

Unit 3:

Emergent literacy: using letters
and sounds of English



Teacher Education
through School-based
Support in India
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The TESS-India project (Teacher Education through School-based Support) aims to improve the classroom practices of elementary and secondary teachers in India through student-centred and activity-based approaches. This has been realised through 105 teacher development units (TDUs) available online and downloaded in printed form.

Teachers are encouraged to read the whole TDU and try out the activities in their classroom in order to maximise their learning and enhance their practice. The TDUs are written in a supportive manner, with a narrative that helps to establish the context and principles that underpin the activities. The activities are written for the teacher rather than the student, acting as a companion to textbooks.

TESS-India TDUs were co-written by Indian authors and UK subject leads to address Indian curriculum and pedagogic targets and contexts. Originally written in English, the TDUs have then been localised to ensure that they have relevance and resonance in each participating Indian state's context.

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Introduction

As a teacher of English, you may have asked yourself what the best way to teach students to read and write is. There are many different views on this; every child will respond a little differently, too. However, we do know that an important step in learning to read is knowing the sounds that the letters in the alphabet make. But this is not the whole story – the teaching of reading must be done holistically, with a focus on meaning.

TDU 2, *English emergent literacy: songs, rhymes and word play*, explores how songs, rhymes and word play can be used to foster emergent literacy in students. In this unit, you will continue to think about how you can support the development of students' literacy through the use of play.

This unit examines ways that you can incorporate meaningful play-based letter and word activities into your classroom, motivating children to read for understanding.

Learning outcomes

After studying this unit, you should have developed:

- knowledge about pre-reading skills that can help students become good readers
- an understanding of how to practise and promote such reading skills in your classroom
- your ability to create activities to help your students improve their pre-reading skills.

1 What is emergent literacy?

Reading is more than just being able to decode written words. You may have noticed this in your own classes.

Pause for thought

Have you ever noticed any of the following situations in your classes?

- Students can read English words in isolation or on a list, but are not be able to read the same words fluently when the words appear in sentences in connected text.
- Students are able to copy words from their books or from the board letter by letter, but do not pay attention to the meaning of these words.
- Students can read a text out loud from the English language book, but are not able to say what this text means.

In such cases, students do not seem to be reading for understanding. Reading for understanding is a vital component of reading development from the earliest stages. For young students, this may take the form of enjoying books, examining pictures, guessing what words say by using the context, and feeling motivated to find out what happens in a text.

So how can this be meaningful appreciation of words and books be promoted? We know that the following activities can be helpful:

- Children need opportunities to talk about different topics. Having pictures in their surroundings related to those topics can prompt this kind of talk. This, in turn, can help them understand the associations between sounds, letters, words and their meanings.
- Children need to be encouraged to focus on the overall meaning of a text when reading.
- Children need to know the names of letters and the sounds that these letters make. They also need to be able to see words as patterns of letters.
- Children need access to interesting texts to have the motivation to read.

So teaching children to read involves much more than teaching them alphabet. It must be done holistically and meaningfully.

The immediate environment is a good source of inspiration for early reading. Children eagerly learn the sounds that make up their names, as well as familiar words. The recognition of the sounds and letters from these familiar words can then be drawn on when they encounter new words.

2 Using phonics

Using phonics is just one of many useful approaches that can support the development of students' learning to read in English. Phonics is about the relationship between letters in the alphabet and their sounds.

In this approach, it is the sounds of the letters rather than their names that are used for building words. The alphabet is taught by focusing on these sounds, so the letter 'b' is taught as the sound 'buh' rather than 'bee'.

Because the names of some of the letters in the alphabet letters are very different from the sounds they make, it is better only to refer to letters by their sound in the initial stages of literacy development, to avoid confusion. The names of the letters can be introduced later.

Learning letters and their sounds (phonics) can help students to quickly 'sound out' unfamiliar written words while reading in English. If a student sees a new word, for example 'bat', they can put together the sounds for /b/, /a/ and /t/ and pronounce it 'bat'; they also come to understand that sounds can be changed to create new words (e.g. /c/ + /a/ + /t/ = cat). If they see the word 'batsman' and do not recognise it, they would sound out the parts that they know – 'bat' and 'man' – and then put them together with 's' in between to say the whole word.

