Państwowa Szkoła Wyższa im. Papieża Jana Pawła II w Białej Podlaskiej

THE DEVELOPMENT OF WORD RECOGNITION IN READING IN LOWER PRIMARY POLISH LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

Barbara Struk



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Introduction

Reading has been universally accepted as one of the sources of language input for bilingual learners (Chodkiewicz, 2000; 2016b), therefore implementing effective reading instruction early into the foreign language curriculum is indispensible. Yet, despite its advancement, research into reading instruction has yet to clarify all the issues concerning the development of early reading components in different language combinations. For instance, a gap can be found in the research into the processes of learning how to read in English by Polish learners. One of such processes that prove essential for fluent reading comprehension, yet are still underexplored in the EFL context, is visual word recognition. The research gap results in the lack of an adequate description of the didactic principles that would provide satisfactory guidance for practicing primary school EFL teachers in Poland.

The book has been inspired by the need to investigate the process of reading comprehension in native and additional languages, as well as the changes in word recognition as developed by primary Polish learners of English when exposed to a good quality balanced reading instruction. The recommendations for early reading instruction offered by the current English language methodology guidelines in Poland for grades 1-3 do not refer clearly to an approach which is constructed on a balanced combination of code- and meaning-based instruction. Even though such is the view favoured by many EFL specialists nowadays (Birch, 2002; Cameron, 2001; Wallace, 1999), the meaning-based approach to teaching reading seems to be the dominating one despite the fact that it may be insufficient for L2/FL learners to become proficient L2 users and independent readers. It seems necessary, therefore, to seek a more complete approach to teaching early reading in English, in particular more effective instruction in word recognition.

The process of recognizing words in reading has been of interest to numerous reading researchers since the end of the 19th century and was studied from two broad perspectives: as a source of information on the mental processes and as an essential aspect of reading (Adelman, 2012). Consequently, the end of the 20th century witnessed an increased commitment to the investigation of word recognition in early reading among bilingual learners (Schwartz & Van Hell, 2012). The research has frequently examined the similarities and differences in word recognition development among L2 and L1 learners as well as the influence of the cross-linguistic transfer of word recognition components in early L2 reading.

The study described in the second part of the book sets out to contribute to the research concerning early FL reading by focusing on the development of word recognition components among Polish lower-primary learners of English. Initially, the learners were exposed to two months pre-literacy course in English, where

the instruction focused on the oral language development, alphabetic knowledge, listening comprehension and vocabulary. Once the pre-literacy training was completed, the learners took part in an early EFL reading course, which lasted six months. During this time, the learners strengthened their word recognition components, that is alphabetics, sight word reading, phonemic decoding, oral language, reading comprehension and vocabulary, but also listening comprehension and spelling. During this 6-month-long investigation tests were conducted to assess changes in the components of word recognition, which comprised alphabetic knowledge, sight word reading, phonemic decoding and contextual word reading. Apart from this, both vocabulary and reading comprehension tests were conducted in order to find out to what extent the learners were able to cope with the language aspects covered within the four stages of the course when the measurements of the word recognition components were taken. More specifically, the study sought to investigate the following:

1. changes in the development of the learners' word recognition components comprising:
   - letter naming,
   - letter-sound matching,
   - sight word reading,
   - phonemic decoding,
   - contextual word reading;
2. changes in the learners' gains on reading comprehension tests;
3. changes in the learners' gains on vocabulary knowledge tests;
4. the extent to which the word recognition components will develop in the particular learners;
5. the potential positive correlations among the results of test in word recognition components for the whole group of the study participants and for the individual learners.

In the light of obligatory English instruction from the age of five in Poland, it is worth investigating the effect of the implementation of the balanced approach to teaching early reading in English, so as to work out some principled instruction guidelines for practicing teachers. Currently, lower primary Polish learners of English are not exposed to effective research-, and science-based instruction that would help them successfully develop all the aspects of early reading components including word recognition.

Reading is a complex term to explain and readers rarely become aware of the multitude of intricate and mutually dependent processes and components that reading comprehension involves. Chapter 1 of this book attempts to shed some light on the complex nature of reading and reading development. Initially, the varied views of reading characteristic of the different fields of study are discussed. Then, the cognitive processes involved in reading, both of lower- and higher-level,

are given attention to. The next part of Chapter 1 concentrates on the essential aspect of reading comprehension, that is on word recognition, by outlining its various models and specific features. After that, a model of reading comprehension called the Simple View of Reading is analysed and its limitations are pointed out. The final part of this chapter deals with reading motivation, the factor frequently overlooked by the theoretical models of reading, yet important from the point of view of a reading learner.

Chapter 2 attends specifically to the early reading development in alphabetic languages, focusing on the aspects and knowledge which underlie the ability to use the alphabet in reading. First, the role of language units in reading in alphabetic languages as well as differences in orthographic depth that affect learning to read are addressed. The main sources of difficulties early readers experience in reading are touched upon. The next part of Chapter 2 delineates the componential view of reading, in particular the role and importance of key component aspects of reading, such as the alphabetic knowledge, phonological and phonemic awareness, grapheme-phoneme correspondences, as well as vocabulary and comprehension. The final part of Chapter 2 concentrates on the discussion of commonly adopted approaches to teaching early reading in English as L1, including code-, and meaning-based approaches, and the balanced approach.

The focal point of Chapter 3 is the nature of becoming a bilingual reader. It aims to pinpoint the main differences between learning a second and a foreign language, and between the disproportions in early reading experience and language exposure of L1 and L2 learners. The sections that follow are dedicated to the connections between L1 and L2 reading, in particular to the linguistic transfer among the lower-level processes. Finally, the context of teaching reading in English to Polish primary school learners is presented, with the focus on the differences between Polish and English at the level of orthography that affect the process of learning to read in English. Furthermore, the current instructional guidelines offered to Polish teachers of English as to the way they should teach reading in that language are presented. The most noteworthy developments and major findings of the research in the field of early reading instruction in an L2 or FL context are also presented in Chapter 3. The research studies comparing the development of word recognition components in L1 and L2/FL are examined, in particular the significance of phonological abilities in word recognition. Special attention is drawn to the findings of the research into L1-L2/FL transfer of word recognition components. The last part of this chapter recounts the results of the empirical studies particularly relevant to the research undertaken by the author as part of her doctoral thesis.

Chapter 4 is devoted to the research study that formed part of the author's doctoral thesis. It offers a detailed analysis of the design of the study, outlines its purpose as well as describes the study setting and participants. It also gives an in-depth description of research instruments, the procedures and data collection methods.

In this part of the book also the study questions are posed in view of measuring the improvements in word recognition components of the six participants of the study involved in a six month early reading course in English as a foreign language.

Apart from this, Chapter 4 also displays the study results, discussion of the results and the learners' profiles as an additional source of qualitative information contributing to a more complete understanding of the process of learning to recognise words in English as a foreign language by Polish learners. The book closes with conclusions outlining potential implications of the current study results for early reading instruction in English as a foreign language. Some suggestions referring to the development of effective word recognition components in particular are put forward.

Key terms that need to be explained:

Early reading – the initial stage in reading development when readers learn to recognize printed words and read simple texts;

Mature reading – the final stage in reading development when reading is fluent;

Literacy – in a narrow meaning the term refers to the skills of reading and writing texts for various purposes, yet in a wider sense it refers to the ability to decipher and understand various formats and media through which information is passed (multiple literacies);

Decoding – the ability to use knowledge of graphic symbols and their corresponding sounds to recognize words that cannot be recognized on sight;

Orthography – the writing system characteristic of a particular language;

Grapheme-phoneme correspondence – the relationship between the graphical forms of letters and the corresponding phonemes.

Part One

Key Issues in Research on the Development of Reading in L1 and L2

Chapter 1

Explaining the fundamentals of reading ability and its development

'(…) [R]eading is many things.'
Meyer, 2002, p. 39

The current chapter aims to outline the reasons why reading comprehension defies simple definitions. The chapter attempts to describe the distinct ways of interpreting what reading is. It focuses on a detailed account of the lower-level processes concerned with attending to print, with special attention devoted to the process of word recognition and its theoretical models. Due attention is also given to the higher-level processes in reading, concerned with comprehending a decoded text. The next part of the chapter gives an overview of the models of early reading development, which is followed by a discussion of two fundamental stages in reading development: those of early and mature reading. Finally, the last section is devoted to the role of home and school environment in supporting reading learners in the development of their reading skill.

1.1. Reading as a multidimensional concept

The first Subchapter is devoted mainly to reading in L1 and only occasionally the discussion touches upon reading in L2/FL. The major focus on L1 reading is due to the existence of the ample body of research into reading in the native language and to the fact that there are many similarities in the process of the acquisition of reading in both native and second or foreign languages, despite the differences which also need to be accounted for (Eskey, 2005; Grabe & Stoller, 2002, cited by Chodkiewicz, 2016a).

1.1.1. The complex task of defining reading

Reading is often taken for granted (Grabe, 2009; Rayner, Pollatsek, Ashby, & Clifton Jr., 2012), yet reading researchers have not been able to agree on one, inclusive definition of reading (Aldreson, 2000; Grabe, 2009; Meyer, 2002). Among the reasons for the continuous absence of one, comprehensive definition of reading, Alderson (2000) enumerates: (1) the vast numbers of volumes written on the subject of reading, (2) many diverse reading theories, (3) differences between reading in L1 and L2, (4) the cognitive and perceptual abilities reading involves, and (5) the role played by memory (p. 1).

However, over the years, varying definitions of reading have appeared, some of them interpreting reading as a skill and others highlighting processing of the text by a reader. For instance, reading has been explained as "the ability to extract visual information from the page and comprehend the meaning of the text" [italics in the original] (Rayner et al., 2012, p. 19), or "information processing: transforming print to speech" (Coltheart, 2005, p. 6). Although seemingly helpful, such reductionist definitions of reading fail to account for the intricate path to reading comprehension. Grabe & Stoller (2013) specify a number of reasons why reductionist definitions of reading should be avoided. In their view such definitions fail to:

- acknowledge that readers approach texts differently driven by different purposes, with each purpose requiring different strategies;
- adequately represent the complicated nature of reading, the number of component "skills, processes, and knowledge";
- recognise the importance of cognition and time–constraints;
- explain the influence of second language proficiency on reading;
- place reading in a social context and explain why texts can be approached in different ways by readers (pp. 3-4).

The current understanding of reading comprehension requires that we approach reading as a skill or a **competence** (Chodkiewicz, 2013b; Koda, 2004) as well as an elaborate processing of a printed text (Alderson, 2000; Grabe 2009; Koda & Zehler, 2008; Wallace, 1999). There seems to be an agreement that the reading process comprises many interrelated sub-processes, some of which are more sophisticated and complex than others, with each one fulfilling an important role in reading comprehension:

> *[R]eading is a complex, multifaceted pursuit requiring the continuous deployment and integration of multiple operations. (…) adept reading is a constellation of interfaced capabilities, ranging from mechanical mappings to more sophisticated conceptual manipulations, such as reasoning and inference.*
>
> (Koda, 2004, p. 227)

Thus, the reading process is multileveled, integrative, cognitively highly complex, and one that incorporates many other mental processes. As stated before, any reductionist definitions of reading comprehension would naturally be misleading (Koda & Zehler, 2008). The notion of reading as a competence is based on the view that in order to reach successful reading comprehension one needs to be competent enough in three areas: "visual information extraction, incremental information integration, and text-meaning and prior-knowledge consolidation" (Koda, 2004, p. 5).

While some researchers, especially those following a psycholinguistic standpoint, specify that reading relies predominantly on cognitive and linguistic knowledge necessary to decode print and comprehend the meaning of a text (e.g. Koda & Zehler, 2008), there are other important aspects that have to be given appropriate consideration. For instance, Dakowska (2005) offers a broader view of reading comprehension stating that it: (1) is driven by a purpose, (2) is a communicative activity which is not only based on linguistic skills, but also the reader's background knowledge and cultural competence, (3) requires active participation of the reader, when comprehension is "constructed, modified, and interpreted" (p. 190), and (4) is strategic, that is based on flexibility and adjustment of strategies in meaning construction (p. 190). A number of reading specialists emphasise the goal-orientedness of the reading process as well as its strategicness, which makes it possible for the reader to reach the standards they set for themselves in particular reading event (e.g. Alexander and The Disciplined Reading and Learning Research Laboratory, 2012; Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Smith, 1994). Chodkiewicz (2013b) encapsulates the complex nature of reading stating that it is "the interface between reader goals and strategic behaviour adaptable to readers' needs and diverse contexts" (p. 90), and underscores that whether reading is viewed as a process, a skill, an act or social practice, its core outcome to be expected is comprehension (p. 80).

As already suggested, defining reading comprehension is not possible without considering the role of reader and text factors in the definition. First of all, different readers read the same text in different ways, depending on their characteristics (Grabe, 2009). One of them is their level of **domain knowledge**. For instance, an expository text is likely to be approached differently by experts in a particular domain than by beginners in that field. Another factor is the type of **genre** a text represents. Due to its genre features, an academic text is read in a different way than a narrative text. As mentioned above, setting different purposes requires that readers employ different **reading strategies** or combinations of strategies. For instance, when a reader is learning from a text they might want to skim the text first to assess the task, get the general comprehension of the text, or integrate information into a coherent frame. Readers might also decide to read at a slower pace, etc. (p. 13). While referring to similar constructs, Hudson (2007) adds **the**

media (i.e. newspaper, novel or computer screen), **the content** (i.e. poetry, maps, or academic articles), **text structure** and **form** (i.e. narrative, graphs) as additional factors in reading (pp. 26-27).

It needs to be emphasised that a diversity of views on reading and research perspectives have emerged due to the fact that reading and reading processes have been examined by scholars representing different fields of study (Kucer, 2005). Experts in the field of **psycholinguistics**, for instance, investigate language and textual properties in reading on the basis of the assumption that it is knowledge of the language that serves as means of conveying meaning, and that meaning can be reached mainly by paying attention to syntactic, semantic, and grapho-phonemic cues (e.g. Carrasquillo, Kucer, & Abrams, 2004, p. 20). **Cognitive psychology** researchers aim at analyzing and understanding mental processes that occur in a human mind during a reading act such as decoding, text-information building, and situation-model construction (e.g. Field, 2004, p. 62; Koda, 2004, p. 4; Rayner et al., 2012, p. 1). **Socioculturalists**, on the other hand, view reading as a process driven by one's need to be part of the society, where the reader's social identity and the social context play a vital role. In fact, ignoring the socio-cultural context within which learning to read and reading itself take place has been found to be quite controversial (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009, p. 16). Finally, **developmental psychologists** examine reading from the point of view of developmental changes that readers go through when advancing their reading or reading strategies (Kucer, 2005, p. 3). As Kucer & Silva (2006) put it, "[p]otentially, development never ends, and individuals may encounter literacy events that involve using literacy in new and novel ways" (p. 6). All these dimensions: linguistic, cognitive, sociocultural and developmental seem to be integrated in a reading event (Kucer & Silva, 2006).

1.1.2. Reading as a combination of mental processes

Cognitive processes that are activated when reading can be divided into two categories: **lower–level processes**, that is word recognition and syntactic parsing, semantic proposition formation and working memory (as the system, where the cognitive processes are carried out), and **higher–level processes** (text model formation, situation–model building, inferencing, executive control processing, and strategic processing) (Grabe, 2009; Grabe & Stoller, 2002). Hudson's (2007) definition of reading refers to reader purposes, types of texts, readers' knowledge and abilities. Among the variables influencing reading success the author enumerates: "(1) grapheme recognition, (2) phonological representation, (3) syntactic structure, (4) background knowledge, (5) processing strategies, (6) text structure understanding, (7) vocabulary and background knowledge, and (8) the context of the reading act" (p. 25).

Koda (2004) explains that reading involves three major sets of processes: (1) recognizing printed words (decoding), (2) understanding the literal meaning of the text, and (3) interpreting the obtained information through integration with prior knowledge (p. 5). Alderson (2000) augments the list of cognitive actions and adds reflecting upon the text and judging whether it is useful, interesting, or difficult (p. 3).

An example of a general framework that sees reading as an orchestra of both cognitive and linguistic processes is the Reading Systems Framework by Perfetti (1999, cited by Stafura & Perfetti, 2017), presented in Figure 1.1. It is a broad perspective on reading which encapsulates all the component subsystems of reading comprehension, including the word identification system. Here, the process of text comprehension is activated by the three main sources of knowledge: the language, the orthography, and the knowledge of the world. These different types of knowledge are indispensable for the functioning of both lower-level processes, i.e. word recognition (discussed in Section 1.2.) and higher level processes, i.e. inferencing (see: Section 1.3.). Within the cognitive system, connections between the perceptual system and the long term memory system ensure that the processing of the contextual data can take place.

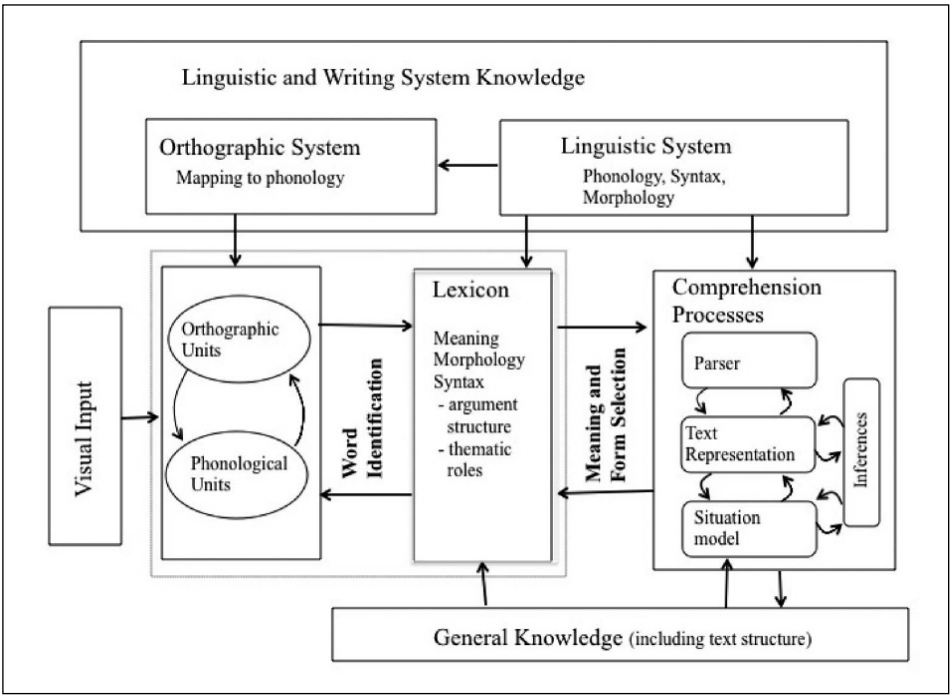


Figure 1.1. The Reading Systems Framework by Perfetti (1999, based on Stafura & Perfetti, 2017, p. 11).

In light of the complex nature of reading and the many aspects and perspectives discussed above, it is evident that reading defies simple definitions. Today it seems that the most comprehensive definitions of reading are those that acknowledge reading as a process, or more precisely as a combination of mental processes occurring in a reader's mind during reading. While trying to understand the intricate nature of reading, it should be acknowledged that no two reading acts can be the same: the reading process will vary for different readers dealing with different texts, different readers dealing with one text, or even one reader dealing with one text at different occasions or for different purposes (Alderson, 2000, pp. 3-4).

1.1.3. Reading as a product

Analyzing the cognitive processes carried out in the reader's mind may be one way of approaching reading, yet it can also be viewed as a **product** of interaction between the reader and the text; in other words, one can attend to **what** level of comprehension has been reached, as opposed to **how** it was reached (Alderson, 2000; Chodkiewicz, 2003). The product approach is helpful for reading didactics for a number of important reasons: (1) the product (level of comprehension) can be observed, measured, and compared with the original text, while the process of reading cannot be observed since it is confined to the reader's mind, (2) teachers are equipped with tools to measure the learner's level of comprehension, and (3) reading teachers can easily adapt their reading instruction appropriately to help learners achieve their reading goals (Chodkiewicz, 2003, p. 15).

Some limitations to approaching reading as a product can be observed, though, and voices against this approach have been raised. Decades ago, Gray (1987) pointed at two major problems: (1) the inability to pinpoint the sources of poor comprehension (facilitated when analyzing reading as a process), and (2) the possibility of providing more than one answer to a comprehension question, due to varying learners' experiences and background knowledge.

1.1.4. Reading as a social act

Apart from seeing reading as a cognitive activity taking place in the privacy of a reader's mind, it can and should also be viewed as socio-cultural because it depends on the involvement of a social context. As Alderson (2000) puts it: "Reading is not an isolated activity that takes place in some vacuum" (p. 25), while Purcell-Gates, Jacobson, & Degener (2004) believe that "the meaning of what is written or read, and the meaning of the act of reading or writing, is necessarily contextual. It is social." (p. 30). Hence Bernhardt (1991) distinguishes between cognitive and socio-cognitive view of reading. The importance of the social context in reading is recognised by other researchers, as well. Wallace (2003) states that it would be

misleading to view reading as isolated from social and cultural context, since the writer, the text and the reader directly depend on the society: authors create their texts in ways that are characteristic to their gender, ethnicity, intentions, attitudes or convictions.

1.1.5. Reading as a purposeful activity

Readers approach texts with various goals and motivations. Among the many purposes for reading Grabe & Stoller (2002) enumerate: (1) searching for information (scanning and skimming), (2) learning from a text, (3) integrating new information with what is known, (4) evaluating, critiquing, and using the gathered information, or (5) simply comprehending. Wallace (1999) sorts purposes for reading into three major categories: (1) reading to survive, (2) reading to learn, and (3) reading for pleasure (pp. 6-7). Reading purposes affect how well readers comprehend texts, the way they carry out inferencing, and how well they are able to recollect the meaning (Chodkiewicz, 2013b). Grabe (2009) adds that even though readers read for different purposes, they still employ the same underlying cognitive processes, and "the differences are matters of emphasis and elaboration rather than different skills being used" (p. 13). These differences are particularly visible when comparing reading to learn with reading for pleasure.

1.1.6. The interactive nature of reading

Reading comprehension is not a mere discovery of one, precise, fixed meaning that a text contains, on the contrary, it is constructed through dynamic interactions between reader and the text (Kucer, 2005; Wallace, 1999), drawing on "linguistic and schematic knowledge and on the input provided by the printed or written text" (Wallace, 1999, p. 39). Dakowska (2005) acknowledges the interactive nature of the reading process, and names the three interacting agents: the writer, the reader, and the text. The writer interacts with the reader through their text, and the reader actively searches for meaning using his or her understanding of the world and through familiarity with the topic.

According to Grabe (2009), the interactive nature of reading can be observed at two levels. At one level, parallel interactions between cognitive skills and knowledge occur in the reader's mind (p. 15), in other words, "one needs to utilise multiple sources of information and process them simultaneously" (Sobkowiak & Piasecka, 2014, p. 51). Readers actively draw upon their background knowledge and previous experiences, thus enabling interaction between the text and their knowledge of the world. As Hudson (2007) puts it: "the active reader provides a lot of the information necessary to comprehend any text" (p. 28). At the other level, interaction takes place between the reader and the writer. The author is also present, since the text is his or

her creation and they are bound to influence how the reader understands their text (p. 15). Various definitions of reading "stem from the same basic assumption: that successful comprehension emerges from the integrative interaction of derived text information and preexisting reader knowledge" (Koda, 2004, p. 4).

1.2. Lower-level processes in reading: the crucial role of word recognition

The following section is devoted to the discussion concerning lower-level processes in reading, that is word recognition and integration, semantic proposition encoding and the role of working memory in attending to print. Fluent word recognition, which remains at the heart of this book, is discussed at depth as triggering text comprehension.

1.2.1. Word recognition – the importance of automaticity and speed of processing

Words form the basis of a language, whether in its oral or written form, so identifying printed words must play an essential role in understanding written language (Adelman, 2012; Cain, 2010; Koda, 2004). Forster (2012) explains word recognition in general terms as "finding a match between a coded version of the input stimulus and an internalized lexical representation" (p. 52). According to Koda (2004) "word recognition refers to the processes of extracting lexical information from graphic displays of words" (p. 29). An expanded definition is given by Grabe (2009), who posits that to recognise a word

> *a reader must recognize the word forms on the page very rapidly, activate links between the graphic form and phonological information, activate appropriate semantic and syntactic resources, recognize morphological affixation in more complex word forms, and access his or her mental lexicon.* (p. 22)

Despite activating so many cognitive sub-processes ('component processes' in Grabe's term), mature readers recognise words in a manner seemingly so effortless that they are considered "extraordinary word recognizers" (Grabe, 2009, p. 23). The elaborate nature of visual word recognition has been a central point of interest to both reading researchers and psychologists (Koda, 2004).

It is widely agreed that the ability to recognise words printed on a page, referred to also as **word identification**, is of crucial importance in reading (Adams, 1990; Grabe, 2009; Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009; Stanovich, 1996). Besner & Humphreys

(1991) confirm by stating that "it is a basic process in reading upon which all other reading processes are predicated" (p. 2), and Grabe & Stoller (2002) consider it "the most fundamental requirement for fluent reading comprehension" (p. 20). Visual word recognition is characteristic only of reading (Grabe, 2009; Perfetti, Van Dyke & Hart, 2001).

Efficient word recognition is characterised by **speed.** Fluent reading seems effortless, as individual words are recognised within a quarter of a second (Rayner et al., 2012). This remarkable pace might suggest that readers perceive individual words as wholes or pictures, or that they rely on contextual clues (Walpole & McKenna, 2007). However, it has been demonstrated that readers pay attention to all the intra-word parts in most of the words in a given text (Balota, Pollatsek & Rayner, 1985; Pressley, 2002). Adams (1994) also points to the fact that word recognition involves paying attention to every letter, and that it takes the remarkable few one-hundredths of a second to notice and register each individual letter in a word (p. 102). A fluent reader is able to recognise between 250-300 wpm (Grabe, 2009).

Another vital characteristic of efficient word recognition is **automaticity**. By automaticity in reading, Field (2004) understands decoding printed words without the conscious analysis of the elements of print. When reading, decoding and comprehension put strain on working memory, which has been defined by Gathercole (2009 p. 757, in: Dakowska, 2015, p. 145) as "a flexible mental workspace that can be used to maintain and transform information in the course of demanding cognitive activities". The capacity of this mental workspace is quite limited, therefore automatic decoding is desired, since it puts minimal strain on working memory, allowing more capacity to comprehension (Field, 2004, p. 28). In skilled reading word recognition is automatic to a point that it lays beyond the reader's conscious will, thus is unavoidable (Murray, 2016). Being able to recognise words with automaticity comes with exposure to print and experience in reading, but even in proficient reading visual word recognition is "not completely free of capacity demands" (Stanovich, 1996, p. 443). As explained by Chodkiewicz (2000), "if lexical access in the reading process is not sufficiently automatised, too many words undergo conscious processing and the L2 learner has to slow down too much, which, in extreme cases, may result in non-comprehension of the text" (p. 62).

A general consensus seems to be that three major sub-processes: phonological, orthographic and semantic, are involved in visual word recognition (Adams, 1990; Perfetti, Van Dyke & Hart, 2001; Nassaji, 2014; Stanovich, 1996). Grabe (2009) augments the list and adds syntactic processing, lexical access, morphological processing in more complex words, and automaticity of the processing. The author also points to the importance of context in word recognition.

1.2.2. Selected theoretical models of word recognition

Since the 1970's, several theoretical models of visual word recognition have been put forward. The so-called **search models** are often refered to as traditional and representational ones (Lupker, 2005; Perfetti, Van Dyke & Hart, 2001). Representational models of word recognition assume that the process of word recognition occurs in sequential, nonoverlapping stages (Carreiras, Armstrong, Perea, & Frost, 2014; Lupker, 2005; Perfetti et al., 2001). What is more, the process occurs in a feedforward manner: it commences with the identification of letters, the recognition of letters activates orthography of a word and its pronunciation, and these representations allow the reader to search their mental lexicon for the appropriate word (Carreiras et al., 2014). One of the first search models was the bin model presented by Forster (1976). Paap, Newsome, McDonald & Schvaneveldt (1982) proposed a different type of the search model, called the **activation-verification model**. Their model assumes that the stages of activation overlap, in other words, further activation takes place before the previous one has been completed. Search models are often criticised because they fail to explain the influence of higher-level processing on lower-level processing (Lupker, 2005). Figure 1.2. presents the sequential flow of information from print to the meaning.

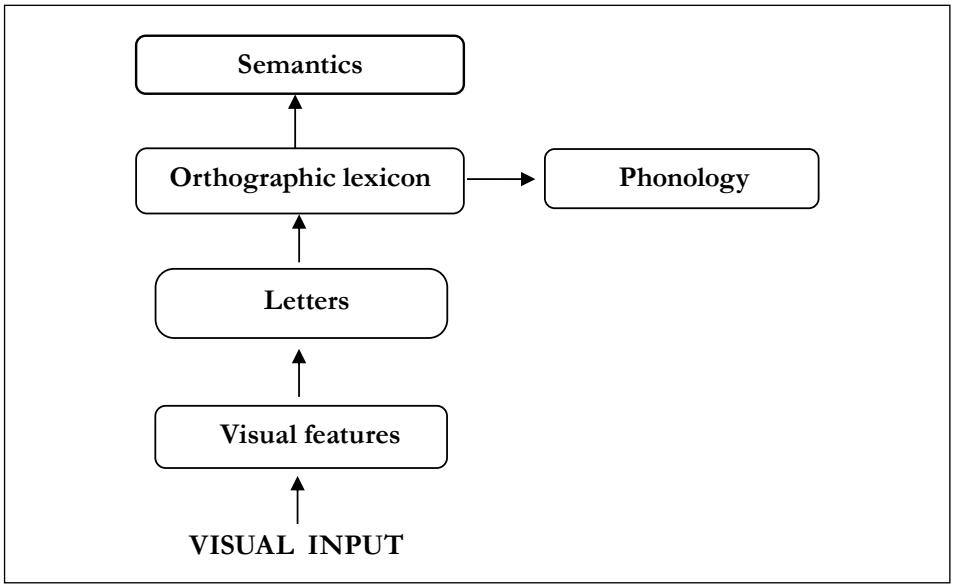


Figure 1.2. Search model of word recognition (based on Carreiras, Armstrong, Perea, & Frost (2014, p. 91).

On the other hand, the **interactive activation** models of word recognition, i.e. by McClelland & Rumelhart (1981) or by Plaut, McClelland, Seidenberg & Patterson (1996) offer a contrasting view to the search models in terms of the direction the activated information flows. According to these models, word recognition does not occur in stages, whether non-overlapping or partially overlapping, but in form of a continuous flow of information. Activation processes start at the level of word features, going upwards towards the letter level, and continuing to the word level. At the same time, the inhibition processes travel downwards from the word level to the lower levels, as well as between representations at the same levels. Figure 1.3. presents a typical interactive activation model of word recognition.

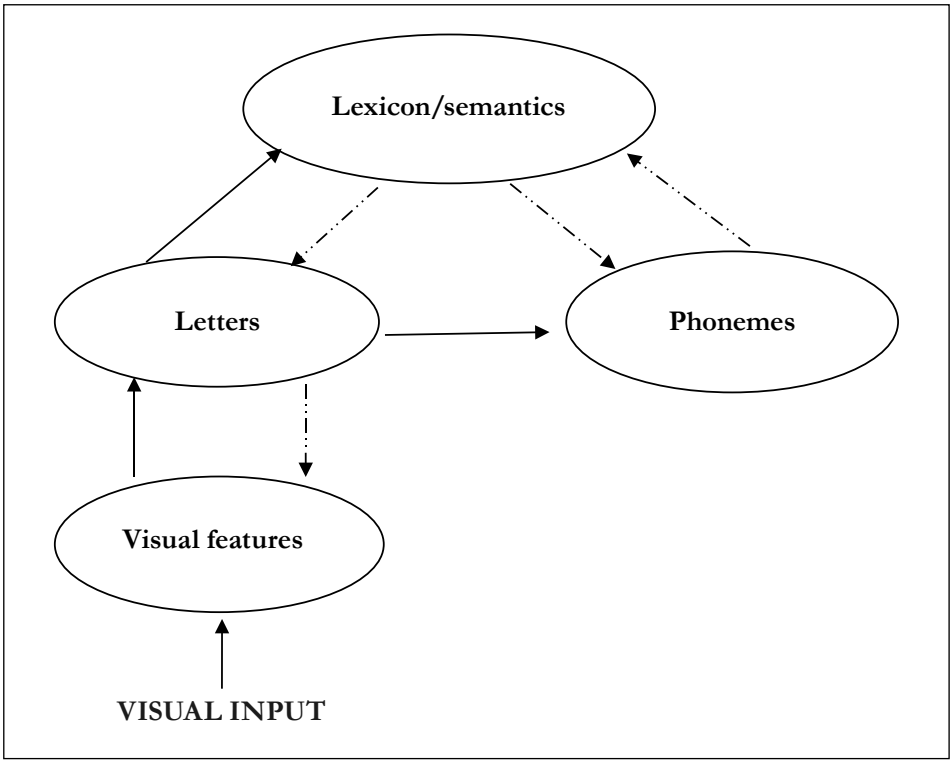


Figure 1.3. Interactive activation model of word recognition (Carreiras, Armstrong, Perea, & Frost, 2014, p. 91).

The models of word recognition presented so far support the notion of lexical representations stored in the mind and retrieved due to the activation of information, either in a sequential or interactive manner. However, the **parallel distributed processing models**, stemming from the connectionist theory of reading, assume that word units are not stored in the mental lexicon, but "rather emerge from processing activity" (Perfetti et. al. 2001, p. 129). According to these

models, four major processors are activated when reading: (1) the Orthographic Processor (responsible for automatic letter identification), (2) the Meaning Processor (vocabulary knowledge), (3) the Phonological Processor, and (4) the Context Processor. It is hypothesised that when readers fix their eyes on visual stimuli, the visual input goes through the Orthographic processor, which simultaneously activates the Meaning processor and the Phonological processor. There, a decision is made if the letter sequence (visual input) has a corresponding unit in the Phonological processor. The information is sent back to the Orthographic processor, but also to the Meaning processor. When the unit of meaning is activated, the information again is sent to the Phonological processor to activate its pronunciation (Adams, 1990, pp. 157-158). Generally, the activation of the flow of information occurs in a continuous, parallel, feedback fashion, where all the groups of codes serve as activators and inhibitors to each other (Adams, 1990; Lupker, 2005), and the phonological processing is not seen as optional but obligatory (Stanovich, 1996). The Context processor is helpful, particularly in the case of a beginning reading learner, as drawing information from context saves these learners time and effort in decoding more complicated words and increases comprehension (Adams, 1990, p. 140). The interaction of the processors is presented in Figure 1.4.:

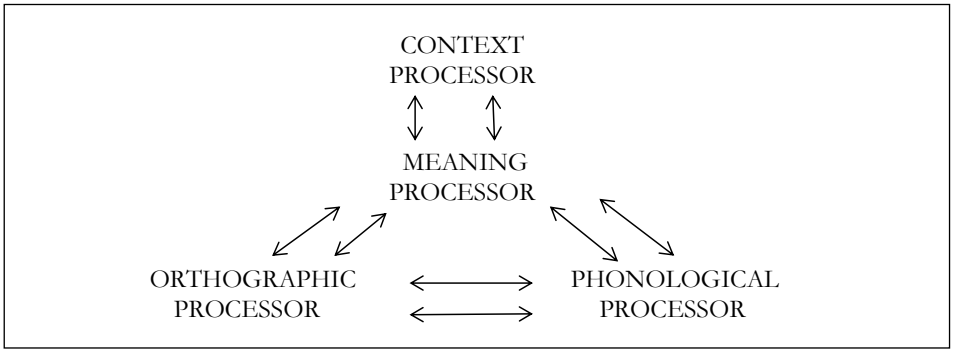


Figure 1.4. Parallel distributed processing model (based on Adams, 1990, p. 158).

Lupker (2005) claims that the most plausible theoretical models of word recognition are those that respect the interactive nature of the information flow, in particular the triangle models (p. 51).

The consequences of inadequate word recognition can be detrimental for readers. Firstly, due to difficulties with understanding and observed lack of progress, readers experience dissatisfaction and lose motivation for reading, which might discourage them from reading not only a given text, but also from reading in general. The less they read, the lower the exposure to printed words, which, again, prevents readers form making progress in reading. What might also follow is the underdevelopment

of conceptual knowledge, which is important for comprehending texts read in the future (Koda, 2004).

1.2.3. Word integration, semantic proposition formation and the role of working memory in reading

Identifying separate words in print is the first, necessary step to understanding what one is reading. Another process requires using grammatical information, and is referred to as structural grouping or **syntactic parsing**. Kintsch & Rawson (2005) define it as "the assignment of words to their roles in sentences and phrases" (p. 210), while Grabe & Stoller (2002) as "the ability to take in and store words together so that basic grammatical information can be extracted" (p. 22); the ability which involves familiarity with phrases, word order, subordinate and superordinate clauses, knowledge of which helps to arrive at the right meaning (p. 22). Field (2004) explains that meaning is built through clauses and that once a clause is understood, it is the meaning that remains in the reader's memory and not the exact words, that syntactic parsing is carried out on-line, that is while reading a given clause, and that it is resolved at the end of the clause.

A further processing in reading leads to integrating the two sets of data already obtained, that is meaning of individual words and grammatical information into **semantic propositions**. Although the precise nature of the influence of semantic processing on word recognition is still not clear (Pexman, 2012), today it is frequently seen as important (Adams, 1990; Grabe, 2009). As noted by Grabe & Stoller (2002) "Words that are recognized and kept active for one to two seconds, along with grammatical cueing, give the fluent reader time to integrate information in a way that it makes sense in relation to what has been read before" (p. 23). When reading, readers unconsciously anticipate the meaning that is going to come next based on recognized words and syntactic parsing. If a clause makes sense in connection with the previous ones, appropriate meaning emerges (Adams, 1990).

Grabe & Stoller (2002) claim that neither of the three lower-level processes (word recognition, syntactic parsing or semantic proposition encoding) is under conscious control, but are carried out automatically and effortlessly by fluent readers. However, when comprehension is broken or the meaning ambiguous, readers might consider other ways of repairing faulty understanding (p. 24).

Reading experts agree that **working memory** impacts the efficiency of reading comprehension (Grabe, 2009; Swanson, Howard, & Sáez, 2007). Nevo & Breznitz (2013) divide working memory into **processing** and **storage** (p. 217), while Seigneuric & Ehrlich (2005) underline its limited nature (p. 621). During reading, recognised words, semantic processing and syntactic processing are integrated in working memory. More specifically, working memory is responsible for storing the already processed information to integrate it with the information currently being

processed and using this input to construct the understanding of the whole text (Swanson et al., 2007, p. 160). Because working memory has a limited capacity, success of text integration depends on the speed and automaticity of processing: if it is slow and laborious, i.e. due to slow word recognition, fewer resources can be directed to text comprehension (Grabe & Stoller, 2013).

1.3. Higher-level processes in reading – ensuring text comprehension

The automatic word recognition, word integration and semantic proposition encoding are found to be indispensable for the smooth operation of the higher-level processes, that is text model formation, situation model building, and inferencing. It is the higher-level processes that remain at the center of reading comprehension research. The following section explores the role of these processes in reading.

1.3.1. Formation of text and situation models

Recognizing words in or out of context is necessary in reading comprehension, but is insufficient for comprehending a particular text. To comprehend the whole text, a reader automatically creates in their mind a model of the text, a process referred to as **text model formation**. The components of this process are numerous. Oakhill, Cain & Elbro (2015) claim that text model formation involves: (1) word recognition, (2) getting the meaning of sentences and seeing the connections between them, (3) making inferences, (4) assessing comprehension while reading, and (5) knowledge of discourse structure (pp. 13-19). Grabe (2009) presents a similar list: (1) linking information into networks, (2) seeing overlapping elements, (3) suppressing information of lesser importance, (4) simple inferencing, (5) summary restructuring (p. 42). Text model formation differs depending on the type of text, and readers often remember the meaning of a text even when they can hardly recall the language used in that text (Oakhill et al., 2015).

Information encoded by the writer (the text) and decoded by the reader is further integrated with information brought in by the readers themselves. This contribution on part of the reader helps to establish a **situation model**, which conditions a more complete understanding of a text. **Situation model building** is explained as "organizing a text's multiple propositions into an integrated whole and incorporating one's prior knowledge" (Hogan, Sittner Bridges, Justice, & Cain, 2011, p. 3). The propositions in narrative texts, for instance, usually refer to such dimensions as time and place of the action, the reasons behind those actions and the chief characters (when, where, why, and who) as described by the Event-Indexing

Model proposed by Zwaan, Langston & Graesser (1995) and expanded by Zwaan & Radvansky (1998). The prior knowledge that the reader brings to the table includes reader's familiarity with the text genre, previous experiences with similar types of texts, knowledge acquired during past reading, reader's attitude towards the author and the text itself, and reader's own inferences (Grabe, 2009). The construction of the situation-model is a dynamic process and is characteristic of successful readers.

1.3.2. Inferencing

Inferencing is a general cognitive ability helpful in understanding what people see and hear around them, i.e.: other people's intentions, or causes and consequences of events; inferencing is also indispensable in making sense of a given text (Grabe, 2009). Cain & Oakhill (2007a) claim that readers need to "connect up information from different parts of the text, and make inferences to fill in missing information, in order to produce a coherent overall representation" (p. 23). Based on this explanation, one can see that due to inferencing readers understand the message that has not been stated directly in print. Inferencing skills can be practiced with very young children as part of storybook reading. They may be asked to reflect upon characters' emotions, reasons for failure or success in accomplishing goals, or to predict the course of action a character might choose to resolve a problem (van Kleeck, 2008). Successful comprehension also depends on the ability to make inferences, and poor inferencing inhibits the process of building a situational-model of reader comprehension.

1.3.3. Executive-control processing

The **executive-control processing** can be understood as part of the working memory mechanism, and is responsible for simultaneous activation of vital attentional processes and information storage to monitor comprehension. Executive control in reading relies on the following actions: "(a) devising or accessing previously devised strategies for optimal allocation of reading time and effort, given one's reading goals and text, (b) implementing one's strategies, in a manner that does not disrupt the reading process unnecessarily; and (c) monitoring the success of one's strategy implementation, which may lead to revision or outright replacement of the strategy" (Wagner & Sternberg, 2013, pp. 1-2). Apart from the function of controlling comprehension, the mechanism can also be responsible for inhibiting the information that is no longer needed or is irrelevant (Grabe, 2009).

1.3.4. Strategic processing

Defining the term **strategy** in reading may not be straightforward since it is understood differently by different reading experts. One type of dilemma concerns conscious application of reading strategies to aid faulty comprehension. Some specialists seem to support the view that strategic reading requires a rather intentional, thus conscious, choice and application of a particular strategy (Duffy, 2009; Hudson, 2007), while others believe that unconscious application of comprehension strategies is also part of strategic reading (Richards, Platt & Weber, 1985). Interestingly, Afflerbach, Pearson, & Paris (2008) notice that particular strategies are used consciously in some situations but unconsciously in others. Grabe (2009) explains the cause of disagreement. In his opinion, initially, a skill may be used consciously, yet after a substantial, successful practice it may undergo automatisation (e.g. decoding in initial reading). Finally, with time, a combination of strategies becomes so natural to the reader, that – unless there is a further difficulty with understanding that requests additional, conscious effort on part of the reader – readers use them unintentionally (p. 222). What authors and researchers seem to agree on is that strategic processing of a text requires readers to be active and flexible in choosing and applying strategies to aid comprehension (Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Hudson, 2007; Kucer, 2005).

1.4. Simple View of Reading – connecting word recognition and reading comprehension (SVR)

As presented above, the many systems and processes involved in reading contribute to the complex picture of reading comprehension. One alternative to the more complex models of reading was offered by Gough & Tunmer (1986) and Hoover & Gough (1990) in the form of the so-called Simple View of Reading Comprehension model. The model narrows down the number of major reading components to two, that is decoding (word recognition) and comprehension. The simplicity of the model has been found useful in designing reading instruction, yet the criticism it has attracted is not to be ignored.

1.4.1. Basic assumptions of the Simple View of Reading

Gough & Tunmer (1986) and Hoover & Gough (1990) proposed a theoretical framework for reading comprehension called The Simple View of Reading, which has gained considerable interest of both L1 and L2 reading specialists and reading educators. According to the model, reading comprehension is attributed to two

basic elements: **decontextualised word recognition** (which the authors refer to as **decoding**) and **linguistic comprehension**. By decontextualised word recognition the researchers understand the ability to "read isolated words quickly, accurately, and silently" (p. 7). By linguistic comprehension they mean "process by which, given lexical (i.e., word) information, sentences and discourse are interpreted" (Gough & Tunmer, 1986, p. 7).

The framework is considered attractive by researchers and practitioners alike, because it assumes that comprehension relies on a limited number of abilities (Savage, 2001) and, according to this model, should reading difficulties arise, deficits in either one of the abilities or in both can be held responsible, and appropriate remedial instruction can be applied (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Høien-Tengesdal, 2010; Kendeou, Savage, & van den Broek, 2009; Savage, 2001). It is worth adding that while some researchers (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Høien-Tengesdal, 2010, Hoover & Gough, 1990) use the term linguistic comprehension, others seem to prefer the term **listening comprehension** (Kendeou et. al., 2009; Savage, 2001).

According to the Simple View of Reading model, reading comprehension can be understood as **a product** or **a sum** of the two components. The **product model** maintains that reading comprehension is a result of multiplying decoding (word recognition) by listening comprehension abilities, where R=D×C (Savage, 2001), while the **sum model** presents reading comprehension as the sum of decoding and listening comprehension (R=D+C). The sum model is thought to clarify reading comprehension equally or even better than the product model. The product model assumes that comprehension is impossible if any of the elements (either D or C) is missing. In the sum model, one of the elements can be bypassed and sufficient comprehension is still possible (Høien-Tengesdal, 2010). The model has been found to account for between 40% and 80% of comprehension variance among readers from 8 to 16 years of age (Kendeou et al., 2009). Figure 1.5. illustrates the sum model and the product model of the SVR.

1.4.2. Strengths and weaknesses of the SVR

The clarity of the Simple View of Reading model seems to be attractive for policymakers and teachers due to the fact that it significantly narrows down the number of potential reading problems to be dealt with in an instructional context. However, despite its popularity, the model has not avoided major criticism. Perfetti, Landi & Oakhill (2005), for example, point out significant differences between reading and listening comprehension, particularly in connection with the level of formality, the semantics and pragmatics, but also the differences in the rate of oral production vs. reading rate. Joshi & Aron (2000) claim that the element of processing speed is missing from the SVR and propose a modification: R=D x C + S (p. 95). A point Hoffman (2009) makes is that the model assumes a rather old-

fashioned and narrow understanding of literacy. The author criticises the model for paying excessive attention to decoding (decontextualised word recognition) at the cost of developing comprehension, for not assigning more importance to the purposes of reading and dealing with authentic texts, or for not offering any suggestions on how to help pupils with reading difficulties.

However, there are also voices in defense of the SVR. Kirby & Savage (2008), forinstance, assert that the simplicity of the model should be counted neither in its favour, nor against it. Instead, it should be seen as a springboard for further exploration of the complexities of the reading process; they share a belief that "the model remains work in progress" (p. 75) and add that since the Simple View of Reading has never been advertised as a complete model of reading comprehension it cannot be expected to answer all the questions, or provide a clear, comprehensive set of instructions for teachers.

1.4.3. Simple but complicated view of reading

The model seems straightforward on the surface, since it stresses the importance of only two major abilities: decoding and language skills, the former indicated by the author as both word recognition and pseudoword reading (Høien-Tengesdal, 2010). In the L1 context, beginning readers have usually mastered the latter skill to the extent that it allows adequate reading comprehension (Gough, 1996). Those who have already learned to read might also see decoding (word recognition and pseudoword reading) as simple and undemanding. However, when taking a closer look at the two major components, it becomes clear that "each represents a host of complex and important processes" (Kirby & Savage, 2008). Linguistic comprehension, for instance, undergoes development throughout life, while learning to recognise words and to decode pseudowords requires multiple subcomponents and depends on many factors, and incorporating many of these elements into reading instruction may blur the picture rather than clear it. While researchers and teachers may feel apprehensive of the complexity of reading comprehension, the Simple View of Reading provides them with at least some order and clarity. Its simplicity is due to the fact that it attributes reading comprehension to two core elements, even though they themselves are not simple. Some researchers find the simplicity helpful and claryfying, while others find it insufficient.

