

Table 1.1. Beginning-stage Reading Objectives in the Taiwanese English Curriculum

Reading Skills and Strategies Related to English Reading Development		Reading Objectives Listed in the Curriculum
Components of Early Reading	Conventions about Print	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ learn to read English text from left to right and from top to bottom because English text is written down in this way, with spaces between words, capital and small letter.
	Letter Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆ identify English letters ■ learn the names and shapes of English letters
	Letter-sound Correspondences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆ use letter-sound correspondences to read words aloud ■ link the letter shapes to their sounds ■ identify initial and final sounds in words
	Phonological Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ break words into syllables ■ break syllables into onset and rime, eg: 'c' is the onset while 'at' is the rime in the word, 'cat'. ■ blend sounds to syllables ■ combine syllables into words
Word Analysis Strategies	Sight Words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆ identify commonly used words
	Decoding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆ use phonics (skills and strategies stated above) to read words aloud
	Contextual Guessing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ guess the meaning of new words from a variety of contextual clues, such as pictures or examples.
	Affixes and Roots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ guess the meaning of new words by using word formation, such as meanings of common morphemes (e.g.: -ing). ■ learn common spelling patterns (e.g.: snail, mail) with same rime to read out new words.
Fluency Strategies	Oral Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆ follow the teacher or tape to chant, sing, or read aloud dialogues and stories.
Text Comprehension Strategies	Prediction with Picture Cues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☆ identify the main idea of stories with pictures cues and other visual support
	Identifying Key Words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ identify the most important nouns or verbs in order to follow the meaning in a text

Using Knowledge of Cohesive Devices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ identify how pronouns or 'this' and 'that' refer back to nouns. ■ identify how ideas are linked together using 'and', 'but', 'then', 'so', 'because' and so on.
Skimming for Gist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ read something quickly noticing the key words to get a general picture of the overall content
Scanning for Specific Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ read something in more detail to find the answer to a specific question, e.g.: using Who?/ What?/ When?/ Why?/ How?.
Identifying the Main idea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ identify key words and ideas to understand the main points
Monitoring Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ use strategies such as prediction to guess the content, guessing new words, checking if the text makes sense, asking questions etc.
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ understand the meaning of simple sentences ■ understand the meaning of different text types and their purposes, e.g.: reading stories for pleasure, reading signs and notices for information, reading a memo to make choices and so on.

Adapted from H.M. Chu, *Teaching Beginning English L2 Readers* and Taiwan Ministry of Education, *Nine-year Integrated Curriculum: English Language*, 2003. Words in italics are additions to the original chart. You may want to make a copy of this chart for handy reference.

TEACHING PRINCIPLES AND ACTIVITIES




In the lower grades, the emphasis is often on “bottom-up” reading skills - in such cases, meaning is “left until later” - when students can read longer texts. Here, we take a very different approach. Reading can and should be meaningful from the very earliest stages. In this section, we will explore the use of activities and visual support to make reading activities more meaningful for young learners. In the next section, we will discuss storytelling.


■ *Reading in the Initial Stages - General Teaching Principles*


- When we first teach students how to read in English, we have to make sure that our teaching principles includes teaching the following skills and strategies, so our students can read English letters and words without big problems.
- Teach students *print conventions* so that they learn to read English text from left to right and from top to bottom. Help students to notice that there are *gaps between words* and there are *capital letters, periods* and so on.
- Teach students *the letter knowledge and letter-sound correspondences and do activities to build up students' phonological awareness* so they will be able to identify the names and shapes of the English letters, read out the sounds of the letters, decode and break words into sounds and blend sounds together to pronounce words.
- Teach students *word recognition and analysis skills* to read out new words, for example, recognizing sight words, frequently occurring words, consonant blends (bl-, cr-) and consonant digraphs (ch, sh, th, -ng), short vowels, long vowels, vowel digraphs (ai, ay, ea, ee, oa, oo), vowel diphthongs (oi, oy), common spelling patterns (-ght, -ack) and so on.
- Teach students *how to guess the meaning of new words* by using contextual clues, such as pictures or examples, the meaning of common morphemes (e.g., verbs with ‘ing’ means present progressive), and from common spelling patterns (e.g., nail, mail, snail). We may also use TPR or charades to explain the meanings of unfamiliar words.


Reading in the Later Stages - General Teaching Principles


While doing reading activities with our students, it is useful to ask them to think about why we are doing certain activities before, during and after reading. Do these activities help them read? We can also ask them to think about the skills and strategies they have used to deal with unfamiliar words in the past and what skills or strategies they think will help them read more effectively. In this way, our students will be actively involved in the process of learning to read. As teachers, we can do our part by making sure that we teach students the skills and strategies they need to read phrases, sentences and small texts, for example.


- students the sentence conventions, types of sentences, intonation, sentence stress and so on, so our students know how to read English sentences and small texts with the right intonation and sentence stress.
- teach students how to identify words and phrases in spoken sentences, break sentences into chunks and phrases, and how to combine them together to make a sentence.
- teach students basic *pre-reading* skills and strategies, for example,
 - teach students how to use contextual clues, (e.g.: picture clues) to guess the meaning of an unfamiliar word, a missing word, a phrase or a sentence.
-  teach students how to predict what the text or story is about by reading the topic of the text or the title of the storybook or simply by looking for information from the picture clues.
-  teach students to read and scan for specific purposes, for example, ask them to read and find answers from the text.
-  teach students how to construct the meaning of sentences and texts by, for example, sequencing words and phrases to form sentences or by identifying reasons and results to understand cause-effect relationships
- to help students understand the meaning of phrases, sentences and texts, we may teach students basic *while-reading* skills and strategies, for example,
 - * teach students *to match pictures to words or texts* while reading. This will help students think and make predictions. It will also help students revise or confirm their predictions while reading through the text.

 teach students *to match the text to text*, for example sequencing sentences or matching causes and effects while reading. This will help them understand the whole text in a logical and meaningful way.

 teach students *how to fill in tables, charts and graphs*. Tell students that drawing tables, charts, graphs or mind maps while reading will help them organize their thoughts and understand the text better.

