

SRS - the EFL Context

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The Sound Reading System has been in use in Israel since 2007, for teaching reading and writing to children learning English as a foreign languages as well as a remedial program for supporting LD individuals of all ages who struggle with English mostly because of Reading disabilities, ADHD or both. It has proven to be highly successful with young learners who, from day one, learn to understand the logic of the English orthography and thus, develop positive attitudes towards the language.

English is an important language in Israel. Israelis use it on the Internet, many of the textbooks in higher education are in English, most of the academic resources in various fields of study are in English and even much of the electronic communication in the workplace is conducted in English. The English language is taught in all schools and is a prerequisite for higher education in all domains.

In Israel, children begin learning English around age 8 and are exposed to an alphabet program after a few months of instruction. The official teaching method in Israel is based on a combined approach. Teachers begin instruction with a phonics system for basic code and quickly switch to a whole language approach. There is no phonological awareness training at the pre-literate stage. Thus, many learners later fail to reach sufficient proficiency in English literacy skills. While learners who are characterized by good linguistic aptitude manage to perform relatively well with reading (but not with spelling), LD learners or less fortunate learners whose linguistic aptitude is below average, lag behind and need remediation to acquire minimal command of reading, writing and ultimately overall linguistic proficiency in English.

Today, the Israeli SRS qualified teachers who have been working as private tutors or in LD learning centers, have seen remarkable success with learners of all types. The SRS is highly effective for teaching EFL since it is logical and systematic, which is crucial for teaching a language in a classroom setting with limited exposure to authentic contextualized language. In addition, it has significant advantage as a catch-up program since it is geared towards the full spectrum of language literacy knowledge and skills. Therefore, we have been using SRS with children, adolescents and adults up to university level and beyond, exhibiting noticeable progress and excellent results. Dyslexic individuals are finally showing considerable progress after years of failure and emotional baggage.

The SRS works on both skill and knowledge required for learning to read and write in English. It develops phonemic awareness in EFL, a skill that is not developed for Hebrew first language and is not taught in schools which rely mainly on sight words and whole language reading. When learners are taught with the SRS, they are able to read words that are new to them. This allows them to become independent readers and learners. Moreover, as a foreign language learner, knowing that you are in control



because you understand how things work in English, relaxes you and frees your mind to focus on the language and the content rather than on being self-aware and worried about the unexpected.

As a final point, the SRS developed by Fiona Nevola and the McGuinness theory have revolutionized our work here in Israel, not only in teaching EFL but also for remedial work with Hebrew L1. Hebrew is the official spoken language in Israel. Being a Semitic language based on morpho-syllabic principles, Hebrew is different from English in its phonological, morphological, syntactic and orthographic features. What it does have in common with English is that it is a phonological language. Hence, at some point, I realized that the same principles, on which the SRS is based, can be adapted to Hebrew. Therefore, we created a parallel program for teaching Hebrew reading and writing to native speakers of Hebrew. This program is currently being piloted, with evident success rate, working with struggling learners in the third grade who have been showing considerable reading difficulties in L1 Hebrew since first grade.

After many years of work and hundreds of students, I can clearly state that the Sound Reading System is an excellent program for teaching reading and writing to both native speakers of the English language and foreign language English learners. It is thorough, comprehensive, systematic, logical, practical and fun to use. And above all, it suits all ages and learner types. It allows the teacher to perform the utmost professional work and the learner to overcome linguistic and emotional barriers and reach normative literacy in EFL.

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