

The Journey to Skilled Reading

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Key vocabulary



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Phonics – method of initial reading instruction whereby pupils are taught the relationship between spelling and sound explicitly (e.g. S -/s/; SH -/tʃ/).

Oral language – knowledge of spoken words and their meanings

Working memory – capacity limited memory store

Executive skills – mental processes that help us plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle tasks

Reading is a learned skill



- Unlike spoken language, we do not have an inborn capacity for reading.
- Brain regions used for other things are recycled during the process of reading acquisition.
- Learning to read does not come naturally; it requires instruction and practice.



A task of immense complexity

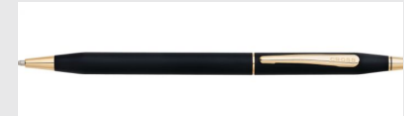
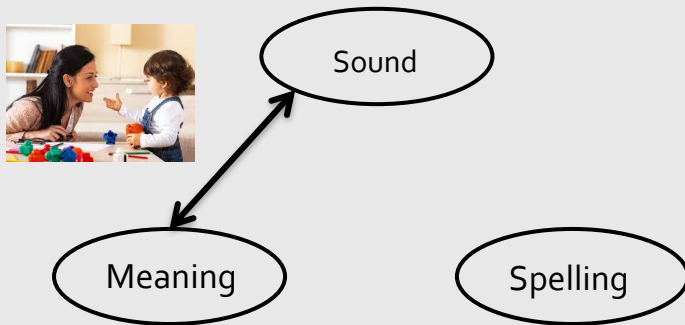


Jess decided to cut and run. She couldn't face what might happen next.

Psychological science has yielded a strong understanding of how children learn to read.

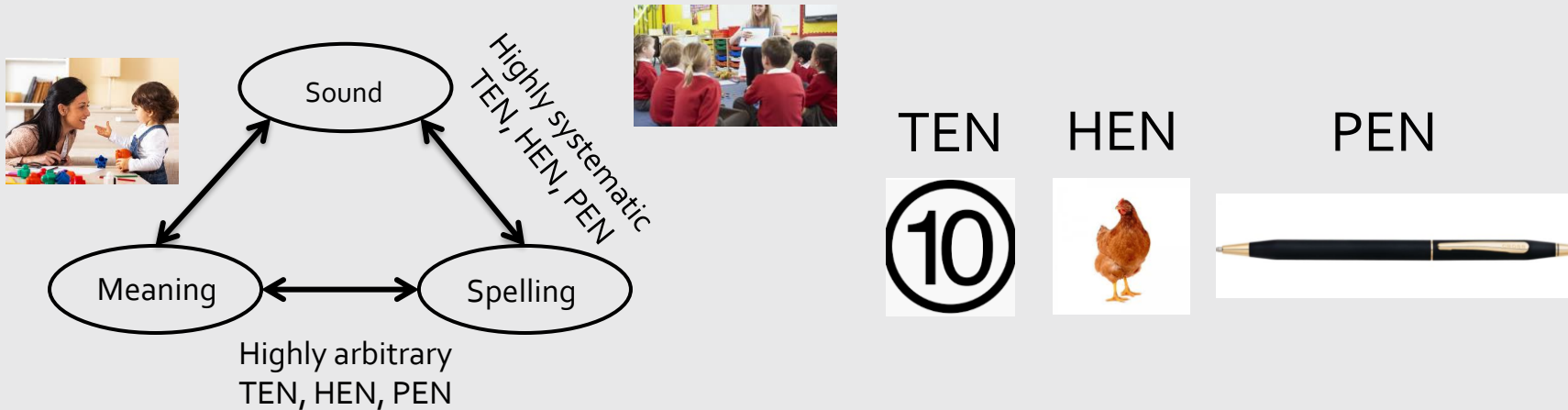
The vast majority of children will learn to read with the right instruction.

Oral language



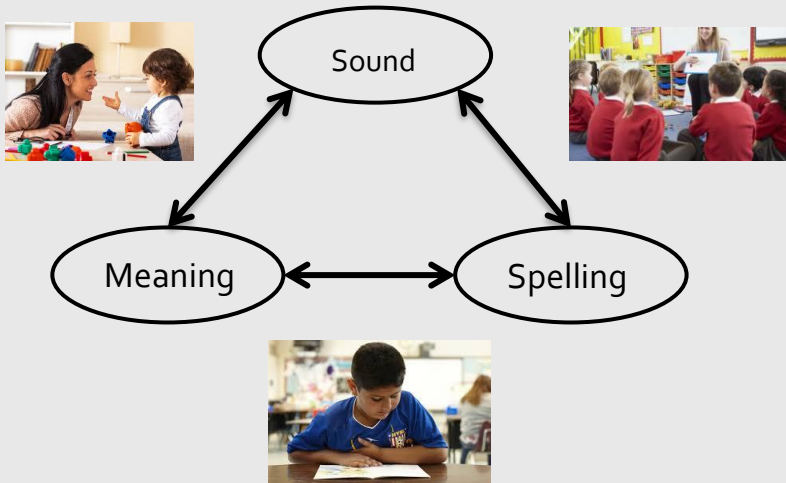
- Background knowledge; knowledge of words and sounds
- Oral language ability -> reading comprehension
- Shared storybook reading very important
- Enormous variation in language ability at school entry
- Learning to read in a second language poses additional challenges
- Progress at all abilities levels can be accelerated by strong teaching and assessment

