Triple R Teaching

Hello, Anna Geiger here from Reach All Readers, here for the first time in a long time

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Love Literacy. We're going to be looking at some hot topics in the science of reading world.

This week we're tackling speech to print. At the end of this week, you will get a conversation between Marnie Ginsburg and Tami Frankfort with Melissa and Lori, and you'll find that on their podcast.

I'm sure if you're listening to my podcast, you know who Melissa and Lori are. But just in case, they have a fabulous podcast for educators interested in learning more about the science of reading, knowledge building, and high quality curriculum, and they just have so many fantastic interviews. Be sure to check that out and subscribe if you haven't already. They're conducting the interview later this week.

I'm going to compare the difference between traditional phonics instruction and speech to print approaches. That's what we're going to be looking at today.

We're going to start by defining some things. Print to speech and speech to print are two different ways of teaching phonics. Now they encompass more things, but we're just going to focus on the phonics part today.

The problem with those labels is that they also mean other things, right? Print to speech also means decoding, and speech to print also means encoding. Of course every phonics lesson, whether you're print to speech or speech to print, is going to include reading and spelling.

I think that calling it print to speech versus speech to print is very confusing, and it leads some people to just not even listen because they're like, "Well, of course. I do print to speech and speech to print in my phonics program, so what's the difference? Why are we even talking about this?"

Maybe let's phrase it a little bit differently. Let's talk about structured literacy. Structured literacy was coined by the International Dyslexia Association a few years ago, and it emphasizes highly explicit and systematic teaching of all important components of literacy. It's not just phonics, but often when we refer to that, when we say structured literacy, we're often referring to how we teach phonics.

Technically, the print to speech approach and the speech to print approach are both structured literacy. They both fall under that. They both fall under the principles that we know from research. The thing, though, is that structured literacy was coined by the IDA, and the IDA is really more in support of Orton-Gillingham-type approaches. Even here, it gets a little bit muddy.

Instead of calling it structured literacy versus something else, or print to speech versus speech to print, this is how I'm going to distinguish between the two. We're going to call them traditional phonics instruction, which includes Orton-Gillingham, versus structured linguistic literacy, which is what programs you may have heard of follow.

For traditional phonics instruction, including Orton-Gillingham, we may have things like the Barton System and Fundations. Many common phonics programs that you may have used have roots in Orton-Gillingham.

Whereas structured linguistic literacy would be programs like EBLI, Reading Simplified, SPELL-Links, and Phono-Graphix. Those are the two things that we're comparing today.

In traditional phonics instruction, including OG, we begin with print and move to sound. We might start with a card. "This is a G. G says /g/, or G spells /g/."

Whereas with structured linguistic literacy, you're going to start with a sound and then move to print.

With traditional phonics instruction, we teach letters and sounds in isolation first. You may be familiar with a sound deck where you're reviewing all the sounds, there's flashcards, things like that.

Whereas with structured linguistic literacy, they actually teach letters with their sounds

in context of words, in word building for example. They might be introducing the letters M, A, T in an actual word with letter tiles. They're actually not teaching the letter names initially. They will focus on those later, but their focus is on sounds. They might say, "Move the /m/ /ă/ /t/" instead of saying the names of the letters.

In traditional phonics instruction, we might say something like, "What does the letter say?"

Whereas with structured linguistic literacy, you might say, "What sound do you say for this spelling?"

Traditional phonics instruction may focus on larger units of speech like the syllable and onset-rime, whereas structured linguistic literacy gets right to the phoneme.

Traditional approaches may teach phonics rules, exceptions, syllable types, and syllable division. There's a lot of that in the training that I took for Orton-Gillingham.

Whereas structured linguistic literacy focuses on patterns, no rules. They don't teach things like syllable types and fancy syllable division.

Traditional phonics instruction includes teaching one spelling at a time to mastery. You might be teaching the vowel consonant E pattern, and you really work on that for a while until kids really know it.

Whereas with structured linguistic literacy, you actually teach many spellings at a time and constantly review them and apply them. I guess eventually you would master them, but that's not an initial focus.

For example, if you're teaching spellings for the /ō/ sound in structured linguistic literacy, then you would teach multiple spellings right away, even in kindergarten. So if you're teaching /ō/, you might teach the letter O, O consonant E, OA, and OW. You might teach all of those at once, and then you just keep reviewing them.

OG is about mastery before moving on, but structured linguistic literacy is about mastery over time, which allows a faster pace.

Then, interestingly, because you are taking more time to master the spellings in OG, you're going to be using decodable text for a longer time.

But with structured linguistic literacy, because many patterns have been introduced sooner, they might call it the complex or advanced code, students can get into traditional text more quickly.

Those are some of the big differences.

A couple of other things we can talk about might be the idea of blends. In traditional phonics instruction, including OG, you teach blends as units. Not that they make one sound, but you teach them together so kids recognize them and say them quickly together.

Whereas with structured linguistic literacy, they don't think of blends as a thing. It's more just... I mean, they do teach CCVC words and CVCC words, but they don't teach blends as a unit.

Another thing is that in many OG programs, red words (as in irregular high frequency words) are taught by things like arm tapping and saying the letter names. So for the word "they", I might tap my shoulder and move all the way down; T-H-E-Y, they.

Whereas with structured linguistic literacy, you teach all words by sounds, think phoneme grapheme mapping.

Perhaps what's getting the most attention and interest from people is that according to structured linguistic literacy advocates, it's much faster than a traditional OG approach and more efficient.

I hope that this was helpful. I think if you listen to Melissa and Lori's episode at the end of the week, you're really going to find out more about the difference, and you can see if it's something you want to look into.

Next week I'm going to talk about how you can incorporate elements of structured linguistic literacy into your teaching, even if that's not the route you decide to go. I personally think there's good to be said for both sides, so next week we're going to talk about how to marry the two a little bit.

You can find the show notes for today's episode at reachallreaders.com/episode122.