



# Chapter 2

## Language Arts Instruction

### Chapter Summary

Literacy Development  
The Six Language Arts  
Early Intervention  
Language Cueing Systems  
Grammar in the Ukrainian Language Arts Classroom

### Literacy Development

Literacy development is continuous throughout a person's life, beginning with his or her earliest experiences with language. Observations of students show that the development of oral language, reading, and writing are interrelated processes, and students learn to read and write concurrently. Students will initiate activities with paper, pencils, crayons, books, and magazines, and will spontaneously assume the roles of writer and reader in their daily play.

In emergent literacy, students actively engage in acquiring language and in constructing their own understandings of how oral and written language work. They experiment with these understandings, testing them in verbal interaction with their parents and other adults. As parents and other adults demonstrate reading and writing in purposeful, meaningful ways, students come to expect meaning from print. Studies show that students who are early readers have been read to extensively by their families. By the time they are two or three, many children can read environmental print such as familiar traffic or safety signs and symbols, restaurant names, or words they see in the media.

Teachers recognize that students bring to school a range of literacy experiences and knowledge that can be built upon in the classroom. Students' knowledge about print expands quickly as they participate in meaningful and genuine experiences with reading, listening, talking, viewing, representing, and writing in the classroom. Teachers foster early literacy development by reading to students daily, by providing guided reading, writing and representing activities from the first day of school, and by actively promoting literacy growth at a level appropriate to each student's development.

## **Stages of Literacy Development**

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In the elementary grades, there is dramatic growth in students' listening, speaking, reading, and writing vocabularies. Most students move rapidly along the literacy continuum from pre-conventional literacy to fluency in reading, writing, viewing, and representing. An increased vocabulary and growing ability to consider other points of view greatly increase students' oral and written communication skills. Their speech becomes more fluent, and they are capable of interactive, reciprocal conversations with teachers and peers.

By conversing with students, teachers can extend and expand these conversations. Teachers can facilitate discussions among students by encouraging them to express their opinions, ideas, and feelings. These social interactions play an important role in learning. Conversing about their learning strengthens students' abilities to express themselves, to construct meaning, to reason, and to solve problems. As they gain a greater control of language, students use it to think and to influence others' thinking. Teachers demonstrate respect for students' ideas by listening and responding attentively to them. It is important to provide small- and large-group activities in which students listen actively to peers and ask and respond to questions, to extend their developing communication skills and facilitate their cognitive development.

Young students learn about print and develop strategies for reading and writing from their independent explorations of written language, from interactions with teachers and peers, and from observation of others engaged in literacy activities. They learn about oral, literacy, and media texts in the same way.

## Stages of Literacy Development

	PRE-CONVENTIONAL	EMERGENT
	Kindergarten students are typically <i>pre-conventional</i> or <i>emergent</i> readers and writers.	Grade 1 students are typically <i>emergent</i> readers and writers, with most becoming <i>early</i> readers and writers by the end of the year.
Knowledge of written language	<p><i>The student</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>knows reading and writing are things people do for some purpose</li> <li>is aware of visual aspects of written language (e.g., the looping characteristics of cursive writing)</li> <li>is aware of some forms of print (e.g., letters, especially capital letters)</li> <li>knows books contain stories</li> <li>may not realize that print “tells the story”</li> <li>knows books are sources of information and enjoyment</li> <li>knows front-to-back directionality</li> <li>is beginning to develop phonological awareness (e.g., syllabic awareness).</li> </ul>	<p><i>The student</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>understands the alphabetic principle</li> <li>understands writing as “talk written down”</li> <li>understands that text, as well as illustrations, carry the message</li> <li>is aware of some forms or genres (e.g., labels, stories)</li> <li>is learning letter names</li> <li>is developing awareness of left-to-right directionality, capitals and punctuation</li> <li>is developing awareness of the phonetic principle (that there are consistent sound/symbol relationships)</li> <li>is developing awareness of onsets and rimes (e.g., c-at; bring)</li> <li>is developing phonemic awareness (e.g., b-r-i-ng).</li> </ul>
Reading processes and skills	<p><b>Pragmatics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reads pictures rather than print (moving from labelling to telling the story)</li> <li>approximates some environmental print, such as signs and labels, in context</li> <li>relies on another person to read the text aloud</li> <li>sometimes uses “book language” in retellings and play</li> </ul>	<p><b>Pragmatics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>begins print-governed reading</li> <li>uses pictures to predict text</li> </ul> <p><b>Semantics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is growing in ability to predict meanings</li> <li>is developing strategies to check predictions against other cues, such as the illustration and the print itself</li> </ul> <p><b>Syntax</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is developing an awareness of syntax and uses this to construct meaning</li> </ul> <p><b>Graphophonics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is establishing directionality in tracking print from left-to-right and top-to-bottom</li> <li>tries to match voice and print while reading (spoken words to written words)</li> </ul>
Writing processes and skills	<p><b>Pragmatics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>combines drawing and writing, with the drawing conveying most of the meaning</li> <li>may not intend to convey a particular message</li> <li>may ask “What does this say?” of own writing</li> </ul> <p><b>Graphophonics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>may use non-conventional forms, including “loopy” writing and/or letter-like forms</li> <li>may produce some conventional letter forms (especially capital letters)</li> <li>may write familiar words, such as own name, Mom, Dad</li> <li>may write with non-conventional directionality</li> <li>may use one symbol to represent one syllable (no phonetic correspondence)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Pragmatics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>combines drawing and writing, with writing supporting and supported by the picture</li> </ul> <p><b>Semantics and Syntax</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can write a caption or label to accompany drawing</li> <li>may read the “gist” of own writing rather than exact words</li> <li>writes words, phrases, or simple sentences</li> </ul> <p><b>Graphophonics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>makes letters that are mostly conventional</li> <li>matches some letters to speech sounds, moving from initial consonants to most consonants to inclusion of vowels to all phonemes represented</li> <li>uses a letter name strategy</li> <li>may use some non-conventional word spacing</li> </ul>

