

**Sixth Edition**

# **Reading, Writing, and Learning in ESL**

**A Resource Book for Teaching  
K-12 English Learners**

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## Emergent Literacy: English Learners Beginning to Write and Read

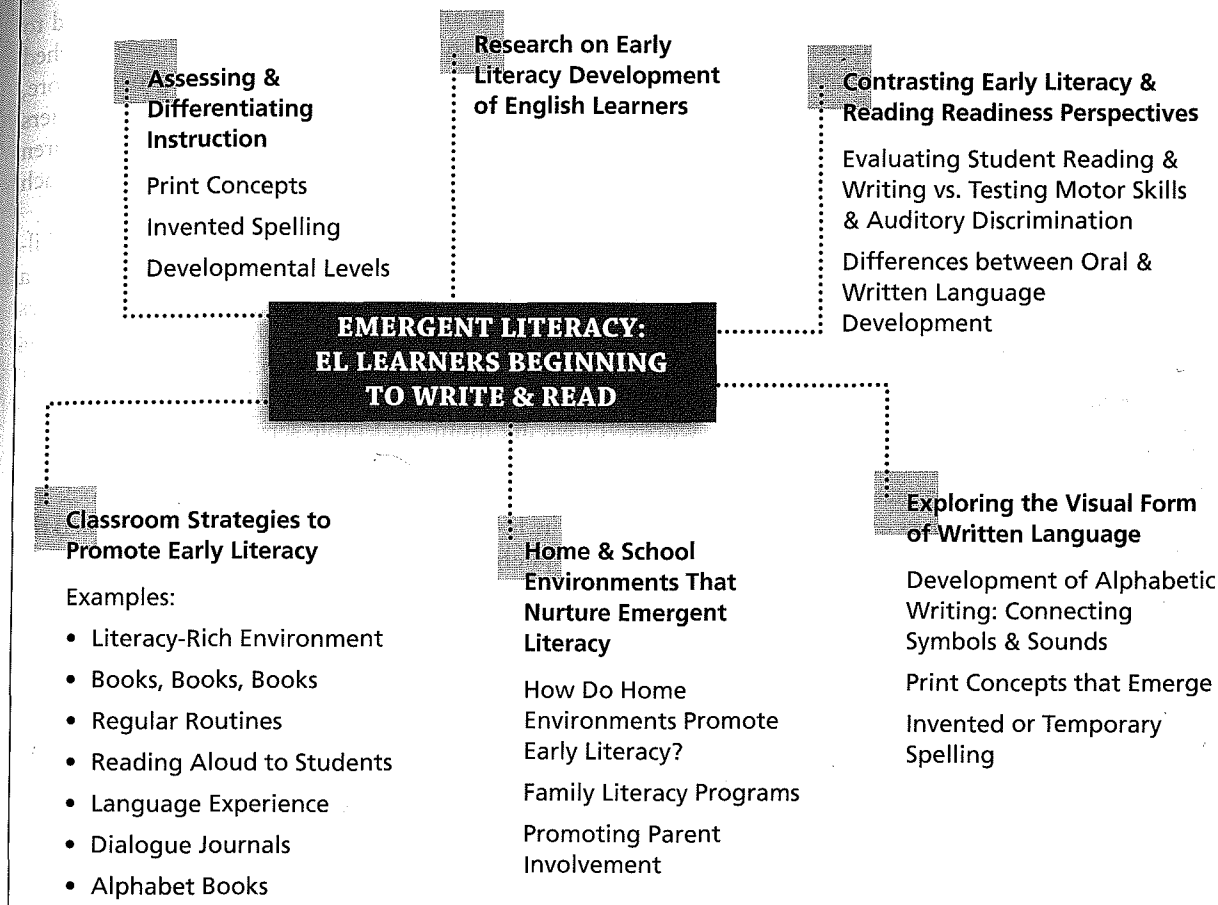
“I won't know what my story is about until I finish my picture!”

—OSVALDO, age 5

“My spelling is Wobbly. It's good spelling but it Wobbles,  
and the letters get in the wrong places.”

—WINNIE THE POOH (MILNE, 1926)

## Chapter Overview



In this chapter, we discuss English learners' early literacy development, home-school relationships, classroom strategies to involve your students in reading and writing, and assessment procedures to document their progress in the early stages of reading and writing development. The following questions will guide your reading for the chapter:

1. What does research tell us about the early literacy development of English learners?
2. What are the "emergent literacy" and "reading readiness" perspectives, and how do they influence early literacy instruction?
3. How can teachers and parents work together to enhance home-school relationships and promote early literacy development?
4. How can you organize your classroom to maximize early literacy development for all students?
5. Which classroom strategies can you use to provide a firm foundation for English learners' early literacy development?
6. How can you assess early literacy development?
7. How can you differentiate instruction to meet the varying needs of your English learners?

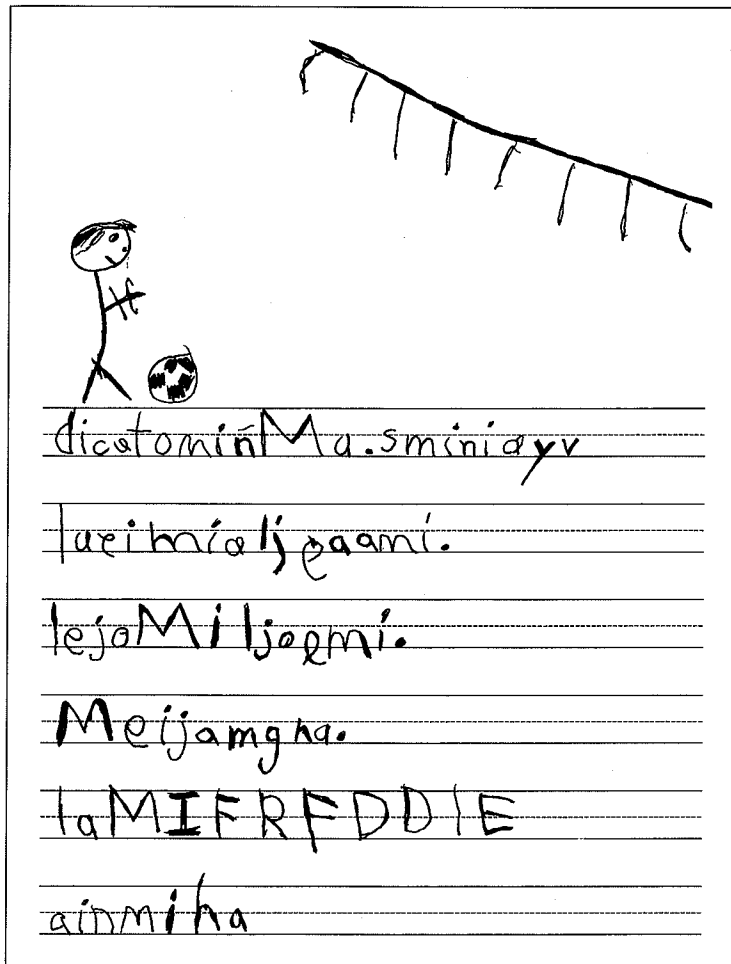
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A few years ago, we spent some time in a two-way Spanish immersion kindergarten, observing and helping the teacher. Children were immersed in a print-rich environment where they drew and wrote daily in journals, listened to predictable stories and poems, rewrote stories, and played in literacy-enriched dramatic play centers that included a post office, restaurant, office, grocery store, blocks, arts, and writing areas. We were interested in how these kindergartners would approach the task of writing in a classroom such as this, where children were invited to draw and write to their hearts' content but were not given much explicit instruction on writing.

During English language arts one day, I (Suzanne) asked a group of six children (native Spanish speakers, native English speakers, and bilinguals) to write a story in English to take home to my husband. I passed out the paper, which was lined on the bottom half and plain on the top, and the children began writing without hesitation. As they wrote, I made note of how each child approached the task, and as they finished, I knelt down to ask each one to tell about their story. Lisa had written the words "I love my mom" in legible script and had illustrated her story with hearts and a picture of herself next to her mother. Rosa had drawn a picture of her seven family members and had filled several lines with block letters evenly spaced. Osvaldo was the last child to finish his work. He had filled the lined half of the page with indecipherable letters and punctuation and was now busy drawing. Three times I asked him to tell me about his story and three times he simply replied, "I don't know yet." The fourth time I interrupted his drawing, he explained in desperation, "I won't know what my story is about until I finish my picture!" His story, shown Figure 5.1, was about a boy kicking a soccer ball, a shiny black and white triangular sphere that nearly flew off the page to hit me in the face of my ineptitude!

These kindergarten children had never been told how to write or what to say. Yet somehow they were quite comfortable with this request to write a story someone else would read. The forms of their writing varied from wavy lines to apparently random arrays of block letters to conventional print. The topics of their stories came from their own interests and experiences. They knew their stories had a purpose of a sort: My husband would enjoy reading them. Yet the children seemed more focused on their own purpose: personal expression of a message from within. It was clear that all six children knew at least something about both the forms and functions of print. Furthermore, they were all confident that they could write a story, one that would at least have meaning for themselves. They differed, however, in the extent to which they were able to approximate conventional writing forms to convey their meaning. Indeed, they differed in their understanding of whether print has anything to do with meaning at all! For Osvaldo, the writing had no meaning until the picture was complete.

When I returned to the classroom after spring break, Osvaldo asked, "How'd your daddy like the story?" In typical kindergarten fashion, he had created an equivalence between husband and dad. But his question revealed something more than his developing understanding of human relationships. It illuminated his sense of audience! Osvaldo provides us with a rich example of the many aspects of writing children must eventually coordinate: forms, functions, and illustrations and the need to shape these in a way that will please one's audience. In the early stages of literacy development, young children typically understand and control some aspects of the task better than others. And they must grapple with these

**FIGURE 5.1** Ovaldo's Soccer Story

complexities while still constructing their understanding of the social and physical world around them.

The kindergarten children just described were demonstrating early literacy development in an emergent literacy environment. In this chapter, we examine early literacy development as it has been researched over the past two decades. In doing so, we will briefly contrast two viewpoints on children's literacy development: the emergent literacy viewpoint and the reading readiness viewpoint. We will spend some time discussing the main tenets of the emergent literacy perspective, illustrating our points with samples of children's writing and reading, and describing how teachers implement such a perspective in early childhood classrooms. Finally, we describe ways to assess English learners' early reading and writing development. In our discussion we also address a pressing concern of many teachers: How do I help older English learners who have not yet learned to read or write in any language?

## What Does Research Tell Us about the Early Literacy Development of English Learners?

A large body of research investigates early literacy development in a first language. As a result, we now have a substantial amount of exciting and interesting information about young children's early literacy development in English, Spanish, and other languages (e.g., Chi, 1988; Clay, 1975; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984; Teale, 1984; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). However, relatively little research documents early literacy development in English as a second language, particularly among students who have not had literacy instruction in their first language. Nevertheless, the research we do have shows that English reading and writing development processes are essentially similar for both English learners and native English speakers (Edelsky, 1981a, 1981b; Goodman & Goodman, 1978; Hudelson, 1984; Urzúa, 1987). That is, in reading, all learners gradually come to use their developing English language knowledge, their world knowledge, and their understanding of print conventions to make sense of written text. Similarly, in writing, they use their developing English language knowledge, world knowledge, and understanding of print conventions to put their ideas on paper.

For all learners, literacy development is a complex process that takes place over a lengthy period during which they demonstrate gradual approximations to mature versions of reading and writing. In both reading and writing, all learners must learn the forms of print in English, including the letters of the alphabet and how these are sequenced into words, sentences, and paragraphs to create letters, stories, recipes, and other forms of written communication. At the same time, all learners must learn to select from this rich array of written discourse forms to achieve the communicative functions at hand, whether to direct, inform, persuade, entertain, complain, or console. Finally, written language use takes place in a social context and serves personal and social purposes. Furthermore, literacy learning is achieved through interpersonal relationships in the varying social contexts in which literacy instruction takes place. Literacy development thus evolves through social interactions involving written language from which children develop ideas about the forms and functions of print. They also become aware of the ways print is used in different social contexts for a wide variety of purposes.

Although many aspects of reading and writing development are essentially similar for English learners and native English speakers, there are important differences as well. Two important differences are a student's English language proficiency and ability to read and write in the primary language (Hudelson, 1987). Students at the beginning stages of English language development are still acquiring basic knowledge of English while learning to read and write English in school. Research shows that English learners can benefit from English literacy instruction well before they have developed full control of the language orally. In other words, oral and written English can develop more or less simultaneously (Goodman, Goodman, & Flores, 1979; Hudelson, 1984, 1986; Urzúa, 1987), provided that instruction is carefully organized to be meaningful and relevant, a topic we discuss throughout this chapter.

If your English learners are literate in their primary language, they may bring knowledge, skills, and attitudes about reading and writing that transfer to the

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## Internet Resources

The English as a foreign language (EFL) specific sites <http://members.tripod.com/~ESL4kids/links.html> contain links to many other sites for hundreds of resources. Boggle's World contains collections of materials for elementary and middle school students. Dave Sperling's ESL Café is one of the most extensive ESL sites on the Web. The CanTeach site offers lesson plans for beginning reading and writing and resources for grades K-4. The Center for Adult English

Language Acquisition (CAEL) site offers information on adult learners: [www.cal.org/caela/](http://www.cal.org/caela/). If you teach older students, you'll want to go to this site. You might try to evaluate some of the sites to see which ones would be most appropriate for different grade levels and different abilities or you might actually try some of the specific activities or strategies available in the sites.

task of English reading. In fact, research and theory consistently support the benefits of teaching children to read and write in their primary language before introducing second language literacy for two reasons: (1) it is easier to read and write a language you already know and (2) literacy skills transfer from the primary language to English, as English language proficiency develops (Cummins, 1981; Perego, 1989; Tragar & Wong, 1984). In summary, research shows that English language proficiency and primary language literacy contribute to the ease with which English learners develop English reading and writing skills. Other factors may contribute as well, including cultural factors that affect classroom communication, teacher perceptions of student abilities, student motivation, and teacher-student relationships as discussed in previous chapters.

In our discussion of early literacy in this chapter, we focus on beginning and intermediate English learners who are new to reading and writing in English as a second language. Most of our discussion applies to beginning readers and writers under age 7. However, we also discuss early literacy instruction for a special group of English language learners: older children and adolescents who have never learned to read or write in any language. Our teaching recommendations for non-native English speakers draw heavily on first language research, applied with caution and sometimes modified to accommodate linguistic and cultural differences. If you are a bilingual teacher, you should note that many of the teaching strategies we describe for beginning literacy in English can be used to teach beginning reading and writing in the primary language, with occasional modifications based on the writing system of the primary language you are teaching.

## Contrasting the Emergent Literacy and Reading Readiness Perspectives

Ideas about when and how young children should be taught to read and write have always been subject to a variety of influences such as traditional child-rearing practices and prevailing educational theories of the day. In this section, we will discuss two theoretical perspectives that have influenced literacy instruction: reading readiness and emergent literacy. We then elaborate on the emergent

literacy perspective, the perspective we believe offers the most effective teaching practices for native English speakers and English learners alike.

