

TEACHING  
ENGLISH  
READING  
TO YOUNG  
LEARNERS

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TRAINING MANUAL

ILONA HUSZTI  
ILONA LECHNER  
MÁRTA FÁBIÁN



Ilona Huszti – Ilona Lechner – Márta Fábíán

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Training manual



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This volume contains excerpts from readings related to its main topic, teaching English reading to young learners. It is aimed at English major college and university students studying the disciplines "The Methods of English Language Teaching" and "Teaching English to Young Learners", both covering the topic of teaching English reading to young learners. The volume is recommended to both pre- and in-service English teachers, as well as all those interested in the topic.

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Authors:

*Ilona Huszti, Ilona Lechner and Márta Fábrián*

Publisher's readers:

*Marianna Lőrincz, DSc (Transcarpathian Hungarian College, Berehove, Ukraine)*

*Beatrix Henkel, PhD (Ministry of Education, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates)*

*Krisztina Sárközi (Lajos Kossuth Lyceum, Berehove, Ukraine)*

Technical editing: *Sándor Dobos*

Page proof: *Melinda Orbán*

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*Sándor Dobos* (head of the Publishing Department  
of Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education)

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## FOREWORD

The present work is meant to help English major pre-service teachers in learning two academic disciplines at the tertiary education level: *Teaching English to young learners (TEYL)* and *The methods of English language teaching (MELT)*. Both courses cover the topic of teaching reading as a language skill to young learners, and teen-agers, respectively. This piece of work presents a collection of selected excerpts from most useful and widely read articles and book chapters on its main focus: teaching reading in English to young learners. All the useful practical pieces of advice, exercises and activities are presented in red throughout the volume.

At the end of the collection, a comprehensive list of references / bibliography is presented containing all the most crucial readings of the topic in focus.

*The authors*



# 1 WHAT IS READING?

Reading is one of the four language skills. The most important element in it is meaning, i.e. when we read, we look at the written text and try to decode it, or understand what it means.

Reading is a literacy skill.

Literacy skills include being able to read and write different sorts of texts for different purposes. In most societies today, literacy is part and parcel of everyday life for children and adults, and life is full of different sorts of written text: in the home, on the street, on television, and on computers. From their early infancy, children are involved in using writing and reading: for example, when they are helped to write their name on a birthday card to a friend or when they look at story books with adults. (Cameron, 2001, p. 124) We can see that becoming literate begins long before a child goes to school, and that the school has a foundation of literacy events and experiences upon which to build the narrower and more detailed skills of reading and writing. (Cameron, 2001, p. 125)

## **1.1 Factors affecting learning to read in English as a foreign language (Cameron, 2001, pp. 134-139)**

### ***1.1.1 First language of the learners***

Each language is structured differently, and the different structures offer users different cues to meaning. So when we learn our first language (L1), our brain / mind 'tunes into' the way the particular L1 works, and we learn to attend to the particular cues to meaning that are most helpful. When we meet a new language, our brain / mind automatically tries to apply the first language experience by looking for familiar cues.

### ***1.1.2 The learner's previous experience in L1 literacy***

If, as happens with YLs, literacy knowledge and skills are only partly developed for the L1, then only some aspects are available for transfer, and those may be only partially mastered. It is also possible that learners will mix knowledge skills and strategies between their languages, or even that 'backward transfer' (Liu et al, 1992, in Cameron, 2001, p. 137) may occur, with foreign language reading strategies being applied to L1 texts.

The methodology of teaching literacy skills in the L1 must also be considered. The way the child is being, or has been, taught to read the first

language will create expectations about how FL reading will be taught. While taking a quite different approach in the FL classroom may be a good idea, because it helps children to differentiate the languages and the literacy skills required in each, it may also confuse children by requiring them to cope with different definitions of ‘good behaviour’ or ‘success’ in reading.

### ***1.1.3 The learner’s knowledge of the foreign language (FL)***

Oral skills in the new language are an important factor in learning to be literate (Verhoeven, 1990, in Cameron, 2001, p. 137). Phonological awareness in the foreign language, the ability to hear the individual sounds and syllables that make up words, will develop from oral language activities, such as saying rhymes or chants and singing songs. Vocabulary knowledge is extremely important: (a) when a written word is being ‘sounded out’ or built up from its component letter or morpheme sounds, knowing the word already will speed up recognition, and (b) when a sentence is being read, known words will be easier to hold in short-term memory as meaning is built up. In the early stages, children should only encounter written words that they already know orally. If a text contains unknown words, then either the meanings of these need to be explained in advance, or the meanings must be completely obvious from the rest of the text.

Seeing words written down can help towards accurate pronunciation because of the visibility of all the letters of a word; sounds that might be unstressed, and thus not noticed in listening, will be evident in written form. The reverse of this positive effect is that children may try to pronounce written foreign words using the pronunciation patterns of their first language.

### ***1.1.4 The learner’s age***

Age of starting to learn to read clearly overlaps with L1 reading experience. However, there are other factors that may make learning to read and write in English a very different experience for children of six or ten years of age. The youngest children are still learning how written text functions, so that they may not be able transfer even the most general concepts about text and print. They are still mastering the fine motor skills needed to shape and join letters, and so producing a written sentence takes a long time, and, because their attentional capacities are also limited, they may only be able to write a small amount. Also because of constraints on memory, when reading a sentence, they may not be able to recall the beginning by the

time they have reached the end. Given the importance of oral skills being established before beginning to read, if very young (under six years) FL learners do begin reading and writing, this should be at a very simple level, such as environmental uses of English text, tracing their names, or reading single words or simple sentences around objects in the classroom.

Teaching children between the ages of 6 and 9 years to read and write in English as a FL can make use of some of the methods used with children for whom English is a L1, perhaps with extra stress put on those aspects of English literacy that contrast most strongly with the learners' L1 reading and writing.

By the time children reach 10 years of age, their L1 oracy and literacy are probably quite firmly established; they understand about how written text works; they are in control of the fine motor skills needed for writing; and they are able to talk and think about the differences between languages.

## **1.2 Starting to read and write in English as a FL**

### ***1.2.1 Creating a literate environment in the classroom*** ***(Cameron, 2001, pp. 140-142)***

The language classroom may be the only place where children will be exposed to environmental print in the FL, so it is helpful to make the most of the opportunities offered by the classroom environment.

#### **LABELS**

Start labeling the children's coat hooks, and desks with their names. Bilingual or FL labels can be put on furniture and objects around the class, and will familiarize children with written forms. There should not be too many labels, and they should be changed after a week or so. Children should be encouraged to look at the labels and talk about what's on them. It is a good idea to have a cut-out butterfly that can be found in a different place in the room every day. The children are excited by the challenge of finding the butterfly when they come into the class. If the butterfly moves from label to label, children's attention will be drawn to where the butterfly is and they will notice the word on the label.

#### **POSTERS**

Colourful posters that include quite a lot of text can be an on-going interest for children, as they gradually recognize more and more of the

words. A rhyme that they are learning could be used for this – but notice that this is presenting children with the written words after they have encountered them orally, not before.

Advertising posters can be fun, but if teachers have ethical problems with using commercial adverts in class, then posters can be made to advertise healthy eating or teeth cleaning or borrowing library books. Making posters for young learners would be a good writing activity for older children in the school.

### MESSAGES

Using written language for communication boosts children’s motivation, and shows them some of the uses of writing. An English message board in the classroom may have simple messages from the teacher, like *Don’t forget your crayons of Friday*, or more personal messages that children can write, too: *My rabbit had seven babies*.

A ‘post box’ in the classroom can encourage children to write and send ‘letters’ to each other and the teacher.

### READING ALOUD

Reading aloud to young children by the teacher (or other adult) has an enormous range of benefits. It can be done in several ways:

- Teacher reads aloud, children just listen, and perhaps look at pictures;
- Teacher uses a ‘big book’, i.e. a large book with large enough print so that all children can see;
- Each child uses a text.

From listening and watching an adult read aloud, children can see how books are handled, how texts encode words and ideas, how words and sentences are set out on a page. Beyond these conventions of print, reading aloud familiarises children with the language of written English: the formulaic openings (*Once upon a time ...*) and closings (*and so they lived happily ever after.*); the patterns of text types – stories and information texts, and sentence types. Affectively, reading aloud can motivate children to want to read themselves.

Reading aloud is not only for the youngest children. Older children continue to benefit, if the texts that are read to them increase in complexity and range. Getting to know different text types through hearing them will have knock-on effects on their own reading and writing.



Teachers should ensure that children understand the overall meaning of what they hear and most of the individual vocabulary items in the text. Understanding can be supported by the use of pictures that show characters and action, and by talking about the text in advance and giving enough of the meaning, so that children have a ‘skeleton’ they can build on as they listen.

Having children read aloud to each other can help learning, but it has problems. If a child is asked to read to the whole class, she may well not speak loud enough for all to hear and, if she stumbles over words, the other children will lose the meaning and probably also the motivation to listen. Paired reading, where children take turn to read to each other in pairs, may be more helpful.

It is very important that children regularly read aloud individually to their teacher, since it is only by listening carefully to how children are making sense of written words that we can understand their progress in learning.

### *1.2.2 Active literacy learning (Cameron, 2001, pp. 142-143)*

#### Multi-sensory experience

In learning to read and write, children have to make links from meaning to what they see (printed text), what they hear (the spoken language) and what they produce (written words). To assist the building and strengthening of all these various sorts of mental connections, we can use a range of modes and senses. **Early literacy activities can provide opportunities for children to see, hear, manipulate, touch and feel.** For example, if children are learning the letter shape ⟨S⟩, then, as well as practising writing the shape, they need to see the shapes on display in the classroom and in their books. They might cut out examples of the letter S from newspapers and magazines and make a collage of them. They might paint, trace, colour in, join the dots, use modelling clay to make the shape; they can draw the shape in a tray of sand, or make the shape with glue on a card and sprinkle sand over to make a ‘feely-S’. They can be asked to visualise the shape in their minds and to imagine drawing the shape. They can make the sound /sss/, long and short, with different emotions: a happy /sss/ and a sad /sss/. If sight words are being learnt, the same range of possibilities for multi-sensory practice exists.

Coloured chalks or pens are helpful to highlight key features of texts, sentences or words.

### *1.2.2.1 Fun with literacy skills*

There is a lot to learn about written English and the more fun that can be had in the process the better. Learning the alphabet can be made more exciting by singing or chanting it rhythmically. It can be recited backwards or starting somewhere other than A.

Simple games may help interest and motivation: e.g. the teacher says a letter at random from the alphabet and children shout out the next letter (or the next but one, or the one before).

## 2 TYPES OF READING

We can read silently or orally, which is more common at the early stage of language learning. In the elementary school, reading aloud is often used by teachers as a way of checking learners' pronunciation of words.

### 2.1 Reading aloud (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990, pp. 57-60)

Let us now move on to look at various reading techniques. When we went to school, most of the reading done in class was reading aloud. Reading aloud is not the same as reading silently. It is a separate skill and not one which most people have that much use for outside the classroom. But it can be useful, especially with beginners in a language.

Traditionally, reading aloud is often thought of as reading round the class one by one, and although many children seem to enjoy it, this type of reading aloud is not to be recommended:

- It gives little pleasure and is of little interest to the listeners.
- It encourages stumbling and mistakes in tone, emphasis and expression.
- It may be harmful to the silent reading techniques of the other pupils.
- It is a very inefficient way to use your lesson time.

However, reading aloud is a useful technique when used slightly differently:

- Reading aloud to the teacher should be done individually or in small groups. The reader then has the teacher's full attention. Reading aloud from a book lets the teacher ask about meaning, what the pupils think of the book, how they are getting on with it, as well as smooth out any language difficulties which arise. High priority should be given to this kind of reading aloud, especially at the beginner stage for all ages.
- The teacher can use it as a means of training and checking rhythm and pronunciation. The teacher can read a sentence or a phrase and the class or parts of the class can read in chorus after. This is particularly useful if the text is a dialogue, but should only be done for a very short time. Choral reading can easily become a chant if there are a lot of children in the class.
- Reading dialogues aloud in pairs or groups is an efficient way of checking work. The pupils can help each other with words they

find difficult to pronounce, and you should try to get them to be a little critical about what they sound like: ‘You don’t sound very friendly, Linda’ or ‘Are you angry, Joe?’

- Listening to a pupil reading aloud should be a treat for the whole class. If pupils are going to read aloud for the rest of the class, they must be well prepared and the others should want to hear what is going to be read: ‘Maria is going to read you a story she’s written with me. It’s about a princess and a bird.’ ‘Peter has written about his trip on board his uncle’s boat and he wants to read it to you.’

## **2.2 Silent reading (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990, pp. 60)**

Reading aloud can be a useful skill to have in the classroom, and one which teachers make good use of, but silent reading is what remains with most people for the rest of their lives. Nobody can guarantee that all your pupils will love books, but a positive attitude from the beginning will help. Make as much use of your English corner as possible: have print everywhere, put up jokes on the notice board, give your pupils messages in writing, try to give them their own books, even if it is only a sheet of paper folded over to make four pages, make books available to them, and listen to what they are saying about their reading. Use the textbook to concentrate on conscious language development, but let your pupils read books for understanding and for pleasure.

## **2.3 Research on reading aloud in Transcarpathian Hungarian schools (Huszt, 2009)**

### ***2.3.1 Introduction and rationale for the research***

Transcarpathia is one of Ukraine’s twenty-four administrative regions. It is situated in south-western Ukraine, with a population of 1 254 614 people among whom there are more than 151 000 Hungarians living in a minority in the region. This minority has its system of education with 100 Hungarian schools which form an integral part of the country’s educational system.

All of these schools teach at least three languages: Hungarian as the learners’ mother tongue – L1, Ukrainian as the official language of the country – second language or L2 for the learners, and a foreign language –

FL, either English, or German, or French. Recent tendencies show greater preference in favour of English. It means that most of the Transcarpathian Hungarian schools teach English as a foreign language. It has started to push out French and German in those schools where teaching English was not included in the curriculum (Fábián, Huszti, & Lizák, 2004).

In Transcarpathian Hungarian schools, it is common practice among English teachers to apply the technique of learner reading aloud in the English lessons (Huszti, 2002, 2003a, 2003b). Some researchers (e.g. Helgesen & Gakuin, 1993) are against the use of this technique in its 'traditional way' emphasizing that it slows down reading and readers are usually incapable of focusing on meaning construction when reading aloud, but their claim is not grounded on any empirical research findings. If such objections exist against the use of oral reading in the classroom, why is it still used despite such disapproval? Trying to find a satisfactory explanation to this question was one of the main rationales for the research described briefly here, the aim of which was to collect empirical evidence to support or refute the assertions proposed in the academic literature on the issue of oral reading.

The need for conducting the present study also arose from the absence of an empirical investigation examining Hungarian learners' English reading miscues in Transcarpathian Hungarian schools. Because this topic is not researched in an adequate way, this research is believed to fill the gap.

The study was further justified by a desire to explore the application of the technique of analysing learners' reading miscues in a non-native context. By investigating how miscues appear in the classroom in real learning situations and not in research conditions, how they help or hinder learners' understanding of the text, and how teachers respond to learners' miscues in the classroom, it was intended to get deeper insights into the macro level of miscues. The examination of miscues via the diagnostic technique of miscue analysis was expected to help better understand their micro level, i.e. their type, frequency, and quality. Also, this scrutiny seemed to promise a good opportunity for establishing whether a relationship existed between reading aloud and reading comprehension, and of what kind it was.

The final motivation for the study concerned the author's desire to gather empirical data on the way in which English teachers responded

to learners' miscues. The research findings and implications were hoped to contribute both to the knowledge about reading in general, and to the methodology of teaching English reading in Transcarpathian Hungarian schools in particular.

### ***2.3.2 Theoretical background***

A widely accepted definition of reading constituting the basis of the top-down reading model is that provided by Goodman (1970), saying that "reading is a psycholinguistic process by which a reader ... reconstructs ... a message which has been encoded by a writer as a graphic display" (p. 103). This definition implies that there is an essential interaction between language and thought, because "the writer encodes thought as language and the reader decodes language to thought" (Goodman, 1988, p. 12).

A current view on reading looks on it as an interactive, socio-cognitive process (Bernhardt, 1991; Ediger, 2001), covering three aspects: a reader, a text, and a social context in which the process is taking place. This interpretation is also reflected in Williams' (1999) view on foreign language (FL) reading, stating that various factors interact with each other in it, for example, the reader's background knowledge about the topic of the text, knowledge of the given FL, transference from first language (L1) reading skills, motivation and attitudes to reading, etc.

In a recent account of reading, Alderson (2000, p. 13) claims that "reading involves perceiving the written form of language either visually or kinaesthetically – using Braille", i.e. the final goal of readers is comprehension. This ultimate aim can be achieved either through silent reading or reading aloud.

Reading aloud is mentioned in the academic literature by some of the researchers as an assessment technique by which reading is tested (Fordham, Holland & Millican, 1995; Alderson, 2000), while Panova (1989) says that reading a text aloud is important for maintaining and perfecting the pronouncing skills of the learners. Advocates of oral reading support its use in the classroom saying that it helps overcome psychological barriers and fear of starting to speak in a foreign language (Stronin, 1986).

In contrast, Dwyer (1983) has objections to the teaching of oral reading. She considers that it slows down reading by forcing the student to focus on each word. Also, when reading aloud, a student may lose all

sense of the meaning of what he is reading, a fact that defeats the very purpose of reading, and when students mispronounce and misread some words, the teacher interrupts the reading to correct miscues, thereby further impeding the flow of meaning extraction. Helgesen and Gakuin (1993) also list several disadvantages of oral reading, declaring that the benefit of oral reading to language learners is questionable. They emphasize that oral reading following the traditional mechanism in the foreign language classroom – i.e. one learner is reading a printed text out loud while the others are supposed to listen – does not lead to language learning success at all. However, one should bear in mind when interpreting Helgesen and Gakuin's claims that the authors do not refer to any empirical evidence while calling attention to learner's oral reading as a teaching technique.

However, Helgesen and Gakuin (1993) admit that activities involving reading aloud are still very popular in many English as a FL classrooms around the world; therefore, they propose various tasks to be used in such classrooms. They suggest that at the beginning level oral reading should be employed in the classroom as it helps in acquiring proper spelling – sound correspondence.

In sum, the use of oral reading has advantages as well as disadvantages. There is a debate over its relevance in the English language classroom. There has no consensus been reached yet, but oral reading continues to be applied in Transcarpathia, and also, learners continue to make miscues when reading orally.

For the purposes of this research, the construct of reading aloud is defined as the process during which the learner utters a printed text out loud in the English language lesson. The text pronounced by the learner is a printed passage which is unknown to him or her. This condition is important for producing a sufficient number of miscues by a learner when reading aloud. This operational definition implies that reading an assignment written by the child at home or an exercise written by the child in the lesson is not relevant to the present research.

Readers cannot avoid making errors when reading orally. These errors occurring in the process of loud reading cannot be considered errors at all because, as Goodman and Goodman (1978) indicate, the term 'error' has a negative connotation in education. Therefore, they prefer to use the term 'miscue' suggesting that the response to the written

text uttered by the reader is not necessarily erroneous. Rather, it can show how the reader processes information obtained via visual input. In the 1960s and 1970s a plethora of investigations was carried out in reading research, and one of the main research instruments was the so-called ‘miscue analysis’ introduced by Goodman (1969). Originally, this tool investigated reading miscues made by learners when reading aloud in their L1. Miscue analysis is a diagnostic procedure that identifies students’ reading strengths and difficulties. This research tool aims at providing the researcher with useful insights into how the reader reads and processes information so that he could be given help in developing more effective cognitive and linguistic strategies when confronting with texts (Bloome and Dail, 1997).

Some reviews (e.g. Leu, 1982; Allington, 1984) have pointed out the inadequacies of miscue analysis, e.g. problems of unreliability which arise from the vague definitions of categories of miscues, an absence of theoretical justification for these categories and a failure to disregard the impact of text difficulty on reading performance (Hempenstall, 1998).

When a miscue occurs during the learner’s reading a text out loud, the teacher feels the pressure to react to it and correct it immediately after it has been uttered by the child. In Campbell’s view (1995), there are “five main strategies that teachers adopt” (p. 120) when reacting to learners’ miscues. These are: the strategy of non-response; a word-cueing strategy, “which involves the teacher in reading the part of the sentence that leads up to the miscued word with a rising intonation which draws the child back into the interaction as the reader” (p. 121); using a non-punitive ‘no’ as a means of informing the reader that a miscue has been produced; providing the word for the reader; and the use of response that draws attention to the letters and associated sounds in words (Campbell, 1983).

### ***2.3.3 Research questions***

Following from the conclusions of the literature review, the main research questions that the thesis aimed to answer were the following:

- 1) Why do teachers use learner reading aloud in the classroom?  
What benefits do they expect from it?
- 2) What miscues do twelve-year-old Transcarpathian Hungarian learners of English make when reading aloud in the target language and what are the possible reasons for them?



- 3) How much do learners understand from what they have read out loud?
- 4) How are learners' reading miscues treated by teachers? What strategies do teachers apply in responding to these miscues?

