Language Learning & Language Teaching 62

CHAPTER 5

Paving the way for L2 literacy skills from the start — raising phonographic awareness in the primary English language classroom

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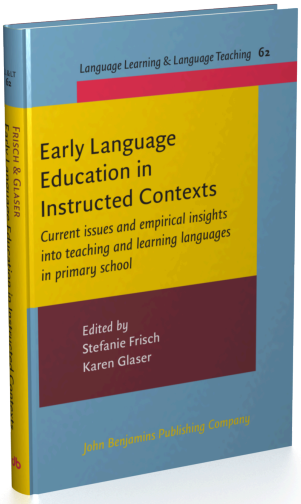
https://doi.org/10.1075/lllt.62.05sch



Pages 94–117 of
Early Language Education in Instructed Contexts: Current issues and empirical insights into teaching and learning languages in primary school
Edited by Stefanie Frisch and Karen Glaser
[Language Learning & Language Teaching, 62]
2025. xiv, 330 pp.

CHAPTER 5

Paving the way for L2 literacy skills from the start — raising phonographic awareness in the primary English language classroom

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This paper adopts a conversation-analytic (CA) approach to analyze L2 English (L2E) phonics instruction in a primary school setting. Specifically, it argues that the identification of interactional sequences that create learning opportunities can provide valuable insights that ultimately inform teachers' pedagogical practices (Sert, 2021). Focusing on the teaching of split digraphs via the Magic E analogy in a German 3rd grade primary classroom, the analysis shows that phonics teaching, originally developed for L1 English literacy instruction, can raise phonographic awareness and lay the foundation for literacy skills in L2E by fostering the acquisition of sound-letter relationships, as illustrated by the learners' competence gains elicited through read-aloud tests. Implications for phonics-based teaching of English in primary contexts are discussed.

1. Introduction

Since Primary English Language Teaching (PELT) became compulsory in Germany in 2004, the role of the written mode has been discussed controversially. English "probably has the most complicated letter-to-sound correspondence of any language that uses a segmental writing system" (Sproat, 2020, p. 31) and is therefore considered to feature an opaque, or deep, orthography (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2023). German, on the other hand, mostly relies on the phonographic matching principle (Ryan, 2020), which results in a much closer phoneme-grapheme correspondence. Therefore, proponents of a predominantly oral instruction in PELT focused on the challenges and possible overextension of the learners posed by the English opaque orthography compared to the more transparent, 'shallow' German orthography (Seymour et al., 2003) whereas advocates of a more balanced approach favored the integration of both oral and written skills. Although a small number of studies in the German context have yielded

https://doi.org/10.1075/lllt.62.05sch

promising results regarding the integration of reading skills into PELT (Frisch, 2013; Reckermann, 2018; Rymarczyk & Musall, 2010), to date there is no theory on L2E literacy acquisition for beginning learners in the primary context (Geng et al., 2022). As a result, reading and writing have been included in PELT only sparsely and unsystematically (Diehr & Rymarczyk, 2012).

Recent research has started to investigate the potential of adapting L1 English literacy teaching approaches for L2E contexts (e.g., Rendon-Romero, 2019; Beinke, 2020), specifically the whole-word method and phonics. Whereas the whole-word method follows top-down principles (Shin & Crandall, 2019) and teaches words in their entirety without considering the individual graphemes that form the word, bottom-up strategies such as phonics teach English spelling through the relationship between graphemes and sounds (Bearne & Reedy, 2018). It also considers that in addition to phoneme-grapheme correspondences (PGC), learners must understand larger, syllabic units such as onset-rime and split digraphs. While a substantial body of research exists on the phonics-based literacy acquisition of L1 learners of English, research on L2E literacy teaching is still in its fledgling stages. The present paper contributes to closing this gap by providing insights gained from the videographed introduction and practice of split digraphs involving syllable-final silent <e> via the Magic E analogy in an authentic 3rd grade L2E classroom in Germany, complemented by the pre- and post-results of a read-aloud test. Implications for shaping teachers' pedagogical practices regarding teaching phonics in an L2E context and raising learners' phonological awareness are derived.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 The English writing system, split digraphs, and Magic E

English is an alphabetic language consisting of a fixed set of 26 letters. Sounds are represented by graphemes that consist either of single letters or a combination of letters, such as <sh>. As with any alphabetic language, the ability to discriminate sounds in spoken language (Bearne & Reedy, 2018) and to connect letters/graphemes with sounds to blend them into words (Frisch, 2013) is the most important prerequisite for literacy acquisition. This phonographic awareness must be developed to acquire reading and writing skills successfully.

The English writing system is characterised by an opaque, or deep orthography, which means that the mapping between spelling and sounds is psycholinguistically deep and does not follow a one-to-one principle (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2023). In addition to understanding frequent and infrequent PGC, learners also

have to master different phoneme realisations of letter combinations (for example, <ough> in *bough* and *bought*) and larger grain sizes (i.e., phonological units) to successfully decode new words, such as morphological or syllabic patterns, for example onset-rimes such as <c-at>-<h-at> or <h-ey>-<sl-eigh>-<p-ay>).

However, English also features a range of spelling regularities. One such regular syllabic pattern, which is highly frequent and thus fundamental for the mastery of English spelling, are split digraphs. This term denotes the conjunct occurrence of two vowel letters that together form one sound, but in the written form are split by a consonant letter (Brown, 2019), as in *note*. There are five split digraphs in English: <a-e>, <e-e>, <i-e>, <o-e>, and <u-e>, all of which involve a stem-final <e>. Although this final <e> is silent, it is part of the stem-vowel grapheme as it influences its pronunciation such that the stem vowel is pronounced as its letter-name. Accordingly, its removal from the written form alters the word pronunciation (Brooks, 2015), as in *note* vs. *not*.

