método alfabético, el método silábico, and el método onomatopéyico. Conversely, analytic methods are the exact opposite of synthetic approaches because these are considered whole-to-part methods. In English instruction this would incorporate sight words, and in Spanish this approach would include el método global o ideovisual, el método de palabras generadoras, and el método léxico. Lastly, the socio-psychological process focuses on the construction of meaning, instead of focusing on individual words. This global approach allows reading to be an enriching experience where students get the opportunity to learn about the world through the text and learn about the specific components of reading along the way (Escamilla, 1999).

In order to ensure a balanced approach instruction is being implemented it would be important to identify key characteristics of elementary school classrooms and how they could be adopted or implemented in both English and Spanish. A common strategy among elementary schools in the United States is a word wall, which is mainly made up of sight words or frequently used words that the entire class has learned, been exposed to, or are important to know. Word walls can be beneficial for both languages, but they should each have their own wall. One reason for this is because there could be words that are spelled the same in both languages but are pronounced differently. For example, come in English is when something or someone moves toward the speaker's direction, but in Spanish, come means he, she, or it eats. Additionally, English and Spanish vowels are pronounced and function differently, therefore, having two separate word walls would

reduce the amount of confusion some students could experience when trying to use both languages. An additional factor to consider when creating word walls, is that the list of high frequency words may be different in every language, or they may have many of the same words, but they could be found at different places on the list (Escamilla, 1999).

Reading instruction in both English and Spanish can benefit from this teaching approach as long as there is a unique scope and sequence for each language. This does cause more work for the educator, but numerous studies show the endless benefits for students, and the success of the children should always be the primary focus of the educator.

Since there are some components of Spanish that do not have to be considered when learning to read in English, it is important to add those aspects to the word wall so that native and non-native speakers are equipped with all the tools they need. For example, articles are very important in Spanish spelling since they determine the gender and number being referenced. Therefore, having the articles on the word wall would help non-native Spanish speakers to instill the rule of agreement between nouns and articles. Another aspect of spelling that is important in Spanish is the use of accent marks. Not placing an accent on a word that requires it or placing an accent where it should not be can either completely change the word's meaning or create a nonexistent word. Spanish only has two rules for accentuation, the first being if a word ends in an n, s, or a vowel, the natural emphasis falls on the second to last syllable, the second rule being that when a word ends in any other letter (except for n, s, or vowels) the natural emphasis falls on the last syllable. When there is an exception to one of these two rules, a written accent mark needs to be placed on the stressed vowel. For example, in the word educación, the natural emphasis would fall on the syllable ca, but since the emphasis falls on the last syllable,

the accent mark is added to the vowel o. Additionally, there are many words that do not have the accent on the second to last, or the last syllable, which means that they will always carry an accent. Directly teaching the rules of accent marks will only improve students' writing and spelling abilities (Escamilla, 1999).

The organization of the word wall could allow students to see example words that begin with a specific consonant or vowel, and for some consonants that do not fall in the initial position, examples in the middle position. For example, letters <rr> and <ñ> would not be found at the beginning of a word but could frequently occur in the middle, such as in the words perro, carro, niña, and piña. Furthermore, having words with upper- and lower-case letters would help students to understand the rules of capitalization which can be challenging for native English learners when they come across graphemes that are not present in English, such as Ch and Ll (Escamilla, 1999).

Word walls have the ability to ease the struggles that any child may face when attempting to learn another language, and it is most beneficial when the word wall can work to help correct difficulties that students are facing with a simple reference to the wall. A teacher may choose to continually change the word wall depending on what the class is focusing on, or there could be multiple word walls for different purposes. Additional Spanish components that could be added would be all the monster letters, which are all the letters that tend to be confused with others due to their similar pronunciation. The monster letter groups are b/v, c/s/z, g/j/h, and ll/y. The next sentence demonstrates an example of errors that could be made with these monster letters. The correct sentence: Yo voy a la escuela y después ceno con mis hermanos. The incorrect sentence: \*Llo boi a la hescuela y despues seno con mis ermanos. If the teacher would sit

down to analyze this student's writing, she would see that he understands how the words are pronounced, but he is unable to remember what words should have the silent h and what words do not. Another beneficial aspect to put on a word wall could be words that are formed using some of the common blends: fr, fl, br, bl, gr, gl, pl, pr, tr, cl, cr, and tr, in English (Escamilla, 1999).

