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ראמ"ה
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ASSESSMENT OF COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH FOR 7th GRADE (ACE-7)

TEACHERS' GUIDE

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Preface

The transition from elementary school to junior high school presents many challenges for pupils and teachers alike. Most pupils begin the seventh grade in new schools and have to adjust to a new learning environment. Oftentimes, the new classes are heterogeneous and consist of students at different levels of English. Moreover, the expectations in junior high school are academically more demanding than in elementary school. In English teaching specifically, instruction shifts from attention to the foundational skills associated with learning to read to the more cognitively and linguistically challenging task of reading to learn (Chall, 1983). In this phase, pupils are expected to learn more complex linguistic structures and advanced vocabulary, as can be seen in the [Revised English Curriculum \(2020\) for the intermediate level](#).

The Assessment of Competence in English for seventh grade (ACE-7) is the only standardized tool in Israel, to date, that teachers can use in order to assess the component skills that support spoken and written language in English as a foreign language (EFL) among Arabic and Hebrew speakers at the beginning of junior high school. It allows teachers to get accurate and highly relevant information about the pupils' language skills.

It has been designed with the following goals in mind:

1. To help teachers identify areas of strength and weakness in individual EFL performance.
2. To guide EFL teachers in planning differentiated instruction and providing support based on pupils' individual needs.

It is important to note that based on task scores within this kit, teachers will be able to discern specific areas where pupils may be strong, and other areas where they may require intervention. Nonetheless, before reaching conclusions we advise teachers to relate to other sources of information, such as in-class performance and quality of homework, in addition to using the tasks in this kit.

The ACE-7 is a computerized assessment kit comprised of seven tasks: Reading Comprehension (referred to as Written Reception in the English Curriculum 2020), Listening Comprehension (referred to as Spoken Reception in the English Curriculum 2020), Isolated Word Reading, Spelling, Oral Passage Reading, Vocabulary and Word Order. The content of the assessment is identical for both Arabic and Hebrew speakers, but the instructions for each group are written in their own L1 as well as in English.

Administration of the ACE-7 kit takes place at the beginning of the seventh grade. Pupils do the assessment tasks in one sitting, which takes approximately 75-90 minutes. All tasks are scored automatically except for the Isolated Word Reading task and the Oral Passage Reading task, which must be scored by the teacher manually. The teacher then receives a report containing information that can help with choosing and adapting teaching and intervention materials.

Theoretical background

The process of acquiring a new language is lengthy and complex, especially when exposure to the new language is based primarily on learning experiences in the school setting, as is the case for English as a foreign language in Israel. At beginning stages of literacy acquisition, it is important for teachers to get information about how pupils perform on skills that underlie reading and writing. The [ABLE kit](#) was designed to focus on skills that support reading and spelling after the first year of formal literacy instruction. The ACE-7 kit allows teachers to learn about additional language skills that support spoken and written language comprehension, which pupils should have acquired by the beginning of the seventh grade. Both of these assessment kits are based on the Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986), presented below.

The Simple View of Reading¹

The ability to derive meaning from written text, i.e. reading comprehension, is a complex activity that is dependent upon multiple sources of information. The Simple View of Reading (SVR) is a theoretical model that captures the relationship between different linguistic components that are integrally related to reading comprehension (Gough & Tunmer, 1986). While the SVR model was initially conceptualized with English as a first language in mind, the model has been validated in different first languages (Joshi & Aaron, 2011; Li et al., 2020), in second languages (Verhoeven & van Leeuwe, 2012) and in EFL (Ghaedsharafi & Yamini, 2011).

According to this model, reading comprehension (R) abilities can be predicted based on word recognition (D for decoding) and language comprehension (C) skills. Word recognition skills are based on the ability to sound out words based on knowledge of sound-letter correspondences and knowledge of orthographic patterns and rules, alongside sight word knowledge for irregular words that cannot be read with the help of sound-letter correspondence knowledge (such as the word *one*). Language comprehension skills are based on lexical knowledge at the word and phrase level (vocabulary) and knowledge of how words can be joined together to create meaning, i.e. syntactic knowledge, along with inherent grammatical understanding.

Specifically, the model proposes that $R = D \times C$. This equation highlights the premises that:

- Decoding skills, or the ability to read words correctly, is an essential component for reading comprehension.
- In order to comprehend what is read, it is necessary to have good language comprehension skills.
- If either language or decoding skills are weak, reading comprehension will be compromised.

Research suggests that at beginning stages of reading comprehension, decoding will contribute more to reading comprehension, whereas at later stages, once decoding skills have become more automatic, language comprehension skills will be stronger contributors to reading comprehension (Catts, Adlof & Weismer, 2006). Moreover, among more proficient readers, fluency has also been

¹ For more in-depth reading: <https://www.readingrockets.org/article/simple-view-reading>

shown to contribute to reading comprehension (Language and Reading Research Consortium, 2015).

Because of its potential not only to uncover sources of difficulties with reading comprehension, but also to serve as a basis for intervention programs, the SVR model served as the basis for the construction of the ACE-7 kit. As can be seen in [table 1](#), each component of the model is represented by a set of tasks. The component of speed has been included under the D category in the present kit, for several reasons: (1) reading speed has been found to contribute to reading comprehension at different stages of development and for differing ability levels (Aaron et al, 2008; Joshi & Aaron, 2000); (2) according to the findings of the National Reading Panel (2000), speed (also referred to as fluency) is one of the five pillars of literacy.

	R	=	D	X	C
SVR	Reading comprehension		Decoding Accuracy and Speed (fluency)		Language comprehension
ACE-7-tasks	• Reading Comprehension		• Isolated Word Reading • Spelling • Oral Passage Reading		• Listening Comprehension • Vocabulary • Word Order

Table 1: The tasks in the ACE-7 kit mapped onto the Simple View of Reading (including the additional speed component)

Using this model, it is possible to delineate four reading comprehension profiles that can be used to create learning groups and intervention programs. These profiles are presented in [figure 1](#). The +D +C quadrant represents readers who have adequate skills in both decoding and language comprehension, and therefore have adequate reading comprehension skills. The -D, -C quadrant represents readers who struggle with both decoding and language comprehension and have been labeled as garden variety struggling readers (Gough & Tunmer, 1986), or a mixed reading difficulties group. The -D, +C quadrant represents characteristically dyslexic readers who have well developed language skills but struggle with decoding. However, in the case of EFL learners, this profile could represent pupils who are simply struggling with decoding because they lack basic information about how sounds map onto letters in English. The +D, -C quadrant represents a group of readers with adequate decoding skills but insufficient language skills, including poor vocabulary and/or poor syntactic knowledge (Catts, et al., 2006). It is important to reiterate that within the framework of the SVR model, problems with decoding (D) reflect difficulties with the ability to read written words accurately and quickly, whereas problems with language comprehension (C) could be related to a weakness in a specific language domain and/or difficulties with higher order thinking skills or thinking strategies.

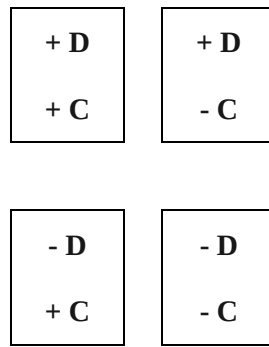


Figure 1: Four profiles of readers based on the Simple View of Reading

Description of the ACE-7 kit

Overview

The goals of the ACE-7 kit are to provide classroom teachers with a standardized, evidence-based assessment tool that will enable them to identify areas of strength and weakness in pupil performance in EFL, and to help teachers plan differentiated instructional units based on pupil needs.

The kit is administered in the whole class setting, in a computerized format. All the pupils are tested individually, progressing through the tasks at their own pace. Instructions are given in Hebrew for the Hebrew speaking population and in Arabic for the Arabic speaking population - see the order of administered tasks in [figure 2](#). As can be seen, all pupils do all of the tasks in the kit except for the second reading comprehension task, which is divided into a basic level and an advanced level. Pupils are given the second reading comprehension task based on their scores on the first reading comprehension task, and then they continue at their own pace through the remaining tasks.

All of the test items in the kit align with the **global** and **operative can-do** statements which can be found in the [2020 English Curriculum](#). The items in the first six tasks are closed-ended items, which means that the pupils are required to choose the correct answers from a distinct set of predefined options, and not to produce the correct answers themselves. This allows for quick, automatic and highly reliable marking. At the end of the scoring process, the teacher receives a report detailing each pupil's performance in each of the skills tested.