Instruction



- Memorising every word individually is not possible
- Spelling-sound knowledge provides hook into oral language
- Spelling-sound knowledge allows generalisation (e.g. DEN)
- Vast majority of children require *explicit phonics instruction* to develop this knowledge
- Oral language + phonics knowledge = 99% variation in reading comprehension, age 7

Practice



- Spelling-sound translation is slow; need to make direct link between spelling and meaning.
- Achieved through practice; children use phonics ability to 'self-teach' through independent reading.
- *Reading for pleasure is important. Reading well causes more frequent reading, not the reverse.*
- Fluency in reading words releases working memory for higher-level comprehension.

Reading comprehension



Whales communicate with each other by singing. Sperm whales have the loudest song. Beluga whales make chirping sounds.

The blue whale is the largest animal in the world.

"Deep in the forest a call was sounding, and as often as he heard this call, mysteriously thrilling and luring, he felt compelled to turn his back upon the fire and the beaten earth around it, and to plunge into the forest, and on and on, he knew not where or why; nor did he wonder where or why, the call sounding imperiously, deep in the forest." The Call of the Wild

- Oral language is the foundation
- Text more complex than spoken language at more advanced reading levels (note importance of shared reading); some instructional strategies to build on oral language
- Learning to read helps improve language and knowledge of the world ("reading to learn")







- Measure where a child started and how much they've learned
- Identify children in need of intervention
- Help teachers to improve their own practice

England Reading Assessment Framework

- Early years foundation stage assessment (age 4/5; oral language)
- Phonics screen (age 5/6)
- Reading comprehension (age 6/7)
- Reading comprehension (age 10/11)



Phonics Screen (age 5/6) 20 simple words, 20 simple nonwords

grit	<u>blan</u> 
start	<u>steck</u> 
best	<u>hild</u> 
hooks	<u>quemp</u> 

Reading Comprehension (age 6/7)

Red, white, green and yellow droplets flicked all over the sky at the top of our lovely painting! Great splashes of paint landed on my clothes.

"Mum will be furious!" I wailed.

We rubbed and scrubbed as much as we could. We did not hear Mum come home.

Then we saw her. I wanted to hide from her really cross face.



7 What happened when Jasmine dropped the brushes?



8 Find and copy two words that tell you how JJ and Jasmine tried to clean off the paint.

1. _____

2. _____



"Jasmine! You have got paint all over your hair," she shouted.

But then she saw the painting. Her face changed.

"Whatever made you think of doing that?" she said. "It is FANTASTIC and I love the sparkling fireworks at the top!"

JJ grinned. "It was Jasmine's idea to add some extra colour," he said. We all laughed.



9 When Mum came home, where did she first see the paint?



10 How did Mum feel when she first saw Jasmine?



11 What did Mum describe as *sparkling fireworks*?

Tick **one**.

the sky that JJ painted

the basketball net and red ball

the flowers that Jasmine painted

the splashes of paint





Reading Comprehension (age 10/11)

Micah brought the music box to her on the night of the meteor storm. Piper never slept on these nights, when debris from other worlds fell from the sky. Restlessness kept her awake in bed, staring at the slanted ceiling of her house. She counted the widening cracks in the grey scrub-pine planks and then counted the seconds as they ticked by on the tarnished silver watch she wore around her neck. Beneath her cotton nightdress, the metal lay warm and comfortable against her skin. Micah's knock made her lose count, but the watch ticked on steadily.

She pulled on a pair of her father's old boots, slung his brown coat over her nightdress, and opened the door. Wind blew a harsh breath of snow and ice crystals into her face. Piper wiped her eyes and fixed a look of annoyance on the boy huddled in the doorway.

'I must be seeing things,' Piper said. 'This can't be Micah Howell standing at my door, dragging me out of bed in the drop dead of night. Look at me – I'm stunned stiff. I'm speechless.'

