Is it all about Jolly Phonics?

Evaluation of Jolly Phonics as a method for teaching literacy and EFL in the bilingual classroom. Proposal of improvement.

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Abstract:

Jolly Phonics is a literacy method created for native students that is lately used in a lot of Spanish schools for EFL teaching. Despite being very popular in Infant Education, this method has received criticisms on the grounds of language teaching because it was not originally created for this end. The present study aims to analyse the method in order to evaluate the capacity of Jolly Phonics for teaching both literacy and English in the context of a bilingual classroom, and provide a proposal of improvement to compensate for the limitations of the method.

Key words: Jolly Phonics, literacy, EFL, SLA skills, methodology.

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1. INTRODUCTION

During the first years of schooling, teaching to read and write is one of the essential objectives of the Infant Education teachers. Literacy is considered a basic lesson for the future learning; even we can say that it is the foundation for the rest of the knowledge. Thus, the correct acquisition of literacy will affect the academic success and the communicative abilities of the learner and it must therefore be considered a vital aspect of the educational process.

Lately, acquiring a second language has also become an important knowledge, which school must provide. Globalization is contributing largely to make English the most important and predominant language of the world as it has become a *lingua franca*. It is everyday more and more used in almost all the fields of knowledge and human development areas. This factor has made learning English necessary to communicate with the rest of the world and schools are expected to make children competent in using this language.

The age at which children are now beginning to learn English is earlier than it used to be. In the past, students began to study a foreign language when they were almost teenagers, but now English is introduced at Infant Education. The type of pupils has changed: these learners are not able to understand grammar rules or exercises because they cannot read nor write yet. As literacy is one of the most important aspects to be learned in those years, to promote a global and comprehensive education, English teaching must overlap with literacy teaching during Infant Education.

In Spain, learning a foreign language has always been an unresolved matter. From schools, many different approaches and methodologies have been used to give an answer to the question of teaching English. Those strategies had different degrees of success, and recently there has been a move towards bilingual education as the best option for making our learners proficient in the L2. Bilingual education entails teaching subjects in a second language, so in Infant Education literacy can also be taught in English.

Since a new perspective in language teaching has been adopted, new methods have to be acquired as well. The best example of a method for teaching literacy is Jolly

Phonics due to their relevance in the present moment. Jolly Phonics is a synthetic phonics method to teach to read and write, which was created in England in 1989 by a teacher – Sue Lloyd – in order to solve some children's literacy learning problems. It bases the teaching in the correspondences between the letters and their sounds and children can learn to read and write through these correspondences. In 2007, after research and investigation, the Department of Education and Skills of the United Kingdom launched a synthetic phonics method. Schools are since then legally required to teach pupils to read using phonics, what means that the government consider this method as the best alternative.

Nevertheless, the Jolly Phonics approach has often received criticisms on the grounds of EFL teaching. Due to being a literacy method created for native students to only learn to read and write, some people question the appropriateness of using Jolly Phonics to serve the purpose of teaching English.

This study aims to go into detail about this matter to identify the possible deficiencies of the method and make a proposal for improvement.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objective of the present study is to analyse and evaluate Synthetic Phonics methodology, specifically Jolly Phonics, in terms of how this method contributes to acquiring literacy and learning a L2 in the context of bilingual Infant Education in Spain.

In order to achieve this goal, the following key research questions will be examined:

1. Which microskills and strategies involved in the reading and writing process are practiced by Jolly Phonics? Compared with Analytic methods such as Whole Language method, which of these skills are similar? Which of the skills practiced in Analytic methods are left out in the Jolly Phonics method?

2. Which aspects of Jolly Phonics contribute or fail to contribute to SLA? More specifically I will be looking at how the method is suitable for the teaching of English as a second language in the context of Spain.

3. To what extent are teachers aware of or critical about the weaknesses and strengths of Jolly Phonics?

4. Are these teachers capable of adapting Jolly Phonics to promote a more holistic learning of literacy and SLA?

5. Which steps should a lesson plan include to compensate for the limitations of Jolly Phonics in the area of teaching ESL?

To answer these questions, firstly I will review the literature about the reading and writing processes, the different methods used to teach literacy and the most remarkable theories about SLA. Secondly, an analysis of Jolly Phonics and an example of a typical lesson plan of the method will be done, as well as a questionnaire to know the opinion of teachers implementing the method. Finally, all the data will be compiled in order to come up with a conclusion of the investigation.

3. THEORETICAL FRAME

3.1 HOW DO WE LEARN TO READ AND WRITE?

According to Galera (2009) the mental process of reading and writing is the one in which a code of graphic symbols is transformed in mental images that are suitable to be expressed in a code of sounds.

In addition, Clemente and Domínguez (1999) distinguish between two kinds of processes while reading: The processes involved in recognition or identification of the written word *(low level processes)*, are those in which some operations take place as identification of graphic symbols and access to its lexical meaning. To reach this

meaning, two alternatives can be used: connecting the symbols with the meaning through global word recognition or turn the symbols into phonemes.

The second set of processes the authors establish are those processes related to the comprehension of the text *(high level processes)*. At this point, operations like construct the text ideas, extract the global meaning and interrelate globally the text meaning. All those actions lead to the textual representation, which is an important dimension of comprehension.

Similarly with respect to writing, Bigas and Correig (2001) consider that writing involves two processes too: the material act of writing; to reproduce symbols in a paper, and the transcription of speaking language by graphic symbols. To develop these processes, motor development and a clear phoneme-grapheme correspondence is needed.

Regarding how we learn to read and write, three paradigms are outlined depending on the way they describe how the information is processed. This process can be *bottom-up*, *top-down* or interactive according to Adams (1982): The bottom-up process includes all the perceptive processes ranging from the sensory input to word recognition. Reading implies reaching the meaning analysing the visual input first, that is, the recognition and decoding of the letters. It is a sequential and hierarchical process that starts on the grapheme and ends in texts, the highest unit. The basic skill is decoding (*low level processes*) so this model attaches great importance to the text but less significance to the reader and their prior knowledge.

 On the other hand, the top-down process emphasizes the serial descending processing and attaches great importance to *high level processes* (comprehension). It is also a sequential and hierarchical process, but in this case the process starts with the reader and finishes with the grapheme (the lowest unit). Prior knowledge of the reader is more important than the text or message to access to comprehension. The most important thing is the reader. Reading implies obtaining a result from the interaction between the reader and the text. The reader understands the text following determined clues (context) that are relevant to formulate and test hypotheses.

Finally the interactive process, allocates the same importance to what is in the text and to the reader's previous knowledge. The access to meaning can be activated

both because the texts, and the prior knowledge and experience of the reader. Bottom-up and top-down processes occur simultaneously.

These three interpretations of how literacy is learned imply different methods of teaching that are going to be explained in the next section.

3.2 LITERACY TEACHING METHODS

Even though there exist a great variety of methods to teach literacy, following Carmena et ál. (2002) we can classify the literacy methods into four categories, depending on the kind of information processing strategies and the orientation of the intervention: Synthetic methods, analytic or global methods, mixed methods and the constructivist methodology.

Synthetic methods

Synthetic methods focus on developing *bottom-up* processes of teaching and learning. These methods start with the teaching of simple units like phonemes and graphemes, to progressively focus on the more complex units like words, sentences and texts. Carmena et al. (2002) explain that the teaching is sequenced: The learning starts from the recognition of graphic units and practice voicing out the letters and letters groups. By blending these units, connections are made, creating higher units until words and texts are formed. The method also focuses on the grapheme-phoneme correspondence. The key skills in this method are correct oral production, quick grapheme recognition and a good command of the grapheme-phoneme correspondences (*bottom-up* skills), leaving comprehension for later stages.

Examples of synthetic methods are Jolly Phonics, Yo Yo Phonics, Letters and Sounds, Phonics International, Read and Write Inc, among others.

Analytic or global methods

These methods are associated with the top-down processing of information. Unlike synthetic methods, analytic methods normally start by focusing on complex and meaningful linguistic units such as words, sentences or texts. Progressively the student will get to the simplest units, the letters. Their main goal is comprehension and increase reader's motivation. They are also known as global because they start from a global message with meaning; either it is a word, a sentence or a text. As Borregón (2008) points out, these methods prioritise the visual function over the auditory one, unlike synthetic methods. Moreover, they are based on the global recognition of known and high frequency words.

Examples of analytic methods are the Whole Language approach or the look-and-say method.

Mixed methods

Galera (2009) indicates that mixed methods use simultaneously the resources from both analytic and synthetic methods. They try to bring together the two perspectives of the teaching and learning process (*top-down / bottom-up*). Their goal is obtaining meaning rather than analysing the mechanic reading process. Mixed methods appeared due to the inefficacy of both analytical and synthetic methods alone. Borregón (2008) adds that these methods allow the reader to make use of their known words bank when they read high frequency words, and to use their phonological decomposition in the prosecution of unknown words. Mixed methods focus on the word recognition, understanding and discovery of grapheme-phoneme correspondences to occur in combination with each other and be fed back. This means that the combination of the two methods creates more competent and skilful readers

An example of a mixed method is the Balanced Literacy Program.

