How the Simple View of Reading Influences Spanish Language Learners

WHAT DID THEY DO?

This study examined the two components of the Simple View of Reading framework: decoding and linguistic comprehension (i.e., making meaning from spoken language), which contribute to Spanish heritage language (HL) learners' reading comprehension. Researchers categorized 74 Spanish HL learners, ages 4-9, into two groups based on their reading stage: early readers or pre-readers. Early readers accurately and fluently decoded a brief Spanish passage. The early readers were assessed in linguistic comprehension, automaticity of decoding, and reading comprehension. Pre-readers were still developing foundational literacy skills in Spanish. The pre-readers were assessed in linguistic comprehension and decoding precursors (e.g., phonemic awareness, letter sounds, letter recognition, print awareness)

ARTICLE

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WHAT DID THEY FIND?

For students in the pre-reader stage, decoding precursors and linguistic comprehension were shown to be equally significant for early Spanish literacy development. However, this finding did not hold true for participants in the early reader stage. Once students had enough foundational skills to progress to the early reader stage, linguistic comprehension served as a stronger predictor of reading comprehension for Spanish HL learners, whereas decoding had significantly less influence on Spanish comprehension.

WHAT COULD THIS MEAN FOR TEACHERS?

If students are still developing early literacy skills, then a balanced approach with dedicated instructional time for both decoding and linguistic comprehension is essential. At this stage (generally grades PreK-2nd), students need to focus on mastering decoding precursors and linguistic comprehension skills concurrently through explicit instruction and frequent opportunities for guided practice and independent application. Once students reach the decoding threshold (i.e., when their foundational decoding skills are automatic and accurate), instructional time in language and linguistic comprehension best supports students' reading comprehension outcomes. Once at this stage (generally 2nd grade or above), students benefit from explicit instruction in morphology and syllabication, which complements the development of language and linguistic comprehension skills, and ultimately enhances reading comprehension.

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