## Stages of Literacy Development (continued)

EARLY	FLUENT	
<b>Grade 2 students are typically <i>early</i> readers and writers.</b>	<b>Most Grade 3 students are <i>fluent</i> readers and writers by the end of the year.</b>	
<p><i>The student</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>understands writing can stand alone to convey meaning</li> <li>begins to understand writing as “ideas written down”</li> <li>understands the importance of a self-improving system in progressing as a reader</li> <li>is aware of more genres (e.g., notes, poems, lists)</li> <li>knows letter names)</li> <li>is aware of phonemes in spoken words</li> <li>is increasing in knowledge of spelling patterns</li> <li>is gaining some knowledge of terminology (e.g., “letter,” “word,” “sentence”)</li> <li>shows beginning awareness of needs of an audience</li> </ul>	<p><i>The student</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>begins to understand writing as “ideas written down”</li> <li>understands most graphophonic patterns (word families)</li> <li>knows many writing terms (e.g., names of punctuation marks, paragraph)</li> <li>shows increasing awareness of needs of an audience/reader</li> <li>is aware of an increasing number of genres (e.g., reports, descriptions)</li> <li>shows a beginning awareness of differences between speaking and writing</li> </ul>	<b>Knowledge of written language</b>
<p><b>Pragmatics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses pictures for checking rather than prediction</li> </ul> <p><b>Semantics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>integrates a variety of cues to construct meaning (pictures, word meanings, context)</li> <li>makes, checks, and confirms predictions with semantic cues (knows when reading “makes sense”)</li> </ul> <p><b>Syntax</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>makes, checks and confirms predictions with syntax (knows when reading “sounds right”)</li> </ul> <p><b>Graphophonics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has a rapidly growing sight vocabulary</li> <li>makes, checks, and confirms predictions with visual (graphophonic) cues</li> </ul>	<p><b>Pragmatics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses prior knowledge effectively to make predictions</li> <li>can read a range of genres and for a variety of purposes</li> <li>is able to read more demanding texts, including novels</li> </ul> <p><b>Semantics and Syntax</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses all the cueing systems in an integrated way to construct meaning (predicting, checking, and confirming/revising)</li> <li>has a variety of reading strategies for making and monitoring meaning</li> </ul> <p><b>Graphophonics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has extensive sight vocabulary (automatic recognition of many words)</li> </ul>	<b>Reading processes and skills</b>
<p><b>Pragmatics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>combines drawing and writing; writing can stand alone to convey meaning</li> <li>is able to read own writing</li> <li>is beginning to write for different purposes</li> <li>may be willing to make some changes in own writing</li> </ul> <p><b>Semantics and Syntax</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can “think aloud” on paper, jot notes, keep a journal</li> <li>can write three or more sentences in a logical sequence</li> </ul> <p><b>Graphophonics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses invented spelling to write independently (with approximations becoming increasingly accurate)</li> <li>spells an increasing number of words conventionally</li> <li>uses some capitalization and punctuation</li> </ul>	<p><b>Pragmatics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can convey meaning in writing alone, when appropriate to purpose</li> <li>is able to write for an increasing range of purposes</li> <li>is developing ability to edit and proofread</li> </ul> <p><b>Semantics and Syntax</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can choose words for particular effects</li> <li>is beginning to develop “voice” as a writer</li> <li>writes a full page or more</li> <li>elaborates and supports ideas with relevant details</li> <li>uses a variety of sentence lengths and structures</li> </ul> <p><b>Graphophonics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>produces mostly conventional writing</li> <li>uses classroom aids to check spelling during the proofreading stage</li> </ul>	<b>Writing processes and skills</b>

## The Six Language Arts

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➔ For more information ...

Chapter 4

The six language arts—listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and representing—are each complex cognitive and social processes that work together dynamically in literacy learning. In listening, reading, and viewing, students construct meaning from texts created by others. In speaking, writing, and representing, students construct meaning to communicate with others. None of the six language arts can be totally separated from the others in authentic learning situations.

Because the six language arts are so closely related and interrelated, they are mutually supportive. Listening, reading, and viewing provide access to rich language models that help students learn new words and forms of expression. Speaking, writing, and representing provide opportunities for students to use those words and forms, and to develop ownership of them. Developing skills in writing enhances students' reading and listening comprehension and their critical thinking skills.