It is worth emphasising that the ability to recognise written words lies at the heart of the Simple View of Reading framework and is considered to be the initial link in the process of text comprehension. According to this model then, reading comprehension depends largely on the knowledge of words in their orthographic form and word meanings as part of the reader's linguistic knowledge. It is word recognition that triggers lexical processes which constitute the basis for syntactic parsing or semantic proposition encoding, which are necessary for reading

comprehension. When words are identified, their meaning (that is comprehension at the word level) is retrieved, then meanings of individual words lead to sentence comprehension, which, in turn, facilitates text comprehension and building the situation model of the text (Stafura & Perfetti, 2017, p. 23).

On part of the early reading teachers it is vital, therefore, to first ensure that reading learners become capable in word recognition (mediated through phonological awareness, grapheme-phoneme correspondences and sight word reading). The other instructional focus should centre around the development of the learners' linguistic and background knowledge as well as the ability to employ higher-level processes, such as, e.g., inference (Murray, 2016).

1.5. Reading in a developmental perspective

Two important issues arise when discussing reading development. One concerns the assumption that all the reading learners follow a generally similar route to achieve mastery in reading. The other is connected with the tendency to compare the ways beginning and expert readers deal with print. This Subchapter aims to examine how both issues contribute to modeling reading development.

1.5.1. Models of early reading development – focus on learning to recognise words

As relevant literature clearly shows early reading development is tightly connected with learning to **recognise printed words**. Among the most frequently quoted models of early reading development in alphabetic languages there are those proposed by Ehri (1995), Frith (1985) and Seymour (2005), which will be briefly presented in this section. The phases of development distinguished by Ehri (1995) seem not to be age-specific and quite flexible. During the **pre-alphabetic phase** young reading learners become aware of the connections between visual characteristics of some words and their pronunciation and meaning. In the **partial alphabetic phase,** on the other hand, learners become aware of certain letter names and are able to make connections between some of those letters and corresponding sounds, especially in case of the first and the last letter in a word. The **full alphabetic phase** is the phase when all the letter names are known to readers, who can now decode and read by analogy. Finally, the **consolidated phase** is characterised by the ability to unconsciously match letters to sounds and decode words automatically.

Frith (1985) offers a model which can be considered universal as it extends to other alphabetic languages. While in the **logographic stage**, children have no

knowledge of the correspondence between graphemes and phonemes yet, but can visually distinguish a word in a text. During the **alphabetic stage** learners are aware of the connection between graphemes and phonemes, can divide spoken words into phonemes and match phonemes to particular phonemes. This is the stage of developing alphabetic competence, a simple but vital issue in the process of learning to recognise words in an alphabetic language. In the final stage, called **orthographic stage**, readers are able to recognise words automatically and comprehend the reading passage.

Seymour's (2005) model of reading acquisition is universal for European languages and sees reading development as undergoing four phases. In the initial phase, called the **letter-sound knowledge** phase, young learners acquire the correspondences between graphemes and phonemes (the alphabetic principle). During the next phase, the **foundation literacy** phase, learners recognise familiar sight words and store them in memory (logographic process), at the same time learning to read words by sequential decoding (alphabetic process). In the subsequent phase of reading development, the **orthographic literacy** phase, children learn to read whole syllables and word parts, like onsets and rimes; in the final phase, called the **morphographic literacy** phase, learners can read multi-syllable words with the right word stress, and can identify and assemble free and bound morphemes.

The three models of early reading development share certain characteristics, namely that the knowledge of the alphabet constitutes the core of reading in an alphabetic language (Mason, Stewart, Peterman & Dunning, 1992), that initially words are recognised in a logographic manner, but in later stages by linguistic processing. As Nijakowska (2010) observes, reading development is a continuous process characterised by the sequence of developmental levels. First, young reading learners are able to recognise a word on the basis of its visual form. Then, learners become aware that letters are connected to sounds in a more or less regular manner, and that these connections can be used to read words. Due to prolonged exposure to text learners can start recognizing words automatically (p. 18).

1.5.2. Chall's model of reading development beyond school years

One of the best known models of reading development extended beyond the initial school years is that by Chall (1976), according to whom reading development stretches well beyond the ability to comprehend a text at the word or sentence level. According to this model, reading development evolves across six stages, where learning to read begins in infancy and continues beyond 18 years of age. **Stage 0** of Chall's model is characteristic of learners up to the age of 6. It is the period of constant augmentation of receptive and productive vocabulary, of phonological development and the growing awareness of print. Additionally, children become aware that sentences can be divided into words, words into syllables, and syllables

into phonemes. **Stage 1** is the time when 6-7year old children begin to learn the associations between written symbols and phonemes; learners often recognise words by looking at the initial and final letters, use pictures to aid reading, and generally acquire the basic level in orthographic and phonemic decoding. During **Stage 2** (7-8 year olds) learners gain automaticity in decoding and in writing. At this stage, basic processes are carried out unconsciously, and a learner can concentrate on comprehension. **Stage 3** (9-12 years of age) is characterised by the key progression from **learning to read** to **reading to learn**, when reading becomes one of the major sources of knowledge. **Stage 4** is the period when learners (up to the age of 18) are capable of understanding different points of view on one topic, drawing conclusions and learning from text. Finally, at **Stage 5** (18 years old and above), learners become advanced readers and are capable of making use of different meanings of words, of looking critically at text and analyzing it (Chall, 1976, pp. 25-37).

The stages or phases models are open to criticism. Castro (2007), for instance, is dissatisfied with little regard for the social context in reading development, while Mason et al., (1992) point to the lack of indication as to the appropriate conditions for word learning, in particular to parental support that facilitates reading development, and complain about lack of explicit concern for reading comprehension. In an attempt to answer the queries, Goswami (1999) and Goswami & Bryant (1990) offer one alternative view, namely **causal theory of development of the ability to read**. Instead of a sequence of stages/phases of reading development, the researchers stress the importance of various factors that have been directly linked to the development of reading, among others: phonological abilities and awareness, grapheme-phoneme knowledge, or reading and spelling instruction.

1.5.3. Early reading – the initial stage in reading development

Mature readers seldom remember how demanding learning to read can be. From the perspective of an expert reader, as noted by Hedgcock & Ferris (2009) "[i]t is easy to overlook the complexity of reading processes, as many of us do not have to think much about how we read" (p. 2). However, the complexity of reading can be observed particularly when looking into both learning and teaching reading, and when analyzing the process of transforming slow, laborious reading into fast, seemingly effortless and automatic (p. 2). Learning to read depends on many factors. Snow, Burns, & Griffin (1998) point out:

> *[e]ffective reading instruction is built on a foundation that recognizes that reading ability is determined by multiple factors: many factors that correlate with reading fail to explain it; many experiences contribute to reading development without being prerequisite to it; and although there are many prerequisites, none by itself is considered sufficient. (p. 3)*

Among such factors researchers enumerate: language skills, early childhood encounters with print that breed motivation for reading and learning to read, pre-school observations of literacy in use, training in letter knowledge, awareness of word parts, understanding of the differences between spoken and written language, receiving reading instructions, and practicing reading (p. 4).

Progression in initial reading brings about considerable changes in how children deal with a written text (Harrison, 2004). Initially, children pretend that they are reading books they know by heart and recite the text. No phonemic segmentation is applied, children simply match words with print because they know the text. At the same time, children draw phonological knowledge from other literacy experiences (including early writing activities), learn grapheme-sound connections. Reading at this stage is context-dependent and words in isolation are not recognised yet. At some point later, children slowly start to identify individual words by drawing information from three sources: (1) context, so that they make predictions or guess what word it might be, (2) semantic and syntactic clues, and (3) simple analogies based on rhyme and initial letters. In this way, early readers slowly gain independence in word recognition. When children progress further, they still make use of the above sources, but apply more sophisticated analogies in word recognition, which allow them to read unknown words with complex orthography, like *fight* and *light*. At this time, which might take about two years, readers start to rely less on context and analogy and more on automatic recognition. Finally, around the age of 8-10 learners begin to read in a way that resembles mature reading. Reading is now becoming increasingly automatic and fluent, and readers have the ability to apply the knowledge of phonological rules to deal with more difficult words. Achieving this level of early reading can be demanding on part of the learner and takes time, but it is the goal of early reading instruction. This will be possible, however, under one condition: that children read a variety of texts for various purposes, regularly. Wide reading, along with the development of knowledge of the world, a proper level of linguistic competence, and familiarity with various types of texts are a necessary combination that will lead to the final stage of early reading.

What can be observed, however, is that some reading teachers concentrate their reading instruction on decoding the print and recognizing individual words. Paying too much attention to the development of the code-related abilities at the expense of comprehension in the context of early reading can mislead a child as to the purpose of reading (Meyer, 2002; Roberts, 1999). Meyer (2002) expresses strong concerns about such practice because "[a] child's definition of reading is shaped by the child's experiences" (p. 30), thus learners who are instructed primarily in decoding the print are likely to view reading as a purely technical skill, and might not realise that reading is meaning-based. Such misunderstanding might negatively affect their interest in and motivation for reading.

Teaching children to reconstruct the meaning that is directly stated in words is an important beginning in developing reading comprehension, however, the bulk of the message any print carries is hidden elsewhere. For this reason, it is important to teach learners how to draw information from other sources so they learn to **read the lines**, **read between the lines**, and **read beyond the lines** (Guppy & Hughes, 1999). There is a danger in concentrating solely on reading the lines, as literal understanding leads to a tunnel vision, that is very limited meaning and, of perhaps lesser interest, to the reader. The authors believe that attending solely to the literal meaning "inhibits receptivity to broader signals, for there is a stream of unseen information, if only the reader will attend to it" (Guppy & Hughes, 1999, p. 7), and that ignoring the remaining two sources of meaning is likely to misguide children in their understanding of what reading truly entails.

1.5.4. Attaining maturity in reading

The process of learning to read can be long and arduous, but once mastered, reading becomes natural and fluent; readers are rarely aware of the multilayered processes activated during any act of reading. Skilled reading is therefore characterised by speed, efficiency and automaticity (Birch, 2002; Grabe, 2009). With extended practice, the lower-level processing, such as word recognition and semantic processing become effortles and subconscious. Automatic and subconscious lower-level processes pave way to effcient higher-level text processes (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974).

It has been concluded that fluent readers attend to all the elements of print (Chodkiewicz, 2016a; Rayner & McConkie, 1976). Even though skilled readers are able to identify words on sight, they still pay attention to single letters that form those words. As Pressley (2002) put it: "[i]t is important to process every single letter during reading because letter-level cues are the primary means of recognizing words" (p. 49). For example, if a letter is missing or the spelling is incorrect, a skilled reader will notice the difference (Cameron, 2001). This is done during **eye fixations**, that is when a reader's eye stops on printed marks:

> *During eye fixations, light energy bouncing off of the page is received in the eye and transmitted to the brain where the visual stimuli is processed. The adult expert reader has about four eye fixations per second and identifies around one word per fixation, although, it is theoretically possible for the eye to read four or five words in a single fixation. This means that the average reader takes in around 240 to 300 words per min.*
>
> (Birch, 2002, p. 64)

The longer the eye fixations, the easier it is to understand the text, but a skilled reader is flexible in how quickly they read to maintain satisfactory comprehension. They are also able to use regression in case of inadequate comprehension, that is they can go back in the text and read it again to repair comprehension gaps (Birch, 2002).

When readers fixate on one word, they already get a **snapshot** of further print, thus are able to cover about 10 graphs to the right. Birch (2002) refers to it as **the window**. The information obtained from fixations and snapshots is then integrated in the readers mind at lexical or syntactic levels. It is then stored in short memory and the next snapshot can be taken. Any possible gaps in information are filled in by supplementary data "from previous linguistic knowledge and experience the readers have acquired" (Birch, 2002, p. 65). With practice, this process becomes more automatic until maturity is reached.

Apart from being automatic, mature reading can also be defined, as done by Grabe (2009), by means of a wide range of features that charcterise it. Thus fluent reading is described as

- **rapid** - about 250-300 words are processed per minute;
- **efficient** - many automatic processes working together;
- **comprehending** - purpose of reading is to understand what is written down;
- **interactive** - interaction occurs between several cognitive processes, and between the reader and the author;
- **strategic** - the reader can repair gaps in understanding with the use of various strategies;
- **flexible** - there are many ways of dealing with text, depending on the reader's aims, interests, etc.;
- **purposeful** - there is always a reason for reading;
- **evaluative** - readers assess their own comprehension levels while reading and employ adequate reader strategies, as well as their own response to the text;
- **learning** - even when readers are not learning new content directly from a text, there is always some kind of learning involved, if only due to the ongoing evaluation;
- **linguisitc** - there can be no comprehension without knowing the language, with its alphabet, phonology, vocabulary, morphology, and syntactic and semantic properties (Grabe, 2009, pp. 14-16).

What is more, mature readers are characterised by automatic decontextualised word identification and successful reading of unknown words and pseudowords; they decide what they will read, whether they want to continue reading a text until the end or stop half-way, or whether they read the entire text or only parts of it (Pressley, 2002; Wallace, 1999). Birch (2002) adds that skilled readers do not consider all the information available to them in print equally useful and constantly make use of *partial information* (p. 64). For instance, because there are more consonants

in alphabetic languages, readers pay more attention to them, and not the vowels. While it is possible to read a text with all the vowels removed, a text with removed consonants is unreadable. What is more, readers seem to be able to read a text looking only at the top halves of the graphs, whereas bottom halves cannot be sufficient. However, the most common practice of using partial information in reading has to do with function and content words. The latter group carry more meaning, therefore they grab most of the reader's attention (Birch, 2002, pp. 64-65).

1.6. Motivational factors in reading development

Although reading motivation has been empirically proven to be of paramount importance for successful mastery of reading at all levels, it is not taken into consideration in designing reading models. The sections to follow discuss how vital role learners' motivation can play in the development of early reading.

1.6.1. Motivation in reading

Achieving fluency in reading is possible through frequent and extended exposure to print (Byrne, 2007), and the rate of reaching automaticity and becoming independent readers has been found to be closely related to the amount of print exposure (i.e. Chateau & Jared, 2000; Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992; Martin-Chang & Gould, 2008; Sparks, Patton, Ganschow, & Humbach, 2012). Motivation to read is of vital importance since learning to read is time-consuming and requires a great deal of effort on the learner's part. As Paris and McNaughton (2010) explain: "[s]tudents need to acquire and apply motivation to learn to read, to monitor and construct meaning from texts, to use reading instrumentally for various purposes, and to read for pleasure and enjoyment" (p. 11). Unmotivated children are unlikely to want to continue with this cognitively challenging practice, and with time, when reading tasks become more demanding, these readers continue to become even less successful than their motivated peers, whose reading improves through frequent and regular exposure to print. This dependency is referred to as **the Mathew effect** (Stanovich, 1986).

Different ways of describing what motivation to read is have been offered. Schiefele, Schaffner, Möller, & Wigfield (2012), for instance, suggest the distinction between **current** and **habitual** motivation for reading. Current motivation refers to a reader's willingness to read a particular text in a particular situation. Frequent and repeatedly experienced current motivation for reading can, on the other hand, be understood as habitual motivation, which is described as "the relatively stable readiness of a person to initiate particular reading activities" (p. 429). Motivation

to read can be generated by the readers themselves (**intrinsic motivation**), or by external factors (**extrinsic motivation**). Intrinsic motivation for reading can be driven by personal interest in a given topic, and by recognition that reading can be enjoyable and satisfactory (p. 429). Among the extrinsic motivational constructs Wigfield & Guthrie (1997) enumerate: (1) competition among pupils, (2) recognition, (3) grades, and (4) compliance. According to research findings by Schiefele et al. (2012), reading development is possitively and moderately influenced by intrinsic motivation, but negatively or not significantly by extrinsic motivation (p. 453).

Paris & McNaughton (2010) point out that intrinsic motivation is more than "enjoying reading or trying hard" (pp. 11-13). A child intrinsically motivated to read is likely to experience **engagement** while reading, a term explained as one that blends "behavioural, cognitive, social and even emotional aspects of reading" (p. 13). When engaging in a reading act, children concentrate on the text message and get drawn into what they are reading in a way that makes them want to continue reading and ignore the world around them. Francis (1997) discusses the importance of emotions in sustaining reading motivation and states that progress in reading is very closely related to "(e)njoyment, interest and a good understanding of the nature and functions of literacy", whereas insufficient development of reading can be connected with negative emotions and misapprehension about reading (p. 5).

1.6.2. Home environment and reading

While it can be safely assumed that it is largely the school's responsibility to teach a child how to decode, it is the family and community's responsibility to help them develop the lifelong appreciation for reading (Baker & Scher, 2002; Phillips & Lonigan, 2007). For example, those parents who see reading with children as a recreational or entertaining activity rather than a basis for practicing particular reading components are likely to read more often with their children and simply motivate them to read for pleasure. Within such environment, children might feel motivated to deal with print since they naturally associate it with pleasure (Paris & McNaughton, 2010). Such learners are also more likely to have a generally more positive approach to reading because they might have acquired some pre-reading abilities before entering school and may feel more confident than their less experienced peers (Taylor & Ysseldyke, 2007). Listening to parents read helps children develop linguistic skills, visual perception, awareness of print, knowledge of the alphabet and letter sounds, and memory (Machado, 2010). In general, the fewer literacy-related activities children experience at home, the higher the likelihood of becoming struggling readers (Roberts, Jurgins, & Burchinal, 2005).

1.6.3. Classroom influence on reading motivation

Classroom environment, especially an approach to literacy development represented by the form teacher, can play an important role in motivating early readers to engage in reading (Widdowson, More, & Dixon, 1999; Turner & Paris, 1995). Gambrell (1996), who investigated reading motivation among first- third- and fifth-graders, enumerates a number of principles for conducting a truly literacy engaging classroom that motivates early reading learners to reach for books. For example, the teacher needs to serve as a role model of a reader both passively (by reading quietly for pleasure in the presence of pupils) and explicitly (by sharing their experiences with books and the emotions reading evokes). Among other equally important principles the author recommends: creating print-rich classrooms with easy access to engaging and diverse reading material that will appeal to different reader interests and needs, respecting the early readers' right to have a say in what they read, or providing learners with the opportunities to interact with their peers about the books they have read.

These literacy-oriented activities introduced in the classroom can have a powerful effect on reading motivation. Children understand reading through the literacy activities introduced to them, therefore literacy tasks should be carefully selected (Turner & Paris, 1995). In general, becoming a habitual and independent reader can be possible through making children believe that reading is tied to pleasure and enjoyment, and by paying special attention to deeper reading comprehension (Paris & McNaughton, 2010).

♦ ♦ ♦

To sum up, it is evident from the above discussion that reading, although seemingly unelaborate for experienced readers, cannot be explained in simple terms. What makes reading complex is, among others, the fact that it is composed of a number of processes responsible for both deciphering the code (lower-level processes) and comprehending the text (higher-level processes). Additionally, all the processes, each relying on numerous abilities and competences, interact and depend on each other. The developmental nature of reading also adds to its complexity, as each stage of reading mastery is characterized by a different approach towards the text on part of the reader. Finally, any attempt at explaining reading would be incomplete without the element of reading motivation. Its importance, particularly at the lower stages of reading mastery, requires an appropriate course of action on part of the home environment, but also school and the wider society.

The first major conclusion that can be drawn from the discussion in Chapter 1 is that presenting the reading skill as a unitary construct should not be accepted as such approach might lead to a wrong impression that there are easy answers to

the problem of poor reading comprehension or that any reading instruction will be effective. Another conclusion is that there is more to reading than just recognising the words on the page because bulk of the meaning comes from the reader's mind, that is their knowledge of the language and the world around them. Finally, apart from the technical aspects of reading and learning to read it should remembered that the will to engage in reading a text stems from the reader's heart.

While the previous sections reported on the general understanding of what reading is and what cognitive processes it entails, the next chapter will explore major theoretical and practical aspects of learning to read in alphabetic languages.

CHAPTER 2

EARLY READING IN ALPHABETIC NATIVE LANGUAGES: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

Although learning to read in alphabetic languages seems less cognitively demanding than, for instance, in logographic languages, it still requires a certain type of cognitive and perceptual readiness on the part of the reading learner as well as an appropriate instructional approach on part of the teacher. This chapter commences with the explanation of how the differences in orthographic depth of particular languages affect learning to read. Then the importance of age in reading acquisition and the potential difficulties encountered by early reading learners are drawn attention to. Numerous views on the critical components of reading are analysed with the aim of highlighting their role in the reading process. The final part of the chapter offers an insight into the two opposing approaches to teaching young learners to read and an attempt at balancing them.

2.1. MAJOR ISSUES IN LEARNING TO READ IN ALPHABETIC LANGUAGES

Learning to read in alphabetic languages requires familiarity with the letters of the alphabet (graphemes) and the sounds of a particular language (phonemes), but more importantly, it requires knowledge of how the graphemes and the phonemes match to 'translate' written language into spoken one. The following sections explain what knowledge is necessary to decode print and recognise words, the complications arising from orthographic depth as well as the importance of age relevant reading instruction. Also, possible problems that might hinder learning to read are discussed.

2.1.1. Cracking the alphabetic code

Writing systems represent **language units** and do not refer directly to our experiences (Birch, 2002). In a typically alphabetic writing system the linguistic unit represented in print is an individual letter or a letter cluster, called **grapheme**, and these letters or letter clusters usually correspond with single speech sounds called **phonemes** (Bald, 2007; Birch, 2002; Purcell-Gates, Jacobson, & Degener, 2004). Most European alphabetic languages (i.e. English, French, Polish, or German) share the Roman alphabet with its 26 basic characters (Birch, 2002, pp. 18-19).

The limited number of written symbols used to represent sounds in a given language, characteristic of alphabetic writing systems (Birch, 2002), has one obvious advantage: reading learners can learn all the letters of the alphabet fairly easily in comparison with, for instance, a logographic system. When learners become familiar with the written symbols of their alphabet and have developed **phonemic awareness**, they need to understand that "letters function as symbols for phonemes" (Ehri, 1995; McGuiness, 2004), in other words, that **graphemes represent phonemes**, which is referred to as the **alphabetic principle**. The acquisition of the alphabetic principle constitutes the foundation of any alphabetic writing system, and it requires time to develop. Ehri (1995) describes three stages of maturation of the awareness of the alphabetic principle: (1) **pre-alphabetic** – when children identify words by focusing on visual cues; (2) **phonetic cue reading** – when children read out parts of words, most commonly initial and final letters; and (3) **the fully alphabetic stage** – during which children use all the letters to read out a word.

2.1.2. Opaque vs. transparent orthography

Despite the limited number of written symbols of the Roman alphabet, learning to read in alphabetic systems is not always as straightforward as it might seem. Difficulties are caused by the fact that in some languages the number of phonemes exceeds the number of graphemes that represent them (McGuiness, 2004). As a consequence, one grapheme can be pronounced in two or even more ways, which is bound to be confusing at the initial stage of learning to read. In some languages, for instance in English, learning to read is further complicated because in some cases one sound represents two or more graphemes. As can thus be expected, the level of irregularity between graphemes and phonemes can exert significant influence over the efficiency of reading acquisition (i.e. Goswami, 1995; Joshi, 2009; Seymour, 2005; Seymour, Aro, & Erskine, 2003). Those alphabetic languages where graphemes and phonemes match in a rather consistent way are said to represent **transparent** or **shallow** orthographies, and those with many

irregularities – **opaque** or **deep** orthography (Birch, 2002; Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Seymour, 2005).

The processing of a text in a language with a shallow orthography differs significantly from deep orthographies (Seymour et al., 2003). The acquisition of regular, and therefore easily predictable, grapheme-phoneme correspondences is naturally less cognitively demanding and learning to process a text in transparent orthographies is usually managed successfully through the **alphabetic processing** only (i.e. in Finnish, Spanish, Italian or German). The deeper the orthography, the more complex the process of reading acquisition, as early reading in such languages requires dual processing: **alphabetic** and **logographic** (i.e. in Portuguese, French, Danish, or English). For this reason children learning to read in shallow orthographies are able to decode a text after approximately one year of reading instruction, while deep orthography early readers require one additional year or year and a half to reach the same level (Seymour et al., 2003).

The Orthographic Depth Hypothesis, proposed by Katz & Frost (1992) attempts to explain the different ways of constructing phonological information according to the orthographic depth:

> *(…) shallow orthographies are more easily able to support a word recognition process that involves the language's phonology. In contrast, deep orthographies encourage a reader to process printed words by referring to their morphology via the printed word's visual-orthographic structure.*
>
> Katz & Frost, 1992, p. 71

In transparent orthographies early readers access a word by analyzing grapheme-by-grapheme and translating those into phonemes. When the phonemes are 'gathered together', the reader recognises a word he or she has read, and is ready to proceed to another word. In opaque or less transparent orthographies, on the other hand, phonological information is retrieved after a word has been recognised and retrieved from lexical memory.

The **psycholinguistic grain-size theory**, proposed by Ziegler & Goswami (2005, 2006), explains how the grain size characteristic of a particular language can affect the pace and accuracy of learning to read. By grain size Nijakowska (2010) means "the number of letters corresponding to a phonological unit" (p. 24). Similar to the case of syllables, some written systems make use of small grain (one letter vs. one phoneme) while others use both small and bigger-size grain (a letter cluster vs. one phoneme). Accordingly, teaching reading in transparent orthographies requires training in mapping phonemes with small grain, and reading learners of opaque orthographies are likely to benefit from training in mapping phonemes onto larger grain units (Nijakowska, 2010).

2.1.3. Differences in syllable structure

Differences between alphabetic languages can result not only from the irregularities of the sound vs. orthography mapping, but also from the structure of syllables (Ziegler & Goswami, 2005, 2006). Early reading in those languages where many words are composed of simple, open syllables is less demanding on the learner. Where more complicated syllable structures are present, learning to read requires more effort and time. Hence, the difficulties in early reading in the most opaque orthographies, like English and Danish, may stem from the combination of language properties concerning both sounds vs. orthography mapping and the structure of syllables (Seymour et al., 2003). The mapping of phonemes to graphemes is not easily predictable in many cases, and syllables are often of more complicated structure. Early reading in French and Portuguese is slightly easier because these languages represent more transparent orthographies but complicated syllable structure. Early reading in Italian or Spanish, but especially in Finnish, is considered the least complex since the orthography is shallow and the syllable structure is simple. Seymour et al., (2003) offered a classification of a number of European languages regarding the syllabic complexity and orthographic depth, presented below in Table 2.1.

The Polish orthographic system is described as rather shallow, although not as shallow as the Italian or Finnish. It is also characterised by frequent morphological alterations, inflections, the importance of consonants over vowels, or varied syllable structure. Many words in the Polish language seem to be easier to read than spell due to the fact that a few phonemes (e.g. /h/) are represented in print by two equivalent graphemes (e.g. /h/ can be spelt both by "h" and "ch", depending on a word or a spelling rule (Awramiuk & Krasowicz-Kupis, 2014).

Table 2.1. A hypothetical classification of some European languages according to syllabic complexity and orthographic depth (based on Seymour, Aro & Erskine, 2003, p. 146).

Syllable structure	**Orthographic depth**				
	shallow ←				→ *deep*
simple	Finnish	Greek Italian Spanish	Portuguese	French	
		German Norwegian	Dutch Swedish	Danish	English
complex		Icelandic			

2.1.4. The age factor in native language reading acquisition

It is impossible to discuss early reading instruction without considering the importance of the age factor (Seymour et al., 2003). In some European educational systems children begin to learn to read at the age of 5 (i.e. England), in others at 6, or even 7 (i.e. Denmark). It can be argued that the later children are introduced to reading instruction, the more cognitively mature they will be. Yet, reading instruction in languages with deep orthographies should commence earlier to give learners more time to develop initial reading. The age, however, seems to be of lesser significance than linguistic factors. This hypothesis has been supported by the findings of Seymour et al., (2003), according to which Danish and English children, learning the two deep orthography languages, experienced similar difficulties despite the 2 year age difference at the onset of formal reading instruction.

2.1.5. Understanding main learner difficulties in developing early reading

Whatever the age of the learners, teaching procedures can be one of the sources of learner problems. Difficulties in early reading have traditionally been attributed to three sources: the formal reading instruction, the reading learners themselves, and their environment (Taylor & Ysseldyke, 2007). Some of the difficulties encountered by beginner readers stem from insufficient word recognition and limited comprehension (Cain & Oakhill, 2007b), dividing those beginner readers who are unsuccessful into two groups: **poor decoders** and **poor comprehenders**. Torgesen (2004) divides learners into two broad groups: (1) those with weak phonological abilities but adequate linguistic skills, and (2) those with weak phonological abilities, poor language skills, and limited background knowledge.

Poor decoders are characterised by insufficient phonological processing at the onset of learning to read. Lower level of phonological processing can have disastrous effects on the whole process of learning to read. Poor alphabetic knowledge (letter names, grapheme-phoneme connections) and poor phonological awareness lead to inadequate decoding of new words. Difficulties with decoding can have a strong demotivating effect, leading to fewer attempts at reading and thus rare exposure to print. As a result of that, reading learners have problems with fluent word recognition and sight vocabulary reading, which makes their reading slow, laborious, and demotivating. This unfortunate situation leads to poor reading comprehension in two ways: (1) learners acquire less new vocabulary and world knowledge, and (2) they fail to become strategic readers due to fewer opportunities for using reading comprehension strategies (Torgesen, 2004).

Poor comprehenders, referred to also as having **a specific comprehension deficit** (Cain & Oakhill, 2007b), can be able and fluent decoders, yet are unable to

make inferences about the text and find it hard to interpret its meaning. Deficiencies in abilities and processes at various levels (word–, sentence–, and discourse–level) might be held responsible (p.43). Based on the available data, it is not possible to decide the precise nature and level of correlation between various reading processes and reading comprehension, however, it can be stated that the younger the reading learners, the greater the importance of word–, and sentence–level processing, and the older the learners, the greater the importance of "skills that foster meaning" (p. 56). Although it is still problematic to determine what early reading abilities are directly linked to comprehension in later years, Cain & Oakhill (2007b) have concluded that reading (and listening) comprehension depend on the abilities to make inferences, to integrate what is known with the new, to monitor comprehension, to use comprehension strategies, and to understand narrative structure.

Helping a poor decoder and a poor comprehender should commence with identifying the nature and the roots of problems. It is important to avoid the Mathew effect (discussed by Stanovich in 1986), where a struggling reading learner becomes even weaker over time, while a strong reading learner becomes better at reading, and with time, the gap between the two types of readers becomes unbridgeable.

2.2. Componential view of early reading – an overview of standpoints

In order to provide a more detailed picture of early reading, this subchapter introduces a componential view of reading. Many a researcher have contributed to the understanding of the reading components, shedding light on the significance of such aspects as the alphabetic principle, phonological and phonemic awareness, grapheme-phoneme connections and vocabulary knowledge. The relationship between the reader and the text in reading comprehension is also delineated.

2.2.1. Key aspects of early reading: knowledge, skills, processes and awareness

The componential approach to reading development was proposed by Carr & Levy (1990), who believed that, in general, reading can be dissected into separate, though co-dependent, cognitive abilities, whose mastery facilitates the perception and comprehension of print. The dissection allows a clearer understanding of what reading and reading development involves. According to Carr, Brown, Vavrus & Evans (1990) this approach allows researchers to: (1) establish a list of cognitive processes involved in reading, (2) visualise the pattern of interactions among the processes, (3) decide how the processes can be controlled, and, i.e. supported

by the use of appropriate strategies, and (4) to understand better individual and developmental differences in reading by pinpointing the processes, the patterns of interactions and processes control (p. 3).

The conceptualising of reading as a combination of components is stressed by numerous L1 and L2 reading specialists. Adams (1990), for example, states that "the task of reading for meaning is enormously complex, involving a host of visual, linguistic, and conceptual skills. To understand it, we have been compelled to find ways to break it down into tractable sets of subskills and to identify their interrelations" (p. 237). The identification of these subskills allows the accurate diagnosis of reading deficits and paves the way for instruction aiming at alleviating these deficits (Koda, 2004). The author warns, however, that treating reading as a sum of single, individualised abilities might lead to a misunderstanding of what reading involves, and states that "a sense of their [component skills'] functional interdependence, (…) is critical in tracing their continuously shifting interconnections and interactions" (Koda, 2004, p. 19).

It is worth looking at the ways some researchers listed major aspects/components of early reading referring to skills, knowledge, processes and awareness. Table 2.2. provides a summary of the most important views suggested by experts in the area of early literacy.

Table 2.2. Key conceptualisations of early reading aspects/components.

Source	The description of early reading aspects/components
Paris (2005)	Reading skills: (1) alphabet knowledge, (2) phonemic awareness, (3) oral reading fluency, (4) vocabulary, (5) comprehension.
Israel (2008)	Key components of early literacy: (1) oral language skills (vocabulary, language production, language comprehension), (2) alphabetic knowledge, (3) phonological awareness, (4) print awareness.
Tankersley (2003)	Interlocking skills and processes: (1) readiness/phonemic awareness, (2) phonics and decoding, (3) fluency, (4) vocabulary and word recognition, (5) comprehension, (6) higher–order thinking.

NRP (2000)	Abilities/components/processes: (1) phonological awareness, (2) phonics, (3) fluency, (4) comprehension, (5) vocabulary.
Roberts (1999)	Skills and sub-skills: (1) print awareness, (2) knowledge that print conveys a message, (3) the alphabetic principle, (4) knowledge that sound sequences in speech correspond with printed words, (5) awareness that a sequence of written words written – like speech – makes sense, (6) knowledge that written words contain letters and – once their associated sounds are produced – these words are read out, (7) knowledge that spelling of words can be predictable regardless the exceptions, (8) knowledge that linguistic knowledge can be helpful in predicting upcoming words in a text, (9) knowledge that text can be read with intonation and prosody that aids comprehension, (10) realising that there is great need to monitor comprehension at all times, (11) awareness of purpose for reading, and that the purpose should be satisfied, (12) the skill of reflecting upon the read text, so that a connection can be made to one's own experiences, and background knowledge.
Grabe & Stoller (2013)	Critical component skills: (1) attending to print to recognise words, (2) large vocabulary, (3) syntactic parsing.
Scanlon, Anderson & Sweeney (2010)	Skills: (1) understanding print (purposes and conventions of print), (2) phonological and phonemic awareness, (3) letter knowledge (letter-names and letter-sound associations).

Lesaux, Geva, Koda, Siegel, & Shanahan (2008)	Skills and knowledge: To access the code - (1) Phonological awareness, (2) letter-knowledge, (3) grapheme-phoneme correspondences, (4) spelling conventions, (5) fluency; To access meaning - (1) vocabulary, (2) world knowledge, (3) discourse structure, (4) comprehension strategies, (5) purpose for reading.
Merchant (2008)	Key aspects of early reading: (1) literacy awareness (knowledge of, i.e., the role of print in everyday life, of print conventions, that print carries meaning, etc.), (2) syntactic awareness, (3) word recognition (recognizing familiar words by their shape or colour), (4) orthographic awareness (awareness of how letters and letter groups are arranged in words), (5) phonological awareness.

As can be seen in the table above, the various components of early reading can be divided into (1) those which facilitate decoding or deciphering print, and (2) those which facilitate meaning-making. The most frequently mentioned code-related subcomponents are alphabetic knowledge and phonological/phonemic awareness, while the most frequent meaning-related ones are oral language skills, vocabulary, and comprehension. Word recognition and fluency of reading, also mentioned frequently, seem to be interrelated with both groups.

What requires special attention is the role each of these components plays in reading acquisition. The components mentioned do not seem to contribute to reading development in an equal manner and need not be considered equal in scope and importance. Paris (2005) proposes that letter knowledge, phonics and concepts of print are viewed as highly constraint components, phonemic awareness and oral reading fluency as less constraint, and vocabulary and comprehension as the least constraint. The higher the level of constraint, the quicker a component can be learnt to enable the development of others. Highly constraint components are necessary for automatic decoding and once mastered, they unburden the working memory, thus making room for strategic text processing. However, on its own they are not predictors of reading success. The least constraint components, on the

other hand, seem to undergo development before, during and after the acquisition of the constraint ones, and exert the most enduring influence on further reading development. Hence, according to Paris (2005), there is a considerable risk in treating all the early reading components as equally important in early reading instruction and assessment: it leads to the overemphasis of constraint components over the unconstraint ones, and simultaneous underdevelopment of the latter, thus creating efficient print decoders but poor comprehenders. As noted by Chodkiewicz (2014), no divergence in constraint components occurs between individuals, however, with the unconstraint ones the opposite is the case. Figure 2.1. presents the level of constraint in early reading components:

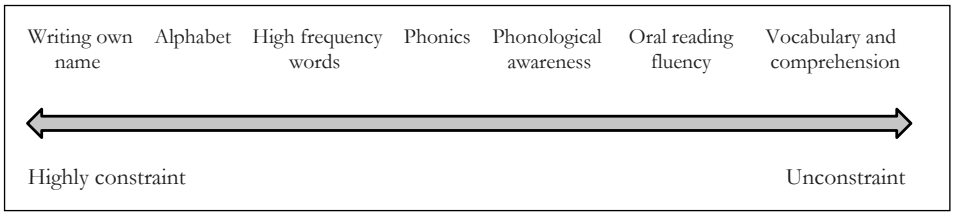


Figure 2.1. The Continuum of Constraint by Paris (2005, cited in Dougherty Stahl, 2011, p. 53).

2.2.2. Basic facets in the acquisition of the alphabetic knowledge

As has been pointed out, learning to read words in an alphabetic language relies on the early acquisition of the knowledge of the alphabet in question, particularly the mastery and automaticity in four letter-related aspects: recognition of letters, naming the letters, knowing the letter-sound correspondences, and using the letter-sound correspondences for decoding (Evans, Saint-Aubin, & Landry, 2009; Israel, 2008; Piasta & Wagner, 2010; Scanlon, Anderson & Sweeney, 2010). This knowledge is necessary for subsequent phonics instruction and word recognition through phonology, and their automaticity lessens the burden on working memory, allowing the readers to direct their attention to blending sounds into words and identifying less regular spelling patterns (Walpole & McKenna, 2007). As one of the most constraint components, once mastered, the alphabetic knowledge has less influence on reading development and academic success than, for instance, vocabulary knowledge and comprehension (Paris, 2005).

The Roman alphabet, used in the English writing system, consists of 26 letters (vowels and consonants), each one represented by two forms: lower- and upper-case. In a transparent writing system each letter has its associated sound or sounds, but in the case of English the number of sounds exceeds the number of letters. Each of the 26 letters has its 'name', i.e. the letter *a* is called /eI/, and the letter *c* is called /sI:/. Birch (2002) discusses the nature of inconsistencies between letters

and sounds in English: (1) some letters can be replaced by others (like *c*, *q*, or *x*), (2) a number of letters are associated with more than one sound, (3) in some cases one sounds can be associated with different letters, and (4) there are frequent silent letters (pp. 21-22). The connection between consonants and their associated sounds tend to be more predictable as they are usually associated with only one sound, with a few exceptions.

Choosing the sequence of letters for instruction should be carried out in a pre-planned order. One criterion can be the significance of the letters to the learners, since children learn most eagerly those letters that are important to them, i.e. their initials (Center, 2005; Israel, 2008; Scanlon et al., 2010). Another criterion may be the letter frequency. Frequently appearing letters make up many words present in story books for early readers, and their knowledge can boost early reading success and motivation for learning. Another important instructional suggestion is to introduce letters whose graphic form is different from the ones taught previously to avoid confusion. Introducing similar letters, like *b* and *d*, in close proximity might confuse some learners and negatively affect their self-confidence and motivation for reading and learning the alphabet. Those learners who have not yet been introduced to the alphabet should begin by learning only the upper case of new letters, but those who are familiar with many of the letters and their names, can be taught letter-sound connections and lower-case at the same time (Scanlon et al., 2010, pp. 110-111).

The most frequent way to introduce the alphabet to pre-readers learning English in both L1 and L2 is through a popular *Abc* song (Center, 2005), often broadcast in children's educational TV programmes and available in multiple versions on the Internet. Through the song children learn letter names in alphabetical order. Besides singing along the entire song, children can also sing along up to a particular letter currently discussed, then stop singing, they can sing along and trace letters on a poster, fill in the missing letter(s), or they can read and discuss alphabet books (Scanlon et al., 2010). Additionally, children can recite the alphabet, point to the right letters while reciting it, and finally produce letter-names and letter-sounds in random order or in isolation. (Walpole & McKenna, 2007). To practice recognizing letters learners might play, for example, *Letter bingo*, or the *Parking lot game*. To practice naming the letters they can play *Memory*, and all sorts of card, or handmade board games. To practice producing letters learners can play *Tic-tac-toe* (Scanlon et al., 2010).

Motivational and environmental factors in learning the alphabet need also to be taken into consideration. Israel (2008) stresses the importance of ensuring that learning the alphabet is attractive to the learners, that it involves multisensory teaching and that young learners are active in the process of learning. This can be achieved through introducing pictorial representations of letters and sounds associated with them, through encouraging learners to write the letters down, and

through making their own alphabet books, containing, for instance, words important to the learners. It is recommended that the home environment be supportive of the alphabet learning process. ABC books and materials should be easily available to all the learners, every-day objects should be used to practice letters, ABC games and songs should be part of a daily routine at home (pp. 30-31).

2.2.3. The role of phonological and phonemic awareness in connecting speech sounds to graphemes

Phonological awareness is defined as noticing sounds and units of sounds, that is syllables, onsets and rimes in spoken words (Adams, 1990; Castles & Coltheart, 2004; Goswami, 2007; Machado, 2010) and remembering them (McGuiness, 2004). Children begin to exhibit some phonological awareness around the age of 3, in the form of noticing rhymes (Snow et al., 1998) and it continues to undergo developmental changes over the years. Stanovich (2000) prefers the term **phonological sensitivity**, pointing to the elements of subconsciousness. Experts in reading almost unanimously agree that there is a causal relationship between phonological awareness and early reading development (Adams, 1990; Goswami, 2007; Harrison, 2004).

Phonological awareness is believed to assist learners of reading in the three ways: (1) it facilitates the understanding of the alphabetic principle, that is the concept that speech sounds (phonemes) map onto graphemes, which is particularly helpful in learning to decode by sounding out graphemes and blending the 'extracted' phonemes into words, (2) it supports learning the letter-sound correspondences, and, when a word is encountered again, allows easier word recognition leading to the acquisition of sight vocabulary, and (3) it can ease word recognition in context for those children who cannot identify certain words as a whole, but only their parts – when coming across such words learners can use both sources of information (context clues and partial sounding out) to search their mental lexicon for the right word (Torgesen & Mathes, 1998).

As already mentioned, phonological awareness development begins around the age of 3 (Snow et al., 1998; Machado, 2010). There are many ways to strengthen it by choosing appropriate classroom activities, among them teachers can expose children to such materials as books and songs with alliteration and repetitions, nursery rhymes and children's poems, enjoyable language games, word walls, or labels on classroom objects. Teachers can also employ different types of practice focusing on phonological awareness, including syllable tasks, phonemic and rhyming tasks, stretching out words to hear the sounds clearly, fun word activities, creating rhymes and searching for them, playing with sounds, looking for words rhyming with children's names, listing words according to the initial phoneme, manipulating sounds to make new unreal words (Machado, 2010, pp. 267-268)

As for assessing phonological awareness, learners can be screened for potential deficits in that field with the help of specific measures. These are divided into two groups, depending on the linguistic units: **non-phonemic measures** (assessing awareness of rhymes and syllables), and **phonemic measures** (assessing awareness of individual phonemes). The non-phonemic measures are to assess children's: (1) rhyme awareness, that is rhyme recognition and rhyme generating, (2) syllable awareness, that is detecting the number of syllables in words, or syllable manipulation, that is deletion, substitution or reversing; and (3) blending onsets and rimes to form words (Rathvon, 2004, pp. 67-69).

Goswami (1995) explains that the **onset** is a consonant sound corresponding to an individual consonant or consonant cluster that stand before the vowel sound in that syllable; by **rime** she understands the remaining part of that syllable, that is the vowel sound, corresponding to one or two vowel letters, and the consonant sound corresponding to individual consonant or consonant cluster that follow the vowel. For example, the word *valentine* can be divided into three syllables: *val*, *en*, and *tine*. The onsets for the three syllables are: /v/ in *val*, and /t/ in *tine*, while the corresponding rimes are *-al*, *-en*, and *–ine* (p. 140).

As already suggested, the development of phonemic awareness plays a crucial role in early reading. Typically, it is defined as the understanding that words are made up of sequences of individual phonemes and the ability to manipulate those phonemes (Duffy, 2009; Scanlon et al., 2010; Snow et al., 1998). A comprehensive definition of phonemic awareness has been offered by Vaughn & Linan-Thompson (2004):

> *Phonemic awareness,* (…) is the ability to identify the *phonemes* (smallest identifiable units of sound) of spoken language, and how they can be separated (pulled apart or segmented), blended (put back together), and manipulated (added, deleted, and substituted). For the purpose of reading instruction, a phoneme is a single sound that maps to one or more printed letters.
>
> (p. 8; italics and brackets in the original)

However, though essential in learning to read in alphabetic languages, such understanding does not develop naturally, since phonemes are not easily distinguishable in a speech stream (Rathvon, 2004; Scanlon et al., 2010).

Despite the fact that precise role of phonemic awareness in reading acquisition continues to be debated (Rathvon, 2004), many researchers seem to agree that without sufficient phonemic awareness, further reading development (i.e. through the introduction of phonics) cannot continue (Duffy, 2009; Scanlon et al., 2010). If children are to learn how to match graphemes with phonemes, they need to have at least some knowledge of both. Once they have alphabetic knowledge (letter names

and sounds) and are able to notice and manipulate phonemes (phonemic awareness), learning how to match them while reading can begin. When children have little awareness of sounds, the teacher should ensure they have opportunities to develop rhyming, learn to distinguish if words begin or end with the same phoneme, and to blend phonemes into words and divide words into phonemes (p. 198).

Although phonemic awareness is a purely auditory ability (Duffy, 2009), the list of phonemic activities given below includes also writing activities. This may be explained by the fact that translating phonemes into graphemes has a positive influence on phonemic awareness, just like writing words down helps learners in the acquisition of reading. Basic phonemic awareness tasks and activities will involve: finding and creating rhymes, practicing alliteration, attending to sounds in various word positions, linking sounds to letters, blending sounds into words, manipulating sounds, i.e. changing their positions in words, grouping words and pictures according to sounds in various positions, counting sounds and manipulating them (Machado, 2010, p. 268). Phonemic awareness can be measured by the following tasks:

1. recognising individual phonemes in a given word,
2. identifying one shared phoneme in a group of words,
3. categorization of individual phonemes (eliminating the odd phoneme out in a group of words),
4. blending phonemes into words,
5. segmenting words into individual phonemes,
6. deleting individual phonemes.

(National Reading Panel, 2000, pp. 2-2)

Despite significant value placed on the role phonological awareness plays in reading, some questions have remained unanswered. For instance, Castles & Coltheart (2004) claim that the exact nature of the relationship between phonological awareness and success (or lack of it) in beginning reading is quite difficult to assess. Among some of the points researchers make are:

1. phonological awareness is not in itself a direct cause of reading success or failure (not a proximal cause), but rather indirect (a distant cause), and should be viewed not as a subskill of early reading but as a separate skill facilitating learning to read;
2. phonological awareness develops due to reading instruction and development in reading ability; in other words, learner's awareness of linguistic segments like syllable, rime or phoneme is a product of reading ability;
3. advancements in reading ability influence learner's achievements in tasks related to phonological awareness like phoneme or syllable counting, and not the awareness itself;

4. there is no causal relationship between phonological awareness and reading development, but that an additional, independent agent might play a role in the relationship between the two (pp. 78–82).

However, a number of studies have confirmed that it is worth strengthening children's phonological abilities. Cardoso-Martins, Mesquita & Ehri (2011) concluded in their research that training pre-school children in phonological awareness might improve their letter-sound knowledge. Szabo (2010) concludes that phonological training should be extended beyond the first grade, as older children are likely to benefit, as well. The most convincing, however, are the conclusions of the National Reading Panel (2000) based on 52 peer-reviewed experimental studies, stating that instruction in phonemic awareness and letter-names yields significant growth in early reading success.

2.2.4. Introducing grapheme–phoneme relationships

Once children have a good command of the letters and have developed phonemic awareness, it is time to teach them how letters or letter groups and sounds match (Duffy, 2009). Knowledge of the correspondence between letters or combinations of letters (**graphemes**) and sounds (**phonemes**) incorporates both printed and auditory forms, and, as such, helps to construct a bridge between the written and spoken language. Although learning the letter-sound connections can be cognitively demanding, knowledge of these correspondences can be classified as highly constraint, that is, it can be mastered fully within a limited period of time (Paris, 2005). Once mastered, the ability allows the learner to read new words with more ease and accuracy (Pazos Rego, 2006).

