

WEEK 6 / SESSION 2

Mini-Lecture I: Blending and Segmenting (10 minutes)

Revise the continuum of complexity along which phonological awareness falls (with sentences and words being the easiest while individual phonemes being the most difficult for children to “hear”.)

REMEMBER that phonological awareness is an auditory skill: paper or pencils are not required for children to be able to “hear” the sound units of a language.

‘Blending’ and ‘Segmenting’.

Specifically, tell student-teachers that preparing children to read requires teaching them to break a word into separate sounds (segments), for example the word ‘phone’ can be broken up into the phonemes ‘f-o-n’. Equally importantly, children must be able to take separate sounds/phonemes and join (or blend) them together to create a word. For example, if you utter the separate phonemes /l/ and /a/ and /f/, the listening child must learn to join (blend) these sounds together to pronounce the word “laugh.” Games and activities that help children practice blending and segmenting provide a huge boost in the ability to read (decode) words.

Note: It is crucial NOT to get into a debate over irregular English spellings at this point. Explain that phonological awareness is auditory (a hearing act) and does not require knowledge of letters—that will come up next, when we talk about the alphabetic principle.

Activity: Phoneme Counting (10 minutes)

Remind your class that reading teachers must be experts at counting phonemes in a word because they must help children connect letters to phonemes in phonics and spelling work.

Ask students to form triads (groups of three).

Tell groups to generate a list of ten Urdu words and ten English that they would expect primary children to know. (Examples: *Pakistan, Islam, parcham, watan, qaum, chooha, anaar, aam, baba, chacha, phool, titli, machli*, cat, dog, apple, ball etc.)

Allow no more than 3 minutes for this task.

Next, ask group members to count the phonemes in each word ORALLY. Remind them not to count letters—but to count phonemes.

Mini-Lecture II: The Alphabetic Principle (10 minutes)

You might use the **PowerPoint slides (What is the Alphabetic Principle?)** in the accompanying resources to supplement this lecture.

Slide 2: Connect the concept of phonological awareness with the alphabetic principle. Specifically, tell student-teachers that children need to learn to link oral language (phonemes) with written language (letters and words on a paper or graphemes). Letters of the alphabet are written symbols that represent phonemes.

Slide 3: To understand the alphabetic principle, children must:

a. understand that written language consists of words that are composed of letters

b. recognize a letter's name and shape

c. match a letter to the sound it makes

Slide 4: For beginning readers of English, this includes recognizing both upper and lower case letters (e.g. the capital A as well as the small a etc.) as well as different fonts. (For example, the lower case 'g' or the lower case 'a' looks different when typed than when hand-written.)

For beginning readers of Urdu, this includes recognizing letters in the whole and half forms (*aadhi shakal*). Explain that the letter 'pe' looks different in the word *aap* (*pe ki poori shakal*) than it does in the word *paan* (*pe ki aadhi shakal*). Similarly, the letter 'jeem' looks different in the word *jaa* (*aadhi shakal*), different in the word *faalij* (*aadhi shakal*) and different in the word *aaaj* (*poori shakal*).

Slide 5: To decode written words in either English or Urdu, children must

i. first identify the separate letters that constitute this word (letter recognition),

ii. match the letter to the phoneme it represents (Matching symbol to sound) and sound these out (segments)

iii. and then blend these phonemes together to recreate the word. (blending).

Explains that this process of decoding words requires teaching and practice in order to become automatic (second nature).

Discussion (10 minutes)

Share the following research findings with student-teachers (write them out on a chart or board or share via a power-point slide) and use them to generate a five-minute discussion.

"The best predictor of reading difficulty in kindergarten or first grade is the inability to segment words and syllables into constituent sound units (phonemic awareness)"

