

## DETERMINING THE STRUCTURE OF READING COMPETENCE OF 5-6 YEAR OLD PRESCHOOL CHILDREN ACCORDING TO THE ORIENTATION OF COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT

Nguyen Thi Hoa, Le Thi Thuong Thuong, Vu Thi Thuy  
University of Education - Thai Nguyen University, Vietnam

<https://doi.org/10.54922/IJEHSS.2024.0698>

### ABSTRACT

Forming reading competence is a very important issue for children 5-6 years old when preparing to enter grade 1. Language development in kindergarten focuses on the formation and development of children's reading competence. At 5 - 6 years old, the structure of reading competence must first be determined. With this concept of approaching the problem, the article focuses on clarifying the reading competence of preschool children by analyzing the manifestation, components, behavioral indicators and proposing the structure of this competence.

**Keywords:** Competence, Reading Competence, 5-6 Years Old, Competence Development.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

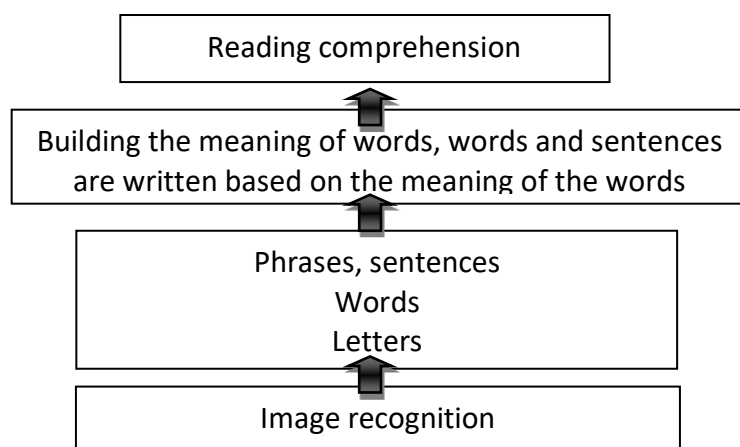
The period from 0 to 6 years old is an important period for the formation and development of language for preschool children. For preschool children, language development is divided into two stages: pre-linguistic stage (under 12 months old) and linguistic stage (from 12 months old onwards). The preschool period is the period when children show their highest sensitivity to linguistic phenomena, which causes children's language development to reach a fairly rapid pace, and by the end of kindergarten, most children know how to use their mother tongue fluently in daily communication activities. In practice, the research process shows that forming reading and writing competence is an extremely important issue for children 5-6 years old when preparing to enter grade 1. It is a learning environment for preschool children to acquire knowledge, grow in education and life skills. The event of knowing how to read profoundly changes children's language and cognitive activities, helping them move from everyday language to the foundations of scientific language, creating a need to practice and use in communication and in daily life. To achieve that goal, it is necessary to clarify the structure of preschool children's reading competence according to the orientation of competence development.

### 2. READING COMPETENCE OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

According to researchers, reading is a form of linguistic activity, including two processes. The first process is the process of converting from written form to sound speech because initially language only existed in verbal form. But when you want to save what you say, you need a visual symbol to record what you said, so writing was born. Therefore, if we want to read, we must convert the written code into sounds or into meaning units without sounds (corresponding to silent reading). The second process is reading comprehension, also known as the process of decoding the content of the text to understand and apply in different situations of life.

Nowadays, the object of reading is no longer just printed text with the main text channel, but also expanded to multimodal text (images, symbols, diagrams, tables, images, sound.....). Therefore, reading competence is also understood as reading and viewing competence.

According to Adam, 1990; Gough, 1972; Laberge & Samuels, 1974; Pearson & Stephens, 1994; Weaver 2002, learning to read is considered a process of recognizing written symbols (letters and words) and the combination of written symbols and speech. Writing involves being able to produce the symbols (letters and alphabets) of written language and combine them to create spelling conventions. According to this view, reading is described as a low-to-high process, in which reading results from the processing of discrete visual images defined by a model as shown in the following figure [4].



According to the behaviorist perspective, children learn through forming associations between stimuli, responses, and reinforcement (Alexander & Fox, 2004). Agreeing with that view, Palardy (1991) also believes that the reading competence children need includes recognizing letters, distinguishing sounds, remembering images and the relationship between letters and sounds. Once children master all of the above skills, they will begin to officially read and write.[4].