Case Study 1: Parveen teaches the sound 'buh' (/b/)

Parveen is a Class I teacher with considerable experience of teaching her students how to read. Here she explains how she teaches the sounds of the alphabet.

I start a lesson by saying, 'Today we will focus on the "buh" sound. Let's all say words that we know with the sound "buh".'

My students then come up with the words that they know like 'bat', 'bag', 'balloon', 'brush' and 'basket'. If I can, I bring in some objects like a bat, a bag, a balloon or a brush, or some pictures of things that start with /b/ to make sure that they associate the word with its meaning. Some of these words they know from the textbook; others they know through the local environment.

Sometimes students come up with words in their language that start with the 'buh' sound. If they do, I confirm that the sound in our language is similar to the English 'buh'. I also like to point out the students in the class who have names that start with the 'buh' sound, like Baldev or Bala.

Once I have a list of words that start with /b/, I try to create a story from the words that they have listed. This may be something simple like:

Bala went to the market to buy a cricket bag, a new bag for her school books, a brush for her hair and a basket to keep the brush in. But in the end, she saw a red balloon and she bought that instead ...

Then I ask the students to draw a picture of the words in the story that started with the 'buh' sound.

3 English letter patterns

The way that English words are written and pronounced is somewhat irregular, due to its many influences and ongoing evolution. This means that there is not always a single match between one letter and one sound.

A close examination will nevertheless reveal many patterns between letters and the sounds they can make in English. For example, the letters ‘c’ and ‘k’ can both correspond to the sound ‘kuh’ (e.g. ‘cat’, ‘kite’), but ‘c’ may also be pronounced ‘suh’ before the letters ‘e’, ‘i’ or ‘y’ (e.g. ‘cycle’). Similarly, sequences of letters often correspond to the same sounds. For example, the letters ‘ight’ have the same sound in ‘light’, ‘might’, ‘sight’ and ‘delight’. The letters ‘dle’ come only at the end of words and have the same sound in ‘candle’ and ‘bundle’.

So students must also start to recognise patterns within and among English words.

The most common sounds of English are featured in Table 1. Sometimes it takes two letters (consonant or vowel pairs) to make one sound, like ‘sh’ in ‘shake’ or ‘ee’ in ‘meet’.

Table 1 Common sounds in English.

Vowels	a, e, i, o, u
Consonants	All the other letters
Consonant pairs	gr, sn, pl, st, etc.
Consonant pairs that make a new sound	ch, sh, th, ph, ng
Vowel pairs that make one sound	ai, ae, ee, ea, oo, ou, etc.

Activity 1: Pronunciation

If you are not used to using the phonics approach to teaching reading, it can take a little practice to get used to referring to letters by their sounds rather than by their names. Reassuringly, however, the names of letters are often a good clue to their sound. You can test this by saying a letter and then saying a word that begins with the letter.

Try saying the names of these letters and then a word that starts with that letter: ‘p’, ‘b’, ‘t’, ‘k’, ‘s’, ‘l’ and ‘r’.

Discussion

Words such as ‘pig’, ‘bike’, ‘time’, ‘kite’, ‘snake’, ‘lead’ and ‘rat’ all start with a sound that sounds like the name of the letter that starts the word. In some cases, however, it is the combination of a pair of consonants that makes a new sound, e.g. ‘phone’ or ‘shoe’.

In English, the letters that spell vowel sounds like ‘a’, ‘e’, ‘i’, ‘o’ and ‘u’ are less consistent, however. You can see how vowel sounds differ by comparing the middle vowel sounds of the short words that follow.

Try saying the following words pairs and note how the pronunciation of the vowel differs:

- a: 'mat'/'late'
- e: 'bed'/'these'
- i: 'fish'/'rice'
- o: 'hot'/'home'
- u: 'bus'/'tune'.

Discussion

In each of these pairs, the first vowel is a 'short' vowel sound, while the second one is a 'long' vowel sound. Can you hear the difference? Your pronunciation is important when you are teaching students letters in English and the sounds that they make. You may want to brush up on your pronunciation using the pronunciation guide in Resource 1.

