

The teaching of reading education essay

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Presentation of a text full of symbols during the initial session of the English module provided an insight into, and appreciation of, the skills and knowledge children need to in order to be able to read a text fluently and, equally as important, with comprehension. By applying a range of strategies from the visual appearance of the symbols (graphic) and recognition of the sounds, letters and the words they represented (phonic) to knowledge of language order (syntactic) and understanding of vocabulary, as well as prior knowledge of texts and story language (semantic), the text was decoded, deciphered and understood. This task illustrated the complexity of the reading process, the strategies of which have been researched, debated and written about in depth, and involve far more than simply decoding the black marks, as was the view pre twentieth century (Graham & Kelly, 2008: 3). Decoding, also described as word recognition skills, when combined with language comprehension, understanding texts and spoken language, provides the perhaps misnamed ‘ simple view of reading’ (Appendix 1), the current framework adopted by the Primary National Strategy (PNS) (DfES, 2006a) and proposed by the Rose Report (DfES, 2006b) to enable teachers to identify and differentiate between the two components; both of which are necessary in order that children become successful readers. Clearly teachers are aware of National Curriculum (DfEE/QCA, 1999) requirements and having met Q10-15 (Appendix 2) of the Professional Standards for Qualified Teacher Status (2008) will have acquired thorough pedagogical and subject knowledge to enable effective teaching of reading. Together with an understanding of reading development from Foundation to post year 6, in order to secure progress that builds on prior learning, a curriculum incorporating phonics and opportunities to discuss and engage with a variety

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of texts through activities such as shared, guided and independent reading can be planned. However, as explained by Browne (2009: 42) how a reading curriculum is delivered will be influenced not only by the above but by the individual beliefs, convictions, enthusiasm, encouragement and passion of the teacher. Reading entertains, educates and empowers; it is the most important skill a child will learn; and as stated by the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (2009: 1) is... the gateway to learning; without it, children cannot access a broad and balanced curriculum. Researchers as far back as the Victorian era found that proficient readers were able to report words better than letters supporting more recent research that, although each letter is registered as a separate symbol, letters in a word are normally perceived simultaneously (Rayner et al, 2002). Conversely, when encountering an unfamiliar word, a confident fluent reader relies upon their phonic knowledge, blending and segmenting the word into its individual phonemes illustrating that an understanding of how graphemes and phonemes relate (alphabetic code) is critically important in reading. When children begin their formal education in Foundation Stage, many are familiar with books having shared and enjoyed stories with parents and carers; sung songs and nursery rhymes; observed literate behaviour in the home and, most importantly, been spoken and listened to since birth; crucial phonological knowledge has begun to be developed. Unfortunately this is not always the case but Rose (DfES, 2006b) stresses the importance of this involvement to encourage positive attitudes to literacy from an early age; recommendations teachers can sensitively communicate to parents and carers during induction sessions and parent evenings. The National Curriculum (DfEE/QCA, 1999) and PNS (DfES, 2006a) in particular Strand 5, <https://assignbuster.com/the-teaching-of-reading-education-essay/>

Word Recognition, place emphasis on the learning of phonics through schemes such as Letters and Sounds (DfES, 2007) a six-phase teaching programme (Appendix 3). Teachers introduce phonological awareness, the ability to perceive and manipulate sounds of spoken words, during Phase 1 through clapping games, nursery rhymes, onset and rime activities, and is a key skill with research proving that strong phonological awareness can be an indicator of children successfully learning to read (Browne, 2009: 26). High quality phonics instruction continues through Phase 2-6, as explained in the Developing Literacy in Initial Teacher Training (DLITT) DVD (DCSF, 2009), during sessions that revisit and review to consolidate prior learning; teaching that incorporates instruction in articulation, blending and segmenting; practice of skills learnt; and, most importantly, opportunities to apply phonic knowledge in purposeful reading (and writing) activities. By ensuring phonic teaching is fun, interactive, short and focused, multi-sensory, progressive and happens daily (Appendix 4), teachers are providing instruction to develop the crucial skill of word recognition – a component of the ‘simple view of reading’ that enables children to read the words fluently. Ongoing assessment is paramount especially after the Chief Inspector of School’s announcement that statutory Phonics Screening Checks are to be carried out on all Year 1 pupils in June (Wilshaw, 2012). In order that children can demonstrate their knowledge of reading, classrooms conducive to reading, as discussed in The Reading Environment (Chambers, 2011), should be created. Living in a print-rich, or print-dependent society, it is important for children to engage with the written word, and this needs to happen both inside and outside the reading corner, although the careful set up of this area reflects the significance of the activity, in addition to teaching

