ABSTRACT
        The design of an effective reading course in English
for academic purposes must be based on an understanding of the
reading process (including perceptual skills and cognitive
processing), an understanding of problems in mastering the English
writing system (punctuation, decoding handwriting, and confusion
between typefaces), and an awareness of the deficiencies the
particular learner group must overcome. Assessment of learners'
reading skills, by a variety of techniques, in the context of their
language backgrounds can then lead to development of materials and
methods for effective reading instruction. English as a second
language (ESL) programs have adopted a number of approaches to these
issues; both theories and procedures are in the process of being
refined. Instructor familiarity with foreign languages, especially
those with a different writing system, is also helpful in ESL reading
instruction. Examples of a number of teaching and testing exercises
are included. A six-page bibliography concludes the document.
(MSE)

BEGINNING READING in ENGLISH as a SECOND LANGUAGE

by Mary Newton Bruder
and Robert T. Henderson

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Gina Doggett, Editor, Language in Education

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Chapter 1
Theories of Reading in ESL

THE PROBLEM

The development of an ability to read with speed and
comprehension is clearly an essential objective of
most students of English as a second or foreign
language (ESL/EFL). For learners in non-English-
speaking environments, printed material represents
the primary medium of communication in the new lan-
guage. Good reading skills are also important for
students in English-speaking countries, particularly
for those who are preparing to undertake academic
work, where success depends to a great extent on the
ability to absorb knowledge from books and other
written sources. It is therefore imperative that
ESL/EFL instructional programs prepare students to
be able to read efficiently. The task is further
intensified if the language of the learner does not
use the same writing system as English, and if the
learner has had little exposure to English.
    The present focus is on adult foreign students
who need to gain proficiency in reading English for
academic purposes in order to achieve the full
potential of their education at the secondary or
university level. The problem of illiteracy, that
is, the inability to read in any language, is not
dealt with. The students of concern here are those
who can read a language but who are nonreaders in
English.
    The problem of nonreaders is relatively new to
academically oriented ESL program., until the mid-
1970s, international students who came to university

programs could, virtually without exception, read at least elementary texts in English. At that point the international student population began to change. ESL programs increasingly admitted students from countries where English was not part of the normal curriculum, or who had avoided English in much the same manner as U.S. students sometimes avoid foreign languages. For these and various other reasons, students who could not read any English and who often did not know the Roman alphabet were entering the U.S. programs. The tried-and-true philosophy of "give them the opportunity to read, see that they do it, and they'll learn" no longer worked. Teachers now had to learn how to teach the students to read English.

A further problem with some students has been that although they can read their native language, there is such a difference between written and spoken forms of the language that they tend not to associate reading and speaking. Arabic-speaking students, for example, generally speak one of their modern regional dialects, while a good portion of the written material is in Classical or Standard Arabic, which can be quite different from the spoken language used for all but the most formal occasions. While written English is also somewhat more formal than the spoken form, there is not such a wide divergence as in Arabic. Thus, students have to be taught to make the connection between the two.

The design of an effective reading course must be based on an understanding of the reading process, which entails an examination of the various components of fluent reading, including perceptual strategies and cognitive subprocesses, which have recently been the object of considerable attention by psychologists, language specialists, and educators. A clear picture of what is involved in efficient reading will enable teachers to provide learners with the kinds of skills they need. Teachers must also gain an awareness of the specific problems that learners can be expected to encounter in their attempts to master the English writing system, taking into consideration relevant features of alphabetic representation, sound-symbol

correspondences, writing style, and rhetorical orga-
nization. Finally, it is essential to make an
accurate assessment of the deficiencies that par-
ticular learners or groups of learners will need to
overcome.

The first step in designing an effective read-
ing program, of course, is to determine what the
learners already know. While there are fluent
speakers who can get by for some time in class with-
out the teacher realizing that they cannot read,
conversely there are nonfluent speakers who can read
better than they are able to reveal through normal
testing procedures. It is important, therefore, to
evaluate reading ability as a separate component of
overall language proficiency and to use this
assessment when deciding on course content and
methodology.

Since the specific deficiencies of particular
learners will depend to a large extent on their
native language (L1) background, their L1 reading
ability, their cultural orientation, and their
general level of proficiency in English, a means
must be available for assessing such factors for
individual students in order to determine the most
appropriate instructional techniques. The reading
skill must be analyzed from the viewpoint of each
learner's language background to discover what each
learner actually knows. Methods and materials can
then be devised to teach reading to a heterogeneous
population with no common tongue in a relatively
short time, usually less than a year, so that the
students will be able to compete in academic set-
tings with American students.

This text discusses what various ESL programs
have done to approach this problem.

READING THEORIES AS APPLIED TO
BEGINNING ESL READERS

Reading can be viewed as a complex skill
involving a series of subskills, all of which have

to work together in order for a reader to be able to
extract meaning from a written text and reconstruct
the author's intended message. For simplicity,
reading ability can be subdivided into perceptual
and cognitive skills, but these are certainly not
independent skill areas: there is constant interac-
tion between the functioning of the eyes and the
brain in normal reading, and neither would be of
much use without the other.

Perceptual Skills

     Since the first step in reading is to perceive
what is on the page (or, increasingly, the computer
video screen), and since the functioning of the eyes
is much more readily observable than the functioning
of the brain, the perceptual aspects of reading have
received a great deal of attention from researchers.
An analysis of the mechanics by which information is
picked up has shown that the eyes, rather than
flowing smoothly across lines of text, move from one
point to another in short jumps, called saccades,
stopping at each point for a short pause, referred
to as a fixation (see Goodman, 1970; Mitchell, 1982;
Smith, 1979). Each fixation lasts about a quarter
of a second in normal fluent reading, and permits
the intake of graphic information from a small area
called the fovea, which extends approximately one
degree of visual angle in each direction from the
point of fixation. The material within the fovea is
what can be seen clearly, but a reader can also pick
up useful information from other parts of the page
even though individual letters are not clearly iden-
tifiable. The fuzzy information outside the foveal
area is important for efficient reading, since it is
used to guide the eyes to the next fixation point
(Bouma, 1978; Rayner, 1978). That is, a reader can
see if there are any long words coming up, can tell
how far it is to the end of the line, and so forth,
and based on such details the eyes are directed to
the point where the most useful graphic information
is likely to be found.

The visual information that the eyes pick up
during a fixation, consisting of graphic represen-
tations in terms of the lines and angles that
constitute the letters, is coded in raw form in what
is known as iconic memory or preperceptual storage,
where the uninterpreted information is stored very
briefly--for about half a second, according to Foss
and Hakes (1978)--before it decays. At this stage
the reader's brain has not yet translated the
graphic shapes into meaningful units such as letters
or words. To be useful in the reading process, this
iconic material must be analyzed in some way, either
through direct identification of words or morphemes
--minimal units of meaning--or initially through
identification of the individual letters or letter
combinations that are contained in the words.
Storage of information in iconic memory, then, is a
first step in the perception of graphic material,
but the contents of the icon have no linguistic
value until they are further processed. This pro-
cessing is carried out in what is often referred to
as working or short-term memory. Theories about how
the brain might carry out this processing are
briefly discussed in the following section.

Cognitive Processing

     Once the graphic material has been perceived,
the brain has to decode the contents of iconic
memory in order to transform it into comprehension
of the text. For purposes of description, it might
be helpful to view reading as a complex information-
processing system (Kolers, 1970). The operation of
such a system requires an efficient mechanism by
which the reader can retrieve from long-term memory
the information necessary for interpreting the
graphic input. Long-term memory, where all of the
knowledge that the reader has acquired is stored,
can be viewed as consisting of various levels of
information, from basic details about letter shapes
and identities to lexical information, such as the
spelling, pronunciation, meaning, and syntactic

characteristics of words, to high-level general knowledge about the world.

The comprehension process for any new information can be said to consist of comparing the new data being introduced into short-term memory with preexisting knowledge in the reader's long-term memory. A text is much easier to understand if it is based on concepts that the reader is already familiar with. A person who has studied a great deal of psychology, for example, will more readily grasp new theories of learning than one who has had little previous exposure to psychological concepts. The cognitive processes that are used to match new input with knowledge held in long-term memory run in both directions, often referred to as bottom-up and top-down processes. Bottom-up or data-driven processes depend primarily on che information presented by the text. Top-down, or conceptually driven, processes involve the reader's previous knowledge about the language and about the subject matter.

Perhaps the most basic kind of bottom-up processing is the visual discrimination of letters. This task is probably based on significant distinctive features such as the lines and angles that make up the letters and their configuration within the letters (see Smith, 1979). Once the letters that make up a word have been recognized, the word itself can be accessed or recalled from long-term memory, either by means of a visual match with representations in the "internal lexicon"--one's knowledge of words and their meanings--or by first assigning a phonological identity to the word in order to process it in terms of its sound, as if it were being heard rather than read. This process can involve subvocalization--that is, converting the written material into actual speech sounds, which usually involves moving one's lips--or, more efficiently, transforming the letter shapes or graphemes directly into an abstract phonological code without activation of the speech mechanism. A main problem with such theories of phonological mediation in English concerns the abundance of orthographic irregularities, which would require a highly complex system of grapheme-to-phoneme correspondence rules. In

English, unlike many other alphabetic languages, it is often very difficult to determine how a word is pronounced based on its spelling, as can be seen in the very distinct pronunciations of words such as through, though, thought, and tough, or to know how a word is spelled based on its pronunciation, as in caught, ache, and so on. This has led many psychologists (see, for example, Barron, 1981; Massaro, 1979; Underwood, 1979) to conclude that in reading, meaning is determined primarily through direct visual recognition of words rather than converting to sound, though subsequent transformation to a speech code may be a means of remembering material until it can be integrated into the meaning of a sentence, which is also a function of short-term memory.

Another way that lexical access--the identification of word meaning--may be achieved is through the perception of visual characteristics of the words themselves, without depending on the prior recognition of component letters. One such characteristic is the overall shape of the word, including its length and the outline pattern created by the ascending and descending letters, those that extend above (b, d, f, h, k, l, t) and below (g, j, p, q, y) the line of print, perhaps along with some internal analysis, such as the identification of some of the letters, especially those at the beginning or end of the word. For example, fluent readers probably do not process familiar words of high frequency such as the articles a and the in terms of their individual letters, but perceive them directly as lexical units.

