

PART 1

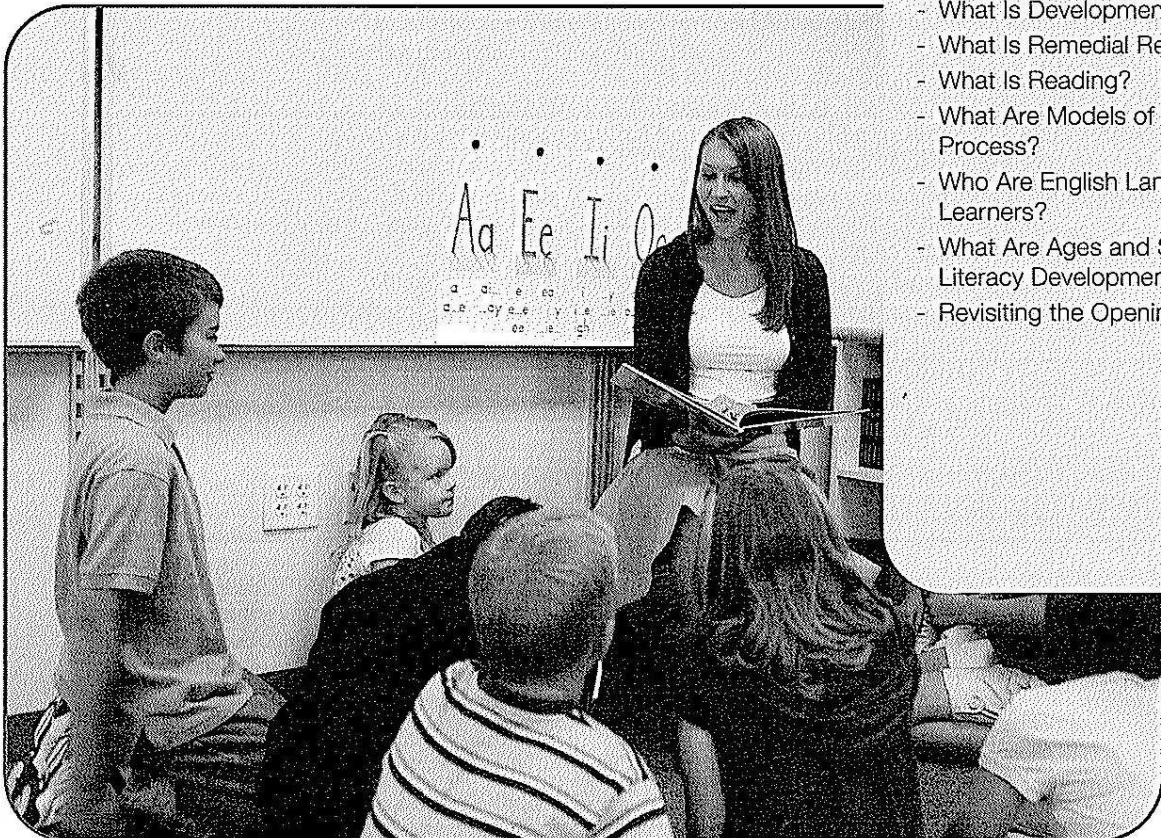
Setting the Stage

What Is Reading Diagnosis and Improvement?

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CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Scenario: A Reading Diagnosis and Improvement Program in Action
- What Is Reading Diagnosis and Improvement?
- What Is Diagnosis?
- Ten Principles of Diagnosis
- What Is a Diagnostic Pattern?
- What Is Response to Intervention (RTI)?
- What Is Balanced Reading?
- Scenario: Balanced Reading
- What Is Developmental Reading?
- What Is Remedial Reading?
- What Is Reading?
- What Are Models of the Reading Process?
- Who Are English Language Learners?
- What Are Ages and Stages of Literacy Development?
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SCENARIO: A READING DIAGNOSIS AND IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM IN ACTION

When you walk into Ms. Johnson's third-grade classroom, you realize that something special is taking place; you can sense the excitement of learning. Often no one notices your arrival because the children are so engrossed in what they are doing.

Ms. Johnson's classroom is not quiet. It's a room in which children and teacher are involved in a dynamic, interactive teaching-learning program, which includes a reading diagnosis and improvement program.

