Laying The Foundations: Unpacking The Complex Interplay Between Pre-Reading Skills and Early Childhood Education

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Abstract

This study looks at how pre-reading skills, teaching methods, and early childhood education are all connected to how children develop reading abilities. It focuses on important skills like recognizing letters, understanding print, building vocabulary, and learning how to understand what they read. The research shows that teaching and learning these skills is not simple and emphasizes the need for teachers and parents to work together. They can create fun, play-based activities that help children develop the skills they need for reading success throughout their lives. The study also highlights how early education is key to helping children build these skills, with both teaching methods and playful learning experiences playing an important role. Ultimately, it shows how teachers and parents collaborating can create a positive environment that encourages early reading development.

Introduction

Before the actual reading act begins among children, there are things to be considered to make the task of reading more understandable. Children should be introduced to letters of alphabet i.e. alphabet awareness. They should recognize letters of the alphabet and should know how to recite them properly with correct sounds. With the knowledge of these, they can now know how to spell and articulate words and make difference between sounds and letters of alphabet in English. Readers must ensure that the writings include recognizable vocabulary and

grammatical patterns. When texts include foreign terminology, readers may incorporate essential terms via pre-processing tasks that emphasize language awareness, such as identifying synonyms, antonyms, derivatives, or related words. The selected texts must correspond to the age range, interests, gender, and cultural background of the target audience. With the help of their teacher, children should know how to pronounce difficult or unfamiliar words correctly before proper reading begins; also know where to stress, rise or fall when reading. They should also be taught where to start reading from and how to handle books. When children perfect all these, reading will be understandable and enjoyable to the audience/listeners (Izundu, 2024).

Early childhood education lays the foundation for future reading proficiency, with pre-reading skills playing a critical role in this developmental process (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Snow et al., 1998). Pre-reading skills, including alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, and print awareness are essential for children to develop reading proficiency (Nation & Newton, 1997; Adams, 1990).

Effective teaching methods, like play-based learning, can help young children develop important skills needed for reading (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2015). Additionally, it is crucial for parents and educators to work together to support children's early literacy growth—this is when children start to understand how spoken and written language are connected (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001).

Studies have shown that knowing the alphabet is a strong predictor of reading ability (Bond & Dykstra, 1967), and being aware of the sounds in words (phonological awareness) is a key factor in reading success (Bradley & Bryant, 1983; Goswami & Bryant, 1990). Understanding print, or knowing how books and writing work, is also an essential part of early literacy (Sulzby & Teale, 1991). Play-based learning gives children the chance to explore and discover through

hands-on experiences, which helps them build these critical reading skills (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2015).

When parents and educators collaborate, they can create a rich literacy environment that supports children's pre-reading abilities (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). By looking at how pre-reading skills, teaching methods, and parent-educator partnerships work together, this study aims to improve our understanding of how to best help young children develop their literacy skills in early education.

Conceptual Review

Pre-reading Skills

Pre-reading skills are essential competencies that children need to develop proficient reading abilities. Numerous abilities are acquired organically during a typical childhood, both at home and in nursery or preschool settings. Otagburuagu et al (2022), pre-reading skill is one of the stages of reading. It is the stage before the child (reader) engages in the reading exercise proper.

Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education (ECE) refers to the educational process for children from birth to age of 8, focusing on holistic development, socialization, and foundational skills (UNESCO, 2012).

UNESCO's ECE framework highlights five key dimensions:

1. Access: ensuring inclusive and equitable access to ECE

2. Quality: providing high-quality ECE programmes and services.

3. Equity: addressing disparities and promoting social cohesion

4. Partnership: encouraging cooperation between families, communities, and governments.

5. Systemic: strengthening ECE systems and policies.

Alphabet knowledge

The idea of alphabet awareness, introduced by Marilyn Jager Adams in 1990, is about understanding how sounds and letters are connected in written language. It includes being able to recognize and name letters, know their shapes and sounds, and understand how they come together to make words.

