



READING READINESS AND PRE-READING INSTRUCTION: A DEVELOPMENT AND FOUNDATION OF WRITTEN LANGUAGE

Khalil Alsaadatⁱ

Department of Educational Policies,
College of Education,
King Saud University,
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Abstract:

The purpose of the current paper is to discuss the concept of reading readiness, some problems associated with reading readiness, pre-reading instruction, role of parents in pre-reading and evaluating readiness. Problems in reading constitute the majority of referrals for learning difficulties. The reasons are varied why some students do not thrive in school, but without basic literacy skills, children cannot excel. Many students with poor reading skills suffer low self-esteem, break school rules, and are unlikely to graduate from high school (Juel, 1996, in Campbell (2004)).

Keywords: reading readiness, pre-reading, instruction

1. Introduction

One of the most difficult challenges teachers face today is working with students who are having difficulty in reading. Most students who have difficulty in reading are also at-risk in academic achievement. Research has proven that phonemic awareness has been shown to be a powerful predictor of later reading success. Griffeth states "*poor readers who enter first grade phonemically unaware are very likely to remain poor readers at the end of fourth grade, since their lack of phonemic awareness contributes to their slow acquisition of word recognition skills*, (Griffeth & Olson, 1992, in (Campbell, 2004)).

2. Previous Works

Majzub and Kurnia (2010) states that reading readiness is an important component of formal schooling. Preschool graduates need to compete with other children in year one of elementary school. The aim of this study was to examine the reading readiness skills among kindergarten children in Pekanbaru, Riau. Aspects of reading readiness

ⁱ Correspondence: email alsaadat@gmail.com

examined were (a) vocabulary, (b) auditory, (c) visual discrimination, and (d) mechanical reading.

Reading readiness achievement was examined according to the gender, type of kindergarten and parents' educational background. The sample included 450 preschoolers obtained through stratified random sampling. The instrument used to collect data was Reading Readiness Test (RRT). The data was analyzed using ANOVA and T-test. The findings revealed that there was no significant difference in reading readiness according to gender but there were significant differences according to type of kindergarten and parents' educational background. The reading readiness tests results showed children's high abilities on most of test components. The major implication of the study is to implement effective strategies to enhance reading through parent education and teachers' professional development (Majzub and Kurnia, 2010).

Carr et al. (2014) affirms that sensitivity to fine timing cues in speech is thought to play a key role in language learning, facilitating the development of phonological processing. In fact, a link between beat synchronization, which requires fine auditory-motor synchrony, and language skills has been found in school-aged children, as well as adults. Here, they showed this relationship between beat entrainment and language metrics in preschoolers and use beat synchronization ability to predict the precision of neural encoding of speech syllables in these emergent readers. By establishing links between beat keeping, neural precision, and reading readiness, their results provided an integrated framework that offers insights into the preparative biology of reading (Carr, et al., 2014).

Alliete, Michae (2018) emphasizes that prior research shows that preliteracy development of children with a hearing loss from homes where English is not the primary language parallels literacy development in children with hearing loss from monolingual homes. Although there are some parallels, there are also some elements that are unique to children from linguistically diverse, bilingual backgrounds. Understanding these commonalities and differences sets the stage to discuss appropriate interventions to develop language and literacy. Literacy-based interventions used with bilingual children who do not have a hearing loss, and/or with bilingual children with additional challenges, are explored for their implications for developing language and literacy in children with hearing loss when the home language is not English (Alliete, Michae, 2018).

Mark S. and Maryellen (2018) review the important role of statistical learning for language and reading development. Although statistical learning—the unconscious encoding of patterns in language input—has become widely known as a force in infants' early interpretation of speech, the role of this kind of learning for language and reading comprehension in children has received less attention. In fact, the implicit learning of cooccurrences of words, sentence structures, and other components of language forms a critical part of children's language comprehension and fluent reading. Beyond introducing basic information about language statistics, the article offers a discussion of how variability in the amount and nature of language experience can affect language development and literacy, including variation owing to the amount of language input in

the child's linguistic environment and the variable nature of input for children who are exposed to multiple languages or multiple dialects (Mark S., Maryellen, 2018).