Constructivist methods

Constructivism is a school of thought about learning. Its main assumption is that for learning to take place, the knowledge must be constructed or reconstructed by the learner by actions. That means that knowledge cannot be only transmitted. That is to say, although knowledge can be facilitated, every learner reconstructs their own experience making his own learning. Piaget – with genetic epistemology theory -, Vygostky – with socio-cultural leraning theory- and Ausubel – with meaningful learning theory –, among other authors, realized important contributions to this paradigm.

Constructivism can also be applied to the teaching of literacy. As Ferreiro and Teberosky (1979) showed, children own certain ideas or beliefs about writing systems and the relations with oral language. This means that children can *read and write* before they can actually do it properly. Prior knowledge and the information that the student obtains from real life, is considered of vital importance. With the new information, prior knowledge is reinforced, completed or dismissed, in order to create the new knowledge. The main goal is to make the students need to communicate through reading and writing and to make them realise the usefulness of the written language.

3.3 HOW DO WE LEARN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE?

Over the last 50 years, there have been a number of different theories about the acquisition of languages, both L1 and L2. Of all these theories, four approaches have provided a major relevance to this study: Krashen's monitor model, the input and interaction theory, the functional perspective and the cognitive theories. These approaches will be used in this study in order to evaluate the different methods for teaching literacy in terms of their efficacy of promoting second language learning – and will be discussed in detail now.

a) Krashen's monitor model (1982)

Krashen's theory about the acquisition of languages consists of 5 different hypotheses: the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the input hypothesis and the affective filter hypothesis.

The most relevant of these hypotheses for Infant Education stage are the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the input hypothesis and the affective filter hypothesis due they have to do with processes that children at this age are capable to develop.

According to the **affective filter hypothesis**, the state of mind and anxiety level of the learner affects his acquisition of the language. Consequently, teachers must create a comfortable atmosphere of learning so that students have what Krashen termed "low affective filter". This is a very important factor not only with respect to SLA but in teaching and learning in general. In any learning situation, a relaxed and joyful environment must be created in order to help the student to acquire.

Two other of Krashen's hypotheses are pertinent to our study. On one hand, the **acquisition-learning hypothesis** which claims that when learning a second language, we engage in two different processes: acquisition and learning. As the learner engages in meaningful interaction in the second language with no attention to form, acquisition takes place. However, learning takes place through a conscious process of study and attention to form and error correction. For Krashen, acquisition is more important because acquiring is a subconscious process that means that the own learner by using the language in communication is "picking up" that language. This is particularly true of early second language education because many second language theorists assume that children at early ages can only acquire the second language, the same way as they acquire their first.

Finally, the **input hypothesis** establishes that a language is acquired by receiving comprehensible input, that is, by understanding messages. If the input contains forms and structures just beyond the learner's current level of competence in the language, then both comprehension and acquisition will take place.

In both hypotheses, the key aspect is that the acquisition of a language is a natural process that takes place thanks to the exposure to input in a meaningful context and with a purpose. This means that for L2 acquisition to take place the classroom activities must promote natural, interactive and input-rich language situations where the learner is able to construct their own assumptions about the language.

b) Input and interaction

Following Krashen (1982) exposing the learner to comprehensible input (i+1) is enough for language acquisition to take place. However, according to the interactionist view (Long, 1983) the modified input that learners are exposed to during interaction and the way in which native speakers interact in conversations with them, are crucial elements in the language acquisition process of young learners.

Interactionists are more concerned with how input is made comprehensible, and they claim this happens through interaction. Input is comprehensible because it is **adapted and modified in interaction.** For interactionists, native speakers always modify in some way their speech when talking with a beginning-level learner acquiring a second language. That means that like mothers modify their speech when talking to their children to be understood, in language learning input must be modified to match the ability of the learner. Some modifications must be made in order to facilitate comprehension, for example providing feedback, providing correct models, encouraging participation, etc. Thanks to these modifications, comprehension and communication are possible. The teachers should be aware of these modifications and use them while talking with the students. This will encourage the learners to create interactional modifications in order to understand and to make him understood. This is what is called negotiation of meaning. Following this theory, negotiation of meaning and interaction, are needed to acquire L2 so the lessons needs classroom communicative activities to make this interaction possible.

c) The Functional perspective

This perspective advocates that the development of a language and its grammatical development are driven by functional ends. What instigates language progress is the effort to communicate effectively. This means that when the students really learn is when they have to use the language to get or to do something: when **using the language to do things**, and that happens through interaction with other people.

As Mitchell and Myles (2004) point out, language learning evolves out of learning how to carry on a conversation and syntactic constructions are developed as a result of those interactions. This means that rather than assuming students first learn

form and then use that form in discourse, learners first learn certain uses or functions during conversation, interacting verbally, and out of this interaction, syntactic knowledge is developed.

What this theory implies for L2 teaching is that if students learn the language trying to communicate, the communicative purpose must be present in every activity made in the classroom. Using the language for a real purpose will provide the activities a meaningful sense and children will learn in context.

   d) Cognitive theories

Most of the theorists on language assume that language is a unique form of knowledge, they think that it is different from other kinds of learning. Cognitive approaches to SLA consider language as a complex cognitive skill, not different from other type of knowledge. For cognitivists, learning is a cognitive process because it involves internal representations that regulate and guide performance. In the case of language acquisition, these representations are based on the language system. As performance improves, the learner is always restructuring these representations, just like when learning other skills. Therefore, SLA can be explained in similar terms as other abilities. Cognitivists' theories about SLA apply the principles of cognitive psychology to the learning of languages.

Even though this view was very relevant in the teaching of languages, it is not that pertinent in Infant Education since children in those ages have not developed their entire cognitive ability. Nevertheless, there are some aspects of these theories that still can be used in the Infant stage. For example, we can talk about lexical chunks, which are long sequences of words that pattern together and are treated as a whole unit. According to Schmitt (2000), the ability to use performed lexical chunks allows greater fluency in speech production. This is because the mind makes use of the long-term memory to compensate for the processing capacity – that is limited – by storing a number of frequently-needed lexical chunks as individual whole units. This means there is less demand on cognitive capacity while using lexical chunks because they are ready to be used, and require little or no additional processing, what is perfect for children that do not have their cognitive capacity totally developed. Another advantage of chunks is

that they are learned in context, so chunks allow the children to be successful when using the language, and therefore generating satisfaction and motivation in them. Routines in the classroom are a very good moment to introduce lexical chunks and to practice them every day.

Based on the above discussed theories, we can identify a set of theoretical ideas of how SLA should be taught. Every method for teaching L2 to young children should have into account these conclusions:

- A comfortable and cheerful atmosphere must be created in the classroom to make the students feel relaxed to learn.
- Learners must acquire the language and for that they must engage in meaningful interaction.
- Learners should be exposed to a variety of structures and rich vocabulary.
- Teachers should modify their input in interaction in order to encourage children to negotiate meaning by interacting.
- Language is learned by using it with a purpose
- To reach a purpose through language, interaction is needed.
- To use routines and language chunks promote the acquisition of pieces of language in context.

All these premises say that what have to be always present in the classroom and in the activities when teaching L2 is: **Interaction, communicative purpose**, **rich input, routines** and a **friendly environment.**

4. METHODS AND MATERIALS

4.1 METHODS

Prior to my study, the first step was to review the literature about the reading and writing processes as well as the main methods to teach them. In addition, I reviewed the different theories of second language acquisition. Four SLA models were selected in

order to be used for the subsequent evaluation of Jolly Phonics as an ESL method, how it is used in Spain.

After my initial review, a deeper analysis of Whole Language and Jolly Phonics was carried out to compare the two of them. The aim of this comparison was to see the limitations and the strengths of each method, and to check in which aspects can Whole Language complement Jolly Phonics so as to encompass all the skills involved in learning – both reading and writing and SLA skills. In this comparison and analysis the SLA principles extracted from the different theories reviewed were used as criteria for comparing and evaluating the two methods. More particularly, the characteristics, the activities, the procedure, etc. of both methods were analysed in terms of whether or not they fulfilled the SLA principles.

In order to investigate the teacher's assumptions about Jolly Phonics I designed a questionnaire which focused on the deficiencies of the method, the obstacles (for learning) the teachers may find while implementing the method, characteristics of Whole Language that are not practiced by Jolly Phonics or in which ways they complement the method with other kind of activities. The questionnaire was then emailed to 9 teachers who offered to participate in the study. The teachers filled in the questionnaire anonymously and submitted them electronically. The results were then compiled, treated statistically and organised in tables to show the main trends and findings in the data.