We also need to clarify between reading skill and reading competence. T. Lobanova, Yu. Shunin analyzed the heterogeneity of “competence” and “skill”. Accordingly, skill is the competence to perform cognitive and/or practical actions competently, accurately, and adaptively to changing conditions. While competence is a complex system of actions, including cognitive skills, practical skills and other non-cognitive components.[3]

Thus, reading competence is the process of converting written code into sound and decoding that text. Reading competence requires the development of many component skills over many years, starting from preschool level. For children of preschool age, reading competence includes a number of elements, such as familiarity with books, phonological awareness, familiarity with reading sounds or words; familiarity with reading smoothly (according to the model); familiarity with understanding explicit meanings. For example, for preschool children, especially for senior children, learning to have good reading skills is understood as the process of teachers teaching children to read using the oral method, and once they have memorized it, they can read the text out loud (by model). However, it is not enough to just stop there and after reading, children need

to understand at a basic level the nature of what they read (text content, images, details, colors, etc...) and apply elementary knowledge into practice. Having met this requirement, the reader has reading competence. Thus, reading competence covers reading skills. But in reality, the reader's reading activities are intertwined to create each person's reading skills and reading competence.

From identifying the process and elements of basic reading, it will help language educators specifically determine the requirements to achieve basic reading in classes from Preschool to Primary level, determine reading learning content for each age group (corresponding to each grade). Starting from that problem, we conceive:

*Preschool children's reading competence is a complex structure that includes the following elements: familiarity with books, phonological awareness, familiarity with reading out loud (by model), familiarity with reading smoothly (by model), familiarity with understanding explicit meanings. These basic foundations will nurture and promote preschool children's initial approach to reading, helping them be ready to learn when they reach primary school.*

### 3. MANIFESTATIONS AND LEVELS OF READING COMPETENCE OF 5-6 YEAR OLD PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

During the process of developing programs, most educational systems aim to build subject curriculum standards, such as knowledge and skills standards, content standards, and performance standards. Knowledge and skills standards are to determine the basic requirements for knowledge and skills that learners need to achieve in each grade level. Content standards determine the basic knowledge and skills that need to be achieved. Performance standards determine the levels that need to be achieved during the learning process.

The competence development approach in teaching and assessment is to help children progress gradually on the development path of knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities. Based on the research work of author Nguyen Thi Hanh "Identifying the elements of basic reading skills"[2], we have described the elements that form the reading competence of 5-6 year old preschool children.

**Table 1: Elements of reading competence of 5-6 year old preschool children**

Description of behavior Elements	Age	Behavior	Development
familiarity with books	5 – 5.5 years old	- Open the book, hold the book in the right direction (do not hold the book upside down) - Identify the parts of the book: book cover (Book title, author's name), book inside (book pages, words and images on the book pages)	Get familiar with reading books
	5.5 – 6 years old	- Know how to read books from top to bottom, from left to right in each line, combining reading words and looking at pictures - Hold the book and read in the correct posture	Learn how to read books

Description of behavior Elements	Age	Behavior	Development
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discover and understand different symbols and letter patterns, stimulate curiosity in learning words and letters</li> <li>- Know how to preserve and protect books</li> </ul>	
<i>phonological awareness</i>	5 – 5.5 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Get familiar with sound names and read the single letters that write the sound names</li> <li>- Recognize letters attached to images</li> <li>- Remember the names of the sounds of the letters</li> <li>- Practice reading letters and recording sounds</li> <li>- Practice reading tone marks: look at the mark \ / ? and read ... Remembering the signs show that you can read the tone by looking at the signs.</li> </ul>	Learn letters, numbers, and tone marks
	5.5 – 6 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Read out loud and clearly</li> <li>- Know the names, pronunciation, and structural characteristics of the letters in the group.</li> <li>- Know uppercase, lowercase, lowercase, uppercase letter styles</li> <li>- Compare and distinguish letters in groups</li> <li>- Know the names, pronunciation, and structural characteristics of numbers</li> <li>- Understand the symbols in alphabet cards</li> </ul>	Recognize and differentiate letters, tones, and numbers
<i>familiarity with reading out loud (by model)</i>	5 – 5.5 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Read loudly and clearly</li> <li>- Accurately read numbers, tones,</li> <li>- Correctly read the components in syllables and each sound in complex words</li> </ul>	Get familiar with learning to read each word
	5.5 – 6 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Read fluently and coherently with letters, numbers, and tones</li> <li>- Read single syllables accurately</li> <li>- Read single syllables expressively</li> <li>- Read expressions of sounds in complex words</li> </ul>	Get familiar with learning to read near-sound words
<i>familiarity with reading smoothly (by model)</i>	5 – 5.5 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Correctly read the sounds in complex words</li> <li>- Read the sentence with the correct intonation</li> </ul>	Get familiar with reading words and sentences smoothly
	5.5 – 6 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Express the correct content of the sentence</li> <li>- Read sample sentences coherently (poems, rhymes, folk songs, short lines in stories...)</li> </ul>	Get familiar with reading words, sentences, and

