

# CASE STUDY: READ, WRITE, INC. Bilingualism and children with difficulties

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## Abstract

First, we present the situation to contextualize this case study. We are in front of a bilingual school in which English is taught from the age of 3 and begin to know the sounds of letters with the method ".Read, Write, Inc". It is a school where children learn to read and write at the same time in English and Spanish. Most children get good results, but not all children have the same ability and sometimes we can find some problems. Throughout this case study we will analyze the problems that we find and how to solve it.

**Keywords:** Case Study, Bilingual School, children, difficulties, Special Needs, advantages, disadvantages

**Título:** Caso de estudio: READ, WRITE, INC. Bilingüismo y niños con dificultades.

## Resumen

Primero, presentamos la situación para contextualizar este caso de estudio. Estamos frente a una escuela bilingüe en la que se enseña inglés desde la edad de 3 años y comenzamos a conocer los sonidos de las letras con el método ".Read, Write, Inc". Es una escuela donde los niños aprenden la lectoescritura al mismo tiempo en inglés y español. La mayoría de los niños obtienen buenos resultados, pero no todos los niños tienen la misma capacidad y, a veces, podemos encontrar algunos problemas. A lo largo de este caso de estudio analizaremos los problemas que encontramos y cómo resolverlos.

**Palabras clave:** Caso de estudio, Colegio Bilingüe, niños, dificultades, Necesidades especiales, ventajas, desventajas.

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## INTRODUCTION

First, we must present the situation in which we find ourselves to contextualize this case study.

We are in front of a bilingual school in which English is taught from the age of 3 and begin to know the sounds of letters with the method ".Read, Write, Inc".

It is a school where children learn to read and write at the same time in English and Spanish. Most children get good results, but we must consider that not all children have the same ability and sometimes we can find some problems.

What can we do with these children? Is it appropriate for these children to learn to read and write in both languages? Would it be better only to teach writing and reading in their mother tongue? Can it cause more problems?

Throughout this case study we will analyze the problems that we find and how to solve it.

## THEORETICAL REFERENCES OF READ, WRITE, INC.

It is a structured method for teaching reading and writing in English.

Taking into account that the school has 60% of students whose mother tongue is not English, reading and writing in this language is even more critical for their access to the rest of the curriculum, that is, to use reading as An instrument for learning.

## Reading

Based on phonological way. The phonological way is worked in a certain sequence so that the students can learn to decode the graphemes and pronounce the correct phoneme.

In Spanish we have 29 phonemes, whereas in English there are 44 for the 150 graphemes that represent them.

The graphemes and their corresponding phonemes are introduced progressively sequentially and words are inserted that follow the alphabetical rules "Green Words" so that they learn to say each phoneme separately pointing a finger of their hand for each phoneme "Fred Fingers" And then uniting them all to say the whole word while drawing a semicircle that encompasses all the fingers representing each of the sounds.

Common words that do not follow the alphabetical rules "Red Words"

Also used are small magnetic boards in which in pairs students collect different magnetic letters to form words that have been worked orally.

## Involvement of all teachers

It is recommended that all Primary and Secondary teachers use this methodology consistently to facilitate continuity in learning and avoid confusion. Hence, in the teacher training sessions that I attended, the method was presented to all teachers of both stages.

## Clusters by level of reading competence

It is advisable to perform an initial evaluation and then periodically, every 7-8 weeks to ensure the effective progression of each student within the method. So it is suggested that 9 skill levels be established along both stages, regardless of age. Therefore, it is very likely that the teacher that they have for the reading sessions will be different from the usual one, as will their classmates.

## Decoding first and understanding later

First, the grapheme / s - phoneme correspondence is taught in a sequence previously established with the indications pertinent to the teacher

Once the students are competent in the mechanics of reading, it is considered that they can concentrate on the comprehension of the text and later on its interpretation.

Thus, the graphemes are presented separately on cards with a cartoon as a mnemonic and with examples of words containing the grapheme / s

In addition, a poster is provided with the different graphemes grouped according to the phoneme with which they correspond. This poster is present in each of the Primary classrooms and is regularly reviewed as "warm-up exercise" at the beginning of the sessions of a higher level.

Also provided are games to learn to read words that include graphemes - learned phonemes.

For example, in a children's reading session I observed the children sitting on the floor in a circle around the teacher, who had kept in a non-transparent bag various objects known to the students, beginning with one of the Graphemes that had already worked a few moments and in previous sessions, so that in turn the students removed an object from the bag and had to decide which was the grapheme by which began the word that named the object.

