Understanding the Reading Process

Sources of Information in Text

There are three primary sources – Three "Secrets of Reading"

Meaning – readers use meaning to tell if what they read is making sense with what is known, fits with previous experiences and makes sense with the story.

Language structure – readers use their knowledge of language structure to verify that what is read sounds like the normal patterns of speech and/or book language.

Visual grapho-phonic – readers check visually to see that words look right or have the correct letter/sound association

As successful readers, we use all of these cues quickly and automatically. When one source of information breaks down, we immediately try another to derive meaning from the print we read.

Meaning - (M) in Running Records

What we read needs to make sense with our experiences, what we know about the world, and what is happening in the story.

> Text: Meg slept at her Grandma's house that night.
> Reader: Meg slept at her Grandma's horse that night.

What sources of information is the reader using? What sources is the reader neglecting?
- Uses **Visual/grapho-phonic** ("horse" looks similar to "house", in length, shape and many letters)
- Uses **Language** Structure (horse and house are both nouns that fit grammatically in that position in the sentence)
- Neglects to use **Meaning** as the substitution does not make sense.

*How can we prompt the reader to think about using **meaning** as a cue when reading?*
- Teacher repeats the misread sentence. Did that make sense? What do you think it could be? Let's read it again to make sense of it (read together)

Language Structure – (S) in Running Records

We use our knowledge of the way we talk to read. Our reading sounds like the language patterns we speak and the language of the books we read. This is why Oral Language development is critical in the development of written literacy and why the most important single thing teachers and parents can do to support early readers is to read aloud to them.

> Text: I go to the shops in our car. Reader:
> I goed to the shops in our car.

What sources of information is the reader using? What sources is the reader neglecting?

- Uses **Meaning** to read a word which makes sense to him/her, and partial visual sources (initial letters)
- His/her oral language patterns may be causing him to substitute goed for go.
- Doesn't check with the **Visual** cue to see that goed looks different to go.
- Not using **Structure** to self-correct that goed is grammatically incorrect and doesn't sound right in English (this is very difficult for young readers while their oral language is still developing).

*How can we prompt the reader to think about using **structure** as a cue when reading?*

- Do we say it that way? Does that sound right? (Child may say yes, as s/he speaks using this pattern of language…need lots of exposure to 'book language' and rich conversation.)

Visual/Grapho-phonic – (V) in Running Records

The words we read must match the letters/sounds we see. We look at the first, middle or last letter of a word, or a familiar part of a word.

> Text: Mouse ran under the door.
>
> Reader: Mouse ran under the table.

What sources of information is the reader using? What sources is the reader neglecting?

- Uses **Meaning** (it makes sense the mouse could run under the table) and Structure (table is the right kind of word to go at the end of the sentence – it sounds right in English.)
- Neglects to use **visual** cue to check the letters and sounds read don't match – it doesn't look right.

*How can we prompt the reader to think about using **visual/grapho-phonic** cues when reading?*

- Does that look right?
- What letter would 'table' start with?
- Read it again and get your mouth ready for the first sound of that word.

Don't pick up every misread word, especially at the first reading. Preserve the story line and meaning and enjoyment, only prompt if meaning is lost and the reader does not self correct.

After reading the book (or chapter or few pages), it is important to give the reader feedback which is explicit. I follow this structure:

1. One (or more if time allows) reading strategy or behaviour the reader is using correctly (eg: 'I noticed you stopped when your read table and realised that it didn't look right, so you changed it to
   door.' (point to text); 'I enjoyed listening to your expression when you saw the exclamation mark after 'excited!' – point to text).
2. One strategy or misread which can be a teaching point (eg: 'Can we just go back and look at this word more closely? You read it as "table", but does that look right?')

Reading Strategies

Alongside and integrated with the three information sources, successful readers also use multiple strategies to make sense of print. Reading is a dynamic and complex problem solving process – particularly when confronted with new or unknown words.

Strategies are mental operations – 'in the head' thinking which goes on automatically for successful readers. As teachers we need to model this 'in the head' thinking out loud and explicitly during Shared Reading, Read Aloud/ Think Aloud and Guided Reading teaching practices.

Teachers can notice, model and think about the following identifiable reading strategies:

Monitor - The reader notices that something is not accurate with the reading and attempts to check and/or correct errors. Successful readers monitor their understanding of what they read at all times by integrating all three sources of information.

Search - The reader notices that something is not accurate with the reading and searches for more information to correct it. A beginning reader may use only one source of information, but a fluent reader has learnt to integrate and try several. Emergent and Early readers will use picture clues to search for further information and this should be encouraged because it is a sign they are using the Meaning cueing system.

Predict - Successful readers predict words or events in the story as they go along. They use prior knowledge and experience, their knowledge of language, what makes sense, and what looks right. This becomes a continual and automatic process for the fluent reader and allows us to read fluently rather than word for word in a laboured manner.

Check - The reader checks that what s/he reads makes sense, looks right, and sounds right. This may occur after an error, or when he/she comes to an unknown word. It is important for the teacher to use Running Records to identify which sources of information the reader is using to check and whether there is an over-reliance on only one source. It is also helpful to sometimes cue readers to check when they pronounce the words accurately and not only when they mis-read. Fluent readers check the accuracy of words and meaning constantly and we don't want children to learn that you only check when the teacher cues them to.

Confirm - Successful readers use one or more sources of information to make certain that what they actually read is what they expected to read. Sometimes readers reread to verify meaning, or to take in the meaning of a sentence as a whole when they've problem-solved part of it. Re-reading is a behaviour that often signals a reader is confirming their understanding.

Self-Correct - Successful readers often notice (on their own) that something is not right in the reading. They detect and correct by searching and checking for more information (using the three "secrets") to self-correct. The self-correct could be a mis-pronounciation, a misread word or meaning that was not clear for them.

In addition, specific strategies that proficient readers use to comprehend deeply and infer more complex meanings have been identified. These can be modelled, taught and nurtured:

- Predicting
- Visualising
- Making Connections (to Prior Knowledge)
- Inferring
- Asking Questions
- Summarising
- Synthesising