Actually, it is possible that a combination of phonological and visual access is used by most readers, very common words being recognized visually, and less common words being recoded to speech sounds through a set of grapheme-to-phoneme correspondence rules. This possibility has been referred to as a dual-access hypothesis (Foss & Hakes, 1978). Even fluent readers can be observed to slow down when they come across an unusual word in order to sound it out.

In summary, bottom-up processing hypotheses view word recognition as the result of a flow from graphic input to meaning, either directly or through phonological mediation.

In contrast to bottom-up processes, top-down processes are believed to depend on the reader's own contribution to comprehension through the knowledge that he or she has about the world and about the syntactic and semantic constraints of the language. A reader who is familiar with the language, including its common rhetorical patterns, and with the topic about which he or she is reading, can usually anticipate words before they are encountered, making detailed bottom-up processing unnecessary. In a study some years ago, Wilson (1973) found that graduate students in advanced ESL classes had much less difficulty reading material in their fields than they did the ESL texts. Proponents of top-down models of reading such as Goodman (1970, 1973, 1976) and Smith (1973) contend that an efficient reader does not have to identify letters or even words with precision, but merely samples from graphic cues, supplying the contextually determined syntactic and semantic information needed to predict grammatical structure and subsequent graphic input. In the sentence, <u>Please</u> <u>turn</u> <u>out</u> <u>the</u> <u>lights</u> <u>when</u> <u>you</u> _____, it is fairly easy to supply the final word based on the meaning of the sentence. The reading process is said to consist basically of testing and confirming these predictions by comparing them with the least possible amount of visual input. In the example given above, the reader merely has to see that the final word begins with the letter "l" to confirm his prediction that the word in question is <u>leave</u>.

While Goodman (1976) recognizes that less proficient readers require more graphic input than advanced readers, he claims that even beginning readers are able to draw on the syntactic and semantic information available to them. Most of the research with top-down processing has been done with native speakers of English. It therefore presupposes a fluent command of the language in its spoken form before learning to read. In dealing with ESL

students, however, it is important to recognize the special problems of second-language learners who, unlike children learning to read in their native language, may not possess sufficient knowledge of the target language to aid significantly in their predictive capability. As Yorio (1971) has pointed out, reading in a foreign language is not the same as in one's native language due to deficiencies in the reader's knowledge of the structure and vocabulary of the language, his or her ability to select the most productive graphic cues, and his or her memory span, as well as interference from his or her native language.

Perhaps it is most realistic to view reading as an interactive process, as proposed by Rumelhart (1977). The interactive model emphasizes the cooperation that must exist between bottom-up and top-down processes. According to this model, long-term memory consists of several abstract levels of meaning, each storing different kinds of information, such as letter features, letters, and words. The perception of a set of letter features can trigger the recognition of the corresponding letter, which in turn activates words containing the letter. As more and more letters are recognized, the corresponding word is accessed, and as more and more words are recognized and contextual comprehension begins to take place, activation will begin to flow down to aid in the recognition of subsequent words.

In the interactive model, phonological encoding is seen as a useful mechanism both in lexical access and as a way of storing material in short-term memory until it can be integrated with subsequent material in order to extract the complete meaning of a sentence or piece of text.

For skilled readers, the lower-level processing tasks involved in reading, such as letter identification and word recognition, become so automatic that the limited resources of short-term memory can be devoted to the integration of meaning at the level of sentences or longer units of text. But as Perfetti and Hogabcam (1975) point out:

If a reader requires considerable processing
capacity to decode a single word, his pro-
cessing capacity is less available for higher
order integrated processes--for example, memory
for the just previously coded word may suffer,
memory for the preceding phrase may decrease,
and the subject's ability to predict what he is
yet to encounter on the printed page may
diminish. (p. 461)

Chapter 2
Problems in Reading ESL

The ease with which learners will be able to acquire effective reading skills in English can be expected to vary, especially at lower levels of instruction, depending on their previous reading experience. The extent to which they have developed reading strategies in their first language, as well as the differences between their native writing system and that of English, will affect the types of problems they will have to confront and the effort that will be required to overcome such problems. While all learners will have to adjust to the peculiarities of the language and its system of written representation, the nature of the adjustments that will have to be made will not be the same for a student whose native language uses an alphabetic system as for one whose language is represented by means of a syllabary or a logographic system. In the following sections are outlined some of the decoding difficulties that different groups of ESL learners face as the result of the contrast between their first (L1) and second language (L2) writing systems.

Some aspects of reading in English cause problems for all learners, even those whose writing systems are the same. Languages as closely related as British and American English differ in some spellings and in a number of categories of punctuation, so students who have learned British English at home have some new things to learn. The common difficulties include punctuation, decoding of handwritten English, and confusions of different typefaces, which can vary greatly from text to text.

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When the writing system is different, there is
the basic problem of figuring out which pieces of
the "squiggles" are meaningful. For example, stu-
dents of Arabic have been known to carefully copy
marks that were left after the teacher erased the
board. There is the problem of sound-symbol
correspondence, deciphering which sound goes with
which letter or sequence, a problem that is worsened
when the sound itself does not exist in the learn-
er's system. Then there is a very real physical
problem of headaches and tired eyes when one must
read in a different direction.

Students from languages that use the Roman
alphabet are often handicapped by their expectation
that reading English will be easy. They are tricked
by false cognates or by grammatical structures that
operate in different ways from their native
languages.

DECODING PROBLEMS

Problems Common to All Learners

The first set of common problems involves punc-
tuation. When confronted with a page of written
English, beginning readers may know that the spaces
on the page separate words; they may not know why
the beginning letter of each sentence is larger than
the others (or even notice it), or why the pronoun I
is always larger. They probably will not know the
significance of paragraphing, and if they do not
know the Roman alphabet, they will not notice ita-
lics as different from ordinary type. They almost
certainly will not know much about the ways in which
punctuation can influence the meaning of written
English.

Consider the following pair (Nash, 1983):

Cheryl explained, "John said I passed
the test, but he was wrong."

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> Cheryl explained, "John said, 'I passed
> the test,' but he was wrong." (p. 17)

The skilled reader of English knows that in the
first sentence Cheryl failed the test and in the
second sentence it was John who had not done so
well, but a beginning reader of ESL could be
expected to miss the distinction.

Punctuation has not received a great deal of
attention in the literature of foreign or second
language learning, perhaps because in the tradi-
tional view, punctuation is a marker for intonation,
and in oral-aural approaches to language learning,
one hears language before one sees it, removing the
necessity to teach punctuation explicitly. The
other possibility is that punctuation is seen as the
companion of the writing course, when the students
actually produce English prose. One is not likely
to hear such an utterance as the one above, however,
so we cannot expect intonation to sort out the
meaning for the learner. And academically oriented
adults are probably not going to be assigned such
dialogues for writing practice. The only place stu-
dents would be expected to encounter usage of single
and double quotations is in a reading text, and
reading texts do not teach punctuation for compre-
hension.

In a study designed to discover the effect of
punctuation on reading comprehension, Nash (1983)
found that punctuation does indeed affect comprehen-
sion, quite profoundly at beginning levels of profi-
ciency across language groups. Her comparison of
Arabic speakers with Spanish speakers showed the
Arabic speakers to have more difficulty at all
levels of proficiency. Even though it stands to
reason that students whose writing system is very
different from that of the L2 will have more dif-
ficulty in reading, insufficient attention has been
paid to this seemingly low-level skill.

Based on a study of seven modern languages
(English, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, Japanese,
Thai, and Greek), Nash identifies seven functions
punctuation may serve (punctuation from English is
given for illustration): (a) to show emphasis

(underlining or italics); (b) to terminate (periods, question marks, exclamation points); (c) to show omission (apostrophes, ellipsis marks); (d) to separate (commas, colons, semicolons); (e) to amplify (brackets and parentheses); (f) to show juncture (hyphens and dashes), and (g) to name (underlining or italics, commas for appositives).

To determine precisely what difficulty the students are likely to have, Nash suggests comparing the two language systems (L1 and English) in three ways. The first is whether the two languages mark the same functions. For the languages she compared, she found that generally all languages mark all seven functions. The second problem is to identify how the languages mark the functions. The language may use punctuation alone to mark a function: for example, in the yes-no question in informal English, You're going? only the ? reveals that this is not a statement. The language may use only a morphological marker: Japanese ka needs no written mark to accompany it to make a question. Or the language may use some combination of punctuation and morphology or syntax to mark a function, such as the French n'est-ce pas followed by a ? or the normal subject-verb inversion plus ? in English.

The third aspect to look at in comparing the systems of the languages are the similarities and differences within each functional category. Sometimes, the same function is marked by essentially the same symbol; all the languages in Nash's study marked declaratives with something that looks like a dot and exclamations with something like an exclamation point. when the systems compare so fully, the students are not likely to have any difficulty. On the other hand, as with Greek, which uses the semicolon to mark questions, a familiar mark may be used for quite a different function, which could be expected to cause reading problems for the students. Finally, if a function is not marked at all in one language, the greatest difficulties can be expected, since the students may have to be taught new language concepts at a time when their language proficiency is very low. For example, English uses the apostrophe to mark contractions, as in I'm, isn't.

The only other language in Nash's sample that uses contractions at all is Spanish, in which they are rare. Since basic reading texts that include dialogues are full of contracted forms, many students must have considerable difficulties with them.

English, it seems, is quite rich in the variety and uses of punctuation marks. The problem for the reading teacher at the beginning levels is to be sensitive to uses of punctuation that are likely to affect the meaning of the text and to make sure the students understand these first. Other uses of punctuation can be learned after the student gains sufficient skill with the language to comprehend their explanation in English.

