



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

MINISTRY OF GENERAL EDUCATION

Chapter 2

Emergent literacy in ECE Zambia



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CONTENTS

1	THE ECE EMERGENT LITERACY PROGRAMME IN ZAMBIA.....	1
1.1	ECE COMPETENCES DEVELOPED IN ZAMBIAN LANGUAGES.....	1
1.2	SKILLS TO BE REVISITED IN GRADE I.....	1
2	ORAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT	2
2.1	LISTENING.....	2
2.2	SPEAKING	2
2.2.1	Interaction.....	2
2.2.2	Pragmatic awareness.....	2
3	KEY CONCEPTS IN EMERGENT LITERACY.....	4
3.1	PRINT CONCEPT AND MEANINGFULNESS	4
3.2	SOUND, PHONOLOGICAL AND PHONEMIC AWARENESS.....	5
3.2.1	Sound Awareness.....	5
3.2.2	Phonological Awareness.....	5
3.2.3	Phonemic Awareness.....	5
3.3	PHONICS.....	6
3.4	FLUENCY AND COMPREHENSION	7
3.5	VOCABULARY	7
3.6	OTHER SKILLS.....	8
3.6.1	Orientation in space.....	8
3.6.2	Visual Perception and Discrimination skills.....	9
4	READING.....	11
4.1	REGULAR READING TO THE LEARNERS.....	11
4.2	CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT	12
4.3	SUFFICIENT PRACTICE AND GRADUAL LEARNING	12
5	WRITING.....	13
5.1	WHAT TO WRITE	13
5.2	HOW TO WRITE.....	13
5.2.1	Motor skills.....	13
5.2.2	Shaping letters.....	13
6	ECE LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS.....	15

In Zambia, the National Literacy Framework (2013) guides teachers in the process of teaching language and literacy to ECE and primary learners.

For this second chapter of the Emergent Literacy Manual for ECE, the ideas of the National Literacy Framework have been customised to the context of emergent literacy in ECE, with the support of MoGE.

This chapter intends to strengthen the knowledge of teachers and other people involved in ECE regarding emergent literacy.

- Content: Emergent literacy skills: definition and description
- Outcome: Theoretical background on emergent literacy development
- Target group: ECE teachers, school leaders and MoGE officials concerned with ECE

I THE ECE EMERGENT LITERACY PROGRAMME IN ZAMBIA

I.1 ECE COMPETENCES DEVELOPED IN ZAMBIAN LANGUAGES

In Nursery and Reception classes in Early Childhood Education, language and literacy is taught in the local language. Emergent literacy classes in ECE are focused on awareness, oral language and reading visuals. Pre-language and literacy lessons build on the following competencies and skills:

Oral language: listening and speaking
Print concept and meaningfulness
Sound awareness
Phonological awareness
Phonemic awareness
Phonics (orally)

Fluency and comprehension
Vocabulary, words and sentences (orally)
Orientation in space
Visual discrimination

I.2 SKILLS TO BE REVISITED IN GRADE I

Some learners do not have the opportunity to attend ECE. Teachers in the first grade of Primary Education will need to revisit the emergent literacy skills for those learners. This repetition is very useful to learners who did attend ECE as well, as it allows them to automatise the learning processes even more.

The following skills need to be revisited in Grade I:

- Recognising and differentiating sounds
- Segmenting words into sounds orally
- Expanding and manipulating language
- Reading initial sounds i.e. letters, syllables and words
- Basic reading
- Expressive writing and drawing
- Introducing common words and simple sentences using basic educational script
- Segment words into syllables

2 ORAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

2.1 LISTENING

Learners should be encouraged to listen to each other and to their teacher as they tell stories. Learners should also listen to instructions, and ask and answer questions. In addition, specific literacy listening skills need to be practised such as sound and phonological and phonemic awareness, as described in the key emergent literacy concepts below.