Subsequently, the revision of a lesson plan observed in the Valdespartera School was carried out. The lesson plan selected was the presentation of the sounds with three year-olds. The reason for this choice is that during the school practice, these kinds of Jolly Phonics lesson plans were the only ones I had witnessed. The analysis was implemented from the point of view of which features can be improved with regard to EFL teaching.

Finally, all the results of the different steps in the investigation were taken into account to provide a general lesson plan that will practice all the skills necessary in both literacy and language learning. This last step is the final product of the investigation and my personal contribution to the matter.

4.2 MATERIALS

4.2.1 Survey

Teachers using Jolly Phonics have a direct contact and experience with the method every day. Due to this experience, they are able to recognise strong and weak points from the method that other person may overlook. For this reason, the teacher's opinions and concerns about the limitations of Jolly Phonics were investigated.

To collect all this information, a survey was implemented (Appendix 1) among Infant teachers of the Valdespartera School, José Antonio Labordeta School and the Juan de Lanuza School, where Jolly Phonics is used in Infant and Primary Education. The two first are state schools, whereas Juan de Lanuza is a private school. All three are in Zaragoza. All the schools are CILE 2 [1]based on PIBLEA (*Programa Integral de Bilingüismo en Lenguas Extranjeras en Aragón)*, and also collaborate with the British Council.

The questionnaire consists of eight questions about the deficiencies and problems of the method. The number of the questions was designed so that it would be enough to compile the data needed, but would not be too high so as not to require too much work from the teachers. Seven of the eight questions are close questions with options to choose from or to rank in order of importance. Close questions were used for the sake of simplicity both in filling out the questionnaire and in compiling the response. Nevertheless, the main disadvantage of the close questions is that the range of answers of the respondents are limited, so when possible the option *others* was included and some space was provided to write any other thought o suggestion that the respondents might have. A final open question was also added to allow the respondents to comment on anything they thought might be important for the research.

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[1] The PIBLEA program has two different modalities of bilinguism that schools in Aragón can implement: CILE 1 or CILE 2. CILE 1 implies that 20% of the school hours must be taught in the foreign language (including foreign language subject). CILE 2 implies that 30% of the school hours must be taught in the foreign language (including foreign language subject.)

5. THE STUDY

5.1 EVALUATION OF THE JOLLY PHONICS METHOD FOR TEACHING LITERACY AND EFL. COMPARISON WITH THE WHOLE LANGUAGE APPROACH.

As discussed in section 3.2, the two main approaches to the teaching of literacy are synthetic and analytic methods, due the fact their principles are shared by a lot of different methods. Jolly Phonics and the Whole Language are respectively the best known exponents of synthetic and analytic literacy methods.

In this section I will first describe each of the two methods separately in order to provide the main characteristics of both methods. After that, Jolly Phonics will be evaluated and compared to the Whole Language method in order to identify those characteristics of the analytical method absent in Jolly Phonics, which are necessary for good literacy and L2 acquisition.

5.1.1 Jolly Phonics

Jolly Phonics is a synthetic phonics method used to teach English literacy which was created in the United Kingdom in 1989 by Sue Lloyd and Christopher Jolly. It is a multisensory method which is based on the teaching of the correspondences between the letters and the sounds in English. Children can learn to read and write through it, using the letter sounds. Through gestures and songs the sounds are introduced, and are taught in a specifically order (not alphabetically).

Jolly Phonics consists in learning the 42 sounds of the English language instead of the letters of the alphabet. The sounds are organised into seven groups, starting with those which allow forming a higher number of words. (Wernham and Lloyd, 2010)

Each of these seven groups consists of six sounds. Some of the sounds are formed by two letters, what is called a diagraph. Each sound is associated to a gesture and a song, which are defined in the materials and educational resources proposed by the method. The sounds are associated to the most common spelling too. This way they learn also the graphemes.

1. s, a, t, i, p, n
2. c k, e, h, r, m, d
3. g, o, u, l, f, b
4. ai, j, oa, ie, ee, or,
5. z, w, ng, v, oo, **oo**
6. y, x, ch, sh, th, **th**
7. qu, ou, oi, ue, er, ar

Groups and sequence of learning of the sounds in Jolly Phonics

Jolly phonics focus on developing five basic skills for reading and writing (http://jollylearning.co.uk/):

1. Learning the letter sounds → Establish the grapheme-phoneme correspondences.
2. Learning letter formation → Handwriting
3. Reading → Blending
4. Identifying the sounds in words → Phonemic awareness
5. Tricky words

The fundamental reading process in the use of Jolly Phonics consists in synthesizing the sounds in words, that is to say, the child has to produce each sound of the word individually, showing their correct acquisition and pronunciation of the sounds learned.

The focus placed on training *tricky words* from early stages is also remarkable. *Tricky words* are set of words with irregular spelling, what means that they do not follow the phonetic rules Jolly Phonics teaches and so, they cannot be read synthetizing its sounds. Some of those *tricky words* include *I, we, me,* etc. The reason to introduce those words since the beginning of the learning is because of their frequency in the written texts, children should know about them.

For the teaching of all these skills, the method comprises very good quality materials. In the *Big Book* the sounds are introduced with a story and pictures, and the

correspondent spelling. The method also possesses a collection of reading books that are used to practice decoding, to improve the pronunciation of the sounds and to enrich the children's vocabulary. The method usually uses different worksheets to practice other skills such as identification of sounds and blending.

5.1.2 Whole Language

The Whole Language method is a perspective on teaching that is based on language being a tool for accomplishing purposes. It is said to be a perspective because unlike Jolly Phonics, the Whole Language is not a brand method. It refers to a set of beliefs about language learning which guide a number of different methods such as the look-and-say method.

For Whole Language, all the components of language – phonemes, morphology, semantics, syntax, pragmatics, etc. – are always simultaneously present and interacting in any instance of language in use. There is no segmentation of language into subskills. Whole Language also believes that language – both oral and written – is learned incidentally in a natural process because we are surrounded by it. Children can acquire language anywhere in any situation.

The key assumption of this approach is that the model of acquisition through real use (not through practice exercises) is the best model to approach the learning of reading and writing, and learning in general.

This perspective considers the language a tool for making meanings and doing tasks, hence it believes that the use of language always occurs in a situation, in a context. We cannot separate language from the context that is being used in. That is why many things about language can be deduced from its context.

Certain practices are especially congruent with a Whole Language framework. (Altwerger et àl., 1989). The overriding consideration regarding classroom reading and writing is that these be real reading and writing, not exercises in reading and writing. Beyond that, Whole Language classrooms are rich in a variety of printed materials. Little use is made of materials written specifically to teach reading or writing. Instead, Whole Language relies heavily on literature, on other print used for appropriate

purposes – for example stories, newspapers, cooking recipes, instructions, etc. – and on writing for varied purposes.

In the Whole Language method reading is not limited to a specific classroom time. The goal is to integrate literacy in every topic. Children are allowed to select their own reading books – which can be poetry, magazines, fiction books, etc. – and then are encouraged to share what they have read by exposing it to their classmates with puppet playing, dioramas, collages, dramatizations, etc. They are also allowed to write texts with a topic and genre chosen by them. What Whole Language expects is to construct new knowledge by exchanging points of view, interacting, experiencing, listening and reading. And this new knowledge involves teachers and peers, what means that learning to read and write is a social process.

5.1.3 Evaluation of Jolly Phonics

Jolly Phonics has been praised for its contributions to the current literacy teaching, but also some deficiencies have been shown.

Jolly Phonics develops a wide range of microskills for teaching literacy. The main microskill practiced is the grapheme-phoneme correspondences. This is exercised by teaching the children the letter sounds through repetition and association with a gesture. Other important microskill in Jolly Phonics is phonemic awareness, which is the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds/phonemes in spoken words. This microskill involves practicing identification of the sounds in words which is also practiced through different exercises. With these later microskills mentioned, learners will be able to practice blending which consists in combining the sounds to read and is exercised by decodable texts. Handwriting is also one of the microskills taught by the method and is usually practiced through worksheets.

However, although the method is very complete with respect to the contents of learning, it still has some limitations. Despite being a multisensory method, Jolly Phonics focuses too much on auditory skills. As Gardner's multiple intelligences theory (1983) explains, too much focus on one skill is inadequate. According to Gardner some learners are better at some type of intelligence and his learning style would be related with this kind of intelligence. Thus, for students who are not good enough at auditory

skills, Jolly Phonics is inadequate. The same happens with non-visual learners when learning with Whole Language. All routes and skills possible should be integrated in one approach in order to provide all students with the same opportunities for learning. In lesson plans, more than one type of intelligence should be practiced in order to facilitate every kind of student the chance to learn in an easy way for them. For example, Jolly Phonics should include some global recognition tasks too, such as using pictograms or identifying very familiar words to let visual kids the chance to succeed in learning.