In phonics instruction, split digraphs are taught by means of the Magic E metaphor. The children learn that this final silent <e> has magic powers because it makes the stem "vowel say its [alphabet] name" (Brown, 2019, p. 115), and then disappears in the spoken form 'as if by magic'. This provides an age-appropriate explanation that children enjoy (Schrader, 2021). In L1 English instruction, Magic E is usually introduced via real-word pairs of a non-Magic E and orthographically parallel Magic E and words, such as *kit — kite* or *man — mane* to illustrate the pattern, which is then extended to the reading of other Magic E words for which no such 'partner' exists. Exceptions to the Magic E rule exist, such as *come* or *have,* which need to be addressed in literacy instruction as well.

2.2 Previous research on phonics instruction

In the L1 English context, there are different approaches to teaching reading and spelling. The two main methods are the whole-word method, which requires learners to store each new word holistically, and phonics, which focuses on the correspondence between letters and sounds (Shin & Crandall, 2014), and thus on the recognition of regularities to enable independent decoding of new word material. Phonics techniques include the segmentation of words into letters as well as the blending of letters to words, thereby fostering phonographic awareness.

Despite ongoing "reading wars" (Castles et al., 2018, p. 5) on the most efficient approach, phonics has been identified as crucial in developing alphabetic skills (National Reading Panel, 2000; Wyse & Goswami, 2008) as learners are enabled to decode or spell new words on their own (Double et al., 2019; Ehri & Flugman, 2018). A growing number of studies in the L1 English context suggest positive effects of phonics-based approaches on literary skills compared to non-phonics

programmes (Brooks, 2023; Buckingham, 2020). Buckingham (2020) concludes that phonics is "more effective than any existing alternative" (p. 105). Similarly, in a meta-analysis of 14 studies, McArthur et al. (2018) found phonics training to be effective for reading fluency as well as for irregular word reading accuracy of English-speaking poor readers.

As phonics-based approaches have beneficial effects with respect to the L1, researchers have also addressed the suitability of phonics in teaching L2E literacy to young learners (YLs). A variety of studies with different L1s showed the advantage of phonics-based approaches over non-phonics literacy teaching methods. Frisch (2013) compared a 2nd grade taught with a phonics-based approach to the parallel class taught by the whole-word method and found significant effects in the phonics group in terms of pronunciation, reading-aloud speed and accuracy, reading comprehension, and attitude towards learning the subject of English. Similarly, Rendón-Romero (2019) and Rendón-Romero et al. (2021) evaluated how Spanish learners of English in a bilingual primary school responded to phonics-based teaching and found significant effects on English phonological awareness, letter naming, and reading skills as well as the positive transfer of skills to Spanish L1 reading. Nishanimut et al. (2013) examined Kannada-speaking 10-year-olds in India and found that the group taught with a phonics approach yielded better reading and spelling skills compared to the group taught without a phonics approach. In their review of 15 (quasi-)experimental studies on phonics-based instruction in the L2E context of various countries, Huo and Wang (2017) found statistically moderate effects on the skills underlying reading, such as phonological awareness. They also specifically addressed knowledge of English letter names and found that it "is effective in young learners on word level reading, regardless of whether English is their first language" (Huo & Wang, 2017, p. 3) which suggests that alphabet instruction should be included in teaching literacy to L2E learners.

Based on the growing number of studies that indicate the potential benefits of phonics for L2E learners, Làzaro Ibarrola (2010) suggests including phonics-based instruction for primary children to increase their phonological awareness and reading competence. However, as Antropova and Colt (2015) point out, implementing phonics in L2E teaching can be very challenging if teachers do not possess the necessary linguistic content knowledge and target language skills. To meet this gap, Beinke (2020) developed an in-service teacher training programme targeting the linguistic background knowledge and pedagogic skills required to teach phonics in L2E in Germany.

However, despite the benefits attributed to teaching phonics, studies have so far only dealt with the more global effects of phonics instruction on L2 reading skills rather than examining actual lesson sequences in an L2E classroom. Accord-

ingly, there is hardly any research on how teachers impart phonographic awareness in primary L2E settings and how the learners respond to specific elements of phonics-based instruction. To address this gap, this paper presents a conversation-analytic approach to the introduction and practice phases of Magic E in a 3rd grade classroom in Germany, suggesting that such insights into interactional sequences can assist teachers in integrating instructional formats to develop phonographic awareness and read-aloud skills in the primary English classroom.

3. Research aims and methodology

3.1 Research aims and questions

This paper explores how the split digraph is introduced via the Magic E analogy in a 3rd-grade L2E primary classroom in Germany, how the beginning learners respond to the Magic E lessons, and how their read-aloud skills of Magic E words develop over the course of a 15-week intervention. By presenting excerpts of student-teacher interaction during the introduction and practice of Magic E and the results of a read-aloud test, this paper aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How does the teacher conduct Magic E instruction of split digraphs with beginning young learners (YLs) in primary school?
2. How do the learners display their emerging phonographic awareness during split digraph instruction?
3. To what extent does the teaching of Magic E support learners' read-aloud performance?

3.2 Data

Data were collected in the context of a larger design-based research (DBR) study on literacy development in 3rd-grade young beginning learners at a primary school in Germany (Schrader, forthcoming.). The learners were 8–9 years old and had received L2 English instruction for three months prior to the intervention. The DBR study was quasi-experimental and consisted of two cycles, each of which featured an intervention group (IG) and a control group (CG) class and covered 30 lessons in three units. All classes were intact and randomly assigned to a treatment condition. In total, the study featured 100 learners, 50 in each condition. While all learners were exposed to the same amount of English instruction of two 45-minute lessons per week in line with the orality-oriented curriculum, the intervention classes (n=50) received literacy-enhanced phonics-informed instruc-

tion (cf. Section 3.3), which was developed by the author in collaboration with the English teacher. The author was present in every lesson to operate the recording equipment and collect field notes, while the English teacher taught all lessons.