### Reading Readiness Perspective

The reading readiness perspective held sway in many parts of the world during much of the twentieth century. Based on maturation theories of development (see Gesell, 1925) and the standardized testing movement of the 1930s and 1940s, reading readiness proponents adhere to the belief that children are not developmentally ready to read until they reach a mental age of 6.6 years (Morphet & Washburn, 1931). In practical terms, this translated into the postponement of reading until first grade. Writing instruction was also postponed until first grade and aimed at proper letter formation rather than composing or communicating. Kindergarten was to serve the purpose of socialization and oral language development, not literacy.

Reading readiness practices in kindergarten were further influenced by the testing movement of the 1920s and 1930s. Test developers created tests of specific subskills that correlated with reading achievement, including auditory discrimination, visual discrimination, left-to-right eye progression, and visual motor skills. Some educators fell into the trap of assuming a causal relationship in the correlations, believing that early reading success resulted from subskill acquisition, rather than just being somehow linked with it. As a result, it became common practice to teach these “readiness skills” in kindergarten to “get children ready to read” in first grade. Reading readiness subskill activities were translated into corresponding kindergarten objectives as shown in the following list. When basal reader publishers incorporated readiness subskills into workbooks as part of their reading series, reading readiness theories became effectively established in classroom practice nationwide.

This list provides examples of reading readiness subskills and corresponding learning objectives for kindergartners that influenced instruction well into the 1970s (Morrow, 1983, 1993).

#### *Reading Readiness Subskills*

Auditory discrimination

Visual discrimination

Visual motor skills

Large motor skills

#### *Sample Objectives*

Identify and differentiate familiar sounds (car horn, dog barking, siren)

Identify rhyming words

Identify sounds of letters

Recognize colors

Recognize shapes

Identify letters by name

Cut on a straight line with scissors

Color inside the lines of a picture

Hop on one foot

Skip

Walk on a straight line



In summary, reading readiness is a traditional view of literacy instruction that assumed that children needed to be able to perform certain auditory, visual, psychomotor, and linguistic tasks in order to show the maturity needed for reading instruction. Children were tested to see if they could tie their shoes, skip properly, trace pictures, hear the difference between similar words such as *pin* and *tin*, and so forth—all as prerequisites for reading instruction. Problems with the reading readiness perspective came to light when children proved they could read without having developed some of the so-called prerequisite readiness skills. For English learners, the language-related prerequisites for reading were often especially inappropriate, such as hearing the difference between initial consonants in two otherwise identical words (e.g., *pin-bin*, *chair-share*), or the expectation that oral language should be fully developed before reading instruction could begin. For native English speakers and English learners alike, many reading readiness subskill prerequisites turned out to be unnecessary hindrances to literacy development.

### **Emergent Literacy Perspective**

The basic tenets of the reading readiness perspective were called into question as a result of research in the 1960s on children who learned to read before receiving reading instruction in school (Durkin, 1966). These early readers had not been drilled on auditory and visual discrimination tasks, nor did they wait until they could hop proficiently on one foot before they engaged in reading. On the other hand, they didn't learn to read by age 2 while hiding alone in a closet either, as philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1967) claimed to have done. Rather, these early readers set their sights on doing what they saw other people doing, and they engaged the adults at home in answering their questions about print and reading. Gradually, they figured the rest out for themselves. The percentage of children who learn to read without formal instruction is quite small. However, by investigating these children's literacy development processes, researchers documented the need for a theory of early literacy development that could accommodate their findings. The stage was set for a new perspective: the emergent literacy perspective.

According to the **emergent literacy** perspective, pioneered by Marie Clay (1975) in New Zealand and Emilia Ferreiro and Ana Teberosky (1982) in Latin America, children begin to develop written language knowledge from the moment they are first exposed to reading and writing at home during their preschool years, possibly from the time of birth (Clay, 1982). Literacy development is viewed as somewhat parallel to oral language development in process (Peregoy & Boyle, 1993). That is, as children are immersed in social environments where people are reading and writing for a variety of purposes, they take note of how the written word is used around them in lists, notes, letters, storybooks, road signs, product labels, magazines, and other environmental print. From this highly functional written input, children gradually construct knowledge of the functions and forms of print. Of course, little ones want to get into the act as well and will take to pencil, paper, and books readily. You may have seen preschoolers pick up a storybook and "read" it to their stuffed animals, turning the pages and pointing out the pictures as they go along. Given the opportunity, children will also try out writing on paper with drawing, scribbling, and various other forms of writing that gradually begin to approximate conventional writing. Thus, comprehensible input, social interaction, and children's gradual approximations to mature

reading and writing are important factors in early literacy development, just as they are in oral language development.

Although early research on emergent literacy highlighted children's natural tendencies to develop literacy concepts through immersion, another line of inquiry took hold in the 1990s (Neuman & Dickinson, 2002; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998) that focused on how explicit, direct instruction might help "emergent literate" children learn to decode written words. In particular, researchers examined aspects of the alphabetic principle that children eventually need to know in order to move along in literacy development (Adams, 1990a, 1990b). Inherent in the alphabetic principle are three basic concepts: (1) the speech stream can be broken down into sounds or phonemes, (2) letters of the alphabet can represent these speech sounds, and (3) knowing letter-sound correspondences permits a reader to "recode" words from written form to oral. The outcome of the research effort has been an emphasis on explicit instruction on **phonemic awareness** (the ability to discriminate speech sounds in words) and **phonics**, specific letter-sound correspondences. These research efforts have led to education policies calling for a **balanced approach** that includes explicit instruction on phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. (For more information, go to [www.nationalreadingpanel.org/](http://www.nationalreadingpanel.org/).) These goals are best accomplished within a rich literacy environment that highlights the meaningful, functional uses of print. We discuss these ideas in greater detail later in this chapter.

An important aspect of the emergent literacy perspective is that literacy development begins at a young age at home amid day-to-day family and community activities. As a result, with literacy learning no longer considered the sole province of the school, family involvement in early literacy is highlighted. Whereas advocates of reading readiness discouraged parents from teaching their children to read, emergent literacy educators encourage parents to involve their children in naturally occurring literacy events at home, such as reading stories and making grocery lists, emphasizing the importance of home-school relationships in early schooling.

To summarize, we have examined two viewpoints on beginning reading and writing development: reading readiness and emergent literacy. The reading readiness perspective was based on the best scientific knowledge available in the first half of the 20th century. However, literacy research in recent decades refutes the major assumptions of the reading readiness perspective and calls into question many of its practices, especially practices that withheld from children opportunities to engage in authentic, purposeful reading and writing, however rudimentary their efforts might be. Emergent literacy research has led to the following teaching recommendations, which we consider applicable to native English speakers and English learners alike.

1. Acknowledge that all children bring literacy knowledge to school, although recognizing that children vary in their sophistication in literacy concepts and skills.
2. Immerse children in a variety of functional reading and writing experiences that display the purposes of literacy while demonstrating and modeling the processes of reading and writing.
3. Enrich dramatic play centers with functional print, including lists, tablets, prescription forms, phone books, and other props, to encourage children to experiment with reading and writing during play.

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4. Accept and celebrate children's progress in their gradual approximations to conventional literacy.
5. Encourage children to read and write at home and to talk to their parents about their reading and writing.
6. Offer explicit instruction on phonemic awareness and phonics based on assessed need.

Specific strategies to implement these recommendations for English learners are described in the remainder of this chapter.

## Differences between Oral and Written Language Development

The emergent literacy perspective emphasizes similarities between oral and written language acquisition. Although there are many similarities between oral and written language acquisition, there are also some significant differences, summarized in Figure 5.2. First, oral language is universally achieved, whereas literacy acquisition is not. No one has posed an innate "literacy acquisition device" comparable to Chomsky's (1959) "language acquisition device." Thus, there are some cultures that never developed literacy, and there are some individuals in literate cultures who do not learn to read and write.

Another difference between oral and written language development is that oral language is learned with relatively little explicit instruction, whereas written language development requires substantial explicit instruction and practice. For example, young children self-correct as they move from saying, "Him don't say it right" to "He doesn't say it right." No one needs to teach them. In contrast, almost all students need explicit instruction on particular reading and writing conventions. Explicit instruction is needed simply because it saves time to tell a third-grader to spell *-tion* at the end of words instead of the more logical *-shun* that the child has been using, or to break long words into parts, or to use letter-sound cues

**FIGURE 5.2** Some Significant Differences between Oral and Written Language Acquisition

| ORAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT  | WRITTEN LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT   |
|--|--|
| Every culture develops oral language.  | Not every culture develops written language.   |
| Every child learns the language of his or her community with rare exception. | Not every child learns the written language of his or her community.                   |
| Oral language is learned with little explicit instruction.                   | For most children written language must be learned with a lot of explicit instruction. |
| Oral language is the primary vehicle for meeting our basic needs.            | Written language is not the primary vehicle for meeting our basic needs.               |

to promote early independence in reading. Speaking of explicit instruction, we are reminded that emergent literacy pioneer Marie Clay is also the developer of Reading Recovery (1975), an early intervention program that provides explicit phonics instruction integrated with meaningful reading and writing for first-graders experiencing difficulty learning to read.

Differences between oral and written language acquisition tend to be differences in degree rather than kind (Snow, 1983). For example, the fact that literacy acquisition is not universally achieved in literate societies may be partially attributable to the difference in degree of functionality between oral and written language. You can't get by in life very well without talking because oral language is used so often to meet basic needs. Written language is certainly functional, but it does not have the immediacy of oral language. No child is required to read the word *Cheerios* in order to get breakfast. As teachers, we need to increase and highlight the functions of literacy in our classrooms. As literacy uses proliferate, your students will be motivated to read and write. In addition, the more you read and write in the classroom, the more your students will be able to see how it is done and why. You are a powerful model. As students work with the medium of written language, they will develop many conventions on their own. When necessary, though, you should feel free to use explicit instruction, especially when children ask you for it. And they will!

### Highlighting Literacy Functions in Your Classroom

It takes some thought and imagination to create and highlight literacy functions in your classroom. When you create a variety of literacy purposes for your students, you broaden their understanding of literacy functions and motivate them to learn how to read and write. If your students have little prior experience with reading and writing, it is all the more important that you explicitly talk about how these can be used for different purposes, such as a card to send birthday wishes to a friend far away, a list to help you remember what to buy at the store, a journal to keep a record of the events of a trip to visit relatives, and a personal phone book to keep your friends' numbers handy. Table 5.1 cites additional examples of literacy functions that children use at home and at school.

### Exploring the Visual Form of Written Language

One fascinating aspect of early literacy development is young children's explorations of the visual form of the writing system they see used around them, whether alphabetic as in English, logographic as in Chinese, or syllabic as in the Cherokee writing system developed by Chief Sequoyah in the nineteenth century (see Crystal, 1997). Just as children acquire the oral language forms spoken around them, they also experiment with the written forms that they see others using. Figure 5.3 illustrates 4-year-old children's attempts at writing in English, Arabic, and Hebrew, each of which uses a different alphabetic writing system, in which letters represent language sounds (Harste et al., 1984). Although not yet

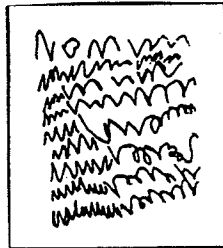
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**TABLE 5.1** Written Language Functions and Classroom Experiences

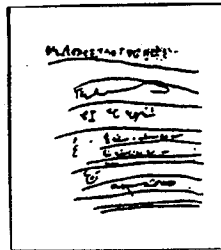
| <b>Functions</b>                           | <b>Classroom Experiences</b>   |
|--|--|
| <i>Instrumental</i><br>I want              | Order forms in play store  |
| <i>Interactional</i><br>Me and you         | Message board for notes from teacher to children;<br>class post office; dialogue journals  |
| <i>Personal</i><br>Here I come             | Books about self and family with captioned<br>pictures; individual language-experience stories   |
| <i>Heuristic</i><br>Tell me why            | Question box; single-concept books; science<br>experiments; learning logs; response journals   |
| <i>Imaginative</i><br>Let's pretend        | Story reading; readers' theater read-along books<br>and records; comic strips  |
| <i>Informative</i><br>I've got to tell you | Message boards and bulletin boards; notes to<br>pupils paralleling school messages to parents; class<br>newspaper; content textbooks; resource books |
| <i>Regulatory</i><br>You should            | Daily schedule posted; directions for feeding the<br>class pet posted; behavioral rules posted   |

conventional, each child's writing is recognizable as a precursor of the conventional form of the corresponding alphabet. These examples of young children's early attempts at writing show us their efforts to represent the visual aspects of the alphabetic writing system they have seen used around them. Their writing approximates the mature writing systems, but not well enough yet to be clearly decipherable.

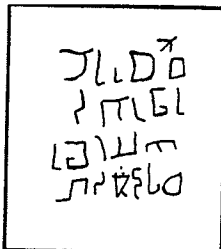
Research suggests that children learning logographic writing systems, in which written characters represent words, may also go through similar stages, from scribbling to inventive character forms to standard character formation (Chi, 1988). Figures 5.4 and 5.5 show young Taiwanese writers' approximations in constructing characters of the Chinese writing system. Figure 5.4 shows early iconic pictographic writing in which the child's writing looks like the actual item. That is, for the word *bed* the child draws a picture of a bed. Below each item is the Chinese character for the word. Figure 5.5 gives an example of more advanced, invented pictographic writing that closely approximates conventional Chinese characters (Chi, 1988).

**FIGURE 5.3** Emergent Writing in English, Arabic, and Hebrew

*Dawn, a 4-year-old from the United States, writes in unconventional script using a series of wavy lines. Each line is written from left to right. Dawn creates a page of such lines starting at the top of her page and finishing at the bottom of her page.*



*Najeeba, a 4-year-old from Saudi Arabia, writes in unconventional script using a series of very intricate curlicue formations with lots of "dots" over the script. When she completes her story she says, "Here, but you can't read it, cause I wrote it in Arabic and in Arabic we use a lot more dots than you do in English!"*



*Ofer, a 4-year-old from Israel, prints, first right-to-left then left-to-right, using a series of rectangular and triangular shapes to create his story, which his grandmother says "... looks like Hebrew, but it's not." Her concern because he sometimes writes "backwards" sounds like the concerns of many parents and teachers in the United States, with the difference being that left-to-right is "backwards" in Hebrew, and right-to-left "backwards" in English.*

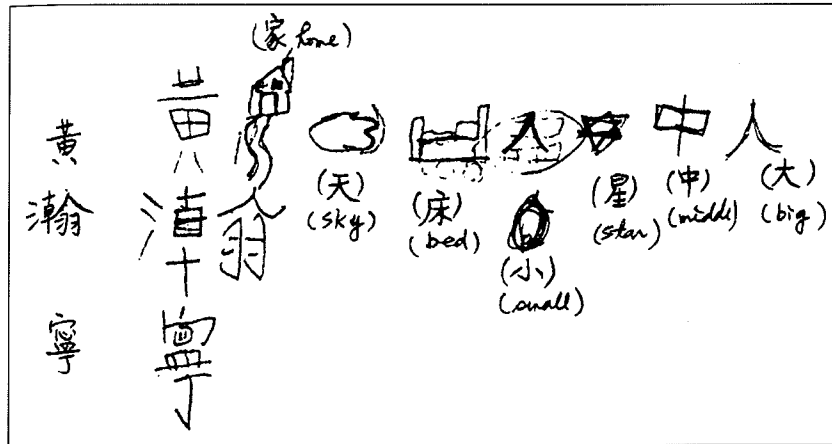
Source: Reprinted by permission of Jerome C. Harste, Virginia A. Woodward, and Carolyn L. Burke, *Language Stories and Literacy Lessons* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc., 1984).