Adams' research stressed the importance of knowing the alphabet for learning to read, showing that it's a key building block for skills like phonemic awareness, decoding, and overall literacy. Important parts of alphabet knowledge include:

1. Letter recognition: uppercase and lowercase letters are identified to the children.

2. Letter naming: associating sounds with letters.

3. Sound-symbol association: understanding the relationship between sounds and letters.

4. Letter-sounds correspondence: recognizing the sounds letters represent.

5. Alphabetical order: understanding the sequence of letters.

Adams' work stressed that alphabet knowledge is not just rote memorization but a deep understanding of the letter-sound system, crucial for reading and spelling development. Before a child starts to read, the child must first master his/her letters of alphabet, which equally makes him/her good at spelling words. It is pertinent to note that letters of alphabet is quite different from spoken sounds of English. Spelling of a word is quite different from the oral production of a word (Izundu, 2024).

In English, we have twenty-six (26) letters of alphabet. The twenty-six letters of alphabet can be written in upper-case form and lower-case form.

Upper-case letters: Upper-case letters of alphabet is known as capital letters.

A   B   C   D   E   F   G   H   I   J   K

L   M   N   O   P   Q   R   S   T   U   V

W   X   Y   Z

Lower-case letters: Lower-case letters of alphabet is known as small letters.

a   b   c   d   e   f   g   h   i   j   k

l   m   n   o   p   q   r   s   t   u   v

w   x   y   z

Both upper-case and lower-case

Aa   Bb   Cc   Dd   Ee   Ff   Gg   Hh   Ii   Jj   Kk

Ll   Mm   Nn   Oo   Pp   Qq   Rr   Ss   Tt   Uu   Vv

Ww   Xx   Yy   Zz

Phonological awareness

Phonological awareness, the ability to manipulate sounds in words, is another critical pre-reading skill (Kuhl & Rivera-Gaxiola, 2008). Studies have demonstrated that phonological awareness is a key factor in reading development (Bradley & Bryant,, 1983).

Activities for Letter Sound Awareness: We have forty-four (44) speech sounds in English language. The forty-four sounds are divided into two; twenty (20) vowel sounds and twenty-four (24) consonant sounds.

Pure Vowel Sounds: **/iː/, /i/, /e/, /aː/, /æ/, /ɔː/, /ɔ/, /uː/, /u/, /ʌ/, /ɜː/, /ə/**

Impure Vowel Sound: **/ei/, /iə/, /ai/, /ɔi/, /au/, /eə/, /uə/, /əu/**

Consonant Sounds: **/p/,/b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /g/, /tʃ/,/dʒ/, /f/,/v/, /Ө/, /ð/, /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /h/, /m/,**

/n/, /ŋ/, /l/, /r/, /j/, /w/

How to recite letters of alphabet with correct sounds

A/ei/,   B/bi:/,   C/si:/,   D/di:/,   E/i:/,   F/ef/,   G/dʒi:/,

H/eitʃ/, I/ai/,   J/dʒei/, K/kei/, L/el/,   M/em/, N/en/

O/əu/,   P/pi:/,   Q/kju:/ R/a:r/,   S/es/,   T/ti:/,   U/ju:/

V/vi:/   W/dʌbəlju:/,   X/eks/,   Y/wai/,   Z/zed/.

These sounds of letters of alphabet are different from the way we pronounce them when they appear in words. Below are the examples:

A	is for apple /æpəl/	**N**	is for nurse /nɜ:s/
B	is for ball /bɔ:l/	**O**	is for orange /ɔrindʒ/
C	is for cat /kæt/	**P**	is for pen /pen/
D	is for dog /dɔg/	**Q**	is for queen /kwi:n/
E	is for egg /eg/	**R**	is for rat /ræt/
F	is for fan /fæn/	**S**	is for spoon /spu:n/
G	is for goat /gəut/	**T**	is for teeth /ti:Ө/
H	is for house /hauz/	**U**	is for umbrella /ʌmbrelə/
I	is for ice-cream /aiskri:m/	**V**	is for van /væn/
J	is for jug /dʒʌg/	**W**	is for wig /wig/
K	is for kite /kait/	**X**	is for xylophone /zailofəun/

L	is for lady /leidi/	Y	is for yack /jæk/
M	is for man /mæn/	Z	is for zebra /zebrə/

From the above examples/illustrations, we have seen that the way we spell words is quite different from the way we pronounce words (Izundu, 2024).

Identification of initial and final sounds in words

Children in Early Childhood Care and Education aged 4-5 years should be capable of identifying and accurately pronouncing the start and ending sounds of words, facilitating their mastery of sound articulation appropriate for their age.