What is characteristic of the alphabetic writing system is that it is economical, that is the number of graphemes representing phonemes is limited (Bryant, Nunes & Barros, 2014). In shallow orthographies, like Serbo-Croatian, where usually one grapheme represents one phoneme and vice versa, learning how they connect is not time consuming. However, as stated before, in deep orthographies, like English, there is a considerable discordance between the number of graphemes and phonemes, which often poses a considerable difficulty for beginning readers (Gontijo, Gontijo, & Shillcock, 2003). To illustrate this phenomenon, researchers point to the word *thought*, in which the number of letters is more than double the number of graphemes and phonemes (7 letters: t-h-o-u-g-h-t; three graphemes: th–ough–t, and three phonemes: /θ, ɔ:, t/) (p. 136). The grapheme-phoneme associations are usually taught using phonics, discussed in Section 2.3.2.

2.2.5. Vocabulary instruction and the development of reading

As already argued, the early reading components, that is alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, and grapheme-phoneme connections are related to the general issue of deciphering the code, hence also the term 'decoding' is deployed. According to the Simple View of Reading (see Subchapter 1.4.), the other major constituent of reading is that of listening (or linguistic) comprehension (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Hoover & Gough, 1990). Hence vocabulary knowledge is perceived to be indirectly responsible for reading comprehension as part of both word recognition and listening skills (Language and Reading Research Consortium, 2015). As pointed out by the National Reading Panel (2000), early readers learn to *translate* unfamiliar written words into familiar spoken words. If a learner arrives at the oral representation of a familiar word, they recognise it. When the word in its oral form is unknown, it cannot be recognised, causing the overall text comprehension to be impaired. Thus the conclusion that "vocabulary seems to occupy an important middle ground in learning to read" has been made (NRP, 2000, p. 4-15).

Before the 1990s the connection between vocabulary knowledge and reading attracted varied attention, since the turn of the Millennium, however, it has enjoyed the deserved recognition (Graves, 2007). Today, there seems to be a strong agreement as to the paramount importance of vocabulary knowledge in one's reading success (Baumann, 2009; Lervåg & Grøver Aukrust, 2010; Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2004). Apart from benefitting reading comprehension, vocabulary knowledge has been demonstrated to be strongly connected with verbal skills, and both academic and out–of–school success (Graves, 2007).

A variety of direct and implicit ways used to enhance word knowledge to accompany reading have been thoroughly discussed in the relevant literature (e.g. Chodkiewicz, 2000, Baumann, 2009; Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2004). Graves (2007), for instance, proposes a four–component framework for facilitating the process of vocabulary teaching to assist the development of reading. The first component is ensuring that reading learners have many opportunities to experience **rich and varied language** through listening and discussions (predominantly in the lower grades), and reading and writing (mostly in higher grades). Children with lower vocabulary knowledge are encouraged to read along with their teacher (shared reading) with stops for discussing more difficult words (p. 58). The second component of the framework refers to **paying attention to individual words**. Readers will comprehend a given text better and, what is also important, will have more appreciation for individual words when they are directly taught some important lexical items. These words can be dealt with at different levels, that is they can be taught with more or less depth depending on whether a given word represents a concept new to learners or one familiar to them. In the latter case it

might be sufficient to point to the word in context, analyze dictionary definition(s) and discuss the findings. In the former case, when the concept is unknown and complicated, it might require a more lengthy procedure, starting with defining the new concept, comparing it to others already known to the learners, providing examples of what the concept is and is not (pp. 38-39). The third component of vocabulary instruction concerns **teaching the word-learning strategies**, which allows learners to become independent. Some of the most effective vocabulary learning strategies include: (1) inferring words from the context, (2) analyzing word parts, (3) using dictionaries, or (4) using cognates. Graves (2007) recommends that each strategy be explained, modeled, practiced by teachers and learners together, then by learners themselves in a controlled way, and, finally, independently. The last, fourth component discusses raising the students' **word consciousness**, which is explained as "an awareness of and interest in words and their meanings" (Graves, 2007, p. 60). This awareness means knowledge about words, the willingness to acquire new words, and an in-depth fascination by words. Students of all grades are likely to benefit from implementing word awareness activities (pp. 59-60). As rather unconstraint, vocabulary knowledge continues to develop way beyond formal education years (Paris, 2005).

A number of guiding suggestions as to the efficient vocabulary teaching to early readers have been provided by many reading experts (e.g. Harrison, 2004; National Reading Panel, 2000). Based on a summary of 50 early reading studies, the National Reading Panel (2000) draw a list of recommendations briefly presented below:

1. Teaching vocabulary differs according to the age and abilities of the learners: when learning to read, words encountered in the text are usually already familiar, but when reading to learn, learners need to expand their vocabulary to understand the new content, they need to learn to use the lexical and etymological strategies.
2. Learners with weaker vocabulary knowledge are likely to benefit from different form of vocabulary instruction than those representing stronger vocabulary.
3. Vocabulary knowledge can be enhanced through the use of multimedia.
4. Learners can acquire new vocabulary through frequent exposure to storybook reading.
5. Frequent exposure to new vocabulary in context is beneficial.
6. A combination of direct and indirect methods, as well as methods based on definitions and context can be effective.
7. Learners with weak vocabulary are likely to benefit from task restructuring, i.e. altering the text by swapping easier words for more difficult ones, or revising new vocabulary within a group.
8. When learners take an active part in their vocabulary learning, the gains in vocabulary knowledge are significant (National Reading Panel, 2000, p. 4-26).

When discussing the issue of vocabulary's contribution to reading comprehension one needs to take into account word knowledge, that is both word recognition and the knowledge of word meanings – vocabulary – as they "interact with other sources of knowledge to affect reading comprehension" (Stahl & Hiebert, 2005, p. 162).

2.2.6. Comprehension: the reader and the text

It is commonly agreed that comprehending a text is considered the core reason why people read (Cain & Oakhil, 2007a, Pearson & Hamm, 2005; van den Broek, Kendeou, Kremer, Lynch, Butler & White, 2005; Walpole & McKenna, 2007). Although it might seem intuitively obvious that comprehending a text involves mostly recognising the meaning of individual words, sentences, or paragraphs, the following definition shows many more aspects of comprehension that have to be addressed.

> *It involves contextualising, analyzing, synthesising, and evaluating words, phrases, sentences, and longer passages during reading. It involves integrating prior experiences and knowledge of the world to construct meaning. The process also involves the ability to remember (short-term or long-term) what was read, for purposes of discussion or taking a test.*
>
> (Medina & Pilonieta, 2006, p. 223)

This definition implies that reading comprehension requires a reader to (1) be able to perform all sorts of cognitive processes at various levels: from individual words to larger portions of the text, (2) make the connection between what is being read and what is already known, and, finally, (3) retain the newly acquired information in memory for further reference. When readers comprehend a text, they learn about other places and people, and grow both socially and cognitively (Cain & Oakhill, 2007a, pp. xi-xii).

Reading comprehension constitutes a complex phenomenon (Perfetti, 2010; Randi, Grigorenko & Sternberg, 2005; Stahl & Hiebert, 2005). According to Kintsch & Kintsch (2005, p. 83) it depends on "a variety of factors, contexts, and reading goals". They claim that the deciding factors to be defined are **reader-related**, i.e. the level of decoding, oral language skills, vocabulary size, domain knowledge, motivation and interest, and the repertoir of reading comprehension strategies; **text-related** – text coherence, illustrations and other pictorial aids; and **instruction-related** (pp. 83-86).

A seminal model of reading called **a construction-integration model** was introduced by Kintsch in 1998. Although the model does not refer to readers who are still learning to decode and recognise printed words, it gives a valuable

insight into the **psychological processes** necessary for successful comprehension (Kintsch, 2012, pp. 21-22). According to the model, a reader forms a **representation** of the meaning, enabled by the following mental processes that occurred while reading: "sentence recognition, text recall and summarization, recognition of main ideas, recognition of text structure and genre, answering questions about the text, including inferences requiring prior knowledge, use of the information in problem solving, and knowledge updating" (p. 22). This representation is multileveled and the three levels named by Kintsch (2012) are **surface structure**, **textbase**, and **the situation model**. The surface structure represents "the actual words and their syntactic relations" (p. 22). If readers rely only on this surface meaning of words and sentences, their comprehension will be shallow, and they will not be able to fully appreciate the deeper message. This is, however, a very important level, since it forms the basis for the other levels. The textbase model represents what the text is saying, namely what the propositions concerning discussed concepts are (p. 22). In order to form textbase model of comprehension, a reader must have not only the linguistic knowledge but also be familiar with the given discourse (p. 23). When paying attention only to what the text is saying, readers, again, limit their own comprehension. They will be able to recall the meaning, but will be unable to expand their knowledge and learn from the text. In order to gain most from a text, readers should form the situation model. This requires the reader to be acquainted with a domain discussed in the text or have sufficient world knowledge. When this is available, a connection between parts of the text and "the reader's prior knowledge and reading goal are made" (Kintsch, 2012, p. 22).

McCormick & Pasquarelli (2010) interepret the phenomenon of reading comprehension in a similar way. As for the reader-related factors found basic for reading comprehension they mention: background knowledge (familiarity with content and vocabulary), text knowledge (knowledge of print conventions, text structure, and surface features, i.e. table of contents), metacognitive strategy knowledge (to be used before-, during-, and after reading), and affective factors (motivation, interest, skills vs. will). The text-related factors, on the other hand, are taken to comprise linguistic complexity (syntax, semantics), and text structures (expository or narrative structures, surface features) (p. 111).

As far as reading comprehension among children is concerned, it relies on print- and comprehension-related sub-skills (Walpole & McKenna, 2007), but it would be misleading to assign equal weight to both. Paris (2005), for example, places more correlational weight on the comprehension–related sub-skills, in particular on the linguistic abilities, vocabulary size, and narrative reasoning. High fluency of decoding was found to correlate with good comprehension only moderately (Paris, Carpenter, Paris, & Hamilton, 2005), and the reasons for that can be that: (1) some children are excellent "word callers" – that is they read their text with satisfactory speed and accuracy, some with the right intonation, but with poor

comprehension; (2) some reading learners concentrate most of their efforts on the right pronunciation and cannot recall the content; (3) some children do not yet have a sufficient command of comprehension strategies; and (4) some children might experience anxiety while reading aloud (p. 136).

What might also influence children's reading comprehension is the situation in which the child is placed while reading. When reading privately for pleasure, at their own pace, with free access to comprehension strategies, comprehension seems to be easier to achieve. In contrast, when reading in front of an audience, learners can pay more attention to the right pronunciation and hence their comprehension is more likely to suffer. The text itself can also have an influence on comprehension depending on its level of difficulty, how engaging it is, and how familiar the reading learner is with the language the text is written in (Paris et al., 2005, p. 136).

It is also worth underscoring that as reading comprehension has developmental characteristics, its growth is related to print and language exposure. It is also closely dependent on listening comprehension development, in fact both exert influence on each other. The interrelation of reading comprehension and listening comprehension depends on the visual word recognition (Perfetti, Landi, & Oakhil, 2005).

2.3. Teaching early reading in English as L1 – different views of the contribution of word-level instruction

The major point of disagreement between reading researchers concerns the amount of time they would like to see allocated to the teaching of decoding and word recognition. The code-emphasis supporters advocate the view that deciphering the code should be taught early and systematically to give learners access to the meaning, while the meaning-emphasis advocates claim that attending primarily to the code distracts learners from getting to the meaning of a text, and that phonics (as the popular code-based approach) should be taught when the need arises rather than through regular instruction. As argued in this Subchapter, a combination of both these approaches seems to be the most beneficial to reading learners.

2.3.1. Basic assumptions of the meaning-based approaches

The advocates of the meaning-based approaches recommended for children learning how to read in L1 have developed a major assumption that while working on the meaning of the text and using a variety of cues it provides, recognizing individual words is not necessary. The tradition of teaching reading by attending first to the meaning of a reading passage goes back to the turn of the 19th and 20th

centuries, when the so-called **activity movement**, or **experience learning** were first adopted. According to the method, reading lessons were usually proceeded by such activities as visiting a farm or a zoo, which then would be discussed by children as their experiences, described with the teacher's assistance, and finally read as a reading passage. The presumption was that learners would start learning to read by dealing with texts recounting their individual, meaningful experiences, written down by themselves or their peers (Guenther, 2005).

The so-called **global method** of teaching reading has its roots in the Psycholinguistic Theory of reading, which argues that reading has predominantly to do with language, and that readers read a text with the use of language cueing systems, mostly syntactic, semantic and grapho-phonic (Tracey & Morrow, 2006), and that reading does not rely on the identification of individual words (Smith, 2004). Another important source of cues is the knowledge of the world, which enables readers to form expectations about the content, called **hypotheses** (p. 58) in Psycholinguistic Guessing Game model of reading by Kenneth Goodman (1967). Another important assumption is that learning to read is not much different form learning to speak (Smith, 2004). Smith (2004) makes this conclusion very clear by stating that

> *[m]aking sense of print can't be more complicated than making sense of speech, which begins much earlier. Written words and spoken words share the same kind of grammar, meanings, and other structures. If we can make sense of all the words of spoken language that we know, we can do the same for written words. (pp. 3-4)*

Children are not instructed in the details of spoken language when learning to speak, and therefore reading learners do not require instruction in the details of written language, and can learn to read as naturally as they had learnt to speak in their native language. Since the global method of teaching reading is based on rich language exposure and experience in reading, phonics drills and worksheet activities are to be abandoned in favour of vast opportunities to simply read engaging, authentic texts regularly, and reading learners behaving like fluent readers from the start. Attention should be directed not to the identification of letters and sounding out words, but to getting the meaning. Instructing learners in letter names, phonic rules or large vocabulary is unnecessary and can demotivate learners from reading or give them wrong ideas about what reading is. All the above knowledge will be acquired naturally while practicing reading, not the other way round (Smith, 2004, p. 213).

Smith (2004) makes a list of advantages for learners taught by following the principles of the whole language method. These include, among others: (1) natural and effortless growth in language fluency, (2) understanding the complicated connection between graphemes and phonemes, (3) developing comprehension

skills, or (4) gaining in automaticity. Children are less likely to be bored, or to have their memory overstretched. Some of the conditions that need to be provided are: reading learners must have easy access to reading material that is both engaging and at their level, teachers must not get involved unnecessarily and should allow mistakes, which are seen as a natural elements of learning to read (p. 214). The author acknowledges that not all learners achieve success, however. The possible reasons of early reading difficulties can be attributed to learners' immaturity or inappropriate method of teaching reading (p. 4).

While Smith (2004) acknowledges the importance of attending to the **visual information** in print, he strongly believes that it is the **nonvisual information** that plays the key part in reading and in learning to read. Visual information is necessary, but only so that the reader can attend to those parts of print that are relevant to the reader's purpose, be it word parts, selected words or all the words (p. 88-90). The most important components that learning to read depends on, referred to by Smith as nonvisual information, are knowledge of the subject matter and knowledge of language (Smith, 2004). The relationship between visual and nonvisual information is reciprocal, that is they complement each other. Where there is insufficient nonvisual information available, visual information is called for to make up for its counterpart. Accordingly, when there is sufficient nonvisual information, that is the content is familiar or easy to comprehend and there is linguistic knowledge, visual information plays a rather redundant role (Smith, 2004, p. 73-74). Other early reading components, like phonological awareness and letter–sound knowledge do not precondition or cause reading development, but develop as a result of practice in reading (Smith, 2004).

The idea of teaching children reading by exposing them to rich language experiences and high quality children's literature seems very attractive (Pressley, 2002). However, many children who were encouraged to **guess** or **predict** the meaning based on context failed to become successful readers beyond the initial stage. It has since been established that reading learners also need to be instructed in letter-sound cues (p. 21). Research studies carried out by Rayner and McConkie (1976) analyzed eye movement with the use of computer software, a technique unavailable before that time, which established that when readers read a text they do not guess the meaning of words or skip difficult ones altogether, but pay attention to most of the visual clues they see on a page. Stanovich (2000) underlined the fact that:

> *Fluent readers fixate on virtually every content word in text and that visual information is rather exhaustively sampled from the visual array. Even fluent readers do not engage in a wholesale skipping of words and they actually do extract most of the visual information available. (p. 405)*

Based on the eye-movement data, it was measured that fluent readers fixate their eyes on over 80% of content words and 20% of function words, deriving most of the information not from the context but from the printed text (Bernhardt, 2011).

2.3.2. The code-based approach: implementing principled teaching of phonics

The ease of learning to break the code depends on the depth of orthography represented in a particular language, as shallow orthographies are considerably more reading learner-friendly than deep orthographies. In shallow orthographies teaching children to decode is based mainly on the alphabetic principle: children are taught the letters of the alphabet and sounds associated with them. This ability is followed by sounding out the letters in words and synthesizing those sounds (Bald, 2007; Goswami, 2007). In deep orthographies, for instance in English, only a limited number of words can be read out by simply synthesizing the sounds of the letters they are built of (like *cat*, *dog*, *bet* or *pin*), and the majority of words cannot be tackled in this way (i.e. *queue*). Many words are orthographically inconsistent (Bold, 2007), with complex syllable structure and exceptions to the phonetic rules (Goswami, 2007). Bold (2007) summarises the differences by stating that learning to read in orthographically regular languages requires a mere *translation* of graphemes into phonemes, while learning to read in orthographically irregular languages requires learners to *interpret* the message behind the graphemes, which is a more demanding task. One way to teach early readers how to carry out this interpretation, and to discourage guessing when identifying words, is the introduction of phonics (p. 2).

In languages like English the grapheme–phoneme relations are not easily transferable, and their acquisition requires a systematic approach, i.e. through **phonics**. According to Goswami (2007), "phonics instruction teaches children how the visual symbol system of their language represents the sounds of the words in their language" (p. 124). Learners instructed in phonics learn the grapheme-phoneme connections, but also to write and spell (Bald, 2007; Schumm, 2006).

There is no one way of teaching the grapheme–phoneme connections, which is reflected in different types of phonics instruction discussed in the relevant literature and employed in teaching L1 reading. Reading specialists, however, suggest that a differentiation be made between **synthetic** and **analytic phonics** (Torgerson, Brooks & Hall, 2006). In synthetic phonics learners are instructed to identify graphemes and their corresponding phonemes first and then are taught to synthesise or blend the phonemes into words (Schumm, 2006), which can be understood as going in the parts-to-whole direction. Analytic phonics, on the other hand, teaches about the grapheme–phoneme connection in the reverse direction. In this approach learners start with learning a word, then dissect the word into individual parts and, finally, use the knowledge of those parts when learning to read

new words (p. 521). One variation of the analytic approach is the linguistic phonics, where the word patterns and word families are attended to (p. 526). A meta-analysis of a hundred of research papers concerning the application of phonics in teaching beginning reading was unable to offer a clear-cut conclusion as to which type of phonics is more efficient (Torgerson et al., 2006). However, according to Johnston & Watson (2007), the synthetic phonics approach allows learners to (1) progress quickly in their acquisition of letter-sound correspondences than the analytic phonics, and (2) decode sooner by sounding out individual letters and synthesizing (blending) sounds into words (p. 8).

Harrison (2004) offers a number of principles underlying successful implementation of phonics in teaching early reading components (Table. 2.3).

Table 2.3. Main goals and recommendations for teaching of phonics (adapted from Harrison, 2004, pp. 47-48).

Basic goals in teaching letter–sound relationships	**Practical recommendations**
Developing phonological awareness,	Using verbal play, rhyming activities clapping or tapping games,
Developing alphabetic knowledge,	Teaching letters and letter-sounds connections,
Teaching both spelling and reading,	Helping children attend to letter-sounds connections,
Accepting invented spelling,	Encouraging letter writing,
Praising correct spelling from the outset,	Practice in spelling aloud,
Teaching letter-sound connections prior to letter names,	Discussing alternative spelling,
Using direct instructional methods as well as environmental print,	Using teaching aids in form of plastic letters, letter blocks or letter cards, Helping children in learning to recognise all basic sounds,
Developing children's segmenting words into onset and rime parts,	Modeling segmenting words into onset and rime to practice reading by analogy,
Developing children's segmenting words into syllables,	Focusing on initial letters and letter groups, modelling how to segment words into syllables in order to pronounce, recognise and spell them,
Connecting the teaching of reading and writing,	Teaching common spelling conventions and reinforcing them in both reading and writing, Making use of words grouped by spelling patterns.

Phonics has a supportive role to play in the learning to read process and teachers are warned against overrelying on phonics. As Callander & Nahmad-Williams (2010) have stated: "[p]honics is a means to an end, not an end in itself" (p. 65). Researchers believe (i.e. Hall, 2007; Meyer, 2002) that while learning to read children should acquire the ability to use all the available cueing systems, not just one, and that concentrating mainly on phonics brings risks that educators should not take. More specifically, the risks may include:

1. giving uniform instruction regardless of the children's individual needs,
2. teaching isolated sounds and word-lists,
3. devoting a prescribed amount of phonics instruction regardless the need for individual approach,
4. limiting children's understanding of reading to accurate decoding rather than comprehension,
5. limiting children as writers – some children are likely to use only the words they are certain of spelling, making the content poorer and less adventurous,
6. limiting the literature for children to texts based on a given phonics program,
7. postponing the opportunities for enjoyable reading,
8. paying too much attention to highly unreliable phonics rule (Meyer, 2002, pp.40-44)

Meyer (2002) concludes that only when informed about what reading is and what it involves are the reading teachers more likely to teach what needs to be taught, at what rate and to whom. When concentrating hard on the sounds, children are likely to ignore the real purpose of engaging with text, that is getting its meaning, or they might ignore the semantic and syntactic clues (a point also made by Roberts, 1999). Children should be aware that phonics can and should be employed as one of the facilitators of reaching comprehension, and never an end in itself (Hall, 2007; Shannon, 2007).

Some researchers protest against the role teachers are expected to play when phonics becomes the basis of teaching reading. Hall (2007) calls such an approach **mechanistic pedagogy** and complains that teachers might feel inadequate when their task is reduced to mechanical passing phonological knowledge onto their learners. What is more, teachers are not expected to make any significant changes or decisions regarding the "strict and unyielding sequence of curriculum content" (p. 88) that may be necessary to recognise individual learner's needs and that would respond to the dynamic nature of learning (pp. 88-90). Roberts (1999) complains about the belief that word recognition is "merely a matter of summation of the individual phonemes represented by all the individual graphemes" (p. 88), a belief that might be tempting to those who believe in phonics above all. Reading is also the ability to search for meaning within the meaningful context surrounding a difficult or unknown word and teaching reading should take context into account rather than teach how to recognise words in isolation. Apart from phono-graphic

clues, significant contribution to comprehension comes also from semantic and syntactic clues and all these elements need attending to from the very beginning of reading instruction (Roberts, 1999, p. 89).

Finally, Bald (2007) warns against a mistake that teachers might make when teaching reading using phonics, particularly letting learners believe "that the language is more regular than it really is" (p.4). Leaving learners with such an impression can be avoided by pointing to the fact that phonetic rules are not always helpful, and that learners need to keep that in their minds when unable to read irregular words. When rules seem to be insufficient, other prompts might need to be used (pp. 4-5). The attitude Bald (2007) suggest should be adopted by reading learners is that "we use what the letters tell us, but we don't believe the letters tell us everything" (p. 5). Table 2.4. presents general guidelines on effective phonics implementation.

Table 2.4. General guidelines on effective phonics implementation (Donat, 2003; Lloyd, 1992; McIntyre, Hulan & Layne, 2011).

Donat (2003)	**McIntyre, Hulan, & Layne (2011)**	**Lloyd (1992)**
General principles for phonics instruction		
• incorporating writing into phonics lessons, • using three-dimensional magnetic letters to be manipulated by children, • making phonics lessons simple, • concentrating on the letter-sound correspondences with lower-case letter symbols, then on the letter names and upper-case letter symbols, • introducing letters and sounds in easily distinguishable pairs.	• starting with learners' names and names of those who are close to them; • encouraging writing, • employing direct, regular, research-based phonics instruction; • making learners aware of the purpose of learning phonics and the objectives to achieve; • starting phonics before children acquire the knowledge of all the letter-sound correspondences; • allowing for children's invented spelling.	• providing multisensory instruction; • initiating phonics instruction early in the school year to capitalise on the learners' enthusiasm; • starting phonics instruction with the most common spelling of one sound to avoid confusion, introducing additional spellings later; • allocating time to revising known letters, • introducing letter names through songs.

Table 2.5. presents a selection of principles to follow in word sorting and a number of phonics-based activities aiming at strengthening the learners' literacy components.

Table 2.5. Principles in word sorting and phonics-based reading and writing activities (based on Donat, 2003; Lloyd, 1992; McIntyre, Hulan & Layne, 2011).

Donat (2003)	McIntyre, Hulan & Layne (2011)	Lloyd (1992)
Principles for word sorting activities		
Written words can be sorted according to sound position (initial, medial or final); After learning some short vowels, learners can start blending sounds into words, in the sequence they occur in words, i.e. /c//a//t/; After learners gain some confidence in blending, teacher can introduce word families (phonograms): words that share a rime, i.e. cat, mat, hat, fat; Words with short vowels are introduced first.	Introduce word sorting as it teaches learners that language is a system; When sorting words, learners practice attending to phonetic patterns in words, but also to the way words are spelt and connected semantically (…). Word sorts can be *open* and *closed*. In open word sort learners decide the pattern according to which words are sorted, in closed the teacher makes the decision. This can be an individual, a pair, or a group activity.	Word sorting can take a form of a **Letter Clue Pictures** activity, where learners look at a picture clue, i.e. a dog with the spelled word 'dog', and based on that clue write down rhyming words, i.e. frog, log, fog, etc. Words can be sorted according to: • identical spelling of parts of words, i.e. rimes, i.e. *pup-cup*, • spelling pattern, i.e. *like-bike-Mike*, • complicated letter clusters, e.g. *–ough*.
Phonics-based literacy oriented activities		
Hop Over: Learners hop over a letter whose sound they hear. **Circle-a-Sound**: children place appropriate letter inside a circle made of yarn when they hear its sound. **Hide-the-Sound**: learners try to guess what letter is hidden in teacher's hand based on the pronounced sounds. **Hear-a-Sound**: teacher reads a book, and learners react in a set way when they hear a word beginning with a particular sound.	**Learners' names:** teacher points to the same sound in the learners' names in various positions, names can be displayed on classroom walls. **Rhyming Books and Tongue Twisters:** teacher points out that sometimes words are spelled in a similar way, and that they sometimes begin with one sound; Learners can be encouraged to create their own rhymes and tongue twisters.	**Game of "Memory"** based on grapheme-phoneme pairs. **Word boxes**, where words are graded according to frequency and placed in boxes, learners manipulate words and learn to read them. **String joining** – a multisensory activity, where learners match words with appropriate drawings printed on a handout, using a shoe string rather than drawing a line. **Matching letters**: words and pictures/drawings.

Word Study Journal: learners cut and paste pictures with particular sounds in various positions. **Magazine Clips**: learners cut out and paste words from newspapers and magazines that have sounds children have learned. **Puppet Stretch**: learners write down individual sounds or words that have been pronounced and stretched for them by a puppet.	**Word banks** and **Word walls:** can be used to practice and display, among others, high frequency irregular words, and can be used for playing games and classroom rituals. **Decodable texts:** although frequently lacking in meaningful content, they provide useful opportunities for practicing particular phonics patterns; can be used for choral or echo reading. **Rhyme bingo:** teacher calls out a word, learners read words on their bingo board and look for one that rhymes.	**Sticking sentences**: where learners cut out whole sentences and glue them under a corresponding picture/drawing. **Sound Book:** each time a new letter-sound is learnt, learners get to glue its copy into the Sound Book (could be made from an exercise book). After a group of letter-sounds is completed, the teacher can give learners a reward sticker or a stamp so that they have a sense of achievement.

2.3.3. The balanced approach to teaching reading – combining meaning- and code-based approaches

The quest for the most effective method of teaching reading in English has continued for many years, and the case for teaching reading for meaning with the use of a combination of methods goes back to as early as the 18th century (Cove, 2006). Despite many opposing ideas, researchers today agree on the importance of inspiring reading learners to behave like readers (Duffy, 2009; Harrison, 2004; Meyer, 2002). This involves approaching reading with a purpose, knowing how to use a number of strategies to recognise known vocabulary automatically, either within or outside of context, and to read unknown words through their phonology and/or the context. Harrison (2004) acknowledges that this goal will be achieved through the development of "both an automatic (i.e. an unattended) and a phonological approach to recognizing words" (p. 41). The recommended approach is to teach children how to make use of all the available sources of information, and to show learners what it means to be a reader, as opposed to being a "good guesser" or an "accurate decoder" (Duffy, 2009; Harrison, 2004).

Helping learners become skilled readers can be possible by implementing the balanced approach, that is a combination of two major approaches discussed above: whole language and phonics (Donat, 2003; Harrison, 2004; Pressley, 2002). The elements of both these methods have an important role to play in the complicated

task of learning to read in such orthography as English as they complement each other. What beginning readers need is a combination of both top-down and bottom-up strategies, that is immersion in authentic and engaging texts and word recognition (p. 299). A typical reading learner will remain unmotivated to read if he/she has no fairly quick access to interesting meaning (as mandated by the whole language approach), nor will they be able to fluently recognise words if there is little or no ability to relate print to sounds (Reid, 1997).

Explaining the balance between the whole language and phonics approaches is far from an easily manageable task, though. For example, Wyse and Styles (2007) firmly believe that teaching reading through phonics and attending to the meaning cannot be separated but need to be combined. This means that exposing children to enjoyable literature should not be postponed. Hastings (2012) makes a similar point and argues for introducing the element of writing, which suggests that the scope of reading instruction should be much wider. The author claims that in order for early reading instruction to be balanced and complete, apart from the combined teaching of grapheme-phoneme relations and comprehension, a number of other elements ougth to be included. First, learners must be allowed to gradually take responsibility for their reading after initially following the teacher closely. Then they need to be instructed in grapheme-phoneme connections, semantics and syntax, as well as in the five building blocks of early literacy: comprehension, fluency, phonics, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary knowledge. Finally, what counts is exposure to authentic and engaging children's literature. A balanced instruction in all these aspects requires solid professional knowledge and careful planning on part of the teacher.

2.3.4. Strategy instruction in word recognition and comprehension

The two fundamental issues in reading development seem to be: 1) increasing the automaticity of word recognition and 2) training learners in comprehension strategies (Chodkiewicz, 2000). Learners of reading in both native and additional languages should be instructed how to use and integrate an array of strategies to decode words and to recognise them (Strickland & Riley-Ayers, 2007, Struk & Chodkiewicz, 2017). Based on a definition of strategies offered by Afflerbach et al. (2008), strategic reading is characterised by volitional decision making regarding ways to achieve a reading goal and their effectiveness, and, should the need arise, assessment of the goal itself along with the effectiveness of those chosen ways (p. 368). Reading learners require regular modelling as to what strategies to use in case of reading difficulties and how to do it. With time and frequent demonstrations on part of the teacher, learners will have observed how to make the necessary connections between the spoken and written language (phonemes and graphemes)

and how to use those connections in recognizing words and in writing. In the next stage they will make their own attempts at using those strategies (Strickland & Riley-Ayers, 2007; Walpole & McKenna, 2007).

Words can be read by applying different strategies. Among those suggested by Walpole & McKenna (2007) one can find: sounding and blending at the level of individual phonemes and graphemes, sounding and blending at the level of letter/vowel patterns, decoding high frequency irregular words by attending to their phoneme-grapheme connections (as opposed to learning these words by rote memory), and by analogy (pp. 58-69). The strategy of reading irregular words by sight is also recommended and helpful in increasing the fluency of reading (Struk & Chodkiewicz, 2017).

Reading learners of a shallow orthography, like Polish, Italian or Finnish might consider the strategy of **decoding by blending subsequent sounds** sufficient to learn to read, however, reading learners of a deep orthography, like English, need to be trained in some additional strategies. This is due to the fact that many words have irregular orthography, where, for instance, one grapheme or grapheme cluster might be pronounced in different ways (i.e. *tap* vs. *tape*, or *bloom* vs. *blood*), or different graphemes might be pronounced with one sound (i.e. *cake*, or *phone* vs. *frog*) (Ringbom, 2007, p. 58).

Learners of reading who have already mastered sounding out and blending individual phonemes into word but have problems with frequent spelling patterns, and learners who try to read the rime by sounding out individual phonemes should benefit from training in the use of the strategy of reading by **analogy** (Duffy, 2009; Walpole & McKenna, 2007). These children need to be made aware that this strategy is more effective than sounding out letter by letter, and that it should be used with unfamiliar words which share spelling with familiar words (Duffy, 2009). Harrison (2004) underlines that

> *[C]hildren will only generate analogies successfully if they also have a basic understanding of letter–sound relationships, i.e. (a) they know the letters of the alphabet and how they are commonly pronounced, and (b) they know how to represent as letters the sounds they hear a word make in their head. (p. 44)*

When children have learned to read a number of clue words (words they will draw from when decoding new words by analogy) explicit strategy training can commence. For example, when teaching to decode the new word *frighten* teachers point to those parts that have previously been introduced in the clue words, i.e. rime *-ight* may have appeared in the word *night*, and the rime *–en* in *pen*. After numerous demonstrations, the learners will have understood the strategy, found it helpful and fairly straightforward. During subsequent oral reading, the teacher can prompt readers to implement this strategy when in need. They should be encouraged to

verbalise subsequent steps in the procedure until it becomes internalised and used automatically (Walpole & McKenna, 2007, pp. 68-69). Goswami (1998) suggests that within analogy training, children ought to be instructed in: (1) the phonological properties of rhymes, (2) orthographic properties of rimes, and (3) how rhymes and rimes are connected to each other (p. 52).

As Wylie & Durell (1970) and Hiebert, Pearson, Richardson & Paris (1998) have counted, the acquisition of around 35 rimes allows reading learners to read by analogy around 500 frequent words. Table 2.6. presents 38 phonograms that are shared by about 600 words frequently used in English:

Table 2.6. 38 phonograms that appear in 600 English words (adapted from Hiebert et al., 1998).

Vowels	V-C / V-C-C	V-C-e / V-V-C	Diphthongs, r-controlled, others
A	-at, -am, -ag, -ack, -ank, -ap, -an, -ab,	-ay, -ail, -ain, -ake,	
E	-ell, -est, -ed,	-eed,	-ew,
I	-ill, -ip, -ick, -ing, -in, -ink, -im,	-ine,	-ight,
O	-ot, -op, -ob, -ock,		-out, -ow, -ore,
U	-unk, -ug, -uck, -um,		
Y			-y

Children's awareness of **rhymes** can be strengthened with the help of many engaging classroom activities. Some of them can contain popular nursery rhymes. The teacher can, for example, recite a nursery rhyme known to children and change the final words in verses into ones that do not rhyme, so that children get to correct them with the proper, rhyming words. The teacher and pupils can provide alternative rhyming pairs, or pupils might be asked to search for rhymes (play 'rhyme detectives') where they practice rhyming by deciding which words rhyme and which do not. Rhyme awareness will then be useful in creating **word families**, that is words with identical rimes (Goswami, 1998, p. 52) which will be helpful in learning to read words by analogy.

It is worth noticing that rhyming word families can be used to teach children about the orthographic properties of rimes as described by Goswami (1998). This can be organised around book reading in the way described below:

1. the teacher (or the children themselves) chooses a clue word from a rhyming family that will be used as the base for analogy, i.e. *reach*.
2. the teacher discusses the rhyming family, and asks the pupils to spot any rhyming words while listening to the teacher read, i.e. *peach* (the teacher might need to reread the story or stop at the key places to scaffold the children).
3. the teacher spells a clue word using movable letter made of plastic or cardboard, and sticks them onto the board, and places the letters in such a way that the onset is somewhat separated from the rime.
4. underneath the clue word the teacher places another word with the same rime, i.e. *teach*, and aligns the onset and rimes, thus showing children that the rime is identical.
5. the teacher asks the children to use the rime of the clue word and the onset of the word underneath, and to blend them to decode that second word (p. 53).

To model how to integrate the phonological ability to find rhymes with the orthographic ability to read rimes, guided response questions can be used. With reference to the example clue word *cap* and the new word *tap*, the following sequence of questions, asked by the teacher, might be useful:

1. *What is our clue word?*
2. *How is the clue word spelt?*
3. *How is the new word spelt?*
4. *What part of the clue word can be used to help us with reading the new word? How does the part sound?*
5. *What is the first letter of the new word? How does it sound?*
6. *Now, let us read the second word using the initial letter and the second part we already know the sound of.*
7. *Do the two words rhyme?*

With frequent practice, learners will start to use this strategy spontaneously (Goswami, 1998, p. 53).

Another strategy of code-breaking is simply **guessing**, or **predicting** a new word. It is not expected to be a wild guess, however, but one based on a number of relevant clues. Children might make their predictions on initial letters of words, familiar words placed before and after the new one, contextual clues and visual clues, like pictures that accompany the text. A learner might be encouraged to read the entire sentence or phrase and only after completing it they might stop to ponder whether it made sense. In this way a difficult word is accessed through the meaning of the text (Wyse & Jones, 2001, p. 43). However, the strategy of predicting words by referring to semantic-contextual or syntactic-contextual clues is not always that effective and it is often characteristic of poor readers (Ehri & McCormick,

1998; Pressley, 2002). As noticed by Chodkiewicz (2016a), research in L1 has not confirmed the effectiveness of the model, on the contrary, it has concluded that instead of relying on guessing and hypothesizing, skilled readers 'adjust their goals, make inferences, use context, and monitor their comprehension effectively' based both on print and the context.

It is worth remembering that some words are easier to recognise than others. The deciding lexical-, and sub-lexical level factors can be (1) word frequency, (2) age of acquisition, (3) regularity of the grapheme-phoneme correspondence, (4) consistency in the way particular spelling patterns are pronounced, and (5) morphological structure of a given word (Cain, 2010, pp. 28-32). Concerning the issue of word frequency, the frequently occurring words are recognised more quickly, even the irregular ones, while among infrequent words, regular ones can be recognised with considerably more ease than irregular ones. In other words, the quickest words to be identified are those that occur frequently in texts and are regular. Slightly more time is needed to identify frequently occurring irregular words, yet more time is necessary to recognise words occurring infrequently but which are regular, with infrequent irregular words considered the most difficult to identify (p. 30).

Another feature of effective literacy teaching is training young readers to implement **comprehension strategies**, as many early readers find it difficult to comprehend a text. The reason for this might lie in the application of most of their cognitive resources to decoding and word recognition. It might seem, therefore, that instructing young early readers in reading comprehension strategies might place even more burden on their cognitive capacities. This assumption is misleading, however, as children do benefit from instruction in strategic comprehending from the earliest age (Medina & Pilonieta, 2006; Paris et al., 2005; Walpole & McKenna, 2007). Reading comprehension instruction should extend way beyond a given text; it should gear learners for any further reading, and should have two aims: (1) to develop the sub-skills and knowledge necessary for comprehension, and (2) to guide learners to become active, strategic and motivated readers (Scanlon et al., 2010, p. 276).

Among reading comprehension strategies appropriate for primary school reading learners are: answering and generating questions, story mapping, instruction in genre structure, direct explanation, and summarization (Walpole & McKenna, 2007). Table 2.7. presents a sample of comprehension strategies, ways in which early readers might benefit from strategy instruction, and particular types of early readers these strategies should be introduced to.

Table 2.7. Early reading comprehension strategies and their potential benefits (based on Walpole & McKenna, 2007, pp. 110-123).

Strategy	How learners will benefit	What type of learners will benefit most?
Question clusters	Learners will reach higher level of comprehension, i.e. make inferences,	Poor comprehenders, but adequate decoders,
Question and answer relations	Learners will learn how to "read between the lines",	Beginning readers and poor comprehenders,
Story mapping	Learners will comprehend, remember and retell narratives,	Poor story comprehenders and retellers,
Genre structure	Learners will comprehend informational texts,	Third-grade good decoders but poor comprehenders of informational texts,
Direct explanation	Learners will become aware of comprehension strategies, what strategy to choose, and how to implement it,	Beginning and older readers who lack procedural knowledge and strong comprehension sub-skills,
Summarization	Learners will understand and recall informational texts.	Older elementary learners who lack strong comprehension sub-skills of informational texts.

♦ ♦ ♦

As can be seen from the discussion in Chapter 2, learning to read in alphabetic languages requires more than simply applying the knowledge of alphabetics to recognize words, but instead it draws from an orchestra of early literacy components, necessary to achieve maturity in reading, like phonological and phonemic awareness, oral language skills, or vocabulary and comprehension. The significance of these and other components cannot be overestimated as deficiencies in any of the components may impair reading development, which, in turn, may negatively influence the learner's future success in life. It is also evident that the level of difficulty of the learning process depends on the learners' level of cognitive maturity, the orthographic depth and the common syllable structure of the language learnt, or on the approach followed in the context of formal education including the way in which word recognition instruction is implemented.

The most prominent conclusion stemming from the above discussion, therefore, is that during the process of EFL teacher training, particular attention must be paid to the recent developments in the field of reading development, especially at the beginning stage. The courses should cover the characteristics of the language that are particularly important in learning to read, for instance the level of orthographic

depth, but also the key early reading components or the most appropriate instructional approaches.

The empirical study proposed in Part II is going to follow closely the latest instructional developments in those word recognition components that have been given most attention in the above discussion. In the meantime, the following chapter aims to provide an overview of the major theoretical issues connected with becoming a reader in an additional language.

CHAPTER 3

BECOMING A BILINGUAL READER: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND RESEARCH

Becoming a reader is cognitively demanding, yet becoming a bilingual reader can be even harder. This chapter brings into the forefront some basic issues connected with learning to read in an additional language. First, the complicated task of defining numerous situations in which people all over the world become bilingual or multilingual is undertaken. Then, the differences between becoming a second and foreign language early reader are underscored. This is followed by the explanations concerning the intricate relationship between L1 and L2 reading and by the relevant reading development problems as depicted in Polish EFL teaching materials. Also, the chapter is going to address the similarities in the development of reading components in English as a native language and those in reading in a second or foreign language based on the example of Dutch learners. Then, findings regarding the importance of phonological awareness in reading development in English as L1 and L2 will be analysed. Finally, the third part of the chapter intends to shed some light on research findings concerning cross-linguistic influence on learning to read in a second or foreign language.

3.1. LEARNING ANOTHER LANGUAGE AS SECOND OR FOREIGN

Learning to read in any language, whether native or additional, depends to a large extent on the stage of language development. The amount of linguistic exposure in the L2 or FL context is far from uniform, and can vary considerably. The following sections describe some of the situations in which to become a bilingual, including the situation of growing up bilingual, becoming bilingual later in life, or acquiring an additional language in the foreign language context.

3.1.1. Problems in defining bilingualism

Defining bilingualism is a delicate matter for a number of reasons (Grosjean 2008; Bialystok, 2001; Wei, 2001). For instance, the suffix 'bi' suggests involvement of two languages, but speakers of three, four and more languages are also generally seen as bilingual (Gass & Selinker, 2000; Mackey, 2001). A solution has been offered recently due to the introduction of the term 'multilingual' which refers to the command of the third and other languages by the same speaker. Another problem connected with the use of the term bilingual stems from the fact that it is not associated with one particular level of L2 mastery, but covers a whole variety of levels, even though traditionally bilingualism meant linguistic proficiency characteristic of the native familiarity of L2 (Bialystok, 2001, p. 4). This dilemma is mainly due to the relative understanding of the levels of linguistic proficiency. It is not clearly stated whether a person is expected to use L2 fluently in speech, writing, listening, and reading or expected only to communicate verbally, or simply to understand spoken or written texts (Mackey, 2001). Such inconsistencies in understanding the term can be avoided if a particular context and particular purposes for bilingualism are taken into account (Edwards, 2006). Bialystok (2001), for example, describes linguistic proficiency as "the ability to function in a situation that is defined by specific cognitive and linguistic demands, to a level of performance indicated by either objective criteria or normative standards" (p. 18). However, according to other researchers, if some kind of definition of **a bilingual** is to be given, the most common understanding refers to those language users who are able to communicate in two languages in everyday situations (Grosjean, 2008; Wei, 2001).

L2 proficiency has been frequently used as the main criterion in defining bilingualism (Bialystok, 2001; Edwards, 2006; Meisel, 2006), yet some other criteria have also been applied. Apart from the question of degree, bilingualism has been discussed in terms of function, alternation, and interference (Mackey, 2001). A bilingual person can use their L2 for a number of external and internal purposes (function), they may switch from one language to another (alternation), or use features of one language while communicating in another (interference). Grosjean (2006) enumerates some aspects of bilingualism helpful in defining it, in particular: lingusitic history and the relationship between languages, language stability, function of the bilingual's languages, linguistic proficiency, language models, as well as biographical information (pp. 34-35).

Bilingualism has been treated as an umbrella term for a range of L1 and L2 language combinations (Bialystok, 2001; Meisel, 2006). Wei (2001) enumerates around 30 of its different forms, including:

- **balanced bilingualism** – the level of L1 and L2 proficiency is similar,

- **dominant bilingualism** – the knowledge of one language significantly exceeds that of the other language,
- **maximal bilingualism** – mastery of both languages is full,
- **minimal bilingualism** – mastery of L2 is minimal,
- **receptive bilingualism** – a bilingual person can only understand spoken or written texts,
- **productive bilingualism** – besides understanding the language, one can also speak and write in both languages,
- **simultaneous bilingualism** – L2 acquisition takes place along with L1, and
- **successive bilingualism** – when L2 acquisitions takes place later in life, after years of L1 acquisition (pp. 4-5).

Edwards (2006) adds to the repertoire of terms and discusses some possibilities of approaching bilingualism in connection with foreign language context, for instance:

- **additive bilingualism** – where the knowledge of both or all the languages is seen as important and desirable,
- **subtractive bilingualism** – when the subsequently acquired language replaces L1.
- **primary bilingualism** – referring to the natural acquisition of L2, and
- **secondary bilingualism** – when L2 is learnt through formal instruction (pp. 10-11).

Currently bilingualism is part and parcel of everyday life for many people. In many parts of the world the common use of more than one language is conditioned historically – particularly due to colonial past, where a vernacular language is used along another, official one (Bialystok, 2001). In many parts of the world, particularly in predominantly monolingual societies the national curricula mandate teaching foreign languages.

3.1.2. Simultaneous vs. subsequent bilingualism

Many children acquire two or more languages at the same time. Simultaneous bilingualism, also termed **bilingual first language acquisition – BFLA** (Genesee & Nicoladis, 2007) or **multilingual first language acquisition** (Meisel, 2006) refers to those situations when a child is learning two or more languages simultaneously, starting from birth or soon after, before the age of 3 or 4. Typical families where conditions for BFLA are made possible are either migrant families, with the parents' native language used at home (with limited opportunities for formal instruction and development of this language) and a different, mainstream language outside of home (Meisel, 2006), or when the parents' dominant languages are different and they interact with their children in these languages (Genesee, Nicoladis, & Paradis, 1995).

There is no one, unique model of simultaneous bilingual acquisition, and the existing ones are often contradictory. One such contradiction refers to the existence of the fusion stage. According to Volterra & Taeschner's (1978) **single-system hypothesis**, children acquiring more than one language from birth develop their multilingual competence in three stages: during **stage one** they develop one lexical system and they are unable to distinguish between the languages; during **stage two** they use two lexical systems and are aware that different vocabulary items pertain to different languages but tend to use one syntactic system; during **stage three** they use separate vocabulary and syntax for communicating in both languages (p. 312). However, Genesee et al. (1995) claim, that even children between 1 and 2 years of age are capable of differentiating between languages, switching from one to the next depending on their interlocutor. As stated by Meisel (2006), this code-switching is rather immature initially in comparison with its form observed among adult bilinguals. Code-switching can be understood as "a form of language use determined by a complex network of sociolinguistic variables and constrained by grammatical properties of the utterances" (p. 96). The language areas where children can switch codes are lexicon, syntax and phonology (Meisel, 2006). The **dual language hypothesis** acknowledges early ability to differentiate between the syntax of one language and the other, and children who grow as simultaneous bilinguals can determine very early and with ease what language is appropriate in a given situation. The general view is that the developmental pattern in the simultaneous acquisition of two languages resembles that of monolingual children acquiring L1, although it is not identical to L1 acquisition (Meisel, 2006, pp. 98-110).