3. Reading Readiness, Concepts and Issues

Reading readiness according to UNICEF (2012) is a process of preparing a child for reading; encouraging the child to read and engaging that child in reading. However, reading readiness entails the maturation of all the mental, physical and socio-emotional factors involved in the reading process. In other words, it is a state of development, which prepares the child mentally, physically, and social-emotionally for reading experiences. (Akubuilu, et al., 2015). Readiness is a term used by learning theorists and educators to refer to the state of being able to acquire new learning at any level. It also refers to the prerequisites for any learning in reading. Readiness could be what the child learns prior to the initiation of formal reading instruction, or prior to the acquisition of the ability to read (Alsaadat, 2020).

Notwithstanding the chronological age of the child, the point at which the child's growth and development have brought about proper maturation of these factors should be the point at which the reading process begins.

Schifferdecker (2007) explains that reading readiness actually commences from that particular time when a child transforms from being a non-reader to a reader. According to him, this can be a tough transition but is very rewarding. Not only are children very proud of themselves as they learn to read, but children who learn to read well are better learners throughout their school years.

Collaborating Schifferdecker's view, Wikipedia (2013) stresses that reading readiness is that point at which a person is ready to learn to read and the time during which a person transitions from being a non-reader into a reader (Akubuilu, et al., 2015).

One of the most difficult tasks facing the kindergarten or first grade teacher is to recognize the degree of readiness to read which his or her young students have attained by the time they face him or her on that first time. A great deal has been written on the subject of reading readiness, which is as it should be, since it is so important a subject.

However, much that has been written is inaccurate, and most of it is incomplete. There is essential agreement on what is meant by the words, "*reading readiness*". It might be translated as, "*the time at which a child is capable of learning to read.*" (Smith, Chaple, 1970).

4. Prereading Instruction

The prereading stage is one that a child will go through before learning to read. Therefore, good preschool and first grade programs mix instruction in pre-reading and beginning reading. In a good instructional program, there should be a variety of experiences with oral and written communications that provide reading in an easy and effective way.

Giving a situation in which children go automatically from the prereading stage to the beginning stage should be one purpose of the school program for five-and six-year-olds.

In prereading situations, we should use printed language. Pre-reading activities can and should be conducted with a reading-type situation with the instruction directed toward the tasks to be performed in reading without exposure to written language. Prereaders will not have an effective instructional foundation for success in beginning reading, so preparation for reading should include activities with printed language to develop visual discrimination, left-to-right orientation, and concept of language.

5. Objectives of Pre-reading Instruction

Specific objectives of pre-reading instruction include (Hall, Ribovich, and Ramig 1974):

- 1) encouraging interest in reading;
- 2) development an understanding of the foundation of the written language and of reading as communication;
- 3) sharpening visual discrimination;
- 4) sharpening auditory discrimination;
- 5) providing instruction in letter names;
- 6) providing instruction in left-to-right orientation;
- 7) providing experience in oral language communication; and
- 8) developing language concepts.

6. Role of Parents in Pre-reading

Parents play a significant role in helping their children learn to read. The pre-reader child is going to a new world when he begins to learn how to read.

The child asks the parents to tell him or her everything about school, reading program, teachers, etc. Also, a child will ask about everything he or she sees on TV, in a book, in a street, in a house, etc. Accordingly, parents must respond to their children's questions. By this, parents will enlarge their children's knowledge, comprehension, and experience.

Children who come from homes where parents do the right things such as reading to them, answering their questions about reading, and letting their children see them reading, tend to perform better in school than do children whose parents do not engage in such activities (Searfoss and Readence, 1985).

Parents need to be informed about the importance of providing a reading environment in the home, taking their children to the local library to attend story hours and to borrow books, encouraging them to talk, exposing them to different kinds of experiences, and developing a good attitude about school .

The role of parents does not and should not stop when the preschool years at home come to an end. Rather, parents' involvement as a part of the teaching team is an

important education concept. Research has confirmed that comprehensive, sustained parent involvement in which parents serve many roles has a positive effect on the school's ability to do its job. Parents' involvement can provide and perhaps assure continuity in the lives of children between home and school can relate positively to their attitudes and academic achievements (Taschow, 1985).