### **2.3.4 Research methods**

The target population of the study constituted three groups: twelve-year-old sixth-formers (n=44), their English teachers (n=7), and educational managers responsible for advisory work in the districts where the learners' schools were situated (n=3).

Research instruments included interviews with learners, teachers, and educational managers; classroom observations; curriculum analysis; and miscue analysis also involving comprehension tests. All the research instruments were piloted before application in order to ensure the validity and reliability of the research.

Data for the study were collected in two major phases. The first one took place in the 2002/2003 school year and involved designing and piloting the research instruments, as well as administering a proficiency test and selecting the learner participants of the miscue study. The second phase took a year and a half. Learners' reading miscues, their answers to two comprehension tests and retrospective interviews with them were recorded during the first semester of the 2003/2004 school year. English classrooms were observed at the beginning of the second semester of the same school year, while interviews with English teachers and educational managers were conducted in April and May, 2004. The data were coded or transcribed between June and December, 2004 so that their analysis could start the following year. Data on the National Curriculum and the English textbook in use were collected in January, 2005 and document analysis was done in the spring of the same year.

A set of three English lessons in the seven schools where the learner participants of the miscue study came from was observed because learners in Form 6 had three English lessons a week. So a series of three lessons during a whole week was observed in each of the seven schools – altogether twenty-one lessons – to maintain continuity and see the classroom practices as a process, not separated from each other.

### **2.3.5 Major findings**

Table 2.1 below summarises which research instrument contributed to answering which research question.

*Table 2.1 Contribution of research findings to answering the research questions (RQ)*

Research instruments	RQ1	RQ2	RQ3	RQ4
Retrospective learner interviews	+	+	+	+
Teacher interviews	+	+	+	+
Educational manager interviews	+	-	-	-
Classroom observations	-	+	-	+
Curriculum analysis	+	-	-	-
Researcher's notes on learners' reading behaviour	-	-	+	-
Miscue analysis of reading miscues by 44 learners	-	+	+	-
Detailed analysis of miscues of six selected learners	-	+	+	-
Comprehension measures (retelling and comprehension questions)	-	-	+	-

*2.3.5.1 Why do teachers use learner reading aloud in the classroom?  
What benefits do they expect from it?*

The National Curriculum for Foreign Languages (1998) demands the use of both oral and silent reading in Form 6, but in different amounts: oral reading is given more preference to, i.e. more time is devoted to its use. The results of the learner and teacher interviews proved that oral reading is applied extensively, while silent reading is hardly ever used by teachers. When they were asked about the role of reading aloud in English lessons, one of the main reasons was practising proper English pronunciation and intonation.

Although the curriculum requires learners to be able to deduce the main message of texts, the form in which it should be done is not described or discussed. Therefore, teachers use their own ways of getting learners comprehend a text. These techniques are similar in most schools: learners do not have to try to arrive at the meaning of different texts, but are given the mother tongue meanings of English words and they translate texts to understand them.

It is surprising to learn that most children like reading aloud. Their reasons for this include the opportunity to practise proper English pronunciation. Although the National Curriculum (1998) does not mention either translation or pronunciation in connection with reading

aloud, learners, teachers, and educational managers all believe that reading aloud is beneficial for learners' ability to pronounce the FL.

On the other hand, those learners who do not prefer reading aloud are afraid of making mistakes and being laughed at. They often become inhibited and anxious. However, one of the methodology consultants believes just the opposite: reading aloud helps inhibited learners to overcome their anxiety, as most often other learners' attention is focused on the text and the textbook and not on the child who is reading. This contradicts the views of some learners as well as the points made by Helgesen and Gakuin (1993).

*2.3.5.2 What miscues do twelve-year-old Transcarpathian Hungarian learners of English make when reading aloud in the target language and what are the possible reasons for them?*

Unlike several studies investigating the reading miscues of non-native English readers, for example, Tatlonghari, 1984; Rigg, 1988, this research proved that Transcarpathian Hungarian six-graders read differently from native-speaking children reading in English and make different miscues in terms of their quantity and order of frequency.

Learners tended to omit short words and inflexions of words. The literature explains that this phenomenon occurs when learners are aware of the meaning of texts they read. In such situations the miscues do not disturb them in comprehension. In the present study, learners very often did not even realize that they had omitted parts of the text; so, these omissions did not hinder them in understanding.

Repetition miscues may be due to the learners' anxiety. However, another possible reason for repetitions is that the child wants to gain time to decode the later words in a line of print; therefore, s/he repeats what s/he has already decoded successfully or unsuccessfully.

The research findings proved that substitutions were the most frequent miscues that learners made when reading aloud in English. The main reasons for learners' substitution miscues were that they were not familiar with the miscued words, or if they were then they did not pay enough attention to pronouncing the text correctly, i.e. they aimed for fluency rather than accuracy. However, this is contrary to what the majority of the learners said in the interviews where they claimed that when reading aloud, they focused more on accuracy than fluency or meaning.

Various factors may be responsible for the learners' miscues. Most often they do not even notice they have made miscues and in such cases the reason is mere lack of attention on the learners' part. This is usually the case in reversal, omission, and insertion miscues. Learners are always aware of corrections, feeling that they produced an Observed Response that must be corrected. Sometimes they manage to get the corrections right, sometimes they do not. However, the final result does not really matter for the learners: they are content with their behaviour of at least trying their best to correct the problems.

#### *2.3.5.3 How much do learners understand from what they have read out loud?*

In answering this question, almost every learner claimed that they could not focus on meaning, but rather they were concerned with being able to pronounce everything correctly and not to make mistakes. Moreover, learners were surprised at this question because when they read aloud, they were not expected to understand the text they read. They were asked to translate passages from their textbooks, but at such times learners looked through the text silently and quickly, and only then did they start the translation. This means that it was no problem if learners did not understand from the context what they had read, it was more important to be able to translate texts. These translations were done with the help of English-Hungarian vocabulary lists containing the unknown words of a text which lists were always provided by the teacher.

Learners believed that pronunciation was the most important thing in reading, and they had to read aloud to develop good pronouncing skills. For those learners who preferred silent reading to reading aloud, this whole issue of pronouncing everything correctly constituted a 'burden'. Because of this high degree of attention to accuracy in reading aloud, very few of the learners used one or more of the cueing systems mentioned by Goodman (1969) when decoding the message of the print. However, some learners used semantic cues and others used graphical ones to arrive at meaning.

Teachers were of diverse opinions about the relationship of reading aloud and reading comprehension. These views can be placed on a continuum at one end of which is the claim that reading aloud does not help understanding at all because learners do not concentrate on the meaning of a text when they read aloud, but on how to pronounce the

words and phrases correctly. At the other end of the continuum is the belief that only reading aloud helps learners understand a text – they explained this by the assertion that when learners read silently, they were ‘day-dreaming’ instead of concentrating on the meaning of a text, therefore they did not comprehend anything.

In the middle of this continuum were the answers of those teachers who stated that reading aloud did not help much, and anyway, everything was translated for the learners. Yet other teachers claimed that full comprehension is impossible without a mixture of silent reading and oral reading.

Two comprehension tests were used to check the learners’ understanding. Both were suggested by Goodman and Burke (1973) as elements of miscue analysis. First, learners were requested to retell the plot of the texts. The mean retelling score was 41%. Twenty-one learners (47.7%) achieved this mean or above, and twenty-three learners (52.3%) were below the mean score. This indicates that more than half of the learners did not understand much of the texts, at least, they did not remember many details.

In the retelling, learners scored one point for every event, character, and main idea that they mentioned in connection to a text. This is a cognitively demanding test as it expects readers to recall various pieces of information. Much depends on how developed the learners’ cognitive skills and memory are. For this reason, and to provide more equal opportunities to every learner, comprehension questions were devised to test understanding.

The mean comprehension questions score was 47.25%, somewhat higher than the mean retelling score, indicating that on average learners performed better at this test than on retelling. An equal number of learners scored above (22=50%) and below (22=50%) this score (standard deviation=21.86). Out of the twenty-two learners, eight scored really low (range of comprehension: 6.25% – 25%). The results of the comprehension test suggest that learners achieved a balanced score and on the whole, did quite well.

#### *2.3.5.4 How are learners’ reading miscues treated by teachers? What strategies do teachers apply in responding to these miscues?*

Teachers used four different strategies to respond to learners’ miscues. Most frequently they decided on immediate or delayed corrections, when they had to react to substituted non-words or intonation miscues

as the two most frequent types in the lesson observations. In addition, they used two other strategies, one of which was non-response, i.e. teachers completely ignored the miscues – most often omission miscues were not paid attention to by the teachers – while the other strategy was connected to providing the word for the learners. Such a strategy was only found when teachers reacted to learners' hesitation miscues.

Although learners were asked to repeat the correction of a miscued word either individually, or in chorus, both learners and teachers admitted that learners learned very few of the corrected words. This was also observed in the lessons because most of the time teacher corrections were repeated by the learners once, but were not consolidated in any way. So when the same learner or another one came across a word that had been previously corrected by the teacher, the learners made the same miscues as before. This suggests that teacher correction seems ineffective in the classroom and can be considered to be wasting valuable class time. Certainly, it does not mean that teachers are never to correct, but implies that the mode of corrections by them should be reconsidered.

### ***2.3.6 Conclusions and implications***

Many learners stated they liked reading aloud because it helped them in understanding a text. Although this claim was not supported by the research findings, learners seemed to have believed what was told them, i.e. reading aloud was useful for them. But teachers should not let learners be misled by the belief that reading is for acquiring good pronunciation.

Learners made a lot of insertions during reading aloud. These were words that occurred later in the same line of a text. It means that learners inspected and decoded words faster than they could pronounce them. This is a clear proof that reading aloud slows down the reading process. If learners read silently, teachers could save classroom time for other activities in the lessons.

Teachers claimed that they used reading aloud to help inhibited learners overcome their inhibitions. But in fact, these learners were inhibited because they had to read aloud in the presence of other learners and take the risk of making a miscue and being laughed at because of this by the other learners. These learners liked to read silently better than orally because for them silent reading was a way of 'self-protection'.

Such learners should never be forced to read aloud. Teachers should reevaluate certain learners' attitudes to reading aloud and try to understand that the source of the problem of inhibition is reading aloud itself. When teachers have understood the real relationship between learners' inhibition and reading aloud, they should no longer insist on such learners' oral reading. Rather, teachers should map their learners in terms of learning styles and preferences, and develop teaching methods that would meet the needs of individual learners.

The study proved that retelling as a measure to test reading comprehension is not valid, because it tests learners' memory rather than their comprehension. Furthermore, it is a big strain on learners to remember details of a story. So teachers had better use comprehension questions to check how well learners understood texts.

When teachers and learners claimed that the aim of oral reading was to practise proper pronunciation, they actually meant producing proper English sounds that were different from the sounds of their own language. But pronunciation also involves stress and intonation. However, the researcher's notes indicated that learners' intonation was flawed, whereas classroom observations proved that stress and intonation were not taught at all – at least, no trace of teaching them was found in the twenty-one observed lessons. Competent oral reading in normal speed was neither emphasised nor encouraged or taught by teachers.

Miscue analysis as a research tool is an analytical method with the help of which researchers and teachers are able to explain why learners make miscues when reading aloud. It shows to the teacher-researcher how learners try to comprehend the information they get from print. When doing so, native readers apply three cuing systems that are useful in understanding. Very rarely do non-native Transcarpathian Hungarian sixth-formers apply these systems. Through miscue analysis teachers and researchers can analyse the miscues learners make and identify which cuing system causes the greatest difficulty to certain learners. This knowledge can help teachers to devise new exercises for learners to help them become better readers.

Miscue analysis in its original form is complicated and time-consuming to perform. However, a shortened and revised form of the miscue categories like the one presented in this study can be applied by researchers and teachers easily.



### ***2.3.7 Suggestions for further research***

The contribution of the study described in the thesis is manifold. First, it provided new insights into reading miscues by non-native learners in a minority context who have not been investigated before. Also, the study indicates new routes in reading research.

The first direction might be a comparative analysis of these learners' reading in Hungarian as their first language and reading in English as their foreign language through miscue analysis. This research would answer the question what difference there is between the processes of reading in Hungarian and reading in English in general.

The second direction that the study suggested concerns the interrelation of three languages – Hungarian, English, and Ukrainian – and the impact they have on each other. This research would seek to answer the question whether the knowledge of Ukrainian as a second language influences learners' English reading miscues. When examining this impact, it would be best to conduct this research with bilingual – Hungarian and Ukrainian – children in settlements of Transcarpathia where the Hungarians do not live in a block but have close contacts with Ukrainians, for example, in the Upper-Tisza territory.

In addition, an investigation could be designed to examine which strategies learners use – besides translating, if any – to arrive at the meaning of texts.

A similar study could be conducted with the same learners in Form 9 or Form 11 to see progress or change in their reading.

The final implication for further research comes from the fact that only half of the learners did well at the comprehension questions test. Based on this, a new research question can be formulated which was not the focus of this study: Would more than 50% of learners achieve better comprehension test results if they read texts silently?



### **3 IMPORTANT CONCEPTS FOR TEACHING READING AND WRITING IN YOUNG LEARNER (YL) CLASSES (HUSZTI, 2013; HARMER, 2007)**

#### **Alphabetic method**

It is a method of teaching children to read. It is used in teaching reading in the mother tongue. Children are taught the names of the letters of the alphabet (A – ay, B – bee, C – see, etc.) and when they see a new or unfamiliar word, e.g., bag, they repeat the letter names: bee ay gee. It is thought that this ‘spelling’ of the word helps the child to recognize it.

#### **Closed question**

A question which leads to a yes/no answer or another very short response, e.g. Did you come to school by bus? Yes. What did you have for breakfast? Toast.

#### **Comprehension**

Understanding a spoken or written text.

#### **Detail, read for detail**

It is to read a text in order to understand most of what it says or particular details. See **gist, global understanding**.

#### **Extensive reading**

Reading long pieces of text, such as stories or newspapers, i.e. it is reading for general or global understanding, often of longer texts. See **intensive reading**.

#### **Gist, global understanding, reading for gist, reading for global understanding**

It is to read to a text and understand the general meaning of it, without paying attention to specific details. See **detail, read for detail**.

#### **Graded reader / simplified reader**

It is a book where the language has been made easier for learners. These are often books with stories or novels where the language has been simplified.

#### **Intensive reading**

One meaning of intensive reading is reading to focus on how language is used in a text. See **extensive reading**.

#### **Literacy**

The ability to read and write in a language

**Look-and-say method**

A method for teaching children to read, especially in L1, which is similar to the **whole-word-method** except that words are always taught in association with a picture or object and the pronunciation of the word is always required.

**Open(-ended) comprehension question**

It is a task-type in which learners read or listen to a text and answer questions (using their own words). It is also a task or question that does not have a right or wrong answer, but which allows learners to offer their own opinions and ideas or to respond creatively, e.g. *Why do you think the writer likes living in Paris?*

**Phonics**

It is an instructional strategy used to teach reading. It helps beginning readers by teaching them letter-sound relationships and having them sound out words. It is also recognition of sound-spelling relationships in printed words.

**Productive skills**

When learners produce language we speak about skills. Speaking and writing are productive skills. See **receptive skills**.

**Reader**

1. A senior teacher at a British university just below the rank of a professor
2. An easy book that is intended to help people learn to read their own or a foreign language

**Reading**

1. Perceiving a written text in order to understand its contents (usually done silently – *silent reading*); 2. Saying a written text aloud (*oral reading*)

**Reading approach**

In FL teaching, a programme or method in which reading comprehension is the main objective. In the Reading approach, a) the FL is generally introduced through short passages written with simple vocabulary and structures; b) comprehension is taught through translation and grammatical analysis; c) if the spoken language is taught, it is generally used to reinforce reading and limited to the oral reading of texts.

**Receptive skills**

When learners do not have to produce language; listening and reading are receptive skills. See **productive skills**.

**Scan**

It is to read a text quickly to pick out specific information, e.g. finding a phone number in a phone book. See **detail, gist, global understanding, and skim.**

**Simplified texts**

These are texts which have been made simpler so as to make it easier for learners to read them. The usual principles of simplification involve reduction in length of the text, shortening of sentences, omission or replacement of difficult words or structures, omission of qualifying clauses and omission of non-essential detail. It is arguable, however, that such simplification might make the words easier to understand but could make it more difficult for the learners to achieve global understanding of a text which is now dense with important information. It might be more profitable to simplify texts by adding examples, by using repetition and paraphrase and by increasing redundant information, in other words, by lengthening rather than shortening the text.

**Skill**

The knowledge and experience needed to perform a specific task or job. The four language skills are listening, speaking, reading and writing. See **subskills, receptive skills, productive skills.**

**Skim**

To read a text quickly to get a general idea of what it is about. See **detail, gist, global understanding.**

**Subskill**

Each of the four language skills can be divided into smaller subskills that are all part of the main skill, e.g. identifying text organisation (reading); identifying word stress (listening). See **detail, gist, global understanding, scan, skim**

**Whole language**

A teaching method that focuses on reading for meaning in context

**Whole-word-method**

A method for teaching children to read in the mother tongue, in which children are taught to recognize whole words rather than letter-names (as in the **alphabetic method**) or sounds (as in **phonics**). It usually leads to the use of the sentence method, where whole sentences are used.

Table 3.1 Useful terms (source: Harmer, 2007)

<p><b>Extensive Reading</b></p> <p>The teacher encourages the students to choose for themselves what they read for pleasure and general language improvement <i>outside the class</i>.</p> <p>The students should read materials on the topics they are interested in and materials appropriate for their level.</p> <p>Original fiction and non-fiction books, simplified works of literature, staged books, magazines can all be used.</p> <p>In order to encourage extensive reading we can build up a library of suitable books, provide them with extensive reading tasks and encourage them to report back on the reading in different ways.</p>	<p><b>Intensive Reading</b></p> <p>It is a classroom-oriented activity to have students focus on the semantic and linguistic details.</p> <p>In order to encourage students to read enthusiastically <i>in class</i>, teachers need to create interest in the topic and tasks.</p> <p>Teachers need to tell students the reading purpose, the instructions and time allocated. While the students are reading, the teachers may observe their progress but should not interrupt.</p> <p>When the teachers ask students to give answers, they should always ask them to say where in the text they found the relevant information.</p> <p>The teachers should focus on strategies to deal with the unknown vocabulary items.</p>
<p><b>Bottom-up Processing:</b> Magnifying glass</p> <p>Readers must recognize the linguistic signals (letters, syllables, words, phrases, discourse markers)</p> <p>This <i>data-driven</i> processing requires a sophisticated knowledge of the language.</p> <p>From the data, the reader selects the meaningful signal.</p>	<p><b>Top-down Processing:</b> Eagle's eye view</p> <p>Readers must refer to their own intelligence and experience to predict probable meaning and to understand a text.</p> <p>This <i>conceptually-driven</i> processing requires readers to infer meaning.</p>
<p><b>Schema or Background Knowledge</b></p> <p>The readers bring information, knowledge, emotion, memories, experience and culture to the printed word.</p> <p><i>Content schemata</i> include what we know about people, the world, culture and the universe; <i>formal schemata</i> include what we know about the discourse structure. While reading, they contribute to the text with more information than the text provides.</p> <p>Skill in reading depends on the efficient interaction between linguistic knowledge and world knowledge.</p>	<p><b>Interest and Culture</b></p> <p>The love of reading has propelled learners to successful acquisition of reading skills.</p> <p>The autonomy and self-esteem gained through reading strategies has been shown to be a powerful motivator.</p> <p>Culture plays an important role in motivating and rewarding young learners for literacy.</p>

Table 3.1 (continued)

<p><b>Teaching Vocabulary</b> Pre-teaching some of the vocabulary items from the text helps reading comprehension for top-down processing. Focusing on some of the vocabulary items after reading the text provides a detailed analysis of the text through bottom-up processing.</p> <p><b>Reading Aloud/ Oral reading</b> Oral reading helps students correspond between spoken and written English in beginner levels. It can serve as a pronunciation check activity and add some extra student participation for short reading segments in the beginner and intermediate levels. It is not an authentic activity and while one student is reading, the others may easily lose attention.</p>	<p><b>Guessing Vocabulary</b> Using the contextual clues, the parts of the word, world knowledge and cognates helps readers to develop strategies to do not only intensive but also extensive reading.</p> <p><b>Silent Reading</b> Silent reading allows readers interact with the text; thus, the teachers should not interrupt while the students are reading. Silent reading allows students to read at their own rate and to identify more than one word at a time. The schemata and background knowledge and affective domain help the reader interact with the text. Sustained silent reading develops a fluency in reading.</p>
<p><b>Decoding</b> This requires the learners to read and recognize the symbols that form or make up words. When readers decode, they make sense of individual words. Decoding can be problematic when the language does not have a one-to-one sound letter correspondence.</p>	<p><b>Comprehension</b> Just because a learner knows how to pronounce written words correctly does not mean that he can read. Reading comprehension refers to reading for meaning and understanding. Thus, it involves higher order thinking skills and more than just decoding words. Teaching children how to derive meaning as well as analyze and synthesize what they have read is an essential part of the reading process.</p>
<p><b>Reading for Pleasure</b> If a student knows that s/he can get pleasure from reading stories in her own language, she may be able to make the connection that reading in general can provide pleasure. Fortunately, modern coursebooks are increasingly using stories as a vital component, although they were ignored or were not made more use of for years.</p>	<p><b>Reading for Information</b> Reading for information can be as simple as reading a menu in a restaurant. Reading for information can also give children pleasure, if they have a purpose in reading a text to learn something such as reading a cookbook, a book on model air planes, a book on dinosaurs.</p>

Table 3.1 (continued)

<p><b>Print-Rich Environment</b></p> <p>Print-rich environments encourage and invite children to develop literacy skills as children realize at an early age that print serves different purposes or functions.</p> <p>Environmental print is the print all around us such as on signs, labels and billboards, which give authentic reason for reading.</p> <p>The teachers may prepare such an environment in class through bulletin boards, labels, word lists, posters, calendars, etc.</p>	<p><b>Print-poor Environment</b></p> <p>The students cannot find printed language use around them, so cannot develop literacy skills to understand such authentic materials in the second language.</p>
<p><b>Teaching Reading</b></p> <p>Teachers devote a great amount of time to develop reading skills and strategies to help students use the contextual clues (determine the meaning), make use of the background knowledge (to activate schemata and to predict) and/or adapt different comprehension techniques (to organize the information the text).</p>	<p><b>Assigning Reading</b></p> <p>Teachers only ask students to read and they check the answers. This does not aim to develop or improve skills or strategies of reading but to test the general reading ability.</p>
<p><b>Process Writing</b></p> <p>When teaching writing to the children, we must recognize the complexity of the process; that's why it should be supported (scaffolding).</p> <p>This refers to the act of gathering ideas and working with them until they are presented in a manner that is polished and comprehensible to the readers.</p> <p>It emphasizes the fluency in the writing process.</p>	<p><b>Product Writing</b></p> <p>It is concerned with the final product of writings; in other words the essay, the project, the report, what that product should look like.</p> <p>Writing is seen as a product and the students are evaluated according to what they write in this product.</p> <p>The teacher tests writing rather than teaching it.</p> <p>The student cannot make use of the feedback s/he receives.</p>
<p><b>Individual Writing</b></p> <p>The student composes the required piece of writing himself/herself. Since writing is a personal skill; asking the students to continue a story, to write a diary entry, to discuss an opinion is not appropriate to work in pairs or in groups.</p>	<p><b>Group Writing</b></p> <p>The children can work on a writing project to write different parts or sections of an assignment as long as it is carefully organized.</p> <p>They can contribute to a whole class story, create a group book, or report a science report.</p>

## 4 APPROACHES TO TEACHING READING

Learning to read and write can begin from text level; from sentence level; from word level; from letter level. Each starting point has produced approaches to reading that can be used in the FL classroom.

