

Enriching Primary English

**CRITICAL
TEACHING**

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Jonathan Glazzard
Jean Palmer

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First published in 2015 by Critical Publishing Ltd

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-909682-29-0

This book is also available in the following e-book formats:

MOBI ISBN: 978-1-909682-30-6

EPUB ISBN: 978-1-909682-31-3

Adobe e-reader ISBN: 978-1-909682-32-0

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Cover and text design by Greensplash Limited

Project Management by Out of House Publishing

Printed and bound in Great Britain by

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Critical Publishing

152 Chester Road

Northwich

CW8 4AL

www.criticalpublishing.com



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Meet the authors



Jonathan Glazzard has been teaching since 1995. He has worked across the early years, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 as a primary school teacher, special educational needs co-ordinator and assistant headteacher. Since 2005 he has worked at the University of Huddersfield, where he is a senior lecturer and University Teaching Fellow. He teaches on the primary English modules and is course leader for the BA and PGCE Primary Education courses and the MA in Early Childhood Studies. Jonathan is responsible for leading the primary initial teacher training provision. He is passionate about promoting creative approaches to teaching which inspire practitioners and children.



Jean Palmer joined the University of Huddersfield in January 2013 and is a Senior Lecturer on the BA Early Primary course and the PGCE Primary course, where she is also partnership and placements co-ordinator and is a tutor for English, history, geography and PSED. Jean has worked in Kirklees schools since 1996 and has over 30 years' experience of working with teachers and young people. Over the past 16 years she has worked in primary schools as a teacher, subject leader, Advanced Skills Teacher (English), governor and LA officer. She has taught across the primary phases and acted as senior mentor for GTP students. She was the lead consultant in Kirklees for the Every Child a Reader programme and is an accredited trainer for the Reading Recovery programme.

Introduction

The *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study* (PIRLS, 2011) compares the attainment and attitudes in reading of over 200,000 nine- and ten-year-olds around the world. The study is repeated every five years and the next study will take place in 2016. In 2011, the top-performing countries in reading were Hong Kong, the Russian Federation, Finland and Singapore. Although England demonstrated an improvement in overall reading achievement from 2006–11, it is not listed as one of the top-performing countries. Additionally, the study identified that the gap between boys' and girls' achievement was greater in England than in most other countries. Girls performed better than boys in reading in England and in most other countries (PIRLS, 2011). The study found that the pupils who enjoyed reading also attained higher scores. However, despite the fact that 20 per cent of pupils in England reported that they did not enjoy reading, England performed well above the international average and the best readers in England were among the best in the world. However, this rosy picture masks the fact that England had a greater proportion of weaker readers than many higher-performing countries (PIRLS, 2011).

Worldwide, high achievement in reading was associated with children from more affluent socio-economic backgrounds, and students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds demonstrated the lowest levels of achievement (PIRLS, 2011). A supportive home environment and an early start to reading are crucial in shaping children's development in reading (PIRLS, 2011). Students with positive attitudes to reading demonstrated higher levels of achievement than those with negative attitudes, and children with greater self-efficacy or high self-esteem about themselves as readers are typically better readers (PIRLS, 2011). Successful schools had better access to resources such as books, and achievement was lower in schools that had more limited resources.

Becoming a good reader is too important to be left to chance. We argue that all children have an entitlement to high-quality teaching and access to resources and support to enable them to read well, regardless of their socio-economic circumstances, gender, ethnicity, the school they attend and the country in which they live. Reading unlocks the door to a wide range

of opportunities which are denied to those who are unable to read and comprehend. The long tail of underachievement in reading (Tymms and Merrell, 2010) in England and other countries, including the United States, New Zealand, Scotland and Singapore, is completely unacceptable and must be addressed by governments immediately. It is our belief that all children can learn to read.

Although this book focuses on spoken language, reading and writing, addressing the long tail of underachievement in reading will go a long way to addressing underachievement in other areas of the curriculum. Children who read more demonstrate higher levels of achievement than those who read less. Avid readers develop a broad and rich vocabulary, which will improve the quality of their written expression. Through reading they absorb the rules about grammar and punctuation, which supports them to produce more sophisticated writing. However, the development of children's spoken language and auditory skills needs to be prioritised above reading and writing because spoken language underpins development in reading and writing. Children who are unable to think and communicate in sentences will find it more difficult to write in sentences. Without linguistic comprehension, pupils will be unable to understand the words they read, and a restricted vocabulary will restrict the quality of their writing. Children will find the task of reading more difficult if they are unable to listen to the sounds of the phonemes of the words they are trying to blend. To improve overall achievement in literacy, teachers need to prioritise speaking and listening by creating spaces for communication. Understanding the inter-relationship between speaking and listening, reading and writing is so important because it helps teachers to understand why children may be underachieving in English.