The reading aloud tasks (Isolated Word Reading and Oral Passage Reading) are open-ended, and so the teacher is required to score them manually according to the instructions that appear in the [Reading Aloud Scoring Key](#).

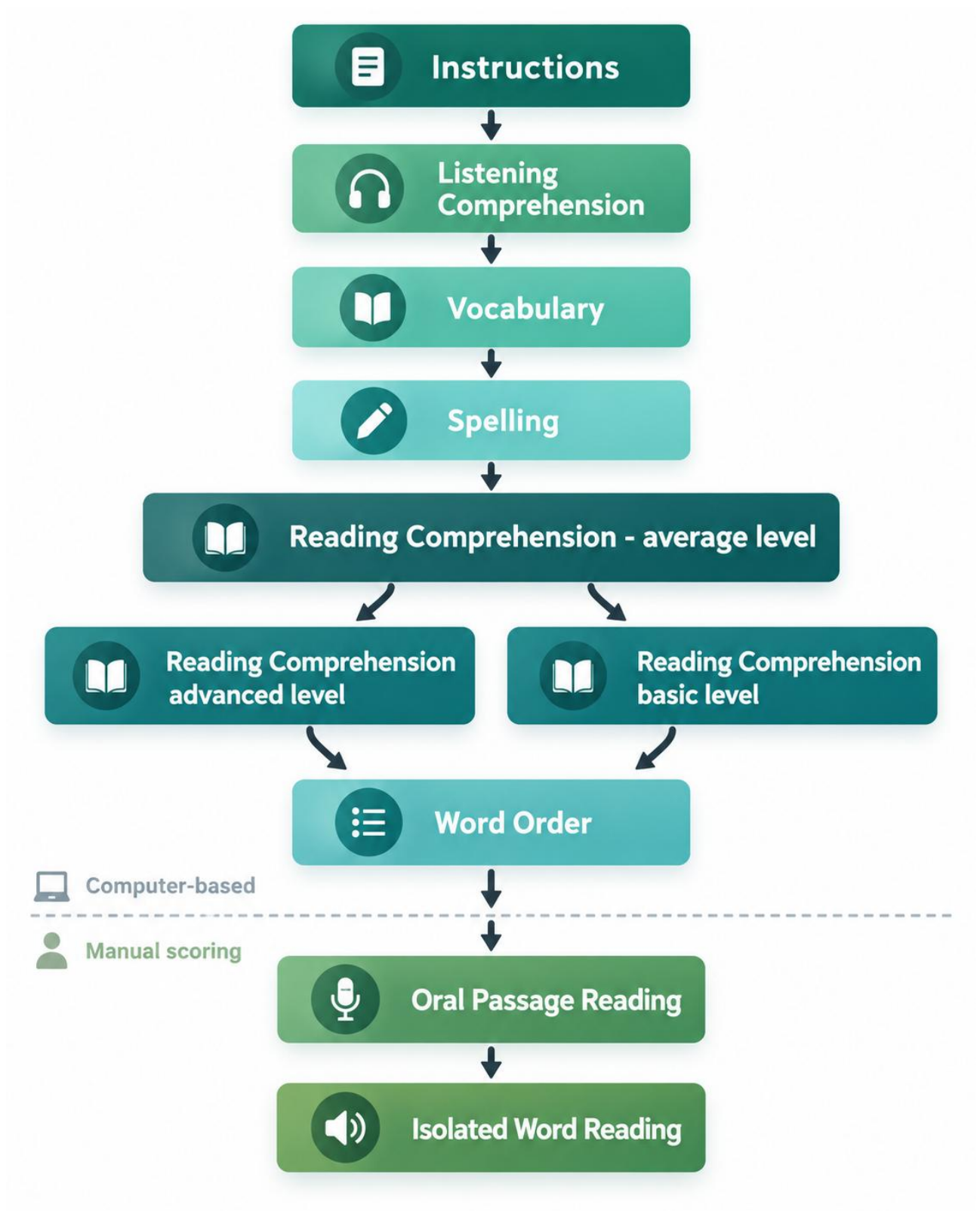


Figure 2: The order of administered tasks in the ACE-7 kit

In what follows, each of the tasks in the ACE-7 kit will be described.

The descriptions include:

- ✓ an **introduction**, with the theoretical basis of the linguistic components for each task
- ✓ a **task description** which explains the skills and competencies each task assesses and a description of the task items, including an explanation of what the pupils are required to do
- ✓ the **scoring procedure** and performance levels that indicate whether a pupil is in need of intervention
- ✓ a description of **possible areas of difficulty** that could explain poor task performance
- ✓ **pedagogical recommendations** for intervention based on areas of difficulty

Note:

1. Performance levels were determined based on empirical data from the norms study along with expert opinions.
2. The areas of difficulty that are presented are specific to each task, although there will be areas of overlap when a particular area of difficulty might impact performance on multiple tasks. Such is the case, for example, with poor vocabulary knowledge, which could affect both listening and reading comprehension. There are also areas of difficulty that could appear across tasks, such as test anxiety. When a pupil feels anxious about a task, for whatever reason, this could impact his or her ability to concentrate or attend to details. If a pupil suffers from test anxiety, it is possible that this difficulty exists across subjects taught in school. In this case, it is wise to consult with the school counselor to think about how to provide support in all areas where the pupil will have to take tests.
3. The pedagogical recommendations at the end of each task include references to sites, video clips and books. These sources can be used as resources for specific activities, as well as general references for enrichment of teacher knowledge. We suggest that teachers refer to the sites and other activity sources when designing intervention activities for the whole class, small groups or individual pupils. Since difficulties with some of the tasks may be based on several sources of weakness, teachers can use activities from multiple categories when planning interventions. It is important to note that the suggested activities should be used as a starting point for lesson planning and not necessarily used as they are. They may require adjustments and adaptations regarding content, length, or other aspects of the activities, depending on the needs of the pupils.
4. The following sites were developed under the auspices of the Ministry of Education so all of the content is highly relevant specifically to the English curriculum in Israel. These sites are rich sources of information and pedagogical recommendations for multiple areas of English language learning. For example, the Building Blocks site includes information and even sample activities for reading, spelling, vocabulary and reading comprehension skills. In order to avoid repetition in the pedagogical sections of the task descriptions, all these excellent resources are listed here. Teachers are encouraged to visit these sites when looking for pedagogical recommendations for each of the areas of weakness.

✓ https://pop.education.gov.il/tchumey_daat/english/yesodi/study_topics

✓ https://pop.education.gov.il/tchumey_daat/english/chativat-beynayim/study_topics/?page=1&main-subject=19274

✓ https://cms.education.gov.il/EducationCMS/Units/Mazkirut_Pedagogit/English/Curriculum/

✓ <https://sites.google.com/view/buildingblocksisrael/home>

Listening Comprehension² (Spoken Reception)

Introduction

Listening comprehension, or spoken reception, as it is referred to in the English curriculum, is one of the most important skills through which a language is learned and taught. It is based on the ability to comprehend spoken language in the form of conversations, stories, and informational messages.

Listening comprehension abilities are reliant on some of the same cognitive and linguistic skills involved in reading comprehension, namely understanding the meaning of words and understanding information implied by the text and linking it to prior knowledge. From a linguistic perspective, comprehension skills are equally, if not more importantly, reliant on the knowledge of how sentences in English are constructed, i.e. syntactic and grammatical knowledge (Cai, 2020; Mokhtari & Niederhauser, 2013). From a cognitive perspective, comprehension skills rely on working memory along with reasoning, monitoring, inhibitory control and other higher-order thinking skills (Kim & Pilcher, 2016).

Unlike reading comprehension, however, listening comprehension activities allow pupils to direct most of their attentional resources to understanding the spoken text without having to allocate additional resources to decoding processes. Listening comprehension relies more heavily on memory skills, since the spoken word, unlike the written word, leaves no tangible trace.

Task description

The Listening Comprehension task in the ACE-7 kit taps into oral receptive knowledge of English at the foundation level (or Basic User as it is referred to in the New Curriculum). Pupils at this level are expected to understand the vocabulary and sentence structures that were taught in elementary school when used in slow and carefully articulated speech. The task includes two listening texts at two different levels: basic and intermediate. Both texts were constructed using familiar words taken from the old band I (Revised English Curriculum November 2013). However, the two listening comprehension texts in this task differ from each other in length and sentence structure, as well as content complexity. The texts are accompanied by items which tap into both lower and higher-order thinking skills

² For more in-depth reading:

Kim, Y.-S. G., & Pilcher, H. (2016). What is listening comprehension and what does it take to improve listening comprehension? In R. Schiff & M. Joshi (Eds.), *Handbook of interventions in learning disabilities* (pp. 159-174). New York: Springer

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED602774.pdf>

Basic level text

The first text, which all pupils are given, is at a basic level for the beginning of the seventh grade. It is called *Our Changing World* (103 words) and tells a story about an elderly man who keeps in touch with his family overseas via modern technology. The text is accompanied by five items.

