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READING WITHIN REACH

Early Grade Reading Program Design and Implementation:
Best Practices and Resources for Success

Webinar series presented by Reading within Reach
(REACH) in collaboration with the Global Reading
Network

June-July 2019

7/24/2019

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Welcome!

- This EGR professional development series was developed by the **Reading within Reach (REACH)** initiative, which is funded by **USAID** and implemented by **University Research Co., LLC (URC)**
- REACH supports the **Global Reading Network (GRN)** to develop and share research, innovations and resources related to EGR programming
- For more information about REACH and the GRN, visit www.globalreadingnetwork.net



Webinar presenters

- Alison Pflepsen, REACH Reading Program Specialist (apflepsen@urc-chs.com)
- Amy Pallangyo, REACH Technical Advisor (aawbrey@gmail.com)
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- Adrienne Barnes, Florida State University (abarnes@lsi.fsu.edu)

Webinar series goal, content and approach

- The purpose of this professional development webinar series is to **provide participants with evidence-based information, guidance and resources to support the design and implementation of effective EGR initiatives**
- Each session is focused on a key technical topic and includes a summary of **research, experiences and best practices to date**
- **Cross-cutting issues** such as gender equity, ICT and inclusive education are integrated throughout the different webinars
- Issues related to EGR program **monitoring, evaluation, expansion and sustainability** will be addressed as well
- **Opportunities for interaction and questions** will be provided throughout each webinar

Webinar session topics and dates

Past webinars – Materials available on GRN website

- **Webinar 1** – Early grade reading programming: From conception to scale (June 25)
- **Webinar 2** – Resources for teaching and learning early grade reading (July 10)
- **Webinar 3** – Key EGR skills and strategies for effective instruction and assessment (July 17)
- **TODAY! Webinar 4** – Language considerations in early grade reading programs (July 24)
- **Webinar 5** – Continuous professional development in early grade reading programs (July 30)

TO REGISTER, VISIT:

www.globalreadingnetwork.net/news-and-events/calendar

Webinar 1: EGR programming: From conception to scale (June 25)

- EGR and global efforts to improve education quality
- EGR programs and progress to date
- Steps and considerations for developing, expanding and scaling an EGR program

Webinar 2 – Resources for teaching and learning EGR (July 10)

- Characteristics of effective resources for EGR instruction
- The materials development & use process, tools and best practices
- Making materials appropriate, inclusive and accessible for diverse learners

Webinar 3 – Key EGR skills and strategies for effective instruction and assessment (July 17)

- Effective skills, strategies, approaches and activities for teaching early grade reading and writing
- Teachers' use of classroom-based assessment to inform instruction
- Considerations for planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating instruction

Webinar 4 – Language considerations in EGR programs (July 24)

- How language is a critical issue to consider and plan for in EGR programming
- The benefits of teaching children to read in a language that children and teachers understand
- Language-specific factors to consider when designing, implementing and evaluating an EGR program
- Policy and advocacy around language issues and EGL programs

Webinar 5 – Continuous professional development in EGR programs (July 30)

- Will focus on how we prepare and support teachers and other educators to improve EGR instruction and support programming. This will include talking about:
- Characteristics and purposes of effective CPD – what does the evidence say related to in-service training and ongoing pedagogical coaching?
- What CPD looks like for teachers and coaches – what topics does it include and how can it be most effectively delivered? We will talk about various experiences in EGR programs.
- Knowledge, skills and characteristics of effective CPD providers
- Considerations when planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating teacher and educator professional development efforts


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Language considerations in early grade reading programs



Alison Pflepsen
Reading within Reach



Adrienne Barnes
Florida State University

July 24, 2019

Alison Pflepsen is the REACH Reading Program Specialist. She supports the design and development of resources and professional development opportunities for the Global Reading Network. Ms. Pflepsen has 15 years of experience designing and managing education-related programs in sub-Saharan Africa. Prior to joining REACH, Ms. Pflepsen worked for six years at RTI International, where she helped design and implement early grade literacy programs, assessments, training manuals and resources. One area of particular interest to her is language use in education, especially as it relates to reading and language learning.

Adrienne Barnes is a Literacy and Pedagogy Specialist at the Learning Systems Institute at Florida State University. She has over 17 years of experience in education environments, education research in American schools, as well as in international education and development. She currently provides technical support to several early grade reading improvement initiatives in Africa and in Central America. Dr. Barnes has been collaborating with REACH and the Global Reading Network to develop and deliver professional development related to EGR programs. Prior to her international work, Dr. Barnes was an elementary school teacher. She received her Master's and Doctoral degrees from FSU in 2011 and 2015, where she was also a fellow with the Florida Center for Reading Research.

Acknowledgments

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Webinar Objectives

By the end of this webinar, participants will know and be able to apply learning about:

- How language is a critical issue to consider and plan for in EGR programming
- The benefits of teaching children to read in a language that children and teachers understand
- Language-specific factors to consider when designing, implementing and evaluating an EGR program
- Policy and advocacy around language issues and EGR programs

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Photo: RTI International, Nigeria RARA (USAID)



Language is central to any early grade reading program. Language touches on every aspect of early grade reading programs, from curriculum to materials to teacher training to assessment.

This session is designed to help all those involved in EGR program design, implementation and evaluation understand and navigate the many issues related to language and EGR programs. In this webinar, we will provide an overview of the important role that language plays in reading and language acquisition. We will discuss the evidence-based benefits of providing children with instruction in a language they and their teachers understand, and why doing so is essential to efficient and effective reading instruction.

We will also answer language-related questions that commonly arise during the design and implementation of EGR programs, including:

1. What languages will be used for EGR instruction? How will the languages be chosen, and what criteria should be considered?
2. How does the language of EGR instruction affect what skills are taught, how and when?
3. Should children be taught to read in multiple languages, and if so, how and when?
4. How can quality materials be cost-effectively developed in a timely manner?
5. What are language-related implications for teacher professional

development and instruction?

6. How can EGR programs address resistance related to mother tongue or first language instruction?

We will be sharing guidance, resources and recent EGR program experiences that we hope you and your colleagues working to improve EGR outcomes can discuss and review together. We encourage that you and your team to consult **Handout 15: Program planning tool**, which includes questions and considerations to guide decision-making. Even if your EGR program is underway, the information can still be using in informing ongoing implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

To share your questions and comments

- We will provide time throughout the webinar to address your questions and comments
- Please submit them via the chat box in Zoom
- Send them to “all panelists and attendees”



— Part I: Language issues in EGR programs



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Why is language a critical consideration for EGR improvement initiatives?

- Language and literacy go hand-in-hand
- Language-related issues are often sensitive and multi-faceted
- Addressing and integrating language issues is critical to the success of EGR programs
- Language is a significant factor in providing equitable and inclusive education



Photo: USAID

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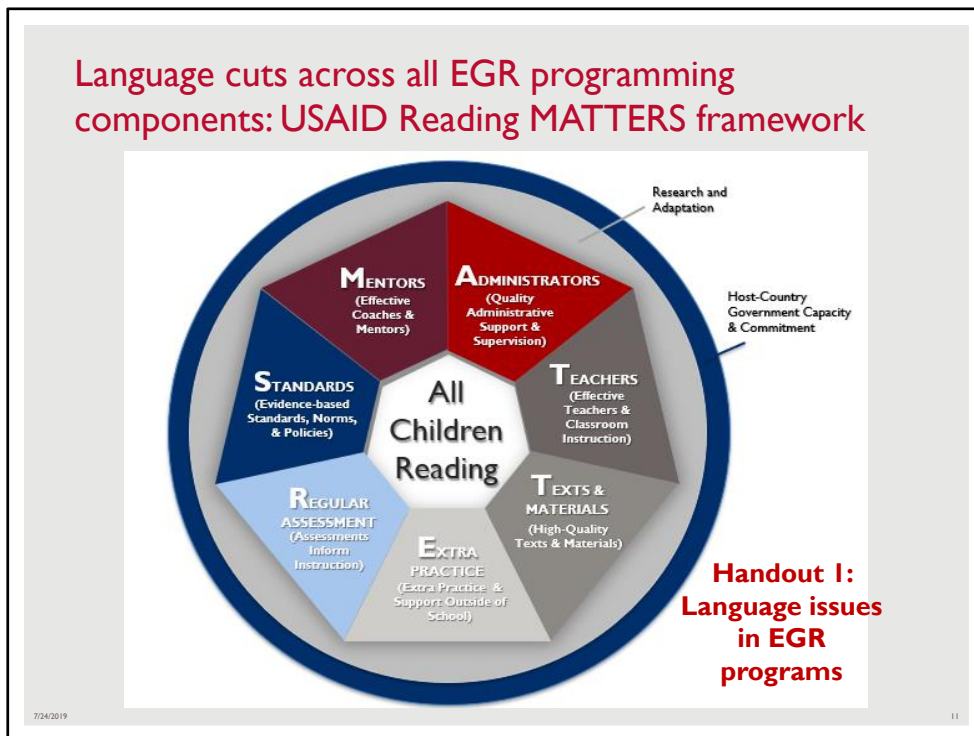
Why is language a critical consideration for EGL improvement initiatives?