Taking on the task of instructing students how to read in two separate languages is a huge endeavor, and although there are many ways instruction in both languages has to be approached differently, there are other aspects that can be beneficial no matter the language being used for instruction. Some recommendations that apply to both languages are modeling, shared reading, guided reading, interactive teaching, independent reading, community building, and assisting in motivating the students. Motivating students is one of the most challenging tasks, especially when the United States has not succeeded in demonstrating the beauty and benefits that come with learning a second language. If students were able to observe society uplifting people who speak a foreign language maybe they would be naturally more enthusiastic. Therefore, it is up to the educator to help the students to see the benefits of being bilingual, and one way to start this process is to make sure that the print environment of the classroom reflects both languages and cultures. Bilingual schools and libraries should make sure they have print materials in Spanish, as well as print materials that are from a variety of Spanish speaking countries. Learning another language should come with learning about the culture, traditions, and values that can occasionally play a large role within the language itself (Escamilla, 1999).

In addition to encouraging students to learn a foreign language by opening their eyes to the benefits of bilingualism, educators should also help their students believe that

they are capable of surpassing all of their goals even if they struggle. Educators play a major role in shaping a child's identity, and the way they are treated in the classroom has the ability to create a long-lasting effect on their lives. Exposing children to books that reflect diversity is crucial because it allows students to see themselves in the stories they read. They should also be exposed to stories that reflect cultures of others, allowing the book to act as a window to the world beyond. Between the years 1992 and 1995 there were only a total of 67 children's books that reflected the lives of Mexican-Americans, which terribly represented the school population of the time. For many students, the only books they had access to were windows, which can negatively affect a child's self-worth. Teachers of all schools, but especially bilingual schools, need to ensure that their literature collection is equitable and reflects current diversity. In a homogenous classroom it is important to provide windows in order to educate them on the beauty that is found in the heterogenous world (Escamilla, 1999).

#### *Author's Proposal*

*In response to the current research that supports the implementation of the Orton-Gillingham Multisensory Instructional Approach for struggling readers in English, I propose that a similar approach be created for students learning to read in Spanish. This would be beneficial to students because they would be learning both languages with a similar instructional method. Previous studies have shown that students are able to improve their literacy skills in Spanish, even if they are only receiving phonological based instruction in English, therefore, a student's abilities to read in both languages should increase and strengthen if they are receiving the same level of explicit, systematic, and direct instruction in both languages (Gildroy & Deshler, 2005).*

The Orton-Gillingham approach was created to teach reading in English with a scope and sequence that follows a specific order, i.e., specific concepts should be mastered before moving onto the next concept. For example, when a student is learning a letter sound, they will consistently study all the sounds they know, and continue focusing on the newest letter that is being studied through activities that are imbedded into the lesson. During the sound card section of the lesson plan the students will review all the sounds that they have successfully mastered and continue to work towards mastery on the newest letter in the scope and sequence. If a student successfully names the sound of the new letter three lessons in a row, the student has reached the level of mastery with that specific letter sound. At the beginning stages of English reading instruction, students have to learn the names of the letters and the sounds that they make, but there is a specific order to separate letters that are commonly misnamed or mispronounced. For example, the letters b and d are not taught sequentially because students frequently confuse the two due to their similar appearance. Separating the learning allows students to master one letter before learning the next one. At the beginning stages of reading in Spanish, the first concept that is taught is the vowel sounds. Vowel sounds are constant in Spanish, unlike English, therefore learning the vowel sounds first creates a solid foundation for a new skill to be mastered.