- Phonic Approach
- Whole-word / Look-and-say Approach
- A “balanced approach” to reading instruction.

Learning to read in English is not as difficult if children can read in their own language because in this case the teacher can rely on the children’s background knowledge.

There are two main approaches to teaching reading in the elementary school.

The first is the PHONIC approach that is widely used in our schools; the other one is the WHOLE-WORD or KEY WORD or LOOK-AND-SAY approach which is rarely if ever used in our schools.

### 4.1 Phonics

Phonics is an instructional strategy used to teach reading. It helps beginning readers by teaching them letter-sound relationships and having them sound out words. It is also recognition of sound-spelling relationships in printed words. The essence of the **phonic approach** lies in that first the teacher teaches the sounds of the most frequent English letters (starting with I, T, O, N, E, P) and then combining them into short words like *in, on, it, ten, pen, net*, etc. At the beginning children learn how to read the vowels in closed syllables, i.e. how to read/pronounce Consonant+Vowel+Consonant letter clusters. When they got familiar with all the consonant letters in this way, the children are introduced to the ways of reading vowels in open syllables, i.e. Consonant+Vowel letter clusters. It is evident from the above that when the teacher uses phonics, they are teaching children the way the letters sound, not their names. At the beginning stage “it is not better to teach the names of the letters, as of course some of the letters of the English alphabet no longer match the actual sounds of the language” (Slattery & Willis, 2000, p. 68).

Phonics teaching focuses on letter-sound relations, building literacy skills from the bottom-up. The usual way involves showing children the sounds of the different letters in the alphabet, then how letters can be combined.

Phonics teaching works if it directs children's attention to letter-sound level features of English and helps children make the mental connections between letters and sounds. It can be very boring and demotivating, if done in isolation, so it is probably preferable to incorporate five or ten minutes of concentrated phonics work inside other activities. Phonics work can be integrated into story reading, class joint writing, sentence writing activities, songs and rhymes, when vocabulary is being presented or recycled, and in stages of oral tasks. (Cameron, 2001, p.149)

#### ***4.1.1 Progression in phonics teaching (based on Dechant, 1991)***

Consonants in English are easier to notice, and thus to learn, than vowels. They can be grouped for teaching in various ways, by the way the shape is formed in writing, by the hard / soft sounds they make, by frequency and usefulness. One suggested teaching order for English consonants is:

1. b c d g h j m n p t w
2. f l r s
3. c g (soft sounds)
4. v x y z

It is usual to start with single consonants that occur as onsets in syllables or in single syllable words, drawing children's attention to them, identifying their name and sound, paying games with them such as spotting them in books, practising writing the letter shapes so that sounds, reading and writing reinforce each other. It is important in phonics teaching to make activities meaningful for children, and to make connections with what they already know. Thus, using words the children know by sight as the context for work on letters and sounds, it is likely to be more meaningful than abstract and unconnected chanting of letter names and shapes. For example, if the letter and sound {<b, /b/} is to be taught, then children can be shown objects such as *a ball*, *a blue balloon*, and *a big basket*, and the written words for each. They then have a meaningful context for the letter and sound. They can look at the words and spot the letter shape; they can listen and hear the sound. The teaching brings the shape and sound together for the children so that they can make the mental connection. To reinforce the connection, a 'b table' might be set up in the classroom and children asked to bring in objects from home that have a /b/ sound. The teacher then labels each object as it is placed on the table.



Phonics teaching can move to consonants that occur at the ends of words, and then to vowels. The English vowel system is notoriously complicated: out of the five vowel letters, a range of different vowel sounds can be produced: long vowel sounds, short vowel sounds, and diphthongs that combine two vowel sounds, as in <boy>. The sound a vowel makes is partly determined by the letters that surround it and its position in a word and some letters are silent. In deciding what to teach explicitly, short vowel sounds are fairly consistent and thus a good place to start, e.g. the sounds in *hat* / *pet* / *sit* / *hop* / *run*. The ‘Magic -e’ rule can then expand these sounds: this rule says that an <-e> on the end of a single syllable word affects the vowel sound, which then (in child-friendly terms) ‘says its own name’: e.g. *hate* / *Pete* / *site* / *hope* / *June*. This rule is a good example of a useful phonics rule, because it is quite simple and true often enough to make it worth learning (although some exceptions do occur in frequently used words, such as *come*). Many other rules are so complex and have so many exceptions that they may not be worth trying to teach explicitly. Long vowel sounds in open syllables, such as *me* and *go*, can be usefully taught next, and then work on rhymes can extend reading and writing skills e.g. *-ite*, *-eat*, *-ike*. This content will cover several years of work. (Cameron, 2001, pp. 149-150)

#### 4.1.2 Weaver’s seven basic phonic rules

Weaver (1980, pp. 57-58, in Hawkins, 1991) lists the seven phonics rules worth spending time on in teaching English reading.

1. The “c rule,” distinguishing ‘hard c’ from ‘soft c’: *cat* as opposed to *city*
2. The “g rule,” distinguishing ‘hard g’ from ‘soft g’: *game* as opposed to *gem*
3. The VC (vowel-consonant) pattern in which a single vowel letter followed by a consonant letter, digraph, or blend usually represents a short vowel sound: *bat*, *bath*, *bask*.
4. The VV (vowel digraph) pattern in which a word or syllable containing a vowel digraph, the first letter in the digraph usually represents the long vowel sound and the second letter is usually silent: *free*, *coat*, *seat*.
5. The VCe (final e) pattern in which one-syllable words, containing two vowel letters, one of which is a final e, the first vowel letter usually represents a long vowel sound and the final e is silent: *nice*, *plate*, *vote*.

6. The CV pattern, which indicates that when there is only one vowel letter in a word or syllable, and it comes at the end of the word or syllable, it usually represents the long vowel sound: *he, go, my*.
7. The “r rule” in which the letter reading modifies the short or long sounds of the preceding vowel letter, thus modifying the VC, VV and VCE patterns mentioned above: VC – *cat/car*; VV – *feat / fear*; VCE – *cape / care*.

## 4.2 Whole-word

The **whole-word / key word approach**, on the other hand, does not focus on individual sounds, but rather on reading ‘whole words’. It is a method for teaching children to read usually in the mother tongue, in which children are taught to recognize whole words rather than letter-names (as in the **alphabetic method**) or sounds (as in **phonics**). It usually leads to the use of the sentence method, where whole sentences are used.

It starts from word level, with children looking at single words on cards (called flash cards, because they are sometimes shown very quickly to the children, or ‘flashed’ in front of their eyes) to encourage rapid whole word recognition. A child will begin with five or six very common words, such as *mummy* and *likes*. The child practises saying the word when he sees the card, and once the first five or six are mastered moves on to the next set. Once the child has about 15 words, very simple books are introduced that only use the known words. The child then reads the books at that level to the teacher, one or two pages a day, and practises alone.

The term ‘key words’ was used because the sight words taught were taken from the most frequently used words in English. Many of the most frequent words are function words, such as *for* or *was*, that do not have clear lexical meanings but create meanings when they are used with content words. In learning to read, these words are probably better, and more easily, learnt through multiple encounters in contexts of use, rather than separated from other words on a card. Another problem with this method is the limited interest of the texts that can be written with a small number of words.

The flashcard method for learning whole words can take a child to quite a high level as a beginner reader, but after about 50 words, it is not

efficient, or even possible, to remember each word as a separate whole. To progress, the method relies on the child generalizing and finding patterns and regularities in the words being learnt, i.e. the child needs to use information about letters and sounds as well. Some children do this mental work automatically, and more or less teach themselves to read. Many others though need focused help with the sound of letters and how letters go together to make words.

The features of whole-word-methods that are relevant for FL contexts include:

- Children get practice at fast recognition of whole words through use of flashcards;
- Children get a good sense of achievement and motivation by being able to read a whole book quite early;
- The sight vocabulary can provide a resource that the child can use to work out how letters combine into syllables. (Cameron, 2001, pp. 148-149)

### **4.3 A ‘balanced approach’ to reading instruction**

In fact, very few educators today would describe themselves as strict advocates of either a Phonics approach or a Whole Language approach – most would describe their teaching as “balanced,” which, on the surface, has a great deal of appeal. It is important to remember that a compromise between these two approaches to reading instruction will not necessarily result in the single, best approach. Neither approach has been sufficiently effective, so why do we assume that a compromise between these two approaches will provide educators with the most effective approach possible?

#### ***4.3.1 Problems with a Balanced Approach***

Most people do not agree what the term “balanced approach” means. A balanced approach could be generically described as “mixing some Phonics with Whole Language,” but how this is accomplished in any particular classroom is unclear. The eclectic approach, as some have come to call it, sometimes involves teaching Phonics first, and then “graduating” to Whole Language approaches. Alternatively, the Phonics instruction may be explicit, but children might be given more opportunities to read connected, authentic literature. Or, lessons

prescribed by Phonics and Whole Language may be intermixed in the hopes that different children will benefit from different “styles” of teaching. Similarly, it is not uncommon for teachers to use an amalgam of decodable text and predictable, repetitive text in a diplomatic approach to balanced literacy instruction. The argument is often made that the best elements of each philosophy can be utilized while the worst are eliminated, but how are we to decide what the “best elements” are? Should we assume that the two approaches represent the entire world of reading instruction, and that the “best elements” are to be found in one camp or the other? It is possible that some combination of the two approaches will work better than either approach alone did, but is it necessarily the best possible approach for each individual child?

#### **4.4 Which method to choose? (Scott and Ytreberg, 1990, pp. 51-53)**

No matter which approach to reading you, the teacher, take as your basic approach, you should remember that all these approaches are a way into reading and are not an end in themselves. You will probably want to make use of all the methods described at some stage in the process of learning to read.

Five to seven year olds

- Five to seven year olds are likely to take longer to learn to read in a FL than eight to ten year olds. Some children starting school are not familiar with books or what they are used for. They have to go through the process of doing reading-like activities first – ‘reading’ from left to right, turning the pages at the right place, going back and reading the same pages again, etc. Picture books with and without text are invaluable at this stage.
- If your pupils have not learnt to read in their own language, many will not yet have understood what a word is, nor what the connection is between the spoken and the written word.
- Sentence structure, paragraphing, grammar – none of these means anything to most pupils at this stage.
- Decoding reading – making sense of what we see on the page – is a very involved process, and adults make use of all sorts of clues on the written page – punctuation, paragraphing, use of special words, references to things which have happened,

hints as to what can happen. What five to seven year olds have instead is often a visual clue and this clue is vital to meaning.

#### Eight-to-ten-year-old beginners

The majority of eight to ten year olds will already be able to read a bit in their own language and most seem to have little difficulty in transferring their reading skills to English. This means that you can spend much less time teaching the mechanics of reading, and concentrate more on the content.

### **4.5 An integrated approach to teach reading to weaker learners (Braun, 1985)**

For children who are having difficulty learning to read, one may wish to try the following sequence:

1. Discuss the topic to be read with the children.
2. The teacher reads the material while the children follow.
3. The teacher then asks literal level comprehension questions which prepare the children for reading the material silently.
4. Children read the material silently and the teacher holds a discussion asking higher level comprehension questions in which the children state their point of view and verify through oral reading.
5. Rather than constantly moving on to new material (e.g. the next story in a basal reader), the teacher should have children reread and discuss previous materials from a new point of view, for example, relating to a current activity in school, or comparing and contrasting the story with other basal stories or literature the teacher has read.

Children who are weak in reading often have limited life experiences and seldom practise converting these experiences into language. They frequently lack the two to three years of readiness activities that good readers have received from their parents prior to entering school.

The integrated approach described above bases reading instruction on language development and understanding. In using this approach, the child has an opportunity to understand the content of what he is about to read through teacher-pupil discussion. He then has a chance to relate the printed word with the teacher's oral reading. The questioning following the reading gives the child specific information about the material he is about

to read. The child now reads the material and has syntactic redundancies, semantic redundancies, as well as better form redundancies to use as aids in reading. The higher level questioning provides an opportunity for deeper understanding, divergent thinking, and transfer to other learning. Reviewing previously read material provides for additional practice and encourages fluency and speed.

## 5 STRUCTURAL PARTS OF BEING ABLE TO READ

### 5.1 Letter Knowledge

To be a successful reader, students will need to be familiar and comfortable with the letters of the alphabet; they should be able to identify them without hesitation or confusion. Research has never shown that it is necessary for children to be familiar with the *names* of the letters. However, research *has* shown that children learning to read should be able to easily and automatically discriminate the letters from each other (and from numbers and other letter-like symbols). The ability to quickly identify letters of the alphabet (by whatever means, be it letter name, sound, or a word that begins with the letter) is one of the best predictors of future reading success.

Children who are not able to quickly and accurately identify all of the letters of the alphabet (both lower-case and upper-case) may benefit from a letter-sorting activity. Put letter tiles or letter cutouts in a pile and ask the children to sort the letters by some salient feature (e.g. put all of the letters with straight lines in one pile and all the ones with curves in another), then ask them to sort them by another salient feature (e.g. diagonal lines versus lines that go up and down). Then by another and another until students are looking at small sets of two to four letters that have similar, confusing features, but which differ in important ways (e.g. O and Q or b, d, p, and q). When children can see confusing letters side by side, they can focus on the salient features that make those confusing letters distinct.

### 5.2 Phonemic awareness (PA)

It is knowledge of what letters create what sounds.

It refers to the specific awareness that the basic building blocks of words are phonemes. Research has shown that phoneme awareness is the single best predictor of future reading success, and research has also shown that children who are explicitly taught to be aware of the phonemes in spoken words are more likely to become successful readers.

It is recommended that teachers in kindergarten and first grade make PA activities a high priority. When providing instruction in PA activities, it was found that blending and segmenting phonemes are the most powerful PA skills to help beginning readers develop. **Phoneme**

segmentation is the ability to separate words into their individual sounds (e.g., cat – /c/ /a/ /t/), and phoneme blending is the ability to connect sounds into words (e.g., /c/ /a/ /t/ – cat). PA instruction should:

- focus on one or two PA skills at a time,
- be based on students needs,
- help children manipulate the phoneme (sound) with the grapheme (letter),
- be carefully planned and explicitly taught,
- include activities that actively involve students in experimenting with language.

PA activities will not be helpful to children learning how to read if PA skills are learned and used in isolation. Thus, it is important that instruction should occur in conjunction with real reading and writing activities. In addition, it is argued that phonics instruction would not be effective if a child does not have understanding of PA.

### 5.3 Phonological awareness

It is knowledge of the individual sounds within a word.

Phonological awareness is defined as an awareness that spoken words are made up of sounds. As mature readers, we are all aware that words are made up of syllables, etc. Children, however, are very concrete thinkers, and they tend to be unaware of these abstract characteristics of spoken words. In fact, many young children have trouble separating the word from what the word represents (e.g. ask a child what the longest word he or she knows is, and the child may say something like “snake” or “train”).

As children learn to rhyme words and learn to pay attention to the first and last sounds in words, they become more able to think about words as abstract entities, and they begin to explore words in ways that will ultimately lay the foundation for developing letter-sound knowledge.

#### **Rhyming Perception**

##### **List A:**

1. Does PILL rhyme with HILL?
2. Does HEAD rhyme with NOSE?
3. Does GAME rhyme with NAME?
4. Does LAKE rhyme with MAKE?
5. Does MOON rhyme with SPOON?
6. Does FEAR rhyme with FAR?



7. Does MOST rhyme with TOAST?
8. Does BIKE rhyme with BAKE?
9. Does GREEN rhyme with GRAIN?
10. Does SNAP rhyme with NAP?

**List B:**

1. Does LUCK rhyme with TRUCK?
2. Does HAND rhyme with FOOT?
3. Does FINE rhyme with PINE?
4. Does HOSE rhyme with NOSE?
5. Does SAME rhyme with GAME?
6. Does SNAKE rhyme with SNACK?
7. Does WEST rhyme with TEST?
8. Does LAKE rhyme with LIKE?
9. Does SMOKE rhyme with SHOOK?
10. Does BEND rhyme with END?

**Rhyming words**

Children should be able to generate at least two rhyming words to each of the items in this test without much difficulty. At the very least, they should be able to make up a nonsense word that rhymes (e.g. if you ask the child to think of a word that rhymes with HOME, the child might say VOME). This test is given orally. Ask the child to come up with at least two rhyming words for each of the words below. Make a note of the child's response on a score sheet – write the words the child generates, and indicate if the response was correct or incorrect by circling incorrect responses. If the child misses more than half of the first five items, then tactfully discontinue the task and proceed to an easier phonological awareness task. Later, after you have provided some phonological awareness instruction, you may wish to retest the child; there are two equivalent lists provided in case a child needs to be retested. To pass this assessment, the child should get 8 out of 10 correct.

**Instructions:**

*Let's think of some words that rhyme with LOW – there's SHOW and MOW and SEW and DOUGH. Can you think of more? (Wait for response)*

*Now let's think of some words that rhyme with PILL. There's FILL and WILL and HILL and STILL.*

*Can you think of more? (Wait for response)*

*Now I want you to come up with at least two words that rhyme with each of these words.*

**SHAKE CASE SOAP****Testing****List A:**

1. HALL
2. MAKE
3. DEAR
4. HAIR
5. RING
6. SACK
7. COOK
8. FLOAT
9. STREET
10. SHOUT

**List B:**

1. NOW
2. LATE
3. WELL
4. HAY
5. LIGHT
6. CAR
7. ZONE
8. GOOD
9. DRAPE
10. SONG

**Identity Perception****Practice Items:**

Do you hear /v/ in VAN?

Do you hear /aw/ in THAW?

Do you hear /h/ in GONE?

**Testing****List A:**

1. Do you hear /s/ in SAND?
2. Do you hear /m/ in GUM?
3. Do you hear /s/ in CARD?
4. Do you hear /oo/ in GLUE?
5. Do you hear /sh/ in SMELL?
6. Do you hear /ee/ in PEEK?

7. Do you hear /m/ in RAIN?
8. Do you hear /k/ in DAY?
9. Do you hear /z/ in MAZE?
10. Do you hear /p/ in SPOON?

**List B:**

1. Do you hear /s/ in SIT?
2. Do you hear /m/ in HAM?
3. Do you hear /s/ in BEARD?
4. Do you hear /oo/ in FLEW?
5. Do you hear /sh/ in PASS?
6. Do you hear /ee/ in GREEN?
7. Do you hear /m/ in TRAIN?
8. Do you hear /k/ in GROW?
9. Do you hear /z/ in WISE?
10. Do you hear /p/ in SPILL?

