

A black and white photograph of a young girl with dark hair, smiling and looking down at a book she is holding. She is wearing a light-colored collared shirt. The background is blurred, showing other children in what appears to be a classroom setting.

How Imagine Lectura Aligns with **Effective Spanish Literacy Instruction**

The Challenge

According to the United States Census Bureau, there are approximately 42 million Spanish speakers in the United States (American Community Survey, 2019). By 2060, experts predict that the United States could surpass Spain as the second largest Spanish-speaking country in the world (Instituto Cervantes, 2019).

Educators recognize that biliterate students—those who can read and speak in two languages—will have distinct cognitive, economic, and social advantages (Saiz & Zoido, 2005; Bialystok, 2017; Kroll & Dussias, 2017; Ramírez-Esparza et al., 2020). Thirty-nine states and the District of Columbia have adopted the Seal of Biliteracy, a special designation on a diploma to denote proficiency in two or more languages. More than 50 years of research confirm that bilingual students outperform their monolingual peers on verbal and non-verbal tests (Peal & Lambert, 1962). Data indicate they also exhibit greater executive function (Bialystok, 2011) and mental flexibility (Adi-Japha et al. 2010), and less cognitive decline than monolingual students (Bialystok, 2011). Studies show biliteracy can improve earnings (Saiz & Zoido, 2005) and is associated with greater empathy, higher tolerance to ambiguity, and open-mindedness toward different cultures (Ramírez-Esparza et al., 2020).

A growing number of educators in the United States are turning to online and blended learning to teach students critical reading skills in Spanish. Research indicates that Spanish-speaking students can benefit from online and blended instruction (Sykes, 2014).

This paper summarizes research-based recommendations for effective Spanish literacy instruction and explains how Imagine Lectura, a blended learning solution, aligns with this research.

The Solution

Imagine Lectura is an assets-based Spanish language arts program designed to help students in grades 3–5 achieve grade-level reading comprehension, language development, and academic discourse. Imagine Lectura prioritizes the rich knowledge and experience Spanish speakers bring to the classroom by offering authentic, culturally relevant content organized into thematic text sets that allow students to appreciate the Spanish-speaking world's rich diversity. With instructional design that promotes discourse and employs pedagogy specific to Spanish literacy instruction, Imagine Lectura provides ample receptive, productive, and interactive language-development opportunities.

The program organizes instruction around six standard units plus one Jump Start unit per grade level. Each standard unit has six connected texts linked to a theme and a Focus Question. Jump Start units contain all the instructional components of standard units but within just two connected passages. The purpose of the Jump Start unit is to introduce teachers and students to the program's instructional flow and preteach critical metacognitive skills that assist with reading and discussing texts.

Theory of Change

The 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) encourages districts and schools to adopt evidence-based programs with a well-specified logic model that explains how the intervention is likely to improve outcomes. Figure 1 provides a conceptual model of Imagine Lectura's design to facilitate learning.

This theory of change lists the resources needed (e.g., professional development, computers, headsets, classroom space, and implementation plan) to successfully launch Imagine Lectura and documents the targeted activities (e.g., time in software, progress monitoring, and teacher-led academic discourse and project-based learning activities) needed to generate the outputs (data on student progress, engagement, and achievement) that lead to short-term outcomes (content mastery and engagement). The interactive online curriculum makes learning more accessible and exposes students to meaningful, culturally relevant texts that reflect the Spanish-speaking world's diversity. It also gives students ample receptive, productive, and interactive opportunities for language development. As students receive strategy instruction for boosting reading skills, they become more motivated. Students become more engaged and develop pride in their linguistic abilities. Consequently, their reading comprehension improves, as measured by Spanish standardized assessments.

Figure 1. Theory of change

Program Inputs → Classroom Activities → Outputs → Short-Term Outcomes → Long-Term Outcomes

1. Program Inputs

Imagine Lectura

- A culturally responsive, assets-based Spanish language arts program that supports rigorous academic discourse and greater depth of knowledge through engaging grade-level aligned texts
- Pedagogy specific to Spanish language and literacy instruction
- Intentional scaffolding that prepares students for successful engagement with texts in Spanish
- A flexible model for content delivery
- Professional development and coaching

District

- Networked computers with proper memory, media appliances, and headsets
- Equipment necessary for using Imagine Lectura (devices and headphones)
- School and district infrastructure to support technology use
- Teacher buy-in readiness to adopt technology
- School implementation plan

