



Phases of Reading Development

Besides developing children's knowledge and skills in reading, it is important to nurture their interest and enjoyment in books. Children typically go through these phases when learning to read:

Generally, reading in EL and MTL involves constructing meaning from print. Children generally go through the following phases (Chall, 1983; Ehri, 1995) when learning to read:

- **Pre-reading**

Children first become aware that print carries a message. They use visual cues to make sense of print in the environment. E.g., children recognise the word 'exit' by associating it with the sign above the door.

- **Initial reading**

As children begin to learn the names and sounds of letters, and recognise some parts of different characters, they use this knowledge to decode words and recognise some words or characters by sight or guess their meaning. E.g., children who recognise the word 'at' in EL become aware that words such as "cat" and "mat" share the same ending sound (i.e., 'at'). For Chinese characters, children discover that words like 吃 and 喝 share the same character part (口) and can guess that this character 吹 which they might not have seen before, could be an action that involves the use of one's mouth.

- **Fluent reading**

As children start to decode words faster and more efficiently, they will be able to read more effortlessly. As automaticity³ sets in, children will be able to focus their attention on understanding and making meaning of the text.

³Automaticity refers to the ability to recognise words instantly without having to decode them deliberately.