


Developing Reading Skills  
in English

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### Assumptions about Learning to Read

- If a pupil LOOKS at a word, the teacher SAYS it, then the pupil will be able to read it
- If a pupil can sing the alphabet song then he can identify letters in the alphabet
- If a pupil can read in his home language then he can read in any language
- Reading is a passive activity

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### Characteristics of Good Readers - What the best readers said:

- They like to read and have lots of time to do it.
- They concentrate well.
- They have lots of books around them.
- They know how to sound out words.
- They learn many new words.
- They do many written exercises and homework.
- They regularly practice the hard things.

From Elley, Warwick, 1992, *How in the world do pupils read?*

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### Preparing pupils to read in English?

Before young learners read English, they should -

- » be able to use English to **communicate** with some ease
- » develop some **visual-motor skills** - eye/hand coordination, visual scanning, visual tracking, alternating and dividing attention, and fine motor control
- » have some experience with **metacognitive and mathematical tasks**
- » **read and write in their home language**

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### A Reading Environment

1. Encourage "good reader" behaviors
2. Provide **authentic reading** material
3. Provide a reading environment: Class Library - "Book Flood" - Reading Time - **extensive reading**
4. Use a frame to organize your approach to teaching English reading

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### Types of **READING** Knowledge

**They \_\_\_\_\_ across the road.**

What do you know about this sentence?

You know that the verb is missing so you think about all the verbs you know that could possibly make sense here.

You use **syntactic** knowledge and **content** knowledge.

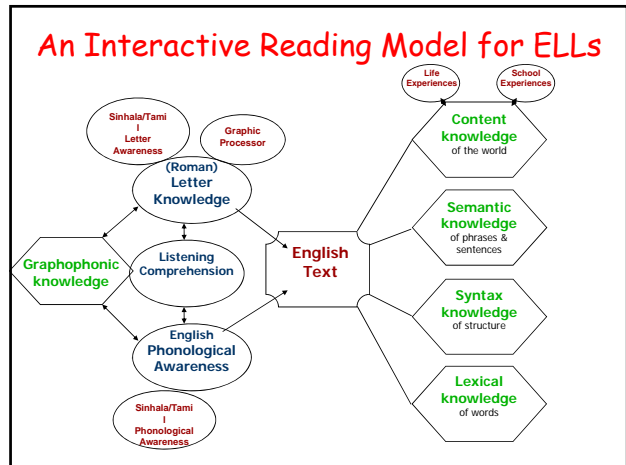
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**David dropped his tennis balls.**  
**They \_\_\_\_ across the road.**  
 Additional information allows you to narrow the possible answers.  
 These are **semantic** and **lexical** clues.  
**They r \_\_\_\_ across the road.**  
 With the addition of a **graphophonic** clue (**r**) you confirm your answer.

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**Listening - Do's**

- Read stories aloud to the class. Show them the words and pictures as you read.
  - » Listening practice should be linked with visuals and/or actions in the beginning.
  - » Gradually add unfamiliar words, concepts or structures
  - » Provide opportunities to talk about each segment.
  - » Ask pupils to listen for specific things
  - » Teach word families/rhyming with context clues
- Don't assume that a word said or read is known

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**Phonological Awareness - Do's**

- Teach letter names and their sounds separately
- Beware of sounds that are not discriminated, i.e. heat/hit, rent/lent, mouse/mouth
- Practice listening for meaning - retell the story
- Explicitly teach contractions and other words that may assimilate, especially jargon
- Distinguish between mistakes in reading vs. mistakes in pronunciation

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**Letter Knowledge - Do's**

- Explicitly teach letter strokes **b d**
- Distinguish capital letters and small. Focus on purpose: proper names/places and the beginning of a sentence.
- Watch for reversals and confusing letters:  
**b d, p q, 3 B, u n,**  
**m w, 5 S, 1 l 1**

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**Graphophonic Knowledge - Do's**

- Pupils identify a picture, then the initial sound is matched with a letter card, or a letter drawn in the air, or traced.
- Wall Dictionary
- Word Families
  - » cat » bat
  - » hat » mat
  - » fat » rat
  - » sat » pat

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### Semantic Knowledge

- Thematic instruction guides pupils to group words together into a semantic structure-make a thematic dictionary.
- Link one form of a word to related words, i.e. television, telephone.
- Read aloud and discuss the meaning of new words. Have a pupil make comprehension questions about a story while others answer the questions.

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### Syntactic Knowledge

- Regularly practice using prepositions - try visuals.
- Make a list of new words organized by function.
- Explicitly teach sentence structure, i.e. N+V+O or S+V+O
- Explicitly teach prefixes and suffixes plus how they make adjectives and adverbs.
- Focus on syntax to gain meaning

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### Lexical Knowledge

1. Give both **definitions and context**
2. Encourage **deep processing** - making multiple connections between new and known information with some mental effort or creativity
3. Provide **multiple exposures** to new words
4. Vocabulary can be learned incidentally in the context of storybook reading and listening (Nagy, 2002)
5. Direct instruction methods must be **age appropriate** and suited to the ability of the reader/listener
6. Dictionary definitions are difficult for pupils to understand
7. Writing a sentence using the new word is often a waste of time (Miller & Gilea, 1987)

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### Lexical Knowledge 2

- Practice word retrieval skills using short and long term memory activities
- Teach memory strategies, i.e. I **hear** with my **ear**.
- Increase pupil exposure to non-fiction
- **Talk about language**, language forms and meaning
- **Sort and compare** words, concepts, events, story characters, science experiment outcomes and classification schemes
- Present new **words in context** with pictures or actions associated

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### Purpose for Reading: Skills Needed

- **Scanning** or reading for a specific purpose-looking for information
- **Skimming** or reading for the gist-reading quickly to get the general idea
- **Reading for detail** or comprehension-getting the meaning of every word
- **Coherence** - when we use our knowledge of the world to see connections in text
- **Cohesion** - when we use our grammatical knowledge to establish links between sentences/paragraphs

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### Reading Instruction

- Lessons will be varied, focusing on
  - » **Extensive reading**-uninterrupted silent reading
    - pleasure
    - gaining information about a topic
    - practicing reading easy text for fluency
  - » **Intensive reading** - short passages read with purpose of learning English
    - specific skills
    - integrating skills
    - applying skills to different text
    - integrating information from different sources

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