There are also many irregular words in English, which can make learning to read more difficult. There are words that are spelt differently but sound alike (e.g. 'not'/'knot', 'sea'/'see' and 'blue'/'blew'), and words that share a spelling but sound different (e.g. the present and past tense of the verb 'read', pronounced 'reed' and 'red').

Activity 2: The stages of reading

Text with dialogue gives you the opportunity to bring the words to life; listed below are four stages of an activity that you might do when reading dialogue from the textbook with a class. Match each stage with a reason for doing it by dragging and dropping the reasons next to the stage that you think matches the reason. (You can assume that the language has already been introduced and practised earlier in the lesson.)

Learning to read takes time, and students need to be aware of:

- the different letters and letter combinations
- the sounds and words they make in English
- the exceptions to the rules.

Below are stages in the process of letter, sound and word recognition in English for most students. These stages may happen in an alternative order; many of them may happen at the same time. Match each stage with the example words by dragging and dropping the words next to the stage that you think matches the reason.

'cat' and 'hen'

Stage 1: Students learn the most common sounds for the letters of the English alphabet. For example, the letter sounds in _____.

'red', 'stop' and 'help'

Stage 2: They learn to put these together to form simple words such as 'hand', _____.

'with', 'shop', 'chicken' and 'elephant'

Stage 3: They learn how pairs of consonants work together to make *new* sounds. For example, 'she', _____.

'please', 'sleep', 'boat' and 'ground'

Stage 4: They learn how pairs of vowels work together to make new sounds. For example, 'good', 'rain', _____.

'race' and 'nice'; 'please' and 'days'

Stage 5: They learn the less common sounds of some letters, such as the 'c' in 'ice', _____, or the 's' in 'nose', _____.

'Saturday', 'another', 'excellent' and 'railway'

Stage 6: They learn to build longer, more complex words such as 'grandmother', _____.

'people', 'laugh', 'Wednesday' and 'receipt'

Stage 7: They learn unusual and irregular spellings such as 'high', 'beautiful', _____.

Discussion

Eventually, most students start to recognise many whole words instantly and no longer need to build them from the letters, except when they encounter completely unfamiliar ones. As they develop as readers, they also become skilled at predicting words based on the context. For example, in a text about a typical school day, when a student reads 'I go to school by ...', the next word is almost certain to be a form of transport and in many situations is most likely to be 'bus'.



Continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE)

Make a note of the stages of reading that your students now seem to have achieved. Are there students who have learnt the most common sounds in English but still struggle with exceptions? Are there students who can read short words but have trouble with longer ones? Are there students who are comfortable reading words in isolation but still struggle to read connected text?

Try to accommodate the varying needs of students in your classes by involving all students in letter and sound activities, and by making the activities more or less challenging, depending on their level.

4 Active reading

In the early stages of primary English, a lot of time is typically spent teaching the letters of the alphabet and the sounds they represent. But it is not enough for students to copy the letters and learn their names; they must use them actively, and that includes using them to build words. How can this be done?

Case Study 2 provides an example of activities that one teacher uses to promote active reading and reading for understanding in students who are just starting to learn how to read in English.

Case Study 2: Nanda promotes active reading

Nanda is a teacher in a learning centre for students in the city, where they go after school and on weekends. She works with young students to support their development of reading skills. This is her account of an activity she uses to encourage students to see the connections between letters and words.

For students in Class 1, I make flash cards for the key vocabulary they are learning in the particular unit that we are covering. In one set of cards, I draw pictures – or find some in magazines – of the key vocabulary in the unit (e.g. ‘apple’, ‘mango’, ‘fish’, ‘goat’ and ‘bag’). In another set of cards, I write the letters that these words start with (‘a’, ‘m’, ‘f’, ‘g’ and ‘b’).

First I get students to practise pronouncing the sounds ‘a’, ‘m’, ‘f’, ‘g’ and ‘b’ when I hold up the letter cards as a prompt. We start by doing this all together and then I call on a few students individually to produce the sound of the letter I hold up.

Then I hold up each of the picture cards and say the word for each of the pictures. I tell the students, ‘Repeat after me ... mango’. I do this a few times. I then do the activity again, this time stressing the first sound of each of the words when I say it; for example, ‘muh, mango’ or ‘guh, goat’.