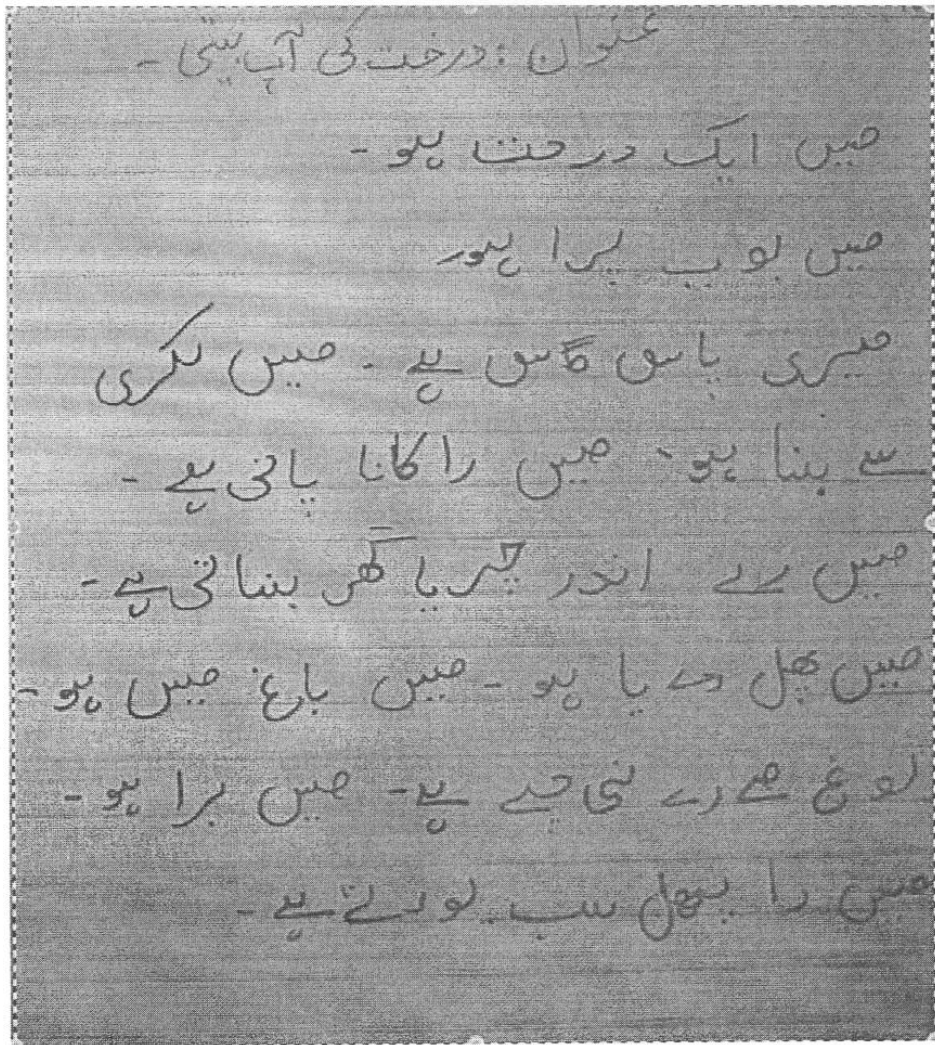
Lyon, G. R. (1995). Toward a definition of dyslexia. Annals of Dyslexia, 45, 3-27.

"Reading and phonemic awareness are mutually reinforcing: Phonemic awareness is necessary for reading, and reading, in turn, improves phonemic awareness still further."

Shaywitz, S. (2003). Overcoming dyslexia: A new and complete science-based program for reading problems at any level. New York: Knopf.

Activity: Making Connections—Phonological Awareness, Alphabetic Principle and Writing: 10 minutes + Out of Class Time

Distribute Handout, Sample of Writing. Ask student teachers to study the sample of student writing.



Explain that this sample consists of an essay was written by a girl for whom Urdu is a second language. She has trouble 'hearing' or 'recognizing' certain Urdu phonemes (since her mother tongue, English, does not use these).

1. Can you identify, just by studying her writing, what Urdu phonemes challenge her?

(Answer: ٹ, noon ghunnaan ں, Some trouble with غ. We know this because of the way she spells certain words.)

2. This child also has some trouble with letter identification. She sometimes confuses the letters yaay and te. How can you tell, just by looking at her writing, that she confuses these two letters? Has she confused any other letters?

3. This child uses "invented spellings" for certain words based on how she "hears" them in her mind. What words are these?

4. What are some things that you might teach this child?

Note: You might want to tell student-teachers that while there are many things that this child needs to learn, an effective instructional plan will isolate one specific thing to teach

at a time. (We confuse the learner when we try to teach too much at once.)

5. Reflection Question: Based on your assessment of this student's essay, what relationship exists between phonological awareness, reading and writing?