Ofsted (2012) highlighted that 40 per cent of children were not secure in the full range of English skills by the time they start Year 1. Scores for writing remain the weakest of all areas of assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Girls achieve better than boys in English at the age of five and the achievement gap is wider in writing (Ofsted, 2012). Ofsted (2012) also notes that standards in English in Key Stage 1 did not improve in the period from 2008 to 2011, and a sizeable minority of pupils were not secure in the basic skills of literacy before they moved into Key Stage 2. In Key Stage 2, attainment in English remained static from 2008 to 2011 and an insufficient number of pupils demonstrated achievement at the highest levels, with a fifth of pupils failing to reach national expectations (Ofsted, 2012). Too much teaching of English requires improvement and schools did not always demonstrate a systematic approach to developing pupils' early communication skills (Ofsted, 2012).

Given this depressing context, it is not surprising that the government has set the bar high in the new national curriculum (DfE, 2013). The curriculum sets out exacting expectations for every year group in order to drive forward standards in English. There is greater focus on grammar and reading for enjoyment and the use of correct registers of communication. We support these changes and believe that they will help to raise attainment in English. The challenging expectations place an onus on providers of teacher training and continuing professional development to ensure that both current and future teachers have the knowledge and skills required to implement the new curriculum. Teacher educators need to ensure that the quality of initial teacher training is high so that all trainees have the knowledge and skills needed to teach the full breadth of content from Year 1 to Year 6. At the same time as

ensuring that trainees have good subject knowledge per se, teacher educators also must make sure that trainees have a secure knowledge of the pedagogical approaches needed to make their lessons interesting and exciting. We believe that outstanding teachers are able to develop lessons which engage, motivate and excite children. We also believe that the very best teachers are capable of igniting children's enthusiasm to the point where children are obsessed about what they are learning. In this book, we focus on supporting you to develop a pedagogical toolkit that will not only enthuse you, but will also get your pupils obsessed about English. The best teacher will be able to get children obsessed about subordinate clauses or fronted adverbials. It is not about the *what* of teaching. It is about the *how*. The national curriculum tells you what to teach but it does not tell you how. You can read other texts to support your subject knowledge. This is a book which essentially focuses on pedagogy and enrichment strategies.

We hope this book achieves the intended purpose, which is to encourage you to be passionate about teaching English. We hope it inspires you and, in turn, we hope that you inspire, engage, enthuse and motivate your pupils.

Jonathan Glazzard and Jean Palmer

January 2015

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Conclusion

We want to emphasise two key points that we believe are vital. We have deliberately included them in this conclusion because if you take nothing else from this book we want you to remember these points.

- 1.** Do not stifle children's reading by tightly restricting access to texts. Let them choose which books they want to read. Allow them to read things they are interested in and give them opportunities to voice their opinions about which texts to include in the classroom. Restricting their choices and only allowing them to read material selected by a teacher will not encourage them to read for pleasure and may lead to them disengaging from reading.
- 2.** Give children time to develop and shape their own ideas for their writing. Celebrate their creative ideas and help them to develop them further. Do not be overly prescriptive about what they write. Allow them to make choices about what they write and give them some ownership about how they wish to present their work. In the early stages of writing, accept and celebrate children's invented spellings and celebrate their emergent writing.

We have emphasised throughout this book the importance of hooking children into English. Pupils need stimulating contexts to develop as speakers, listeners, readers and writers. You need to carefully engineer these contexts so that learning becomes relevant and purposeful. Pupils need to speak, read and write for a range of purposes and audiences, and they need opportunities to use the skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing across the full breadth of the primary curriculum. Pupils also need opportunities to read for information and for pleasure. In addition, pupils need to be provided with opportunities to speak and write for pleasure.