At various times on any one day, you can observe Ms. Johnson working with an individual child, a group of children, or a whole class. In Ms. Johnson's room, grouping is tailored to the needs of children and is very flexible. Children flow from one group to another depending on need. It's not unusual to find a child in more than one reading group, working individually, or working in a one-to-one relationship with Ms. Johnson. Ms. Johnson tries to correlate reading with all the other language arts and sees to it that she meets individually with each child in a special conference at least once during the week. She believes in "nipping problems in the bud," so she keeps very close tabs on her students. Whether children are reading from trade books or from their basal readers, she keeps records of their progress in word recognition and comprehension.

Ms. Johnson is always probing, questioning, and keeping a sharp eye out for what her students do well and for potential problems; she interweaves diagnosis with instruction. When she notices a problem, she talks to the child to try to determine whether the child recognizes that there is a problem. She then sets up a student conference to meet and discuss the issue further.

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After reading the chapter, you should be able to:

- Discuss the importance of a reading diagnosis and improvement program.
- State ten principles of diagnosis.
- Describe what a total integrative reading program entails.
- Discuss how a definition of reading influences the reading diagnosis and improvement program.
- Discuss what is usually meant by a balanced reading program.

WHAT IS READING DIAGNOSIS AND IMPROVEMENT?

Reading diagnosis and improvement
Reading instruction interwoven with diagnosis and intervention.

Reading diagnosis and improvement consists of reading instruction interwoven with diagnosis and intervention. It is based on the premise that both ongoing diagnosis and intervention are integral parts of a daily developmental reading program (i.e., a program that addresses all reading skills and strategies that are systematically and sequentially developed to enable children to become readers) and that knowledgeable teachers can and should implement such a program once they have the necessary skills. It is also based on the premise that early intervention (i.e., identifying students' strengths and needs as early as kindergarten) is essential.

WHAT IS DIAGNOSIS?

Diagnosis

The act, process, or result of identifying the nature of a disorder or disability through observation and examination. In education, it often includes the planning of instruction and an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses (i.e., needs) of the student.

Some educators are disturbed by the term *diagnosis* because it seems to connote illness or disease, and they do not like the analogies that are often made between medicine and education. *Diagnosis* is a term that has been borrowed from medicine. In the field of reading, it is used to discuss how to identify children's reading strengths and needs. The definition of *diagnosis* offered in *The Literacy Dictionary* (Harris & Hodges, 1995) is most often used:

The act, process, or result of identifying the nature of a disorder or disability through observation and examination. . . . As the term is used in education, it often includes the planning of instruction and an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses (i.e., needs) of the student. (p. 59)

Let us analyze the definition further.

1. The first step in diagnosis is the identification of strengths and needs by observing certain signs or symptoms as the child is reading throughout the day and by administering informal reading assessments. (See Chapters 5, 7, and 8.) Some examples of these signs or symptoms would be a child's ability or inability to read fluently, to decode words, or to comprehend.
2. The second step is to determine possible reasons for reading difficulties. This is accomplished by analyzing the results of assessments that are used to shed light on a child's reading performance. It may also include looking for some of the underlying factors, noneducational or educational, that could be contributing to the reading problem.

Note that in the first step, teachers look for both strengths and needs. Knowledge of what a child can do is often helpful in providing insight into a child's reading problem. Teachers can also use what the child knows to teach new strategies. The second step generally reveals that a reading problem is caused by a number of factors rather than just one. (See Chapter 4.)

TEN PRINCIPLES OF DIAGNOSIS

Ten principles underlie the type of diagnosis and improvement we propose in this text. These principles are reflected in *Excellent Reading Teachers*, a position statement issued by the International Reading Association's board of directors (IRA, 2000).

1. Diagnosis underlies prevention.
2. Early diagnosis is essential in order to ameliorate reading problems from the start.
3. Diagnosis is continuous.
4. Diagnosis and instruction are interwoven.
5. Diagnosis is a *means* to improvement; it is not an end in itself.
6. Teacher-made as well as published reading assessment instruments are used in diagnosis.
7. Noneducational as well as educational factors are considered.
8. Diagnosis identifies strengths as well as needs.

9. Diagnosis is an individual process; that is, in diagnosis, the teacher focuses on an individual child. (Diagnostic information can be obtained from various contexts: working in a one-to-one relationship with a child, observing a child in a group, or observing a child doing seatwork.)
10. The teacher works to establish rapport and treats each student as an individual worthy of respect.

WHAT IS A DIAGNOSTIC PATTERN?