Initial sound is the first sound we hear in any word. The initial sounds can be a vowel or consonant sound. Examples:

a. Rat /ræt/; the sound **/r/** which is a consonant sound is the initial sound.

b. Church /tʃɜːtʃ/; the sound **/tʃ/** which is a consonant sound is the initial sound.

c. Umbrella /ʌmbrelə/; the sound **/ʌ/** which is a vowel sound is the initial sound.

d. Ice-cream /aiskriːm/; the sound **/ai/** which is a vowel sound is the initial sound.

e. Jug /dʒʌg/; the sound **/dʒ/** which is a consonant sound is the initial sound.

Final sound is the last sound we hear in a word. It can also be defined as the sound at the end of a word. Examples:

a. Ice-cream /aiskriːm/; the sound /m/ is the final sound.

b. Egg /eg/; the sound /g/ is the final sound.

c. Teeth /tiːϴ/; the sound /ϴ/ is the final sound.

d. Umbrella /ʌmbrelə/; the sound /ə/ is the final sound.

e. Video /vidiəu/; the sound /əu/ is the final sound

f. Lady /leidi/; the sound /i/ is the final sound.

g. Today /tudei/; the sound /ei/ is the final sound.

h. Comb /kəum/; the sound /m/ is the final sound.

From the above examples, you will realize that the initial and final sounds differ from the letters of alphabet. Examples; the word "jug" has its initial as **/dʒ/** while the word "teeth" has its final sound as **/Ө/.** Also, despite the fact that the word "comb" has its last alphabet as letter "b," its final   sound   is   **/m/.** So, we get our initial and final sounds of words from the sound as we articulate *not from the letter of alphabet.*

It is pertinent to note that sounds must be enclosed with a slashes / / for phonemic transcriptions and square brackets [ ] for phonetic transcription, and it must be transcribed in small letters.

Counting Syllable

A syllable is the smallest unit of phonetic articulation within a word. Distinct phonemes amalgamate to create syllables, which then merge to form words. A syllable is a linguistic unit that is larger than a phoneme but smaller than a word. It comprises one or more vowel sounds or a syllabic consonant independently. Syllables enable words to be broken into rhythmic units i.e. syllabification (Okafor, et al 2013)

Okafor (2013), the syllable structure has three parts - the onset, the peak and the closure. For instance, the word "sit" is a one syllable word. And the structure is c v c (consonant, vowel, consonant). The syllable combines a vowel to two consonants for it to form. "s" is the onset,

"i" is the peak/nucleus and "t" is the closure. The peak is the most prominent part, and it is usually the vowel or sometimes a syllabic element. Some syllables have only the peak (for instance the words ("I" and "are") or may have only the onset and peak (as in "be") or the peak and closure as in "un". A syllabic consonant is a consonant that can serve as a nucleus/peak of a syllable if it occurs in a syllable that has no vowel. There are two of them in English – "l" and "n". For example, paddle /pædl/, cotton /kʌtn/ and little /litl/ make their second syllables with syllabic consonant. In essence, every syllabified/broken word must have a vowel sound or syllabic consonant in it. Words divided into syllables by means of a hyphen. Examples:

Monosyllables: It has only one syllable. For example, are, man, me, is, I, shoe, ache, up, may, come, boy, blast, cool.

Disyllables: It has two syllables. For example, af – ter, mar – ket, be – hind, on – ward, ri – cket, ac – tion, pro – per, ro – bot, padd – le, cott – on, hun – dred.

Trisyllables: It has three syllables. For example, im – por – tant, gen – tle – ness, op – tio – nal, po – ssi – ble.

Polysyllables: It has more than three syllables. For example, ar – ti – cu – la – tion, ve – ri – fi – ca – tion, con – sum – ma – tion, con – sub – stan – tia – tion.

Possible Syllabic Structure

V	-	are,	or,		I	/ai/
VC	-	eat,	up,		ache	/ek/
VCC	-	aunt,		else		/els/
CV	-	tea,	pee,	the	/	ði:/
CCV	-	play,	clear,	star		/sta:/
CVC	-	man,	fan,	bet		/bet/

CVCC	-	beast,	nest,	shift	/ʃift/
CVCCC	-	banks,	thanks		/Ɵænks/
CCVC	-	smack,	block,	step	/step/
CCVCC	-	blast,	stopped		/stɔ:pt/
CCCVC	-	strive,	sprite		/sprait/
CVCCCC-		tempts /tempts/			

Any syllable can take any of the above structures. The obligatory part of a syllable is the vowel. It should be noticed that there is a lot of consonant clusters and some silent letters. It is the duty of learners to watch out for these and learn their correct pronunciation. Pupils are taught to recognize and understand the number of syllables in different words.