### Development of Alphabetic Writing: Connecting Symbols and Sounds

The examples of children's emergent writing in Figures 5.3, 5.4, and 5.5 illustrate youngsters' attention to the visual aspects of writing systems. In this section, we take a look at two studies that show how children working with alphabetic writing systems gradually connect the visual symbols with the sounds they represent to make their written messages decipherable to others. Elizabeth Sulzby, an emergent literacy researcher, examined the writing of 24 English-speaking kindergarten children (1985). She identified six categories of writing strategies that the children used, but she cautioned that

**FIGURE 5.4 Chinese Iconic Pictographic Writing**

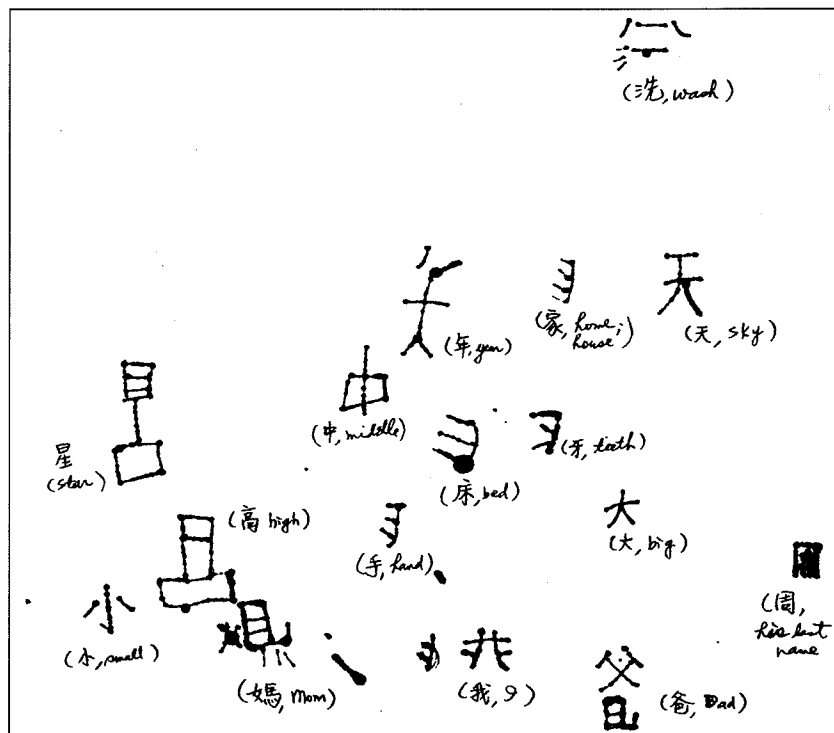
These pictographs were written by a 5-year-old Chinese boy. Beneath his pictographic writing is the conventional Chinese character and the meaning in English.



Source: Original data, reprinted with permission, courtesy of Dr. Marilyn Chi.

**FIGURE 5.5 Pictographic Invented Writing**

This 5-year-old Chinese boy is using symbols that look like the conventional Chinese character, as shown in parenthesis.



Source: Original data, reprinted with permission, courtesy of Dr. Marilyn Chi.

these categories did not necessarily represent developmental sequences. The categories were:

1. Writing via drawing
2. Writing via scribbling
3. Writing via letterlike forms
4. Writing via reproducing well-learned units or letter strings
5. Writing via invented spelling
6. Writing via conventional spelling


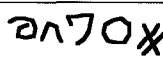

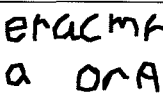

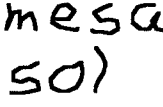
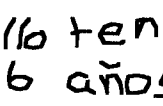
As shown in Sulzby's research (1985), when children first begin to use letters, they may not use them to represent sounds. Eventually, however, children represent

sounds with letters. At this stage, they create their own invented spellings, which are logical and readable but not yet fully conventional. When children create invented spellings, they are demonstrating advanced emergent literacy. It is through children's invented spellings that we see them really working through the sound/symbol puzzle inherent in writing English (Gentry, 1980).

In our own research in the two-way Spanish immersion kindergarten described at the beginning of this chapter, we analyzed journal entries made by eight Hispanic American children who were native Spanish speakers writing in Spanish (Peregoy & Boyle, 1990a). We identified seven developmental scripting strategies in Spanish that correspond closely with those found by Sulzby in English. Our categories, shown in Figure 5.6, are distributed along a continuum from least advanced to most advanced: scribble writing, pseudo letters, letters, pseudo words, copied words and phrases, self-generated words, and self-generated sentences. Like Sulzby, we found that these were not discrete developmental sequences. In fact, some children used two or more scripting strategies in the same journal entry. You may want to adapt Figure 5.6 as a teacher-researcher and chart the developmental progress of your own emergent writers.

In our emergent writing research in the Spanish immersion kindergarten, we were able to document ways in which native Spanish-speaking Mexican American children took control of their own Spanish literacy development in a constructive manner similar to that reported in other studies

**FIGURE 5.6** A Continuum of Developmental Scripting Strategies

| Writing type             | Definition  | Example   |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| scribble writing         | wavy lines or forms that don't look like letters, but look a little like writing                  |    |
| pseudo letters           | forms that look like letters but aren't   |    |
| letters                  | recognizable letters from the alphabet; often seen in long rows                                   |  |
| pseudo words             | letter or pseudo letters that are spaced so they appear to be words                               |  |
| copied words             | words that have been copied from displays in the classroom  |  |
| self-generated words     | words that students words created that are close enough to conventional spelling to be recognized |  |
| self-generated sentences | conventional or nearly sentences conventional sentences that communicate ideas                    |  |

Source: Suzanne F. Peregoy and Owen F. Boyle, "Kindergartners Write! Emergent Literacy of Mexican American Children in a Two-Way Spanish Immersion Program," *The Journal of the Association of Mexican American Educators* (1989-90), p. 12. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.

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(Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Sulzby, 1985). They used drawing to assist them with the task of developing ideas for writing, and they wrote about topics related to home and school, including topics initiated during circle time. In addition, these kindergartners used the print that surrounded them in and out of the classroom as a form of input for scripting. They took note of words in the wall dictionary, labels from around the room, alphabet charts, and their own names, and incorporated these into their journal writing. Several of the children made significant progress in constructing literacy in the emergent literacy kindergarten. However, some children made relatively little progress, the result, in part, of the teacher's extended absence because of illness that year. More research is needed on children who struggle in emergent literacy development.

Finally, it is important to note that the children in our study varied in prior literacy experiences gained at home. In some cases, the children's parents had attained less than a sixth-grade education, whereas other parents were high school graduates. One child, whose mother we met at school, was already being encouraged to write at home. Therefore, it is not surprising that he was the most sophisticated writer in our study. We regretted that we were unable to visit each child's home to find out what kinds of literacy materials were available and how the family incorporated literacy events into day-to-day activities.

In summary, this section examined ways in which young children explore the visual forms of written language. As they experiment with written language, young children may gradually reconstruct the spelling system well enough to convey written messages without having to explain their meaning. To achieve accuracy in conventional spelling and other aspects of written language generally requires formal instruction. In the next section, we take a closer look at some of the concepts about print that students need to develop to use the alphabet for reading and writing.

### **Print Concepts That Emerge in Emergent Literacy**

We have suggested that children begin to develop their own literacy knowledge through exposure to meaningful, functional literacy events in a process similar to oral language development. What are some basic literacy concepts and insights that develop during the emergent literacy phase? In addition to an ever-broadening understanding of the many communicative functions and personal purposes served by written language, emergent readers and writers must grasp the following ideas about print:

1. Print carries meaning. It conveys a message.
2. Spoken words can be written down and preserved.
3. Written words can be spoken—that is, read out loud.
4. In English, words are read from left to right, top to bottom.
5. In English and other languages that use alphabets, the speech stream can be divided into sounds, and these sounds are represented by letters or groups of letters. This is the alphabetic principle.

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6. The speech stream has a linear sequence in time that corresponds to written language's linear sequence on the page.
  7. Sound/symbol correspondences are consistent, but in English there are many exceptions.

As you read this list, you probably noticed how abstract all these sounds are. It is abstract! You could never teach children these things by trying to have them memorize these statements! It is through immersion in a literacy-rich environment with lots of stories read aloud and lots of opportunities for children to write on their own that they begin to understand the marvelous truths about print, its relationships to spoken language, and its power to communicate across time and space.

The first four of the preceding list of print concepts probably seem extremely obvious to you. For young children, however, there is still a great mystery to the printed word, and children have to come to understand gradually that print can convey meaning and that it does so by representing language. You will recall our friend Osvaldo, the kindergartner whose writing had no meaning until his picture was complete. Osvaldo did not yet grasp the specific relationship of print to meaning and language. On the other hand, he did understand that writing should convey a message, and he was interested in knowing how his story was received!

The last three print concepts, which sound technical to many who hear them for the first time, all relate to the alphabetic principle, which is the idea that language sounds are represented by letters and letter sequences. The first alphabet was created over 3,000 years ago by the great Semitic trading people of the Mediterranean, the Phoenicians. Theirs was a brilliant discovery, one that is reconstructed daily by children learning to read and write. What does it take to reconstruct the alphabetic system that children see in use around them? Let's consider the idea that the speech stream can be divided into sounds. If this idea seems obvious to you, it is probably because you read and write and have therefore had many opportunities to work with the **grapho-phonemic units**, or letter-sound correspondences, of your language. A *phoneme*, you may recall, is the smallest unit of sound that makes a difference in meaning in a language, and a **grapheme** is the letter or letter combination, such as *d* or *th*, that represents that sound (Stahl, 1992).

The streamlike nature of speech is more evident when you listen to someone speaking a foreign language. Then it's hard to discern individual words, much less individual sounds: It's all a flow of sound. Young children are confronted with the speech stream in a similar manner, except that they are further distracted from listening for sounds by their attention to the meaning of the speech stream. Young children do, however, know how to play with language sounds, an ability that develops around age 4 or 5. Evidence that children can divide the speech stream comes from word play, such as spontaneous rhyming. For example, you may have heard children who take a word such as *cake* and generate a litany of rhymes: *take, lake, Jake, rake*. They do this for fun, but it shows that they understand the concept of a speech sound because they have replaced the initial consonant, a single speech sound, in each word to create

a new rhyming word. In so doing, they are demonstrating **phonemic awareness**, or awareness of individual sounds that constitute spoken words. In fact, one way to assess a child's level of phonemic awareness informally is to ask him or her to tell you words that rhyme.

Research suggests that phonemic awareness is an important aspect of early reading development in English and one of the best predictors of native English-speaking children's future success as readers (Adams, 1990a, 1990b). This makes sense when you consider that the alphabet is a graphic system that relates letters to speech sounds. As students learn the relationships between speech sounds and the letters in written words, they gain access to one of the main cueing systems in reading (along with syntax and semantics): phonics or graphophonics (Goodman, 1967; Stahl, 1992). Key research suggests that once children grasp (1) the idea that words consist of different phonemes and (2) that letters represent these phonemes, they can benefit from phonics instruction (Ehri & Wilce, 1985; Frith, 1985; Juel, Griffith, & Gough, 1986; Perfetti, Beck, Bell, & Hughes, 1987). However, phonics instruction should address sound/symbol correspondences that students have not acquired already through meaningful experiences with print and through their own personal efforts at reading and writing.

You can no doubt see how important the concept of speech sounds is to the development of the alphabetic principle. Phonemic awareness should not be considered a prerequisite for literacy instruction, however. Indeed, we believe that exposure to written language promotes phonemic awareness by showing children how oral language sounds are divided, sequenced, and represented by letters and letter sequences. Reading poems, stories, and song lyrics aloud while students read along is one way. Giving them opportunities to write is another. Your students' emergent writings demonstrate the extent of their understanding of the alphabetic principle and other concepts about the forms and functions of print. In fact, one of the best ways for learners to work on phonics is through their own writing using invented or temporary spelling. Just as children's oral language "errors" (e.g., "he goed" for "he went") represent logical, developmental hypotheses about grammar, so also children's and older students' invented spellings (e.g., *bar* for *bear*) represent their logical, developmental hypotheses about how to spell. You need to be well prepared to explain invented or temporary spelling to parents as a high-level cognitive process in which students "think through" how sounds and letters relate to one another. Invented spelling represents an important step on the way to conventional spelling while providing individualized phonics practice that will assist both reading and writing development.

### **Invented or Temporary Spelling: Children Working Out Sound/Symbol Correspondences**

We have talked about invented spelling at some length. Now let's look at two children's writing samples to examine the logic inherent in their invented spellings. Sam is a 7-year-old Farsi/English bilingual who is proficient in English, whereas Martha is a 6-year-old native English speaker. In Figure 5.7, we see

FIGURE 5.7 Sam's Writing

Dear, Mom

Don't forget my cbeck.

AND Don't forget my shering on <sup>Friday</sup> ~~Friday~~

AND I am shering my

Dinosaur scelit<sup>in</sup>.

And don't last <sup>in the ging</sup>

paperes <sup>of</sup> forget to tace owt my

my Wenbay onvilope

~~MEMOR~~

Berrloeth Berrbill.

Loves Sam

~~LOVE~~

xo: Mo MMY oo

THANK YOU!

a note Sam wrote to his mother, a university student. Because she is not always home when Sam gets out of school, the two of them post notes, messages, and letters on the refrigerator door to keep one another apprised of events of the day or coming events.

Sam uses some interesting spelling strategies. For example, he spells *Friday* "Firiday," because that's how he hears it. Notice that each of the words he invents or constructs is decipherable by sounding out the word phonetically with a little help from the context. So we get "shering" for *sharing*, "scelitin" for *skel-eton*, "girag" for *garage*, "owt" for *out*, and so on. We know how he pronounces the word *envelope* because of his spelling, "onvilope." We also get Sam's original spelling for *take*, which we might not expect: "tace." Most important, we see in Sam's writing a consistency as he constructs the sounds he hears in English into his own individual, sophisticated, and logical spelling system. Incidentally, we thought that the words at the end of the letter, *Berrloeth Berrbill*, were made up or Farsi words, but his mother told us they were from a favorite book of his—another indication of the effects of a highly literate environment.