Subsequent L2 acquisition differs from learning one or two languages from birth for a number of reasons. The first concerns the age and maturation of a learner. If a learner is exposed to the L2 before the age of five, their L2 acquisition resembles that of L1 acquisition. If a learner is exposed to L2 within the critical period (between 5 and 10 years of age), the L2 acquisition might still share some properties with L1 acquisition, but beyond the age of 10 it might resemble the adult L2 acquisition. The other characteristics of subsequent L2 exposition that can be observed are: (1) the impact of the mastery of one language on the early stages of L2 acquisition, (2) a different sequential order of L2 acquisition as compared with L1, (3) the influence of the learner' individual characteristics on the pattern of L2 development, and (4) the scarcity of the full mastery of L2 grammar (Meisel, 2006, pp. 106-107). Also the learners' motivation can be different: simultaneous bilingual language acquisition occurs simply because a child is naturally exposed to two languages, whereas subsequent bilingual acquisition is usually driven by a purpose. Those purposes have been described in literature is **instrumental** or **integrative.** The former refers to the necessity to function within a society, while the latter to the need to be part of a given society or culture (Edwards, 2006, p. 13).

3.1.3. Limitations of and reasons for learning languages in a FL context

While L2 learners are immersed in the target language in and out of school, many other language learners around the world do not have this advantage since their community uses L1 and they learn another language at school. They are frequently referred to as **Foreign Language Learners** (**FLLs**). Learning a foreign language is carried out mostly through formal instruction limited to a few lessons a week. The term Instructed Second Language Acquisition has been coined, therefore, to refer to learning another language in formal educational context (Gass & Selinker, 2000).

As emphasised by Dakowska (2015), foreign language is "learned principally while being taught, within the confinements of the educational system" (p. 19). The sources of language input in the FL learning context are limited to the classroom, that is the FL teacher, FL learning materials, and other classmates (Gass & Selinker, 2000; Tomlinson, 2005). Not only the amount of input but also its quality can often be problematic. On part of the teacher it is usually modified to a simpler form to accommodate the learners' level of proficiency, and on part of the other learners it is frequently full of errors. It is no wonder, therefore, that becoming a fluent bilingual as a result of learning a foreign language (FL) in educational settings is a rare accomplishment, and such learners usually gain only some level of proficiency (Bialystok, 2001). The reason lies in the limited language exposure, as Dakowska (2015) explains:

> *Second/foreign language learning and teaching is both natural and cultivated (…) by human expertise, choices and work. Its reconstruction (…) in the educational context, however, can be effective only to the extent to which it is understood as a real occurrence, i.e. to the extent to which it is understood as an empirical phenomenon (p. 20).*

FL learners have limited access to real FL use and extensive FL experience since they lack opportunities for meaningful, naturalistic interactions with speakers of the target language (Dakowska, 2005; Gass & Selinker, 2000) due to the fact that they do not study other subjects in the target language, their English language teachers are not native English speakers, and they learn the target language in large groups, which negatively affects the frequency of communicative tasks in the classroom (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009). As a result of such limitations learners are less likely to form and test hypotheses about the target language (Gass & Selinker, 2000).

Though learning a foreign language in situations when the community uses L1 requires a lot of effort and motivation, around billion of people around the world are learning at least one foreign language. The reasons for becoming bilingual through

the FL context must be important. The drive can be instrumental: economic benefits, better career prospect, trade, travel, access to information, or education. However, beyond the utilitarian reasons, people often become bilingual because they want to be part of a particular group, in other words the heart of bilingualism is belonging (Baker, 2001, pp.111-112; Edwards, 2006, p. 30). Johnson (2001) points to yet another but equally important reason, that is the need to communicate. He distinguishes between **intercultural communication**, when foreign language learners have the need to communicate with speakers of other languages representing other cultures, and **intracultural communication,** when they desire to have easier access to speakers of other languages within their own culture (p. 5). While the former type of situation seems to have been natural for centuries, the latter type is becoming more and more common nowadays, as numerous countries or communities all over the world cease to be monolingual and become multilingual due to migrations. It would probably be difficult to find a country where no other languages, apart from the official one, are spoken. Indeed, remaining monolingual today is becoming less and less commonplace (Johnson, 2001, pp. 5-6).

Despite the fact that FL learners share many common characteristics, the term is not all-inclusive, it would, therefore, be controversial to treat all FL learners in the same way and expect certain approach or a set of teaching procedures to be equally effective in all cultural contexts. First of all, no two cultures or communities are alike, as some, for example, promote independent thinking and free self-expression, while others value obedience and conformity. Likewise, an approach that would be adequate with one group of learners might be inadequate with another group because FL learners come with different expectations, needs, attitudes and different learning styles (Tomlinson, 2005). FL learners also represent different levels of the target language proficiency. In order to offer a uniform and comprehensive description of L2/FL proficiency levels, the Council of Europe has distinguished six levels, from A1 to C2, so as to make it possible to define the FL learners' language development from the beginner to a proficient language user (Council of Europe, 2017).

3.2. Early reading experience in learning L1 vs. L2

The sections to follow set about explaining the differences between learning early reading in native and additional languages. Children learning to read in L1 have an advantage over L2/FL learners because they have a good command of the oral language as well as greater motivation for learning reading as they are more likely to be supported by their home environments and educational institutions.

3.2.1. General characteristics of L1 vs. L2/FL early readers

Learning to read in L1 usually commences at the beginning of the first grade of primary school, although children are being prepared for that much earlier in the form of frequent interactions and discussions on books and illustrations with their carers. As a result of being read to, L1 children become familiarised with print conventions and many children's stories, as well as with other unabridged, thus rich in meaning, texts. Children usually learn to read in L1 in a group of peers (around 5 or 6 years old) who are at a similar developmental level, have similar instructional needs, and often share enthusiasm for learning to read. Typical L1 reading classroom activities include shared reading, guided reading and, finally independent reading. Additionally, learning to read and reading is not limited to the classroom only, but also takes place outside (Ediger, 2001; Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009; Nation, 2009).

L2/EFL reading learners, on the other hand, do not form such a homogeneous group – they might represent, among others, various levels of cognitive development, different age or varied motivation to read (Aebersold & Field, 1997; Ediger, 2001; Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009). Starting to learn an additional language at a different age, L2 early readers will represent varied levels of background knowledge and life experience. Some FL learners may be cognitively more mature and already experienced in reading. Many reading learners, however, might still be at the initial stages of reading in their L1.

Motivation to read can also vary among L1 and L2/FL reading learners. As stated before, L1 early readers are usually eager to learn to read, but it is not always the case with L2 or FL readers. FL readers learn the target language usually because it is compulsory, and therefore fail to see reading in the target language as a possible source of entertainment and enjoyment. This can also be caused by the necessity to introduce early L2/FL readers to texts that have been adjusted to their language level, thus carrying less meaning (Aebersold & Field, 1997; Ediger, 2001; Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009; Nation, 2009). Hence, the heterogeneity of L2/EFL reading learners requires a careful consideration of the reading learners' needs and taking up the most merited teaching approach on part of reading teachers.

3.2.2. Differences in language exposure in the initial stage of the development of reading in L1 and L2

Vital differences in the level of oral language mastery between early L1 and L2/FL reading learners are frequently observed. L1 children are typically fluent users of their native language, while for many L2/FL children, learning the target language and reading begins simultaneously at the onset of formal instruction. This gives L1 learners years of advantage over L2/FL learners (Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Koda,

2004). The development of children's oral language skills in L1 does not require formal instruction, but feeds on a combination of three elements: the inherent need and talent of every human being to learn a language, the linguistic input provided by the child's immediate environment, and his or her cognitive abilities (Genishi, 1998). As noted by Herschensohn (2007), native language development

> *draws on innate predispositions at every stage; exploits linguistic, pragmatic, social and environmental scaffolds; uses prosodic, semantic, syntactic and lexical bootstrapping; calculates frequency and saliency of input; and completes the process by creating native competence in grammar. (p.63)*

In L1, learning to use oral language to communicate is not rushed and children slowly work out the linguistic rules during meaningful acts of communication. It is also a highly individual process (Genishi, 1998). Before children start learning to read in L1, they will have been exposed to their mother tongue for about 4-5 or even 6 years, depending on the age of the onset of formal reading instruction, by which time children will have reached a high level of mastery of fundamental language sub-systems: phonological, semantic and morphosyntactic (Ediger, 2001; Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Krasowicz-Kupis, 2004; Nation, 2009)

Children need to acquire cognitive–linguistic knowledge of the sounds characteristic of the language they are exposed to, and the speech-motor skills necessary to produce those sounds (Herschensohn, 2007, p. 29). As noted by Stoel-Gammon & Vogel Sosa (2007), children need to gain knowledge of "the phonological forms of words and phrases and must learn the articulatory phonatory movements needed to produce these words and phrases in adult-like manner" (p. 238). Most of the acquisition of phonological rules is possible only through extensive language exposure. Within the first year of their lives children produce open syllables CV, then slowly proceed to CVC and CVCV, the order which seems to be universal across languages. By the age of 2, when typically developing children have a vocabulary of 250-350 words, they have acquired the most essential phonological items. At this time, the phonetic inventory of L1 English children includes stops (i.e. *pie, bee, toe*), labial and alveolar nasals (*me, no*), and glides (*we, you*), ..but also basic syllable structures, like CV or CVC. Children can also utter some words with consonant clusters (*milk*). By the age of three, children can produce almost all consonants and various types of syllables (Stoel-Gammon & Vogel Sosa, 2007). With age and language exposure, L1 children's phonological abilities continue to expand, forming the basis for the acquisition of early reading components such as phonological and phonemic awareness, which are required to make connections between graphemes and phonemes, which, in turn, are indispensible in word recognition.

Word learning in the native language can also be observed from a very early age and occurs at an impressive rate. By the time children are 18 months old, they

can produce about 50 words, yet the number grows to about 7000 words (Grabe & Stoller, 2002), or even a staggering 10 000 words by the age of six (Diesendruck, 2007). When children enter the first grade and start learning to read, they are familiar with most of the words appearing in the texts they encounter. Like in the case of phonological development, also vocabulary growth is possible only through exposure.

Along with the development of phonology and lexis, also syntactic knowledge undergoes development. Syntactic development is generally seen as a "gradual approximation of a young child's syntactic competence to that of the adult language user" (Field, 2004, p. 294). Similar to phonology and lexis, mastering L1 word order and morphology does not require explicit instruction because children acquire it while being exposed to the L1. In his analysis of the syntactic development among native English children, Brown (1973) identified certain developmental stages. The first stage is characterised by the appearance of the most salient word combinations, i.e. the basic word order; during the following stages the child's syntax undergoes further refinement, almost always in accordance with one particular order. By 36 months children start using the *–ing* and prepositions of place, then irregular past forms of verb. By 46 months children use articles and both regular and irregular verbs.

In the case of learners of reading in L2, they are exposed to the target language both at school, and in the mainstream environment (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 2014). This facilitates a fairly swift development of oral language skills, although it is not the formal language of schooling, which needs to be worked upon. Some L2 learners have frequent opportunities to practice their reading by attending to environmental print (Ediger, 2001). Among those L2 learners who are exposed to L1 at home and L2 in the community, not many significant differences in the model and pace of L2 acquisition as well as in the L2 vocabulary growth can be observed in comparison to monolingual children. This cannot be said, however, about the L2 phonological development, where the differences are due to likely phonological transfer. Overall, it might take L2 learners a larger part of elementary school years to reach the level of linguistic development characteristic of L1 users (Paradis, 2007, p. 401).

Learners of FL reading, on the other hand, cannot rely on their linguistic knowledge at the onset of their learning to read, nor do they have many opportunities to develop their FL oral skills before entering language classroom (Gass & Selinker, 2000; Grabe & Stoller, 2002). What adds to the hardship is the fact that a considerable part of the FL lesson is often conducted in the native language, or that the quality of the FL input is not always satisfactory. What is more, learners are more frequently exposed to the written language than to spoken, which might affect the target language pronunciation (Szpyra-Kozłowska, 2014). Insufficient exposure to the FL in its oral form carries an additional disadvantage: the reading learners

are less likely to successfully employ the strategy of phonological decoding to sound out a new word (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). What FL readers require is substantial pre-reading practice as well as intensive development of oral language skills (Aebersold & Field, 1997; Ediger, 2001, Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009; Nation, 2009)

3.2.3. The role of metacognitive and metalinguistic awareness in the reading process in L1 and L2

As argued above, the oral language proficiency constitutes one significant difference between L1 and L2/FL learners, however, some other differences as those concerning the levels of **metacognitive** and **metalinguistic awareness** can also play a key role in reading development (Grabe, 2009). Metacognitive awareness has been defined by Field (2004) as "[t]he ability to think about thinking. It involves being aware of mental processes, monitoring them and controlling them" (p. 178). The significance of understanding the cognitive processes in reading cannot be underestimated as it allows reading learners to be conscious about how to monitor reading comprehension, and what actions can remedy the situation when difficulties arise (Carrel, Gajdusek & Wise, 1998). L1 early readers and those children who at the same time learn to read in another language have a rather weak metacognitive knowledge and thus are rarely aware of how metacognition can facilitate reading (Aebersold & Field, 1997). On the other hand, those learners who are already literate in L1 are usually experienced in the use of strategies and language knowledge in reading (Grabe & Stoller, 2002).

Metalinguistic awareness, "the speaker's ability to distance himself from the content of speech in order to pay attention to the structural features of language and to the language's properties as an object", as defined by Reder, Marec-Breton, Gombert, & Demont (2013), constitutes another shared resource useful in learning to read in L2/FL. Gombert (1992) distinguished between its six different types, that is metaphonological, metasyntactic, metalexical, metasemantic, metapragmatic, and metatextual awareness. According to Koda (2007a, p. 69), metamorphological and metaphonological awareness seem particularly significant in early reading, because they condition the analysis of words into morphemes and phonemes, which in turn is necessary in making connections between spoken and written language. A similar view is also given support by Nagy & Scott (2000). L2/FL readers show a more advanced metalinguisitc awareness and use it more consciously while learning to read in subsequent languages (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). It is worth noting that metalinguisitc awareness has an evolving character and develops with the language use (Koda, 2007a).

3.2.4. Reading as a socio-cultural and institutional practice

As discussed in Section 1.1.4., reading should be viewed as not only cognitive and linguistic, but also socio-cultural practice since readers, writers and texts are influenced by the society. Different societies are bound to shape the readers' attitude to L1 reading in different ways. Some communities value literacy more than others, some value certain types of texts more than other types (i.e. religious texts), some value literacy but accept illiteracy among their members, yet others place much value on literacy and reading practice and allow questioning and critical approach to the printed text (Alderson, 2000; Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Lundberg, 1999; Wallace, 1999). These attitudes transfer to L2 reading, so if there are considerable differences between L1 and L2 views on reading, L2 reading learners might experience difficulties adjusting to the new situation. This requires understanding and assistance on the part of the reading teachers.

The northern hemisphere cultures place high value on reading and writing, not only in academic settings, but also in everyday life. In fact, being part of this large community requires that we are literate (Wallace, 1999). An interesting example of the value assigned to the ability to read and write is the law introduced in Sweden at the end of the 17th century stripping illiterate people of such basic civil rights as marrying or voting (Lundberg, 1999). An attempt at investigating contemporary everyday literacy use was made by Barton & Hamilton (1998), who involved in their study selected members of a community in Lancaster, in the UK. According to their findings, people read and write to run their households (i.e. making notes, paying bills, etc.), to do shopping (writing shopping lists, reading grocery labels, ingredients, etc.), to communicate (exchanging formal and informal letters), to learn (reading books and writing assignments), to relax (reading for pleasure), and to reflect (i.e. to write a diary). As can be seen, illiteracy in such a print-rich environment would make every day functioning a difficult endeavor, requiring assistance from other, literate members of that society. Not every culture, however, is print-rich. Another important difference in approaching literacy might concern the way readers react to the content of a text, as some tend to question and evaluate what they read, while others accept it without giving it a second thought (Wallace, 1999, p. 43).

An approach to literacy by L1 and L2 **educational institutions** may also differ, and thus affect L2 reading learning and practice. The differences may concern, for instance, the standards of teacher training, the financial means allocated to the educational systems reflected in the average class size, or the preferred type of teacher-student relationship (Grabe & Stoller, 2002; McKay, 1993). Some schools pay more attention than others to providing their pupils with access to speech therapists and reading specialists, some devote additional resources to in-service teacher training (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998).

In many cultures, for example in European, North American or many Asian countries, educational institutions promote language and early literacy development from a very young age. Kindergarten, for instance, is the place where children make the progression from being non-readers to early readers. The many roles kindergarten fulfills that help to make this progression include stimulating verbal communication and conceptual knowledge, introducing children to comprehension strategies, providing children with reading material, or cooperating with school or public libraries, whose mission is also to support children in the process of learning to read (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998). Librarians also play this important role if they "read aloud to students, tell stories, conduct book talks, plan and implement author visits, sponsor motivational reading activities, lead book discussions, plan and conduct book fairs" (Bishop, 2011, p. 19). The success in promoting literacy depends on the integration of library and literacy classroom policies which aim at providing easy access to school-connected reading materials, on training children in how to search for information, and on cooperation between teacher-librarians and reading teachers (Asselin, 2005). As can be seen, L1 reading learners and those L2 learners who live in the L2 community are strongly supported in the process of learning to read both by typical literacy practices followed in everyday life and those implemented by educational institutions and libraries.

3.3. Explaining the relationship between reading in L1 and L2

Learning to read in an additional language is bound to be influenced by the reader's abilities developed while learning to read in L1. The current subchapter attempts to address the issue of the reciprocal nature of the connections between L1 and L2 reading. It begins with the description of the theoretical models conceptualizing the relationship between L1 and L2 reading, then explains the problems connected with the cross-linguistic transfer. Both facilitative and inhibiting factors are dealt with, with an emphasis on how they affect the lower-level processes in reading.

3.3.1. General models of relationships between L1 and L2 in reading

Over the years, several theories concerning the relationship between L1 and L2 reading and language have been put forward. One of such theories, the Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis (DIH), grew from the assumption that the higher the native language skills, the easier the acquisition of a target language, supporting the view that learning L1 and additional languages depends

on a general conceptual and linguistic proficiency, termed **common underlying proficiency** (Cummins, 1979). Genesee, Geva, Dressler, & Kamil (2008) explain this vague term as "procedural knowledge that underlies language use for higher-order cognitive purposes and entails the skills involved in defining words or elaborating ideas verbally" (p. 64). The DIH assumes that one general reading ability forms the basis for the development of reading in L1 and L2, regardless the encoding system either language represents. What is more, the DIH also relates to the reading ability across languages and posits that when a reader can read fairly automatically in their L1, the automatised reading components and sub-skills become the springboard for L2 reading; likewise, L2 literacy instruction and practice enhances L1 literacy success. In sum, the familiarity of concepts, literacy components and strategic behaviour acquired in one language transfer to the other languages learnt (Cummins, 1979). Another important conclusion stemming from this theory is that L1 and L2 reading, general linguistic and cognitive competences cannot be separated (Grabe, 2009; Kahn-Horwitz, Shimron & Sparks, 2005).

This hypothesis was supported by research findings of Verhoeven (1990) and Dressler & Kamil (2006). Verhoeven (1990), who analysed the early reading development of Turkish children learning to read in Dutch, noticed that there was a significant correlation between the level of L1 and L2 reading, in particular between phonological awareness, vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension and strategic reading. Those learners whose L1 skills were strong, had fewer problems with learning to read in L2, and vice versa. Dressler & Kamil (2006) drew similar conclusions.

Another model that attempts to account for the relationship between reading in L1 and L2 is the Linguistic Threshold Hypothesis (LTH). It maintains that the facilitative cross-linguistic transfer of L1 literacy components to L2 reading is less feasible at the lower level of L2 proficiency, but more feasible at a higher level. In other words, this form of transfer is not fixed across different levels of L2 proficiency but varies depending on the L2 linguistic knowledge. Consequently, L2 reading behaviour can be unsatisfactory even among advanced L1 readers, when their L2 proficiency is not sufficient, thus it might be inappropriate to label L2 readers as **good** or **poor** (Clarke, 1980, p. 206). One of the latest tests on the validity of the LTH by Feinauer, Hall-Kenyon & Everson (2016) confirmed that the transfer of L1 literacy components to L2 is particularly significant after the linguistic threshold is assured.

A Compensatory Model of L2 Reading by Bernhardt (2005), which assumes interdependence with L1 reading and recognises the role of L2 proficiency, nominates three major contributors to L2 reading comprehension: L1 literacy level, L2 linguistic knowledge, and an unexplained variance. L1 literacy, contributing to L2 reading in about 20%, will include alphabetic knowledge, vocabulary knowledge, discourse knowledge, and beliefs concerning words and sentence configurations.

L2 linguistic knowledge (30%) refers to the level of familiarity with the vocabulary, grammar, cognates in L2, along with the L1-L2 distance. The unexplained variance (50%) includes comprehension strategies, the level of motivation, content familiarity, interest, and many others. This L2 reading model allows for insufficient knowledge of one variance to be compensated by knowledge from other sources (Chodkiewicz, 2013a).

McNeil's (2012) extends Bernhard's (2005) model by adding two more variables, that is background knowledge and reader strategies, and suggests two different models to distinguish between lower and higher L2 proficiency. For lower-proficiency readers, the biggest contribution seems to lie with L2 linguistic knowledge, followed by background knowledge, L1 reading ability, and strategic knowledge. For higher–proficiency readers the following hierarchy of importance has been established: strategic knowledge, L2 linguistic knowledge, L1 reading ability, and background knowledge. Across both proficiency levels, the unexplained variance accounts for about one quarter of the contribution. The lower-proficiency model suggests that at the early stages of L2 reading acquisition, instruction should aim primarily at the development of the linguistic knowledge and world knowledge. L1 reading ability along with the pre-reading abilities, like phonological awareness, must also be considered.

As shown in the models above, the nature of the relationship between L1 and L2 reading is difficult to define, as it concerns an interplay of numerous variables involved in reading comprehension processes, as well as different levels of learners' reading proficiency.

3.3.2. Basic issues in cross-linguistic transfer

A closer look at the relationships between the development of L1 and L2 reading has been taken by some SLA specialists exploring the phenomenon of the so-called *linguistic transfer*. **Linguistic transfer**, labeled also a **cross-linguistic transfer** or **influence**, can be conceptualised as "continuous hypothesis formation and verification, based on available linguistic input (…) providing facilitation by creating an essential basis for establishing an additional linguistic system" (Koda, 2004, p. 13). In other words, it refers to various manners in which the learning of another language or the use of that language is affected by the language learners already know (Ringbom, 2007). Odlin (1989) claims that linguistic transfer depends on a range of variables which have to be given due importance in SLA. Koda (2007a) notices however, that numerous questions concerning linguistic transfer have not yet been fully answered, for instance "(…) what is actually transferred, under what conditions, how transferred competencies alter second-language reading development, and whether transfer occurs in the same manner – and to the same degree – among learners from diverse first-language backgrounds."

(p. 69). Despite the doubts, some linguistic factors have been labeled as subject to cross-linguistic transfer, such as morphosyntactics, phonology, pragmatics, metalinguistic awareness, and communicative strategies (Koda, 2004). Edwards (2006) lists lexical transfer, morphological and syntactic transfer, and phonological and prosodic transfer.

Linguistic transfer has been traditionally classified as either **positive** (facilitative) or **negative** (inhibitive). Sometimes the stronger language influences the new language learning and its use in a facilitative way, and other times in an inhibitive way. However, Ringbom (2007, 2013) offers a different view of transfer types, naming them **item transfer**, **procedural transfer**, and **overall transfer**. Learning a language commences with learning items like individual words, phonemes, morphological units, etc. At this point learners can observe similarities between L1 and L2 items, initially in their form, then their function/meaning, and then some individual items can transfer. Naturally, it has a facilitating effect on L2 comprehension (p. 55). When a substantial number of items has been acquired, system transfer, also called procedural transfer, occurs. Learners often naturally expect that L1 procedures can be employed in L2 comprehension. If it is possible, positive transfer occurs, which further facilitates comprehension. If L1 procedures differ considerably from L2, the procedural transfer will have negative effect on comprehension (p. 57). Finally, the overall transfer occurs when there are similarities between L1 and L2 linguistic items and systems, and it explains why some languages are easier to learn than others (Ringbom, 2007, 2013; Ringbom & Jarvis, 2009).

Cross-linguistic transfer affects early reading across languages. In Koda's work (2004, 2007b) it is explained by two major hypotheses. According to the hypothesis of reading universals, children learning to read in any language need to realise that the printed words relate to the spoken words, that speech is composed of small elements of spoken language, and that those spoken elements (i.e. phonemes) correspond to graphic elements of print. The second hypothesis assumes that reading procedures are characteristic of a given language, that is readers use such linguistic procedures as decoding, morphological analyses, syntactic parsing and discourse processing differently when reading in different languages (Koda, 2004, pp. 14-15).

3.3.3. The significance of transfer in lower-level processes in reading – focus on word recognition

Word recognition in both native and non-native languages involves an orchestra of early reading components, however, as mentioned before, early literacy development in the latter situation occurs "while linguistic sophistication is still limited" (Koda, 2004, p. 38). As a consequence, early second language readers' word recognition resembles that of poor L1 readers. Difficulties in L2 word recognition

accuracy and speed require the use of certain strategies, whether conscious or unconscious (Karim, 2003).

What can, at least to some extent, facilitate word recognition development in L2 is the components' transfer from L1 lower-level processes in reading to L2, especially promising if L1 and L2 share certain properties, that is those operations where L1 and L2 require similar processing. Additionally, it can be assumed that thanks to growing experience in L2 reading the transferred components undergo maturation, or that processing print in ways pertaining to L1 weakens and eventually disappears (Koda, 2004). As observed by Nassaji (2014), L1 lower level components transfer to L2 and vice versa.

Phonological processing, for instance, undergoes cross-linguistic transfer, and, according to Nassaji (2014), the relationship between L1-L2 phonological processing can be analysed from two perspectives so as to determine: (1) if L1 phonological processing also plays a significant role in L2/FL reading; and (2) if the L1-L2/FL phonological processing is similar or different. Both questions seem to have been answered satisfactorily. As for the first question, L1 phonological processing seems to be important in learning to read regardless of the writing system a language represents (Durgunoglu, 2002). In fact, phonological processing can be considered a universal language-general ability regardless of the language or the writing system in question (Deacon, Chen, Luo & Ramirez, 2013).

As for the second question, the answer seems to be more complicated. One difference may concern the type of phonological units that readers of different languages attend to. For instance, Spanish reading learners tend to pay more attention to the vowels first, then to the consonants (Dickinson, McCabe, Clark--Chiarelli, Wolf, 2004), Czech learners of reading tend to pay attention to complex onsets, while the English reading learners analyze the onset-rime units (Caravolas & Bruck, 1993). Therefore, it is advisable to understand the differences and plan the instruction in a way that the children are aware of the differences and of the need to attend to the phonological units characteristic of the target language. Another difference might concern the fact that L2 readers might have difficulties with distinguishing between the target language sounds. The ability to fully differentiate between phonemes is bound to affect assigning of the right phoneme to its corresponding grapheme, thus inhibiting word recognition due to wrong pronunciation (Verhoeven, 2011).

Since the orthographic properties of languages differ, some form of orthographic processing can also be transferred from L1 when reading in another language. The orthographic differences result from the writing system, and in the case when the languages represent one writing system and use one alphabet, the differences might stem from varying orthographic depth. This is explained by a number of theories, for instance the Orthographic Depth Hypothesis or the psycholinguistic grain size theory, discussed in Section 2.1.2. Learning to read in orthographically shallow

languages requires the use of phonological decoding, while learning to read in a language representing a deep orthography requires the use of other strategies helpful in reading irregularly spelt words, for instance, attending to the whole word, the onsets and rimes, or to syllables (Goswami, 2008; Nassaji, 2014). In general, orthographic processing that can be transferred to a second language reading needs to be modified, and the level of modification depends on the L1-L2/FL distance. Thus, reading learners need to be exposed to print for the modifications to become internalised (Koda, 2004).

It is generally assumed that the orthographic properties are language specific (Durgunoglu, 2002), and that the degree to which orthographic processing transfer is possible depends on the L1-L2 distance. While Deacon, Wade-Woolley & Kirby (2009) do not challenge this popular assumption, they have suggested that orthographic processing could be alphabet specific, or even more precisely, characteristic of particular language features, such as their orthographic depth. This can be clearly seen when two languages share one alphabet and are equally deep orthographically, like French and English. Deacon, Commissaire, Chen, & Pasquarella (2013), for instance, concluded after analyzing orthographic processing among English children in a French immersion program that orthographic processing transfer occurred more readily with orthographic patterns shared between the languages, and not with those characteristic only to one language. In a similar vein, the orthographic processing transfers from Spanish to English and vice versa, which suggests that it is bidirectional (to and from transparent and opaque orthography) (Deacon, Chen, Luo & Ramirez, 2013).

Lexical transfer, that is using an L1 vocabulary item in L2 production, and semantic transfer, that is assigning an L2 vocabulary item the meaning of a matching L1 word, can also be observed, although not as frequently as, for instance, transfer in pronunciation (Appel & Muysken, 2005). When discussing the process of reading in a second or foreign language, it is especially worth looking at the facilitative role of cognates, defined by Rigbom (2007) as "historically related, formally similar words, whose meanings may be identical, similar, partly different or, occasionally, even wholly different" (p. 73). Generally speaking, the greater the number of cognates between L1 and L2, the better L2 reading comprehension (Otwinowska, 2015; Ringbom, 2007). Although cognates are expected to be immediately salient due to their form often strikingly similar or even identical to L1 items, it has been reported that learners do not always notice them as easily as it is expected (Otwinowska-Kasztelanic, 2009; Ringbom, 2007). Another issue concerns their pronunciation, as even advanced L2 learners tend to use L1 pronunciation for cognates (Ringbom, 2007).

3.4. Becoming an English reader at primary level in Polish context

Successful instruction in early EFL reading requires an outline of the cross-linguistic similarities and differences since they affect early reading acquisition. Here, the two languages (Polish and English) are briefly compared in terms of their phonological and orthographic features. Teaching to read in English requires teachers to implement appropriate reading instruction so as to take those differences into consideration. The main recommendations given by Polish early EFL experts are discussed.

3.4.1. Early reading in Polish vs. English – incongruities between the two languages

While it has been concluded that L2 word recognition is affected by the L1 (Akamatsu, 2003), from the perspective of the current discussion the important question is whether early reading in L2 or in FL requires the same coalition of components and the same cognitive processing as early reading in L1 in the light of the differences in the efficiency of:

1. the bottom-up processing,
2. top-down comprehension processing,
3. the interaction between bottom-up and top-down processes.

Cross-linguistic differences need to be taken into consideration for the appropriate reading instruction to be provided (Droop & Verhoeven, 1998, pp. 193-194).

At the initial stages of learning to read, the major differences concern the lower level processes, which may be affected by differences in the phonology and orthographic depth, as it is the case with Polish and English, which share the alphabet but represent quite a different level of orthographic depth. When L1 represents a shallow orthography and L2 a deep one, learners are likely to erroneously use L1 decoding strategies while reading in L2. This can be observed among Polish EFL learners, who attempt to decode words in English by "translating" individual letters into sounds and assembling those individual sounds into words (Kusiak, 2013, pp. 22-23).

Considerable differences can be observed between the phonology of the Polish and the English language not only in the number of phonemes existing in each language but also in the way they are pronounced (Sobkowiak & Piasecka, 2014). The English phonemic system has close to 25 consonant phonemes and about 20 vowel phonemes, while the alphabet includes 26 letters, that is 20 consonants, 5 vowels and 'y', which can be treated as either one of those (Ogden, 2009). The Polish

phonemic system includes 40 phonemes, which are represented by 40 graphemes, and the Polish alphabet includes 32 letters, 9 of them with diacritics (Awramiuk & Krasowicz-Kupis, 2014). The pronunciation of consonants in both languages is to a certain extent similar and requires only some modifications. For instance, the /m/ sound in both languages is described as a bilabial nasal, /p/ and /b/ as bilabial plosives, /k/ and /g/ as velar plosives, or /f/ and /v/ as labiodental fricatives (Clemente, 2012, Gussmann, 2007). One example of a difference in pronunciation might concern the phonemes /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /ʧ/, and /dʒ/, as they are simply pronounced softer in English than in Polish. Another difference might stem from the fact that some phonemes present in one language do not exist in the other and need to be learnt, for instance the English sounds /θ/ and /ð/. The pronunciation of vowels constitutes a significant difference. Polish learners of English need to be made aware of the existence of, for instance, /æ/, /ɜː/, /ɒ/, /ɔː/, /ʊ/, /uː/ and diphthongs /eɪ/, /ɑɪ/, /ɔɪ/, /əʊ/ and /ɑʊ/, and need to be able to distinguish between short and long vowels (Szpyra-Kozłowska, 2014).

The level of the orthographic depth of Polish and English seems to constitute the most significant difference affecting early reading development in young Polish learners of English as a foreign language. As mentioned before, Polish orthography is transparent while English orthography is opaque, and the difference between the two systems is reflected in the strategies used by early readers when decoding texts (Kusiak-Pisowacka, 2017). When Polish children start learning to read in their native language, they initially rely on the **phonemic decoding** strategy, that is they analyze each grapheme, match it with a corresponding phoneme, and assemble these phonemes into words. With time and growing experience in decoding, children become familiar with word forms and usually by the end of the first grade are able to use the **global** strategy to decode familiar words, which naturally positively affects reading fluency and comprehension (Sochacka, 2004). Deep orthography, on the other hand, calls for additional strategies, necessary to deal with irregular words, and thus early reading in English requires reading by **analogy**, attending to **onsets and rimes**, or **sight vocabulary** (Birch, 2002, Ehri & McCormick, 1998; Goswami, 1995, Struk & Chodkiewicz, 2017). As noted by Kusiak-Pisowacka (2017), the dissimilarity needs to be addressed in teaching materials and in the instruction.

3.4.2. Learning to read in English by Polish learners as reflected in current English language didactic guidelines for grades 1-3

The most recently published FL teaching programs for grades 1-3 offer guidelines on teaching early reading with varied precision. Studzińska, Mędela, Kondro, Piotrowska & Sikorska (2017) believe that at this level of education the most important language skills are speaking, listening, and reacting appropriately

to spoken utterances, while reading and writing are of secondary importance. Learners should be given time to learn the Polish alphabet, both lower-case and capital letters. Once the Polish version of the Roman alphabet is learnt, learners can be slowly introduced to the copying and writing of individual English words, short utterances and simple texts. After completing the third grade learners should be able to read known words and simple sentences, comprehend simple texts, extract the necessary information from a text, use picture dictionaries, storybooks and multimedia. The program seems to follow global methods of teaching reading in a foreign language and does not explain how to teach decoding or grapheme-phoneme connections.

Rapacka and Wójcik (2017), on the other hand, offer a set of more detailed guidelines as to the way early reading in a foreign language should be taught. Like previous authors, they also suggest postponing early reading acquisition in a FL until children learn to read in Polish. Learners should become familiar with the pronunciation and the meaning of the words or simple sentences before reading a text, so that they will be able to match the language known in oral form to its written equivalent. The nature of the relationships between graphemes and phonemes should not be explained to the learners, but children should be allowed to slowly deduct them from the visual representations of words. Among the recommended techniques for teaching early reading in a foreign language Rapacka and Wójcik (2017) enumerate: (1) recognition of letters, (2) reading both aloud and silently, (3) matching pictures with words, (4) finding known words in a text, (5) arts and crafts based on text information, (6) ordering sentences, (7) choosing the most appropriate answers, (8) completing texts with stickers and pictures, (9) completing texts with missing words, (10) removing words that are not suitable for a given text, and (11) reading dialogues. This programme also seems to be closely related to the global approach to teaching reading.

As can be seen, the above two foreign language teaching programs for grades 1-3 of primary school seem incomplete for two reasons. Firstly, the early reading components which are vital to reading development are not discussed. Secondly, comprehension is stressed as the goal of any reading activity, however, the subcomponents that lead to reading comprehension have not been given the deserved attention. Instead, the authors suggest that early FL reading be learnt along with learning the language. This approach does not raise the teachers' awareness of what should constitute early reading instruction in English, nor does it guide teachers as to what early reading components should be developed and why. In accordance with the present discussion, more attention should be paid to the word recognition sub-processes and the development of phonological awareness. It should also be stressed that while deducing the nature of grapheme-phoneme relationship is a powerful tool in early reading development, teachers should also include direct instruction in the grapheme-phoneme connections. It would help

the learners understand the relationships sooner, and the development of words recognition would be easier.

Szpotowicz and Szulc-Kurpaska (2009) recommend that "more focus should be put on the development of these aspects of skills which are different compared to the learners' L1 reading and writing" (p. 148), an approach that directs teachers to take a closer look at the process of learning to read in a foreign language. Apart from the **global method**, where the reader learns to recognise words by their overall graphic form (i.e. the "look and say"), the authors enumerate other methods, used with native English learners, for instance: the **synthetic methods** (where letters, whole graphemes or syllables are assembled into words), the **analytic methods** (where words, phrases or sentences are disassembled to teach learners about smaller elements, like letters or graphemes), and the **analytic-synthetic methods** (attending both to smaller elements and the meaning). While the global method is helpful in learning to read words of irregular spelling, the synthetic and analytic approaches can help deal with words where some regularities can be observed. The authors also recommend that teaching reading be delayed by two or three months, to familiarise the learners with the sounds of the new language, and to give them some time to develop reading in their native language. What is also important in early reading development in a foreign language is providing children with print-rich environment in form of classroom object labels or word signs arranged thematically or accompanied by illustrations (Szpotowicz & Szulc-Kurpaska, 2009, pp. 148-151).

3.5. Recent developments in studies of early L2/FL alphabetic reading

The development of word recognition at the early stages of learning to read in L1 did not always receive the deserved attention. In the 1970s and early 1980s, when reading was viewed from the top-down perspective, it was believed that comprehension occurs largely in the reader's mind and not necessarily in particular words on a page. As a consequence, visual word recognition were largely unexplored by L2 reading researchers (Koda, 2004). Today it is believed that words carry the bulk of the meaning, as it has been found that insufficient word recognition leads to disruption in comprehension and "takes long term tolls, directly and indirectly on the acquisition of reading competence" (Koda, 2004, p. 31). It has, therefore, been concluded that reading involves extracting information from a text rather than confirming or rejecting the reader's hypotheses. What is more, the development of those subcomponents which are important in successful word recognition and the

conditions under which they become automatic are now frequently explored by L1 and L2/FL reading researchers (p. 30).

Due to the fact that reading in L1 and L2 share some common features, research on L2/FL reading often resembles that of L1 reading in terms of the discussed topics, methods used, and ways of analysing the data. Some differences between research in L1 and L2 are manifested in the presence of additional topics related to L2/FL reading, some of which are: linguistic proficiency, cross-linguistic influence, transfer of strategies, background knowledge, cultural influence, and – an issue limited solely to L2/FL – the linguistic threshold (Grabe & Stoller, 2002, p. 125). In general, seven fields of major interest for L2 reading researchers have been enumerated. They are:

1. word–level issues in reading development,
2. discourse organization and text comprehension,
3. main idea comprehension and instructional routines,
4. extensive reading and motivation,
5. topics unique to L2 reading settings,
6. social and cultural context influences on reading,
7. assessment of reading (p. 127).

Since bilingualism, in its various forms, is on the increase, more and more research projects have been devoted to the word recognition development in a second, foreign, or additional language. The English language, learned as L2 or FL, dominates the research, however, word recognition development in other alphabetic languages has also been investigated, for example in Finnish (i.e. Muller & Brady, 2001), Dutch (i.e. Verhoeven, 1990, 2000), or Spanish (i.e. Swanson, Rosston, Gerber & Solari, 2008). Research projects into early L2 word-level reading development have concentrated on a variety of topics, and those discussed in this chapter will include:

1. research comparing the development of word recognition in L1 and L2 or FL (Jongejan, Verhoeven, & Siegel, 2007; Lesaux, Rupp, & Siegel, 2007; Verhoeven, 2000);
2. the importance of phonological abilities in word recognition (Muter & Diethelm, 2001; Swanson, Rosston, Gerber & Solari, 2008);
3. research on L1-L2/FL transfer of word recognition components (Cardenas--Hagan, Carlson, & Pollard-Durodola, 2007; Feinauer, Hall-Kenyon, & Davison, 2013; Melby-Lervåg & Lervåg, 2011).

3.6. Comparing the development of word recognition components in L1 and L2

In order to illuminate the similarities and differences between learning to read in L1 and L2, an investigation of the role early reading variables play in early reading acquisition in both contexts is necessary. Such an attempt was made by Verhoeven (2000). In his comparative study Verhoeven investigated differences between L1 Dutch and L2 minority learners' performance in such components as **word decoding** (grapheme knowledge and word blending), **word spelling** (cipher knowledge and phonemic segmentation), and the difference in the **reading comprehension** (vocabulary knowledge).

The participants were 2,143 learners (1,812 native Dutch L1 learners and 331 minority learners of low SES with limited experience of print) from 118 primary schools in the Netherlands. The minority group comprised mostly Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese and Antillean children, who were exposed to their L1 languages from birth and who become exposed to L2 Dutch at the entrance of kindergarten or primary school. They usually learn to read in Dutch first and might receive additional literacy lessons in the second grade in their native language.

Word decoding was assessed with the use of three tests of speed reading: one for one-syllable words, another for one-syllable words with consonantal clusters, and the third one for words of more than one syllable. Other decoding–related tests included a test of grapheme-phoneme correspondence (where the children were asked to pronounce all Dutch graphemes), and a test in word blending (where children were to blend phonemes in words of increased difficulty). **Spelling** was measured with a word spelling task, along with two other tests: (a) phoneme-grapheme knowledge (cipher) – tested by asking children to write down all the Dutch phonemes, and (b) phonemic segmentation of monosyllabic words of increased difficulty. **Vocabulary knowledge** was measured with the use of vocabulary task based on selecting one picture from a larger set of pictures, according to the word pronounced by the experimenter. Two different tests were used to assess the **reading comprehension**. One comprehension test contained 10 texts, each accompanied by a set of multiple-choice questions referring to characters, places, actions and events presented in the texts. In the other comprehension test, children were required to read 10 texts accompanied by five questions regarding direct and indirect meaning connections between sentences. The children were tested altogether 6 times: at the beginning (Time 1), in the middle (Time 2) and at the end of Grade 1 (Time 3), and at the same points in Grade 2 (Times 4, 5, and 6). Word decoding was assessed at all 6 testing times, spelling – at Times 2, 3, 5, and 6, the grapheme-phoneme and phoneme-grapheme knowledge, word blending and phoneme-segmenting were assessed at Times 2 and 3, vocabulary knowledge at Times 2, 3, 5, and 6 and comprehension

at Times 3, 5, and 6. Reading instruction was based on a balanced combination of whole-word reading and phonics, with special attention paid to general language experience. The instruction began with sight vocabulary, which then served as basis for introducing segmenting and blending of phonemes. Spelling was practiced along with decoding, and the difficulty of texts increased with time.

Findings of this comparative study showed that performance on word blending and word decoding tasks for both native and minority groups is similar, with minor differences regarding grapheme knowledge. Considerable differences appeared in spelling, with both cipher knowledge and phonemic segmentation posing visibly more difficulties for L2 learners. However, the biggest differences were recorded with regard to comprehension, with the minority children performing considerably below the level of native speakers, which is due to large differences in vocabulary knowledge. Additionally, knowledge of vocabulary was found to be more crucial in L2 reading comprehension than in L1.

The results of the research indicate that the development of oral language skills is vital as more proficient children are likely to benefit further from reading instruction. Strengthening oral language before formal reading instruction along with extensive L2 vocabulary stimulation seem to be the necessary steps to give L2 learners a better start in reading acquisition. It is imperative that linguistic development should go hand in hand with conceptual development, which ensures better comprehension. These goals can be achieved with the use of interactive storybook reading within smaller groups, and thematically organised curriculum. Encouraging learners to make connections between the content of a book and their own lives before, during and after reading is also particularly helpful. Twofold benefits are to be expected: children will develop narrative skills as well as their oral language skills, which will help them make a connection between the spoken language and its written form (Verhoven, 2000).

While the study by Verhoven (2000) demonstrated that components involved in L2 decoding develop in a similar manner as in L1, a later comparative research by Jongejan, Verhoeven & Siegel (2007) with English as the language of interest, was set to explore decoding further, and one of its goals was to identify the best predictors of decoding in L1 and L2 across grades 1-4. Thus, the study examined **whether L1 and L2 readers rely on the same early reading components and related processes**. The variables taken into consideration in the research were **phonological awareness, lexical access, syntactic awareness**, and **verbal working memory**. The study involved a group of 212 children living in urban Canada, with 48% English L1 speakers and 52% ESLs. Learners' progress was observed across grades 1 to 4 and the data was collected in grades 1, 2, 3, and 4 during 2 consecutive years; the second time researchers tested a different group of children.

Phonological awareness was assessed with a battery of tests in: initial phoneme recognition, phoneme recognition and location, phoneme deletion and substitution, stripping the initial consonant, and repeating non–words of increasing difficulty. **Lexical access** was measured with the use of a rapid naming task, while **syntactic awareness** was assessed with the use of a syntactic error judgment task. **Verbal working memory** was measured with the following procedure: children were provided orally with a number of sentences with the last word missing. Their task was to provide the missing word and then repeat all the provided words in the same order. To assess children's **decoding** the researchers tested the ability to decode single, individual words, but also frequently used words, easy words and non–words. Finally, **spelling** was measured with the use of tests in spelling real and unreal words.

The results support the view that phonological awareness plays an important role in learning to read across languages, in fact it is **the strongest predictor of decoding** in all four grades for both groups, the strongest predictor of spelling among L1 learners in grades 1 and 2, and of spelling among ESL learners in all four grades. **The next strongest predictor of L1 decoding in grades 1 and 2 and ESLs' decoding in all four grades was lexical access**. It was not correlated with L1 spelling in any of the four grades, but it was correlated with ESL spelling in grades 3 and 4. Syntactic awareness and verbal working memory were only predictive of decoding and spelling abilities among L1 learners and did not correlate with ESLs' decoding and spelling. Additionally, in a similar vein to Verhoven (2000), also Jongejan, Verhoeven & Siegel (2007) concluded that decoding develops in a similar way for both native and ESL learners, in particular phonological awareness and lexical access. Another conclusion is that syntactic awareness and verbal working memory pose more problems for ESL learners.

Lesaux, Rupp & Siegel (2007) also conducted a comparative research and investigated the development of reading components among a group of ELLs and native English children over a four year period from grade 1 to 4. The measured components were: **word** and **non-word decoding**, **spelling**, **phonological processing**, **syntactic awareness**, **working memory,** and **reading comprehension**. The specific research questions were: (1) whether there are noticeable differences in the acquisition of reading components between ELLs and native English children in pre–school and in the fourth grade, (2) what pre-school abilities are predictors of word decoding and comprehension in the fourth grade and whether they are different for ELLs and native English speakers, and (3) whether the development of word reading is different for both groups of learners, and if so, what pre–school abilities influence those differences. The participants for this study were 824 children living in Canada, 689 of whom were L1 English speakers and the remaining 135 – ELLs, speakers of 33 different foreign languages.

Learners were assessed twice over the period of 5 years: at the end of kindergarten and in the fourth grade. In kindergarten, children's performance in the following was measured: (1) letter identification, when children named 26 lowercase letters presented in random order; (2) working memory for sentences, which involved repeating sentences of various length and complexity; (3) sound mimicry test involving repetition of pseudowords of various complexity; (4) rhyme detecting test, where learners were given a picture with a target word and had to choose a rhyming word from among three other pictures; (5) syllable identification test, where the examiner pronounced the first syllable of the word based on a picture shown, and learners were to provide the missing syllable; (6) phoneme identification test, where the examiner presented the first part of the word based on a provided picture, and the children were to provide the missing phoneme; (7) phoneme deletion test, with children having to delete the initial or final phoneme of a word presented in form of a picture; (8) oral language skills test, where children heard a sentence with one word missing and were asked to complete the sentence with a word of their choice; and finally, (9) basic spelling test, where learners were required to write down some basic words along with their own names.

Fourth grade tests included: (1) reading comprehension – after reading short passages learners were asked to answer multiple choice questions within a time limit of 40 minutes; (2) word identification – reading real words of increased difficulty (after six misread words, the testing was discontinued); (3) word attack – reading out pseudowords of increasing difficulty (after six misread pseudowords the testing was discontinued); (4) 1-min real individual word reading; (5) 1-min pseudoword reading; (6) spelling – spelling real word of increased difficulty; (6) pseudoword reading and spelling. Testing also concerned (7) working memory for words and numbers, (9) auditory analysis test of real words, and (10) sentences completion with missing words (oral cloze).

