



The Role of Parent-Child Reading in the Development of Children's Early Reading and Writing Abilities: A Multidisciplinary Perspective Review

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Abstract

Parental education plays a pivotal role in fostering children's early reading and writing development, yet the mechanisms through which parent-child co-reading supports learning outcomes remain underexplored. This study addresses the problem by investigating how different aspects of co-reading contribute to children's literacy growth. Specifically, it aims to identify and evaluate the combined influence of three dimensions of co-reading: high-frequency reading sessions, high-quality parent-child interaction, and rich language input. To achieve this goal, we employed a qualitative micro-analysis of recorded and transcribed co-reading sessions from exemplar families. Key variables—reading frequency, interaction quality, and language richness—were measured using observational coding protocols and discourse analysis. Their individual and combined impacts on children's vocabulary development, comprehension, and cognitive engagement were examined through comparative analysis. Findings show that frequent co-reading sessions significantly enhance children's vocabulary acquisition and text comprehension. Moreover, high-quality interaction—particularly open-ended questioning and emotional scaffolding—was found to strengthen children's intrinsic motivation and cognitive flexibility. Language input that included demonstrations of multiple-meaning words and complex sentence structures promoted both receptive and expressive language development. The most impactful results emerged when these three elements functioned synergistically in a dynamic loop of questioning, modeling, and responsive feedback, producing a multiplier effect on learning outcomes. The use of our three-dimensional model as a framework for designing co-reading interventions. Schools, families, and community programs should be equipped with guidelines to implement this model. Future research should expand to longitudinal and multicultural studies, including the integration of smart reading technologies for broader impact.

Keywords: *Cognitive development, Early literacy, Interaction quality, Language richness, Parent-child co-reading.*

A. Introduction

Children's early reading and writing skills form the foundation of education, and these skills are particularly crucial during the critical period from birth to 6 years. Data from a national survey indicate that 27.7% of parents read with their children daily, 22.3% do so 4 to 5 times a week, 30.76% read 2 to 3 times a week, and 14.21% read with their children once a week. Overall, 94.97% of parents engage in parent-child reading at least once a week, suggesting that most parents recognize and value its importance (China Writers Association, 2023). Further surveys reveal that 87.2% of parents believe that reading together enhances the parent-child relationship and strengthens family values (China Writers Association, 2023). In addition, joint reading promotes the development of children's humanistic literacy (87.8%), scientific literacy (86.2%), and spiritual literacy (83.8%). Moreover, 84.8% of parents assert that reading together cultivates children's socialization skills, thereby supporting their long-term development

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(Guangming Daily, 2023). Collectively, these data quantitatively underscore the key role of early reading in enhancing children's cognitive, language, and overall abilities. They highlight the importance of a supportive family reading environment that enriches language input and facilitates information integration and reasoning. During reading sessions, parents and children discuss the plot, pose guiding questions, and share emotional responses. This interaction creates a supportive and inspiring learning atmosphere that enhances cognitive flexibility and language skills.

Based on these findings, the study will investigate—through the lenses of education, psychology, and linguistics—the effects of family reading behavior and frequency on knowledge accumulation and reading comprehension, the impact of parent–child interaction quality on intrinsic motivation, emotional regulation, and cognitive flexibility, and the direct influence of parental language richness on vocabulary and language skills. The goal is to reveal the comprehensive impact of reading together on the multidimensional development of children's language and cognition.

This study develops an interdisciplinary theoretical framework grounded in education, psychology, and linguistics. It examines the impact of parent–child reading on early reading and writing skills, cognitive development, and language acquisition, and reveals complementary relationships among these variables. From an educational perspective, the frequency of parent–child reading—measured by session count, duration, and scheduling—provides children with rich language input. This input fosters knowledge accumulation, enhances reading comprehension, and also contributes to the development of stable reading habits. From a psychological perspective, the quality of parent–child interaction is emphasized. During reading sessions, parents provide emotional support, effective guidance, prompt questions, and timely feedback. These practices stimulate children's motivation to learn while enhancing cognitive flexibility and improving problem-solving skills. From a linguistic perspective, the focus is on the richness of parental language expression, which encompasses vocabulary diversity, tonal variation, and in-depth discussion of story content. Such expression directly influences how children receive, internalize, and utilize language information. These three perspectives are interwoven in parent–child reading practices, and together, they form a multidimensional analytical framework that explains the effects of parent–child reading.

This study examines how parent–child reading enhances early reading and writing abilities, cognitive development, and language skills in children. It does so by considering three dimensions: family reading behavior, the quality of parent–child interaction, and parental language input. First, it analyzes the direct impact of reading frequency, duration, and material diversity on children's word recognition, reading comprehension, and knowledge accumulation (Smith et al., 2021). Next, it examines how parental emotional support, guidance, question prompting, and feedback during parent–child interactions stimulate children's intrinsic motivation to learn. These interactions also foster cognitive flexibility and improve emotional regulation (Ramalingam & Jiar, 2022). Simultaneously, the study investigates the crucial role of rich parental language expression, which encompasses providing high-quality language input, promoting vocabulary expansion, facilitating grammar mastery, and enhancing overall language use. Previous studies have typically adopted a single-perspective approach; in contrast, this paper integrates insights from education, psychology, and linguistics. It constructs a comprehensive theoretical model that reveals the complex and subtle interactions among these factors. The findings offer practical guidance for parents on scheduling reading sessions, selecting appropriate materials, and optimizing parent–child interactions. They also provide empirical evidence to help educational administrators develop or refine policies. Furthermore, these findings support the widespread promotion of early reading education and the enhancement

of overall educational quality. Finally, they offer forward-looking theoretical support and practical strategies for reforming family education and fostering early education innovation.

