



Teaching phonics in Modern Languages: why, what and how?

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Outline

1. Phonics and teaching early literacy (in L1)
2. Should we teach phonics in Modern Languages? Why?
3. Some principles and ideas for teaching L2 phonics

- Read the following English words aloud, as soon as they are revealed.
- How confident do you feel in your pronunciation? (1 not at all confident – 5 very confident)

jentacular

broppish

- Transcribe the following English words (1-3) on Vevox or in the chat.

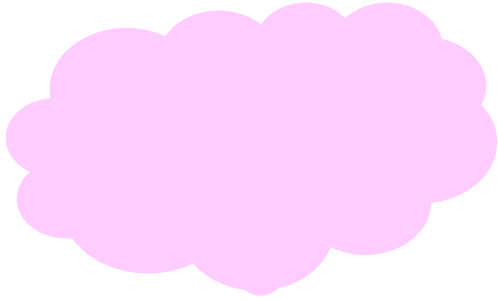


The building was absolutely **1** and
conveyed a **2** sense of **3**.

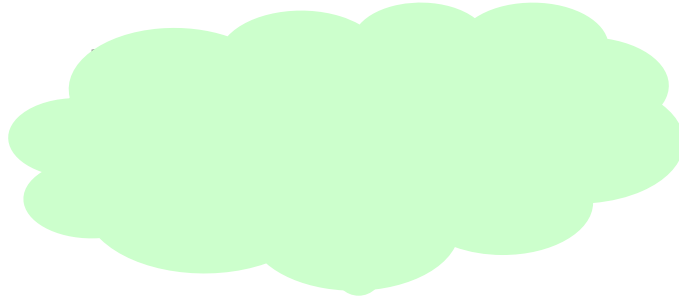
- What does this exercise tell us about our literacy knowledge in English?

- Read the following words aloud (if you can), as soon as they are revealed.
- How confident do you feel in your pronunciation? (1 not at all confident – 5 very confident)

1



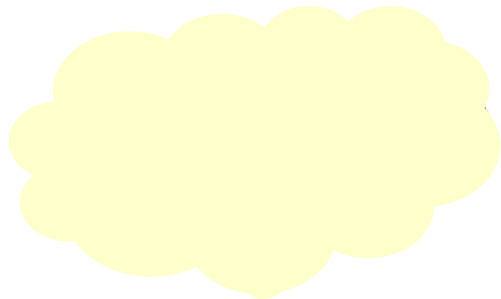
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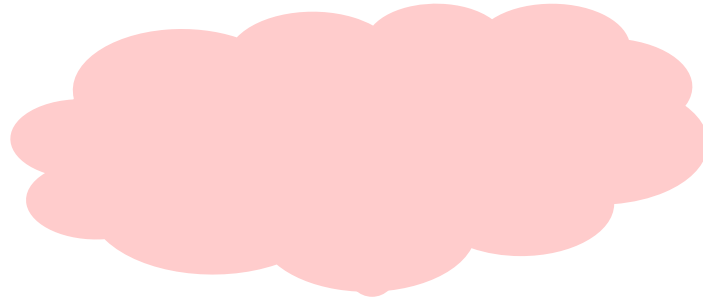
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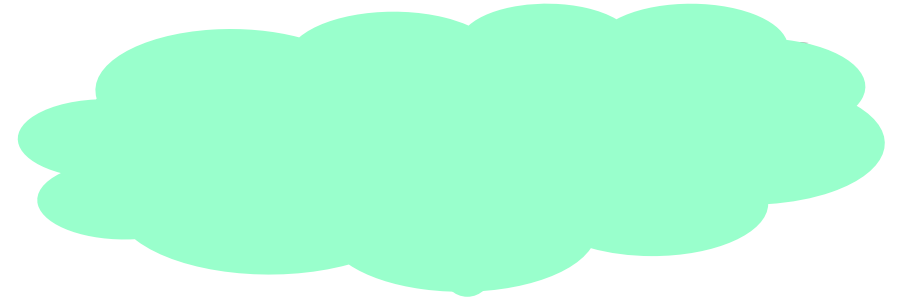
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5

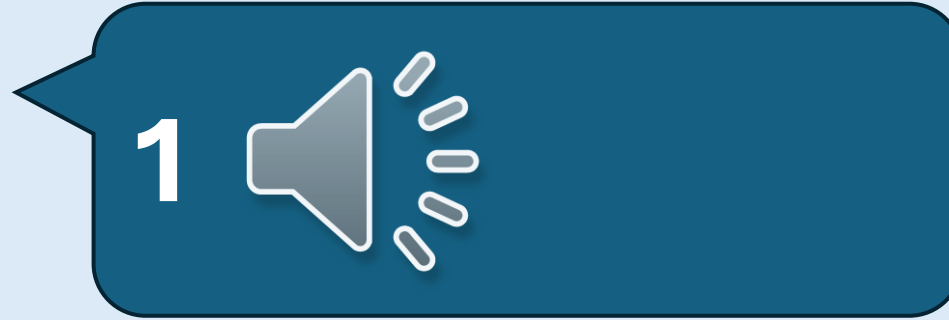
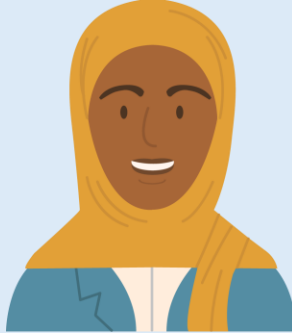


6



- What does this exercise tell us about our knowledge of writing systems?