2. Classroom Activities

Student Activities

- Students spend a minimum of 2.5 hours a week using the program

Teacher Activities

- Teachers use actionable data to monitor student progress, review concepts, and conference with students
- Teachers lead, facilitate, and scaffold academic discourse and project-based learning activities

3. Outputs

Student Outputs

- Ample receptive, productive, and interactive opportunities for language and literacy development
- Student motivation

Teacher Outputs

- Teachers feel prepared to implement Imagine Lectura
- Teachers understand individual students' strengths and weaknesses

4. Short-Term Outcomes

- Students exhibit increased engagement (measured by active time and progress)
- Students develop pride and appreciation for the diversity of the Spanish-speaking world

5. Long-Term Outcomes

- Students interact more confidently in Spanish in academic and social contexts
- Students demonstrate reading comprehension, language development, and academic discourse on Spanish and English standardized assessments
- Students increase self-efficacy

Five Research-Based Practices

Imagine Lectura employs five well-established, evidence-based principles.

1. Support the acceleration of academic language development and reading comprehension in Spanish, contextualized within grade-level aligned text.
2. Make use of pedagogy specific to Spanish literacy.
3. Provide interactive opportunities to use Spanish in productive and receptive modes.
4. Deliver a rich array of rigorous, culturally authentic language and literacy experiences that reflect the diversity of the Spanish-speaking world and capitalize on students' cultural assets.
5. Include intentional scaffolding that prepares students for successful engagement with texts in Spanish.



1. Support the acceleration of academic language development and reading comprehension in Spanish, contextualized within grade-level aligned text.

The purpose of reading is to extract meaning from text. A reader must have “fluent execution and coordination” (Scarborough, 2001, p. 98) of word recognition skills (phonological awareness, decoding, or high-frequency words), as well as strong language comprehension skills (i.e., background knowledge, vocabulary knowledge, verbal reasoning, and literacy knowledge).

Across the country there are a growing number of emerging bilinguals who may be learning Spanish for the first time, trying to regain their Spanish language abilities, or who are aiming to develop academic skills. Research shows that emerging bilinguals “benefit the most from reading instruction enriched with complex text and language use, rather than targeted phonics exercises that further obviate the relatively obvious patterns of this language” (Kovelman et al., 2015, p. 8).

Research confirms that school success requires mastery of academic language—the syntax, morphology, pragmatics, and vocabulary used in schools (Snow, 2010). Due to the misconception that emerging bilinguals have linguistic and cognitive challenges, they are often less likely to be exposed to the academic register needed for school success. All too often, they receive simple texts that are well below grade level (Blum Martinez, 2020; Wong Fillmore & Fillmore, 2012; Lesaux & Harris, 2015). Exposing emerging bilinguals to instruction contextualized within the complex, grade-level text is critical because it helps students “acquire the reasoning, language skills, and academic registers they need to be successful across the curriculum and throughout the school day” (Council of Great City Schools, 2017, p.11).

Research by Wong Fillmore (2014), Cuchiarra (2019), and Blum Martinez (2020) shows that emerging bilinguals can understand complex texts in the following circumstances: 1) when instruction connects text to a big idea; 2) when what is known is integrated with what is new; 3) when students have the chance to answer text-dependent questions; 4) when students learn to unpack “juicy sentences” (those with rich content and academic language) to analyze word forms, meanings, and language uses; and 5) when instruction allows students to apply learning to new contexts.

Our Solution: Imagine Lectura supports deep comprehension through rigorous, grade-level content. Instruction within literary and informational text sets that aligns to the Spanish-language version of the Common Core State Standards for Literature and Informational Texts (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2012) as well as to the Texas Spanish language arts and reading (SLAR) and English as a Second Language Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (Texas Education Agency, n.d.). Following a blended learning model, Imagine Lectura includes teacher-led instruction, online student practice, facilitated classroom discussion, and group projects.