Intermediate level text

The Cookie Shop (338 words) is the second text that all pupils are given. It is an intermediate level text suitable for the beginning of the seventh grade with regard to vocabulary level and text complexity. The text is about a young boy who helps his father start a business in a new country. The text is accompanied by seven items.

All pupils are required to do both tasks in this section. In order to eliminate the impact of poor memory skills on success in this task, pupils may listen to the text and accompanying items as many times as they wish.

Scoring

Pupils receive 4 points for each correct answer. The total number of possible points for the Listening Comprehension task is 48.

Norms for the Listening Comprehension task:

Sufficient	In need of intervention	In need of intensive intervention
37-48 points	25-36 points	0-24 points

Possible areas of difficulty

Lack of success in the Listening Comprehension task could be the result of different types of difficulties.

1. *Weak vocabulary.* This difficulty would also be evident in poor performance on the Vocabulary task.
2. *Weak syntactic knowledge of how sentences are structured in English.* This difficulty would also be evident in poor performance on the Word Order task.
3. *Lack of comprehension strategies.* These difficulties might also be evident in the Reading Comprehension task.

4. *Difficulties with particular question types.* Pupils who struggle with particular question types will usually succeed with the literal questions but struggle with questions that require higher order thinking skills. This difficulty might also be evident in the Reading Comprehension task.
5. *Poor auditory memory.* This could also impact vocabulary since pupils learn many new words through initial oral language exposure. In the case of the present task, the pupils may listen to the texts as many times as they need to, and this possibility may help compensate for poor auditory memory skills.

Pedagogical recommendations

As mentioned earlier, listening comprehension is dependent on many of the same linguistic and cognitive abilities as is reading comprehension. Thus, it is possible that a pupil will struggle with both types of comprehension tasks. However, since by nature listening comprehension requires attention to spoken language without the aid of a written text to recall, it is important to include instructional activities that strengthen auditory memory.

- ✓ Field, J. (2009). Fitting it together. In *Listening in the Language Classroom* (Cambridge Language Teaching Library, pp. 327-335). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
doi:10.1017/CBO9780511575945.019
- ✓ Ur, P. (1984). *Teaching Listening Comprehension*. Oxford University Press.
- ✓ 10 Awesome Activities to Improve Intermediate ESL Students' Listening
<https://www.fluentu.com/blog/educator-english/esl-listening-activities-intermediate/>
- ✓ Audio Books: Stories - Reading and Listening (Elementary מרחב פדגוגי — הוראה — פורטל עובדי הוראה)
- ✓ 25 ESL Listening Activities for Seven Learning Styles—from Kinesthetic to Mathematical
<https://www.fluentu.com/blog/educator-english/esl-listening-activities/>

Vocabulary³

Introduction

Vocabulary represents all the words that an individual knows and uses in a particular language. It is essential for success in all areas of language acquisition, including both receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing) skills (Alderson, 2007; Laufer & Goldstein, 2004). Thus, vocabulary is directly associated with acquiring and comprehending language (Nation, 2013). Moreover, vocabulary knowledge has been linked directly with academic achievement (Bleses et al, 2016).

Unfortunately, many L2 classrooms do not devote enough time to the teaching and learning of this indispensable linguistic component (Gonzalez-Fernandez & Schmitt, 2017). Furthermore, vocabulary instruction in the foreign language classroom seems to be based on a common pedagogical myth that if a pupil is exposed to a word in a text s/he will remember that word. In truth, exposure to new lexical items (vocabulary words) must be frequent, intentional and multi-dimensional, focusing on both form and function, as well as establishing semantic connections between new and familiar items.

Task description

The Vocabulary task in the ACE–7 kit assesses receptive knowledge of high frequency lexical units. It taps into recognition of meaning and form of target single words and language chunks. The task is comprised of 24 multiple choice items. For 9 items, the target word is presented in English and the four meaning options are presented in L1 (Hebrew/Arabic). Then, for 15 additional items, the target word is presented in L1 (Hebrew/ Arabic) and the pupil must choose the correct English translation of the word from four options. These two test formats are used in the task because research suggests that recognizing the target word is easier when presented with four L1 options than when presented with four L2 options. (Laufer & Goldstein, 2004). Moreover, this type of vocabulary test seems to be a useful method of assessing the breadth of classroom word knowledge (Laufer & Goldstein, 2004; Webb, Yanagisawa & Uchihara, 2020). The words in the task were chosen from band-I lists; most of them are from the 2013 curriculum and several high frequency words are from the 2020 revised curriculum. All of these words should be familiar to pupils who have graduated from elementary school. Lexical items in the task include different parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives), and are presented as single words as well as language chunks (e.g., right now, not at all).

Please note that it is not recommended to administer this task to pupils who are new immigrants since a strong knowledge of Hebrew or Arabic is required.

³ For more in-depth reading:

González-Fernández, B., & Schmitt, N. (2017). Vocabulary acquisition. In S. Loewen & M. Sato (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of instructed second language acquisition* (pp. 280-298). New York: Routledge.

Laufer, B. (2017). The Three 'I's of second language vocabulary learning: Input, instruction, involvement. In Hinkel, E. (Ed.), *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning, Volume III* (pp. 343–354). London: Routledge

Scoring

The items in this task are scored automatically as either correct or incorrect. Pupils receive 4 points for each correct answer. Points can vary between 0-96. Norms for the Vocabulary task:

Sufficient	In need of intervention
77-96 points	0-76 points

Possible areas of difficulty

If a pupil performs poorly on this task, s/he clearly needs more exposure and practice with lexical items in English. Moreover, since the items are presented in two different formats (target word in English & translations in L1 or target word in L1 and translations in English), it is possible for the teacher to see if a pupil scored higher when the items were presented in a particular format.

Pedagogical recommendations

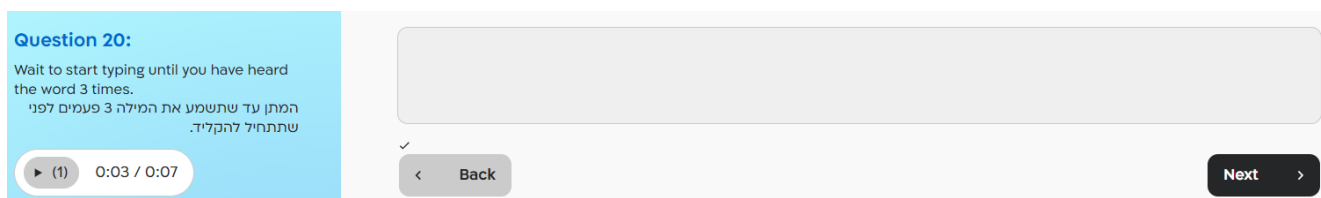
Strengthening lexical knowledge is highly dependent on multiple exposures to words in meaningful contexts, instruction based on the multiple dimensions of knowing a word, and the activation of multi-sensory learning techniques. Knowing a word involves five dimensions: knowing the definition or translation of a word, being able to use the word correctly in context, knowing the multiple meanings of a word, knowing when and when not to use a word, and finally being able to use the word productively in multiple settings (Miller, 1999). Therefore, in order to facilitate vocabulary enrichment, it is essential to include activities that promote word learning through all five of the dimensions, for example, matching word forms with their meanings, as well as with synonyms and antonyms, choosing word meanings from multiple options, exploring word etymology (word origins and history), connecting words through semantic and morphological mapping, using target words in oral and written production and other forms of meaning-focused output (Gonzalez-Fernandez & Schmitt, 2017). Teaching vocabulary through multi-sensory activities is important because it activates multiple sensory modalities which in turn enhance memory and learning (Structured Literacy IDA document, 2020). These activities are particularly important among EFL learners where, in many cases, exposure and practice with English is usually limited to school as the primary source of language experience.