The results of the research imply that despite the fact that learning to read is a more challenging task for ESLs than for native children, there is very little difference in the way learners from both groups acquire early reading components. Moreover, for both groups **letter identification**, **working memory**, **rhyme detection** and **phoneme deletion** were significant predictors of fourth-grade word reading, and **letter identification**, **working memory**, **rhyme detection** and **oral cloze** – significant predictors of growth in fourth-grade reading comprehension. Finally, **word reading components' trajectory looks strikingly similar for both groups**.

Findings of the above research projects lead to an assumption that reading acquisition in L2/FL resembles that of L1 and that similar underlying reading components need to be worked upon in both contexts. Attention should be paid to those word reading predictors that have been found to be important, for instance, phonological awareness and letter-sound knowledge, since they have

been recognised as closely connected with the growth in decoding across all languages, regardless of the level of L2 linguistic proficiency. To tackle any possible comprehension problems, the instruction should target linguistic abilities. What is more, since the first grade learners' comprehension abilities depend to a large extent on decoding and knowledge of vocabulary, the allocated time should be devoted to strengthening vocabulary instruction and development of oral linguistic skills through frequent, interactive reading of story books and thematically organised curriculum.

3.7. Focus on phonological abilities in L2/FL early reading

The majority of research studies exploring the contribution of phonological awareness to the development of early reading discussed here are longitudinal. Early reading learners are usually assessed 2 or 3 times over a study period. The initial assessment is usually carried out at the beginning of a reading course, usually at the onset of the first year of primary school, but sometimes also towards the end of kindergarten. Its purpose is to establish the level of phonological awareness and phonemic manipulation abilities acquired by children before entering school. The final assessment takes place after a period of instruction. In some cases it is carried out immedialtely after the course or an intervention programme, in other cases after a considerable time, which can extend to a number of years.

Phonological awareness and its contribution to the reading development was initially of interest mostly to L1 reading researchers, however, recently some of the L2 reading experts have also investigated the issue. Muter and Diethelm (2001), for instance, set out to answer four research questions: (1) whether phonological awareness influences reading development also in the case of L2/FL early reading; (2) if tests of phonological segmentation predict early reading development also for children of various L1s; (3) if the pattern of phonological abilities is similar or different for both English L1 and multilingual L2 children; and (4) how significant the knowledge of vocabulary, the alphabet and phonological abilities is in early reading progress.

The research was carried out with a group of multilingual children coming from various linguistic backgrounds, living in Switzerland. All the children received instruction in English. They were assessed twice: in kindergarten (Time 1) and one year later in grade 1 (Time 2). By Time 2 testing, the learners had been exposed to 2 years of formal English instruction. During the initial testing (Time 1) 22 of the 55 children were English L1 speakers (of North American, English, British, South African and Australian origin), 28 were non-English L1 speakers (French,

Yugoslavian, Turkish, Spanish, Japanese, Italian, Hungarian, Russian and Dutch), and 5 came from bilingual families (with exposure to combinations of French and English or Spanish and English). During the second data collection point 46 children were assessed: 17 native English speakers, 28 non-English speakers, and 5 speakers of mixed L1s.

The learners were tested on rhyming and phonological segmentation: blending, identification and deletion of phonemes. At both testing times they were tested on (1) rhyme detection, (2) rhyme production, (3) word completion (with an individual phoneme or syllable), (4) phoneme deletion (in both initial and final position), (5) rate of speech, and (6) letter knowledge. On the 'rhyme detection' test the children were given a target word and were to find one rhyming word from a set of words, all accompanied by a picture. During the rhyme production test they were given two target words and had to produce rhyming words for both those words within 60 seconds for each word. The syllable and phoneme completion test required the children to complete one- or two-syllable words, and the phoneme deletion test required them to remove the initial or final phoneme. During the Speech Rate test the children were to repeat the word "buttercup" 10 times at the fastest possible rate – the test was performed three times and the average result was calculated. Knowledge of the alphabet was measured with the task to provide either the names or associated phonemes for all 26 lowercase letters presented on flashcards in random order. Moreover, at Times 1 and 2 the children were assessed on receptive vocabulary, at Time 1 on the level of cognitive development and, at Time 2, on word reading, when they were to decode 42 simple but frequently encountered words (out of which 8 were irregular).

Muter and Diethelm (2001) came to a predictable conclusion that phonological awareness correlates highly with concurrent and subsequent literacy development in both L1 and L2, however, phoneme segmentation abilities are more predictive of reading success than rhyming. Apart from phonemic segmentation, for both English L1 and L2/FL children the best predictors of literacy development are also alphabet knowledge and vocabulary knolwedge. The researchers conclude that their findings "echo those of the monolingual studies, indicating that the phonological--reading association is powerful, robust, and can transcend language differences" (Muter and Diethelm, 2001, p. 216).

The prominence of phonological awareness in early reading, however, seems to undergo changes with time and growing experience in reading. Swanson, Rosston, Gerber & Solari (2008), for instance, investigated the contribution of phonological awareness and oral language skills among third year learners. The participants for this study included 68 third grade pupils, Spanish-speaking learners of English as a second language in California. Children came from lower SES families and participated in a reading intervention program. They were tested on a number of phonological awareness and oral language skills measures: phonological

segmentation and blending, reading pseudowords, word identification, passage comprehension, and syntactic awareness.

The researchers came to an interesting conclusion that once children have acquired decoding and word recognition, the significance of phonological awareness diminishes and oral language skills, in particular vocabulary and syntax knowledge become more important in reading. The results of the statistical analysis are as follows: phonological awareness provides less than 10% of the unique variance across literacy measures in third grade, compared to oral language which provides 21% of the unique variance in word recognition in English, 31% in word attack in English, 64% in word recognition in Spanish, 40% in word attack in Spanish, 43% in reading comprehension in English, and 62% in reading comprehension in Spanish. Additionally, the researchers confirmed that L2 reading success is closely correlated with L2 oral language skills.

The most salient conclusion is that instruction in early literacy should aim at strengthening phonological awareness, in particular phonemic segmentation, alphabet knowledge and vocabulary range. What is more, it is of great importance not to concentrate solely on decoding as it might lead to a situation when learners are fluent at decoding and individual word recognition, but fail in reading comprehension. Postponing oral language development until learners reach a satisfactory level of decoding and word recognition is likely to be counterproductive and stop learners form a continuous development of the reading ability.

3.8. Transfer of early reading components from L1 to L2

The purpose of the research carried out by Cardenas-Hagan, Carlson, & Pollard--Durodola (2007) was to investigate the influence of L1 early reading variables, that is knowledge of letter names and sounds, phonological awareness and oral language skills on the development of L2 reading. The participants of the study were 1016 Hispanic kindergarten ELLs living in either urban Texas, border Texas or urban California. The children were initially assessed after six weeks of instruction and the second time – six weeks before the end of school year, both times in Spanish (L1) and English (L2) variables.

Children's knowledge of both the English (26 letters) and Spanish (30 letters) alphabets was measured by identifying all the letters and providing at least one sound associated with each letter. The dependent measure was the total percentage of names and sounds that was identified correctly. Phonological awareness was measured with the use of five subtests: elision (phoneme and syllable deletion), blending phonemes into words, blending phonemes into non-words, segmenting words into phonemes, and phoneme matching (first sound and last sound). Oral language skills were measured with the following tests: memory for sentences

(repeating phrases and sentences), picture vocabulary (naming familiar and unfamiliar objects in pictures), oral vocabulary knowledge (providing synonyms and antonyms), listening comprehension (an oral cloze), and verbal analogies: the learners complete a logical word relationship, where based on a provided pair of words, i.e. *pitch – football*, learners decide what word out of four provided should go with another word, i.e. *court*: _____, whether it is a) poker, b) jury, c) grass, or d) squash [the analogical word is *squash*, because of the place where both sports are usually played.

The findings illuminate (a) the progress in the early reading components measured, and (b) the relationship between L1 and L2 components. First of all, the initial testing showed that at the beginning the level of letter names and letter–sound correspondences in both Spanish and English was comparable – students responded correctly to about one third of the items. The level of phonological awareness was also similar as about one fourth of the responses were successful. Considerable differences were only observable with respect to oral language skills. Testing towards the end of the school year showed significant gains in letter names and letter–sounds correspondences – around 70 % of correct responses. Also learners' phonological awareness developed, with correct responses reaching about 40%. However, the gains in oral language skills in Spanish and English were minimal. The influence of Spanish (L1) early reading components observed at the initial testing on English (L2) components at the latter testing was also measured.

The findings of the research showed the following: regarding letter name and sound identification, there was a significant influence in both directions. For those learners who exhibited lower levels of knowledge in English letter name and sound relationship at the initial testing, the relationship between initial Spanish early reading components and latter English ones was positive and significant. This occurred in case of both Spanish and English instruction. As for phonological awareness, for those children who underwent instruction in Spanish, both English and Spanish initial phonological awareness level contributed to the latter level of phonological awareness in English. For English instruction, initial phonological awareness level in Spanish did not influence the latter English phonological awareness level. Regarding the oral language skills, its English and Spanish levels at the initial testing influenced English oral language skills within instruction in Spanish. When the instruction was in English, level of oral language skills in Spanish did not influence the latter English oral language skills.

The implications for educators suggest that while teaching literacy to ELLs teachers should introduce strategy training and should carefully plan the language of instruction. What the researchers recommend is that learners receive instruction in their L1 first, and only after some time they proceed to literacy instruction and reading texts in L2. Besides, it is recommended that literacy teachers should have a clear understanding of the "orthographic, phonemic, semantic, and alphabetic

similarities and differences between L1 and L2" (Cardenas-Hagan, Carlson, & Pollard-Durodola, 2007) so that they have the necessary knowledge to enable both the development of pre-reading abilities and their transfer. Additionally, teachers should take both languages into consideration rather than concentrate on L2 only.

In a more recent study Feinauer, Hall-Kenyon, & Davison (2013) analysed cross-linguistic transfer of both constraint and unconstraint early reading components from L1 to L2 at the onset and after one year of early reading instruction. The cohort included 174 kindergarten to grade 1 pupils, both of Spanish and English L1, attending a bilingual immersion program in a US elementary school. Learners received literacy instruction in L1, and were exposed to L2 for about 35 minutes every day. During L2 lessons instruction concentrated on the oral language development in form of small group conversations on books read in class, listening to class readings and vocabulary development. Children were tested in the following: letter and word identification, reading fluency, passage comprehension, word attack, picture vocabulary, reading vocabulary and sounds.

The researchers reached a number of conclusions. The first conclusion was that there is clear evidence for the interdependence of L1 and L2 components and cross-linguistic transfer. The second is that the evidence supports providing learners with the literacy instruction in their native language. Another conclusion is that the level of proficiency affects cross-linguistic transfer, that is learners with low L2 proficiency level showed large effect sizes for the transfer of constraint elements (alphabetic knowledge, grapheme-phoneme correspondences, and phonological awareness), while learners with higher L1 and L2 proficiency level showed large effect sizes for the transfer of the unconstraint components (reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge).

Also Melby-Lervåg & Lervåg (2011), in their meta-analysis, investigated cross-linguistic transfer, in particular between the learners' oral language skills, decoding, phonological abilities and comprehension. They analysed the findings of 47 studies, conducted between 1975 and 2009, with 52 groups of participants and the total number of 4,413 individual bilingual learners between 6 and 10. They proposed the following hypotheses:

1. cross-linguistic transfer is weaker in more complex early reading components, i.e. in oral language, than in simpler components, i.e. in phonological abilities;
2. learners' socioeconomic status, language used at school, and similarities between L1 and L2 will moderate the differences between the participants; and
3. transfer from L1 oral language skills and decoding abilities to L2 comprehension will occur, as established by other studies.

To measure phonological awareness, the researchers took into consideration those tasks, which required various types of phoneme, rhyme or syllable manipulation. Testing decoding involved tests in reading fluency, reading accuracy

of words and non–words, and sentence or passage decoding, while oral language skills were tested through tests in receptive vocabulary with the use of pictures, expressive vocabulary and listening comprehension. Finally, comprehension was measured with the task of answering multiple answer questions based on read passages. The moderators included: intelligence, age of L2 acquisition, length of residence in the L2 country for both learners and their parents, level of L2 fluency among parents, motivational aspects, learners' age, differences between L1 and L2 languages (Indo-European or non-Indo-European L1 vs. English as L2), writing system (idiographic L1 vs. alphabetic L2), language of instruction (only L2 or both L1 and L2), language spoken at home (only L1 or both), and SES (high, middle or low).

As anticipated, the findings suggest that cross-linguistic transfer between L1 and L2 is significant in more constraint, phonological abilities but weaker in less constraint ones, e.g. in oral language. Secondly, for decoding, transfer was especially stronger if learners received instruction in both L1 and L2 than only in L1 (which may be due to raised meta–linguistic awareness), and in the case of alphabetic L1. Finally, only decoding was strongly correlated with L2 reading comprehension. There was no correlation between L1 oral language skills and L2 reading comprehension.

The majority of the above discussed studies are longitudinal in nature. The purpose of such study design is the possibility of observing how certain reading subcomponents develop over time and under certain instructional conditions. Table 3.1. presents a summary of research findings relevant for the present study.

Table 3.1. Summary of research findings relevant for the present study.

STUDY	SUBJECTS	VARIABLES INVESTIGATED	GOALS OF THE STUDY	MAIN FINDINGS
COMPARING DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY READING COMPONENTS IN L1 AND L2				
Verhoeven (2000)	2,143 primary school learners (1,812 Dutch L1 learners and 331 Dutch L2 learners) living in the Netherlands;	Word decoding Spelling Vocabulary Reading comprehension;	To compare the rate of acquisition of the investigated variables among L1 and L2 learners, and how the variables influenced decoding, spelling, and comprehension in L1 and L2;	L2 children fall behind in all variables except for spelling, vocabulary knowledge being their weakest ability; First grade comprehension is largely connected with decoding and vocabulary.
Jongejan, Verhoeven & Siegel (2007)	212 children living in Canada – 48% L1 speakers and 52% ESLs speakers of Chinese, Gujarati, Urdu, and Greek;	Phonological awareness, Lexical access, Syntactic Awareness, Verbal working memory, Decoding, Spelling;	To compare the levels of the mastery of the phonological awareness, word and pseudoword reading, word and pseudoword spelling among L1 and L2 children and to examine if phonological awareness, lexical access, syntactic awareness, and verbal working memory predict the L1 and L2 word reading and spelling;	L1 and L2 children show similar levels of phonological awareness, word and pseudoword reading, word and pseudoword spelling. Phonological awareness and lexical access play equally vital role in L1 and L2 word reading in grades 1-2, however, after some time the predictability of the component processes of L1 and L2 word reading and spelling changes. Verbal working memory and syntactic awareness predict word reading and spelling in L1, while. lexical access predicts L2 word reading and spelling.

Lesaux, Rupp & Siegel (2007)	824 Canadian children – 689 English L1 speakers and 135 ELLs, with Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean, Spanish, Polish, or Farsi as L1;	Working memory, Phonological processing, Syntactic awareness, Word and non-word reading (1-min), Spelling, Comprehension;	To compare the rate and trajectory of the development of early reading components between L1 and ELLs over a period of five years (K-4); To investigate what pre-school abilities predict word decoding and comprehension in the grade 4;	The results of the research imply that there is very little difference in the way L1 and ELL children from both groups acquire the reading skill; Word reading in L1 learners and ELLs in grade 4 correlated with the same pre-school abilities.
RESEARCH ON THE IMPORTANCE OF PHONOLOGICAL ABILITIES				
Muter and Diethelm (2001)	L1 English and ESL of various L1 backgrounds, bilingual speakers of French and English or Spanish and English;	Rhyming Phonological abilities: Segmentation, Blending, Phoneme identification, Phoneme deletion;	To investigate whether phonological awareness can be predictive also in the case of L2/FL early reading;	Phonological awareness highly correlates with concurrent and subsequent literacy development in both L1 and L2, For both English L1 and L2/FL children the best predictors of literacy development are alphabet knowledge, phonological segmentation and vocabulary knowledge.

Swanson, Rosston, Gerber & Solari (2008)	68 third grade Spanish-L1 English L2 learners living in California;	Phonemic segmenting, Phonemic blending in English and Spanish, Reading pseudowords, Word identification, Passage comprehension, Receptive and productive English and Spanish vocabulary, Syntactic knowledge;	To investigate the contribution of phonological awareness and oral language skills in L2 reading;	Phonological awareness no longer correlates with third grade reading, Oral language skills provide 21% of the unique variance in word recognition in English, 31% in word attack in English, 64% in word recognition in Spanish, 40% in word attack in Spanish, 43% in reading comprehension in English, and 62% in reading comprehension in Spanish. L2 reading success is closely correlated with L2 oral language skills.
RESEARCH ON TRANSFER OF EARLY READING COMPONENTS FROM L1 TO L2				
Cardenas-Hagan,Carlson & Pollard-Durodola (2007)	1016 Hispanic kindergarten ELLs living in the USA;	Alphabet knowledge; Phonological abilities: Phoneme elision, Phonemic blending (words, non-words), Phonemic segmenting, Sound matching, Linguistic proficiency tests: Listening Comprehension, Picture Vocabulary, Verbal Analogy;	To investigate the influence of L1 early reading variables (i.e. knowledge of letter names and sounds, phonological awareness and oral language skills) and the influence of the language of instruction on the development of L2 reading;	L1 letter name and sound knowledge correlates with their counterparts in L1; L2 instruction impacts positively L2 early literacy components; cross-linguistic transfer of phonological awareness is characterised as significant and direct.

Feinauer, Hall-Kenyon & Davison (2013)	174 kindergarten to grade 1 pupils, both of Spanish and English L1, attending a bilingual immersion program in the USA;	Letter, Word identification, Reading fluency, Passage comprehension, Word attack, Picture vocabulary, Reading vocabulary and sound awareness;	To investigate cross-linguistic transfer of both constraint and unconstraint early reading components from L1 to L2 at the onset and after one year of early reading instruction. Learners received literacy instruction in L1, and were exposed to L2 for about 35 minutes every day;	There is clear evidence for cross-linguistic transfer; The lower the L2 proficiency level, the larger effect sizes for the transfer of constraint components (alphabetic knowledge, grapheme-phoneme correspondences, and phonological awareness), while the higher L1 and L2 proficiency level the larger effect sizes for the transfer of unconstraint components (reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge).
Melby-Lervåg & Lervåg (2011)	52 groups of participants and the total number of 4,413 individual bilingual learners between the age 6 and 10;	Phonological awareness (manipulation of phonemes, rhymes or syllables); Decoding Reading fluency, Reading accuracy of words and non-words, and sentence or passage decoding tests; Receptive vocabulary, Expressive vocabulary, Listening comprehension, Reading comprehension;	To compare the significance of cross-linguistic transfer of more complex abilities (oral language) and in simpler ones (phonological abilities); To investigate if SES, language used at school, and L1-L2 distance moderate differences between the participants; To confirm findings of other studies regarding the transfer between L1 oral language skills and decoding abilities to L2 reading comprehension;	Cross-linguistic transfer between L1 and L2 phonological abilities is significant, but not for oral language skills. Transfer was stronger if learners received instructions in both L1 and L2 than only in L1, and when L1 was also alphabetic. Only decoding abilities were strongly correlated with L2 reading comprehension, and the younger the learners the higher the correlation. There was no correlation between L1 oral language skills and L2 reading comprehension.

♦ ♦ ♦

To sum up, bilingual early readers differ in their target language experience, which naturally influences the process of learning reading in that language. As it can be expected, readers with frequent exposure to the target language, and/or whose native language shares some features with the target language, are more likely to achieve success. What needs to be remembered is that when learning to read in additional languages, the quality and quantity of the language that the learners are exposed to plays a significant role, and that although the level of linguistic development at the onset of learning to read is often quite low, the reading learners can rely on what they have at their disposal in terms of metacognitive and metalinguistic awareness. Polish learners of reading in English, for instance, do rely on the knowledge of the Roman alphabet and familiarity with at least some letter-sound connections, however, it is insufficient if they are to become independent, motivated readers in English.

The reading methodology guidelines need to clarify the linguistic differences that affect the process of learning to recognize words in the target language, and, more importantly, reading educators need to understand these differences to be able to apply such knowledge in their teaching. On a more practical note, Polish learners of early reading in English should be given the opportunity to develop the key word recognition components that are part of reading instruction in English as a native language, that is alphabetic knowledge, grapheme-phoneme correspondences, phonics, sight word reading, fluency, vocabulary or oral language skills. Additionally, the presence of cross-linguistic transfer can be used to the learners' advantage through direct instruction pointing both to the L1-L2 similarities (i.e. the shared writing system, the alphabetic principle, the shared alphabet) as well as to the differences. The description of the empirical part of the author's doctoral thesis to follow contains an in-depth report on the research study designed and conducted in order to contribute to the understanding of the development of word recognition by early readers of English as a foreign language.

Part Two

A STUDY OF IMPROVEMENT IN WORD RECOGNITION COMPONENTS OF SIX POLISH FIRST GRADE EFL LEARNERS

Chapter 4

Design, method and results of the study

Methodology of the study which investigated the development of word recognition among a group of six primary Polish learners of English and a discussion on the data collected are presented in the following chapter. The study participants were involved in an early EFL reading course aiming to develop their word recognition, reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge, which were to be measured throughout the course by means of a special set of tests designed for the purpose of the study. The reader will get acquainted with tests used in the current study, that is letter naming, letter-sound matching, sight word reading, phonemic decoding, contextual word reading, reading comprehension and vocabulary tests as well as learner profiles. The results of the tests are analysed and interpreted, and the correlations among the word recognition test results are provided along with the six learner profiles. The chapter rounds off with the summary of the findings, limitations of the current study and implications for EFL teachers concerning early reading instruction.

4.1. Purpose and research questions

The discussion carried out in the theoretical part of this monograph has demonstrated that reading skill is quite complex and that reading success depends on an array of internal and external factors. Reading development in L1 can be cognitively demanding on the learners, but even more so in case of a foreign language context. To ensure learner success in reading in English, teaching reading at the initial stages requires thorough preparation on part of the teacher, that is they need a deep understanding of the intricate parts of the process, for example word recognition components, and the appropriate and well-timed instructional solutions. The study described below, whose aim is to shed some light on the

educational solutions and their results, is grounded on the theoretical considerations in Chapters 1, 2 and 3 and on the recent research results gathered and analysed in Chapter 4.

Early 6 month reading instruction course designed for the purpose of the empirical

study has been developed on the basis of several models defining the components of early reading with the stress put on word recognition (Krasowicz-Kupis, 2004, Paris 2005, National Reading, Panel, 2000; McCormack & Pasquarelli, 2010; Scanlon, Anderson, & Sweeney, 2010), and ELL (Barone & Hong Xu, 2008). Although the researchers mentioned introduced different categories to define early reading subcomponents, they found it basic to cover such issues as alphabetic knowledge, phonological awareness, phonics and decoding, oral reading fluency, comprehension and vocabulary. The tests which made it possible to carry out the longitudinal study carried out by the current author, designed for the purpose of this study were based on a set of tests introduced by Krasowicz-Kupis (2008), that is the reason why they aimed to assess alphabetic knowledge (letter names and letter-sound correspondences), sight word reading, phonemic decoding, reading comprehension and vocabulary.

My study was undertaken in an attempt to expand on the research available and partially discussed in Chapter 4 concerning the development of L2/FL reading, as no such research, to my knowledge, has been carried out so far among Polish early readers of English. Drawing from the wealth of data provided by other researchers, I seek an answer to the research questions listed below:

Research question 1:

Will there be changes in the development of the learners' following word recognition subcomponents:

1. letter naming,
2. letter-sound matching,
3. sight word reading,
4. phonemic decoding,
5. contextual word reading?

Research Question 2:

Will there be changes in the learners' gains on reading comprehension tests?

Research Question 3:

Will there be changes in the learners' gains on vocabulary knowledge tests?

Research question 4:

To what extent will the word recognition subcomponents develop in the particular learners?

Research Question 5: Will there be a correlation among the results of the tests on the word recognition subcomponents for the whole group of the study participants and for the individual learners?

4.2. Design

In order to explore the development of word recognition in reading in English by Polish lower primary school learners, the current study has been planned so as to comply with the principles of a longitudinal design. Thus the study followed a research methodology of a multiple case study. This type of study design was found to be appropriate to collect a sufficient amount of data on how major components of word recognition in early reading by Polish learners of English would develop over time under well-informed, professionally prepared instruction.

The aim of the current study is to gain insight into the dynamics of the improvement of the word recognition components in Polish primary learners of English as assessed by: letter naming, letter-sound matching, sight word reading, phonemic decoding, and contextualised word reading. Correspondingly, two other crucial components of reading development in a foreign language, that is comprehension and vocabulary knowledge were examined. Throughout the period of six months of the instruction four testing sessions were carried out so as to measure the changes in the participants' efficiency in the areas of interest. Before the study proper started, the learners had been exposed to a two month pre-literacy period of the English language teaching which aimed at enhancing their listening and speaking, phonological awareness and the improvement of alphabetic knowledge. At the onset of the EFL reading training period the learners' performance in their early reading components in Polish was assessed to ensure that at least some basic levels had been mastered (see Section 4.4.1.). Table 4.1. below shows a general design of the study, with its division into the pre-literacy and early EFL reading periods of instruction.

Table 4.1. The plan of the current study.

PRE-LITERACY INSTRUCTION IN ENGLISH (2 month course)		
Number of 60 minute sessions	Instructional focus	Types of tests used
14	Oral language development 1. Developing phonological awareness 2. Recognising English phonemes Enhancing alphabetic knowledge Comprehension skills: 3. Listening comprehension 4. Vocabulary expansion	Informal teacher assessment
Assessment of the learners' early reading subcomponents in Polish		"Reading tests for six-year-olds" by Krasowicz-Kupis (2008)

EARLY EFL READING INSTRUCTION (6 month course)			
Number of 90 minute sessions	Instructional focus	Testing times	Early reading components assessed
12	Building word recognition: – Letter naming, letter-sound matching, – Sight vocabulary reading – Phonemic decoding – Reading fluency practice Oral language development Comprehension tasks Vocabulary expansion Spelling practice	1	Word recognition: – Letter knowledge – Sight vocabulary – Phonemic decoding Contextual word reading Reading comprehension Vocabulary knowledge
8		2	
10		3	
10		4	

The form of the multiple case study has been chosen for the current study as it has been found particularly valuable to reach the goals set. It is worth looking then at some of its features that determine the way the research data are described and analysed. First of all, a case study, as a research method, has been frequently used to evaluate the linguistic development in L1 and L2 context so as to provide a close observation of one or more subjects' performance in extended time (Rokita, 2007, p. 69). Apart from this, "[i]n general, case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" or "why" questions are being posed […] to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena" (Yin, 2003, p. 1).

What is also of great importance is that case studies can rely on both quantitative and qualitative data (Yin, 2003, p. 14), with both types of data contributing to a more complete picture of the phenomenon investigated. What is more, it relies on naturalistic observations, allows the researcher to assume the position close to the subjects, it is exploratory and descriptive in nature, and it is process-oriented. In contrast, quantitative data is generally focused on facts and takes form of a controlled measurement, which determines its high objectivity while allowing distance from the subjects. It is outcome-oriented, and its frequent purpose is to verify or confirm some hypothesis by obtaining "hard" data (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 2014, p. 55).

Yet, conducting a case study can be perceived both in terms of its advantages and disadvantages. Among the former, one could mention it being "a comprehensive research strategy" (Yin, 2003, p. 14). Another advantage is that it has proven to be particularly feasible in the case of small-scale research investigating individual learner differences (Rokita, 2007, p. 69). Among the concerns voiced with regard to the case study research method are: (1) lack of rigour caused by not having to adhere to a rigid set of procedures resulting in the possibility that some evidence can be reported unfairly, (2) little generalization potential, or (3) the vast amount of documents to be examined (Yin, 2003, pp. 10-11). Additionally, conducting a case study can be difficult for such practical reasons as finding an appropriate number of subjects that share some common features. The participants of the study can differ so much in their results that this can lead to difficulties with generalization and cross-subject comparisons (Rokita, 2007, pp. 69-70).

Despite all its weaknesses, a case study seems to be the best methodology to be adopted for the current research as it is most likely to provide a satisfactory analysis of the learners' performance on early reading tasks, in particular with respect to their word recognition, as well as to arrive at profiles of individual learners involved in the process of the acquisition of L2 reading. On balance, a mixed design offers an adequate combination of both qualitative and quantitative data.

4.3. Setting and participants

The instructional sessions which involved the participants in ealry EFL reading training were organised and conducted in form of private teaching by the current researcher. The six children who participated in the sessions attended the same first grade in the nearby primary school and knew each other. Their parents appreciated that their children were given the opportunity to benefit from a quality English course. All the sessions were conducted in a room specially arranged for the purpose so that it could ensure a print-friendly atmophere. The children were sourounded with bookshelves full of children's books in English to reach for, as well as with

some toys. A computer available in the room was one of the basic teaching aids and was used by the teacher in all the sessions.

At the commencement of the early EFL reading course Zuzanna P. was at the age of 6 years and 2 months (74 months), Karolina and Szymon were at the age of 6 years and 5 months (77 months), Zuzanna S. was 6 years and 7 months old (79 months), Marcel was 7 years and 7 months (91months) old, and the oldest child, Jakub, was 7 years and 11 months (95 months) old.

the six participants could be placed at the beginner level of English proficiency. Before entering school, the learners had attended English classes in kindergarten (1 x 30 minutes of English per week, five out of six participants for as long as 2 years, one participant for 3 years). At school they were exposed to two 45 minute lessons of English per week in groups of 22 pupils. For two months prior to the early EFL reading course, the learners were additionally exposed to two 60 min. English lessons a week (the pre-literacy period of instruction) conducted by the researcher. By the time the learners entered the actual course, they had been exposed to the English language, though in a rather non-intensive way, for at least two and a half years.

By the time the EFL early reading course began, all the children had a clear understanding of what literacy involves and had knowledge of the following: shapes of most of the letters in the Roman alphabet, many Polish letter names and sounds, selected English letter names and sounds, and print conventions. Besides, the learners had reached a high level of phonological and phonemic awareness, and could read simple words. According to the authors specializing in early ESL and EFL reading instruction, the above abilities are necessary so that formal literacy instruction in the second or foreign language can commence (e.g. Brewster, Ellis & Girard, 2002; Cameron, 2001; Gunderson, D'Silva, & Odo, 2014; Nation, 2009).

4.4. Research instruments

The data collection for the study was possible due to the use the following research instruments:

1. A set of tests of early reading subcomponents in Polish,
2. A set of tests of word recognition in early reading in English,
3. Tests in reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge,
4. Learner profiles.

All the testing sessions the student participated in were recorded for the purpose of the subsequent analysis.

4.4.1. A set of tests of early reading components in Polish

The first set of tests was used to verify if the learners represent a minimal level of early reading in Polish and can participate in the early EFL reading training in English. The tests come from the "Reading tests for six-year-olds" by Krasowicz-Kupis (2008), and they were designed to measure (a) letter naming, (b) text reading, (c) individual word reading, and (d) reading comprehension.

The letter-name test was to evaluate the learners' familiarity with the Polish alphabet. In the test the learners were shown 31 upper-case letters, including the ones with diacritics, that is Ą, Ę, Ć, Ś, Ź, Ń. The letters were arranged randomly, except for letters L and Ł, which appeared in alphabetical order. The children's task was to name as many letters as possible within 1 minute. The score was the number of correctly named letters within the time limit.

The text reading test made it possible to evaluate the learners' ability to read a connected text aloud by measuring how many words per minute the learners could read. The 50 words used in the text came from coursebooks intended for six-year-old learners of Polish as a native language. The nine text sentences were composed of words of various length. The characters used in the passage included a boy called Janek, his mother, and animals (a tiger and a fox). The score was the number of words read correctly within the time limit.

The next test was used to assess the learners' performance in reading words out of context. The 38 words used in the test were of various length (between 2 and 10 letters, or 1 and 4 syllables) and were unconnected to each other. The learners were asked to read the words aloud in the order they were presented in for up to 1 minute. The score was the number of words read correctly within the time limit.

Comprehension test was the last to be administered. The learners were presented with 10 simple illustrations, each accompanied by a set of two sentences. A number of sentence pairs included words phonetically similar so as to avoid guessing. In each set only one of the sentences corresponded to a particular illustration. The learners' task was to look at the illustrations, read the two sentences, and indicate the corresponding one. The learners were given 1 minute to complete the task. The score was the number of correct sentences indicated in the time limit.

4.4.2. A set of tests of word recognition components in early reading in English

When deciding upon the choice of the tests to assess the development of early reading subcomponents in English by a group of Polish learners – the subjects of the current study – the recommendations of Polish researchers Krasowicz-Kupis, Bogdanowicz & Wiejak (2015) were followed. They claim that adequate testing tasks should focus on accuracy and fluency of reading, text comprehension, as well

as the preferred word reading strategies used by learners. The tests used in assessing the knowledge of the alphabet, word reading and comprehension in the current study had a graphic form similar to that used in "Reading tests for six-year-olds" by Krasowicz-Kupis (2008). The test items that were developed for the purpose of this study were based on the syllabus adopted for the early EFL reading instruction period. The Vocabulary assessment test was designed on the basis of a vocabulary test called "Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test – Fourth edition" by Dunn & Dunn (2007). It is worth noticing that so far no grade-based or age-based standardised tests in early EFL reading components have been designed for Polish primary learners.

4.4.2.1. Letter-name and letter-sound tests

As discussed in Section 2.2.2., knowledge of the alphabet is a crucial factor in learning to read in an alphabetic language and it is indispensable for the development of efficient word recognition (Ehri & McCormick, 1998; Israel, 2008; Paris, 2005; Scanlon, Anderson & Sweeney, 2010).

In the current study, the participants' knowledge of the English alphabet was measured with two tests: the **Letter naming test** and the **Letter-sound matching test**. Each of the tests appeared in the four versions to be used at four different testing times (see Appendices F and G). Letter-naming is considered to be one of the best predictors of future reading success as it helps learners make the connection between spoken and written form of the language, and additionally facilitates the acquisition of letter-sound correspondences (Adams, 1990; Scanlon & Vellutino, 1996). The knowledge of letter-sound relationships ensures a more advanced level of phonological awareness and the development of the ability to isolate individual phonemes, which can be drawn upon in decoding unfamiliar words (Treiman & Rodriguez, 1999).

In creating both letter-naming and letter-sound tests, as already mentioned, the letter-naming tests from the "Reading tests for six-year-olds" (Krasowicz-Kupis, 2008) were adapted. Horizontal lists of lower and upper case letters seem to be arranged randomly, however, great care was taken to ensure that no sequence of letters appears in alphabetical order. Such an arrangement helps avoid a situation when learners use, for instance, the knowledge of the ABC song in naming letters. It has to be pointed out that a parallel sequence of letters was used to assess letter names and letter-sound connections at all testing times. Additionally, the first and the last tests were identical. The risk that children would remember the letter-grid used at Time 1 reappearing at Time 4 was minimal due to the fact that it was administered 5 months later.

Both alphabet-based tasks follow the so-called continuous-list procedure and their score is the number of letters named properly within 1 minute. This procedure

is typically followed in other letter-naming tests, for instance in the Texas Primary Reading Inventory – Letter Name Identification by Foorman, Fletcher et al. (2002) or in the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills – Letter Naming Fluency by Good & Kaminski (2002). Both lower and upper case letters are displayed randomly on a card. It is important to mention that in order to increase the tests' reliability, instead of using just a sample of letters, the current author included all the 26 letters of the English alphabet in the tests. Following the rule, a number of letters in the test were presented in upper case, and the remaining ones in lower case. The letters in the letter grid were printed in Bookman Old Style font size 38 bold to make them easily decipherable and their shape clearly distinguishable.

Apart from providing information about the improvement of the learners' alphabetic knowledge, the tests were also used to determine how difficult to learn for the subjects were the particular letter-names and letter-sounds.

4.4.2.2. Sight word reading tests

Tests in reading sight words (irregularly spelt words familiar to the study participants) were designed to assess the learners' ability to identify words as whole orthographic units. As empirically proved, recognising words at sight is one of the most efficient ways of arriving at the meaning of words in reading due to its speed and automaticity (Ehri, 1995; Ehri & Saltmarsh, 1995). One of the often used tests of sight words recognition is the Test of Word Reading Efficiency – Second Edition (TOWRE-2) by Torgesen, Wagner, & Rashotte (2012), where children are required to read as many real words printed on a card as possible within 45 seconds, or the Letter-Word Identification (Woodcock & Johnson, 1989), requiring recognition of both familiar and unfamiliar words.

Test items used for the purpose of the current study were presented in vertical lists. They were unconnected to each other, and exceptions to spelling rules, so that they could not be identified through phonemic decoding. What is more, the sight words used in the tests were of various length and difficulty, but of equally high frequency. The learners were asked to read aloud as many words as they could within 1 minute, and the score was the number of correctly recognised words within that time. Each word list contained 10 words selected from the reading texts that were used throughout the early EFL reading training period sessions. Table 4.2. presents sight word lists used at Times 1-4.

Table 4.2. Sight words included in four sight word reading tests.

SIGHT WORDS USED IN THE TESTS			
Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4
tall	funny	brother	teacher
tree	table	car	chair
night	sky	see	wow
beautiful	flowers	snake	behind
island	mountains	said	beach
sea	she	hear	ouch
jungle	scared	tiger	fall
what	doing	playing	eating
they	the	girl	people
whose	t-shirt	these	jeans

Apart from determining the number of words read correctly as sight vocabulary, the tests were also used to analyse which sight words seemed to be the easiest and the most difficult to acquire; examples of such words are provided. The score is the number of words recognised correctly at sight out of all the words read from the lists.

4.4.2.3. Phonemic decoding tests

Identifying printed words which are not yet familiar to the reader is possible through phonemic decoding, and the **phonemic decoding tests** used in the study aimed at assessing how well learners apply their knowledge of graphemes and their corresponding phonemes to decode unfamiliar words. According to Rathvon (2004), "[p]seudowords (…) are pronounceable combinations of letters that conform to English spelling rules but that either are not real English words or occur with very low frequency" (p. 138). Pseudoword reading is considered a powerful predictor of word identification and reading disabilities among early readers (Carver, 2003; Vellutino, Scanlon, & Tanzman, 1994).

Among other standardised measures of pseudoword decoding, also aimed at first grade learners is The DIBELS Nonsense Word Fluency, part of the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills 6th Edition designed by Good and Kaminksy (2002). Here, the words are of similar difficulty, and the score is the number of correct items produced in 1 minute. Another similar measure is the Test of Word Reading Efficiency–Second Edition (TOWRE-2) by Torgesen, Wagner, & Rashotte (2012), where children are required to read as many pseudowords as possible within 45 seconds.

Pseudowords were used to assess the automaticity of phonological decoding because real words might be known to learners as sight vocabulary and thus distort the results. Because pseudowords lack lexical entries and learners had not encountered them before, decoding pseudowords requires phonemic segmentation and the application of the grapheme-phoneme correspondences. It might be stated that learners decode pseudowords by analogy. While this cannot be avoided, it seems rather unlikely, as the analogy strategy is usually characteristic of more advanced reading learners. According to Ehri & McCormick (1998) phonological decoding is characteristic of children at the onset of the full alphabetic phase of learning to decode words, while reading by analogy is usually employed by children at the end of this phase.

Test items included syllabus-based phonemes and graphemes arranged into pseudowords, which were created according to the principle of modifying familiar words by changing one element, like the initial consonant, the vowel, or the final consonant. In the case of short vowel words the onsets of familiar words were modified by changing the initial consonant (i.e. *dad – fad*, *pig – lig*, or *foot – moot*), except for the word *up*, which was modified by changing the final consonant (*up – ut*); in familiar words with the digraph *sh*, the vowel was changed (i.e. *ship – shap*, *fish – fesh*), familiar words with digraph *ch* were modified by changing the vowel sound or the final consonant (i.e. *lunch – lench*, or *chip – chim*), and in familiar words with graphemes *oo*, *-ng*, and *ck*, the initial consonant was changed. Table 4.3. presents criteria for creating pseudowords used in the tests in the current study.

Table 4.3. Pseudowords created for the test used in the current study.

Grapheme –phoneme connection	**Pseudowords created (phonological decoding tests)**	**Adopted criteria**
'a' – /æ/	cat – dat, dad – fad, cap – pap, mad – rad	Initial or final consonants of known words were changed
'e' – /e/	pet – tet, red – ped, jet – ret, pen – nen	
'i' – /I/	pig – nig, dig – lig, hit – mit, lip – bip	
'u' – /ʌ/	sun – tun, mug – pug, bus – lus, up – ut	
'o' – /ɒ/	dog – nog, fox – lox, hop – rop, dot – sot	
'sh' – /ʃ/	shop – shap, ship – shup, fish – fesh, dish – dosh	Vowels or final consonants in known words were changed
'ch' – /tʃ/	chip – chim, chess – chet, munch – minch, lunch – lench	

'oo' – /ʊ/ or /uː/	book – dook, foot – moot, cook – sook, pool – zool	Initial consonants of known words were changed
'ng' – /ŋ/	pong – mong, sing – ping, song – jong, king – ting	
'ck' – /k/	sock – nock, tick – fick, duck – puck, pick – zick	

The learners' task was to decode as many pseudowords as possible in under 1 minute. The score was the number of correctly decoded pseudowords within the time limit. The results of these tests were also used to determine what syllabus-based phoneme-grapheme correspondences were the easiest and the most difficult to master.

4.4.2.4. Contextual word reading tests

As stated in Section 1.2.1., competent reading depends on the automaticity of word recognition. In the current study, contextual word reading was measured by analyzing the recordings of the learners' reading aloud four continuous texts, constructed by the author-researcher. The length of the reading passages varied: the longest had 37 words and the shortest 31. The texts were narrative and descriptive in nature and occasionally contained short dialogues; they were also curriculum-based and appropriate for the children's instructional level. No pictorial clues were provided as illustrations assist readers in reading comprehension and word recognition. Reading the passages was timed, and after 1 minute reading was interrupted. If the children wanted to continue reading they were allowed to do so, however, scoring was discontinued. When assessing contextual word reading, the current author established how many of all the words read within the time limit were read correctly.

4.4.3. Tests in reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge

The comprehension tests used in the study were also closely based on language material covered by the course syllabus. Each test was constructed on the basis of a drawing which provided the visual input clearly connected with the linguistic aspects taught during one of the previously completed sequences. Each test included 4 items consisting of two sentences each. In every sentence pair, only one matched the drawing. The children's task was to take a close look at the drawing so as to have no doubt about its content; this part of the testing was not timed. When children indicated that they were ready, the test items were uncovered and the timing began. The learners were to decide if they wanted to read the sentences

silently or aloud. After reading sentences from each item, the children marked the answers on the answer sheet. The score was the sum of correct responses provided within 1 minute. A similar procedure is followed in the Sentence Sense subtest of the Process Assessment of the Learner: Test Battery for Reading and Writing (Berninger, 2001) designed for grades K-6. Here the learners also choose one sentence out of a set and are timed.

The **vocabulary knowledge** tests were designed as a quick estimate of receptive syllabus-based vocabulary. The children were presented with 10 drawings, each accompanied by three words. The learners' task was to choose and underline the word representing the person, the animal or the object shown in the illustration.

As stated above, the design of the vocabulary knowledge test was inspired by a popular standardised test, that is The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test – Fourth Edition, designed by Dunn & Dunn (2007), a norm-referenced tool aiming to measure receptive vocabulary, administered individually. The examiner calls out a word and the learner is to identify the corresponding picture out of four on a page. Here the pictures are large (four pictures per an A4 size card). The test can be used for various research purposes, also with learners who are not native speakers of English.

4.4.4. Learner profiles

Over the period of the study the learners' profiles were created so as to complement the data needed to answer the research questions. The profiles were based on the information obtained from the parents concerning the learners' reading performance and EFL learning experience prior to the early EFL reading course, and on the observations of the learners' reading development during the course. By introducing learner profiles, the present author aims at providing an additional source of data contributing to the comprehensive description of the subjects' progress in early reading, with the focus on word recognition. The qualitative data gathered by the current researcher during the early EFL reading course allows to make a number of insightful observations concerning e.g. the learners' reading motivation, and to identify the potential difficulties in word recognition or comprehension.

4.5. Procedure and data collection

This chapter presents the structure of the early EFL reading course the learners participated in and its implementation over a six-month period. Hence, the way in which the instructional sequences and sessions were organised are discussed in

great detail. Apart from this, the way in which the quantitative data was collected is given due consideration.

4.5.1. The main stages of an early EFL reading course

The current study was incorporated into the early EFL reading course conducted over a period of six months between January and June 2016. The course was proceeded by a two month pre-literacy instruction in English (November – December 2015), designed with the focus on developing both code-related subcomponents (print and alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, knowledge of English phonemes), and comprehension (listening skills and vocabulary knowledge). The instructional sessions were conducted twice a week and lasted 60 minutes each. The activities evolved around reading authentic storybooks in English, singing children songs, TPR and arts and crafts activities, and a variety of language games. Both the pre-literacy training and the actual early EFL reading training course were attended regularly by all the learners, with the occasional individual absence caused by an illness.

4.5.2. Instructional sequences and sessions

The early EFL reading training course was organised around 10 thematic sequences, and each sequence was divided into four sessions which aimed to reach clearly defined goals in introducing new language aspects, presenting it in the oral as well as in the written form and providing efficient practice in improving word recognition and reading. A detailed structure of each of the four sequences was suggested by Chodkiewicz (2015, personal communication) and elaborated by the current author (a sample of the early EFL reading course syllabus and example session plans can be found in Appendices A and B respectively). The sessions were conducted on Monday and Friday afternoons and each one lasted 90 minutes. Table 4.4. provides the information concerning the implementation of the early reading course over the period of 6 months, from January to June 2016. The table shows when particular sessions were offered and how many of them were conducted in a particular month. The measurement times and the tests administered are also included in the table.

Table 4.4. Implementation of the reading instruction sessions and tests administration.

Reading instruction sessions			
Dates	Sequences taught	Number of sessions taught	Tests administered
January 2016	1&2	8	_____
February 2016	3	4	The first set of four tests of word recognition subcomponents, a contextual word reading test, a comprehension test and a vocabulary test
March 2016	4&5	8	_____
April 2016	6&7	8	The second set of four tests of word recognition subcomponents, a contextual word reading test, a comprehension test and a vocabulary test (after completing sequence 6)
May 2016	8&9	8	The third set of four tests of word recognition subcomponents, a contextual word reading test, a comprehension test and a vocabulary test (after completing sequence 8)
June 2016	10	4	The fourth set of four tests of word recognition subcomponents, a contextual word reading test, a comprehension test and a vocabulary test (after completing sequence 10)

As stated above, each session lasted 90 minutes, and each commenced with a video clip presenting vocabulary in form of an attractive children's song of increasing speed (*Action verb song*). The learners were invited to sing along, and to simultaneously perform the actions. The purpose was to introduce a number of verbs in both oral and written form in an attractive and memorable way.

The objective of each **first session** of each sequence was to introduce new language items in oral form, using enlarged posters on the wall and using the Power Point presentations. The objective was reached by means of vocabulary presentations, individual and choral repetitions, discussion concerning illustrations or answering questions.

The aim of each **second session** of each sequence was to practice reading the new linguistic material introduced during the previous session. After singing along to the *Action verb song*, the learners were invited to sit closer to the poster and to talk about it using the language already learnt. This time, however, the poster was accompanied by a reading passage printed in a large font on an A4 paper. The passages were created by the researcher as part of instructional materials. The

researcher would recapture what had been stated about the illustrations using the exact phrases from the printed passage, thus using the language used later in the texts.

To motivate the learners to read aloud, the *Reader's theatre* technique was used, during which learners had the opportunity to read their texts aloud using various 'voices'. The range of voices to choose from included the voice of a tiny mouse, a tired woman, an angry boy and a big elephant (see Appendix M). This activity was followed by an additional comprehension check. Another integral part of the second session of each sequence was the development of phonemic awareness. The aim was to introduce particular English phonemes, to make the learners realise the difference between the English phonemes and similar sounding Polish ones, and to help the learners produce these phonemes.

Each **third session** of each sequence centered around additional practice of vocabulary and grammar aspects, that is the revision of meaning and pronunciation, as well as writing the language taught down. The activities used to practice vocabulary with the use of flashcards, word cards, and real objects included: miming an action, guessing the object based on a short description provided by the teacher, *Chinese whispers*, but also through language games, i.e. *Simon says*, *Snakes and ladders*, *True/false chairs* (Lewis & Bedson, 1999), *Memory*, or *Kim's game* (known also as *What's missing?*).