The program organizes instruction around six standard units plus one Jump Start unit (Unidad de Inicio) for a total of seven units per grade level. Learning begins with a Focus Question (Pregunta de enfoque) video that activates prior knowledge and introduces students to a big idea or theme. For example, in the Impressive Animals unit, the Focus Question is, “Cómo usan los animales sus impresionantes habilidades para sobrevivir en su medio ambiente?” (How do animals use their impressive abilities to survive?). Asking this question allows students to connect what they already know about animals to build a greater understanding of resistance, adaptation, and interdependent relationships among animals in ecosystems. Students learn about topics to which they have not been previously exposed—such as why animals have unique behavioral and physical attributes, how different species work as a team, and when animals use their camouflage or sixth sense to survive. Each of the related texts in the unit contributes to deepening students’ understanding of the key ideas that are explored.

Figure 2. Imagine Lectura instructional design



Imagine Lectura engages students in a four-part deep-reading cycle of a grade-level text:

- **First**, the teacher facilitates a Power Sentence Lesson (Lección de la oración estrella) making sense of a rich, information-packed sentence from the text, idea by idea, exploring meaning, language, and syntax. In addition to analyzing the structures, conventions, and vocabulary, students explore the author's craft. They recompose the Power Sentence and discuss how the meaning changes as it is put together in different ways. This focused language instruction provides a model students can use to analyze the complex text in other passages and strengthens students' ability to communicate, elaborate, and abstract concepts in their writing.

Figure 3. Power Sentence Protocol

Preguntas de segmentación	
¿Qué significa este Segmento de la oración?	
¿Por qué crees que el autor hizo esta elección de estilo de lenguaje?	
Grabado en las paredes	
¿Qué tan lejos debe llegar la gente para proteger sus derechos o los derechos de los demás?	
...plasmaron sus sentimientos acerca de su sufrimiento y describieron su viaje a América.	
su anhelo por volver a casa con su familia, y su indignación y humillación por el trato que recibieron.	
Esta oración es sobre...	
Los hombres...	
Ejemplo de lección en proceso. Los estudiantes han identificado el primer Segmento de la oración, lo han eliminado de la Oración clave y lo han colocado al lado del Inicio de oración para formar la oración "Esta oración es sobre estos hombres". El siguiente Inicio de oración se ha descubierto para ayudar a los estudiantes a identificar el siguiente Segmento de la oración.	

EJEMPLO DE TABLA DE SEGMENTACIÓN			
Inicio de oración	Pregunta guía	Segmento de la oración	Ejemplos de preguntas de segmentación
Esta frase es sobre...	¿De quién o de qué se trata esta oración?	ESTOS HOMBRES	¿Por qué el autor utiliza la palabra "estos" para describir a los hombres? (porque la oración es sobre un grupo específico de hombres y no sobre hombres en general)
Los hombres...	¿Qué hicieron los hombres?	plasmaron sus sentimientos acerca de su sufrimiento	¿Por qué si el autor eligió la palabra "sufriimiento"? ¿Por qué no "problema"? (porque un problema es más grave que un problema, y los hombres experimentaron algo mucho más grave que solo un problema)
Los hombres plasmaron sus sentimientos sobre su sufrimiento...	¿Qué más hicieron además de plasmar sus sentimientos?	y describieron su viaje a América,	¿Por qué hay una coma después de "el anhelo"? (una vez más, el autor está separando las cosas en una lista)
También describieron...	¿Y cuál es la segunda cosa que describieron?	su anhelo por volver a casa con su familia,	¿Por qué hay una coma después de "su familia"? (una vez más, el autor está separando las cosas en una lista)

- **Second**, students read the passage independently in the online program, where strategic scaffolding (e.g., explicit instruction, text-dependent questions, annotations, multimedia, glossaries, visual supports) helps students engage with rigorous, grade-level standards and texts. During their close reading, students encounter multiple instances where they must cite text evidence. Every passage includes a culminating question where students highlight their prior answers and write an integrated summary of what they read.

- **Third**, the teacher facilitates a Language Lesson (Lección de Lenguaje + Dictado) that explores, for example, roots, affixes, cognates, and shades of meanings within a sentence. For example, students might watch a brief instructional animation online about the suffix *-ísimo/-ísima*. They then have an opportunity for guided and independent practice with the new language element in a gradual release model.

Figure 4. Language Lesson on *-ísimo/-ísima* as a suffix

Elija el sufijo correcto para completar la palabra.

