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# A STUDY OF SYNTHETIC PHONICS TEACHING IN ARAGÓN

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## ABSTRACT

The way in which literacy is being taught in Spain has changed in the recent years. A Synthetic Phonics approach has very often been adapted from Britain to our Spanish schools. This study analyzes how this adaptation and implementation is being carried out in foreign language lessons and what is required in order to deliver effective literacy teaching. In doing so, a checklist and a questionnaire have been carried out in one British school as well as in three Spanish schools. All the literature read and analyzed, as well as the results obtained from the observations have enabled us to propose some improvements, which adapted to the context, will ensure high-quality and effective literacy teaching.

*Keywords:* Literacy skills; Synthetic Phonics; Teacher training; Improvements

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## **1. Introduction:**

English is by far the foreign language most taught in nearly all countries at all educational levels. At the end of compulsory education, the four communicative skills have equal standing in nearly all curricula (Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe, 2012). For the last years, in an attempt to improve the teaching of English as a second language in our country, much research has been focused on the importance of literacy. Therefore, Spanish schools are trying to adapt the way English literacy is being taught in the United Kingdom to their English lessons. The importance of learning to read is widely known as it is vital for becoming a literate and an educated person (Lewis and Ellis, 2006). In addition, reading offers opportunities for enjoyment, for increasing our knowledge of the world and for enhancing our imagination and creativity. However, it is important to read not only in the mother tongue, but also in the foreign language that pupils are studying. According to Driscoll and Frost (1999), teachers should provide children with a set of general rules which will enable them to decode familiar language items and the unknown ones.

The purpose of this research is to analyze the way in which Synthetic Phonics are taught in Britain and how they are being adapted to Spain, as a method of teaching literacy in an English as a second language lesson. After that, it will be possible to propose some improvements for the Spanish way of teaching phonics in order to be able to deliver effective phonics lessons.

In order to achieve this aim, a checklist and a questionnaire have been carried out in Britain and in Spain, as the main methodology used for this project. They are based on different aspects which are important when teaching phonics and the conclusions reached have been very useful due to the fact that they have helped me propose those improvements

for the Spanish context. It will certainly be very enriching for my future career as an English teacher.

This analysis includes a theoretical framework in which the whole project is based on, as it is necessary in order to reach the conclusions. It is mainly a brief overview of the theories, approaches and history of the teaching of Synthetic Phonics in Britain and in Spain. The research also covers the main results of the observations carried out, some conclusions and improvements for the Spanish context and useful recommendations which may help become a better professional.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

The aim of this dissertation is to analyze the importance of Synthetic Phonics, as well as the different methods used for teaching them systematically in England and in Spain.

In doing so, several observations have been carried out. Therefore, another objective set in this research is to analyze the way Synthetic Phonics is being adapted to our Spanish context, in order to propose some improvements.

Many different approaches about how children learn to read and write have arisen throughout British history, from alphabet, phonic and whole word methods to whole language ones. Many researchers have been seeking the best method to teach literacy. However, in the development of these theories, phonic methods have taken on a special role. The Literacy Strategy was introduced in 1999, but it failed to increase reading standards. Therefore, different research was carried out. The Rose Review (2006) was based on one of those studies, which took place in Clackmannanshire in Scotland. It claims that children should be taught through an approach termed ‘synthetic phonics’ instead of being taught through the phonics approach promoted in the Literacy Strategy which was known as ‘analytic phonics’.

The Rose Review (2006) also argues that awareness of and competence in spoken language is key to developing effective literacy.

These facts led to important debates between using Synthetic or Analytic phonics, but finally Rose's recommendation resulted in the promotion of Systematic Synthetic Phonics teaching. Thus, British government funding has now been provided to support schools to acquire full programs, reading books, resources and training based on the official 'Core Criteria' for evaluating a synthetic phonics programme of work. In addition, the National Curriculum for England (2014) refers specifically to the need for teaching through a "rigorous and systematic phonics programme".

Regarding Spain, bilingualism is quite usual nowadays and its popularity is increasing. Pound (2008) states some advantages of bilingualism such as increased self-esteem, positive sense of identity, positive attitudes towards language learning, and increased problem-solving abilities and flexibility in thinking. Although teaching foreign languages has become a common practice at Spanish schools, Bilingualism was not considered an educative policy until 1996, when the Spanish Ministry of Education signed an agreement with the British Council. This meant the implementation of a bilingual curriculum based on up to 40% of the hours delivered in the foreign language and the possibility of teaching some subjects in that language.

Over the last two decades, Europe has witnessed an increase in the duration of compulsory foreign language teaching. This increase has been exclusively achieved by lowering the age at which this teaching begins. Some countries are currently introducing reforms to lower the starting age for the compulsory learning of the first foreign language (Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe, 2012). This is something that has also happened in Spain, where students start learning a foreign language in the second cycle of

pre-primary education, and in 10 out of 17 Autonomous Communities, as early as the age of 3. This will be analyzed later due to the fact that many of these young learners do not know how to read and write in their mother tongue at that age and this should make teachers consider what the most effective strategies are and how they could be adapted to their students' cognitive development level.

Early Years Education is considered to be the foundation stage for children's language development. These years are crucial for young children in developing their first language and building their cultural identity. During this stage of development, children expand their experiences and their ways of communication and representation while they construct knowledge of the world which surrounds them (Clarke, 2009). Neurologists, psychologists and educators speak of sensitive periods or critical learning periods as moments when learning naturally takes place.

According to the critical period hypothesis postulated by Lenneberg (1967), the ability to acquire language declines at puberty because the brain loses its plasticity (a significant fact in language learning). This hypothesis claims that unless individuals acquire a second language before puberty they will never achieve native-like proficiency in pronunciation and grammatical knowledge. However, researchers disagree over how long the critical language period is; some of them think that it ends by the age of 6 or 7 while others state that it lasts until puberty, around 11 or 12 years old. Most researchers agree on the added difficulty which students find when they learn a second language after that critical period. From that moment of development, the learner finds it difficult to access the Language Acquisition Device (LAD), an instinctive mental capacity which enables a child to acquire and produce language. The learner, at that moment of development, also finds it difficult to access the Universal Grammar, a theory which suggests that the common properties shared by all natural human

languages are manifested as innate linguistic abilities (Chomsky, 1965). In other words, this theory refers to those skills which have been acquired without having been taught.

A recent study in the University of London (Thomas and Knowland, 2008) about how sensitive periods affect the acquisition of higher cognitive abilities in humans gives us some interesting theoretical support for this study, as it explains that it is essential to provide children with motivation, attention and appropriate strategies in order to learn new skills after sensitive periods have closed. According to Thomas and Johnson (2008) plasticity, which is one of the main features of the human brain, apart from being the ability to change behavior based on experience (Thomas and Knowland, 2008), plays an important role in the acquisition of phonology and morphosyntax. “L2 attainment shows a linear decline with age: The later you start, the lower your final level is likely to be” (Thomas and Johnson, 2008, p.4). Therefore, all these theories must be taken into account, as the Spanish schools observed begin to teach Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) in the early years and not in the second cycle of Primary Education, as was usual a few years ago.

Foreign language teaching methods employed throughout history used to be focused on reaching a good command of the grammar structures of the language. In addition, the teacher was thought to play the main role in the learning process. However, new teaching methods, which pay attention to the context and to teaching children how to deal with different communicative situations, are becoming increasingly popular. Thus, and basing our methods on the ones used in Britain for many years, teaching Synthetic phonics is a common phenomena nowadays in Spain. Furthermore, in the 9<sup>th</sup> of May of 2007 Order, from the Education, Culture and Sports Department, (Orden del 9 de mayo de 2007, del Departamento de Educación, Cultura y Deporte) on which the Primary Aragonese Curriculum is based, there is a whole block, known as “Block 2: Reading and Writing” which intends to develop the

discursive competence in the written form, not only in relation to comprehension but also to the expression of messages in the foreign language. Therefore, literacy teaching must be contextualized so that children find their learning useful and both input they are exposed to and output they produce, appear as real communicative use of language (Long, 1985; Swain, 2000) Thus, the improvements proposed in this dissertation try to address the necessary aspects to achieve these aims.

As part of the theoretical framework, it is important to mention two different literacy methods, Jolly Phonics and THRASS, which appeared during the realization of this project. It is also important to know about the origin, purposes and strategies of each one.

Jolly Phonics, has become increasingly popular in Spain. The reason why it became so popular in Britain many years ago should be explained in order to know why it is being used nowadays in our country.

One of the authors of Jolly Phonics is Sue Lloyd. She was a primary school teacher in Britain who developed a reading method based on mimics and gestures. Her main objectives were to eradicate illiteracy in primary school children, as well as to help pupils who fell behind with literacy and who had lower levels than their classmates.

Jolly Phonics uses the synthetic phonics method of teaching the letter sounds in a way that is fun and multi-sensory ([www.jollylearning.co.uk](http://www.jollylearning.co.uk)). It also enables children to become fluent readers. As it is explained in their books, it is mainly focused on five basic skills: learning the letter sounds, learning letter formation, blending, identifying sounds in words and spelling the tricky words.