**Phonological Awareness – Identity Production****Practice Items:**

Tell me three words that have the sound /em/ in them, as in LOW, OPEN, and SOAP.

Tell me three words that have the sound /f/ in them, as in FIRE, FALL, and LAUGH.

Tell me three words that have the sound /s/ in them, as in SAND, SAIL and GRASS

**Testing****List A:**

1. Tell me three words that have the sound /t/ in them, as in TAIL, LATE, and TEA.
2. Tell me three words that have the sound /k/ in them, as in QUICK, LAKE, and CORN.
3. Tell me three words that have the sound /f/ in them, as in FARM, LEAF, and AFRAID.
4. Tell me three words that have the sound /l/ in them, as in LEAP, HILL, and GLOW.
5. Tell me three words that have the sound /p/ in them, as in PLUS, HELP, and APPLE.

**List B:**

1. Tell me three words that have the sound /t/ in them, as in TALK, ATE, and TIP.

2. Tell me three words that have the sound /k/ in them, as in KITE, QUEEN, and BIKE.
3. Tell me three words that have the sound /f/ in them, as in FOUR, HALF, and AFTER.
4. Tell me three words that have the sound /l/ in them, as in LIGHT, CLAY, and SHELL.
5. Tell me three words that have the sound /p/ in them, as in PLATE, SPRAY, and GULP.

### 5.4 Alphabetic principle

It is important that children have phonemic awareness, and it is important that children be familiar with the letters of the alphabet. Research has shown that both of these things are essential to developing good reading skills. However, it is also important that children be aware that letters in text represent the phonemes in speech – that is the alphabetic principle, and it is the cornerstone on which all reading skill is built.

Sometimes children can have phonemic awareness and letter knowledge, but still fail to see how they are related to each other. Children who do not understand the alphabetic principle do not understand what a “long” word is, nor do they understand that mature readers do not memorize words as wholes. Children’s natural tendency is to memorize the shape of words, or memorize some salient feature within words, but when they develop an implicit understanding of the alphabetic principle, they realize that to be a mature reader, they have to learn how to break words apart and sound them out.

To develop this in the child is relatively easy – the child looks at two words; one is long and the other short. The teacher says one of the words out loud, and the child points to the word the teacher said. It is important to note that a child can do this task without actually *reading* the word. The child only needs to be able to decide which word is longer or shorter to be successful at this task.

Children who have difficulty with this task may benefit from a “reverse dictation” task – the teacher sits with the child and asks the child to dictate something for the teacher to write (one twist is to have the child make up nonsense words for the teacher to write). The teacher will slowly model the writing process, asking the child to repeat the words slowly so that each sound can be written down accurately. Then

the teacher models sounding the word out to recreate the spoken words. The child's attention should be drawn to long words and short words, and the lesson should emphasize the fact that words that take a long time to say are written down as long words on the page.

### 5.5 Decoding

Young children easily learn to associate whole words with concepts or ideas—at this early stage in reading development, children can “recognize” familiar words, but that does not necessarily mean they are “decoding” them. Decoding words involves sounding them out and arriving at a pronunciation that other mature readers agree with. Furthermore, that decoding process should not be laborious – not if the child is going to be a successful reader. Successful readers can very quickly and easily pronounce written words. Skilled readers (college level students) can recognize words in less than one-fifth of a second. They recognize words so easily and automatically, they cannot *help* but decode words that are put in front of them. Young children cannot identify words so quickly, but they should be able to identify a word in less than a few seconds.

When children spend so much of their energy concentrating on sounding out words in text, there is nothing left over to concentrate on meaning and understanding. Decoding must be fluent and automatic so that comprehension will not suffer. Furthermore, at least in English, sometimes sounding out words is not sufficient. Some words in English are not “spelled the way they sound.” That is, they have irregular spellings – “one” does not rhyme with “bone” or “gone” (which don't rhyme with each other).

Arguably, it rhymes with “done,” but where does the /w/ sound come from? To be successful readers of English text, children must be able to quickly identify *both* regular and irregular words. First children learn how to sound out regular words, then they learn how to correctly pronounce irregular words. So emphasizing the regular patterns is most beneficial for students struggling to decode words.



## **6 A FEW TIPS AND IDEAS WHEN DEALING WITH READING AND YOUNG LEARNERS (PINTER, 2006, PP. 69-72)**

It is advisable to start with working on the sub-skills such as learning to decode familiar written language, match spoken and written forms or complete short texts with personally relevant information. With YLs, the teacher might introduce written words to let children experience printed materials. For example, one could label objects such as tables, chairs, blackboard, window, door, picture, posters, plants, books, shelves, by making word cards, laminating them and hanging them up round the classroom. This would make the children curious about reading and writing and could illustrate to them that words that they are familiar with orally can be represented in writing.

In order to practise word level reading, many different games and activities can be used. One well-known memory card game is often played by matching pictures and words. Children play in teams picking up two cards each any one time to see if they match.

Teachers can make their own word cards and picture cards and play simple matching or categorizing games or spot the missing card. (Cards can also be used for story telling as well as other activities for vocabulary teaching.)

A lot of work with word cards will contribute to build up children's sight vocabulary of commonly used words in English.

Introducing reading beyond word level should happen gradually. It is possible to play with sentences and phrases. The teacher can chop up sentences and get the children to put them back in the correct order. Similarly, familiar songs, rhymes and poems can also be chopped up and reconstructed. Depending on how familiar the language in these exercises is to the children, the activity can be of varying difficulty. Common sense shows it is best to have plenty of encouraging practice with familiar language first.

In the case of YLs, it is important to progress slowly with reading in a foreign language. It is a holistic process which involves learning many skills such as predicting, noticing patterns and guessing. It is a good idea to make this process multisensory by including crafting, colouring, body movements and sounds.

In this age of accountability and assessment, classroom teachers need to be encouraged to become action researchers. Action research helps them look at a challenge in the classroom in depth and adjust the curriculum, their teaching methods, or both when they find that current practices are not meeting the needs of some or all students. If we as educators want to close the achievement gaps among students, we must use assessment data to inform instruction.

Reading with young learners (aged 6-10 – elementary school) often demands a different approach to reading with older learners. For one thing, young learners may not yet be able to read well in their mother tongue so dealing with a different language may bring up extra difficulties.

Another issue is concentration. Young learners have much shorter attention spans than older learners so teachers should keep things simple and short.

**A few tips and ideas when dealing with reading and young learners:**

- Make sure the material you are reading is of the right level and age group! This cannot be overstated: it should not be too difficult or too simple; it should be the right age group also and not be too ‘childish’ or ‘grown up’ for the group in question. In this regard it should be the same kind of material as the students would read in their own language.
- Encourage sound effects. When a character in the story rings the doorbell see how many different doorbells the class can give you!
- Read clearly and carefully. Make it as interesting as possible by not keeping your eyes on the book but engaging in eye contact with different students as you read. Keep things exciting!
- Try stopping in mid sentence and see if the students can guess what comes next. Unlike older students and adults who mostly want new material when they read, younger learners can enjoy reading the same book more than once and getting to know it well.
- Get the class to act out small scenes from the book.
- Use silly voices!
- Try making obvious mistakes: ‘Red Riding Hood went to see her teacher!’ Stop and look surprised. ‘Her teacher?! I don’t think so! Who did she go and see?’



- Make sure you ask both open-ended questions as well as Yes/No questions.
- If the class are learning how to read, make sure to point out useful letters – the first letter of the character’s name, for example.
- Don’t be too didactic; try and make reading a pleasure.

One major point to suggest is to keep reading playful as well. Reading should be fun and enjoyable and the more you can make it so the more the class will enjoy doing it. How you present material now will make a huge difference not just for the lesson you are giving but potentially for the rest of your students’ lives!

– letter-sound association for single letters

Do not follow alphabetic sequence, but rather teach most dependable letters first.

Begin phonics instruction with the letters I, T, P, N, S, L. Introduce vowels with the short vowel sound first. These can be taught in short drills as part of words that have meaning for students: do not teach nonsense words or abstractions.

– minimal pairs

Work on recognition of spellings of similar sounding words. For example, “sit, seat.” Which word means to use a chair? The first or the second? (heat, hit; pet, pit; etc.)

– introduce regular phonemic exercises

Deletion: cat. If I take away the [k] sound, what is left?

Addition: ring. If I add SP, what word do we have?

Modification: him. If I take away (H) and substitute SW, what word do we have?

Identification: What sound do you hear in the middle of the word ‘bean’?

– use error positively as a springboard for teaching

“I see BLAK for a color. Does anyone know how we end a one syllable word with the sound [k]? What are some other examples of the same idea?”



## **7 CONTINUING TO LEARN TO READ (CAMERON, 2001, PP. 151-152): LEARNING A RANGE OF READING STRATEGIES**

If children are to become independent readers, they need to acquire a wide range of strategies for making sense of texts. Evidence from helping children who are struggling to learn to read shows that they often stick with only one or two sources of information, which may work at the beginning stages, but which need augmenting with strategies at other scales for progression to fluent reading (Clay, 1982, in Cameron, 2001, p. 151). The child who picks up a set of words that she recognises as whole words, and uses this sight vocabulary to read simple texts, needs to also develop knowledge of grapho-phonemic relationships within words to progress to more difficult texts. On the other hand, the child who has learnt the names and sounds of the letters and can read simple, regular words by ‘sounding them out’, needs also to recognise morphemes by sight and to draw on grammatical information at sentence level if progression is to be made. Wherever a child starts in reading, the teacher needs to make sure development takes him or her to the other scales and that reading activities require the active integration of information across scales.

### **7.1 Reading strategy training (Farrell, 2001)**

Research in FL/L2 reading suggests that effective reading strategies can be taught and that students benefit from such instruction. Strategy training as it relates to L2 reading means that successful reading mainly depends on appropriate strategy use and that learners can improve their reading comprehension by being trained to use effective strategies. Strategy instruction develops student knowledge about the reading process, introduces students to specific strategies, and provides them with opportunities to discuss and practise strategies while reading (Janzen & Stoller, 1998, in Farrell, 2001, p. 631).

Learner strategies are tools that enable learners to take on responsibility for their own language learning. The main objective of language learners using specific learning strategies is for them to solve learning problems and thus become autonomous language learners. Learner strategy training consists of first listing descriptions of strategies

of successful language learners in the form of typologies and then training L2 students in how to use strategies that have been identified as effective. It is assumed that once the strategies used by good language learners have been identified and listed, they can be taught to less successful language learners so that they can learn more effectively. These ideas for strategy training have also been incorporated into the teaching of L2 reading.

Research on how L2 readers attempt to comprehend a text has suggested that because beginning readers depend so much on the text itself, they may rely on word for word reading and translation strategy, at least in the early stages of learning how to read in the second language. Many L2 readers are not able to use any other reading strategies and thus may stay at this level even after years of trying to read successfully in a second language. Consequently, it may be necessary to teach L2 reading students more effective methods or strategies so that they may be able to read and learn more effectively (Oxford & Cohen, 1992, in Farrell, 2001, p. 632).

Reading strategies indicate how readers conceive a task, what textual cues they attend to, how they make sense of what they read, and what they do when they do not understand a particular text. **These strategies range from easy fix-up strategies such as simply re-reading difficult segments and guessing the meaning of an unknown word from context, to more comprehensive strategies such as summarizing and relating what is being read to the reader's background knowledge.** Research on the reading strategies of native English language speakers has found that good readers are better at monitoring their comprehension than poor readers, they are more aware of the strategies they use than are poor readers, and they use strategies more flexibly and efficiently than inefficient readers do (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995, in Farrell, 2001, p. 632 ). For instance, good readers distinguish between important information and details as they read and are able to use clues in the text to anticipate information and/or relate new information to information already stated. They are also able to notice inconsistencies in a text and employ strategies to make these inconsistencies understandable (Baker & Brown, 1984, in Farrell, 2001, p. 632).

However, Kern (1997, in Farrell, 2001, p. 632) has marked that no strategy is inherently a 'good' or 'bad' strategy and that what works for one reader does not necessarily work for another. Additionally,

Carrell (1998, in Farrell, 2001, p. 632) has argued that the difference between good and bad reading strategies is whether the strategies are used consciously or not. For effective reading strategy training, Carrell (1998, in Farrell, 2001, p. 632) has argued for the involvement of two key metacognitive factors: (1) knowledge of cognition, and (2) regulation of cognition. The first involves readers being aware of what strategies they are currently using as they read, and the second involves readers choosing appropriate or more effective strategies that will enable them to successfully comprehend a text. Carrell (1998, in Farrell, 2001, p. 632) has suggested that both can be incorporated successfully in L2 reading strategy training.

Winograd and Hare (1988, in Farrell, 2001, p. 633) have identified five prerequisites that teachers should incorporate for successful strategy training. For each learning strategy teachers should:

- 1) describe the strategy the students are going to learn
- 2) explain why the strategy is important and remind students about the benefits of strategy use. (If teachers teach L2 learners strategies without direct explanation and explicit teacher modelling for a short period, it is unlikely to have a long-term effect on students and therefore it is unlikely to help them develop as strategic readers.)
- 3) demonstrate how to use the strategy effectively, for example by modelling it. (Janzen & Stoller (1998, in Farrell, 2001, p. 633) maintain that strategy instruction involves the teacher reading and thinking out loud, and also modelling strategic reading behaviour.)
- 4) point out to the students when and where a strategy should be used
- 5) teach students how they can evaluate their successful (or unsuccessful) use of the strategy.



## **8 LEARNING THROUGH STORIES AND STORY TELLING (CAMERON, 2001, PP. 159-179)**

Stories are frequently claimed to bring many benefits to YL classrooms, including language development. The power attributed to stories, which sometimes seems to move towards the mystical and magical, is probably generated by their links into poetics and literature in one direction and to the warmth of early childhood experiences in another. Parent-child story reading can be rich and intimate events that contrast sharply with the linear aridity of syllabuses and some course books (Garton & Pratt, 1998, in Cameron, 2001, p. 160).

However, classrooms are not family sitting rooms, teachers are not their pupils' parents, and many of the texts in books found in schools are not poetic, meaningful stories that will instantly capture children's imagination. We can best serve YLs by adopting a critical stance to the use of stories, aiming to clarify the qualities of good stories for the language classrooms. We should also be careful that our own nostalgia does not push the use of stories beyond the reality of learners' lives in this 'information age'. Children participate in many literacy events outside school that involve texts that are not stories, and that combine text and visuals in varied and dynamic ways. They may be equally motivated by the importing of some of these other text types into classrooms.

### **8.1 The discourse organisation of stories**

Story telling is an oral activity, and stories have the shape they do because they are designed to be listened to and, in many situations, participated in. The first, obvious, key organising feature of stories is that events happen at different points in time; they occur in a temporal sequence. The other key organising feature of stories is their thematic structure, i.e. there is some interest factor (theme) that changes over the timescale of the story: difficulties or evil are overcome, or a major event is survived. Very often the thematic structure of a story can be characterised as the resolution of a problem (Hoey, 1983, in Cameron, 2001, p. 161). These two central features of a story can be illustrated by considering a children's story well known in Europe and beyond, 'Little Red Riding Hood' (LRRH for short).

In the story of LRRH, the main characters are a little girl, who has a red coat with a hood, hence the nickname, and who lives with

her parents near a forest, and a big bad wolf, who wants to eat people, and who provides the problem. The story covers the events of one day, when LRRH visits her grandmother and on the way, despite her mother's warnings, leaves the path to pick flowers, and meets the wolf. She tells the wolf where she is going and he rushes ahead, eats the grandmother, dresses in her clothes, and waits for the girl to arrive. LRRH does not notice that it is the wolf in her grandmother's bed, and is about to be eaten by the wolf, when, just in time, her father arrives and kills the wolf. The grandmother jumps out of his stomach, and all ends happily. The story has two morals: that wickedness will be overcome and, at a more specific level, that children should do what their parents tell them.

Prototypical features of stories, that will be found in most versions of LRRH, are:

- an opening: often formulaic in fairy tales, e.g. *'Once upon a time ...'*;
- introduction of characters;
- description of the setting;
- introduction of a problem;
- a series of events;
- that lead to –
- the resolution of the problem
- a closing: often formulaic in fairy tales – *'They all lived happily ever after'*;
- a moral: which may or may not be explicitly stated.

We should note that many texts found in course books may be called 'stories', but in fact may lack some of these prototypical features. Most often they lack a plot; instead of setting up a problem and working towards its resolution, the characters just move through a sequence of activities. Teachers should not assume that such non-stories will not capture children's imagination in the same way that stories can do.

LRRH illustrates yet more features of stories, that are common, but not always all found in every story. Firstly, the way that the story is told sets up dramatic irony, in that the reader knows more than the central character. In this case, the reader knows that the 'grandmother' who LRRH finds in bed is really that wolf dressed up, and also knows that LRRH does not know. A sense of suspense is created by this knowledge gap between story characters and audience, motivating listeners to want to find out what will happen when LRRH arrives at her grandmother's house.



Secondly, there is predictability built into the narrative, through a kind of lock-step progression in which one incident seems to lead inevitably to the next:

mother warns LRRH not to leave the path or talk to the wolf

⇒ LRRH leaves the path and talks to the wolf

⇒ LRRH tells the wolf about her grandmother

⇒ the wolf goes to the grandmother's house

⇒ LRRH tells the wolf / grandmother she has big teeth

⇒ the wolf tries to eat LRRH.

Thirdly, this predictability and sense of inevitability is broken by the surprise event of the arrival of LRRH's father to save her. The pattern of a sequence of familiar and predictable events, interrupted by a surprise, echoes the one of 'security and novelty', and it is probably a pattern that suits human psychology: a degree of comfortable familiarity combined with just the right amount of surprise and change.

## 8.2 Language use in stories

Children's stories contain uses of language that are considered typical of poetic and literary texts. Many of these devices offer opportunities for FL learning.

### 8.2.1 *Parallelism*

The pattern of predictability + surprise, or repetition + change, is often reflected in patterns of repetition of language. For example, when LRRH arrives at her grandmother's house and talks to the big bad wolf (BBW) wearing the old woman's clothes, their dialogue goes like this:

LRRH: Grandmother, what big eyes you've got!	BBW: All the better to see you with, my dear.
LRRH: Grandmother, what big ears you've got!	BBW: All the better to hear you with, my dear.
LRRH: Grandmother, what big teeth you've got!	BBW: All the better to EAT you with ...

This repeated pattern, or parallelism, creates a way into the story for the active listener, as well as providing a natural support for language learning.

### 8.2.2 *Rich vocabulary*

Because stories are designed to entertain, writers and tellers choose and use words with particular care to keep the audience interested. Stories may thus include unusual words, or words that have a strong phonological content, with interesting rhythms or sounds that are onomatopoeic. The context created by the story, its predictable pattern of events and language, and pictures, all act to support listeners' understanding of unfamiliar words. Children will pick up words that they enjoy and, in this way, stories offer space for growth in vocabulary.

### 8.2.3 *Alliteration*

Alliteration is the use of words that have the same initial consonants. For example, red riding and big bad. It can offer a source for developing knowledge of letter sounds.

### 8.2.4 *Contrast*

Stories for children often contain strong contrasts between characters or actions or settings. In LRRH, the innocent girl and the bad wolf are clearly contrasted characters, representing good and evil; the old woman and the young girl contrast youth and age. Placing ideas in such clear opposition may well help children's understanding of the story as a whole. For language learning, the lexical items that are used in connection with each idea will also form contrasting sets, that may help understanding and recall.

### 8.2.5 *Metaphor*

In LRRH, the forest can be seen as metaphorically representing life outside the safety of the family, and the wolf as representing threats to safety and innocence. Bettelheim (1976, in Cameron, 2001, p. 165) suggests that our early experiences with fairy stories map subconsciously on to our real world experiences, and become a kind of script for our lives.

### 8.2.6 *Narrative / dialogue*

Within a story, we can distinguish two main uses of language: for narrative and for dialogue. Narrative text concerns the series of events: *the little girl walked through the forest; the wolf ran to grandmother's house*. Dialogue is use of language as it would be spoken by the characters: *'all the better to eat you with'*.

Some stories are entirely narrative; in others, the text is entirely dialogue, with the pictures contributing to the narrative. Most stories,

though, move between narrative and dialogue, and the way they intertwine in a story does much to create its particular atmosphere.

Narrative and dialogue are clearly separable to listeners and readers. They are distinguished by their time-frame, and hence by the tense of the verbs used: narrative language recounts what happened and verbs are typically in the Past Tense, while dialogue captures characters in their present time-frame, and uses whichever tense is appropriate to what they are talking about.

Foreign language or simplified versions of stories in English often choose the simple present tense for narrative (*the little girl walks through the forest*), probably because in EFL syllabuses it has been seen as simpler than the others and taught first. If a story is told through pictures, the present continuous tense is often found (*the little girl is walking through the forest*). It seems a pity to deprive learners of opportunities to hear authentic uses of past tense forms, and the contrast with other tenses, in the meaningful contexts of stories, and there is no reason for supposing that use of past tense would prevent children understanding a story. In fact, if they are familiar with stories in their L1, they will expect to hear past tense forms and may misconstrue the verbs.

