



A Systematic Literature Review of the Research on Phonics in the English-speaking World and in Spain

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ABSTRACT

A growing body of literature recognises the complexity of English literacy. It is well established that Phonics plays a pivotal role in its instruction, despite some uncertainty with regards to the degree to which practitioners should resort exclusively to the synthetic Phonics methodology and materials. This paper seeks to explore the Spanish academics' contribution to the existing research. The hypothesis established theorizes that research in Spain lags behind investigations worldwide, since these began earlier, so there is a tendency to adhere to that worldwide predisposition. Findings suggest that the scarce research conducted thus far in Spain positively contributes to our understanding of the most suitable pedagogy of English literacy in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) environments. Similarly, the results endorse the need to adapt Phonics to non-native speakers. As a conclusion, considerably more work is needed, as many aspects remain to be elucidated of the appropriateness of Phonics within the idiosyncrasy of the Spanish educational system.

Key words: Phonics, EFL, Systematic Literature Review, Primary Education, Pre-primary Education

Una revisión bibliográfica sistemática de la investigación sobre Phonics en el mundo anglosajón y en España

RESUMEN

Un creciente número de estudios académicos se centran en la complejidad de la lectoescritura del inglés. Es comúnmente aceptado que *Phonics* juega un papel fundamental en su instrucción, a pesar de cierta incertidumbre con respecto al grado en que las y los profesionales deben recurrir exclusivamente a la metodología y los materiales de *Synthetic Phonics*. Este artículo busca explorar la contribución a la investigación existente por parte de la comunidad académica española. La hipótesis establecida conjetura que la investigación en España va a la zaga de las investigaciones a nivel mundial, que comenzaron antes, por lo que la propensión es una aproximación a esa tendencia global. Los hallazgos sugieren que la escasa investigación realizada hasta el momento en España contribuye positivamente a la comprensión de la pedagogía más adecuada de la lectoescritura del inglés en entornos del inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL), así como la necesidad de adaptar *Phonics* a hablantes no nativos. Una mayor investigación es necesaria, puesto que quedan por dilucidar muchos aspectos sobre el uso de *Phonics* en el sistema educativo español.

Palabras clave: Phonics, ILE, revisión sistemática de la literatura, educación primaria, educación infantil



1. Introduction

English is broadly acknowledged as an extremely demanding language when compared to neighbouring European languages concerning pronunciation (Underhill, 2006). As the correspondences between letters and sounds are excessively abundant, that relationship between oral and written English seems to be almost arbitrary to many learners. A considerable amount of literature has attempted to clarify whether Phonics stands as the most effective method to acquire English literacy. The long-standing debate reached a turning point the very moment the Jolly Phonics method (Lloyd *et al.*, 1998) was introduced, which revolutionized to some extent the paradigm. Systematic Synthetic Phonics approaches to the teaching of literacy organise the sounds according to a scale of difficulty, irrespective of the alphabetical order (Lázaro, 2007). Sounds are introduced in a comprehensive manner, allowing the most numerous combinations with merely a few sounds (Andúgar & Cortina, 2020). The method incorporates catchy songs, multi-sensory appealing materials, decodable books resorting only to the sounds and letters learnt at each stage, and Total Physical Response (TPR) as a mnemonic technique to ease the learning of the sounds. Most importantly, the authors (Lloyd *et al.*, 1998) identified five skills, namely: letter formation, grapheme-phoneme correspondence (GPC), blending, segmenting and tricky words (López Cirugeda & López Campillo, 2016), thereby establishing a certain order to the extremely broad and blurry terminology existing up to that moment.