Puedo comprar cinco lápices porque son baratos

Hablé con mi abuela por teléfono, y siento felicidad

ízimos císimo isimos

- **Fourth**, supported by a Discussion Protocol (Discusión de la pregunta de enfoque), teachers facilitate a discussion that connects the Focus Question to the text at hand. The protocol offers strategies that allow students to combine their opinions, background experiences, and evidence from the text to inform their perspective. Students learn academic communication techniques, such as clarifying, elaborating, identifying common ground, and respecting different opinions. They also learn or practice key elements of effective discussion, such as disagreeing and challenging, requesting justifications, building off another's points, conceding a point, and synthesizing and problem-solving. Students first practice sharing and supporting their ideas with the class in a low-stakes environment and then transfer these strategies to independent conversations with peers and small groups. Through this structured academic discourse, students build academic language and develop critical thinking skills.

Each Imagine Lectura passage concludes with an end-of-unit Synthesis Project (Proyecto de síntesis), where students deepen their learning through creating and discussing a group project. The project's goal is to work in small groups to articulate and defend a shared, negotiated response to the Focus Question for the unit. Students may present their conclusions, for example, through posters, dramatic scripts, digital slides, written narratives, videos, creative songs, podcasts, visual art, plays, or poems. The program offers a rubric and checklist to help teachers evaluate students' work.

Figure 5. Synthesis Protocol

Discusión de síntesis del estudiante y Lista de verificación del proyecto	
Los líderes de los grupos deben utilizar esta lista de verificación para guiar a su grupo a través de los pasos de discusión y planificación del Proyecto de síntesis. Escribe cualquier nota que ayude a tu grupo a recordar ideas importantes y permite que tu profesor vea su trabajo. Incluye cualquier plan de proyecto grupal y cualquier nota a esta lista de verificación.	
Unidad:	
Pregunta de enfoque:	
Líder del grupo:	
Miembros del grupo:	
Paso	✓
1 Compartir y aclarar las respuestas individuales a la Pregunta de enfoque	
¿Todos han compartido su respuesta individual a la Pregunta de enfoque?	
¿Todos entendemos las respuestas individuales de los demás a la Pregunta de enfoque?	
2 Colaborar y acordar una respuesta de grupo a la Pregunta de enfoque	
¿Qué tienen en común nuestras respuestas individuales a la Pregunta de enfoque?	
¿Cómo podemos crear una respuesta grupal de acuerdo a lo que tenemos en común?	
¿Cuál es nuestra respuesta de grupo a la Pregunta de enfoque?	
3 Planificar el Proyecto de síntesis	
¿Qué talentos o intereses tenemos entre los miembros de nuestro grupo? ¿Cómo pueden estos talentos e intereses ayudarnos con nuestro proyecto?	
¿Cuál es nuestro plan para completar el proyecto? ¿Podemos terminar este proyecto en el tiempo asignado?	
4 Desarrollar el Proyecto de síntesis	
¿Nuestro proyecto brindará una oportunidad para que todos los miembros del grupo contribuyan? ¿Qué hará cada persona?	
¿Qué vamos a crear para comunicar nuestra respuesta de grupo a la Pregunta de enfoque? ¿Qué podemos hacer para transmitir nuestra respuesta de una manera que sea convincente para los demás?	
¿Cómo será nuestra presentación final? ¿Qué aportará cada persona a la presentación?	
¿Hay errores en nuestra presentación? Si es así, ¿cómo podemos corregirlos?	

2. Make use of pedagogy specific to Spanish literacy.

Experts agree that schools should offer pedagogy that is specific to Spanish literacy. Effective instruction should “highlight aspects of the internal structure of Spanish that have a direct impact on the teaching of literacy in Spanish and the development of metalinguistic awareness, a key element of biliteracy” (Beeman & Urow, 2013, p.155).

Our Solution: The Power Sentence and Language Lessons in Imagine Lectura teach students the critical internal structures of the Spanish language.

For example, Language Lessons provide instruction and practice with:

- Using Spanish accent marks, and how to identify the meanings of words that are spelled the same way but contain different accent marks;
- Understanding diminutives and augmentatives as pragmatic particles of the language and knowing basic guidelines for their formation;
- Using punctuation in Spanish;
- Spelling words correctly in Spanish;
- Forming plurals in Spanish;
- Using prefixes, suffixes, and root words to understand word meanings in Spanish;
- Using words families (e.g., zapato, zapatero, zapatería) to assist with spelling in Spanish; and
- Determining whether a Spanish word has an English cognate (English and Spanish words that share a similar root and result in similar spelling, meanings, and pronunciation).