The final component of each third session of each sequence was devoted to the explicit instruction in phonological and phonemic awareness, and to phonics practice. This part of the session commenced with the revision of the sound taught during the previous session, and any other sounds introduced during previous instructional sequences. The sound revision was usually conducted with the use of animated videos available on YouTube presenting sounds (i.e. *Alphablocks*), to which the children sang along, or during the activity entitled *the-odd-one-out*, where the learners' task was to listen attentively to three words and then decide which word is the odd-one-out based on the sounds. Next, the researcher distributed the handout – a booklet of printed, self-designed materials (sample of the handout can be found in Appendix D). The aim of the activities was phonics practice, the development of phonemic and phonological awareness, and vocabulary and grammar consolidation.

The final **fourth session** of each sequence was dedicated to the self-evaluation, revision and practice of the acquired linguistic material including phonemes, vocabulary, active grammar structures, sight word reading and phonics. During the self-evaluation test learners read quietly or aloud to themselves regularly spelt words and ticked boxes next to the ones they felt they could read correctly. In the majority of cases children were satisfied with their reading. The second task usually required the learners to match pictures with words, match pictures with rhyming words, write rhyming pairs of words, colour elements of the accompanying illustrations according to particular phonemes, or to complete words with missing letters. The purpose of self-evaluation was to revise all the phonemes and vocabulary items

taught up to this point, but also to strengthen the learners' feeling of accomplishment and responsibility for their own learning. The final part of the revision consisted of spelling a few chosen words.

The revision was followed by the learners creating their own texts in English, based on a photo presented in form of a Power Point Presentation document. The content of the illustration was similar to the one used in the particular sequence. The children dictated the sentences to the teacher, then read them chorally and individually. The researcher made only some small amendments to the children's texts, usually adding the missing function words. The photo with the new text created by the children was subsequently uploaded onto the Facebook page and made available to the participants' parents. The purpose was to make the pictures and texts available to the family for motivational reasons but also so that they could practice reading their own texts at home. According to Scott and Ytreberg (1990), this pupil-centered approach is particularly effective with beginner readers (p. 56) in both native and foreign language. The texts created by the learners can be found in Appendix C. Table 4.5. presents the basic structure of each sequence.

Table 4.5. Basic structure of the sequence of each instructional session implemented in the study.

Session number	Main stages of each instructional session
1	**Oral language input** a) language exposure through listening, b) confirming understanding (short SS's responses), c) vocabulary introduction and practice, d) developing word recognition.
2	**Reading practice** a) reading aloud – focus on pronunciation and the form (graphic representation), b) checking text comprehension, c) developing phonemic awareness, d) developing word recognition.
3	**Additional vocabulary and grammar practice** a) focus on writing down the elements of language taught, b) phonological awareness and phonics work, c) integrating reading and writing, d) developing word recognition.
4	**Revision and self-evaluation** a) revision of the language aspects taught, b) learners' self–evaluation of word recognition.

4.5.3. Data collection

During the early EFL reading course the learners were tested four times in word recognition, comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. Time 1 testing took place after completing Sequence 3, Time 2 after Sequence 6, Time 3 after Sequence 8 and Time 4 tests were administered after completing the entire course (after Sequence 10). Time 1 testing took place after 12 sessions. The researcher decided to administer Time 1 tests after learners had been exposed to some weeks of instruction so as not to curtail the learners' motivation for further learning by low test scores. The remaining assessments (Time 2, 3 and 4 testing) were carried out at shorter but equal intervals of 8 sessions.

A set of principles were observed when administering the tests. First of all, it was ensured that testing conditions were very similar at all testing times. Each test was administered individually, in a friendly and reassuring atmosphere. Children felt safe and received thorough explanations and enthusiastic praise. Testing sessions took place in a closed room to ensure minimal distraction and uninterrupted recording of the learners' responses. The testing room was familiar to the learners since this was also the room of the course sessions. When being tested the learners were seated in front of a desk and the researcher was seated at a small distance. Testing children's early reading ablities in Polish and at the four times in English was carried out on a Saturday morning, when learners were neither tired nor hungry.

All the tests were easy to administer and score, and testing instructions were easy to follow. A set of practice items was administered prior to testing. Each test was timed, and to avoid having to keep checking the time the researcher used a stopwatch with an audible signal. Testing was recorded in two ways: by marking the learners' answers while testing on the answer sheet, and by audio recording their responses for further examination. Before each test was administered, a demonstration of a test sample was carried out so as to confirm that the children had no doubt how to respond to the tasks provided. The quantitative instruments of the study were accompanied by the qualitative constituent in form of the analysis of the study participants' behaviour and motivation to read aloud in English.

4.6. Results and discussion

4.6.1. Test results

In describing the results of all the types of assessment connected with word recognition, reading comprehension and vocabulary development, the descriptive statistics will be used in order to present the quantitative data. The qualitative

examination of the data will also be carried out so as to provide some enlightening details necessary for constructing the learners' profiles.

4.6.1.1. Results of the tests of early reading components in Polish

The first measure used to confirm that the learners included in the study represented at least the basic level of reading in Polish and could participate in the early EFL reading instruction was the Polish letter naming test, whose results are shown in Figure 4.1. below. The learners were provided with a list of 31 letters of the Polish alphabet, and were instructed to give names of as many letters as they could within 1 minute.

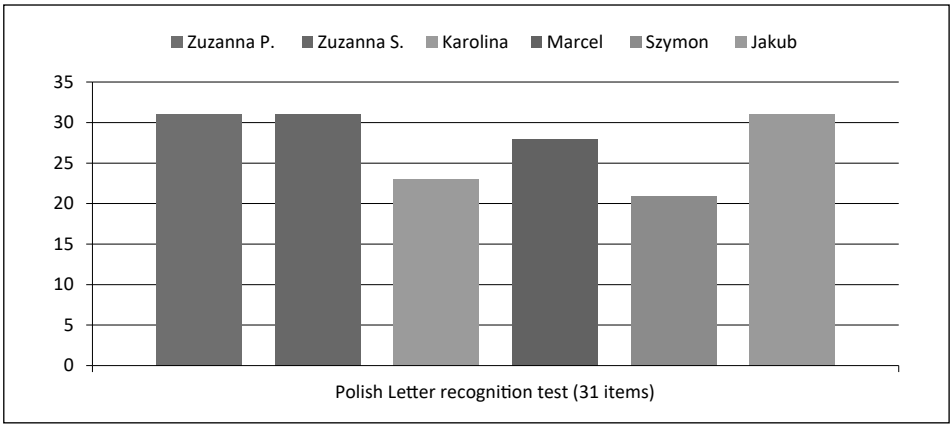


Figure 4.1. Number of correct answers provided by the learners in the Polish letter-naming test.

The results show that the number of the participants' correct answers was very high. Three of the learners (Zuzanna P., Zuzanna S. and Jakub) achieved the maximum results and were familiar with all the 31 letters of the Polish alphabet. The result achieved by Marcel was close to the maximum, and those of Karolina and Szymon, though the lowest, show that the learners could name most of the Polish letters. It is clear from the results that the participants were familiar with the Polish letter names. One might expect that the familiarity with the Polish alphabet will have a facilitating effect on the process of learning the English letter names, however, in case of considerable differences between the names of the same letters in Polish and English, some negative transfer may occur.

The second measure was the text reading test, whose results are shown in Figure 4.2. The learners were asked to read loud a connected text for 1 minute. The score is the number of words read correctly either as sight words, or through syllable or phoneme blending.

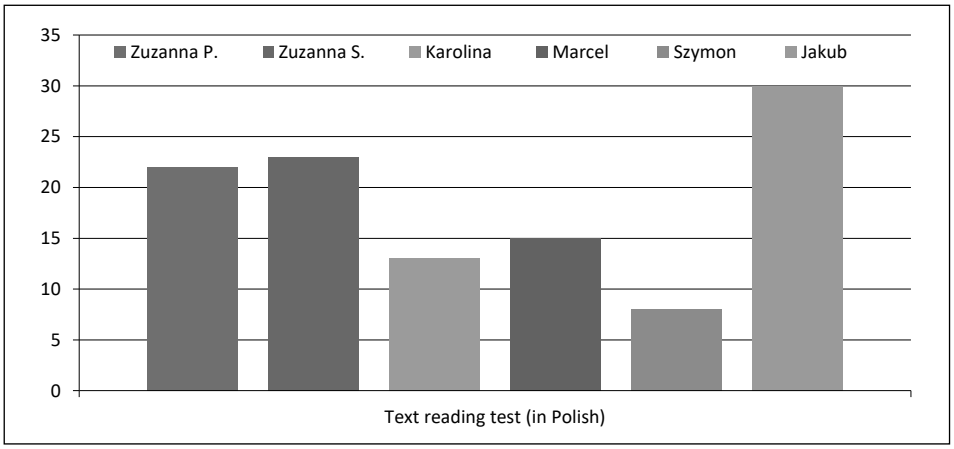


Figure 4.2. Number of correct answers provided by the learners in the text reading test.

As is immediately apparent, all the learners read at least some text in Polish. Jakub's test results were the highest. The results of Zuzanna P. and Zuzanna S. were similar (22 and 23 respectively), as well as the results obtained by Karolina and Marcel (13 and 15). The participant representing the lowest level in text reading was Szymon, who read 8 words. Despite Szymon's low result, it could be observed that he was generally able to cope with reading a continuous text and ready to complete the task provided.

The third measure was the individual word reading test in Polish (Figure 4.3.). The learners' task was to read aloud unconnected words for up to 1 minute. The score was the number of words read correctly either as sight words, or through syllable or phoneme blending.

The results show that all the participants could read individual words, however, the learners' performance varied, especially that of Jakub (22 read words) and three other participants: Karolina, Marcel and Szymon (respectively 7, 7 and 6 words read). The results of Zuzanna P. and Zuzanna S. were identical (14). As can be seen, Jakub's results clearly stood out, while all the remaining five participants achieved much lower level of individual word reading. Yet it can be recognised that all the study participants achieved some minimal level of individual word reading in Polish.

The last measure to be administered to evaluate the learners' reading in Polish was the reading comprehension test, whose results are presented in Figure 4.4. The learners were instructed to choose sentences that corresponded to pictures. The score was the number of sentences chosen correctly in the time limit.

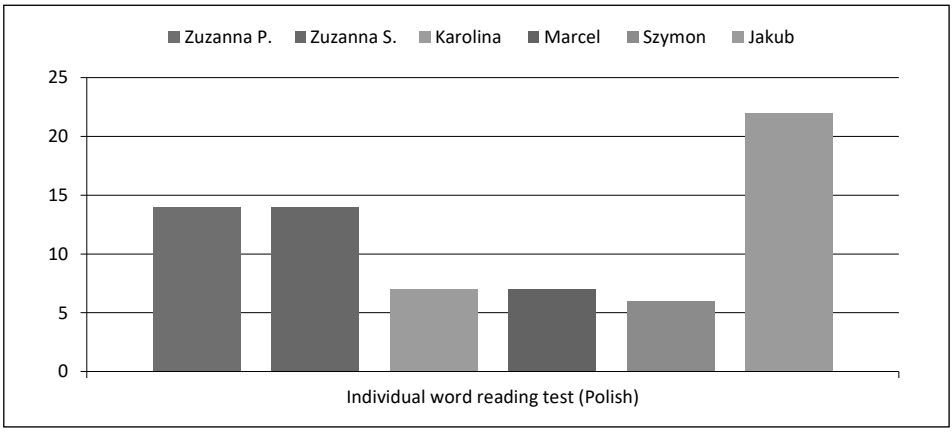


Figure 4.3. Number of correct answers provided by the learners in the individual word reading test.

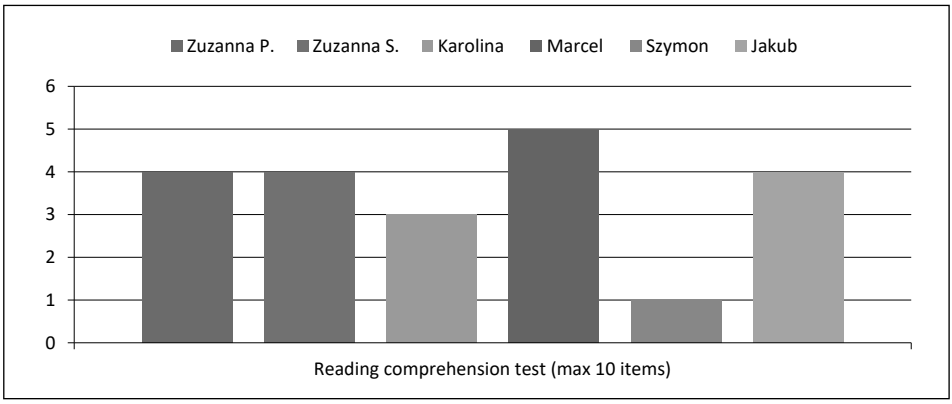


Figure 4.4. Number of correct answers provided by the learners in the reading comprehension test.

The results show yet again that all the children had mastered at least the minimal level of reading comprehension in Polish. Also this time the number of the participants' correct answers differed, in particular the results of Marcel (5 correct answers) and Szymon (1 correct answer). The performance results obtained by Zuzanna P., Zuzanna S. and Jakub were identical (4), those of Karolina were slightly lower (3).

As can be observed from the data provided in Figures 5.1-5.4., the study participants had mastered basic reading in Polish, however, the results obtained by them differed considerably. Clear disproportions could be observed in particular between two learners: Jakub and Szymon. Jakub secured the highest results in three measures: letter-naming, text reading, and word reading, while Szymon

achieved the lowest results on all the four measures. Despite the visible asymmetry between the levels of early reading represented by the two participants, Szymon was included in the study for two reasons. First of all, Szymon did represent at least some basic level of early reading in Polish. His results were in all probability due to age difference, as Szymon is 18 months younger than Jakub. With time and practice, the significance of the participants' age was likely to decrease. Secondly, it is common today that many first grades in Polish schools are not homogenous and take in learners both 6 and 7 years old. Including participants representing different age and different levels of early reading in Polish allows to replicate, to at least some extent, the conditions observed in such classrooms and gives an invaluable insight into the process of learning to read in EFL by students of different age.

All in all, the participants had mastered at least the basic level of early reading in Polish before entering the early EFL reading course, which made it possible to include them in one study group.

4.6.1.2. Results of the tests of word recognition components in English

The results of the learners' word recognition subcomponents indicate the number of correct answers given by the participants within 1 minute. The time limit was imposed because slow and laborious performance in word recognition impedes reading comprehension. The results were calculated and analysed from two perspectives, that of individual learners and that of the whole group.

4.6.1.2.1. Results of the letter naming tests

The first measure that has made it possible to look at the changes in the development of the individual learners' word recognition subcomponents was the letter-naming test, given at four testing times, whose results are demonstrated in Figure 4.5. and in Tables 4.6 and 4.7. The learners were provided with a list of 26 letters of the English alphabet and were instructed to give names of as many letters as they could within 1 minute. As already discussed in Section 1.2.1, effective word recognition while reading is possible when individual letters are recognised quickly and automatically, hence the time limitation introduced into this type of test. The aim of Figure 4.5. is to illustrate the changes in the development of the particular learners' letter-naming ability.

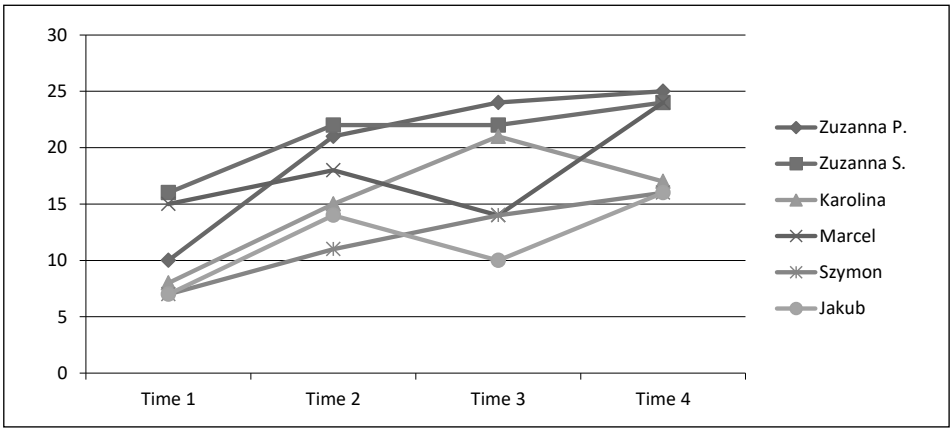


Figure 4.5. Changes in the development of the learners' letter naming across four testing times.

It is clear that the number of the correct answers provided by the participants had a tendency to increase throughout the period of 6 months of early reading instruction across four measurement times. The most spectacular results could be observed in the case of Zuzanna P. whose starting point was among the lowest, yet the final result was close to the maximum (25 letters of the English alphabet named correctly). Another student that reached almost the maximum result was Zuzanna S. At Time 4 she correctly named 24 letters, although she began with the knowledge of 16 letters. It is interesting to note that in the case of two learners, Marcel and Jakub, the numbers of correct answers they gave at Time 3 was lower than that of Time 2, respectively 18 and 14 in the case of Marcel and 14 and 10 in the case of Jakub. A similar drop in results occurred between the answers provided by Karolina at Time 3 and Time 4 (respectively 21 and 17). Hence it can be stated that a steady development trend in letter naming could be observed in the case of three learners whereas the remaining learners experienced a slight drop in the test results at Times 3 and 4. The drop in the results of Marcel might have been caused by the fact that, as reported by his mother, the learner had difficulties with concentration, while Jakub's decline in results at Time 3 may have been due to his tendency to guess the answers when not certain. In the case of Karolina, her drop of result at Time 4 could have been due to a difficult situation in the family she experienced at that time.

In order to look at the results of the letter-naming tests from the perspective of the gains of the whole group, the total number and percentage of correct answers per measurement and per learner has been calculated (Table 4.6.).

Table 4.6. Number and percentage of correct answers in letter-naming tests per measure and per learner.

Learner	CORRECT ANSWERS (max number of points per test = 26)				Number and percentage of correct answers per learner
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4	
Zuzanna P.	10	21	24	25	**80** (**77%**)
Zuzanna S.	16	22	22	24	**84** (**81%**)
Karolina	8	15	21	17	**61** (**59%**)
Marcel	15	18	14	24	**71** (**68%**)
Szymon	7	11	14	16	**48** (**46%**)
Jakub	7	14	10	16	**47** (**45%**)
Number and percentage of correct answers per measure	**63** (**40%**)	**101** (**65%**)	**105** (**67%**)	**122** (**78%**)	

It is obvious from the data shown in the table that the learners involved in the current study improved their ability to name letters of the English alphabet over the period of their participation in the course. While at the first time of measurement the total number of correct answers was 63 (40%), a definite increase could be observed in Time 2 & 3, that is 101 (65%) and 105 (67%) respectively. By Time 4 the number of correct answers almost doubled and was 122 (78%). Clear differences could also be seen as to the scores reached by individual learners on all the letter naming tests. While the two highest scores gained by Zuzanna P. and Zuzanna S. were 80 (77%) and 84 (81%), the lowest were those of Szymon and Jakub, that is 48 (46%) and 47 (45%). Although the results of particular learners differed considerably (especially the results of Zuzanna S. and Szymon) it can be stated that, generally, the learners' letter naming gradually improved. The differences in results of particular learners may have been due to the fact that Zuzanna P. and Zuzanna S. seemed to make progress faster than the other learners, despite the fact that they were among the youngest in the group. Jakub's lowest results in the group may have been caused by the fact that at Times 2, 3, and 4 he attempted to name all the letters and concentrated on the speed of naming at the cost of accuracy. Szymon's results may be attributed to the fact that he was the youngest in the group.

Table 4.7. below presents the number of all the answers provided by the learners while naming the particular letters of the alphabet across the four measuring times as well as the number and percentage of correct answers they gave.

Table 4.7. Number of all the answers given in naming letters of the English alphabet across four measuring times and number and percentage of correct answers (n=6).

Letter names	Number of answers provided	Number (percentage) of correct answers	Letter names	Number of answers provided	Number (percentage) of correct answers
A	**24**	**21 (88%)**	N	20	19 (95%)
B	19	18 (95%)	O	15	14 (93%)
C	**24**	**22 (92%)**	P	17	15 (88%)
D	16	16 (100%)	**Q**	**10**	**4 (40%)**
E	**24**	**24 (100%)**	**R**	**23**	**16 (70%)**
F	**24**	**21 (88%)**	**S**	**23**	**19 (83%)**
G	**23**	**21 (91%)**	**T**	**23**	**21 (91%)**
H	15	8 (53%)	**U**	**12**	**4 (33%)**
I	**13**	**5 (38%)**	V	19	10 (53%)
J	**13**	**7 (54%)**	W	16	9 (56%)
K	20	13 (65%)	**X**	**23**	**16 (70%)**
L	20	19 (95%)	**Y**	**11**	**5 (45%)**
M	22	20 (91 %)	**Z**	**24**	**23 (96%)**

As can be seen, differences between the numbers of correct answers show clearly that certain letter-names were more familiar to the learners than others. It can be observed that when letter-names were known to the learners not only did they give more answers, but also a higher percentage of the given answers provided were correct, e.g., in the case of the letters, whose names were provided 20–24 times (A, C, E, F, G, R, S, T, X, Z) a high percentage of them was correct, that is they ranged from 70% – 100% (mean 87%). In the case of the letter names the learners found difficult to arrive at, e.g. I, J, Q, U, Y, much lower was the number of the answers provided (from 10 to 13 answers given), as well as the percentage of the correct answers (33%-54%, mean – 42%). None of the learners managed to name all the 26 letters of the English alphabet at any testing time, and on a number of instances the learners omitted those letters whose names they were not certain.

Finally, the results of the two identical letter-naming tests the participants were given at Time 1 and 4 were compared. At Time 1 Zuzanna P. named 10 letters and omitted the letter *S*, while at Time 4 she named 25 letters, named the letter *S* correctly but omitted the letter *U*. Zuzanna S. named correctly 16 letters at Time 1, and 24 letters at Time 4, naming two letters incorrectly: *V* and *Q*. Karolina named 8 letters correctly at Time 1 and omitted 3 letters *G*, *S*, and *R*, however, she correctly named these three letters at Time 4 as well as 14 other letters, omitting the letter *K* (named correctly at Time 1). Karolina failed to name the letter *X* at both testing times. Marcel named correctly 15 letters of the English alphabet at Time 1 and 24

at Time 4. Initially he could not name the letter *G*, but he gave the correct answer at Time 4. Szymon named 7 letters at Time 1 and 16 at Time 4. Initially, he omitted the letter *S*, attempted to name it at Time 4, however he was unsuccessful. At Time 4 he did not name some letters whose names he knew at Time 1, namely *A* and *C*. Also Jakub managed to name more letters at Time 4 than at Time1, however, the letters *R* and *X* were not named correctly at any of the two testing times.

In general, as it had been expected, the results of the letter-naming tests indicate that there was noticeable improvement in the letter-naming ability of all the study subjects across the period of early EFL reading training (as shown in Figure 4.5.). However, two major conclusions emerge. First of all, the differences between individual learners' letter-naming development were evident, as only three of the learners had shown a clear growth in the knowledge of letter names (Table 4.6.). Secondly, it is evident that while learning certain letter names is easier, the mastery of other letter names requires more intense instructional practice (Table 4.7.). Hence, there is a need for adjustment to the didactic approach regarding individual learners to respond more accurately to their instructional needs. Also, some modifications need to be introduced to the instruction in the case of the most problematic letter names.

4.6.1.2.2. Results of the letter-sound matching tests

The second measure that facilitated the observation of the changes in the growth of word recognition subcomponents among the study participants were the letter-sound matching tests, given at four testing times, whose results are presented in Figure 5.6., and in Tables 5.8. and 5.9. The learners' task was to provide common sounds for as many of the 26 letters of the English alphabet as they could in under 1 minute. The time limit was imposed for the same reason as in the letter-naming tests. The aim of Figure 4.6. is to present graphically the trend in the development of individual learners' ability to match English sounds to letters.

It can be observed that, as in the case of the letter-naming, the knowledge of letter-sounds also generally improved across four testing times, although the results of the majority of the learners do not show a steady growth but tend to fluctuate. For instance, the numbers of correct answers given by Zuzanna P. and Karolina at Time 3 were lower than those at Time 2. Similarly, in the cases of three other participants (Marcel, Szymon and Jakub), the number of correctly given answers at Time 4 was slightly lower than those at Time 3. Only Zuzanna S. showed a clear growth of her ability to use the knowledge of letter-sound relationships. What is more, in the case of Marcel, the results seemed to decline altogether and were the lowest at Time 4. Also, the sum of Karolina's results at Times 1 and 2 was higher than that of Times 3 and 4. Finally, however, it needs to be noted that while the starting points of four of the learners (Zuzanna P., Zuzanna S., Szymon and Jakub) were very low (respectively 0, 1, 0, and 5 correct answers), by Time 4

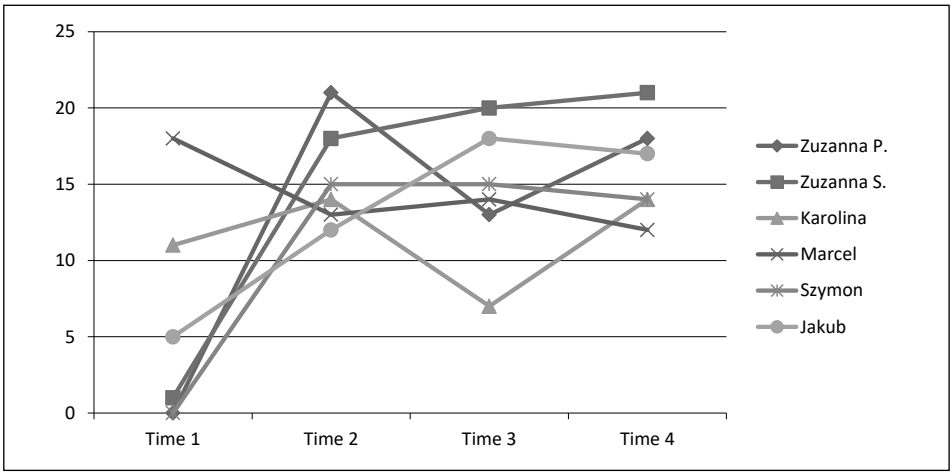


Figure 4.6. Changes in the development of the learners' letter-sound matching across four testing times.

their results significantly increased (respectively 18, 21, 14 and 17). A possible explanation of the fluctuation phenomenon can be that the acquisition process of the letter-sound correspondences is much more time-consuming and requires more language exposure and practice. Besides, it seems that under the time pressure the learners might have found it problematic to keep the rules of letter–sound connections in English and Polish apart. This can serve as an example of cross linguistic transfer of constraint abilities (letter-naming and letter-sound matching) at the onset of learning to read in L2, which has been confirmed by research findings of Feinauer, Hall-Kenyon & Davison (2013), as discussed in Table 3.1..

With the view to presenting the results of the letter–sound matching tests as gained by the whole study group, the total number and percentage of correct answers per measurement and per individual learner has been worked out (Table 4.8.).

Table 4.8. Number and percentage of correct answers in letter–sound matching tests per measurement and per learner.

Learner	CORRECT ANSWERS (max number of points per test = 26)				Number and percentage of correct answers per learner
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4	
Zuzanna P.	0	21	13	18	**52** (**50%**)
Zuzanna S.	1	18	20	21	**60** (**58%**)
Karolina	11	14	7	14	**46** (**44%**)
Marcel	18	13	14	12	**57** (**54%**)

Szymon	0	15	15	14	**44** (**42%**)
Jakub	5	12	18	17	**52** (**50%**)
Number and percentage of correct answers per measure	**35** (**22%**)	**93** (**60%**)	**87** (**56%**)	**96** (**62%**)	

As illustrated by the table above, the study participants advanced their efficiency of matching English sounds to letters over the period of the early EFL reading course. While at the first measurement time the total number of correct answers was 35 (22%), a definite improvement could be observed in Time 2, 3 & 4, that is respectively 93 (60%), 87 (56%) and 96 (62%) of correct answers. By Time 4 the number of correct answers almost tripled in comparison with those at the starting point. The total scores on all the letter-sound matching tests obtained by individual learners show only slight differences. While the two highest scores gained by Zuzanna S. and Marcel were 60 (58%) and 57 (54%) respectively, the lowest were those of Szymon and Karolina, that is 44 (42%) and 46 (44%) respectively. What is interesting to observe is the case of Marcel, whose results declined over the course in comparison with the results of Time 1, yet his total score was among the highest. Marcel's initial results were high because at Testing 1 he produced sounds associated with those letters whose associated sounds in Polish correspond to those in English, for instance: A, B, D, E, F, G, H, K, L, M, N, O, P, S, T, Z. This is evidence of the occurrence of the positive cross-linguistic transfer, which facilitates the development of L2 reading, a phenomenon observed by Feinauer, Hall-Kenyon & Davison (2013).

Generally, it has to be emphasised that the level of the mastery of the letter-sound relations by the whole group improved by 40% (from 22% to 62%). This is comparable to the results the learners gained in letter-naming, which improved from 40 to 78%, that is by 38%. One can conclude that the learners made a similar progress in both abilities although at the onset of the early EFL reading training period, they must have been familiar with many letter names.

Table 4.9. displays the number of all the answers provided by the participants while producing letter sounds across the four measuring times, as well as the number and percentage of the correct answers for each letter.

Table 4.9. Number of all the answers given by the learners when producing sounds associated with letters of the English alphabet across four measuring times, and number and percentage of all the correct answers (n=6).

Letter sounds	Number of answers provided	Number (percentage) of correct answers	Letter sounds	Number of answers provided	Number (percentage) of correct answers
A	**23**	**18 (78%)**	N	22	13 (59%)
B	**22**	**16 (73%)**	**O**	**17**	**16 (94%)**
C	23	11 (48%)	**P**	**20**	**16 (80%)**
D	19	12 (63%)	Q	15	4 (27%)
E	**22**	**18 (82%)**	**R**	**23**	**18 (78%)**
F	**23**	**18 (78%)**	**S**	**23**	**18 (78%)**
G	**22**	**18 (82%)**	**T**	**21**	**19 (90%)**
H	**18**	**14 (78%)**	**U**	**17**	**1 (6%)**
I	**17**	**2 (12%)**	V	21	7 (33%)
J	**17**	**2 (12%)**	**W**	**20**	**3 (15%)**
K	**22**	**19 (86%)**	**X**	**22**	**5 (23%)**
L	22	13 (59%)	**Y**	**16**	**3 (19%)**
M	21	11 (52%)	Z	23	19 (83%)

The diversity in the numbers of correct answers provided by the learners seems to suggest that remembering certain letter-sound correspondences is more demanding than others. Similarly to the letter-naming tests, also in the letter-sound matching tests, when the learners gave more answers concerning a particular letter, percentage of the correct answers was higher. This can be observed e.g., with those letters whose sounds were provided as frequently as 17 up to 23 times (A, B, E, F, G, H, K, O, P, R, S, T, Z). In those cases, a high percentage of the given answers was correct and ranged from 73% – 94% (mean – 82%). It is interesting to note that in letter-naming tests the learners did not make attempts to name letters when they were not sure of the answers; the percentage of correct answers ranged from 70 – 100% in the case of the most frequently named letters. However, on the contrary, while providing letter-sound associations the learners often attempted to guess their answers. This was observed in the case of such letters as, e.g. I, J, U, W, X, Y, whose sounds were provided correctly between 6% and 23% (mean – 15%), despite the frequent attempts at providing the answers (16–20 attempts). None of the learners managed to provide correct sounds for all the 26 letters of the English alphabet at any testing time; on occasion certain letters were omitted.

Also in the case of the letter-sound matching tests, the results given by the participants at Time 1 and 4 were contrasted. Zuzanna P. failed to match sounds

correctly to any letters at Time 1, yet at Time 4 she matched correctly 18 sounds to their corresponding letters. She omitted the letters *H*, *I*, and *U*, and when trying to provide sounds for the letters *X* and *V*, she gave their names instead of sounds. Zuzanna S. provided only 1 letter-sound connection at Time 1 (the letter *S*) although she named 7 letters altogether (including *R*, *F*, *E*, *A*, *Z* and *X*). At Time 4 she provided 21 letter-sounds, including the ones she failed with at Time 1. Karolina's result was 11 at Time 1, and 14 at Time 4. Among the letters whose sound correspondences she did not know at Time 1 but had acquired by Time 4 were the letters *S*, *C*, and *B*, however some letters-sound relations that had been given correctly at Time 1 seem to have been forgotten by Time 4, e.g. *M*, *K*, *L* and *N*. Marcel managed to give 18 correct answers at Time 1, but the number dropped to 12 at Time 4. Over time the knowledge of some letter-sound connections improved (e.g. *R* and *C*), but the knowledge of many others deteriorated (e.g. *M*, *K*, *L*, *N*, *V*, *B*, *P*, and *Y*). Szymon, similarly to Zuzanna P., also failed to provide correct sounds to any of the letters at Time 1, but gave 14 correct answers at Time 4. In the case of Jakub, 5 correct answers were given at Time 1 and 17 at Time 4. Initially, the learner gave mostly letter-names instead of sounds, but at Time 4 providing letter-sounds was not as confusing. Initially, Jakub knew the correct answer for the letter *G* but at Time 4 he failed. On the contrary, he failed to provide correct answers at Time 1 with the letters *O*, *Y*, and *Q*, but managed to do it at Time 4.

All in all, on the basis of the results of the letter-sound matching tests, it can be stated that progress was made by all the study participants except for Marcel (Figure 4.6.), whose results were already high at the starting point. As in the previously discussed tests, also the results of the letter-sound matching tests showed variations between individual participants, however, this time the total results were not so disproportionate (Table 4.8.).

4.6.1.2.3. Results of the sight word reading tests

The third measure that has contributed to the assessment of the development of word recognition subcomponents in the study group was the sight word reading test, given at four testing times, whose results are shown in Figure 4.7. below. Recognizing familiar words automatically as sight vocabulary plays an important facilitative role in reading fluency, as discussed in Sections 1.4.3. or 2.1.5. In these tests the learners were provided with lists of 10 syllabus-based sight words, and were instructed to read aloud as many sight words as they could within 1 minute. As in the case of letter-naming and letter-sound matching tests, also measuring the efficiency of sight word reading requires that time limitation is imposed in taking a test.

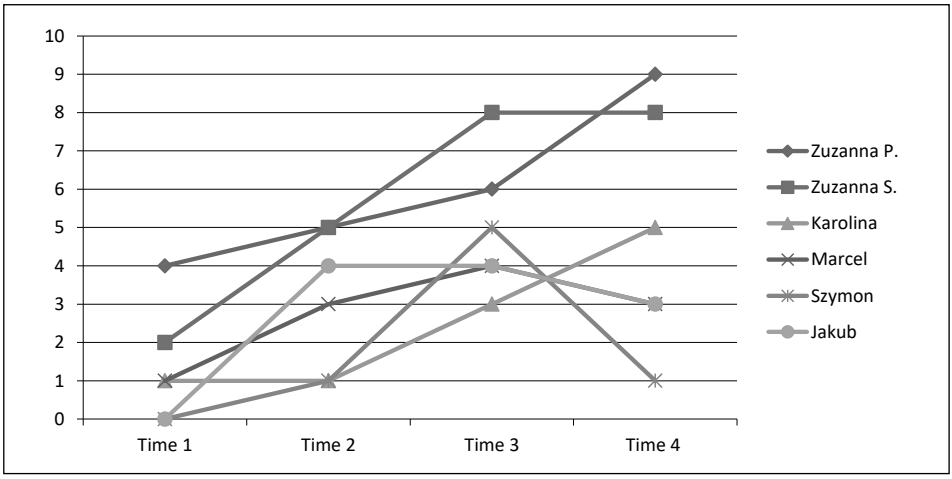


Figure 4.7. Changes in development of the learners' sight word reading efficiency across four testing times.

It is evident from the results presented above that the number of the participants' correct answers had a general tendency to increase throughout the 6 months of early reading instruction and across four measurement times. The highest scores per measure were secured by two participants: Zuzanna P. and Zuzanna S., whose final score (Time 4) was close to the maximum (respectively 9 and 8 sight words read correctly). Also Karolina, Marcel, Szymon and Jakub were found to make some progress. Karolina, for instance, read correctly only 1 sight word at Time 1, however, her scores at Time 3 & 4 show considerable improvement (respectively 3 and 5 correct answers). It is interesting to note that in the cases of Marcel, Szymon and Jakub the numbers of correct answers they gave at Time 3 were higher than those at Time 4. A drop in those results may have been caused by the participants' willingness to be sure that they would give a proper answer. Additionally, no improvement in results occurred in the case of Zuzanna S. at Time 3 and 4, in the case of Jakub at Time 2 and 3, and in the case of Karolina at Time 1 and 2. In each case the reasons for learners' lack of improvement could be different. Zuzanna S. might have made a simple mistake, Jakub may have concentrated on the fast pace of reading at the cost of accuracy, and Karolina may have had problems with getting accustomed to the idea of recognizing words at sight.

The aim of Table 4.10. below is to display the total results of the sight word reading tests per measurement and per individual learner.

Table 4.10. Number and percentage of correct answers in sight word reading tests per measure and per learner.

Learner	CORRECT ANSWERS (max number of points per test = 10)				Number and percentage of correct answers per learner
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4	
Zuzanna P.	4	5	6	9	**24** (**60%**)
Zuzanna S.	2	5	8	8	**23** (**58%**)
Karolina	1	1	3	5	**10** (**25%**)
Marcel	1	3	4	3	**11** (**28%**)
Szymon	0	1	5	1	**7** (**18%**)
Jakub	0	4	4	3	**11** (**28%**)
Number and percentage of correct answers per measure	**8** (**13%**)	**19** (**32%**)	**30** (**50%**)	**29** (**48%**)	

As apparent from the data shown in the table above, the study participants improved their efficiency of sight word reading over the period of 6 months of early EFL reading instruction. While initially the total number of correct answers was 8 (13%), a definite improvement could be reported at Time 2, 3 & 4, that is respectively 19 (32%), 30 (50%) and 29 (48%). By Time 3 the number of correctly read sight words almost quadrupled in comparison with that at Time 1 as it grew from 8 to 30. The score of individual learners showed considerable differences. While the two highest total scores gained by Zuzanna P. and Zuzanna S. were 24 (60%) and 23 (58%), the lowest were those of Szymon and Karolina, that is 7 (18%) and 10 (25%). All in all, it is known that learning to read in Polish does not require the use of sight vocabulary strategy, and the children in the study had to be familiarised with it.

Table 4.11. below presents the number of all the answers given by the study participants while reading sight words across all four measurements as well as the number and percentage of correct answers.

Table 4.11. Number of all the answers provided in sight word reading tests across four measuring times and number and percentage of correct answers (n=6).

Sight words	Number of answers provided	Number (percentage) of correct answers	Sight words	Number of answers provided	Number (percentage) of correct answers
beach	6	1 (17%)	playing	6	5 (83%)
beautiful	2	1 (50%)	said	6	1 (17%)
behind	6	3 (50%)	scared	4	0 (0%)
brother	6	2 (33%)	sea	5	1 (20%)
car	6	4 (67%)	see	6	5 (83%)
chair	5	3 (60%)	she	6	4 (67%)
doing	4	0 (0%)	sky	6	2 (33%)
eating	6	3 (50%)	snake	6	4 (67%)
fall	6	3 (50%)	table	6	3 (50%)
flowers	6	4 (67%)	tall	5	0 (0%)
funny	6	2 (33%)	teacher	5	2 (40%)
girl	6	3 (50%)	the	4	1 (25%)
hear	6	2 (33%)	these	5	0 (0%)
island	3	1 (33%)	they	2	0 (0%)
jeans	5	3 (60%)	those	1	0 (0%)
jungle	3	1 (33%)	tiger	4	3 (75%)
mountains	6	3 (50%)	tree	5	3 (60%)
night	2	1 (50%)	t-shirt	4	0 (0%)
ouch	6	5 (83%)	what	2	0 (0%)
people	5	2 (40%)	wow	6	6 (100%)

What can be observed is that those sight words that the learners attempted to read more often were read correctly more often. This is the case with a number of words that were read out by all the learners (6 attempts) e.g. *ouch*, *wow*, *snake*, *see*, *playing*, *car*, *flowers*, *she*, which were read correctly 4, 5, or 6 times (67% – 100%, mean 77%). When some sight words were not read out correctly by any of the participants, e.g. *what*, *they*, *those*, *island*, and *jungle* (0%), the number of attempts to read them was also lower (between 1 and 3). There were some sight words, such as *tall*, *these*, *beach*, *said*, *sea*, and *the*, where no correct answers were given although the number of attempts was high (between 4–6 attempts). In some cases the learners omitted sight words they did not recognise and proceeded to the next one on the list. None of the learners managed to recognise all the 10 sight words at any testing time.

4.6.1.2.4. Results of the phonemic decoding tests

The fourth measure that has made it possible to investigate the development of word recognition abilities among the group of learners were phonemic decoding tests, also given at four testing times. The results of the tests are shown in Figure 4.8. below. As discussed in Section 2.2.4., the knowledge of grapheme–phoneme relations allows reading learners to make the connection between written and spoken language and is particularly useful in recognising unfamiliar but regular words. In this test the learners were provided with lists of 10 pseudowords, all including syllabus-based phonemes and graphemes, and were instructed to read aloud as many of these pseudowords as possible within 1 minute. The time limit was given for the same reason as in the previous tests.

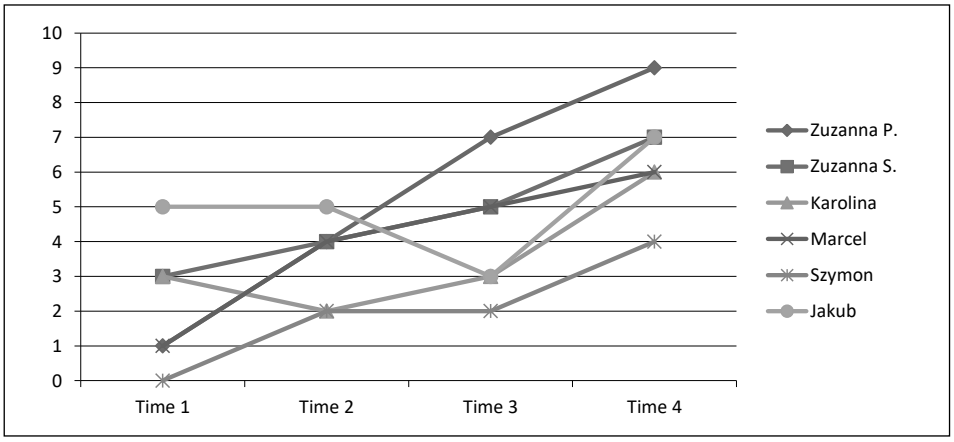


Figure 4.8. Changes in development of the learners' phonemic decoding across four testing times.

The results of the phonemic decoding tests show that the number of the participants' correct answers had a growing tendency throughout the period of 6 months of early reading instruction and across four measurement times. The most spectacular results can be observed in the case of Zuzanna P., whose starting point was among the lowest, yet whose final result was close to the maximum (9 correctly decoded pseudowords at Time 4). Other students whose results augmented steadily over the training period were Zuzanna S. and Marcel. All the other participants also scored higher at Time 4 than at Time 1, however, Karolina had a lower result at Time 2 than at Time 1, Szymon's result at Time 3 was the same as at Time 2, and Jakub's result at Time 3 was lower than at Times 1 and 2. The results of the phonemic decoding tests seem to show fewer fluctuations as compared to the results of the previous tests. This may be due to the fact that phonological decoding was practiced during the early EFL reading course and, simultaneously, when learning to read in Polish.

In order to discuss the results of the phonemic decoding tests from the perspective of the whole study group, the number and percentage of correct answers per measurement and per individual learner has been provided (Table 4.12.).

Table 4.12. Number and percentage of correct answers in phonemic decoding tests per measurement and per individual learner.

Learner	CORRECT ANSWERS (max number of points per test = 10)				Number and percentage of correct answers per learner
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4	
Zuzanna P.	1	4	7	9	**21** (**53%**)
Zuzanna S.	3	4	5	7	**19** (**48%**)
Karolina	3	2	3	6	**14** (**35%**)
Marcel	1	4	5	6	**16** (**40%**)
Szymon	0	2	2	4	**8** (**20%**)
Jakub	5	5	3	7	**20** (**50%**)
Number and percentage of correct answers per measure	**13** (**22%**)	**21** (**35%**)	**25** (**42%**)	**39** (**65%**)	

The data presented in the table show that the study participants improved significantly their phonemic decoding ability over the 6 month period of the instruction. At the first measuring time the total number of correct answers was 13 (22%), yet by Time 4 the number of correct answers tripled and was 39 (65%). Considerable differences could also be seen as to the scores reached by individual learners on all the phonemic decoding tests. While the three highest scores gained by Zuzanna P., Zuzanna S. and Jakub, were 21 (53%), 19 (48%) and 20 (50%), the lowest were those of Szymon, who correctly decoded only 8 psudowords out of 40 (20%). Generally, the learners advanced their phonemic decoding, which was to be expected, since phonemic decoding is the dominant strategy in reading unfamiliar words in Polish and the participants were skilled at using this strategy when reading unfamiliar words.

Table 4.13. below presents the number of all the attempts at phonological decoding made by the learners across the four measurement times as well as the number and percentage of correct answers.

Table 4.13. Number of all the answers given in phonological decoding tests across four measurements and number and percentage of the correct answers (n=6).

Pseudo-words	Number of answers provided	Number (percentage) of correct answers	Pseudo-words	Number of answers provided	Number (percentage) of correct answers
bip	6	1 (17%)	nock	4	1 (25%)
chet	4	0 (0%)	nog	5	3 (60%)
chim	6	0 (0%)	pap	6	4 (67%)
dat	6	4 (67%)	ped	6	4 (67%)
dook	5	2 (40%)	ping	6	4 (67%)
dosh	6	5 (83%)	puck	5	3 (60%)
fad	5	3 (60%)	pug	5	0 (0%)
fesh	6	2 (33%)	rad	6	5 (83%)
fick	5	3 (60%)	ret	6	3 (50%)
jong	6	2 (33%)	rop	6	5 (83%)
lench	6	0 (0%)	rus	6	4 (67%)
lig	6	4 (67%)	shap	4	0 (0%)
lox	6	3 (50%)	shup	6	1 (17%)
lus	6	2 (33%)	sook	5	1 (20%)
minch	6	2 (33%)	sot	6	2 (33%)
mit	5	0 (0%)	tet	6	3 (50%)
mong	3	0 (0%)	ting	5	0 (0%)
moot	6	2 (33%)	tun	6	3 (50%)
nen	6	4 (67%)	zick	4	2 (50%)
nig	6	4 (67%)	zool	5	4 (80%)

As in the previous tests, also in the case of phonemic decoding test, the variations in the numbers of correct answers were considerable. When analysing the results, the number of correct answers per particular grapheme-phoneme correspondence. Therefore, among all the grapheme-phoneme connections, the one which seems to have been the easiest was the 'a' – /æ/ correspondence, as the highest score was gained when reading the following pseudowords: *fad*, *pap*, *dat*, and *rad* (60% – 83%, mean – 69%). The two other grapheme–phoneme correspondences that learners were most familiar with were the 'e' – /e/, as *ret*, *nen*, *ped*, and *tet* were read correctly 4 or 5 times (either 50% or 67%, with the mean of 59%), and 'o' – /ɒ/, as *nog*, *sot*, *lox*, and *rop* were read correctly 2 – 5 times (33% – 83%, with the mean of 57%). The grapheme-phoneme correspondence that proved to be the most difficult was the 'ch' – /tʃ/ connection, since out of four pseudowords (*chet*, *lench*, *chim*, and *minch*) the

first three were not read correctly at all, and the last one was read correctly twice. Also during phonemic decoding tests the learners sometimes omitted pseudowords they could not decode, however most of the pseudowords (25 out of 40) were read by all the study participants. None of the participants decoded phonemically all the 10 pseudowords at any testing time.

4.6.1.2.5. Results of the contextual word reading tests

The fifth measure administered to assess contextual word reading was also used at four testing times. As mentioned in Section 1.2.1., the more accurate the readers are when attempting to recognise words (either through i.e. decoding or sigh word reading), the less burden is exerted on their working memory, whose free resources can be allocated to reading comprehension. While the general word reading accuracy rate should not be lower than 94% (Hashbrouck, 1998), contextual word reading accuracy should not be a goal in itself.