Other important authors who made major contributions to the state-of-the-art of Synthetic Phonics are Hepplewhite (2006), Hepplewhite and Sayers (2006) and Miskin and Munton (2006). The first, largely contributed to our understanding of English spelling with her design of a set of useful charts for users and practitioners which help understand at a glance the complexity of English orthography. These charts are currently well received by phonics practitioners in the context of EFL. Additionally, this author has managed to incorporate, hand in hand with Oxford University Press, not only a Phonics dictionary (Hepplewhite, 2020), but also three Phonics programmes to the short list of 20 officially accepted by the UK Department for Education (Department for Education, 2022). As for Miskin and Munton (2006), they contributed to Phonics by reshaping the notion of tricky words. Amongst other novelties, in their programme double letters are introduced before digraphs.

Synthetic Phonics programmes have gained followers in practitioners, parents and policy-makers (Buckingham, 2020; Ehri *et al.*, 2001; Shapiro & Solity, 2008; Vadasy & Sanders, 2010, 2011), but also detractors who regard Phonics as either incomplete (Bowers & Bowers, 2017; Ellis, 2007; Tse & Nicholson, 2014), a very childish approach to the complex phenomenon of the pedagogy of English literacy (Campbell *et al.*, 2012; Davis, 2012), not profoundly linguistically-informed, or insufficiently supported by the research (Bowers, 2020; Hammill & Swanson, 2006; Wyse & Styles, 2007). A much-debated question which remains still unresolved is whether synthetic Phonics manages to achieve a more efficient and prolonged learning of English literacy (Garan, 2001; Vadasy & Sanders, 2012) than the previous methodologies (mainly, whole-word instruction).

Proof of the interest of academics in the matter is the number of research papers being published. A quick search on the Web of Science (WoS), one of the most commonly utilized and reputed academic search engines in Europe (Ferreira & Morán, 2011), with Phonics as a research term, displays the following data: an average of 3.5 papers per year were published in the 1990's, a

number which increased to 11.2 in the 2000s, reaching 17.2 published studies per year in the 2010s.

While the research interest in the English-speaking world seems quite clear, the extent to which Spanish-speaking scholars have explored the complex phenomenon of English literacy instruction in light of Synthetic Phonics programmes remains to be established. According to Statista (2022), Spanish speakers may well be the 3rd largest community of learners of English in the world, after the Mandarin Chinese and Hindi-speaking communities. Attempting to explore the research on Phonics in the many and various Spanish-speaking regions and cultures would result in a vast, almost impossible task. This fact, has therefore led the researchers to define the scope of this paper to Spain where, for decades, changes in educational programmes have occurred rapidly resulting in an increase in the number of hours of English classes, the incorporation of bilingual programmes in some of the autonomous regions, and content subjects being taught in English: CLIL (Andúgar *et al.*, 2019; Antropova & Colt, 2015). Table 1 summarizes the countries of origin of the publishing of Phonics.

Table 1.

Databases of the journals where papers on Phonics have been published and the country of publication.

	USA	ENG	AUS	NZ	CHI	SPA	TAI	JAP	NET	SCO
WoS (n= 459)	98	66	28	10	9	6*	6	5	5	5
	USA	UK	AUS	FR	NZ	SPA	BRA	MAL	CHI	ROM
SCOPUS (n= 403)	123	104	28	14	13	12*	11	10	9	9

2. Objectives

The present research compiles not only the existing literature about the pedagogy of English literacy in the English-speaking world, but also a review of the research conducted in Spain. This study aims to contribute to the growing area of research of Phonics in Spain.

The importance and originality of this study lies in the fact that it explores the bibliography in a comparative and comprehensive fashion. No meta-analysis or systematic review of the literature with regards to the use of Phonics within the EFL context in Spain has been formerly done, despite the fact that Spain ranks as the second country in the world in purchases of Jolly Phonics materials (Jolly *et al.*, 2022).

While there is still uncertainty concerning the specific role of Phonics within the English literacy acquisition process, this paper additionally attempts to identify validated research on the issue, as much has been published in Spain on the matter, yet, numerous studies are merely descriptive or anecdotal.