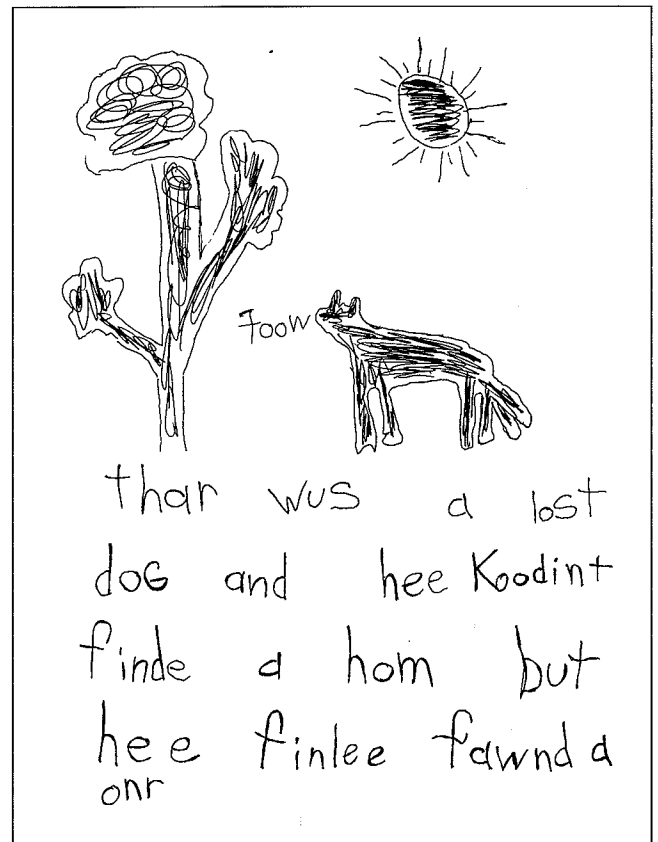
In Figure 5.8 we see evidence of 6-year-old Martha's approach to the task of representing her words through invented spellings.

For the most part, the consonants she uses are consistent with the sounds she wishes to represent. She has learned the conventional sound/letter correspondences and uses them effectively. In contrast, spelling vowel sounds presents a challenge to Martha. English has numerous vowel sounds, but few vowel letters to represent these sounds, just *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u*, and sometimes *y* and *w*. Even conventional spelling does not offer a one-to-one correspondence between English letters and sounds. Let's see how Martha is handling this challenge. In her story in Figure 5.8, she consistently uses "ee" to represent the long *e* sound as in "hee" for *he* and "finlee" for *finally*. Her double vowel strategy is used inconsistently, however. For example, she uses double *o* in "koodint" for *couldn't*, even though it doesn't have a long *o* sound. In addition, Martha uses a different approach to long vowel sounds, writing "finde" for *find*, "hom" for *home*, and "onr" for *owner*. In these words, she lets the vowel "say its name." Finally, Martha hears the diphthong, two vowel sounds combined, in the word *found*, which she spells "fawnd." Even though Martha's vowel spellings are inconsistent, they portray the sounds well enough for the words to be decipherable. Invented spellings as sophisticated as Martha's and Sam's

show us how children are working out orthographic representations of language sounds. If you can decipher the message, the child has done an effective spelling job even if it is not completely conventional.

Although Sam and Martha provide interesting examples of invented spelling for us to analyze, their efforts also demonstrate a clear understanding that writing has meaning and purpose. Their messages make sense and serve particular functions: Sam is communicating with his mother; Martha is writing a piece of fiction. Martha is an avid storyteller, in fact, and she uses a number of literary devices in her stories, including openings such as "Wuns upon a time." In addition, her characters tend to have a problem that they solve, evidence of a rudimentary plot. We mention these aspects of the children's writing to highlight that spelling is but one aspect of written language that learners must begin to control as they develop literacy. They will need time, practice, and instructional support to proceed to conventional reading and writing. These important topics will be developed in Chapters 7 through 11. In addition, we discuss spelling development and instruction later in this chapter.

**FIGURE 5.8** Martha's Writing



### Emergent Literacy in English as a Non-Native Language

Little research addresses the emergent English literacy development of English learners who have not received literacy instruction in their primary language. Although more research is needed, we believe that English learners will develop emergent literacy concepts following patterns similar to those documented for native English speakers (Hudelson, 1984, 1986). Therefore, the teaching strategies we offer in subsequent sections of this book emphasize immersing students in meaningful, functional uses of reading and writing combined with explicit instruction to assist them in becoming independent readers and writers. National panels reviewing research on the teaching of beginning reading recommend phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, and comprehension as the cornerstones of the curriculum. Students should receive beginning reading instruction

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in the primary language, if possible (Snow et al., 1998). Complex topics such as phonemic awareness have yet to be investigated among students learning English as a second language. However, there will be differences early on in English learners' ability to perceive and produce English speech sounds, depending on the extent of their English language proficiency. For this reason, English learners should not be involved in phonics instruction that isolates sounds and letters from meaningful use of text. That is to say that any phonics instruction should take place in the context of whole texts such as poems, songs, and predictable stories for which understanding and enjoyment have been developed, before focusing on individual words and sound/symbol patterns. In so doing, both language and literacy acquisition are served first, and children receive explicit phonics instruction subsequently.

As with young English learners who are new to literacy, there is little research on older English learners who have minimal prior literacy experience in either the primary language or English. However, Else Hamayan (1994) has given us an interesting report on her experiences teaching ESL to Southeast Asian refugee adolescents in the Philippines in a program designed to prepare families to relocate to North America. For various reasons, the adolescents in her class had never received literacy instruction, and their families were nonliterate as well. Thus, the students had very little experience with functional print. In dialogue journal entries to share with her, Hamayan's students tended to copy print materials they found at home, such as their parents' ESL exercises. They seemed to focus on form, without any idea that print served to communicate a message. Hamayan concluded that their lack of experience with print left them in the dark about its functions and purposes.\*

Based on her experiences with these students, Hamayan (1994) suggests that older nonliterate students need to be introduced gradually to the numerous ways reading and writing are used for communication—that is, written language functions. In addition to constant exposure to literacy functions, Hamayan suggests explicit teaching of reading and writing strategies to help nonliterate students learn as quickly and efficiently as possible. As Hamayan says, "Although an exclusive use of structural approaches falls short of the needs of children from low-literacy backgrounds, explicit attention to the rules and the structure of written language can help learners become literate and develop higher-order thinking skills and learning strategies" (1994, p. 290). Hamayan's recommendations echo the ones we make here for younger learners. Because of their age and more advanced cognitive development, older learners may be able to learn some aspects of literacy more quickly than younger children. However, as yet we have insufficient data to draw detailed conclusions about the differences between younger and older learners whose first exposure to literacy is in their second language. If you have such students, you might consider documenting your teaching strategies and corresponding student progress over time. Sharing your experiences with other teachers in class, at conferences, or in a blog can increase your own understanding while making a worthwhile contribution to the field!

\*Alternative explanations for these students' approach to writing in dialogue journals might be their unfamiliarity with the genre or their belief that the most important thing was to produce correct forms for the teacher.

In summary, we have contrasted the reading readiness and emergent literacy perspectives of early literacy development. We elaborated on the emergent literacy perspective, discussing research findings and implications for instruction, including the importance of immersing students in a variety of functional literacy events and providing opportunities for them to construct reading and writing in their own way, gradually approximating conventional written language. We went on to discuss in some detail several early insights learners must achieve in the emergent literacy phase of reading and writing development, most of which related to the alphabetic principle. In our discussion, we emphasized that emergent readers and writers are also expanding their understanding of how print can serve a vast array of communicative functions and purposes. Thus, a crucial role for teachers is to illustrate the usefulness of reading and writing for many purposes in classroom and community. Finally, we discussed implications for English learners, noting that more research is needed on the emergent literacy paths taken by English learners, including those who are older when introduced to literacy for the first time.

## Home and School Environments That Nurture Emergent Literacy

In literate societies, young children's literacy development begins well before kindergarten, and this holds true across ethnic and socioeconomic lines. In many countries, children are exposed to environmental print in the form of road signs, billboards, announcements in store windows, and magazines in doctors' offices, to name just a few. In addition, you will find literacy materials of various kinds in most homes: magazines, newspapers, CD or tape labels, TV guides, books, and paper and writing tools. The general public has sometimes been led to believe that families living in poverty and those in minority groups neither use literacy at home nor value education in general. A growing body of research now refutes this belief. Although it is true that families vary in the ways children are involved in literacy at home, literacy nonetheless serves numerous functions in most homes, including homes of families living below the poverty level (Chall & Snow, 1982; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988), families in which English is not the primary language (Delgado-Gaitán, 1987; Díaz, Moll, & Mehan, 1986; Vásquez, 1991), and families with low educational levels (Heath, 1983; Purcell-Gates, 1995). Perceptive teachers will find ways to recognize and build on children's home language and literacy experiences, thereby transforming deficit myths about English language learners and other language minority students (Díaz et al., 1986; Flores, Cousin, & Díaz, 1991).

### How Do Home Environments Promote Early Literacy?

Parents and other family members provide a powerful model for children every time they pick up a newspaper or magazine; every time they put pen to paper, whether to post messages on the refrigerator, make grocery lists, write letters, or

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note appointments on their calendar; and every time they cut out grocery coupons or discuss the price hike announced in the recent phone bill. In so doing, family members model the forms and functions of print for children. These natural, functional, daily uses of written language provide a good foundation for literacy because children see that written language is a wonderful tool. They want to own the mystery of such powerful magic.

Another way families promote literacy development is by answering children's questions about print. Children often initiate literacy events when they ask, "What does that sign say?" The question triggers a response, "That's a stop sign. It means we have to stop at the corner to let other cars go by." I (Suzanne) can remember at age 7 sitting in the front seat as my father was driving home from the store. I saw a big, yellow YIELD RIGHT OF WAY sign, and I asked my dad what it meant. He explained it, but I remember being confused by the concept. Luckily, I didn't need to understand that sign for another 10 years, when I finally got my driver's license! Sometimes children ask parents how to spell a word as they write at home. At other times, children will beg them to read a story. In each case, children *invite* modeling, scaffolding, and explicit instruction from parents and siblings, thereby providing a natural means of language and literacy development at home.

Children also show interest in writing from an early age. As soon as a toddler can grasp a pen or crayon, the impulse to write will appear. This impulse often takes on grand proportions if children gain surreptitious access to a "blank" wall in the house. Perhaps you are one of those early writers/artists who wrote on walls as a child, or, less joyful, perhaps you were the parent who had to repaint the wall! Providing children with writing materials early on serves to encourage literacy development—and it might also save your walls!

What do we know about the literacy concepts children bring to school if a language other than English is spoken in the home? First, we know that for early literacy concepts to develop, exposure to literacy events is what matters most, not the language of the written materials or the language in which the discussion around written materials takes place. Many non-English-speaking parents have feared that using their native language at home might be harmful to their children's acquisition of English. This turns out to be untrue (see Cummins, 1981; Wong Fillmore, 1991a, 1991b). In the case of early literacy in particular, when children are involved in functional literacy activities at home—in, say, Spanish or Cantonese—they begin to form important concepts about how print works in form and function. In the process, they begin to have expectations about print and they want to read and write. These understandings will transfer to English literacy when they go to school. Similarly, with oral language use, it is important that parents talk to children in extended and elaborated ways in the language they know best because doing so helps young children build knowledge of the world that will serve them in school and transfer to English once the second language is developed.

A small percentage of English learners may come to school with extremely limited literacy experience. However, even parents who are not highly educated often expose their children to the functions of print. You may recall the story of Gustavo in Chapter 1. At age 6, Gustavo understood deeply the importance of the written word because his mother had to find someone who could write a letter to Mexico to obtain medicine essential for his baby sister's health. Gustavo's mother could not write, but the importance of writing was certainly understood. Parents



of English learners, whether immigrants or native born, vary in their own literacy development; some are highly educated, others are not. However, nearly all value literacy and education (Delgado-Gaitán, 1987). In fact, many have risked their lives to come to this country for the specific purpose of obtaining a better education for their children.

Some children who are learning English in school come from cultures with strong oral storytelling traditions in the home language, be it Navajo, Spanish, Hmong, or African American English. It is important to note that oral traditions also offer excellent foundations for literacy development. We know, for example, that fables and folktales have predictable story structures, as do television soap operas, which you can watch in Spanish, Chinese, English, and other languages in some areas of the country. Children become familiar with the narrative structures of these genres and with the characters themselves, potentially creating a familiar foundation when they encounter similar stories in print at school. It can be a challenge to find out about the oral traditions of the children in your class, but these stories can provide a rich multicultural resource for early literacy development.

In summary, families promote early literacy in many ways: by modeling a variety of day-to-day literacy uses; by answering children's questions about print and its meanings; by providing children with literacy materials, including paper, pencils, books, and magazines that allow them to play with reading and writing; and by telling stories and reading aloud to children. We offer resources in a subsequent section of this chapter for reading aloud to children.

### **Family Literacy Programs**

Numerous research studies have shown that children who are read to at home tend to achieve better when they go to school (Wells, 1986). Furthermore, the active involvement of parents in children's schooling has a positive impact on their school adjustment and performance (Epstein, 1986; Topping & Wolfingdale, 1985). These research findings have led many educators to become involved in family literacy projects aimed at promoting story reading and other kinds of literacy activities among families, particularly low-income, minority, and immigrant families. Some family literacy projects offer classes for parents on English language and literacy with a focus on promoting parent involvement in their children's schooling. The best family literacy programs assess and acknowledge the language and literacy used at home and build from there. Family literacy is so important that some family literacy organizations have attracted donors and corporate sponsors to support their online resource offerings (see <http://famlit.org>).

We have seen family literacy projects of various kinds. A number of projects emphasize teaching parents to read storybooks to their preschool and kindergarten children. Some projects teach specific read-aloud techniques such as asking children to predict what the story will be about or to predict what will happen on the next page or asking children at the end why they liked or disliked the book (Edwards, 1989). Story reading seems to be beneficial in a variety of ways. Perhaps most powerful is the cozy, loving laptime moments that story reading creates. It also provides parents with a chance to exercise their own reading skills, while boosting parental self-esteem in knowing that they are strengthening their child's chances for success in school. Finally, by modeling story reading for children, parents provide a rich source of numerous emergent literacy concepts.

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A special kind of family literacy project was instituted in the late 1980s as a result of federal funding: Family English Literacy. These programs serve the parents of children who are learning English in school. The parents themselves are English learners, and the Family English Literacy programs assist parents in learning to speak, read, and write in English. The functional focus of English language use involves parents in reading with their children and listening to their children read; talking about homework and school concerns with their children; and engaging children in literacy-related home activities, such as cooking, writing notes, and marking the calendar for special events.

Among the most promising Family English Literacy projects are those that make a particular effort to learn about, acknowledge, and build on the literacy activities already present in the home (Auerbach, 1991). In such projects, parents use the English literacy class to identify their own needs and concerns in a safe forum for dialogue about family and community issues. At the same time, they learn how to advocate for their children in school. Most important, family literacy projects help forge comfortable connections with the school among parents who previously may have felt alienated from educational institutions, while helping immigrant and other parents take control of their own lives and those of their children.

One particularly interesting family literacy project was undertaken in the Pajaro School District in California (Ada, 1988). In this project, educator Alma Flor Ada invited Spanish-speaking parents to come to the library to study children's literature as a focus for developing their own literacy skills. Many of the parents had never advanced beyond the second or third grade in Mexico and were therefore unsure of themselves in school settings. Children's literature provided a natural, nonthreatening, and inviting means to literacy. As parents attended the sessions, they began to see that there were many ways in which they could become involved in literacy activities at home with their children. They felt validated to know that using Spanish and talking about Spanish language children's literature would have a positive effect on their children's school experiences, including literacy development in English. As a culminating project, parents and children wrote stories about significant events in their lives. Through this project, parents had the opportunity to reflect on their relationships with their children, with the school, and with their as yet unwritten futures. In so doing, they took a more active and aware stance in creating and re-creating their own life stories.

### **Promoting Parent Involvement in English Learners' Schooling**

Promoting involvement among your English learners' parents can be quite a challenge, especially if you don't share a common language. Cultural differences may also impede the school relationships you wish to achieve, if parents' prior experiences with schools were minimal or if their school experiences emphasized separate, autonomous roles for home and school. We offer some suggestions here that we have gathered over the years.