Diagnostic pattern

Consists of three steps: identify, assess and set goals

Identification

Part of diagnostic pattern; the act of determining the student's present level of performance in word recognition and comprehension for screening purposes.

Appropriate instruction stems from and is interwoven with accurate and pertinent diagnostic information for each child in the regular classroom. We also stress that diagnosis is ongoing and is necessary for prevention as well as for continued growth. In a reading diagnosis and improvement program, the teacher is interested in determining the student's reading strengths and needs, as well as the factors contributing to them, as soon as possible in order to plan and provide appropriate instruction. Three steps to accomplish this are given below.

Step 1: *Identify* the student's present level of performance in comprehension and word recognition by using a variety of reading assessments (see Part 2, Chapters 5–8).

Step 2: *Assess* specific student strengths and needs, especially if a discrepancy exists between a student's present reading status and reading potential. Doing so allows the teacher to discover specific factors that affect the student's reading performance.

Step 3: *Set goals* to help students maximize their reading potential.

Identification, assessment, and goal setting are three steps in a diagnostic pattern.¹

WHAT IS RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION (RTI)?



To hear an expert discuss RTI and cultural considerations, go to the IRIS Center Resources section of Topic 11: Reading Difficulties and Intervention Strategies in the MyEducationLab for your course and listen to the Podcast entitled "Leonard Baca on RTI and Cultural Considerations."

The latest version of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), which was passed by Congress in 2004, specifies that it is no longer necessary to show a discrepancy in order to determine who has a learning problem (e.g., learning to read) that is severe enough to be classified as a learning disability. In its place is a process called *Response to Intervention* (RTI). See Appendix D for the International Reading Association's Guiding Principles on RTI. The IRA commission on RTI summarizes the actual laws and provides clear principles on how to put the intent of the laws into action.

The three-step process entails providing children who appear to be struggling with the best possible instruction and taking a look at how they perform under such conditions. This first round of instruction takes place in the classroom context and is provided by the classroom teacher. If the child makes little or no progress in comparison to his or her peers, the second step involves providing supplementary instruction, either individually or in a small group. The classroom teacher or another professional provides this instruction. If the child still makes little progress, additional tests are administered to determine whether there is a specific learning disability. If there is, the child is placed in special education classes and given more intensive intervention.

Intervention is a key word here. Just as with reading diagnosis and improvement, RTI insists that identifying a problem early on and doing something to ameliorate it better ensures that students will continue to progress in reading. And, as discussed in Chapters 5, 7, and 8, there are numerous reading assessment techniques

¹These terms are adapted from Ruth Strang, *Diagnostic Teaching of Reading*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969).

teachers can use to identify student strengths and needs beginning in kindergarten. Each technique is accompanied by teaching suggestions that will assist teachers with planning appropriate instruction.

WHAT IS BALANCED READING?

Balanced reading is defined in many different ways. We view it as a program that incorporates various philosophies, teaching strategies, and materials to achieve the best possible reading instruction for children.

Balanced reading programs are concerned with early intervention and with helping students gain the skills that they need to become effective readers as quickly as possible. Balanced reading programs are designed to help students improve their higher-order thinking skills, as well as gain needed comprehension and word recognition skills and strategies. Teachers also use these programs to nurture in their students a love of books that will help them become lifelong readers. A good reading diagnosis and improvement program includes a balanced reading program.

A balanced reading diagnosis and improvement program can help to stop the “failure cycle.” If children continually have reading difficulties, they begin to see themselves as failures, destroying their self-concept. The more they perceive themselves as failures, the more they fail. And so the cycle continues.

Instead, teachers must help to create a success cycle (Cullinan, 2000). The basic idea is that the more students read, the more their reading ability improves and the more they enjoy the reading experience. Because students enjoy the experience, they will spend more time reading.



SCENARIO: BALANCED READING

Ms. Hill has a balanced reading program in her classroom. Let's look at what she does.

Ms. Hill uses explicit teaching, that is, she presents an intentional program designed to teach skills and strategies. She realizes that just reading aloud to the children is not enough. She teaches phonics skills systematically because she believes in a sequential development of this skill. When appropriate, she also teaches spelling generalizations and vocabulary skills.

For those children who have difficulty with phonics, she uses a whole word approach. Ms. Hill uses many different approaches. Her goal is to help her students become good, strategic readers; consequently, she presents them with word recognition and comprehension strategies. She incorporates a program that uses both oral and silent reading. She models oral reading for her students to help them gain and recognize good adult reading fluency.