The second set of common problems concerns handwriting. Although most of the material a typical ESL student will have occasion to read will be in printed form, he or she will also find it necessary at times to be able to read handwritten messages. Instructors usually use handwriting on the blackboard as well as for comments on tests and papers; students take class notes in longhand; and, indeed, most informal written communication is handwritten. Since letter shapes in handwriting are often quite different from standard printed forms (compare, for example, a - a, f - f, r - r, s - s, v - v, z - z), and since the distinctions between some handwritten letters are minimal (as with g/q, h/k, a/o, r/s, u/v, y/z, n/u, e/l), it is important that students whose languages do not use the Roman alphabet be given special training in order to gain familiarity with the handwritten forms of the letters.

The main problem in learning to read handwriting is that there is often considerable variation in form and style from one individual to another, both in the shape of particular letters and in the overall slant, size, and spacing of the writing. Compare, for example, the following samples, all of which could be considered good handwriting in spite of the differences among them:

Reading is a valuable skill.

Reading is a valuable skill.

Reading is a valuable skill.

Thus, in addition to teaching a standard form
of handwriting, some of the major variables should
also be taught.

Varying typefaces present a third set of
problems. Modern German classes, for example com-
monly begin reading in a script similar to this one
and then switch to a Gothic script that looks like a
different language once the students advance to
"literature." Many learners have had this traumatic
experience. With ESL learners who are unfamiliar
with the Roman alphabet, the same thing can happen
when changing from text to text in different type
styles. The serifs, or the embellishments at the
tops and bottoms of letters in some typefaces, may
be confusing, as students may think the serifs
create new letters with different correspondences,
in the same manner as adding dots in Arabic, for
example. Following is an example of a serif
typeface:

Reading is a valuable skill.

And, as mentioned earlier, italics can present
problems when the students do not notice the dif-
ference, or do not know the significance of the
difference.

The teacher should also examine the text
materials to see if there are particular uses of
boldface type, italics, or other features that
signal certain types of directions or activities.

Problems Specific to Language Systems

While difficulties in acquiring familiarity
with the alphabetic symbols and the conventions
of printing and handwriting discussed so far can
be expected to affect the reading ability of
beginning ESL students regardless of their language
background, different kinds of problems can be
anticipated depending on the type of graphic rep-
resentation students have previously learned to use.
From the point of view of various writing systems
commonly used in different languages, the adjust-
ments that learners from diverse backgrounds will
have to make in learning to read English are
explored here.

English is one of many modern languages that
use some form of alphabetic writing, in which the
individual letters or letter combinations represent
language sounds, or phonemes. As noted earlier, the
correspondences between sounds and symbols are not
as consistent in English as in some other languages
with a more regular orthography. However, the basic
principle is still that the way a word is written is
based on the discrete phonemic units constituting
the oral articulation of a word. In contrast to
such alphabetic systems, the syllabaries and logo-
graphic systems used by many languages, primarily in
the Far East, consist of symbols (characters) that
represent syllables or complete words. The
outstanding example of a logographic system is that
of Chinese writing, which uses thousands of charac-
ters, each representing a different semantic con-
cept. Japanese writing, on the other hand, makes
use of both a logographic system borrowed from Chi-
nese and two syllabaries (hiragana and katakana), in
which each symbol represents a particular consonant-
plus-vowel sequence.

Students from these language backgrounds may
experience basic difficulty in learning the very
concept of letter-sound correspondence: that each
symbol represents not a word or syllable, but an
individual phoneme. Lacking an understanding of
this principle, they would fail to take advantage of
the orthographic efficiency made possible by alpha-

betic writing. The task of learning to read could
be seriously hampered if a student tended to treat
written words as isolated visual displays to be
memorized rather than using sound-symbol correspon-
dences to relate the written and oral forms.
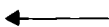
Many languages, including Arabic, Persian,
Hebrew, Hindi, and Thai, are written with alphabetic
systems, but using non-Roman alphabets. The charac-
ters of these alphabets are very different from
those of English. Numerous conventions of English,
such as capitalization, hyphenation, and spacing,
are lacking or quite different in some of these lan-
guages. In addition, in Arabic, Persian, and
Hebrew, the direction of writing is from right to
left, the opposite of the Roman alphabet.

Examples:

Thai   ครอบครัวเราเป็นครอบครัวที่ไม่หญูนัก

Arabic · الاثنين بيعمل حساب العمله وما بيحبش يزعلها

Although students whose native languages use
non-Roman alphabets are familiar with the concept of
sound-symbol correspondence, they must learn to
recognize a completely new set of symbols and to
associate these symbols with their respective sounds
with a high degree of automaticity before they can
be expected to read English with facility. This can
be especially difficult in the case of letters that
share a large number of visual features and are thus
very similar in appearance, particularly if the let-
ters represent sounds that do not exist in the
learner's native language.

In the historical development of European
alphabetic writing systems, all of which derived
from the original alphabet devised in Ancient Greece
on the basis of a syllabary introduced by Phoenician
seafarers, major differences came about principally
between the types of systems used by languages in
Eastern and Western Europe. Since they have common
roots, though, there are numerous similarities in
individual symbols among the quasi-Roman alphabets.
The problems that learners encounter stem from the

fact that graphemes that are similar in appearance
may represent quite different sounds in two lan-
guages, as observed in correspondences between Greek
and English (H ~ E, ng ~ e, v ~ n, p ~ r, o ~ s,
x ~ ch, w ~ o) or between Russian and English
(B ~ v, H ~ n, p ~ r, y ~ u, x ~ kh). In early
stages of learning to read English, such ᵕ milari-
ties could be troublesome for students who have
already learned to associate symbols with sounds
other than those they represent in English.

Ironically, students whose native languages use
the Roman alphabet may experience the greatest dif-
ficulty in mastering English sound-symbol correspon-
dences since they have already learned to associate
given letters with sounds in their own languages,
which may or may not be the same as the sounds they
represent in English. A Spanish speaker, for
example, would tend to pronounce unfamiliar words
according to Spanish sound-symbol correspondence
rules, potentially making comprehension more dif-
ficult. In Spanish, the letter r is pronounced like
the tap sound of intervocalic d in English. A stu-
dent may hear the word "kidding" and want to look it
up in a dictionary. He may become quite frustrated
trying to find it with an r in the middle of the
word. It should be noted, on the other hand, that
in the case of cognate words, there is usually more
similarity in the written forms of equivalent words
than in their spoken forms, allowing ESL learners
to exhibit greater reading comprehension than their
overall language proficiency would permit.

In light of these factors, it is apparent that
learners' native languages will have some bearing on
the kind and degree of difficulty they experience in
acquiring reading ability in English. It would
therefore be useful to take language background into
consideration in an initial assessment of baᵕic
decoding problems and in the design of a beginning
reading programs.

Vocabulary Problems

For students whose language is completely unre-
lated to English, all the words will present more or
less equal difficulty; therefore, some rational
means of presentation will have to be devised to
help the students learn new words as quickly as pos-
sible. At the very beginning levels, the readings
should reinforce in the visual mode the language
that the students are learning aurally, so they will
be getting a double dose of the same words. Later
on, when the students can comprehend more difficult
language than they can produce, reading serves as a
primary source of new vocabulary.

For students from Romance language backgrounds,
the Latinate vocabulary will be much easier than
words with an Anglo-Saxon source. Demonstrate, for
example, is easier for them than show. They may
have trouble with the pronunciation, especially with
stress placement; but they will not have difficulty
with the meaning. There are, of course, false
cognates, but these are limited in number and can be
given special attention when they arise.

A more important problem for all learners
arises when the semantic field of the word does not
match in the target and native languages. The words
make and do in English are often represented by a
single word in many languages, and students have
difficulty knowing which to use. At the beginning
stages of reading in a new language, it is not
likely that the students would be reading texts in
which this particular problem would affect compre-
hension. The students probably translate both into
their native language equivalent with little loss of
comprehension.

Many individual words or phrases can have a
variety of meanings depending on the context, and
students' individual knowledge of these contexts
will affect their comprehension. Washington can
refer to a president, a city, a state, a government,
a monument, a bridge, and various public and private
schools. It is not always easy for students to
determine which meaning to choose for a given word.

Morphology and Syntax Problems

Compared with many languages, English morphology is relatively simple. Students should learn it quite early since it often provides a redundancy that will help comprehension. The inflectional suffixes (-d for past, -s for plural, possessive, or third person singular, for example) are few in number and are usually learned as part of the grammatical structure. The teacher of reading needs to point out how the can be useful in deciphering a text. Learning derivational affixes (pre-, -tion, -cy) allows students to relate words to each other and reduces the task of vocabulary learning.

The syntax of English is not particularly complicated, either, given the possibilities that exist in the world's languages. While the productive skills of speaking and writing can be difficult to master, students can use the receptive skills of listening and reading to comprehend material containing syntax that is beyond their ability to produce. The use of the past perfect tense, for example, may come quite late in the sequence of grammatical patterns to be mastered for production, but it is fairly straightforward in meaning and can be taught for recognition along with or shortly after the simple past. The same is true of passives, relative clauses, and conditional sentences.

Comprehension Problems

Even for students who have thoroughly mastered the basic features of the writing system, there may be serious problems in reading comprehension due not only to a limited knowledge of vocabulary or a lack of familiarity with the grammatical and rhetorical conventions of the language, but also to limited previous experience with the subject matter dealt with in a reading selection.

It has been found that much of the difficulty that foreign learners of English experience in reading is due to the inability to relate what they are reading to their own preexisting knowledge. As

Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) point out, comprehension involves not only the readers' language proficiency, but also their background knowledge. Prior knowledge of the world is seen as being organized into cognitive schemata. According to schema theory, in order for efficient comprehension to take place, ongoing interaction must occur between the reader's existing knowledge, which is often culturally based, and new information presented in the text. That is, much of the meaning conveyed by a text depends on background information that the author assumes the reader will share and that is therefore not made explicit. The proficient reader is expected to be able to make inferences and arrive at a fuller interpretation of the text than is actually written down. If readers are unable to make the necessary inferences due to a lack of familiarity with the sociocultural patterns implicit in a text, they may not fully understand what they are reading even though they know all the words and have an adequate mastery of the grammar.