Children in KG1 are expected to be able to read words with two syllables. KG1 children will also learn how to spell words with two syllables. If children get stuck when reading words with two syllables, a common teaching practice is to split the words into two syllables to help children get to grips with the pronunciation.

The teacher may cover the second syllable in the word, so that the child can focus on the first syllable before moving onto the next one. Once they understand the first syllable, they can try the second one and then blend the two syllables together.

Children are also expected to spell words with two syllables in KG2. A similar method to the one above is used for spelling. Children are encouraged to split the word into two syllables so that it's easier for them to spell. For example, when spelling the word, 'Monday', they should split it into 'Mon' and 'day'.

Once they reach KG2, children will progress to learning the spellings of words containing four or more syllables.

Clapping Syllable

Adrian McGhee (1999), defines clapping syllables as a playful activity that helps children develop phonological awareness by breaking words into their syllabic components. This method involves clapping for each syllable in a word, making fun and engaging way for children to understand the structure of words and enhance their reading readiness.

A syllable is the smallest unit of phonetic articulation within a word. Distinct phonemes amalgamate to create syllables, which in turn merge to produce words. A syllable is a linguistic unit that is larger than a phoneme but smaller than a word. It comprises one or more vowel sounds or a syllabic consonant independently. It is a vital skill for both speech sound development, and it is a key for literacy development (Izundu, 2024).

How does it work? Extend your hands apart while articulating the syllables. A loud clap aids in perceiving and counting the words. As the child claps, he/she says the syllable at the same time.   For   example:

Cat   =   one   clap

Rocket   =   two   claps

Butterfly   =   three   claps

Congratulations = five claps.

Stress

When we speak, some efforts are exerted in the production of sounds. But the effort exerted can never be the same for all words. Stress is the amount of muscular energy in the production of a syllable. When a syllable is stressed, the energy exerted is great while the unstressed syllable is uttered with less energy thereby making a stressed syllable louder, longer and with a higher pitch of voice. A stressed syllable is indicated by placing a stroke or capitalizing at the

beginning of the stressed syllable as in [I]Castigate, im[I]port or CAstigate, IMport. Stress also

goes beyond the word level to the sentence level (Okafor, et al 2013:22).

Stress of Disyllable Words: When the term functions as a noun or adjective, the first syllable

is emphasized; when it serves as a verb, the second syllable is emphasized.

Noun	Verb
[I]Import	Im[I]port
[I]Market	Mar[I]ket
[I]Rocket	Roc[I]ket
[I]Water	Wa[I]ter
[I]Present	Pre[I]sent

1. The   so   IMport
is   great.

2.   He   imPORTS   cars.

3.   Their   WAter   is   so   clean.

4.   They   waTER   the   garden   every   day.

5.   He   gave   me   a   PREsent.

6. He preSENTS the prize.

Three   syllable   words   ending   in   **"er"   and   "ly"**

The rule: Words with three syllables ending in "-er" or "-ly" often exhibit emphasis on the

first syllable. Examples: OR-der-ly, QUI-et-ly, MA-na-ger

Words   ending   in   **"ic,"   "sion"   and   "tion"**

The rule: When a word concludes with "ic," "sion," or "tion," the emphasis is often placed on

the penultimate syllable. Count syllables in reverse and emphasize the penultimate one.

Examples: cre-A-tion, com-MI-ssion, pho-to-GRA-phic, e-xam-i-NA-tion, ma-tri-cu-LA-tion, gra-du-A-tion

Words ending in **"cy,"** **"ty,"** **"phy,"** **"gy,"** **and** **"al"**

The rule: Words terminating in "cy," "ty," "phy," "gy," and "al" often exhibit emphasis on the antepenultimate syllable. Likewise, count syllables in reverse and emphasize the third syllable from the conclusion. Examples: de-moc-ra-cy, pho-to-gra-phy, lo-gi-cal, com-mo-di-ty, psy-cho-lo-gy, e-du-CA-tion-al

Words ending in "sm" with three or fewer syllables have their stress on the first syllable. Examples: PRIsm, SARcasm, AUTism

Words ending in "sm" with four or more syllables tend to have their stress on the second syllable. Examples: enTHUsiasm, meTAbolism.