ORAL LANGUAGE: LISTENING	Learners: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen to the teachers as they tell stories, read texts or give instructions• Listen to peers as they tell stories or ask questions• Encourage peers to give more details• Play games with words (riddles, tongue twisters), rhyme and sing
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2.2 SPEAKING

2.2.1 Interaction

Vygotsky, a 20th century psychologist from Russia who developed ideas about how children learn, emphasised that learning happens through interaction. It is therefore important that learners do a lot of talking in class and that a real dialogue is fostered, instead of learners merely answering questions. Learners should have lots of opportunities to:

- Start interactions – Encourage learners to ask questions and to describe what they are doing.
- Communicate ideas – Ask them questions about their day, about their lives and about their likes and dislikes. Encourage them to discuss these ideas with each other.
- Ask questions or explain if they did not understand someone or something – Ask questions such as “Did you understand what Tanzi said?” or “What do you think Godfrey is saying?”. This gives them a chance to restate and use new vocabulary.
- Respond to stories or questions – Reading to and with learners is just the beginning. Before reading a story, ask questions such as “Have you ever seen...?”, “Has it ever happened to you that...?”.
- Participate in discussion – Having discussions is an exchange. It involves skills, such as listening to what is said, understanding, waiting for your turn to speak, asking questions when you do not understand, etc. The more learners participate in discussions with each other or with the teacher, the better they become at learning how to participate in discussions.

Peer interaction facilitates both learning and development of emergent literacy. Learners should be encouraged to ask questions, engage in role-play and talk freely while working independently in groups.

2.2.2 Pragmatic awareness

Pragmatic awareness is also an important part of speaking and emergent literacy. Pragmatic awareness includes the following:

- ECE learners understand that the manner in which they speak should be adjusted depending on the listener. For instance, speaking to another child will be different from speaking to a Minister.
- ECE learners know what to do when people do not understand them. For example, they should repeat what was said or offer a description.

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- ECE learners are able to ask for explanations if they did not understand someone or something.
 - ECE learners are to some extent in control of what they say and understand what the consequences are of what they say.

Pragmatic awareness is the prelude to thinking about who you are writing or talking to or for.

<p>ORAL LANGUAGE: SPEAKING</p>	<p>Learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use language in play• Interact with adults and other children in a variety of ways• Choose the culturally correct way of speaking to other children, their teacher, the head teacher, grandparents, etc.• Repeat or rephrase what was said when the listener indicates that the message was not understood• Sing songs• Say tongue twisters, riddles, rhymes and poems• Retell a story
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3 KEY CONCEPTS IN EMERGENT LITERACY

The key concepts in emergent literacy are the foundation for the key concepts of reading at later stages. What they learn in ECE continues in Grade 1, 2 and 3. You will notice the same concepts - phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension - through this period. Some aspects of the key concepts of early grade reading are also covered within ECE. Children evolve as literate persons.

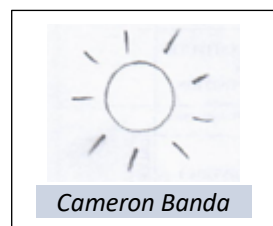
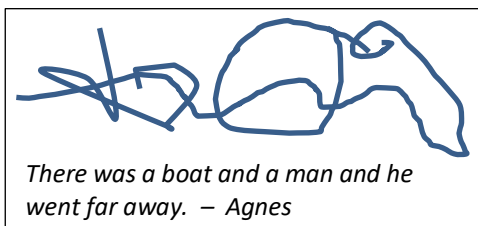
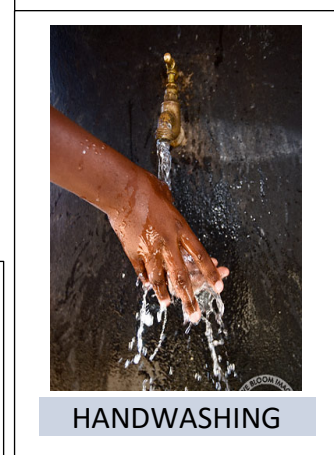
In ECE, teachers organise guided play activities in which these concepts are explored, practised and developed in a holistic way and not separately.