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appropriate reading behaviour. Available and accessible books, written by a wide range of skilled authors and illustrators provide an almost unlimited choice for the reader. With the encouragement of a trusted, experienced adult all children, especially those from non-reading backgrounds, have opportunities to discuss and support each other in the art and craft of reading (Chambers, 2011: 21). Name labels, simple instructions, displays, computer screens, in addition to books, promote encounters with print demonstrating its importance and motivate children to become attentive, enthusiastic readers. Martin et al (2007) question, as the PNS (DfES, 2006a) declares, that word recognition proceeds comprehension. Certainly there is a shift from learning to read and reading to learn as reading competence increases but, as Wilson (2001) states, when reading books to children the primary concern of the teacher is helping to make sense of the text. In order to do this the text will be talked about and the meaning, probably literal at this stage, discussed. Speaking and listening skills are integral to Early Years practice; communication, language and literacy Early Learning Goals specify children extend their vocabulary, exploring the meaning of new words and show an understanding of the elements of stories such as main character, sequence of events and openings (Medwell et al, 2009). Surely this is early stage comprehension ...Memories of primary school include the teacher reading aloud her chosen texts; listening to a story alongside friends was an extremely enjoyable experience where emotions were shared and anticipation of the next installment provided opportunities to talk amongst each other. For many children, especially those with EAL, hearing fluent English read may be their first opportunity to experience how the written language works and for others allow appreciation of the differences between

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written and spoken English. Teachers introduce early readers to picturebooks and through the use of a pointer stick they learn of 1: 1 correspondence, left to right directionality, that print conveys meaning and the purpose of punctuation. Bibliographical knowledge is developed together with critical active listening skills. Daily reading to any age child provides a powerful model and fosters positive attitudes to reading. It may comprise an enthusiastic telling of the story uninterrupted; on other occasions children will be engaged, through discussion, to develop their understanding of the text. However care must be taken to ensure that analysis of the text does not affect enjoyment and personal response (Wyse & Jones, 2008: 64). Prediction skills are developed through stopping to consider what might happen next helping to focus the children on the text and encouraging evidence to be sought from within (DfES, 2005c: 5). Choice and range of text is paramount; the characteristics of different genres introduce readers to the distinctive language of each. The value of picturebooks at Key Stage 2 is often ignored and although a recent reading of *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998) met with initial disapproval from Year 6, forty minutes later the different perspectives had been thoroughly analysed and the social class system reflected upon. The children were understanding, interpreting, engaging and responding to the text, PNS strands 7 & 8 (DfES, 2006a) and, as is reflective of a good book had discovered something new at a subsequent reading (Meek, 1988). The role of the teacher therefore is to choose suitable texts that that allow readers to draw on their own experiences to enable comprehension; texts, unlike those of reading schemes, that support intertextuality and leave gaps for the reader to fill, although concerning findings of Cremin et al (2007-2008) indicate that <https://assignbuster.com/the-teaching-of-reading-education-essay/>

teachers' knowledge of children's literature is somewhat narrow. Reading comprehension, an active process, involves understanding, engaging with and critically evaluating a text whilst simultaneously making connections with existing knowledge and consideration of responses to it (DfES, 2005a). Strategies need to be taught to access all three levels: the literal or what is actually stated, using evidence from the text; the implied or reading between the lines to determine what is what the author is inferring rather than stating drawing on background knowledge and prior experience, and finally being critical by evaluating and reacting to the text. During this third level readers begin to give a personal response and interpretation whilst discovering that texts can have multiple 'readings' (Browne, 2009: 65). Shared reading, a more structured derivative of reading aloud, is typically a whole-class activity where the teacher, with the aid of a text pitched slightly above reading ability, teaches and demonstrates early reading strategies and behaviours. By modeling language, clarifying ideas, asking 'why' questions and encouraging talk with peers, the teacher is scaffolding, giving a framework from which to work thus reducing the gap in the Zone of Proximal Development; the difference between what a child can actually do alone and what they are capable of with adult support (Whitebread & Coltman, 2008). Big books, because of their size, are ideal for shared reading but more important is that the narrative structure of the text supports the session objective and subsequent learning (Appendix 5). Sessions are highly interactive so skill of questioning, together with a thorough knowledge of the text, is crucial to ensure that all pupils regardless of language skills or reading ability are challenged. Questions that activate prior knowledge and encourage links between the known and the unknown helps develop