A good balanced reading program helps her students become lifelong readers.

WHAT IS DEVELOPMENTAL READING?

Developmental reading

Reading skills and strategies that are systematically and sequentially developed to help students become effective readers.

In our view, *developmental reading* refers to all those reading skills and strategies that are systematically and sequentially developed to help students become effective readers throughout their schooling. “All those reading skills and strategies” refers to learning-to-read skills and strategies as well as reading-to-learn skills and strategies and reading for appreciation. Developmental reading is the major reading program, and the diagnostic improvement program that takes place in the regular classroom is part of the developmental reading program; all other programs are adjuncts to the developmental program.

WHAT IS REMEDIAL READING?

Remedial reading program

Takes place inside or outside the regular classroom and is handled by special personnel.

Remedial reading programs can take place outside the regular classroom and are handled by special personnel such as a special reading teacher, a therapist, or a clinician. The special reading teacher usually works with students who have severe reading problems that cannot be handled in the regular classroom. The students are usually referred for help by the regular classroom teacher. Regardless of where the remedial instruction occurs, it dovetails into the developmental reading program.

For example, the prime purpose of the remedial reading program that takes place outside the regular classroom is to help students attain the developmental skills and strategies that they lack. This program is not a replacement for the student's classroom developmental instruction in reading; it is reading instruction that is given *in addition to* the reading instruction in the regular classroom; therefore, it must be related to or considered part of the developmental program. This is imperative because studies show that there is a consistent negative relationship between the time students spend in "pull-out" classes and reading.² Many times the "pull-out" program becomes the complete reading program for students with severe reading problems, and rather than spending more time, the students spend less time in reading. Also, if the remedial program is looked on as separate from the developmental reading program, there is usually a lack of congruence between the instruction of the regular classroom teacher and that of the remedial reading teacher. This lack of congruence can confuse children who are already struggling.³

WHAT IS READING?

Reading

A dynamic, complex act that involves bringing meaning to and getting meaning from the printed page.

The relationship of reading to diagnosis is important in a reading diagnosis and improvement program. To fully understand this relationship, it is first essential to define reading. Clearly, the definition that we choose will influence both the instructional and diagnostic components of the program. For example, if we see reading as a total integrative process, diagnosis will also be seen as a total integrative process.

There is no single, set definition of reading. A broad definition is that *reading* is a dynamic, complex act that involves bringing to and getting meaning from the printed page. This definition implies that readers bring their backgrounds, experiences, and emotions into play. It further implies that students who are upset or physically ill will bring these feelings into the act of reading, and these feelings will influence their interpretative processes. Yet another implication is that a person well versed in the subject matter at hand will gain more from reading the material than someone less knowledgeable. For example, a student who is a good critical thinker will gain more from a critical passage than one who is not. A student who has strong dislikes will come away with different feelings and understandings than a student with strong likings related to a given text. Under a global (i.e., integrative) definition, a diagnosis acknowledges that a reading problem is often caused by multiple factors. Therefore, the diagnosis would include considerations of ecological (environmental), personal, and intellectual factors. Educational factors, as well as noneducational ones, are considered. A global definition also recognizes that not all children respond in the same way to either teachers or instruction. An atmosphere conducive to growth is important, as is the maxim that success breeds success. Diagnosis is looked on as continuous, as underlying prevention as well as remediation, and

²G. V. Glass and M. L. Smith, *Pull-Out in Compensatory Education*, paper prepared for Office of the Commissioner, U.S. Office of Education, 1977.

³See R. L. Allington and M. C. Shake, "Remedial Reading: Achieving Curricular Congruence in Classroom and Clinic," *The Reading Teacher* (March, 1986): 648-654.

as interwoven with instruction. The emphasis in diagnosis is on determining the child's reading problems and the conditions that contribute to them. This is the definition we advocate in this text. The following section further explains our view.

HOW IS READING A TOTAL INTEGRATIVE PROCESS?

By using a broad or global definition of reading, we see reading as a total integrative process that starts with the reader and includes the affective, perceptual, and cognitive domains.

Reading process

Concerned with the affective, perceptual, and cognitive domains.

Affective domain

Part of the reading process that involves an individual's feelings and emotions.

Perceptual domain

Part of the reading process that depends on an individual's background of experiences in using the body's sensory receptors and interpreting sensory input.

Perception

A cumulative process based on an individual's background of experiences. It is defined as giving meaning to sensations or the ability to organize stimuli on a field.