3. Method

The methodological approach taken in this study is a systematic literature review. According to Xiao and Watson (2019), literature reviews are an essential feature of academic research, as knowledge advancement builds on prior existing work. Systematic literature reviews allow researchers to familiarise themselves with the current status, theory, and methods in their fields by analysing existing academic literature to produce a structured quantitative summary (Pickering & Byrne, 2014). This pa-

per takes the form of a textual narrative synthesis (Rodgers *et al.*, 2009), characterised by having a standard data extraction format by which various characteristics can be taken from each piece of literature (tables 2 to 6).

Due to the characteristics and constraints of this paper, the study will adhere to the scheme for systematic literature reviews specifically outlined by the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI-Centre) from the University College London (UCL), consisting of nine phases: review question, inclusion-exclusion criteria, search strategy, selection methodology, search results, data extraction processes, quality assessment and methodological rigour, synthesis and conclusions (Gough *et al.*, 2013). A more exhaustive account of the different stages of the process is provided in the following sections. Figures 1 and 2 detail the procedure.

3.1 Search strategy

The design of this study resorted initially to WoS (all data bases, Phonics OR Synthetic Phonics in the title, a timespan between 1991 and 2021) and SCOPUS (phonics OR 'synthetic AND phonics', AND pubyear > 1990 and pubyear < 2022). Figure 1 details the thorough process by which the initial 862 papers were reduced to the 119 included in this review.

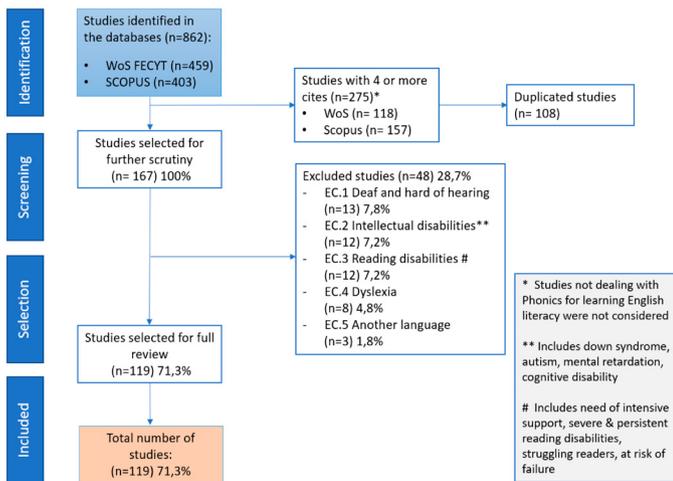


Figure 1: Research strategy for the English-speaking world. Source: the authors

According to WoS and SCOPUS, from the 119 remaining papers, six and twelve papers respectively were published in Spanish Journals. Further scrutiny proved that only two were studies dealing with Phonics in Spain (López Cirugeda & López Campillo, 2016; Rendón *et al.*, 2021). These results led the researchers to triangulate the findings (Bryman, 2016) via two iterative cycles. The first iterative cycle included TESEO and DIALNET. For both research strategies, the research terms were *Phonics*, *lectoescritura*, *fonémica*, *conciencia fonológica*, *método fónico-sintético*. As the findings were so few, a second iterative cycle searched in ProQuest in the amplest manner possible: solely 'Phonics' as the research word. A clear and detailed explanation of the process followed is to be found in figure 2.

3.2 Search results and data analysis

Three main dimensions were identified (tables 2 to 5). In them, several categories with similar perceptions of Phonics on the part of researchers were compiled and a term provided to summarise the views of the researchers in each category. Di-

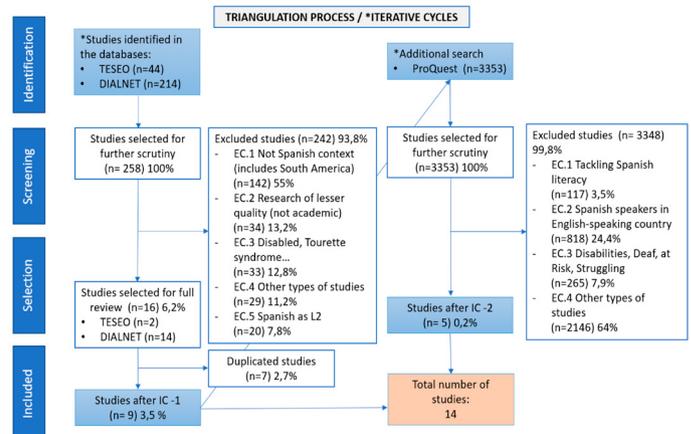


Figure 2. Research about Phonics in Spain with the Iterative Cycles.