Power Sentences teach students to:

- Deeply examine the choices an author makes to express ideas and relationships in a text;
- Focus on how the author uses linguistic devices and structures unique to Spanish in texts and apply these to their writing; and
- Analyze how word and sentence meanings can change based on verb tense, number and gender agreement, and size and affection in Spanish (-ito, -ón, ísimo).

3. Provide interactive opportunities to use Spanish in productive and receptive modes.

Research and expert opinion stress the importance of developing students' receptive (reading and listening) and productive language (speaking and writing) skills (Heineke & McTighe, 2018). Studies confirm that interactive approaches to teaching reading, listening, speaking, and writing are more effective than passive methods (Genesee & Riches, 2006).

- **Reading:** The RAND Reading Study Group (Snow, 2002, p. 11) defines comprehension as, "The process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language." To accomplish this, students must tap into their background knowledge and apply their understanding of letters, sounds, word parts, words, sentence structure, and text structures to comprehend meaning, make inferences, and construct new knowledge about a text (Heineke & McTighe, 2018). Teaching students reading strategies such as identifying the main idea of a passage, monitoring comprehension, visualizing, making inferences, summarizing, and generating and answering questions can aid comprehension (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Duke et al., 2011; Marchand-Martella et al., 2013). An understanding of the structures that undergird narrative texts (e.g., characters, setting, conflict, plot, theme) and expository texts (e.g., compare and contrast, problem and solution, cause and effect) is also essential to reading comprehension skills (Duke et al., 2011; Marchand-Martella et al., 2013).
- **Listening:** Listening skills are a significant predictor of language development (Foorman et al., 2015). Rost (2011) found that effective listening instruction should teach students to listen closely for sounds, words, phrases, grammatical structures, and discourse patterns. Emerging bilinguals can build these skills using student-centered formats as well as in collaborative conversations.
- **Speaking:** Research shows a strong and reciprocal relationship between speaking and literacy development (Pollard-Durodola et al., 2006). Experts agree that students need opportunities to: 1) generate sentences for various communicative functions; 2) engage in open-ended literacy-related discussions with their peers and teachers; and 3) participate in conversations that allow students to rehearse language structures and use them for real purposes (Escamilla et al., 2014). Students also need to learn to use language appropriately in various social situations. This requires adjusting one's language to fit the context (Heineke & McTighe, 2018).
- **Writing:** A large body of research shows that there is a reciprocal relationship between reading and writing. That is, "Writing helps students to be better readers, reading helps students to better writers" (Beeman & Urow, 2013 p. 100). Consequently, experts emphasize the need for writing in the service of reading and recommends that writing activities focus on responses to reading.

Our Solution: Imagine Lectura takes advantage of multiple media to provide rich, multisensory, interactive learning experiences. Instruction and practice activities feature high-quality videos, animations, illustrations, and voices from around the Spanish-speaking world. Multiple modes of representing information are provided in the same lesson (e.g., combinations of video and audio, text and voice, text and illustrations). The meanings of new vocabulary words and unfamiliar idioms are included in annotations. They are often conveyed with pictures, in addition to text-based definitions and explanations. The platform uses a wide range of graphic organizers to highlight important ideas, compare and contrast concepts, represent relationships, depict chronology, and illustrate cause and effect. Question-response formats vary and include multiple choice, free-writing responses, annotation, voice recordings, charts, and graphic organizers.

The program also provides multiple opportunities for students to build productive and receptive Spanish proficiency.

- **Reading:** The program includes peer modeling videos that introduce each passage. These videos teach students pre-reading strategies (which may include previewing the text, accessing prior knowledge, formulating questions, clarifying understanding, setting a purpose, and making predictions), during-reading strategies (visualizing, making connections, monitoring understanding, making inferences, rereading, questioning, and summarizing), and after-reading strategies (comparing, synthesizing, and drawing conclusions). These strategies are reinforced in passage annotations and practiced in passage-level items.