Cognitive domain

Hierarchy of objectives ranging from simplistic thinking skills to the more complex ones.

The Affective Domain

The *affective domain* includes our feelings and emotions. The way we feel greatly influences the way we look at stimuli on a field. It may distort our perception. For example, if we have adverse feelings about certain things, these feelings will influence how we interpret what we read. Our feelings also influence what we decide to read. Attitudes exert a directive and dynamic influence on both our readiness to respond to and our willingness to read a given text.

The Perceptual Domain

The *perceptual domain* involves giving meaning to sensations and the ability to organize stimuli on a field. *Perception* is a cumulative process based on an individual's background of experiences in using the body's sensory receptors and interpreting the sensory input. If, for example, an individual's eyes are organically defective, perceptions involving sight will be distorted. In the act of reading, visual perception is a very important factor. Children need to be able to control their eyes so that they move from left to right across the page. Eye movements influence what the reader perceives.⁴

Although what we observe is never in exact accord with the actual physical stimuli,⁵ we must be able to accurately decode the graphemic (written) representation of those stimuli. If readers have learned incorrect associations, this will affect their ability to read. For example, if a child reads the word *gip* for *pig* and is never shown the difference between these words, this may become part of his or her perceptions. Whether children perceive words as a whole, in parts, or as individual letters will also determine whether they will be good or poor readers. More mature readers are able to perceive more complex and extensive graphemic patterns as units. They are also able to give meaning to mutilated words such as

As noted above, the perceptual process is influenced by physiological factors as well as affective ones. Therefore, a person's biases toward a topic may result in deleting from, adding to, or distorting what is actually written.

The Cognitive Domain

The *cognitive domain* includes the areas involving thinking. Under this umbrella we place all the comprehension skills (see Chapter 10). Persons who have difficulty thinking (the manipulation of symbolic representations) will have difficulty reading. Although the cognitive domain goes beyond the perceptual domain, it builds and depends on a firm perceptual base. That is, if readers have faulty perceptions, they will also have faulty concepts. (See Chapter 7 for a discussion of concept development.)

⁴Eric J. Paulson and Ann E. Freeman, *Insight from the Eyes* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003).

⁵Julian E. Hochberg, *Perception* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964), p. 3.

TABLE 1.1 Summary of Proficient and Less Proficient Reading Behaviors

<i>Proficient Reading Behaviors</i>	<i>Less Proficient Reading Behaviors</i>
Attempt to make what is read sound like language and make sense	Attempt to identify all of the words correctly
Monitor what is read for sense and coherence	Monitor what is read for correct letter/sound and word identification
Build meaning using the text, their purpose, and their background	Build meaning by attempting to identify the letters and words correctly
Use a variety of strategies when meaning breaks down: reread, rethink, read on and return if necessary, substitute, skip it, sound it out, seek assistance, use text aids (pictures, graphs, charts), ignore it, stop reading	Use a limited range of strategies when meaning breaks down: sound it out, skip it
Selectively sample the print; use a mixture of visual (print) and nonvisual (background) information	Use most of the visual (print) information
Use and integrate a variety of systems of language to create meaning	Rely heavily on graphemes, graphophonemics, and morphemes
Vary the manner in which texts are read based on purpose	Read all texts in a similar manner regardless of purpose
Typically correct one in three miscues	Typically correct one in twenty miscues
Attempt to correct miscues that affect meaning	Attempt to correct miscues that fail to resemble the word
"Chunk" what is read	Process letter by letter, which results in tunnel vision

Source: Kucer, S. *Dimensions of Literacy: A Conceptual Base for Teaching Reading and Writing in School Settings*, 2nd ed. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2005, p. 142.

Metacognition

Thinking critically about thinking; refers to students' knowledge about their thinking processes and ability to control them.

The findings of research on the brain and cognitive processes have implications for teaching and instruction. By regarding the brain as an active consumer of information, able to interpret and draw inferences as well as ignore or selectively attend to other information, the learner is "given a new, more important active role and responsibility in learning from instruction and teaching."⁶

Metacognition relates to the cognitive domain. The term *metacognition* is used "to refer to both students' knowledge about their own cognitive processes and their ability to control these processes."⁷ It literally means thinking critically about thinking.

WHAT ARE CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD READERS?

