The term Response to Intervention (RtI) has become central in the educational lexicon in the United States (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2012). RtI can be summarized as a prevention and identification model for determining learning disabilities (LD; Fuchs, Mock, Morgan, Young, 2003). The model is usually articulated around three tiers of support that are layered and provided to all students based on (a) their reading performance at the beginning of the year and (b) their reading growth throughout the year compared to the reading growth of other students with similar characteristics.

The premise of an effective RtI system is that Tier 1 instruction is provided with high quality to all students in the regular classroom using a scientifically-based core reading program (Baker, Fien, & Baker, 2010). At the same time students are screened and progress monitored at least three times a year with valid and reliable fluency measures. These assessments are designed to ensure that all students are making adequate reading progress in accordance to established benchmark goals or school norms (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2006; Kame’enui, Simmons, Good, & Harn, 2001). If a student in Tier 1 is below these benchmark goals or school/district norms in the beginning or the middle of the year, the student receives additional support in small groups, with an evidence-based supplemental program. This Tier 2 intervention is of utmost importance because it is conceptualized as a scaffold to prevent the development of more complex reading disabilities (RD) (Vaughn et al., 2006). Tier 2 is typically delivered in small groups of 3–5 students (Elbaum, Vaughn, Tejero Hughes, & Watson Moody, 2000) where

Differences in Growth Reading Patterns for at-Risk Spanish-Monolingual Children as a Function of a Tier 2 Intervention

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Abstract. The present study compares the patterns of growth of beginning reading skills (i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension) of Spanish speaking monolingual students who received a Tier 2 reading intervention with students who did not receive the intervention. All the students in grades K-2 were screened at the beginning of the year to confirm their risk status. A quasi-experimental longitudinal design was used: the treatment group received a supplemental program in small groups of 3 to 5 students, for 30 minutes daily from November to June. The control group did not receive it. All students were assessed three times during the academic year. A hierarchical linear growth modeling was conducted and differences on growth rate were found in vocabulary in kindergarten ($p < .001$; variance explained = 77.0%), phonemic awareness in kindergarten ($p < .001$; variance explained = 43.7%) and first grade ($p < .01$; variance explained = 15.2%), and finally we also find significant growth differences for second grade in oral reading fluency ($p < .05$; variance explained = 15.1%) and retell task ($p < .05$; variance explained = 14.5%). Children at risk for reading disabilities in Spanish can improve their skills when they receive explicit instruction in the context of Response to Intervention (RtI). Findings are discussed for each skill in the context of implementing a Tier 2 small group intervention within an RtI approach. Implications for practice in the Spanish educational context are also discussed for children who are struggling with reading.

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their growth patterns on specific reading skills are closely monitored (i.e., biweekly or monthly) to determine if they should be moved to a more intensive level of support (i.e., Tier 3) or remain in the same tier (i.e., with a similar level of support). In other words, if a student does not respond as expected, this will be the signal indicating to the teacher that the student should be moved to Tier 3 where instructional intensity is increased by, for example, reducing the number of students in the group, increasing the amount of instructional time, and/or using an evidence-based explicit and systematic intervention (see for example, Reading Mastery (Engelman & Bruner, 1995)). Tier 3 tends to be understood, in general, as a pre-referral for special education (Fuchs, Mock, Morgan, & Young, 2003) requiring substantially higher resources in terms of personnel and materials.

Thus, the early identification is vital in RtI, which implies an important change in the way the concept of a LD has been traditionally understood. Moreover, the term LD could be replaced, at first, by the term “at-risk” to create a continuum between these two concepts (i.e., the student moves from an at-risk category to a learning disability (LD) if there is not enough progress in his or her learning using evidence-based programs). In this way, the change in the conceptualization of a LD also transfers the focus on the “disability” from the student to the instruction, allowing practitioners to adapt the intervention that the student is currently receiving to his/her specific needs.

The goal of the present study is to examine the effects of a Tier 2 intervention in Spanish on reading outcomes for monolingual Spanish-speaking children in the Canary Islands, Spain. To our knowledge, this is the first study conducted in Spain implementing a Response to Intervention approach to address the needs of children who are manifesting reading difficulties in the early grades.

**Components of a Tier 2 Level of Support**

The success of a Tier 2 level of support within an RtI model requires practitioners to be able to determine what to teach and how to teach (italics by author). The first component, the what to teach, needs to include the core components or Big Ideas of beginning reading common to alphabetic languages (i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension; (National Reading Panel [NRP], 2000; Jiménez & O’Shanahan, 2008). The second component, how to teach, relates to how the instruction is delivered in terms of the pedagogical techniques, the composition of the group, and the amount of time that is spent on Tier 2 (Carnine, Silbert, Kame’enui, & Tarver, 2004; Harn, Linan-Thompson, & Roberts, 2008).

**What to teach?**

We review studies conducted in the Spanish language that provide the evidence of the importance of the Five Big Ideas in learning to read in Spanish. Given the dearth of research on the implementation of a Tier 2 intervention in Spanish for Spanish monolingual students, we also review studies conducted in the United States that include Spanish-speaking English learners receiving Spanish reading instruction. We review these studies by the Big Ideas they addressed.

**Phonological awareness.** Teach phonological awareness (PA) involves teaching children to manipulate phonemes in spoken syllables and words (NRP, 2000). Despite the transparency of the language, several studies indicate that students with RD in Spanish appear to have difficulties with PA (Caravolas, Lerwag, Defior, Seidlová-Málková, & Hulme, 2013; Carrillo, 1994; Jiménez, 1997; Jiménez & Hernández-Valle, 2000; Manrique & Signorini, 1994; Signorini, 1997). In this sense, many studies have showed the effect of the intervention on PA in Spanish children (Defior & Tudela, 1994; Hernández-Valle & Jiménez, 2001; Jiménez et al., 2003; Jiménez & Rojas, 2008).

**The alphabetical principle.** Instruction of the alphabetical principle is a way of teaching reading that stresses the acquisition of letter-sound correspondences and their use in reading and spelling words in connected text (NRP, 2000). Understanding the alphabetical principle appears to be a key component to improving word reading and reading comprehension in Spanish (Baker, Park, & Baker, 2010). Cueto (2008) suggests that students with RD in Spanish tend to have a malfunction of the sublexical processes (i.e., the mechanism that recognizes the relation between graphemes and phonemes). This malfunction is expressed in turn by the student’s difficulty reading multi-syllabic words automatically (Jiménez & Hernández-Valle, 2000; Jiménez, Rodriguez, & Ramírez, 2009; Suárez & Cueto, 2008). Some studies have examined the effect of an intervention designed to improve student understanding of the alphabetic principle and word automaticity in Spanish (Hernández-Valle & Jiménez, 2001; Ortiz, Espinel & Guzmán, 2002; Vaughn et al., 2006). The findings suggested that the interventions which target the understanding of the alphabetic principle using systematic and explicit instruction appear to significantly improve student word reading in Spanish.

**Fluency.** Teaching fluency implies to help students to develop the ability of read texts aloud with speed, accuracy, and proper expression (NRP, 2000). Findings in Spanish indicate that students with RD tend to read slowly but accurately (Cueto, 2008; Jiménez et al., 2009). Recent findings also suggest that in Spanish just like in English, oral reading fluency appears to have a