Language-related issues are critical to consider with respect to the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of EGL improvement efforts. These include:

- **Language and literacy go hand-in-hand.** Children learn to read more easily when they learn to read in a language they already speak and understand.
- **Language-related issues are often sensitive and multi-faceted.** Issues related to language are not confined to the classroom, but usually related to a number of socio-cultural and political issues. Language is often tied to ethnicity and can be used as a way to re-enforce political or cultural power of one group over another, explicitly or implicitly. Additionally, addressing one issue related to language (e.g., selecting languages to use for instruction) often uncovers many other issues (need to address dialect issues, orthography standardization, attitudes and beliefs about a particular language and culture, etc.)
- **Addressing and integrating language issues is critical to the success of EGR programs.** Many decisions regarding an EGR program are related to language. For example, at the planning stages you need to identify:
 - Which language should be used for initial reading instruction?
 - How many languages should be used for reading instruction?
 - When should children learn to read a second, or other, language?
 - How will the approach to instruction—including the skills taught, strategies used, and time needed to learn different skills--need to take into account the language being taught?

We need to integrate issues of language throughout planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation throughout all components of a program from curriculum design to materials development to teacher professional development. Failure to address language issues will result in a program not achieving its potential.

- **Language is a significant factor in providing equitable and inclusive education.** Children who understand the language of instruction are more likely to enter school on time, are more likely to attend regularly and are less likely to drop out than their peers who do not understand the language being used in the classroom (World Bank, 2005, Malawi). This is particularly true for girls, who in some contexts are less likely than boys to speak and understand a second or foreign language, and thus face an additional barrier to education. Providing instruction in a language girls understand has been found to support their retention, identification as “good” students and achievement (Benson, 2004; Hovens, 2002, 2003).



Reading MATTERS Framework

USAID recently developed this framework to guide the design and implementation of reading program components. It is designed to address all key program components necessary for a comprehensive approach toward a scalable and sustainable program. We introduced it in detail in the first webinar, so it may be familiar to those of you who joined us for that presentation. Take a minute to read the key components.

Language is a critical issues with respect to each of these main components. For example, let's start with....

- **Standards and Policies:** These are the foundation for effective use of language in education. It's important to know: What is the policy for language use in schools? Does it support effective learning? Does the curriculum include standards and benchmarks related to literacy and language learning? If not, we need to work with country governments to align policies, standards and plans for providing effective instruction that takes language into consideration.
- **Classroom Instruction and Assessment:** Language is key consideration when it comes to providing effective instruction and assessment. Programs need to develop curriculum based on evidence on effective pedagogical approaches for teaching reading and language, particularly in multilingual classrooms. Different types of assessments need to be developed and used at the appropriate time and in the appropriate language. They need to be aligned with each other and with curriculum. Adrienne will take us on a deep dive today about what

the research says about effective reading and language instruction.

- **Effective Teachers:** Language also permeates teacher professional development and workforce issues. Do teachers have the knowledge and skills to teach reading in the required languages? Do they have the knowledge and skills to teach to second-language learners? Does teacher pre- and in-service PD address language issues? These are all important areas for EGR reading and education programs to work to improve if not, and we'll be talking about them during today's webinar.
- **Texts and Materials:** Teachers cannot teach and students cannot learn if they do not have quality materials in the appropriate languages. So it's important to know: Are teaching and learning materials aligned with the curriculum across languages and grades? Are the materials appropriate and high-quality across languages? Are they appropriate for first and second language learners? If not, we need to develop materials with language in mind. Webinar 2 in this series focused on materials development, and today we'll be talking about it as well with a focus on language issues.
- **Extra practice:** It's long been recognized that children's reading and language acquisition begins at home and at an early age, and it continues at home every day when children go home from school. Efforts to improve reading outcomes therefore also need to support communities and caregivers to build children's oral language skills even before they start school, and to continue to support their language learning and reading development at home.
- **MERL:** There's a lot we don't know about the effectiveness of reading programs as they relate to language. We need to incorporate language specifically into our research, monitoring and evaluation, and we'll talking more today about how to do this.

Handout 1 summarizes some of the issues related to these main components in EGR programs. Take a minute to look through the list and to circle any that resonate with you, or to add any additional challenges you have faced. Feel free to mention them in the chat box. Reviewing this list of things with a program team is also a useful activity.

First, a few terms....

- A **first language (L1)**, sometimes referred to as *mother tongue language*, is the language a child learns to speak and understand first
 - A person can have more than one L1
 - An L1 can be used for different purposes at different times
 - L1 proficiency may change over time
- A **second language (L2)** or **other language (Lx)** is a language learned in addition to a first language
- Other terms used in some contexts: **Dominant** and **non-dominant languages**; **official** and **national languages**; **language of wider communication**
- **Language of instruction (LOI)**, sometimes called Medium of Instruction (MOI), refers to the language used for teaching and learning

Sources: UNESCO, 2018b, 2018c

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It's important to use accurate and context-specific terminology with respect to language-related issues. Understanding how terms such as national language and official language are defined and used for a country is also key. Take a few minutes to read through these terms and definitions.

A “**first language,”** or **L1**, is the language a child learns to speak and understand first. It is sometimes referred to as “mother tongue.” As you will see noted on this slide, a person can have more than one L1; a person's L1 can be used for different purposes at different times; and a person's proficiency in his or her L1 may change over time.

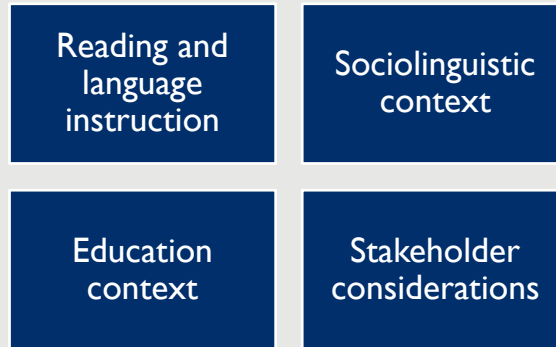
A “**second language,”** or **L2**, is a language a person learns in addition to a first language. **Lx** is a common way to connote a third or additional language. In some contexts, a child may be frequently exposed to an L2 and become highly proficient in the language (e.g., bilingual). Or, a child may be infrequently exposed to an L2 or **Lx**, making it essentially a “foreign” language. Proficiency in a second language can also change over time, and vary depending on the purpose.

Other terms that you may have heard include **dominant** and **non-dominant languages**, which are more frequently used in Asia to refer to languages that are spoken by majority and minority ethnic or language groups, respectively. Many countries also have designated official and national languages, which have stated purposes regarding their use in government and the education system. The term “**languages of wider communication**” is sometimes used to refer to languages that are spoken across geographic or political borders.

When discussing language-related issues within the context of programs, it's important to be aware that certain terms may have positive or negative connotations depending on the context and audience. For example, in some contexts, the term "mother tongue" is more politically charged and contentious than terms such as **familiar language**, **home language**, or **language children speak and understand**, which might be preferable alternatives. A country's history with respect to language and language use in education can be an influencing factor in how certain terms are perceived.

ACTIVITY:

Language issues in EGR programs—What do we need to consider?



Handout 2: Factors to consider

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Factors to consider when addressing language-related issues in EGR programming

Factors to consider when determining how to integrate and address language issues in EGR program can be grouped into four main categories. These are the socio-linguistic context, the education context, effective approaches to reading and language instruction, and stakeholder considerations.

Now take a minute now to bring up Handout 2. As I describe each of these four main factors to consider, indicate whether the issues described are ones that you and your program have considered and incorporated in the design and implementation of your early grade reading program.

- **Socio-linguistic context** refers to the various aspects of the environment in which a language is spoken. This includes the languages and dialects spoken in a specific geographic area, by whom, for what purpose and how well. It also includes the degree to which a language has been developed, standardized and used. Note the sociolinguistic context can be different within the same country.
- **Education context** refers to a country's or region's policies, goals and practices with respect to education and language. This includes official policies and actual practices with respect to the languages used for instruction. The education context also includes student proficiency and use of different languages; teacher-related language considerations (including teachers' knowledge about reading and skills for teaching reading; their level of literacy proficiency;

and the degree of teacher-to-student language match in classrooms); the availability of teaching and learning materials in different languages; the amount of time spent teaching children to read and learn different languages; and the content taught in different languages. Being aware of these issues will help to situate the use of language in an EGR program.

Understanding the socio-linguistic context—or understanding how languages are used in the community and in schools—is an important first step in helping to identify what languages will be used for instruction. It will also help to inform instruction, materials and teacher training.

- **Reading and language instruction** refers to how children learn to read, and how they learn language, most effectively. This includes evidence regarding the critical skills that children need to be taught to learn to read, regardless of language, and best practices for teaching them. It also includes knowledge of how to most effectively teach reading depending on the specific properties of a given language. It's also important for EGR programs to understand evidence-based best practices for teaching children to read in a second or other language.
- **Stakeholder considerations** refers to the numerous issues related to language use in education. These include attitudes and beliefs among parents, teachers and education authorities about how children learn to read and how they learn language most effectively. They also include beliefs about speakers of different languages, the utility of learning different languages, and preferences for which languages children should learn. All of these considerations need to be taken into account by EGR programs, as they will affect how receptive parents and teachers are to the program, and can ultimately affect its effectiveness.