Proficient readers have a large repertoire of strategies at their disposal, which they use to help them better comprehend the text at hand (see Table 1.1). The strategies they

⁶Merlin C. Wittrock. "Education and the Cognitive Processes of the Brain," *The National Society for the Study of Education Seventy-Seventh Yearbook*, Part II (1978), p. 101.

⁷Claire E. Weinstein and Richard E. Mayer. "The Teaching of Learning Strategies," *The Handbook of Research on Teaching*, 3rd ed. (1986), p. 323.

TABLE 1.2 Explanations of Good Reader Attributes

<i>Good Reader Attributes</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
Active	Readers bring their own experiences to reading the text and to constructing meaning. They make predictions and make decisions such as what to read and reread, and when to slow down or speed up.
Purposeful	Readers have purposes in mind when they read a text. They then read with these purposes in mind. For example, they might choose to read for enjoyment or entertainment. At other times, they might read to discover specific details.
Evaluative	Readers evaluate what they are reading, asking themselves whether the text is meeting their initial purposes for reading it. They also evaluate the quality of the text and whether it is of value. They react to the text both emotionally and intellectually. Readers also evaluate their interaction with others in different instructional groupings as well as their ability to function as both leaders and followers in the group.
Thoughtful	Readers think about the text selection before, during, and after reading. <i>Before reading</i> , they think about what they might already know. <i>During reading</i> , they think about how the current text relates to what they already know. <i>After reading</i> , they think about what the text offered and formulate their interpretations of it.
Strategic	Readers use specific strategies such as predicting, monitoring, and visualizing to ensure that they are comprehending the text.
Persistent	Readers keep reading a text even when it might be rather difficult if they feel that the text is helping them to accomplish a set purpose.
Productive	Readers are productive in more than one way. For instance, they bring their own experiences to the text at hand to construct or <i>produce</i> their understanding of it. Because they are engaged with reading, they are more productive in terms of the amount of reading they do.

Source: Adapted from Duke, N. K., and Pearson, P. D. "Effective Practices for Developing Reading Comprehension," in A. E. Farstrup and S. J. Samuels, eds., *What Research Has to Say about Reading Instruction*, 3rd ed. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2002, pp. 205–242.

employ will shift depending on their background for the text and the manner in which the text is written. If they have read and heard stories, for instance, they most likely have an understanding of story structure (i.e., the pattern used to write stories). This text structure poses few if any difficulties, so they are able to read with greater ease.

In essence, then, good readers are active, purposeful, evaluative, thoughtful, strategic, persistent, and productive.⁸ We explain each of these attributes in Table 1.2. When you hear someone exclaim, "He is a good reader!" this is what it means.

But what do we do with children who do not carry this label? Can we teach them the "good reader" characteristics? Thanks to the work of several researchers who have designed metacognition training programs to explore this question, we know that the answer is "yes." But the characteristics must be explicitly taught; for whatever reason, less proficient readers do not acquire them with as little explicit instruction as do many of the good readers.

Regardless of a child's level of proficiency, helping all children to maximize their full potential as readers is more important than assigning a label, a view that is supported

⁸N. K. Duke and P. D. Pearson, "Effective Practices for Developing Reading Comprehension," in *What Research Has to Say about Reading Instruction*, 3rd ed., eds. A. E. Farstrup and S. J. Samuels (Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2002), pp. 205–242.

by the Council for Exceptional Children.⁹ Remember that the goal of a reading diagnosis and improvement program is to discover children's strengths and needs and to design appropriate instruction to address these. Put another way, children are always ready to learn something and our job as teachers is to figure out what that something is. Learning is what we're after. The success of education depends on adapting teaching to the individual differences among learners. That children vary is natural; what is unnatural is to assume that all children are the same.¹⁰

WHAT ARE MODELS OF THE READING PROCESS?

Top-down reading models

Models that depend on reader's background of experiences and language ability in constructing meaning from the text.

Bottom-up reading models

Models that consider the reading process as one of grapheme-phoneme correspondences; code emphasis or subskill models.

Interactive reading models

Models that consider the top-down processing of information as dependent on the bottom-up processing, and vice versa.

The field of reading is replete with theories, and different catch phrases are sometimes assigned to the same general theories, further confusing those who try to understand the various theories. One area that has caused much disagreement and debate among reading theorists is that of beginning reading. Controversy has centered on whether the reading process is a holistic one (emphasis on meaning), that is, a *top-down model*; a subskill process (code emphasis), that is, a *bottom-up model*; and, more recently, whether it is an *interactive model*. The interactive model is somewhat but not entirely a combination of the top-down and bottom-up models in that both processes take place simultaneously depending on the difficulty of the material for the individual reader. (See Figure 1.1.)