- ✓ See the English Inspectorate Site
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1wEi3v-486rUB0g-8sGq4ow5lm1DPXNaO> for a presentation on Vocabulary given by Dr. Susie Russak
- ✓ Pilot E mini vocabulary lessons:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_By9lssScGV9leE3SzcAwivvGQ32L03RphfV4yv4Fag/edit
- ✓ Ur, P. (2012). *Vocabulary Activities*. Cambridge University Press
[Penny Ur–20Teaching tips on vocabulary | #CambridgeDay2020 - YouTube Clip](#)

Spelling

Task description

The Spelling task in the ACE-7 kit taps into the ability to recall and produce specific orthographic syllables and word patterns within frequently occurring words. It is comprised of 20 familiar mono- and multi-syllabic words taken from the old band-I list of the [revised curriculum](#). The words in the Spelling task include representations from five of the six orthographic syllable types (open, closed, r-controlled, vowel team, magic e), the pattern 'ight', the morpheme 'tion' and irregular spelled words. Unlike the other categories, the irregular spelled words can only be spelled correctly if the speller has an exact representation of the word in orthographic memory. The pupil hears each word three times: first in isolation, then within a meaningful sentence and one more time in isolation. Then the pupil is required to type the word in the correct form. Once the pupil has completed spelling a word, s/he continues to the following screen and spells the next word.



Scoring

The words in this task are scored automatically as correct or incorrect. 4 points are given for each word that is spelled correctly and zero points are given if there are any misspellings within the target word.

Norms for the spelling task:

Sufficient	In need of intervention	In need of intensive intervention
61-80 points	41-60 points	0-40 points

Note that while the nature of this particular spelling task does not allow for a correct or incorrect score for capitalization of proper nouns (in this case, the words Sunday and November), it is very important to pay attention to capitalization rules when teaching spelling in English.

Possible areas of difficulty

If a pupil has difficulties with accurate word spelling, this may be due to a lack of knowledge regarding specific orthographic patterns or a general weakness in orthographic memory and/or sound-letter correspondence knowledge. Since spelling and reading rely on similar linguistic and cognitive skills, it is possible to see similar patterns of difficulty across the reading and spelling tasks.

If the teacher would like to get more specific information about the orthographic patterns that may be difficult for the pupil to represent in spelling, [table 2](#) which can be found in the reading task above, allows

for error identification at this level. This score may indicate whether a pupil needs direct instruction in a particular syllable type or pattern.

Pedagogical recommendations

If a pupil receives a low score on the Spelling task, it is important for the teacher to use the provided table to map out which orthographic patterns were the most challenging for the pupil and use this information as a starting point for intervention.

It is possible that the pupil struggled with spelling of all words. In this case, it might be wise to examine the score on the Isolated Word Reading task and the performance profile, using the same table to decide where to begin intervention.

Choices about which orthographic syllables to teach first should be guided by how much “mileage” the pupil will get from this newly acquired knowledge: how frequent is this orthographic pattern and what will the pupil be able to do once s/he knows how to spell and/or read this orthographic pattern?

Keep in mind that the best way to motivate a struggling learner is by providing success experiences!

Note that general difficulties with spelling could also indicate that the pupil is lacking basic sound-letter knowledge necessary for accurate word spelling. In this case, it might be advisable to return to the [ABLE kit](#) and administer either the entire diagnostic section or at least the grapheme-phoneme correspondence knowledge task to get a clearer picture of the sound-letter correspondences that the pupil knows at a more basic level.

✓ Spelling: Introduction

<https://www.readingrockets.org/teaching/reading101-course/modules/spelling-introduction>

Reading Comprehension (Written Reception)

Introduction

Reading comprehension, or written reception, as it is referred to in the New English Curriculum, is an active and complex process that relies on the reader's ability to use multiple cognitive and linguistic resources to construct meaning from a written text (Grabe & Stoller, 2020). This ability is reliant on an underlying set of processes and skills which must be activated in order to reach the goal of meaning extraction. At a linguistic level this involves decoding written words, matching them with units of meaning at the word level (vocabulary) and sentence level (syntax/grammar knowledge). At a cognitive level, it involves making connections between what is read and what is already known. However, additional cognitive skills and strategies are also required, including memory and the ability to distinguish between a main idea and supporting details (Geva & Ramirez, 2015), as well as an understanding of different genres and rhetorical structures (Seidenberg, 2017). In addition to the component skills associated with reading comprehension, exposure and guided practice with reading different types of texts also contribute to strengthening comprehension abilities (Duke & Pearson, 2008).

The centrality of reading comprehension as an essential literacy skill is also evident in the fact that most high-stake testing of academic achievement includes reading comprehension tasks. The English matriculation examinations in Israel are no exception. This may be because reading comprehension is a central conduit to accessing information, and hence to academic achievement. Thus, it is not surprising that the National Reading Panel (2000) deemed reading comprehension one of the five pillars of literacy acquisition.

Task description

The Reading Comprehension task in the ACE-7 kit taps into the ability to derive meaning from written texts at the beginning of seventh grade. It is comprised of three texts at different levels of difficulty: basic, intermediate and advanced. While each of the texts was constructed using words taken from band I ([Revised English Curriculum November 2013](#)), they differ from each other in length (number of words per text) and sentence structure, as well as content complexity. Each text is accompanied by a set of items that assess the pupil's comprehension of the text.

The items are designed to tap into different levels of thinking skills: lower-order thinking skills which require the reader to locate specific information in the text, and higher-order thinking skills which require the reader to use existing information as the basis for deducing a missing piece of information. There are also items that require the reader to access information from different parts of a text and then integrate them meaningfully for a specific purpose.

Administration of this task proceeds in an adaptive manner. All pupils begin by reading the intermediate level text, and then, based on their scores, they are automatically referred to either the basic or the advanced level text, so that each pupil reads two texts in total. In this manner it is possible to get more precise information about the reading comprehension level of each pupil.

Intermediate level text

The first text that all pupils are given, *Clothes on Trees*, (214 words) is at an intermediate level, appropriate for the beginning of seventh grade. It is about Maya, a nine-year-old girl, who sympathizes with people she sees on the News and decides to help them. She writes a post on the Internet, asking her community to hang warm clothes on trees during the winter. The text is accompanied by seven items.

Advanced level text

The Lego Story (319 words) is the advanced level text. It is a biography about Ole Kirk, who had to leave school at the age of 14 and get a job. The text describes the sequence of events and turning points in Ole's life that led him to create the Lego pieces that we all know today. This text is the most advanced of the three because it is the longest, has more advanced vocabulary and has the densest content. The text is accompanied by nine items.

Basic level text

First Day at School (62 words) is a basic level text formatted as WhatsApp messages between two friends, Danny and Tom. They are about to start their first day at a new school and are discussing their concerns and expectations. The text is accompanied by five items.

Scoring

Pupils receive points for each correctly answered item.

Norms for the Reading Comprehension task:

Sufficient	In need of intervention	In need of intensive intervention
higher than 52 and up to 64 points	higher than 36 and up to 52 points	36 points or less

Possible areas of difficulty

Lack of success in the Reading Comprehension task could be the result of different types of difficulties:

1. *Poor reading skills.* Poor reading skills in this case could result from either weak decoding skills, slow and labored reading, or both. These difficulties would also be evident in poor performance on the Isolated Word Reading and Oral Passage Reading tasks. However, as the main difficulty in this profile is associated with word-reading difficulties, it is expected to see at least average performance on the Listening Comprehension task where there is no need to read the text.
2. *Weak vocabulary.* This difficulty would also be evident in poor performance on the Vocabulary task and possibly on the Listening Comprehension task.
3. *Weak syntactic knowledge of how sentences are structured in English.* This difficulty would also be evident in poor performance on the Word Order task, and possibly on the Listening Comprehension task.
4. *Lack of comprehension strategies.* These difficulties might also be evident in the Listening Comprehension task.
5. *Difficulties with particular question types.* Pupils who struggle with particular question types will usually succeed with questions that require finding specific information but struggle with questions that require making inferences or drawing conclusions. This difficulty might also be evident in the Listening Comprehension task.

Pedagogical recommendations

Since reading comprehension is the product of decoding and language skills, difficulties with reading comprehension could have multiple sources. It is important to examine pupil performance on the other component skills in order to pinpoint the specific sources of difficulty with reading comprehension. The following pedagogical recommendations focus on strategies associated with strong reading comprehension skills.