### Listening and Speaking

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Oral language is the foundation of literacy. Speaking is fundamentally connected to thinking and exploring and creating meaning. Speaking to others brings our thoughts to conscious awareness and enables us to reflect on and analyze them. Conversation with others often helps us make sense of new information, for while we may sometimes construct meaning alone, we more often do so through collaboration. Students benefit from opportunities to rehearse their ideas orally. The classroom should be an inviting setting that promotes student talk.

Through talking and listening, students learn to understand who they are in relation to others. The ability to form and maintain relationships and to collaborate and extend learning through interaction with others is closely tied to listening and speaking skills. Students' fluency and confidence in speaking, listening, and responding are integral to their identity and place in the community.

In the classroom, student talk (conversing, discussing, debating, questioning, and answering) is the foundation upon which teachers build community and achieve progress in all curricular areas. Speaking and listening are woven through all learning and teaching activities in writing, reading, viewing, and representing. Through talking, students verify their understanding and realize the ability to take ownership of their learning. Talk plays a major role in all language learning.

### Viewing and Representing

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Many students are avid and sophisticated consumers of visual media, and their familiarity with visual forms may facilitate literacy with other forms. Through experience, students may have an implicit understanding of visual media conventions—the unspoken ways in which meaning is represented—for example, how the passage of time is conveyed. Teachers can make use of this knowledge by

creating links between conventions used in visual media and similar conventions used in written texts.

Students need to learn the techniques and conventions of visual language to become more conscious, critical, and appreciative readers of visual media, and more effective creators of visual products. They need to be shown that what a camera captures is a construction of reality, not reality itself. Students need to learn how to decide what is real and what is simulated. They need to learn that images convey ideas, values, and beliefs, just as words do, and they need to learn to read and interpret the language of images. Many contemporary authors use the term *reading* to describe the process of decoding and interpreting visual texts.

Exposure to films and video productions increases the scope of students' experiences, much as written texts do, and they offer similar opportunities for discussion. Films also provide rich opportunities to explore the similarities and differences between visual and written language. Students may examine the effects of visual language cues (e.g., composition, colour and light, shadow and contrast, camera angles and distance, pace and rhythm), and the association of images with sound. They learn to identify point of view by following the eye of the camera. Whether interpreting a visual or written presentation, the reader may look at or be taught to appreciate elements such as pattern, repetition, mood, symbolism and situational or historical context. Students may enhance their own products and presentations by using visuals with written text and/or speech.

Studying strategies used by authors and illustrators helps students become conscious of the effects of visual elements in texts. Illustrations interact with words to enrich comprehension, and they can influence students' interpretations of information or ideas. Illustrations may show things that words do not, or they may express a different point of view from the narrative. Visual cues such as colour, tone, shape, texture, line, and composition all contribute to the construction of meaning.

Students may use visual representation for both informal and formal expression. Just as they talk and write to explore what they think and to generate new ideas and insights, students may sketch or doodle. Drawing or sketching may, in fact, be the first and most natural way for some students to clarify thinking and generate ideas. They may also use tools such as frames, mind maps, webs, and other graphic organizers to comprehend parts and their relationships. Visual tools are especially useful because they can represent the non-linear nature of the thought process and show relationships among ideas.

Students may use representations to express their mental construction and interpretation of ideas, theories, or scenes in written texts. Events, ideas, and information may be depicted in graphic organizers, storyboards, murals, comic strips, or collages. After studying visual media, students make informed use of design elements in developing charts, slides, posters, and booklets. Other creative forms of expression, such as music, drama, dance, or mathematics, can be used to represent students' understanding of a topic or a concept.

## Reading

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Reading comprehension is an active skill whereby the reader seeks out information for a reason. This means that reading comprehension involves not only deciphering and decoding written symbols, but also, and more importantly, constructing meaning from the printed word and interpreting it.

Like listening comprehension, students must first be presented with sufficient vocabulary in print form so that they can pull these words out of the text and attempt to build meaning from them. In the context of the units, a number of texts have been created or authentic texts have been used to provide students with the opportunity to read these words in context. To develop this skill, students are asked to pull out key ideas and some details and to categorize the information, while at the same time reading for a purpose.

To develop reading comprehension, students need to be taught how to use comprehension strategies to help deal with unknown words. Teaching them to look for cognates and word families as a means of building meaning is one way. Having students focus on visual clues such as illustrations, photographs, or charts can assist them in building meaning. Teaching them to use the title and subtitles to anticipate the ideas that may be presented in the text helps to structure their reading. Using the context to predict the type of information or the categories of information that they might find in the text can help prepare students for reading the text. Reminding students to use reading strategies that they have developed in their first language will also assist them in becoming better readers.

### Reading to Learn

The focus of instruction in the primary grades is on learning to read, but over time the focus shifts to reading to learn. This, ultimately, is why people read and why reading matters. To reach this goal, students need help in becoming deliberate and reflective readers. They need explicit instruction in comprehension and thinking skills that will enable them to obtain and remember important ideas from the text. They also need help in integrating information in the text with their prior knowledge to build on their learning and deepen their understanding.

The ease and speed with which a child progresses from learning to read to reading to learn will depend on several factors, including

- exposure to a rich language environment in the preschool years, with plenty of storytelling, conversation, books, and encouragement to ask and answer questions
- the quality and quantity of reading instruction in the early school years
- focused early intervention for those who are at risk of reading failure
- ongoing support from family and community

## Effective Reading Instruction

Becoming a reader is a continuous process that begins with the development of oral language skills and leads, over time, to independent reading. Oral language—the ability to speak and listen—is a vital foundation for reading success. In every culture, children learn the language of the home as they observe, listen, speak, and interact with the adults and children in their environment. This process happens naturally and predictably in almost all cases.