- Here are some sentences in a language that you may not know.
- Transcribe the sentences (as best you can) – on Vevox or in the chat.



An toil leat cofaidh Eadailteach?
(Do you like Italian coffee?)

Entamacht kofi elelczach



Tha tì nas fhèarr.
(Tea is better.)

A tin neszard

Phonics teaching in L1

Phonics: explicit teaching of the relationships between letters and their sounds in written words

→ Symbol-sound correspondences / sound-symbol correspondences (SSC)



“The case for systematic phonic work is overwhelming and much strengthened by a synthetic approach” (Rose, 2006, p.20)

“We will improve early numeracy and literacy, promoting systematic synthetic phonics and assessing reading at age six to make sure that all children are on track” (DfE, 2010:43)



Two types of phonics teaching

Synthetic phonics

- c – a – t → cat
- Common exception words also taught – e.g. 'of', 'the'

Analytic phonics

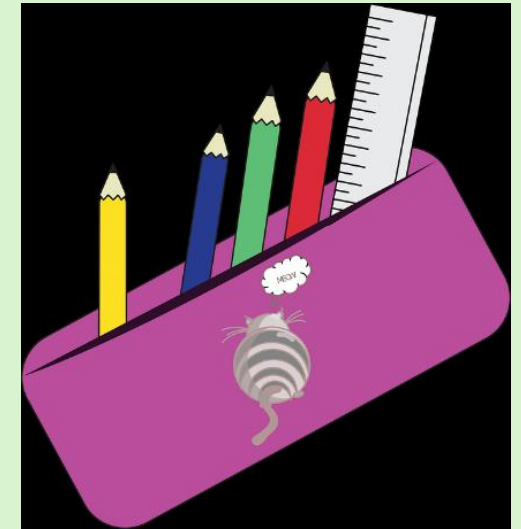
- Children taught to recognize whole words first
- Then recognize patterns – e.g.
 - *cat, cake, car, cup* all start with <c>
 - *cap, rip, flap* all end in <p>

- The government's emphasis on **synthetic phonics** in L1 is contested.
- The question of **synthetic vs. analytic** may differ in ML context
 - older learners
 - greater cognitive maturity
 - already literate in English (and maybe other languages)

Engagement in reading

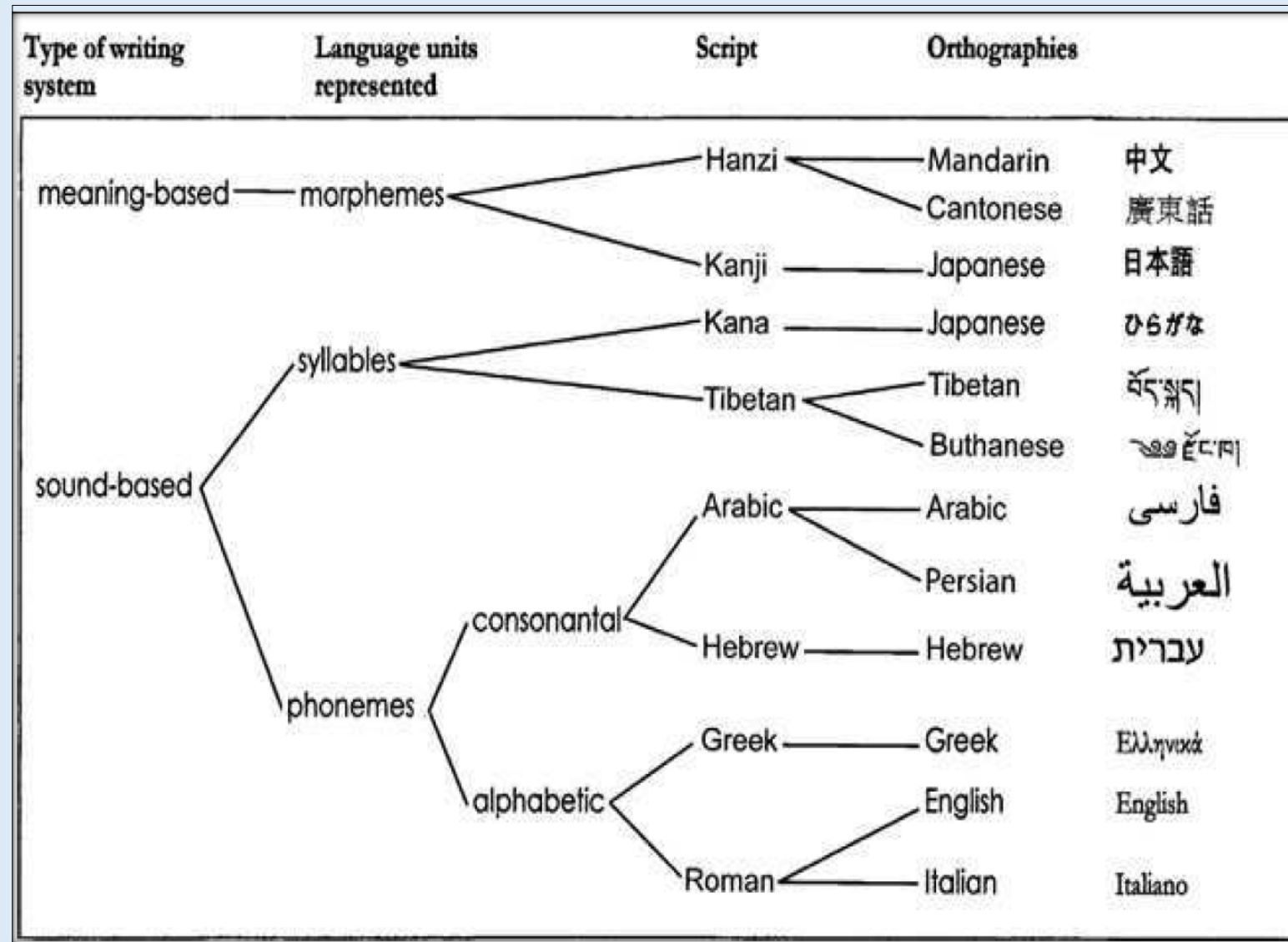
'If we want England's children to get better at reading and to do more of it, we have to give them a diet that is attractive, nutritious and satisfying. Restricting them to an unbalanced diet, the thin gruel of a phonics-dominated approach, is a recipe for lowering standards and turning children against the written word. (...) **Children certainly need instruction in the techniques, but they only become effective and committed readers through reading texts that interest them'**