Carrell and Eisterhold (1983), in their discussion of schema theory, distinguish between formal schemata, including background knowledge that a reader has about linguistic and rhetorical structures, and content schemata, which consist of prior knowledge about the specific content area dealt with in a given text. Both kinds of knowledge can be expected to influence a reader's understanding of a passage. For example, someone with medical training will be able to derive meaning from an article about surgical techniques more easily than a person who is unfamiliar with medical writing styles, technical vocabulary, and operating procedures.

For students who are not only learning a new language but also dealing with unfamiliar types of rhetorical organization and cultural patterns that may be quite different from those of their native lands, comprehension of a new piece of text can be severely restricted. Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) therefore insist that ESL teachers "must be particularly sensitive to reading problems that result from the implicit cultural knowledge presupposed by a text."

Cultural Orientation to Reading

In general, ESL teachers view the purpose of
reading to be to derive knowledge or pleasure. Most
of the training offered to students in academically
oriented programs concentrates on reading to gather
information. Such reading should be done silently
and as rapidly as possible, and necessarily involves
giving critical attention to the information and
ideas presented by the author. While teachers try
to teach this orientation, many students seem to
have trouble accepting it. In some cultures,
reading is seen as an art form rather than as a
linguistic tool. Furthermore, many students' pre-
vious experience with reading has dealt mainly with
religious material, which is read aloud and with
reverence. These factors may explain why some stu-
dents seem to resist teachers' exhortations to speed
up by giving less attention to individual words and
more to the development of ideas in a text.
Critical reading is a new concept to many students
because they have had no experience with questioning
the authority of the printed page.

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Chapter 3
Assessing Components
of the Reading Skills

Accurate assessment of reading ability is essential
whether its purpose is to evaluate an individual's
potential for success in an academic program or to
determine the type and level of instruction that he
or she needs in order to achieve the greatest
possible reading proficiency. This section will
examine various kinds of tests that have been used
to measure reading ability, discussing the appro-
priateness of each for various situations. As will
be seen, while some tests may provide an accurate
picture of a subject's overall reading ability, most
of them do not give us a clear indication of the
specific problems that may be affecting that abil-
ity. Given the complexity of the reading process,
it is often not enough to know the percentage of
correct responses that an individual was able to
give on a reading comprehension test. To be of real
value, an assessment should provide detailed infor-
mation regarding the source of the learner's weak-
nesses by identifying deficiencies in one or more of
the subcomponents of the reading process: letter
identification, word recognition, lexical access,
contextual interpretation, background knowledge,
integration of meaning, retention of information,
and so forth.

TEST TYPES

All standardized tests of ESL include a test of
reading comprehension, but these tests do not

discriminate between nonreaders, people who read a little, and very elementary readers. The reading section is at the end of the test, as a rule, and if students get a minimal score on that part of the test, the evaluator cannot tell whether they could not read or they could not finish the test because of general proficiency problems.

The problem for the teacher is to learn exactly where the learner is in reading so that appropriate materials and methods may be selected. Depending on which part of the reading skill is being assessed, a number of tests may be administered fairly quickly. Most of the classroom tests have not been standardized, so it is difficult to use them for comparison purposes, but generally this is not the purpose of giving such tests.

Cloze Tests

A relatively simple way to assess reading proficiency is by means of a cloze test. This procedure involves presenting a reader with a passage from which every fifth to tenth word has been systematically deleted, except for the first and last sentences, which are usually left intact. The reader is asked to fill in the blanks with appropriate words to complete the meaning of the text. A proficient reader may be expected to know what part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, etc.) would be most appropriate in a given context, and on the basis of overall meaning should be able to provide a word that makes sense.

In the sentence, for example, The man ____ four sandwiches because he was very ____, the first blank requires a verb to connect the subject and object and the second blank requires an adjective since it is preceded by the modifier very. Furthermore, the verb must be a past tense form to agree with was in the subordinate clause, and since the object is a kind of food the most appropriate verb is probably ate, although consumed, ordered, devoured, and so on, would also be possible answers. The meaning of

the sentence calls for an adjective in the second
blank such as hungry.

An entire cloze passage is normally long enough
to include a large number of blanks of varying
degrees of difficulty so that a wide range of profi-
ciencies can be measured. The tests are scored
either by giving credit only if the exact word that
was deleted is given by the reader (trict scoring),
or by allowing any semantically and syntactically
acceptable word to be inserted (lenient scoring).
As Oller (1979) notes, the choice of scoring method
is of little importance because the two methods have
been found to produce highly correlated measures.
For teachers who are themselves nonnative speakers
of English, it would probably be more expedient to
use the exact-word method since it is more objective
and does not require any guesswork or use of
reference books on the part of the evaluator. In
interpreting the scores, however, it should be
remembered that strict scoring yields substantially
lower scores than the lenient method. If a cloze
test is being used as a placement instrument, there-
fore, score requirements should be scaled down
accordingly.

As an alternative to this fairly open-ended
procedure, multiple-choice cloze passages have been
found to be much easier to evaluate, producing
results that correlate highly with other types of
testing instruments (Jonz, 1976). Using the same
example as before, a multiple-choice format would
appear as follows:

The man ___(1)___ four sandwiches   1. a. with
                                                       b. could
                                                       c. ate
                                                       d. buying

because he was very ___(2)___ .   2. a. yesterday
                                                       b. hungry
                                                       c. much
                                                       d. taste

Of course, a complete passage would be much longer,
containing a large enough number of blanks to allow

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for a fairly wide range of scores. A multiple-
choice cloze is more difficult to construct than an
open-ended test, since the distractors, or incorrect
response items, must be chosen carefully. They must
be syntactically or semantically incorrect but yet
not so ridiculous that they would never be selected
by a test taker.

The main drawback with multiple-choice tests of
this kind is that they do not provide a clear indi-
cation of the learner's ability to use context to
predict the missing words. Instead, the test taker
merely has to determine which of the alternative
response choices results in a meaningful and gram-
matically correct sentence. The procedure does show
how well a student understands the syntactic and
semantic constraints of the language, however, and
can be used as a reliable instrument for placement,
especially when rapid evaluation and ease of scoring
are important.

ELI-Pitt Reading Assessment Test[1]

Students who may not perform well enough on a
proficiency test to produce a reliable score exhibit
a considerable range of skills in both perceptual
and cognitive reading abilities. Indeed, they may
span a broad range of abilities in other language
skills as well. Many students are orally very
fluent, but cannot read or write at all. On the
other hand, there are students who understand the
written word very well, but who cannot speak an
intelligible word. It is extremely important to
begin at the appropriate place with these students,
to build on what they know and not to frustrate them
by trying to teach what they already know, or allow
them to flounder in material that is beyond their
reach.

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[1] Most of the information in this section origi-
nally appeared in an article in the TESOL News-
letter, June 1982.

Goodman (1970) notes the difference between "recoding," or transferring language from one medium to another, and "decoding," or extracting the meaning of the language. For example, reading aloud is recoding from the visual to the auditory medium, and can be done without decoding. People can do it in many foreign languages without a shred of comprehension; it is also quite common in a person's native language when confronted with material outside his or her field, such as when trying to read a contract or any document in "governmentese." Here is an example from the manual describing the word processing program with which the manuscript for this monograph was composed; you may be able to understand all the individual words, but anyone who has not had a good bit of experience with such documentation is defied to explain it to a novice:

> The partial loading procedure used by Catalyst has an interesting consequence. Space must be reserved for the largest interpreter. When a smaller interpreter is loaded, it may not be able to effectively make use of some of the space reserved for the larger interpreter. Most interpreters can use at least a portion of the space for file buffers. Catalyst will also use this space for the drivers it loads before using any other space. (Quark, 1983, pp. 1-3)

It is important for the reading teacher to be aware of the student's code-cracking perceptual skills as well as comprehension skills. Four levels of ability are identifiable in the process of learning the reading code:

1. The students know nothing about the Roman alphabet or the names or the sounds of the letters. Such students are always native speakers of languages that use different writing systems.

2. The students, when asked to spell aloud, say the letter names in their native language, or some other language that uses the Roman alphabet

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that they may have studied, but they don't know the code (sound-symbol relationships) for English.

3. The students have some knowledge of the sound-symbol relationships, especially the regular consonant ones, but may have considerable trouble with the vowel relationships, which are rich and bothersome in English. (For example, ow has two possible pronunciations, as in slow and cow, with no clue as to which is which.)

4. The student knows most of the sound-symbol relationships and recodes with ease, but with the "accent" common to native speakers of his or her language.

Three levels of comprehension are discernible for very beginning readers:

1. When the students have no knowledge of the code, it stands to reason that they will not comprehend anything they read. However, some students who can recode with some facility cannot comprehend the meaning of the written word. These students come from all language backgrounds, even those with Roman alphabets.

2. Students at the second level of comprehension can understand and answer questions that come directly from the text and have the same syntactic structure. These students usually have a limited vocabulary and knowledge of structure.

3. Students at the third level of comprehension can not only answer direct questions about the text, but can also draw inferences from the material in a simple text. Despite a limited vocabulary, they possess the basic reading skills required by most currently available "beginning" ESL texts.

A short, simple test (about 5 minutes' administration time) can be used to sort out the different levels of abilities among beginning readers (Menasche, 1982). The procedures for giving the

test are part of the assessment, since they provide
additional information. The test may be adminis-
tered individually during regular proficiency
testing or during the first reading class by the
teacher. The latter procedure is preferable, since
the reading teacher can gain a sense of the stu-
dents' ability from the outset.

Materials

        The teacher has an answer sheet for each stu-
dent such as the following:

                        ELI Reading Test

        Student _____

        Comments

        Paragraph I.   Decoding to Sound

        (unintelligible) 1 2 3 4 5 (very good)

        Comments

        Paragraph II.   Comprehension

                1.
                2.
                3.
                4.
                5.
                6.

        Comments

The actual test is on another sheet, as follows:

Paragraph 1.   Read the following passage aloud.

Peter wanted to buy a book for his physics
course, so he called the Lazy Fox Book Center
to find out if they had it in stock.   The per-
son who answered the phone very quickly gave
him the necessary information.   Peter's friend
offered to go to the store to get it for him,
because he was going there anyway to buy a book
for his English course.