Given the focus of the present study, only data from the 50 IG is included in the analysis. Of these, 39 were monolingual German speakers, six were bilingual with an additional L1 (Spanish (n=2), Russian, Chinese, English, Arabic) and German, two spoke German as their L3 with two other L1s (Russian-Albanian, Arabic–French), and three learners spoke German as their L2 with either Arabic or Russian as their L1.

The data for the larger DBR study consisted of video recordings of 60 IG lessons, field notes, teacher interviews, and written learner products, as well as pre- and immediate post-tests of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. For the present paper, video recordings of the introduction and practice phases of Magic E were analyzed to answer RQs 1 & 2, as well as the read-aloud portions of the pre- and post-tests for RQ3. In the read-aloud task, the learners read the text in Figure 1 out loud without any further preparation, and their renditions were audio-recorded. Taken from Frisch (2013, p. 272), this passage spanned 37 words and contained nine Magic E words (shaded in grey) as well as the Magic E exception *have* (shaded in blue).

Wintertime
In the wintertime I feel fine. In winter you can take your sled. And you can have a snowball fight. I like ice and snow and snowflakes. Let's make ten white snowmen.
Ready — steady — go!

Figure 1. Read-aloud text with Magic E words and *have* highlighted

3.3 Intervention

The longitudinal intervention study ran in two cycles between May 2021 and July 2022 and covered 30 lessons (ten lessons each on the three topics of *Winter, Animals*, and *At Home*). In addition to Magic E, the intervention covered a range of other phonic elements as well as the alphabet and thus letter knowledge. After an initial focus on the alphabet and PGC, the intervention progressed to larger grain sizes, namely onset-rimes. In addition, high-frequency words played a role and were introduced in a top-down approach. Reading aloud was an integral aspect of the design to help foster spelling-pronunciation links. In addition to teaching spelling, the intervention aimed to promote writing skills at the level of sentences and short texts (for more details, cf. Schrader, forthcoming).

The concept of split digraphs was introduced to the children as Magic E in the first unit, *Winter*, in an inductive-explicit fashion by means of the vocabulary item *skate* (cf. Excerpt 1 in Section 4.1) After being introduced to the phenomenon, the children were presented with Magic E words in isolation and in context, with a focus on read-aloud practice, both in the same and during the next lesson, and the concept was revisited in the subsequent units with suitable vocabulary items. *Have* as an exception to the phenomenon was explicitly addressed, as illustrated in Excerpt 2c in Section 4.3.

3.4 Data analysis

3.4.1 *Conversation Analysis of classroom interaction*

The present analysis draws upon Conversation Analysis in the context of (Instructed) Second Language Acquisition (CA-for-SLA), a method that analyses the interaction sequentially as it unfolds turn-by-turn (Markee & Kunitz, 2015). Assuming an emic, i.e., participant-oriented perspective, this method provides insights into how the interactants co-construct meaning and how new shared cognitions emerge. Although over the past years CA-for-SLA has become a well-established approach for studying classroom interaction, research projects based on this method are scarce in German-speaking countries, particularly in the primary school context. The analysis focuses on the learners' handling of Magic E instruction as well as displays of their emerging phonographic awareness. Classroom videos were transcribed using the transcription software f4 (cf. Appendix for transcription symbols) and complemented by IPA symbols where necessary. The present analysis thus displays and reconstructs the events that unfolded in this language classroom. In addition, the presentation of cases contributes to building a collection of interactional phenomena that provide insight into how primary L2E learners deal with specific phonic elements.

3.4.2 *Analysis of read-alouds*

All read-aloud tests were transcribed phonetically using IPA. Subsequently, all nine words containing a split digraph were analyzed regarding their pronunciation. For the quantitative analysis, one point was awarded for each correctly pronounced word, resulting in an accuracy score for each learner, which allowed the calculation of means, standard deviations, medians, and quartile distributions. In addition, *t*-tests were conducted to gain further insight into the robustness of the observed differences. *Have,* the exception to the Magic E rule contained in the text, was analyzed quantitatively for correct vs. incorrect production, and qualitatively regarding the different pronunciation variants produced by the learners.

4. Results

The following section presents seven excerpts of the Magic E instruction, as well as the read-aloud results. More specifically, Subsection 4.1 and 4.2 show how the teacher introduced and practised Magic E, thereby answering RQ 1, while Subsection 4.3–4.5 illustrate how the learners responded to and engaged with this concept, thereby providing insights for RQ 2. Lastly, the results of the pre-post read-aloud tests are presented, answering RQ 3.

4.1 Introduction of split digraphs

This section presents the Conversation Analyses of how split digraphs were introduced. Prior to Excerpt 1, the learners had been introduced to winter-related activities such as *skate, build a snowman* or *have a snowball fight*. The teacher had pinned the word card *skate* on the board visible to every learner.

Excerpt 1. Introduction of Magic E through *skate*[1]

001 T **[points at BB] which sounds can you hear when you hear**
002 [touches ear] skate (.) /s/-/k/-/eɪ/-/t/
003 students [together with teacher] skATE
004 T yeah (.) what can you hear when you hear skAte?
[unrelated classroom talk]
011 students /skeɪt/
012 T **can you say it what can you hear? [points at ear, nods]**
013 students /skeɪt/
014 T /s/- /sk/ – /eɪ/ – /t/ yeah? so very good you can hear (.) /skeɪt/
015 **can you hear this [points at BB] (..) [points at ear]**
016 can you – can you hear the e?
[unrelated classroom talk]
021 students no
022 T **no (..) yeah? this is a magic e [laughter]**
023 this is a magic e you canNOT hear it (..)
024 in german it's like a stummes e yeah?
silent e
025 (.) so the magic e (..) is very quiet you can't hear it
026 <student> (...) es ist wichtig dass du aufpasst ja?
it is important that you pay attention okay?
027 but it makes – [points at the word] here –

1. The boldface type indicates the lines that are referred to in the text.

028 it makes this letter sound yeah? (.)