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contextual knowledge and understanding as illustrated during SE2 when legends were introduced to a class of predominantly Pakistani children with little knowledge of the genre. Observation and questioning of the front cover of *Saint George and the Dragon* (McCaughrean, 2000), in terms of what it reminded them of, stimulated memories of a non-chronological report on dragons written the previous term, developing comprehension of the 'mythical qualities' of the text to be read. The more experience readers made comparisons to *Harry Potter* demonstrating knowledge of other texts and acknowledging intertextuality. This text was specifically chosen because of its rich language, above the average child's individual reading capability, in order to develop vocabulary and widen word choices as many children only spoke English in school. During shared reading unfamiliar words the children may encounter in the text are usually discussed beforehand, however on this occasion, in order to develop semantic reading strategies, root words were thought about and comparison to words of similar meaning discussed. Reading to the end of the sentence develops syntactic knowledge and enables suggestions to be made as to an appropriate fit of word. Each shared reading session, unlike reading aloud, should include a clearly identified learning objective to teach a specific strategy whether it be to concentrate on rhyme in Early Years, apply phonic skills, extend comprehension or develop word meaning (Graham & Kelly, 2008: 59). This ensures the focus is maintained as clearly the introduction of too many strategies may confuse rather than clarify. Wyse & Jones (2008: 90) discuss the implications of the separation of phonic and comprehension teaching within shared and guided reading as suggested by the Rose Report (DfES, 2006b); surely experienced teachers have the skills to incorporate valuable

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teaching points that arise out of a child's contribution, supporting 'unexpected' learning, rather than omit because they do not match the particular objective. Most importantly, as Browne (2009: 59) explains, one of the many messages a teacher should give within any lesson is the enjoyment to be had from reading. Guided reading provides the link between the highly supported shared reading and independent reading that requires little or no teacher support. There is a clear purpose to sessions, communicated at the beginning of each, where strategies previously taught during shared reading are reinforced and extended through explicit teaching (Baker et al, 2007). Where shared reading is mixed ability, guided reading comprises small groups of children grouped appropriately, ideally accordingly to both dimensions of 'the simple view of reading' (Appendix 1) allowing strengths and weaknesses to be identified and sessions planned accordingly (DCSF, 2009). Guided reading follows a structure combining adult led teaching with independent reading of an accessible text within current reading capability (Appendix 6). The initial book introduction provides opportunities to activate prior knowledge through discussion of topic, text type and significant features with the teacher skillfully providing sufficient and appropriate support to enable independent reading. Key vocabulary, the greatest impediment of children's reading understanding, is discussed in order that children keep sense of what they are reading (Graham & Kelly 2008: 60). The strategy check enables the learning objective of the session to be shared with reiteration of approaches to use should they encounter an unfamiliar word being key; guided reading provides an ideal opportunity to rehearse phonic strategies, the prime approach to reading unfamiliar words (DCSF, 2009). Setting challenge questions during this time, <https://assignbuster.com/the-teaching-of-reading-education-essay/>

for faster readers, develops inference and deduction and, following independent reading, individual viewpoints can be discussed and reflected upon helping children understand that texts can be responded to in different ways (Appendix 7). The incorporation of non-fiction texts develops an appreciation of the different skills needed to read this type of literature. Typographic knowledge, through consideration of the layout; skimming and scanning, essential for summarising and identification of key words; as well as the ability to read graphic aids are taught through DARTS (directed activities related to texts). During independent reading the teacher listens to all, or selected children, read the text at their own pace providing opportunities to monitor and assess. Regular individual reading with the teacher, because of busy timetables, happens less frequently; the task of reading aloud to an adult is often carried out by parent helpers. Hearing a child read within guided reading therefore provides valuable assessment as to which strategy the child uses when faced with an unfamiliar word (phonic, syntactic, semantic or graphic) and allows important praise, encouragement and support related to individual needs (Browne, 2009: 49). Combined with evidence gathered from individual informal assessments (Appendix 7), running records (focused analysis of cueing strategies) and general observation during lessons or in the library, a whole picture can be gained of the child's reading from attitude, choice of material and comprehension, allowing future clear learning objectives, group and individual targets to be set. Returning to the text with the whole group identifies and reviews problem-solving strategies and develops comprehension of the text further through clarification of questions set at the beginning. Individual responses are justified together with exploration of personal preferences allowing

