Ancient Forms of Communication in the Spanish Immersion Classroom: The Use of Pictograms and Rebuses to Promote the Development of Spanish Language Literacy

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:
Spanish Immersion Kindergarten, Reading and Writing

Keywords: oral language, written language, reading, writing, phonemic awareness, pictograms, rebus principle, rhyming words, shared readings

Teaching Standards: See Appendix 1 for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

Synopsis: In this unit, students in kindergarten will learn about the relationship between oral language and written language by recounting, reading and writing short poems or rhymes in the Spanish language. *Pictograms*, one of the earliest forms of writing, will be used in the poems in order to facilitate students' comprehension and reading fluency. One of the main goals of this unit is to support students' abilities to talk, listen, write and read; students will read short poems, identifying the pictograms that rhyme; after practicing identifying rhyming words (listening), they will compose and recite their own poems (speaking). Students will be encouraged to write their poems using pictograms to compose a rebus. Lastly, they will share their rebuses with their classmates who will decode them and translate them into speech.

I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to 24 students in a Spanish *Immersion Kindergarten classroom, Spanish Language Arts.*

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Adriana Hart

Introduction

There are several goals in this curriculum unit; one of those goals is to teach kindergarten students to use reading strategies in order to identify Spanish rhyming words in short texts or poems. In order to help students identify patterns and rhymes in a foreign language, the teacher will use analog signals of communication such as gesticulation and intonation. Gesticulation has been defined by Burling as the waving of the hands and associated movements of the head and body that accompany, and work closely with, spoken language [1]. Another important goal in this unit is for students to gain fluency and confidence in reading through the use of rebuses. The term *rebus* will be used throughout the unit to make reference to texts that use a mix of words and pictures (pictograms).

The rebuses will be used as scaffolds to support the development of reading in the foreign language; because students who are learning to read may be able to identify a limited number of words, the benefits of rebuses in their reading instruction are clear. As early people used rebuses to communicate messages and ideas, students will also make use of this ancient way of writing to create messages that will be transferred to speech.

Student Objectives

Students will:

• explore the connections between words and images using rebus poems.
• compose original rebus poems, based on a model.
• define and explore rhyme by identifying rhyming words.

Duration of the unit: two weeks.

This unit will be taught during Shared Reading time (30 to 40 minutes daily).

Rationale

The school where I work, Collinswood Language Academy, is a kindergarten through eighth grade (k-8) dual language public school in Charlotte NC, located in a working class neighborhood in the south of the city. The school's enrollment is culturally and

linguistically diverse, around 750 students, composed mainly from Hispanic and Caucasian origin who are learning Spanish either as a heritage or second language.

At Collinswood, students are taught math, social studies, Spanish/language arts, and higher-level language courses in Spanish. Science and English/language arts are taught in English. Physical education is taught in Spanish, and English is the main language of instruction for art and music. This school is also a magnet school, which means the students who wish to attend the school are only admitted through the lottery system.

This unit will be taught in a kindergarten classroom, to a group of 24 students; their ages range from 5 to 6 years old. These students receive 85% of their daily instruction in the Spanish Language; the remaining 15% of daily instruction is taught in the English language. Within this group of students, 60% have Hispanic heritage; however, they don't necessarily speak Spanish as their first language, or in a fluent way. Also, within this group there is one student who has been identified by the Special Education Team as Developmentally Delayed (DD) in several areas, including language and fine motor skills. Developmental delay refers to a child who is not achieving milestones within the age range of that normal variability.

The Exceptional Children coordinator from our school district, the school counselors, school speech therapist and the resource EC teacher suggested the use of picture cards or pictograms in the daily instruction to help this child understand commands and follow rules and procedures in the classroom and school. These pictures depict basic commands such as *raise your hand, stand up, sit, hands to yourself, listen, quiet time, walking feet, no talking, stop etc.* The pictogram cards have been used during the student's transitions and between classrooms (special area classes); English has been the language used when using the pictogram cards with the student in the regular classroom.