Classroom practices are based on the theories that teachers embrace. Those who believe in a bottom-up model will emphasize decoding to the exclusion of meaning; those who believe primarily in a top-down model emphasize meaning. Those who believe in an interactive model will probably use a combination of both.

Reading theorists often tend to be exclusive; they promote their own theory and generally neglect others. The classroom teacher, however, need not accept an either-or dichotomy, but rather should seek a synthesis of all the elements that have proven workable; that is, the classroom teacher can take elements from each theory based on the individual needs of students. Good teachers realize that the reading process is very complex and that there are no simple answers.

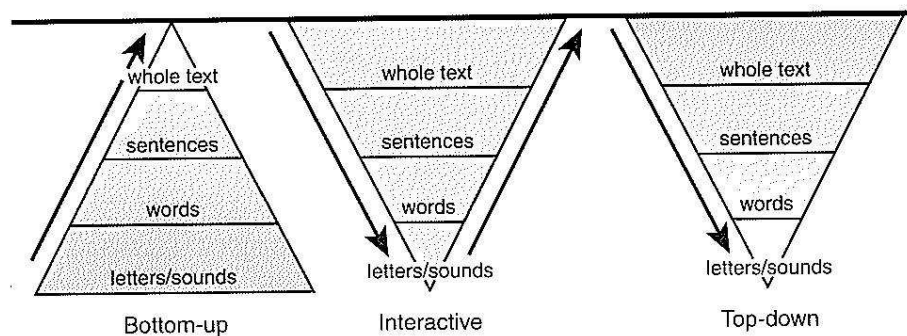


FIGURE 1.1 Models of Reading

⁹Council for Exceptional Children, *What Every Special Educator Must Know: Ethics, Standards, and Guidelines for Special Educators*, 5th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Merrill/Prentice-Hall, 2003).

¹⁰A. Flurkey, "What's 'Normal' about Real Reading?" in *The Truth About DIBELS: What It Is and What It Does*, ed. K. Goodman (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2006), pp. 40–49.

WHO ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS?

English Language Learners are those who are fortunate to know a language other than English.¹¹ In fact, sometimes these learners may know more than one language. Regardless, the language they seek to acquire is English, hence the label *English Language Learner*. And just as with all learners, ELLs are constantly showing what they know and what they need to learn. There is much variability among them, which is not to be confused with disability.¹²

Researchers have identified different levels of language proficiency through which language learners progress.¹³ Figure 1.2 draws on these initial delineations of levels as well as others' adaptations of them.¹⁴ Through it, we show the levels as delineated in the TESOL standards,¹⁵ and provide a brief description of each. Keep in mind that when learning a new language, any individual, regardless of age, progresses through these levels. To assume that the levels coincide with specific grade levels is problematic.

FIGURE 1.2 Levels of Language Proficiency, Descriptions, and Implications

Levels of Language Proficiency	Description
Level 1: Starting	Students have a limited understanding of English. They may respond using nonverbal cues in an attempt to communicate basic needs. They begin to imitate others and use some single words or simple phrases.
Level 2: Emerging	Students are beginning to understand some phrases and simple sentences. They respond using memorized words and phrases.
Level 3: Developing	Students' listening comprehension improves, and they can understand written English. Students are fairly comfortable engaging in social conversations using simple sentences, but they are just beginning to develop their academic language proficiency.
Level 4: Expanding	Students understand and frequently use conversational English with relatively high accuracy. They are able to communicate their ideas in both oral and written contexts. They are also showing the ability to use academic vocabulary.
Level 5: Bridging	Students comprehend and engage in conversational and academic English with proficiency. They perform at or near grade level in reading, writing, and other content areas.

¹¹M. F. Opitz and L. M. Guccione, *Comprehension and English Language Learners: 25 Oral Reading Strategies That Cross Proficiency Levels* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2009).

¹²C. Roller, *Variability, Not Disability* (Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 1996).

¹³S. Krashen and T. Terrell, *The Natural Approach: Language Acquisition in the Classroom* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1983).

¹⁴D. E. Freeman and Y. S. Freeman, *Teaching Reading in Multilingual Classrooms* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000). See also J. Kendal, and O. Khuon, *Making Sense: Small Group Comprehension Lessons for English Language Learners* (Portland, ME: Stenhouse, 2005).