It has been proven by many studies that children taught systematically with phonics learn around twice as fast, in comparison to those who learn using other reading methods such

as analytic phonics. Children are said to have a reading age 12 months ahead of their actual age after one year. Some evidence also claimed that boys do as well as girls, instead of worse, as had been found in earlier studies (Brooks, Pugh and Schagen, 1996). This good performance was also given by children from poorer socio-economic backgrounds and those who do not have English as their first language, avoiding falling behind (Stuart, 1999). However, there are also opponents who state that such teaching may detract from the meaning of the text as well as from the enjoyment of reading. (<http://jollylearning.co.uk/2013/05/09/is-the-emphasis-on-grammar-right/?submit=view>)

Another method to take into consideration for this analysis is the THRASS method, an acronym for Teaching Handwriting, Reading and Spelling Skills. It was designed to build both content and pedagogical knowledge. THRASS method also provides multi-sensorial resources and activities that can be used across the school at any year level. It was designed specifically as a teacher training skill-base for the teaching of speaking, reading, spelling and writing skills in English, as a first or other language. (<http://www.thrass.com.au/about-thrass/>). The THRASS Charts (Appendix I), which are an easy teaching tool, include the 44 phonemes of spoken English as well as the 120 most common graphemes of written English. There are different THRASS Charts and the sounds are split into vowels and consonants. The THRASS phonemes Charts show a clear physical representation of each of the 44 speech sounds of English by isolating each sound into a “sound box”. (<http://www.thrass.com.au/about-thrass/history-of-thrass/>)

Something to take into consideration is that THRASS method has been used just in one of the schools analyzed during the research. That school was the one from Britain, where they start to use this method in Year 1 in order to take a step forward and begin with the alternative spellings. They use Jolly Phonics method in Reception but change to THRASS

method from Year 1 onwards. However, none of the Spanish schools observed use the THRASS method and none of the teachers of the classrooms have worked with it or even heard of it before.

It is important to consider as well what is known as Phonological Awareness. Torgesen, Wagner and Rashotte (1994) describe it as a sensitivity to and awareness of the phonological structures of the words and split it into two sub-groups: phonological analysis and phonological synthesis. The first one, phonological analysis is the ability to identify or isolate phonemes from whole words and the second one, phonological synthesis is the ability to blend phonemes, which are presented separately, back into whole words. It is of vital importance to consider the Phonological Awareness as Spanish children find developing it more difficult than English children, due to the fact that the phonemes used for Spanish language are not the same as the ones used in English. Therefore, all the strategies used to teach phonemes must involve the development of Phonological Awareness.

### **3. Methodology**

Many aspects must be taken into account when trying to analyze how to deliver a good Synthetic Phonics lesson. One of the main issues is observation, which plays a crucial role in classroom research, but also in supporting the professional growth of teachers as well as in the process of school development (Hopkins, 2008). The opportunity of attending lessons in both countries, Britain and Spain, has been crucial to develop this project.

In order to carry out these observations, a checklist (Appendix II) and a questionnaire (Appendix III) have been designed, trying to include all the essential aspects for delivering a good Phonics lesson. For their development, two authors have been considered, as they have proposed some theories and examples of how a typical synthetic phonics lesson should be,

after gathering data for many years. One of these authors is Lyndsay Macnair, who has a specific chapter related to this issue in Lewis and Ellis' book *Phonics: Practice, research and policy* (2006) and the other one is Bald (2007) whose chapter called *What makes an effective lesson?* covers an extensive amount of information providing a deep knowledge of this subject. All the aspects taken into account for the design of the checklist and questionnaire are going to be explained in the following sections.

First of all, it is important to consider the revision of previous teaching as one of the main parts of a good Synthetic Phonics lesson. Lewis and Ellis propose that these typical lessons should include a revision of previous phonics by using either letter flashcards or magnetic wedges. As teachers, we cannot teach new concepts each time without revising them all. This would mean lots of new information given to the pupils but they would not learn anything. Therefore, as part of the checklist, revisions of previous phonics taught and summarizing of phonics covered are included so that this aspect can be deeply analyzed.

Secondly, regarding resources and materials, either methods' or teacher's own materials are equally used in literacy lessons. There is no one better than the other, but it is important to look analytically at the talking and the thinking that the worksheet or activity promotes in practice. Lewis and Ellis (2006) contend that the activities and worksheets that give opportunity to clarify understandings and to practise and consolidate knowledge are the ones that must be used. They state as vital the use of resources such as flashcards, magnetic letters on individual boards and magnetic wedges with the alphabet along the top. They also claim the importance of visual aids displayed within the classroom. Trying to analyze the materials and resources used in the classroom, as well as the origin of them, that is, whether they are made by the teacher or not, some aspects such as the employing of other tools (i.e.

computer, IWB...) and references made to them during the lesson, are going to be analyzed as part of the checklist.

The methods used by teachers must be taken into account as well. There are many different methods or types of activities such as small group discussion, student-led activities, co-operative learning groups, etc. All of them have their own advantages and disadvantages and can be more or less useful depending on the objective of the activity. For example, Lewis and Ellis (2006) claim the huge impact that sharing writing with their classmates has on the class. Apart from this, it is also important to deliver a lesson which engages children. Therefore, both the development of many types of activities and lessons which engage students, are considered within the checklist.

As part of the theories on which the designs of the checklist and the questionnaire have been based, interaction between students and teachers must be considered. It must be constant throughout the lesson. Typical interaction in a Primary classroom may include teachers explaining the activities and giving feedback to pupils who then perform the activities and ask questions to teachers. For this reason, pupils' participation must take place during the lesson, requiring the development of activities that promote interaction. There is another important issue in this section, the address and awareness of individual student learning needs. Teachers need to notice and respond to difficulties quickly, because the sooner we realize their problems, the faster we will face them (Lewis and Ellis, 2006). Many aspects of this section have been used for the checklist and the questionnaire. They are related to the spontaneous or repetitive language produced by learners, the awareness of individual student learning needs and how these are addressed.

Contents are the specific knowledge, skills and abilities children have to learn, that is why it is important that they are well-organized in the course syllabus, following a coherent

scheme of work. Two types of schemes of work are considered, the ones designed by publishers and those created by teachers. Bald (2007) explains that many scholars defend the use of published schemes of work, as they are well structured. They also contend that schools may find the one which meets their needs with little or no alteration. If an alteration is required, it is better to adapt it instead of making up a new one. On the other hand, others claim that if you create your own, it will help you include children with serious learning difficulties, as well as make up some good systems for explaining some aspects of phonics that are not mentioned in other published schemes. However, both sides agree that schemes must be easy to read and to use. There are even opponents to the creation of schemes of work, as they do not take into account the contexts of their implementation or adapt to the changes within the development of the course (Lewis and Ellis, 2006).

Apart from being well-organized, clear and structured, the topics must be related to students' experience and previous knowledge. Everyone learns more effectively when they understand how the learning will be useful and can link the learning activity they have been set with wider and more general experiences (Lewis and Ellis, 2006). Furthermore, an appropriate stage for resources and schemes is needed, as well as a provision of support to adapt resources and make them appropriate to the needs of the child. So, as part of the checklist, the structure of contents, the relation of them to children's experience and previous knowledge and the selection of an appropriate level of learning have been considered.

What is also required for success in a phonics lesson is that both teacher and children know the learning outcomes of each lesson. To achieve this, it is important to have a well-organised scheme, as has been explained before, but this scheme needs to be used in conjunction with professional judgment (Bald, 2007). Thus, children's clear understanding of what they need to learn is essential. As this is one of the main aspects that will be deeply

analyzed, one specific section includes this issue, which regards if children are aware of the learning outcomes of the lesson.

In addition, a good command of phonetics and specific training for teachers are required. Teachers have to detect and address errors. In other words, they have to know how to correct them and what type of feedback is advisable to give. Bald (2007) states that it is necessary to try to correct them all along the lesson. Doing this on a regular basis will help children develop individual strategies to avoid their own errors. What is more, he contends that this approach can be used with both weak and very strong spellers. Thus, error correction has been included in the checklist, trying to analyze the types of error, ways of correcting them and frequency in which they are corrected.

Finally, the last point of the checklist and the questionnaire regards assessment. It is necessary to assess not only learning, but also understanding. In order to do so, we can consider many different approaches or tools. Assessment can be made from direct observation and it allows you to know what it is going wrong and why (Bald, 2007). Due to this fact, two sections regarding assessment of learning and checking of understanding are included.

After having explained the different sections of the checklist and questionnaire, which are necessary in order to complete our analysis, a description of the observation process will be given.

The first two observations were carried out in Jervoise School in Birmingham, in the United Kingdom. It is a state school from a low-class district, which has experienced a big change in the last years. Nowadays, it asks for parents' help and participation and its main objective is "to prepare our children to go into the world and make it a better place" (Jervoise School Mission statement). One of the classrooms observed was Reception, with children

aged 4 and 5 years old. They use Jolly Phonics as the main method for teaching literacy. The other class was Year 1, aged 5 and 6, who used THRASS from that year level onwards.

The other observations took place in three schools from Zaragoza, in a total of eight classrooms. It has to be noted that all of them used the Jolly Phonics method. One of those schools has been working with an integrated English curriculum and has been supported by the British Council for seven years. It is a state school situated in a low-class district, and the people involved in this school claim the importance of learning in two different languages, as it has positive effects in the development of children's cognitive abilities.

The other school, which is mainly of middle-class families, is situated in the city centre of Zaragoza. This religious and semi-private school delivers up to 20% of the school hours in English, since September of this academic year. The classrooms observed were both from the first cycle of Primary Education.