In order to ensure that the scope and sequence for Spanish is unique to the language, the specific challenges students face while learning need to be accounted for. Escamilla (1999) listed the vowels and consonants in their order of frequency which could be a beneficial place to start when creating the scope and sequence specifically for learning the letter sounds, but the frequency alone should not determine the order in

which letter sounds are taught. It would be helpful to have experts and educators that have studied and taught Spanish to struggling readers, including both native and non-native speakers, to help fill in the gap of current research. In a bilingual classroom within the United States there will be native speakers of both English and Spanish, therefore it is important to identify learning difficulties that are common in both languages.

Prior to implementing the scope and sequence, students need to go through initial testing which would occur in both languages so that the teacher can know what skills students have mastered, and what skills they need to continue practicing. Within the OG approach, there are a variety of initial tests that could be used, which have been included in the Appendix. Some tests are geared towards young readers, while others are created for more advanced learners. This is not based on the age of the student because it is not based on benchmarks or created to prepare students to pass a state test. The intention is always to meet the students where they are, whether they are multiple grades behind or grade levels ahead according to the benchmarks. It is the teacher's job to find a way to cater to the specific needs of students by supporting them and helping them overcome their challenges which will occur during lessons that are conducted 2-3 times a week. Once the results of the initial testing are collected, the teacher would know how to proceed in teaching. The scope and sequence document would be the primary way that the teacher tracks the progress of the students. Within the next chapter, specific recommendations will be presented as well as recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate current best practices in the field of bilingual education in order to find an instructional method that meets the needs of all students, including those who struggle with learning disabilities. In so doing, curriculum can be developed and implemented within bilingual schools that can allow all learners to maintain their first language while still learning a second, and thus, prevent some students from being excluded from opportunities simply due to learning challenges they might face. In this study I focused specifically on bilingual education in a US context where English and Spanish are the languages of instruction. However, the findings can be generalized to include bilingualism in other contexts and in other languages.

Bilingual education has been scrutinized throughout its existence, yet has persisted as an integral part of the school system within the US. Since the time of the first settlement, the United States has been comprised of immigrants, and as such, bilingual schools were the vehicle through which students learned English and US culture. Early bilingual schools existed in a multitude of languages alongside English, such as Spanish, French, German, Dutch, etc. Without immigration and the diversity it provides, the US could not position itself as a country that welcomes and offers opportunities for all. Although historically part of the US school system, bilingual schools have also had a history of contention, including seasons when bilingual education was banned, and other seasons where citizens took a stand to fight for the benefits it

brought to the school system. This contention has not existed without consequence for the students, causing many to question their self-worth and what it truly means to be American, struggling with having to give up their first language and culture in order to fit in and be accepted.

A groundbreaking era for the field of bilingual education was the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's which resulted in correcting discriminatory practices and passing the Bilingual Education Act in 1968. This unfortunately was not the end of the battle, and those in support of bilingual education had to continue to fight to prove that being bilingual was a sign of strength and intelligence, which was contrary to many beliefs of the time. Today, the legitimacy of bilingual education is still questioned, demonstrating the importance of creating awareness regarding the intellectual, social and economic benefits of bilingualism for both the individual and the community. This approach to instruction can change the perceptions of many regarding bilingual education and can result in more students who excel in literacy skills in two or more languages. However, there is also a need to develop approaches that include instruction of bilingual students who have learning differences.

Dyslexia is a neurological deficit that causes a lack of accuracy and fluency when reading. More specifically, dyslexia causes difficulty decoding. Students with dyslexia have commonly been labeled as less intelligent than the average student, which is an unfounded assumption. Many students with dyslexia have high IQ's; they simply need support and direct instruction to be able to understand and apply a concept that is learned. Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are other common conditions that create challenges for students when learning to read.

Best practices for instructional approaches include multisensory, direct, and systematic instruction just as is recommended for students with dyslexia. If students' needs are being met, they are being supported in their learning and being taught in a way that allows them to succeed, then success will be attained. Thus, this should not only apply to the English language. If students are improving in their reading ability in English through a successful teaching approach, the teaching approach should be able to be replicated in the second language to aid in their success. Research has shown that literacy skills transfer from one language to the next. Therefore, this transfer effect further strengthens the argument not only for bilingual education, but for second-language instruction for students who have a learning difference. The transfer effect states that the skills that a student learns and masters in their primary language can transfer over to the secondary language, therefore making it possible for students with learning difficulties to succeed and benefit from learning a foreign language. Students with learning disabilities should not be purposely excluded from participating in specific learning activities or opportunities that could benefit them in the future.