Your role as teachers and future teachers is to get children buzzing about English. Decontextualised grammar, spelling and punctuation exercises serve little purpose. On the other hand, if you teach these elements through the medium of texts children will begin to

understand how writers have made specific choices in order to create a greater impact on the reader. It is then that grammar and punctuation become meaningful because pupils can place it in the contexts of the texts that they are reading. When the skills of English are taught within the context of texts, pupils will start to use grammar and punctuation for effect in their own writing in the same way that authors do.

Children need to see themselves as authors and poets. They need to be introduced throughout their primary education to a rich tapestry of stories, poems and non-fiction texts. It is your role to empower them and help them to believe in their abilities to be authors. Creating a positive climate for learning in the classroom where pupils' attempts at speaking, reading and writing are valued and celebrated is one way of motivating young learners. Being a role model yourself is another way of inspiring them. You cannot expect pupils to be readers or authors if you do not model being a reader or a writer. Sharing examples of your own writing and the texts you are reading with your pupils will help them to understand that the skills of English are important for both adults and children. Having a broad knowledge of children's literature is essential in order for you to be able to challenge children further in reading and ignite children's passion for reading.

You need to be brave in your approaches to teaching. There is no 'correct' model of how to teach an English lesson. Children tend to disengage with predictable lesson structures and they enjoy lessons that are varied and use a range of approaches. You need to focus on hooking them into learning, getting them engaged in the learning and getting them obsessed about speaking, listening, reading and writing. Reducing teacher talk, getting pupils on task and giving them sufficient time to practise their skills are critical aspects of effective pedagogy, not just in English but in all aspects of the curriculum.

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Glossary

Some definitions are taken directly from the national curriculum (DfE, 2013).

Adjacent consonant	Adjacent consonants are next to each other either at the beginning or end of words, eg <u>f</u> <u>l</u> a g, <u>c</u> <u>r</u> i s <u>p</u> . Each individual consonant represents a separate sound (phoneme).
Adverb	Adverbs modify a verb, an adjective, another adverb or even a whole clause. <i>James <u>quickly</u> started shouting <u>loudly</u>.</i> [Adverbs modifying the verbs <i>started</i> and <i>shouting</i>]
Alphabetic code	In English the sounds of speech are represented by letters and this is known as the alphabetic code.
Blending	This is the process in which sounds (phonemes) are pronounced in sequence within a word and put together to read the target word.
Clause	A clause is a special type of phrase whose head is a verb. Clauses can sometimes be complete sentences. Clauses may be main or subordinate.
Consonant digraph	A consonant digraph is two consonants next to each other which represent one sound (phoneme), eg <u>sh</u> op or <u>ch</u> ip.
Decoding	Decoding is the process of translating the symbols (graphemes) of a word into a spoken word. When we read a word by sounding it out we are decoding the word.
Digraph	This is a written representation of a phoneme using two letters. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vowel digraphs: these represent vowel <i>sounds</i> and can be made up purely of vowels (ee/ea/oa/ue/ai) or can include consonants (e.g. <i>say</i>)• Consonant digraphs: see above.

Encoding	When a spoken word is translated into written symbols this is known as encoding or segmenting. We use this process for spelling.
Exception word	These are words that include unusual grapheme–phoneme correspondences. For example, in the word <i>said</i> the grapheme in the middle of the word represents the sound /e/.
Grapheme	A letter, or combination of letters, that corresponds to a single <u>phoneme</u> within a word. It is the written representation of a phoneme.
Guided reading	Guided reading is reading which takes place within a small group using a text which has been specifically chosen to meet the needs of that group of pupils.
Inference	The ability to infer refers to the ability to piece together known information to make a deduction.
Linguistic comprehension	Linguistic comprehension refers to the ability to understand spoken vocabulary.
Noun	Nouns are sometimes called ‘naming words’ because they name people, places and ‘things’; this is often true, but it doesn’t help to distinguish nouns from other word classes. For example, prepositions can name places and verbs can name ‘things’ such as actions. Nouns may be classified as common (eg <i>boy, day</i>) or proper (eg <i>Ivan, Wednesday</i>), and also as countable (eg <i>thing, boy</i>) or non-countable (eg <i>stuff, money</i>). These classes can be recognised by the determiners they combine with.
Noun phrase	A noun phrase is a phrase with a noun as its head, eg <i>some foxes, foxes with bushy tails</i> . Some grammarians recognise one-word phrases, so that <i>foxes are multiplying</i> would contain the noun <i>foxes</i> acting as the head of the noun phrase <i>foxes</i> .
Onset	The onset refers the consonants that come before the vowel for example in <i>string</i> the onset is ‘str’.
Oral rehearsal	This refers to the process of articulating ideas before writing them down.
Phoneme	A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound that signals a distinct, contrasting meaning. There are around 44 phonemes in English; the exact number depends on the regional accent. A single phoneme may be represented in writing by one, two, three or four letters constituting a single grapheme.
Phonemic awareness	Phonemic awareness refers to the ability to perceive and manipulate the phonemes in spoken words (Johnston and Watson, 2007). A child with good phonemic awareness can identify the three phonemes in <i>boat</i> , ie /b/oa/t/.