The teacher had left on the floor the different cards corresponding to the 10 graphs that had already worked (m, n, p, t, d, a, s, i, or, g).

Once the right choice was made, I asked everyone to pronounce the phoneme corresponding to the grapheme and then the whole word.

Also, he showed them how to write the grapheme in the air with the index finger while giving them instructions and asked them to try all at once.

Although, whenever a word is introduced, teachers need to ensure that students understand its meaning, reading comprehension is introduced later and progression within the various stages of the method is based on their ability to establish the grapheme- Phoneme and not understanding. They are also taught to spell later.

### **Writing**

It has additional notebooks to work with writing and spelling words. These notebooks are linked to reading books by levels.

At a certain level small dictations are made. I attended a mid-level session. The teacher read the whole sentence first and then repeated parts of it many times in order, so he did not go on to the next part until he did not see that most of the class had already written the words involved. He warns them when he will only read the sentence 2 more times.

Once he finished the dictation, he explained the correction criteria for them to review their sentences. The capital letter at the beginning of the sentence was a tick, certain complicated graphemes could be two ticks, put the point at the end of each sentence was equivalent to a tick, etc.

At the class level they discussed the phonemes that composed some words that involved a certain degree of difficulty.

The students counted the total number of ticks they had reached and the teacher asked them to raise their hands, who had gotten so many ticks, to check the level reached by the class.

### **The 5 P's (Pace, Praise, Purpose, Participation and Passion)**

The sessions are designed to be dynamic, despite implying a high degree of repetition. Likewise, a rapid progression is sought even if English is not their first language.

Emphasis is placed on the importance of using positive group reinforcement to maintain attention and participation.

The different activities that compose this methodology have a clear purpose that it is easy for the teaching staff to transmit without requiring a lot of previous preparation and that stimulates the involvement of the students.

As for participation, the sessions are structured so that the teacher acts as a model for students to imitate how to pronounce a grapheme or how to write a grapheme in the air or how to pronounce the different phonemes of a word, etc. To establish these shifts, the teachers say: "my turn, your turn"

In addition, the work in pairs is much encouraged, so that for example once the teacher has worked at class level the correspondence between a series of graphemes - phonemes proceed to work in duos: one uses a wooden stick to go pointing the Graphemes that his partner has to be pronouncing so that he then reads the entire word of the corresponding book and vice versa. It encourages them to correct each other. It is intended that they take responsibility for their own learning and therefore gain autonomy.

Also included in the material is a little frog named Fred that teachers can use as a model when introducing new sounds and put together to form words

It is essential that teachers show a high level of energy and enthusiasm, changing the tone of voice when giving instructions and presenting a new activity, when you want to encourage participation, when you demonstrate, when giving positive reinforcement, etc.

### **CASE STUDY**

We are faced with a class of 20 children from Year 2 and there is a girl who has been in school with this kind of education since the age of 3.

Marta is a girl with mental retardation who has been in school since she was 3 years old at our school. At first she had difficulty remembering the letters but each time has been having more difficulty until the diagnosis was made a year ago. She is a girl who receives support twice a week from a specialist but also has goals adapted to her academic level. Now the parents are considering their schooling and the type of teaching more appropriate for her. So we must ask ourselves:

Is an adequate methodology being followed for Marta?

Is this kind of bilingual education the most appropriate?

Would it be convenient for Marta to have a teaching only in her mother tongue?

Is the problema coming from the method that is used in the teaching of reading and writing?

## PROBLEMS

Marta has the following difficulties:

- She is not able to decode all the letters of the words.
- Read with a speed that is not appropriate to her academic level.
- She does not write sentences independently.
- She does not write sentences for dictation.
- She write words by reversing some letters or omitting them.
- She is not able to keep up with the class.
- She does not understand the meaning of brief texts read.
- She follows very simple instructions (the rest of children are able to follow more complex instructions)

## SOLUTIONS

In the case of people with mental retardation, whatever the degree, the response considered more convenient by professionals has been not to enroll them in a bilingual model, in order not to increase the learning problems they already have in some Cases, in their first language.

However, the question of the possible benefits of early bilingual education on the cognitive and linguistic development of such students should be considered seriously, as much or more than in the case of children of normal development.

It has been shown how particular strategies in the teaching / learning of a second language, in a program that generates in the person who learns an additive bilingualism, have positive consequences in the general cognitive development for the majority and since the learning does not compete for a space and exclusive resources, there is no reason to think that part of this population with mental retardation can not obtain the same benefits of a bilingual program adapted to their needs, derived only in part from their IQ.