**Make Parent Involvement a Schoolwide Goal** If parent involvement is a school priority, then resources can be provided for increasing home-school communication. For example, school notices can be translated into your students' home languages. Because schools often have numerous different primary

languages within the student population, it is essential to have the support of the administration in providing translators. If possible, a community liaison worker can be hired to make phone calls or visit the homes, if needed, to make sure parents receive important information.

Teachers sometimes report difficulties in getting parents to come to school, whether for open house, parent conferences, or other school functions. If children are bussed some distance to school in cities or rural areas, it is often quite difficult for parents to get to the school. In addition, some parents work long hours and are unable to attend school functions because of work schedules. Nonetheless, you can make a special effort to help parents feel comfortable at school by providing notices in the home language that explain the purpose of the school function and what will be happening. We have often been told that the best way to get parents to come to school is to provide a social event that includes food and the opportunity to see their children performing songs, dances, or plays. Because each community is different, you may wish to brainstorm parent involvement ideas with paraprofessionals, community liaisons, teachers, and the principal at your school, especially those who are members of the particular cultural groups you serve.

**Taking School Activities Home** In addition to translating notices sent home and making efforts to bring parents to school, you can forge home-school connections and promote language and literacy development through carefully structured take-home activities. We know of one teacher who lets children take home a teddy bear for one day. The next day at school, the child reports to the class what the teddy bear did at home. Similarly, you can implement the use of a "literacy backpack." You will have to buy one or more small backpacks, depending on how many you want to have in use at one time. You place literacy materials in them to be taken home for a specified number of days. One week, you might insert colored markers and several sheets of paper; another week, you might put in a copy of the storybook you have been reading to the class. You need to make sure that the rules on caring for the items and the due date for return are clear. To promote parent involvement, children can be asked to show their parents what they wrote or drew, to read a story to their parents, or to otherwise talk about activities. Children who have taken the backpack home may also report to the class what they did with the materials at home.

Another item to put in the literacy backpack is storybooks with audiotapes that your children have been reading in class, a routine that has been researched and found effective with young English learners (Koskinen et al., 1995). In this home-school literacy project, the teachers sent home a tape recorder, storybook, and audiotape. (Twelve-inch tape recorders with color-coded buttons, marked with colored dots for "play," "stop," and "rewind," work best.) The teachers sent home letters explaining the project translated into the home languages of the parents. Whenever possible, teachers explained the use of books and audiotapes during parent conferences. In this project, for example, five backpacks at a time were available to take home to keep for three to five days. Thus, it took several weeks for each child to have a first turn. Children were given instructions on how to select a book, how to check it out and return it, and how to use the tape recorder to read along with the story. The children were responsible for teaching their parents how to use the tape recorder with the storybooks. Projects such as these take considerable time, money, and organization, but the rewards in literacy development and home-school relations make them worthwhile. Financial support

is sometimes available from parent-teacher groups, professional organizations, local merchants, or fast-food chains.

In summary, as children become involved in using literacy in their homes and communities, they will begin to develop ideas about the forms and functions of print—the beginnings of emergent literacy. You can build on these early concepts by offering all children a wide variety of functional literacy experiences, including shared reading, journal writing, shared writing, and immersion in literacy-enriched play centers, as described subsequently.

## Classroom Strategies to Promote Early Literacy

In the previous section, we discussed early literacy development and ways to link children's home and school experiences in natural, fun ways to support their developing concepts of the forms and functions of print. Our discussion focused primarily on early childhood classrooms. In this section, we describe classroom strategies that will continue to support early reading and writing development for young English learners. In addition, we make suggestions for adapting these strategies for older English learners whose first exposure to literacy begins later, whether in upper-elementary, middle, or high school.

### Early Literacy Goals

Any student, regardless of age, who is just beginning to read and write in English needs to develop (1) awareness and appreciation of the variety of purposes reading and writing serve in everyday life; (2) understanding of relationships between print and oral language, including the alphabetic principle; (3) knowledge of print conventions, such as left-to-right, top-to-bottom sequencing; (4) knowledge of specific sound/symbol correspondences, or phonics; and (5) ability to recognize a growing number of words on sight. During early literacy development, learners need to begin to coordinate all these understandings to read and make sense of simple texts.

All five goals are served by holistic teaching strategies, whereas explicit skill instruction further reinforces phonics and sight word development. We define **holistic strategies** as literacy events that involve reading and writing whole texts—such as stories, poems, songs, and recipes—that serve real, day-to-day purposes. Holistic strategies, or what we defined as literacy scaffolds in Chapter 3, are especially important for English learners because they provide rich and meaningful print experiences, with comprehension scaffolded by the teacher or other students. Holistic strategies should be used extensively every day. These strategies may then be supplemented by explicit phonics and sight word instruction. Phonics and sight word instruction should be based on words that students have already seen and heard many times in stories, poems, songs, letters, recipes, and other texts used previously. When you offer numerous meaningful, functional print experiences, your students increase their awareness of why we read and write; that is, the functions of print. When you offer explicit phonics instruction, you increase students' knowledge of how print works, or its form. Both are important aspects of early literacy development.

## Creating a Literacy-Rich Classroom Environment

In the early grades, especially kindergarten, you can promote literacy development in many ways. First, you can enrich activity centers with literacy props that encourage children to learn about literacy through play. Some centers reflect familiar aspects of the child's home and community, such as the kitchen and grocery store; others introduce new themes, such as science centers, that are precursors of later academic subjects. For literacy development purposes, each center should be enriched with literacy props. For example, the kitchen can be supplied with calendars, note paper for grocery lists, cookbooks, and recipe cards for boys and girls to enjoy. The other centers can be similarly enriched. With an eye toward literacy opportunities, you can create a plethora of functional literacy opportunities for children to explore and enjoy.

The list under "Books, Books, Books" illustrates some ways to enrich your classroom with functional literacy opportunities in several different centers. Figure 5.9 shows a sample floor plan illustrating one way you might organize your classroom for children's optimal use of functional literacy opportunities.

### Books, Books, Books

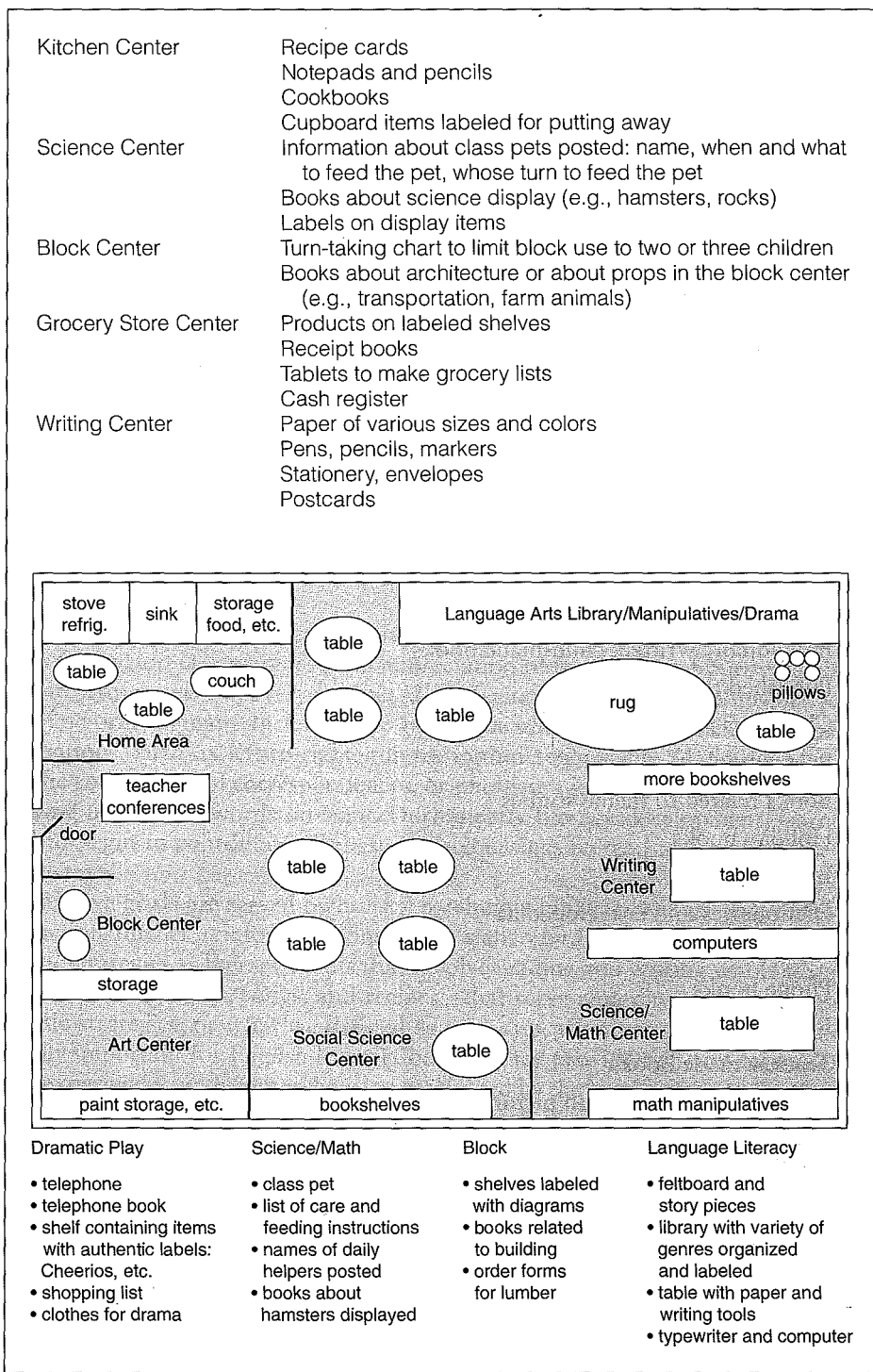
Books—not just those that the teacher reads aloud daily, but also books children make themselves—take on new life in early literacy classrooms. Here is a list of the many different kinds of books found in exemplary emergent literacy classrooms (Tease, 1995):

- Individually written, child-made books
- Published trade books
- Children's journals
- Poetry books
- Books related to theme studies
- Holiday books
- Big Books
- Dictionaries and encyclopedias
- Alphabet books
- Phone books
- Recipe books
- Teacher-made books
- Photo album books with pictures labeled
- Sign language books
- Author of the month books
- Collections of songs or poems children have learned at school

With so many books in the classroom, you'll need to find a way to organize them so that children can find them easily and put them away after use. Bookshelves are often organized with labels by subject, author, title, or size (tall, wide, and small). In each case, alphabetical order may provide the sequence. Some

[Floor]

**FIGURE 5.9 Classroom Floor Plan Optimizing Functional Literacy Opportunities**



teachers put books in color-coded bins according to topics, authors, or level of reading difficulty. Single-book display racks showcase a special theme book, the author of the month, or a current story or poem. All good literacy programs build on children's fascination with books.

### Using Daily Routines to Highlight the Forms and Functions of Print

Daily classroom routines can enhance children's awareness of the forms and functions of print. Give some thought to the routines of your classroom so that you may highlight for your students how literacy serves everyday purposes. At the same time, call attention to the actual processes of reading and writing as you go about daily activities.

**Morning Message** One classroom routine is the "morning message," in which you preview the day's activities for your students. By writing the day's activities down on the board as you say the words, you model the organizational/mnemonic function of writing and the form (i.e., the left-to-right, letter-by-letter sequence corresponding to your spoken words).

**Classroom Rules and Procedures** Another routine that lends itself to a functional literacy learning opportunity stems from classroom rules and procedures that you and your students establish together at the beginning of the year. As decisions are made, you write down on a large chart the rules and procedures for such duties as table cleaning, floor sweeping, pet care, and any other routine chores. In this way, your students will see the spoken words written on the board. Each duty can be simply illustrated with a broom, an animal, a table, or other appropriate picture to support student understanding of the chart. By highlighting print uses during day-to-day routines, you make literacy so natural and unthreatening that children begin to read without even knowing it.

**Wall Dictionary** Another way to incorporate a literacy learning opportunity into your daily routines is to post the alphabet at children's eye level, creating a wall dictionary (Figure 5.10). The first entries in the dictionary are the children's names on tagboard posted below the appropriate letter of the alphabet. If possible, post a photo of each child next to his or her name. During roll call, children can place their name tags on the wall dictionary under the appropriate letter: María would place her tag under the letter M, for example. For each of us, there is a magic in our names and those of our friends. To be able to write their own name early in school creates a power over print for children. Later on, favorite words from songs, poems, stories, and theme studies may be added to the wall dictionary. As words accumulate, you may invite children to

**FIGURE 5.10** Partial Wall Dictionary Using Children's Names and Familiar Words

| A a                                | B b                                 | C c                                | D d                      |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Anna<br>an<br>and<br>are<br>animal | Barbara<br>be<br>bear<br>but<br>bat | Cathy<br>cat<br>can<br>car<br>colt | Don<br>Dan<br>dad<br>did |

read, chorally or individually, all the words that begin with *M*, or one word that begins with *M*. Or you might ask children to find all the animal names posted. You can no doubt think of other games to play using the wall dictionary. The wall dictionary provides many opportunities for children to become aware of both the alphabet and its sound/symbol correspondences. In addition, the wall dictionary helps students develop a sight vocabulary that they will use in reading and writing. Finally, the wall dictionary familiarizes students with the concept of alphabetical order.

### Reading Aloud to Students

Reading aloud is beneficial for students of all ages. When you read aloud to your students, you involve them in the pleasure function of print, you model the reading process, and you develop general knowledge and literary notions about story plots and characters. Keep in mind, however, that following a story line places heavy cognitive-linguistic demands on listeners in terms of attention, comprehension, and memory. You can help your students listen and comprehend by stopping at certain places in the book to discuss a picture as it relates to the story or to review the plot. You may also focus on comprehension by asking prediction questions as you go along. If the book is short and simple, repeated readings will assist in comprehension. As you try these techniques, you will find out which ones work best with your particular group of students. Their purpose is to facilitate comprehension for your beginning and intermediate English language learners so that they may enjoy the read-alouds.

In reading aloud to students, you will want to select age-appropriate books that they will be able to understand. At the same time, you will want to move gradually to books that are more demanding for your students, books that increase in length, language level, and plot complexity. If you are new to the act of reading aloud to an audience, we recommend that you practice story reading at first. You can get ideas for oral reading from professionally recorded audio- or videotapes. For example, if you listen to Danny Glover reading *How the Leopard Got His Spots* or James Earl Jones reading *Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain* (Aardema, 1981), you will get an idea of how professional actors use intonation and other techniques to convey the enthusiasm and wonder that oral readings can bring to a story. Such oral readings greatly enhance anyone's ability to listen. For helpful lists of good books and procedures for reading aloud, check out [www.readaloundamerica.org/](http://www.readaloundamerica.org/). You can also find engaging read-alouds online for popular storybooks at <http://kids.aol.com/KOL/1/KOLJrStories>.