 To check if our students understand the sentences or texts, teach them basic *post-reading* skills and strategies, for example, teach students *how to recall and tell what they know about the text or the story*. For example, we can do read & draw, label, sequence or true/false activities with the students after reading a text or a story. Encourage students to use the key words and information they have obtained from these activities to recall and tell what they know about the text or the story.

 teach students how to explain or interpret their ideas, by, for example, encouraging them to express their ideas using key words or information they have, or to write or draw something that explains or expresses their thoughts.

 ask students to act out the topic and do role-plays. Encourage students to revise the text or the story a little bit, for example, adding words or sentences or changing the ending and then to act it out. This will help students to develop their ideas with their peers and with the teacher. This will also help students read the text in more depth. Many teachers believe that students learn better when they are involved in the process of learning.

Activities, techniques and procedures


If we do language activities with our students in a friendly and loving learning environment, where they are encouraged to use the language they have learnt, they will perform better than when they are simply asked to react to teachers' questions during formal instruction. Why? By providing opportunities for students to work together to resolve problems, we are giving our students more realistic situations in which to practice the language as well as the opportunity to make the language their own. Also, providing a safe and friendly environment helps our students relax and feel less anxious, so that they feel more confident in using their English.


Many teachers use contextual clues such as pictures to help students say the letters and words out loud when they first teach students to read in English. Some teachers use phonics skills such as letter-sound correspondences to help build up students' phonemic awareness so the students have the skills to sound out letters and blend them together to form words. To further help students read for meaning, we should have students actually do some language activities such as reading and drawing, or reading and matching pictures with letters, words or sentences in a way which requires them to think more deeply about what they are reading.


Reminders for Teaching Reading


As mentioned earlier in this section, reading in a foreign language is never an easy task for an EFL student. That explains why we need to think seriously about teaching the skills and strategies that our students need when they read in English. However, we are not going to teach these skills and strategies directly to the students because that will not help much. We have to teach these skills and strategies through various types of activities such as those you have seen in this section so the students learn how to use these skills and strategies to build up their own reading abilities. Here are some reminders for teaching reading which you may find useful.


1. Build up your students' confidence in reading in English, for example,


( Encourage your students to do finger-pointing when you teach them to read a new word or a story line.


 Create a print-rich area (e.g. a reading corner) in the classroom where the word wall, sight words & students' work are displayed.

 Read to your students often. Take turns reading and acting out the sentences or texts with your students.


 Give students a silent reading period, a quiet period before you ask them to respond to a question or express their ideas. This will allow them more time to organize their thoughts as well as think how to respond in English.

 Encourage your students to use the reading skills and strategies they have learnt when they read in English. For example, when the students see an unfamiliar word, tell them not to panic or wait for someone to translate it into Chinese. Encourage them to say the word out loud using the phonics skills they have learnt, and guess the meaning of the word from the context.


 Encourage students to think about what skills and strategies help them read. Encourage them to share the skills and strategies they have found useful with other students; also encourage students to talk about the reading problems they have, and ask them to think about what they can do to resolve their problems.






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2. Organize a reading lesson

 Think of the purpose of the reading activity when you plan a reading lesson.

( Prepare the visual aids and materials before class.

 Organize your students and get them ready before doing a reading activity.

-  Give clear and simple instructions and, if possible, demonstrate how to do a new activity step by step with at least one student.
3. Prepare yourself for the reading lesson
-  Make good use of your voice, body language, facial expressions and physical movements while you read to your students.
-  Contextualize and personalize the new language; for example, connect the situation with students' prior experiences to make the activity more meaningful to the students.
-  Give your students opportunities to use the language and make the language their own.
-  Teach reading from whole to part and part to whole. For example, teach students to read for the meaning of words and sentences; then, do letter games, word study or phonics activities to help them focus on language forms; finally, return to meaning again and teach them how to think more deeply about the meaning of the text.

The next section provides a number of sample activities for different reading levels.

Table 2.1: Storytelling Stages and Activities

Stages	Suggested Activities	Examples of Activities
1. Pre-Reading	1.1 Story Introduction (Picture Walk)	<p>Ask students to <i>predict</i> what the story might be about by looking at the picture on the cover.</p> <p>Teach important or new language found in the story.</p> <p>Try to help students connect their previous experience with the story.</p>
2. While-Reading	2.1 First Reading	<p>Model the sentence pattern by reading the first two or three pages of the story (“<i>Read Aloud</i>”).</p> <p>Use <i>cloze technique</i> as you read through the rest of the story (“<i>Shared Reading</i>”).</p>
	2.2 Second Reading	<p>Begin developing students’ strategy awareness, by using <i>picture clues, visual clue, etc.</i></p> <p>Invite students to read parts of the story (“<i>Shared Reading</i>”).</p> <p>Have students read the story orally together (“<i>Read Aloud</i>”).</p>
3. After-Reading	3.1 Discussion	<p>Focus on meaning.</p> <p>Relate the story to their lives.</p>
	3.2 Follow-up activities or Independent Practice	<p>Book making.</p> <p>Give students opportunities to retell the story.</p> <p>Have students pair up and read the story to each other.</p>