- ✓ Strategies that Promote Comprehension

<https://www.readingrockets.org/article/strategies-promote-comprehension>

- ✓ 103 Things to Do Before, During, or After Reading

<https://www.readingrockets.org/article/103-things-do-during-or-after-reading>

- ✓ Webinar sponsored by the English Inspectorate with a presentation on reading comprehension given by Ms. Arona Gvariahu

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1wEi3v-486rUB0g-8sGq4ow5lm1DPXNaO>

Word Order⁴

Introduction

Knowing the correct order of words within a sentence is a basic component of syntactic knowledge. Syntax focuses on the form of the language, specifically the way that words are combined together to create sentences. It has been termed the “gateway to meaning” (Brown & Miller, 2002) because one can only access the meaning of spoken and written utterances if one is familiar with the syntactic constraints of the target language, or the order in which words are organized to represent meaning.

There are several factors that can present a challenge for L1 Hebrew and Arabic speakers when learning and using English:

- a) The structural complexity of a sentence. Structural complexity is dependent on the number of constituents added to a sentence – as more constituents are added, the complexity level of the sentence increases. For example, an S V IO DO (subject, verb, indirect object, direct object) structured sentence (*The girl bought her mother a gift*) will be more difficult to understand and form correctly than a sentence with an S V DO pattern (*The girl bought a gift*). Similarly, a sentence that includes a noun phrase (NP) with more constituents, particularly when there is an adjective preceding the noun, will be more complex, for example, *the cat, the big cat, the very big cat, the very big cat under the table*.
- b) Word order within a sentence. Hebrew and Arabic are highly inflected languages and have a somewhat flexible word order. This is because the suffixes that mark inflection help us reconstruct meaning. English, on the other hand, possesses some degree of inflection, but not as much as Hebrew and Arabic. In English, the main way to convey specific meaning in a sentence is through rigid word order. Moving a word or a phrase to a different place in the sentence often results in a difference in meaning or in an ungrammatical sentence. Consider, for example, the sentence – *All the children arrived at school yesterday*. In Hebrew and Arabic, we can change the order of the core elements so that the verb can precede or follow the subject:

כל הילדים הגיעו אתמול לבית הספר. جميع الأولاد جاؤوا في الأمس إلى المدرسة.

אתמול הגיעו כל הילדים לבית הספר. في الأمس جاء جميع الأولاد إلى المدرسة.

In English, unlike Hebrew and Arabic, the verb cannot precede the subject. '*Yesterday went all the children to school*' is not an acceptable alternative.

- c) Linguistic distance between L1 and EFL regarding sentence structure. The existential 'be' in English, for example, is non-existent in the L1 of Hebrew or Arabic in the present tense. Thus, the S V C pattern, (*We are strong*), and the more challenging pattern which includes the existential 'be' and 'there' as the subject, (*There is a book*), will probably be difficult for L1 Arabic and Hebrew speakers at beginning stages of EFL acquisition and require direct instruction and repeated exposures.

⁴ For more in-depth reading:

Celce-Murcia, M. 7 Larsen-Freeman. D. (1999). *The Grammar Book: An ESL/EFL Teachers' course* 2nd edition. USA_ Heinle & Heinle Publishers
<https://flaviamcunha.files.wordpress.com/2013/03/the-grammar-book-an-eslefl-teachers-course-second-editiona4.pdf>

Teaching this information about English, especially in comparison to the L1 of the learners, may help pupils understand the importance of using the proper sequence of words in a sentence.

Task description

The Word Order task in the ACE-7 kit assesses syntactic knowledge using common variations of the basic sentence patterns, including affirmative, negative, interrogative, and imperative forms. These structures were chosen because they represent the range of sentence types that a pupil should be familiar with by the beginning of seventh grade in Israel. These basic sentence patterns vary in level of difficulty, which is determined by either structural complexity of the sentence or how different the sentence is from the learners' native language (L1). In what follows, each of the patterns targeted in the task is described below.

The first type of sentence pattern is subject, verb, complement represented as an S V C pattern. This pattern is used when the verb acts as a link between the subject and what comes after the verb. The information following the verb describes the subject, thus linking the subject and verb. For example, "He is happy," 'happy' follows the verb 'is' and describes the subject 'he'.

The second basic sentence pattern is the subject, verb, direct object pattern or S V DO. In a sentence involving a direct object, the verb represents an action and the direct object of the sentence is the 'who' or 'what' that receives the action of the verb, for example, "Amir calls Tom." 'Tom' is the direct object of the sentence since Tom is the 'who' that receives the action. Another example of a sentence with a direct object is "Amir kicks the ball." 'the ball' is the direct object: it is the 'what' that receives the action.

The third basic sentence pattern: subject, verb, indirect object, direct object written as S V IO DO, includes an indirect object, or the one 'who' receives the action from the direct object, for example, "Amir gives Tom the ball," where 'Tom' is the indirect object: it is the receiver of the direct object, 'the ball.'

The fourth basic sentence pattern involves an adverbial phrase following the subject and verb S V AdvP, which describes the when, where, how, and/or why related to the verb, for example, "They went to the beach," 'to the beach' is the adverbial phrase which describes where the action takes place.

The fifth and final basic pattern used in the ACE-7 kit is the pattern of 'there' plus 'be' with a noun phrase, for example, "There is a book". This is a pattern that has 'there' as a subject followed by a form of the verb 'be.' This type of pattern is represented as There be NP.

The vocabulary words used in this task were taken from highly familiar words in the band-I list of the revised curriculum 2013 to ensure that performance on the Word Order task is not influenced by pupils' vocabulary level. In other words, difficulties with this task should not be the result of lack of understanding of the words used in the task.

The task begins with eight sentences with a middle range of difficulty and then continues with five sentences that are relatively more complex. All pupils are given these **13 sentences**. Pupils are shown words displayed out of correct sentence order in a "word bank". They must arrange the words to form a correct sentence by placing each word to its correct spot in the sentence. One word in each display is presented with a capital letter at the beginning. This can serve as a clue for the pupils as to which word begins the sentence.

Question 1:

Word Bank: I, in, Tel Aviv, live

Choose the right words to form a correct sentence.

בחר את המילה הנכונה כדי ליצור משפט תקין.

1 2 3

-Reset-

I

in

Tel Aviv

live

Next



Question 1:

Word Bank: I, in, Tel Aviv, live

Choose the right words to form a correct sentence.

בחר את המילה הנכונה כדי ליצור משפט תקין.

I

live

in

Tel Aviv



Back

Next



Scoring

The sentences in this task are scored automatically. Pupils receive 4 points for each sentence that they organize according to the correct structural sentence pattern. There are no points for partially correct word ordering. Moreover, sentences that do not begin with a capitalized letter are not accepted as correct.

Norms for the Word Order task:

Sufficient	In need of intervention	In need of intensive intervention
41-52 points	29-40 points	0-28 points

Possible areas of difficulty

If a pupil's score indicates the need for intensive intervention, it is advisable to check if s/he can order the most basic sentences. Teachers may use the following four sentences for this:

- speak We English (We speak English.)

- basketball plays Yasmin (Yasmin plays basketball.)
- eat I apples green (I eat green apples.)
- you ice Do cream like (Do you like ice cream?)

Performance on these basic sentences can provide a glimpse into the pupil's understanding of basic sentence construction.

There could be three sources of difficulty in the task of constructing sentences in the correct word order:

1. *General lack of syntactic/grammatical knowledge*: If the pupil lacks general syntactic/grammatical knowledge, s/he will struggle with almost all of the items.
2. *Structural complexity of the items*: Structural complexity in this context refers to the number of phrase/sentence constituents. If the pupil struggles with sentences that are structurally more complex, the difficulties will arise only with sentences that have additional phrasal elements.
3. *Syntactic distance between the learners' native language (L1) and the target structures in English*: Distance from L1 refers to the specific structures that are different from/non-existent in L1, for example: We are strong (existential 'be' in the present) or There is a book (Existential 'be' and a dummy subject 'there').

Pedagogical recommendations

Sometimes learners of English as an additional language or EFL struggle with syntactic issues because of differences between accepted patterns of organization of constituents within sentences. In order to better predict and understand potential areas of difficulty with understanding of basic English syntactic rules and patterns, it is advisable to consider the rules and different structures that govern the organization of the L1 of the learner (Yule, 2020).

Acquisition of grammatical structure knowledge occurs in a developmental process, with relatively predictable stages and sequences (Loewen, 2020). Eight developmental stages of learning grammatical morphemes in English have been identified and are presented in [Figure 6](#). Explicit instruction of grammar structures that learners are not developmentally ready for might not be effective. However, even though learners are not ready for certain grammatical structures, they should be exposed to an enormous amount of comprehensible input. Teachers should combine both implicit and explicit instruction through the use of meaning-focused instruction, and focus on form instruction.