The last school is also placed in the city centre of Zaragoza and it is comprised of middle-low class families. It is a state school and it is the only one, from the schools observed, which has no agreement signed for developing bilingualism. The classrooms observed here belong to the first cycle of Primary Education.

#### **4. Outcomes**

Prior to the analysis of the data, the information has been collected and organized with the goal of understanding and interpreting it in an easier way. For that reason, some tables (Appendix IV) have been designed to represent the ten observations carried out. The results have been split into the ones obtained from the British classrooms and the ones obtained from the Spanish ones. A total has been added, as well as the percentage of that total, as it will be meaningful in order to analyze all the results as a whole.

As a way of including an overview of the data obtained, the main results which have led us to the conclusions and improvements are going to be exposed.

As a general overview, most classrooms coincide with each other in the same aspects or sections of the checklist and the questionnaire. For instance, they all employ Phonics materials. In addition, it could be said that many classrooms use support through visual aids but not all of them make references to them during the lesson (Table II). All the teachers promote participation and create an environment where most students are engaged. However, it has to be noted that just half of them employ additional learning activities, such as small group discussions, student-led activities, cooperative learning groups, etc. (Table III)

They also coincide with each other in the selection of experiences appropriate to children's level of learning, as well as in the giving of clear instructions and the well-organized structure of contents (Table V). Finally, there is another coincidence with regard to the words used to illustrate Phonics, which are commonplace words (Table VII).

Apart from these high percentages, there are also lower percentages, which will be really useful for the conclusions and improvements. For instance, just three classrooms summarize phonics covered during the lesson (Table I), which has been proven to be very important. It has to be noted that one classroom of each Spanish school do it, so it cannot be claimed to be a common practice in the whole school. Regarding students output, in just 3 out of the 10 classrooms observed students produce spontaneous acts of communication instead of repetition (Table IV). Once again, in just 3 classrooms children know the learning outcomes (table VI) and understanding is checked along the lesson (Table VIII). Finally, another important aspect which will lead to significant conclusions is that just 4 teachers, one of each school, have received specific Synthetic Phonics training (Table IX).

As has been explained before, the main aim of this project is to analyze the way in which Synthetic Phonics is being taught in Britain and how it has been adapted to Spain. Thus, establishing a comparison between the British classrooms observed and the Spanish ones, it seems that regarding revision of contents and the summarizing of phonemes covered, Spanish schools do better than the British one (Table I). However, it is not like that if we take resources into consideration, because both British classrooms employ visual aids for supporting phonics and make references to them during the lesson, and just 5 of the Spanish classrooms do so (Table II).

In addition, with regard to teacher-student interaction, none of the British classrooms address individual needs. It contrasts with the Spanish ones, in which most of them do it (Table IV). Apart from this, there is also another example of contrast between British and Spanish schools, the selection of the words used to illustrate Phonics in other areas. None of the British classrooms employ Phonics words in other contexts or areas (Table VII), this huge difference will be really useful for the outcomes of the project.

To conclude the analysing of the data, as well as the analysis of the adaptation of this British method to our context, I just want to point out the frequency with which each phoneme is introduced (Table X), as there are many differences between introducing a new phoneme for children whose first language is English and those for whom English is the foreign language they are learning.

Therefore, while British classrooms introduce a new phoneme daily, Spanish schools do not. The schools analyzed, introduce a new phoneme each week, or even one every two weeks. It has to be noted, that all the teachers interviewed claim that children do not move on to the next phase until they feel secure.

## **5. Innovative proposals for teaching Synthetic Phonics in Spain:**

The analysis of the results obtained by observing the different classrooms and carrying out the checklist and the questionnaire led me to propose some improvements for teaching Synthetic Phonics in Spain. This is because, it is quite popular nowadays in our country and as teachers, we have to make sure that we provide children with the best opportunities for education and learning.

Therefore, as part of this project, some proposals are going to be explained, which will be related to different theories suggested and supported by many authors, as it has been considered an important issue by researchers for many years. In addition, a selection of the items with lower percentages, which are the main issues that the Spanish way of teaching Synthetic Phonics should improve, has been carried out in order to propose some improvements. It has to be noted that these teaching improvements are going to be focused on Synthetic Phonics methods, as it has been the main issue of research during the project but it is important to consider that whereas teaching Synthetic Phonics is very effective for languages such as Italian or Spanish, it is only one phonics teaching method among many that are useful for a language like English (Goouch and Lambirth, 2007). In fact, teaching to read and write in English is much more difficult than teaching that in other transparent orthography languages such as Italian, Spanish, Finnish or Swahili. There are more patterns involved, as well as exceptions to those patterns, and teachers need to be aware of this. Teachers also have to face these irregularities, which usually cause particular problems for children in the earliest stages of reading and writing. Our goal of teaching it to make this easier and to enable children to tackle the problems with as much enjoyment and as little stress as possible (Bald, 2007). A study adapted from Seymour et al. (2003) in which the grapheme-phoneme recoding skills for monosyllables in 14 European languages were analyzed, showed that children

learning to read languages like German or Spanish showed accuracy levels above 90 per cent correct, for both words and non-words. In contrast, children learning languages with less orthographic consistency, such as those who learn to read in English, showed lower levels. Therefore, we will have to consider the difficulty of English orthography when teaching literacy to young learners.

Furthermore, much research on effective literacy teaching shows that a quality literacy programme is not only about teaching material, the curriculum and set procedures, but also the teacher, as it is thought to be the most critical element in building an effective literacy programme (Lewis and Ellis, 2006). It is important to consider, as well, that the improvements that are going to be explained have to take the context into account. This is because, the teaching and learning of phonics have to be set in context, as we have to consider as well what children have to learn before making the decision of how to teach it (Lewis and Ellis, 2006).

The first improvement is to summarize all the phonics covered during the lesson. Lewis and Ellis (2006) suggest a way of doing it, by asking children to read words from the board that reinforce the previous phonemes taught. However, it does not mean that lessons must be focused on re-visiting and re-explaining old ideas too often, because this will make children become bored and switch off (Lewis and Ellis, 2006). Instead, an improvement I can propose, as it was an effective activity I observed in one of the Spanish classrooms, is to play games in groups using flashcards. The flashcards may have pictures with representative things for each phoneme drawn on them and other flashcards could have the phonemes written on them as well. Students have to match each phoneme with the right picture. Thus, playing these games, it is possible to review and summarize the phonics covered in an easy and engaging way.

Another improvement is related to resources, materials and making references to visual aids during the lesson. According to Bald (2007), resources are an important tool for what they do rather than for what they are. There is an important difference between the British classrooms and the Spanish ones, due to the fact that the British children observed used individual Phonics Charts along the lesson, as they had a pile of laminated charts (Appendix I) in their tables and they felt free to use them whenever they wanted. On the other hand, none of the Spanish classrooms use these resources, which as far as I am concerned, and basing this affirmation on the experience I gained in the British school, are very useful. In this way, an improvement proposed would be to use these materials to support students' learning. Specific ideas for using these resources are asking children how they would write a word and ask them to find the phoneme in the laminated Chart, singing the THRASS songs, asking examples of words in which a phoneme is used, etc.

Table III shows that just 4 of the teachers observed employ additional learning activities. This should be reconsidered because offering a wide range of activities, all of them interesting and stimulating, would lead to a perfect moment in which whatever children chose to do, they would be doing something the teacher would like them to do (Bald, 2007). Thus, engaging children with different types of activities, such as student-led activities, co-operative learning groups, activities which involve stories, etc. would be advisable and a good improvement for delivering an effective Phonics lesson. Bald (2007) also suggests that the use of talk partners to discuss questions and the use of small whiteboards for informal writing involves children and is a good way for managing the class. In addition, Lewis and Ellis, (2007) contend that whole class phonics teaching is not effective for the majority of children. They also contend that providing children with verbal interactions, instructions and written materials that are at the right level and at the right time, is easier if they are not working as a

whole group but rather in pairs or small groups. One improvement I propose is based on the literacy lesson observed in one of the British classrooms. Each child had a little whiteboard and they were asked by the teacher to write the words she said. It seemed to be a lesson designed for the class as a whole, but she often asked the children as well to discuss in pairs or in groups how a word was spelled. Thus, combining activities designed for the whole class with co-operative activities, would be a good improvement which leads to a more effective lesson.

According to table IV, and as has been explained in the results, most of the student's production was repetition instead of spontaneous acts of communication. Therefore, as Bald (2007) states, much of the teaching is built into the environment, and teachers have to create a productive triangle between the children, the activity and him or her. If this advice is followed, there will appear an effective point and purpose for social interaction, which will promote the development of spoken discourse. The improvement proposed is to engage children and make them interact as many times as possible. One way of achieving this would be by doing activities in which communication is required or asking children questions about things they like that are linked to the topic they are learning as well.