This challenging teaching situation made me reflect about my teaching instruction, not only in terms of finding new strategies to teach basic skills in a second language to a student with communication deficits, but also to include the other 23 students, making sure that time is spent wisely. The basic concept for this curriculum unit is to use the pictograms to support all 24 students in their Spanish reading instruction. This system would not have to be specific for one student only; it would benefit the rest of the students' Spanish literacy development.

For students with special needs, pictograms provide shortcuts to meaning. Where text is present on the page, it is there for the benefit of the helpers; however, for another group of learners, print annotated by pictograms can have a different function. Sassoon states that "children in the early stages of learning to read, youngsters learning English as a foreign or second language, pupils with dyslexia, all can use pictograms as a bridge between the spoken word and the abstract nature of the printed text." [2]

In this case, pictograms are seen as a temporary support or scaffold, encouraging the learner to use other clues such as knowledge of sound/letter correspondence and context in order to identify new words; as Sassoon affirms, the function of the pictograms with

regular students can be seen as addition rather that an alternative communication system in its own as it is for special needs students. [3]

Content Objectives

As mentioned before, this curriculum unit explores the connection between oral and written language. This connection can be transferred into the classroom by exposing students to activities that promote the development of phonological awareness (the ability to discern units of sound in speech and to use those sounds units in the cognitive processes involved in literacy activities) and phonemic awareness (the capacity to carry out mental operations on individual phonemes within a language) such as: recognizing rhyme, blending phonemes to form a word, counting the number of phonemes in a word by asking children to clap once for each sound they hear in a word, etc. [4] This connection will be also reinforced by the work students will be producing when using pictograms, when reading and when creating rebuses.

   This unit will cover the following standards in kindergarten:

Phonological Awareness:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.K.2

Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes).

   CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.K.2.A

   Recognize and produce rhyming words.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.K.10 (Literature)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.K.10 (informative**)**

Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.

Fluency

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.K.4

Read emergent-reader texts with purpose and understanding.

Text Types and Purposes:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.K.2

Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about

the topic.

Background Research

Gaining the ability to use words may have been the single most important step in the evolution of language. Words were used not only to request things but also to convey information by making statements about the world. According to Deutscher, words are divided into things and actions and by doing this, language simply reflects a conceptual distinction that has been there before language was around. This clear distinction is required in order to have a "mental representation" of who is doing what to whom, and this mental representation is a part of social intelligence that is well developed in non-human primates. [5]

Deustscher claims that the ordering of words was crucial when our ancestors used language, but the order of words was not based on the rules of English or of any other particular language but rather was a natural ordering principle that is deeply entrenched in the way humans perceive the world; this natural order is probably the oldest element in the structure of language. [6]

Burling states that the most important characteristic of language is its symbolic nature: the use of arbitrary signs, which mean something only by agreed convention, not because they really sound like the object they refer to. These arbitrary signs were conveyed vocally, using vowels and consonants, which do not bear any meaning in themselves, but which derive their sense from being joined up into words; this method of combining meaningless sound units into meaningful words is called duality of patterning. [7]

On the other hand, there is a large class of signals that are common to all humanity; these signals need little learning and they allow humans to communicate in quite subtle ways with people of all cultures. We use our faces, voices, hands and arms, our posture and movements of our entire bodies to express ourselves; these gestures or vocalizations, according to Burling, form a second kind of human communication, very different from language; Burling calls this kind of communication "gesture-calls". [8] While gesture-calls are separate from human language, that language does have a component, "gesticulation," quite like gesture-calls. As we talk, we use facial expressions and postures that are much better at conveying delicate shades of emotion and intention than words; postures and facial expressions are more likely to give a more reliable guide than words; we convey our feelings more easily, more subtly and less self-consciously with these gesticulations than we do with words. Our words allow us to refer to things and events and to say something about them. However, our facial expressions and body language are much better at expressing our emotions and intentions. [9] According to McNeill, language and gesture are inextricably entwined. He sees "gestures as active participants in speaking and thinking. They are conceived of as ingredients in an imagery-language dialect that fuels speech and thought". [10]

Our ancestors' invented a way to represent oral communication in a system of written symbols. This system was invented independently in different parts of the world. At the

beginning, early people used pictures to indicate something; 30-40,000 years ago, people started by drawing graffiti and paintings on rocks and walls of caves.

