Approaches in Teaching Children with Reading Problems

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ABSTRACT

English has been taught in elementary school. In learning English, the English teacher teaches the four skills, namely, reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The reading process is one of the activities that needs to be given a great attention. There are some important approaches that can be used in the reading process, namely, individualized reading, language experience, shared reading, and so forth. The English teacher should be familiar with the important approaches of the reading process as well as the materials that reflect each approach. When the teacher reads about these approaches, he thinks about what he wrote about how he reads in the elementary school. He also needs to think where his experience fits and how he will teach reading.

Keywords: approaches, reading process, attention, individualized reading, language experience

1. Introduction

In every class in every elementary school there are some children who experience difficulty in learning to read and thereby consume a disproportionate amount of the teacher's time and effort. The teacher may overlook forgetfulness, general awkwardness, shyness, and even a short attention span; but poor reading cannot be ignored (Boyd&Bartel, 1978). In general, this is because the reading skill is involved in virtually every school subject. If the child cannot read adequately, his entire school experience will suffer. In particular, in learning English, the child needs to master four skills, namely, reading, speaking, writing, and listening skills. Poor reading skill in that language will also influence the other skills as mentioned above.

Even though an effort has been directed toward developing better approach in reading, as yet there are not enough English teachers who continuously attempt to apply an appropriate approach in elementary school. Therefore, the English teacher must deal on daily basis with children who have reading problems, while satisfying the needs of the rest of the children in the class.

The first section deals with the nature of reading; some of the common reading problems that are found in the classroom are described in the second part. The third section presents three approaches to the teaching of reading, describes some materials that can be used in the ongoing

reading program. The final section explains an assessment in the teaching of reading in the classroom.

The information presented in this article should be regarded as a starting point. The English teacher should take this initial information and using his own experiences, resources, and knowledge, continue to develop and refine materials that will best suit his own teaching situation. The teacher must be aware that unanticipated needs will arise that must be met. By careful planning and organization, the teacher can build a file of materials that will be readily available when the need arises.

2. The Nature of Reading

The English teachers who would attempt to improve reading skills in children must first understand what reading is. Such a process is not easily acquired for the process of learning to read is not very well understood. Researchers do not yet know enough about the developed skills of fluent reader, the end product of the instructional process, let alone the process of acquiring these skills (Smith, 1971). Boyd et al. (1978) said that to some authors reading is responding orally to printed symbols (i.e., word calling). This definition does not acknowledge that obtaining meaning is part of the reading process.

Goodman (1970) has described reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game. He said that in reading act, the reader makes successive sets of hypotheses and that he uses semantic, syntactic, and graphic cues to confirm these hypotheses or guesses. For example, Tommy is confronted with the following paragraph to read:

Little Fox and His Friends

Once there was a little fox who didn't like the dark. One morning, before the sun came up, Little Fox woke up all alone. His mother had gone hunting in the forest.

Simply by reading what the story is about, the child can develop some expectancy about the content. For example, he can expect that the story will have words that refer to life in the forest. If he has been exposed to stories such as fairy tale, he will know that the word right after the first word "once" will probably be "upon" (for "Once upon a time …") or "there" (for "Once there was …"). The next word that may give the child difficulty is "didn't." The main cues that the child can use here are syntactic and visual. He knows when he hears a sentence

such as “Once there was a fox who …” that the next word will tell something about what the fox did or did not do. This knowledge may provide enough information for him to “guess” or “hypothesize” the correct word. If he guesses correctly, without too long a hesitation to break his train of thought, the next word, “like,” will probably be easy for him. If he had to pause to ponder over “didn’t” “like” will be more difficult, because he does not have the string of words “Once there was a little fox who didn’t …” to help him figure out “like.” Then, a wrong guess slows the child down and interferes with the cues of meaning and syntax.

Gibson (1970) said that the child does not apply a set of decoding rules to identify unknown words. Rather, he said that readers mediate the identification of unfamiliar words by comparing the unknown word to known words or word parts. There is general agreement that when a child is confronted with a new word, he searches through his memory store and compares the unknown to the known. Some kind of transfer takes place in comparing the unknown to the known.

Based on the above description, reading is regarded as the meaningful interpretation of printed symbols in light of the reader’ own background of experience and as such is regarded as an ability to attach meanings to words, phrases, sentences, and longer selections.

