

# Improving content area reading comprehension of Spanish speaking English learners in Grades 4 and 5 using web-based text structure instruction

Kausalai Wijekumar<sup>1</sup> · Bonnie J. F. Meyer<sup>2</sup> · Puiwa Lei<sup>2</sup> · Anita C. Hernandez<sup>3</sup> · Diane L. August<sup>4</sup>

Published online: 1 December 2017

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**Abstract** Reading and comprehending content area texts is important for academic and professional success as well as life skills necessary to maintain good health and quality lifestyle. Spanish speaking English language learners have shown poor performance on high-stakes assessments in reading comprehension. The number of Spanish speaking English learners (ELs) in our schools continues to increase at a fast pace, and therefore it is imperative that we address their reading comprehension needs swiftly and effectively. The text structure strategy has shown positive results on comprehension outcomes in many research studies with students at Grades 2, 4, 5, and 7. This study is the first implementation of instruction about the text structure strategy expressly designed to accommodate the linguistic and comprehension needs of Spanish speaking ELs in Grades 4 and 5. Strategy instruction on the web for English learners (SWELL) was designed to deliver instruction about the text structure strategy to Spanish speaker English learners. A randomized controlled study with pre and post-tests was conducted with 14 classrooms at fourth-grade and 17 classrooms at fifth-grade in high poverty schools where over 85% of students were Spanish speaking bilinguals or ELs. Analysis of data using multi-level models show moderate to large-effects favoring the students in the SWELL classrooms over the business as usual control classrooms on important measures such as a standardized reading comprehension test and main idea and cloze tasks. This research has practical implications for the use of web-based tools to provide high-quality and

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✉ Kausalai Wijekumar  
K\_Wijekumar@tamu.edu

<sup>1</sup> Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843, USA

<sup>2</sup> The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, State College, PA 16802, USA

<sup>3</sup> New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM, USA

<sup>4</sup> American Institutes for Research, Washington, DC, USA