All the earliest forms of writing were much more iconic than the writing used today. [11] Ancient Egyptian, the earliest Chinese writing, and Sumerian, the first well-developed written language of Mesopotamia, all relied on pictographs. The most famous is probably the Egyptian form, which came to be called *hieroglyphic* (from the Greek "sacred carving"). The term has also come to be used for scripts of a similar character from other cultures, such as the Hittite, Mayan, or Indus Valley. [12]

Pictograms and signs may convey messages by visual means but move towards "proper" writing only with the introduction of the rebus principle. The idea that symbols could be used to represent the sounds of a language rather than represent real objects, is one of the most significant ancient discoveries leading to the development of writing. Not only did this principle apply to the development of the Ancient Egyptian written language, but it was also the precursor to the development of the alphabets used in modern languages as well. The rebus increased the possibilities of information storage and communication by allowing the same symbol to stand for the idea it represents as well as for the sound associated with the word used for this idea. Both the Egyptians and the Sumerian/Akkadians made use of this principle and, thus initiated the important transitional step towards "proper" writing (a purely phonetic writing). [13] Two main types of sound writing evolved from the development and extension of the rebus principle: syllabic and alphabetic writing. Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphs can demonstrate both types of writing.

In order to help students to learn a second language in the classroom, and taking into account that early people communicated first by speaking, this unit promotes the development of students' phonological awareness, specifically the awareness of rhyme. Research shows that students benefit from direct instruction on rhyme recognition paired with fun activities that target this skill. A **r**hyme is a repetition of similar sounds (or the same sound) in two or more words, most often in the final syllables of lines in poems and songs. In order to help students to identify the words that rhyme, it is important to highlight the ending of each word by using intonation and stress. When teaching a lesson related to the development of speech in a foreign language, it is necessary for the teacher to use gesticulation and intonation. These two are used simultaneously with the words and sentences of the specific language; as McNeill states, gesticulation is intimately tied to vocal language. Gesticulation is iconic because it imitates the shape and movement of something that the speaker is talking about. Using gesticulations in the language classroom is important because it augments the meaning conveyed by words. [14]

Teaching Strategies

Phonemic Awareness

Rhyme detection

Students hear pairs of words and identify whether they rhyme (ver/ser=si; sed/van=no)

Rhyme Sensitivity

Students hear a series of words and identify which one of the series does not rhyme with the others, or which one does not rhyme with a target word.

Onset-rime blending

Students hear an onset and a rime, each one pronounced separately; students' job is to blend them into a word. (For Example m-esa)

Writing

Modeled Writing

The teacher demonstrates for students the process of writing a text and multiple uses of writing as a communicative and learning tool. In modeled writing, the teacher encodes the message and students watch as they participate orally in the composition of the written piece. The teacher writes the text produced, which is at a higher level than what the students would be able to compose independently.

Shared Writing

This is an instructional approach in which the teacher and students take turns constructing a written text together. All the students in the class participate in the writing of the text by sharing the pen with the teacher, copying from the board, or encoding the text in their own notebooks.

Collaborative Writing

Children write with their peers and the teacher monitors their work, providing further assistance as needed. This strategy encourages greater student involvement in the actual encoding, revising, editing and publishing processes. It is also an opportunity for students to talk about what they intend to write.

Fluency

Choral Reading

Choral reading is reading aloud in unison with a whole class or group of students. Choral reading helps build students' fluency, self-confidence, and motivation. Because students are reading aloud together, students who may ordinarily feel self-conscious or nervous about reading aloud have built-in support.

Partner Reading

Paired reading is a research-based fluency strategy used with readers who lack fluency. In this strategy, students read aloud to each other. When using partners, more fluent readers can be paired with less fluent readers, or children who read at the same level can be paired to reread a story they have already read. Paired reading can be used with any book, taking turns reading by sentence, paragraph, page or chapter.

