



“HOW TO HELP YOUNG UZBEK CHILDREN READ BASIC ENGLISH: STARTING WITH THREE-LETTER WORDS”

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ANNOTATION

This article provides teaching methods for reading English letters to Uzbek young learners, covering information on using dots, object pointing, tracing letters with fingers, aloud/silent reading techniques, and boosting children's self-confidence during the classroom.

Keywords: Phonics, reading aloud, silent reading, phonograms, Game-Based Learning (GBL), and building up confidence

Young children around six years old often struggle with reading English words due to the English alphabet being divided into two categories: the names of the letters and their corresponding sounds. In my teaching experience, I have taught both aspects—letter names and sounds. This approach has proven effective in helping students differentiate between sounds right from the start. For children whose first language is Uzbek, teaching English letters tends to be relatively straightforward. The English letters resemble Uzbek letters in their written form, making them easier for students to memorise, as they are already familiar with the Uzbek alphabet. Uzbek letters are also based on the Roman (Latin) script. However, the differences in sounds can be significant. So, that would probably take quite some time teaching phonetics first.

When teaching the alphabet, I emphasise both the names and sounds of the letters. For example, the letter A is pronounced as [æ], and I provide an example word that starts with that letter, along with its correct pronunciation (e.g., apple = ['æpəl]). This pattern continues until we cover all the letters from A to Z. Each lesson may introduce a new set of words, but I ensure that the sounds of the letters in these new words remain similar. For instance, we might use the word "bed" [bɛd] on one day and "big" [bɪg] the next.

Another effective strategy is to teach three-letter words along with their meanings and translations. Utilising cards that feature pictures and letters can greatly assist teachers, as most children develop their visual and auditory learning skills effectively. By showing these cards while simultaneously reading the letters aloud with the children, we can enhance their comprehension significantly. It is crucial to emphasise the pronunciation of each letter and its sounds. Additionally, using dots under each letter can help students understand the number of sounds in words. Some

letters may be silent, so incorporating dots can guide children in accurately reading words (as illustrated in Figure 1).

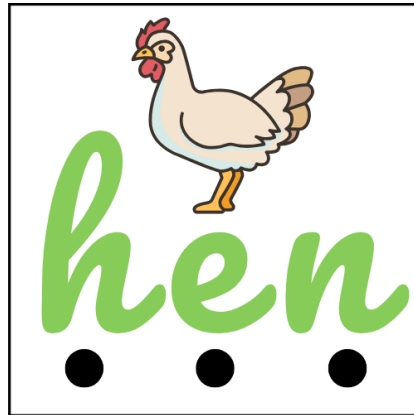


Figure 1

The design of the card in Figure 1 is structured effectively to support the children's reading and learning process. It includes pictures, big and visible letters, and dots beneath each letter.

Now, let's analyse Figure 2.

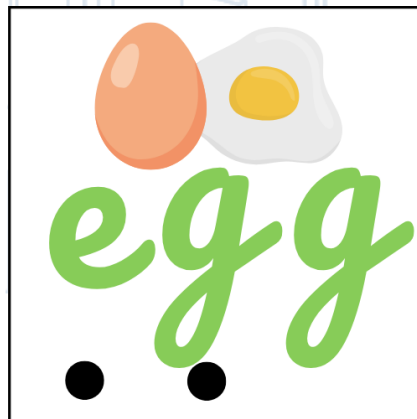


Figure 2

In Figure 2, the word "egg" is illustrated with two dots to indicate that it consists of only two sounds [ɛg]. Without this indication, children might mistakenly add an extra [g] sound when reading the word, pronouncing it as [ɛgg], which is incorrect.

In both Figures 1 and 2, lowercase words are presented. I chose not to capitalise these words, as they commonly appear in reading books with small letters.

The next approach: pointing to the object, saying the name of the object and then reading the word. We will present toy cars in various colours to the children. While pointing to the car, children will say its colour coupled with the word itself – car [kɑ:]. Then a teacher will ask to read the word from the card with dots. As a result, a child will

repeat the word several times, providing an opportunity for a teacher to listen to their pronunciation several times, and if the child mispronounces the word, the teacher will have a chance to correct it.

This teaching approach is also called “look and say”, based on words, and makes a lot of use of flashcards – words written on cards like in figures 1 and 2. It is important to start by teaching with everyday words that are familiar to the young learners.

The use of phonograms, or word families such as -at, -an, -en, -ad, -ed, and -et ([-æ, -æn, -en, -æd, -ɛd, -ɛt]), is an effective technique for enhancing children's reading skills. For instance, words like fat, mat, bat, cat, and hat belong to the -at family, while man, fan, hen, pen, ten, and men belong to the -an family. By using this technique, the children will be familiarised with the ending sounds, which makes the reading process straightforward.

Silent reading can be a suitable approach for children whose ages are above 8-9 years, and also these children have to have started reading words at early ages of development (in kindergarten) where an experienced teacher has already taught the pronunciation of each letter – phonetics. This is because, in the silent reading teaching method, a teacher cannot listen to the words that a child pronounces. However, this is a helpful approach for kids who already know the formation of words and their sounds.

Tracing a letter with fingers is also a wonderful technique to remember letters due to motor memory in our hands. While tracing letters with fingers, children can be asked to read words aloud. Peck et al. (1993) highlighted that reading aloud is not the same as reading silently, and it is a separate skill and not one which most people have that much use for outside the classroom. It means that the classroom provided children with the great opportunity to read aloud in the classroom with a teacher and peers, as in most cases in life, children read silently and will be used to doing it further in their lives. “The teacher may use round reading in the classroom to train and check children’s pronunciation, and even listening to a young learner reading aloud should be a treat for the whole class” (Peck et al., 1993). The reading of three-letter words can be aligned with writing skills because developing children’s writing skills is a long process.

Fajarina (2017) said that using games in the classroom may assist pupils to be active and interested with one another. In line with this, students may be thrilled to play games since they will be pleased and interested throughout the learning process. One of the best games for teaching three-letter words in kindergartens is flashcard matching, where a set of flashcards with pictures and another set of flashcards with words should be created, and children will match words with pictures. Other games are three-letter word bingo and word fishing. Three-letter word bingo is the game where a teacher will write the first letter of the word s/he has in mind, and whoever is first to find it will win. In the word fishing game, first, magnets should be stuck to the papers with three-letter words. Then, children can use a magnetic fishing rod to catch “fish” (i.e., words with three letters) and read the words aloud. These games can be conducted in pairs or in small groups. Won groups will be rewarded. Ningsih (2023) emphasised that Game-Based Learning (GBL) offers appealing features and immediate feedback, allowing teachers to develop a variety of learning strategies when presenting material to students.

The last but not the least piece of advice is to increase a child's self-esteem and to build up confidence. Peck et al. (1993) say that there are some students who are natural readers and will want to read books as soon as they can, but a teacher should spend some time building up confidence with the whole class. In my practice, I noticed the fact that natural readers are quite fast learners in terms of reading or in other integrated skills, but there are some young learners who are shy and afraid of pronouncing even a single word. Here, teachers must motivate by saying encouraging words not only in English but also in their mother tongue (Uzbek language).

Furthermore, a teacher should pay attention to the intonation of each pronounced encouraging word, saying it in the positive mode and keeping rapport with the whole classroom. A teacher should create a welcoming atmosphere, promoting open communication with humour, and if a child mispronounces the sound, a teacher should provide constructive feedback. If a child makes a mistake, we should see it as something normal by saying that we all make mistakes. Only in this case will the children not laugh at each other's mistakes; instead, they will support each other. Working in a team and in a group can also be helpful to boost children's confidence.

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