029 (.) say it's own name ich sag's mal auf deutsch
i'll say it in german

030 das ist nämlich ein bisschen schwer ehm (..) auf englisch (.)
because it is a bit difficult in english

031 [points at the word and the letters, respectively]

032 wenn ihr ein magic e am ende habt wird der vokal – hier –
if you have a magic e at the end the vowel is

033 so gesprochen wie ihr ihn auch von hier
pronounced like you got to know it

034 [points at alphabet poster] kennnengelernt habt (.)
from here

035 / eɪ/ [points at a] ja?//
yes?

036 S3 //ABC

037 T oder /'oʊ/ [points at o] oder /'aɪ/ [points at i] ja?
or /'oʊ/ or /'aɪ/ yes?

038 S3 /i:/

039 T oder /ju/ [points at u]
or /ju/

040 S3 /i:/

041 T [points at BB] das passiert (.) wenn man ein magic e am ende hat
this happens if you have a magic e at the end

042 das ehm (.) man nicht hören [points at ear] kann
that you can't hear

043 und meistens wenn auf einen konsonant ein vokal folgt (.) ja?
and mostly if a vowel follows a consonant yes?

044 wir gucken das gleich nochmal hier an (.) mAke
we look at it once again here

045 can you hear [holds hand behind ear] the e?

046 can you – can you – can you hear the e at the end?

047 students no

048 T no it's a magic e (.) so it makes this letter (..) A (.) mAke (.) okay?

After the learners were asked which sounds they could discriminate when they heard <skate> (line 001 and 004), and to sound it out together with the teacher (003), they read the word correctly (011). This was taken up by the teacher in her rephrasing the original question (012), thereby trying to elicit individual sounds instead of the whole word as an entity. However, in 013, the learners merely repeated the entire word, apparently unaware of the teacher's intentions. The teacher then produced the answer herself in 014, segmenting the word into its sounds. After that, she explicitly drew the learners' attention to the final <e> by

pointing at it and asking whether the learners could hear it (015). As soon as the learners replied *no* (021), the teacher confirmed the learner's observation that one cannot hear this letter (022 ff.) and started to introduce the concept of Magic E in 023. During her explanation, for which she also draws on the L1 to be able to refer to scientific concepts and terms the learners know from their L1 German instruction, she explicitly mentions that the <e> makes the vowel say its own name (029) as in the alphabet (033). This is followed by the teacher's and learners' conjoint revision of the vowel letter-names by means of the ABC poster (035–40). The teacher then showed another word with the same spelling pattern, *make* (044), asking the learners first whether they can hear <e> at the end (045–046). The learners' collective *no* in (047) received a positive evaluation from the teacher, via a confirming repetition (048), which she immediately couples with the explicit mention of the vowel change. This excerpt thus illustrates how the teacher introduced both aspects of Magic E (silent <e> and stem-vowel change), by drawing on the children's prior knowledge.

4.2 Practice of split digraphs

Excerpt 2a depicts the first practice phase of Magic E in the lesson following the introduction. The class has just revised the previously introduced winter-related vocabulary and performed a short spelling competition.

Excerpt 2a. Revision of Magic E phenomenon/ Uptake from introductory lesson

001 T so (.) on (..) eh on friday last week we learned a magic trick (..)

002 can you remember the magic trick? (...) what was the magic trick

003 (.) what was the name <andrew> (...) the

004 S ehm (...) the magic e

005 T perfect (.) the magic e who can explain

006 what is the magic e in german weil so viele krank waren
because so many of you were sick

007 what is the magic e [points at the words written on the BB] (3)

008 hm (...) ja (*yes*)

009 S das stumme e
the silent e

010 T ja (*yes*) and what- what is it what //can it do//

011 S //dass man das// e nicht mitspricht
that you don't pronounce the e

012 T and what happens? was passiert dann?
what happens then?

013 [(4) points one by one at the vowels in the word list on the BB]

014 S also dass da ehm also ein buch- zwei buchstaben davor
well, that uhm well a let- two letters before

015 so ein vokal ist also letzter
there is such a vowel, that is, the previous

016 T der vokal davor spielt eine rolle (.)
the previous vowel does play a role

017 ob der jetzt zwei buchstaben davor ist oder nicht
but if it's two letters before or not

018 das ist eigentlich egal aber was passiert mit dem vokal davor
doesn't really matter but what happens to the previous vowel

019 S der wird lang gesprochen
it is pronounced long

020 T nicht lang gesprochen sondern?
not pronounced long but?

021 S (???)

022 T ja wie wird der gesprochen <Alfred>
well how is it pronounced

023 S so wie man es in der ABC spricht
the way you say it in the ABC

024 T so wie das /eɪ bi: si:/ gesprochen wird ja genau also es wird so
the way you say it in the ABC yes exactly it

025 gesprochen wie man ihn auch spricht
is pronounced the way you pronounced it

026 wenn wie wirs grade gemacht haben
when- like we just did

027 /eɪ/ (.) /əʊ/ (.) /ju:/ (.) /aɪ/ (.) /i:/ [counts with her fingers up to five]

This lesson phase addressed the revision of the previously introduced phenomenon of Magic E and showed that the learners had grasped both the notion of silent letters as well as the change in pronunciation regarding the stem vowel. After the teacher asked about the name of the "magic trick," one of the learners provided *Magic E* (004). Subsequently, the teacher asked the learners to explain Magic E in German (006). Although the phenomenon of silent letters influencing the pronunciation of preceding vowels also exists in German (*Dehnungs-h*, a silent h indicating tenseness of the preceding vowel), the two phenomena are not identical, as split digraphs in English are, by definition, split (thus, with a consonant in between), whereas the consonant *Dehnungs-h* appears directly after a vowel, which means these orthographical phenomena cannot be directly transferred. One of the learners reproduced the teacher's expression from the previous lesson: the *silent e* (009). After being asked what happens in Magic E cases (012) and how the vowel is pronounced (018–022), one of the students remembered that the vowel in the C-V-C sequence plays a role and replied accordingly (014/015), which the teacher confirmed, explaining that the vowel does indeed play a role, regardless of its exact position in the word. After more elicitation, the learner replied that the sound is prolonged (019), which the teacher denied, but

the learner could not provide the correct answer. Another child was able to successfully reply that the vowel was pronounced as it was in the alphabet (023).