For more information on each of these topics, consult: Pflepsen, A., Benson, C., Chabbott, C., & van Ginkel, A. (2015). *Planning for Language Use in Education: Best Practices and Practical Steps to Improve Learning Outcomes*. Washington, DC: U.S. Agency for International Development. Available at <https://globalreadingnetwork.net/eddata/planning-language-use-education-best-practices-and-practical-steps-improve-learning-outcomes>

— Part 2: Effective approaches for teaching reading and language



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How research on instruction informs programming

Research and evidence on how literacy and language are most effectively taught and learned can inform decisions regarding:

- What language(s) to use for literacy instruction
- What skills to teach, and when
- Instructional approaches to effectively teach literacy and language in a first (L1) language, a second language (L2) or other language (Lx)
- If, when and how to transition from learning in an L1 to learning in an L2/Lx

Reading is different from language learning!

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Once program implementers understand the socio-cultural context, they can identify what language(s) can/should be used for literacy instruction. This should be based on the languages that the children speak and understand.

The skills to be taught are dependent upon the specific language characteristics. For instance, sound/symbol (letter or syllable) correlations are taught starting with the most frequent sounds in the language. This means that if two languages of instruction use the same letters/symbols, the letters/symbols and their sounds may not be taught in the same order because the some sounds (or sound patterns) may occur more frequently in one of the two languages. The letters representing the most frequent sounds (or sound patterns) are taught first in each language, and this may not be the same across languages.

When children are taught how to read in a language they already understand and speak, then learning to read in a new language means they just learn the sounds and symbols. Teachers typically do not need to teach the skills that transfer (such as tracking print, blending sounds to form words, pausing at a full stop, etc.). More skills transfer between similar languages, and fewer skills transfer between different languages.

Transitioning from L1 to L2/Lx can be a difficult process and is highly dependent upon both oral language development and literacy in the L1, as well as the similarities between the languages.

Importance of a strong foundation in a familiar language

- The language in which a child learns oral communication is the basis for literacy development
- Children learn to read more efficiently when they do so in a language they already speak and understand

Sources: Nation, 2006; Nation & Wang, 1999; Seymour, Aro & Erskin, 2003; Van Ginkel, 2008

L1-based instruction is “at the heart of inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all.”

~Gwang-Jo Kim, Director, UNESCO Bangkok

Advocacy kit for promoting multilingual education: Including the excluded

Handout 3: Benefits of instruction in familiar languages

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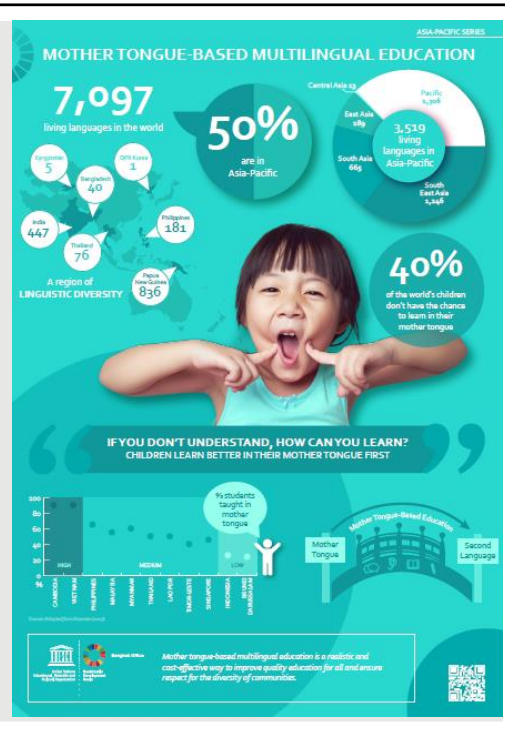
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- The language children use for oral communication is typically the easiest language for them to learn how to read.

Why learning to read in a familiar language is efficient

- When children learn how to read in a language they already understand, they are able to use linguistic knowledge to support their emerging reading skills.
 - This includes knowledge of the language structure and vocabulary to decode words and determine meaning.
 - For example, as they decode words, they are likely to know what the words mean. This ability to comprehend in turn creates motivation to read.
- Different languages have different numbers of graphemes—letters or symbols—and sounds associated with those graphemes.
 - Syllabic languages (which use a symbol to represent a syllable rather than an individual sound) typically have many more graphemes than alphabetic languages (which use a symbol/letter to represent a single sound). This means that the time required to learn all of the sound/symbol correlations and spelling patterns may vary across languages.
- Additionally, research indicates that languages written in transparent orthographies (where the letters only represent one sound and sounds are represented by one letter/spelling pattern) are easier and take less time to learn to read than languages written in less transparent orthographies (Aro, 2004).

Handout 4: UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau language infographic



This new infographic from UNESCO's Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau can be used to support advocacy around language issues in education, and in particular the use of mother tongue languages, or L1, to support teaching and learning.

How long does it take a child to learn to read?

- The length of time needed to learn to read in an LI or familiar language varies depending on:
 - The **orthography** (written representation of the language)
 - **Time available for teaching and learning**
 - Availability of **quality instructional materials**
 - The **quality of instruction**
- With good instruction most children should be able to read in a familiar language by the end of grade 2

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The amount of time children need to learn to read depends on several factors, including:

Language type: Alphabetic, syllabic, alpha-syllabic (consists of symbols for consonants and vowels)

Orthography, or written representation of the language. Important orthography considerations include:

- number of letters or symbols (graphemes)
- number of sounds
- orthography (deep or shallow)
- tonality
- word order (syntax)
- other complexities.

Different languages have different numbers of graphemes (letter/symbols) and sounds associated with those graphemes. Syllabic languages (which use a symbol to represent a syllable rather than an individual sound) typically have many more graphemes than alphabetic languages (which use a symbol/letter to represent a single sound). This means that the time required to learn all of the sound/symbol correlations and spelling patterns may vary across languages.

Additionally, sound/symbol (e.g., letter or syllable) correlations are taught starting with the most frequent sounds in the language. This means that if two languages of instruction use the same letters/symbols, the letters/symbols and their sounds may not be taught in the same

order because the same sounds (or sound patterns) may occur more frequently in one of the two languages. The letters representing the most frequent sounds (or sound patterns) are taught first in each language, and this may not be the same across languages.

Transparency refers to the degree to which the orthography exhibits a one-to-one correspondence between a letter or grapheme and its sound. Orthographies that are highly transparent are called “shallow.” They have a one-to-one correspondence between letters and sounds. Language orthographies that are not transparent are called deep or opaque. One sound may be represented by more than one letter, or one letter may represent more than one sound. Research indicates that languages written in transparent orthographies (where the letters only represent one sound and sounds are represented by one letter/spelling pattern) are easier and take less time to learn to read than languages written in less transparent orthographies (Aro, 2004).

Time available for teaching and learning. Children won’t learn to read if the amount of time allocated for instruction is insufficient. *At least* one hour of reading instruction a day needs to be provided, though more is better. Current evidence indicates that reading/language arts instruction should take place daily, for at least 90-120 minutes (Florida Center for Reading Research, 2009; Shanahan, 2013).

Quality of instruction. It matters! Teachers need to use evidence-based approaches for children to learn to read. Webinar 3 in this series from July 17 takes a deep-dive into the skills that should be taught and the instructional approaches used.

Relationship between L1 and L2 learning

- A solid foundation in L1 reading skills helps children to learn to read another language
- Success in L2 is strongly associated with oral and written proficiency in L1
- Teaching reading in an L2 too early may lead to reduced success or reading failure in both languages
- It's important to continue to build L1 literacy skills even after an L2 or Lx is introduced

Evidence from Kenya

Research conducted in Kenya supports existing evidence on the importance of children acquiring strong L1 literacy skills.

An analysis of grade 3 students' reading assessment results found that poor English-language outcomes were correlated with poor reading skills in children's first, or mother tongue, language.

Source: Piper, B., Schroeder, L., & Trudell, B. (2015)

Sources: Ball, 2001; Center for Applied Linguistics, 2006; Cummins, 2009; August & Shanahan, 2006; Bialystock, 2006; Geva, 2006

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Building a solid foundation in L1 supports learning in a second or other language. Strong literacy and language skills, as well as content knowledge, in L1 transfer to L2/Lx to support academic achievement and successful reading comprehension.