In addition to focusing on auditory skills, Jolly Phonics' teaching is based on activities with close-ended response. Occasionally this can produce rejection and unwillingness to learn from the less advanced students. Nevertheless, rigid teaching and close-ended responses are good and necessary in some situations. To present the information or to practice some elements, structured close-ended response activities are suitable for the students. It allows them to get familiar to the input and to exercise it to be able to use it in contextualised situations. However, it is the combination of structured and creative activities which makes the best formula for learning. For Jolly Phonics to acquire this combination of convergent and divergent teaching, experimental and divergent-answer activities – such as dramatizations or creative writing – used in Whole Language, could be included to give children the opportunity to develop their learning more freely and with no fear to fail.

As a trademark method, Jolly Phonics includes its own reading books which are adapted to the different stages of decoding depending on how many sound groups the student controls. This is a good technique to practice decoding, but sometimes the sense of the written texts that is communicate a message, is lost. At time learners may be more focused on decoding correctly than on understanding and enjoying the story. In contrast, Whole Language uses all kind of everyday texts in literacy teaching which allows children to discover the communicative function of written texts. Moreover, this kind of texts allows children to use the context to access meaning which is another strategy to comprehend the texts. Having more than one tactic for reading – not only decoding – is very useful for learners while reading. This is exactly what the searchlights model (DFES, 1998) says. This model assumes that reading should be taught by using different strategies simultaneously. This approach claims that children

will learn to read most effectively by exploiting a diverse range of tactics. This way, the number of 'cues' or inputs for the pupil is optimized, enabling them to relate them. The more 'searchlights' that are switched on, the less critical it is if one of them fails. (DFES, 2005) To remedy these limitations, Jolly Phonics could include in its program some of real materials too, apart from the decodable texts. This fact would let the children practice decoding with the phonics texts but also be aware that reading is not just decoding, reading and writing serves a purpose that is communication. Giving students purposes for reading encourages them to monitor their own understanding, and prepares the way for the reading of increasingly more difficult texts.

As in the context of Spain Jolly Phonics is being used as an EFL method, it is important to also evaluate the effectiveness of the method for the acquisition of EFL:

As mentioned before, Jolly Phonics focuses on the phonemic awareness, which means that children are taught to spell and pronounce the language correctly. This is a good skill that students must practice, particularly in Spain where English pronunciation and spelling has always been the weakest point of the learners. Learning the sounds instead the letters while learning English means that students will not be influenced by the spelling of the words when pronouncing them. Especially when they are so young, because they are still learning to read and write so they do not have prior ideas that affect them.

Nevertheless, these skills are not enough to promote the acquisition of a second language. Jolly Phonics is so focused on the correct synthetizing of the sounds that it often leaves comprehension behind. When teaching another language, comprehension is a very important aspect that must be present in the classroom. The method should insist not only in children decoding and pronouncing correctly, but also in the acquisition of new vocabulary and the comprehension of what they are reading, even if it is just one word. To let this comprehension take place it is necessary to include interaction in the lesson plans. As the interactionist view of SLA says: modified input that occurs in interaction will lead to the negotiation of meaning and comprehension. It is only with comprehension that the learning can be meaningful to the children.

Secondly, Jolly Phonics does not always have the communicative purpose of the language into account. The idea of language serving a communicative purpose is not as

clearly highlighted in Jolly Phonics as in Whole Language. Isolated activities of decoding and blending sounds are carried out, but the real end of language – communication – is not present in these activities. As the functional perspective of SLA points, only by using the language with a purpose can this language be acquired. Children must be aware that English is another language that can be used to communicate in different contexts apart from school, otherwise the sense of learning English does not exist. Understand the sense and the use of learning is the key to this learning to become meaningful.

Related to this latter idea and as said previously, decodable texts cannot be the only resource to practice reading. We cannot limit the use of English to structured activities to learn sounds and vocabulary. Practising and using real English texts – appropriate for the level and age – as well, is a good alternative to develop the communicative skills of the learners. Rich and contextualised input is provided to the learners this way, which is an essential aspect for the acquisition of the language to take place, as Krashen (1982) and the interactionist view of SLA (Long, 1983) teaching say. Furthermore, this communicative perspective cannot only be applied to texts. Conversational activities, games in which language is needed to participate, dramatizations, etc. are resources that allow children to practice the language in real meaningful situations. These activities also allow practicing other important aspects to learn a second language: interaction and context.

All the theories of SLA reviewed, highlight the importance of interaction while learning another language. Nevertheless, decoding which is the most important skill in Jolly Phonics, is usually practiced by learners individually. This way and with this kind of activities, interaction is not promoted. In contrast, Whole Language usually makes children work in pairs or groups as this way of organise pupils is more likely to promote interaction than working alone. Although individual work is also needed, it does not have to be the only way of working. Jolly Phonics should add more group activities in its program in order to encourage children to interact and peer-teaching.

5.2 ANALYSIS OF A LESSON PLAN

A Jolly Phonics typical lesson plan which was used in Infant classrooms, will be analysed in this section in order to highlight its efficiency to contribute to the acquisition of literacy and EFL teaching. Based on the insights derived from this analysis, a blueprint of lesson plans will be then developed which can help to carry out more complete and effective lessons.

For this analysis I selected a lesson plan designed for three year-olds from the state school Valdespartera of Zaragoza. The objective of the lesson plan is to introduce new sounds to the children. The lesson plan consists of (1) two introductory activities that present the sound and make it familiar to the children, (2) a sound identification activity, (3) a letter formation activity, (4) two games involving sound identification and blending, and (5) a final revision part of all the sounds studied. Unfortunately, I was not provided with the objectives, contents and evaluation criteria of the mentioned lesson plan and therefore my analysis will focus only in the activities.

The structure of the lesson plan is detailed in the chart below.

Activity	Description
1.Presentation of the sound and the spelling	A picture of the spelling is showed. The sound is said while doing the corresponding gesture. This is done several times.
2.Song	The song of the sound is played three times and the gesture is done while singing.
3.Looking for words – Identification of the sound in words.	A big poster of the Jolly Phonics Big Book, where the sounds are presented is showed. In these pages, the grapheme of the sound can be found as well as a scene that represents a story. In the scene, different things with the sound are present. The story is left behind, and the teacher wants the children to identify things with the sound. If the children say something containing the sound, the sound and the gesture are repeated.
4.Letter formation	With the digital whiteboard, the children practice letter formation by drawing the letter with the help of a guide. The way to write the letter correctly is explained to the children. Only few children come out to the board and participate.
5.Game 1 – Identification of the	In the digital whiteboard can be found a box with the grapheme of the sound. Outside the box, there are different things. Some of them contain the sound and some others do not. The children have

sounds in words	to choose one thing. The teacher asks what it is and if they do not know, the teacher pronounces the word and they have to say if they have heard the sound or not. If they have, they have to move the thing into the box. If the sound is not present, they have to cross that object.
6.Game 2 – Blending	Some words and their picture are displayed disordered in the digital whiteboard. The teacher chooses a word. Letter by letter, she makes the children to sound the letter and do the gesture. Then she reads the word very slowly to let the children notice all the sounds. Then she reads the word quickly and asks which picture corresponds to that word. Children have to match the picture with the word.
7.Revision	All the songs for the sounds previously studied are sung.

Table 1. Jolly Phonics Lesson Plan of Valdespartera's School

Activity 1:

When presenting the sound, the teacher shows the spelling while voicing the sound accompanied with the correspondent gestures which are repeated several times. Although children love repetition, this technique is not going to be memorable for the kids, because it is a decontextualized and isolated activity. Ausubel (1963) claims that for learning to be meaningful and memorable, learners must relate new knowledge to relevant concepts they already know. If the activity is isolated, nothing could be related to the new learning. The teacher has to find a way to introduce the sound in context and apart of repeating the sound. This would make it funnier and more memorable.

Activity 2:

The teacher plays the song in a CD and encourages the children to sing along while doing the gesture. Songs are easy to remember and they are enjoyable, but the problem is that often the Jolly Phonics' songs are incomprehensible to the children. Also different songs have the same melody, so if children do not understand the lyrics, it can also be very confusing. The most important feature of the songs, that is memorability, is lost. As Krashen's input hypothesis and the interactionist view (Long, 1983) of SLA says, language is acquired by receiving comprehensible input. New easier songs can be made by the teacher, so as not to lose this fantastic resource.

Activity 3: This activity encourages children to recall the vocabulary previously learned by identifying the words for the pictures in the poster. Children also practice the sound in question, as the elements to be found in the poster contain that sound. However, this way to practice vocabulary is very isolated. Learning isolated words is not effective as the functional perspective of SLA claims language is learned by using it to do something, that is to say, when using the language in context. A game or dramatization where the words were used within a context would be more effective to practice vocabulary.