The next Excerpt 2b shows a reading-aloud phase. After the revision, learners were asked to read Magic E words on the blackboard.

Excerpt 2b. Read-aloud of Magic E words

028 (..) so (2) here are some magic e words
029 [points at the words on the BB]
030 can YOU read it (.) what is this [points at "name"] (.) <Lukas>
031 S name
032 T name okay ja (*yes*)? name (.) /aɪ/ [points at the "a" in name"]
033 you can't hear [touches her ears] the e
034 [points at the <e> in name]
035 it's a magic e okay next word [points at "five"]
036 S /faɪv/
037 T five look /aɪ/ [points at "i" in five] ja (*yes*) five very good
038 next word [points at "game"]
039 S /geɪm/
040 T game (.) /eɪ/ [points at "a" im game] ja game
041 [covers the "e" in game with her hand]
042 right next word [points at "code"]
043 S kəʊd
044 T code very good (.) and [points at "nine"]
045 S naɪn
046 T nine good (2) next word [points at "white"] (..) <Jona>
047 S /wi:t/
048 what- what letter is this [points at "i" in white]
049 S /waɪt/
050 T white yeah it's an /aɪ/ so white okay and last word
051 [points at "skate"] <Bruno>
052 S /skeɪt/
053 T skate (.) /eɪ/ [points at "a" in skate] (.) these are all magic e words
054 [points at all the words that are written on the BB]

This sequence attests to learners' ability to read Magic E words almost instantly. Only one of the learners made a mistake by first realising the <i> in <white> as /i:/ applying German PGC (047). The mistake was immediately self-corrected (049) by the learner after the teacher pointed again at the first vowel and asked which letter it was (048). The excerpt shows how the teacher's explanations initiate the emergence of phonographic awareness in the learners.

4.3 Understanding exceptions to the rule

The following Excerpt 2c illustrates the explanation of the Magic E exception *have* in reaction to a learner explicitly inquiring about exceptions.

Excerpt 2c. Exceptions to the Magic E pattern

055	T	yeah okay good <Alfred>?
056	**S**	**es gibt aber auch ausnahmen** ***but there are also exceptions***
057	T	es gibt IMMER ausnahmen <Alfred> immer (..) *there are ALWAYS exceptions <Alfred> always (..)*
058		hast du ne ausnahme? *do you have an exception?*
059	S	nee *no*
060	T	soll ich euch mal ne ausnahme zeigen? *shall i show you an exception?*
061	S	ice
062	T	hm?
063	S	ice
064	T	ice? is a magic e yeah because it's /aɪ/ but look this word here
065		**[writes "have" on the BB] (6) what word is this (..) <Andy>?**
066	**S**	**/hæv/**
067	**T**	**have aber wenn das jetzt mit nem magic e gewesen wäre** ***but if this had been with a magic e,***
068		**wie würds n dann heißen** ***how would it be pronounced?***
069	students	[two students are answering at the same time] // /hʌf/ // // /haɪf/ //
070	T	ah wie spricht man den buchstaben aus? [underlines "a" in have] *uh how do you say the letter?*
071		(3) hm?
072	**S**	**/eɪ/**
073	T	/heɪf/ würds dann heißen weil es ja ein /eɪ/ ist *it would be /heif/ because it is an /ei/*
074		aber es heißt nicht /heɪf/ es heißt /hæv/ (..) *but we don't say /heif/ we say /hæv/ (..)*
075		obwohl man das e [points at the "e" in have] nicht hört *although you don't hear the e*
076		das ist also eine ausnahme vom magic e ja? *so that is an exception of the magic e, alright?*

After the learners' inquiry about exceptions to the phenomenon (056), the teacher wrote *have* on the board and asked how this word is pronounced (065). A student correctly read /hæv/ (066), indicating that this learner was aware of the correct pronunciation. Following this, the teacher asked how the word would be pronounced if it were a Magic E word (067f.) Two students tried to read the word which resulted in two different incorrect versions, /hʌf/ and /haɪf/, after which the teacher pointed to the letter <a>, asking the children how it is pronounced (070). The teacher confirmed the learners' correct reply /ˈeɪ/ by inserting the /ˈeɪ/ (072) into the word *have*, thus arriving at /hˈeɪf/ (073). She then immediately went on to explain that it is not /hˈeɪf/ but /hæv/ (074), despite the fact that <e> is silent. The excerpt shows how the teacher herself is aware of exceptions to the Magic E pattern, and how this content knowledge affects her pedagogical practice.

4.4 Identification of split digraphs by the learners

After Magic E had been explicitly introduced and practiced, the learners were able to spot Magic E words in various consecutive lessons and lesson phases, thus demonstrating an increasing mastery of this spelling pattern, as exemplified by Excerpts 3 and 4.

Except 3 illustrates one of Magic E's recognitions by a student in the *At Home* unit. The teacher has just introduced indoor activities.

Excerpt 3. Student spotting a Magic E word during vocabulary introduction

001 T now look at the words (..) (???) look at the words
002 [points at them]
003 there's one word (.) to take a shower (.) what can you see
004 [gesturing to look out for something] or hear [points at one ear]
005 when you look at tAke (.) a shower? [points at student]
006 S1 magic e word?
007 T magic E word very good yeah you can't hear e
008 [puts hand over one ear]
009 and it's an a [points at the letters] tAke a shower

The teacher pointed at (line 004) her ear to demonstrate the inaudibility of the letter, referring to the change in pronunciation. One of the learners, taking up the given hints, correctly identified the spelling pattern in line 006. The teacher confirmed this observation by saying and gesturing that the <e> is silent (007, 008) and by stressing the changed stem vowel (009). A similar case is shown in Excerpt 4 from another lesson. Focusing on rhyming words in an animal riddle the teacher addressed the fact that rhyming words are not always spelled alike.