Description of behavior Elements	Age	Behavior	Development
			expressive paragraphs smoothly
<i>familiarity with understanding explicit meanings</i>	5 – 5.5 years old	- Understand the explicit meaning of words - Understand the explicit meaning of words in sample sentences and short paragraphs.	Understand word meaning
	5.5 – 6 years old	- Understand the explicit meaning of sentences made up of words that have been read and know the meaning to read sample sentences smoothly.	Understand the meaning of the sentence

Analyzing the components, behavioral indicators, and developmental milestones of each stage is an important foundation for determining the requirements to be met, orienting the development of teaching content, selecting materials for learning and teaching methods to achieve basic competencies for preschool children according to the orientation of competency development.

#### 4. STRUCTURE OF READING COMPETENCE OF 5-6 YEAR OLD PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

The structure of competence is shown in the following approaches:

- In terms of essence: competence is the subject's competence to flexibly and reasonably organize knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, motivations... to meet the complex requirements of an activity, ensuring that activity has quality in a certain context (situation).

- In terms of expression: competence is expressed by knowing how to use knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and motivation in a real situation rather than the acquisition of discrete knowledge, separate from situations. The reality is that competence is expressed in behaviors, actions, products... that can be observed and measured.

- Regarding composition: competence is made up of elements of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, personal emotions and motivations, and qualities. [1]

We also agree with the elements/skills and basic reading behavior indicators proposed by author Nguyen Thi Hanh. From there, we pose the issue of the necessity of determining the structure of reading competence including two components: basic reading techniques and reading comprehension.

Regarding basic reading techniques: Analyzing the components of each reading skill mentioned above is an important foundation for determining the elements to be achieved and the learning content of Basic Reading and Reading Comprehension in the educational program of all levels of education from preschool to general education. Basic reading requires the development of many component skills over many years, so reading fluency is the focus in the first years of formal schooling for children across the world. Different from Reading Comprehension skill - an unlimited skill, because it is developed throughout each person's life, right while studying at school

and during the process of living and working, reading skill is a limited skill. This skill begins to form before entering elementary school and is usually only learned in the last few years of preschool and early primary school. Basic Reading skills include several elements, such as becoming familiar with books and reading with phonological awareness; reading sounds or words; reading smoothly; understanding the meaning clearly:

- The element of familiarity with books is a combination of operations to help readers recognize: A book is a type of product that contains information, the structure of a book, how to read a book and how to find books to read to serve the development needs of students themselves.

- Phonological awareness is a group of operations: i) recognizing the differences of different phonemes through listening to phoneme pronunciation, ii) pronouncing Vietnamese phonemes, iii) reading correctly letters or letter combinations that record the phonemes of Vietnamese.

- Reading sounds (reading syllables) is a group of operations: i) reading letters, recorded letter combinations; ii) reading rhyming letter combinations; iii) reading tonal markings; iv) combining sounds (syllables) from the 3 components of first sound, rhyme, and tone; v) reading fluently.