While developing oral language is a natural process, learning to read is not. Students must be taught to understand, interpret, and manipulate the printed symbols of written language. This is an essential task of the first few years of school.

All students become fluent readers when they comprehend what they are reading, are able to communicate their knowledge and skills in a new context, and have a strong motivation to read.

### Teaching practices that support early reading achievement:

- Balance of direct instruction, guided instruction, independent learning, and practice
- Large group, small group, and individual instruction, discussion, and collaboration
- Variety of assessment and evaluation techniques to inform program planning and instruction
- Integration of phonics and word study in reading, writing, and oral language instruction
- An uninterrupted literacy block each day
- Parental and community involvement
- High-quality literature and levelled texts
- A variety of genres, narratives, informational texts, and electronic media
- Authentic and motivating literacy experiences and learning activities
- Intervention for students at risk of not learning to read
- Supportive classroom culture and an environment that promotes higher-order thinking skills
- Effective classroom organization and management

Reading success is the foundation for achievement throughout the school years. There is a critical window of opportunity from the ages of four to seven for learning to read. Students who successfully learn to read in the early elementary years of school are well prepared to read for learning and for pleasure in the years to come. On the other hand, students who struggle with reading in Grades 2 to 3 are at a serious disadvantage. Academically, they have a much harder time keeping up with their peers, and they increasingly fall behind in other subjects.

## Goals of Reading Instruction

Reading is the process of constructing meaning from a written text. Effective early reading instruction enables all students to become fluent readers who comprehend what they are reading, can apply and communicate their knowledge and skills in new contexts, and have a strong motivation to read.

There are three main goals for reading instruction:

- **Fluency** is the ability to identify words accurately and read text quickly with good expression. Fluency comes from practice reading easy books about familiar subjects. These texts primarily contain familiar, high-frequency words and few unfamiliar words. As students develop fluency, they improve in their ability to read more expressively and with proper phrasing, thus gaining more of the text’s meaning.
- **Comprehension** is the ability to understand, reflect on, and learn from text. To ensure that students develop comprehension skills, effective reading instruction builds on their prior knowledge and experience, language skills, and higher-level thinking.
- **Motivation to read** is the essential element for actively engaging students in the reading process. It is the fuel that lights the fire and keeps it burning. Students need to be immersed in a literacy-rich environment filled with books, poems, pictures, charts, and other resources that capture their interest and make them want to read for information and pleasure.

These three goals are interconnected, and the strategies for achieving them work together synergistically.

## Knowledge and Skills for Reading

Students need to learn a variety of skills and strategies to become proficient readers. In the earliest stages, they need to understand what reading is about and how it works—that what can be spoken can also be written down and read by someone else. Some students will have already grasped the basic concepts before entering school, but many will need explicit instruction to set the context for reading. When students first experience formal reading instruction in school, they need to learn specific things about oral language, letters, and words. They need to understand how print works, and be able to connect print with the sounds and words in oral language. Once they can demonstrate these skills, the emphasis shifts to developing fluency. Fluency at this level involves recognizing words in text quickly and without effort. This will allow students to read with increasing enjoyment and understanding. Fluency is critical if students are to move from **learning to read to reading to learn**. The role of elementary teachers, working as a team, is to move students from the earliest awareness of print to the reading-to-learn stage, where they will become independent, successful, and motivated readers.

According to research, the knowledge and skills that students need to read with fluency and comprehension include

- oral language
- prior knowledge and experience
- concepts about print; phonemic awareness

- letter-sound relationships
- vocabulary
- semantics and syntax
- metacognition
- higher-order thinking skills.

These are not isolated concepts taught in a sequence—they are interrelated components that support and build on each other.

### **Oral Language**

Children acquire most of what they know about oral language by listening and speaking with others, including their families, peers, and teachers. Through experience with oral language, students build the vocabulary, semantic knowledge (awareness of meaning), and syntactic knowledge (awareness of structure) that form a foundation for reading and writing. Students who are proficient in oral language have a solid beginning for reading. This knowledge allows them to identify words accurately and to predict and interpret what the written language says and means.

### **Prior Knowledge and Experience**

So that students can understand what they are reading, it is important that they come to the text with a variety of experiences that will allow them to appreciate the concepts embedded in the text. These experiences enable them to anticipate the content, and such anticipation leads to easier decoding of the text and deeper understanding of its meaning.

*Prior knowledge and experience* refer to the world of understanding that students bring to school. Research on the early stages of learning indicates that children begin to make sense of their world at a very young age. In many parts of Manitoba, children enter school from a variety of countries and cultures. Thus, their prior knowledge and experiences may differ considerably from those of their classmates and teachers, and they may find it difficult to relate to the context and content of the resources generally used in Manitoba classrooms. On the other hand, they may have a wealth of knowledge and experiences that can enhance the learning of their classmates. Teachers need to be aware of students' backgrounds, cultures, and experiences to provide appropriate instruction. By creating rich opportunities for all students to share prior knowledge and related experiences, teachers will engage the interest of students from various backgrounds and ensure that they will better understand what they read.