Compound nouns have stress on the first part. Examples: SUGARcane, PINEapple, BEETroot, HENhouse, ROUNDabout etc.

Print awareness

Understanding the concept of print is also essential for emergent literacy (Sulzby, 1985). Research has shown that print awareness is a significant predictor of reading proficiency in early childhood education (Duke & Pearson, 2002).

Print is ubiquitous in our environment. Print is ubiquitous, manifesting in books, newspapers, and magazines, as well as in road signs, billboards seen during travel, and labels on kitchen cans. Print awareness refers to the comprehension that printed material is structured in a certain manner, such as recognizing that text is read from left to right and top to bottom. Knowing that

words consist of letters, and that spaces appear between words and understanding that print carries meaning (Izundu, 2024).

Print awareness represents a child's first exposure to reading. Children possessing print awareness recognize that print serves several purposes contingent upon its environment, such as:

- a restaurant menu enumerating food options
- a book narrating a tale
- a sign indicating a preferred location or signaling danger.

The comprehension of print does not arise spontaneously; it develops via the deliberate engagement of adults, educators, and peers who highlight letters, words, and other characteristics of the print environment around youngsters.

In print awareness, children are meant to know that reading of printed works in English, start from left to right, from top to bottom; that sentence starts with capital letters and ends with period (full stop).

Print awareness facilitates our understanding of the printed material we encounter daily and is a crucial pre-reading concept for toddlers to comprehend. Through interactive reading with adults or instructors, children acquire knowledge about the elements of a book, including the author's and illustrator's names, the book title, and page numbers. They also acquire knowledge on book handling, namely how to distinguish between the front and back covers of a book.

Sulzby and Teale (1991) are renowed researchers in the field of early literacy and reading development. Their work focuses on the importance of print awareness in young children.

Print awareness refers to the understanding that printed text carries meaning and the ability to recognize and interpret various aspects of print, such as:

1. Directionality: understanding that text is read from left to right and top to bottom.

2. Page orientation: recognizing the front and back of a book ant the order of pages.

3. Word recognition: identifying individual words within a text.

4. Sentence structure: understanding punctuation and capitalization.

Implications for Instruction:

1. Early exposure: introduce print awareness concepts in preschool and kindergarten.

2. Shared reading: engage children in interactive reading experiences.

3. Print-rich environments: create classrooms and homes with abundant print materials.

4. Explicit instruction: teach print awareness concepts systematically.

Duke and Pearson (2002), explore the concept of print awareness, which refers to children's understanding of the functions and forms of print in their environment. They contend that print awareness is an essential element of early literacy development and establishes the groundwork for reading and writing acquisition. The review highlights various aspects of print awareness, including the recognition of print as a distinct entity from pictures, understanding that print carries meaning, and awareness of print conventions such as directionality and letter recognition.

Duke and Pearson also discuss research on effective strategies for promoting print awareness in young children, such as shared reading experiences and environmental print exposure. They emphasize the importance of integrating print awareness activities into early education to support literacy development and argue for a balanced approach that incorporates both explicit instruction and meaningful print interactions in everyday contexts.

Types of Print Materials

Books, journals, serials, magazines, newspapers, maps, atlases, flyers, road signs, billboard and other materials that are physically printed on paper.

Care of Books

The following are the ways we care for our books:

1) Shelve your books properly

2) Avoid humidity of your books

3) Do not expose your books direct to sunlight

4) Practice regularly dusting of your books

5) Protect your books with plastic covers, bags or wrapping sheet

6) Wash and dry your dirty hands before touching your books

7) Do not fold any page rather; use a bookmark to locate where you stopped reading.

Story Comprehension

Comprehension refers to the understanding and interpretation of written material. For youngsters to comprehend written information effectively, they must be able to:

1)Decode the text;

2)Establish links between the content and their prior knowledge. 3)Contemplate well the material they have perused. Storybooks may be used in several ways to enhance children's early literacy development. youngsters's engagement in listening to their instructor read a tale enhances listening comprehension, an essential ability for the development of text comprehension in youngsters. After hearing the instructor read the tale with effective intonation, children might be prompted to recount the narrative. Retelling a tale is beneficial since it necessitates that children listen attentively. Children must engage their memories. It aids in the enhancement of their children's vocabulary. The teacher's role is to explain to the children the roles been played by the characters in the story. The teacher has to draw inferential questions at the end for evaluation

Problems in Story Comprehension

Children often articulate their displeasure and challenges in a broad manner, using expressions such as, "I detest reading!" or "This is nonsensical!" With the assistance of educators and adults, children may acquire techniques to address comprehension difficulties that impact their reading. Presented below are some recommendations and certain actions to do.