As the percentages were not too good with regard to the address and awareness of individual needs (table IV), a necessary improvement is going to be explained. We all know that in any group, there are usually children who fall behind and find literacy more difficult than others. We should plan in advanced how to deal with these difficulties, in order to tackle these problems as soon as they arise. The improvement proposed calls for the creation or adaptation of the scheme of work in order to integrate children with learning difficulties into it (Bald, 2007). Furthermore, Bald (2007) claims that in order to help a child who is struggling with any aspect of reading or writing, we need to find the answers to these two

questions: what exactly the child finds difficult and how the child needs to adjust her or his thinking in order to work more effectively. In addition, the answers will be found out by observation of the child, first in class and afterwards individually. Teachers should collect evidence of the child's difficulties in learning and write complete notes in order to give effective support. The more detailed these notes are, the better. These notes should include a number of questions such as what words the child is reading effortlessly, if he or she tends to guess the word from the first letter, if he or she hesitates or stumbles, or even reads too quickly, if he or she has any limitations in his or her speaking and listening (as teachers need to be aware of how children's pronunciation affects their problems (Lewis and Ellis, 2006), if he or she has any behavioural difficulties, etc. (Bald, 2007). Some ways of helping weaker readers are giving them texts to read provided with multiple repetitions of the same words and helping children to spell words through numerous teacher-scaffolded interactions (Lewis and Ellis, 2006). The main improvement regarding awareness of individual needs I propose is to pay attention to each child and try to do our best since the beginning. This means, not only to solve the problem once the individual need is detected but also to try to avoid it before it appears. Thus, we could ask the Spanish language teacher if there is any child who has fallen behind in reading and writing in Spanish so that we can prevent him or her from falling behind as well in the foreign language.

The percentages regarding the selection of concepts and contents appropriate to level of learning and related to children's previous experience and knowledge (table V) are quite good. However, they have to be mentioned as well but tried to be improved to a lesser extent. This is because sometimes, links that seem obvious to teachers are not as obvious to children, who often ring-fence knowledge and think it is only applicable to particular activities or situations (Lewis and Ellis, 2006). In addition, everyone learns more effectively if the

learning activity is linked with other general experiences. The reason of this is that children need to apply new knowledge many times before it moves from working memory to long-term memory (Lewis and Ellis, 2006). Good advice for achieving this, as well as for adapting the learning to the children's cognitive level, would be to select "stage appropriate" resources and scheme of work and to provide support to adapt them to the children's needs, as Lewis and Ellis (2006) contend. The improvement I propose is to be aware of children's cognitive level and to know what they are prepared to learn at this stage. We should provide children with the appropriate activities for learning based on their previous experiences and background knowledge.

Whether children were aware of the learning outcomes or not, was something checked during the observations, and the results have not been too good. Therefore, one of the improvements must be that teachers explain the purpose of each lesson at the beginning, as well as what has been learnt at the end (Bald, 2007). In fact, the teachers from the 3 classrooms in which children know their learning outcomes, claimed that in order to achieve it, they give a brief explanation at the beginning of the lesson. However, in one of those classrooms, the teacher says that children know that the objectives of each Phonics lesson is to learn a new sound and vocabulary related to that sound, so she does not remind them of the learning outcomes each time, because she assumes that children know them. I would suggest that teachers explicitly make children aware of what they are learning and what they will have learnt once they have achieved the aims of the lesson. This is related to the Learning to learn Competence, which involves developing the ability to organize the learning by controlling the time and information individually and in group.

Regarding assessment, observation is an important ability which teachers should develop because it is essential in the assessment process. Teachers observe children doing

activities and they draw conclusions about different aspects of children's development. Assessment for learning should be part of effective planning of teaching and learning. According to Leung and Mohan (2004) much of what teachers and learners do in classrooms can be called assessment. That is referred to tasks and questions which promote learners to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills. Assessment is a way of providing information for both the teacher and the learner about the progress towards learning goals. It involves reflection, dialogue and decision-making.

If teachers develop good assessment, it will show which children have found an idea difficult. In addition, if we introduced the work in advance of the lesson rather than afterwards, we would achieve an important aim: children would make sense of work instead of supporting children after they had failed (Bald, 2007). Some points to look for when assessing would be what the child gets right without hesitation, what words he or she hesitates over and if he or she can finally work it out, if the child knows now any words that have previously caused problems to him or her or if the child corrects any of his or her own mistakes. This last point is often the most positive sign of progress because it shows growing control (Bald, 2007).

The following signs of progress need to be seen in terms of student's needs and abilities: correcting own errors without prompting, reduced error rate in reading, faster and more fluent reading of texts, lower rate of spelling error in writing, reading voluntarily, for pleasure of instruction, reading environmental print more easily (print found in everyday life on roads, products, adverts, etc.) and improved results in school tests, as well as in the national or standardised ones (Bald, 2007).

Good practices of assessment are going to be proposed. In the British school, I was able to participate in one of the assessments carried out. Each child was asked individually to

read a sheet on which many words were written. The teacher ticked the ones he or she were able to read and made a circle around the ones which were more difficult for him or her. Afterwards, the teacher wrote her own notes on a different sheet, taking into account the difficulties the child usually had, the words he or she had struggled with, etc. However, the main improvement I propose is what the teacher did then, which was to give the sheet to the child and ask him to revise it at home. The purpose was to colour the words he already knew and once he or she had learnt the ones he did not know, he would be allowed to colour them as well (Appendix V).

How and when children use phonics in reading and spelling must be considered. There are many differences between English learners, who have English as their first language and English learners, whose mother tongue is not English. Both of them start learning the spelling of the most common words in English, such as *a, the, I, you...* as well as the easiest ones such as *bat, can, man...* (Lewis and Ellis, 2006) But there is a considerable difference, as English children will know the meaning of the words used to illustrate phonics and non-English children might not. Therefore, it is essential to choose the right words, as well as to relate them to other areas, such as science, arts... in order to facilitate learning. Furthermore, when an incidental word for the phonics taught appears during the lesson, we have to make sure that all the children know the meaning of it.

Related to this, is the fact that we should provide children with the best strategies and we should benefit from their mother tongue. In other words, much attention must be paid both to cross-language similarities and to cross-language differences, because those similarities and differences are important for making decisions about how to teach phonics effectively (Goouch and Lambirth, 2007). Therefore, although many English phonemes are not similar to the Spanish ones, we should benefit from the ones that are similar in order to make children

feel that English is not as different as Spanish, which would lead to enhance their motivation and to a faster rhythm for learning.

Regarding the frequency with which each phoneme is introduced, none of the frequencies analyzed from the classrooms observed could be claimed to be the best. It depends on the children, the pace of learning and of course their mother tongue. This is because table X shows that the British school introduces a new phoneme each day and in the Spanish ones, they do it once a week or even once a fortnight. It is obvious that Spanish learners find learning English literacy more difficult than English pupils and even more so if they are young learners and have recently started to learn how to read and write in their mother tongue. Therefore, it is important to introduce a new phoneme once children are prepared to move on to next phase. In addition, it must be considered that it is not essential to do a specific or isolated phonic lesson. It can be included within a lesson with a completely different objective or even in a science or art lesson. This does not mean that we should not deliver isolated phonic work lessons. It means that short periods of phonic reinforcement can be fit into any lesson (Bald, 2007). I would like to propose an improvement I was able to observe in one of the classrooms, where they were teaching phonics within a topic centred on animals. It is a way of linking phonics to other subjects and also a way of reinforcing the phonics taught so they can make more progress within several areas instead of working on them just in literacy lessons.

Another important improvement is the development of Synthetic Phonics training for teachers. The results show that just 2 of the Spanish teachers have received training, specifically a Jolly Phonics' course. It is important that teachers are trained in the subjects they are teaching, this is because if they do not know how the method works or even if they do not know exactly the English phonemes, it will lead to misunderstandings and pupils will

be the main ones affected. Thus, one of the improvements proposed in this research is to provide training and keep always up-to-date. In addition, according to Bald (2007), it does not matter how long it lasts. What is important is the quality, it must enable teachers to understand and use new material well. Talking from my experience, I think having a deep knowledge of the theories and authors who have written about the skills you are teaching is essential. Furthermore, if you are teaching a specific method, in this case a Synthetic Phonics method, you should know not only how it works, but also how it covers all the children's development stages, so good teaching is provided.

The importance of proper teacher training can also lead to an improvement in parents' collaboration. Close involvement of parents from the start affords some advantages such as: knowledge of their children's difficulties, provision of information that the school otherwise would not have and the use at home of the same techniques employed at school. Strong communication links between parents and teachers will avoid some of the difficulties children find as well as engaging children. This is because, by connecting home and school, they will not feel that English is just a subject from school but a way of communicating with others.

Two more issues should be considered as part of the improvements, but are mentioned separately as they can be under discussion. One of them is testing literacy outcomes by National tests such as the *Statutory phonics screening check*, which is taken by English pupils in Year 1. They are asked to read 40 words, 20 of them "nonsense" words. The check must be completed by all year 1 pupils in maintained schools, academies and free schools. This test lets teachers identify the children who need help and therefore, they can receive the support they need to improve their skills. However, some opponents have claimed that the main impact of the *Statutory phonics screening check* has been to increase the teaching "nonsense" words, rather than improving reading abilities. They also claim that if teachers do their job

properly it is not necessary to take a test in order to know which children need support. In addition, if these National tests for reading and writing in English were carried out in Spain, it is possible that they would ensure that all schools were comprised of well-trained literacy teachers.