### **Concepts about Print**

When children first encounter print, they are not aware that the symbols on the page represent spoken language or that they convey meaning. The term *concepts about print* refers to awareness of how language is conveyed in print. These concepts include directionality (knowing that English is read from left to right and top to bottom); differences between letters and words (words are made of letters, and there are spaces between words); awareness of capitalization and punctuation; diacritic signs (e.g., accents); and common characteristics of books (such as the front/back, title, and author). Students can be taught these concepts by interacting with and observing experienced readers (including teachers and family members) who draw their attention to print and give them opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of the concepts. Teachers need to provide students with a variety of printed materials for practice.

### **Phonemic Awareness**

Students need to learn that the words they see are made up of sounds. This understanding is called phonemic awareness. Research has confirmed that phonemic awareness is a crucial foundation for word identification. Phonemic awareness helps students learn to read; without it, students struggle and have reading difficulties. Evidence also shows that phonemic awareness can be taught and that the teacher’s role in the development of phonemic awareness is essential for most students.

For students to develop phonemic awareness, teachers need to engage them in playing with and manipulating the sounds of language. This can be accomplished through songs, rhymes, and activities that require students to blend individual sounds together to form words in their heads, and by breaking words they hear into their constituent sounds. Blending and segmentation of speech sounds in oral language provide an essential foundation for reading and writing. Phonemic awareness prepares students for decoding and encoding the sounds of the language in print.

### **Letter–Sound Relationships**

Building on a foundation of phonemic awareness and concepts about print, students are ready to understand that there is a way to connect the sounds they hear with the print on the page to make meaning.

Phonics instruction teaches students the relationships between the letters (graphemes) of written language and individual sounds (phonemes) of spoken language. Research has shown that systematic and explicit phonics instruction is the most effective way to develop students’ abilities to identify words in print.

### **Vocabulary for Reading**

Students need a broad vocabulary of words that they understand and can use correctly to label their knowledge and experiences. The breadth and depth of a student’s vocabulary provides the foundation for successful comprehension. Oral vocabulary refers to words that are used in speaking or recognized in listening. Reading vocabulary refers to words that are recognized or used in print.

Vocabulary development involves coming to understand unfamiliar words and using them appropriately. It is a huge challenge for students to read words that are not already part of their oral vocabulary. To develop students’ vocabularies, teachers need to model how to use a variety of strategies to understand what words mean (e.g., using the surrounding context or using smaller meaningful parts of words, such as prefixes or suffixes). Good teaching includes selecting material for reading aloud that will expand students’ oral vocabularies, and providing opportunities for students to see and use new reading vocabulary in different contexts. Recent research on vocabulary instruction indicates that students learn most of their vocabulary indirectly by engaging daily in oral language, listening to adults read to them, and reading extensively on their own. Research also shows that some vocabulary must be taught directly. This can be done by introducing specific words before reading, providing opportunities for active engagement with new words, and repeating exposure to the vocabulary in many contexts.

Even students who have a very extensive oral vocabulary may have great difficulty reading words in print because they have a small reading vocabulary. The reading vocabulary—often referred to as the sight vocabulary—is determined mainly by how many times a child has seen the words in print. Students who read a lot have a large pool of words they recognize immediately on sight; students who do little reading have a limited sight vocabulary. To increase their students' sight vocabularies so they can recognize a large proportion of the words in print, teachers need to focus their instruction and practice on the most commonly used words in the language.

### **Semantics, Syntax, and Pragmatics**

Although words alone carry meaning, reading for the most part involves the deciphering of phrases and sentences, which depends on both the words and how those words are organized. Therefore, it is important to spend instructional time not only on the meanings of individual words but also on the meanings of phrases and complete sentences.

**Semantics** refers to meaning in language, including the meaning of words, phrases, and sentences. **Syntax** refers to the predictable structure of language and the ways that words are combined to form phrases, clauses, and sentences. Syntax includes classes of words (such as noun, verb, and adjective) and their functions (such as subject and object). Semantic and syntactic knowledge are important because they help students identify words in context and lead to deeper levels of comprehension. Beginning readers may not need to be able to define a noun or verb, but understand that a word can represent a thing or an action, depending on the context.

Teachers need to model correct sentence structures so that students can learn to anticipate these structures when reading print. Opportunities should be provided for students to become familiar with and use the specific terminology for basic parts of speech (e.g., noun, verb, adjective, adverb) to facilitate instruction. Teachers also need to familiarize students with a variety of language structures and encourage their use of longer, more complex sentences.

**Pragmatics**, which is introduced in the later primary years, is the study of how people choose what they say or write from the range of possibilities available in the language, and how listeners or readers are affected by those choices. Pragmatics involves understanding how the context influences the way sentences convey information. A sentence can have different purposes depending on the situation or context in which it is used. It can be a mere statement or affirmation, but it can also be a warning, a promise, a threat, or something else. Readers with pragmatic knowledge and skills are able to decipher these different intents from the context.

Teachers need to show students how to use context clues that surround an unfamiliar word to help determine the word's meaning. Because students learn most word meanings indirectly or from context, it is important that they learn to use context clues effectively. Context clues alone, however, are not enough; teachers will need to teach other word-meaning strategies to develop a student's ability to learn new words.