Figure 6: Eight developmental stages of learning grammatical morphemes in English according to Loewen, 2020

- ✓ https://pop.education.gov.il/tchumey_daat/english/chativat-beynayim/study_topics/?page=1&main-subject=19280
- ✓ Jones, P. W. (1995). Grammar Games and Activities for Teachers, Penguin Books.

ACE-7 Teachers' guide: Word Order

Oral Passage Reading⁵

Introduction

Proficient reading skills are dependent on accuracy of word decoding and speed of reading. Word decoding accuracy is a measure of correctly read words. Speed refers to how quickly and effortlessly words are read. It develops over time, as a result of continued and focused reading practice. The term 'fluency' is used to represent both – how quickly and how accurately one reads. In other words, fluency represents a measure of automaticity. Research indicates that children who have strong reading fluency tend to have good reading comprehension skills whereas those who have poor reading fluency tend to struggle with reading comprehension (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2008). This is because when reading for meaning, decoding skills must be automatic, otherwise the cognitive energy of the reader will not be fully available for comprehension (Lai, et al, 2014; Pey, Min & Wah, 2014). Thus, fluency has a direct impact on reading comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000; Schwanenflugel et al, 2006). In fact, fluency has been described as the bridge between word recognition and comprehension (Pikulski & Chard, 2005).

Usually, fluency is measured by the following equation:

Total number of words in the passage read correctly x (multiplied by) 60; ÷ (divided by) number of seconds to read passage = words per minute

Another skill which has been identified as an indication of text reading proficiency is prosody. Prosody is a measure of expressiveness, which includes appropriate phrasing, pausing and stress along with rise and fall patterns of natural language (Schwanenflugel et al, 2006). Prosodic reading has been described as reading as if one is talking (Stahl & Kuhn, 2002), and it develops with practice over time. However, as it is scientifically difficult to get a clear and objective assessment of prosody while reading, most measures of fluency only rely on speed and accuracy (Schwanenflugel et al, 2006). Thus, reading fluency is associated with multiple aspects of both word and text reading. Figure 5, which is taken from Schwanenflugel and Ruston (2008), p. 2, illustrates this relationship.

⁵ For more in-depth reading:

Reading Fluency and how to improve it

<https://journal.imse.com/what-is-reading-fluency-how-to-improve-it/>

Schwanenflugel, P. J., & Ruston, H. P. (2008). Becoming a fluent reader: From theory to practice. In M. R. Kuhn & P. J. Schwanenflugel (Eds.), *Fluency in the classroom* (pp. 1–16). Guilford Press.

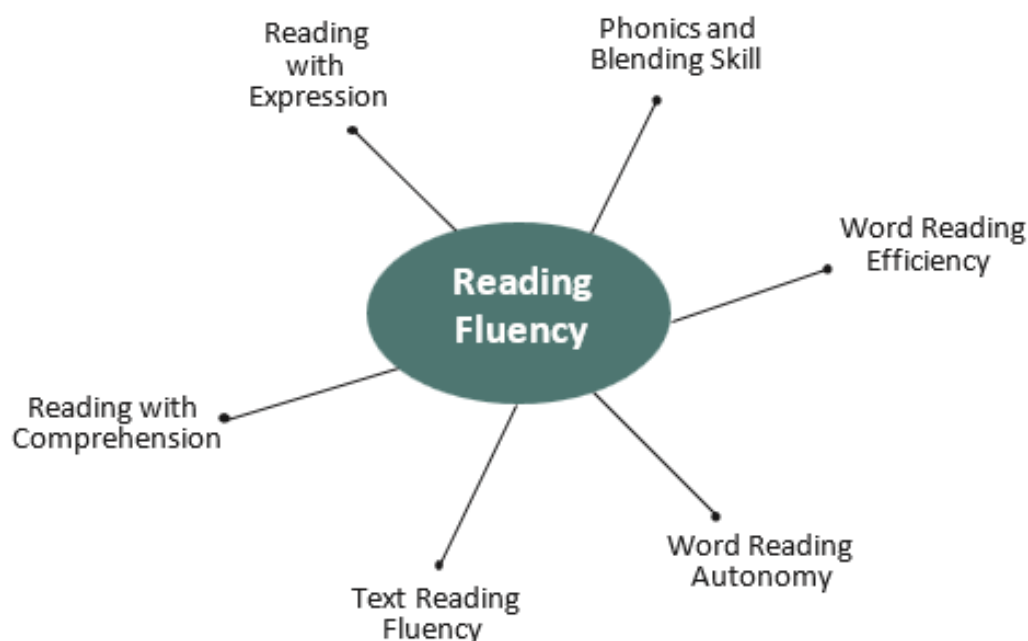


Figure 5: The relationship between reading fluency and different measures of literacy

Task description

The Oral Passage Reading task in the ACE-7 kit assesses reading fluency in the context of a text. The text created for this task is comprised of 72 words taken from band I of the 2013 English curriculum. The words in the text were chosen for two reasons: (1) they are familiar to the pupils from the elementary school lexis, (2) the lexical items are easy to decode along with frequently occurring sight words. In addition, the sentences are comprised of simple grammatical structures. Based on these considerations, it is expected that a pupil at the beginning of seventh grade will not have to invest energy in word decoding, but will be able to read quickly, accurately, and with appropriate intonation and expression. In this task, pupils are presented with the text and are asked to record themselves reading it aloud. They can delete their first recording and make a new one, but this can only be done once.

Scoring

This task is comprised of two measures: one for accuracy and one for fluency. The accuracy score represents the number of words that were read correctly in the given passage. As mentioned above, the fluency score is calculated based on the number of words read accurately in a minute.

Teachers marking this task are expected to use the **reading aloud scoring key** which can also be found in this kit. The scoring key includes guidelines for accurate and inaccurate word reading. Points should not be taken off for accent interference (for example, reading the word *'they'* as *'dey'* or *'pizza'* as *'bizza'* are not considered errors).

In order to calculate the fluency score, the number of correctly read words is calculated along with the number of seconds that it takes the pupil to complete reading the passage. As the words used in the task appear in context and are highly frequent and familiar to the pupils, it is important to note that the word accuracy score in this task alone does not give a reliable indication of word decoding ability. A high score for reading accuracy in this task may indicate that the pupil can recall these familiar words when they are presented in context but it cannot be used as an index of word decoding ability. In order to get a reliable measure of word reading ability, the Isolated Word Reading task must be used.

Norms for the accuracy score:

Sufficient	In need of intervention	In need of intensive intervention
68-72 accurate words	63-67 accurate words	0-62 accurate words

Norms for the fluency score:

Above the norm	Sufficient	In need of intervention
at least 140 words per minute	80-139 words per minute	79 or fewer words per minute

Possible areas of difficulty

Since the fluency measure in this task is comprised of the score for accuracy and the score for speed, there are two areas of possible difficulties relating to this task: errors with accurate word decoding and slow and effortful reading speed.

Errors in accuracy indicate that the pupil has a problem with word reading. These errors could include:

- words that were read incorrectly
- words that were skipped or added
- words that were changed by using the wrong inflection (e.g., adding *ed*, or *s* to the end of a word, such as reading 'wanted' instead of 'want').

A low fluency score could indicate that word-reading skills are not automatic and require focused effort and energy. Slow readers may read accurately but due to the effort involved in decoding the words, they may not be able to fully attend to the content of what they read. As a result, their reading comprehension skills may be compromised.

Pedagogical recommendations

If pupils have slow and effortful reading, intervention should focus on building automaticity.

If the area of weakness is related to word-reading accuracy, the intervention should focus on strengthening decoding skills as suggested in the pedagogical section for the Isolated Word Reading task.

- ✓ Patterson, D. (2013). Fluency-Building Activities for the EFL Classroom. Working Papers in Language Education and Research. 1. 71-84.
- ✓ Top 10 Resources on Fluency
<https://www.readingrockets.org/article/top-10-resources-fluency>
- ✓ Cohen, J. (2011). Second-language Literacy Instruction: Five Principles for Effective Fluency Development
<http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/PTA/Volume-54-jc.pdf>
- ✓ Introduction: Fluent Reading (videos)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oqi7ANK49wk>

Isolated Word Reading⁶

Introduction

Word decoding, more generally referred to as reading, and spelling will be addressed together in this section because they are reliant on many shared cognitive and linguistic underpinnings (Ehri, 2000; Frith, 1985; Joshi, 2016). Acquiring these two crucial literacy skills begins with the basic ability to map between the written and the spoken forms of language (Hulme & Snowling, 2014). However, since English has a deep orthography where graphemes do not always represent phonemes consistently (Joshi, Treiman, Carreker & Moats 2008; Moats, 2010), the ability to read and spell words correctly is dependent on more than knowing the sounds that each of the letters represents. Vowels, in particular, show high levels of variability of grapheme-phoneme (sound-letter) correspondences (Joshi, et al., 2008; Kessler & Treiman, 2001), but become more consistent when embedded within orthographic syllable patterns. Therefore, learning the sound-letter correspondences for vowels embedded within orthographic syllable patterns leads to greater reading proficiency.