- **Listening:** Imagine Lectura provides individual and collaborative activities to build students' listening comprehension skills. For example:

- Power Sentence Lessons provide opportunities for students to integrate listening, oral communication, and academic learning. During discussions, they learn to listen for the linguistic features of spoken discourse (grammar, intonation) and look for discourse markers (words or phrases used to connect and organize what is said).
- Within the Language Lessons that accompany every passage, students engage in a Dictado. The Dictado is a strategy designed to teach Spanish listening comprehension, spelling, conventions, punctuation, grammar, fluency, and writing in an integrated way. During the Dictado the teacher first reads a few sentences to students and then has the students repeat the sentences. The teacher dictates and has students then write down what they heard. Finally, the teacher and students talk through the linguistic and grammar conventions in the sentences. The teacher may also ask questions about the main idea or purpose of the sentences. Through their writing, students demonstrate their understanding and use of discrete skills,

such as spelling, punctuation (e.g., proper placement of commas, exclamation marks, and hyphens to indicate dialogue), syntax, and semantics.

- Students further refine their listening skills as they engage in discussions about the Focus Question of each passage.
- **Speaking:** Imagine Lectura builds structured conversation into every Power Sentence and Language Lesson. Each of these lessons includes speaking prompts that guide students to use target vocabulary and grammar in conversations with their teachers and peers. Students practice their ideas and respond to those of others, building academic discourse skills. The program's instructional routines scaffold classroom discussion so that emerging bilinguals can feel more comfortable participating in the classroom.
- **Writing:** Imagine Lectura offers writing opportunities in response to reading. Within the Power Sentence Lessons, students explore and discuss an author's craft and study how and why authors use language to express ideas and relationships embedded within complex sentences. Then students compose powerful sentences on their own. Reading passages offer opportunities for short responses to text, encouraging students to communicate their understanding clearly and concisely. Synthesis Projects offer students the option of responding in longer-form writing, expressing their evolved understanding of the Focus Question via reports, blogs, scripts, articles, or other writing forms. The program also includes grading rubrics to outline ideal responses.



4. Deliver a rich array of rigorous, culturally authentic texts and capitalize on students' cultural assets.

In their synthesis of research, the authors of *How People Learn* found that to process information, students need to connect new information and skills with preexisting experience and knowledge (National Research Council, 2000). However, as Fisher et al. (2011) note, when students face a new, unfamiliar task, they are often unable to "marshal what is known to solve the unknown. Therefore, it is important to activate useful background knowledge when figuring out how to do something less familiar" (p. 370).

While 78 percent of emerging bilinguals in K–12 schools speak Spanish (U.S. Department of Education, 2020), Spanish-speaking students are not homogeneous. Because emerging bilinguals come from different continents, walks of life, and backgrounds, they may have widely diverse interests, strengths, life experiences, and prior schooling. There are also rich variations in the Spanish they speak, including variations in vocabulary, pronunciation, idioms, and expressions. Emerging bilinguals enter the classroom with an assorted array of skills, concepts, and knowledge they learned at home or in their communities (Beeman & Urow, 2013). As Beeman & Urow (2013) point out, "It is therefore the teachers' responsibility to build connections between what students already know and what they are learning in school" (p. 73).

Practitioners, researchers, and experts agree that Spanish literacy instruction should not only act as a window into the diverse Spanish-speaking world, but also serve as a vehicle that reflects a student's own language, culture, and lived experiences (Escamilla et al., 2014).



Our Solution: The program deliberately exposes students to speakers and texts from around the globe, including the diverse cultures of the Spanish-speaking world. This includes varying perspectives, dialects, customs, music, art, geography, food, and local culture. For example:

- In the Communities Unit (Comunidades: conectando al ser humano), students explore what constitutes a community. They become familiar with the elements that keep communities growing and reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of belonging to one. Texts describe characteristics of communities around the world, present online communities, discuss neighborhood communities, present different school communities, and shed light on heroes in communities.
- In the Legends & Fables Unit (Leyendas y fábulas: enseñanzas de nuestros antepasados), students learn about the origin and basic literary elements of legends and fables. Students become familiar with traditional legends and fables and discover important values as well as life lessons for the present and future. Texts address the creation of legends, the elements of fables, the Karok tribe, and the Mayans, as well as fables from well-known Spanish authors, such as Félix María de Samaniegos.
- In the Art Unit (Burbujas de creatividad), students reflect on the human need to create. They explore and expand the traditional definition of “art” and become familiar with examples of unconventional art. Students learn to perceive art in different contexts and are likely to discover their own creativity. Texts address digital art, the definition of art, the need for creativity, how to discover artistic talents, and how art is everywhere. They introduce students to the musical artist Celia Cruz.
- In the Civil Rights Unit (Los derechos civiles), students become familiar with the socioeconomic and educational disadvantages that various minority groups have experienced throughout history. Students get to know about the work it has taken for these groups to begin to obtain their civil rights. Passages address civil rights in the United States (for example César Estrada Chávez) and Latin America. Passages also cover women’s civil rights and civil rights in education.

