

Reading and English Language Learners

What do we know?

1. Students who cannot read by age 9 are
 - unlikely to become fluent readers
 - have a higher tendency to drop out
2. Literacy (teaching and learning) is complex
3. Development of literacy by ELL is compounded by diverse variables
 - linguistic
 - cognitive
 - academic

What do we know? (cont.)

4. Reading First (NCLB Act of 2001) legislation mandates every K-3 reading program to contain explicit and systemic instruction in:
 - phonemic awareness
 - phonics
 - vocabulary development
 - reading fluency
 - reading comprehension

What do we know about reading and ELL?

- There is a strong and positive correlation between literacy in native language and learning English
- The degree of native language proficiency is a strong predictor of English language development
- Literacy skills in native language transfer to second language

Reading Research

- **Recommends**
 - ELL learn to read initially in their first language (CIERA)
- **Found**
 - priority for ELL should be learning to speak English before being taught to read English (NRC)
- **Supports**
 - oral language development provides foundation in phonological awareness

5 Essential Components of Reading Instruction

1. Phonemic Awareness
2. Phonics
3. Vocabulary Development
4. Fluency (including oral reading skills)
5. Reading Comprehension Strategies

Phonemic Awareness

- phonemes
 - smallest units making up spoken language
- phonemic awareness
 - the ability to identify and manipulate phonemes

Considerations for ELL

- not all English phonemes are present in ELL native language
- native language phonemes may conflict with English phonemes
- use meaningful activities (language games, word walls, songs, poems, etc.)

Phonics

→ Phonics

- understanding of the relationship between sounds and written language

Considerations for ELL

- literacy in own language or non existence of written language
- different sound systems
- challenges of sounds and spelling

Vocabulary Development

→ Vocabulary development

→ knowledge of stored information about the meaning and pronunciations of words

Considerations for ELL

- importance of context
- teaching of vocabulary
- BICS vs. CALP

Reading Fluency (including oral reading skills)

→ Fluency

- the ability to read words accurately and quickly
- instructional approaches :
 - (1) guided repeated oral reading
 - (2) independent silent reading

Considerations for ELL

- ELL should learn to read in L1 or be exposed to hundreds of books and participate in read-alouds, read along, listen to books
- oral proficiency provides foundation
- fluency ≠ accent

Reading Comprehension Strategies

- Reading comprehension
 - an active process
 - interaction between the reader and the text

Considerations for ELL

- to the extent possible develop literacy skills in L1
- figurative language
- programs (remedial vs. enrichment)

Considerations of Reading Programs for ELL

- ✓ What works in English does not necessarily work in other languages
- ✓ Program must be tailor to children's needs

Considerations of Reading Programs for ELL (cont.)

- ✓ Some questions that need to be answered
 - ✓ What is the student L1?
 - ✓ What form of alphabet has L1? Does it have a written form?
 - ✓ Is the student literate in L1?
 - ✓ What is the student language proficiency in English?
 - ✓ Age, grade, etc.?

Source: *Implementing Reading First with English Language Learners*
by Beth Antunez

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