### 8.3 Quality in stories

A good story is, at one level, simply one that listeners or readers enjoy. However, stories that appeal more than others, and remain favourites with children and parents over many years, do demonstrate some common features that can be identified as characterising quality.

Quality stories have characters and a plot that engage children, often the art work is as important as the text in telling the story, and they create a strong feeling of satisfaction when the end is reached. A convincing and satisfying closure includes the reader in those who ‘live happily ever after’.

Children need to be able to enter the imaginative world that the story creates. This means that they can understand enough about the characters and their lives to be able to empathise with them. Many stories for children include fantastical beings or animals in imaginary worlds, but these characters or settings usually bear enough resemblance to children and their real worlds for readers to imagine them: monsters tend to live in families, tigers come to drink tea in the kitchen, frogs and ducks get jealous – all act in ways familiar to children!

Stories that have the qualities of content, organisation and language use are potentially useful tools in the FL classroom, since they have the potential to capture children's interest and thus motivation to learn, along with space for language growth.

#### **8.4 Choosing stories to promote language learning**

In this section, we use the features of stories described so far to set out questions that a language teacher might ask to evaluate the language learning opportunities offered by a story in order to choose stories for the language classroom.

'Real' books or specially written ones?

In British education in the 1980s there was a move to bring what were called 'real books' into primary schools for teaching reading. Real books were those written by 'real' authors for parents to buy for children, and there was a so-called 'golden age' of young children's literature in English in the 1970s and 1980s, as writers exploited the use of colour and pictures alongside simple story lines.

The reading with real books movement has mostly lost momentum now in a return to more focused literacy teaching in British classrooms, but there have been lasting effects. Teachers now make much more use of story books for teaching reading. Educational publishers followed up the idea of quality stories, and commissioned specially written story books to accompany and extend structured reading schemes.

Will the content engage the learners?

A good story for language learning will have interesting characters that children can empathise with, who take part in activities that the learners can make sense of. The plot will be clear, but may have a surprise or twist at the end.

The role of the pictures in combination with the text to form the story as a whole should be considered. If the pictures are indispensable, as is often the case, then somehow there will need to be enough copies or they will need to be made big enough for everyone to see.

Are the values and attitudes embodied in the story acceptable?

Stories can help children feel positive about other countries and cultures, and can broaden the knowledge of the world. However, stories should be checked for values and attitudes that may not be appropriate; for

example, ‘classic’ stories written some time ago may carry attitudes to women and black people that are no longer acceptable.

How is the discourse organised?

Stories with a structure close to the prototypical format set out in section 9.1 are likely to be most accessible to children. The characters and setting will be described. There will be a clear plot, with an initial formulation of a problem, a series of linked events, and a resolution of the problem. An element of surprise or unpredictability will add to the children’s involvement with the story.

What is the balance of dialogue and narrative?

The balance of dialogue and narrative in a story may influence choice, and will certainly affect the way a story is used. Dialogue in a story may lend itself to acting out and for learning phrases with conversation. Narrative may offer repeated patterns of language that will help grammar learning through noticing of new patterns or consolidation of patterns already met.

How is language used?

The built-in repetition of words and phrases is one of the features of stories that is most helpful for language learning. Careful analysis of the language of the text will reveal whether the repeated phrases and vocabulary will help a particular class. There may be some phrases used in the dialogue that children can appropriate for their own language use. The narrative may use words that have already been learnt, offering a chance to recycle them in a new context.

What new language is used?

In planning the use of a story, the teacher can identify language use and make three rough groupings:

- a. language that children have already met, and that will be recycled;
- b. new language that will be useful to learn for all children from the story;
- c. new language that may or may not be learnt, depending on individual children’s interest.

A story can include some new language, but not so much that the story becomes incomprehensible. The number of new words that listeners can cope with within one story is not clear cut; it will depend on how well the pictures and discourse organisation support the meaning of

the words, how central the new words are to the plot, and the overall total of new words, which should not be too high. In preparing to use a story, new words and phrases that are crucial to understanding the story should be pre-taught, and the support offered by pictures and context for the meaning of other new language should be checked to ensure it is adequate. If necessary, further support can be provided.

Having chosen a story because it offers potential language learning opportunities, the next stage is to decide on a sequence of tasks for the classroom.

### **8.5 Ways of using a story: Language learning tasks using stories**

The examples from a text demonstrate the poetic nature of the writer's choice and use of language, and for this reason, we should want to use the story orally first. Listening to the teacher read or tell a story is a useful language learning activity at any age; using story books does not have to be about teaching reading (although it can be). Listening to a story practises the ability to hold in mind the meaning of an extended piece of spoken discourse.

The teacher telling the story constitutes the core activity of the first task, with children listening and looking at the illustrations, either sitting close enough to the teacher to see or using large versions of the pictures. The main language learning goal for the core activity of the task would be that the children understand enough of the story to enjoy it. As a preparation activity, before the story reading, it would be useful to introduce the ideas and some of the key vocabulary, and the contrasting ideas and lexis that run through the story offer a good place to start:

#### **Preparation activity: brainstorming vocabulary**

Two pictures from the story are shown to the children, and they are asked for words about them that they already know. If the children can read and write in English, then the words can be written on the board.

Children may offer words in English, or their first language, which the teacher can translate. After children have offered words, the teacher can supply a few others that will be needed to understand the story.

#### **Core activity: reading the story**

The teacher reads the story to the children, giving them plenty of time to look at the pictures.

In the first reading, the teacher should read on through the story, rather than stopping too much to talk about words or the plot. Pictures can be used to emphasise what is happening in the story.

A second reading can follow straight away. This time the teacher can pause at the end of each page to point and repeat key words or ideas, or to ask children to recall or predict what happens next.

After listening to a story, children should have the chance to respond to it. They can be encouraged to express their feelings about the story, in English if possible, using simple phrases like *I liked it when ...*, *I thought the dinosaurs were good*.

#### Follow-up activity

A simple immediate follow up would be to get the children to draw a picture as a further response to the story, and to choose and write down some of the vocabulary from the brainstormed list during the preparation phase next to the picture. They might be asked to choose five new words that they liked and are going to learn, and take the picture home to show parents and practise their words. At the beginning of the next lesson, they can be asked to tell the words to a friend to motivate their self-directed learning.

The language learning goal of a follow-up activity is much more specific: to learn the meanings of five new words and recall the words in the next lesson.

This three stage task would probably take about half an hour and, in doing it, learners have only dipped a toe into the ocean of possibilities that any story offers.

## 8.6 Developing tasks around a story

### 8.6.1 Listening skills

The first encounter with a story is only the beginning of language learning work that can be done around it. If a story appeals to children, they will want to hear it again and again. Once a story has been used, it can be added to the collection in the classroom, and looked at by the children in spare moments, borrowed to take home, or read again by the teacher in future lessons. The five or ten minutes spent listening to a familiar story will re-activate vocabulary and grammatical patterns, and offer opportunities for children to notice aspects of the language use that passed them by on previous readings or that they have partly learnt.

In listening to a story, children are practising listening for ‘gist’, i.e. the overall meaning. They can also be helped to focus on detail when the text is met on further occasions. If the teacher records the story on a cassette during one of the tellings, the recording can be used for further listening practice, at home or in class.

### **8.6.2 Discourse skills**

A story creates a world of characters who talk to each other and this discourse world presents opportunities for communicative activities and work on discourse skills.

#### **Acting roles**

The dialogue in a story can be separated out from the narrative, if necessary in a version simplified by the teacher, and spoken by the children who take on roles of characters. If the teacher reads the narrative and children dress up and act out the dialogue, the story becomes a performance that might entertain another class, provide useful repeated practice in the process.

#### **Retelling the story**

Asking children to retell a story in a foreign language is a very demanding task, much more demanding than in the first language. After all, one of the advantages of stories is that they can be slightly beyond the children’s receptive level because of the support they offer to understanding. If children are to retell the story, they are asked to work at this level in production. They are unlikely to be able to do this and the experience will be difficult and perhaps demotivating.

If children are to reproduce the whole story in some way, with its temporal sequencing, then the language demands will need to be reduced. For example, learners could be given (or draw) a set of pictures of the story (the collection of pictures produced in the follow-up to the first hearing could be used) and arrange them in order. They might then also get a set of simple sentences written on strips of card to match the pictures. The pictures and the sentences could be stuck into the children’s books and used for reading. If they are not writing in English, pairs of children could work on composing a sentence orally for each picture and, after they have practised several times, can tell the whole class their ‘story’, using the pictures as prompts. They might reconstruct the story, orally or in writing, using much simpler text.



## **9 AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON STORY TELLING IN TRANSCARPATIA (FÁBIÁN, LECHNER, BÁRÁNY, HUSZTI, 2011)**

### **Abstract**

The value and benefits of teaching a modern language to young learners through stories have been established and acknowledged by researchers (Ellis & Brewster, 1991; King, 2003; Lugossy, 2007; Mattheoudakis, Dvorakova & Láng, 2007). In Transcarpathia in western Ukraine, however, this teaching strategy is not widely spread, despite the proven motivating characteristics of stories and their positive influences on language learning success. Therefore, we find it of utmost importance to introduce English major students (pre-service teachers of English) to the methodology of using stories in the young learner English classroom.

English major and Ukrainian major pre-service teachers participated in the research we have carried out. Their journals were collected and analysed qualitatively. The results show that story-based teaching has positive impacts on young learners' listening comprehension and vocabulary development. Besides, it raises learner motivation towards learning the English language. Expected advantages and benefits of the research project were that trainee teachers would learn the methodology of teaching modern foreign languages to young learners through stories and the methods of researching the same process; also, trainee teachers would have hands-on practice opportunities to apply theory in practice.

### **9.1 Introduction and rationale**

Transcarpathia is situated in the south-western part of Ukraine. It is one of the 24 administrative regions of Ukraine with a population of about 1.2 million people, among whom 151 000 are Hungarians living in minority in the country. The education of the minority is realized at all the levels from primary and secondary to tertiary education. While there are 100 primary and secondary schools with Hungarian language of instruction, there is only one such college of higher education in Transcarpathia (the Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education). Although this college trains economists and accountants, its main focus is teacher training.

The research detailed in this paper was motivated by the authors' firm belief in the innovative approach to teaching English to young learners through stories in Transcarpathia, and their eagerness to implement it in the teacher training curriculum as a constructive element.

## 9.2 Review of the relevant literature

Today English teacher training at our institution strives to follow the constructivist model for teacher training (Nahalka, 2009) in which our English major students are provided with information on the various foreign language teaching approaches, methods, and techniques. They are not told, however, how to best teach a foreign language. On the contrary, they are encouraged to 'construct' their own understanding of the processes going on in language teaching. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that we, teacher trainers familiarize our students with a range of variety of useful and applicable methods so that they could make competent decisions in practice when teaching in reality. One of these methods is the teaching of foreign languages through stories.

Stories or fairy-tales are excellent teaching resources especially with young learners because (1) children love listening to them, (2) they are motivating and enjoyable for children, (3) they develop learners' listening skills, and last but not least (4) stories can be flexibly used within the syllabus (Gorszkiné Síró, 2007). Claussen (2005) also states that if children listen to stories regularly, this improves their speaking skills and enriches their vocabulary. Claussen adds that it is helpful when learners are asked to retell (describe orally) the story they have heard as this fosters their language acquisition and language development. Further justification for using stories in the young learner classroom is given by Brewster, Ellis and Girard (2002; cited in Mattheoudakis, Dvorakova & Láng, 2007, p. 60) who claim that when listening to stories children tend to identify with the characters of the stories and speak and act in their personalities. This way they become personally involved in the story.

Based on the above discussion a question arises: why are stories neglected by teachers in Transcarpathian Hungarian schools when their benefits in the young learner classroom are so evident? In Ellis and Brewster's (1991) view, the reason for this teacher resistance to apply

stories lies in their lack of confidence to be able to tell or read aloud stories for children at an appropriate professional level. In addition, a lot of foreign language teachers are not trained to apply story telling in teaching so they are not confident enough. Also, it might be possible that some teachers are simply not aware of the real value of this method and do not use it because of their personal beliefs (Mattheoudakis, Dvorakova & Láng, 2007).

### **9.3 The study**

#### ***9.3.1 Participants***

Participants were 25 Year 4 college students out of whom 18 were majoring in English and 7 in Ukrainian. All the English majors were female students aged 20-25, while there were 6 female and one male student among the Ukrainian majors aged 20-21. Prior to the research, they all covered a minimum of six weeks of teaching practicum in their Years 2 and 3 where their main tasks included observing the English and the Ukrainian teaching processes in the school context, as well as giving some lessons of English or Ukrainian on their own, but these lessons were not story-based ones. The participants applied the story telling technique in 21 different Transcarpathian Hungarian schools. We have assigned codes to the participants during the analysis of their data.

#### ***9.3.2 Instruments***

In fact, two direct research instruments were applied to collect data. These were a reflection journal and a self-report questionnaire, both with open-ended questions. In the reflection journal (see Reflection journal on p. 78) we asked our participants to describe and evaluate their own experiences during story telling (5 questions) and provide us with comments on the effectiveness of the whole process. The second research instrument, the self-report questionnaire (see Self-report questionnaire on p. 78) contained ten open-ended questions about the facts and about the participants' perceptions of their story telling processes. Both instruments were filled in in Hungarian, the participants' mother tongue.

The indirect research instrument was the text of the well-known story of "The enormous turnip". The story was selected because this is a story known both in English and Ukrainian. Evidently, the English

major student-participants were presented the English version of the story, while the Ukrainian majors were given the Ukrainian version. They had to tell this story to the children in the schools during the second phase of our research.

### ***9.3.3 Procedures***

The first phase in October, 2009 was the theoretical part during which we presented the methodology of story-based language teaching to the students and had them understand the role of stories in the young learner English classroom. Also, in research sessions held with the students we trained them how to reflect on their own teaching (Richards & Lockhart, 1996) to be able to write reflection journals as research instruments which we later analyzed. The second phase taking place in November and December, 2009 was the practical one in which the trainee teachers spent their compulsory six-week teaching practicum in various schools in Transcarpathia (both urban and rural) and applied stories with young learners. The trainees had to measure the learners' comprehension with the help of tasks they had prepared during the first phase of the research. Also, participants were asked to write up their experiences, thoughts and reflections on the process of implementing stories with young learners in a separate reflection journal. In addition, during the second phase of our investigation a questionnaire was administered to the student participants. It enquired about the experience of teaching English through stories from the learners' perspective and from their own one.

The analysis of the data was mainly done qualitatively in December, 2009, while the conclusions and implications were drawn in January and February, 2010.

## **9.4 Findings and discussion of the results**

The participants of the research project were 18 English and 7 Ukrainian major students who were willing to participate in our research project and agreed to give a story-based lesson. They also agreed, on the one hand, to estimate their own work and performance, on the other hand, reflect on the process of story telling and share their experiences and perceptions with us. In the present study first the findings of the students' reflection journals are discussed, and then the experiences gained during the story telling lessons are described.

In the course of planning the project we had an assumption that stories are very rarely read or applied in foreign language lessons in the Hungarian schools of Transcarpathia, though it is common knowledge that stories and tales influence the development of the children's personality and they need them as stories serve as a link between the world of fantasy and reality (Gorszkiné Síró, 2007).

The reports of the students show that all of them except for two students enjoyed the lesson and only a few of them were a little anxious before the lesson about discipline in the classroom or due to the fact that they were not familiar with the learners of the particular class. However, even in these cases the atmosphere became friendly in a very short time and the lesson was spent in a good spirit.

The second, third and fourth questions dealt with the way the story was told: if the teachers (i.e. our research participants) strayed from the subject or lost the thread of the story, and if they enjoyed the whole process. The answers were negative to Questions 2 and 3, as the text of the story was relatively short, the language and the plot were simple. Only two participants answered that they confused some characters as they had to keep discipline but they could control the situation. Most of them paid attention to articulation and clarity; three English majors also observed learners' reaction (whether they understood and enjoyed the story) but this did not distract their attention from their original aim. All the students (participants) without exception claimed that they enjoyed the story telling process and were satisfied with their own performance.

As to the fifth question, 64% of the students reported that they did not experience anything new during the story telling, explaining this answer by the fact that they had no previous experience, did not participate in a lesson of this type (i.e. story telling lesson) neither as learners or listeners nor as teachers, the situation was completely new for them. This fact could as well be an advantage as they had no basis for comparison and had neither positive nor negative expectations as to the method. All of them stated that they had left the classroom with positive feelings and impression. Among the rest of the students some found new elements in the story itself as they knew another version of it and they experienced change in the learners' behaviour and reaction. In spite of the fact that the story was familiar with many learners they were interested in it and were very attentive. It is worth mentioning, that two Ukrainian major teacher trainees remarked that

*In the process of story telling it was unusual that while working with the traditional methods the learners usually looked at me with bored faces and it seemed to me that their thoughts were somewhere else, but while I was reading the story everybody was attentive and their eyes were sparkling. (SPU 2)*

*I experienced that this method was all new to them [i.e. the children] in contrast to the boring everyday activities, they listened with sparkling eyes. (SPU 4)\**

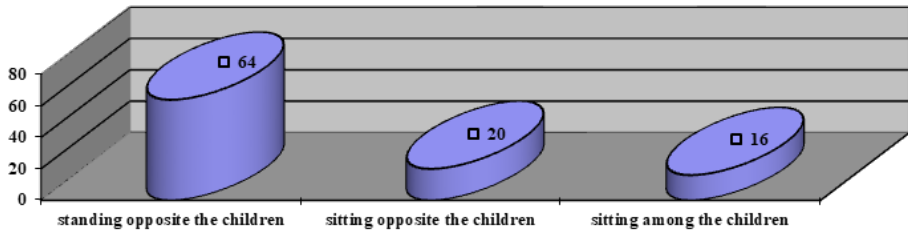
Due to the fact that the participants had a chance to decide the way they wanted to work on the story, this process in different classes was different. There were between 12 and 15 learners in a class. The proportions were different even in the way the learners were seated in the English and the Ukrainian classrooms. While in the English lessons in 11 cases out of 18 the learners were sitting in a circle or semi-circle, only one Ukrainian major trainee-participant reported about this type of classroom organization. In all the other cases no changes were made in the classroom, the children were listening to the stories sitting at the desk in a traditional way. The Ukrainian majors' opinion was that in a traditional setting the learners would be more disciplined and attentive. Those English majors who did not rearrange the classroom found it too small and reported that they simply had no chance to do this. By the end of the lesson the trainees realized the disadvantages of sitting at the desks behind each other: the learners could not relax, were stiff and did not see each others' reactions. The trainees considered the advantages of sitting in a circle or semi-circle to be the following:

- relaxed and friendly atmosphere (the atmosphere of intimacy);
- good mood;
- informal relationship between the teacher and the learners as well as among the learners themselves.

The disadvantages noticed were that rearranging the furniture was time-consuming, noisy and it gave opportunities to off-task talking and moving around (See Figure 9.1).

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\* The excerpts from the research findings are provided in the authors' translation.

*Figure 9.1 Position of the student teacher during story telling, n=25 (%)*

Source: *Fábián, Lechner; Bárány, Huszti, 2011*

Another important point is where the story-teller takes his/her seat as compared to the listeners. 64% of the trainees was standing at the blackboard or table facing the learners, 20% was sitting opposite the children with the purpose to be well seen and heard by all the listeners and to be able to keep eye-contact with them, to follow whether they understood the story or not. Only 16% of the trainees decided to take a seat among the learners reasoning that this way the atmosphere would not be authoritarian.

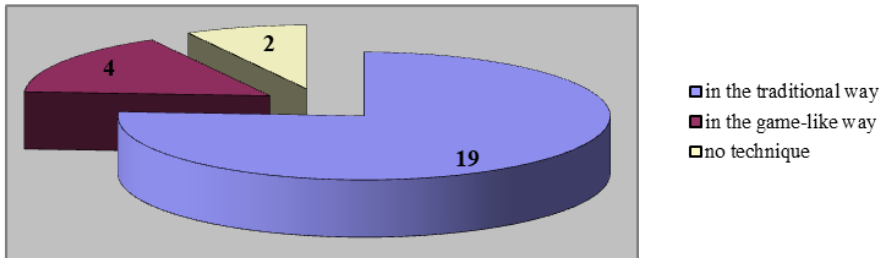
90% of the participants of the project used visual aids at the lesson, mainly pictures or drawings of their own. (See a sample illustration of the story on p. 79.) The visual aids were mainly used during the story telling process to introduce the characters. Other trainees changed the tone of their voice when reading different roles to show different characters.

In a lesson of this type it is important that the learners' language and vocabulary level were appropriate and they were prepared for understanding the story. We asked about the way our participants solved this question. Figure 9.2 shows that two trainees did not pay any attention to this problem because they considered the story was well-known to the children. Only four trainees used memory cards and pantomime for introducing the vocabulary of the story. The majority introduced the new words and structures in a traditional way: explained the meaning, wrote the words on the blackboard and practised the pronunciation of the words or phrases. This was done because they found time to be short; they had no opportunity to prepare the students in the previous lesson(s).