You will also find reading aloud more fun if you choose some of your own favorite books. Your natural enthusiasm will be contagious. Big Books or oversized books are an excellent choice, because you can point to the words as you read aloud. In this way you model the reading process, promoting development of print concepts, the alphabetic principle, phonics knowledge, and sight vocabulary. Most important, the reading-aloud moments should be a special time when students feel comfortable to simply sit and enjoy listening to stories. Finally, encourage children to bring books they enjoy for you to read to the class; this will give them a sense of ownership during reading-aloud time. Here is a list of some of our favorite books to read aloud for readers of different ages.



*Read-Aloud Books*

- Ahlberg, J., & Ahlberg, A. (1981). *Peek-A-Boo*. London: Puffin.
- Ahlberg, J., & Ahlberg, A. (1986). *The Jolly Postman*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Anno, M. (1983). *Anno's USA*. New York: Philomel Books.
- Brown, M. W. (1947). *Goodnight Moon*, illustrated by C. Hurd. New York: Harper & Row.
- Bruchac, J. (1989). *Iroquois Stories*. Cassette tape. Greenfield Center, NY: Good Mind Records.
- Bryan, A. (1991). *All Night, All Day: A Child's First Book of African-American Spirituals*. New York: Atheneum.
- Carle, E. (1986). *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. New York: Philomel Books.
- Connolly, J. (Ed.). (1985). *Why the Possum's Tail Is Bare and Other North American Indian Nature Tales*. Seattle: Stemmer House.
- Delacre, L. (1989). *Arroz con Leche: Popular Songs and Rhymes from Latin America*. New York: Scholastic.
- de Paola, T. (1985). *Tomie de Paola's Mother Goose*. New York: Putnam.
- Galdone, P. (1979). *The Three Bears*. New York: Clarion.
- Garcia, M. (1978). *The Adventures of Connie and Diego/Las Aventuras de Connie y Diego*. Chicago: Children's Book Press.
- Griego, M., Bucks, B., Gilbert, S., & Kimball, L. (1981). *Tortillitas para Mamá and Other Nursery Rhymes, English and Spanish*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Kitchen, B. (1984). *Animal Alphabet*. New York: Dial.
- Lobel, A. (1970). *Frog and Toad Are Friends*. New York: Harper.
- McKissack, P. (1986). *Flossie and the Fox*. Chicago: Children's Book Press.
- Myers, W. (1990). *The Mouse Rap*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Prelutsky, J. (Ed.). (1983). *The Random House Book of Poetry for Children*, illustrated by A. Lobel. New York: Random House.
- Say, A. (1995). *Grandfather's Journey*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Sendak, M. (1963). *Where the Wild Things Are*. New York: Harper.
- Step toe, J. (1987). *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughter: An African Tale*. New York: Lothrop.
- Yep, L. (1989). *The Rainbow People*. New York: Harper & Row.

### **Shared Writing and Reading Using the Language Experience Approach**

The language experience approach to writing and reading, discussed fully in Chapter 8, is a literacy approach based on students' dictations that can be used with learners of any age, preschool through adult. A good way to start is to invite your students to dictate stories or ideas as a whole class. As they dictate the words, you write them down on chart paper, inviting students to read the words

back as you point them out. This simple use of language experience models functional writing and reading, illustrates the relationship of print to speech, helps develop sight vocabulary, and illustrates sound/symbol correspondences. Finally, the fact that students themselves generate the content ensures a text that is appropriate to their age, experiences, and interests. You can later use these texts as the basis of phonics and sight word instruction. By writing down things students say each day you will be helping them learn to read and write.

### Dialogue Journals

Dialogue journals provide an excellent introduction to literacy for English learners of all ages (Kreeft, 1984; [www.cal.org/caela/esl\\_resources/digests/Dialog\\_Journals.html](http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests/Dialog_Journals.html)), retrieved October 31, 2011). As you may recall, in dialogue journals students write regularly on the topic of their choice, and you respond to the content of their entries, not the form. By doing so, you show interest in the students' ideas, ask questions that encourage elaboration, model form and function in writing, and deepen your personal relationship with students. For emergent readers and writers, dialogue journals offer students the chance to work out sound/symbol relationships in the context of an authentic communicative interaction with their teacher. English learners also work on overall English language development through journals, as evident in the following examples from a first-grader working on the phrase "What I like to do is \_\_\_\_\_." We offer some clarifications of the child's words in italics.

- Dec. 1: I like to do is sing for egg de I like to do is it a pizza? (*I like to do is sing for egg day. I like to do, "Is it a pizza."*) Teacher responded: You should teach us an egg song.
- Dec. 8: I like to do is sing de He like to do is paly happy sing paly? (*I like to do is sing day. He like to do is play happy sing play.*) (Teacher did not respond that day.)
- Dec. 15: I like to play whaat butterfly de vey like to do is play a round bks Butterfly is like to it flsr (*I like to play with butterfly day they like to do is play around bikes. Butterfly is like to eat flowers.*) Teacher responded: I have never played with a butterfly before. It sounds like fun.

Students of all ages enjoy dialogue journals, in part because of the personal attention they receive from the teacher. Journals also provide ongoing writing samples from which to assess students' literacy development over time.

### Alphabet Books

We have already mentioned using print in functional and meaningful ways to develop children's appreciation of the purposes and pleasures of print. All of these activities—such as wall dictionaries, language experience stories, rhyming games, the alphabet song, and shared reading—help children develop the alphabetic principle. With the **alphabetic principle**, children come to know that there is a relationship between letters and sounds in the English language. Alphabet books provide yet another avenue for teaching both the alphabetic principle and the

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alphabet itself. Alphabet books display capital and lowercase letters in interesting ways and can help students become aware of the alphabetic principle while learning the names of the letters. Many of the books teach not only the letters but also concepts. Interestingly, alphabet books are available for all ages, from Bruna's *Is for Bear* for the young to Musgrove's *Ashanti to Zulu: African Traditions* for older students. The best books use enjoyable illustrations that convey meaning and can also help learners begin to make the connection between specific letters and the sounds they make in words the children already know. We've listed some of our favorites here. Titles that are preceded by an asterisk are books older children will enjoy. You may also wish to check some favorites at [www.bostonkids.org/images/teacher\\_pdfs/Bibliographies/Alphabet.pdf](http://www.bostonkids.org/images/teacher_pdfs/Bibliographies/Alphabet.pdf).

#### *Alphabet Books*

- \*Anno, M. (1975). *Anno's Alphabet*. New York: Crowell.
- \*Base, G. (1986). *Animalia*. New York: Abrams.
- Brown, M. (1974). *All Butterflies*. New York: Scribner's.
- Bruchac, J. (2003) *Many Nations: An Alphabet of Native America*. BridgeWater Paperbooks.
- Dr. Seuss. (1963). *Dr. Seuss's ABC*. New York: Random House.
- \*Dragonwagon, C. (1987). *Alligator Arrived with Apples*. New York: Macmillan.
- Duke, K. (1983). *The Guinea Pig ABC*. New York: Dutton.
- Eisele, B., Eisele, C. Y., Hanlon, S. M., Hanlon, R. Y., & Hojel, B. (2002). *My ABC Storybook*. White Plains, NY: Pearson.
- Gag, W., & Gag, H. (1933). *The ABC Bunny*. New York: Coward-McCann.
- Kitchen, B. (1984). *Animal Alphabet*. New York: Dial.
- McNaught, H. (1988). *The Sesame Street ABC Book of Words*. New York: Random House.
- \*Musgrove, M. (1976). *Ashanti to Zulu: African Traditions*. New York: Dial.
- Oxenbury, H. (1972). *Helen Oxenbury's ABC of Things*. New York: Watts.
- Rankin, L. (1991). *The Handmade Alphabet*. New York: Dial.
- Red Hawk, R. (1988). *ABC's: The American Indian Way*. Albany, CA: Sierra Oaks.
- \*Van Allsburg, C. (1987). *The Z Was Zapped: A Play in 26 Acts*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Wood, A. & Wood, B. (2003) *Alphabet Mystery*. Scholastic.

## Helping Students Recognize and Spell Words Independently

As students progress in their emerging understanding of the functions and forms of print, they have already begun to develop some rudimentary word recognition abilities. You can help them become more effective and efficient in recognizing words by increasing their sight word vocabularies and providing explicit phonics

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instruction. In this section, we briefly review some of the most useful teaching strategies for these purposes. For a much more comprehensive discussion of word recognition instruction, we recommend Bear, Helman, Templeton, Invernizzi, and Johnston (2007), described in the resource list, at the end of this chapter. This book was written with native English-speaking students in mind, so you will have to consider the language and cultural needs of your students as you select from the teaching strategies provided.

### Using Big Books to Teach Sight Words and Phonics

Although we discuss the use of Big Books more fully in Chapter 8, we want to mention a few ways you can use them—as well as poems and song lyrics written in large format on chart paper—to develop word recognition and phonics knowledge early in children’s reading and writing development. First, these large-format texts allow children to follow the words that you point to as you read. Second, you can create a window or frame that allows children to focus on only one word at a time in the book. By framing only one word, you provide practice in actually recognizing the word on sight. You can also use predictable books with repetitive patterns and phrases to teach or reinforce sound/symbol correspondences, including consonants, vowels, and letter sequences found in rhyming words. In addition, you may invite children to write their own stories following the pattern in predictable books that they have heard several times. In writing their own stories, your students will have a chance to put their phonics and sight word knowledge into meaningful practice.

The sight word and phonics strategies just described are also applicable to older students who are new to literacy. The key is to find short texts with age-appropriate content. There are a number of predictable books that are appropriate for older students, such as *Fortunately* by Remy Charlip (1987). In addition, poems and song lyrics are good sources of predictable texts. Songs lyrics, poems, and predictable books can be written in large letters on tag-board or chart paper and used in the same way that Big Books are used with younger children. You may wish to consult a useful list of good books for shared reading at [www.hubbardscupboard.org/Quick\\_Reference\\_Shared\\_Reading\\_Book\\_List.PDF](http://www.hubbardscupboard.org/Quick_Reference_Shared_Reading_Book_List.PDF).

### Increasing Students’ Sight Word Vocabulary

Students begin to develop a sight word vocabulary as a result of immersion in meaningful, functional encounters with print, including writing in dialogue journals, seeing the morning message printed and explained, using wall dictionaries, repeated reading of rhyming poems and predictable books, and shared writing through language experience dictations. All beginning readers and writers need daily opportunities such as these to develop literacy. In addition, you’ll need to provide them with explicit instruction on strategies they can use to recognize words they have never encountered or do not recognize easily when reading.

Certain words occur frequently in any English text, such as *a, and, the, I, we*. If your students have not learned these words through holistic strategies, you may wish to provide practice with these and other words from stories and

themes you are studying by using flash cards in a game. Students can do this in pairs or small groups. It is important that your students know the meanings of the words on the flash cards, however, and it may be helpful for the words to be illustrated on the back of the cards. To demonstrate the meaning of articles, prepositions, conjunctions, and other function words, you need to use them in full sentences. If readers do not learn how to recognize sight words automatically, they will plod their way through print and lose the meaning along the way.

Next, we give a brief list of high-frequency words adapted from Mason and Au (1990). Students may keep their own word banks or dictionaries with these words along with other words they choose to include.

|         |          |          |           |           |
|---------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. the  | 11. at   | 21. was  | 31. but   | 41. which |
| 2. of   | 12. he   | 22. this | 32. what  | 42. their |
| 3. and  | 13. for  | 23. from | 33. all   | 43. said  |
| 4. a    | 14. on   | 24. I    | 34. were  | 44. if    |
| 5. to   | 15. are  | 25. have | 35. when  | 45. do    |
| 6. in   | 16. as   | 26. or   | 36. we    | 46. will  |
| 7. you  | 17. with | 27. by   | 37. there | 47. each  |
| 8. is   | 18. his  | 28. one  | 38. can   | 48. about |
| 9. that | 19. they | 29. had  | 39. an    | 49. how   |
| 10. it  | 20. be   | 30. not  | 40. your  | 50. up    |

### Phonics

The purpose of phonics instruction is to help students recognize words independently, *not* to have them state rules or generalizations. A substantial amount of research on native English readers supports the importance of phonics instruction (Adams, 1990a, 1990b; Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985; Bond & Dykstra, 1967; Chall, 1983; Ehri, 1991). Although there is little research, if any, on phonics instruction for English learners, we believe that English learners will also benefit from phonics instruction, judiciously applied. The following principles, developed for native English speakers, apply well to phonics for English learners:

1. Provide ample time for students to read and write for meaningful purposes, allowing students to develop their own understanding of sound/symbol correspondences.
2. Informally assess phonics and word recognition skills your students already use in writing and reading, then focus your teaching on new skills that will promote independence.
3. Always teach phonics and other word recognition skills within a meaningful context; enjoy the story or poem for meaning first, then teach the skill.
4. Generally, teach spelling patterns rather than rules.
5. Remember that phonics and other word recognition strategies are a means to an end: comprehension.

Through thoughtful phonics instruction, students can begin to read words that they would otherwise be unable to recognize. Bear in mind, however, that phonics strategies work best during reading when combined with meaning cues provided by the context of the passage. If a student comes across a new word while reading, phonics strategies will provide a tentative pronunciation, while the sentence context will provide the meaning or gist, thereby facilitating comprehension. In fact, mature readers use several cueing systems simultaneously during reading: graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic, for example. We discuss these more fully in Chapter 8.

### Word Families

In addition to helping students with phonemic awareness through your daily use of print, it is important to teach students **word families**, sometimes referred to as **onsets and rimes**. The *onset* is the initial consonant in a word or syllable, followed by a vowel-consonant sequence, the *rime* (Stahl, 1992). Thus, in the word *gain* the letter *g* is the onset and the letters *-ain* represent the rime. Adams and others (Adams, 1990a, 1990b; Cunningham, 2005; Ruddell & Ruddell, 1995; Stahl, 1992; Trieman, 1985) have found that “letter sound correspondences are more stable when one looks at rimes than when letters are looked at in isolation” (Stahl, 1992). Thus, you can help students learn words associated with the *-at* rime by simply placing letters in front of the *-at* to make words such as *cat, rat, bat, sat, mat, fat, hat, and pat*. Or you can make a word wheel containing the rime (*-at*) in the center and the onset (*c, r, b*) on the outside; as children turn the wheel, they create the different words. Likewise, other rimes, such as those found in Stahl’s (1992) list, which follows, generate nearly 500 words. Knowledge of rimes, along with the consonants that provide the onsets, give students a powerful word recognition strategy that they can use in combination with meaning and grammatical cues to make sense of text.

|      |      |       |      |      |      |
|------|------|-------|------|------|------|
| -ack | -ain | -ake  | -ale | -all | -ame |
| -an  | -ank | -ap   | -ash | -at  | -ate |
| -aw  | -ay  | -eat  | -ell | -est | -ice |
| -ick | -ide | -ight | -ill | -in  | -ine |
| -ing | -ink | -ip   | -ir  | -ock | -op  |
| -or  | -ore | -uck  | -ug  | -ump | -unk |

One mistake teachers sometimes make is to identify a student’s inability to pronounce a word with a lack of phonics knowledge or to consider non-native pronunciation of a word as a reading error. If we give you a word such as *icosahedron*, you might not be able to pronounce it, not because you don’t know phonics or can’t read, but because you may never have encountered the word before, orally or in writing. Too many students are sent to reading labs for phonics instruction because they can’t pronounce a word and have been misdiagnosed as needing phonics instruction. For the purposes of reading and writing, vocabulary instruction highlighting word meaning is a close ally to sight word and phonics

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instruction because we want students to be able to access the meaning of the word, regardless of pronunciation.