The other issue which is also under discussion is what method is better to be used in order to deliver effective Synthetic Phonics. In other words, and taking just the two methods explained in this research into account, it would mean whether it is better to use Jolly Phonics or THRASS. As far as I am concerned, I cannot side with any of them, as this research has not been deeply focused on the methods used for teaching literacy but on the possible improvements for the Spanish way of teaching. However, it might be taken into consideration why Britain and other English speaking countries such as Australia and the United States, have been teaching literacy through Synthetic Phonics for many years, and usually use the THRASS method. It should also remain under discussion whether it is better to use Synthetic Phonics or other approaches such as Analytic Phonics. But, Synthetic Phonics, as the basis of spelling in English, has been placed in the centre of this research as it is the approach most often used in both countries. However, as part of this study and basing this improvement on the experience I gained during my school placement in Britain, I would consider the idea of adapting the THRASS method to Spain. In other words, we could reflect on improving our teaching by using both methods in different stages and year levels, as it has been proven to be successful in many English speaking countries.

As part of my project, it is also necessary to consider other aspects that have not been taken into account and which would lead to further research on this literacy issue. Some of these possible improvements to study are the implications of text books, specific objectives for the whole academic year and ways in which IT facilitates literacy learning.

Finally, it could be claimed that phonics do the whole work and just by working using them lead us to a guaranteed success. However, in almost all research in the last 20 years, the sentence “phonics is necessary but not sufficient” is reiterated (Stanovich, 1980; Tunmer, 1991). The role which teachers play must also be considered, as they should provide children with the proper strategies that help them make sense of the text. This means not only strategies that help them decode words, but also strategies that help them comprehend texts. Therefore, Phonics is an important part of this story, but it is not the whole story (Lewis and Ellis, 2006)

## 6. Conclusions:

These are the main improvements proposed in this research after having carried out the checklist and the questionnaire, and after having analyzed the data as well. However, the importance of this research is how this study will help me become a better English teacher in my future career. As a consequence of the research, the observations and my reflections on them, I have learnt that teaching English literacy is difficult in that it involves many aspects of children’s cognitive learning. It is important to consider the Phonological Awareness, as well as the difficulties of teaching English phonemes which are different from the Spanish ones.

It is important to consider as well the difficulties I found during the carrying out of the study, as it has not been easy to find literature adequate to the aims of the project. However, at the same time I was reading theories about literacy skill development, I learnt new theories about children’s cognitive development, which are really useful, as we have to adapt our teaching to children’s stage of learning.

All I gained from the training received during my degree will help me be a good teacher, but of course, the more experience in teaching, the better teacher I will be. Thus, all

the improvements explained have been based on the literature read and once I start teaching English at school, the research and the improvements proposed will be the basis of my professional performance. I am sure it will be different as all these improvements will have to be adapted to the context as well as to each child's learning needs, but it will be really useful as having a deep theoretical knowledge of the skills you are teaching is essential in order to deliver effective teaching. This project has equipped me to be able to effectively teach reading and writing, as I have had the chance to observe lessons in Britain and in Spain. In addition, I have learnt two different methods of teaching Synthetic Phonics, which are Jolly Phonics and THRASS. I cannot reflect on which one of them is better, as both have advantages and disadvantages. Teachers and schools should choose the one which is better adapted to their children's needs and to the context of its implementation. The improvements proposed in this study are based on the lessons observed and comprise my personal view of what effective literacy teaching should be. I hope all of the knowledge I have acquired here and throughout my degree will help me become an excellent English teacher.

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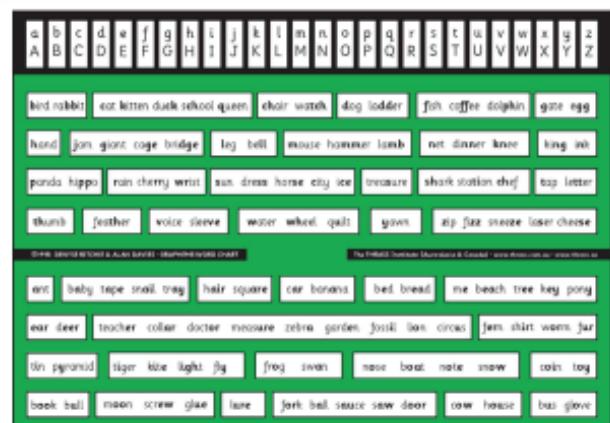
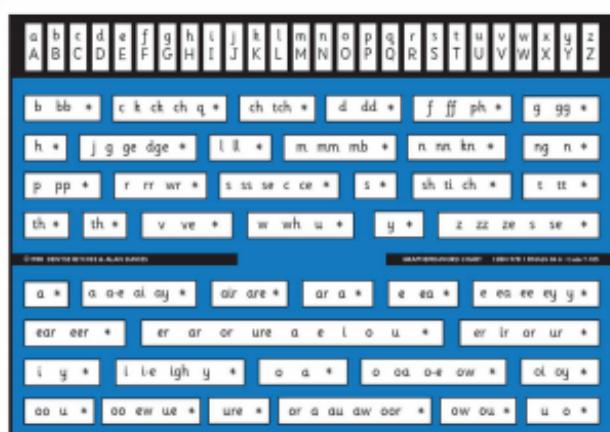
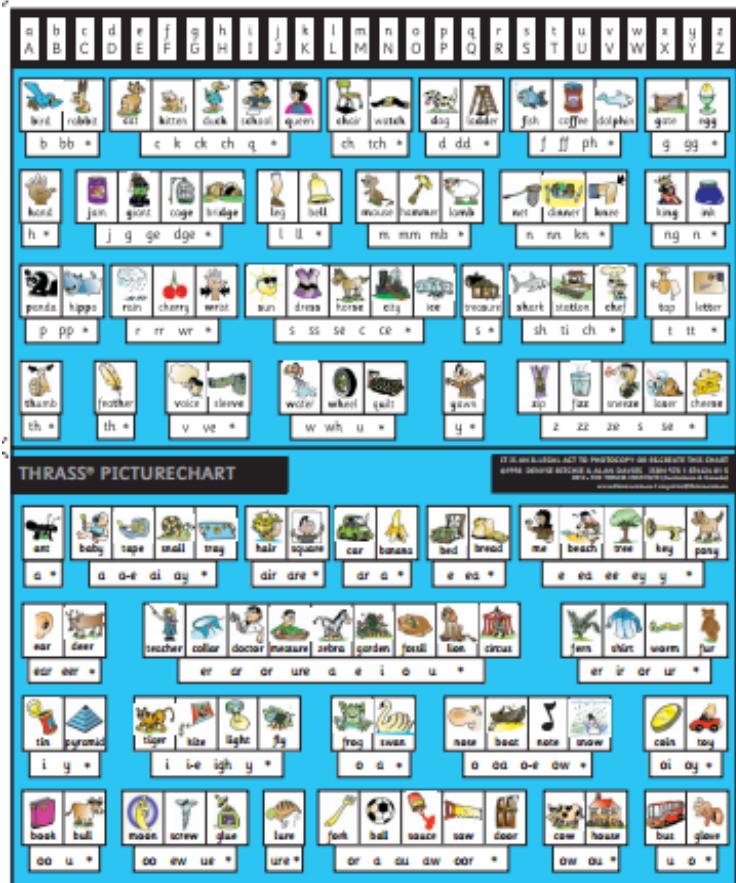
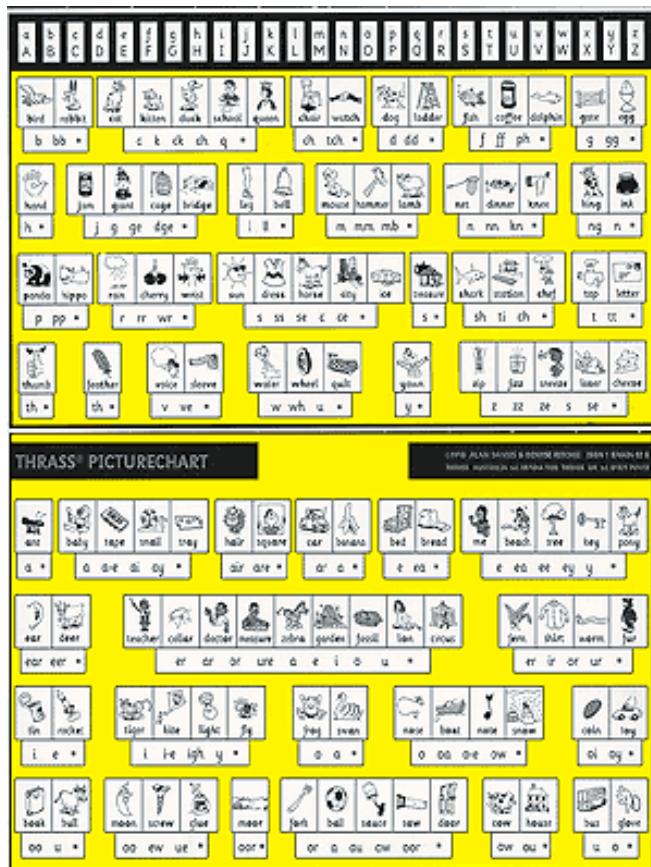
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APPENDIX I- ENGLISH PHONICS CHARTS-THRASS



