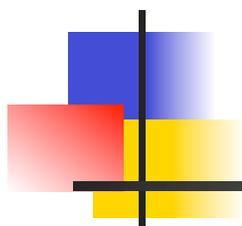


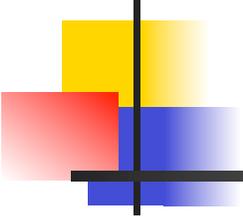
# Cross-linguistic Transfer of Reading Skills for Children Learning to Read in English and Spanish



*What does the evidence tell  
us?*

Doris Luft Baker

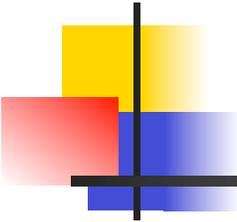
Institute on Beginning Reading  
Day 2  
June 24, 2005



# Objectives

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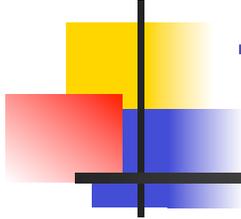
- Theoretical framework
- Phonemic awareness
- Phonics
- Fluency and Accuracy
- Vocabulary
- Reading Strategies to develop comprehension



# Cummins's Theoretical Framework

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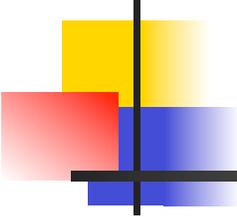
- The threshold level hypothesis
- The developmental interdependence hypothesis
- Problems associated with both theories
  - Imprecise definition
  - Little direct empirical evidence for the threshold level hypothesis



# Phonemic Awareness Transfer

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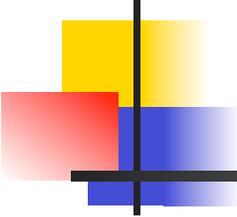
- Spanish and English are both alphabetic languages
- PA develops in stages in both languages
  - discriminate words by its sounds
  - alliteration
  - Syllabic awareness
  - Onsets and rimes



# Evidence of PA Transfer

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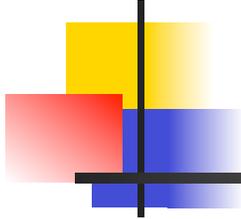
- Strong phonological awareness (PA) skills are good predictors of reading in the first and second languages. (Durgunoglu, Nagy, and Hancin-Bhatt, 1993; Lindsey, Manis, & Bailey, 2003).
- Ceiling effect of PA in Spanish
  - Spanish has 22-24 phonemes and 30 letters (including ll, rr, and ch).
  - English has 43-46 phonemes and 26 letters



# Phonics

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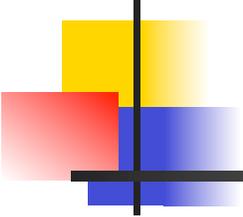
- Understanding the alphabetic principle.
- Decoding nonwords in Spanish is strongly correlated with decoding nonwords in English ( $r = 0.73$ ,  $p < .01$ ; Bialystok, Luk, and Kwan, 2005).



# Fluency and Accuracy

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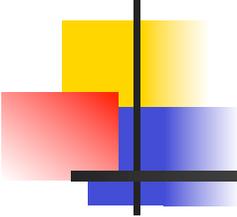
- Common patterns:
  - Students with reading difficulties in English may have poor accuracy and slow rate.
  - Students with reading difficulties in Spanish may have high accuracy and slow rate (Jong & Leij, 1999; Wimmer & Mayringer, 2002).



# Vocabulary Transfer

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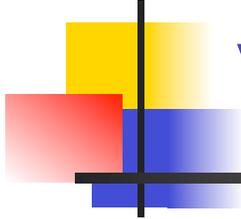
- Vocabulary is a strong predictor of reading comprehension in both English and Spanish (Nagy et al. 1993; Geva & Petrulis-Wright, 1999)



# Cognate recognition

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- Students know the word in Spanish and can identify the word as an English cognate
- Difficult words in English are related to frequently known words in Spanish (e.g. *encounter* vs. *encuentro*)
- Cognate recognition depends on similar spelling and morphological patterns (e.g. cafeteria vs. cafetería; respond vs. responder; *but* occur vs. ocurrir)
- Occurs at higher levels, not lower levels of reading proficiency

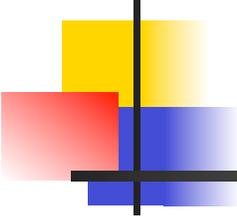


# Vocabulary Strategy (cont...)

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- Definitions

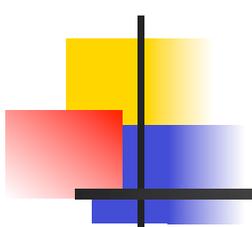
- Informal Definitions (e.g. *A knife is sharp and we can find it in the kitchen.*)
- Formal Definitions(e.g. *A knife is a tool for cutting food*)



# Reading Strategies

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- Use *orthographic, phonetic, semantic, or syntactic* cues to derive word meaning.
- *Read aloud, question* what doesn't make sense, *integrate* relevant prior knowledge

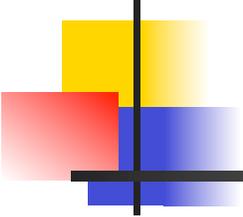


# What does NOT transfer from Spanish to English?

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- \*Vowel Sounds (e.g. long /e/ in eat or short /i/ in it, etc)
- \*English consonant sounds in the beginning or ending of words (e.g. /sp/, /h/, /th/, etc.)
- \*Grammar Features (e.g. definite articles, subject omission, adjective after noun, etc.)
- False cognates (e.g. realize vs. realizar, gas, etc.)
- Polysemus words (e.g. “banco,” “dirt”)

\*Reference: *Handbook for English Language Learners*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin; pp R5-R15)



# Instructional Recommendations

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- Focus on English phonemes during English literacy instruction.
- Teach *explicitly* the importance of sound recognition.
- Consider that if students can decode in Spanish they probably can decode in English.

# Instructional

## Recommendations cont....

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- Teach cognate awareness *explicitly*. (This is found to be developmental; Nagy et al. 1993, Hancin-Bhatt & Nagy, 1994).
- Teach vocabulary *systematically and explicitly* (from concrete use of words in multiple contexts to formal definitions).
- *Integrate* relevant prior knowledge to text content.