Excerpt 4. A student recognising Magic E words in a rhyme

001 T who can help me what rhymes?
002 [holds up chalk in one hand and points to bb]
003 you can do it here on the board yeah? [points at S1]
004 you can //help//?
005 S1 //black// and (back)
006 T you can come out and (3) circle
007 [makes circle movement with chalk] the rhyming words
008 [hands chalk to S1] what rhymes (2) okay?
009 S1 [circles words]
010 T a:nd what is that?
011 S1 black and (back) [hands chalk back to teacher]
012 T blACK and (bACK) rhymes perfect (.) but there's more [nods]
013 could you say the other words? [hands chalk to S2]
014 or circle the other words?
015 S2 [circles words]
016 T WOW what is that?
017 S2 ride and glide [hands chalk back to teacher]
018 T rIDE and glIDE and [makes surprised sound huh]
019 what are these words? rI:DE and glI:DE (2) huh? [points at S3]
020 S3 magic e words
021 T WOW (..) perfect (.) here are magic e words [points at words]
022 i and i magic e (.) glIDE and rIDE very good okay

In this lesson phase, although the focus was on rhymes, the students also discovered the familiar spelling pattern of Magic E (line 020), albeit only providing this term after the teacher had drawn the learners' attention to it. This indicates the teacher's important role in using awareness-raising opportunities in different contexts and in pointing out connections to previously introduced concepts. In addition, this example illustrates how students became increasingly aware of Magic E in different classroom situations, even if the focus did not lie on it specifically in this lesson.

4.5 Drawing analogies to similar phenomena

After identifying and reading Magic E words, the intervention progressed to new orthographical phenomena. As the next extract (Excerpt 5) from the Animals unit shows, the notion of silent letters (other than Magic E) was explained to the children. The learners were introduced to their next task, viz. completing a table

based on information on what animals can and cannot do gained from short texts. The teacher is drawing attention to the verbs *jump, run, fly*, and *climb* in the table header.

Excerpt 5. Students drawing analogies between Magic E and other silent letters

001 T before we start our next worksheet (2.5) ehm look (...)
002 (...) [shh noise to get the students' attention] [points at the blackboard]
003 climb (..) is /kl/ /aɪ/ /m/
004 [points at the respective letters on the blackboard]
005 S1 /b/
006 T so (...) mhm [clueless gesture and facial expression] (...)
007 climb is /kl/ /aɪ/ /m/
008 S2 // /b/ //
009 S3 // /b/ //
010 S4 /klaɪmb/
011 T [points at blackboard] what can you say? was fällt euch auf? (2.0)
what do you notice?
012 S3 /b/
013 S2 /klaɪmb/
014 S5 [whispers] magic b
015 T mhm? (..) [points at student] <S1?>
016 S1 das b ist weg
the b is gone
017 T ja: very good :)
018 S5 and //magic b//
019 T :) //and magic b// [laughing] that's good :) (.) yeah

The teacher twice read the word /klaɪm/ in a segmented fashion (003, 007) while pointing to its written form, subsequently asking the learners whether they notice anything (011). Two of the learners (S2 and S3) noticed the absence of /b/ in the teachers' read-aloud and supplied this (008, 009), apparently under the impression that the teacher made a mistake. In addition, S4 pronounced the whole word with a /b/ (010), which is taken up by S2, who now also produces /klaimb/ (013), incorrectly sounding out /b/ and thus treating <b>/ as a non-silent letter. The teacher gained the learners' attention by briefly switching to German in line 011: *Was fällt euch auf?*). One learner (S5) whispered *Magic b*, thereby applying the previously acquired concept of Magic E to this new occurrence of a silent letter (014). The teacher, however, pointed to another student who states the absence of /b/ (016), which the teacher acknowledged with positive praise (017). Subsequently, the learner who had already whispered *Magic b* repeated this more audibly in line 018, which the teacher acknowledged with laughter and repeti-

tion (019). This short sequence further attests to the learners' increasing language awareness over the course of the intervention, showing both their grasp of the Magic E concept and their beginning ability to draw analogies to related phenomena.

4.6 Learners' performance in the read-aloud tests

Thirty-nine of these 50 IG learners completed both the pre- and post-tests. As the focus of the present analysis is on changes over time, only those 39 sets were included in the analysis. Figure 2 shows the number of correctly produced Magic E words in the pre- and post-test.