3.1 PRINT CONCEPT AND MEANINGFULNESS

It is important for learners to realise that printed text carries meaning and that print is a code for the words one speaks. So print should be considered meaningful and useful.

ECE appropriate literacy activities include:

- Reading a story while pointing at the words.
- Use pictures for learners to tell or retell stories.
- Use their written names (name tags) in naturally occurring situations in the class.
- Using pictograms and symbols in class, e.g. Name tags, symbols for chores, etc. Learners will begin to associate the pictograms and symbols with their own and their friends' names.
- Adding labels to pictures together with the learners and sounding out the word as it is written on the label.
- Having learners "read" or tell their fellow learners about their pictures and then "write" (draw) what they say. Start with: "Tell me about your picture", and avoid: "What is that?", "That does not look like a ..." or "Let me show you how to draw a ..."
- The pictures and stories should be clear to them.
- Making drawings to remember events.



PRINT CONCEPT AND MEANINGFULNESS

Learners:

- Talk about pictures
- Interpret visual messages or instructions
- Retell a written message that they dictated or that they were also told
- Appreciate print has meaning and can be used for communication
- Give reasons for reading and writing

3.2 SOUND, PHONOLOGICAL AND PHONEMIC AWARENESS

3.2.1 Sound Awareness

In ECE teachers help learners to develop awareness of the sounds around them.

An initial step is to help learners discriminate between general sounds, such as sounds in their environment, sounds of instruments, animal sounds and sounds the learners make (clapping, stomping or using their voice).

Manipulating letter sounds is abstract. Starting with what they know, namely sounds in the environment, is a good way to prepare them for phonemic awareness.

When learners develop sound awareness, they can name sounds or talk about sounds: e.g. “I hear a tap dripping, I hear a shaker, the river makes a soft noise, the siren of the ambulance is a loud sound”.

Good sound awareness helps learners to remember, and to hear the difference between and associate sounds with objects or events. They should be able to state which sound came first before the next. For example, if the sound of a drum was heard earlier than the shaker, they should say: “I heard a drum before a shaker”. They should also recognise the voice of a speaker before seeing them.

3.2.2 Phonological Awareness

When sound awareness has been created, then phonological awareness can be built, through games involving rhymes, alliteration and syllables.

Working on phonological awareness helps to learn objectification. This is the ability to distance oneself from the meaning or content of a word, but instead think of the form or sound of the word.

A young child will only think of the meaning of a word. E.g. When you say “biscuit”, the child will think of how good biscuits taste. Later a child will start thinking of the sound and the form of the word such as bis-cuit (two parts or syllables) or bissssss-cuit (I can hear a [sss]).

Objectification is an important step towards reading and writing. The ability to objectivise can for example be tested by asking a learner what the longest word is: [pigeon] or [cow]. Younger learners may answer ‘cow’ because they focus on the meaning and a cow is bigger than a pigeon. Slightly older Reception learners may be able to focus on the form, and recognise that [pigeon] is the longest word.

3.2.3 Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness is usually the last of the phonological awareness skills to develop. When kids have this skill, they can hear and “play” with the smallest units of sounds (phonemes) in words and syllables.

Activities may include finding words with the same sound at the beginning (alliteration), orally blending sounds into a word, as well as breaking up words into the separate sounds (segmenting) and being able to delete and substitute sounds in a word.

SOUND AWARENESS	<p>Learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hear the difference between sounds: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Environmental sounds 2. Instrumental sounds 3. Body percussion sounds 4. Voice sounds • Name sounds or talk about sounds • Remember sounds
PHONO- LOGICAL AWARENESS	<p>Learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Segment words into syllables • Blend syllables into a word • Dissociate words from their meaning (objectification)
PHONEMIC AWARENESS	<p>Learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are aware of initial sounds or alliteration • Are aware of end sounds, for example rhyme (the same ending) or vira (the same last syllable) • Repeat rhymes or predict rhyming words in a text • Can identify middle sounds • Substitute sounds (initial, middle, end) • Blend phonemes into words orally • Segment words into phonemes orally

3.3 PHONICS

The next step is phonics instruction. This helps learners to connect letters (graphemes) with sounds (phonemes) and become readers and writers.