Teachers should contact parents and discuss their children's performance because parents can provide all kinds of support for the reading programme. Teachers should ask them about the child's history and if he or she has any physical or emotional problems and the child's relationship with his or her parents, brothers and sisters, and other relatives, This information would help the teacher draw a clear picture of the child's educational and reading situation, it would make the teacher prepared on how to teach, treat, and deal with each individual child.

7. Evaluating Readiness

The most common means of evaluating reading readiness is the standardized readiness test and the teacher's observation.

7.1 Readiness Test

This test is given in the last period of time in the preschool (kindergarten) year or after two or three weeks in grade one. This test often includes several subtests such as visual discrimination or matching, listening, copying writing, vocabulary, letter names, and auditory discrimination. The goal of using readiness tests for the teacher is as a source of information about any child, his or her strengths and weaknesses - for instance, in any particular subtest.

Also, the test helps select materials and methods to fit the child's needs, to check progress on skills and general efficiency, to check how reading is interacting with the student emotionally, socially, and intellectually. The testing program for a reading course should be chosen with care. It should be easy to provide and to correct. It should include many approaches and testing devices. It should fit the courses that were taught and provide evaluation.

There are too many items and components in some tests. Teachers should be selective when choosing or evaluating a test. However, teachers should not base their evaluation completely on the test. They should look at the test as a source of information. There are a variety of disadvantages of using standardized tests.

7.2 Teacher Observation

The writer considers teacher observation the real test and criteria that gives real evaluation about a child. The teacher is available with the children every day. He or she knows their abilities, their trends, their competencies, their activities, their mistakes, their weaknesses, and their strengths. Such a person should be able to tell and evaluate any

child without a test, because in the test the child could be under pressure and would not show and state his abilities and competencies in the test.

If the teacher has a record-keeping system, that will help a great deal to give a good evaluation. By the end of the pre-reading program teachers should evaluate and ask themselves if they have done a good job and whether they have fulfilled their commitments or not. The following are some questions a teacher might ask him or herself (Schmidt and Schick, 1973):

- 1) what have I set out to do in this course?
- 2) have I accomplished it?
- 3) how did my method fit my mission?
- 4) can the testing devices I used measure reasonably what I have set out to do?
- 5) what changes are needed?
- 6) what do the students, other teachers, and administrators think of the program?
- 7) am I over - or undertesting?
- 8) is there any way of checking the reliability of my testing?

8. Conclusion

Campbell (2004) concluded that beginning reading instruction presents educators with a challenge. The researcher believes there is a need for a more balanced reading readiness program to be developed and incorporated in the classroom curriculum. The need for students to develop and attend to speech sounds by using phonemes to guide reading readiness skills needs to be in place in order to show student reading success (Campbell, 2004). He believed that phonemic awareness can be developed in children by providing them with rich language experiences that encourage active exploration and manipulation of sounds. These activities will lead to significant gains in subsequent reading and spelling performance. Most children will learn basic phonemic awareness from these activities, but some children, however, need more extensive assistance. Children should be diagnosed mid-kindergarten to see if they are adequately progressing, and if not, given more intensive phonemic awareness experiences (Campbell, 2004).

Campbell (2004) thought that learning to read is a lengthy and difficult process for many children, and success is based in large part on developing language and literacy-related skills early in life. A massive effort needs to be undertaken to inform parents of the need to involve children in reading from the first days of life; to engage children in playing with language through nursery rhymes, storybooks, and writing activities; and, as early as possible, to bring to children the wonder and joy that can be derived from reading (Campbell, 2004).

Campbell added that parents must be aware of the importance of vocabulary development and verbal interactions with their youngsters. In addition, preschool children should be encouraged to learn the letters of the alphabet, to discriminate between letters, to print letters, and to attempt to spell words that they hear. Introducing young children to print will increase their exposure to the purposes of reading and

writing. Children should report to kindergarten with at least a basic level of literacy related skills. It would make the task of learning to read easier for the educators and more rewarding for the child (Campbell, 2004).

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