

## **The Big Six Components of Reading**

Aileen G. Mactal  
Education Program Supervisor

Reading is one of the basic skills that every learner must learn before they can learn the other disciplines. How can a learner understand a sentence, follow directions, go to a certain store, tell the price of a specific item, read the message received on the phone, write the words dictated by the teacher, choose the correct answer in a test, and so on and so forth if the students are non-readers?

Not all children have a strong foundation in reading. Thus, teaching them how to read is a challenge for some teachers.

The Big Six of Reading has been widely used by educators in teaching children how to read. This term “Big Six” came from Deslea Konza of South Africa, a credible educator, and researcher in reading.

The Big Six of reading has six components namely Oral Language, Phonological Awareness, Phonics, Vocabulary, Fluency, and Comprehension.

Oral Language is the first component. Oral language is the spoken language that a child learns after birth. This is learned from the child’s environment such as his or her parents, siblings, neighbors, playmates, and others. If the oral language of a child has a strong foundation, his or her vocabulary, confidence in communicating with others, understanding of the world, and thinking ability widens.

For example, a baby or toddler who is always with someone not fond of talking can have an oral language deficiency. Why? It is because during the child’s formative years, it was not developed. Thus, his oral language level does not coincide with his or her age.

Talking to a baby as young as a newborn can help develop an oral language. Letting a child sing, and recite nursery rhymes are significant towards the development of oral language. Moreover, avoidance of “baby talk” must be observed because children are like sponge. They absorb everything that they hear and see. Thus, oral language is the first foundation of learning how to read.

The second component is the Phonological Awareness. This component refers to the sounds of each letter. In teaching the sound of each letter, the letter name must be taught first before the letter sound.

There are several ways on how to develop the phonological awareness of a child. First is by teaching them the rhythm by clapping their hands based on the number of syllables the word has. Next example is by giving words that rhyme at the onset, at the middle or at the final sound of words like man, mass, and moon for the onset; car, ham, and bat for the middle; and bike, like, and hike for the final sound.

In phonological awareness, some of the activities that can help improve this component among children is by counting the sound that a word have. For example in the word “pan,” there are three sounds which are /p/, /a/, and /n/. They may also use games by changing the first letter of the word to form a new sound like the word “pass.” By changing the initial sound /p/ with /l/, the new word is “lass.”

The third component is Phonics. It is also referred to as the alphabetic principle” because it focuses on the relationship between letters and sounds. According to

Johnston & Watson (2003), and Rose (2006), this component must be taught by teaching the letter names and sounds through the chronological order of presenting letter combinations. It means that teaching the letter names and letter sounds does not necessarily mean that the letters be presented in an alphabetical order.

For example in Marungko Approach, the first letter to be taught is /m/, followed by /a/, /s/, /i/, /o/, and so on and so forth. After the child learns the sound of /m/ and /a/, he or she can be able to blend the two sounds to form syllables and words like “ama”, “am”, and “ma.”

The fourth component of the Big Six is the Vocabulary. The development of one’s vocabulary can be drawn from a person’s wide experience with any educational reading materials like stories, nursery rhymes, dialogs, and others.

In developing the vocabulary of learners, teachers may use several strategies like the following.

The first strategy is labeling of things found in the classroom like chair, door, table, books, board, eraser, windows, sink, curtain and others.

The second is speaking with learners with rich vocabulary. For example in teaching English subject, the teacher must use the English language as a medium of instruction so that the learners can learn the language gradually. Code switching must be avoided because it will hamper the learners’ vocabulary development.

The third one is pre-teaching key vocabulary words. Before presenting any poem, song, or story to children, vocabulary development is part of the lesson plan wherein meanings of difficult or new words to learners are taught.

Then, teaching prefixes and suffixes is also helpful in improve one’s vocabulary. It is significant to teach the suffixes and prefixes because they add meanings to words. For example the root word “do,” when added with a prefix “un” which means “not” changes the meaning of the word “do” which becomes “undo.”

The fifth component of the Big Six is Fluency. Fluency is the ability of having all the reading skills required from a reader such as the first four components mentioned already plus the comprehension. It includes correct rhythm, phrasing, intonation, naturalness, and use of appropriate voice for different moods or characters. A fluent reader means that he or she can comprehend the text that he or she is reading.

Some of the tactics that can be used to improve the fluency of a learner are through repetition and paired-reading. In repetition, a learner shall read aloud with repetition so that he or she can hear himself or herself reading. In paired-teaching, there will be partners in reading like the independent readers will be partnered with the struggling readers.

The sixth component of reading is comprehension. This component requires the reader to have an understanding of what he or she is reading. How could the teacher know if a student is showing a comprehension to the text? The several ways are the following: (1) the student can answer correctly the comprehension questions, (2) the learner can arrange the sequence of events chronologically, (3) the learner can give an inference, (4) the learner can summarize the texts being read, (5) can give the meaning of specific lines of the selection, and others.

Once a learner has a good comprehension of the text, it is understood that he or she has a mastery of the first five components. Thus, to achieve a good comprehension among students, the teachers must provide varied activities such as vocabulary

development or unlocking of difficulties before presenting any reading material in class. This activity can be found in the lesson plan before presenting a short story, a poem, or any material to be read by the class. In here, new words to be encountered by the learners or complex words shall be unlocked so that the learners would know already the meaning of those words when they encounter them in the text. Next is through context clues which can be taught through synonyms or restatement clues, antonyms or contrast clues, definition or explanation clues, general or inference clues, and punctuation or font clues.

For example is in antonyms or contrast clues. The sentence is “The place of my friend is picturesque while mine is ugly. If the teacher is going to ask what does picturesque means, the word ugly serves as a clue which means that picturesque is the opposite of ugly. Therefore, picturesque is beautiful.

By providing activities such as arranging the order or events, letting the learners give their inferences about the topic, asking them to summarize the whole story, or telling them to draw their most appreciated parts of the poem can enhance the comprehension of learners.

According to Dr. Rosalina J. Villaneza, Bureau of Learning Delivery Chief, there is only one way of teaching the learners to read and that is through the Big Six components of reading.

Thus, teachers must be competent and committed enough so that they can really give what is due to all learners in terms of reading. Through this way, the learning gaps in reading which has been a perennial issue be solved because it is proven by researches and sciences that there is only one way of making the learners become readers- through the Big Six of reading.

#### References:

- [1.0 The ‘Big Six’1 components of reading: Best Advice Learning Improvement - Literacy \(blackforestps.sa.edu.au\)](http://blackforestps.sa.edu.au)
- [2.0 The “Big Six” components of reading | http://bit.ly/BestAdviceSeries, Government of South Australia, Department of Education and Child Development](http://bit.ly/BestAdviceSeries)
- [3.0 research-process-and-the-big-six.pdf \(pearson.com\)](http://pearson.com)
- [4.0 5 Types of Context Clues with Examples in Sentences - EnglishBix](#)