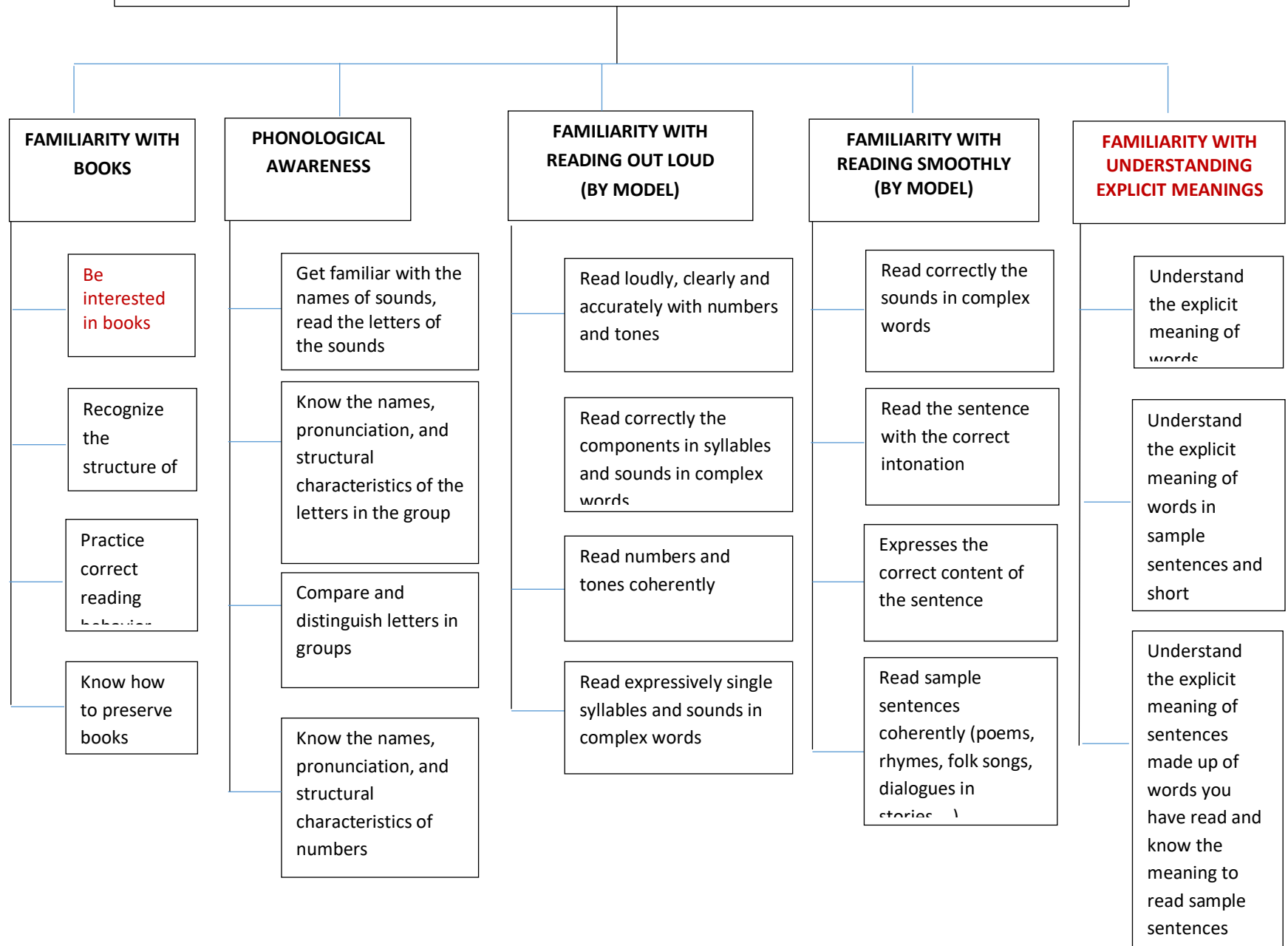
- Smooth reading is a group of operations of reading each unit of the text (discours) smoothly, such as words, sentences, paragraphs or short articles. Reading smoothly includes reading the correct sounds in words, reading seamlessly between sounds in words, pausing at punctuation to clarify ideas.

- Understanding explicit meaning within the scope of required skills in reading is a group of operations including: i) recognizing words in text and understand their meanings, ii) understanding the explicit meaning of sentences created by words with known meanings and punctuation marks with known functions.

However, there may be differences in determining the components of basic reading skills in learning to read in different languages due to the characteristics of each language. For example, students with basic reading skills when learning to read Indo-European languages do not have the language reading component but instead have the word reading component, while students learning basic Vietnamese reading skills need to have the reading element (syllables) [2]. Reading comprehension includes understanding content, understanding methods of expression, and making comparisons outside the text.

From the inheritance and application of research on reading competence, we build the structure of reading competence of 5-6 year old children through the following diagram:

**THE STRUCTURE OF READING COMPETENCE OF 5-6 YEAR OLD PRESCHOOL CHILDREN**



## 5. CONCLUSION

In summary, language development in general and building reading competence for preschool children in particular are very important in the current competency-oriented education context. By identifying the components and structures of reading competence, we hope to help curriculum developers and teachers identify the content, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to form and practice reading skills for preschool children. Those are the necessary conditions to prepare children for entering grade 1.

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