Finally, I hold up one of the picture cards and ask students to tell me the letter that it starts with. So when I hold up a card with a mango on it, they say ‘muh’. Or when I hold up a letter card, the students call out a word that starts with that letter.

If we have time, and when I am working with small groups, I give the cards to the students and ask them to match the letters to the pictures.

Activity 3: Active reading in your classroom

Thinking about Nanda's account, consider the following questions:

- Why is Nanda's activity much better than just pointing at letters and words, and asking students to repeat them?
- How might you try this activity in one of your classes?

Discussion

The activity that Nanda organised in Case Study 2 encourages students to read and say the letters and think about the sounds they make, rather than just copying the teacher. Most importantly, it makes them think about the meaning of the words.

You may or may not have access to resources like letter and word flashcards. Such resources are not difficult to make. It can be difficult to use flashcards with large classes, but even in large classes there are meaning-oriented activities that you can try.

Here are some more activities that Nanda does to help students learn the letters and their sounds. They would also be suitable for large classes. Have you tried any of these before?

- She writes the letter 'f' on the board. She then says the sound 'guh' (or the word 'goat'). The students in the class raise their hands if they think the letter or word Nanda said matches the letter on the board. This way, Nanda can monitor which of the students are following the lesson. She then says the sound 'fuh' (or the word 'fish') and students in the class raise their hands to indicate that the letter or word that she said matches the letter. (This activity can also be done with words.)
- Nanda writes the four letters on the board from the lesson she is currently teaching ('e', 'f', 'g', 'h'). She says one of the sounds of the four letters (e.g. 'huh'). The students write the letter they hear. This is then repeated with the other three letters. (This activity can also be done with words.)
- Students work in pairs. One student says the sound of a letter (for example, 'buh') and the other student must say a word that starts with that letter (for example, 'bat', 'bus' or 'bag'). Alternatively, for more advanced students, one student says a word and the other student must write that word down.

If you haven't tried any of these activities before, try one in the next class you teach.

For more suggestions about activities with sounds, letters and words, see Resource 2. Try one of these activities out with a colleague and then try it in the classroom. Resource 3 provides a rhyme that can be used to teach letters and words with a focus on meaning.

5 Making short words

Now try Activities 4 and 5, which look at combining letters to create words.

Activity 4: Combining letters to make short words

Most primary English textbooks have lessons that teach students about short words. Now look in the textbook that you use to find an example.

While the main aim of this lesson is to teach letter sounds, it is also important to make sure the students relate these sounds to English words and that they understand those words. It's not very useful for students to say words when they may not know their meanings; it can also make some of them feel that they are failing. They may think that all the other students know what these words mean and they are the only ones who don't.

Look carefully at the textbook lesson you select:

- 1 Which words in the lesson do you think the students won't already know?
- 2 Can you think of ways in which you could teach this lesson to check that all students understand the meaning of the words?
- 3 How might you teach a lesson like this in an interactive way that focuses on meaning and involves all the students in the class?

Discussion

- 1 Even if you think that students will know most of the words, it is a good idea to check their understanding, particularly in the case of the weaker students.
- 2 You could draw pictures, use mime and gesture, or show objects that are in the classroom (e.g. pen, bag, etc.).
- 3 You could ask them to point to the words in their books as they say them. Pointing at the words makes the students prove they are listening and it makes the activity seem more like a game. Giving students something to do rather than just listening can help to prevent them from getting distracted.

Activity 5: 'Is it on the Page?'

Now watch the video below about a teacher teaching a lesson on short words using a game called 'Is it on the Page?'. If you are unable to watch the video, it shows the teacher introducing the new vocabulary and using mime, gesture, classroom objects to make sure that students understand what the words mean. You may also find it useful to read the video's transcript.



Now watch the video clip. If it is unavailable or has not been provided separately, you can find it at the [TESS-India YouTube channel](#). You will find the transcript at the end of this unit.

In the game, you say target words from the lesson, for example, 'The red hen in a net'. Also include some similar words with different vowels, such as 'hot', 'big', 'fit', 'rock', 'not', 'rod' or 'pin'. The students have to decide if the word you say is on the page or not. Having established the format with the whole class responding, switch to asking individual students.