(Dombey and colleagues (UKLA), 2010:13)



Should we teach phonics in L2?

1. Is SSC knowledge important for L2 learners? (and if so, why?)
2. Can they develop SSC knowledge without phonics instruction? (If **yes**, no need to teach it).
3. Is there evidence that teaching phonics in L2 is effective (and in what ways)?
4. (Is there a cost to other areas of L2 learning?)



Should we teach phonics in L2?



Research and analysis

Research review series: languages

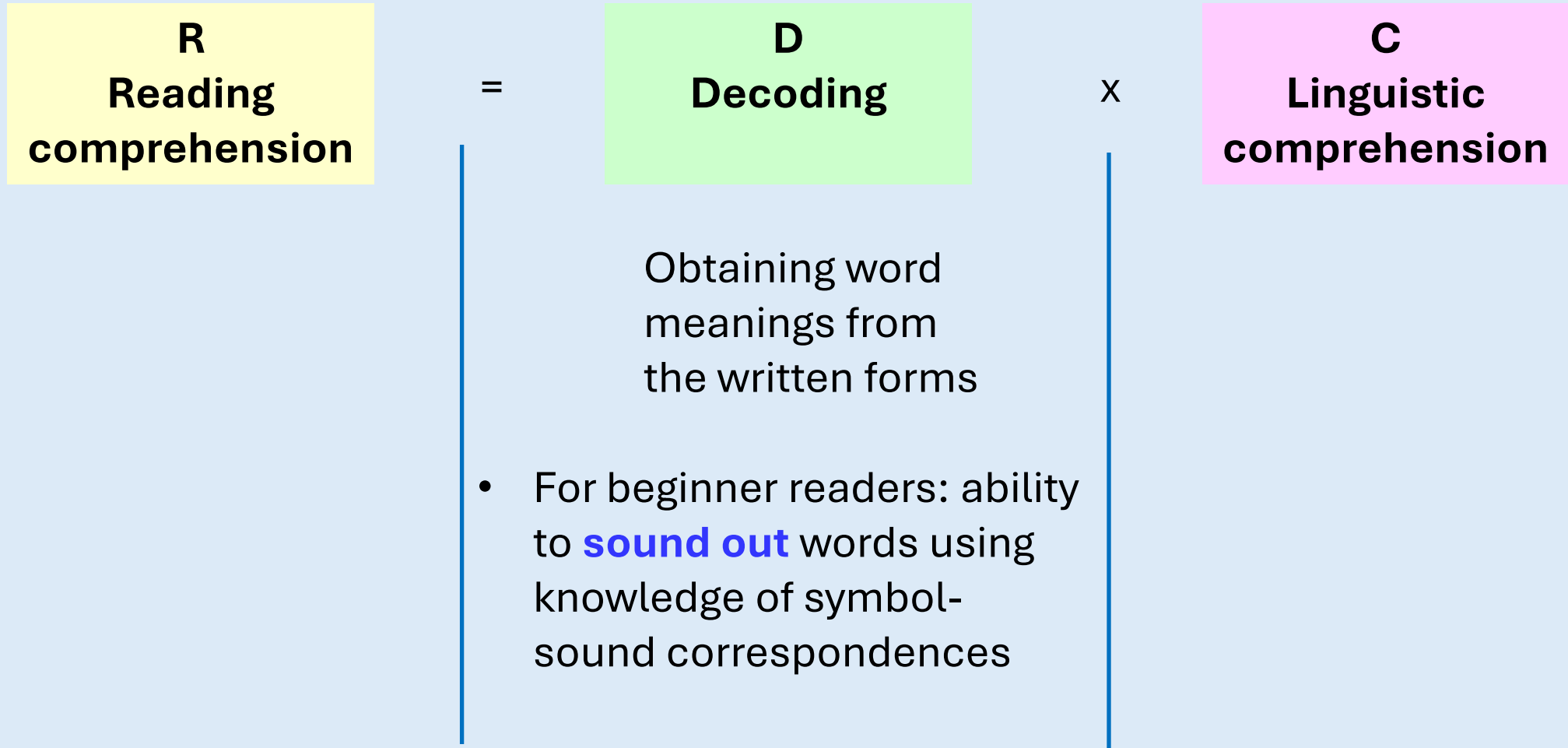
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‘There are similarities between learning to read and to write in our first language and learning to do so in another language. Some of the concepts that lie behind early reading and early writing (and in particular, **systematic synthetic phonics**) are also relevant in the languages curriculum. The step-by-step, explicit approach to phonics and spelling can transfer to the languages classroom.’ (Ofsted, 2021:14)