Contextual word reading was evaluated by calculating the number of correctly read words among those found in the reading samples produced by learners at four measuring times. The learners' task was to read the texts aloud for up to 1 minute. In the contextual word reading tests (see Figure 4.9. below for results), the score was the percentage of words read correctly out of all the words read within 1 minute.

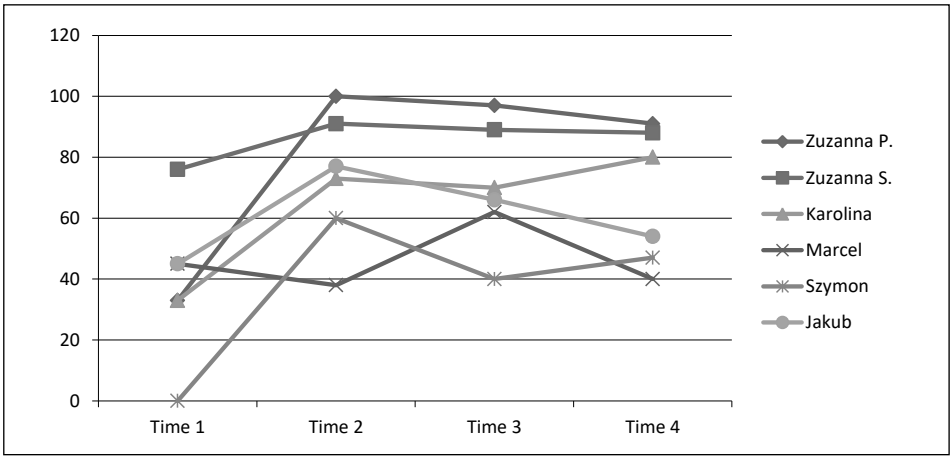


Figure 4.9. Changes in gains of the learners' contextual word reading across four testing times.

As can be seen, the results show that the participants' contextual word reading had a tendency to increase throughout the 6 months of early EFL reading course and across four measurement times. The highest results were obtained by two participants: Zuzanna P. and Zuzanna S. whose final results were closest to the maximum (respectively 92% and 86% of words read correctly). Of these two

participants the most spectacular progress was made by Zuzanna P., whose starting point was 33% of correctly read words, yet the result at Time 2 was 100% and at Times 3 and 4 respectively 97% and 91%. Also Karolina, Szymon and Jakub made clear progress in contextual word reading. In the case of Karolina, the results were initially 33% and grew to 80% at Time 4; in the case of Szymon the results changed from 0% to 60% between Times 1 and 2. Jakub's development of contextual word reading was also clearly visible and improved from 45% at Time 1 to 77% at Time 2. Marcel's results indicated a slight improvement: the average result achieved by the participant at Times 1 and 2 was 42%, while the average result obtained at Times 3 and 4 was 51%. Drops in the results in contextual word reading could be observed in the cases of five participants (except for Zuzanna S.) at various testing times. The development of contextual word reading may have been attributed to the frequent practice in reading both in English and in Polish.

The Table 4.14. below shows the numbers of the learners' correct answers scored on the four contextual word reading tests with the percentage of all correct responses per test as well as the percentage of all correct answers per each learner.

From the data shown in the table it can be seen that the participants improved their contextual word reading over the period of 6 months of instruction. While at the initial measurement time the percentage of all the correctly read words out of all the words read within 1 minute was 50%, at Time 2 it reached 77%, to drop slightly by the final measurement to 70%. The mean scores of individual learners also showed considerable differences. While the highest score (gained by Zuzanna P.) was 92%., the lowest score was 45% (obtained by Szymon). Apart from Szymon, the rate of contextual word reading of all the other learners reaches over 50%.

The results of the contextual word reading tests can be analysed from the perspective of the most frequently misread words. At Time 1 such words included: *this*, *what*, *these*, *is*, *are* and *Ben's*; at Time 2: *this*, *what*, *the*, *it*, *is*, *island* and *beautiful*; at Time 3: *this*, *what*, *the*, *are*, *and*, *monkeys* and *jeans*; and at Time 4: *this*, *what*, *the*, *are*, *whose*, *these*, *they*, *they're*, but also *singing*, *asked*, *said*, *jeans* and *children*. As can be seen, the majority of the misread words were function words.

Table 4.14. Number and percentage of words read accurately out of all the words read by particular learners within 1 minute across four measuring times.

Learner	CORRECT ANSWERS								Number and percentage of correctly read words per learner
	Time 1		Time 2		Time 3		Time 4		
	No. of all read words	No. of correctly read word	No. of all read words	No. of correctly read word	No. of all read words	No. of correctly read word	No. of all read words	No. of correctly read word	
Zuzanna P	3	1 (33%)	10	10 (100%)	30	29 (97%)	22	20 (91%)	**60/65 (92%)**
Zuzanna S.	25	19 (76%)	32	29 (91%)	28	25 (89%)	25	22 (88%)	**95/110 (86%)**
Karolina	12	4 (33%)	22	16 (73%)	20	14 (70%)	20	16 (80%)	**50/74 (68%)**
Marcel	11	5 (45%)	8	3 (38%)	26	16 (62%)	10	4 (40%)	**28/55 (51%)**
Szymon	4	0 (0)%)	15	9 (60%)	15	6 (40%)	19	9 (47%)	**24/53 (45%)**
Jakub	33	15 (45%)	22	17 (77%)	29	19 (66%)	24	13 (54%)	**64/108 (59%)**
Number of all read words, and percentage of correctly read words per measure	**88**	**44 (50%)**	109	**84 (77%)**	**148**	**109 (74%)**	**120**	**84 (70%)**	

4.6.1.3. Results of the reading comprehension tests

The sixth measure was the reading comprehension test, administered at four testing times, whose results are shown in Table 4.15. below. In each test the learners were presented with an illustration accompanied by four pairs of sentences. Each of the illustrations and the reading comprehension tasks were based on the syllabus material covered up to the testing time. In each pair of statements only one was true, and the learner's task was to mark as many of the correct statements as they could within 1 minute.

With the view to demonstrating the results of the reading comprehension tests, the total number and percentage of correct answers per measurement and per student has been calculated (Table 4.15.).

Table 4.15. Number and percentage of correct answers in reading comprehension tests per measure and per learner.

Learner	CORRECT ANSWERS (max. number of points per test = 4)				Number and percentage of correct answers per learner
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4	
Zuzanna P.	1	3	4	4	**12** (**75%**)
Zuzanna S.	2	3	3	4	**12** (**75%**)
Karolina	2	2	3	1	**8** (**50%**)
Marcel	3	1	2	3	**9** (**56%**)
Szymon	4	1	4	4	**13** (**81%**)
Jakub	3	3	3	2	**11** (**69%**)
Number and percentage of correct answers per measure	**15** (**63%**)	**13** (**54%**)	**19** (**79%**)	**18** (**75%**)	

The data shown in the table indicates that the study participants slightly improved their reading comprehension over the period of 6 months of instruction despite the frequent fluctuations in results. While at the first measurement time the total number of correct answers was 15 (63%), an improvement could be observed in Time 3 & 4, that is respectively 19 (79%) and 18 (75%). At Time 2 the number of correct answers on comprehension test was lower than at Time 1. The scores of individual learners showed some variation, as well. While the highest total score was gained by Szymon and amounted to 13 (81%), the lowest were those of Karolina and Marcel, that is 8 (50%) and 9 (56%). In general, as expected, the learners' reading comprehension improved, which can be due to exposure to the

language aspects focused upon, familiarity with the text content and systematic reading comprehension practice.

4.6.1.4. Results of the vocabulary knowledge tests

The last measure was the vocabulary knowledge test given at four testing times, whose results are shown in Figure 4.10. The lexical items appearing on the tests were based on the language material the students were assumed to have already been exposed to. In this test the learners were provided with 10 simple drawings (each presenting a person, an animal or an object) accompanied by three words, where one of the words referred to the drawing. The participants' task was to match as many words to the drawings as possible within 1 minute.

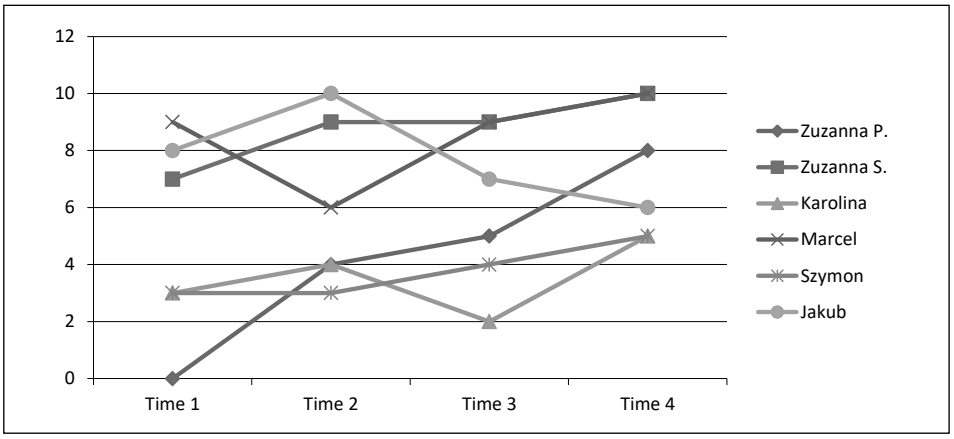


Figure 4.10. Changes in the gains of the learners' vocabulary knowledge across four testing times.

The results of the vocabulary knowledge tests indicate that the number of the participants' correct answers had a tendency to increase over the period of 6 months of early reading EFL training instruction and across four measurement times. The most spectacular results could be observed in the case of Zuzanna S., whose starting point was already high (7 correct answers out of 10), and who at Times 2 and 3 obtained score 9, and the maximum 10 at Time 4. Also Marcel's and Jakub's results stood out. Marcel's starting point was the highest, and his final result was maximum (10 correct answers). Jakub's initial result was 8 and at Time 2 it was 10, however, at Time 4 his score was the lowest of all the results (6 correct answers). Apart from Zuzanna S., other students whose results in vocabulary knowledge increased steadily over the period of early EFL training course were Zuzanna P. and Szymon.

The table below (Table 4.16.) shows the numbers of the learners' correct answers scored on the four vocabulary knowledge tests with the total number of correct answers per measurement as well as the number of correct answers per learner.

Table 4.16. Number and percentage of correct answers in vocabulary knowledge tests per measure and per learner.

Learner	CORRECT ANSWERS (max number of points per test = 10)				Number and percentage of correct answers per learner
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4	
Zuzanna P.	0	4	5	8	**17** (**43%**)
Zuzanna S.	7	9	9	10	**35** (**88%**)
Karolina	3	4	2	5	**14** (**35%**)
Marcel	9	6	9	10	**34** (**85%**)
Szymon	3	3	4	5	**15** (**38%**)
Jakub	8	10	7	6	**31** (**78%**)
Number and percentage of correct answers per measure	**30** (**50%**)	**36** (**60%**)	**36** (**60%**)	**44** (**73%**)	

The collected data presented in the table above shows that the study participants improved their vocabulary knowledge over the 6 month period of the instruction. At the first measuring time the total number of correct answers was 30 (50%), at Time 2 and 3 – 36 (60%) and 44 (73%) at Time 4. By Time 4 the number of correct answers increased by half. Considerable differences could also be seen regarding the total scores reached by individual learners. While the three highest scores gained by Zuzanna S., Marcel and Jakub, were respectively 35 (88%), 34 (85%) and 31 (78%), the lowest were those of Karolina, Szymon, and Zuzanna P., that is 14 (35%), 15 (38%), and 17 (43%) correct answers respectively. As expected, the learners improved their vocabulary knowledge due to the course they participated in.

4.6.2. Correlations between the results of word recognition components

In order to determine to what extent the gains in the particular components of students' word recognition subcomponent measured in the study were related to each other, Pearson's correlation coefficient formula was used. Hence the correlations among the scores achieved by all the students on the five tests were computed. The relevant correlations coefficients are presented in Table 4.17.

Table 4.17. Pearson correlations among the scores of the five word recognition tests gained by all the learners. $p < 0.05$

Correlations among the group results							
	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 4	Test 5	Mean	Standard deviation
Test 1	1.00	0.52	0.71	0.64	0.68	62.7%	21.7%
Test 2		1.00	0.53	0.44	0.56	49.8%	24.0%
Test 3			1.00	0.64	0.67	35.8%	25.2%
Test 4				1.00	0.57	40.8%	22.2%
Test 5					1.00	62.3%	25.1%

It is worth noticing that there is a high correlation between the students' results on Tests 1 (letter names), 3 (sight word reading), 4 (phonological decoding), and 5 (contextual reading of words), ranging from 0.64 to 0.71. There is also a significant relationship between the results gained by the learners on Tests 1 and 2 (letter-sound correspondences) (0.52). This might indicate that the learners' alphabetic knowledge constitutes an efficient basis for the acquisition of all the other components measured in the study. The relationship between letter-sound correspondences (Test 2) and the remaining word recognition subcomponents is lower but still significant (0.44 – 0.56). Sight word reading seems to be particularly helpful in phonemic decoding and reading words in context (respectively 0.64 and 0.67).

As far as the correlations among the scores of the word recognition tests are concerned for the particular learners the observed patterns differ. Table 4.18. shows the relevant correlations among the five test results of Zuzanna P.

Table 4.18. Pearson correlations among the five test results obtained by Zuzanna P. $p < 0.05$

Correlations among the test results of Zuzanna P.							
	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 4	Test 5	Mean	Standard deviation
Test 1	1.00	0.85	0.76	0.93	0.94	76.9%	26.5%
Test 2		1.00	0.55	0.66	0.94	50.0%	35.7%
Test 3			1.00	0.93	0.52	60.0%	21.6%
Test 4				1.00	0.74	52.5%	35.0%
Test 5					1.00	80.2%	31.5%

As can be seen, the correlations among the scores gained by Zuzanna range from moderate to very high (0.52-0.94). While, in Zuzanna's case a high correlation could be observed between the results achieved on Tests 1 (letter names) and 3 (0.76) as well as between the results on tests 2 (letter-sound correspondences) and 4

(phonemic decoding) (0.66), a very high to perfect correlation occurred among the results on the tests 1 and 2, 4, and 5 (respectively 0.85, 0.93 and 0.94). A very high correlation could also be found among the results of tests 2 and 5 (0.94), and tests 3 and 4 (0.93). It can be assumed that there was an interdependence among all the components. The correlations presented above suggest that there is a stable growth in Zuzanna's word recognition.

Table 4.19. presents the correlations among the test results gained by Zuzanna S.

Table 4.19. Pearson correlations among the five test results of Zuzanna S. $p < 0.05$

Correlations among the test results of Zuzanna S.							
	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 4	Test 5	Mean	Standard deviation
Test 1	1.00	0.98	0.90	0.85	0.91	80.8%	13.3%
Test 2		1.00	0.92	0.77	0.96	57.7%	36.2%
Test 3			1.00	0.87	0.79	57.5%	28.7%
Test 4				1.00	0.56	47.5%	17.1%
Test 5					1.00	86.0%	6.7%

The analysis of correlations among the results of all the tests obtained by Zuzanna (with the exception of one of them) shows that they are either high or very high. There is a high or perfect correlation ranging from 0.85 to 0.96 among the results on test 1 (letter name) and tests 2, 3, 4, and 5 (letter sound correspondences, sight word reading, phonemic decoding and contextual word reading), as well as between the results of tests 3 and 4 (0.87). There seems to be a strong relationship between Zuzanna's growth of letter-naming and the improvement of all the remaining word recognition subcomponents. Generally speaking Zuzanna's word recognition was well-established in the context of the tasks she was instructed to perform.

The results of the tests performed by Karolina are in most cases positive. They are illustrated by Table 4.20.

Table 4.20. Pearson correlations among the test results achieved by Karolina. $p < 0.05$

Correlation among the test results of Karolina							
	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 4	Test 5	Mean	Standard deviation
Test 1	1.00	-0.34	0.59	0.19	0.83	58.7%	20.9%
Test 2		1.00	0.05	0.29	0.24	44.2%	12.8%
Test 3			1.00	0.90	0.63	25.0%	19.1%
Test 4				1.00	0.36	35.0%	17.3%
Test 5					1.00	64.0%	20.9%

Correlations among the test results of Karolina are in most cases positive. High or very high correlation was observed between the results of tests 1 and 5 (0.83) and on tests 3 and 4 (phonemic decoding) (0.90). Unexpectedly, negative correlation occurred between the results on tests 1 and 2 (-0.34). The letter-sound matching (Test 2) did not seem to have assisted in the acquisition of the other word recognition subcomponents. The analysis shows that in the case of Karolina, the growth of only some of the aspects of word recognition is stable and well-founded.

In contrast to the correlations among the test results gained by the three pupils discussed so far, the analysis of Marcel's results shows the occurrence of as many as four high negative correlations among the results of the tests. Table 4.21. below demonstrates the correlations among the test results of Marcel.

Table 4.21. Pearson correlations among the results of the five tests obtained by Marcel. $p < 0.05$

Correlations among the test results of Marcel							
	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 4	Test 5	Mean	Standard deviation
Test 1	1.00	-0.67	0.10	0.58	-0.66	68.3%	17.3%
Test 2		1.00	-0.78	-0.94	0.21	54.8%	10.1%
Test 3			1.00	0.86	0.41	27.5%	12.6%
Test 4				1.00	0.07	40.0%	21.6%
Test 5					1.00	46.1%	10.8%

The highly negative correlations concern Tests 1 (letter-naming) and Test 2 (letter sound correspondences) (-0.67), Tests 1 (letter names) and Test 5 (contextual word reading) (-0.66), as well as Tests 2 (letter sound correspondences) and 3 (sight word reading) (-0.78) and Tests 2 and 4 (phonemic decoding) (-0.94). The very high positive correlation was found to occur between Tests 3 (sight word reading) and 4 (phonemic decoding) (0.89). This indicates that the sight word reading played a facilitative role in the development of phonemic decoding and contextual word reading. All in all, the growth in Marcel's word recognition was not well-established yet and he needed more time for the changes to be secure.

Table 4.22. below shows the correlations among the test results of Szymon.

Table 4.22. Pearson correlations among the five test results of Szymon. $p < 0.05$

Correlations among the test results of Szymon							
	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 4	Test 5	Mean	Standard deviation
Test 1	1.00	0.82	0.50	0.94	0.69	46.2%	15.1%
Test 2		1.00	0.55	0.78	0.95	42.3%	28.3%
Test 3			1.00	0.18	0.29	17.5%	22.2%
Test 4				1.00	0.75	20.0%	16.3%
Test 5					1.00	36.8%	25.9%

In the case of Szymon, it is worth noticing that a high to perfect correlation was observed between the student's results on Tests 1 (letter names), 2 (letter sound correspondences), 3 (sight word reading), 4 (phonemic decoding), and 5 (contextual reading of words) (ranging from 0.50 to 0.94), between the results on Tests 2 and 3 (sight word reading), 4 and 5 (ranging from 0.55 to 0.95), and between the results of Tests 4 and 5 (0.75). This indicates that improvement on letter-naming, letter-sound matching and phonemic decoding facilitated the improvement in the remaining aspects of word recognition, while sight word reading assisted in the development of the alphabetic knowledge. These high to perfect codependences show that Szymon's progress in word recognition was well-founded.

Table 4.23. presents the correlations among the test results of Jakub.

Table 4.23. Pearson correlations among the test results gained by Jakub. $p < 0.05$

Correlation among the test results of Jakub							
	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 4	Test 5	Mean	Standard deviation
Test 1	1.00	0.61	0.64	0.61	0.44	45.2%	15.5%
Test 2		1.00	0.83	-0.07	0.42	50.0%	22.9%
Test 3			1.00	-0.22	0.85	27.5%	18.9%
Test 4				1.00	-0.34	50.0%	16.3%
Test 5					1.00	60.6%	13.8%

Correlations between the test results achieved by Jakub were predominantly positive. The highest correlation can be observed between the results gained by the participant on Tests 2 (letter-sound correspondences) and 3 (sight word reading) (0.83), and between the results of Tests 3 and 5 (contextual word reading) (0.85). High and moderate correlations occurred between the results obtained on Test 1 (letter names) and Tests 2, 3, and 4 (phonemic decoding) (ranging from 0.61 to 0.64), and between Tests 1 and 5 (contextual word reading) (0.44), and 2 and 5 (0.42). This means that Jakub's letter-naming ability constituted a sound foundation

for the acquisition of all the other components measured in the study. Letter-sound matching facilitated sight word reading (0.83) and contextual word reading (0.42). Sight word reading, on the other hand, assisted in the acquisition of the contextual word reading as well as in the alphabetic knowledge, and the influence was very high. The analysis shows that only some of Jakub's word recognition subcomponents were well-founded, and that the participant required more time and practice.

4.7. Learner profiles

The learner's profiles were drawn based on three sources: short interviews with the subjects' parents conducted prior to the pre-literacy instruction in English, the information gathered by the researcher while closely observing the learners during early EFL reading course instructional sessions, and on the participants' test results in word recognition subcomponents obtained during the study. The interviews with parents concerned mostly the information on their children's English Language exposure, the learners' reading experience and attitudes, any potential speech impediment a child had as well as the amount of support parents gave to their children. The classroom observation carried out by the teacher-researcher aimed to gain insights into the individual learners' language performance on the tasks implemented in the classroom as well as their behaviour in interactive learning activities during the instructional sessions. The results of the participant's attainment in word recognition subcomponents were also taken into consideration. Thus the aspects discussed intend to address the following issues:

1. the children's prior reading experience in Polish and English, their attitudes and parental support;
2. patterns in the amount and quality of learners' contribution to the classroom activities over the period of the study as well as observable changes concerning the learners' participation in reading tasks;
3. the individual learners' progress in word recognition evaluated by means of the testing instruments designed for the purpose of the early EFL reading course offered;
4. the adjustments to the word recognition instruction and reading practice the teacher introduced in response to the individual learners' needs;
5. correlations among the development of the particular subcomponents of word recognition of the entire study group and of individual learners.

4.7.1. Zuzanna P.

At the time of participation in the early EFL reading course Zuzanna P. was an only child and her parents participated equally in the development and upbringing

of their daughter. By the time the course began, Zuzanna had been learning English for 2.5 years. According to her mother she read daily one page of a book of her own choice for pleasure in Polish. She also read in English twice a week when doing the assigned English homework. At school, the learner received top marks in early reading in Polish. She had no speech impediment.

Zuzanna's behaviour during the instructional sessions evolved overtime. During the first few meetings she was shy and preferred to passively observe what was happening in the classroom. After overcoming the initial reservations, however, she became talkative and eager to participate in many activities. Throughout the course, the learner was always highly motivated, curious and excited by the new tasks and the new language taught. Her favourite activities included reading aloud familiar texts and the *spelling race* activity, however, she refused to take part in the *musical chairs* activity. As explained by the participant herself, she was afraid of being pushed and was worried that she would not be able to correctly recognise the words used in the activity.

Also Zuzanna's motivation to participate in classroom reading tasks changed over the time of the course. The researcher observed that during the first three instructional sequences the learner seemed uncertain when reading aloud, nevertheless she followed the teacher's instruction, remained focused and read the whole text. Around Sequence 4, Zuzanna seemed to gain in confidence and was visibly excited about reading new passages aloud. She continued to willingly follow the instructions and participated in most of the activities. Throughout the remaining sequences of the course Zuzanna stayed enthusiastic about reading and learning the new material. When reading, she often analysed the illustrations accompanying the text, which suggests that she naturally used all the available sources of information to confirm text comprehension. Towards the end of the course Zuzanna was willing to read a given passage a number of times, as it made her feel proud of her reading ability. When introduced to the *Reader's theatre* technique, she always chose the voice of 'a tiny mouse'.

A clear consistency in Zuzanna's performance could be seen in her approach to taking tests. She remained focused on the tasks and generally avoided giving the answer when uncertain. Instead of guessing, Zuzanna omitted those letter names, letter-sound connections and words that she found difficult, which might explain her low initial results. Her test results in word recognition subcomponents are presented in Figure 4.11.

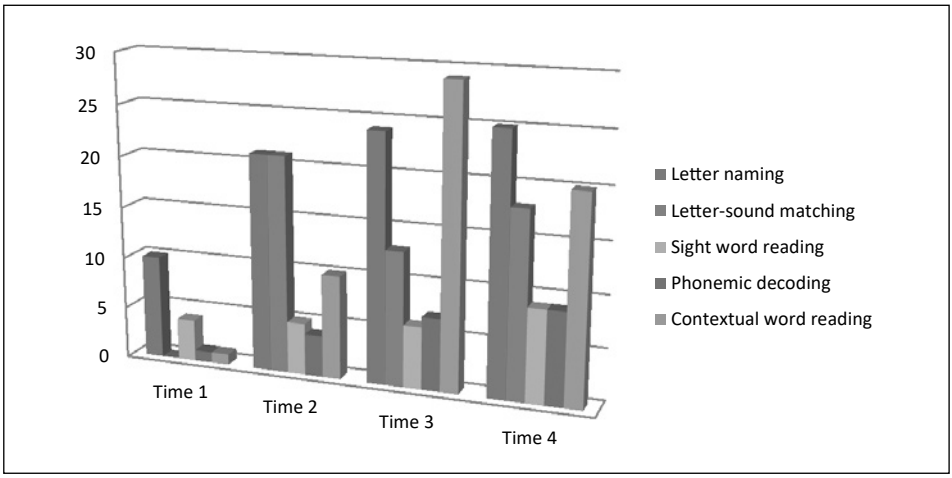


Figure 4.11. Changes in Zuzanna P.'s results in word recognition tests across four testing times.

As can be seen, Zuzanna's test results show a clear progress in a number of word recognition abilities: letter naming (from 10 at Time 1 to 25 at Time 4), sight word reading (from nil at Time 1 to 18 at Time 4) and phonological decoding (from 1 at Time 1 to 9 at Time 4), yet some fluctuations could be observed in letter-sound matching and contextual word reading. The development in the latter subcomponent was particularly interesting to observe. At Time 1, Zuzanna's performance was very poor. At Time 2 she read only 10 words, however, all the words were read correctly and with some level of intonation. She read the words slowly and was unable to read out longer words as sight words. She analysed individual graphemes, blended the phonemes and read the words aloud. At Times 3 and 4 she correctly recognised nearly all the words in the texts she was assigned to read. She also used the right intonation both in affirmative sentences and in questions. Generally, her test results were low at Time 1, and relatively high at Time 4.

In the case of Zuzanna no significant adjustments to word recognition instruction and reading practice on the part of the teacher were necessary. This enthusiastic and cooperating learner required a combination of regular L2 exposure and a balanced approach to teaching word recognition in English to ensure a parallel development of both decoding and comprehension. Zuzanna needed to feel safe, and for this reason she was given autonomy in deciding upon the activities she would participate in.

4.7.2. Zuzanna S.

Zuzanna S. was also an only child at the time of her participation in the early EFL reading course, and both her parents contributed equally to her upbringing. The study participant had been learning English since the age of four. According to her mother, Zuzanna enjoyed her daily reading for pleasure. Before the beginning of the early EFL reading course Zuzanna had not attempted to read a text in English but frequently watched cartoons and films for children in that language. She received top marks in reading in L1. Like the previously described participant, Zuzanna also showed signs of good hearing, and had no speech impediment.

From the first instructional session Zuzanna S. appeared to be self-confident and keen to participate in all the activities. Initially, she preferred working independently, but soon became more open to cooperation with the other learners. She was ambitious, listened attentively to the researcher's instructions, and sometimes recited from memory the explanations she had heard earlier. Throughout the remaining part of the course she was willing to read entire texts more than once and took great pride in her reading ability. During the *Readers' theatre* activity, Zuzanna chose to use the voice of 'a tiny mouse' or 'an angry man'. The participant always paid attention to the labels in English displayed in the classroom.

It was interesting to observe the changes in the way Zuzanna read unfamiliar continuous texts at four testing times. At Time 1 she read the text slowly and stressed all the words, including the function words. At Time 2 the participant read the text slowly and focused her mental resources on word recognition; she also read with some intonation, however, not always correctly, and sometimes self-corrected herself. When Zuzanna read her text at Time 4, the pace of reading, reading accuracy and intonation reached a high level.

Throughout the early EFL reading course Zuzanna's test results were high as she gave many answers and, in most cases, correctly. Figure 4.12. presents the changes in the participant's test results in word recognition subcomponents across four measuring times.

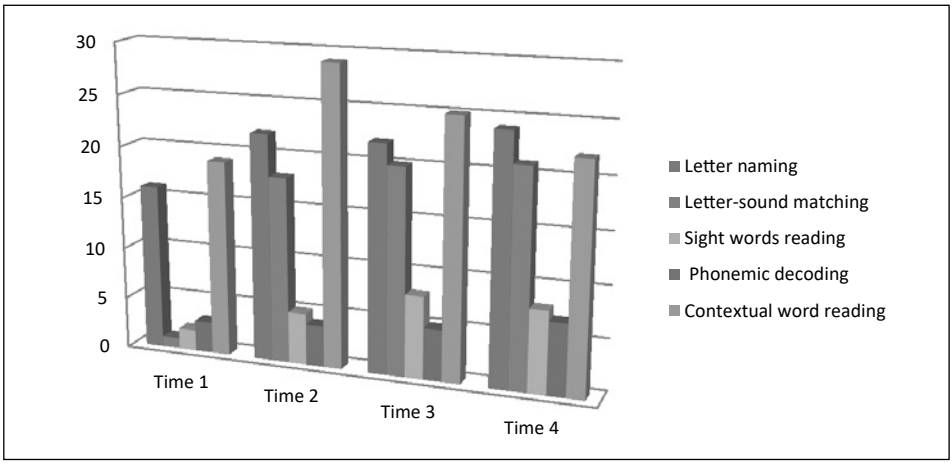


Figure 4.12. Changes in Zuzanna S.'s results in word recognition tests across four testing times.

As shown above, Zuzanna's test results show a steady progress in most of the word recognition subcomponents, e.g. in letter naming (improvement from 16 at Time 1 and 24 at Time 4), letter-sound matching (form 1 at Time 1 to 21 at Time 4), sight word reading (from 2 at Time 1 to 8 at Time 4), and phonemic decoding (from 3 at Time 1 to 7 at Time 4), although no progress was reported in letter-naming between Times 2 and 3, and in sight word reading between Times 3 and 4. No drops in results were observed.

The participant could be described as both good docoder and comprehender. She responded well to the word recognition instruction and reading practice. Regular exposure to the L2 and books in L2, balanced reading instruction, a variety of multisensory activities, challenging reading tasks and enjoyable texts was what the participant needed to improve her word recognition in EFL.

4.7.3. Karolina

One of the two youngest participants, Karolina, had no siblings at the time of the early EFL reading course; both her parents participated actively in her upbringing. The learner's regular exposure to English began when she was four years old. Karolina's mother reported that her daughter listened to audiobooks and read in Polish on a regular basis, though not the reading texts assigned by her form teacher. She received top marks in reading in Polish. Before the early EFL reading course began she read words and short sentences in English while doing homework. The learner was artistically talented, and had no speech impediment.

Around testing Time 3, a difficult situation occurred in Karolina's family structure, which may have affected her ability to concentrate during tests.

The learner's behaviour in the classroom changed over time. At the beginning of the course Karolina was reserved despite having known the teacher earlier. She sometimes became distracted by a toy or by what she saw outside. With time, however, she gained in confidence and was more eager to participate in the activities. She was ambitious, eager to learn, and interested in the new language and activities. She seemed to particularly enjoy colouring, the *musical chairs* and *spelling race* activities, dictations, listening to songs and watching cartoons. She regularly watched at home the videos played during instructional sessions and was familiar with the lyrics.

Also Karolina's behaviour when reading changed overtime. Initially, when reading new texts Karolina felt uncertain and lacked confidence, however, she willingly followed the teacher's instructions. During the first three instructional sequences she chose to read aloud only a few sentences when practicing reading. Around sequence 4 Karolina gained in confidence and was more open to reading aloud in class. Between sequences 4 and 7 she was visibly more focused when reading. When given a choice as to how much she would read she usually chose to read the first few sentences, but was easily motivated to read the whole reading passage. During the *Reader's theatre* activity she would usually assume the voice of 'a tiny mouse' or 'a tired woman'. Towards the end of the early EFL reading course (Sequences 8-10) Karolina was eager to read, although she never volunteered to be the first to read aloud. She followed the teacher's instructions most of the times, and once focused on the text she read it from the beginning to the end.

A number of insightful observations were made by the researcher when analysing the recordings of Karolina reading continuous texts at four testing times. At testing Time 2 Karolina used the Polish grapheme-phoneme correspondences instead of English, e.g. in reading words *is* and *and*, however, the words were read correctly at later testing times. It also happened that Karolina used the Polish pronunciation, e.g. the sound /tʃ/ in the word *chair* was pronounced with the Polish sound. When reading the first continuous text, Karolina's results in contextual word reading were low, however, the results at Time 2 showed improvement. She read all the words in the text, and used appropriate intonation, especially when reading questions. She also self-corrected herself when reading the word *doing* at Time 3. At Time 4 she seemed to have paid less attention to intonation, especially towards the end of the text. Sometimes the learner tried to guess how a word should be read, i.e. she read the sight word *teacher* as *T-shirt* at Time 4.

Figure 4.13. presents the changes in Karolina's test results in word recognition over the four testing times.

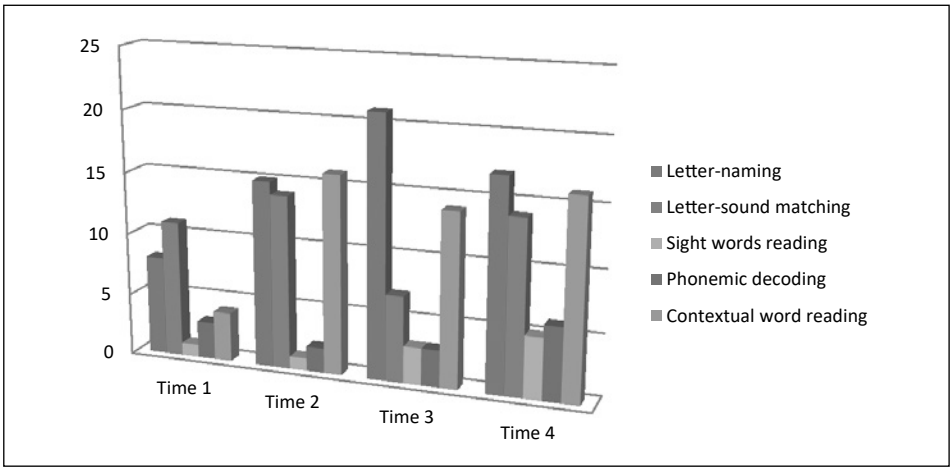


Figure 4.13. Changes in Karolina's results in word recognition tests across four testing times.

As evident, Karolina's progress in early EFL reading was uneven. Steady progress could be observed in connection to sight word reading, where at Time 1 she read correctly only 1 word, but at Time 4 she read correctly 5 words. The results of other subcomponents were subject to fluctuations, though with a tendency to grow. The results in the letter-naming test dropped at Time 4 in comparison to those at Time 3 (respectively 17 and 21), while the letter-sound matching results dropped at Time 3, when Karolina matched sounds to letter correctly 7 times, yet at Time 2 the number was 14.

Karolina was keen on learning to read in English and responded well to reading instruction. The fluctuations in the test results, however, mean that the participant needed more time and practice in early EFL reading. While her decoding ability was developing, the results in comprehension test at Time 4 were the lowest, suggesting that she needed more practice in comprehension tasks to avoid the risk of becoming a poor comprehender. In general, Karolina needed regular exposure to the English language and to entertaining reading materials in English. It was evident that she required systematic practice in using comprehension strategies, but also frequent praise and regular opportunities to experience success.

4.7.4. Marcel

At the time of his participation in the early EFL reading course Marcel had a younger brother. The participant was cared for mainly by his mother as the father worked away from home. As reported by his mother, reading was one of Marcel's least favourite pastime activities, as he found it particularly difficult. The learner

only read when he had been assigned reading practice by his form teacher. Marcel had attended English lessons since the age of 5, yet he had not had the opportunity to read in English before the early EFL reading course. Marcel had no speech impediment.

Initially Marcel was not willing to attend the course and generally seemed to feel insecure. Sometimes he stated that he was not going to attend the course any more, at other times he was visibly excited by the tasks, participated willingly and showed commitment, especially when the activities involved movement e.g. *musical chairs*, or *running dictation*. Generally, Marcel seemed to have a short concentration span, and was frequently bored by reading aloud, unless reading in a different voice (the *Reader's theatre* technique), which he considered a fun activity. The study participant also seemed to be easily discouraged by the mistakes he made and lacked confidence in his own abilities. He required constant stimulation, and was motivated by positive reinforcement and encouragement. During testing sessions, he needed to be reminded that the testing was going to end soon. All in all, Marcel proved to be an ambitious boy, with a great sense of humour.

Generally, Marcel was not a keen reader in English. Throughout the course Marcel usually followed the teacher's instructions and was prepared to read aloud in class, however, unwillingly. When asked how much he wanted to read he often chose only one sentence, usually the shortest one; sometimes he refused to read aloud at all. He sometimes talked loudly during reading sessions and requested the then current activity to be changed to another one of his choice. Sometimes, when reading aloud, he lay on his back and held the text over his head. By sequence 8, Marcel's attitude towards reading aloud in classroom changed and he did not resist it any more, however, his usual reading position was still lying down and he still found it hard to stay focused on the reading passage. Another difference could be observed in the amount of text he was ready to read, as he often read most of the text. When reading, he always assumed the voice of 'a big elephant'.

When Marcel read the first continuous text at Time1, he read very slowly and with no intonation. When he could not read a word he tried analyzing its parts but gave up (e.g. with the word *family*), or sometimes he skipped the words he could not decode (e.g. *is*, *these*, or *this*). Most of the words read correctly were content words (e.g. *mum*, *dad*, *tree* and *house*). Marcel sometimes misread words by reading the graphemes in the wrong order, for instance the word *is* was read as *si*, which means that he had problems with synthesis. At Time 2 he was clearly frustrated when unable to read the words and expected the researcher to help him with reading. He could not read the word *beautiful* as sight word, tried to read the word by means of phonological decoding, but then gave up halfway through the word. At Time 3 Marcel was concentrated, he self-corrected himself twice (with words *baby* and *one*), he did not omit any of the words, but unsuccessfully guessed one word: he read the word *jungle* as *jumping*. At Time 4 his results in contextual word reading were much

lower than at Time 3, he read the word *this* as *T-shirt*, and he read the word *children* by applying the Polish grapheme-phoneme correspondences.

The changes in Marcel's test results in word recognition abilities are presented in Figure 4.14.

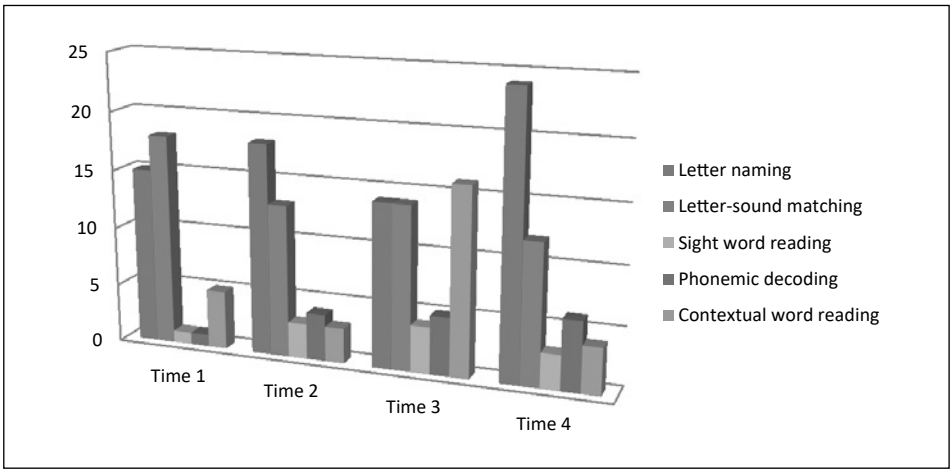


Figure 4.14. Changes in Marcel's results in word recognition tests across four testing times.

What could immediately be noticed when looking at Marcel's test results was that all the subcomponents, except for phonemic decoding, were subject to fluctuations. Test results in letter-sound matching and contextual word reading were lower at Time 4 than at previous testing times (at Time 1 Marcel matched correctly sounds to 18 letters, while at Time 4 the number dropped to 12, and in the contextual reading test at Time 4 he gave only 4 correct answers while at Time 3 the number was 16). The reason for the frequent drops in results may be connected with Marcel's concentration difficulties as he was the only participant who found the testing sessions too long and tiring.

It was immediately apparent to the researcher that Marcel found reading difficult. What he needed was the opportunity to have short but intensive individual instructional sessions in reading. Since individual sessions were not possible as a part of the course, the researcher attempted to allocate a few minutes of class time to provide Marcel with some personalised instruction. What was also important, the researcher was supportive and creative in her approach to teaching Marcel reading. Frequent praise on her part was to help Marcel maintain the feeling of success. Finally, Marcel enjoyed reading humorous and engaging stories.

4.7.5. Szymon

Szymon had an older brother and both of them were brought up by their parents. Szymon started learning English at the age of 3, which means that he had been exposed to the English language for at least 3 years before entering the early EFL reading course. As mentioned by Szymon's mother, at the beginning of the course the learner was at the initial stage of learning to read in Polish, and he found it hard and complicated. He read the assigned texts every day to catch up with his classmates and received top marks in reading in L1. Szymon was a typical kinesthetic learner: energetic, friendly, and with a great sense of humour. He had no significant speech impediment.

From the first instructional session Szymon seemed confident and excited to learn English. If some time was available before the lesson, Szymon often asked what new language was going to be taught and what activities had been planned. During the initial activity, when children performed actions while listening to *Action verb songs*, Szymon performed the actions faster and with more force than other children, as if trying to release the energy within him and to provoke other children to act in the same manner. Like Marcel, he sometimes found it difficult to concentrate during reading activities and looked at the toys. He was, however, very excited by activities involving movement and music, and was not easily discouraged by the difficulties. He once expressed it clearly that he was going to learn well and gain as much as possible from the sessions; he frequently remembered the teacher's explanations to recall them later. Szymon enjoyed all sorts of kinesthetic and multisensory activities, but was not willing to do written activities, however, when encouraged by the teacher, he could be persuaded to complete the assigned tasks.

At times, reading in English seemed problematic to Szymon. Throughout the course, the learner felt uncertain about reading. Sometimes he was willing to read and followed the teacher's instructions, on occasions he refused to read at all; sometimes Szymon was prepared to read only one or two words, at other times he was willing to read a few sentences or even the whole text. When practicing reading aloud, he usually analysed the illustrations to confirm comprehension. Frequently, instead of following the instructions, Szymon looked for a toy to play with and did all he could to attract the attention of the other boys in the group. During the *Reader's theatre* activity, Szymon assumed the voice of 'an angry boy' or 'a big elephant'.

Throughout the course, Szymon seemed to have particular problems with decoding. When tested in reading a continuous text at Time 1, Szymon read only a few words, and none of them correctly. Even though the number of words he read at Time 2 grew to 8, all the mental resources were directed towards word recognition at the cost of accuracy and intonation. Szymon tried to read words by

looking at the initial syllable or letter cluster, that is why when reading the word *beautiful* he looked at the initial grapheme and read the word as *butterfly*. Besides, Szymon read the text as if it was a list of unconnected words. At Time 3 the same could be observed, however, some intonation was used. Time 4 testing did not show improvement. Words were misread, e.g. *are* was read as *car,* the word *the* was read as *here*, and *asked* was read as if it contained five phonemes instead of four. Although a poor decoder, Szymon seemed to be a good comprehender, because he achieved the highest possible results in reading comprehension at Times 1, 3 and 4.

Figure 4.15. presents the changes in Szymon's test results in word recognition subcomponents across four measuring times.

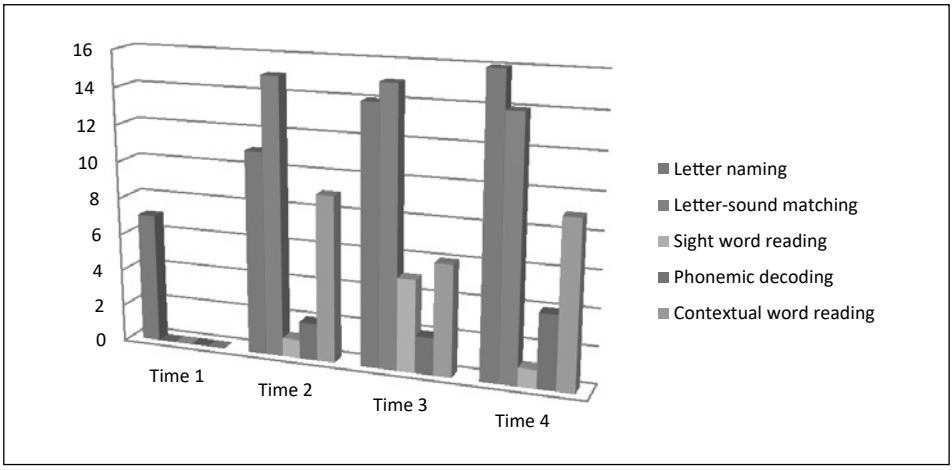


Figure 4.15. Changes in Szymon's results in word recognition tests across four testing times.

Szymon's test results show that the level of word recognition subcomponents at the starting point was very low, yet progress was made throughout the course. Low but steady improvement was observed in connection to letter naming (from 7 at Time 1 to 16 at Time 4), letter-sound matching (from nil at Time 1 to 14 at Time 4), phonemic decoding (from nil at Time 1 to 4 at Time 4) and contextual word reading (from nil at Time 1 to 9 at Time 4). It was clear from the first test that Szymon's performance was inefficient. At Time 1 he sometimes resorted to guessing the correct answer, e.g. in the phonemic decoding test he read the pseudoword *fad* as *sad*, *ret* as *rat*, *pug* as *pig*, and *dook* as *dok*; he also omitted a letter or a word. At Time 3 he continued guessing, e.g. *dat* was read as *dad*, *ped* as *pen*, *bip* as *dig*, or *moot* as *moon,* thus changing pseudowords into real words.

A learner whose reading comprehension is strong but whose decoding ability is still very poor requires additional practice in decoding strategies, i.e. in reading by analogy. As a kinesthetic learner, Szymon required instruction that would

include movement, rhythm and rhyme. A learner at the reading level represented by Szymon should be neither rushed nor compared to those learners who are more skilled. Learning to read is effortful and cognitively demanding, and children at this level may feel vulnerable. Szymon was therefore to be taught in an entertaining way, where success was easily obtainable.

4.7.6. Jakub

When Jakub entered the early EFL reading course, he had a younger brother, and both parents devoted their time to the care of their children. The learner had attended kindergarten and started participating in English lessons at the age of five. Jakub's mother reported that her son read in Polish every day, that he enjoyed reading books and comic books, and that he often took books with him on car journeys. When the course began, Jakub could read individual words in English, but had not yet attempted to read books in English. When he saw an English word he tried to read it and translate it into Polish. At the time of the course Jakub had a slight speech impediment and had some difficulties with articulating the Polish sounds connected with letters *s*, *c*, and *r* and graphemes *sz*, *cz*, *ż*, and *dź*. Jakub was the oldest participant in the course.

In spite of being a quiet child, Jakub proved to be an active and willing participant and seemed to have equally enjoyed both stationary and kinesthetic activities. He was able to concentrate for long periods of time and had a very good memory for lyrics and poems. As an ambitious boy, he put much effort into completing the assigned tasks.

In the case of Jakub, some untypical behaviours concerning the learner's reading aloud were observed by the researcher. Initially, when practicing reading, Jakub felt uncertain of his reading abilities but was willing to try. When given a choice, he often read only one sentence. Jakub seemed conscious of his speech impediment and as a consequence he concentrated on pronunciation practice. When reading aloud individually he often finger-pointed the text; choral reading on the other hand, deconcentrated him. Only at the end of the course was he prepared to read the entire text. During the *Reader's theatre* activity, he usually read the text using the 'big elephant' voice. It was also observed that when reading continuous texts Jakub tried to read with the right intonation and at a natural pace, however, at the cost of accuracy and comprehension. At Time 1 he read the word *telescope* as the Polish *teleskop*, at Time 2 he read the word *island* by pronouncing the silent letter 's', and at Time 3 he read the words *one* and *he* by applying Polish letter-sound connections. Finally, at Time 4 Jakub managed to read correctly words that had been problematic for him during all three previous testing times, that is words *this* and *are*.