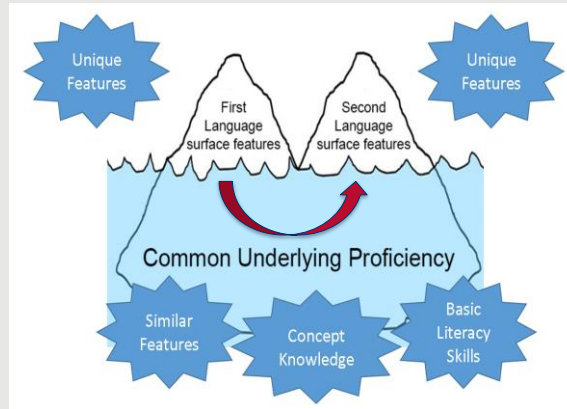
In fact, **Success in L2 is strongly associated with oral and written proficiency in L1** and new research indicates that children need to reach a certain level of proficiency in their L1 before they are able to successfully transfer skills to L2/Lx.

Teaching reading in L2/Lx too early may lead to reduced success or reading failure in both languages because if a child has not mastered the skills related to knowing how to read in the first language, asking him to learn in another language may be overwhelming.

It's important to continue to build L1 literacy skills even after an L2 or Lx is introduced. This means that new concepts and learning content should be introduced and discussed in both languages. This allows students to think through new concepts using a familiar vocabulary. Research indicates that when students are expected to produce an oral or written product in a second language, they perform better when they are able to first discuss the content in their first language (Derakhshan & Karimi, 2015).

Transfer of language and literacy skills

- Basic language/ literacy skills and knowledge are the foundation for literacy learning in any language
- LI skills can be applied to a new language



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Understanding that print represents speech and carries meaning needs to be learned only once, just like learning how to blend sounds to read words. These skills transfer to a second language. Research also indicates that phonological awareness skills transfer between languages (multiple citations listed in Language Guidance document).

Concept knowledge also transfers. For example, knowing the life cycle of a butterfly is the same in the second language – the student only needs the new words to label the stages.

Similar features between two languages facilitate language and literacy learning. These features can include: directionality of print, phonetic structure, cognates, orthographic system (letters/symbols), etc.

Therefore, well-developed literacy skills in the first language provides the child with stronger skills to transfer to the second language, and these skills become reciprocal and each language supports development of the other.

Unique features are the differences. These differences can interfere with language learning and may cause confusion for language learners. For example, if a child first learns to read in Arabic and then is later asked to read in English, he may automatically try to begin reading on the right side of the page – because Arabic text flows from right to left. Teachers must provide explicit instruction in the differences between languages so that students can anticipate difficulties and be prepared to handle them.

Learning to read a second or additional language

Factors influencing children's acquisition of a second or additional language include:

- Language characteristics
- Proficiency in L1
- Time for instruction
- Quality of instruction
- Exposure outside the classroom



Photo: EDC Basa - Pilipinas (USAID)

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When learning to read in a second or additional language, many factors impact the speed of learning.

Language characteristics: The more similar the new language is to the familiar language(s), the faster this process can take place. [Assuming good quality instruction and time to learn the new language is sufficient.] Languages vary on characteristics such as number of symbols/letters, number of sounds, orthography (deep or shallow; syllabic, alpha-syllabic, or alphabetic; agglutination), tonality, word order (syntax), and other complexities. This means that the time required to learn *how* to read is language-dependent.

Learner Proficiency in L1: However, the L1 skills that a learner brings to learning an L2 also matter. For instance, if the learner is already fully proficient in literacy skills in one language, those basic literacy skills will transfer to the new language. For instance, a person needs to learn how to sound out words and blend those sounds to read words once – that skill is then transferred to any language once the person learns the letter-sound correlations. Learning will progress more quickly if the learner is already a fluent speaker of the new language. However, teachers will need to explicitly teach children which skills transfer to the new language.

Time for instruction: Separate time should be dedicated to learning the language itself before learning how to read in that language. Learning how to read and learning a language are two distinct skills. Time should be dedicated to not only the language learning activities but also the reading activities in that language every day. If children have very little time during the day to learn the L2, it's going to take longer to both learn the language and learn how to read in that language. For example, the standard 30-40 minute time block to learn in a lot of countries isn't

going to result in children being fully proficient and able to learn using only the L2 by the end of grade 3, which is a common expectation.

Quality of instruction: Explicit, systematic instruction in language and reading skills will help the learner acquire skills in the new language, particularly when the language is used outside the classroom setting. Teacher skill and proficiency in the L2 is also directly tied to both the quality of instruction and the learner achievement. If teachers don't know how to teach L2 appropriately, students aren't going to learn it. This is a huge issue in many contexts.

Exposure outside the classroom: Opportunities to learn a second language outside of school are important as well. Children's L2 acquisition will be enhanced if they are able to hear, see and speak the language outside the classroom.

ACTIVITY:

Language-related issues in EGR programs

Reflect and use the Zoom chat window to share your experiences and ideas

1. In the contexts where you work, are the evidence-based approaches to reading and language instruction we just discussed being used? If not, why? How might you be able to support their use?
2. Tell us one new piece of information you learned today about effective approaches to reading and language instruction. How could you apply the information to your work?

— Part 3: Steps to take to effectively incorporate language throughout an EGR program



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Incorporating and addressing language issues is critical to the success of early grade reading improvement efforts. Doing so requires collaborative, comprehensive and long-term planning among donors, all levels of government, and other partners. This section will outline key steps and considerations during the planning process. They are summarized and described in more detail in **Handout 15: Key activities, questions and considerations related to language and EGR programming**

I. Engage diverse stakeholders at all stages

- Learn about stakeholder attitudes, knowledge and beliefs related to language
- Involve stakeholders in information gathering, analysis, decision-making and planning
- Provide learning and professional development opportunities to build knowledge and skills



The first critical step/activity is to engage diverse stakeholders at all stages. This includes:

- **Learn about language-related attitudes and beliefs of key stakeholders.** Attitudes and beliefs about language (and the speakers of languages) can be a powerful impediment to change and to the success of the most technically sound approach to language and literacy instruction. As such, it's important to be aware of the attitudes and beliefs that key stakeholders, from education authorities to teachers to parents, hold about teaching children to read in certain languages. Don't assume you know what these are! A plan should be developed to assess and address these attitudes and beliefs.
- **Involve stakeholders in information gathering, analysis, decision-making and planning.** Direct involvement in all aspects of monitoring, evaluation and research can be a powerful way to build awareness, gain acceptance of results and obtain consensus on the most effective approach to addressing languages issues. As such relevant stakeholders—government personnel, teachers, parents—should be involved in research, from the collection of early grade reading data to language mapping. Their involvement will help to surface existing attitudes and beliefs, identify challenges and potential solutions, bring people on board with proposed approaches, and bring about positive change. It can help to decrease the politicization of language issues if people are engaged in collaborative planning and have an opportunity to understand the evidence around decision making. This can greatly help to facilitate decision-making based on evidence and group consensus.
- **Provide learning and professional development opportunities.** Stakeholder engagement should also include opportunities to learn and share information and skills. This includes

learning about evidence on how children learn to read and how they learn language, to how orthography informs how a language is taught. Opportunities to be involved in language mapping, materials development and other aspects of reading program development should be structured in such a way that they allow for genuine professional development of those involved. This also supports sustainability of programming beyond the life of a project.

Examples from practice: Understanding stakeholder considerations and working with government

The GRN webinar “Language Policy, Planning and Practice in EGR Programs” shares recent experiences and reflections on working with government on language-related issues in Ethiopia, Nepal and the Philippines



Photo: RTI International, Nepal Early Grade Reading Program (USAID)

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Learn how three USAID EGR programs—in Ethiopia, Nepal and the Philippines—have addressed stakeholder issues related to language by watching presentations delivered at a Global Reading Network webinar titled “Language Policy, Planning and Practice in EGR Programs” on March 6, 2018. The presentations were delivered by government representatives and their implementing partners. Some important takeaways from the presentations:

- Decisions about language use in education are not just about pedagogy—politics also matters.
- Need to conduct thorough background research to understand socio-political factors and realities on the ground before developing any aspect of the program – and know that plans will need to be modified as more information is learned.

A recording of the webinar and the PowerPoint presentations can be found on the GRN website.

2. Understand the country's educational context

Learn about:

- Education and learning goals
 - Policy and practice related to language
 - Political issues related to language
 - Access and learning outcomes as they relate to language
 - Past experience planning and implementing language-related education policies and plans
- 
- Photo: Democratic Republic of Congo ACCELERE (USAID)
- Teacher language proficiency and skills
 - Materials available for teaching reading, language and content

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A critical step to take to effectively incorporate language into an program is to gather information and evidence about a country's education context as it relates to language. This includes understanding:

- **Education and learning goals**, as they relate to language.
- **Policies and practices related to language**, including how much time is available to teach reading and language
- **Political issues related to language**, such as the ratification of a new constitution (Nepal) or elections
- **Access and learning outcomes as they relate to language...** Are access and achievement equitable across languages, or do differences exist? Are students able to learn to read and to learn academic content in the languages used for instruction?
- **Teacher and student language and literacy proficiency....** What are levels of language proficiency?
- **Availability of teaching and learning materials...** What resources are available for teaching reading, language and subject matter content? What is the quality of the materials and what exists in classrooms?
- **Past experiences planning and implementing language-related education policies and plans.** Often, countries have had experiences trying to address language-of-instruction issues. These prior experiences and knowledge about current policies and practices will be useful information when trying to address language-related issues in programs.