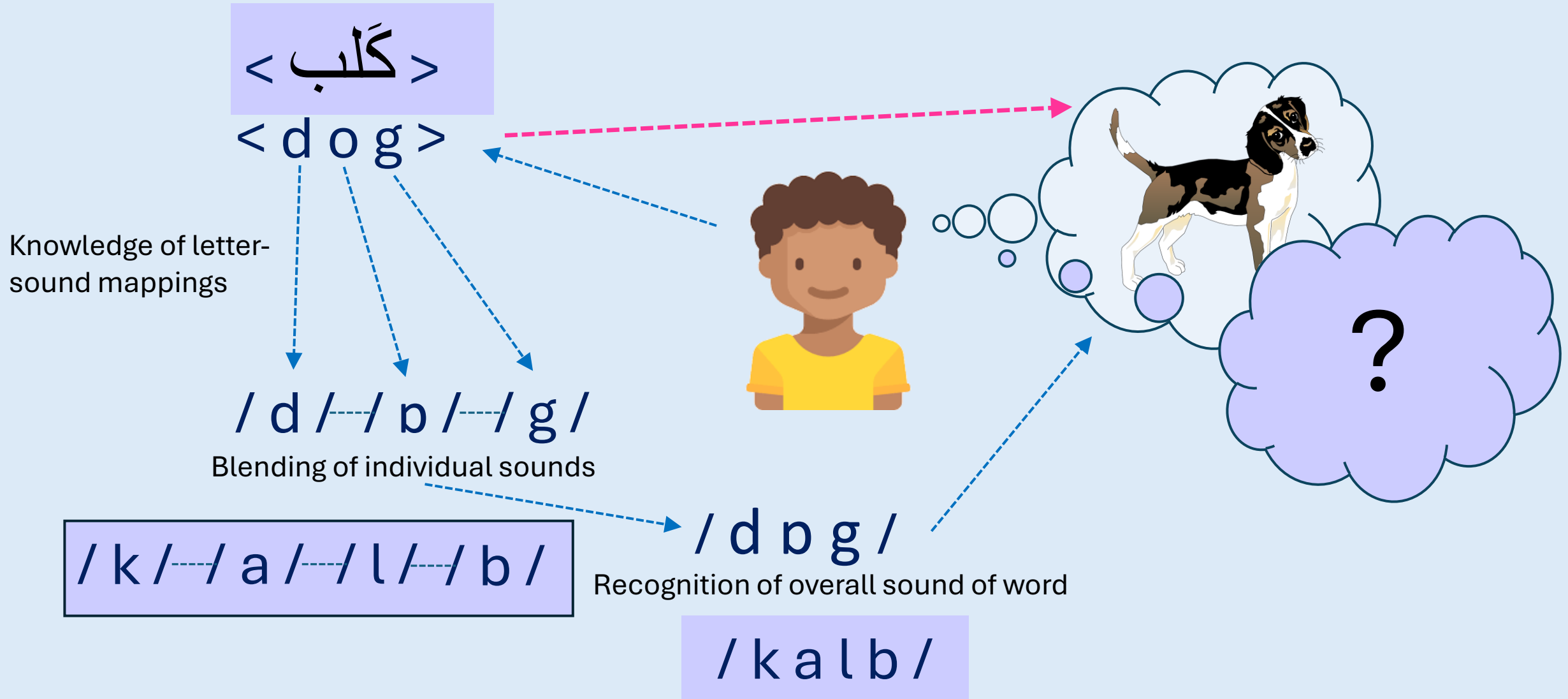


(Why) is SSC knowledge important?

‘Simple View of Reading’ (SVR) - Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Hoover & Gough, 1990



(Why) is SSC knowledge important?

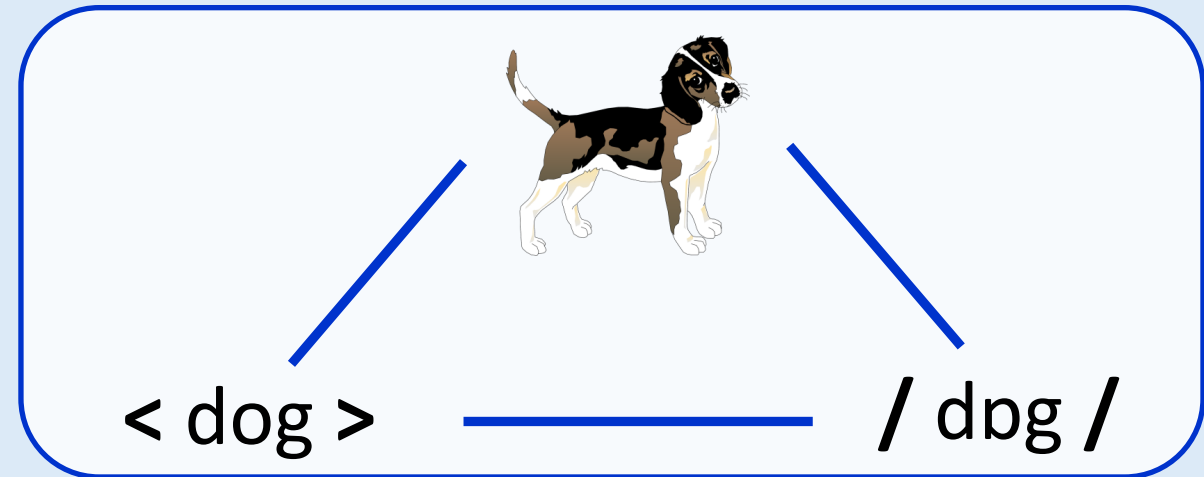


(Why) is SSC knowledge important?

