

Learning to Read and Write in a Multilingual Society

Instruction that provides substantial coverage of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension has benefits. Focusing on these key components of reading has a positive influence on the literacy development of students learning to read in a new language, just as it does for native speakers. However, some adjustments may need to be made. For example, special attention should be given to phonemes in the new language that are not in the student's first language.

- What other adjustments that may need to be made to teaching these components?

Reading and writing instruction in a new language are necessary, but not sufficient.

Oral proficiency is critical as well, but is often over-looked. Word identification skills are taught more easily than underlying competencies. However, rushing into word identification without underlying oral language proficiency often results in comprehension skills suffering.

- What do you think this means for teaching the alphabet in a new language?

Oral proficiency and literacy in a first language can be used to foster reading and writing development in a new language.

Cognates (words in both languages that are similar in sound, spelling, and meaning) help facilitate language acquisition. For example the word for doll in Urdu "gurya" in English and "guddi" in Punjabi and "guddai" in Pushto. There are often literacy skills that transfer from one language to another (e.g., print concepts; alphabetic principle).

What are the cognates between Urdu and English? *

Which literacy skills may transfer from Urdu to English?

Individual differences contribute significantly to reading and writing development in a new language. Reading and writing development are influenced by factors such as the age of the student, previous experiences with reading and writing, and the similarity of the first language to the new language.

Research supports two findings about the role of home. One important finding is that parents express willingness to help children, but schools underestimate and underutilize parents' interest, motivation, and potential contributions.

Features of family life, such as domestic workload and religious activities influence the value children place on reading and their concepts of themselves as readers.

Read brochure Reading First

Design an activity to support the home-school connection. (30 min).

Assign students to groups of four or five. Ask students to review the reading that was due for today: *Put Reading First: Help Your Child Learn to Read*. Tell students that their assignment over the next 30 minutes is to design an activity to share with parents that would promote the parents' support of their children's language, reading or writing development. The activity could be conducted at school or at home. On the chart paper, write out the activity and be prepared to share it with classmates. Remind students that they must make explicit the link between this activity and the assigned reading, *Put Reading First: Help Your Child Learn to Read* [Students will share their posters in Session 3.]

COGNATES

* Bungalow from Hindi *banglā* & Urdu *banglā*, literally, "(house) in the Bengal style". [3]

Cummerbund from Kamar Bandh, meaning waist band or waist cloth.

Cot from Khāt, a portable bed.

Guru from Guru, An intellectual or spiritual guide or leader, any person who counsels or advises; mentor. e.g. "The elder senator was her political guru."

Gymkhana, a term which originally referred to a place where sporting events take place and referred to any of various meets at which contests were held to test the skill of the competitors.

In English-speaking countries, a gymkhana refers to a multi-game equestrian event performed to display the training and talents of horses and their riders

Jungle from *jāngal*, another word for wilderness or forest.

Loot from *Lūtnā*, to loot. Pyjama from *Payjamo*, a garment worn as a trouser.

Sentry from *Santī*, an armed guard.

Shampoo from *Champu*, a scalp massage with some kind of oily or treacly mixture just before a bath.