The Orton Gillingham Approach (OG Approach) was created with the help of Dr. Samuel Orton, Anna Gillingham and Bessie Stillman and designed to cater to the needs of students who have dyslexia. This Approach is considered an instructional method instead of a curriculum, but it works to support struggling readers through a structured system to ensure that they learn and maintain the content necessary for reading success. The OG approach is meant to be direct, systematic, and multisensory, incorporating activities that do not rely solely on a student's visual memory, but rather include multisensory activities for auditory and tactile learners. The engagement of all senses in the learning process has

proven to be beneficial for all students, thus allowing a teacher to implement this teaching approach for the entire class, even with students who are at or above grade level. The OG approach understands the term differentiation as it is built into this instructional approach. Differentiation is the process that the teacher takes to make sure the content they are teaching their students is within reach. Therefore, within a bilingual education context, one that is charged with teaching biliteracy skills, I propose that the best educational approach to include all learners should be the OG Approach, which has demonstrated success in English instruction. This would necessitate the development of materials in Spanish. Although the Spanish and English language are orthographically different, phonemic and phonological awareness practice can strengthen the reading skills for students learning across languages through multisensory instruction that has been proven beneficial for all.

Based on this thorough investigation of the literature, the OG method has great potential as the recommended instructional approach to teaching students to read in both English and Spanish. This would entail developing materials or creating a formalized approach similar to what already exists in English. Once materials are developed, a case study could be conducted with a couple of students to pilot them before implementing them with an entire class. As the materials are being developed, data can be collected to monitor success in terms of materials and student learning. Thus, there is much work to be done. However, considering the contents of this study, the potential outcomes will be well worth the efforts – to ensure the success of all students.

## APPENDIX A

### Sample OG Lesson Plan in English

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| <b><i>Student: 2nd Grader — Learning to Read in Both English and Spanish</i></b><br><br><b><i>Lesson #</i></b>   | <b>Date:</b> |
| <b><i>Errors from previous lesson:</i></b><br><i>Reading</i><br><br><i>Spelling</i>  |              |
| <b><i>Objectives for review:</i></b><br>Students will continue to practice the /h/ sound and will continue reading words with h.<br>Students will be able to identify how many words are in a given sentence.<br>Students will be able to sound out the letters that they have mastered with 100% accuracy.<br>Students will be able to segment words to name the individual sounds, and pronounce new words with this strategy.<br><br><b><i>Objective for new concept (if applicable):</i></b><br>Students will learn the sounds /j/ and /p/ and practice reading words with these sounds. |              |
| <b><i>Phonemic awareness activity (if applicable):</i></b>   |              |
| Sentence Segmentation:<br>1. I have a black dog.<br>2. I like to play sports.<br>3. That cat is black.<br>4. My family is big.<br>5. When is your birthday?<br>6.  |              |

|  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| <b><i>Handwriting (if applicable):</i></b>   |                      |
| The students will write out the alphabet from A-Z so that the teacher can see where both students show areas that need extra attention.                  |                      |
| <b><i>Association 1 - symbol to sound oral reading</i></b>   |                      |
| <b><i>Phonograms</i></b>   | <b><i>Errors</i></b> |
| k, b, t, x, z, v, y, w, s, n, l, r, c, f, m, h, a, e, i, o, u  |                      |
| <b><i>Blending Drill</i></b>   | <b><i>Errors</i></b> |
| 1. cat<br>2. Hit<br>3. Top<br>4. Fav<br>5. Box<br>6. Fit<br>7. Jov<br>8. Rip<br>9. Saf<br>10. bap<br>11. Jat<br>12. yit<br>13. yac<br>14. jut<br>15. fij |                      |