During the theoretical part in Phase 1 of our research, the trainee-participants' attention was drawn to the fact that story-based teaching provides an opportunity for integrating the interdisciplinary approach

but only 32% of the trainees referred to other subjects. They activated learners' knowledge in literature and biology. The rest of the trainees did not try to activate any previous knowledge, only mentioned that the story might be familiar with the learners. Some trainees tried recalling cases when learners helped to solve a problem in their own family.

*Figure 9.2 Techniques of preparing learners for the vocabulary of the story (n=25)*



*Source: Fábán, Lechner, Bárány, Huszti, 2011*

Except for two Ukrainian major students, all the trainees agreed that their lesson was successful; the learners understood the story, were cooperative and enjoyed the lesson. All the participants received positive feedback from the learners and from the whole story telling process.

## 9.5 Conclusions and pedagogical implications

Our hypothesis that story telling as a language teaching technique is not paid enough attention to in foreign language teaching in Transcarpathian Hungarian schools despite its advantages was supported. For this reason our aim in the future is to prepare our pre-service teachers for applying this method so that they can use it in their future work. As a consequence of our empirical investigation, the topic of teaching foreign languages to young learners through stories will hopefully be included in the syllabus of the discipline 'Methodology of English language teaching to young learners' in our institution.

## 9.6 Appendices

### *Reflection journal (English version)*

Please answer the following questions after you have told the story of "The enormous turnip" to children.



1. How much were you anxious during story telling? How much did you feel comfortable?
2. Was there such a moment during your story telling when you lost the thread of the story? How did you solve the situation?
3. Was there such a moment during your story telling when your thoughts did not focus on the task at hand?
4. Did you enjoy the story telling process?
5. Did you discover anything new in the story? Did you experience anything new in the process of telling/teaching a story in general?

***Self-report questionnaire (English version)***

Please answer the following questions after you have told the story of “The enormous turnip” to children.

1. How many children were listening to the story? How old were they? In what way were their seats arranged? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this seating?
2. Did the children interrupt the story telling process by their comments on the story or the process itself?
3. Where were you, the story-teller, sitting during the story telling process?
4. Did you use any visual aids (e.g. pictures, posters, puppets, etc.) during the story telling?
5. Did you use any background music? What was it? Why?
6. What techniques did you apply to introduce the characters of the story to the children?
7. How did you connect the story with the learners’ schemata?
8. How did you prepare the learners for the language / the lexis of the story?
9. Did you refer to the integration among the school subjects? How?
10. In your perception, did you tell the story clearly, in good tempo? Did the children ask back for information they did not hear/understand?

*Figure 9.3 Illustration to the story 'The enormous turnip' by Beáta Molnár*

*Hajz: Molnár Beáta*



*Source: Beáta Molnár, English major graduate of Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education, 2011*

## **10 GRADED READERS (GRS): HOW THE PUBLISHERS MAKE THE GRADE (CLARIDGE, 2012)**

The publishing of graded readers is big business, as the number of catalogues produced annually by publishers testifies. Graded readers are described by David Hill (2008, p.185, cited in Claridge, 2012, p. 106) as ‘books written for learners of English using limited lexis and syntax’. For learners of English as a second or foreign language, they are potentially a major source of extensive reading material. Because extensive reading is widely considered to make an important contribution to the language proficiency of English learners, they constitute a part of many of the extensive reading programmes used by teachers of English to speakers of other languages. Hence it seems a curious phenomenon that many learners of English are very reluctant to read anything at all, graded or otherwise.

The three main stakeholder groups in graded readers are the learners, the teachers and the publishers. A mismatch may exist between the learners’ perceptions of the purposes and uses of graded readers, and the perceptions of the teachers and publishers.

### **10.1 Publishers and their backgrounds**

The Oxford Bookworms (OB)

The Cambridge Readers (CR)

Penguin Readers (PR)

Pearson Longman

Macmillan Guided Readers (MGR)

The publishers can be divided into two groups: the university presses and the publishers owned by large corporations. Oxford University Press (OUP) and Cambridge University Press (CUP) are two of the oldest publishing houses in Europe.

OUP printed its first book in 1478; only two years after Caxton opened the first printing press in England. It received a decree from the Star Chamber in 1586, confirming its privilege to print books. It was granted the right to publish the King James I authorised version of the Bible, which apparently was very profitable and a “spur to OUP’s expansion”.

Cambridge University Press (CUP) was granted a charter by Henry VIII in 1534 to publish academic and educational works. It is described

on its own website as “an educational charitable enterprise, trading with vigour throughout the world and publishing over 2400 titles a year” (Black, 2000, cited in Claridge, 2012, p. 109). Both publish important dictionaries, and since the explosion of English Language Teaching (ELT) publishing in the 1960s, both have become major players in the production of ELT materials. Graded readers are included among these materials. Each publishing house currently has a series dedicated to producing graded readers for the 16+ age group: these are the Oxford Bookworms, set up in 1988; and the Cambridge English Readers, set up in 1999.

Penguin Books was founded more recently, in 1935, by Sir Allen Lane, previously of the Bodley Head. His mission was not to educate, but to supply good quality contemporary fiction to a British public, which until then, had been largely unable to afford to buy books. The first Penguins were colour coded, orange for fiction and green for crime. As well as supporting the right of the working person to read literature, Penguin also gained a reputation as a champion of free speech. It took on the Crown in 1960 in the trial of DH Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* under the Obscene Publications Act and won its case. Penguin was bought by the conglomerate Pearson in 1970, and Pearson later absorbed Longman, the publisher that in the 1930s, had brought out Michael West’s staged reader series for Bangladeshi school children. As a result of these amalgamations, the graded reader series were combined as Penguin Readers, under the umbrella of Longman Pearson.

Macmillan was founded in the 19th century by two Scots from the Isle of Arran. It has published some eminent figures such as Charles Kingsley, Matthew Arnold, Lewis Carroll, W. B. Yeats, and John Maynard Keynes. It is also responsible for the Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians. Its academic and reference division is called Palgrave Macmillan. Since 1995, the company has been owned by a German media group called the Georg von Holtzbrinck Publishing Group.

## 10.2 Text: Story or Topic

This category included the purposes of GRs, the choice of the story or non-fiction topic, whether it was an adaptation or an original, and how the levels were determined. Only the university publishers mentioned the academic purpose for which learners might be reading GRs. Oxword Bookworms spoke about reading being equivalent to conversation as a means of exposing the learner to language, and even more importantly,

of its function in satisfying a human need for stories. Cambridge Readers said that learners read in order to improve their ability to communicate internationally in English, but also for entertainment.

In addition to the differences in attitudes to story topic, a major debate among the publishers revolves around whether to commission original stories in reduced code or to adapt published books for native speakers. Within this larger discussion is the question of whether the classics are better suited to adaptation than modern novels. CRR firmly advocates original texts, but Hill (2005, in Claridge, 2012, p. 111) criticises this attitude, as he found that story lines which have already worked are likely to be better than those created specifically as vehicles for learner literature. Oxford Bookworms, Penguin Readers and Macmillan Guided Readers all do adaptations, and all of them advocate adapting the classics, as well as more contemporary novels, for various reasons. As stated above, one of Oxford Bookworms' fundamental tenets is "a good story that will stand the test of time," and that is surely a definition of a classic. There is also the advantage, that the classics have a certain cachet and respectability, which are both good marketing ploys. However, Cambridge Readers claim that adaptations of the classics are not generally done well, and the problem with adaptations is often that although the lexis and syntax are controlled, the content is not, making it difficult for learners from cultures alien to the setting of the story to understand. Cambridge Readers strongly support the notion of "information control," which means that their stories tend to be more "culture-free" than the others, even if there is still a discernible modern western cultural background to many of them. This cultural semi-neutrality is in fact, one of Hill's objections to the Cambridge Readers' graded readers, which he said, tend to have "simpler plots and thinner characterisation, especially at the higher levels" than the adaptations of classics (Hill, 2008, cited in Claridge, 2012, p. 111). Perhaps in response to this criticism, Cambridge very recently brought out a series of graded readers for teens called Discovery, which does include a few adaptations.

Attitudes to the book-of-the-film adaptations are also very different. Cambridge Readers, Oxford Bookworms and David Hill are very much against them, but Penguin Readers are particularly in favour. Both Penguin Readers and Macmillan Guided Readers cited the advantages of the free advertising that a popular movie, such as *Dante's Peak*, can give to a GR. However, Cambridge Readers find them incomprehensible

to learners, especially those who have not seen the film, and Oxford Bookworms explain the difficulties of re-telling a film. Without visual cues some written sequencing is impossible to follow for a native speaker, let alone a learner. Hill (2005) also objected strongly to film stills being used to advertise graded readers as he said the actors are usually far too glamorous for the characters they are meant to be representing. This has not stopped the publishers who do re-writes using film or television stills as cover pictures, presumably because of the advertising value these have.

### *10.2.1 Levels of Language*

All the publishers divide their graded reader series into levels appropriate for certain degrees of English proficiency, according to the number of headwords and the structures expected to be known at that degree. If the purpose of reading is enjoyment then the grading of readers is particularly vital so that learners are not discouraged when faced with a text that is clearly too hard for them to read fluently. Notwithstanding this necessity, there seems to be a consensus of opinion among the editors that although each publisher's particular level list is used as a guide for the writers, these lists should be neither prescriptive nor proscriptive. Oxford Bookworms acknowledged that it is impossible to estimate accurately the lexicon of students, as it differs with each individual according to interest and experience. Cambridge Readers remarked that certain genres may require certain vocabulary not within the given lexicon at certain levels. For instance, a Level 2 thriller with an indicated level of 700 headwords may need to include the words *kill*, *die* and *shoot*, even if they are not within the frequency range at that level.

However, even accepting this need for flexibility, there are surprisingly wide differences among publishers in the numbers of headwords deemed appropriate at each level, and each one has a slightly different way of dividing the headwords. Cambridge Readers now have 3800 headwords in the list they describe as advanced, Macmillan Guided Readers have a top level which they describe as upper intermediate with 2200 headwords. These discrepancies do not make choices easy for learners. The Common European Framework should have simplified life by providing a benchmark, but in fact, books that have 400 headwords are classified as A1/A2 by Oxford Bookworms, while Macmillan Guided Readers have put books with 1100 headwords in their A2 list.

**Table 10.1 Publishers' wordlists aligned  
with the Common European Framework (CEF)**

<b>CEF</b>	<b>Oxford Bookworms</b>	<b>Cambridge Readers</b>	<b>Macmillan Guided Readers</b>
A1	250	250	300
A1	400	400	600
A2	400	–	1100
A2	700	800	1400
B1	700	–	–
B1	1000	1300	1400
B1	1400	–	1600
B2	–	1900	–
B2	1800	2800	2200
B2	2500	–	–
C1	2500	3800	–

*Note.* Sourced from publishers' websites. Penguin Readers is missing as its website does not provide an equivalence with the CEF.

At the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) 2002 conference, a panel of editors from all four publishers discussed the question: *What makes a good Graded Reader?* In the report, Macmillan's Sarah Axten (2002, in Claridge, 2012) remarked: "It was interesting to have confirmed how closely parallel the aims and intentions of our different series seem to run." It is certainly true that each of the editors, when asked to talk about graded readers, were united in speaking mainly about fiction, which perhaps indicates that they agree with Hill's (2008, p. 187, cited in Claridge, 2012) contention: "only fiction provides the type of text that can develop a learner's fluency." Their views may also reflect his opinion that good non-fiction graded readers are hard to produce because "they make demands that cannot be met by graded text, which permits the expression of only the simplest of information which everyone knows already" (Hill, 2008, p. 187, in Claridge, 2012).

However, in spite of basic agreement between the publishers that a good story well told is fundamental to a good graded reader, there are basic differences in the attitudes to the perceived needs of the learners, which reflect the publishers' perceptions of learners' cultures and acceptance of topics.

Cambridge Readers is the most proactive of the publishers in producing work in sensitive areas, while aiming to make texts more acceptable to all markets by situating topics in relatively “culturally neutral” contexts. Their attitude seems to correspond to their approach of treating the learner as an adult, able to make choices and capable of autonomous learning. This may reflect a more western cultural perception, which assumes the individuality of the learner. Oxford Bookworms take the view that most topics can be dealt with if they are approached sensitively. They do not shy away from problem topic areas, but they do not court them deliberately. The other two publishers are very much more politically correct in their choice of subject matter and the illustrations that go with them.

The philosophies which guide the choices of the four publishers used in this study differ, principally because two are old university foundations, not totally constrained by market demands, whereas the other two are presumably subject to the requirements of their shareholders. The university presses can spend more time on editing and revising, and appear to be less bound by political correctness. Penguin Readers and Macmillan Guided Readers are happier to use the marketing advantages of tie-ins with other media, even if the educational and literary advantages are not entirely obvious. It would be wrong, however, to say that Oxford Bookworms and Cambridge Readers ignore the constraints of the market. It is notable that all four publishing houses, to a degree, respond to voices in the market that they perceive to be the most influential: the teachers and librarians who buy the books. Macmillan Guided Readers never survey the learners; Penguin Readers obtain their marketing data from agents and teachers; Oxford Bookworms and Cambridge Readers do survey the learners but not on a regular, or universal basis. While in responding to market demand, all four produce the most graded readers for the intermediate level.

Hill (2008, p. 189, cited in Claridge, 2012) actually suggested that the whole canon of graded readers currently produced is “too high-brow,” aimed at a rather narrow, academic, market, and that “most of them [language learners] would be happier with a Mills and Boon, or thriller, or western, type of book, than a classic” (2005, in Claridge, 2012). The fact that an average graded reader library usually contains numerous adaptations of classics may on the face of it add weight to this contention. However, it is also true that there is a large number of graded readers in all the publishers’ lists, both classics and others, including plenty of romantic fictions, thrillers, and action tales.



These differences between the publishers have led to major variations in the areas of subject and support, and suggest a variety of expectations about whether the reader is expected to read for pure enjoyment, or to extract a measurable quantity of learning from reading. Cambridge Readers, with their apparently non-interventionist approach, would seem to hope for an aesthetic, “enjoyment” approach from their readers; ideally, they will enjoy the books without being expected to answer questions on them or produce any measurable outcome. Whether learners are totally capable of reading the texts from the stance of a pleasure reader depends partly on the quality of the in-built scaffolding provided by the lexical, syntactical, and information controls. The level of language is critical in this case as it must be easy if it is to be enjoyed, rather than worked at. The expectation of Oxford Bookworms is also that learners read the series for the joy of reading. It is the Oxford Bookworms editor who speaks of the reader being drawn, willy-nilly, into the fictional universe, and of the “unputdownability” of a book (Bassett, 2005, cited in Claridge, 2012, p.117). Yet, Oxford Bookworms does not ignore the value of “scaffolding” the learner to enable her to enjoy reading, by providing notes and glosses. Macmillan Guided Readers were not so eloquent about the need for a good story, but instead for a story that would not present lexical, structural or cultural problems for the learner; this opinion also supports an expectation of an enjoyable, uninterrupted, reading of a book, assisted by notes. Penguin Readers, while agreeing on the necessity for a good story, was more focused on market demand, which often included teacher demands for activities that go with the graded readers; while the readers are expected to enjoy reading, they are also expected to do exercises and answer questions.

### 10.3 Conclusion

In examining graded readers for any one factor which might either encourage or discourage learners from reading, it is hard to pinpoint an area where the publishers as a group could be at fault. The four described here all agree in that a good story, well-written for the level, is the ideal model for a graded reader. How a good story is defined is another matter, and this criterion to a certain extent must depend on the taste and personality of the editors, and the aims and ideals of their respective publishing houses. There are different perceptions of how a text for non-native speakers must either be adapted or conceived in order for

it to form comprehensible input for the learner. Publishers all appear to agree that texts should be “well-written,” and this may assume a literary bent to their production, but whether that would in itself discourage or encourage learner readers is doubtful. The success of the four publishers in the market place indicates that the products are satisfactory in the views of business and reading professionals. However, the question of why learners do not read enough remains unanswered.

So, are the publishers making the grade? In many ways, collectively they are doing an excellent job. The variety of top quality material certainly caters to the important criterion of choice for learners. It hardly seems possible that it is the fault of publishers that learners are not reading. But, if not the publishers, then who?

According to the evidence gleaned from the learners themselves, their teachers and the publishers, it seems clear that the respective perceptions of the stakeholders are at odds. The learners would like to enjoy a good story, but if they are to enjoy it, the story must be easy enough to read without effort, and it must also be worth reading. However, their teachers want them to read texts that are just a little too hard for that to happen. According to the publishers in this study, and the evidence on their websites, most graded readers are produced, in line with the wishes of the teachers, for the group of learners who are at the upper elementary to intermediate group of learners. If they are to read easily and for pleasure, learners should be reading extensively at the level below their perceived proficiency level. This would be the elementary level. Yet, most of the books are actually at the intermediate level.

Teachers of English as another or second language thus need to change their attitudes towards the recommended levels for extensive reading. If teachers insist that learners select easy books, publishers will produce them. There are some outstanding graded readers written for beginners, although there are not enough. It is the number of graded readers of excellent quality at the very bottom levels that should be developed in order to “hook” the learners of English into extensive reading at the earliest opportunity. The levels above the existing advanced level, which would provide a bridge between graded readers and teen fiction written for native speakers, also require development. The first of these two lacunae, in particular, would seem to indicate a major need in the arena of English learning, and incidentally, a marketing opportunity of significant proportions.

## **11 GRADED READERS AND VOCABULARY (NATION & WANG MING-TZU, 1999)**

This study examines the vocabulary learning possibilities and vocabulary load of GRs. It is a corpus-based study and looks at a collection of GRs at various levels from the same GR scheme. Because the study looks at what actually happens when learners read GRs, it can be seen as the first step of a program of research that looks at the role of GRs in vocabulary development. In essence, this study examines the coverage, density and repetitions of vocabulary at each level of a graded reading scheme. It also looks at the vocabulary of reading schemes in terms of the high frequency of vocabulary of English. It tries to answer questions like the following:

Do learners need to know the new vocabulary of a level in the graded reading scheme before they begin reading at that level?

How much do learners have to read in order to learn the new vocabulary?

How much graded reading should learners be doing?

Are graded reading schemes well designed?

Do they cover the most important high frequency words of English?

These questions are approached from a vocabulary perspective. Although vocabulary knowledge is very important for reading, it is one of a range of important factors affecting reading and learning from reading. These other factors include the learners' interest in the book being read, the background knowledge that the learner brings to the book, the learners' skill in reading in the first and second languages, and the quality of writing in the book being read.

### **11.1 Graded readers**

GRs are books which are specially written or adapted for second language learners. This involves severely restricting the vocabulary that can occur, controlling the grammatical structures that can occur, and matching the length of text to the vocabulary and grammar controls.

Typically a graded reading scheme consists of a series of vocabulary and grammar levels with several readers available at each level of the scheme. A low proficiency learner would begin reading books at the lowest level of the scheme, and when reading at that level was comfortable, would move on to books at the next level.

Reading GRs can have several learning goals. These include gaining skill and fluency in reading, establishing previously learned vocabulary and grammar, learning new vocabulary and grammar, and gaining pleasure from reading.

There are some writers who see no place for simplified reading material of the kind that is found in GRs. They consider that the simplification results in distorted language that is not suitable for learners. However, there is no research to support this position. The strongest argument in favour of GRs is that without them learners would not be able to experience reading in a second language at a level of comfort and fluency approaching L1 reading. The vocabulary load of unsimplified material is so high that learners would have to study for several years before they could read a book where they knew most of the vocabulary. Graded reading schemes allow learners to have early contact with easy material in the second language.

Michael West designed his GRs as supplementary readers. That is, they were not intended to teach previously unmet vocabulary, but to help establish previously met vocabulary and to help learners to gain pleasure and skill from reading material containing familiar vocabulary.

## 11.2 Graded reading schemes

A graded reading scheme usually has a word and structure list divided into levels that are used to guide the production of the books. It seems possible to produce GRs at each level where the proper nouns and the vocabulary allowed at that level cover more than or close to 97% of the running words in the text. This would provide very comfortable reading. If the vocabulary introduced at each level is not known beforehand, however, reading particularly in the lower levels of the scheme is likely to be laborious, as there will be a high proportion of unknown words. Direct study of this vocabulary would be a useful way of helping reading when first entering a new level of the scheme.

GRs provide some support for unknown vocabulary through the use of pictures and through the rich contexts provided to support guessing from context. However, in general, guessing from context will be very difficult without knowledge of 95% of the running words in the text.

At the early levels of GRs, learners might find the vocabulary load of the texts a little heavy and may need to make use of a dictionary.

Before learners begin a graded reading program, some direct study of the vocabulary at the early levels could make reading easier.

At the higher levels of GRs, the conditions for incidental vocabulary learning are very good.

The analysis showed (Nation & Wang Ming-tzu, 1999, p. 364) that there are more repetitions of words in GRs at subsequent levels than there are at the levels where they are first introduced. This suggests that learners should not read so many books at the early levels but should read more at the later levels providing the vocabulary load is not so heavy. That is, it is not likely to be the level at which the word is introduced that establishes knowledge of that word; it is likely to be the later levels that establish the knowledge. This reinforces the point that GRs are not designed to teach words when they first appear.

A general conclusion is that GRs have the best effect for vocabulary learning when a substantial number of books at each level are read.