A general sequence of phonics instruction often recommended for native English speakers is the following:

1. Single consonants at the beginning of words
2. Short and long vowels
3. Letter patterns and word families (onsets and rimes)
4. Digraphs (two consonants together that make one sound such as *th*, *ch*, *ph*) and blends (two consonants together that blend their sounds, such as *cl-*, *bl-*, *tr-*, *cr-*, *pr-*)
5. Syllabication

This sequence is probably useful for English learners whose first exposure to literacy is in English. When you focus on any of these elements, we recommend that you base your instruction on words taken from poems, stories, song lyrics, and other texts you have used in class many times. For example, if you have read *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* (Martin, 1967), you would hold up the book, point to the words *brown* and *bear*, and proceed to talk about the letter *b* and the sound it represents. Next, you might ask your students to tell you other words that begin with the letter *b*, perhaps permitting them to peek at the wall dictionary. In this way you ensure that students understand the words themselves and that they are aware of how letters are related to words in meaningful, whole texts.

An important consideration for English learners is the extent of literacy skill in their first language. In general, students who are literate in their primary language will already possess knowledge of the functions of print. However, they will need to learn the forms of English print and some of its functions, to the extent that they differ from the students' prior print experiences. Bear in mind that students who read a language with an alphabet similar to that of English (e.g., Spanish, French, German) are apt to need less phonics instruction because of transfer of alphabetic knowledge, especially with consonants. The English vowels and their spellings present difficulties for most readers, however, native and non-native English speakers alike.

Besides the many ways students can learn phonics through literacy events, such as reading aloud and journal writing, we recommend using games to help reinforce the learning of individual sound/symbol correspondences when more practice is warranted. We also recommend that you spend a brief time each day going over sound/symbol correspondences you believe students should already know, both to evaluate their phonics knowledge and to determine whether more explicit instruction is needed on word analysis and recognition.

Finally, your students can learn phonics through their own explorations using computers. New software programs are coming out daily that can assist children with learning to read independently—programs that sound out any word children point to as they are reading an animated text. Other programs will read texts in different languages to help English language learners. Another kind of program that is a favorite of ours is "Kids Write," which allows students to write down any word or story and will pronounce the word they have written.

### Invented or Temporary Spelling and Word Recognition

We advocate that students write from the first day of class, and we suggest that you accept their temporary or invented spellings. Awareness of word structure and phonics is often best developed through students' own attempts at writing. One study of invented spelling among native English speakers (Clarke, 1989) compared groups of children who used invented spelling with groups of children who were in traditional spelling programs. Results showed that the children who were in the invented spelling groups were better in decoding and comprehension. In addition, "low-readiness" students performed significantly higher on spelling and word recognition tests. Many teachers who have used invented spelling techniques testify to the efficacy of encouraging invented spelling and confirm research findings such as these. However, just as with anything else you do in your classroom, you will want to be aware of the progress students are making and adjust your program accordingly.

### Developmental Levels in Student Spelling

One way to assess students' progress is to analyze their spelling according to developmental characteristics. We suggest using four developmental levels: prephonetic, phonetic, transitional, and conventional, as defined briefly here and discussed more fully next.

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Prephonetic spelling:  | Letters or letterlike forms do not represent speech sounds. |
| Phonetic spelling:     | Letters represent sounds; words are decipherable.           |
| Transitional spelling: | Conventional spellings are mixed with phonetic spellings.   |
| Conventional spelling: | Most words are spelled conventionally.                      |

**Prephonetic** spellers use letters or letterlike forms or even numbers or scribbles that do not as yet represent speech sounds. In other words, prephonetic spellers do not demonstrate understanding of the alphabetic principle—the idea that a letter or letter sequence represents a speech sound. Osvaldo's soccer story at the beginning of this chapter illustrates prephonetic spelling. The examples in Figure 5.11 also illustrate the kind of spelling found at this stage.

**FIGURE 5.11** Examples of Prephonetic Spelling

| Conventional Spelling | Student's Prephonetic Spelling |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. dog                | 1. mll                         |
| 2. cat                | 2. dfg                         |
| 3. mom                | 3. trd                         |

[7000]



Prephonetic spellers need rich exposure to functional uses of written language, the kind provided by reading Big Books, by writing language experience stories, by discussing word spellings on the word wall, and by generally talking about how print works as you use written language for functional purposes in day-to-day classroom activities. As students develop an understanding of the alphabetic principle, they become able to associate English speech sounds with letters of the English alphabet. When they begin to use this knowledge in spelling, they are on their way to becoming phonetic spellers.

**Phonetic** spellers use letters and letter sequences to represent speech sounds, thereby demonstrating their grasp of the alphabetic principle (see Figure 5.12). However, they use many spellings that are not conventional. Martha's story on page 187 about the lost dog represents advanced phonetic spelling. Students who are developing the ability to spell phonetically vary a great deal in their approach. Early on, some students may represent a whole word such as *mother* with just one letter, *m*. Gradually, they begin to represent each speech sound with one letter. At this point, most phonetic spellings students produce are more logical and consistent than many conventional English spellings because English orthography is not based strictly on a one-to-one correspondence between sounds and letters. In other words, some letters consistently represent just one sound, but others do not. Similarly, some speech sounds are represented in several different ways or with several letters, such as long vowel sounds. Figure 5.12 shows examples of phonetic spelling.

Phonetic spellers should be recognized and praised for their thoughtful spelling. They should also be encouraged to write more. They will benefit from the kind of exposure to interesting uses of written language recommended for prephonetic spellers. Moreover, phonetic spellers can benefit from basic, formal spelling instruction such as the spelling patterns in the simple word family words provided previously in the discussion of phonics. In this way you can build on what they already know and move them to the next level of spelling development.

**Transitional** spellers (see Figure 5.13) extend their knowledge beyond the phonetic aspects of spelling and begin to include conventional spellings that are not strictly phonetic. These students are in the transitional phase moving toward conventional spelling. The term *transitional* indicates that they are making the transition from purely phonetic spelling to conventional spelling. Transitional spellers remain adept at phonetic spelling, but they also use a growing number of conventional spelling patterns, such as using the silent *e* for long vowel sounds as in *lake* or two vowels for long vowel sounds as in *beat*. Sam's note to his mother on page 189 provides a good example of transitional spelling.

**FIGURE 5.12** Examples of Phonetic Spelling

| Conventional Spelling | Student's Phonetic Spelling |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| from                  | frum                        |
| clown                 | cleewown                    |
| cat                   | kat                         |
| city                  | sity                        |
| bake                  | bac                         |

**FIGURE 5.13** Example of Transitional Spelling

One day we went to the beech. We played volly ball and we swam arond in the ocean. My friends brought lots of food too. We ate enchaladis and tamalez and we had differen kinds of samiches.

Students at the transitional level of spelling may be spelling 60 to 90 percent of words correctly in their writing. They are on their way to becoming good spellers. They need to continue reading and writing each day for a variety of purposes. In addition, they will benefit from instruction on new spelling patterns as they begin to write longer, more complex words. In this way they will continue developing toward conventional or standard spelling.

Non-native English speaking students may vary somewhat in the developmental patterns just described. Young English learners whose only literacy instruction has been in English are likely to display the developmental patterns noted here. Nonetheless, their phonetic spellings are apt to reflect both their pronunciation and grammar in English; in other words, their phonological, morphological, and syntactic development in English. For example, a first-grade English learner recently wrote, "My ma se go st an by de food." ("My mama, she go to the store and buy the food.") The child's pronunciation and grammar are reflected in his spellings. He should be commended for his ability to convey his idea with enough sound/symbol regularity to make it decipherable to his teacher. At the same time, the teacher might choose one or two words to pronounce with him (e.g., *store*) to help him hear and represent the sounds more completely.

Non-native English speakers who begin literacy instruction in English when they are a little older may demonstrate similar English pronunciation and grammar features in their spellings. If they are literate in a primary language that uses an alphabet similar to English, such as Spanish, students may spell using sound/symbol correspondences from their first language. Literacy knowledge in their first language provides them with a starting point for spelling in English. A literate Spanish speaker new to English might write, for example, "I laic to see de circo," for "I like to see the circus." In this case, the word *like* was spelled using Spanish spelling rules. On the other hand, the student is already using the conventional spelling for the words *I*, *see*, and *to*. The word *circo* is borrowed entirely from Spanish.

Whether students are native or non-native English speakers, it is important to recognize the logic of their phonetic spellings and commend them for this accomplishment. Phonetic spellers are showing you their ability to hear sounds in words (phonemic awareness) and their knowledge of representing those sounds in a systematic manner, using conventional English sound/symbol correspondences (phonics) at least some of the time. These abilities permit them to spell in ways that make their writing decipherable. Their next challenge is to learn the conventional spellings of words that are not spelled exactly as they sound.

**Conventional** spellers spell nearly all words conventionally—that is, the way they are spelled in the dictionary. However, even students at the conventional level of spelling development must gradually learn how to spell longer, more complex and more difficult words, a process that takes place over a period of many years. You can expose them to more complex spelling patterns used in English through word study and through vocabulary development in the content areas, including literature study.

We recommend three sources of words that you may use for spelling instruction: (1) misspelled words that recur in the student's own writing, such as journal entries; (2) words related to themes or topics you are currently studying;

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and (3) words that illustrate particular spelling patterns pertaining to individual speech sounds and to word structure and word formation. At the level of individual sound/symbol correspondences, for example, it is necessary to learn the sounds represented by each consonant letter of the alphabet. Moreover, it is necessary to learn that some consonant letters represent more than one speech sound, such as the letter *c* in *can* and *city*. Likewise, students need to learn that some individual speech sounds are represented by two letters, called *digraphs*, such as *sh*, *ch*, *th*. In terms of relating spelling to word formation, it is necessary to learn, for example, that the consonant is doubled at the end of certain words such as *cut*, *bid*, and *let* when you add *-ing* to make *cutting*, *bidding*, *letting*. Thus, you'll want to select words that teach students basic spelling patterns in English, beginning with simple spelling patterns such as those found in the word families presented previously and moving on to more complex spelling patterns related to word structure and formation, including prefixes, suffixes, and root words. Of course, students who constantly read will learn new words and new spellings.

Selecting words from students' own writing and from the content of your curriculum is fairly straightforward. However, when it comes to word lists based on spelling patterns, which are rather numerous and complex, we recommend that you avail yourself of published resources on the topic rather than staying up late at night pulling together your own lists. Published lists provide a point of departure for you to modify according to your students' needs and your instructional goals. One resource is provided by a published spelling series that your school district may adopt. In addition, we note professional books in the resource list at the end of this chapter that have helped us understand English spelling instruction better.

Using ideas and information from the resources already given, you may wish to construct word lists to inform your instruction that evaluate the kinds of spelling patterns and conventions students know or don't know. Note the spelling list in Figure 5.14, given in November and then in March to a 6-year-old student. With this list the teacher was able to evaluate the student's knowledge and progress and to develop a curriculum for the student.

In summary, spelling is an important skill for writing. It is also influential in early reading development. As students learn the various spelling patterns of English, they can apply this knowledge to word identification during reading and writing. Although developmental spelling details and terminology may vary, the continuum we have offered provides a basic outline for describing students' spelling development in English whether they are first language learners or second language learners. Attention to students' spelling and thoughtful instruction yield benefits to students' literacy development.

**FIGURE 5.14** Spelling List Displaying 6-Year-Old Student's Development

| WORD GIVEN | FALL/NOVEMBER | SPRING/MARCH |
|------------|---------------|--------------|
| monster    | mistr         | monster      |
| united     | unti          | united       |
| dress      | trste         | dress        |
| bottom     | botm          | bottom       |
| hiked      | htiel         | hiked        |
| human      | hanin         | human        |
| eagle      | ell           | egole        |
| closed     | kvost         | klosed       |
| bumped     | bode          | bumped       |
| type       | top           | tipe         |

## Summary of Early Literacy Instructional Strategies

In summary, our view is that through authentic, meaningful literacy events, students will begin to develop understandings of both the forms and functions of print. Holistic teaching strategies are essential for English learners because they provide many opportunities for students to access the meanings and functions of written language while exposing them to the formal aspects of print. Therefore, we described several holistic strategies and a number of specific word recognition and phonics strategies that we believe promote early independence in reading and writing. As teachers in student-centered classrooms, we need to make decisions about how much and what kind of phonics and other skills instruction students may or may not need based on their progress in reading and writing. We strongly advocate continuous use of holistic, meaningful, and functional reading and writing throughout the year in combination with carefully selected skill-based instruction. In Chapters 6 through 8, we provide additional early literacy strategies for English language learners.

## Assessing Emergent Literacy Development

Assessing students' emergent literacy development requires us to focus on what students know, with an eye to moving them to the next developmental level. To document your English learners' emergent literacy development, we recommend keeping a **portfolio** that includes both reading and writing information for each student. For writing, you may select samples from students' journals and dictated stories. For reading, you may include a list of favorite stories. You might also wish to keep a checklist of your students' knowledge of letters/sounds and sight words and any other word recognition strategies you have taught. In addition, you may wish to use a holistic checklist such as those in Figures 5.15 and 5.16 to document reading and writing development.

Figure 5.15 presents a scale of writing development in which Levels 1 through 6 represent emergent writing behaviors, Level 7 represents transitional writing, and Levels 8 through 11 represent a developmental progression of more mature writing. Figure 5.16 provides developmental descriptors for reading in a manner similar to the writing development scale. Levels 1 through 5 represent emergent reading behaviors, and Levels 6 through 8 represent transitional reading. Levels 9 through 11 represent developmental progressions of more mature reading.

You can use these reading and writing development descriptors to document and evaluate individual student progress. Although these levels appear to represent steps of a staircase, it is important to note that they should not be considered as lockstep sequences. Students will develop in individual ways, perhaps skipping some levels and intermixing various levels as well. To use these developmental checklists, you put a check beside each statement that describes the child's behaviors exhibited during a particular observation period. In so doing, you document what the student can do and set goals for development to the next level. By collecting and marking your observations over time, you will be able to portray each student's progress, communicate his or her progress to parents and others, and adjust your instruction accordingly.

**Figure 5.15 Scale of Writing Development**

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Level 11: | Child uses a variety of strategies for revision and editing.<br>Child uses a variety of literary techniques to build suspense, create humor, etc.  |
| Level 10: | Child willingly revises and edits.<br>Child writes creatively and imaginatively.<br>Child writes original poetry.<br>Child writes clearly. The message makes sense.<br>Child uses commas, quotation marks, and apostrophes.  |
| Level 9:  | Writing includes details, dialogue, a sense of humor, or other emotions.<br>Spelling becomes more conventional.<br>Child willingly revises.  |
| Level 8:  | Child writes a story with a beginning, middle, and end.<br>Child uses different forms for several different purposes (narrative, expository, persuasive). Revisions include adding to the story or piece.<br>Child uses basic punctuation purposefully and consistently. |
| Level 7:  | Child writes the start of a story.<br>Child uses both phonics and sight strategies to spell words.<br>Child writes several short sentences.<br>Child rewrites a familiar story or follows the pattern of a known story or poem.  |
| Level 6:  | Child invents spellings.<br>Story is a single factual statement.<br>Message is understandable (decipherable).  |
| Level 5:  | Child labels or makes statement about drawings.<br>Letters have some connection to sounds.<br>Child writes lists.<br>Child separates words with space or marker.   |
| Level 4:  | Letters don't match sounds, but child can explain written message.<br>Child writes strings of letters.   |
| Level 3:  | Child copies words he or she sees around the room.<br>Child writes letters and mock letters in a line across the page.<br>Child writes in left-to-right sequence, top to bottom of page.   |
| Level 2:  | Child copies words he or she sees around the room.<br>Child writes mock letters, but these may not be in any conventional sequence.<br>Child pretends to write.  |
| Level 1:  | Child attempts to write in scribbles or draws patterns.  |

Source: Adapted from L. Lamme and C. Hysmith, "One School's Adventure into Portfolio Assessment," *Language Arts*, 68, 629-640, December 1991. Copyright 1991 by the National Council of Teachers of English. Reprinted with permission.