¹⁵TESOL, *Pre-K-12 English Language Proficiency Standards* (Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, 2006).

Also problematic is seeing language learning as a linear process. As Freeman and Freeman¹⁶ make clear, it is anything but. When using language in less formal settings, such as when having conversations with friends, ELLs may demonstrate that they have acquired Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and be functioning at level 5 (bridging), an advanced level of language acquisition. However, these same learners can and do have difficulty using language in more formal settings, such as school, where they may demonstrate that they are functioning at level 3 (developing), the middle level of language proficiency. They need assistance in acquiring academic language. In other words, these ELLs need help in acquiring Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). The same children who appear to be functioning at a given level in the classroom are instead functioning at different levels depending on how they are called on to use language.

WHAT ARE AGES AND STAGES OF LITERACY DEVELOPMENT?

Reading ability continues to develop throughout life. For that matter, so do writing, speaking, and listening abilities. In fact, we might say that reading ability grows with exposure to oral language and print. In general, children at given ages share common characteristics in terms of reading and writing abilities. Different reading researchers and educators cast these characteristics into stages of growth (e.g., Chall, 1983; International Reading Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1998; Cooper & Kiger, 2005) to help teachers determine who is displaying age-appropriate reading behaviors.¹⁷ Knowing some of these behaviors can also be extremely helpful in trying to determine who might need further assistance with learning to speak, listen, read, or write.

Table 1.3 shows the stages of literacy growth and some of their descriptors. Keep in mind that stages can overlap and that students rarely display every characteristic of one stage before they move into another. Many of the characteristics stay the same from stage to stage, but they become more sophisticated. Also, as when anyone is learning something new, there can be plateaus. So, while the table shows a neat linear process that happens in a smooth tempo, in reality the tempo is more halting at times.

TABLE 1.3 Stages and Descriptors of Literacy Growth

Stage	Brief Description	Sample Benchmarks
Early Emergent	Viewed as a foundation on which children develop oral language and a curiosity about print.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attends to read-alouds
Typically before kindergarten		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses oral language for different purposes Likes playing with movable or magnetic letters Knows several nursery rhymes Uses paper and writing utensils to attempt writing
Emergent Literacy	Children show more interest in all aspects of literacy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retains oral directions Enjoys tongue twisters

¹⁶D. E. Freeman and Y. S. Freeman. *English Language Learners: The Essential Guide* (New York: Scholastic, 2007).

¹⁷Jean Chall. *Stages of Reading Development* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983). International Reading Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children. "Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children." *The Reading Teacher*, 52 (1998): 193–216. J. D. Cooper and N. Kiger. *Literacy Assessment: Helping Teachers Plan Instruction*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005).

TABLE 1.3

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Brief Description</i>	<i>Sample Benchmarks</i>
Typically kindergarten; may overlap into the beginning of first grade		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knows some concepts about print such as book parts, word boundaries, and how to handle a book • Recognizes and names most letters • Shows evidence of being phonemically aware • Can write own name • Uses some punctuation
<i>Beginning Reading and Writing</i>	Oral language facility expands. Children develop word analysis skills, start to show fluency in reading and increased understanding of many words. Their writing begins to follow print conventions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses increased oral vocabulary • Participates in discussions
Typically first grade; continues into second and third grade for some		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes and names all letters in any order • Identifies many sight words • Uses phonics to determine word pronunciation • Uses a variety of comprehension strategies • Reads and retells stories • Enjoys writing • Uses a computer to write
<i>Almost Proficient Reading and Writing</i>	Children grow in their understanding of literacy. Oral language shows increased vocabulary, writing is more frequent, and silent reading increases.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grows in use of standard English • Uses new oral vocabulary • Uses context to determine word meaning
Typically begins at end of second grade and continues into fourth or fifth grade		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-corrects • Reads independently • Reads for many purposes • Begins learning research skills • Writes for many purposes • Writing conventions show growth • Chooses to write in free time
<i>Proficient Reading and Writing</i>	Children use reading and writing for a variety of purposes. The majority of skills are acquired and used as appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listens to presentations with understanding • Uses oral language for a variety of purposes • Seldom needs help with word recognition
Typically begins in fourth grade and continues through life.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses several comprehension strategies • Enjoys reading • Writes for many purposes • Edits own writing • Experiments with different writing forms

Source: Adapted from Cooper & Kiger, *Literacy Assessment: Helping Teachers Plan Instruction*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2005.