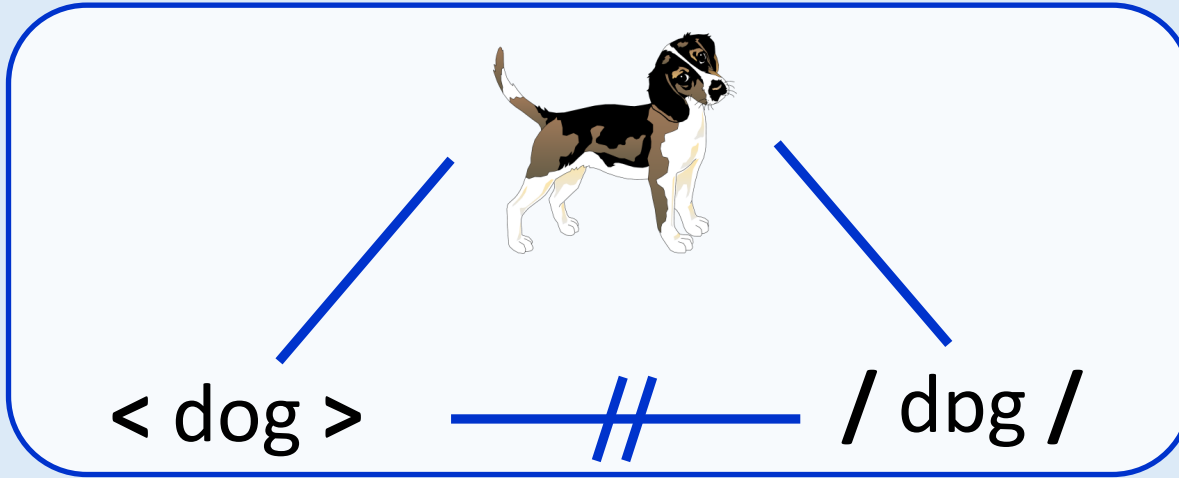
There is some evidence that SSC knowledge impacts on various aspects of foreign language learning, including:

- Reading (Many students do try to sound words out – Erler & Macaro, 2012)
- Grammar learning (They don't distinguish between different endings – Erler, 2003)
- Motivation (Learners who cannot sound words out get disaffected – Erler, 2003)
- Writing (They use SSC knowledge when copying from the board – Macaro, 2007)
- Speaking (They often prepare from written models)
- Vocabulary learning (Correlations between decoding and vocab learning – Hamada & Koda, 2008, 2011; Li, 2019)
- **Listening**

**Je regarde /
j'ai regardé**



SSC knowledge and listening comprehension



Visualizing spellings from pronunciations
may help with segmentation and word recognition

The problem of 'spelling pronunciations'



inventé

Fettnäpfchen

Ah, last time when someone mentioned 'benign' in the class, I didn't react to it very quickly because I always pronounced it as 'BEning' for many years.

Goh (2000, p. 62)

Do they learn SSC without phonics?

Research in UK ML classrooms (FRENCH) suggests that, **in the absence of explicit instruction:**

- Students are not very good at phonological decoding (reading aloud)
- They seem to make little progress in this area
- English spelling-sound links remain stubbornly entrenched
- Students may know that words should sound different to English, but not know how they should sound



University learners of English:

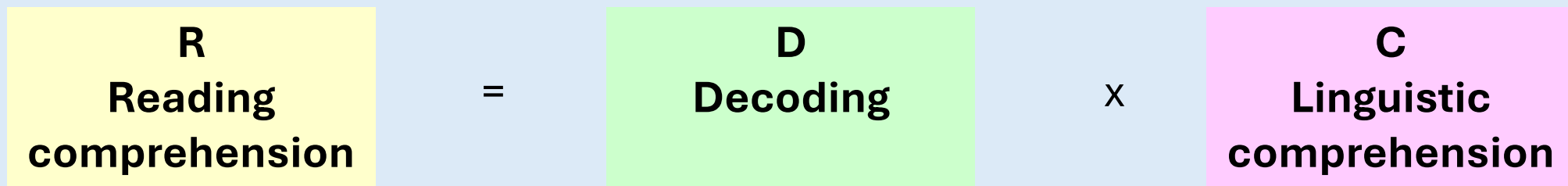
Alghamdi, 2020, Li, 2019



Is teaching phonics in L2 effective? (In what ways?)

What does research tell us?

- Experimental studies in foreign language settings (comparing phonics to a control group): **consistent evidence** for positive effects of phonics teaching on phonological decoding
 - But – limitations in both quantity and quality of research.
- In contrast to L1 research: **little evidence** that L2 phonics improves reading comprehension.