Phonological awareness	Phonological awareness refers to the ability to perceive and manipulate syllables, onsets and rimes within words (Johnston and Watson, 2007).
Prefix	A prefix is added at the beginning of a word in order to turn it into another word.
Pronoun	A pronoun is a word which is substituted to replace a noun, eg <i>he</i> , <i>she</i> , <i>them</i> .
Reading as a writer	Reading as a writer is characterised by the ability to read a piece of text while identifying specific ways in which the writer has used vocabulary, grammar and punctuation to create an impact on the reader.
Register	Classroom lessons, football commentaries and novels use different registers of the same language, recognised by differences of vocabulary and grammar. Registers are 'varieties' of a language which are each tied to a range of uses, in contrast with dialects, which are tied to groups of users.
Rime	The rime is the vowel and the rest of the syllable, eg in <i>sting</i> the rime is 'ing'.
Segmenting	Segmenting is the ability to split a spoken word into phonemes and to represent these as graphemes to spell the word. See also 'encoding'.
Semantic knowledge	This refers to the ability to get meaning from a sentence.
Shared reading	Shared reading is the sharing of a text usually with a class. The text is read with some participation from the audience.
Split vowel digraph	This is a vowel digraph split by a consonant. For example, in <i>name</i> the vowel digraph a-e is split with the consonant 'm'.
Standard English	Standard English can be recognised by the use of a very small range of forms such as <i>those books</i> , <i>I did it</i> and <i>I wasn't doing anything</i> (rather than their non-standard equivalents); it is not limited to any particular accent. It is the variety of English which is used, with only minor variations, as a major world language. Some people use standard English all the time, in all situations from the most casual to the most formal, so it covers most registers. The aim of the national curriculum is that everyone should be able to use standard English as needed in writing and in relatively formal speaking.
Subordinate clause	A clause which is subordinate to some other part of the same sentence is a subordinate clause; for example, in <i>The apple that I ate was sour</i> , the clause <i>that I ate</i> is subordinate to <i>apple</i> (which it modifies). Subordinate clauses contrast with co-ordinate clauses as in <i>It was sour but looked very tasty</i> . (Contrast: main clause). However, clauses that are directly quoted as direct speech are not subordinate clauses.

Suffix	A suffix is an 'ending', used at the end of one word to turn it into another word. Unlike root words, suffixes cannot stand on their own as a complete word.
Syllable	A syllable sounds like a beat in a word. Syllables consist of at least one vowel, and possibly one or more consonants.
Syntactic knowledge	Knowledge of syntax refers to the ability to understand the rules of sentence structure.
Synthetic phonics	Synthetic phonics refers to the process of separating words into phonemes and then blending the phonemes together in sequence to read the word. Words are broken down into the smallest meaningful units of sound within a word rather than into larger units such as rimes.
Tenses	In English, tense is the choice between present and past verbs, which is special because it is signalled by inflections and normally indicates differences of time. In contrast, languages like French, Spanish and Italian have three or more distinct tense forms, including a future tense. In English, the simple tenses (present and past) may be combined with the perfect and progressive.
Trigraph	A type of grapheme where three letters represent one phoneme
Verb	Verbs are sometimes called 'doing words' because many verbs name an action that someone does; while this can be a way of recognising verbs, it doesn't distinguish verbs from nouns (which can also name actions). Moreover, many verbs name states or feelings rather than actions. Verbs can be classified in various ways: for example, as auxiliary, or modal; as transitive or intransitive; and as states or events.
Word recognition	Word recognition is the ability to translate graphemes on a page into their constituent phonemes then to blend these together to read words. It also refers to the skill of identifying whole words from visual memory.
Writing as a reader	Writing as a reader refers to composing text while being consciously aware of how to use vocabulary, grammar and punctuation to create an impact on the reader.

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