### **Metacognition and Comprehension Strategies**

Comprehension is the reason for reading. If readers can identify the words but do not understand what they are reading, they have not achieved the goal of reading comprehension. To gain a good understanding of the text, students must bring to it the foundational knowledge and skills of oral language, prior knowledge and experience, concepts about print, phonemic awareness, letter-sound relationships, vocabulary, semantics, and syntax. They must integrate what they bring to the text with the text itself. To *read to learn*, students need to use problem-solving, thinking processes. They must reflect on what they know and need to know (metacognition) and draw on a variety of comprehension strategies to make sense of what they read.

Good readers plan and monitor their reading at a metacognitive level. What they are doing is thinking about the strategies they need to make sense of the text. When they run into difficulty, they evaluate their reading to determine the best strategy for improving their understanding of the text. Students who read at a metacognitive level know the strategies that affect their own reading (e.g., decoding hard words, connecting text with prior experience, understanding word meanings, identifying main ideas, drawing inferences from the text and synthesizing information). These students use a variety of strategies to decode and understand text and know when and why to apply particular strategies. Their understanding of the text extends beyond the literal.

## **Writing**

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Written production is developed in a sequential fashion and begins with the copying of words, moving to the formulation of simple phrases, and finally to the autonomous use of language to express personal ideas.

Writing is a powerful tool for communicating and learning. Young children's first explorations of print often occur in writing rather than reading. These explorations allow children to experiment with written language and construct understandings of literacy concepts. Students should be encouraged to write daily and to develop an understanding of audience, purpose and the meaning of their messages.

Effective elementary classrooms immerse students in books, visual images, and the spoken word. A text-rich environment is important for all students, but for students who have little involvement with literacy events outside school, it is essential.

The most beneficial literacy experience for students in all grades is to be read to daily. Read-aloud sessions introduce students to texts beyond their own reading level and give them access to ideas, places, and characters they might otherwise never meet. They also help students become familiar with story language and text structure. Students who have been read to will adopt and adapt the language of books when they write, retell a story, share information, represent a character or event, dramatize a scene, or create a storyboard.

A text-rich classroom provides students with a wide variety of texts that include oral, print, and other media communications. Students should listen to poetry and engaging dramatic, expository, and narrative texts. Teachers should supplement narrative and expository texts with appropriate types of literacy materials with which students are familiar in their personal lives. Students from other cultures, or students who speak a first language other than English, will benefit from seeing and hearing their own literature and oral traditions shared and valued in class.

A text-rich environment has visual appeal, with attractive posters, charts, and “word walls.” Different areas of the classroom are devoted to materials and equipment to encourage writing, viewing, and representing through art and drama, listening to music and to story recordings, and reading alone, with friends, or with teachers. Student-published books are on bookshelves, student artwork and other representations are displayed, and works-in-progress are evident. Student-made books or posters that display photographs with captions provide records of past shared experiences and successes.

A text-rich environment that offers interesting reading, speaking, listening, viewing, representing, and writing activities is important, but teachers must also use a variety of active, intellectually engaging strategies and methods of instruction. These strategies and methods include

- reciprocal discussions in which students’ ideas are taken seriously (e.g., examining problems, asking open-ended, thought-provoking questions, and interacting informally)
- sustained inquiry in which teacher and students select questions or topics to pursue as a group and individually
- explicit instruction in response to the observed needs of individual students
- incidental teaching, conferencing, and informal instruction
- flexible grouping to promote literacy learning and social-emotional development

Students need to follow a writing process to create acceptable products. This means that students need to brainstorm ideas, draft a preliminary plan, write a draft, edit it, or have someone else edit it, revise the text, and produce a final copy. It is important to note, however, that students should not be asked to create a text independently unless they have had ample practice in the fundamentals of the language needed to create a specific type of text and they have worked as a class in the creation of model texts.

In preparation for the evaluation of writing skills, students need to be made aware that language precision is important; that is, they will be evaluated on spelling, word order, appropriate vocabulary use and other grammatical elements that have been taught leading up to the creation of the text. The use of clear, concise evaluation criteria provides students with parameters so they can fulfill the requirements of the task successfully.

# Early Intervention

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## The Nature of Reading Difficulties

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The foundation of good reading is the same for all students. All readers, regardless of their age, gender, or aptitude, need to develop fluency, comprehension, and the motivation to read to become successful readers. Students who experience reading difficulties are no exception. They too must develop a basic foundation for reading.

Most young students with reading difficulties have problems developing fluency. For these students, identifying words takes a lot of effort. Their reading rate is slow, their word identification is hesitant, and they over-rely on contextual cues for word identification. Because most of their cognitive or mental effort is spent trying to identify words, their comprehension suffers. The main prevention and early intervention strategies for these students are intensive preparation for literacy and targeted classroom instruction.

Even with effective classroom instruction, some students will need additional support or intervention. When targeted instruction has not resolved a child's reading difficulties, it may be necessary to consult with reading specialists or other specialized educational interventions.

Effective intervention requires that teachers recognize as early as possible those students who are experiencing reading difficulties, tailor instruction to address their needs, and provide supplementary instruction when necessary. If adequate screening and assessment procedures are in place, early intervention may begin even before formal instruction in reading. Interventions that are begun when students are very young have a much better chance of success than interventions begun later.