- **Emerging evidence** that L2 phonics helps other aspects of L2 learning, particularly vocabulary acquisition.
- **Listening?**

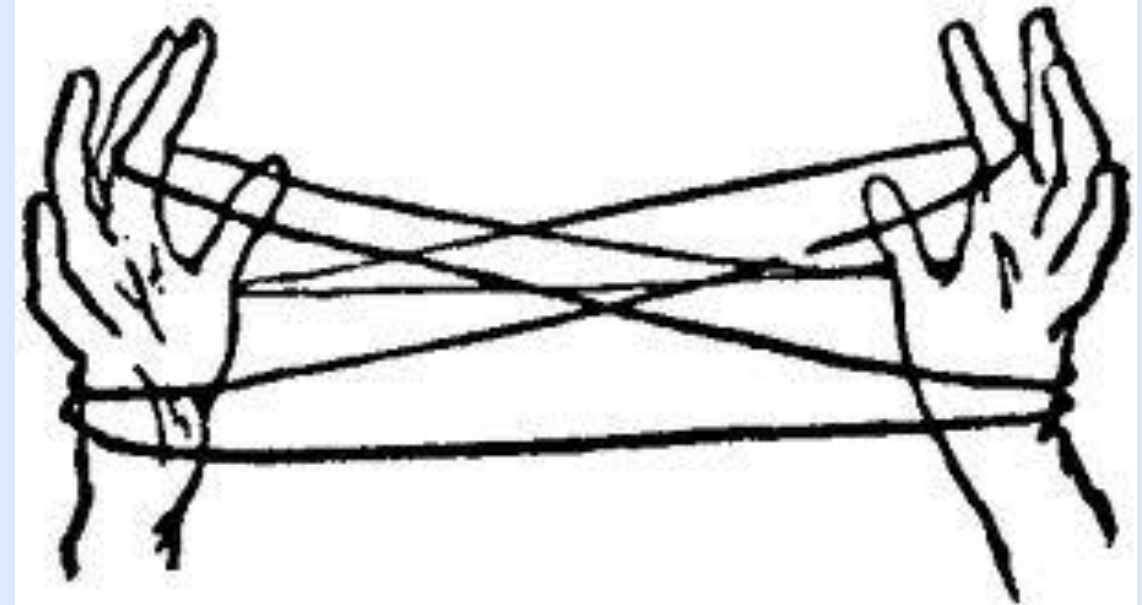
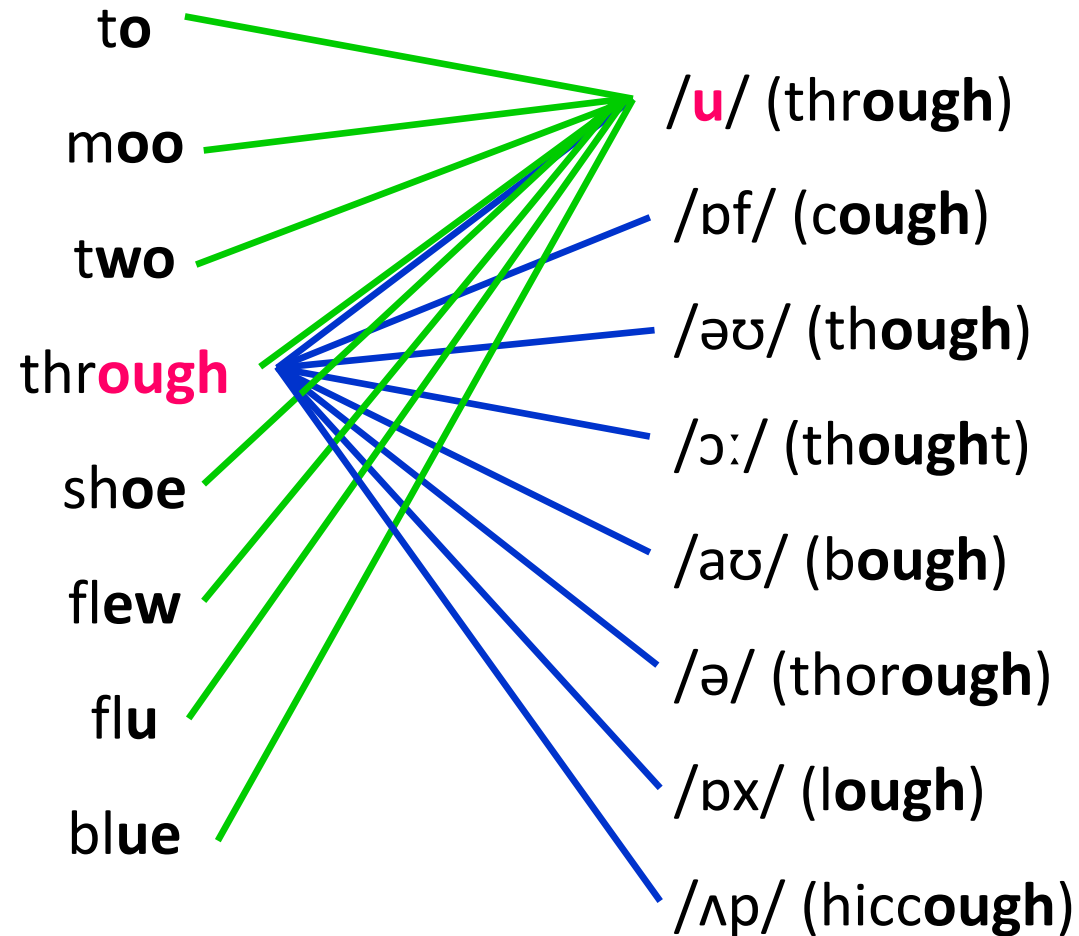
Some principles and ideas for teaching phonics