Activity 4: The teacher explains the way to write the spelling and the children try to reproduce it before. Letter formation activities like the one presented here, are necessary to practice handwriting and make the children relate the sounds with their graphemes. Nevertheless, in this particular activity not every child participates in the activity, so not everybody experiments the writing. Although they all hear the explanations, if they only observe how other children write the grapheme, it will not be as memorable and meaningful as if they have written it as Kolb (1984) declares that experience plays a central role in the learning process. It will be better to find another activity in which all the students could experiment letter formation.

Activity 5: Sound identification in different positions of the word is being practiced. Children are learning to identify sounds in real words, so the sounds are not presented in isolation. They can use their prior knowledge about the sound to hear and identify it in another word, so the learning will be meaningful as Ausubel alleges.

Activity 6: The teacher sounds the letters of a word slowly, to form a word. This way blending is introduced. However, blending isolated words does not teach to read, because reading is not only decoding and blending, comprehension also has an important role. The Whole Language approach only conceives the teaching of literacy if a communicative sense is given to reading. It will be better to blend words within a short and easy sentence for allowing children to "read" something more contextualised than single words, and also allow them to practice comprehension.

Activity 7: The teacher and the children sing all the songs learned up to that moment while doing the respective gestures for each sound. This is an activity the kids will love, however, the fact that children are singing the songs do not mean that children are

revising the different sounds, because they are not practicing them properly. If the objective is to practice the sound and gesture association it is a good activity because they are practicing it in the context of singing a song. But, if the teacher wants to revise the sounds, they should create concrete activities for that.

One important factor missing in this lesson is the use of the language to do things: the communicative purpose, which is indispensable in second language teaching according with the functional perspective of SLA. Activities practicing any easy structure and the new and revised vocabulary to do something can be added to the lesson in order to practice real conversation too. Dramatizations are always a good option but competition or TPR games are too because they involve interaction.

Another missing aspect in this lesson is the top-down skills. Neither word recognition nor using the context to access meaning are practiced in this lesson plan. As explained in the analysis of Jolly Phonics, focus on a single type of reading processing is a mistake because there will be children who will be best at top-down skills, and they also deserve to learn in an easy way for them. Moreover, practicing different kind of skills we are providing the child with more strategies to approach reading.

In sum, although this lesson plan practices all the bottom-up skills needed to learn to read and write, most of the activities were decontextualized and isolated, preventing learning from being meaningful. Furthermore, the lesson sidelines the language teaching part that should be present in a bilingual lesson.

6. RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

In this section I will present and discuss the main findings derived from the teacher's responses to the survey I elaborated about the limitations of Jolly Phonics.

The questionnaire was structured into four sections: (1) Questions about the limitations of Jolly Phonics, (2) questions comparing Jolly Phonics with the Whole Language approach, (3) questions about the measures adopted by the teachers to

compensate for Jolly Phonics' weaknesses and (4) questions about their general opinion about the method. I will review the results of each of these sections in turn[2].

1. **Questions about the limitations of Jolly Phonics.**

Question 2 of the survey revealed the importance that teachers give to the principal deficiencies of Jolly Phonics. As can be seen on graph 1, the teachers strongly agreed that the most important problem is that Jolly Phonics was created for native students and not for teaching English to foreign learners. Another frequent criticism is the isolation and decontextualization of the contents. However, the problems that have to do with the language teaching – no communicative purpose, no rich input and no interaction – were not considered very important and there was not much accordance in the degree of importance. This may indicate that teachers were not considering the factor of language teaching in their response, even though the revision of the SLA theories I made concluded that rich input, interaction and communicative purpose are vital elements in a L2 class.
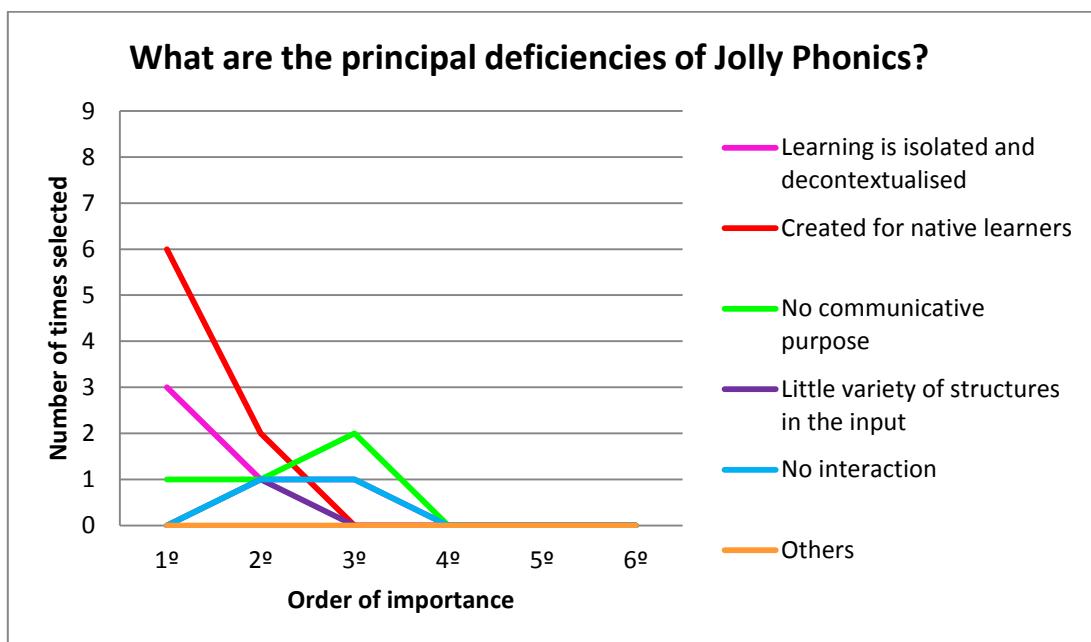
Graph 1. Relative importance (from 1-6) of the 6 deficiencies of Jolly Phonics evaluated by the teachers – Question 2

The obstacles of learning that children experiment when using this method were asked in question 4. In the teachers' opinion the most important obstacle is the English language itself, which has difficult grapheme-phoneme relationships. Some resources

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[2] All the results are also provided in tables for a better understanding in the appendix 2.

for learning, such as the songs and the gestures were also considered problems. As the graph 2 shows, the sequence of the contents and the repetition were not perceived as big impediments for learning. The answers revealed that teachers consider that the way some resources are created, is not efficient for Spanish students and this is very related with the previous question in which the fact of not being created for native students was seen as the main problem of the method.

Obstacles for learning when using Jolly Phonics
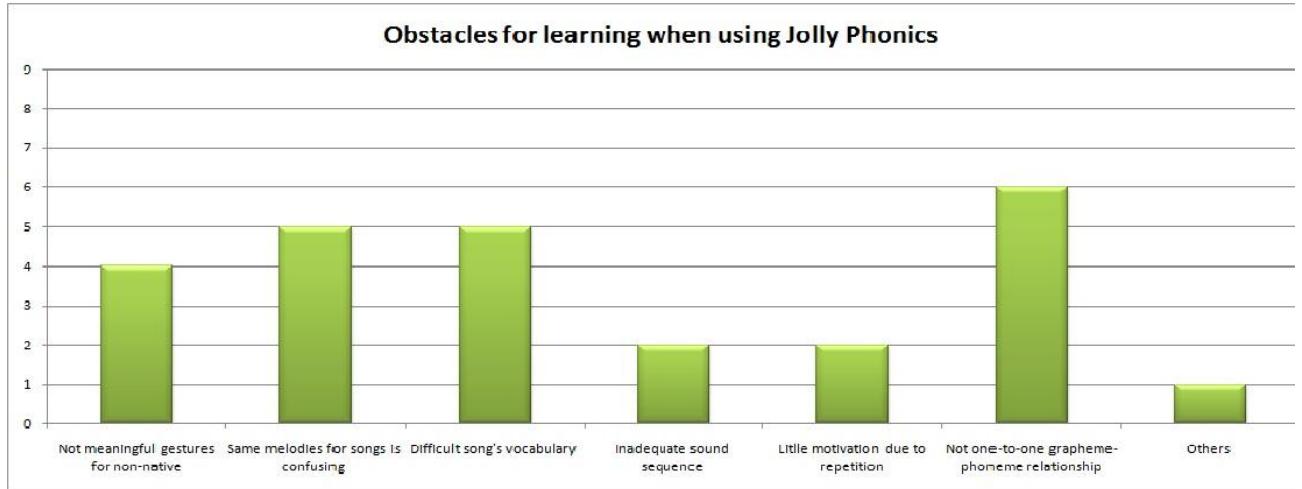
Graph 2. Frequency of each of the aspects mentioned as obstacles for learning – Question 3

## 2. Questions about comparing Jolly Phonics with the Whole Language approach.

In the teachers' opinion, the emphasis on comprehension from the beginning and new information presented in meaningful backgrounds were the characteristics of the Whole Language approach that better complement Jolly Phonics. It is surprising that the use of purposeful texts such as newspapers, magazines, recipes, etc., had not been considered as a very important feature of Whole Language for most of the teachers because one strong point of my analysis is based on the necessity of including those kinds of texts in the program to offer more strategies for learning and to highlight the communicative approach.