The changes in Jakub's test results in word recognition subcomponents are presented in Figure 4.16.

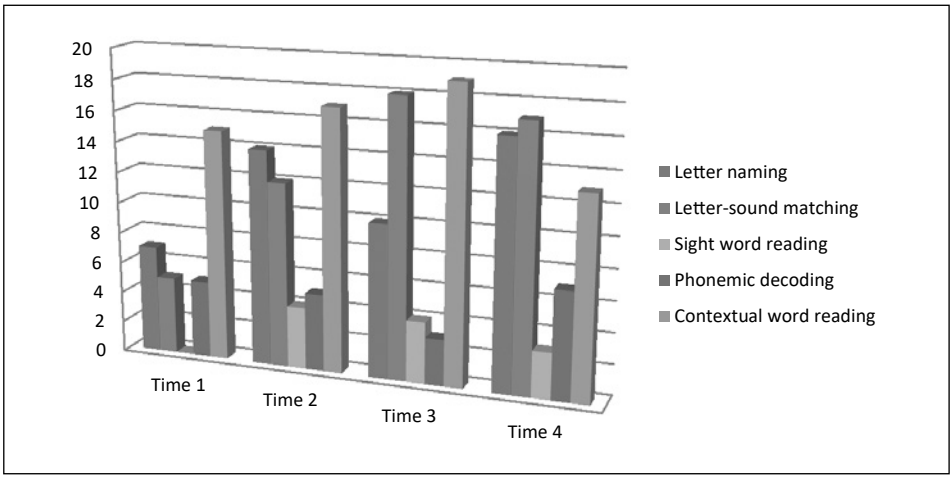


Figure 4.16. Changes in Jakub's results in word recognition tests across four testing times.

It is visible form the presented figure that Jakub's test results were low at Time 1, but higher at Time 4. Jakub made progress in all the aspects of word recognition, however, the results in most of them were subject to fluctuations. There was a drop in results of the letter-naming test at Time 3 (at Time 2 the number of correct answers was 14, yet at Time 3 it was 10), slight drop in letter-sound matching at Time 4 (at Time 4 the learner gave 17 correct answers, yet at Time 3 the number was 18), and in phonemic decoding at Time 3 (a drop from 5 at Time 2 to 3 at Time 3). As for the results in contextual word reading, the percentage of the correctly read words was considerably low as Jakub had a tendency to guess.

The many instances when Jakub guessed the answers or applied his word recognition subcomponents incorrectly were noted. For instance, at Time 1 he produced 26 letter-sound connection, yet only 5 of them were correct because he provided letter names instead. When reading sight words at testing Time 4 he read the word *teacher* as *T-shirt*, at Time 3 he wrongly self-corrected himself when reading the word *bip*. Additionally, when decoding pseudowords phonemically at Time 1 he read the word *dook* as *book*, which means that he was still at the stage of reading acquisition when learners find mirror letters confusing. Finally, when reading sight words at Time 1 Jakub tried to read the words by applying the strategy of phonemic decoding.

Since Jakub too frequently guessed the answers he was to provide throughout the test, thus requiring additional reading practice, the teacher's intervention was indispensible. First, the teacher directly explained to Jakub that accuracy was expected in reading aloud. Then she provided the study participant with practice in dividing longer, multisyllabic words into smaller, easily decodable parts, and in reading by analogy. Finally, Jakub was exposed to some additional practice in

automatic word recognition, both in form of decontextualised practice and reading for pleasure.

4.8. Synthesis of the findings

Despite the limited time allocated to the course, it was expected that some promising improvements in word recognition would be observed due to 4 measurements taken to assess the level of the learners' performance tasks involving particular components of word recognition distributed throughout the study. This section offers a summary of the study findings as well as their interpretation with reference to the detailed research questions posed earlier.

The aim of **Research Question 1** was to observe if changes could be found in the development of the learners' word recognition represented by the following subcomponents: letter naming, letter-sound matching, sight word reading, phonemic decoding and contextual word reading.

As far as **letter naming** is concerned, a considerable increase in the number of correct answers obtained by the learners at Time 4 in comparison of that at Time 1 was observed as the number of correct answers almost doubled. While at Time 1, 40 % of the learners' answers were correct, at Time 4 the number rose to 78%. The results varied between learners, however. The correlational analysis shows that the increase in letter-naming might have been closely connected with positive changes in the level of other subcomponents. It is worth then investing proper instruction time and effort into practice in naming letters. It should be remarked that during the course organised for the study under consideration the learners were provided with some video and audio materials which were available to them at home and thus could enrich their exposure to a range of letter naming activities.

In the case of the learners' progress in **letter-sound matching** positive changes for the whole group were also observed. The test results showed that the number of correct answers at Time 4 almost tripled in comparison to the number of correct answers given by the learners at Time 1. At Time 1, 22% of all the answers provided by the learners were correct, yet at Time 4 their number grew to as much as 62%.

Similarly to the previously discussed subcomponent, positive changes occurred also in the learners' **sight word reading**. Here the researcher observed a significant improvement, since at Time 1 the percentage of correct answers was 13%, and it tripled by Time 4 (48%). However, the differences between the particular learners' progress in sight word reading were considerable and ranged from 18% to 60%. It has to be noted that it is not the kind of word recognition subcomponent typically required from Polish early readers in their native language.

The analysis of the changes to the learners' **phonemic decoding** ability has also shown an increase in the level of the learners' performance. The results

improved considerably and went from 22% at Time 1 up to 65% at Time 4. Not all the learners' phonemic decoding, however, developed at an equal pace as the differences between individual learners were meaningful and ranged from 20% to 53%. As this component of word recognition is particularly useful in dealing with unfamiliar words it comes naturally to Polish children, yet some problems can appear as a result of cross-linguistic transfer. While decoding English words some children tend to apply Polish phonemes.

Likewise, positive changes to the learners' **contextual word reading** were also observed as the score of correctly read words amounted to 50% at Time 1 and 70% at Time 4. Also in connection to the contextual word reading, some considerable differences can be observed between learners, with the total results ranging from 45 % to 92%. When reading a connected text and concentrating on the fast pace of reading some children tended to make guesses at the words that were not a part of their sight vocabulary.

To provide the answer to **Research Question 2** regarding the possible changes in the development of the learners' **reading comprehension**, the researcher analysed the results of comprehension tests, which were based on matching sentences to illustrations. The number of correct answers provided by the learners at Times 1-4 was respectively 63%, 54%, 79%, and 75%. The results indicate that no clear growth in comprehension levels on the four tasks performed by the learners could be seen, despite this the level of comprehension reached by the learners at the time of each assessment can be considered generally satisfactory. Also the differences between the results of individual learners did not differ as much as in the case of sight word reading or phonemic decoding. The lowest result in reading comprehension was 50% and the highest was 81%.

Some improvements could also be observed in connection with the changes in the learners' vocabulary knowledge (**Research Question 3**). At Time 1 the number of correct answers was 50% and at Time 4 it amounted to 73% for the whole group. On the other hand, differences between individual learners were considerable, with the lowest result being 35% and the highest 88%.

Research Question 4 was posed to investigate the extent to which the word recognition subcomponents would develop in the particular learners. Creating and analysing learner profiles confirmed the existence of considerable individual differences in the development of the study participants' word recognition as well as their vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension ability. It is evident from the data that Zuzanna S. and Zuzanna P. had the most significant result gains. The mean scores of Zuzanna S. on all the seven tests ranged from 48% to 96%, similarly to Zuzanna P. (43% - 92%), while the lowest results came from Szymon and ranged from 18% to 46%, with the exception of the reading comprehension test, where Szymon reached an impressive 81%. The reason for the individual differences between the results of Zuzanna S., Zuzanna P. and Szymon cannot

be attributed to the participants' age since the age difference amounted to no more than a few months. Rather, this seems to be a problem of reading readiness. Although Szymon's results are considerably lower on the six remaining tests, all the three children seem to have been making a steady progress, as their results were subject to sporadic fluctuations.

Correlational relationships among all the test results referring to the particular components of word recognition for the whole group of the study participants and for the individual learners were the subject of **Research Question 5**. From the analysis of the correlations among all the test scores awarded to the individual learners two observations can be made. First of all, only positive correlations appeared in the case of Zuzanna S., Zuzanna P. and Szymon, who showed steady progress in their word recognition, while negative correlations characterised Karolina, Marcel and Jakub test results, where frequent drops were observed. Another important conclusion is that the alphabetic knowkedge (letter naming and letter-sound matching) seems to be frequently correlated with other subcomponents, which gives support to the recommendation that Polish learners be taught the English alphabet early and regularly.

4.9. Limitations of the study

The study is not without its limitations and the results should be approached with a certain degree of caution. The major limitation lays with the small number of the study participants. It would have been more beneficial and statistically reliable to carry out the study involving a larger number of pupils, as in the research studies discussed in Chapter 4. The Author, however, decided to adopt a design of a multiple case study so that - while accepting its limitations - an in-depth analysis and description of the development of selected aspects of early reading could be carried out. Obtaining some qualitative data to reach the goal of her study was also taken into consideration. Due to the fact that the group the teacher-researcher taught consisted of just six learners, she was able to carefully observe the dynamics of the changes in the development of the particular learners' word recognition subcomponents directly in classroom conditions while they were performing a range of carefully planned reading-based classroom activities. This would have not been possible had the number of study participants been considerably larger and had the study been based on quantitative data only.

Another limitation of the study was a relatively short time in which this specific group of learners were exposed to an early EFL reading instruction. The pre-literacy training period and the actual early EFL reading course stretched over the period of eight months, which is not much considering the nature of the processes to be observed and the potential progress to be measured. As a result, in the cases

of some of the participants, among others due to individual learner differences, the changes in their word recognition subcomponents were hardly observable or subject to considerable fluctuations. Had the learners been given more time to develop their English oral language skills and early EFL reading, and had the tests been carried out at longer distances, the results might have been more visible, and the development of word recognition subcomponents clearer and easier to observe and measure. The weaker learners would have been given more time to make up for their deficits.

In spite of the limitations mentioned above, the early EFL reading course conducted as part of the author's doctoral thesis seems to have served its primary research purpose as well as its educational, more practical goals. It has assisted the learners in the improvement in the areas of word recognition, comprehension and vocabulary. It has also given them practice in reading fluency and the development of some elementary oral language skills. The results of the instructional treatment were promising, though not dramatic, yet they have confirmed that the development of early EFL reading through the application of the balanced approach to teaching reading is well worth further investigation.

4.10. Conclusions of the study and implications for EFL primary reading instruction

A detailed analysis of the data obtained through a series of four tests on individual word recognition aspects as well as reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge made it possible to draw a number of optimistic conclusions regarding the development of the subcomponents in questions.

Clearly, word recognition should be given the deserved attention in the context of early EFL reading instruction. The fact that the test results in all the components at Time 4 were higher than at Time 1 implies that it was worthy implementing the balanced instruction in the development of early EFL reading. The study showed that when exposed to the balanced reading instruction, the participants improved their word recognition, namely their alphabetic knowledge, sight word reading, phonemic decoding but also comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. Unfortunately, the gains in the test results on all seven tests were not spectacular and were expected to be higher. However, these improvements give a rationale for implementing the balanced instruction into the English lessons at the beginner level of primary school.

Implications for the primary EFL teachers

The findings of the current study bring about a number of implications for the instruction in word recognition in a FL context:

- learning to read in a foreign language requires much more effort on part of the learner than learning to read in their native language, therefore reading instruction needs to be based on scientific knowledge as well as the most current research findings concerning the topic;
- reading instruction should be preplanned, structured and direct, so that learners have a clear understanding of the importance of the components of word recognition;
- reading is based on the oral language skills, therefore their development should precede reading practice;
- the knowledge of the alphabet (letter names and letter-sound correspondences) is of great value as it was found to correlate with other word recognition subcomponents, however, teaching the letter-sound correspondences seemed more challenging to learners, therefore requires more practice than letter naming; the multisensory instruction in teaching the alphabetics seems to be effective;
- since Polish learners are not familiar with sight word reading instruction, direct explanation as to the reason of such instruction seems necessary;
- parallel development of decoding and comprehension seems to be of paramount importance so as to avoid learners becoming good decoders but poor comprehenders or vice versa; the balanced approach to teaching early word recognition aims at strengthening both;
- should difficulties in any of the word recognition components arise, individualised remedial instruction in early reading must be provided;
- word recognition subcomponents should not be worked on in isolation, but as integral parts of the reading process;
- the focus of early reading instruction should be on improving decoding and fluency, so that decoding words can become automatic and effortless for the reader;
- learners should be frequently exposed to authentic texts, particularly in form of children's books and discussions about topics close to their lives and hearts;
- follow-up activities should include creating own texts individually and in groups, as well as exposing learners to a variety of authentic texts of their choice;
- the development of word recognition is highly individual among the participants, suggesting that in some cases the process should not be rushed.

4.11. Summary and conclusions

Providing the theoretical grounding explaining the complexities of reading is the goal of Chapter 1. It enumerates the various ways reading is viewed including definitional dilemmas, the various processes involved in reading comprehension, the developmental stages in reading and motivational factors in reading. As presented, the many definitional dilemmas stem from the fact that reading is viewed differently by different researchers and from the perspective of diverse fields such as: psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology, educational psychology or language arts. Also the differences between reading in L1 and in L2 are recognised. The point made in Chapter 1 is that reading should not be treated as a unitary ability, that it is complex and involves an array of various component processes and abilities, and that it has a developmental character, and whose successful development requires the presence of a supporting environment both at home and in the formal educational context. The deliberation in Chapter 1 is particularly important from the point of view of reading instruction, as the complicated nature of reading means that there may be numerous potential sources of reading difficulties that need to be identified and addressed appropriately by practicing teachers to avoid reading failure.

The intricacies of learning to read in English as a native alphabetic language have been explained in Chapter 2. It examines the properties of alphabetic languages that affect learning to read and the choice of the most effective approaches to teaching reading, in particular the level of orthographic transparency, the differences in common syllable structure, as well as the key component aspects of reading, like alphabetics or phonological awareness. The implications that can be derived from the discussion in Chapter 2 concern the key elements in early reading in English, whose understanding seems to be fundamental, particularly from the point of view of an early reading learner and the teacher. Early reading instruction in English should take into consideration the specific ways in which the spoken and written language are connected and how to use this knowledge in teaching reading in the language classroom.

Issues related to becoming a bilingual reader lay at the heart of Chapter 3. It focused on the examination of the differences in language acquisition observed among L2 and FL learners, concerning mainly the amount of language input learners are usually exposed to, the differences in reading experience of L1 and L2 reading learners, the interrelationship of L1 and L2 reading, and the situation of Polish learners of early reading in English. The chapter clearly underscored that while learning to read in English can be cognitively demanding for native children, it can be even more so for those learners for whom English constitutes a second or foreign language. The problems may be caused by limited language exposure, poor metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness, the poor level of support offered by educational institutions, the nature of differences between L1 and L2/FL, which

may give ground to negative cross-linguistic transfer in reading, or ineffective didactic approaches to teaching reading. The undertaken discussion implies that thorough knowledge on part of L2 or FL reading teachers as to the nature of cross-linguistic differences is imperative (Cardenas-Hagan, Carlson, & Pollard-Durodola, 2007; Melby-Lervåg & Lervåg, 2011). Furthermore, the development of reading among L2 and FL learners has to follow the principles of up-to-date research-based approaches to teaching reading as they ultimately determine the progress in L2/FL reading development.

An overview of the recent research studies into the development of word recognition components in an alphabetic second or foreign language has been offered in Chapter 4. The conclusions drawn from the research evolve around the fact that learners of reading in L1 and in L2/FL to a large extent rely on the same early reading subcomponents and processes, e.g. on phonological awareness and lexical access. What is more, decoding develops in a similar way and the development of word reading in L2/FL resembles that of L1. An example of an important early reading subcomponent that underlies learning to read in both contexts is phonological awareness. Another conclusion concerns the development of oral language skills as of paramount importance in early reading in additional languages. The discussion on cross-linguistic transfer drew attention to the major finding that L1 and L1 reading subcomponents do influence L2 reading development. It was found that the lower the level of L2 proficiency, the stronger the transfer of constraint subcomponents from L1, yet the higher L2 proficiency, the stronger the role of L1 unconstraint subcomponents. The implication is that as the native language reading plays a role in L2 reading development, it is not to be ignored by L2/FL teachers while launching their reading courses. It may not only help teachers in the understanding of the potential difficulties in L2/FL reading development but also be used to the learners' advantage in the process of acquiring another language.

Providing a detailed description of the study conducted by the author is the primary goal of Chapter 5. The study was pursued with a view to investigate the development of word recognition subcomponents among Polish lower primary learners of English within the four stages of the early EFL reading course, which covered 6 months of the study. The initial subchapters are devoted to the methodology of the study, its purpose, design, setting and participants, research instruments and procedure and data collection. Test results, correlations among the results of word recognition tests, learner profiles, summary of the findings as well as conclusions and implications for educators occupy the latter subchapters.

The development of word recognition among EFL learners can be time-consuming and multifaceted, yet it is necessary to make the link between spoken and written language and indispensible if beginner readers are to become independent. That is why EFL reading instruction should be based on the most

recent scientific knowledge and research. It must be underscored, however, that reading comprehension is the primary purpose of any reading act, and should remain at the very heart of reading instruction.

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APPENDIX A

EARLY EFL READING COURSE SYLLABUS (A SAMPLE)

Sequence number	Sessions no. / topic	Revised vocabulary	New vocabulary	Active structures	Phonics and decodable words	Sight words	Activity type
I. Family	1. Tim's family (Listening and speaking)	*- mum, dad, big sister, baby brother*	*friends, teacher, pet, grandma, grandpa,*	*Who is this? This is... Mum is .... Dad is.... Grandma and grandpa are...*	CVC with /æ/: *dad – sad van -man cat - rat*	Teacher, friends, hi, this, is, my,	Listening Speaking Vocabulary and grammar practice **Word recognition focus –** Introducing the notion of letter names, rhyme awareness,
	2. My family (Listening, speaking and reading)	*- mum, dad, big sister, baby brother, -friends, teacher, pet, grandma, grandpa,*	*tall, kind, helpful, funny, my,*	.	CVC with /æ/: *dad – sad van -man cat - rat*		Listening Speaking Reading Vocabulary and grammar practice Spelling Writing individual words **Word recognition focus –** Introducing the notion of letter sounds, rhyme awareness
	3. The Minion family (Reading and writing – LEA)	*-mum, dad, big sister, baby brother, - friends, teacher, pet, grandma, grandpa, -tall, kind, helpful, funny,*	*Cap, hat, sat, mad*		CVC with /æ/: *dad – sad van -man cat - rat cap, hat, sat, mad*		Listening Speaking Reading Writing individual words Vocabulary and grammar practice Spelling **Word recognition focus –** Practicing letter names and letter sounds, rhyme recognition, sight words, phonics with /æ/ sound, onset-rime blending, putting words with the /æ/ sound into sentences based on photos,
	4. Revision 1 (Revising vocabulary and structures, sight words, phonics game (/æ/ sound).						

II. bedroom and toys	5. Sam's tree house (Listening and speaking)	*bed, table, funny, tall,*	*bedroom, tree house, chair, TV, books, toys,*	*This is Sam's ... . These are Sam's ... . Sam's ball is red and blue. My ball is green.*	CVC with /æ/ and /e/: *bed, red, jet, net, pen, hen, cap, hat, sat, mad*	*chair, tree, house, these*	Listening Speaking Vocabulary and grammar practice **Word recognition focus –** Introducing the notion of a syllable, syllable counting, matching letter names and sound with letters, Phonics: segmenting CVC words into phonemes and longer words into syllables,
	6. My bedroom (Listening, speaking and reading)	*bed, table, funny, tall, bedroom, tree house, chair, TV, books, toys, red, blue, green, yellow, orange*	*my, teddy bear, toy truck, toy car, toy plane, a ball, a doll, a parrot, jet, net, pen, hen,*		CVC with /æ/ and /e/: *bed, red, jet, net, pen, hen, cap, hat, sat, mad,*		Listening Speaking Reading Vocabulary and grammar practice Spelling **Word recognition focus –** rhyming, putting words with the /e/ sound into sentences based on photos, categorizing words according to the middle short vowel sound, alphabet writing,
	7. My ball is red. (Reading and writing – LEA)	*bed, table, funny, tall, bedroom, tree house, chair, TV, books, toys, red, blue, green, yellow, orange, my, teddy bear, toy truck, toy car, toy plane a, ball, a doll, a parrot, jet, net, pen, hen,*	*leg, beg, men, wet, web, bell*		CVC with /æ/, /e/: *bed, red, jet, net, pen, hen, leg, beg, men, wet, web, bell, cap, hat, sat, mad,*		Listening Speaking Reading Vocabulary and grammar practice Spelling Writing individual words **Word recognition focus –** syllable segmenting, letter name and sound, Phonics with /e/ sound, sight words, onset-rime matching, completing sentences with /e/ sound words based on photos,
	8. Revision 2 (revision of the vocabulary, structure and early reading skills – with elements of self-evaluation or self-reporting) **Revising vocabulary and structures, sight words, phonics game (/æ/ and /e/ sounds).**						

Appendix B

Early EFL reading course session plan (an example)

Sessions 1-4 (Sequence 1)	
Theme: Tim's family	
Reading text vocabulary: *dad, mum, sister, big brother, baby brother, grandma, grandpa, teacher, friends, pet dog, tall, helpful, funny, little, kind, a lot of fun,* **Additional vocabulary**: *rat, van, man, sad;*	
Grammar/prefabricated expressions: *This is… /and this is me..*	
Skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing	
Materials: Self-made materials Materials from Internet sources: *My family* song: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GiRUF7hvWuM accessed Sep 2015 Illustration from pp. 10-11 of Macmillan English 1, Language Book;	
Activities	**Objectives**
Session 1	
1. Language exposure through listening and speaking, 2. Confirming understanding by getting SS' responses, 3. Introduction of vocabulary – tightly controlled & practice, 4. **Word recognition focus.**	a. Exposure to the target language, b. Developing listening and speaking skills, c. Introducing new vocabulary in oral form, d. Practicing letter names, e. Introducing the idea of phonemes, syllables, and rhymes.
Session 2	
1. Oral language input, 2. Listening to T reading the text slowly while finger-pointing, 3. Listening to the recording and finger-pointing, 4. Reading aloud (chorally with the teacher, then the tape), 5. Checking text comprehension, 6. Introducing the alphabet, 7. Vocabulary practice (written form), 8. **8. Word recognition focus.**	a. Revising previously taught vocabulary in oral form, b. Listening to the teacher reading the text and finger-point while reading, c. Practicing reading aloud (focusing on pronunciation and intonation), d. Exposure to the graphic representations of words, e. Practicing the alphabet and recognition of rhymes, f. Practicing reading CVC words with /æ/.

Session 3	
1. Oral language input 2. Creating own text in oral form, then writing it down, 3. Reading aloud own text 4. **Word recognition focus**	a. Practice talking about family, b. Creating own text about the Minion family (based on an illustration), then reading it aloud, c. Developing word recognition d. Reading and spelling words with short/æ/ sound.
Session 4 (Revision 1)	
1. Revision of vocabulary, structure, and early reading components 2. Self-evaluation 3. Practice of sight vocabulary	

Appendix C

Reading texts for each sequence and children's own texts

Sequence number	Reading text	Children's own texts
1	**Meet my family** Hi! I am Tim. I'm six. Meet my family. This is my big brother. He is ten… and this is me. This is my dad. He's really tall. And this is me. This is my mum. She's very helpful. And this is me. This is my big sister. She's really funny. And this is me. This is my baby brother. He's little. And this is me. And this is my grandma and my grandpa. They are very kind and this is me. These are my friends and this is my teacher. And this is me. And this is my pet Jack. He is a lot of fun. And this is me.	**The Minion family** This is dad. This is mum. This is big brother. This is big sister. This is baby brother.
2	**Sam's tree house** This is Sam's tree house. This is Sam's bed, and this is Sam's table. This is Sam's TV, and these are Sam's toys. This is a toy car, and this is a toy plane. These are Sam's books. Sam loves his books. Sam's TV is funny, and the chair is funny, too.	**My bedroom** This is a computer. These are books. These are toys. These are 2 beds. These are crayons.

3	**The moon and the stars** Look at the night sky! Where are the children? The children are at the top of the tree house. Sam has got a lunette. – What can you see, Sam? – I can see the moon and the stars. – Wow!	**The night sky** Look at the night sky. I can see the stars. The moon looks happy. These are a girl and a boy.
4	**Sam's garden** – What can you see, children? – We can see a beautiful garden. – What can you see in the garden? – I can see flowers and trees. – I can see a monkey and a bird in the tree. – I can see snakes around the tree. – Oh! I can see mum behind the tree!	**A beautiful garden** This is a garden. The garden is beautiful There is a colourful parrot. I can see a tiger. There is a bear behind the tree. I can see many flowers.
5	**Sam's island** The children are at the top of the tree house. They can see the island. – Look! This is my tree house and that is the mountain. – said Sam On the island there is a jungle, the beach, the river, lions, zebras and an elephant. – Where is the elephant? – The elephant is under that big tree.	**Wow!** Look! What can you see? I can see a river and an island! And look! This is a big castle. There is a little castle on the mountain! Look! This is a very big mountain!
6	**On the beach** The children are on the beach. Sam is in the sea. Nina has got a shell. She can hear the sea. Has Ben got a fish? No, Ben has got a crab. – Ouch! – said Ben. What has Mobi got? – Mobi has got a drink. It is very hot.	**On the beach** The children are on the beach. The big girl has got a big shell. What has the little boy got? He has got a shell, too He can hear the sea. It is very hot.

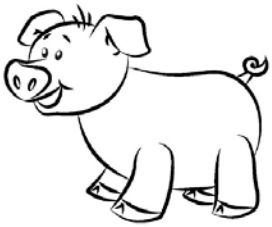
7	**In the jungle** The children are in the jungle. It is very dark. Tilly is scared. – Don't look behind you, Tilly! There is a tiger! – Don't fall down, Ben! – Ahhh! – Oh, no! Poor Ben. Is he ok?	**In the jungle** Look! There is a tiger in the jungle and there are three monkeys behind the tiger. Look! There is a boy. – Don't fall down!
8	**Monkey business** What are the monkeys doing? Mummy monkey is holding her baby. Daddy monkey is sleeping. – These monkeys are playing football. – This monkey is jumping. – That monkey is swinging. – This little one is sitting and eating a banana.	**The monkey family** This is monkey family What are the monkeys doing? Mummy monkey is looking at her baby monkey. Daddy monkey is singing! Baby monkey is sitting and looking at daddy.
9	**In the cave** – Look! A cave! – What are they doing? – They are riding elephants, – said Tilly. – He is playing a big drum, – said Ben. – She is singing, and the little girl is dancing. – He is fishing, – said Sam. – Look at this! – said Mobi.	**At the playground** Look! A playground! These are children! – What are they doing? – They are playing. Kate is swinging on a swing. Tom is sliding on a slide. Tim and Pam are playing with a ball!
10	**Our clothes** The children are packing. What a mess! – Whose t-shirt is it? – asked Sam. – It's Ben's t-shirt. – Whose hat is it? – asked Ben. – It's Tilly's. – Whose socks are these? – asked Nina. – They're Sam's. – And whose jeans are these? – asked Tilly. – They're Nina's.	**Packing time** Ron is a little boy. Ron is packing. Whose shoes are these? They're Ron's. Whose hat is this? It's Ron's. And whose book is this? It's Ron's.

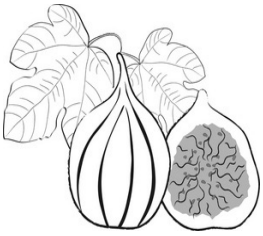
Appendix D

Phonics, grammar and vocabulary handout (an example)

Sequence 3. phoneme /I/

1. Match illustrations with words and spell one of them:





dig	**wig**	**fig**	**hit**	**lip**	**pig**

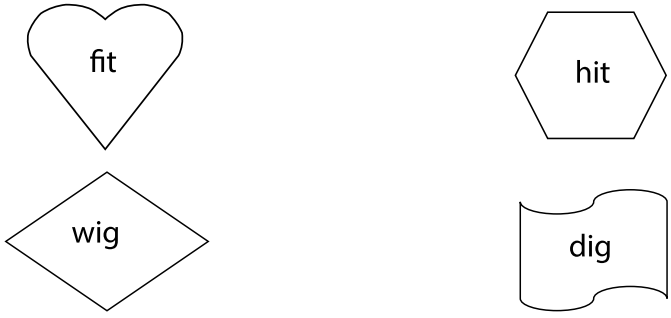
2. Look at the photos and complete the sentences:

The _____ has got a _____ .
I can see a _____.
These pigs like to _____.
Miss Pit is really _____ .

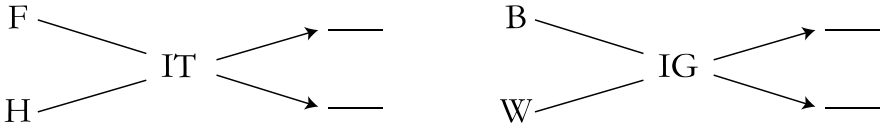
3. Find words in the grid and spell two of them:

pig	wig	fit	lip	fit
hit	lip	pig	hit	fig
dig	fig	jig	wig	dig
wig	fit	look	jig	jig
fig	lip	hit	dig	pig

4. Match rhyming words:



5. Join the letters and make words:



6. Match words with the same sounds as in names:

cat wig red pig dad fig net lip

sad dig jet jig rat rip pen

Sam					
Tilly					
Ben					

Sequence 3. Vocabulary and grammar practice.

1. Look at the picture. Write V or X.



1. I can see the moon. ☐
2. I can see a star. ☐
3. I can see toys. ☐
4. I can see a dog. ☐
5. I can see a book. ☐
6. I can see a house. ☐
7. I can see a tree. ☐
8. I can see a telescope. ☐

2. Complete the sentences as in the example:



1. I can see 3 houses.

2. … can see 2 trees.

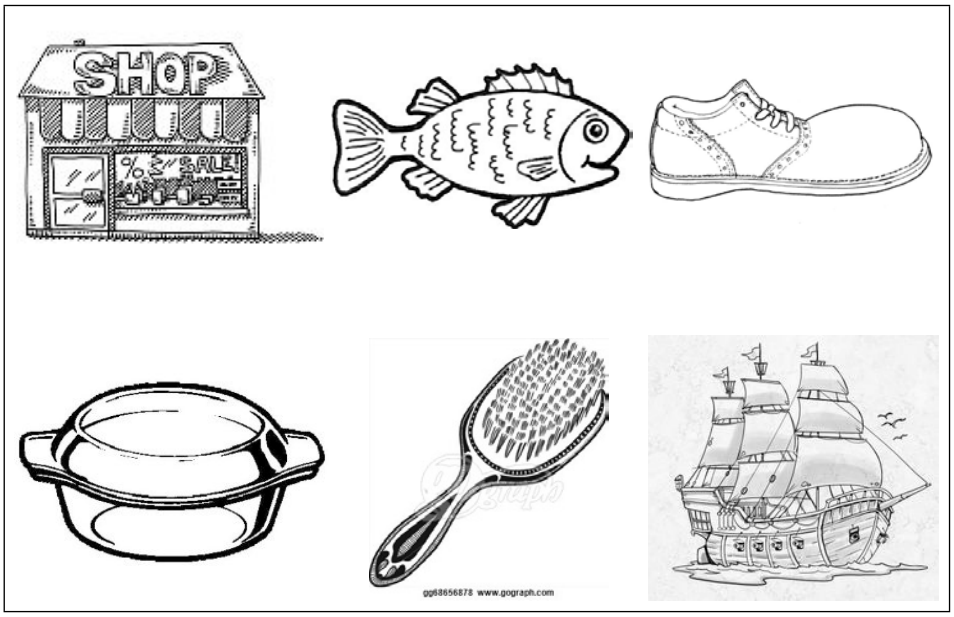
3. … … see 8 stars.

4. … … … the moon.

5. … … … the dog house.

Sequence 6. phoneme /ʃ/ and grapheme 'sh'

1. Match words with the following drawings and spell one of them:



brush	ship	fish	dish	shoe	shop

2. Look at the photos and complete the sentences:

Do you like this _____?

I can see a _____ in a _____.

This _____ is big.

I like this _____ _____ .

3. Find, colour and spell words in the grid:

shell	water	sand	Shell
rock	shell	rock	water
water	rock	I can hear	I can hear
sand	I can hear	shell	Sand
I can hear	sand	water	Rock

4. Find 7 words:

D	O	B	R	U	S	H	E	D	S
S	H	O	P	A	R	S	H	O	E
K	L	H	G	F	D	S	A	R	E
S	H	E	L	L	I	U	E	R	W
R	Q	X	V	U	K	S	H	I	P
D	I	S	H	T	A	F	I	S	H

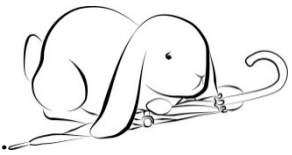
5. Write words from task 7 in the chart:

sh_____	_____sh
_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____

Sequence 6. Vocabulary and grammar practice.

Look at the pictures. Write V or X:

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

1. She has got a doll. ☐
   She have got a doll. ☐
2. The rabbit has got an umbrella. ☐
   The rabbit have got an umbrella. ☐
3. The cats have got a baby. ☐
   The cats has got a baby. ☐
4. She has got an ice cream. ☐
   She have got an ice cream. ☐

APPENDIX E

REVISION HANDOUT (AN EXAMPLE)

Revision 3.

1. Self-evaluation

Name_____

Tick ✓ the words you can read:

Ben ☐

rat ☐

pig ☐

man ☐

jet ☐

sit ☐

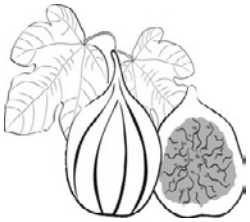
hit ☐

hat ☐

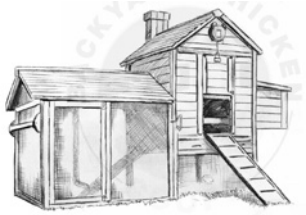
Pat ☐

wig ☐

2. Match pictures with words.

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

5. 

6. 

7. 

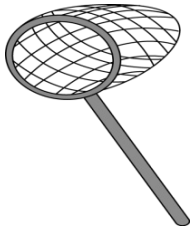
8. 

fig mad net hit bed pen dad dig

Appendix F

Letter naming test (an example)

Name _____

Letter	**G**	**S**	**R**	**C**
answer				
Letter	**F**	**E**	**A**	**Z**
answer				
Letter	**X**	**T**	**M**	**K**
answer				
Letter	**L**	**N**	**V**	**B**
answer				
Letter	**P**	**W**	**H**	**D**
answer				
Letter	**I**	**J**	**U**	**O**
answer				
Letter	**Y**	**Q**		
answer				

The results:

Number		Result
1.	How many letters were named?	
2.	How many letter were named correctly?	
Additional comments:		

APPENDIX G

LETTER-SOUND MATCHING TEST (AN EXAMPLE)

Name _____

Letter	**G**	**S**	**R**	**C**
answer				
Letter	**F**	**E**	**A**	**Z**
answer				
Letter	**X**	**T**	**M**	**K**
answer				
Letter	**L**	**N**	**V**	**B**
answer				
Letter	**P**	**w**	**H**	**D**
answer				
Letter	**I**	**J**	**U**	**O**
answer				
Letter	**Y**	**q**		
answer				

The results:

Number		Result
1.	How many letter-sounds were given?	
2.	How many letter-sounds were given correctly?	
Additional comments:		

Appendix H

Sight word reading test (an example)

Name _____

	Correct answers	Additional observations
tall		
tree		
night		
beautiful		
island		
sea		
jungle		
what		
they		
whose		

The results:

Number		Result
1.	How many words were read?	
2.	How many words were successfully recognised on sight?	
Additional comments:		

Appendix I

Phonemic decoding test (an example)

Name _____

Non-words	Correct answers
fad	
ret	
mit	
pug	
nog	
shap	
chet	
dook	
mong	
nock	

Number		Result
1.	How many non-words were read?	
2.	How many non-words were decoded correctly?	
Additional comments:		

Appendix J

Contextual word reading test (an example)

This is Ben's family. These are Ben's mum and dad. This is Ben's tree house. Ben has got a TV and a telescope.

– What can you see, Ben?
– I can see the moon and the stars.

Name _____

this	is	Ben's	family	these	are
Ben's	mum	and	dad	this	is
Ben's	tree	house	Ben	has	got
A	TV	and	A	telescope	what
can	you	see	Ben	I	can
see	the	moon	and	the	stars

The results:

Nr	Recognising words in context	How many words were read?	How many words were read correctly?
	Words recognised on sight		
	Words recognized through phonological decoding		
	The sum of correctly recognised words:		
Comments on the intonation:			
Additional remarks:			

Appendix K

Reading comprehension test (an example)

Name _____



1. This is a family. ☐ This is a teacher. ☐

2. The sister is sad. ☐ The sister is happy. ☐

3. Big brother has got a dog. ☐ Big brother has got a toy. ☐

4. There are three children. ☐ There are six children. ☐

Number		Result
1.	How many answers were given?	
2.	How many answers were given correctly?	
Additional comments:		

Appendix L

Vocabulary knowledge test (an example)

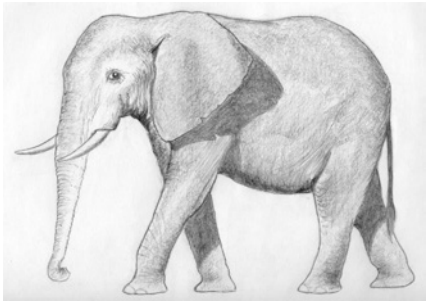
Name _____

 baby grandpa family	 toy car teddy bear blocks	 star moon owl
 snake flower monkey	 lion zebra elephant	 shell crab fish
 jungle tiger scared	 sleeping swinging eating	 elephant dancing fishing
 socks jeans shoes		

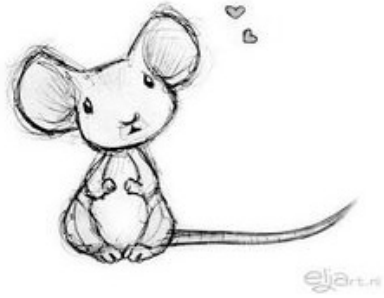
Number		Result
1.	How many words were read?	
2.	How many words were recognised correctly?	
Additional comments:		

Appendix M

Reader's theatre aids



/the voice of a big elephant/



/the voice of tiny mouse/



/the voice of an angry boy/



/the voice of a tired woman/

STRESZCZENIE

Nauczanie czytania jako jednej z czterech sprawności językowych w języku obcym wymaga zastosowania właściwego podejścia w zależności od poziomu biegłości językowej i potrzeb uczniów związanych z ich wiekiem. Jednakże rozwiązania dydaktyczne aktualnie zalecane przez specjalistów w odniesieniu do nauczania języka angielskiego jako obcego nie gwarantują w pełni skutecznego rozwoju tej sprawności, szczególnie na jej początkowym etapie. Uczniom szkoły podstawowej na poziomie wczesnoszkolnym najczęściej proponuje się naukę czytania poprzez imitację tekstu przedstawionego przez nauczyciela lub jego powtarzanie za nagraniem służącym jako model, co nie przygotowuje ich do rozwijania umiejętności samodzielnego czytania. Tymczasem można i należy rozwijać u uczniów te podsprawności, które przybliżą ich do uzyskania płynności w czytaniu i pełnego rozumienia tekstów w języku angielskim już od pierwszych lekcji językowych.

Niniejsza praca poświęcona została zbadaniu stopnia rozwoju umiejętności rozpoznawania wyrazów w języku angielskim przez polskich uczniów pierwszej klasy szkoły podstawowej. Szczególnej analizie poddano zmiany dotyczące następujących aspektów prowadzących do płynnego rozpoznawania słów: (1) znajomość nazw liter alfabetu angielskiego oraz relacji litera-głoska, (2) odczytywanie wyrazów metodą całościową (ang. *sight word reading*), (3) odczytywanie wyrazów za pomocą syntezy głosek (ang. *phonemic decoding*), oraz (4) odczytywanie wyrazów w kontekście. Dodatkowo obserwowano zmiany w stopniu rozumienia zdań oraz znajomości słownictwa. Badanie miało charakter ilościowo-jakościowy. Jako badanie podłużne i studium wielu przypadków umożliwiło ono wnikliwą obserwację i ocenę rozwoju poszczególnych komponentów sprawności czytania na przestrzeni sześciu miesięcy u sześciorga uczniów biorących udział w kursie językowym kładącym szczególny nacisk na rozwijanie umiejętności czytania.

W rozdziale pierwszym odniosłam się do problemu definiowania czytania, jego komponentów, procesów, oraz etapów w rozwoju tej umiejętności. W dalszej kolejności opisałam procesy niższego i wyższego rzędu zachodzące w trakcie czytania tekstu, podkreśliłam rolę kształtowania sprawności rozpoznawania słów i ich znaczeń, i przedstawiłam poszczególne etapy w dążeniu do osiągnięcia wysokiego poziomu biegłości w czytaniu, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem etapu początkowego, oraz wpływu środowiska ucznia na rozwój jego umiejętności czytania. Zwróciłam też uwagę na rolę takich czynników jak: wiek ucznia, wsparcie w środowisku domowym, motywacja do nauki i działania szkoły, które to czynniki mają istotne znaczenie w nauce czytania.

Zagadnienie początkowej nauki czytania w alfabetycznym języku rodzimym podjęte zostało w rozdziale drugim. Zaprezentowałam różne poglądy dotyczące podsprawności wczesnego czytania, ich wzajemnych relacji w rozwoju umiejętności czytania tekstu i jego interpretacji na etapie początkowym. Omówiłam wykorzystywanie przez czytającego znajomości alfabetu, świadomości fonologicznej, znajomości relacji głoska–litera, zasobów słownictwa, a także problemy związane z uzyskiwaniem właściwego rozumienia tekstu oraz stosowania wybranej strategii w rozpoznawaniu słów na etapie czytania początkowego. W dalszej części przedstawiłam podstawowe metody nauczania czytania w języku angielskim jako rodzimym, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem metody globalnej i fonetycznej, których zadaniem jest stworzenie odpowiednich warunków i wspieranie ucznia w kształtowaniu umiejętności czytania.

W rozdziale trzecim podjęłam próbę wyjaśnienia pojęcia tzw. czytelnika dwujęzycznego (ang. *bilingual reader*). Punktem wyjścia była dyskusja na temat różnic w pojmowaniu funkcji dwujęzyczności zależnie od rodzaju i intensywności kontaktu z drugim językiem. Podkreśliłam specyfikę sytuacji uczenia się języka docelowego jako języka obcego i zwróciłam uwagę na bardziej ogólną koncepcję zależności międzyjęzykowych (ang. *cross-linguistic transfer*), uwzględniających zarówno podobieństwa jak i różnice miedzy dwoma językami, które wywierają istotny wpływ na rozwój czytania w języku docelowym. Przedstawiłam również wnioski z wybranych badań empirycznych poświęconych m.in. tym aspektom, które prowadzą do rozwoju umiejętności rozpoznawania słów w tekście, będącej podstawą uzyskania wysokiego poziomu biegłości w czytaniu. Tematy analizowanych badań to: (1) różnice i podobieństwa w rozwoju umiejętności wczesnego czytania w języku rodzimym i języku drugim lub obcym, (2) rozwój i znaczenie świadomości fonologicznej w czytaniu w języku drugim lub obcym, oraz (3) rola transferu językowego na początkowym etapie czytania.

Celem rozdziału czwartego był szczegółowy opis przeprowadzonego przeze mnie badania empirycznego, celów tegoż badania, metod pozyskiwania i analizy danych oraz przedstawienie szczegółowych wyników przeprowadzonych testów badających podsprawności w czytaniu jak również rozumienia wyrazów w kontekście oraz znajomości słownictwa. Ponadto przedstawiłam korelacje pomiędzy wynikami testów z poszczególnych podsprawności oraz indywidualne profile uczestników badania.

Zamykające niniejsze opracowanie sekcje poświęciłam podsumowaniu wyników badania, jego ograniczeniom, podsumowaniu całej monografii oraz konkluzjom, które mogą posłużyć nauczycielom języka angielskiego w nauczaniu czytania na etapie początkowym. Implikacje wynikające z zaobserwowanych zmian dotyczą rozwoju umiejętności rozpoznawania słów oraz innych znaczących aspektów nauczania umiejętności czytania w języku angielskim na poziomie wczesnoszkolnym. W przypadku polskich uczniów ważne jest zwrócenie uwagi

na różnice pomiędzy tzw. głębokością ortograficzną charakteryzującą oba języki (ang. *orthographic depth*), i potencjalnie wynikającymi z nich trudnościami w czytaniu w języku obcym. W przypadku znaczących różnic pomiędzy głębokością ortograficzną w języku ojczystym i obcym rozwój umiejętności czytania wymaga zastosowania odmiennych strategii dekodowania, dlatego też zastosowanie ćwiczeń w całościowym odczytywaniu wyrazów stanowi nowość dla polskich uczniów. Świadomość różnic i podobieństw pomiędzy językiem ojczystym i obcym pomoże również w zrozumieniu zjawiska transferu językowego, którego wpływ może być znaczący, szczególnie na początkowym etapie nauki czytania. Poza tym, właściwe uwzględnienie poszczególnych podsprawności rozpoznawania wyrazów pozwala na zastosowanie ćwiczeń służących do ich rozwoju jak również na identyfikację ewentualnych trudności i szybkie podjęcie działań pomocowych przez nauczyciela. Bardzo istotnym dla rozwoju czytania jest również rozwijanie umiejętności językowych dzieci, w tym znajomości słownictwa, gdyż nieznajomość znaczenia i wymowy danego wyrazu znacząco ogranicza jego rozpoznanie w trakcie czytania. Nauczanie podsprawności rozpoznawania słów to proces długotrwały i skomplikowany, jednak niezbędny do uzyskania biegłości i samodzielności w czytaniu, szczególnie w kontekście języka obcego. Należy pamiętać jednak, że istotą czytania jest zrozumienie tekstu, i to powinno stanowić nadrzędny cel wszelkich działań dydaktycznych w nauczaniu tej sprawności, niezależnie od języka.



Barbara Struk jest doktorem nauk humanistycznych w zakresie językoznawstwa stosowanego i wykładowcą w Zakładzie Neofilologii w Państwowej Szkole Wyższej w Białej Podlaskiej. Jej główne zainteresowania naukowe obejmują nauczanie czytania na etapie początkowym w języku angielskim oraz czynniki wpływające na motywację dzieci do czytania dla przyjemności. Zainteresowania dydaktyczne autorki to kształcenie nauczycieli języków obcych, przyswajanie języków obcych przez dzieci, społeczno-pedagogiczne czynniki istotne w nauczaniu dzieci i polityka edukacyjna. Jest autorką publikacji dotyczących rozwoju umiejętności czytania w języku obcym i wykorzystania w tym celu literatury dziecięcej. W swojej pracy zawodowej uczyła języka angielskiego na wszystkich poziomach edukacyjnych i pełniła rolę opiekuna anglojęzycznego koła teatralnego. Obecnie, poza pracą zawodową, jest również aktorką w Teatrze Eksperymentalnym PANACEUM, działającym w Bialskim Centrum Kultury, gdzie występuje z własnymi dziećmi.

Autorka podjęła się badania trudnej problematyki, jaką jest kształcenie umiejętności czytania w języku obcym na jej wczesnym etapie. Istnieje bowiem pilna potrzeba rozwijania tej sprawności w polskich warunkach szkolnych, szczególnie w odniesieniu do najpopularniejszego języka obcego, jakim jest obecnie angielski, na profesjonalnych, naukowo ugruntowanych, a nie intuicyjnych podstawach.

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Monografia ta jest ważną pozycją glottodydaktyczną, stanowi istotny wkład w aktualny stan wiedzy nt. nauczania czytania w języku obcym na początkowych etapach. Będzie cennym źródłem zarówno dla edukatorów, jak i badaczy, chcących zająć się tym tematem. Monografia ta powinna być również spopularyzowana na rynku globalnym, gdyż nauczanie j. angielskiego jako globalnego, obejmujące proces czytania, stanowi odmienne wyzwanie dla uczniów i nauczycieli różnych języków rodzimych (nie tylko opartych na alfabecie łacińskim), co stanowi aktualny trend w badaniach nad wczesnym nauczaniem języków obcych dzieci.

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