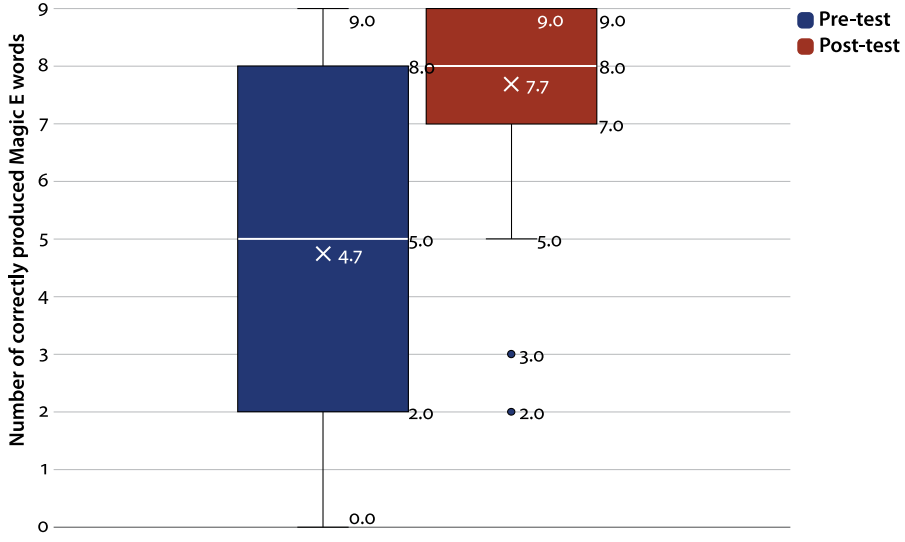

Figure 2. Read-aloud results for Magic E words

As Figure 2 illustrates, on average the learners managed to read 4.7 ($SD = 3.4$) out of the nine Magic E words correctly in the pre-test, whereas in the post-test, they were able to read 7.7 Magic E words correctly ($SD = 1.7$). Paired-sample *t*-tests revealed that this difference is significant: $t(39) = 7.8$; $p < .001$, suggesting that the pre-post difference is systematic and that the learners improved their skills in decoding Magic E words as a function of the instruction. This conclusion is further supported by the statistical dispersion illustrated by the boxplots. Not only did the Median increase from $M = 5.0$ to $M = 8.0$, but the interquartile range decreased from 6.0 in the pre-test (8.0–2.0) to 2.0 in the post-test (9.0–7.0). Accordingly, in addition to improving as a group, the heterogeneity of learner per-

formance *within* the group decreased from pre- to post-test, suggesting that the awareness-raising instruction helped both stronger and weaker learners improve their mastery of Magic E words.

In addition to analysing the pronunciation of Magic E words, the production of the Magic E-exception *have* was evaluated. As Figure 3 shows, in the pre-test *have* was only pronounced correctly by 18 of the 39 learners (46%), and realised in 10 different variants.

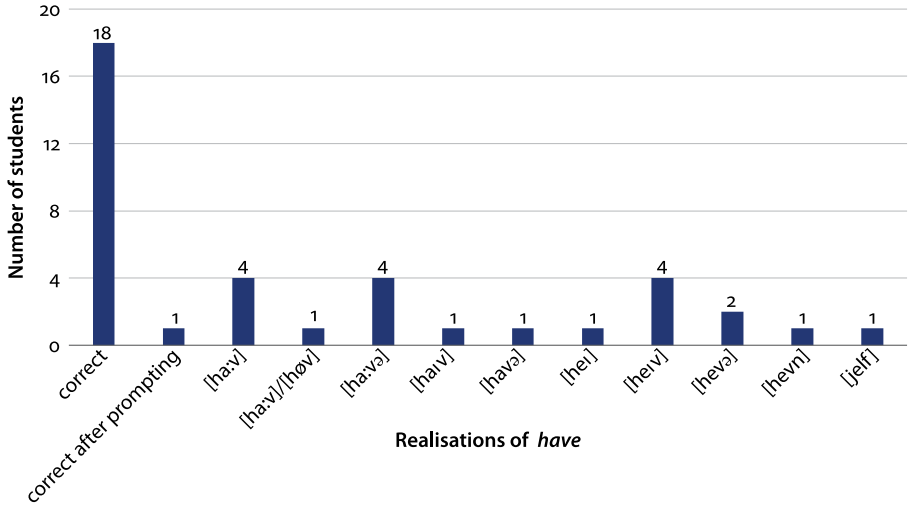

Figure 3. Pre-test realisations of HAVE

By contrast, Figure 4 shows that in the post-test the number of students who correctly produced *have* had increased to 32 (82%), a difference that is significant on the .001-level ($t(39) = 4.6$; $p < .001$). Moreover, the number of pronunciation variants across the learner group was reduced to four. Interestingly, two of these incorrect pronunciation versions, viz. [heɪv] and [heɪf] attest to the Magic E rule being followed (the latter with added final devoicing negatively transferred from German), although in this case it does not result in target-like pronunciation. Overall, the findings attest to the children's significantly increased phonographic awareness, which enabled them to correctly read Magic E words and the exception word *have*.

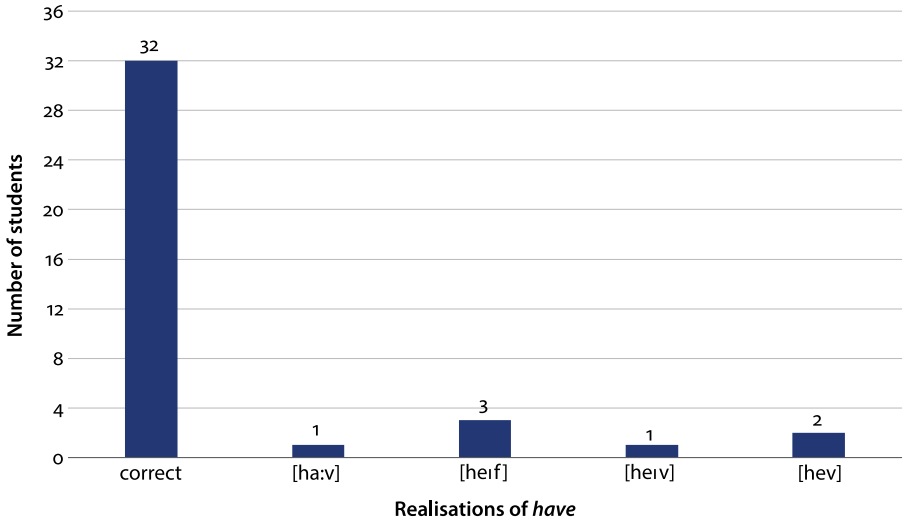

Figure 4. Post-test realisations of HAVE

5. Discussion

5.1 Link to previous research

This chapter presents conversation analyses of selected transcripts to provide insights into L2E phonics instruction on split digraphs. According to Sert (2021), using CA findings of the "phenomenon under investigation" (p. 270) can be helpful for teachers and researchers alike to generate implications for their own practice; accordingly, it has the potential to affect the professionalisation of future L2E teachers. As the analyses of lesson Excerpts 1 to 5 indicate, L2E learners in a 3rd grade can grasp the unfamiliar split digraph phenomenon and employ this newly acquired orthographical pattern onto new words they encounter in L2E lessons. The lesson excerpts further showed that a carefully planned and sequenced unit not only creates awareness of spelling regularities but also serves to introduce the learners in an age-appropriate fashion to the intransparency of the English spelling system. As the read-aloud results show, the intervention successfully imparted mastery of both the regular split digraph pattern and of the exception *have*.