Paragraph 2.   Read the following silently and
              then answer the questions.

It was a hot day and Jeanie was feeling
thirsty.   On the way home she stopped at the
cafeteria to have something to drink.   To her
surprise, she was told that there was only cof-
fee available, so she decided to go home imme-
diately, because she wanted a cold drink.

Questions.   Read along as the examiner reads
              these questions.   Then answer
              orally.

1.   Why was Jeanie thirsty?
2.   Why did she stop at the cafeteria?
3.   Did she drink coffee at the cafeteria?
4.   How long did Jeanie stay in the cafeteria?
5.   Did the cafeteria have many kinds of drinks
     for its customers?
6.   What did Jeanie want to drink?

                    PROCEDURES

     The students are first assured that the test is
simply to help the evaluators know how well they
read, that it will not affect grades in any way, and
that they should do the best they can.   (Since the
test is given during the first week, it is one of
several and does not usually cause much anxiety)

Then the first student is called to the teacher and
asked to spell his or her name as the teacher writes
it on the answer sheet. The student is encouraged
to look on as the teacher writes, in order to
correct any mistakes. In this way the teacher
learns whether the student knows the names of the
letters in English and is naming them correctly.
Many students at this stage try to take the paper
and pencil from the teacher and fill in the name
themselves. If the teacher does not insist they try
to spell aloud, the initial sound-symbol information
will be lost. If the student cannot do this step at
all even with translation of directions into the
native language, it is safe to conclude that the
student is at the basic beginning level and the test
need go no further.

To test for the second level, the students read
Paragraph 1 aloud and are rated on intelligibility.
A judgment is made about the students' knowledge of
the sound-symbol relationships with this part of the
test. Students who read with an accent that is nor-
mal for people from their language background, but
perfectly comprehensible to nonteachers of ESL, get
a 5. If the teacher cannot understand them, they
get a 1. (It is important to make the judgment in
terms of nonprofessional listeners since comprehen-
sion would be harder for them. Thus the standard is
stricter than if teachers were judging on the basis
of their own comprehension of the students.)

In addition to the sound-symbol information,
the teacher can attend to students' phrasing and
intonation to determine whether they have any idea
of the structural elements in the passage. Students
who pause appropriately at the end of sentences or
phrases probably understand some of what they are
reading. On the other hand, those who read in a
monotone probably do not have much idea of the
grammar.

Comprehension questions are not asked about
this passage, since it is perfectly possible to read
aloud without understanding the content. (Consider
that you may read a beloved children's story aloud
for the tenth time while planning the next week's
class in your mind. You would probably not be able

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to answer a comprehension question on the spur of the moment.)

To test for the third level of comprehension, students read the second paragraph silently. Sometimes the teacher has to pantomime with a hand over the mouth while moving the eyes over the page to get the students to understand how they are to read it. While they are reading, the teacher should note how long they take, whether they subvocalize, and how often they reread parts of the passage. As a rule, the longer it take; to read the passage, the poorer will be the comprehension.

There is some controversy over the role the phonetic representation plays in reading comprehension. While reading teachers generally hold that subvocalizing slows down the reading, some contend that it serves a useful function in the early stages of learning to read by allowing the student to make the connection between spoken and written language. The teacher can also observe whether the students need to keep their place by marking it with a finger.[2]

The teacher then reads the questions as the student reads along. The student should understand the question if possible, since it is not a very good measure of reading comprehension if the student misses because he or she did not understand the question. Poor readers will not get any of the answers right, while beginners will probably answer the first two with verbatim answers from the passage. Notice that the last four questions require some inference and synthesis of the material in the passage. Good readers at this level answer all the questions quickly and with one- or two-word answers. The latter group of students is placed with confidence in regular beginning classes; the former require more attention than is available in most basic courses and texts. Techniques and exercises

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[2] While good readers use their fingers to keep up their pace, poor readers hold their place in this fashion.

to deal with these students' problems are discussed
in Chapter 4.

ORAL READING

Reading aloud is a principal technique of
assessment for some psychologists who investigate
reading strategies. A method devised by Goodman and
his colleagues (Allen & Watr   1976; Buck, 1973;
Goodman, 1970, 1973; Goodm∢   ∢ Burke, 1973), which
has been used primarily to assess reading differ-
ences among native-speaking learners, is based on an
analysis of the kinds of errors that readers make in
reading aloud and of the readers' attempts to
correct their errors. Since proponents of miscue
analysis, as the method is known, view reading as a
process of sampling and predicting from the printed
page, they contend that mistakes made in oral read-
ing are indicators of the strategies an individual
uses when reading for meaning. For each miscue made
by a subject, the investigators attempt to identify
the factors that may have contributed to its
occurrence and to determine to what extent the
incorrectly produced item conforms to the graphic,
syntactic, and semantic constraints of the text.
Since this approach is based on the assumption that
skilled reading is largely a top-down process, using
as little graphic input as possible and supplying
semantic concepts and a sense of syntactic structure
to predict meaning (Goodman, 1973), it is assumed
that errors will occur as a natural part of the
reading process. If an error in the oral reading
results in an utterance being perceived as syntac-
tically or semantically unacceptable, the reader may
attempt to correct it. An analysis of a reader's
strategies, using a specially designed taxonomy of
errors, takes into account the number and kind ₋f
errors made, the number and kind of errors that are
subsequently corrected, and the success of the
attempts at correction. Then these data are related
to overall reading comprehension as measured through
the reader's retelling of the content of the text.

When assessing non-English speakers' reading
ability through reading aloud, the ability to recode
without comprehension should be borne in mind.
Although miscue analysis is supposedly applicable to
foreign-language learning situations as well as to
the first-language reading for which it was origi-
nally designed, a number of problems are apparent in
this regard. While oral reading may represent a
transformation of printed langue je to a familiar
oral form for children learning to read their native
language, speaking skills are often as under-
developed as reading skills for students of a
foreign language. Not surprisingly, then, attempts
to evaluate reading ability in a foreign language
using the miscue-analysis approach (e.g., Cziko,
1980, looking at English-speaking students of
French; and Folman, 1977, dealing with Israeli stu-
dents of English) have not found any significant
differences in subjects' ability to use syntactic and
semantic constraints, regardless of their level of
proficiency in the language, due to their preoccupa-
tion with the graphic input.

There is one instance, however, when reading
aloud can reveal a great deal about the students'
reading ability. Using a technique called "read and
look up" (West, 1960), the student looks at a sen-
tence or part of a passage, says it silently, looks
up from the page and says the sentence aloud.
Unless the student understands the grammatical
structure and the message of the sentence, it is
impossible to remember the string long enough to
repeat it back. We frequently use the technique at
beginning and intermediate levels to check compre-
hension and strengthen short-term memory.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM

Once the teacher has determined students'
reading abilities to be minimal, he or she must
select classroom procedures for teaching the basic
reading skills--how to crack the code of English,

learn the sound-symbol correspondences, and then
learn the traditional skills of decoding grammar,
developing word-study skills, guessing meaning from
context, and using a dictionary. For students who
start at zero proficiency in reading English, the
early skills must be learned quickly so that these
students can keep up with students of higher profi-
ciency and so that they do not become discouraged.
Some steps toward achieving these goals are outlined
here, along with examples of exercises that can be
used and adapted for classroom use.

CRACKING THE CODE

It is very beneficial for readers, especially
at beginning levels of study, to be able to relate
the written and spoken forms of the language. This
is particularly true for native speakers, who in
essence are faced with the challenge of associating
what is written on the page with their already
well-established knowledge of the spoken language;
it also applies to foreign-language learners, whose
oral skills are more highly developed than their
reading ability, or indeed to any student who wishes
to gain proficiency in the use of both spoken and
written language. Since there is a close relation-
ship between the way words are pronounced and the
way they are spelled when dealing with an alpha-
betically represented language such as English,
it would be highly inefficient to neglect the cor-
respondences that exist between sounds and graphic
symbols. However, in light of the abundance of
irregularities in the orthographic system of Eng-
lish, it is especially essential that concentrated
training and practice in both r gular sound-symbol
correspondences and except ns be provided as an
integral component of the curriculum. This
procedure will enable students to guess with some
accuracy the pronunciation of new words they
encounter as well as teaching them to guess the
spelling of new words they hear.

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Learning Sound-Symbol Correspondences
Through the Use of Iconic Devices

In order to begin to read in English, a stu-
dent's understanding of the relationship of sound
to symbol must be automatic. It seems easier if
there is some device that can be used in case the
student forgets. The most common device is a pic-
ture or word associated with a specific sound, as
with B is for baby accompanied by a picture of a
baby, very similar to beginning reading books for
native-speaking children. Care must be taken to
choose pictures that are simple, clear, consistent
with the culture of the students, and not insulting
to adults. Line drawings are often the best if the
teacher can create them, or has a source. (Some
children's books have good clear drawings, as do
some illustrated beginner's dictionaries.)

The picture must portray the vocabulary item
unambiguously. For example, rather than illus-
trating L is for letter with an addressed, stamped
envelope, using a drawing of a piece of paper with
handwriting on it, along with an envelope, is much
more effective. Also, words that play an important
role culturally are sometimes difficult to portray.
Rice is an example. Sensitivity to cultural matters
is especially difficult when presenting materials
for a heterogeneous group. Avoid the obvious, such
as using dogs and pigs when the aterials will be
used by Moslem students; and have all materials
checked for cultural content with native speakers of
the languages, if possible. One further caution
regarding the use of pictures: Cartoons should be
avoided since some cultures regard them as childish
and therefore insulting in materials for adults.

The following list of words has been tested and
refined over the past several years. They seem to
be both inoffensive and clearly ilustratable (Bruder
& Williams, 1982). Note that illustrations for the
name and base sounds of the vowels are given, and
for the consonants with more than one sound, as

well as some common digraphs. Other vowel sounds are
not introduced in the initial presentation to avoid
confusion. The student who has mastered the list
shown in Figure 1 (page 40) knows most sound-symbol
relationships for English.