Further implications include:

GRs need to be quite long in order to get repetitions of vocabulary. To get a useful number of repetitions, at least three books need to be read at each level, and preferably more at later levels.

Learners need to read at least one GR a week to meet words often enough to have a good effect on their vocabulary growth.

There need to be GRs up to the 5000 word level.

After the 2000 word level, there should be GRs focusing on fiction and there should be academic non-fiction readers.

The number of new words in each level of a graded reading scheme should become bigger from the earlier to the later levels.

### **11.3 Conclusion for teachers using GRs**

This study has shown that a carefully designed scheme of GRs is a very effective means of ensuring that learners meet the high frequency words of a language with plenty of repeated opportunities so that learners have a chance to learn them and to enrich their knowledge of them.

Learners need to read a minimum of five books at each level, and need to work their way through the levels. The main reason for this is that most words occur in subsequent levels than that they do at the level at which they are first introduced.

This reading needs to be done at a fairly intensive rate of around a book per week. This will ensure that learners meet words again before they have forgotten their previous meeting with the words.

When learners move to a new level in their graded reading, it is likely that they will meet quite a high proportion of unknown words. At this point it would be wise to supplement the learning through reading with direct study of the new vocabulary, using word cards. This is best done as an individual activity with learners making their own cards and choosing the words from the books to put on the cards. Teachers can give useful advice and training in how to go about this learning. This may need to be done for only the first one or two books at a level. After that the density of unknown words will be light enough to allow more fluent reading.

From a vocabulary learning perspective, it is best to move fairly quickly to the higher levels of the graded reading scheme and to read more books at those higher levels.

As well as providing opportunities for vocabulary growth, GRs also allow learners to develop fluency with the words they already know. If the degree of vocabulary control in a GR is well applied, then by reading books at levels that they have already passed through, learners will meet few unknown words and will be able to concentrate on reading faster.

#### **11.4 Conclusion for publishers designing a graded reading scheme**

GRs differ from other reading material in that the language in them is controlled so that most or all of it is within the proficiency level of the learners reading them. GRs should not differ in other ways. That is, they should be readable, interesting and well-written. Just because the vocabulary and grammar are controlled, the quality of the writing should not suffer. A GR should tell a good story well.

Graded reading schemes need to take learners closer to unsimplified text in the higher levels of the scheme. GRs should take learners up to 5,000 word families with some specialisation of focus for learners wishing to read non-academic text (novels, magazines), and those wishing to read academic text and newspapers.

The spacing and size of levels need to be worked out so that each successive level contains a greater number of words. The principle that

should lie behind the setting up of the levels of a GR scheme is that when learners move from one level to another, they will not be overburdened by new vocabulary.

Vocabulary control does not ensure an interesting story and an enjoyable read and GRs must be interesting. Lack of vocabulary control however increases the vocabulary load of the text and makes reading a much more difficult process. We have to see interest and control not as alternatives but as complementary goals in producing GRs.

The effects of all these changes in graded reading schemes should be to increase learners' satisfaction with GRs and thus to encourage them to read more. GRs are such a tremendous resource for language learners that they need to be designed and used for the best possible effect.





## 12 READING COMPREHENSION

### 12.1 How useful are comprehension questions?

(Rinvoluceri, 2008)

You may well ask me “How useful is the question in this title?” After all to check what a student has understood after listening to or reading an L2 text seems plain common sense. If it were not felt to be a sensible procedure why would course book writers supply comprehension questions in large quantities?

Teachers’ comprehension questions

Comprehension questions are a part of an EFL teacher’s arsenal that few people would regard as controversial. In ordinary conversation, in L1, it is quite normal to ask a comprehension question if you are unsure about what the other person has said. You might break into what they are saying and hypothesize: “Oh, so, do you mean that.....?”

So, clearly, comprehension questions are a normal part of discourse. The difference is that, in normal conversation, it is the listener who decides to ask the speaker for clarification when he fails to follow what the other is saying. In the EFL class it is an external authority (course book/teacher) that initiates the comprehension checking.

When you come to think of it this is a very bizarre procedure: How on earth does a course book writer in North Oxford know where the linguistic difficulties in a reading passage will lie for a 16 year old in Cairo? Or a university student in Bangkok or a senior citizen in Hamburg?

One might reasonably expect that Egyptian Arabic, Thai and German might affect the three learners differently in terms of their ability to comprehend the same passage.

Student comprehension

My first suggestion is that comprehension questions are the business of the students and no one else. **One good way of dealing with a reading passage in class is to ask the students to read the text twice and then write 7 questions, each one aimed at a different, named classmate. The students themselves know, better than the teacher does, which classmate is likely to be able to give them an adequate answer. Once each student has written at least four questions, ask them to move around the room asking their questions and listening to the answers.**

- This procedure is respectful of the students' right to find out what they feel they have not yet grasped.
- This procedure links the course book passage to real people in the room.
- This procedure reduces the teachers' preparation time (if she is in the habit of creating her own comprehension questions.)

#### Deletion, elaboration and transformation

Yet there are other deeper reasons for doubting the usefulness of the comprehension question in second language reading. The comprehension question is based on the notion that a listener or reader is a sort of CD-ROM that accurately holds the entire in-coming message. This can never be the case. The normal act of reading is always one of deletion, elaboration and transformation.

The reader will defocus from details that strike them as insignificant. These details will be deleted from the reader's memory.

The reader will elaborate the text as it hits the auditory circuits of her brain – if she is listening to a story the elaboration will often be visual and the listener will create her own 'inner film'.

In some cases the reader will transform the text by framing it within previous experiences.

For example, I once told a group a tale about a wall girdling a town and the theme of the story was 'fear'. One listener perceived the whole story in the political framework of the Berlin Wall and its breaching. This person 'heard' a much bigger story than I think I told.

Such deletion, elaboration and transformation are a part of the normal, everyday creativity of listening and reading.

#### Alternatives to comprehension checking

So what can I do after telling the class a story? **I can offer the students questions that help them explore each others' elaboration. I ask the students to go through the questions below and cross out the ones they do not relate to. Once this deletion is effected I pair them and ask them to use the questions they have retained to get an idea of their partner's elaboration. Here is a set of such questions:**

**In which sort of country did you imagine the story?**

**What kind of pictures did you get as you listened?**

**Did you create a sort of film from the story?**

**Were you ever actually in the same space as the character in the story?**

What feelings did you have during the telling?

Did you become any of the characters?

What, for you, is the moral of the story?

Did this story remind you of other stories you know?

Did any of the characters seem like people you know?

Can you think of some one in this group who may have disliked the story?

Would your brother/mother/daughter/father like this story? Why would they like it?

At which point in the story did you really start listening?

Which was the most vivid bit for you?

At which points in the story did you drift off and think of other things?

The list of questions could be much longer and more detailed, but you will notice they all focus on the students' elaborated text and on their reactions to the text. None are about details of the original text.

"Very nice" I can hear some readers saying, "but what if the students did not understand the language during the telling?"

My answer to this is that the teacher/teller needs to make sure she gets her meaning across by using mime, drawing and L1 glosses on words or phrases that may be hard for students. It is the teller's job to ensure language comprehension as she tells, and I believe minimal, disciplined recourse to L1 is natural in this situation.

## **12.2 Reading and schema/script building (Hawkins, 1991, pp. 176-178)**

Schemata (the plural of 'schema') are the fundamental elements upon which all information processing depends and in this sense Rumelhart (1977, cited in Hawkins, 1991, p. 176) call them the 'building blocks of cognition'. As such, they are used in the process of interpreting sensory data, in retrieving information from memory, in organizing actions, in determining goals and subgoals, in allocating resources, and generally, in guiding the flow of processing in the system. Schemata are 'packets' or 'units of knowledge' that represent our beliefs about objects, situations, events, sequences of events, actions and sequences of actions.

With respect to teaching children to read, schemata/scripts play an obvious role. It is not only because children are faced with possibly new schemata every time they approach a text, but also because they

need to develop a schema for what reading is in the first place. This is to say that children do not always understand what it means to read, let alone what it is that they are reading. They are sometimes led to think that it is ‘sounding out letters,’ or filling in phonics worksheets, but the real connection between the spoken word and the written word often eludes them. The first job for the teacher is, of course, to try to help their students develop a script that lets them in on the nature of reading as the interpretation of the written word.

In summary, the child learning to read needs to understand, first, that print is meaningful and, second, that reading may require developing or changing or discovering new knowledge structures. People involved in teaching children to read may need to spend a great deal of time helping them understand these two things; and talk about text, especially talk that allows the child to explore the meaning of the text and how the meaning can be discovered within the text itself, is essential. Children will need help with decoding and semantic and/or syntactic prediction, but even more importantly, they will need time spent on interaction about what it is they are reading.

## 13 EXTENSIVE READING (ER) IN FOCUS (FERNANDEZ DE MORGARDO, 2009)

Just as cycling is the best learned by riding a bicycle, so is reading by reading. This is the most important belief underlying Extensive Reading's validity. Among the obstacles a teacher has to overcome in connection with ER are: a) scarcity of reading materials; b) lack of adequate preparation of teachers; c) pressures to cover the entire syllabus and text books, leaving no time for programs such as ER; d) exam pressure and inflexibility of compulsory assessment activities.

*Table 13.1 Students' comments regarding opinions of extensive reading / ER (p. 39)*

CATEGORY	COMMENTS
<b>General opinion</b>	<p>It is a practical way of gaining confidence in reading English.            I felt it helped me with comprehension and speed.            I think it is a great technique.            It is good to help develop the habit of reading in English.            I thought it was great to get to know about new things in English.            I think it is a very creative way to foster reading in English.            It made the class somehow different and that is good.            I liked it because it had me practice.            It is a good method to relate us with the language.            It is good practice which helps get me more fluent in English.            I think it is a good method that we should use not only in English but in other languages.</p>
<b>Enjoyment</b>	<p>I enjoyed it because it allowed me to learn about many different and interesting things.            I think I like English better now.            I enjoyed the varied topics.            I enjoyed it because the topics were very interesting.            I found it enjoyable because I read about stuff that interested me.            I found the topics interesting because they were about things I didn't know about.            It was great to have the freedom to choose what you are to read.            I enjoyed it because it was a mixture of entertainment and learning.</p>
<b>Usefulness</b>	<p>It is useful because it helps with vocabulary and speed.            It helps develop skills for reading faster.            I thought it was useful because it broadens my knowledge of technology and innovations.            It helped me to get better at finding the main idea.            I think it helped me improve in vocabulary and reading comprehension.            I found it useful because it helped me learn English while learning about things that I enjoy.            It helped me understand better the readings from our regular class text book.            I feel reading my text book is easier now.            I think it helps me get a better grade because it makes me a better reader.</p>

Table 13.1 (continued)

CATEGORY	COMMENTS
<b>Reading skills</b>	<p>It helps because I practiced a lot.</p> <p>I am not sure if it helps me with skills.</p> <p>I think it helped with my reading skills because the more you read the better you get at it.</p> <p>I think so, because we did it every week; regular practice is good.</p> <p>If I can do all this reading then I can also read a book.</p> <p>I was surprised to find out that I didn't have to look up every word in order to understand a text; that made me more confident and faster.</p> <p>It made me better at reading speed and comprehension.</p>
<b>Vocabulary enrichment</b>	<p>It helps me practice meaning from context.</p> <p>It helped me learn new words.</p> <p>I think it helped my vocabulary because of the varied topics and the regular practice.</p> <p>Yes, because it had me using my dictionary.</p> <p>I am certain I learned new words by guessing meaning from context.</p> <p>It helped me learn new vocabulary because I was forced to look up key words to gather the main idea.</p>

### 13.1 What is Extensive Reading? (Renandya, 2007)

According to Carrell and Carson (1997, pp. 49-50, cited in Renandya, 2007, p. 134), 'extensive reading... generally involves rapid reading of large quantities of material or longer readings (e.g. whole books) for general understanding, with the focus generally on the meaning of what is being read than on the language'. While this definition provides an overview of extensive reading, Davis (1995, p. 329, cited in Renandya, 2007, p. 134) offers a more useful definition of extensive reading from a classroom implementation perspective:

An extensive reading programme is a supplementary class library scheme, attached to an English course, in which pupils are given the time, encouragement, and materials to read pleurably, at their own level, as many books as they can, without the pressures of testing or marks. Thus, pupils are competing only against themselves, and it is up to the teacher to provide the motivation and monitoring to ensure that the maximum number of books is being read in the time available. The watchwords are quantity and variety, rather than quality, so that books are selected for their attractiveness and relevance to the pupils' lives, rather than for literary merit.

Although extensive reading programmes come under different names, including Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR), Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), and Silent Uninterrupted Reading for

Fun (SURF), and the Book Flood programme, they all share a common purpose: that learners read large quantities of books and other materials in an environment that nurtures a lifelong reading habit. In addition, these programmes also share a common belief, that is, the ability to read fluently is best achieved through reading extensively in the language. People learn to read by reading. Extensive reading differs from intensive reading. In intensive reading, students normally work with short texts with close guidance from the teacher. The aim of intensive reading is to help students obtain detailed meaning from the text, to develop reading skills – such as identifying main ideas and recognizing text connectors – and to enhance vocabulary and grammar knowledge. It is important to note that these two approaches to teaching reading – intensive and extensive reading – should not be seen as being in opposition, as both serve different but complementary purposes. However, intensive reading seems to be the dominant mode of teaching reading in many language classrooms. This is despite evidence that intensive reading alone will not help learners develop their reading fluency, a crucial skill that mature readers acquire only after repeated exposure to massive quantities of written text.

### **13.2 Theoretical framework**

The theory behind extensive reading is a simple one. We learn language by understanding messages, that is, when we understand what people say to us and when we comprehend what we read. This is a position maintained by a number of theorists – James Asher, Harris Winitz, Kenneth Goodman, Frank Smith, Warwick Elley and Richard Day, just to name a few. But it was Stephen Krashen who formalized this position into a theory known as the ‘input hypothesis’, which he later called the ‘comprehension hypothesis’ (Krashen 2004, in Renandya, 2007). The comprehension hypothesis states that the following conditions are needed for acquisition to take place:

- that the input is abundantly available;
- that the input is comprehensible;
- that the input is slightly above students’ current level of competence.

### **13.3 Why are we not all doing Extensive Reading?**

Those of us who have been in the profession for some time know that extensive reading is not new. However, although many of us would readily

acknowledge the educational benefits of ER, how many of us are actually implementing extensive reading in our second language programme? If extensive reading is good for second language development, why isn't everybody doing it? According to Day and Bamford (1998, in Renandya, 2007), one of the most important reasons is that many teachers believe that intensive reading alone will produce good, fluent readers. As was mentioned earlier, in intensive reading students spend lots of time analyzing and dissecting short, difficult texts under the close supervision of the teacher. The aim of intensive reading is to help students construct detailed meaning from the text, to develop reading skills, and enhance vocabulary and grammar knowledge. This overemphasis on the explicit teaching of reading and language skills leaves little room for implementing other approaches. Researchers agree that the intensive reading approach may help students perform well in conventional reading tests, but may not help them become fluent and independent readers. A related reason why extensive reading is not done goes back to the whole paradigm issue of the role of teachers. Many teachers are perhaps still uncomfortable with the idea of playing a 'less' central role in the classroom. In intensive reading, instruction is more teacher-centered in that teachers are more center-stage in what is happening in the classroom. They do lots of talking and decide what skills or strategies to teach, how these are taught, and what passages to use. In contrast, with ER, roles shift as teachers not only pass on knowledge, but also 'guide students and participate with them as members of a reading community' (Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 47, in Renandya, 2007).

Other reasons are more practical in nature. In teaching in-service courses, teachers are often heard saying that they do not have enough time to get students to read extensively because they feel pressured by the administration to cover the predetermined materials specified in the syllabus. Some others report that since extensive reading is not directly assessed, they feel that curriculum time would be better spent on other subjects that students are tested on. Even in places where extensive reading has been incorporated into the second language curriculum, full implementation of the extensive reading programmes is hampered by these practical considerations. Careful examination of these implementation variables should naturally receive more attention in future research.



## 14 USEFUL ACTIVITIES (DAY, 1993)

### ◆ Reading Around the Room

**Level:** *Beginning*

**Aims:** *Increase phonological awareness;  
Help students isolate initial sounds*

**Class Time:** *5–10 minutes*

**Preparation Time:** *15–20 minutes*

**Resources:** *Labels for objects in the classroom;  
Pointer sticks*

When reading with young children, teachers often use pointer sticks to call attention to each word as it is read. Young learners enjoy using pointer sticks to find and read labels around the classroom. For beginners, finding labels on familiar objects helps them to improve their phonological awareness and notice the letters for initial sounds.

#### ***Procedure***

1. Write or print out labels and attach them to objects in the classroom.
2. Demonstrate appropriate use of pointer sticks for pointing to the labels and reading the words.
3. Allow the students to read around the room by pointing to the different labels and reading the words aloud.

#### ***Caveats and Options***

1. If you want the students to focus on a particular sound or sounds, you can mark the pointer sticks with different letters and send the students on a treasure hunt searching for words that begin with that letter. When students are holding D pointer sticks, they should find and read the labels for door, desk, drawer, and so forth. When students are holding M pointer sticks, they should point to and read the labels for mirror, marker, map, and so forth.
2. You might want to begin with words that are easy to recognize because of the item they represent. As students progress, you can add labels to the classroom that are more challenging. As you add each new set of labels, use a different color of paper. This will allow you to give instructions such as, Now, use your pointer stick to read all of the yellow labels in the classroom.
3. Another option is to put the students in pairs and give them a checklist of labels to find. As they find each item, they can make a checkmark in the corresponding box.

◆ ***Sorting by Sound***

**Level:** *Beginning*

**Aims:** *Increase phonological awareness;  
Help students isolate initial sounds*

**Class Time:** *15 minutes*

**Preparation Time:** *30 minutes*

**Resources:** *4–8 sets of three small boxes with letter labels;  
4–8 sets of picture cards that correspond to the letters on the  
small boxes*

Sorting is an important skill for young learners to master. This activity combines sorting items and identifying first sounds in the items' names. It allows students to physically manipulate objects and group them according to their initial sounds.

***Procedure***

1. Divide the students into small groups. Each group should have a set of small boxes and a stack of picture cards.

2. Instruct the students to divide the cards equally among the members of the group. They should take turns naming aloud the item on one card and placing the card into the correct box until all the cards are in boxes.

3. Once all of the picture cards have been sorted by sound, students should empty the boxes one at a time. They should repeat the names of the objects aloud to make sure that all of the pictures were placed correctly.

***Caveats and Options***

1. If students need preliminary instruction, use a set of large boxes and real objects to do a class demonstration. Call a few of the students to the front of the class one by one. Each student will choose an object and hold it up for the class to see. Repeat the name of the item and determine the letter that represents the initial sound. Emphasize the initial sound and have the student place the object in the box with the correct letter for that sound.

2. You may choose to make all of the sets of boxes and picture cards the same, or you might want to make different sets to add variety to the activity. For example, you could label the boxes in one set with letters *B*, *P*, and *S*. The cards for this set would have pictures of items, such as a ball, a bed, a book; a pencil, a pig, a piano; and a snake, a sock, the sun. In another set, the cards would include pictures of a flower, a frog, a foot; a nose, a net, a necklace; and a turtle, a tooth and a truck. The boxes for that set would be labeled with letters *F*, *N*, and *T*. This variety would allow you to have the students rotate from one station to another as they practice sorting by different initial sounds.

◆ ***The Food Label Store***

**Levels:** *Beginning; ESL primarily, but can be adapted for EFL*

**Aims:** *Involve students in the development of their own reading skills;  
Help students see a connection between reading in school and  
reading in the outside world*

**Class Time:** *No set time*

**Preparation Time:** *20–30 minutes*

**Resources:** *One or more cardboard boxes, depending on how large the  
store is to be;  
A series of questions about food labels;  
Glue or staples*

Students may be more motivated to learn if they become involved in their own learning and if they can generalize what they are learning in class to activities outside the classroom. Shopping for food is a relevant activity for nearly any student.

***Procedure***

1. Tell the students to bring to class food labels of any description (e.g., labels from cans, meats, bottles, jars; fronts of boxes of cereals, mixes, soap, milk containers; wrappers from loaves of bread, rolls).

2. Place the students in whatever size group you think works best (anywhere from three to six students works well) and give each group a cardboard store.

3. Have them glue their labels to their store.

4. When the groups have finished creating their stores, ask a series of questions that the students can answer by reading the labels from their stores. Sample questions include: *What food is the most expensive? The cheapest? Which product is the heaviest? The lightest? Which food do you like best? Why? The least? Why? What two foods go together (e.g., salt and pepper; bread and butter; peanut butter and jelly)? How many brands are there of the same product?*

5. You might also have the students do a variety of tasks. For example, ask them to find as many brand names as they can as quickly as possible. Another task is to have them add up the total cost of all of the products in the store. Or ask them to put all of the products in various categories (e.g., meats, dairy products).

***Caveats and Options***

1. Have the students work with stores that other groups created.

2. Distribute the questions and have the students write their answers.

3. Ask the questions orally and have the students write their answers.

4. Have the students make up a menu for a particular meal.

5. This activity can deal with products other than food. For example, you could have students bring in ads for clothes or small appliances. It can be adapted to an EFL situation if students have access outside the classroom to products with English labels. Or you could collect labels and bring them to class for the students to use in making the stores.