Once you have watched the video, answer the questions below.

- 1 What is the purpose of the game 'Is it on the Page?', as shown in the video?
- 2 How did the teacher try to ensure that all students were involved in the activity and that all the students understood?
- 3 How did the teacher help students to develop skills beyond the level of the word?

Discussion

- 1 It combines listening with understanding the sounds that letters make. To play the game, students have to think carefully about the relationship between the sounds they hear and letters on the page. It's also quite a fun activity!
- 2 The teacher used mime and gesture to act out the words she was introducing in the lesson. For example, she made a 'miaow' sound to check 'cat'. She lifted up a student's bag to check the understanding of that word. She drew a picture of a hat on the board. And she used mime and gesture, patting her belly for the word 'fat'. Finally, if none of these methods seemed effective, she provided a translation of the English word in the students' home language.

- 3 She used the words in a sentence and she asked questions, for example: 'Do you like cats?' or 'Do you have a hat?' She also pointed out the words that rhyme.

Find a lesson you will teach in the next few weeks in which you can use these methods to practise the sounds of vowels in the middle of words. If you need help to remember them, look at the pronunciation guide in Resource 1. For more games on teaching sounds and words, see Resource 2.

6 Rhyming words

Now it's time to look at rhyming words.

Activity 6: How many rhyming words?

Using rhyme helps students to recognise sound patterns in words and map letter patterns onto these. So reading and listening to words go together.

You can get practice at rhyming words by playing a game called 'How Many Can You Write?' Try this with a colleague and then play the game with one of your classes. Because this game involves independent writing, it is mainly suitable for more advanced students.

Timing yourselves for one or two minutes, write down as many words as you can by adding a consonant or a consonant pair in the blank. The winner is the one with the most words at the end of the time limit.

Table 2 'How Many Words Can You Write?'

Words with a blank space	Possible words
_it	sit, pit, bit, fit, hit, lit
_at	mat, cat, sat, bat, rat, hat
_all	hall, ball, tall, wall
_an	can, man, fan, pan
_ow	low, show, bow, blow, slow, flow, glow; but note also how, now, cow, bow

When you play this activity in the classroom, organise the students into small groups. One person in each group needs something to write with and on. The groups have two minutes to write as many words as they can remember. After the two minutes are up, ask the scribe to read out the words from their group. Write any less familiar on the board and get the whole class to practise them for pronunciation.

This activity can also be useful for practising pairs of letters that make a new sound, such as 'ai', 'oo', 'ee', 'ou', 'ar', 'or', 'ay', 'ow', 'sh', 'th', 'ch', 'wh' and 'ph'. The students then have to think of as many words as they can that contain these letters.

Pause for thought

- Have you ever done activities like this in your classes?
- What sort of activity could you introduce that calls attention to sound patterns in your next lesson?
- How would you go about planning for this activity?

Activity 7: Identifying rhyming words

Primary English textbooks contain lessons that ask students to look for selected short words within a longer text. This also helps them to identify rhyming words and spelling patterns. As an example, see the activity below from the Class I textbook.

Say and spell these words aloud. Circle the words you find in the story.

few	bed	see	back
new	red	tree	sack

Ravi is crying. 'I CAN'T SEE MY NEW BAG!' he says.

'Is your bag new?' asks the teacher.

'Yes, it is,' says Ravi.

'Is it red and yellow?'

'Yes, it is.'

'I can see it,' says the teacher.

'Where?'

'It's on your back!'

(Shaw, 2007)

- How does this help the child to learn to read?
- How could you teach this activity in a way that encourages the students to read for meaning and enjoyment?

Discussion

- The words at the beginning of the extract are rhyming words. One word in each pair occurs in the story on that page and the student has to look for it. This helps the student to put the word into a meaningful context at the same time as it draws attention to spelling and sound.
- Read the dialogue aloud, helping to ensure that the students understand it. You could act out the two different parts using different voices or ask a student to act it out with you. Use mime and gesture,

and any classroom objects, to ensure that students understand the meaning.



Continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE)

Make a note of which students need more help to do the exercise above.