Source: the authors

mension 1 includes those papers where the use of Phonics is not supported. Dimension 2 comprehends research studies which do not clearly take sides, for or against, in their conclusions. Dimension 3 incorporates studies which clearly support Phonics for the pedagogy of English literacy.

Table 2 shows how extensively detractors of phonics have focused on the views of practitioners (either they deem themselves not prepared enough, or feel the pressure of the system or parents). The subsequent category includes researchers who consider that Phonics should not be the only method. Next group encompasses the papers of those scholars who claim that either the research has not been conducted properly, or the results are poorly explained. The last categories include those papers by authors who do not think Phonics is useful, the voices of those who are against the policies, as they consider existing policies to be constraining and imposing. These papers place particular emphasis on the inadequacy of the Phonics Screening Check (PSC), an examination which classifies very young learners according to their phonics skills in an attempt to prevent literacy failure. Researchers in this group ponder it as educational triage, unfairly or poorly designed.

Table 2.

Papers which do not consider research supports the use of Phonics.

Dimension 1	Authors
Focus on practitioners - educators	Campbell, 2015, 2020; Campbell <i>et al.</i> , 2012, 2014; Hutchinson Tompkins <i>et al.</i> , 2012
Phonics not the only method	Ellis, 2007; Tse & Nicholson, 2014; Price-Mohr & Price, 2018; Watts & Gardner, 2013
Disagreement with the research methodology	Wyse & Goswami, 2008; Garan, 2001; Hammill & Swanson, 2006
Different interpretations of the results	Bowers, 2020; Wyse, 2000; Wyse & Styles, 2007
Phonics not necessary	Bowers & Bowers, 2017; Ivey & Baker, 2004; Strauss, 2004
Unhappy with policies	Ellis, 2007; Davis, 2012; Strauss, 2004
Unhappy with Phonics Screening Check (PSC)	Darnell <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Ellis & Moss, 2014; Gibson & England, 2016
Other issues	Strauss & Altwerger, 2007; Brown <i>et al.</i> , 2012

The group of researchers whose conclusions are not so clearly in favour or against phonics are included in table 3. The

categories are quite similar, and only the perception of the results differ. The inclusion of empirical research stands as the sole newest category, for it was non-existent in the previous dimension.

Table 3.

Papers not strenuously in favour or against the use of Phonics.

Dimension 2	Authors
Empirical research	Connelly <i>et al.</i> , 2001; Hatcher <i>et al.</i> , 2004 ; Larabee <i>et al.</i> , 2014 ; Price-Mohr & Price, 2016, 2018; Thompson <i>et al.</i> , 2007
Phonics important but not only tool, better combined, eclectic practice	Baumann <i>et al.</i> , 1998; Calfee, 1998; Goswami, 2005; McArthur <i>et al.</i> , 2015; Suggate, 2016
Teachers' voices	Brady, 2011; Chapman <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Dahl & Scharrer, 2000; Fielding-Barnsley, 2010; Morrow & Tracey, 1997
Theoretical description	Hempenstall, 2005; Soler & Openshaw, 2007
Phonics Screening Check	Bradbury, 2018; Duff <i>et al.</i> , 2015
Meta-analysis	McArthur <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Torgerson <i>et al.</i> , 2019
Compare Phonics methods	Joseph, 1999; Torgerson <i>et al.</i> , 2019
Own methodology	Bear & Templeton, 1998; Trachtenburg, 1990
Policy	Brenner, 2007
Other issues	Adams <i>et al.</i> , 1994; Chew, 1997; Fry, 2004 ; Gupta, 2014; Hassan <i>et al.</i> , 2007; Mather <i>et al.</i> , 2006; McIntyre <i>et al.</i> , 2008; Moustafa & Maldonado-Colón, 1999; Rymes, 2003