3. Understand the sociolinguistic context

To inform program design and implementation, gather information about:

- What languages and dialects are spoken, by whom and where
- Percentage of children/student population whose home language is an official LOI or other languages
- Languages teachers and students speak, and their level of proficiency

**Handout 5:
Language
mapping
experiences and
resources**

**Conduct a
language
mapping
exercise**

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Defining the sociolinguistic contexts involves a number of activities. While ideally these should be done prior to a program being designed, they can also take place after a program has started, to inform ongoing implementation.

- **One important activity is to identify languages and dialects spoken, who speaks them and where.** First conduct some background research to learn what languages are spoken in a country. SIL's Ethnologue (available online) and locally available reports may have this information, but it is sometimes outdated and usually not specific to the community and school level. In addition to knowing what languages are spoken, it's also important to be aware of dialects. In many contexts where EGR programs are implemented, one language may have many dialects. The degree to which a dialect may differ from a "standard" version of a language will vary. In some cases, language dialects may differ in relatively minor ways, but in other cases the differences may be significant in terms of grammar and vocabulary. It's important that technical experts and speakers of the language be consulted to determine if dialect differences within a language may require different content and materials to be developed. Small-scale piloting of materials can be helpful in identifying whether teachers and children who speak different dialects can use the same materials or whether different ones will be required. If the same materials are used for speakers of different dialects, reading assessment results can be disaggregated by dialect to help identify whether the materials are appropriate for all speakers.
- **Another key piece of information is the percentage of children and students whose home language is the official LOI, or not.** This is a critical data point to have, as it can help to identify areas where learners may be experiencing particular difficulties due to language

barriers. This information can often be found in data gathered from early grade reading assessments, which typically collect demographic data including the home language the child speaks. Other international assessments like PIRLS also gather this information.

- **Another essential piece of information is the languages spoken by teachers and students, and their level of proficiency.** Teachers need to be proficient in the languages they are expected to teach children to read, and the language of instruction. Teachers should also be able to communicate well with their learners. It's important to find out whether the languages spoken by teachers and their students match.

You can gather all of this information by conducting a **language mapping exercise**. Language maps are essential to informing early grade reading program design and implementation. Such maps can identify what languages are spoken in specific areas, how many people speak specific languages, by whom and for what purpose. They can help governments and program teams identify the appropriate languages to use for reading instruction, and whether a language needs to be taught as a first or second language. At the school level, information from language mapping can help inform decisions about the language to be used for reading instruction, how many languages may need to be taught, what materials need to be distributed, and whether teachers speak the same languages as their students. Importantly, language maps can also help to dispel myths that might have been impeding efforts to provide instruction in languages children understand. Learn about some EGR programs' experiences conducting language mapping exercises in **Handout 5: Language mapping experiences and resources**

Example from practice: Language mapping in Afghanistan

Purpose: Document the linguistic landscape in and around a school



Photo: Creative Associates Int'l

Findings:

- Greater language diversity than originally assumed (12-15% of students in some areas do not speak LOI)
- Differences between dialect spoken by students and their teachers, and in textbooks
- Teachers were using languages besides the LOI when students spoke other languages

Handout 5: Language mapping experiences and resources

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Example from practice: Afghanistan

The purpose of a language mapping by the Afghan Children Read initiative (supported by USAID) was to document the linguistic and literacy landscape in and around primary schools to better understand current practices under Afghanistan's current LOI policy, which states that either Dari or Pashto should be used for instruction. The language mapping research was designed to inform policy discussions about LOI in the classroom and how to best support children's reading and language acquisition in their mother tongue and the national languages.

To collect data, the research team conducted classroom observations, structured interviews with school principals, teachers and students; and focus groups with parents and community members. Information gathered included the language used in classrooms; teacher self-reported language skills; and stakeholder opinions on language-related issues. Main findings included the following:

- Greater language diversity exists than originally assumed (12-15% of students in some areas do not speak the official LOI).
- Dialects spoken by students differ at times with those spoken by their teachers and found in textbooks.
- Teachers use languages besides the official LOI when students speak other languages, they employ various instructional strategies to support learners whose L1 was not the LOI.

Handout 5: Language mapping experiences and resources includes additional examples of language mapping exercises from Ghana and Mozambique.

4. Review and analyze orthography

- Identify whether it has been standardized and is ready to be used for instruction
- Identify how language characteristics will influence how reading is taught

Handout 6: Orthography assessment tool

Handout 7: Orthography standardization: A case study from Uganda

- Identify similarities and differences between languages that will be taught simultaneously

EGR program experiences

- Balancing linguistic and contextual factors:
Example from Nepal (Ralaingita & van Ginkel, 2018)
- The role of linguistics in Ghana *Learning* (Trudell, 2018)
- Negotiating language complexities and government policies for Khmer instruction (Pinto, 2018)

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- **Determine language “readiness,” or level of orthography standardization.** Before curricula and materials can be developed, programs need to determine whether a language is ready to be used for instruction. Such work involves technical experts including linguists, analyzing the language’s orthography, or writing systems. In some cases, this assessment may find that a language has a standard orthography and is ready to be used for instruction. In some instances, an assessment may find that efforts need to be made to standardize different orthographies for the same language. It’s important to conduct an orthography review early in the program design phase, as it may inform what languages are initially selected to use for instruction, and because language standardization process may take time to be done well.
- **Identify aspects of the language that will inform the instructional approach.** While there are overarching, evidence-based approaches for teaching reading and language, not all languages should be taught in exactly the same way. Attention to the specific linguistic features of the language is critical. For example, it’s important to know and analyze: What type of language is it? Is it transparent? How many graphemes need to be taught? All of these will affect what is taught, the instructional strategies used, and how long it may take children to learn to read.

Handout 7: Orthography standardization: A case study from Uganda summarizes a successful, collaborative effort to review and standardize several languages in the country in preparation for the development of EGR materials. **Handout 6: Orthography assessment tool** is a resource that can be used to help assess an orthography. Note its use, and subsequent work to standardize an orthography, should be undertaken by skilled linguistics.

- **Identify similarities and differences between language that will be taught.** The degree to which the two languages differ matters. Teaching a second language that has similar properties to that of the first (e.g., is also alphabetic, read from left to right, have similar symbols and/or sounds, have similar grammatical features) will take less time for children to learn than a language that is really different.
- The presentations listed in the text box on the right provide rich detail about the role of linguistics and orthography in informing reading program content and materials.

Example from practice: Orthography review

- Khmer is a relatively complex language in terms of the number of graphemes (71), density of script and similarity between letters
- Review of language identified ways in which instructional approach and materials could be adapted to the language

Learn more about the experience in Cambodia and implications for other contexts in the presentation by Pinto, C. (2018)

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To support improved reading outcomes in Cambodia, Room to Read collaborated with government language and reading specialists to identify ways in which the instructional approach and materials used to teach the Khmer language could be adapted. The process began with a review of Khmer, a complex language in terms of the number of graphemes (71) and phonics skills (314), number of strokes per letter, density of script and similarity between letters. The language review identified several ways in which literacy instruction could be modified to account for specific orthographic features unique to Khmer.

Room to Read developed supplementary student books and teacher's guides that accounted for these language complexities to align with textbooks developed by the Cambodia Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS). In addition to introducing five consonants before the vowels to allow for the earlier introduction of decodable text, student books with syllable grids, word grids and decodable text were designed to give children practice with each new phonics skill they learned. Teachers were then trained and coached on the new approach and resources. An initial assessment of the new instructional approach and materials found an improvement in children's oral reading fluency and comprehension compared to that of children not exposed to the new approach and materials.

Currently, Room to Read is applying this experience in its work with a consortium of partners to develop a harmonized approach to early grade reading instruction for children in kindergarten and grades 1-3. This five-year early initiative (2017-2021) is supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development.

ACTIVITY: Taking stock of the context

Reflect and use the Zoom chat window to share your experiences and ideas

1. In your work, what information have you gathered (or plan to gather) about the sociolinguistic and educational context? How did you do so?
2. How did the information gathered affect program design and implementation?
3. What information gaps do you still have?

5. Identify languages to be used for instruction

Take into consideration:

- sociolinguistic context
- language mapping findings
- education and language learning goals
- orthography readiness
- similarities between languages
- languages for children with disabilities (sign language, Braille)
- availability of materials and other resources
- timeline and funding available

In countries with multiple languages, consider *staggering the use of languages for instruction*.

Piloting instruction in select languages can build support for LI-based instruction and use of additional languages, identify effective approaches, and provide sufficient time for materials development.