For the students who find it difficult, give them a simpler exercise. Ask them to look for and circle all the words with two letters on the page. How many such words are there? Which ones are the same?

For other similar exercises, take a poem or a page from a story from the book you are teaching. Can you make a simple word-finding exercise like the one here? Can you suggest other such exercises? Which ones do your students find easy, and which do they find difficult?

7 Clapping out sounds and syllables

Another way to reinforce the relationship between letters and their sounds is to clap out how many sounds there are in a word. You might like to try the next activity with a colleague and then use it in one of your next classes.

Activity 8: Clapping out sounds and syllables

Choose one-, two-, three- or four-letter words, which have between one and three sounds. Clap once for each sound. For example, the word 'bat' has three sounds, and you clap once for each: /b/-clap, /a/-clap, /t/-clap.

1. How many claps in *at*?
2. How many claps in *beat*?
3. How many claps in *eat*?

Discussion

1. Two: /a/-clap, /t/-clap.
2. Three: /b/-clap, /ea/-clap /t/-clap.
3. Two: /ea/-clap /t/-clap.

After you have done this activity with your students for a number of words and they are able to do it along with you, you can play the next game, where you put the separate sounds back into a word. First say the sounds and clap for each sound (for example, /ou/-clap, /t/-clap) and then put the sounds together into a word: 'out'.

1. Put the sounds together into a word: /sh/-clap, /ou/-clap, /t/-clap
2. Put the sounds together into a word: /s/-clap, /p/-clap, /ou/-clap, /t/-clap

Discussion

1. Shout
2. Spout

As the students progress in their literacy development, they move from words with one syllable (e.g. 'cat') to words with two or more syllables (e.g. 'tiger'). Recognising syllables in words makes reading an easier task for students. When students are able to say one syllable at a time, writing such words also becomes easier because the student can break the word into parts.

All words have syllables. A word might have one, two, or even more syllables. A syllable has one vowel sound and one or more consonant sounds. In writing, a syllable should have at least one vowel letter ('a',

'e', 'i', 'o' or 'u' – or 'y'), and it can have consonant letters before and after the vowel letter.

Clap as you say each syllable:

- snake: one clap.
- mon-key: two claps
- el-e-phant; three claps.



Continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE)

Look at the lesson you are now teaching or the first lesson in a book for a class you expect to teach. Find the one-syllable words in the lesson and identify the sounds in them.

- Are there any regular letter patterns in the lesson that you can recognise? Make a note of these. Make a list of common words with these letter patterns.
- Now play the clapping game with the students. Make a note of which students do well, and which do not. For those who do not, put them in groups with the students who are better at finding sounds in words, and see if that helps them.
- If there are students in your class who are quite good at the activities so far, see if they can think of such words on their own, or find matching words in the textbook.

In more advanced classes, try out this activity with multi-syllable words.

- What are the two- and three- syllable words in the lesson you are teaching?
- Now play the clapping game with the students. Make a note of which students do well at identifying the syllables in words and which need more help.

8 Summary

In this unit you have looked at ways to build on your students' emergent literacy skills. This includes using games to develop their knowledge of letters, sounds and words. It also involves finding ways to ensure that lessons focus on meaning and engage all students in learning.

Now reflect and make some notes on the following:

- Identify three key ideas or skills you have learned in this unit.
- Identify your strengths in teaching letters and sounds.
- What skills for teaching letters and sounds would you like to develop further?

9 Resources

Resource 1: Pronunciation guide

Of course, English is not your first language and you can't expect to have perfect pronunciation. Though you might read and write English, you may not have heard much English and may be shy about speaking it. Listening to the national radio and television programmes in English is one way of brushing up your pronunciation. Another way is using the pronunciation guide in a good dictionary.

If you want your students to speak English so that they can be understood internationally, you must try to have the best pronunciation you can. A common problem for English teachers is that it may be many years since they learned English, and their pronunciation may have gradually changed, becoming less and less correct.

Use the pronunciation guide below to check how well you know the main vowel and consonant sounds or combinations of these in English. Tick the sounds that you don't feel confident about.