1. L2 phonics should start with awareness raising

	ANGLAIS	FRANÇAIS		ANGLAIS	FRANÇAIS
1	rat	rat	11	loin	loin
2	vent	vent	12	son	son
3	pain	pain	13	queue	queue
4	signal	signal	14	theatre	théâtre
5	nation	nation	15	television	télévision
6	fiction	fiction	16	chat	chat
7	mine	mine	17	jungle	jungle
8	sale	sale	18	rare	rare
9	nutrition	nutrition	19	grand	grand
10	train	train	20	Paul	Paul

Some principles and ideas for teaching phonics

1. L2 phonics should start with awareness raising



Some principles and ideas for teaching phonics

1. L2 phonics should start with awareness raising

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<a>



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verre

verres

verts

vert

vair

* vaire

* vaires

* verd

/vɛʁ/

Some principles and ideas for teaching phonics

2. Phonics instruction should be tailored to learners' needs



SSC difficulty



m er

f in

p gn

b eau

l oin



SSC frequency



Silent Final Consonant (SFC)

ay

Silent Final < e >

aon

é

ielle

a

th

i

aî

Some principles and ideas for teaching phonics

2. Phonics instruction should be tailored to learners' needs



Juwelierladen

Bach



Some principles and ideas for teaching phonics

3. Phonics should be taught systematically and explicitly

Synthetic phonics in French

Les lettres et les sons en français

ou – u

une poule



la lune



le cou

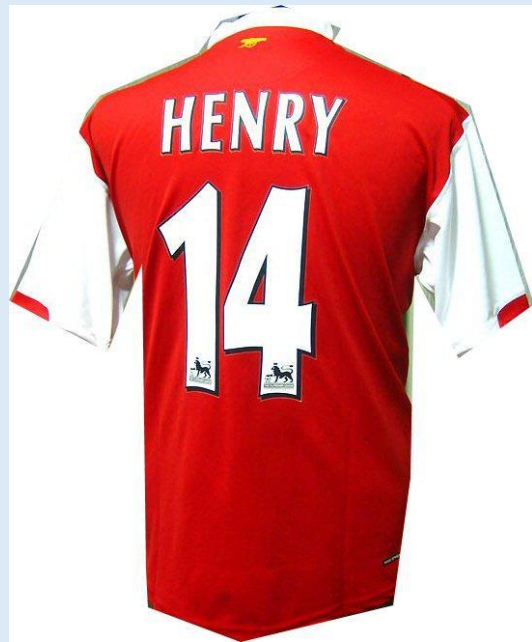


une tortue



Analytic phonics in French

With thanks to
Polly Grice



Bordeaux

Analytic phonics in French

champgnon



Symbol-sound correspondences – at different units of size

rather than ‘Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondences’ (GPC)



< t >

narratution

-tion

< ain >

américain / américaine

-ain, -aine

< ai >

paix / paille

-ai-, -aille

Escucha. ¿Dónde está la persona?

Escucha otra vez y escribe la frase. ¿Qué significa?



	España	Latinoamérica / Canarias	Frase	¿Qué significa?
1	✓		Hay pájaros azules en los árboles de la zona.	<i>There are blue birds in the trees of the area.</i>
2		✓	Debo organizar los zapatos.	<i>I must organise the shoes.</i>
3		✓	La plaza está a la izquierda.	<i>The square is on the left.</i>
4	✓		Debes empezar un dibujo de la naturaleza.	<i>You must start a drawing of nature.</i>
5		✓	Tiene diez ideas en la cabeza.	<i>S/he has ten ideas in the head.</i>

Some principles and ideas for teaching phonics

4. Phonics should be sustained and integrated with the wider curriculum

oi

un poisson



- Un deux trois
- Il fait froid
- On doit porter un uniforme
- Je crois que...
- Moi, je...

Some principles and ideas for teaching phonics

4. Phonics should be sustained and integrated with the wider curriculum

« Un chasseur sachant chasser sans son chien est un bon chasseur »

« Les chaussettes de l'archiduchesse, sont-elles sèches, archi-sèches ? »

Un gentil petit lapin
Fait sa valise ce matin
Car il va prendre le train
Pour aller chez Arlequin.

Carnaval, c'est demain !
Il va donc voir son copain,
Muni de son tambourin.
Ils vont danser, c'est certain !

Auteur : Bruno Basset - 2007

<http://www.phonemus.fr/phonocomptines/phonocomptines.html>

Some principles and ideas for teaching phonics



4. Phonics should be sustained and integrated with the wider curriculum

Please write a 40 word text in French with lots of <ou> sounds, on the subject of pets.

Loulou, le chien, joue partout. Il court autour du bout du jardin. Il trouve un jouet sous un vieux coussin. Minou, le chat, boude. Loulou veut jouer, mais Minou trouve tout trop bruyant !

Some principles and ideas for teaching phonics

4. Phonics should be sustained and integrated with the wider curriculum

L'éléphant géant et le dragon-cheval de Nantes

Nantes est une ville française de 300 000 habitants qui est située sur les rives de la Loire. Dans le passé, c'était un port important avec accès à l'océan atlantique. À l'époque, Nantes était un grand centre industriel avec de nombreux chantiers navals. Mais Nantes a beaucoup changé. C'est maintenant une grande destination touristique.