3. Types of Reading Problems

The English teacher must not only know the level at which to initiate instruction but also as much as possible about the strengths and weaknesses of individual pupils in learning English. If a child’s overall instructional level in reading is third grade, it does not necessarily mean that he must be taught all skills found at the third-grade level (Boyd et al., 1978). It is said that he may have mastered a number of skills very well but is impeded from further advancement due to a few particular areas of weakness. If the teacher can determine the specific areas and deal with them, the child will advance more quickly than if he has to spend time reviewing skills in which he is already competent.

Ideally, a child should be reading at a level commensurate with his mental age, not his chronological age or grade placement. Unfortunately, there are many children who do not read at their mental age level. There are many labels for children with reading problems, namely, corrective, retarded, developmental, remedial, dyslexic and so forth. Generally, the English teacher is not so familiar with medical or psychological labels, since the label alone is of no

assistance in helping the child with a reading problem. In fact, most of the reading problems found in a classroom are not those of a highly clinical nature; rather, they have a relatively obvious cause.

To some professionals, "remedial" students have associated learning problems; to others, the term is applied to all pupils who are more than 2 years behind expectancy in reading. (Boyd et al., 1978). In fact, some children may experience temporary lags in reading development due to external causes and a few may have serious word-learning problems. For example, a child may fall behind in reading due to extended absence from school, or to a temporary failure in vision (which can be corrected by appropriately prescribed glasses).

Harris (in Boyd et al., 1978) gives a list of some of the common word-attack errors. They are as follows:

Table 3-1. List of Some of the Common Word-Attack Errors

Problem	Example
1. Omission of letters in a word	The child reads "here" for "where" The child reads "away" for "always"
2. Whole-word reveals	The child reads "was" for "saw" The child reads "no" for "on"
3. Letter confusion	The child reads "pot' for "top" The child reads "ban" for "pan" The child reads 'dut" for 'put" The child reads "dug" for "bug'
4. Substitutions	The child reads "what" for 'that" The child reads "aways" for "always"
5. Added or omitted endings	The child reads "fastest" for "fast" The child reads "hard" for 'harder"
6. Initial sounds	The child reads "fish" for "wish" The child reads "bone" for "gone"
7. Confused ending sounds	The child reads "cane" for "can" The child reads "looks" for 'looking"
8. Medial vowel	The child reads "run" for "ran" The child reads "rat" for "rot"

9. Medial syllable omission

The child reads ‘visting” for “visiting”
The child reads “artcle” for ‘article”

4. Approaches to the Teaching of Reading

There are various approaches to reading instruction, namely, classroom approach, individualized reading, language-experience, programmed reading, Peabody program, initial teaching alphabet, and so forth. Some of the common approaches to reading instruction are presented in this section, including method and techniques that are often used in special classes and reading clinics for teaching specialized word-learning techniques. The approaches presented here are as follows: individualized reading, language-experience approach, and shared reading approach.

4.1 Individualized Reading

In recent years, some English teachers have advocated the use of individualized instruction in reading. It is felt that individual should be given the opportunity to follow their own tastes. To some teachers, children need to discuss what they read and will profit by their discussion. If reading instruction is to develop desirable attitudes, habits, and skills, then each teacher must study the needs and interests of his pupils to provide appropriate individualized instruction (Boyd et al., 1978). Lazar (1957) states:

> Individualized reading is a way of thinking about reading – an attitude towards the place of reading in the total curriculum, towards the materials and methods used, and towards the child’s developmental needs. It is not a single method or technique but a broader way of thinking about reading which involves newer concepts about class organization, materials, and the approach to the individual child. The term individualized reading is by no means fully descriptive, but for want of a better term, most proponents of this approach continue to use it (p. 76)

Generally, the program permits the child to read a larger amount of material of a wider variety than he would in a more traditional setting. Through individual conferences with the teacher, the student can be guided into new areas of exploration. A child may be very excited about one kind of fiction, for example, mystery stories. The teacher can direct him to research

on the work of real detectives, to find out if the author presented the geographical setting correctly, or to investigate other points of the story. The individualized approach integrates well into the language arts program in the areas of writing, spelling, and speaking (Boyd et al., 1978).

4.2 Language Experience Approach

The language experience approach (LEA) uses language experience charts, which are composed orally by the children and recorded by the teacher on a piece of chart paper (Cox, 1999). The language experience charts based on interesting, shared experience become part of the classroom print environment and student-composed texts for reading and rereading. Here are the steps of the LEA given by Cox.