1) As children read, ask them open-ended questions such as, "Why did things happen that way?" or "What is the author trying to do here?" and "Why is this somewhat confusing?" 2) Instruct youngsters on the organization of various forms of reading materials. Narrative writings often have a conflict, a climax, and a resolution. Informational writings may delineate, compare and contrast, or portray a chronological series of events. 3) Analyze the significance of vocabulary when reviewing the text. Focus on select terms for in-depth instruction, thoroughly examining their meanings and applications. Instruct them on note-taking techniques and summarization methods. 5) Employ graphic organizers to assist students in deconstructing material and monitoring their reading comprehension. 6)Encourage the use and review of certain vocabulary terms.

7) Teach children how to make prediction (what to happen next in a story) and how to summarize.

Parental Roles in Supporting Their Children's Literacy Development in Early Childhood

1. **Read aloud daily:** reading to children exposes them to vocabulary, syntax, and storytelling (Krashen, 2004).

2. **Create a literacy-rich environment:** make books, magazines, and reading materials accessible (Neuman & Dickinson, 2010).

3. **Engage in interactive reading:** encourage children to point to words, predict events, and discuss stories (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001).

4. **Make reading fun:** use voices, gestures, and expressions to bring stories to life (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003).

5. **Monitor progress:** track children's reading development and adjust strategies accordingly (Harris & Sipay, 1990).

Teacher's Roles in Supporting Their Children's Literacy Development in Early Childhood

1. **Phonological awareness instruction:** teach sound-letter relationships and phonemic awareness (National Reading Panel, 2000).

2. **Systematic phonics instruction:** introduce letter-sound correspondences and blending (Juel, 1991).

3. **Guide reading**: provide scaffolding and support during reading instruction (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

4. **Word work:** engage children in word-building, rhyming, and word families (Bear et al., 2012).

5. **Create a literacy-rich classroom:** display books, charts, and reading materials (Neuman & Dickinson, 2010).

COLLABORATIVE SUPPORT

1. **Parent-teacher conferences:** discuss children's progress and development shared goals (Epstein, 2022).

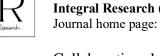2. **Volunteer reading programmes:** engage parents and community members in reading activities (Morrow, 2012).

3. **Literacy events:** host book fairs, author visits, aand reading celebrations (Krashen, 2004).

Instructional Practices

Play-based learning, an instructional practice that emphasizes child-centered play, has been shown to enhance pre-reading skills (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2015). Susan Hirsh-Pasek emphasizes several key points regarding instructional practices that unpack the interplay between pre-reading skills and early childhood:

1. **Play-Based Learning**: she advocates for incorporating play into literacy instruction, arguing that playful interactions foster essential cognitive and language skills, which are foundational for reading

2. **Interactive Reading**: Hirsh-Pasek highlights the importance of interactive read-aloud, where educator and caregivers engage children in discussions **about the text.**

3. **Rich Language Exposure:** She emphasizes the importance of giving children a variety of language experiences, like storytelling and having conversations, to help them develop their language skills**.**

4. **Integrated Curriculum:** Hirsh-Pasek supports a teaching method where reading and writing are included in different subjects and activities, helping children make connections between various areas of learning.

5. **Family Involvement:** She highlights how important it is for families to be involved in early literacy, encouraging parents to engage in fun reading and language activities that support their child's growth**.**

Collaboration between parents and educators is essential for supporting early literacy development (Epstein, 2011). Joyce Epstein's framework on parental involvement in education highlights several important areas that connect to early literacy and teaching practices:

1. Home Learning Environment: She emphasizes the need for a rich home learning environment, where parents take part in activities like reading, storytelling, and talking with their children to boost language skills.

2. School-Home Collaboration: Epstein advocates for strong partnerships between schools and families, encouraging schools to offer resources and workshops that help parents support their children's literacy development.