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Identifying which languages will be used for reading instruction, or for literacy and language, is a decision that requires information about multiple issues. These include:

- **Sociolinguistic context:** What languages are spoken and by how many people? Findings from **language mapping** can help to identify which languages are spoken by large proportion of the population, as well as which languages are spoken by minority or other marginalized groups, and thus may be critical to include to address disparities in education access and outcomes that may exist.
- **Education and language learning goals.** It's important to understand what a country hopes to achieve in terms of its education goals, as well as language-learning goals. These can help support decisions related to the languages used for reading instruction.
- **Orthography readiness:** A language cannot be used for reading instruction if its orthography has not been standardized for use. The readiness of some languages over others may therefore guide the sequencing of the languages for use in an EGR program.
- **Similarities between languages:** Some languages are more similar to each other than others. It will be more efficient to develop materials for languages that are similar to each other than those that are significantly different.
- **Languages for children with disabilities:** Programs should plan for the use of sign language and Braille.
- **Availability of materials and other resources:** The existence of appropriate EGR materials, as well as the necessary human resources to roll out a program, may also affect which languages are identified for use in an EGR program, at least initially
- **Timeline and funding available:** A decision about which languages to use for instruction will also depend on the amount of funds and time available. It's important, though, to remember

that each additional language may not necessarily cost the same amount, since some costs will be the same no matter how many languages are included, while others may apply to each language.

6. Develop instructional approach based on evidence, context and languages to be used

- Build oral language skills before teaching reading
- Create a strong foundation in the L1 or other familiar language
- Support gradual transition to learning to read in L2/Lx

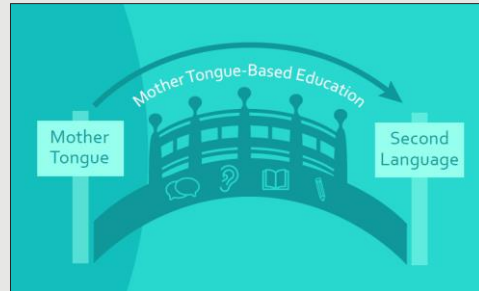


Image: MTB-MLE Asia-Pacific Infographic (2018)

Handout 8: Guidance on language skills transfer and supporting instruction for L2/Lx learners

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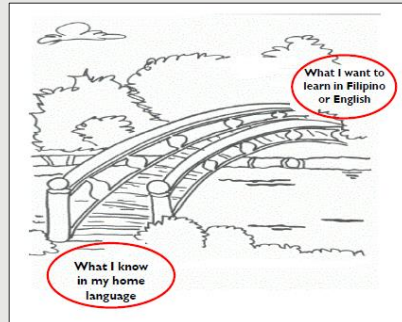
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Strong oral language skills provide a framework for building literacy skills. Children who learn to communicate well and have well-developed vocabularies will learn to read easier, have better comprehension of what they read, and have more skills that will transfer when learning a second or additional language.

Since L1 knowledge and skills support L2 learning, **students should be encouraged to continue learning and developing academic language in the L1 as they transition to learning in an L2/Lx**. Additionally, for some languages and in some contexts, little evidence exists regarding exactly when and how it is most effective for children to “transition” from learning in one language to learning in another (i.e., transitioning from many African languages to French or English). Therefore, transition decisions must be made based on the context, on teachers’ language and instructional skills, on children’s literacy skills, and on contextual factors such as the amount of time and materials allocated for instruction – and learners should continue to receive reinforcement in their first language as they continue on the path to transitioning to learning in a new language.

Once a decision has been made and an instructional approach developed, it should be rigorously evaluated to determine if the timing and approach to transition is effective.

Example from practice: Supporting reading acquisition across languages in the Philippines



For more information, consult
Bruckner, S. & Ocampo, D.
(2018) GRN presentation

	GRADE 1				GRADE 2				GRADE 3			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Mother Tongue	Reading/Writing and Language of Instruction for All Subjects											
Filipino Language		Oral Language				Reading/Writing						
English Language			Oral Language				Reading/Writing					

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Source: Bruckner, S. (2018)

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Supporting reading acquisition across languages: Bridging in the Philippines

During the 2012-2013 academic year, the Philippines Department of Education (DepEd) launched a new policy to support mother tongue-based multilingual education. It required children in grade 1 to be taught to read in the mother tongue language identified for their region, with Filipino and English taught as oral language subjects. In grade 2, students are introduced to reading and writing in Filipino and to reading in English. However, the mother tongue remains the language of instruction (through grade 3. In grade 4, English becomes the LOI for math and science, with Filipino used to teach other subjects.

The USAID Basa Pilipinas initiative supported the DepEd to implement the new LOI policy in select regions. This support included collaborating with government to design an instructional approach and materials to support children's learning across three languages through bridging. Bridging is an instructional approach that helps learners transfer their knowledge of one language to another. To support bridging, under Basa Pilipinas teachers learned how to explicitly teach what is the same and what is different in the mother tongue, Filipino and English languages. This includes teaching similarities and differences in sound-symbol correspondence, word structure, grammar and syntax, among other areas. To support the application of bridging strategies, Basa Pilipinas developed teacher's guides that include information on how and when to use bridging. Videos developed to support teacher professional development also include

information about strategies and activities teachers can use in the classroom to support bridging. This includes helping students to recognize cognates across languages, comparing and contrasting verb forms in the three languages, or having children develop cross-linguistic vocabulary skills through writing and drawing activities.

Source: Bruckner, S. & Ocampo, D. (2018, March 7). Basa Pilipinas Support to DepEd's MTB-MLE Policy Reform. [Webinar]. In *Language Policy, Planning and Practice in EGR Programs*. Available at <https://www.globalreadingnetwork.net/resources/webinar-language-policy-planning-and-practice-egr-programs>

6. Develop instructional approach based on evidence, context and languages to be used (continued)

- Develop scope and sequence (e.g., what is taught and when) based on properties of the languages; align S&S when multiple languages will be taught
- Identify how language type, properties and orthography will affect content and instructional strategies

Reading and Language should be taught as two separate subjects:

- In different time blocks
- Using different materials
- Implementing different—yet synergistic—instructional strategies

Engage reading specialists *and* language specialists to identify how to most appropriately teach reading in a specific language!

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When developing the scope and sequence (e.g., the curriculum for the reading program) for the second or other language, first focus on the language features that are similar across languages (L1/L2/Lx). Then, begin explicitly teaching the features that are dissimilar across the languages.

This means that language type, language properties, and language orthographies will need to be well-understood and analyzed for similarities and differences. Additionally, orthographic characteristics [such as alphabetic vs syllabic structures and type (agglutinating, transparent vs. opaque, etc.)] will impact phonological awareness, phonics, and decoding instruction.

Time allocations should be made for language instruction and reading instruction separately for each language being taught.

6. Develop instructional approach based on evidence, context and languages to be used (continued)

- Identify competency-based “language thresholds” in contexts where children are expected to learn to read in more than one language

USAID-supported research in India identified specific skill levels students need to successfully transfer their knowledge of reading from one language to another.

Nakamura & Hoop, 2014



**Facilitating Reading Acquisition
in Multilingual Environments in
India (FRAME-India)**

FINAL REPORT

7/24/2019

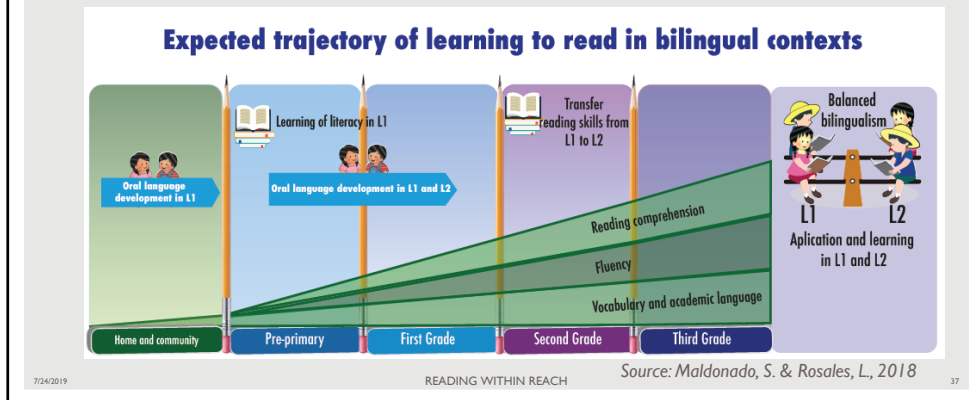
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Nakamura & de Hoop, 2016 – This study, funded through USAID’s All Children Reading Grand Challenge initiative, found that children were more successful reading in a second language when they were able to acquire a certain level of proficiency in certain skills in their first language. This means that a certain level of skill in the L1 is necessary before students are ready to begin learning in the L2/Lx. The students may need to be reading a certain number of words per minute, or be able to read a certain number of spelling patterns (or at a certain complexity level) in the first language in order to be successful at reading in the second language. The level, or threshold, required in order to successfully transition to an L2/Lx will vary depending on the characteristics of the two languages being learned.

Example from practice: Assessing bilingual reading trajectories in Guatemala

- A longitudinal study of children in Guatemala (USAID Lifelong Learning project) compared expected versus actual trajectories in children's L1 and L2 reading skills
- The results were used to develop policy and practice recommendations to improve literacy and language instruction



It is important to recognize that children's reading skills may not develop at the same pace when learning in multiple languages. Depending on the point at which a second or additional language is introduced and the types of instruction received, children may be able to develop bilingual literacy by the middle elementary grades.