Phonics instruction should start after the above skills have been learnt. In practice, the phonics are introduced and presented to the learners throughout ECE in a playful way, but they will only be taught to mastery in Primary classes.

When teaching phonics in ECE, it is important to:

- Use a multisensory approach:
e.g. When talking about the days of the week in Chitonga, you can point out that many of the words begin with the /b/ sound. Ask learners to sound out /b/ repeatedly. Then as they understand that words like 'bwabili' 'bwatatu' 'bwane' and 'bwasanu' begin with the /b/ sound, introduce the letter sound 'b'. Find a child whose name begins with 'B'. Then introduce different ways to write and trace the letter 'B'. For example, learners trace the letter 'B' with their finger on sandpaper or with a stick on the playground. You may also ask learners to sing a song with words which have the sound /a/ as they form the letter 'a' with their entire bodies on the playground.
- Teach the sounds according to frequency of use in the local language.

In the early grades, learners will learn letters in this order:

- Lunda: a e i o u n k m h w t y ñ d p z f s v j b l ch plus additional blends
- Luvale: a e i o u n k kh m l h w t th v y ny s ng j nj ch mb p ph z nd f sh plus additional blends
- Kikaonde: a e i o u l k n b s m t p w y h j f d v ñ lw ly plus additional blends
- Chitonga: a e i o u n k l m b w y t s z d c g p j b v f kk cc hh ñ ng nk nw ny plus additional more blends

- Chinyanja: a e i o u k m t b n l p c w f d s g j z v y r mw mb nd plus additional blends
- Ibibemba: a e i o u n b m k l p c t s f w y j ŋ ng' ch sh bw plus additional blends
- Silozi: a e i o u l n b k m t s z w y h p f ny ñ c sh ng ñw aa ee ii oo uu nk nt ns plus additional blends

Feel free to introduce all the letters; teach them one at a time as they become relevant. What is important, is that learners have seen all the letters multiple times throughout the year. As stated in the ECE syllabus, all letters from all local languages should be introduced in ECE, regardless of the local language spoken in the region.

PHONICS	Learners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link sounds or phonemes to letters or graphemes and vice versa • Recognise several letters
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3.4 FLUENCY AND COMPREHENSION

Fluency at the ECE level involves frequently listening to fluently read stories and texts, both in big and small groups.

After learners listen, test their comprehension in a variety of ways. You do not do all the activities at once. Identify different activities for them to do in different lessons:

- Answering questions about the text
- Drawing pictures about the read text
- Putting pictures accompanying the text in the correct order
- Role playing what happened in the read text
- Showing learners only some pictures of the book (leaving out others) and ask learners what is missing

FLUENCY AND COMPREHENSION	Learners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow rhythms • Copy rhythms • Listen frequently to a variety of fluently read stories • Demonstrate comprehension of text, e.g. by retelling or drawing a read text
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3.5 VOCABULARY

Vocabulary refers to the number of words a person knows and uses. Often, we will know and understand many more vocabulary words than we use. Research shows that early vocabulary acquisition greatly impacts on reading success or difficulties and that this has an impact on later success in school (Hart & Risley, 1995).

Teaching vocabulary means that teachers talk about words and their meaning, play with words, invite children to make up silly games with words and introduce new words both in natural conversation or as part of an activity. Learning new words has little to do with quizzing children using flashcards and more to do with helping children to use new words to improve how they express themselves.

Since learners may come from different language backgrounds, it is very important that teachers conduct all lessons in the assigned familiar or local language, which will expand learners' vocabulary. Code switching can also be useful: if a learner uses a word correctly in his or her home language (when this differs from the language of instruction). The teacher should praise the learner and ask peers if they know how to say this word in the language of instruction or tell the learner the

correct word.