L'une des attractions touristiques les plus bizarres, c'est « Les Machines de l'Île », un projet artistique. Ça se trouve dans le quartier du vieux port. On y trouve des animaux mécaniques, tels qu'un éléphant gigantesque qui marche dans les rues entouré de touristes et vacanciers. Il mesure 12 mètres de hauteur et pèse 48 tonnes. Il peut transporter 50 passagers en tout.



Depuis 2014, il y a un nouvel animal géant. Mi-cheval, mi-dragon, cette créature mythique s'inspire d'une légende chinoise. Elle s'appelle « Long Ma » : ça signifie « dragon cheval » en mandarin. Contrôlé par un chauffeur, il fait des promenades dans la ville de Nantes. Avec les flammes et la fumée qui émanent de sa bouche, c'est un spectacle magnifique – mais aussi un peu menaçant et même effrayant !

C'est intéressant ? Tu peux regarder un clip vidéo ici : www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHnMfKyh340

Philippe Petit – Journal Intime

Je m'appelle Philippe Petit. J'ai 24 ans. Je suis un magicien, jongleur et funambule français. Voici un extrait de mon journal intime.



Le mercredi 7 août 1974. Mes amis et moi, on passe la nuit au sommet des deux Tours Jumelles, les « Twin Towers » du World Trade Centre à New York. On est là en visiteurs clandestins. On s'est infiltrés dans les bâtiments avec de fausses cartes d'identité et on s'est cachés sur les toits. Je me prépare à mon exploit dangereux. Je le planifie depuis six ans mais maintenant, enfin, le grand moment est arrivé ! Ça va être incroyable, le crime artistique du siècle ! Je suis un peu nerveux, c'est certain... mais je ne veux pas décevoir mes amis.

Le jeudi 8 août 1974. Très tôt le matin, nous relierons les deux tours avec un câble de métal. C'est un écart de soixante et un mètres. Le ciel devient nuageux, mais il n'y a pas de vent et il ne fait pas froid. Et puis, peu avant sept heures, c'est parti ! Je ne crains plus rien, je suis très calme. J'avance sur mon fil.



Pendant cinquante minutes, je fais l'impossible. Je fais plusieurs traversées entre les deux tours. Je me sens invincible, mi-humain mi-oiseau !



Bientôt, les policiers exploit est illégal ! ma santé mentale, sont impressionnés avez-vous fait une

Je leur réponds, « Quand je vois trois oranges, je jongle de passer de l'une à l'autre ».

Tu t'intéresses à Philippe Petit ? Tu peux regarder un reportage télévisé de 1974 : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IAVj2IVC9ko> – Interview avec Philippe Petit en 2015 : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XX_h18HzfEk

FLEUR 'pedagogical texts' (Woore et al., 2018).

Eight texts available:

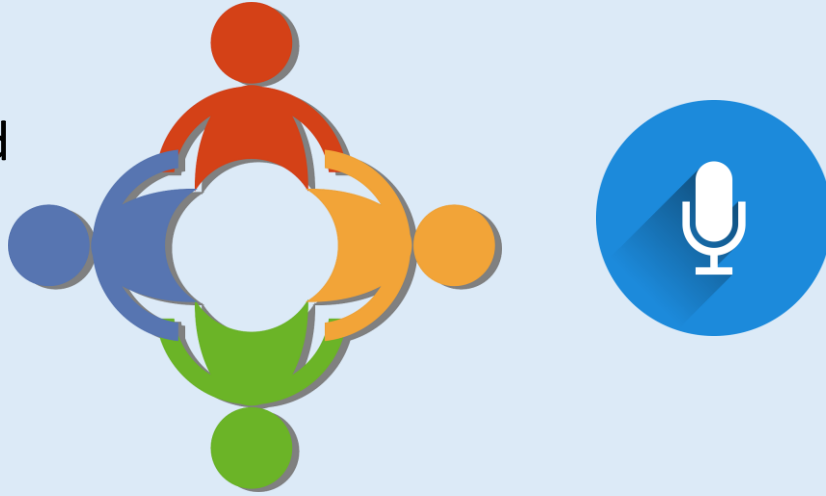
Go to Language Driven Pedagogy (LDP) resource portal and search 'FLEUR'

https://resources.ldpedagogy.org/catalog?utf8=%E2%9C%93&search_field=all_fields&q=fleur

Some principles and ideas for teaching phonics

5. Phonics knowledge should be assessed

- Reading aloud
- Dictation



Importance of unfamiliar words
(to force learners to engage with the SSC)

jentacular

broppish

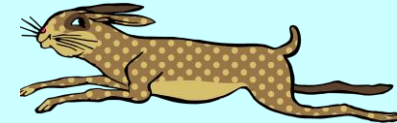
Ziege



Eule



Hase



Wolf



Schaf



Summary: a possible phonics teaching sequence in ML

1. Awareness raising
2. Systematic teaching of SSC
 - Prioritize SSC that are tricky and frequent
 - Probably synthetic (but maybe also a place for analytic)
 - Discrete segments – e.g. starters
 - One or two SSC per lesson
3. Revisiting at appropriate intervals
4. Opportunities to practise in controlled and real language contexts
5. Formative assessment (including unfamiliar words)

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Credits

- AI text-to-speech audio from <https://www.narakeet.com>
- Gaelic audio from <https://speakgaelic.scot/>
- People icons from <https://venngage.com/blog/free-people-icons/>
- Image of beer bottle cap by Przemek Pietrak, <https://szarada.net/okreslenie-z-krzyzowki/piwny-zacier/>
- Various other images from <https://pixabay.com>