There are a lot of reasons for the enrichment at all levels that implies an education that enhances an additive bilingualism, which allows to consider the fact that a bilingual education can be, for this population, an educational instrument together with other intervention techniques or strategies.

In certain situations, besides, it is not an easy decision to give up the knowledge of two languages; When the family is bilingual, when the language of the social environment and that of the family are not the same ... 34

The data of C.I. And the assessment of cognitive development are therefore important factors to be taken into account in the evaluation, but they are only part of the global analysis necessary to make decisions regarding the linguistic model of education.

It can be affirmed that no immersion program, in itself, contributes to increase the academic problems, language difficulties and learning of this students and it is necessary to inform about the families and the teachers.

The programs of additive bilingualism have no cost for the personal or academic development of any child, whether of normal or difficult development, and of majority or minority language.

From this framework it is intended to promote reflection on decision-making. Which until now seemed already determined by the intellectual level of a part of the students, nevertheless it is necessary to qualify this general framework and thus, in the case of students with mental retardation, it will be necessary to take into account that individualized support will probably be indispensable by the tutor and other professionals of the center, to plan and carry out the relevant adaptations of the general program in each case (as indeed is also done in monolingual programs) and to keep in

mind the general criterion that children and Girls with this type of delay acquire language with another speed of learning and that the final development will be more "incomplete", with greater difference between the comprehensive and expressive levels, compared to the average number of students with CI Considered normal, and this will occur both in the acquisition of L1 and in the learning of L2.

It is quite obvious that the mistakes she makes are related to the syntactic and semantic system, which any child without difficulty could carry out correctly. However, errors in these fields committed by a child in a bilingual program are no different from a child of these personal characteristics in a monolingual program.

## STEPS TO FOLLOW

- To consider the socio-cultural level and the possible effects in oral language, in the development of reading, writing and learning, of a second language: uses of the language, environments, contextualization, precision, details ... , Cultural baggage acquired in an informal context ...

- Evaluate the possible difficulties or deficiencies and their effects in the acquisition of L1, in the learning of reading, writing and L2; Create a context that allows you to access the discovery of the personal strategies you use.

- To monitor and evaluate the development of the learning process of reading and writing: to observe what she knows how to do, to know and classify the mistakes he makes, as a sample of what he does not do well because he uses a certain strategy that induces repetition Of the error. Detect if the time you need is the same before any type of text or in any situation.

- Placing or locating the curriculum in a meaningful context, in which the communicative purpose is clear and authentic, in which people feel involved in the resolution of the task in a real situation, since neither the students with nee benefits Of reductionist situations, in which only one specific aspect is worked out and outside the real context.

- To relate the curriculum to the personal experiences of the students, since this makes the contents interesting and allows the participation of all the students in a respectful context, that knows how to value all the experiences and to enrich themselves with them.

- Incorporate written experiences, reading and learning in general, personal experiences, in order to organize the teaching process from the previous knowledge detected at the beginning of each activity through an initial "informal" assessment.

- Generate the desire to read before beginning the process of teaching reading literacy in L2 through children's literature appropriate to each age. This will cause them to be interested even in the details, to ask clarifying questions of the text and to negotiate the meaning, the meaning of the words in a given context. When it is interesting to know what a text says, strategies of clarification, of interaction with all available resources are mobilized.

- Involving parents, without changing their role, in the learning of their sons and daughters has shown to have positive effects, whatever the degree and time of the collaboration. Listening while your children read, even if they do not understand the language, since their job is not to correct mistakes or ask questions but to spend some time listening to the "stories" they want to tell and to be satisfied by it.

- Evaluate in cases in which other professionals have to intervene the advisability of the support is in L1 or L2, since the standardized answers are not always adequate and according to the circumstances either of the two criteria may be advisable.

## CONCLUSION:

As we have seen throughout the case study, when we are facing a child with difficulty, we must first analyze the factors and problems that presents to be able to give a solution. In the first place, it seemed obvious that the teaching method was not adequate and that perhaps a monolingual education would be the most convenient for Marta. However, after several studies, we can say that the problems that Marta presents, would also present them in a monolingual education and that the enrichment that Marta receives from this education is much greater.

As for the type of reading and writing program used, it is not significant or influences her difficulties in writing and reading, because with any other method we have used, she has the same difficulties.

Therefore, with the necessary curricular adaptations and support by specialists, Marta will be able to learn gradually by benefiting from this type of education.

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