Frequently reading a variety (fiction and non-fiction) of texts to learners helps to build their vocabulary. It is therefore important to also read slightly longer texts in class which may contain more complex words. During reading, upon coming across a complex word, ask the learners what they think this word means. This teaches them to derive meaning from the context. Complex words can also simply be explained.

If comprehension is to be tested after reading, ask the learners if they remember the difficult word that was used in the text.

Easy books with short sentences are just one type of book for learners. They should also have access to books that introduce them to new words and texts that challenge them to build vocabulary.

VOCABULARY AND WORDS	Learners: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate a widening vocabulary in their own language• Deduce the meaning of an unfamiliar word from context• Remember some new words briefly after they were introduced
SENTENCES	Learners: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use increasingly long sentences• Describe the feelings or qualities of a character in a story• Recall a series of events in chronological order

3.6 OTHER SKILLS

The skills below may, at a first glance, have a less direct link to emergent literacy. Yet reading and writing instruction can only succeed if these other skills are also given adequate attention.

3.6.1 Orientation in space

3.6.1.1 Orientation in space

Spatial orientation is one of the key capacities which must be properly developed if a child is to learn to read and write easily. The early childhood movement patterns like rolling, creeping, crawling, rocking and later walking, running, climbing, swinging all build a sensory “map” in the child’s brain of where they are in space at any particular time (e.g. I am next to you, behind the table)

1. At first, orientation starts in one’s own body. (e.g. My head is there, this is my foot).
2. Spatial orientation is the first component of spatial awareness. It is knowing where you are and how to get around; it is the orientation of one’s body to the environment (e.g. This ball is next to me, the door is behind me, the roof is above me).
3. The second component of spatial awareness is spatial visualisation. That is the ability to generate and manipulate images in your mind. A child is able to localise two objects in relation to each other (e.g. The ball is under the chair, the door is next to the cupboard).
4. An ECE learner may not really be able to see something from the point of view of someone else; this skill starts to develop more in grade 1.

Through actions and reflections regarding spatial awareness, children construct a basic understanding of spatial relationships. According to Jean Piaget (1956), the key spatial relationships pre-schoolers become aware of are “correspondences”, involving concepts like proximity, separation, order and sequence.

3.6.1.2 Positional language

In the interest of learners' writing skills, it is important that positional language (vocabulary of place, direction and distance) is acquired, as this will often be used during teaching later. For example:

- Writing is “from left to right” and “on” the line.
- The “next” line will be located “under” the “former” one.
- To shape the letter l, you start “at the top” and then go “down”.
- You want to focus learners' attention on the “middle” sound to help them hear and write the difference between “hot” and “hat”.

Examples of positional language to be taught in local language may include the following:

In, low(er), high(er), top, bottom, side, next to, outside, inside, in front of, in the middle, to the back, left, right, from, far, close, behind, on, between, etc.

ORIENTATION IN SPACE	Learners: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe where they are in space• Distinguish where body parts are• Refer to where things are in the environment relative to the own body• Name the location of objects in relation to each other• Demonstrate comprehension of positional language (vocabulary of place, direction and distance)• Practice reading direction• Practice direction top down
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Use these words in your discussions with learners, as you give directions or locate something in the classroom. Ask them to do the same.

3.6.2 Visual Perception and Discrimination skills

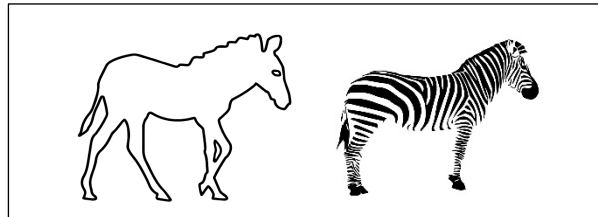
3.6.2.1 Visual perception

Visual perception can be practised by looking at pictures with learners and asking them to find details. Visual perception answers the question, “What do you see?”. E.g. Ask questions about details on a picture such as “How many buttons are on the girl’s dress?” or “What is she doing?”