Micah snorted. 'That'll be the day, then. Let me in, Piper, will ya?' He stomped snow off his boots. 'Stinks out here, and it's so cold my teeth are cracking together.'

'That's your own fault for being out on a storm night. Most scrappers have the sense to stay inside.' He was right, though. The air already reeked of brimstone. The storm was coming. Piper moved to let him in, then shut the door behind him. He immediately ran to the cast-iron stove to warm his hands. Piper nudged him aside and adjusted the controls. 'Hand me a log before you make yourself at home,' she said. It was her habit to pretend to be bothered by her friend, even though she was happy to see him.

Micah handed her a piece of wood from the basket near the stove and reached into the bulky sack he had slung over his shoulder. 'I brought it, just like I said I would.'

28 What has Piper been counting in the first paragraph?

1. _____

2. _____

1 mark

29 She pulled on a pair of her father's old boots, **slung** his brown coat over her nightdress, and opened the door.

The word *slung* suggests that Piper put on the brown coat...

Tick one.

carelessly.

slowly.

tidily.

thoughtfully.

1 mark

30 Look at page 8.

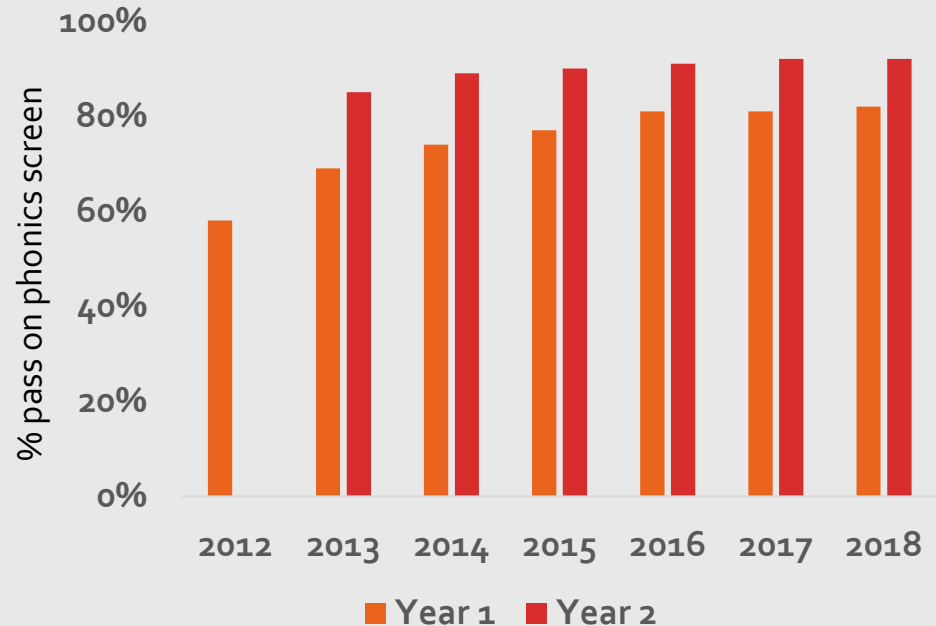
Why is the boy *huddled* in the doorway while he waits for Piper to open the door?

1 mark

England Phonics screen



- Short reading aloud test (20 words; 20 nonwords) at the end of Year 1 (age 5/6)
- Identifies children in need of additional support; tested again in Year 2.
- Poor performance in 2012; dramatic annual improvements since then.
- Driven improvements on later tests of reading comprehension, particularly for children at risk of reading failure
- 21% increase in performance between 2012 and 2015 in England's 10 most deprived counties; "the great equaliser"
- Teachers report that the test has enhanced their own practice

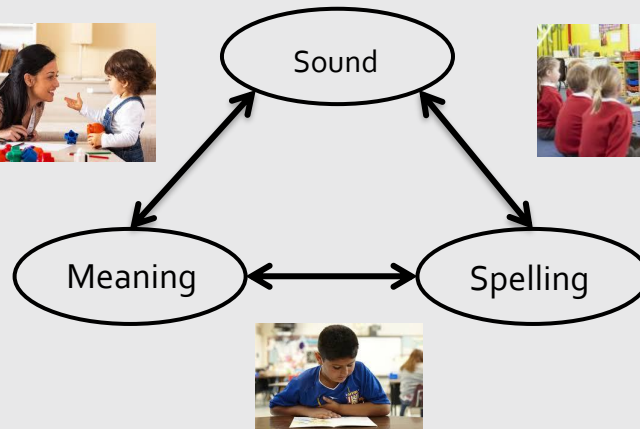


Foundations for every child to become a skilled, confident reader

Oral language



Instruction



Practice

This is a tractable problem, no matter what the context, and no matter what the language.

Thank you!



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