**APPENDIX II- CHECKLISTS**

Checklist 1

<b>CLASS STRUCTURE</b>	
Reviews previous day's phonics	
Summarizes phonics covered	
<b>RESOURCES AND MATERIALS</b>	
Employs Phonics materials	X
Employs his/her own designed materials	
Employs other tools (i.e. technology, computer, IWB, projector...)	X
Which one? IWB	
Understanding of phonics is supported through visual aids displayed in the classroom.	X
Which kind of visual aids are displayed? JP materials	
References are made to visual aids during the lesson	X
<b>METHODS</b>	
Promotes participation	X
Employs additional learning activities (i.e. small group discussion, student-led activities, cooperative learning groups...)	
Which one?	
<b>TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTION</b>	
Solicits student output	X
- Student production is mostly repetition	X
- Students produce spontaneous acts of communication	
Most students are engaged	X
Demonstrates awareness of individual student learning needs	
Individual student needs are addressed	
<b>CONTENTS</b>	
Appears well-organized	X
Explains instructions clearly	X
Relates concepts to students' experience and previous knowledge	X
Selects learning experiences appropriate to level of learning	X

<b>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</b>	
Children are aware of the learning outcomes of the lesson	
If so, how?	
<b>VOCABULARY AND STRUCTURES USED IN CLASS</b>	
Words used to illustrate Phonics are commonplace words	X
Words used to illustrate Phonics are words children know	X
Phonics words are used in other context/areas	
Number of repetitions of key phonics terms during the lesson	Number: N.O
Example words used for each phoneme presented	Words: Castanets, cat, can
Teaching of Incidental words that do not fit into Phonics sequence	Words: Conquers
<b>ERROR CORRECTION</b>	
Frequency of error correction	Each children's intervention
Kinds of errors which are corrected	When they thought that a word started with the sound /k/ and they were wrong
Ways in which errors are corrected	Oral feedback
<b>ASSESSMENT</b>	
Learning is assessed in the lesson	
Understanding is checked in the lesson	

Checklist 2:

<b>CLASS STRUCTURE</b>	
Reviews previous day's phonics	
Summarizes phonics covered	
<b>RESOURCES AND MATERIALS</b>	
Employs Phonics materials	X
Employs his/her own designed materials	X
Employs other tools (i.e. technology, computer, IWB, projector...)	X
Which one? Computer, IWB	
Understanding of phonics is supported through visual aids displayed in the classroom.	X
Which kind of visual aids are displayed? English Phonics Chart, Tricky words from Jolly Phonics	
References are made to visual aids during the lesson	X
<b>METHODS</b>	
Promotes participation	X
Employs additional learning activities (i.e. small group discussion, student-led activities, cooperative learning groups...)	X
Which one? Student-led activities	
<b>TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTION</b>	
Solicits student output	X
- Student production is mostly repetition	X
- Students produce spontaneous acts of communication	X
Most students are engaged	X
Demonstrates awareness of individual student learning needs	X
Individual student needs are addressed	
<b>CONTENTS</b>	
Appears well-organized	X
Explains instructions clearly	X
Relates concepts to students' experience and previous knowledge	X
Selects learning experiences appropriate to level of learning	X

<b>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</b>	
Children are aware of the learning outcomes of the lesson	
If so, how?	
<b>VOCABULARY AND STRUCTURES USED IN CLASS</b>	
Words used to illustrate Phonics are commonplace words	X
Words used to illustrate Phonics are words children know	X
Phonics words are used in other context/areas	
Number of repetitions of key phonics terms during the lesson	Number:
Example words used for each phoneme presented	Words:
Teaching of Incidental words that do not fit into Phonics sequence	Words:
<b>ERROR CORRECTION</b>	
Frequency of error correction	
Kinds of errors which are corrected	
Ways in which errors are corrected	
<b>ASSESSMENT</b>	
Learning is assessed in the lesson	
Understanding is checked in the lesson	

Checklist 3:

<b>CLASS STRUCTURE</b>	
Reviews previous day's phonics	X
Summarizes phonics covered	X
<b>RESOURCES AND MATERIALS</b>	
Employs Phonics materials	X
Employs his/her own designed materials	X
Employs other tools (i.e. technology, computer, IWB, projector...)	X
Which one? <a href="http://www.starfall.com">www.starfall.com</a>	
Understanding of phonics is supported through visual aids displayed in the classroom	X
Which kind of visual aids are displayed? Jolly phonics flowers Sound of the week	
References are made to visual aids during the lesson	X
<b>METHODS</b>	
Promotes participation	X
Employs additional learning activities (i.e. small group discussion, student-led activities, cooperative learning groups...)	
Which one?	
<b>TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTION</b>	
Solicits student output	
- Student production is mostly repetition	X
- Students produce spontaneous acts of communication	X
Most students are engaged	X
Demonstrates awareness of individual student learning needs	X
Individual student needs are addressed	X
<b>CONTENTS</b>	
Appears well-organized	X
Explains instructions clearly	X
Relates concepts to students' experience and previous knowledge	
Selects learning experiences appropriate to level of learning	X
<b>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</b>	
Children are aware of the learning outcomes of the lesson	X
If so, how? Because all the lessons have the same learning outcome, which is learning a sound and vocabulary with that sound.	
<b>VOCABULARY AND STRUCTURES USED IN CLASS</b>	
Words used to illustrate Phonics are commonplace words	X
Words used to illustrate Phonics are words children know	
Phonics words are used in other context/areas	X
Number of repetitions of key phonics terms during the lesson	Number: N.O.
Example words used for each phoneme presented	Words: S – sun, grass, snake, small, sit, snail
Teaching of Incidental	Words: sound, letter

words that do not fit into Phonics sequence	
<b>ERROR CORRECTION</b>	
Frequency of error correction	
Kinds of errors which are corrected	When a sound is not produced correctly.
Ways in which errors are corrected	The teacher repeats it correctly. Asking the other children if they agree or not.
<b>ASSESSMENT</b>	
Learning is assessed in the lesson	
Understanding is checked in the lesson	

Checklist 4:

<b>CLASS STRUCTURE</b>	
Reviews previous day's phonics	X
Summarizes phonics covered	X
<b>RESOURCES AND MATERIALS</b>	
Employs Phonics materials	X
Employs his/her own designed materials	
Employs other tools (i.e. technology, computer, IWB, projector...)	
Which one?	
Understanding of phonics is supported through visual aids displayed in the classroom	X
Which kind of visual aids are displayed? Tricky words and sounds	
References are made to visual aids during the lesson	
<b>METHODS</b>	
Promotes participation	X
Employs additional learning activities (i.e. small group discussion, student-led activities, cooperative learning groups...)	X
Which one?	
<b>TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTION</b>	
Solicits student output	
- Student production is mostly repetition	
- Students produce spontaneous acts of communication	
Most students are engaged	X
Demonstrates awareness of individual student learning needs	X
Individual student needs are addressed	X
<b>CONTENTS</b>	
Appears well-organized	X
Explains instructions clearly	X
Relates concepts to students' experience and previous knowledge	X
Selects learning experiences appropriate to level of learning	X

<b>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</b>	
Children are aware of the learning outcomes of the lesson	
If so, how?	
<b>VOCABULARY AND STRUCTURES USED IN CLASS</b>	
Words used to illustrate Phonics are commonplace words	
Words used to illustrate Phonics are words children know	X
Phonics words are used in other context/areas	X
Number of repetitions of key phonics terms during the lesson	Number: each exercise
Example words used for each phoneme presented	Words: bat, cat, mat, fan, pan, bag, ant, hen , let egg, get, met, ten
Teaching of Incidental words that do not fit into Phonics sequence	Words: other
<b>ERROR CORRECTION</b>	
Frequency of error correction	Each time they participate
Kinds of errors which are corrected	
Ways in which errors are corrected	
<b>ASSESSMENT</b>	
Learning is assessed in the lesson	X
Understanding is checked in the lesson	

Checklist 5:

<b>CLASS STRUCTURE</b>	
Reviews previous day's phonics	X
Summarizes phonics covered	
<b>RESOURCES AND MATERIALS</b>	
Employs Phonics materials	X
Employs his/her own designed materials	
Employs other tools (i.e. technology, computer, IWB, projector...)	
Which one?	
Understanding of phonics is supported through visual aids displayed in the classroom	X
Which kind of visual aids are displayed? Tricky words, rules	
References are made to visual aids during the lesson	X
<b>METHODS</b>	
Promotes participation	X
Employs additional learning activities (i.e. small group discussion, student-led activities, cooperative learning groups...)	X
Which one?	
<b>TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTION</b>	
Solicits student output	
- Student production is mostly repetition	
- Students produce spontaneous acts of communication	
Most students are engaged	X
Demonstrates awareness of individual student learning needs	
Individual student needs are addressed	
<b>CONTENTS</b>	
Appears well-organized	X
Explains instructions clearly	X
Relates concepts to students' experience and previous knowledge	X
Selects learning experiences appropriate to level of learning	X
<b>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</b>	
Children are aware of the learning outcomes of the lesson	
If so, how?	