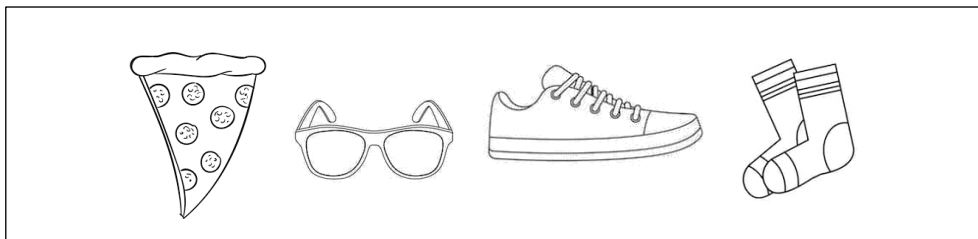
Practise perception by making jigsaw puzzles. Learners need to look at the picture on the puzzle piece to find the correct place. Puzzle pieces may need to be turned to fit and thus foster orientation skills.

3.6.2.2 Visual discrimination

Visual discrimination is seeing the difference between pictures, figures and ultimately characters. For example: “Find the 3 differences between the two pictures”,



“Which figure is the odd one out in this series?”,



“Which letter is different (f - f - g - f)?”. Visual discrimination answers the question: “Can you find...?”



VISUAL PERCEPTION AND DISCRIMINATION

Learners:

- Answer questions related to details in pictures
- See similarities in drawings, shapes, letters and words
- See differences in drawings, shapes, letters and words
- Make increasingly difficult jigsaw puzzles
- Match letters

4 READING

The key emergent literacy concepts all build up to reading. Meanwhile we should encourage emergent reading by:

- Regular reading to the learners
- Classroom environment
- Sufficient practice and gradual learning

4.1 REGULAR READING TO THE LEARNERS

Regularly reading a variety of texts to the learners that are accompanied by pictures, supports their vocabulary development, fluency, comprehension, print concept and meaningfulness.

When you plan to read to the learners, keep the following in mind:

- Selection of texts that are at the right level.
- Grouping, e.g. Will you read to the whole class? Will you tell the story first to learners who are struggling in a small group?

Before reading:

- Ask the learners to look at the cover of the book and brainstorm what the text may be about.
- Discuss the picture on the cover.

During reading:

- Show the pictures.
- Use intonation and facial expressions.
- Depending on the reading level of the learners, tell the story in their own words (younger learners) or read the text more literally (older learners).
- Encourage children to ask questions and give answers and ask boys and girls similar types of questions.
- React to comments of learners: e.g. “Yes, this is a funny story, isn’t it, Musonda?”
- Ask questions and encourage children to answer:
 - Ask the learners to relate the text to the pictures.
 - Reflect on the story: How does the character feel? What does this mean in the story? What will happen next?
 - Talk about the vocabulary and illustrations: What does this word mean? Can we see that in the picture?

After reading:

- The learners reconstruct the story. Ask them to retell the story in their own words.
- Additional reflections on the text are shared. For example, did Ziba respond in a pleasant way in the story? What would you do in his place?
- The learners read the picture book individually or in small groups again.
- The learners make a drawing.
- The learners dramatise the story.
- Show learners some of the pictures, leaving out some. Learners tell the teacher which pictures are missing.

- Reflect on the reading conditions with the learners: Were the reading conditions conducive (lighting, temperature, space). What is needed for them to concentrate and to enjoy the reading? Was it silent enough in the classroom? Were the pictures clearly and properly shown? What could be done better in the next reading session?