Characteristics		Order of importance					
		1º	2º	3º	4º	5º	6º
	Emphasis on comprehension	2	4	1	1	0	0
	Information presented meaningfully	4	1	2	0	0	0
	Purposeful reading texts	2	1	0	1	0	4
	Guess unfamiliar words using context or prior knowledge	0	2	2	2	2	0
	Spelling correclty not so important	0	0	2	2	2	2
	Not so sequenced contents	0	0	0	2	4	2

Graph 3. Relative importance (from 1-6) of each of the 6 characteristics of Whole Language that better supplements

Jolly Phonics – Question 4

The teachers tended to agree when choosing the more important characteristics that are absent in Jolly Phonics as we can see in graph 5. The more important feature for most of the teachers was the use of the context and prior knowledge to build new meanings. It was unexpected to find that comprehension was considered by many teachers of less importance, considering that one of my analysis findings was that practicing comprehension give sense to read and write and makes learning meaningful and purposeful.
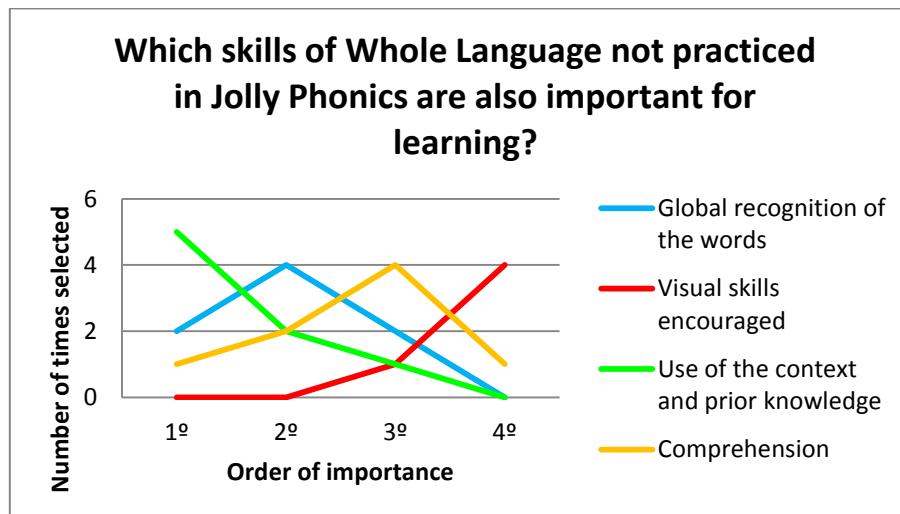

Graph 4. Relative frequency (from 1-4) of the characteristics of Whole Language not practiced in Jolly Phonics that are also important for learning – Question 5.

It is remarkable to say that one teacher did not answer any of these two later questions because he believes none of the above points are better than a synthetic phonics methodology and also added that there is scientific proof that synthetic phonics is the best way to teach children to read and write in English, and it is also scientifically proven that mixed methods are not as successful as a synthetic phonics method.

3. Questions about the measures adopted by the teachers to compensate for Jolly Phonics' weaknesses

Question 6 wanted to be aware of the kind of activities teachers use in order to supplement Jolly Phonics. It is worth noting that all the teachers use some activity to complement the method, this could be due they all think that the method alone is insufficient for promoting an integral and complete learning. The results were very similar as graph 5 shows, but videos and listening activities were selected as the less used. One person marked the *"others"* option and pointed that he also uses news and creative writing activities, which are activities more distinctive of the Whole Language approach.
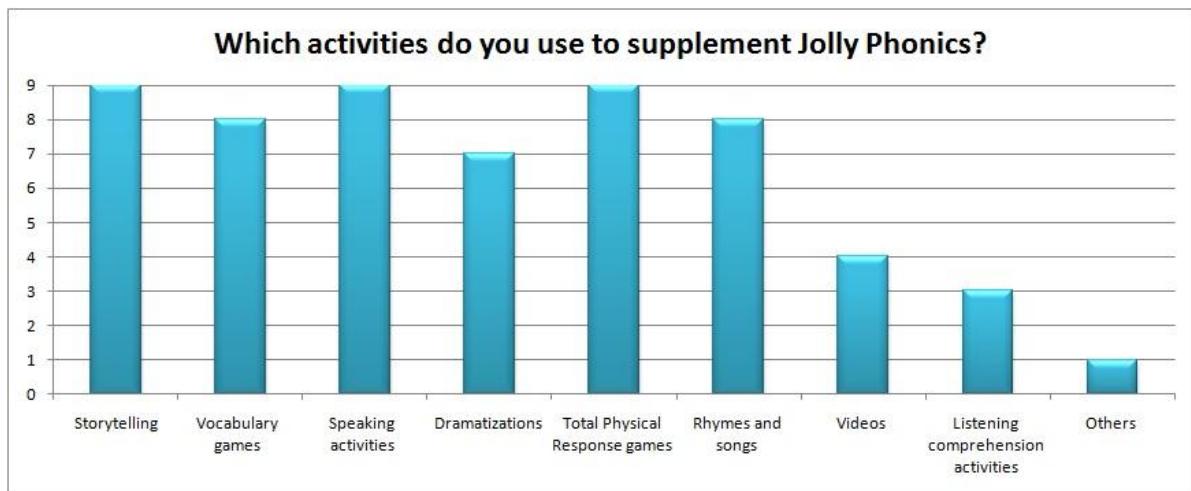
Graph 5. Frequency of each activity used to supplement Jolly Phonics – Question 6.

Most of the teachers coincided in the strategies they use to solve Jolly Phonics problems, which was question 7 of the questionnaire. The use of additional visual materials to also encourage the visual skills and the realization of active games to compensate repetition were with difference, the most used strategies. However, the strategies relative to changing the gestures, the songs or the sequence of presentation of the sounds were options barely selected, which are also those that need more effort of the teacher to be carried out. This indicates that sometimes teachers are not likely to carry out modifications if they have a method, although they perceive the problems.
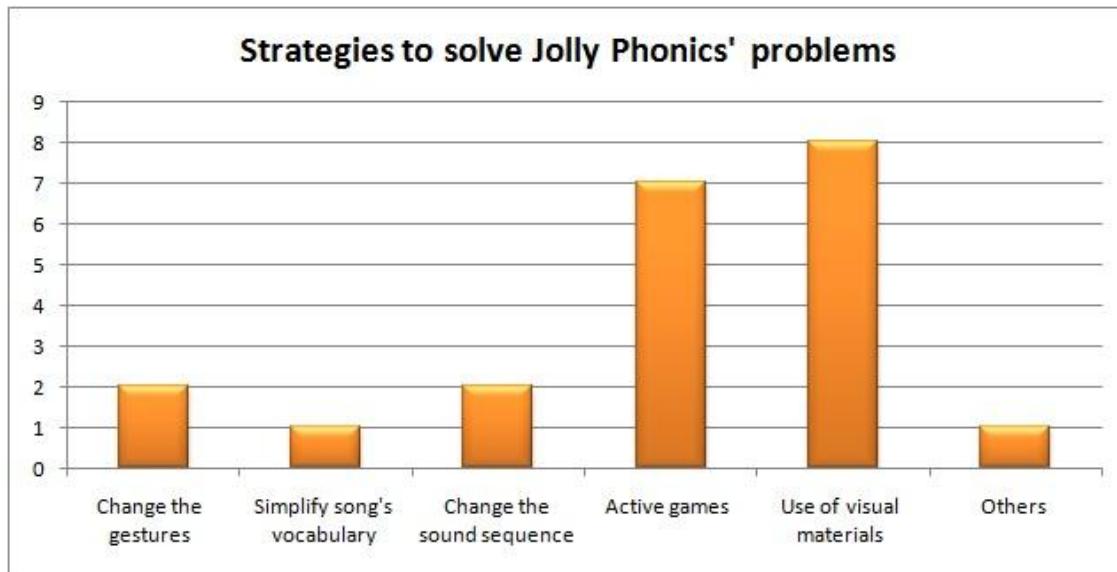
Graph 6. Frequency of the strategies used to solve Jolly Phonics' problems – Question 7