3. Community Engagement: She stresses the importance of community resources in supporting literacy, suggesting that schools should work with local organizations to provide extra help to families.

4. Equity and Access: Epstein calls for equal access to resources, making sure all families, no matter their background, have the tools they need to support literacy development at home.

Maria Montessori (1912) also shared her views on early childhood education and the development of pre-reading skills through these key principles:

1. Child-Centered Learning: Montessori believed in creating an environment where children can explore and learn at their own pace. This approach sparks a natural interest in reading and language.

2. Prepared Environment: She advocated for a carefully arranged learning space with plenty of reading materials and language-rich activities, encouraging children to engage with text in meaningful ways.

3. Hands-On Learning: Montessori valued hands-on experiences, using tactile materials that help children develop phonemic awareness and other pre-reading skills through touch and sensory exploration.

4. Integrated Learning: In Montessori's approach, language development is linked to other areas of learning. Literacy is integrated with practical life skills and sensory activities, helping children see how reading is relevant in different contexts.

5. Respect for Developmental Stages: Montessori emphasized the importance of recognizing each child's developmental stage and tailoring instruction to meet their individual needs and interests, which helps foster a love for reading.

6. Focus on Collaboration: Montessori classrooms encourage children to work together, promoting social interactions that support language development and literacy skills.

Theoretical Framework

This framework combines different theories to show how mental, social, and educational factors affect the development of early reading skills in young children. Understanding these theories can help shape better teaching methods and support programs.

1. *Constructivist Theory*

1. Jean Piaget (1952) suggested that children learn by actively engaging with their surroundings, with different stages of cognitive growth affecting how they learn. These stages are:

2. **Sensorimotor Stage (0-2 years):** Infants acquire knowledge via sensory experiences and bodily interactions. They get to understand that items persist in existence while being unseen and learn to comprehend the universe via direct interaction.

3. **Preoperational Stage (2-7 years):** Young infants start using language and engaging in symbolic thought; yet, their cognition remains grounded on personal experiences. They

struggle to comprehend others' perspectives and mostly concentrate on their own firsthand experiences.

4. **Concrete Operational Stage (7-11 years):** At this juncture, youngsters start logical reasoning around tangible occurrences. They comprehend the principle of conservation and can execute calculations mentally; nonetheless, they continue to have difficulties with abstract or hypothetical reasoning.

5. **Formal Operational Stage (11 years and up):** At this stage, humans acquire the capacity for abstract and logical thinking. They can formulate hypotheses, engaging in systematic thinking, and contemplating possibilities outside the present context.

2. **Phonological Awareness Theory**

- **William Liberman (1974):** introduced the concept of phonemic awareness as a critical pre-reading skill, emphasizing its role in developing reading proficiency through understands the sound structure of language.

3. **Emergent Literacy Theory**

   Marie Clay (1966): Proposed that literacy development is a gradual process starting from birth, highlighting the significances and interactions with print in fostering pre-reading skills.

4. **The Simple View Of Reading**

   Gough (1986): Emphasized the interaction between decoding (word recognition) and language comprehension as essential components of reading proficiency, underscoring the need for foundation pre-reading skills.

Conclusion

This study underscores the critical importance of pre-reading skills in early childhood education, highlighting the complex interplay between alphabet knowledge, phonological

awareness, print awareness, vocabulary development, and comprehension strategies. The findings emphasize the need for collaborative efforts between educators and parents to create engaging, play-based experiences that foster pre-reading skills, ultimately setting the stage for lifelong reading proficiency. By informing evidence0-based practices and policy initiatives, this research contributes to promoting reading success in diverse early childhood settings.

Recommendations:

Educational Suggestions:

1. Focus on play-based learning in primary childhood education to help develop early reading skills.

2. Include focused teaching on phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and understanding print.

3. Promote collaboration between parents and teachers to support children's reading growth.

4. Offer training for teachers to improve their skills in teaching literacy.

Parental Involvement:

1. Encourage children to participate in reading activities at home, focusing on phonological awareness and the alphabet.

2. Take part in parent-teacher meetings to discuss about the child's reading progress.

3. Help teachers initiate a home or school environment that confirms literacy.

Policy Suggestions:

1. Provide funding for early childhood programs that emphasize literacy development.

2. Create and apply effective literacy-based teaching programs.

3. Ensure there is financial support for teachers to receive ongoing training in literacy education.

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