In creating meaningfulness, it is important for children to read pictures and pictograms. Therefore, encourage learners to:

- Read their own names on items, their drawings, notebooks, etc.
- Read pictures with words. For example:
 - The alphabet flashcards which have one picture and the word underneath
 - Retelling a story of a picture book which was told in group, based on the pictures
 - Words based on a drawn message of a learner
- Read pictograms or symbols. For example:
 - Indications on the boys' and girls' toilet
 - Visual instructions on how to wash hands
 - Pictures on the shelves which indicate which toys need to be in that place
 - Pictures on a visual timetable, week or weather calendar

4.2 CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

It would be good if there is an area in the class with a little library and where children can possibly sit comfortably. The library can be a shelf and cabinet, or a basket of books neatly arranged. During group work, learners can be there to look in books and read pictures. Teach learners how to choose books and how to place them back in storage.

4.3 SUFFICIENT PRACTICE AND GRADUAL LEARNING

It is important to gradually introduce phonics where sounds and letters are linked. Phonics should be coupled with sufficient practice to enable learners to recognise the letter sounds and shapes and read words with automaticity. When a couple of letters are known, it is important for learners to regularly read words with those sounds, preferably supported with a picture.

What is important for very young learners is that they are exposed to different levels of materials but are not required to master them. Refrain from saying, "That's too hard" or "You should know that already". School is for learning.

READING	<p>Learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at or "read" picture books individually or in small groups • Retell a story • Read pictures • Recognise their own names on items, their drawings, notebooks, etc. • Sound out and blend short words composed of letters which are known and accompanied by a picture
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5 WRITING

5.1 WHAT TO WRITE

Writing is an important part of literacy. Writing and reading together make a human being literate. Writing begins long before phonics instruction. Learners can be encouraged to draw out their messages. For example:

- A drawn shopping list
- A drawn instruction on how to build a boat with the blocks
- A drawn invitation to a school event

Some learners could also be encouraged to include some letters or copy short words in these first “written texts”. In addition, this can be in the shape of writing patterns to practise certain fine motor movements.

5.2 HOW TO WRITE

5.2.1 Motor skills

Writing should start with big movements (even involving the whole body), for example by writing in the air using our entire arm. Gradually progress to smaller movements by writing in the air or the sand using the finger. The last step is to work in exercise books.

It is important that learners are in a comfortable position when manipulating a small tool such as tweezers or a pen. The posture held contributes to correct formation but may differ among learners.

Start learners off by allowing them to use different tools for writing: pencils, pens, markers, crayons... whatever you have. They will need some time to figure out what the tools are meant to do. Small children are not interested in making representations or drawings that we recognise as adults. They are interested in what their efforts can produce. As soon as they see you writing, they will be interested in writing as well. Invite them to draw and write by asking them, “What would you like to draw?, What would you like to write?” They might ask you to draw or write for them, but encourage them to write or draw on their own.

Big movements → smaller movements → work on paper (e.g. exercise books)

5.2.2 Shaping letters

The very first step is handling patterns such as zigzags or waves. Children can use what they see in the classroom to copy shapes and letters. Introduce letter shapes through flashcards, teacher writing, signs in or around the classroom and in their name. In ECE the focus is on the use of small letters. For learners at this level, all texts should be written using the standard script prescribed by MoGE.

Writing patterns → writing letters

First there should be tracing, then copying and finally forming letters and words without the help of a model. Follow the process below:

Tracing → copying → forming letters → forming words

Sometimes learners will write mirrored letters. This is when the letter is written as if you are looking at it in a mirror. It is common at this stage and can be pointed out gently without

discouraging the learners.

WRITING	<p>Learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate fine motor skills, manipulate fingers and hands• Take a comfortable position when manipulating a pen or another small tool• Use big movements to form patterns or letters• Draw out their message• Trace writing patterns• Form writing patterns with examples• Trace letter shapes• Form letter shapes with examples• Form words
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6 ECE LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

In ECE, all learners develop at their own pace. Teachers should take into account that emergent literacy is a developmental process, which can be enhanced, but not changed as such.

Learners learn at their own pace. Those who are ready will profit from the opportunities. Those who are not, will need other opportunities.

Teachers should allow learners to work at their own level and use a differentiated approach in combination with plenty of group work. This way of working also accommodates learners with special needs who need more opportunities and a more gradual progression (more time for every step).



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