Single vowels

short a (mat, ant)

short e, (bed, end)

short i, (fish, it)

short o, (shop, hot)

short u, (bus, under)

long a, (race, late)

long e, (these, scene)

long i, (time, like)

long o, (home, bone)

long u, (tune, use)

Pairs of vowels making a new sound

ai (train, paint)

ea (leaf, dream)

ee (sheep, been)

oa (boat, road)

oo (look, good)

ou (ground, out)

Vowel changed by a consonant

ar (car, park)

er (her, verse)

ir (bird, shirt)

or (short, or)

ur (turn, purple)

ow (town, shower/show, low)

ay (day, play)

Pairs of consonants making new sounds

th unvoiced (three, thanks)

th voiced (this, mother)

sh (she, short)

ch (which, chicken)

ph (phone, elephant)

gh (laugh, enough, high, although)

wh (what, why)

Others

–all (all, fall)

qu– (queen, quick)

–y (sunny, happy)

–ing (sing, talking)

‘schwa’ – the sound at the beginning and end of another

Resource 2: Some more games

Here are some more general ideas for teaching the early stages of reading and writing. You can use a game like this to begin or end a class – or whenever you find you have some time left over. You might choose to do it because you’ve noticed that many students in the class have a problem with this particular aspect of reading and writing, and you think they need some extra help.

Choose a game and practise it with a colleague. Then try it out in one of your upcoming classes.

Guess What I See?

This game can be used with any primary level. Choose a word for something that you can see in the classroom (e.g. 'pen', 'door'). Don't say which word it is. It should be a word at least most of the class will know. Then say, 'Guess what I see? I see something beginning with ...' for students to guess the word. (For beginning students, you could just say the letter.) Repeat with further suitable words. Practise the pronunciation of each word as it is guessed.

Guess What I See? (Alternative Version)

As above, but instead of always asking the question yourself, students take it in turns to ask it. Here are three ways to select the next student to ask the question:

- Choose a student, making sure you choose from all around the classroom.
- Ask for volunteers each time, and select somebody who hasn't contributed recently.
- The student who guessed the previous word correctly asks the next question (but don't always use this method, because it favours the more able students).

One More Word

It may take a little while to explain the rules to this game, but once the class understands them, you can play this game on several occasions. The example below uses *a*.

Divide the class into two teams. Write a big letter 'a' on the board. Ask Team 1 for a word that includes 'a'. Select somebody who raises a hand, who then says their word. Write the word on the board. Then ask Team 2, and so on. Continue until nobody in a team can think of another word. At this point, the other team is the winner.

You could use this game to get practice with many different letters and pairs of letters; for example, 'e', 'i', 'o', 'u', 'ai', 'ee', 'oo', 'ar', 'sh', 'th', 'ch' or 'wh'. Just be sure the students know enough of the words to make the game worth playing.

You could extend the game to several rounds. For example, in round 1 you could use 'a', in round 2 you could use 'ai', then 'e' in round 3 and 'ee' in round 4, and so on.

Word Ladder

This game starts by listing one word, such as 'pen'. The next player or team has to say a word that starts with the final sound of the previous word; for example, 'nest'. The game proceeds further, with the next player or team saying a word that begins with the sound /t/, and so on.

Is it the Same?

Divide the class into two or more teams. Write a selection of around 12 words from recent lessons on the board. Point to one word (for example, 'page') and say a word. The word you say can be the word you are pointing at or another word with some similarities (such as 'play' or 'plane'). Choose a student, who must then say 'It's the same' or 'It's not the same', depending on whether the word you've pointed to is the same as the word you've said. A correct answer wins one point for the team. Now ask a student on the other team.

Continue in this way. After a while, wipe the first group of words off the board, and write up another group of words and repeat. Repeat again as required, keeping the score on the board.

Paint the Word

For beginning students, this game can be used with single letters of the alphabet. For more advanced students, the activity can be used with words.

Mime painting a letter or word from recent lessons and/or the current lesson, using big, bold strokes, as if holding a paint brush as high above your head as you can. Remember to face away from the students, or your writing will be back to front from the students' point of view! Ask who can guess the letter or word. The first student to guess correctly wins a round of applause from the rest of the class. Continue with further letters or words, and then ask the students to take turns to mime painting the letters and words themselves.