Lastly, Dimension 3 largely relies on empirical studies, followed by a theoretical descriptive perspective which resorts to previous theories and studies (table 4). Findings in Dimension 1 derived from research are regarded differently, and meta-analyses appear.

When the dimensions identified in the research on Phonics worldwide are transferred to the Spanish academic context, what can easily be observed is that all Spanish authors belong to Dimension 3. One notable exception is Osa Bonaba (2015), who, in spite of some positive results in his research, correspondingly acknowledges the lack of success in reading fluency, vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension in the experimental group. Generally speaking, findings coincide with the categories of the research conducted in the English-speaking environment (table 5).

Additional specific categories have been documented, the results of which are displayed in table 6. Meta-analyses do not exist, as the topic encompasses a degree of novelty. Similarly, a scrutiny of books and manuals falls off the scope of the present study, particularly since the authors of this study are conducting a specific piece of research on the issue.

Table 6.

Additional categories identified in the Spanish context.

Table 4.

Research on aspects of Phonics which supports its use.

Dimension 3	Authors
Empirical research	Apfelbaum <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Bruck <i>et al.</i> , 1998; Chen, 2018; Chu & Chen, 2014; Christensen & Bowey, 2005; Dahl <i>et al.</i> , 1999; Double <i>et al.</i> , 2019 ; Ehri & Flugman, 2017; Johnston <i>et al.</i> , 2011; Lloyd-Elredge <i>et al.</i> , 1990; Machin <i>et al.</i> , 2018; McGeown & Medford, 2013; Nishanimut <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Ok <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Roberts & Meiring, 2006; Shapiro & Solity, 2008, 2016; Stuart, 1999; Thompson & Johnston, 2007; Vadasy & Sanders, 2010, 2011, 2012; White, 2005
Theoretical-descriptive perspective	Gardner, 2008; Groff, 1998; Gunning, 1995; Hall, 2006; Johnston & Watson, 2006; Norman & Calfee, 2004; Rasinski <i>et al.</i> , 2008; Reutzel <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Rosowsky, 2005; Stahl, 1992, 1998; Wyse, 2000
Review studies & conclusions	Bowey, 2006; Cunningham & Cunningham, 2002; Johnston <i>et al.</i> , 2009; Rupley, 2009
Disagree with the negative view of research on Phonics	Brooks, 2007; Buckingham, 2020; Fletcher <i>et al.</i> , 2020; Stuebing <i>et al.</i> , 2008
Phonics generalizations	Gates & Yale, 2011; Johnston, 2001
Voices of teachers	Mesmer & Griffith, 2005; Stahl <i>et al.</i> , 1998
Books / manuals	Bald, 2007; Goouch & Lambirth, 2016
Policy	Beard <i>et al.</i> , 2019; Skibbe <i>et al.</i> , 2015
Meta-analyses	Ehri <i>et al.</i> , 2001; Jeynes, 2008

Table 5.

Dimension 3 within the Spanish context.

Dimension 3	Authors
Empirical research	Antropova <i>et al.</i> , 2019; Blanco Rodríguez, 2002; Hernández Tomás, 2016; Osa Bonaba, 2015; Pérez Cañado, 2004; Rendón, 2019; Rendón <i>et al.</i> , 2019, 2021
Theoretical-descriptive perspective	Andúgar & Cortina, 2020; Antropova & Colt, 2015; Blanco Rodríguez, 2002; Cámara, 2018; Corral Robles & Hernández Aledo, 2021; Lázaro, 2007
Voices of teachers	Rendón <i>et al.</i> , 2019
Policy	Lázaro, 2007; López Cirugeda & López Campillo, 2016
Phonics generalizations	Cámara, 2018
Disagree with the negative view of research on Phonics	Antropova & Colt, 2015; Cámara, 2018; Corral Robles & Hernández Aledo, 2021; Lázaro, 2007; Hernández Tomás, 2016; López Cirugeda & López Campillo, 2016; Pérez Cañado, 2004; Rendón, 2019; Rendón <i>et al.</i> , 2019, 2021
Review studies & conclusions	Corral Robles & Hernández Aledo, 2021