1. Use experience to develop language and concepts.
   Use experience as the basis for thinking and talking.
   Develop concepts through talking, clustering ideas, and semantic webbing.
2. Build vocabulary.
   Focus on words children already know and use during discussion, and add new words along the way.
   Record and display these words on word strips or chart paper.
3. The children compose and the teacher records on chart paper.
   Choose a focal topic, such as interesting classroom experience.
   Discuss the topic and create a title. Record the title on top of the chart.
   Continue to discuss; encourage children's comments; record them on the chart. Use questions like "What else can you tell me?"
   Children watch as the teacher writes their ideas on the chart and read while he or she is writing.
4. The children read the language experience chart.
   Read the chart with the children, pointing to words.
   Take volunteers to read parts or all of the chart.
   Let another child point to the words while others read
5. Integrate skill.
   Skills can be taught in a meaningful context, as children read their own words.
6. Publish.

Writing through language experience is published instantly, as it is recorded by the teacher.

Display charts on bulletin boards and walls or bind them together, creating class books for further reading and rereading.

Here is an example of a teacher using the LEA with struggling students who need motivation and help with reading. Their teacher, Gene Hughes, has found that LEA is a successful student-and response-centered method with students who have not succeeded with traditional reading instruction and who have low self-concepts as readers. Gene provides many interesting direct experiences, encourages the students to talk about them, and uses LEA along with sustained silent reading, self-selected wide independent reading, and conferences. He builds vocabulary and teaches skills through these methods

For example, Gene was given a baby crow, which he brought to school each day. Gene's students read this story many times and published it by posting it on the wall outside their room; an article about Bart, which appeared in the education section of the local newspaper, was posted in their classroom. Given their interest in Bart, the students read books about birds and how to care for them.

4.3 Shared Reading

Nora Miller (in Cox, 1999) used many aspects of a shared reading in her lesson with *May I Bring a Friend?* This approach is a natural outgrowth of the home bedtime story situation or the lap approach of reading aloud and along with young children. Children are surrounded with books. An adult reads aloud to them, talks to them, answers their questions, and is willing to read favorite books over and over again. Shared reading recreates the natural ways young children learn to speak and many learn to read.

Here is a step-by-step sequence for shared reading (Holdaway, 1982):

1. Opening Warm-up: Start with favorite poems, rhymes, and songs with enlarged text on each art paper. Also teach new poems and songs.
2. Old Favorite: Share a favorite story in enlarged format, such as a "big book." Teach skills in context and deepen students' understanding. Encourage unison participation, role-playing, and dramatization.
3. Language Game: Have fun with words and sounds in meaningful situations.

Play alphabet game, recite rhymes, and sing songs using letter names.

4. New Story: This is the highlight of the session. A long story may be broken naturally into two or more parts. Discuss words in context and encourage students to participate in predicting the story, confirming new words.
5. Response Option: Children's response can include self-selected reading from a wide selection of favorites; art making related to the new story; writing, often using structures from the new story; and playing 'teacher" (in which several children enjoy their favorite story together, with one acting as the teacher).

Teaching idea given by Cox (1999) is the following:

A Shared Reading: All about Pigs

This teaching idea presents a shared reading following the step-by-step sequence outlined earlier:

1. Opening Warm-up

   Read familiar nursery rhymes, such as "the Little Pig Went to the Market," "Tom, Tom, The Piper's Son," and "Barber, Barber, Shave a Pig."

   Read new poems, such as selections from The Book of Pigericks.
2. Old Favorite

   Read the Three Little Pigs, and ask children what they think of the story.

   Teach skills in context: for example, words that begin with the letter *p* and words that rhyme with *pig* (identifying the *-ig* rime).

   Deepen students' understanding of story structure. Identify story parts, such as the opening problem, the repetition of three encounters with the wolf, and the ending.

   Ask students to recall other stories that follow a similar pattern, such as "The Three Billy Goats Gruff."

   Do role-playing and story dramatizations, having students play each of the three pigs and the wolf.

   Encourage unison participation, in which half the class play pigs and the other half play the wolf. Students chant:

   Wolf: Little pig, little pig, let me come in!
   Pig: Not by the hair on my chinny, chin, chin!
   Wolf: Then I'll huff, and I'll puff, and I'll blow your house in!

3. Language Games

Using *p* words shared during reading, create an alphabet pyramid pattern:

Alphabet Pyramid Pattern	Example about Pigs
noun	pigs
adjective noun	pink pigs
adjective noun verb	pink pigs prancing
adjective noun verb adverb	pink pigs prancing proudly

4. New Story

Introduce the new story: "Pig Pig Rides is about a young pig who tells his mother everything he is going to do that day, including jumping 500 elephants on a motorcycle. Predict what Pig Pig will do next."