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readers working at NC Levels 4 and 5 begin to appreciate the distinction between personal significance and interpretation (Hogsbaum et al, 2002: 13) That is what the text means to them compared to what the author may have intended. By working collaboratively the children learn from each other, as well as the teacher, and begin to articulate their thoughts developing essential speaking and listening skills. Texts of varying types are important; teachers should therefore provide plenty of opportunities to use them both in and out of literacy lessons. The National Curriculum (DfEE/QCA, 1999: 20) reiterates the importance of promoting skills across the curriculum; clearly proficiency in reading is vital to success in other areas. Reading instruction therefore should not be exclusively taught within literacy lessons; Goodwin discusses the merits of using literature, in particular historical narratives of human experience, to deepen and extend children's understanding (2005: 6) within history lessons. Independent reading, where teacher and children, read their own choice of text for a period of time, is unfortunately an area of the reading curriculum that is often omitted. Many children do not have resources, desire or encouragement to read at home so time to practise reading and apply skills learnt within school is especially important. In addition the teacher reading a book, rather than marking or completing paperwork, illustrates the value of reading and allows children to see an adult reading for enjoyment. Research shows that independent reading works best when children can choose their own reading material and when it is part of a consistent and continued program (Krashen, 2004), demonstrating that a whole school approach where every child and adult reads at a specific time is a consideration, as suggested by Lockwood (2008). A gradual increase of time allocated over the year, both within individual

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classes and increasing through the key stages, will improve reading stamina. Within my own school independent reading is incorporated into the guided reading slots allowing those children unsupported by either the class teacher or Teaching Assistant to make personal choices and, most importantly, lose themselves in the magic of a book (Pennac, 2006). Reading aloud within a peer group is something less confident, especially older readers, may find challenging or uncomfortable as it can often highlight their difficulties resulting in further anxiety. However buddy reading allows struggling readers in Years 5/6 to engage with easier texts with Reception children in a relaxed atmosphere resulting in increased self-esteem. Discussion at the beginning of term ensures the older child's awareness of their 'teacher' role and allows consideration, within a meaningful context, of the different aspects of the reading process such as book choice, language and their own reading aloud voice (Browne, 2009: 81). Forming an integral part of the speaking and listening programme of study within the National Curriculum (DfEE/QCA, 1999), drama plays a valuable role in enabling children, especially reluctant readers or those who struggle to engage with an actual text, to develop responses through exploration of a character's motives and emotions. A recent hot seating activity during SE2 (Appendix 9) required children to ask questions of a character to ascertain his guilt. By responding imaginatively, that is "putting themselves in Matthew's shoes" the children began to develop empathy and the character's motivation was better understood, enhancing meaning. Using props, especially in key stage one, brings children even closer to the text; the ultimate goal of any activity designed to teach reading. As previously mentioned guided reading focuses on particular learning objectives incorporating both elements of the 'simple

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view of reading’ - phonics and comprehension whereas the ‘ Tell Me’ approach (Chambers, 2011) is based solely around language comprehension and developing an individual viewpoint supporting strand 8 of the PNS (DfES, 2006a) engaging with and responding to texts. Almost exclusively through discussion and supported by the teacher, the facilitator, children gain confidence to think and justify their own answers. They learn to be critical and of the importance of their own opinion as opposed to that of the teacher, and through sharing patterns and puzzles begin to make sense of texts. Crucial to the success of any book talk is familiarity of the text and preparation of ‘ special questions’ to help the discussion move into features the children have yet to discover. The teaching of reading is always going to be a controversial subject but what is evident from each individual area of the reading curriculum is that talk is at the heart of it. Phonics teaching to decode text, combined with development of cues and strategies to ensure comprehension, provides a sound base from which to start. With knowledge, expertise and most importantly passion, the literacy framework can be used creatively to ensure that the teaching of reading is carried out in a way that is effective, interesting and relevant to the children in today’s classrooms. Teaching the value and enjoyment books have to offer from the Early Years onwards enables teachers to ‘ exploit’ the willingness and curiosity children bring to learning and through continuous talk, whether planned or spontaneous, foster in children a lifelong love of and need for reading in their lives (Browne, 2009: 42). Word count: 3, 293