| <b><i>Sight words (for reading and spelling)</i></b>  | <b><i>Errors</i></b> |
|---|----------------------|
| 1. the<br>2. Of<br>3. And<br>4. a<br>5. To<br>6. in<br>7. is<br>8. you<br>9. That<br>10. it<br>11. he<br>12. Was<br>13. For           |                      |
| <b><i>Introduce new concept (if applicable):</i></b>  | <b><i>Errors</i></b> |
| <p>Introduce one or two sounds (depending out the students do with the first one). The two letters will be <b>j</b> and <b>p</b>.</p> |                      |

| <b><i>Words to read (new concept or review)</i></b>   | <b><i>Errors</i></b> |
|---|----------------------|
| 1. cut<br>2. Rut<br>3. just<br>4. Top<br>5. Hem<br>6. hat<br>7. Hen<br>8. Ham<br>9. pit<br>10.    sap<br>11.    cup<br>12.    Put<br>13.    Pat<br>14.    Hut<br>15.    rat<br>16.    rip<br>17.    Box<br>18.    fix |                      |
| <b><i>Sentences to read (new concept or review)</i></b>   | <b><i>Errors</i></b> |
| 1. The cat ran.<br>2. The hat of ham.<br>3. He was in a box.<br>4. Was that a rat?<br>5. The fin is bit.<br>6. He has a sax.<br>7. He is six.<br>8. You win that bat.   |                      |
| <b><i>Syllable Division (if applicable)</i></b>   | <b><i>Errors</i></b> |
|   |                      |
|   |                      |

| <b>Association 2 and 3 – Sound to Symbol- written spelling using SOS (new or review)</b> |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <b><i>Sounds: “What says / /?”</i></b>   | <b><i>Words to spell</i></b>  | <b><i>Phrases and Sentences to spell</i></b> |
| What says /j/?<br><br>What says /p/?   | jak, jot, jif, pit, pot, pat, put, pun,<br>kip, pox, jus, jes, hip, ap, jet, jen,<br>pal, pil, jil, lip |  |
| <b><i>Errors</i></b>   | <b><i>Errors</i></b>  | <b><i>Errors</i></b>                         |
|  |   |  |
| <b><i>Oral Reading (Controlled text or chapter book)</i></b>                             |   |  |
| <b><u>N/A</u></b>  |   | <b><i>Errors</i></b>                         |

***Notes: What do you need to review next time? Are you ready to introduce a new concept?***

## APPENDIX B

### Scope and Sequence for the OG Approach in English for Beginning Learners

| Area of focus                  | Skill   | Introduced | Progressing | Mastered |
|--------------------------------|---|------------|-------------|----------|
| Sounds – 1 <sup>st</sup> group | a   |            |             |          |
|                                | t   |            |             |          |
|                                | b   |            |             |          |
|                                | h   |            |             |          |
|                                | i   |            |             |          |
|                                | j   |            |             |          |
|                                | k   |            |             |          |
|                                | m   |            |             |          |
|                                | p   |            |             |          |
|                                | f   |            |             |          |
| Words                          | CVC words with previously taught sounds (1 <sup>st</sup> group) |            |             |          |
|                                | c   |            |             |          |
|                                | g   |            |             |          |
|                                | o   |            |             |          |
|                                | r   |            |             |          |
|                                | l   |            |             |          |
|                                | n   |            |             |          |

|       |  |  |  |  |
|-------|--|--|--|--|
|       | th   |  |  |  |
|       | u  |  |  |  |
|       | ch   |  |  |  |
|       | e  |  |  |  |
|       | s  |  |  |  |
|       | sh   |  |  |  |
|       | d  |  |  |  |
|       | w  |  |  |  |
|       | wh   |  |  |  |
|       | y  |  |  |  |
|       | v  |  |  |  |
|       | z  |  |  |  |
|       | x  |  |  |  |
| Words | CVC words with all sounds taught (1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> group) |  |  |  |