Students build background knowledge via:

- Opportunities to activate and share prior knowledge within Power Sentence Lessons, Discussion Questions and Synthesis Projects;
- Opportunities to connect to and acknowledge prior knowledge in short response items that appear before reading passages; and
- Opportunities for translanguaging (using Spanish and English together) as options within Power Sentence Lessons and Synthesis Protocols.

5. Include intentional scaffolding that prepares students for successful engagement with texts in Spanish.

The term *scaffolding* is often used to describe instructional supports made available as needed—including prompts, questions as prompts, and modeling—designed to help students carry out tasks until they can do so independently (Molenaar & Roda, 2011).

Research suggests that text-dependent questions—questions that require students to provide evidence from the text as part of their responses—can provide a predictable structure to help students better comprehend complex texts (Fisher & Frey, 2014). As Buehl (2011, p. 225) states, “Helping students identify the reader moves that enable them to work complex texts is a significant step in their development as independent readers.”

Research shows that incorporating graphic organizers, illustrations, charts, multimedia, annotations, and student-friendly dictionaries (with examples and non-examples) can scaffold learning for emerging bilinguals (Baker et. al, 2014; Howard & Christian, 2002).

Our Solution: Imagine Lectura incorporates a wide array of scaffolding to support language and reading comprehension. Scaffolds include explicit instruction that activates students' prior knowledge, establishes clear goals, presents instruction in small, manageable segments, provides clear instruction with examples and modeling, provides opportunities for distributed practice, and conducts frequent checks for understanding.

As students read passages, they answer text-dependent questions such as identifying main ideas, pinpointing supporting details, detecting the author's purpose, citing evidence, and critically analyzing information. These questions enable students to identify:

- What the text says: These questions ask who, what, when, where, why, how much, or how, and assess whether students understand the gist and explicit details of a text.
- How the text works: These questions ask students about how an author's choice of words, text structure, literary devices (foreshadowing, imagery, point of view, tone, and mood), poetic devices (alliteration, hyperbole, metaphor, personification, simile, and symbolism), text features (charts, diagrams, figures, illustrations, boldface, and font), or narration (first person, second person, third person, limited, omniscient, or unreliable) contribute to a text's meaning.
- What the text means: These questions concentrate on an author's purpose (stated or implied) and on synthesizing information. They also ask students to provide an opinion with evidence to argue for or against the text's theme.



The Power Sentence Lesson also acts as a robust scaffold, as it enables students to engage closely with a key sentence, key ideas, and key vocabulary before engaging with the full text.

Grade-level texts include maps, videos, multimedia, audio supports, photos, graphics, graphic organizers, and visual and audio prompts designed to make learning more accessible. New vocabulary words include student-friendly definitions that students can easily find within interactive glossaries. Passages identify all cognates. All texts include audio playback, which allows students to hear texts read fluently by a real human voice, which supports comprehension by enabling students to read and hear passages. Repeated reading of texts, repeatable directions, visual and auditory prompts, strategic questions, and formative feedback make learning accessible to students.

Conclusion

Imagine Lectura reflects well-accepted, research-based best practices to accelerate reading and language proficiency for emerging bilinguals in grades 3–5. Students receive explicit instruction that deepens and accelerates academic language and comprehension of grade-level complex text. Through a wide range of text genres, including both literary and informational texts, students build background knowledge, answer text-dependent questions, and hone their ability to read.

Thought-provoking Focus Questions empower students to engage critically with the text and use the highlighting and annotation tools to help cite text evidence. Power Sentence and Language Study instruction teaches students to zoom in on “juicy sentences” (those with rich content and academic language that students learn to unpack). Teachers’ explicit instruction helps students demystify how and why authors use words, semantics, morphology, phrases, and grammar. Interactive close reading, multimedia scaffolding and embedded comprehension strategy instruction support student learning. Group Synthesis Projects, teacher-facilitated discussions, and project-based learning provide opportunities for students to talk about texts and practice the conventions of discourse.

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