New categories identified	Authors
Phonics in Spain not researched enough	Andúgar & Cortina, 2020; Cámara, 2018; Hernández Tomás, 2016; Lázaro, 2007; Osa Bonaba, 2015; Rendón <i>et al.</i> , 2021
Need to adapt English phonics for Spanish context	López Cirugeda & López Campillo, 2016; Rendón, 2019; Rendón <i>et al.</i> , 2021
An eclectic methodology is needed	Andúgar & Cortina, 2020
Importance of pronunciation	Andúgar & Cortina, 2020; Hernández Tomás, 2016; Lázaro, 2007; Osa Bonaba, 2015
Lack of specific training / teacher training is needed	Corral Robles & Hernández Aledo, 2021; Lázaro, 2007; Rendón, 2019; Rendón <i>et al.</i> , 2021
Transfer from Spanish phonological system	Antropova <i>et al.</i> , 2019; Hernández Tomás, 2016; Lázaro, 2007
English literacy may help Spanish literacy	López Cirugeda & López Campillo, 2016; Rendón, 2019; Rendón <i>et al.</i> , 2021
Existence of plenty of materials	López & López, 2016
Relates plausible benefits of Phonics + CLIL	Rendón <i>et al.</i> , 2021
Phonics may enhance comprehension	Rendón, 2019
Possible influence in results of students attending 'la academia de inglés'	Hernández Tomás, 2016
Most common mistakes in English writing by Spanish young learners	Antropova <i>et al.</i> , 2019
Comparison of synthetic and analytic phonics	Hernández Tomás, 2016

4. Discussion

4.1 Research in the English-speaking world

Worldwide, many scholars largely support the benefits of phonics (dimension 3). Some conceive phonics as a complementary important feature in a broader conceptualisation of literacy (Christensen & Bowey, 2005; Connelly *et al.*, 2001; Torgerson *et al.*, 2019). Abundant papers have tackled the positive effects of phonics training in the short-term, however, a few have placed particular emphasis on the follow-up of the acquired skills (Stuart, 1999; Suggate, 2016).

In spite of the favourable tendencies of the research, as in any given paradigm, the existence of a number of papers questioning synthetic phonics over other methodologies and types of phonics (dimension 1) needs to be acknowledged, and their contributions considered. Part of this 'against the mainstream' literature has encountered, however, further discrepancy concerning the results and conclusions reached, thus, the debate endures. In that sense, and as an example, Fletcher *et al.* (2020) reread Bowers (2020) suggesting an integrative and customised approach,

more in accordance with the most recent reading instruction trends. Equally, some of these critique-loaded articles (Goswami, 2005; Wyse & Goswami, 2008) do not unequivocally deny the use of phonics, but favour as an alternative a mixed-methods (synthetic and systematic) approach to the teaching of literacy, assuming the need to partially resort to whole word instruction.

Other authors, such as Brady (2011), endeavoured to expound the abundant parameters of phonics that vary across studies. Hitherto, Dahl *et al.* (1999) had attempted to delimit the foundation concepts and their scope. In a similar fashion, the heterogeneous samples which researchers have used in their studies (low achievement readers, at risk of reading disabilities, low/middle SES readers, normal readers, LM readers, natives, adolescents, adults, boys vs. girls...) makes of drawing conclusions almost an unachievable task. As Stahl (1998) put it, there is (still) confusion about what phonics is.