6. If there is limited space and storing the boxes is difficult, use poster boards instead of cardboard boxes.

### ◆ ***Roll the Dice***

**Level:** *High Beginning (can be adjusted up or down)*

**Aims:** *Encourage reading by allowing students to create words and read them*

**Class Time:** *10–15 minutes*

**Preparation Time:** *10 minutes*

**Resources:** *Dice (one dice per student pair);*

*Dictionary (optional)*

This activity allows students to roll dice two times to create readable consonant-vowel-consonant words. It is enjoyable, boosts student confidence and curiosity, and helps students discover new words.

#### ***Procedure***

1. Give the chart to students (see Appendix below), or reproduce it on the wall. This will tell them the letters corresponding with the number they get on roll 1 and roll 2.

2. Students will pair up (we will use *SA* and *SB* to represent them). *SA* rolls the die two times and writes the letter each time on the chart.

3. *SA* hands the die to *SB* and looks his word up in the dictionary.

4. While *SA* looks the word up, *SB* rolls two times to make a word. *SB* passes the die and uses the dictionary.

5. Repeat five times (so each student has six words). Students show each other their six words, make new pairs, and read each other's words.

#### ***Caveats and Options***

The activity can easily be shortened or altered for different situations.

1. Students can do the dice and dictionary part alone (with one die per student).

2. The teacher can hold the dictionary, and the students can come up when they finish all six words to ask for the definitions. This will keep the words mysterious.

3. The activity can be done with diphthongs, silent letters (such as *i\_e*), or CC (consonant-consonant) pairs.

4. The teacher or students can make their own dice with letters on them (e.g., the “roll 1” letters can be blue; “roll 2,” green; and “roll 3,” red).

### *Appendix*

This is a chart that you can give to your students.

Roll 1st letter 2nd letter Roll 3rd letter

**1 B A 1 B**

**2 C A 2 D**

**3 D A 3 G**

**4 M A 4 N**

**5 P A 5 P**

**6 S A 6 T**

You can make many common, for-all-ages words from this combination: BAD, BAG,

BAN, BAT, CAB, CAN, CAP, CAT, DAB, DAD, DAN, MAD, MAN, MAP, MAT, PAD, PAN,

PAT, SAD, SAG, SAP, SAT. You can produce a dictionary in a spreadsheet that lists all of these words and their L1 meaning(s).

For a U vowel, the first letters can be B, C, G, H, N, R; the third letters can be B, D, G, M, N, T (makes about 25 words).

### ◆ **Say It, Write It, Read It**

**Levels:** *Beginning*

**Aims:** *Build reading texts for emerging readers from language that they already know*

**Class Time:** *15–30 minutes, depending on children’s attention span;*

*The process can be stopped at any time and continued later in the lesson or in a subsequent lesson*

**Preparation Time:** *About 30 minutes for the first lesson, less for subsequent lessons*

**Resources:** *Large sheets of newsprint, white- or blackboard, or computer with projector;*

*Writing paper*

In many environments, children are first exposed to English through pleasurable listen-and-do activities like finger plays, action songs, Total Physical Response routines, and dramatic story telling. Then, when they reach middle school, they are suddenly expected to

cope with challenging, text-heavy reading passages in their English language textbooks. This activity describes one way to build a bridge from no reading to some reading, so that textbook reading becomes less intimidating. It rests on the notion that students can read what they can already say, and, in this respect, relies heavily on the principles of the Language Experience Approach (LEA).

LEA is a process by which teachers transcribe what students say and then use the resulting text as reading material for the students. It is a widely used strategy in the teaching of first-language reading to young children and in adult literacy programs. It works well for beginning readers in second- or foreignlanguage classes, no matter what their age. The activity described here is written with children in mind. Adaptations for other language learners are suggested in **Caveats and Options** below.

### *Procedure*

1. Before class, choose a song, chant, warm-up routine, or story that your students already know well and enjoy. As an example, let us consider a popular morning song with these lyrics:

Good morning. Good morning.  
 Good morning, how are you?  
 Good morning. Good morning.  
 I'm fine, thank you.

2. Decide how and where you will transcribe the song. You will need a large sheet of newsprint, white- or blackboard space, or a computer with projector. Ideally, the completed text would remain on display in the classroom where students can see it for 2 to 3 days.

3. Sing the song together once or twice to review.

4. Tell the children that now that they know the song so well, they can read it, too, but that you need their help to write it first.

5. Ask them to sing it again for you s-l-o-w-l-y so that you can write it. As they sing, you transcribe their words, pointing them out as you do.

6. Because writing takes a bit of time, the children may have time to repeat the lines two to three times as you write.

7. Tell students to copy the song into their notebooks or journals. If they are tired at this point, they can copy it later. This is the advantage of using newsprint, so the story can hang in the classroom for 2 to 3 days. There are many ways to extend the use of the story in this or subsequent lessons. For example:

- Ask for volunteers to come up and point to all the instances of *good* or *morning*.
- Ask volunteers to locate the phrases *How are you*, *I'm fine*, and *thank you*.
- Ask volunteers to spell *morning*, *fine*, and *thank*.
- Write and read related expressions or sentences that students already know, such as these: *a good story*, *feel good*, *good and bad*, *in the morning*, *tomorrow morning*, *every morning*.

### ***Caveats and Options***

1. This activity is meant for children who are already reading and writing (at least to some extent) in their first language. That is, they already understand what reading is.

2. If possible, have students keep their stories in a notebook where their writing can be organized, dated, and reread frequently.

3. LEA is ideally suited for older learners who do not read or write much English but may be familiar with it through music, movies, travel, workplace encounters, and so forth. They can dictate song lyrics, memorized dialogues from familiar folktales or stories, and so forth. The principles of the lesson remain the same: If they can say it, the teacher can write it, and then they can read it.

### ◆ ***Character Faces***

***Levels:*** Any

***Aim:*** Help students describe characters and categorize words and phrases

***Class Time:*** 10 minutes

***Preparation Time:*** 10 minutes

***Resources:*** Any story that the students have read

Being able to describe characters is an important part of story comprehension. Character description involves more than just listing adjectives to describe a character. In this activity, students will use higher-order thinking skills as they categorize words and phrases associated with a character from the story.

### ***Procedure***

1. Draw a circle with four quadrants on the board. In three of the quadrants, write phrases that are in some way related to the main character. In the fourth quadrant, write an unrelated phrase. For example, three actions that the main character did and one action done by another

character; three adjectives to describe the main character and one adjective that does not describe the character; three places that the character visited in the story and one place not mentioned; or three names of the character's friends and one name of an adult.

2. As a class, ask students to try to identify which of the four phrases is different. Cross off the phrase that doesn't belong (see Appendix below).

3. As a class, come up with a title for the circle based on what the three remaining phrases have in common.

4. Draw three to four more circles on the board, or give them to students on a worksheet and have them work in pairs to identify and cross off the one phrase that does not belong.

### ***Caveats and Options***

1. Draw a face inside the circle to help students make the connection that all of your circles are describing the same character in a different way.

2. To make this activity easier, the teacher can provide circle titles based on what the three words or phrases have in common.

3. For very young learners, sing or chant the Sesame Street song "One of These Things (Is Not Like the Others)" as you do the class examples. (Many versions are available on youtube if you prefer to play the audio.) Here are the song lyrics:

One of these things is not like the others  
One of these things just doesn't belong  
Can you tell which thing is not like the others  
By the time I finish my song?

### ***◆ Cooperative Vocabulary Building and Early Writing With ELL and Monolingual Students***

**Levels:** *Beginning*

**Aims:** *Expand knowledge of high-frequency home vocabulary and positional vocabulary;*

*Help students develop their phonemic awareness through phonetic spelling;*

*Strengthen verbal communication and cooperation among ELL and monolingual students*

**Class Time:** *45–60 minutes (15–20 minutes per group)*

**Preparation Time:** *5 minutes*

**Resources:** *Small unit blocks;*

*Simple picture of a house;*

*Paper and coloured pencils, crayons, or markers*



This activity introduces house-related vocabulary and positional words to ELL students, and it encourages all students to practice phonetic spelling. As ELL students learn to read, having a wider English vocabulary will help them better understand and connect to texts. Because houses and home life are common topics for children's books, this type of vocabulary is especially useful. Also, this activity encourages students to begin writing using phonetic spelling and to read what they have written. Encouraging them to practice and share their writing helps develop confidence in this form of communication.

***Procedure***

1. Divide students into teams of three or four. Make sure ELL and monolingual students are represented in each group.
2. Bring the first team to a table equipped with a box of small unit blocks.
3. Explain to the students that they need to build a house and that they need to work together to do so.
4. Discuss what working together looks and sounds like (e.g., talking to each other, watching each other, taking turns).
5. Before they begin building, tell students that they need to take turns sharing ideas about building a house. Ask them the following questions and let each student present their thoughts:
  - What are the parts of a house?
  - Which parts of the house are important? Why?
  - Which part of the house do you think you should build first? Next? Last?
6. As students name parts of the house, have them point to the parts they name on the picture.
7. Once they agree on the order of building, let them begin to construct.
8. While they build, ask them the following questions:
  - Which part of the house are you building?
  - Where will you put that block?
  - Why are you putting that block there?
  - How many blocks do you think you should use?
  - How might you make a window or a door?
9. Encourage students to talk to each other while they build.
10. When they finish, give students paper and writing utensils. Ask each to draw the house and then label the important parts phonetically.
11. When everyone has finished drawing and labeling, let students present their pictures and read the labels they have written.

◆ ***Rime Reading***

**Level:** *High Beginning*

**Aims:** *Increase reading fluency and vocabulary*

**Class Time:** *15 minutes, Day 1; 5–10 minutes, Days 2–5*

**Preparation Time:** *15 minutes*

**Resources:** *Computer and printer;*

*Chart paper and markers, highlighters, or crayons;*

*Folder with prongs*

This activity not only introduces the students to different word families, but it increases reading fluency and vocabulary as the text is read and reread. Shyer students and those with limited language skills gain confidence as they read a familiar text, first as a group and then independently. The completed folder also serves as a great resource for rhyming words.

***Procedure***

Day 1: Begin by introducing a new rime, or word family, such as *at*.

- Have students practice pronouncing the rime.
- Write *at* on the chart paper and have students call out words that have the rime *at*. Write four to five words on the chart (e.g., *cat, mat, sat, fat, hat*). Have students choral-read the words several times.
- Using the chart paper, write a short sentence for each chosen word and again the class choral-reads each sentence.
- After class, type up the short sentences with the student-generated words, then print out one copy for each student and place it in their individual folders. (This process takes about 15 minutes, once a week.)

Day 2: Have students get out their folders and read each sentence aloud to you. After the sentences have been read several times, students highlight (or underline in crayon) the rime. For example, *My cat is black and white*.

Days 3–5: students spend 5 minutes at the beginning of class, choral reading or partner reading the sentences. Each week another rime page is added.

***Caveats and Options***

1. Once there are at least four to five completed pages, call on students to choose a rime page and let them read the entire page while the others follow along.

2. Choose one student to come in front of the class and give him or her a small drum, maraca, or another small musical instrument. While

the rest of the class choral-reads each page, the student in front of the room beats the drum or shakes the maraca each time a word from the word family is spoken.

3. More advanced students can create their own short sentences.

#### *Appendix*

Sample word list for *at*: cat, mat, sat, fat, hat

My cat is black and white. Sit on the small mat. I sat on the blue rug. That dog is short and fat. His hat is very big.

#### ◆ **Orally Summarizing**

**Levels:** *High Beginning +*

**Aims:** *Help students identify main ideas from a text and productively use target vocabulary*

**Class Time:** *10–15 minutes*

**Preparation:** *Time 10 minutes*

**Resources:** *Any story or chapter from a book that has pictures (children's picture books and graded readers work well); Photocopier*

After students finish reading a story, they should be able to summarize the main events to demonstrate comprehension. In this activity, visual cues and a discussion phase provide scaffolding for students, enabling them to create richer summaries that incorporate more target vocabulary and exclude unimportant details.

#### ***Procedure***

1. Photocopy six to eight pictures from the story that represent the main events.

2. Arrange the pictures in chronological order and under each picture write two to three target vocabulary words. If large enough, the pictures can be put on a poster board and displayed at the front of the room; for smaller pictures, put them on a handout for each group of students.

3. Put students in pairs and give half of the class pairs (*A* groups) the first three to four pictures, and the other half of the class pairs (*B* groups), the second three to four pictures. Tell students to discuss what is occurring in the pictures and try to use the vocabulary words in their discussion.

4. Reshuffle the students into new pairs made up of one *A* student and one *B* student. The *A* student should orally summarize the first half of the story, and the *B* student should listen and write down each vocabulary

word as he or she hears it being used during the summary. The students should switch roles for the second half of the story, and the *B* student should orally summarize, while the *A* student listens and writes.

### ***Caveats and Options***

The activity can be shortened or altered for different situations.

1. To guide younger students through the initial discussion part of the activity, you might include *wh*- questions above pictures. After one to two exposures, they should be able to discuss the pictures without the questions.

2. To decrease the level of difficulty, provide each student with an alphabetical list of all the vocabulary words, and as they listen, they can put a check next to the words instead of writing them down.

3. If you provide the pictures on a handout, as a possible extension, have students write one to two sentences under each picture for homework.

4. This activity can easily be used with short stories that have no pictures if you take an extra 10 to 15 minutes of prep time to get images off the Internet.

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**APPENDIX 1**  
**READING SHEETS BASED ON LAWDAY, 1996**

**Reading Sheet 1**

**Read the tasks:**

1.

“Hello.”

“Hello.”

“I’m Adam. What’s your name?”

“I’m Helen. Good-bye.”

2.

a pen, a pencil, a pencil case, a ruler, a rubber, a bag, a desk, a table, a chair, a book, a board, a bin, a white pen, a black pencil, a yellow pencil case, a red ruler, a blue book, a yellow chair, a black board, a white board, a green bag, a red and blue rubber, a green bin

3.

“What’s this?”

“It’s a rubber. It’s a white rubber.”

“What’s this?”

“It’s a book. It’s a blue book. What’s this?”

“It’s a green and red pencil case.”

4.

“What’s this, Helen?”

“It’s a balloon. It’s a yellow balloon.”

“Oh, Tabby!”

“Oh, no!”

“Look, Helen. It’s a red balloon.”

5.

“Is it a desk?”

“No, it isn’t.”

“Is it a table?”

“Yes, it is.”

“Is it a black table?”

“No, it isn’t.”

“Is it a yellow table?”

“Yes, it is.”

## Reading Sheet 2

### Read the tasks:

1.

a red balloon, two green balloons, five yellow bananas, ten white books, nine blue cakes, three black monkeys, four white eggs, eight green apples, six oranges, seven ice creams

2.

“Look. This is my lunch. A sandwich, a banana, a cake and an orange.”

“This is my lunch. A sandwich and an apple. And a cake. Mmmm.”

“Mmmm! This is my lunch. Fish.”

3.

“What’s this?”

“It’s an egg.”

“What’s this? Is it a sandwich?”

“No, it’s a cake. And is it a cake?”

“No, it’s an ice cream.”

4.

One big, two big elephants,  
Three big, four big elephants,  
One, two, three, four, five big elephants,  
Five big elephants.  
And a little mouse.  
Five big, four big elephants,  
Three big, two big elephants,  
Five, four, three, two, one big elephant,  
Goodbye, elephants.

5.

a camel, a lion, a cat, three parrots, four snakes, two elephants, three monkeys, a bear, a kangaroo, three bats, a zoo, animals, animals in the zoo

6.

Say “Hello”. Say “Goodbye”. Stand up. Sit down. Open your book. Close your book. Write your name.

7.

The ABC-song

Let’s sing the ABC

Sing the letters, sing with me.

A, B, C, D, E, F, G,  
 H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P.  
 Q, R, S, T, U, V,  
 W, X, Y and Z.

Let's sing the ABC,  
 Sing the letters, sing with me.

8.

"Is it a pink book?" "No, it isn't"  
 "Is it a purple pencil?" "Yes, it is."  
 "Is it an orange pen?" "No, it isn't."  
 "Is it a blue letter?" "No, it isn't."  
 "Is it a brown letter?" "Yes, it is."  
 "Is it letter B?" "Yes, it is."

### Reading sheet 3

#### Read the tasks:

1.

"Where's my bear? Is it on the table?"  
 "No, it isn't."  
 "Is it in the bin?"  
 "No, it isn't."  
 "Oh, here's my bear. It's under Tabby!"

2.

Helen: I've got a ball, and a bear and a clown. I've got a little cat and my cat's brown. Tabby is my cat and my cat's brown.

Adam: I've got a ball, and a book and a kite. I've got a robot and my robot's blue and white. Bix is my robot and my robot's blue and white.

3.

a red balloon, an orange and red kite, a red and black bike, a clown, a pink and blue and red robot, a brown bear, a green ball, a doll

4.

Helen: This is my ball. My ball is red.

Bix: This is your ball, Adam. Your ball is blue. Here's your ball, Adam.

Adam: Thank you.

B U M M M

Bix: Sorry, Adam!

5.

a plane, a white plane, a train, a green train, a car, a blue car, a boat, a red boat, a bike, a black bike

6.

Bix: Happy birthday, Helen. Here's a present.

Helen: Oh, thank you, Bix.

Bix: How old are you, Helen?

Helen: I'm seven. What's this?

Bix: It's an ice-cream.

Helen: Oh, thank you.

7.

"How old are you, Helen?"

"I'm seven."

"How old are you, Adam?"

"I'm six."

"How old are you, Tabby?"

"I'm five."

"How old are you, Bix?"

"I'm six."

8.

Hello, my name's Tabby. I'm a cat. I've got four friends. They are cats, too. My friend Fluffy is very big. He's a big cat. My friend Snowy is very thin. She's a thin cat. My friend Tiny is very small. She's a small cat. My friend Blackie is very fat. He's a fat cat.

9.

a big elephant, a small elephant, a long snake, a short snake, a fat bear, a thin bear, five small bats, a big lion, eight thin monkeys, nine fat parrots, three big kangaroos, two small camels.

**APPENDIX 2**  
**TASKS AT THE INITIAL PHASE**  
**OF TEACHING READING TO YLS**

**1. Letter recognition activities**

a) Find and circle the odd-one-out.

h h k            n h n            f j j            p b b            d b d

b) Find the circle same letter.

**b:** n d b c k            **k:** j f k h            **d:** b p l d h

c) Find all the **d**'s.

f k s n d j  
s j d d b p  
h f k s z m  
f d k j m n

Find all the **h**'s.

s k j h n d  
z k n b s d  
m h n h s s  
f g h k h b

d) Underline the words that have **n**.

net            bed            ten

e) Underline the words ending in **ed**.

ned            bed            dip            net

**2. Matching**

Match capital letters with lower case letters.

Pin	tin
bin	pin
Tin	Bin
Net	net









Н 98

**Ілона Густі – Ілона Лехнер – Марта Фабіян**

Навчання читання англійською мовою школярам молодшого віку. Навчальне видання (навчальний посібник) Закарпатського угорського інституту імені Ференца Ракоці II / Автори: Ілона Густі, Ілона Лехнер та Марта Фабіян. Берегове–Ужгород: ЗУІ ім. Ф.Ракоці II – ТОВ «РІК-У», 2022. – 128 с. (англійською мовою)

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Цей навчальний посібник містить уривки текстів наукової літератури, які пов'язані з тематикою посібника, а саме: навчання читання англійською мовою учнів молодшого шкільного віку. Він орієнтований для студентів спеціальності «англійська філологія», які вивчають дисципліни «Методика викладання англійської мови» та «Викладання англійської мови для учнів молодшого шкільного віку». У посібнику висвітлено теми, пов'язані з навчанням читання англійською мовою учнів молодшого шкільного віку. Для студентів і викладачів гуманітарних факультетів вищих навчальних закладів, усім, хто цікавиться методикою викладання англійської мови.

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**ШКОЛЯРАМ МОЛОДШОГО ВІКУ**

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Рецензенти:

*Маріанна Леврінци*, доктор педагогічних наук, доцент  
(Закарпатський угорський інститут імені Ференца Ракоці ІІ, м. Берегове, Україна)

*Беатрікс Генкел*, доктор філософії у галузі гуманітарних наук за спеціальністю  
«Мовна педагогіка» (Міністерство освіти, м. Абу-Дабі, Об'єднані Арабські Емірати)

*Крістіна Шаркезі* (Берегівський ліцей імені Лайоша Кошута, м. Берегове, Україна)

Технічне редагування: *Олександр Добош*

Верстка: *Мелінда Орбан*

Коректура: *авторська*

Обкладинка: *Ласло Веждед та Мелінда Орбан*

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Відповідальний за випуск:

*Олександр Добош* (начальник Видавничого відділу ЗУІ ім. Ф.Ракоці ІІ)

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**Видавництво: Закарпатський угорський інститут імені Ференца Ракоці ІІ**  
(адреса: пл. Кошута 6, м. Берегове, 90202. Електронна пошта: foiskola@kmf.uz.ua)  
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