It is essential to identify reading difficulties early and to put appropriate intervention in place immediately. In this way, reading problems can be tackled before they become entrenched and before repeated failures affect the child's motivation and compound his or her difficulties in learning to read and write.

## Characteristics of Successful Intervention

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No one intervention works for all students with reading difficulties; however, interventions that succeed for many students have several characteristics in common, such as

- more instructional time for students
- carefully planned assessment that allows for continual monitoring of the child's response and leads to modifications of the intervention when necessary
- teaching methods that are supported by research on how students learn to read and how they should be taught

- considerable attention to the materials used (e.g., predictable, patterned, easy-to-more-difficult texts), with a focus on interesting and enjoyable texts at appropriate reading levels
- an array of activities (e.g., word study, reading, rereading, and writing)

Successful interventions generally occur on a daily basis and may occur in focused, short blocks of time or in longer blocks, with appropriate accommodations in classroom instruction.

Successful interventions are strongly linked with regular classroom instruction, are supported by sound research, reflect an understanding of effective reading instruction, and are culturally and linguistically appropriate for the individual child. It is critical that interventions be measured against these criteria, and that their effectiveness in helping students with reading difficulties are carefully assessed and monitored.

## **Early Intervention Strategies**

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Effective early identification and intervention will help prevent and significantly decrease reading difficulties for many young students and improve their prospects for success in school. However, even exemplary early intervention practices will not guarantee that severe reading difficulties are overcome. Some students will continue to need additional reading instruction and support to succeed in the later school grades.

As these students grow older and literacy increasingly becomes a vehicle for teaching, learning, and evaluation, instructional and other supports that address their changing needs must be in place.

## Early Intervention Strategies for Addressing Literacy Problems

### STRATEGY: ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

#### Questions to Consider

Are there sufficient opportunities for the child's active participation in learning through

- engagement?
- play?
- representing?
- reflection?

How might engaged time be increased in ways that are meaningful to the learner?

How might the learner develop more effective literacy knowledge and skills through literate engagement?

How might the learner develop greater awareness of reading and writing processes and become self-regulated and motivated?

#### Possibilities for Action and Intervention

- Develop phonological awareness through language and literacy play (e.g., games with rhymes).
- Develop awareness of purposes of print and "how print works" through increased reading and writing in the context of everyday routines and use of literacy materials in the dramatic play centre.
- Devote increased time to reading and writing to develop word recognition and fluency.
- Develop phonemic awareness and phonics knowledge through guided and interactive writing in small groups or one-on-one and increased independent writing (with invented spelling).
- Ensure the use of appropriate reading materials for independent practice to develop fluency and comprehension. Provide patterned and predictable books but not the "decidable" texts that make reading harder.
- Choose reading materials slightly ahead of the student's independent level for instructional purposes; increase difficulty gradually.
- Provide a daily take-home reading program for extra practice.
- Place increased emphasis on silent reading.
- Make increased use of open-ended activities that allow students to communicate ideas in a variety of ways.
- Use increased think-aloud during modelling of reading and writing.
- Talk about thinking processes related to reading and writing; encourage students to talk about their own thinking.
- Teach strategies to develop awareness and self-regulation of one's own reading and writing processes (e.g., retrospective miscue analysis [Goodman and Marek 1996]).
- Use miscue analysis, retellings, and running records to determine how the student approaches reading and how to get the reader "on track."
- Conduct a dynamic assessment to determine the type and degree of support the student needs to be successful.
- Regularly analyze the student's independent writing to establish an ongoing assessment of the student's phonological awareness and knowledge of phonics.

## STRATEGY: LEARNING IN VARIOUS WAYS AND AT DIFFERENT RATES

### Questions to Consider

Are the learning experiences appropriate for the student's ways and rates of learning and particular learning needs?

How might the student's rate of learning be accelerated?

Does the program include a range of approaches?

Is the content relevant to the student's interests and cultural background?

### Possibilities for Action and Intervention

- Try a different instructional approach and new strategies.
- Consider a reading style assessment
- Use key visuals and graphic organizers.
- Find topics of interest to the student to “hook” him or her on reading.
- Use culturally relevant reading materials (e.g., First Nations tales for Aboriginal students).
- Have students create their own reading materials by sharing personal stories and writing.
- Use drama, music, and movement to involve students in literature.
- Use concrete materials and pictures to help students grasp abstract concepts.
- Try tactile materials.
- Use a variety of non-fiction as well as fiction materials.
- Have students do “research” to learn information and write about what they have learned.
- Increase instructional time, especially small-group and one-on-one.
- Combine structure and routine with flexible responsiveness for students with special learning needs.
- Consult the school-based team for possible assessments that might provide insights about the student's learning needs.
- Consider ways that the environment might be adapted to better address the student's learning needs (“adapted” means that the learning outcomes remain the same but that some aspect of the instructional environment might be changed).
- Consider ways that the curriculum might be modified to address the student's learning needs (“modified” means that the learning outcomes are changed in some way, either quantitatively or qualitatively, and an IPP is thus required).