Look at words like elephants and motorcycle in context.

5. Response Options

Have students do self-selected reading of pig books, such as these:

The Pig's Wedding
The True Story of Three Little Pigs
A Treeful of Pigs
Paddy Pork's Evening Out

Art making: have students make thumb print pigs by pressing their thumb on an ink pad; ad features and limbs to thumb prints to create pigs. Also consider the possibilities for pig pictures: drawings, paintings, or illustrations for stories.

Writing: students should write anything they want. Perhaps they could write stories modeled after Pig Pig Rides or "The Three Little Pigs"; they could rewrite the latter from the wolf's point of view.

Playing "teacher": This could involve shared reading in a group or taking turns reading the dialogue of Pig Pig and his mother.

5. Assessing Reading

There are many types of assessment, namely, naturalistic, authentic, informal reading inventory, ongoing assessment by observing, interacting, and analyzing students' reading experiences, and so forth. Here are types of naturalistic reading assessment given by Routman (1996).

1. Anecdotal Records: These are notes made by the teacher based on observations of students, usually including dated, informal, brief comment related specifically to reading and literacy. Over time, anecdotal records provide a picture of each child's progress and needs, which should form the basis for further planning. These records can be based on students' independent reading, participation in literature circles, response options to literature and work from literature units, and behavior in reading-aloud and shared-reading lessons.
2. Literature-Response Journals: Teaching with literature, these journals provide a rich, ongoing record of students' reading and responses.
3. Reading Conference Record: This form can be adapted to keep track of reading conference as part of ongoing assessment of students' progress and to help plan further reading experiences for him or her. It should include information such as book titles and questions and comments, suggestions, and observations about them.
4. Running Records: A running record documents what a child says and does while reading a book chosen by the teacher. It is a useful tool for assessing strengths and weaknesses in reading strategies, especially for beginning readers, while reading a real text.

Here are guidelines for creating and using a running record:

a. Prepare a record with the child's name, the book title, and the date across the top. List the pages to be read vertically down the left hand side.
b. Choose a book the child has read before. Use a 100-word sample for a longer book.
c. Have the child read aloud. Make a check mark for each word read correctly on each page.
d. Mark miscues as follows:

   Misread: Write the correct word with the misread word above it.

   Omits word: Write the omitted word and circle it.

   Self-corrects: Write the word with SC above it.

   Teacher tells word: Write the word with T above it.

e. Scoring formula:

   Total words read correctly (including self-corrections) _ X 100 = _ %

   Number of words in book/sample_

Good progress = 90 %

Boyd et al., (1978) gives the following description of Informal Reading Inventory. A complete, informal reading inventory is usually regarded as a clinical instrument used by reading specialists, although on occasion, a teacher may want to use it. Although informal reading inventories are too time-consuming for classroom administration, they can provide precise and valuable information about the child's reading difficulty.

Initially, a child is given a word-recognition test beginning at the pre-primer level. He is given tests until he misses 50 percent of the words on flash presentation on two successive levels. Starting with the last level at which the child receives 100 percent on the flash presentation in the word-recognition test, the child reads two selections (one oral and one silent) at each level and answers questions concerning each selection. When he falls below 90 percent in word recognition, below 50 percent in comprehension (average of oral and silent selection), or is qualitatively frustrated, the child stops reading. Then the examiner reads aloud one selection at each level until the child is unable to answer 50 percent of the questions asked about the material. Levels for word recognition in context and comprehension are computed for each level using the generally accepted criteria as shown by Table 3-2.

Table 3-2 Criteria for Various Levels

Level	Word Recognition in Context (percent)	Compre-hension (percent)	Observable Behavior
Independent	99	90	No signs of frustration or tension
Instructional	95	75	No signs of frustration or tension
Frustration	Below 90	Below 50	Signs of frustration and/or tension
Hearing capacity		75	

6. Conclusion

In reading process, learning is an active, ongoing process, which occurs in the social contexts of the classroom. There is a transaction between the reader and text. The child first recognizes letters, then words, and then sentences. He also learns a sequence of smaller to larger sub -skills in getting meaning from printed words.

Reading is primarily the construction of meaning. This is not as simple as it sounds. Reading theory and research have wrestled for years with how to describe exactly how meaning is constructed during reading. The English teacher should be familiar with the important approaches of the reading process as well as the materials that reflect each approach. When the teacher reads about these approaches, he thinks of what he wrote about how he reads in school. He also needs to think where his experience fits and how he will teach reading.

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