There are six different orthographic syllables in English⁷

1. closed syllable, where the vowel is followed by a consonant which causes the vowel to produce a short sound (CVC – e.g. *man*)
2. open syllable, where the vowel is the last letter in the syllable and therefore produces a long sound (CV – e.g. *hi*)
3. vowel team syllable, where two vowels combine to represent one sound, usually a diphthong sound (CVVC – e.g. *green, round, coin*)
4. r-controlled syllable, where the vowel is followed by the letter r which changes the sound of the vowel (CVr – e.g. *car, her, fir, burn*)
5. silent e syllable (or magic e, also called a split digraph), where the vowel produces a long sound (CVCe – e.g. *make, tube*)
6. consonant plus *le* syllable which is the final syllable in a multisyllabic word (Cle – e.g. *simple, little*).

According to Shankweiler & Fowler (2004), “Closed syllables (at, met, mop, in, up) make up almost half of all written syllables; their spellings correctly predict the vowel pronunciation in 95% of words.” (p. 494). Thus, while knowledge of the six orthographic syllable types will not enable an English language learner to read and spell every word that is encountered with 100% accuracy, this knowledge will certainly lead to a higher level of accuracy in both word reading and spelling⁸.

⁶ For more in-depth reading:
<https://umw.dyslexiaida.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2016/05/SPELLING-SUPPORTS-READING.pdf>
<https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/Moats.pdf>

⁷ For more in-depth reading:
<https://www.readingrockets.org/article/six-syllable-types>

ACE-7 Teachers' guide: Isolated Word Reading

⁸ In further support of potential of knowledge of orthographic syllable patterns to facilitate accurate word reading, an analysis of the lexical items in bands 1 and 2 of the Israeli English curriculum highlighted that 41% of band 1 words and 67% of band 2 words contain closed syllables (short vowels) and 17% of band 1 words and 25%

In order to illustrate this point, consider the sound that the letter **a** may represent. If it is read alone, this letter may represent between seven and nine different sounds, however the sound of the letter **a** when followed by a consonant becomes highly consistent. [Figure 3](#) illustrates the difference in levels of consistency between single vowel letters in words and vowel letters when they are followed by a consonant that creates a closed syllable pattern.

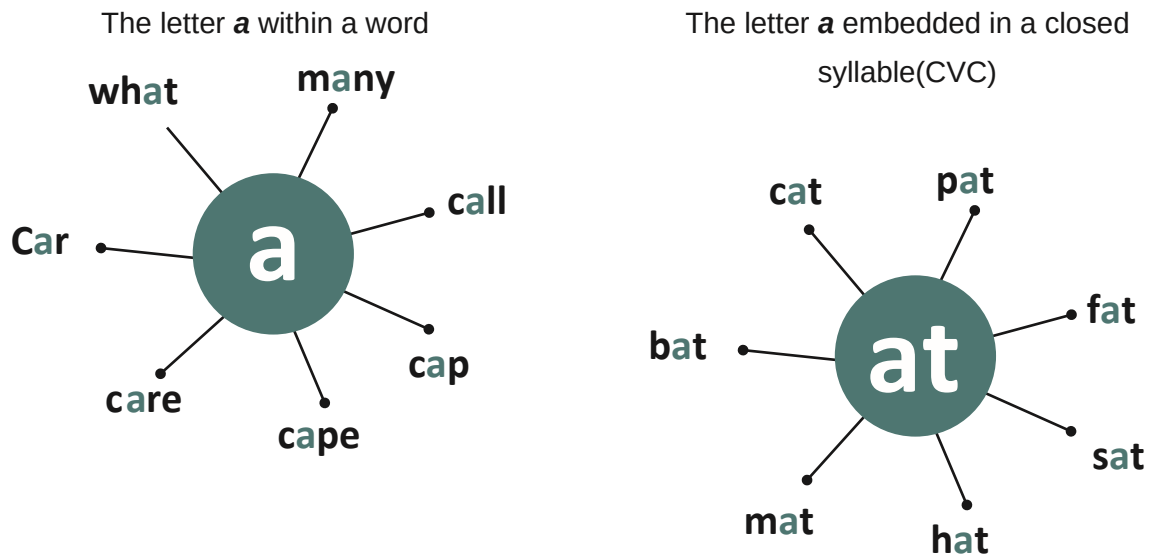


Figure 3: Comparison between the sounds of the letter **a** when embedded in random words as compared to embedded in a closed syllable.

However, as previously mentioned, English is considered to have a deep orthography where not all words can be read even with knowledge of sound-letter correspondences and orthographic syllable patterns. Additional knowledge of spelling patterns, such as *ind* and *ture* (as in the words *find*, *kind*; *mixture*, *picture*), spelling rules (hard and soft c), morphological patterns (*decide-decision*, *act-action*) and knowledge of word origins (dict- Latin) also facilitate word reading and spelling. Beyond these sources of word knowledge, there are still some words that must be learned by sight because they are considered non-phonetic, such as the words: *one*, *the*, *said*, *does*. These words are usually learned through multiple exposures. [Figure 4](#) illustrates linguistic skills that support the ability to read and spell words in English accurately.

of band 2 words include open syllables (Kahn-Horwitz & Levitt, 2020). Moreover, words with vowel digraphs and diphthongs comprise 22.5% of band 1 and 19.6% of band 2. This shows that if a pupil is equipped with knowledge of the orthographic syllable patterns in English, s/he will be able to read and spell most of the words in bands 1 and 2 correctly (Kahn-Horwitz & Levitt, 2020.)

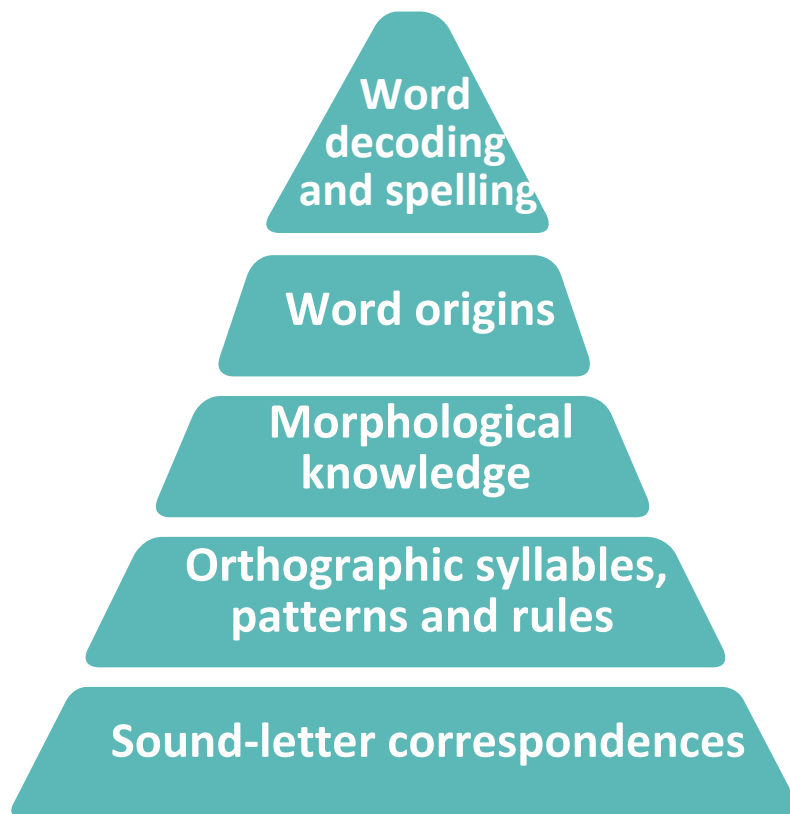


Figure 4: The linguistic skills that underlie the ability to read and spell a word accurately.