Guess the Word

Start writing a word from recent lessons or the current lesson on the board. When you have written the first two letters, invite guesses about the word. If nobody is correct, add a third letter, and so on, until somebody guesses the word correctly. If you wish, the first student to guess the word can come to the board, and take over the role of writing (you may need to help with this, however).

Guess the Word (Alternative Version: Last Letter First)

This activity is for more advanced students. The procedure is as described above, but start writing with the last letter first.

Sit Down!

This activity can be used with any level and using any letter or pair of letters. The example below uses 'sh'.

Write the letters 'sh' on the board. Everybody must stand. Say a word from the current and previous lessons. If it contains 'sh', the students must sit down; if not, they remain standing. If standing up or sitting down will be

difficult in your classroom, students can raise and lower their hands instead. Responding physically in a lesson can be a fun and memorable way to learn.

Alphabet Board Game

This game is appropriate for more advanced learners, from Class II onwards, who have been introduced to the names of letters, as well as their sounds.

On a large piece of cardboard, write out the letters of the alphabet in sequence, preparing one board game per group. Give the students a die per group. They roll a number and move to the appropriate letter. When they land on a letter, they say the name of the letter, its sound, and perhaps also a word something that starts with that letter.

Resource 3

The following resource is a refreshing break from the traditional ABC song. You could adapt and extend it to suit your local context.

A a

A is for animal.

A for an animal.

I want an animal.

A is for aeroplane.

B b

B is for bus.

Here is a bus.

B is for bell.

Here is a bell.

It is a school bell.

The school bell rings at nine o'clock.

It is nine o'clock.

Here is a clock.

C c

C is for clock.

The clock strikes nine.

It's nine o'clock!

Come, come to school.

Come and study.

Come and read, come and write.

Come and learn English.

Listen to an English song

Come and dance, come and dance.

Come and dance.

A, aa, ta, taa.

A, aa, ta, taa.

Run up! Run up!

Dance for fun, everyone, everyone.

Dance for fun, everyone, everyone.

Come and dance, come and dance.

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Video: appreciation and thanks are extended to the participation of teachers and students at Greater Noida World School and all those involved in the making of this video.

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Transcript

- Female:** In this video, the teacher has created a simple washing line of letters of the English alphabet. This enhances the classroom environment and is used to reinforce knowledge of English letters and words.
- Teacher:** Children, today we are going to have some fun. You like fun.
- Students:** Yes ma'am.
- Teacher:** Okay, so what we will do today, this is a picture, in this picture some objects are there, you will look at that object then some alphabets are hanging on that string, you will go there, you will pick some alphabets and you will stand accordingly to that word. Can you recognize these letters?
- Students:** Yes ma'am.
- Teacher:** What is this?
- Students:** "E".
- Teacher:** Very nice. What is this?
- Students:** "O".
- Teacher:** Vow. Can you tell me where is the letter R?
- Students:** [murmur]
- Teacher:** This one, this one.
- Students:** Yes.
- Teacher:** Very good. We will do this in groups okay, okay. Now come in make groups, one group you can make. Go there Tharun. Okay there are some birds swimming in the water.
- Students:** Duck.
- Teacher:** What is it?
- Students:** Duck.
- Teacher:** Oh, very good. Now go and pick the letters. Now you will stand. Is it right?
- Students:** Yes ma'am.

- Teacher:** Wow! awesome. Now, its turn of group two, there is something on the tree in which eggs are there. Can you see what is that?
- Students:** Yes ma'am.
- Teacher:** What is that?
- Students:** Nest.
- Teacher:** Very good. Now you go and pick the alphabets. Is this word correct?
- Students:** No ma'am.
- Teacher:** No?
- Students:** No ma'am.
- Teacher:** Okay, can group three come and correct it.
- Students:** Yes ma'am.
- Teacher:** Come. Yes, yes now you go back. Now this word is correct.
- Students:** Yes ma'am.
- Teacher:** Correct.
- Students:** Yes ma'am.
- Teacher:** Wow!
- Female:** You can use words and pictures from a familiar story or poem. Students can use the washing line to create their own words or find the letters that spell their names.

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