## STRATEGY: LEARNING AS A PERSONAL AND SOCIAL PROCESS

### Questions to Consider

- Does the instructional program help the student develop personal “ownership” of learning?
- Does the program allow the student to pursue some topics of personal interest?
- Does the program allow the student to make connections and construct meaning?
- Who might support the student in his or her learning?
- What kinds of groupings might be used to support the student’s learning?

### Possibilities for Action and Intervention

- Allow students some choice in their reading and writing.
- Integrate learning of skills with meaningful contexts (real reading and writing).
- Use onsets and rimes and spelling by analogy to help learners work with chunks of meaning and pattern (rather than letter-by-letter).
- Use word-sorting and brainstorm-categorize activities to help students discern patterns.
- Use brainstorm/cloze to help learners integrate cues.
- Use strategies to activate prior knowledge and generate purposes for reading (e.g., KWL).
- Use thematic units to develop ideas and vocabulary in an integrated way.
- Use reading and writing for a variety of functions and in a variety of genres.
- Try partner and collaborative activities.
- Try older/younger buddies.
- Use various cooperative learning techniques.
- Balance group work and individual activities so students get sufficient independent practice.
- Use a variety of instructional techniques, including scaffolding, guided reading, explicit instruction, and emphasizing connections to real reading and writing while avoiding isolated exercises.
- Design instruction according to the learner’s needs, in small group or one-on-one instruction (e.g. interactive writing with one student).
- Use flexible groupings for particular purposes.
- Make learning explicit so students know what they are learning and why.
- Encourage students to talk about their learning.
- Encourage parental or guardian involvement in home literacy experiences.

# Language Cueing Systems

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Students use a variety of cueing systems, along with background knowledge, to create meaning. To communicate effectively, students need to learn how to maximize their use of linguistic and textual cues.

## Semantic Cues

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Semantic cues refer to the meaning in language that assists in comprehending texts, including words, speech, signs, symbols, and other meaning-bearing forms.

Semantic cues involve the learners' prior knowledge of language, text and visual media, and their prior life experiences. Many of the conventions of visual media fall under the umbrella of semantic cues. Teachers can scaffold students' use of semantic knowledge by relating new concepts to concepts already familiar to students. Gradually, students independently relate new information to what is known and personally meaningful.

## Morphological Cues

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Morphological cues involve using the smallest meaningful units of the language to derive meaning from a word or text.

## Syntactic Cues

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Syntactic cues involve word order, rules, patterns of language, grammar, and punctuation. For example, the position a word holds in a sentence can cue the listener or reader as to whether the word is a noun or a verb. Conversely, listeners and readers use their intuitive knowledge of grammar to predict what words are likely to appear next. Oral punctuation provides cues to meaning through rhythm, flow, pauses, intonation, and voice modulation.

## Graphophonic Cues

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Graphophonic cues involve the letter-sound or sound-symbol relationships of language. Readers who identify unknown words by relating speech sounds to letters or letter patterns are using graphophonic cues. This process is often called *decoding*. Decoding is not, as the word may imply, a mechanical process but an essential means of making meaning. Graphophonic cues are used to support semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic cues to help readers determine if a word is logical or makes sense. In early literacy development, some students over-rely on graphophonic cues and attempt to sound out every word. These students need to be encouraged to predict what word would make sense and fit in the sentence pattern or context.

## Textual Cues

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Learners use textual cues such as titles, headings, subheadings, bold print, italics, captions, and other text features to construct meaning. Learning to read graphs and charts is also part of the comprehension process. Text-structure cues give insight into the author's organizational patterns and thought processes in different types of texts, such as narrative, expository, dramatic, and poetic. Students who learn to attend to textual cues are better able to comprehend, organize, and remember information presented in texts than those who do not.

## Grammar in the Ukrainian Language Arts Classroom

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### Elements of Grammar

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Grammar is not introduced and taught as a separate component of the Ukrainian language arts program, but instead is integrated with other student learning. Linguistic Elements Outcome 6.1 of the curriculum framework outlines the grammatical components to be emphasized at each grade level. The suggested teaching and learning activities provide the context within which Ukrainian grammatical elements can be explored.

### Contextualizing Grammar

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The issue of how to deal with grammar and grammar instruction in the second language classroom has been the focus of considerable discussion in language teaching; however, there is increasing agreement as to what constitutes effective grammar instruction.

#### Effective grammar instruction

- should be taught in context. Students gain insight into the structural elements of Ukrainian through the use of the language in authentic, meaningful, and relevant contexts.
- should be integrated into daily teaching and learning activities and classroom routines. It should be integrated into all activities and across all subject areas.
- does not fragment language at the word or sentence level and neglect the discourse level.
- should be accurately modelled and students need frequent opportunities to practise these structures in a variety of different contexts and for a variety of purposes.
- facilitates communication. The emphasis in grammar instruction should remain on communicative skills that lead to the use of the Ukrainian language in a variety of circumstances. Although **language fluency** is a major goal of the Ukrainian language arts program, teachers also need to focus attention on **language accuracy** to avoid students' "fossilization" of language errors.
- should be purposeful and build on students' prior linguistic knowledge and experiences.

- includes repetition and reinforcement of grammar rules and patterns, using concrete language experiences, across a broad spectrum of topics and themes.
- should be reinforced in a variety of ways to meet the various learning preferences of students.
- provides students opportunities to interact with one another in a non-threatening environment where they feel free to take risks and experiment with language.