Bilingual learning trajectories: An assessment from Guatemala

Once a bilingual reading and education curriculum is developed, it's important to assess whether children are acquiring key language and literacy skills according to plan. Information from such an assessment can help identify whether changes may be needed to the instructional approach, teacher professional development or other aspects of a program.

A longitudinal study of children in Guatemala conducted under the USAID-supported Lifelong Learning project, implemented from 2015-2017 in the Western Highlands of the country, compared expected versus actual trajectories in children's L1 and L2 reading skills. (The L1 was an indigenous Guatemalan language, and the L2 was Spanish.) According to the Guatemalan National Curriculum, children are expected to acquire basic reading skills in their mother tongue (L1) by the end of first grade, while at the same time developing oral language skills in the L2, Spanish. In second grade, the focus is on transferring skills learned in the L1 to learning to read in Spanish. In grade 3, students learn to read in both the L1 and L2.

The longitudinal study found that children's reading skills progressed over time, but their skill level was insufficient to be able to learn subject content across the curriculum by grade 3. The study authors recommended that teachers should formatively assess various reading

competencies beginning in first grade to know if their students are achieving expected competencies. They also recommended greater use of explicit instructional teaching methods appropriate for the bilingual context in Guatemala. In particular, second grade teachers should be provided with support and tools to help students transfer their L1 reading skills to learning Spanish.

7. Develop language-specific resources

- **Involve language-specific teams** including authors, teachers, community members, language specialists and children
- **Conduct an inventory** of available materials; analyze quality, appropriateness
- **Conduct orthography review** as described previously
- **Use software** (such as Bloom) to inform scope and sequence, develop controlled text
- **Develop quality control processes and tools** to support production of materials across languages



Resources developed for Philippines Basa Pilipinas (USAID; Image from Bruckner, 2018)

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Incorporate language-specific issues in materials design and use

One commonly cited challenge to providing reading instruction in languages children understand is that it will be “too difficult” to develop teaching and learning materials for multiple languages. However, experience in several EGR programs indicates it is possible to do so successfully, and in a relatively short amount of time. Countries that have successfully produced materials in multiple languages include Ethiopia (7 languages), Ghana (11 languages) and Uganda (12 languages). These countries’ achievements share in common careful planning, collaborative involvement of technical experts and writers, the use of software and tools to facilitate materials production, adherence to quality control processes, and strong management of the process. Key steps that cannot be overlooked are listed on this slide and in **Handout 10: Language-specific considerations for EGL materials**. The session on EGR resources also includes numerous resources to assist programs in developing materials in multiple languages.

Examples and resources from practice: Developing resources in multiple languages

- **Handout 9: Role of linguistics in content and materials development**
- **Handout 10: Language-specific considerations for EGR materials**
- **Handout 11: Multilingual digital libraries**
- **Developing materials in 11 languages: The case of Ghana**
- **Enabling Writers**

Technology to support resource production

- **Bloom** software supports decodable and leveled text development
- **PrimerPro & SynPhony** software conduct language analysis
- **SIL** provides fonts, language analysis software and shell books

Webinar 2: Resources for teaching and learning EGR includes many country examples, tools and recommendations
Handouts include lesson templates and other tools to support materials development across languages

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Language-specific resources for developing early grade reading TLMs

Many resources exist to support the development of resources in multiple languages. that can help EGR programs to develop quality TLMs in multiple languages. **Handout 9: Role of linguistics in content and materials development** discusses issues encountered in the Ghana Learning program and how they affected materials production.

- **Handout 10** summarizes **Language-specific considerations for EGR materials**.
- **Handout 11** provides an overview of the many online repositories for teaching and learning materials. Many materials are open-source and can be adapted into different languages.
- **Developing materials in 11 languages: The case of Ghana** is a panel of presentations that provides in-depth information and insights into how materials were developed for 11 languages.
- **Webinar 2 in this series, Resources for teaching and learning EGR**, also includes resources related to language.
- Technology has also been harnessed expressly for the purpose of developing materials in many languages. This includes software programs that can conduct language analysis that can be used to inform a reading program's scope and sequence for instruction and help develop decodable text. The development of Bloom software was supported by USAID through the All Children Reading: Grand Challenge for Development competition. REACH then supported Bloom's use in six countries working with six organizations to develop more than 3,000 titles in 15 different languages.

The link between language and effective teachers

To be effective, teachers need to be:

- ✓ Able to communicate with students in a language they both understand
- ✓ Able to speak, read and write in the language they are teaching
- ✓ Knowledgeable about the orthography, sound structure and spelling patterns of the language in which they are teaching reading
- ✓ Able to apply evidence-based best practices for teaching children to read
- ✓ Knowledgeable about and able to apply strategies for teaching a second or other language, if required
- ✓ Respectful of the language (and language speakers) they are teaching

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This slide summarizes the language-related knowledge and skills that teachers need to have to be successful at teaching children to read. This includes the ability to speak, read, write and communicate in the language of reading instruction, understanding the advantages of teaching children to read in a familiar language, and being able to use evidence-based and appropriate instructional practices for teaching children to read in their first or other languages.

EGR programs need to understand what knowledge and skills teachers already have, as well as what knowledge and skills they do not so that appropriate professional development opportunities can be provided. It's important to note that teachers who are expected to provide literacy and language instruction in multiple language will need extra support to help them understand how to teach in both languages. Those who are teaching a second (L2) or other language (Lx) will need in-depth and ongoing PD opportunities for them to be able to provide appropriate, evidence-based strategies.

8. Incorporate language in teacher professional development

- Assess teacher language and literacy knowledge, skills and practices (see next slide)
- Include language-specific issues and instructional strategies in teacher PD (pre- and in-service)
- Provide teachers with TLMs in the appropriate languages
- Provide opportunities for teachers to improve their literacy and language skills if needed



Photo: RTI International Nigeria RARA (USAID)

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Incorporate language-specific considerations regarding teacher knowledge, skills and PD

Steps to take and activities to conduct with respect to teachers and language include:

Assess teacher language skills. Doing so:

- Informs materials development (e.g., can help to appropriately tailor content to teachers' literacy levels)
- Will help to target professional development (e.g., will help to identify whether PD should include literacy support for teachers)
- Supports "student-teacher" language match in schools (e.g., will help to determine whether teachers and students speak the same language)

Incorporate languages-specific issues into teacher PD. These include but are not limited to:

- Properties of the language, sound and spelling systems
- Difference between literacy and language instruction
- Effective instructional approaches for L1- and L2/Lx instruction
- How to support transfer of skills from one language to another

Provide teachers with appropriate teaching and learning materials. This will:

- Help to build teachers' language skills
- Support effective instruction

Provide opportunities for teachers to improve their literacy skills. Methods for doing so include:

- Provide PD in the languages that teachers will be expected to teach
- Integrate opportunities to improve language skills into pre- and in-service training
- Support diverse opportunities such as peer study circles, individual app-based learning, etc.

Examples from practice: Assessing teacher language knowledge, skills & practices in 3 countries



- Informs teacher PD, materials development and content, teacher placement
- Requires thoughtful planning and appropriate tools
- Findings should be used only for the purpose of informing program design and PD

Handout 12: Assessing teacher language and literacy skills

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Photo: EDC, Rwanda L3 (USAID)

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Assessing teacher language skills

- **Assessing teachers' language and literacy skills requires thoughtful planning and appropriate tools.** EGR programs need to thoughtfully plan how teachers' language and literacy skills will be assessed. What knowledge and skills need and should be assessed? What are the appropriate tools and methods for doing so? How can teachers be assessed in a professional manner that does not make them feel uncomfortable? **Handout 12: Assessing teacher language and literacy skills** describes three countries' experiences doing so in the context of EGR programs.
- **Findings should be used only for the purpose of informing the design of the EGR program.** It's extremely important that any assessment of teachers' knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs be used appropriately, to inform the EGR program design and PD. Results should NOT be used to penalize, sanction or fire teachers. Education authorities who may be interested in the data gathered from teacher assessment should be made aware of this, and no data with information that would allow teachers to be identified should be shared.

ACTIVITY:

Language-related issues in EGR programs

Reflect and use the Zoom chat window to share your experiences and ideas

How have teachers' professional development needs specific to language been addressed in your EGR work? Have teachers' language and literacy skills been assessed? Share your experiences with us before we move on to the next section....

9. Incorporate language into EGR program MERL

- Language should be a specific focus of monitoring, evaluation, research and learning (MERL)
- Programs should:
 - Monitor fidelity of implementation
 - Disaggregate outcomes by school and home language
 - Conduct relevant research
 - Report language-related results appropriately
 - Identify language-specific benchmarks
 - Use findings to adapt instructional approach, teacher PD and materials, policy and practice related to language

Examples of language-related research

- What is children's reading and language progression over time?
- What are skill-specific thresholds for students to successfully transition from L1 to Lx learning?
- What skills and instructional strategies are more effective for teaching certain languages?
- What strategies are most effective in multilingual classroom contexts?

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Programs need to be attentive to how they assess and measure language-related issues. Language-focused monitoring, evaluation and research will help to shed much-needed insight into what is working, and what is not, with respect to instruction and student outcomes. Some important actions to take include:

Monitor fidelity of implementation

- First and foremost it's important to know whether teachers are actually implementing an L1-based reading program, or any other language-specific intervention, as planned.