4.2 Research in Spain

The results from Spanish researchers seem to follow along the lines of research in English-speaking journals. The category encompassing the largest number of papers is empirical studies (Antropova *et al.*, 2019; Blanco Rodríguez, 2002; Hernández Tomás, 2016; Osa Bonaba, 2015; Pérez Cañado, 2004; Rendón, 2019; Rendón *et al.*, 2019, 2021), followed by studies of a more theoretical and descriptive work (Andúgar & Cortina, 2020; Antropova & Colt, 2015; Blanco Rodríguez, 2002; Cámara, 2018; Corral Robles & Hernández Aledo, 2021; Lázaro, 2007). The 14 Spanish studies show a preference for the use of phonics as a method to teach English literacy in Spanish classrooms. The nuances vary between authors whose research recommends synthetic phonics as a more efficient approach (Hernández Tomás, 2016) when compared to analytic phonics. In the case of Cámara (2018), he recommends a handful of graph-phonemic rules explaining over 80% of the most common English words, which, in addition to phonics, may be of assistance to literacy instruction. The voices of the teachers are similarly gathered (Rendón *et al.*, 2019), as well as the existing policies (Lázaro, 2007; López Cirugeda & López Campillo, 2016) and a review of the literature in relation to the use of music in the synthetic phonics methodology (Corral Robles & Hernández Aledo, 2021).

The differentiating aspects tackled in depth by the Spanish academics suggest a variety of more specific topics which derive from literacy instruction for Spanish-speakers, where the language code is straightforward: one sound almost relates to one letter. The concern of researchers mainly deals with the insufficient research conducted, in agreement with the aim and results of this paper. The importance of correct pronunciation before teaching students to read and write is similarly expounded by a number of authors (Andúgar & Cortina, 2020; Hernández Tomás, 2016; Lázaro, 2007; Osa Bonaba, 2015). The need to adapt the existing programmes to the specifics of Spanish speakers stands out as a matter of vast concern (López Cirugeda & López Campillo, 2016; Rendón, 2019; Rendón *et al.*, 2021), while specific training on how to teach English literacy is also deemed essential by Spanish researchers (Corral Robles & Hernández Aledo, 2021; Lázaro, 2007; Rendón *et al.*, 2021). The transfer from L1 to L2, as Spanish literacy tends to be taught earlier, was studied by Antropova *et al.* (2019), Hernández (2016) and Lázaro, (2007), who highlighted its importance within the conceptualization of English literacy instruction in the context of EFL learning.

5. Conclusions

Research in Spain is more recent and scarcer when compared to published papers in the English-speaking world, nevertheless the studies compiled have undoubtedly contributed to our understanding of the use of Phonics within the Spanish educational system from a variety of angles. Far more research on Phonics is needed, as its use, sometimes not sufficiently informed, continues to increase in Spain. According to the comparative systematic literature review conducted, there seems to be a growing interest to do research on the issues detected. Phonics instruction began in countries where English is the spoken language, and it has taken some time to reach the learners of EFL in Spain.

The need to provide prospective teachers with proper training appears to be a must, a view shared by the Spanish authors. Similarly, some adaptations of the existing programmes, with or without an eclectic approach encompassing other methodologies and perspectives, appear to be similarly preemptory. Literacy instruction for non-natives occurs at a later stage and hence, the methodology needs to be adapted to older students who in comparison with native speakers are less exposed to the language, and who face some degree of motivation issues. As suggested by Rendón *et al.* (2021), perhaps CLIL and Phonics ought to be combined with the aim to attain the most effective results, keeping in mind all constraints derived from non-native contexts and co-official languages in many of the Spanish autonomous regions.

Limitations

Regarding the research conducted in the English-speaking world, ERIC could have been included as an additional database of indexed literature. Nonetheless, it was decided that the results obtained by the Web of Science and SCOPUS would suffice, since it was predicted that research in the Spanish context would be scarce in comparison.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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