The study contributes to the budding research into adapting L1E phonics to L2E contexts (Beinke, 2020; Frisch, 2013; Rendón-Romero, 2019), supporting the conclusion that phonics can help to establish early English literacy skills not only in the L1, but also in the L2. Yet, to adapt L1 phonics teaching approaches to the L2 context, basic differences between L1 and L2 learners must be considered.

While in L1 literacy instruction the learners have already acquired a large oral lexicon, for which they now acquire the written mode, for L2 learners the lexical material is usually completely new, and they are faced with the task to learn the meaning-pronunciation-spelling mappings (plus grammatical behaviour) simultaneously (Schmitt & Schmitt, 2020). In addition, the specific contexts in which the L2E instruction takes place needs to be considered. Young L2E learners in Germany are predominantly in 3rd grade and have thus already acquired L1 literacy skills when starting to learn L2E, including scientific concepts surrounding literacy they can draw from, as illustrated in Excerpt 1. In addition, they are more cognitively mature than at the starting point of their literacy acquisition in grade 1. At the same time, in Germany L2E is only taught twice a week; hence, a complete phonics course as for L1 English learners is not feasible during this limited exposure. As this study showed through the CA-based reconstruction of classroom events, it is still possible to include phonics-informed elements in such a low-exposure L2E primary context, and that this helps to increase the young learners' phonological awareness and reading skills.

5.2 Limitations

Naturally, this study comes with limitations. Most notably, the larger study from which the current data was derived was not specifically conceptualised as an intervention study on Magic E but more generally on literacy skills. Magic E was only one of many facets, which means that the data presented here was analyzed in a post-hoc fashion. If the focus had been on Magic E exclusively, other instruments might have been developed to tap more intensely into the learners' comprehension and mastery of split digraphs, covering both declarative and procedural knowledge, such as read-aloud texts containing more split digraphs or a delayed post-test. Likewise, the absence of a delayed post-test failed to capture possible long term effects of the instructional intervention. At the same time, the fact that the data presented here emerged in authentic classroom settings without such a narrow interventionist focus attests to a high ecological validity.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Implications for research

This chapter has provided insights into phonics-informed teaching phases in an L2E setting for YLs with a focus on Magic E. It therefore contributes to the understanding of how particular phonics elements can be introduced to YLs,

how teachers can foster students' phonological awareness, and how YLs react to these phonics-inspired sequences. Such empirical insights into concrete pedagogical strategies for introducing and practicing phonics in L2E for YL are scarce. Accordingly, there is a need for much more research into adapting phonics to L2E instruction in a variety of contexts to gain deeper insights into the opportunities, affordances and benefits this pedagogical approach provides as well as challenges and potential limitations. A central concern will be the adaptations that are necessary for an effective transfer of this method from L1 to L2 settings. Ultimately, this kind of research will help develop a theory of L2E literacy acquisition that can inform a structured approach to PELT that systematically promotes both oral and written skills.

6.2 Implications for teaching practice and teacher education

Although a frequently utilised strategy in L1 English literacy classrooms, phonics is still unfamiliar to many L2E teachers and thus underused in L2E classrooms, resulting in a lack of instruction on the phonemic structure of the target language and on phonographic awareness, and generally of PGC decoding practice (Coates et al., 2017). Accordingly, orthographical phenomena such as split digraphs are not often explicitly addressed. In light of such L2E literacy teaching practices, the study highlights the importance of restructuring L2E literacy acquisition for YLs with a more prominent focus on phonics and the balanced integration of oral and written skills, including phonographic awareness. If corroborated in other contexts, this, in turn, may require a shift in pre- and in-service teacher training, namely, the inclusion of content knowledge on the phonemic structure of English, and of pedagogical content knowledge of approaches to literacy instruction, thus linking linguistics with pedagogical expertise.

A related observation concerns the teaching technique of reading aloud, which is central to phonics but usually viewed critically in the German L2E teaching context, both for secondary (Alter, 2014) and primary level (Louis, 2020). Instead of being considered a resource for mastering English PGC, it is mostly seen as a technique that showcases the learners' problems with the opaque orthography. As the learners' significant improvement in the number of correctly read split digraph words in the read-aloud tests suggests, however, it helped them increase their phonographic awareness and mastery of spelling-pronunciation links. This is in line with research showing that learners benefit from reading aloud practice, as it fosters reading fluency and provides feedback on decoding skills (Gibson, 2008). Accordingly, rather than disparage this method, teachers need to be made aware of the usefulness of read-aloud as a teaching tool.

A final implication of this classroom-based research concerns the availability of materials for teachers. Suitable material was necessary to carry out the intervention, but as this does not yet exist, it had to be specifically created. As this requires expertise and especially time that not all teachers have, it is conceivable that teachers would be able to implement phonics-inspired literacy instruction to a greater extent if more easily accessible phonics-based L2E teaching material existed, e.g., as an integral component of textbooks. Such material would, in turn, also be a helpful resource in teacher training.

Taken together, it is hoped that the present study will encourage more classroom-based research projects on phonics-inspired L2E instruction in primary contexts. This increasing body of knowledge will not only contribute to a better understanding of early L2E literacy acquisition, but also inform classroom practice, materials creation, and teacher education alike.

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Appendix. Transcription symbols

//	overlaps
(.)	pauses of up to 0.5 seconds in length
(..)	pauses of between 0.5 and 1.0 seconds in length
(…)	pauses of between 1.0 and 1.5 seconds in length
(3), (4), …	pause length in seconds
?	question intonation
:	prolonged sound, multiple colons indicate a strong degree of lengthening
-	unfinished words
--	unfinished sentence
<>	anonymised item
[]	non- and paraverbal item
(???)	incomprehensible passage