Note that the list contains all the letters
and significant sounds (phonemes) of English except
/ ɔ / as in ball, / aʊ / as in house, / ɔɪ / as in boy,
/u/ as in moon, / ʊ / as in book, / ɝ / as in bird.
The key words have proved to be sufficient for the
students to learn the names of the letters and the
sounds in a fairly straightforward manner. The
remaining six are all spelled with the same letters
as are found in the key word list, and may be
learned later.

The following steps may be used to teach stu-
dents to "crack the code." First it is useful to
have an explanation in the native language where
possible. If not, the letter A and the two key
words apple and ape may be used, since most students
can hear the difference in those vowel sounds, and
thus understand the concepts more readily. It is
important to remember that the students will have
difficulty hearing the differences in some of the
vowel pairs, as well as among the unfamiliar conso-
nants. If they can hear the difference in one pair
they tend to believe that there is a difference in
the others, which is good because they will even-
tually be able to discern the difference even if
they cannot do so at first.

Learning the Names of the Letters in Sequence

The students will have to spell aloud on a
number of occasions, giving their names and other
types of information; and they will eventually have
to learn to use a dictionary. Learning the letter
names also gives some clues to their sounds. Each
vowel name is also one of the sounds the vowel
represents, for example. The sound of each of the
following letters is at the beginning of its name:
B, C, D, G, J, K, P, Q, T, V, Z. The sound of the
following letters is at the end of the name: F, L,

Letter	Sound	Word
A	/ e /	ape
A	/ æ /	apple
B	/ b /	baby
C	/ k /	cat
C	/ s /	city
D	/ d /	door
E	/ i /	sheep
E	/ ɛ /	egg
F	/ f /	fish
G	/ g /	goat
G	/ ǰ /	giraffe
H	/ h /	hat
I	/ ai /	rice
I	/ ɪ /	six
J	/ ǰ /	jet
K	/ k /	king
L	/ l /	letter
M	/ m /	man
N	/ n /	nose
O	/ o /	coke
O	/ a /	stop
P	/ p /	pencil
Q	/ kw /	queen
R	/ r /	ring
S	/ s /	sun
T	/ t /	telephone
U	/ yu /	cube
U	/ ə /	bus
V	/ v /	vase
W	/ w /	woman
X	/ ks /	exit
Y	/ y /	year
Z	/ ž /	zero
CH	/ č /	chair
TH	/ θ /	thumb
TH	/ ð /	mother
SH	/ š /	shoe

Figure 1. Key word list.

M, N, R, S, X. Only three letters do not contain
their sounds in their names: H, W, and Y (Bruder &
Williams, 1982).

Using flashcards, the teacher may say the name
of each letter and have the students repeat. The
teacher should say the letters in groups for repeti-
tion, first two, then three, and build up to four or
five as the students' memories increase. The
teacher may hold up a card and ask the students to
call out the letter that follows in the alphabet.
The teacher may hold up two cards and have the stu-
dents call out the letter or letters that fall in
the middle. The class may have a race around the
room, starting with one student and continuing until
all students have given a letter in oder. The
teacher can time the exercise and note how the time
decreases from day to day.

Teachers working with students of this level of
proficiency will come up with many tricks to keep
the students learning. However, such memory work is
inherently boring, and students progress much more
rapidly if production of the letters is introduced
early, around the second hour of instruction.

Production of the Capital Letters

Literate adults seem to rely on the written
word for remembering things (visual memory). As a
result, ESL students are frustrated when they cannot
write things down. Learning to produce the letters
right away relieves some of this frustration, and
allows for a wider variety of exercise types. Thus
some of the boredom that may accompany the cracking
of the code is alleviated. In addition, producing
the letters in writing reinforces the auditory and
visual presentation. The students produce only the
capital letters because those are the main printed
forms of the letters that will be needed--for
filling out forms, and so on. Later on they will
produce handwritten (cursive) capital and small
letters, because that style of writing is faster
than printing.

There are many exercise books and worksheets meant for children learning to write that are appropriate here (as long as they are not accompanied by childish illustrations, etc.). The students need enough practice to be able to produce the letters rather automatically, and they should say the name of the letter as they trace or produce it.

In order not to overload the students' visual memories, the alphabet should be divided into groups of four or five letters, and the production can be reinforced by other activities such as dictation ("Copy the letters in the order the teacher says them"); and sound to symbol ("Write the first letter of the word your teacher says").

Recognition of the Small Letters

The use of the terms capital/small or upper case/lower case seems to depend on the writing method a student learned as a child. The materials should be consistent in using one or the other; although since most of the students will recognize the term small, using that set will require learning only one new term.

The students are required to notice the difference between capital and small letters, to be able to associate the small and capital of the same letter, and to distinguish among similar small letters. The students should see the whole alphabet in capital and small letters (A a, B b, C c, D d, etc.). The teacher should help the students see similarities as well as the differences in the shapes of the letters. For example, show them how the bulge of the B goes the sa... way from the vertical line for both the capital and the small letter, but the bulge of the D is in opposite directions for the capital and small versions.

The following exercises can be used to teach capital and small letters.

1. To distinguish between capital and small letters, students may be given a list such as the following and asked to circle the small letters:

1. D © ⓓ F ⓠ

2. r W v l L

3. N m n u U etc.

(Bruder & Williams, 1982, p. 15)

Then students may be given a text of five or six
lines, and asked to circle the capital letters.
Depending on the proficiency of the students, they
might be led to the generalization that sentences
begin with capital letters in English. They can
look "sentence" up in their bilingual glossaries.

    2. To learn to associate capital and small
versions of the same letter, students may be asked
to connect the capital and small letters in a
display such as the following:

```
A            b

B            d

C            e

D            c

E            a
```
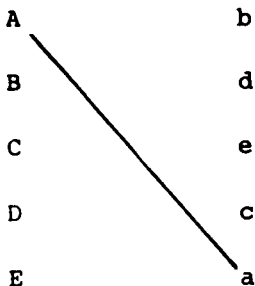
(Bruder & Williams, 1982, p. 17)

Next, ask them to circle the small letters that are
the same as the capital:

1. P   q ⓟ g ⓟ q j

2. T   t f r f t r

3. U   v u w n u r   etc.

(Bruder & Williams, 1982, p. 16)

In the following exercise, have the students make a
check mark (✓) if the letters are the same:

1. A e ___

2. A a ✓

3. B b ✓

4. D b ___ etc.

(Bruder & Williams, 1982, p. 15)

Then have them write the capital letter and say it
at the same time, with a list such as the following:

1. a A

2. e ___

3. i ___

4. d ___

5. b ___

Finally, ask the students to identify the small
letter in the following display:

1. N: m (n) r p c v

2. R: z s a r v n

3. B: b p s e d f

4. Y: a l v f y j etc.

(Henderson, 1983, p. 16)

3.   To help students distinguish among similar
small letters, first have them circle the small let-
ters in each line that are the same as the ones on
the left:

```
1. b    d p ⓑ d ⓑ p

2. d    b p d g d b

3. f    t f r f l t   etc.
```

(Bruder & Williams, 1982, p. 15)

Then have them connect the letters that are the same
and fall in a row in displays such as the following:

```
a           o           a
o           a           a
a           a           o
---------------------------
n           m           m
n           n           m
n           m           n
```

All the exercises can be adapted to the various
aspects of cracking the code, handwriting capitals
and small letters, distinguishing words, and so
forth. Focus on problem areas for each group of
students in constructing the exercises; students may
resent having to do many exercises that are extreme-
ly easy.

Production of Small, Handwritten Letters
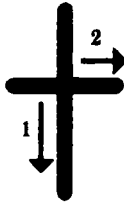
Practitioners disagree on what the next step
should be after students learn to recognize printed
capital and small letters and to produce the capital
letters. One option is to go on to beginning
reading exercises, have students complete their
mastery of sound-symbol correspondences, and then
progress to more complex reading. Some students do
not make this transition easily; they need more time
to digest the basics. For these students, all the
material may be recycled through the task of pro-
ducing the small, handwritten letters. It is up to
the teacher of the individual student or class to
decide the most appropriate sequence. Incidentally,

the term <u>handwritten</u> is easier to grasp than the term <u>cursive</u>.

First, the students learn to produce the letters in isolation, tracing and then producing them freehand. Key words (if they have been presented) may accompany each letter to remind the students of the sound, but the students are not asked to produce the key words in writing until the letters have been presented individually. Once they have practiced the letters in isolation they are instructed to connect them in sequences found in English words.

Once the students have mastered the vowels, the consonants may be presented in alphabetical order, using simple words that the students can pronounce and learn, in some cases, by looking up the meanings in their glossaries. Dictation of letter sequences is a useful exercise at this stage. It should be emphasized that the students are to say the names of the letters and the words as they are produced. The following exercises are recommended.

T t   Identify and print the letter:

(t) f l t i r t d f l x (etc.)

k l x t f z t v k f d (etc.)

(Henderson, 1983, p. 2)

Identify the letter combinations:

at	ot	to	(at)	al	af	ta	(at)	ot
ga	go	qa	ad	bo	ga	go	ag	ga
st	sl	st	ts	at	et	sf	zt	st

(etc.)   (Henderson, 1983, p. 3)

Print the letter combinations:

Bob _____

ban _____

cob _____

(etc.)   (Henderson, 1983, p. 3)

Leaving Spaces Between Words

After the practice with the small letters,
before going to the handwritten capitals, introduce
the idea of putting words together into phrases with
spaces between the words. This is a crucial concept
for students with non-Roman-alphabet backgrounds.
The students may be asked to copy printed phrases by
hand, and dictations are again useful here. Stu-
dents may also be given boxes in which to copy the
words in order to reinforce the idea, as follows:

The woman is going to work.

| The | woman | is | going | to | work. |

She has a red and blue blouse.

| | | | | | | |

Production of Handwritten Capital Letters

The students need to know when capital letters are used, which ones connect with the following letters (as a rule), and how to differentiate between capital and small handwritten letters. First give simple rules for capitalization and then introduce the days of the week, months of the year, and so on, as appropriate in the exercises.