Shared Reading

Shared Reading is an interactive reading experience that occurs when students join in or share the reading of a book or other text while guided and supported by a teacher. The teacher explicitly models the skills of proficient readers, including reading with fluency and expression. The shared reading model often uses oversized books (referred to as big books) with enlarged print and illustrations.

Think-Pair-Share

Think-pair-share (TPS) is a collaborative learning strategy in which students work together to solve a problem or answer a question about an assigned reading. This technique requires students to (1) think individually about a topic or answer to a question; and (2) share ideas with classmates. Discussing an answer with a partner serves to maximize participation, focus attention and engage students in comprehending the reading material.

Vocabulary

List-group-label

List-group-label is a form of semantic mapping. The strategy encourages students to improve their vocabulary and categorization skills and learn to organize concepts. Categorizing listed words, through grouping and labeling, helps students organize new concepts in relation to previously learned concepts.

Classroom Activities

The duration of the unit is a week and a half. Research shows that students benefit from direct instruction on rhyme recognition paired with fun activities that target this skill.

Day 1

Teacher starts the lesson with a Lyric video of the song called "Roar" from Katy Perry. The video shows the lyrics of the song written in rebus form. After the students watch a segment of the video, teacher will ask them questions about what they saw in the lyrics (words and pictures). Teacher will explain that some words in the lyrics are represented in the forms of pictures or pictograms and that a text using a combination of words and pictograms is called a rebus.

Teacher will read a rebus poem called "El color Verde." Before doing so, teacher introduces the poem by giving a very short summary of it, and discusses the title. Teacher reads the poem aloud encouraging the students to join in the reading of the repeating pattern (Choral Reading).

The purposes of the reading on Day 1 are to enjoy the poem and to encourage students to notice repeating patterns, words that rhyme and the pictograms in the poem.

Day 2

Teacher links the students' previous learning by watching once again the "Roar" video. Teacher asks students to list some of the pictograms they see in the video. Teacher draws the pictograms and writes the words next to each one on chart paper (Modeled Writing).

After writing the list, teacher again gives a short summary of the poem read the day before and asks the students to identify the pictograms in the poem. Teacher uses the pointer or reading wand to show where the reading starts. While pointing to each word as it is read, teacher reads fluently and expressively. The students are encouraged to join in. To show what a reader does while reading, teacher thinks aloud at selected points near the beginning of the book, predicting what words rhyme and will come next in the poem and modeling how to confirm the prediction (Shared Reading).

Day 3

Before reading the poem from the previous day, teacher plays a rhyming words game with the students:

Teacher says:

"Vamos a jugar un juego de palabras que riman. Las palabras riman cuando tienen al final los mismos sonidos. Las palabras *oso* y *hermoso* riman porque ambas terminan con el sonido /oso/. Ahora es su turno para decirme si tres palabras riman. Digan las palabras después de mí. Levanten los pulgares si creen que las palabras riman."

Teacher asks the students to explain which words rhyme and which words do not rhyme.

       camión, canción, salón

       queso, beso, peso

       cuna, vela, luna

Teacher asks a student to use the pointer to read the poem, then invites the students to add to the poem by naming more green animals or objects and words that rhyme (Shared Writing). With teacher's voice taking more of a background role, teacher and students begin to read. A student may be asked to use the reading wand.

In a pocket chart, teacher has prepared sentence strips with the words "veo," "una" and pictograms of "verde" "oruga" "lechuga", etc. The students are invited to come up and form a sentence using the pictures and the words. Students are asked to read the sentence by pointing to the words.

The students keep practicing words that rhyme, teacher asks them to complete sentences with a rhyming word

Day 4

Warm up:

Teacher asks the students to listen carefully in order to complete a sentence with a rhyming word.

Teacher says:

"Es su turno para hacer algunas rimas. Voy a decir el principio de una oración. Ustedes me van a decir una palabra que complete la oración para que rime. ¿Están listos? Escuchen con cuidado

El ratón, Ramón, tiene un _____.