As students advance beyond emergent literacy, we will introduce them to the idea of editing for publishing, as described in Chapter 7. At that time, we will begin to help them focus on conventional spelling. For now, though, we applaud everything the child produces. Our goal is to allow students the freedom to create as they write—to create the message of their choice while re-creating the medium, the spelling system. We also want them to have many choices in reading as they develop into mature readers.

**FIGURE 5.16** Scale of Reading Development

- Level 11: Child reads fluently from a variety of books and other materials.
- Level 10: Child seeks out new sources of written information.  
Child voluntarily shares information with other children.
- Level 9: Child uses context clues, sentence structure, structural analysis, and phonic analysis to read new passages in a functional, effective, and strategic manner.
- Level 8: Child reads unfamiliar stories haltingly, with little adult assistance.
- Level 7: Child reads familiar stories fluently.
- Level 6: Child reads short texts word by word.
- Level 5: Child memorizes text and can pretend to read a story.
- Level 4: Child participates in reading by supplying rhyming words and some predictable text.
- Level 3: Child talks about each picture (attends to pictures, less so to the story itself).
- Level 2: Child watches pictures as adult reads a story.
- Level 1: Child listens to a story but does not look at pages.

Source: Adapted from L. Lamme and C. Hysmith, "One School's Adventure into Portfolio Assessment," *Language Arts*, 68, 629–640, December 1991. Copyright 1991 by the National Council of Teachers of English. Reprinted with permission.

## Differentiating Instruction for Emergent Literacy

In order to match instruction to student needs, you start by considering your students' English language proficiency as well as their literacy experiences at home and/or in preschool, both in English and the primary language. Prior literacy experiences in either language are important because they potentially lay a foundation for the early literacy concepts that you will be assessing now to differentiate instruction. In addition, your students' home language literacy knowledge is important because many basic print concepts transfer between languages, as do many higher-level literacy skills.

In order to differentiate emergent literacy instruction, you need to assess what your students already know about the forms and functions of print in English. To do so, we recommend that you use the Scale of Writing Development (Figure 5.15) and the Scale of Reading Development (Figure 5.16). In addition, after reviewing our section on "Print Concepts in Emergent Literacy" (beginning on page 185), you may create a checklist or refer to a *Concepts about Print* checklist based on the work of Marie Clay (1989). Many such checklists are available online using the key words "concepts about print" or going directly to <http://teams.lacoe.edu/> and click on assessments to find a variety of early literacy assessment tools. In addition, you may apply the developmental spelling descriptors to the writing produced by your students (i.e., prephonetic, phonetic, transitional, and conventional). You will

want to study the scales and checklists a bit so that you will know what to look for as you observe your students individually and in groups. Your assessment results should be kept in portfolios for documenting student progress over time.

The suggested checklists require you to observe students and collect performance samples, such as writing or drawing. Many observations will come from classroom activities. For example, during the first few weeks of school, you will want to offer your students many holistic literacy experiences as described in this chapter, such as journal writing and shared reading with Big Books. A major advantage of these meaningful encounters with print is that they also facilitate oral English development—an important goal for all your students. In addition, holistic strategies are beneficial at all early literacy levels; students take from the activity according to their own level of literacy development. While the children are enjoying these activities, *you* will be making informal observations about their literacy knowledge, and recording these afterwards according to the scales and checklists noted earlier. In addition, you may need to call students individually in order to gather information you were unable to observe during instruction.

After collecting the information, you will be able to group students homogeneously for explicit instruction on areas of assessed need, such as basic print concepts, letter-sound correspondences, and sight word recognition. As you begin instruction, you may need to alter group membership as appropriate based on your ongoing assessment of student needs. In addition, these groups should meet on a relatively short-term basis, disbanding when your goals are achieved. You will also continue with holistic reading and writing strategies, in small heterogeneous groups or with the whole class, in order to model fluent reading and writing for enjoyment and learning. By offering both holistic literacy activities and explicit skills instruction based on assessed needs, you will provide **differentiated** instruction in a **balanced** emergent literacy curriculum.

You may recall our planning scaffold for differentiated instruction, addressing the questions: *who*, *what*, *how*, and *how well*. We use that framework now to illustrate a differentiated, emergent literacy lesson, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Carle, 1986). This lesson forms part of a theme study on how living things grow and change. Several children have brought in caterpillars that now live, well-fed, in jars near the window sill.

**Who?** Kindergarten students from various primary language backgrounds, identified as **beginning** to **intermediate** in English language proficiency. Most of the students know very basic print concepts for English: the front and back of a book, how to turn pages, and reading print from left to right. Many are still developing the concept of “word”; all are developing a sight word vocabulary. All are working on letter-sound correspondences while refining phonemic awareness and their understanding of the alphabetic principle.

**What?** Students follow along visually as you read with a pointer; they chime in on the repeated refrain, “But he was still hungry,” during a whole-class, shared reading of a Big Book version of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. All students will learn to recognize and understand, orally and in writing, the words: *apple*, *pear*, *plum*, *strawberry*, and *orange*. They will also be able to clap the syllables when pronouncing the words to develop and practice phonemic awareness.

*How?* Students who are **beginners** in English will be able to match pictures of the fruits to the corresponding written words, thereafter drawing and labeling them in their personal word booklets. Students who are **intermediate** in English and demonstrate basic phonemic awareness will, as a group, dictate three words to the teacher that begin with the same initial sound as *pear* and three that begin with same initial sound as in *strawberry*. They will then copy and illustrate the words in their personal word booklets under two headings: “P words” and “S words.”

*How Well?* Student word booklets form the primary means of assessing student learning. While all students are working on their booklets, the teacher visits each one individually to elicit word knowledge and recognition, to determine whether students can hear sounds in words, and to determine how well students can match the beginning sound of a word with its corresponding letter.

## Summary

In this chapter, we presented current viewpoints on emergent literacy in contrast to traditional reading readiness views. We described the early insights about the forms and functions of print that learners who are new to the written word must develop, regardless of their age. In addition, we focused on current efforts to forge stronger connections between families and schools, including descriptions of programs to assist the parents of English learners in learning English themselves. We also provided a variety of strategies for developing early reading and writing and suggested several ways to assess and document emergent literacy development. Finally, we discussed differentiated instruction for young students and offered an example lesson to illustrate how to do so.

Figure 5.17 summarizes the teaching strategies described in this chapter, showing the many age levels to which they may be applied, provided the content is age appropriate. Most of the strategies in Figure 5.17 will be used in the early grades, of course, but you may find older English learners who have not been to school or did not learn how to read in their primary language. As a result, these older students may be able to profit from some of the strategies teachers normally use with younger learners. Through ongoing evaluation you can make appropriate decisions about which strategies will be most useful to you and your students as you help them become readers and writers. Nevertheless, to bridge a possible gap between home and school, you will probably want to start by reading aloud to students of all ages to give them a strong sense of good stories and to start them on the road to becoming competent readers. A good teacher will continually evaluate children's progress and assist them as needed with such skills as sight word recognition and other word analysis skills. But the heart of beginning literacy instruction is reading aloud to children and sharing the wonder and magic in reading and writing for ourselves and others.



**FIGURE 5.17** Grade Levels in Which Strategies May Be Used

| STRATEGY \ GRADE LEVEL | K | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|
| Alphabet books         | → |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Assessment             |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Formal                 |   |   |   |   |   | → |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Informal               | → |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Dialogue journals      | → |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Drawing                | → |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Experiments            | → |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Invented spelling      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Labeling               | → |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Language experience    | → |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Name charts            | → |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Play centers           | → |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Reading aloud          | → |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Shared reading         | → |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Wall charts            | → |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Word recognition       |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Sight words            | → |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Phonics                | → |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Context                | → |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| Dictionary             | → |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |

## Additional Internet Resources

### ■ Colorin Colorado for Educators

[www.colorincolorado.org/educators](http://www.colorincolorado.org/educators): In Colorin Colorado you'll find an abundance of resources for teaching ELs. Links include "Reaching Out to ELL Students and Families," "ELL Resources by Grade," and links for content instruction, reading, writing, and assessment. With each link you'll find articles, webcasts, websites, and more resources on the specific topic.

### ■ Literacy Web for Classroom Teachers

[www.literacy.uconn.edu/teachers.htm](http://www.literacy.uconn.edu/teachers.htm): There are literally hundreds of sources, teaching strategies, and links at this site for preschool through adult education.

### ■ Read Write Think

[www.readwritethink.org](http://www.readwritethink.org): You'll find over a thousand lesson plans at K-12 grade levels here. The site is sponsored by the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English.

### ■ Reading Rockets

[www.readingrockets.org/](http://www.readingrockets.org/): Reading Rockets is a terrific site that we have used often in this book. It has sections for parents, teachers, principals, and librarians, and has lots of information in Spanish. There are lesson plans, webcasts, articles, and more.

## Suggestions for Further Reading

Antunez, B. (2009). Reading and English language learners. Retrieved on October 24, 2011, from <http://readingrockets.org/article/341/>.

This excellent article provides a clear overview of how to teach reading to primary-grade English language learners using current research and policy guidelines. It begins with the recommendation to teach beginning reading in children's primary language, if possible. Then it illustrates how to incorporate five components of beginning English reading in a developmentally appropriate manner: (1) phonemic awareness; (2) phonics; (3) vocabulary; (4) reading fluency, including oral reading skills; and (5) reading comprehension strategies. Each section includes special considerations to keep in mind for young English language learners.

August, D., & Shanahan, T. (Eds.). (2006) *Developing literacy in second language learners: Report of the national literacy panel on language-minority children and youth*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

This text comprehensively reviews research on language minority students. If you're interested in research on English learners, this is the place to go.

Cameron, L. (2009). *Teaching languages to young learners*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

This excellent book with a focus on teaching and learners is an exceptional resource if you work with young students. Chapters include "Learning Language through Tasks and Activities," "Learning the Spoken Language," "Learning Words," "Learning Grammar," "Learning Literacy Skills," "Learning through Stories," and "Theme-Based Teaching and Learning." This comprehensive book should be in every elementary teacher's library.

Helman, L., Bear, D., Templeton, S., Invernizzi, M., & Johnston, F. (2011). *Words their way with English learners: Word study for phonics, vocabulary, and spelling* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.

This text is so detailed that you would never be able to use all of the information in it. However,

all the theoretical and practical knowledge that you are likely to ever need is here. Chapters range from assessment, to organization, to working with students in the emergent stages, to working with word study, within-word patterns, and affixes, and much more. This book is helpful for teachers working at every grade level. The second edition adds new languages and activities.

Carrasquillo, A., Kucer, S. B., & Abrams, R. (2004). *Beyond the beginnings: Literacy interventions for upper elementary English language learners*. New York: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

This informative book is both comprehensive and brief (under 200 pages). Chapters include "English Language Learners in United States Schools," "English Literacy Development and English Language Learners," "Moving Beyond Transition: Struggling English Language Learners in the Regular/Mainstream Classroom," "Instructional Writing Strategies for Struggling English Language Learners," "Instructional Practices to Promote Reading Development in English Language Learners," and "English Literacy across the Curriculum." It is a valuable book for every teacher's library.

Hamayan, E. (1994). Language development of low literacy children. In F. Genesee (Ed.), *Educating second language children: The whole child, the whole curriculum, the whole community* (pp. 278-300). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

This chapter describes the author's experiences teaching literacy in English to nonliterate, adolescent English learners in a Southeast Asian refugee camp to help prepare them for relocation to North America. The author provides a thorough discussion of teaching strategies, such as dialogue journals, along with the students' responses to her efforts. A combination of holistic and structural (e.g., phonics) instruction is recommended along with a special emphasis on promoting understanding of the purposes and functions of reading and writing.

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Peregoy, S. F., & Boyle, O. (2000). English learners reading English: What we know, what we need to know. In L. Meyer (Ed.), *Theory Into Practice*, 39(4), 237–247.

This article looks at some basic elements of reading in a second language. Headings include “Diversity among English Learners,” “Good Readers Reading in English,” “English Language Proficiency,” “Background Knowledge: Text Content,” “Background Knowledge: Text Structure,” “Phonemic Awareness and Phonics,” “Experience in the Primary Language,” “Types of Writing Systems,” “Writing Systems Similar to English,” “Writing Systems Different from English,” “Students with Minimal Literacy Experience,” and “Instructional Implications.”

Samway, K. D. (2006). *When English language learners write: Connecting research to practice, K–8*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

This book on writing in the early grades is invaluable to every teacher of English language learners. Following a brief history of writing research, chapters include “Core Research about the Writing of ELLs,” “Sketches of ELLs Becoming Writers,” “Gender, Race, Ethnicity, Social Class, and Writing,” “Reading/Writing Connections,” “Reflective Writing,” and “The Influence of the Environment on Children’s Writing.” This excellent book fills an important gap in ELL education: writing development in a second language.

Snow, C. E., Burns, M. S., & Griffin, P. (Eds.). (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young*

*children*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

A national panel of experts was given the task of “conducting a study of the effectiveness of interventions for young children who are at risk of having problems learning to read.” This book is the report that reviewed research and gave advice on teaching reading. Chapters address the process of learning to read, who has reading difficulties, predictors of success and failure in reading, preventing reading difficulties before kindergarten, instructional strategies for kindergarten and the primary grades, and recommendations for practice and research. English language learners are discussed throughout the chapters. Panels that make recommendations about reading always find their critics, and this book is no exception. However, whatever your perspective on reading, this is a book you should read.

Uribe, M., & Nathenson-Mejia, S. (2008). *Literacy essentials for English language learners: Successful Transitions*. New York: Teachers College Press.

This is a book we wish we had when we started working with young children. It deals with specific topics we recommend to all teachers: creating support for learners, as well as using read-alouds, guided reading, shared reading, and writing. Each chapter, clearly and interestingly written, will give you information that will assist you with using the strategies with confidence and success.

## Activities

1. Identify two or three excellent kindergarten or first-grade teachers serving English learners. To help you in your search, ask a teacher, principal, or supervisor to make recommendations and help you get permission to observe those teachers. Spend an hour or so in each class taking note of the physical arrangement of the classroom, the kinds of reading and writing activities children do, and the kinds of things the teacher says and does to engage children in reading and writing.

How would you evaluate what you see going on? What do these excellent teachers do similarly? What do they do differently? Can you identify their literacy philosophy based on what you see happening in the classroom (e.g., emergent literacy or reading readiness)?

2. Think about the “ideal” emergent literacy environment for children entering school for the first time. How would you organize your classroom