Bruder and Williams (1982) have divided the capitals into three groups: easy, those whose handwritten small letters are virtually the same as the capitals (*A/a*, *C/c*, *M/m*, *N/n*, *O/o*, *S/s*, *U/u*, *V/v*, *X/x*, *Y/y*, *Z/z*); hard, whose capital and small letters are similar in some respects (*J/j*, *K/k*, *L/l*, *P/p*, *W/w*) or the handwritten letters are similar to the printed ones (B/*B*, D/*D*, E/*E*, R/*R*); and tough, whose capital and small letters do not resemble each other at all (F/*F/f*, G/*G/g*, H/*H/h*, I/*J/i*, Q/*Q/q*, T/*J/t*). Henderson (1983) presents the letters grouped by similarity of form (A, O, Q, D, for example). The letters should be organized to allow the students to concentrate on those that are the most difficult for them. At this stage the students should be copying from printed models and writing simple sentences from dictation using the words and sounds they have already learned; spacing and end punctuation should be emphasized.

Learning Alphabetization

Learning to alphabetize words is a good way to reinforce the skills learned thus far and a good introduction to using the dictionary in English. Alphabetization is straightforward in English, and the rules are easy to learn; all the students need is practice in the increasing complexities as the words to be alphabetized are increasingly similar at the beginnings. Students whose languages are not alphabetic will need to pay special attention to the rules; students whose languages are alphabetic, but not the Roman alphabet, will need to understand how

the organization of the dictionary in English is different from their own.

An example exercise by Henderson (1983) can be adapted to the vocabulary that the students have learned. The complexity increases as the activity progresses.

Have the stude ̄ print the words in alphabetical order:

1.	give/bottle/picture	bottle	give	picture
2.	always/listen/another	_____	_____	_____
	...			
9.	speak/station/serve	_____	_____	_____
	...			
11.	there/table/their	_____	_____	_____
	...			
26.	weather/welcome/well	_____	_____	_____

(etc.)   (p. 19)

In conclusion, for students to learn to crack the code of English, teachers must examine the systems of the students' native languages. They must consider how to present the material, as well as the students' rel ative proficiency in English. For example, Spanish speakers will need to learn the basic sound-symbol correspondences with special attention to the vowels, but they need not spend much time with handwriting or alphabetization. Students who use similar alphabets, such as the Slavic languages, need to concentrate on the sound-symbol correspondences of similar letters that have very different sounds; then they need to learn new letters and their correspondences. If the students use an alphabet, but not the Roman one, they will probably need to go through the complete series of steps outlined earlier if they are at the beginning reading level as defined here. Academically oriented students from languages that do not use the Roman alphabet are already knowledgeable about English; it is up to the teacher to decide where on the continuum a student's abilities l

EYE MOVEMENT TRAINING

A major problem of many students is lack of
speed in moving their eyes over the page. Speed-
reading techniques should not be taught at this
level of proficiency; only fluent readers can bene-
fit from such training. Students can, however, be
trained o move their eyes faster and to pick out
certain features. The exercises should be timed, at
first liberally, then faster and faster to create a
sense of competition (friendly) and a gamelike
atmosphere.

A reader develops an effective pattern of sac-
cades, or eye movements, by learning to pick up as
much graphic information as possible from each fixa-
tion, thereby reducing the number of fixations
needed to read a line of print. This entails being
able to perceive words and phrases as visual units
rather than having to pay attention to individual
letters. At beginning levels, rapid discrimination
exercises with words of increasing length, such as
the following, will help students become accustomed
from the outset to focusing on words and common
letter sequences.

Circle the words that are the same as the given word.

me   em ma ne we am (me) ew om (me) mo (me) nc

id   bi id di ld id ib pi ig jd di id ib

dim   bim dim din mid dim dem din aim bid
        dim dim

di e   dine bime dime lime bine time dime tine
        dime diem

ind   mine nind dime line bine time dime time
        dime diem

send   send send sand sent cend sind send semd
        send senf

```
bends   bends   dends   bendz   bandz   bends   bends
        henas   denbs

timed   tined   timed   dimed   timea   timed   timed
        fined   timed
```

<div align="right">(Henderson, 1983, p. 7)</div>

A similar type of exercise requires that students find words as they are read at increasingly rapid rates. In order to complete the activity successfully, the reader must be able to recognize at a glance whether a given word is the one he or she is looking for. The following example is used in Barnard's (1971) advanced vocabulary workbooks:

Number the following words in the order in which you hear them (the teacher reads them out in any order):

    paper   study   /desk

    class   room   3book   pencil

   2 chair   good   table

The choice of words for any such activity depends on the proficiency level of the students. It is preferable to use words that the students know so that they can become accustomed to thinking of the words as meaningful units. In the Barnard workbooks, the words are taken from a reading passage that has been presented earlier in the lesson.
Another useful activity involves determining as quickly as possible whether the members of a pair are the same or different:

Circle S if the following phrases are the same; circle D if they are different

    take a look   take a book   S   D
    go to town   go to town   S   D

To make these activities more meaningful, students can be asked to find words that are synonymous

with given wor(s. This will take longer, of course,
since it will not be possible to rely on a visual
match.

Underline the word that has the same meaning as
the given word:

1. <u>shut</u>   watch   close   sleep   need
2. <u>speak</u>   point   talk   hope   see
3. <u>purchase</u> step   buy   listen   dream

(Norris, 1972, p. 195)

VOCABULARY LEARNING

In a foreign language class, the teacher
usually has the luxury of being able to limit the
amount of vocabulary introduced to the students and
the possibility of using the students' native
language for the presentation. On the other hand,
the foreign language student may not see the need of
learning new words when the native language ones
seem to suit perfectly. As a result, the teacher
may have a motivation problem. In the ESL class-
room, the teacher is confronted with students whose
vocabulary needs are enormous and immediate, both
for academic study and for normal living arrange-
ments; but the teacher lacks the ease of native
language use in explaining the words and the
meanings.

There are probably no new gimmicks for teaching
vocabulary at the beginning level; many teachers
have been using the same techniques for years. How-
ever, some of the general principles might usefully
be discussed here. Since appropriate readers or
materials may be difficult to find for a target
group, the best approach is to cull reading texts
for exercise types that can be adapted to an indi-
vidual class.

At the basic level, the vocabulary the students
need is mostly concrete, and thus picturable.
Pictures and illustrations, if they are clear, are

very helpful, but they should leave no room for doubt. (One language class spent several hours learning color words illustrated by sticks of different lengths. At the end of the lesson, one man expressed amazement at how the students had succeeded in learning the words-- he though† the words referred to the lengths of the sticks.)

Vocabulary at this level is best learned in the context of a commonplace situation--the supermarket, an apartment, a kitchen--but care should be taken not to overload the students with extraneous vocabulary; for example, whisk is probably a useless item for beginning students. One way to handle this situation is to collect a series of pictures, present the basic series in the first week or two and then recycle them, adding vocabulary that has come up in readings or ⌐lsewhere and letting students ask for specific words to fit the contexts they have come to need since the last presentation.

The vocabulary of classroom management should be carefully thought out, since it constitutes a large portion of early vocabulary input. The teacher can even write down the routine commands such as Open your books to page ____ and Hand in the homework so that the students can look up the words in bilingual glossaries. The teacher should be very careful to monitor the syntax and lexical complexity of his or her speech, so that the students hear the same phrases repeatedly; this practice will help with listening comprehension and make life much easier for students while they gain confidence through knowing what to expect and being able to do the right thing. For example, the teacher might want to avoid the idiomatic hand in and substitute give me for the first few weeks.

Some students want word lists, but most teachers are reluctant to give out lists that present words in alphabetical order out of context and often without designation of part of speech. They fear, rightly, that students will not be able to use the words correctly or even be able to tell which meaning of the word to refer to when they see the word in a text. For the students who insist, however, basic word lists make them feel better; for some

students, memorizing lists is a common way of learning. As long as learning the list does not interfere with the accomplishment of the other learning tasks, it seems harmless enough.

A very good technique for explaining vocabulary, especially in a heterogeneous classroom, is to ask if any of the other students knows the meaning of a given word. Students with their limited vocabulary and grammar are often better able than the teacher to explain things simply and in terms other students will comprehend. One class was doing a reading in which someone had fainted, and the word unconscious came up. The teacher, obviously unable to think of a good clear explanation, called on one of the students, who promptly said, "It's when your eyes are closed and you're not asleep and not dead."

It is very common at beginning levels to teach vocabulary items in pairs of opposites: good/bad, tall/short, fat/thin, and so on. This is not recommended, since the learner may remember the words, but not which attribute is associated with which word, and get them mixed up. Only after the words have been learned separately should they be brought together as an aid to the memory.

Following are four general types of exercises for beginning-level vocabulary.

Copying

Many vocabulary exercises at the beginning level involve copying of some kind. While this may not seem like a very interesting task, it is, in fact, very useful for reinforcing beginning reading skills. Besides, the students' vocabulary is so limited that getting them to produce vocabulary from memory is virtually impossible.

In one exercise, the student practices putting the same word into several sentence contexts:

perfect   A thing is perfect when it is complete and
          has no fault; when it is the best of its
          own kind.

Examples: It is very difficult to draw a p_____t
          circle. Your work is good, but no one can
          call it _____. They found a _____
          place for their holiday.

                              (Barnard, 1971, Vol. 1, p. 3)

     In the next exercise, after reading a passage,
the student writes the correct words in the blank:

     Avenue   good   bad   Street

This is 88th _____ between Second Avenue
and Third _____. It isn't a very _____
block. It isn't a very _____ block.

                    (Bodman & Lanzano, 1975, p. 18)

Synonyms/Antonyms

     In this exercise, the student is asked to
select from the list the word that has the same
meaning as the phrases given.

               final   baby   guy

1. the last   _____
2. a man or boy   _____
3. a very small child   _____

                    (Bodman & Lanzano, 1975, p. 37)

Guessing from Context

     From the outset, exercises should encourage
students to guess meanings from the information they
have, and they need to be taught how to use that
information. The teacher might construct simple
sentences using the grammar and vocabulary familiar
to the students to introduce new words. For
example:

The man has an _____.   He thinks it will rain.