      Respuestas posibles: *balón, botón, camión, avión*.

      Si la respuesta es correcta: Bien. La palabra que dijeron rima con *ratón* y *Ramón*.

Teacher asks the students to complete the sentences with a word that rimes:

      Es un oso muy _____. (Respuestas posibles: *chistoso, famoso, hermoso, chismoso*)

      El grillo tiene un _____. (Respuestas posibles: *anillo, cepillo, palillo, ladrillo*)

      Mi amiga, Nina, está en la _____. (Respuestas posibles: *cocina, colina, oficina, vitrina*)

      La abeja no es una _____. (Respuestas posibles: *almeja, ceja, oveja, oreja*)

      Ana tiene una_____. (Respuestas posibles: *hermana, iguana, cana, rana*)

With teacher's voice taking more of a background role, teacher and students begin to read. When the page with the pictograph of "oruga" is reached, there is a sticky note on the pictograph '"oruga". Teacher invites the students to predict what that word might be. When the answer is given, teacher asks, "How did you know?"

The rest of the poem is read.

Day 5

Teacher presents a new poem similar to "El color verde". The poem is called "El color Rojo". Teacher asks the students to read the poem identifying sight words and finding the words that rime.

    The entire poem is then reread, with the students taking turns to point (Shared Reading). All the students are expected to read while teacher remains silent (Choral Reading)

    Teacher explains that both poems have a word pattern and asks the students to explain what the pattern is. Then, teacher explains that the students are going to create their own poems, using some of the rhyming words they have been practicing in class, and using also a poem frame.

    Students practice in pairs, creating and reciting their poems. After they have had enough practice, students are encouraged to come in front of the group and recite their poems to the class (Partner Reading).

Day 6

Students will practice their poems with a partner. After they have had enough practice identifying and choosing the rhyming words, teacher explains that now the students are going to write their poems using the sight words they already know and representing the rhyming words with pictograms in order to create a rebus poem. Students can use the same poem pattern to write their poems; they can work independently, or who need more support with the Spanish language can work with a partner (Collaborative Writing).

Day 7

Students will keep working on their rebuses. Students who finish their poems are encouraged to start a new rebus. After all students have finished their rebuses, they will be invited to exchange rebuses with their classmates in order to decode them and then read them to a partner.

Day 8

Teacher reviews words that begin with the syllable "la". Students should have learned words that start with letter "Ll" previously. Teacher asks students to read the short text called "Palabras con la silaba "la". Students read the text and identify the word for each pictogram. Students practice reading the text not only in the rebus version but also with the words replacing the pictograms. After this, teacher makes emphasis that the syllable "la" can also be found at the end of words. Teacher and students play a game identifying the syllable "la" at the beginning and at the end of words.

Day 9

Teacher and students review syllables; students read the poem called "Poema con /la/" , teacher asks the students to notice where the syllable "la" is in the word (beginning or end). Then teacher asks students to read the rebus/poem by taking turns. After students are familiar with the vocabulary, teacher presents a different text with the same vocabulary but this time, the pictograms are being replaced by the words. To make sure that the transition from picture to symbols is easy to understand, teacher highlights the ending syllable "la" in a different color; by doing this, the students are encouraged to make more sense of the shift that transforms iconic writing to symbolic writing.

Resources

List of materials for classroom use

"Roar" Lyric Video, Katy Perry. A segment of this video can be used as a clear example to introduce a rebus. https://youtu.be/e9SeJIgWRPk

El color verde (rima) Appendix 2

El color rojo (rima) Appendix 3

Poem frame Appendix 4

Example of a rebus song used previously in the classroom Appendix 5

Example of a rebus song used previously in the classroom Appendix 6

Palabras con la silaba "la" rebus Appendix 7

Example from iconic writing to symbolic writing Appendix 8

Poem: Poema con "la" rebus Appendix 9

Example from iconic writing to symbolic writing Appendix 10

Rhyming words in Spanish, Spanish Playground. http://tinyurl.com/pszqpp6 . This is a wonderful resource to find printable rhyming words cards and rhymes in Spanish.

http://www.pictotraductor.com This resource creates messages using pictograms.

