



STAGES OF READING DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

English as a language with "special role" has own a world-wide status, by either regarded as the official language or taught superior to other languages as second or foreign language . With its growing status, people are not simply satisfied with talking with each other in English. More and more focus has been put on mastering the basic four language skills which are: effective reading ability; fluency in communication; accuracy in listening and native-like writing ability. Compared with other three skills, reading is much more complex to acquire by learners as well as to teach by teacher.

There are generally five stages of reading development and teachers should be aware of what is required at each stage. This awareness helps the teachers to understand when, and how, to introduce various techniques into the program at the various levels of growth and development of pupils. It should be noted that children tend to master the various stages at different ages. To a large extent, the ability of children to read depends on the quality of the learning environment provided by the teacher and whether or not the language spoken in the school is the language spoken by the child at home. Both of these factors can have a dramatic effect on the time it takes a child to develop in each of the stages. In situations where the

language of the child is different, the language spoken in school the first year of primary education should be devoted to language development and not to reading. A child cannot learn to read in a language that he or she does not speak. After one year of language development the pupil should be better prepared for the reading development program.

The first stage of development is the pre-reading stage. The responsibility of the teacher is to encourage reading interest with enjoyable experiences and activities, with an emphasis on oral expression. The principal goal at this stage is to ensure that the learner is socially, mentally, emotionally and physically ready to learn to read. The pupil is taught to recognize



spaces between words and the descending order of the lines in a text. He or she learns to read from left to right usually, or from right to left for instance in Arabic. Oral expression is the focus of instruction, and the development of sight vocabulary which is taught using sentences, signs, labels, etc. Simple ideas are expressed and organized in order to create sentences. The formation of words, starting with consonants, and the recognition of rhymes by word endings, are all taught.

At the beginning reading stage of development, the learner must acquire an ability to recognize the letters of the alphabet, but not to memorize them. This is accomplished by varying the types of techniques used to teach the alphabet. The modern approach is that children learn the alphabet in a literature context. A card with a picture of an apple on it and the letter 'a' helps to give meaning to the sound 'a'. Although traditional methods of teaching the alphabet do not involve teaching the alphabet in a literary context, they do involve the participation of children in creating ways to help them learn the alphabet. Methods such as children creating their own jingles, or the teacher creating a jingle are ways of teaching the alphabet, and may be helpful in introducing and practicing the alphabet. Children generally enjoy creating various rhythms and melodies to help them memorize the alphabet. However, to ensure that they have not just memorized but have actually learned the alphabet, the teacher will want to also teach the alphabet in a literary context. A child must have a natural ease with the alphabet in order to learn letter sounds and word spellings comfortably, and exercises that are fun as well as

instructive can facilitate learning it. At this stage, teachers should promote pupil motivation constantly from the start of a reading program. Pupils react willingly to the text when they are motivated. Texts that reflect the interests and environment of the pupils increase motivation, especially if a pupil is having difficulty beginning to read. It may be beneficial to select photographs of people they know in the community or their family members, people who are a reaction of who they are, so that they feel connected to the reading process. Finally, teachers are encouraged to provide models for the children. This means that the teacher (or possibly a pupil) performs an action, or expresses a thought, that the class imitates. Modeling is one person setting an example and the others following it. An example of modeling is a child reading a poem, imitating the pronunciation and expression a teacher used while reading the poem. Or, a pupil can be a model and teach the class a small lesson or activity that he or she has learned. When pupils are the models, it encourages self-empowerment. Children feel good about themselves because they are able to share something they have learned with the class.

The third stage of reading development is reading fluency. At this stage of development, the pupil is prepared to identify words that he or she cannot pronounce and find the pronunciation independently, read simple stories and feel comfortable learning new concepts. Pupils begin to use context clues, using information in the story to guess the meaning of certain unknown words or ideas. Materials need to be very diverse. The pupil is better able to make use of



various texts, such as travel brochures, pictures, stamps from countries around the world and washing directions on clothes labels. It is very important, therefore, to make sure that the materials challenge the pupils and are relevant to the lessons, and that they continue to reflect the images and the interests of the children.

The fourth stage lies in increased reading ability and the development of reading interest.

Once the fundamental elements of reading have been mastered, pupils are able to start reading for pleasure. They have the ability to combine different sounds in order to create new combinations with unfamiliar words. They have experience with contractions and are able to recognize the use of contraction. They are able to recognize compound words and smaller words within larger words. Many of the tools needed to be a fluent reader have been learned at this point in development, so concentration is placed on motivating pupils to read for enjoyment and encouraging children to make reading a habit. Supplementary materials for individual reading activities or free voluntary reading should be made available. The children should be

encouraged to make class books in addition added to the supplementary materials. As pupils are able to read faster and with more understanding, ample materials should therefore be available in the classroom library and/or the school library for the children to choose from.

The fifth stage implies enhancing and refining reading skills

Reading comprehension requires pupils to be able to use the language of a text to understand and explain the meaning. Pupils learn how to (a) identify the main ideas in a text and (b) how to analyze and apply the information that they have learned from a text. They are able to develop arguments and support those arguments based on information in the text, other sources of information or previous knowledge. At this stage, there should be more emphasis on non-fiction materials, such as diagrams, maps and encyclopedias. The ultimate goal is for pupils to be able to read a text and comprehend its meaning. It is expected that pupils will have a facility with words that aid in communication, the form of communication they use with others and in self-expression.

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