Despite their shared dependence on knowledge of the way that phonemes map onto graphemes, spelling is a more challenging task than reading. This is because reading is considered primarily a recognition task, based on decoding written symbols, whereas spelling is a language production task, involving the encoding of spoken sounds into written letters. Accurate word decoding can be supported by context when reading a text, whereas accurate spelling requires the ability to recall the exact letters and letter patterns that represent the sounds of words (Kessler & Treiman, 2015). From this one can understand why spelling ability may support word reading, whereas the ability to read words correctly may not necessarily impact accurate spelling (Bosman & Van Orden, 1997; Caravalos, Hulme & Snowling, 2001).

Task description

The ability to read words in isolation is a commonly used index of decoding ability. Tasks that assess decoding ability often use either unfamiliar or pseudo words in order to uncover the word attack skills that the reader uses. On the other hand, familiar words are usually used to assess word recognition, a skill that depends on orthographic memory.

The Isolated Word Reading task in the ACE-7 kit assesses the ability to read words accurately. It is comprised of 22 words, 17 of which are unfamiliar decodable words mostly taken from the [Advanced Level English Curriculum](#) (band III). These words were chosen based on the assumption that they would be new to pupils in seventh grade. There are also four familiar irregular words taken from the foundation level of the 2013 revised curriculum, in order to provide a measure of sight word recognition for familiar words.

The decodable words include representation of five orthographic syllable types: open, closed, r-controlled, vowel team and silent e. In addition, the decodable words include representation of the orthographic pattern *igh* and the morpheme *tion*.

The words are presented on four screens, five to six words at a time, and the pupils are asked to record themselves reading the words. If the pupils wish to correct themselves, they can delete their first recording and make a new one, but this can only be done once on each screen.

Scoring

The teacher is required to score this task manually. For the reading accuracy evaluation, the decodable words are divided into syllables based on the patterns that each word represents. These syllables act as separate evaluation units. Some words are not divided into syllables and are treated as whole evaluation units.

While marking this task, the teacher must listen carefully to the pupil's recording and score each of the evaluation units for accuracy (for example, the word *confirm* is comprised of the closed syllable *con* and the r - controlled syllable *firm*, which act as two separate evaluation units and receive two separate accuracy marks). In total, the teacher must mark 34 evaluation units (within 22 words) as "correct" or "incorrect". In this manner, the scoring procedure for this task provides a score based on how accurately the pupil read each of the patterns represented in each syllable or word. It is important to note that since the majority of the words in this task are unfamiliar to the pupils, no points are taken off if a word is read with an incorrect stress pattern.

Norms for the Isolated Word Reading task:

Sufficient	In need of intervention	In need of intensive intervention
29-34 correctly read units	15-28 correctly read units	0-14 correctly read units

Possible areas of difficulty

Since reading and spelling rely on similar linguistic and cognitive skills, it is possible to see similar patterns of difficulty across both tasks.

1. *Inaccurate reading of specific orthographic patterns*
2. *Inaccurate reading of sight words*
3. *General reading difficulty*

Pedagogical recommendations

If the teacher would like to get more specific information about the orthographic patterns that may be difficult for the pupil to recognize in reading, [table 2](#) below can be used to map out the specific reading and spelling errors that a pupil made, based on the patterns that were used in the tasks.

Error patterns in Isolated Word Reading and Spelling tasks

Pattern	Circle the errors in reading	Circle the errors in spelling	Comments
Closed syllable CVC	• in (insight) • stim (stimulate) • ex (exploit) • men (mention) • con (confirm) • den (den) • sec (section)	• vem (November) • Sun (Sunday) • ac (action) • mis (mistake) • com (computer)	
Open syllable CV	• u (stimulate) • mo (motion) • si (silo) • lo (lo)	• No (Noember) • pa (paper) • pu (pucomputer) • va (vacation) • ca (ca)	

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Pattern	Circle the errors in reading	Circle the errors in spelling	Comments
Vowel team syllable CVVC	• dain (ordain) • ploit (exploit) • bean • root • oats • out (outaine)	• teen (nineteen) • show • day (Sunaiday) • each	
R controlled syllable CVr	• or (ordain) • firm (confirm) • bar • bur (burirden)	• ber (Novemirber) • far • per (papir) • ter (computir)	
Magic e syllable CVCe	• late (stimulaite) • tribe • line (outaine) • fume	• nine (nineteen) • fine • take • smile	
igh	• sight (insight) • tight	• light • night • high	
tion	• tion (mention) • tion (section) • tion (motion)	• tion (action) • tion (vacation)	
Irregular (sight) words	• who • one • because • answer	• come • are • said • eyes	

Table 2: Error patterns in Spelling and Isolated Word Reading tasks

Note that general difficulties with isolated word reading on this task will indicate that the pupil is lacking basic grapheme-phoneme knowledge necessary for accurate word decoding. In this case, it is advisable to return to the [ABLE kit](#) and administer either the entire diagnostic section or at least the grapheme-phoneme correspondence knowledge and high and low frequency word reading tasks, along with the spelling task from the Screening section of the ABLE kit, to get a clearer picture of what the pupil knows at a more basic level.

- ✓ Building Blocks project

<https://sites.google.com/view/buildingblocksisrael/home>

- ✓ Phonics and Decoding (video)

<https://www.readingrockets.org/reading-topics/phonics-and-decoding>

- ✓ Phonics wheel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUFGLFjrAUg>

- ✓ How to Make a Phonics Flip Book

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kd8eUDyqTC0>

Reading Aloud Scoring Key

This document contains the guidelines for scoring the two Reading Aloud tasks in the ACE-7 kit: Oral Passage Reading & Isolated Word Reading.

Oral Passage Reading

This task consists of a **Reading Accuracy** measure and a **Fluency** measure. The accuracy measure represents the percentage of words that were read correctly in the given passage. The fluency measure is calculated based on the number of words read accurately in a minute.

To evaluate this task, the teacher is required to provide the following:

- ◆ a score for **Reading Accuracy**
- ◆ **Time recorded:** minutes & seconds
- ◆ **Whole passage reading**

To score for **Reading Accuracy**, listen to the pupil's recording and **count the number of errors** in the passage.

The following reading patterns are considered errors:

- words pronounced incorrectly
- words that were replaced with different words
- words that were skipped and not read by the pupil
- words that were added even though they did not appear in the given text
- words that were read with a wrong inflection, e.g., wanted instead of want
- words that were read correctly and were then read again incorrectly
- words that were translated into another language

Note: if a pupil began reading the passage and stopped before s/he reached the end, then all the unread words were 'skipped' and should be counted as errors.

The following reading patterns are not considered errors:

- discourse markers or filler sounds (um, mm, eh, uh, er, etc.)
- words that were read incorrectly and were then corrected by the pupil

- reading the contracted form (it's for it is)

Isolated Word Reading

This task only consists of a **Reading Accuracy** measure.

To evaluate reading accuracy, most words are divided into syllables which act as separate evaluation units. There are, however, four sight words that are not divided into syllables and are treated as whole evaluation units.

Note:

- Reading a word with an incorrect stress pattern should not be considered an error.
- If the pupil read some of the evaluation units but skipped others, the unread units should be scored as incorrect.
- If the pupil did not attempt to read any of the evaluation units on the screen, click the "**No answer**" box for all of them.

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כל הזכויות שמורות למדינת ישראל, משרד החינוך, ראמ"ה. השימוש במסמך זה, לרבות הפריטים שבו, מוגבל למטרות לימוד אישיות בלבד או להוראה ולבחינה על ידי מוסד חינוך בלבד, לפי הרשאה מפורשת למוסד חינוך באתר ראמ"ה. זכויות השימוש אינן ניתנות להעברה. חל איסור מפורש לכל שימוש מסחרי וכן לכל מטרה אחרת שאינה מסחרית. אין להעתיק, להפיץ, לעבד, להציג, לשכפל, לפרסם, להנפיק רישיון, ליצור עבודות נגזרות בין על ידי המשתמש ובין באמצעות אחר לכל מטרה או למכור פריט מפרטי המידע, התוכן, המוצרים או השירותים שמקורם במסמך זה. תוכן המבחנים, לרבות טקסט, תוכנה, תמונות, גרפיקה וכל חומר אחר המוכל במסמך זה, מוגן על ידי זכויות יוצרים, סימני מסחר, פטנטים או זכויות יוצרים וקניין רוחני אחרות, ועל פי כל דין; כל זכות שאינה ניתנת במסמך זה במפורש, דינה כזכות שמורה.