Reading list for teachers

Crystal, David. *How Language Works: How babies babble, words change meaning, and languages live or die.* New York: Penguin Group, 2005. In this book, Crystal explains languages, how children learn to speak and why we should not take it for granted. This is a good resource for any teacher in any subject area.

Echavarria, Jana, Deborah Short and Carla Peterson. *Using the SIOP model with Pre-K and Kindergarten English Learners.* Boston, MA: Pearson, 2012. This book is another great resource for every kindergarten teacher. The book explains the SIOP model, introduce every component, how to integrate them in a lesson plan, also gives different strategies to help students to comprehend content and develop language.

Escamilla, Kathy, Susan Hopewell, Sandra Butvilofsky, Wendy Sparrow, Lucinda Soltero-Gonzalez, Olivia Ruiz-Figueroa and Manuel Escamilla. *Biliteracy from the Start: Literacy Squared in Action.* Philadelphia, PA: Caslon Inc., 2014. This is a very useful resource for dual language teachers. Escamilla gives research based examples of how help student to development literacy skills in the dual language classroom.

Villamil, Josefina and DeVillar, Robert. *The power of two languages: Effective Dual-Language use across the curriculum.* New York: McGraw-Hill. This book provides teachers theoretical and practical information about dual language instructional contexts to enhance their instructional performance.

Appendix 1: Implementing Teaching Standards

This unit will cover the following standards in kindergarten:

Phonological Awareness:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.K.2

Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes).

　　CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.K.2.A

　　Recognize and produce rhyming words.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.K.10 (Literature)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.K.10 (informative**)**

Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.

Fluency

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.K.4

Read emergent-reader texts with purpose and understanding.

Text Types and Purposes:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.K.2

Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.

Student Objectives

　Students will:

• explore the connections between words and images using rebus poems.
• compose original rebus poems, based on a model.
• define and explore rhyme by identifying rhyming words.

El   color   Rojo

La   es   .

  es la   .

La   es   .

Y también la

Adapted from Spanishplayground.net
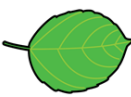
El   color   Verde

La   es   .

    es   la   .

La   es   .

Y   también   la

Adapted from Spanishplayground.net

Yo   tengo   un/una _____

Y   tu   tienes   un/una_____

Yo   también   tengo   un/una_____

Pero   tu   tienes   un/una _____

Cascabel

Ha llegado , la alegre

esta, celebrando en la paz del santo

  lindo

Con sus de alegría va anunciando

el.

El Otoño
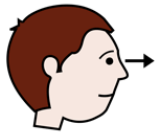
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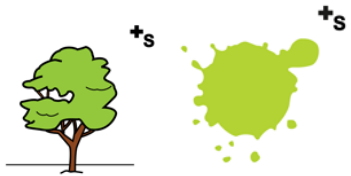
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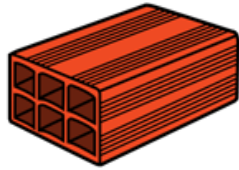
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Yo saco el y el

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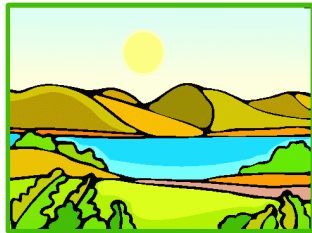# Appendix 7

Palabras con la silaba "la"

Mira este

Mira este

Mira este

Mira este

Mira este 🧱

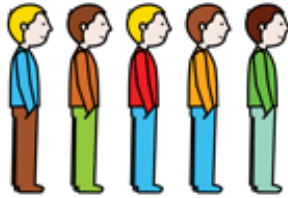Mira este la**drillo**

Aquí hay una 👥👥👥👥👥

Esta es una **fila**

Poema con "la"