<b>VOCABULARY AND STRUCTURES USED IN CLASS</b>	
Words used to illustrate Phonics are commonplace words	X
Words used to illustrate Phonics are words children know	
Phonics words are used in other context/areas	
Number of repetitions of key phonics terms during the lesson	Number:
Example words used for each phoneme presented	Words: Cub, cube, fin, fine, hug, huge, boat, tape, tub, tube, hat, hate, rid, ride, treasure
Teaching of Incidental words that do not fit into Phonics sequence	Words: words within a sentence
<b>ERROR CORRECTION</b>	
Frequency of error correction	Each time they make mistake
Kinds of errors which are corrected	Pronunciation
Ways in which errors are corrected	Asking them the rule, so they self-correct
<b>ASSESSMENT</b>	
Learning is assessed in the lesson	
Understanding is checked in the lesson	

Checklist 6:

<b>CLASS STRUCTURE</b>	
Reviews previous day's phonics	
Summarizes phonics covered	X
<b>RESOURCES AND MATERIALS</b>	
Employs Phonics materials	X
Employs his/her own designed materials	X
Employs other tools (i.e. technology, computer, IWB, projector...)	X
Which one? Computer and projector	
Understanding of phonics is supported through visual aids displayed in the classroom	
Which kind of visual aids are displayed?	
References are made to visual aids during the lesson	
<b>METHODS</b>	
Promotes participation	X
Employs additional learning activities (i.e. small group discussion, student-led activities, cooperative learning groups...)	
Which one?	
<b>TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTION</b>	
Solicits student output	
- Student production is mostly repetition	X
- Students produce spontaneous acts of communication	
Most students are engaged	X
Demonstrates awareness of individual student learning needs	
Individual student needs are addressed	X
<b>CONTENTS</b>	
Appears well-organized	X
Explains instructions clearly	X
Relates concepts to students' experience and previous knowledge	X
Selects learning experiences appropriate to level of learning	X

<b>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</b>	
Children are aware of the learning outcomes of the lesson	
If so, how?	
<b>VOCABULARY AND STRUCTURES USED IN CLASS</b>	
Words used to illustrate Phonics are commonplace words	X
Words used to illustrate Phonics are words children know	X
Phonics words are used in other context/areas	
Number of repetitions of key phonics terms during the lesson	Number: N.O
Example words used for each phoneme presented	Words:
Teaching of Incidental words that do not fit into Phonics sequence	Words:
<b>ERROR CORRECTION</b>	
Frequency of error correction	
Kinds of errors which are corrected	
Ways in which errors are corrected	
<b>ASSESSMENT</b>	
Learning is assessed in the lesson	X
Understanding is checked in the lesson	

Checklist 7:

<b>CLASS STRUCTURE</b>	
Reviews previous day's phonics	X
Summarizes phonics covered	
<b>RESOURCES AND MATERIALS</b>	
Employs Phonics materials	X
Employs his/her own designed materials	X
Employs other tools (i.e. technology, computer, IWB, projector...)	X
Which one? Computer	
Understanding of phonics is supported through visual aids displayed in the classroom	X
Which kind of visual aids are displayed? Frames and pictures	
References are made to visual aids during the lesson	
<b>METHODS</b>	
Promotes participation	X
Employs additional learning activities (i.e. small group discussion, student-led activities, cooperative learning groups...)	X
Which one? Small group games	
<b>TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTION</b>	
Solicits student output	X
- Student production is mostly repetition	X
- Students produce spontaneous acts of communication	
Most students are engaged	X
Demonstrates awareness of individual student learning needs	
Individual student needs are addressed	
<b>CONTENTS</b>	
Appears well-organized	X
Explains instructions clearly	X
Relates concepts to students' experience and previous knowledge	X
Selects learning experiences appropriate to level of learning	X

<b>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</b>	
Children are aware of the learning outcomes of the lesson	X
If so, how?	
Through a brief explanation at the beginning of the lesson	
<b>VOCABULARY AND STRUCTURES USED IN CLASS</b>	
Words used to illustrate Phonics are commonplace words	X
Words used to illustrate Phonics are words children know	
Phonics words are used in other context/areas	
Number of repetitions of key phonics terms during the lesson	Number: +/- 4
Example words used for each phoneme presented	Words: Sun, summer, spring, sunday
Teaching of Incidental words that do not fit into Phonics sequence	Words: Silvia, Sergio
<b>ERROR CORRECTION</b>	
Frequency of error correction	
Kinds of errors which are corrected	
Ways in which errors are corrected	
<b>ASSESSMENT</b>	
Learning is assessed in the lesson	X
Understanding is checked in the lesson	X

Checklist 8:

<b>CLASS STRUCTURE</b>	
Reviews previous day's phonics	X
Summarizes phonics covered	
<b>RESOURCES AND MATERIALS</b>	
Employs Phonics materials	X
Employs his/her own designed materials	X
Employs other tools (i.e. technology, computer, IWB, projector...)	X
Which one? Computer, projector, cd...	
Understanding of phonics is supported through visual aids displayed in the classroom	X
Which kind of visual aids are displayed? Worksheet, song Books, capital letter cards, letter poster	
References are made to visual aids during the lesson	X
<b>METHODS</b>	
Promotes participation	X
Employs additional learning activities (i.e. small group discussion, student-led activities, cooperative learning groups...)	
Which one?	
<b>TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTION</b>	
Solicits student output	X
- Student production is mostly repetition	X
- Students produce spontaneous acts of communication	
Most students are engaged	X
Demonstrates awareness of individual student learning needs	
Individual student needs are addressed	X
<b>CONTENTS</b>	
Appears well-organized	X
Explains instructions clearly	X
Relates concepts to students' experience and previous knowledge	X
Selects learning experiences appropriate to level of learning	X

<b>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</b>	
Children are aware of the learning outcomes of the lesson	X
If so, how? Teacher explanation	
<b>VOCABULARY AND STRUCTURES USED IN CLASS</b>	
Words used to illustrate Phonics are commonplace words	X
Words used to illustrate Phonics are words children know	
Phonics words are used in other context/areas	X
Number of repetitions of key phonics terms during the lesson	Number: 10-15
Example words used for each phoneme presented	Words: Bag, Ball, Bat, Bus, Boat, Box
Teaching of Incidental words that do not fit into Phonics sequence	Words: Beatriz, Alba, Pablo
<b>ERROR CORRECTION</b>	
Frequency of error correction	
Kinds of errors which are corrected	/ch/ for /t/, /es/ for /s/
Ways in which errors are corrected	With repetition
<b>ASSESSMENT</b>	
Learning is assessed in the lesson	
Understanding is checked in the lesson	

Checklist 9:

<b>CLASS STRUCTURE</b>	
Reviews previous day's phonics	X
Summarizes phonics covered	
<b>RESOURCES AND MATERIALS</b>	
Employs Phonics materials	X
Employs his/her own designed materials	X
Employs other tools (i.e. technology, computer, IWB, projector...)	
Which one?	
Understanding of phonics is supported through visual aids displayed in the classroom	X
Which kind of visual aids are displayed?	
Cards, big books, realia	
References are made to visual aids during the lesson	X
<b>METHODS</b>	
Promotes participation	X
Employs additional learning activities (i.e. small group discussion, student-led activities, cooperative learning groups...)	
Which one?	
<b>TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTION</b>	
Solicits student output	
- Student production is mostly repetition	X
- Students produce spontaneous acts of communication	X
Most students are engaged	X
Demonstrates awareness of individual student learning needs	X
Individual student needs are addressed	X
<b>CONTENTS</b>	
Appears well-organized	X
Explains instructions clearly	X

Relates concepts to students' experience and previous knowledge		X	
Selects learning experiences appropriate to level of learning		X	
<b>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</b>			
Children are aware of the learning outcomes of the lesson			
If so, how?			
<b>VOCABULARY AND STRUCTURES USED IN CLASS</b>			
Words used to illustrate Phonics are commonplace words		X	
Words used to illustrate Phonics are words children know		X	
Phonics words are used in other context/areas		X	
Number of repetitions of key phonics terms during the lesson	Number:		
Example words used for each phoneme presented	Words: egg, castanets, sun, jam		
Teaching of Incidental words that do not fit into Phonics sequence	Words:		
<b>ERROR CORRECTION</b>			
Frequency of error correction			
Kinds of errors which are corrected	Interference English Spanish		
Ways in which errors are corrected	Notice that we speak English so they self correct		
<b>ASSESSMENT</b>			
Learning is assessed in the lesson		X	
Understanding is checked in the lesson		X	

Checklist 10:

<b>CLASS STRUCTURE</b>	
Reviews previous day's phonics	X
Summarizes phonics covered	
<b>RESOURCES AND MATERIALS</b>	
Employs Phonics materials	X
Employs his/her own designed materials	X
Employs other tools (i.e. technology, computer, IWB, projector...)	X
Which one? Computer,projector...	
Understanding of phonics is supported through visual aids displayed in the classroom	X
Which kind of visual aids are displayed? POSTERS, PICTURES	
References are made to visual aids during the lesson	X
<b>METHODS</b>	
Promotes participation	X
Employs additional learning activities (i.e. small group discussion, student-led activities, cooperative learning groups...)	
Which one?	
<b>TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTION</b>	
Solicits student output	X
- Student production is mostly repetition	X
- Students produce spontaneous acts of communication	
Most students are engaged	X
Demonstrates awareness of individual student learning needs	X
Individual student needs are addressed	N.O
<b>CONTENTS</b>	
Appears well-organized	
Explains instructions clearly	X
Relates concepts to students' experience and previous knowledge	X

Selects learning experiences appropriate to level of learning	X
<b>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</b>	
Children are aware of the learning outcomes of the lesson	
If so, how?	
<b>VOCABULARY AND STRUCTURES USED IN CLASS</b>	
Words used to illustrate Phonics are commonplace words	X
Words used to illustrate Phonics are words children know	X
Phonics words are used in other context/areas	X
Number of repetitions of key phonics terms during the lesson	Number: N.O
Example words used for each phoneme presented	Words:
Teaching of Incidental words that do not fit into Phonics sequence	Words:
<b>ERROR CORRECTION</b>	
Frequency of error correction	
Kinds of errors which are corrected	
Ways in which errors are corrected	
<b>ASSESSMENT</b>	
Learning is assessed in the lesson	
Understanding is checked in the lesson	X