## APPENDIX C

### Scope and Sequence for the OG Approach in English for Advanced Learners

(Use this Scope and Sequence once you have taught all single consonants,  
short vowels, and diagraphs ch, sh, th, and wh)

| Area of focus     | Skill   | Introduced | Progressing | Mastered |
|-------------------|---|------------|-------------|----------|
| Syllables         | Blends at the beginning of words  |            |             |          |
|                   | Blends at the end of words  |            |             |          |
|                   | Closed syllable with ccvcc  |            |             |          |
| Spelling          | Floss rule (ff, ll, ss) “When a one syllable word ends with a <i>f</i> , <i>l</i> , or <i>s</i> , double it”.   |            |             |          |
| Patterns          | -ng/-nk patterns (for beginners teach –ng patterns first, then –nk patterns, then put together. Some students may need the patterns taught one at a time (i.e. ang, then ing, then ong, etc.) Note: make separate cards to add to the sound deck. |            |             |          |
|                   | al/all pattern – Note: make separate cards to add to the sound deck   |            |             |          |
| Syllable division | Catfish words (compound) (cvc + cvc)  |            |             |          |
|                   | Rabbit words (vc/cv)  |            |             |          |
|                   | Monster words (vcc/cv or vc/ccv)  |            |             |          |
| Sounds            | qu  |            |             |          |
|                   | -ck for reading   |            |             |          |

|                      |  |                   |                   |                 |
|----------------------|--|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Spelling             | Longer spelling rule with –ck :<br>“Use the longer spelling right after a short vowel” – choice is between –k and –ck.   |                   |                   |                 |
| Sounds               | -tch for reading   |                   |                   |                 |
| Spelling             | Longer spelling rule with –tch<br>(“Use the longer spelling right after a short vowel.” The choice is between -ch and -tch).   |                   |                   |                 |
| Sounds               | Silent e words (VCe)   |                   |                   |                 |
| Syllables            | Silent e syllables   |                   |                   |                 |
| Syllables            | Open syllables in one syllable words (he, she, no, etc.)   |                   |                   |                 |
| Sounds               | Y=long I at the end of 1 syllable<br>Words (shy, fly, etc.)  |                   |                   |                 |
| <b>Area of focus</b> | <b>Skill</b>   | <b>Introduced</b> | <b>Progressed</b> | <b>Mastered</b> |
|                      | Y = long e at the end of 2 syllable words (plenty, bunny)  |                   |                   |                 |
| Syllable division    | Tiger words (v/cv)<br>(review open syllables first)  |                   |                   |                 |
|                      | Camel words (vc/v)   |                   |                   |                 |
| Patterns             | Wild old patterns (ild, ind, old, ost, oll) Note: make separate cards to add to the sound deck. Students may need to be taught the long i patterns first (ild, ind) and then the long o patterns (old, ost, and oll) |                   |                   |                 |
| Sounds               | Vowel team: ay (two vowels work together on a team to make one sound)  |                   |                   |                 |
| Syllables            | Vowel team syllables   |                   |                   |                 |

|                   |  |  |  |  |
|-------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Suffixes          | -ed (/ed/, /d/, /t/) Before having the students read the words, students will need practice hearing the difference between the sounds as the words are read to them. Doing a sort is a great way to practice this. |  |  |  |
| Suffixes          | Basic Anglo-Saxon suffixes – teach in pairs/groups with meaning:<br>-s, -es; -er, -est; -ing, -en, -ish<br>-y, -ly; -ful, -less, -ness   |  |  |  |
| Sounds            | Vowel team: ou –teach only 1st sound as in “ouch”  |  |  |  |
| Prefix            | a-   |  |  |  |
|                   | Vowel team: ea (for Skills 1 – teach only one sound; for Skills 2 – teach all three sounds “eat bread with steak”  |  |  |  |
| Syllable type     | Consonant-l-e syllable (-ble, -fle, -ple, etc.)  |  |  |  |
| Syllable division | Turtle words (words ending with consonant-le, count back three to scoop)   |  |  |  |
| Sounds            | Vowel team: oa   |  |  |  |
|                   | Vowel team: ai   |  |  |  |
| Spelling          | ai in middle of word; ay at end of word  |  |  |  |

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