Disaggregate reading outcomes by language:

- This includes the languages (and dialects!) spoken at home and learned in school. You will likely find different outcomes that can be used to inform improved instructional approaches.

Conduct relevant research:

- There is a lot we still do not know about how to teach children to read in specific languages, and how to teach children to read and learn language in multilingual contexts. We need more and better research that helps find answers to these questions in specific contexts. The blue textbox includes some important questions for which you may want to embed research into your program's MERL plan.
- Small-scale "proofs of concept" or pilot studies are particularly useful in trying out a new approach to language-related instruction, such as providing additional instructional support to children who may not be proficient in the language used for reading instruction. Another important area for language-related research and learning is to better understand the progression of student language and reading skills over time and across languages.

Longitudinal studies of a small sample of students could help shed light on a number of issues.

Report language-related results appropriately:

- Just as the instruction approach for teaching languages may differ depending on the characteristics of the language, so, too, should reading assessment. Assessment may differ by language in terms of the skills tested and how results are reported. For some languages, certain ways of measuring fluency may be more appropriate than others. For example, for Amharic the unit of appropriate measurement might be fidels. People are also discussing what may be more appropriate for agglutinating languages, like syllables.
- One important thing to keep in mind is how we compare achievement across languages. We often want to do this within a country, but doing it incorrectly can result in an inaccurate picture of achievement, and lead to negative outcomes. Rather than compare fluency across languages that may be different, and assessment content that may also differ, compare “zero scores” across languages. Zero scores is the percentage of children who did not provide any correct responses. Note that assessment instruments still need to be comparable in important ways for results to be presented similarly, so make sure you consult relevant experts to identify if and how results should be presented.

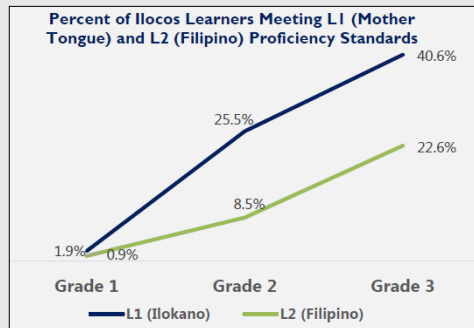
Establish language-specific benchmarks:

- Benchmarks—or target goals for achievement in different skills—should be different depending on the language. Room to Read and RTI have produced several helpful resources on developing benchmarks for different languages and you can find these resources in the “Resources and Reference” document for this webinar.

Use findings to improve what we are doing

- Lastly, we need to always be using what we learn to improve what we are doing, whether it’s the instruction approach, teacher PD and materials or changes to policy and practice.

Example from practice: Evaluating the multilingual approach to instruction in the Philippines



Expectation that children will become proficient in three languages by the end of grade 3 is not realistic, given current approach and context

- Fluency in L1 is associated with higher fluency in L2 (Filipino) & L3 (English)
- But most students do not acquire sufficient proficiency in Filipino or English to transition to learning in those languages by grade 4
- Children for whom Filipino is not their MT do not “catch up” to MT speakers of Tagalog, the basis of Filipino

Source: EDC, 2017

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Assessing a trilingual approach to literacy and learning: Findings from the Philippines

In 2012-2013, the Philippines Department of Education began implementing a new policy to provide mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE). According to the new policy: In Grade 1, children are taught to read in the mother tongue identified for their region, with Filipino and English taught as oral language subjects. In grade 2, students learn to read and write in Filipino and English, with instruction continuing into grade 3. In grade 4, English is the language of instruction for math and science, and Filipino for other content subjects. Children are no longer taught to read or taught academic content in their mother tongue.

After a few years of implementing the new policy, the Philippines Department of Education, in collaboration with USAID and its partners, conducted an evaluation of this approach to identify whether desired results were being achieved. The evaluation found the following:

- Fluency in L1 was associated with higher fluency in L2 (Filipino) and L3 (English).
- However, most students had not become proficient readers in their L1, and have not acquired sufficient proficiency in Filipino or English 3 to transition to learning *in* those languages by grade 4.
- The proficiency of children for whom Tagalog—the basis of Filipino—was not their L1 did not “catch up” to their peers whose home language was Tagalog.

The evaluation suggested several reasons why the new MTB-MLE policy is not achieving all of its expected results:

- Children are expected to learn too many languages too early (grade 1) and too quickly (by the end of grade 3). This is compounded by insufficient time in the curriculum to learn three

languages.

- Teachers do not have the skills to teach 3 languages well. These skills include their own literacy skills in the target languages and knowledge of effective approaches to L2 and L3 instruction
- Both the quantity and quality of teaching and learning materials may be insufficient for learning the various languages.

Given these findings, the evaluation recommended that students would likely benefit from continuing instruction in mother tongue rather than switching to Filipino and/or English instruction in grade 4, as well as supporting teachers to improve their instruction across languages.

The findings from the Philippines are of interest to other countries considering a trilingual approach to instruction, as well as a bilingual approach in which the LOI of instruction changes from grade 3 to grade 4. Children are likely to need more time to solidify their skills in L1 (e.g., beyond grade 3), as well as the opportunity to continue to learn in their L1 or other familiar language.

Source: Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC). 2017. Mother tongue-based multilingual education in the Philippines: A study of literacy trajectories. Available at https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00T717.pdf

10. Communicate and advocate about language issues

- Develop a communications and advocacy strategy
- Target information appropriately
- Use appropriate media (briefs, infographics, radio, television, etc.) to reach specific groups
- Share experiences and results along the way

Handout 13: Policy Brief: Transition to English



Source: Creative Associates, 2018

Addressing language issues requires that program implementers build understanding, capacity and consensus. Specific activities include:

- **Develop a communication and advocacy strategy.** Don't assume that communications and advocacy will happen organically. Conduct a needs assessment and develop a strategy for reaching your audience effectively.
- **Target information appropriately.** Different stakeholders—from senior MOE officials to parents to teachers—will have different needs when it comes to understanding language issues. It is important to identify what learning needs different groups have and provide the information in an appropriate format.
- **Use appropriate media.** Briefs, infographics, radio and television should all be harnessed for communications and advocacy. Find out what is most appropriate, involve people who know how to use specific media effectively, and monitor and evaluate how you are communicating to find out whether it is effective.
- **Share experiences and results along the way.** Communications and advocacy about language issues need to be ongoing. Status updates and results need to be shared on an ongoing basis so everyone knows what is happening and what they are achieving.

ACTIVITY: Key steps to take

Reflect and use the Zoom chat window to share your experiences and ideas

1. Reflecting on the key steps just presented, which have you conducted? Which did you find to be most challenging? What was most successful?
2. What guidance can you offer others about steps to take and factors to consider with respect to EGR programming?

The following resources provide additional guidance and support:

- **Handout 14: Strategies for addressing language-related issues in EGR programs**
- **Handout 15: Language in EGR programs: Key activities, questions and considerations**

Key takeaways

- ✓ Language applies to all aspects of EGR improvement
- ✓ Take time to understand the context and the evidence
- ✓ Engage in a collaborative process to build understanding, knowledge, capacity and consensus on language issues
- ✓ Ground decisions in evidence and good practices
- ✓ Monitor, evaluate and *adjust* plans, practices and policies as needed
- ✓ Communicate plans and findings, and conduct appropriate advocacy

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We've discussed a lot in today's session! Before we leave, here are a few key takeaways:

1. **There isn't one aspect of an EGR program that is not affected by language.** Planning teams and partners need to be aware of and on the same page about these issues, and plan accordingly.
2. **Take time to understand the context and the evidence.** Know what you don't know! Include experts and diverse stakeholders—the more collaborative, the more likely you are to obtain consensus and develop an effective approach to teaching and learning.
3. Ground decisions in **evidence and best practices**. There's a lot we already know about how to approach language issues. We need to heed the existing evidence and wisdom coming out of EGR programs.
4. We need to **embed good research into our program designs** to find answers. And then we need to monitor and evaluate the approach we are taking, and learn from and apply our findings.
5. Lastly, we need to communicate what we are doing, and the results of what we are doing, with all stakeholders, from parents all the way up to senior-level government officials. And we need to advocate for improvements that will help *all* children to read and learn.

Coming soon!

We are currently updating the resource **Planning for Language Use in Education: Best Practices and Practical Steps to Improve Learning Outcomes (2016)** to reflect the latest information and experiences related to language issues in EGR programming

Stay tuned!

PLANNING FOR LANGUAGE USE
IN EDUCATION: BEST PRACTICES
AND PRACTICAL STEPS TO
IMPROVE LEARNING OUTCOMES



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Thank you for attending the “Early Grade Reading Program Design and Implementation: Best Practices and Resources for Success” webinar series!

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Upcoming webinars and events



- **July 30:** Continuous professional development in early grade reading programs (5th and final webinar in the series)
- **August 22-23:** Universal Design for Learning Toolkit in-person workshop in Chevy Chase, MD – details coming soon

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