### **APPENDIX III- TEACHER'S INTERVIEW**

Interview 1:

#### **TEACHER'S ACADEMIC TRAINING:**

**Studies:** Education Degree

**Specific Phonic's training:** JP LGA training THRASS training

**Opinion about Synthetic Phonics:** a good approach to phonics

**What method did you use prior to this one?** N/A

#### **OBJECTIVES**

**Objectives of the lesson observed:** to learn the sound /k/

**Proportion of time dedicated to phonics within lesson plan:** 20 mins each day and work in literacy lessons

**Frequency with which each phoneme is introduced:** Daily for phases 2 and 3

#### **ASSESSMENT**

**How is learning in Phonics assessed? (Tools, timing...):** Ongoing and weekly individual assignments

Interview 2:

### **TEACHER'S ACADEMIC TRAINING:**

**Studies:** BH QTSSpecific Phonic's training: General training

**Opinion about Synthetic Phonics:** Great way to teach young children the rules of spelling and reading

**What method did you use prior to this one?** Always used Jolly Phonics

### **OBJECTIVES**

**Objectives of the lesson observed:** to learn alternative spelling

**Proportion of time dedicated to phonics within lesson plan:** Specific phonics lesson 30 mins daily but it also feed through into other lessons

**Frequency with which each phoneme is introduced:** One a day and then recapped at the end of the week. Children don't move on to next phase until secure.

### **ASSESSMENT**

**How is learning in Phonics assessed? (Tools, timing...):** By assessing each child individually using a tick chart and daily on going.

Interview 3:

**TEACHER'S ACADEMIC TRAINING:**

**Studies:** English Philology

**Specific Phonic's training:** At College and British Council courses

**Opinion about Synthetic Phonics:** I think it works very well, but most people who are working for bilingual projects at Spanish schools have not been trained to do it, and they have to do it anyway. Training is fundamental.

**What method did you use prior to this one?** none

**OBJECTIVES**

**Objectives of the lesson observed:** That children recognize the sound “s” and can pronounce it.

**Proportion of time dedicated to phonics within lesson plan:** 2 sessions per week

**Frequency with which each phoneme is introduced:** 1-2 days

**ASSESMENT**

**How is learning in Phonics assessed? (Tools, timing...):** Pupil's observation.

Interview 4:

## TEACHER INTERVIEW

### TEACHER'S ACADEMIC TRAINING:

**Studies:** Diplomado en profesorado de EGB, Especialidad Matemáticas y CC.NN.

**Specific Phonic's training:** None

**Opinion about Synthetic Phonics:** necessary way to knowledge

**What method did you use prior to this one? None**

## OBJECTIVES

**Objectives of the lesson observed:** Get phonics right

**Proportion of time dedicated to phonics within lesson plan:** 1/5-1/4

**Frequency with which each phoneme is introduced:** once every two weeks

## ASSESSMENT

**How is learning in Phonics assessed? (Tools, timing...)** N/A

Interview 5:

**TEACHER'S ACADEMIC TRAINING:**

**Studies:** Maestra Lengua Extranjera

**Specific Phonic's training:** working in a bilingual school with 5-year old students

**Opinion about Synthetic Phonics:** Excellent for infants and first-cycle

**What method did you use prior to this one?** None

**OBJECTIVES**

**Objectives of the lesson observed:** to learn /s/ sound

**Proportion of time dedicated to phonics within lesson plan:** 1 lesson per week

**Frequency with which each phoneme is introduced:** 1 per week, starting at 1st year (infants) and finishing with 3rd year (infants)

**ASSESSMENT**

**How is learning in Phonics assessed? (Tools, timing...):** Songs, dictations, worksheet...

Interview 6:

## TEACHER INTERVIEW

### TEACHER'S ACADEMIC TRAINING:

Studies: Diplomado en profesorado de EGB, Maestra de Ed. Infantil y Licenciada en Pedagogía

**Specific Phonic's training:** Jolly Phonics

**Opinion about Synthetic Phonics:** Interesting for early age children

**What method did you use prior to this one?** None

## OBJECTIVES

**Objectives of the lesson observed:** Aprender la pronunciación correcta de cada phonic y relacionarlo con acciones y palabras a través de canciones, imágenes y tarjetas.

**Proportion of time dedicated to phonics within lesson plan:** 30-45 minutes per wekk

**Frequency with which each phoneme is introduced:** Once a fortnight

## ASSESMENT

**How is learning in Phonics assessed? (Tools, timing...):** N/A

Interview 7:

### **TEACHER'S ACADEMIC TRAINING:**

**Studies:** Magisterio inglés

**Specific Phonic's training:** Really short, attendance to two short lectures

**Opinion about Synthetic Phonics:** really interesting and useful

**What method did you use prior to this one?** I combine this with “constructivismo” “Hocus and Lotus”. I have just started “Phonics”

### **OBJECTIVES**

**Objectives of the lesson observed:** It's the first year, they learn the main and similar sounds to Spanish (28)

**Proportion of time dedicated to phonics within lesson plan:** half an hour a week out of an hour and a half a week (3 sessions). Infantil 2º and 3º

**Frequency with which each phoneme is introduced:** the same

### **ASSESMENT**

**How is learning in Phonics assessed? (Tools, timing...)** while we play games

Interview 8:

### **TEACHER'S ACADEMIC TRAINING:**

**Studies:** Degree in Special Education. B2 English level (in process to get C1)

**Specific Phonic's training:** None

**Opinion about Synthetic Phonics:** I'm a bit sceptic about Phonics because I think they're a good resource to help children decoding unknown words, but sometimes I find its teaching is not linked to meaning. However my experience is limited since this is my first year working and I teach 3 year olds, so we don't really go into detail about them.

**What method did you use prior to this one?** I haven't got information about other methods at that early ages.

### **OBJECTIVES**

**Objectives of the lesson observed**

**Proportion of time dedicated to phonics within lesson plan**

I usually dedicate one lesson per week to deep into phonics, but I make references to them during different moments of other lessons.

**Frequency with which each phoneme is introduced:** Once a week

### **ASSESSMENT**

**How is learning in Phonics assessed? (Tools, timing...)**

Mainly through direct observation since I teach the youngest students.

**APPENDIX IV- TABLE OF RESULTS**

Tables I:

CLASS STRUCTURE	BRITISH CLASSROOMS	SPANISH CLASSROOMS	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
Reviews previous day's phonics	0	6	6	60%
Summarizes phonics covered	0	3	3	30%

Table II:

RESOURCES AND MATERIALS	BRITISH CLASSROOMS	SPANISH CLASSROOMS	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
Employs Phonics materials	2	8	10	100%
Employs his/her own designed materials	1	6	7	70%
Employs other tools	2	4	6	60%
Understanding of phonics is supported through visual aids displayed in the classroom	2	6	8	80%
References are made to visual aids during the lesson	2	5	7	70%

Table III:

METHODS	BIRITISH CLASSROOMS	SPANISH CLASSROOMS	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
Promotes participation	2	8	10	100%
Employs additional learning activities	1	3	4	40%

Table IV:

TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTION	BRITISH CLASSROOMS	SPANISH CLASSROOMS	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
Solicits student output	2	4	6	60%
Student production is mostly repetition	2	6	8	80%
Student produce spontaneous acts of communication	1	2	3	30%
Most students are engaged	2	8	10	100%
Demonstrates awareness of individual student learning needs	1	4	5	50%
Individual student needs are addressed	0	6	6	60%

Table V:

CONTENTS	BRITISH CLASSROOMS	SPANISH CLASSROOMS	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
Appears well-organized	2	8	10	100%
Explains instructions clearly	2	8	10	100%
Relates concepts to students' experience and previous knowledge	2	7	9	90%
Selects learning experiences appropriate to level of learning	2	8	10	100%

Table VI:

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	BRITISH CLASSROOMS	SPANISH CLASSROOMS	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
Children are aware of the learning outcomes of the lesson	0	3	3	30

Table VII:

VOCABULARY AND STRUCTURES USED IN CLASS	BRITISH CLASSROOMS	SPANISH CLASSROOMS	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
Words used to illustrate Phonics are commonplace words	2	8	10	100%
Words used to illustrate Phonics are words children know	2	4	6	60%
Phonics words are used in other context/areas	0	5	5	50%

Table VIII:

ASSESSMENT	BRITISH CLASSROOMS	SPANISH CLASSROOMS	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
Learning is assessed in the lesson	0	5	5	50%
Understanding is checked in the lesson	0	3	3	30%

Table IX:

TEACHER TRAINING	BRITISH TEACHERS	SPANISH TEACHERS	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
Specific Synthetic Phonics training	1	2	3	30%

Table X:

TEACHER TRAINING	BRITISH TEACHERS	SPANISH TEACHERS
Frequency with which each phoneme is introduced	1/day	1/week or 1/fortnight

## APPENDIX V- ASSESSMENT SHEET

Rainbow Words  
(Key Stage One)

about

an

after

another

again

as

Rainbow Words  
(Key Stage One)

be

been

because

boy

bed

brother