In this instance, the students may be led to say
that a noun is needed and that it will begin with a
vowel.   Further, the item is something that is used
when it rains.   If the students think they know what
the word is in their native language, they can look
in their glossaries and find the English word.   This
kind of exercise draws on their past experiences and
teaches them the skills they will need to become
better readers.

Comprehension Questions

        Two types of comprehension questions can be
used at the basic levels of reading ability.   The
most common are the ones typically found after
reading passages and illustrated on page 3 in the
Menasche (1982) test of reading comprehension.   Even
at the beginning levels, questions should require
the students to make inferences.   A second type,
usually called "True or False," gives sentences that
students can label correctly if they know the
meanings of the words.   A pair of sentences such as
Stamps like to eat pizza and Politicians like to eat
pizza requires only that the students know that
politicians are human and stamps are not in order to
complete the exercise correctly.   Such sentences are
easy to construct using known vocabulary and grammar
as a review, or with new vocabulary for presentation
purposes.
        Basically the same types of vocabulary exer-
cises that are available in most beginning reading
texts may be adapted for beginning readers.   Care
must be taken that the syntax and the core vocabu-
lary in the sentences to be read is not beyond the
beginners.

GRAMMAR

Learning to read requires more than cracking
the code and learning words. The students must
recognize the relationships among the words--the
grammar. At the very basic levels, teachers should
have students learn to read the same structures they
are learning to produce orally; this minimizes con-
fusion, and the visual reinforcement speeds oral
learning. The grammatical patterns should also be
limited at first, so that the students can learn as
much vocabulary as possible in the first few weeks.
(It is ironic that in the late 1960s when audiolin-
gual methodologies held sway, teachers limited the
vocabulary and pushed the grammar, much to the
dismay of students, who wanted "words, words,
words." It turns out they were right; words without
grammar can get you quite far, but grammar without
words is useless in the real world.)

Academically oriented students usually know the
metalanguage for talking about grammar: noun, verb,
adjective, present tense, and so on. If they do,
then the labels can conveniently be used to analyze
the reading passages. Students should be asked to
identify sentences in context that exhibit certain
grammatical features. They can also be given
sentence-matching exercises: The teacher writes a
sentence on the board and the class is given a
limited time to find a sentence with the same
structure in the reading. Students can be asked to
find similar structures in the local or student
newspaper. It is important to stress that the
students should work mainly on recognition of
grammar patterns in reading (and copying exercises,
if used); production of even simple sentences in
writing is extremely difficult at the beginning
levels.

An interesting exercise that was developed in
work with native speakers of English learning to
write can also be used with foreign students. The
students construct an oral narrative, which is
written on the blackboard by the teacher. Since the
students have limited grammatical structures, they

will not make the story too complex; the teacher can
remedy any major problems, and then the narrative
may be used for reading material for the class. It
may be amended on a regular basis and makes a good
record of class achievement over the course of a
term.

WORD STUDY

Just as a knowledge of the grammar makes read-
ing easier, a knowledge of the way words are formed
using prefixes and suffixes and so on helps students
guess more intelligently when faced with unknown
vocabulary. Many current beginning reading books
contain exercises in word study, and once the stu-
dents reach the level of proficiency of beginning
reading, they can progress without special exer-
cises. It is important to ensure that the exercise
concentrates on recognition rather than production
of the word forms. Very beginning students should
be taught the inflections for plurals, past tense,
progressives, and common prefixes that occur in the
readings, such as un-. Word study beyond the very
elementary is better left until the students' profi-
ciency permits easier comprehension.

MEANING FROM CONTEXT

Due to the large amount of redundancy that is
almost always present in extended discourse, it is
usually possible to understand a reading passage
even though some of the words are unfamiliar.
Skilled readers use cues of various kinds to antici-
pate what is likely to be encountered on the page
and are thus able to read quickly, using as little
graphic input as possible to confirm their expec-
tations. When faced with an unfamiliar word,
readers use syntactic cues to determine the part of
speech and grammatical function of the word, and can

usually guess at its meaning on the basis of seman-
tic information presented in the rest of the sen-
tence or in other parts of the passage. Proficient
readers very seldom take the time to look up new
words in the dictionary, since the meaning is
usually evident from the context in which they are
found.

Beginning readers, on the other hand, may
struggle so much with individual words or even more
basic units of language that they are not able to
process the overall meaning of a sentence; by the
time they reach the end of the sentence, they may
have forgotten information from the beginning and
thus have difficulty interpreting the sentence as a
whole. In a consideration of ESL reading problems,
Norris (1972) makes note of this difficulty,
observing that students who can focus on only one
word at a time "will usually be unable to put the
words together and understand the sense of the
sentence" (p. 190). It is equally unlikely that
such learners will be able to retain the meaning of
one sentence long enough to integrate it with the
meaning of subsequent material in order to follow
the development of the message intended to be con-
veyed by the text as a whole. It is important,
therefore, that from the beginning stages of read-
ing, learners be trained to think about the global
meaning of what they are reading and not get un-
necessarily bogged down in word-by-word detail.

As Grellet (1981) proposes, it is advisable to
have students look first for the overall gist of a
text and then to give attention to details, both
because in this way students will gain confidence in
their ability to understand what they are reading
and because such an approach will help learners
develop an ability to infer meanings and anticipate
what they are likely to encounter in the text.

One way of convincing students that they really
do not have to understand every word in order to
extract meaning from a passage is to eliminate some
of the words. While this is similar to the cloze
test procedure, the objective is quite different;
the reader is not asked to supply the missing words
but to try to understand the text in spite of the

omissions. Once they see that this is possible,
students overcome much of their preoccupation with
individual words.

There are various ways in which context can
provide clues to the meaning of a word. It is use-
ful to give learners practice in using context
through exercises of the following sorts.

Finding Synonyms, Definitions, or Equivalent Expressions

Writers often avoid repeating particular words
by expressing the same meaning in another way.
Students must become aware of the possibility of
using such equivalents to grasp the meaning of a
given word, as is demonstrated in the following
example:

> The students <u>lack</u> time for sports. They don't
> have time for anything but homework.
>
> <u>lack</u> means _____ . (not have)

At beginning levels, it may help to provide
several options from which the students may choose
the one that is closest to the target word:

> I want to buy a new car, but I can't afford it
> now. I don't even have enough money to buy a
> motorcycle.
>
> <u>to afford</u> means
>
> a. to drive a car
> b. to have enough money to buy something
> c. to want something
> d. to save money

Finding Antonyms or Contrasts

Other words or expressions in a text often mean

the opposite of the word in question, as shown in the following example:

It is interesting to travel in your country, but it is more exciting to travel abroad.

Abroad means

a. travel
b. in your country
c. exciting
d. outside your country

Finding an Example or Explanation

In many cases a text will explain a term or provide examples that help make the meaning of a term clear, as in the following sentence:

The store sells many kinds of small appliances such as toasters, coffee makers, and irons.

To better enable students to use this strategy, it is valuable to teach expressions such as such as, including, for example, for instance, and so on.

Finding Cause-and-Effect Relationships

The meaning of a new word can sometimes be understood if the context indicates what caused it or what resulted from it:

The child was scalded when he spilled the boiling water on himself.

The speech was so boring that many people in the audience fell asleep.

USING A GLOSSARY/DICTIONARY

The term <u>glossary</u> refers here to the English/
foreign language dictionaries from which students
are inseparable. They are basically lists of
synonyms or elaborations of phrases, but are not, in
the traditional sense, dictionaries. A <u>dictionary</u>,
on the other hand, is in one language, gives
multiple meanings of the words, synonyms, antonyms,
historical information, and possibly, examples in
sentences.

In the past, advocating the use of bilingual
glossaries by beginning readers was considered
heresy. The argument went something like this: The
students get dependent on the glossaries and do not
learn to use dictionaries; and there are so many
synonyms, the student might get the wrong one and
then the teacher would be powerless to control
errors. The counterargument is based on practical-
ity as well as concern for the student. While glos-
saries must be given up for dictionaries at some
specified point in the reading program--about the
intermediate level where there are exercises and a
carefully thought-out unit on the use of the dic-
tionary. Beginning readers have scarcely learned
the alphabet, and it seems ludicrous to force them
to try to wade through a wordy definition in a
language in which they hardly know any words. As to
the matter of choosing the wrong word, the teacher
can help the students learn how to use the glossary
to good effect. At the beginning of the term all of
the students should bring their glossaries each day
so that they can look up the basic key words. There
will not be many problems with misinterpretation or
ambiguities in the core vocabulary; and if one
student's definition of "king" includes "a constitu-
tional monarch" while another's rules by divine
right, it is a small mismatch that is not like.y to
cause reading problems at this level.

After a certain amount of vocabulary and gram-
mar has been presented, the teacher can do a
glossary exercise. A series of sentences may be
presented with words missing, accompanied by a list

of those words plus two or three extras. The
teacher and students read through the sentences, if
necessary, making sure there are no unfamiliar
words. Then the students look up the meanings in
their glossaries--in class--and fill in the blanks.
(It turns out to be a lesson in getting meaning from
context as well as a glossary exercise.) The
teacher circulates to make sure everyone is on the
right track. Students who have difficulties may be
referred back to the glossary and helped to see why
they made the wrong choice. The teacher should have
on hand a glossary in his or her best known foreign
language so that he [or she] can check which mean-
ings are likely to be included. To be sure, items
that appear in an English/French glossary are not
guaranteed to be the same as those in an Arabic/
English version, but it is one measure that shou_d
not be overlooked.

CONCLUSION

The experience over the past few years of trying to
teach nonreaders in English has been both trying and
exciting. The frustration of failure with tried-
and-true techniques gave way to elation upon finding
something new that seemed to work. No doubt in the
next few years, both teachers and psychologists,
working together, will have a better description of
the reading process, and the techniques may be
further refined.

In order to fully comprehend what the students
are faced with, any teacher who has not recently
learned a foreign language should begin the study of
one whose writing system is very different from
English. Even a few weeks' study will give the
teacher insights that will be especially valuable to
the teaching of reading. It is a most challenging
and humbling experience.

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