Esta es una

Y este es un

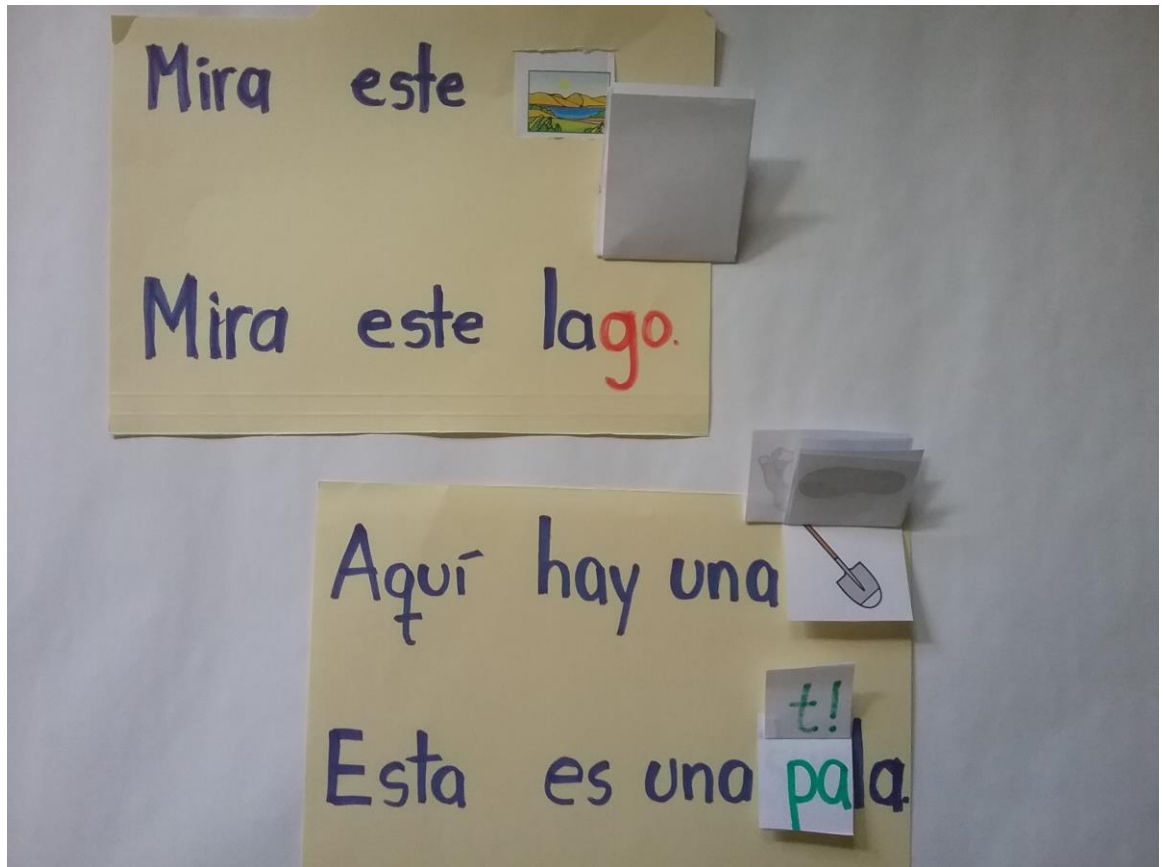Veo la   y también la

Al final veo la   que dejo Manuela.

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Notes

[1] (Burling 2005) p. 44
[2] (Sassoon 1997) p.88
[3] (Sassoon 1997) p.88
[4] (Hasbrouck and Denton 1998)
[5] (Deutscher 2005) p. 212
[6] (Deutscher 2005) p. 25
[7] (Burling 2005) p. 111
[8] (Burling 2005) p. 25
[9] (Burling 2005) p. 29
[10] (McNeill 2005) p.3
[11] (Burling 2005) p. 112
[12] (Crystal 2005) p. 109
[13] (Gaur 2003) p. 28
[14] (Burling 2005) p. 94