4. Questions about the general opinion of the method.

Despite all this data and opinions about the limitations of Jolly Phonics, most of the teachers qualified the method as good.
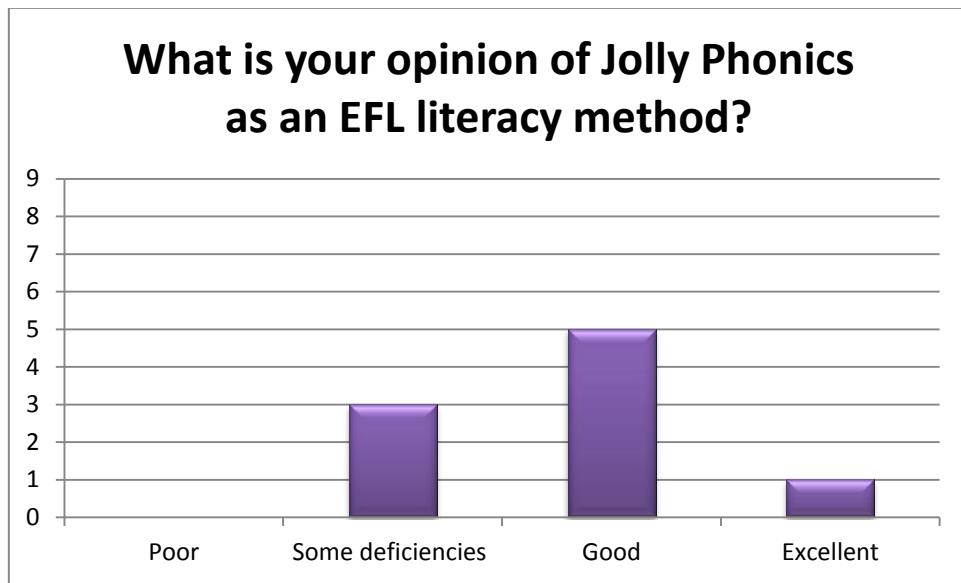
Graph 7. Frequency of the different opinions about Jolly Phonics as an EFL literacy method – Question 1

Nevertheless, around the 80% of the participants commented about the improvements that could be made to Jolly Phonics. Most of them pointed aspects mentioned in this study such as the method should be more contextualised, that the songs are difficult and not appropriated or that the method should be adapted for not-native students. A teacher also thinks that stories of the *Big Book* are also poor and non-

sense. Only one teacher thought that the more he uses Jolly Phonics, the happier he is with the results and added that the method itself is also making continual improvements.

All these answers considered, it can be concluded that teachers are generally concerned about the limitations of the use of Jolly Phonics in Spain and consider that some changes have to be done if the method is being use in other different context. Even though the teachers do develop some strategies to compensate for the problems; they do not usually propose measures that imply significant changes in the method. It is also remarkable to note that the limitations about including the teaching of the language at the same time as literacy are not valued as very important, and considering that Jolly Phonics is mainly implemented in bilingual schools this is a great problem. However, many times the choice of the teaching methods is forced by the direction and teachers have to deal with a method that is not always what they would prefer and nevertheless they try to take advantage of the resource that they have.

7. PROPOSAL

As a result of all the previous analyses and evaluations, a blueprint of a lesson plan will be provided. This blueprint has the objective of presenting the English sounds, like the lesson plan before analysed, to allow a clearer comparison. Aspects of Whole Language method and EFL characteristics have been added to a typical Jolly Phonics lesson plan in order to provide a more complete teaching of bilingual literacy.

Pre-activity		Benefits
Starting routine	All the lessons could start with the same routine, for example a song, a rhyme or anything else.	The routine allows children to notice that it is time for literacy in English and get ready for it. It is also a good way to introduce lexical chunks, with the consequent improvement of fluency in speech production.
Presentation of the sound	The teacher will present the sound in a contextualised way. He can use different techniques as using the story of Jolly Phonics Big Book, another invented story, a dramatization, etc. The sound must always be introduced together with the grapheme. Then the Jolly Phonics song for this sound will be sung. Some modifications in the song may be done by the teacher to make the lyrics easier for the children's English level. A	Meaningful learning is more likely to take place when presenting information in context. Introducing together the sound and the grapheme promotes the establishment of the grapheme-phoneme correspondences. Modifications in the songs to make the language level more appropriate for the learner's level will promote comprehension, and comprehension leads to acquisition.

Central activities		Benefits
	dance with the gesture can be included with the song.	Including the gesture with the song will make it more memorable and will focus the attention.
Letter formation	The children will practice handwriting. The teacher will first provide instructions of how to do it – up, down, make a round, etc. – and then allow the children to practice alone. A model will be displayed in the blackboard. The way to practice can change from one lesson to another or practice different ways the same day. Suggested techniques: practice in paper with a pencil, with crayons, with finger paint; also without paper on the palm of the hand, on the back of another child, on a rough surface like sandpaper letters, in the sand, with stones, etc.	Letter formation is a very important skill for the acquisition of grapheme-phoneme correspondences. It allows children to recognise the grapheme (reading) and to express it in a paper (writing). Practice alone is a good way to let pupils to make their own hypotheses and then check it with the model exposed. Practice with different techniques avoids repeating every day the same procedure and it fights against boredom and disinterest.
Bottom-up activities	The teacher can propose different games for: **Sound identification**. Identification of the sound in different parts of the word can be practiced. For example, playing Simon says: only when Simon says any word with the sound we can move. **Voicing.** Another skill to be practice is to voice correctly written letters. For example, by making a contest: the teacher	All these *bottom-up* skills promote the phonemic awareness that allow children to understand the concept that words can be divided into individual phonemes and that those phonemes can be blended into words. This understanding will lead to the use of this knowledge of grapheme-phoneme correspondences to read and write. Practice these skills with games makes learning funnier,

	shows a letter and the teams have to press a button to answer. If the answer is correct, the team gets a point.	more interesting, meaningful and contextualised.
	Blending. Children must practice how to blend the sounds together to read and write new words. For example, Play *I Spy*. The teacher sounds out the name of the object he is looking at. Children have to blend the sounds together to determine the object.	
	All the games must be related with the sound learned that day, and also with the ones learned before.	
	<u>Recommendations:</u> To maintain interest and motivation, it is better to play more than one game, if they are short.	
Top-down activity	Children must practice their ability to use context to access to the meaning of words and to predict words.	Practicing other kind of activities different from Jolly Phonics method, the teacher is providing the child other kind of strategies to use while reading. As the searchlight model claims, the more strategies the children have to apply while reading, the easier will be for him to succeed in reading, if one of the strategies fails.
	The teacher will propose some games, like for example predict possible missing words from a short story or sentence – depending on the learner's level – by using context clues. It is important that the child explains why he had chosen that word to fill the gap in the story.	
	The sound learned that day must be present in the games, and also the ones learned before.	By explaining the motive of the choice of the word to fill the gap, the child is forced to think about his reasoning and realise the usefulness of context while reading.

Communicative purpose game	To communicative purpose of the language to be present, games with this end can be played. The teacher will organise some games to practice this skill. Any game in which language is needed to succeed in, will be appropriated. Include the use of the context, like in the previous activity is a great opportunity to keep practicing top-down skills. The games must be related to the sound in some way. For example, practicing words or structures that contain it, the context is related with it They can be tasks, dramatizations, cooperation games, etc. Recommendations: It is better to play these games or tasks in groups or in teams, to favour interaction.	As said in the SLA theories previously discussed, a language is acquired by using it in context and for a purpose. That is why it is necessary to include some activity of this kind in the lesson plan.
Post-activity		
Literacy centres	To end the lessons, different literacy centres will be assigned to groups of children. The idea is that children play and practice what they have learned freely. The centres can be different things such as letter formation with play-dough and guides, magnetic letters, white boards to write in, letter puzzles, free reading of real materials, games in the digital blackboard, letter stamps, free writing, etc.	After all the previous structured/ teacher guided activities, this free activity promotes the creative part of learning and allows children to test their hypotheses. Observing their free play is a great opportunity of assessment. The teacher can observe whether the children integrate the learning in their play.

In every one of these activities rich input and a variety of structures must be provided as well.

8. CONCLUSIONS

The present study has analysed and evaluated the Jolly Phonics method taking into account the literacy processes and the SLA theories, as well as the opinions and concerns of the teachers about the method and the analysis of a typical Jolly Phonics lesson plan. Jolly Phonics has been also compared to the Whole Language approach in order to find some characteristics in the analytic perspective that can complement Jolly Phonics. Based on the findings of these analyses, a number of conclusions and implications for teaching may be drawn.

One of the conclusions of this study is that although Jolly Phonics boasts a multisensory methodology as one of its main advantages, most of its focus is on auditory skills. As a result, children that are not good at this kind of skills may experiment difficulties in learning through Jolly Phonics. The method should take into account the different learning styles that teachers will find in a classroom and propose varied activities which focus on different types of skills to provide the same opportunities of success to every student.

Equally important is the fact that it only practices bottom-up skills is not adequate because it is detrimental for all the students that are not good at those skills. Moreover, training children in only one type of abilities diminishes the number of strategies that they can use to approach learning. The more strategies students know the easier it would be to confront difficult situations when reading a text because if one strategy does not work, they could use another. Teachers can include more top-down activities to offer children different approaches to learning for the purpose of offering a more complete learning.

