Using Ehri's Phase Theory to Make Instructional Decisions in Reading

(from 1995, *Phases of Development in Learning to Read Words by Sight*; 2005, *The Science of Reading: A Handbook*;
2005, *Learning to Read Words: Theories, Findings and Issues*; 2023, *How Children Learn to Read Words,* H. Lane - UFLI)

Pre-alphabetic

- Lack letter-sound knowledge
- Identify words by salient letters, visual features, or environmental context (logos, stores, their own names)
- Read by using cues that do not involve letter-sound skills
- May memorize familiar stories
- Exhibit poor phonological skills
- Not yet blending any letter sounds
- Identify few, if any, sight words

Instructional focus:

- Phonological awareness
- Alphabet knowledge
- Letter-sound knowledge
- Concepts of print

Partial Alphabetic

- Know most letter names
- Emerging knowledge of letter-sound connections
- Blending skills emerge
- Can use some letter sounds to connect spelling and pronunciation
- Meager knowledge of sight words
- Slow decoding skills
- Mix up similarly spelled words due to weak letter-sound proficiency

Instructional focus:

- Phonemic awareness (3-4 phonemes)
- Letter-sound knowledge, including digraphs
- Attend to all the letters in a word for decoding
- Segment phonemes to spell unknown words
- Teach appx. 40 high frequency words using orthographic mapping

Full Alphabetic

- Have full letter-sound connections, including word families, syllables, and inflectional endings
- Blending becomes automatic
- Decoding is a self-teaching mechanism
- Segment, blend, and substitute phonemes with ease
- Growing bank of sight words
- Orthographic mapping enhances memory for words
- Accuracy and automaticity influence comprehension

Instructional focus:

- Onsets & rimes, word families, syllables, and endings
- Chunk words instead of letter-by-letter decoding
- Reread text to promote orthographic mapping
- Literal comprehension
- Confirm decoding with meaning
- Set for variability

Consolidated Alphabetic

- Use multiletter units to read words
- Use analogies to solve new words (D. Share's self-teaching hypothesis, 1995)
- Need fewer re-reads to secure words in memory
- Large bank of sight words
- Morphology facilitates word retention
- Capacity for deeper comprehension

Instructional focus:

- Spelling patterns
- Teach morphemes to assist word reading
- Use morphology to support vocabulary development
- Recognize various chunks within words
- Pronounce or chunk unfamiliar words aloud to secure them in memory
- Teach a variety of ways to analyze words – onset/rime, syllables, morphological units

Automatic Phase

- Word reading is quick and effortless
- Most words encountered have become sight words
- Unfamiliar words are decoded with highly-developed automaticity
- Have a variety of word-solving strategies at their disposal
- Little attention or effort is expended in recognizing the pronunciation and meanings of new words
- Visual and phonological information activates semantic codes in memory (unitization)
- Total focus on comprehension

Instructional focus:

- Prefixes, suffixes, base words & root words
- Vocabulary strategies
- Teach vocabulary within context
- Deep comprehension of complex text
- Text structure

Pre-A → A	A - D	D - K	K - Q	Q – Z

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