This study also revealed that the bottom-up skills training activities usually have close-ended responses and they do not allow divergent thinking and do not admit many mistakes, which can produce frustration to the weakest students. In order not to discourage learners, teachers should include more creative and divergent activities in the

program to allow children to lose their fear to fail and also to develop their creative abilities.

It is also remarkable to point that despite having good quality reading materials to practice decoding, they do not emphasize the communicative purpose of the language sufficiently and are all alike, there is no variety. To highlight the purpose of reading and writing – communication – it is necessary for children to have also access to real life texts. This way, children will feel more motivated than if they always practice with the same kind of readings. Moreover, exposing children to different kind of texts offers them richer input and structures.

In addition to the texts, the songs of Jolly Phonics are also a limitation. Although being a great resource its difficult lyrics and the confusion that the repetition of the melodies create, the songs do not help learning. The method should adapt the songs to Infant foreign learners and invent some easier lyrics to make children understand and associate the songs with the sounds in a meaningful way.

Another interesting insight of this study is that Jolly Phonics is not prepared for the teaching of EFL. As the method has been created for literacy teaching, it ignores the needs of a bilingual classroom. Communicative activities are not very common in the method and interaction is hardly fostered because the activities tend to be rather individualised, and with no interaction real communication situations cannot take place. If teachers want to teach English in addition to literacy the method should include communicative activities in its program and adapt to the Spanish bilingual education curriculum.

With the intention of giving a solution to all these limitations, I created a blueprint with some steps that teachers can follow to provide lessons that integrate literacy and language teaching. Some advice and examples of activities are included to illustrate how a lesson should be designed according to the findings of the study.

Although this study tried to be rigorous, it is evident that it also has limitations due to its size. For example the interpretation of the surveys' results are not very significant because few teachers filled the survey. It is difficult to find significant relationships from the data, as statistical tests normally require a larger sample size to

ensure a representative result. The fact of not having access to certain information or not having more resources to test the hypotheses also has constrained the study.

Although this study has attempted to throw light on the appropriateness of Jolly Phonics, much remains to be investigated. It could be interesting to test the blueprint in the future to check if it really contributes to the acquisition of literacy and English in bilingual classrooms. Moreover, the blueprint could be tested in schools with different factors, such as different degree of teacher's training, different number of children in a classroom, different amount of hours in English, etc. to investigate the role of the different variables which take part in the acquisition of a second language in bilingual classrooms.

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9. APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1. JOLLY PHONICS SURVEY.

Jolly Phonics is a synthetic literacy method created to teach how to read and write. Nowadays in Spain, Jolly Phonics is used to teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The aim of this questionnaire is to know the opinion of teachers using the method, about the deficiencies of Jolly Phonics for the learning of EFL.

This questionnaire is anonymous and confidential. Please answer the questions as indicated.

1. What is your opinion about Jolly Phonics as an EFL literacy method? Make a cross in your choice.

 Poor ( )   Some deficiencies ( )   Good ( )   Excellent ( )

2. What do you think are its principal deficiencies? Number in order of importance your choices; write the numbers next to the options. Write 1 for the most important and keep numbering in order of importance. It's not necessary that you choose all the options, only select the ones you think are problems. (In case you choose "others" write below the reason why.)

> a) The learning contents are presented in an isolated way, not in a meaningful context for the children. ( )
>
> b) The method was created for native learners. ( )
>
> c) No communicative purpose in the activities. ( )
>
> d) Little variety of structures in the input the children are exposed to. ( )
>
> e) Students do not communicate/interact in English. ( )
>
> f) Others. ( )

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_____

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_____

3. Have you noticed any of these obstacles or problems when using this method? Make a cross in the ones you have. (You can select more than one option. In case you choose "others" write below the reason why.)

g) The gestures associated to the sounds are not meaningful for non-native students. ( )

h) The repetition of the same melodies in different songs is confusing for the children. ( )

i) The vocabulary in the songs is often very difficult for non-native children. ( )

j) The sequence of the sounds is not adequate for EFL students. ( )

k) There is little motivation due to a lot of repetition. ( )

l) English does not have one-to-one sound to grapheme relationship. ( )

m) Others ( )

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4. As you know, there are also analytical methods such as *Whole language method* that are the opposite to synthetic phonics methods. They are based on global recognition of the words and natural comprehension rather than decoding. In your opinion, which one of these characteristics of *Whole language approach* do you think supplements *Jolly Phonics* better for EFL teaching? (Answer 1-6.Write 1 for the most important and 6 for the least important)

n) Comprehension is emphasized from the beginning ( )

o) New information is presented in a meaningful background for the students ( )

p) Purposeful reading texts; such as newspapers, magazines, letters, etc. ( )

q) Unfamiliar words should be skipped or guessed at according to context clues like pictures or by using prior information. ( )

r) Spelling correctly is not important; it is the thoughts and concepts that children know that count. ( )

s) Not so sequenced contents ( )

5. In *Jolly Phonics* some skills are practiced such as sound recognition, blending, identification of sounds in words… But which skills from analytic methods that are not practiced in *Jolly Phonics* do you think are also important for the learning? (Rank the following answers from most to least important)

t) Global recognition of the words ( )

u) Visual skills rather than auditory skills are encouraged ( )

v) Use of the context and prior knowledge to build new meanings. ( )

w) Comprehension. ( )

6. Which other activities do you use in order to supplement *Jolly Phonics* method? (You can select more than one option. In case you choose "others" write below the reason why.)

x) Storytelling ( )

y) Vocabulary games ( )

z) Speaking activities ( )

aa) Dramatizations ( )

bb) Total Physical Response games ( )

cc) Nursery rhymes and songs ( )

dd) Videos ( )

ee) Listening comprehension activities ( )

ff) Others ( )

_____
_____
_____
_____

7. Do you use any strategy to solve any of the *Jolly Phonics* problems previously mentioned? Select the ones you use. (In case you choose "others" explain below the reason why.)

gg) Change some gestures in order to make more meaningful and memorable for Spanish learners. ( )

hh) Simplify the vocabulary of the songs. ( )

ii) Change the sequence of the presentation of the sounds. ( )

jj) Make active games to compensate repetition. ( )

kk) Use additional visual materials to also encourage the visual skills. ( )

ll) Others ( )

_____
_____
_____
_____

8. In case you think Jolly Phonics should improve any aspects, which ones do you think these should be? Be free to comment any aspect that may be important for you and you want to highlight about this topic.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Thank you for your time and collaboration!

APPENDIX 2. RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONS OF THE SURVEY.

Question 1. What is your opinion of Jolly Phonics as an EFL literacy method?

		Number of times selected
Options	Poor	0
	Some deficiencies	3
	Good	5
	Excellent	1

Question 2. What are the principal deficiencies of Jolly Phonics?

		Order of importance					
		1º	2º	3º	4º	5º	6º
Deficiencies	Learning is isolated and decontextualized	3	1	1	0	0	0
	Created for native learners	6	2	0	0	0	0
	No communicative purpose	1	1	2	0	0	0
	Little variety of structures in the input	0	2	0	0	0	0
	No interaction	0	1	1	0	0	0

Question 3. Obstacles for learning when using Jolly Phonics

		Number of times selected
Obstacles	Not meaningful gestures for non-native students	4
	Same melodies for different songs is confusing	5
	Difficult song's vocabulary	5
	Inadequate song's sequence	2
	Little motivation due to repetition	2
	Not one-to-one grapheme-phoneme correspondences	6
	Others	1

Question 4. Which characteristics of Whole Language supplements better Jolly Phonics?

		Order of importance					
		1º	2º	3º	4º	5º	6º
Characteristics	Emphasis on comprehension	2	4	1	1	0	0
	Information presented meaningfully	4	1	2	0	0	0
	Purposeful reading texts	2	1	0	1	0	4
	Guess unfamiliar words using context or prior knowledge	0	2	2	2	2	0
	Spelling correclty not so important	0	0	2	2	2	2
	Not so sequenced contents	0	0	0	2	4	2

Question 5. Which skills of Whole Language not practiced in Jolly Phonics are also important for learning?

		Order of importance			
		1º	2º	3º	4º
Skills of Whole Language	Global recognition of the words	2	4	2	0
	Visual skills encouraged	0	0	1	4
	Use of the context and prior knowledge	5	2	1	0
	Comprehension	1	2	4	1

Question 6. Which activities do you use to supplement Jolly Phonics?

		Number of times selected
Activities	Storytelling	9
	Vocabulary games	8
	Speaking activities	9
	Dramatizations	7
	Total Physical Response games	9
	Nursery rhymes and songs	8
	Videos	4
	Listening comprehension activities	3
	Others	1

Question 7. Strategies to solve Jolly Phonics' problems.

		Number of times selected
Strategies	Change the gestures	2
	Simplify the song's vocabulary	1
	Change the sounds sequence	2
	Active games	7
	Use of visual materials	8
	Others	1