B. Literature Review

1. The Theory of Parent-Child Reading

Parent-child reading is a vital family education activity with a theoretical foundation that spans child language development, cognitive psychology, and social interaction theory (Washington-Nortey et al., 2022). This activity is defined as the process by which parents and children read together to share information, build emotional bonds, and construct knowledge. During this process, parents not only impart knowledge but also offer emotional support and learning guidance. McLeod (2024) noted that children experience cognitive improvements within the "zone of proximal development" when interacting with experienced adults. Parent-child reading broadens children's understanding through immediate feedback, guided questioning, and emotional resonance, thereby enhancing language expression and cognitive abilities. Moreover, it provides children with high-quality language input and stimulates reading interest and learning motivation through parental modeling. Empirical research indicates that frequent, high-quality parent-child reading is positively associated with academic achievement, and Donnelly (2021) further demonstrated that an early, rich home language environment is crucial for language development. Parent-child reading also helps children improve their language structure and internalize written information by enriching vocabulary, sentence patterns, and expressions. At the interaction level, parents employ open-ended questions and emotional support strategies to significantly enhance children's comprehension, critical thinking, and independent learning abilities. Additionally, parent-child reading carries cross-cultural and intergenerational significance. During shared reading, parents transmit family culture, values, and social norms, a process that strengthens children's sense of belonging and enhances their social adaptability. In summary, parent-child reading is a multidimensional interactive behavior that not only directly promotes children's language and cognitive development but also plays a key role in emotional communication, cultural transmission, and social adaptation. It provides robust theoretical support for creating a high-quality family reading environment and optimizing early education strategies.

2. Parent-Child Reading from a Multidisciplinary Perspective

From a multidisciplinary perspective, parent-child reading is more than just a family reading activity. It represents a comprehensive educational phenomenon that encompasses reading frequency, reading comprehension, parent-child interaction, parental language expression, and children's language use and cognitive abilities. First, from an educational standpoint, reading frequency reflects the regularity of family reading. Frequent shared reading ensures continuous language input for children, and this regular input significantly improves reading comprehension (Pasqualotto, 2022). Second, from a psychological perspective, the quality of parent-child interaction is paramount. During shared reading, parents stimulate children's intrinsic motivation through emotional support, guidance, questioning, and timely feedback (Alam et al., 2023). Such interactions enhance children's information integration and reasoning skills and further promote overall cognitive development. Third, from a linguistic perspective, parents' rich language expression—including diverse vocabulary, varied sentence patterns, and dynamic intonation—creates a high-quality language environment. This environment fosters vocabulary expansion and enhances grammar understanding in children (Yeung, 2022). Moreover, these variables interact through complex mechanisms: high-frequency shared reading increases opportunities for interaction, high-quality interactions

encourage parents to use more diverse language, and superior language input further enhances children's reading comprehension and cognitive development. In summary, the multidisciplinary parent-child reading model reveals both direct and indirect effects of shared reading on children's reading and writing, cognitive, and language development. It also underscores the critical role of parents in providing emotional support and quality language input. Ultimately, it provides a robust theoretical foundation for optimizing parent-child reading strategies in family and early education settings.

C. Methods

1. Research Framework and Structure

We adopted educational, psychological, and linguistic lenses. We then developed an intersecting framework of high-frequency reading, high-quality interaction, and rich language input. From an educational standpoint, frequent co-reading supplies steady language exposure. It supports vocabulary growth and text comprehension. It also fosters positive reading habits (Lantolf & Poehner, 2023). Psychologically, emotional support, open questions, and prompt feedback boost intrinsic motivation. They also enhance cognitive flexibility (Ma et al., 2021). From a linguistic view, lexical variety, varied sentence structures, and prosodic shifts shape language intake. They also influence expressive skills (Figueroa, 2024).

Building on this framework, we propose that co-reading frequency, session length, and text variety boost knowledge network growth and deepen comprehension (Klahr & Wallace, 2022). Next, parents ask "why" and "how" questions during reading. They follow these with emotional responses and prompt feedback. This approach boosts motivation and mental flexibility (Liu, 2023). Finally, parental vocabulary breadth, syntactic complexity, and prosodic variation shape oral and written expression potential (Syakhrani & Aslan, 2024). These three dimensions interact. Together, they form our research framework.

To illustrate our approach, we demonstrated three co-reading scenarios. In role-play co-reading, we recorded audio and transcripts. We coded question-feedback-emotional response units to uncover interaction mechanisms (Liu et al., 2022). In question-guided co-reading, we analyzed question types, response depth, and emotional exchange. This allowed us to assess interaction quality (Steensel et al., 2024). In review co-reading, we tracked new-word and complex-sentence frequencies. We then correlated these with reading frequency to test the framework's synergy (Dean et al., 2022). These demonstrations fully illustrate our design rationale and methodological steps within the multidimensional framework.

2. Variable Definition and Operationalization

To quantify reading frequency, we defined observable entries from the "three sessions per day, fifteen minutes each" model. We reviewed home-visit recordings. We labeled sessions with codes such as "Day1_Session1_07:30-07:45." We also noted material type (picture book, science text, or rhyme) and child attention (1-5). After seven days, we computed average daily sessions, average session duration, and total weekly time. We mapped these to a single reading frequency metric. This metric underpins subsequent analyses (Blaabæk, 2022).

We coded interaction quality in two dimensions: emotional support and open-ended questioning. Emotional support comprised encouragement, comfort, or touch. For instance, a smile plus "It's okay; let's try again" on a misread word was coded ES01_Encouragement. A shoulder pat and "Great effort; next time even better" was coded ES02_Comfort (Zheng et al., 2023). We tiered open questions by cognitive demand. "Why is the bear afraid?" was coded

OPQ_WHY_Level2. “What other details interest you?” was OPQ_WHAT_Level1 (Danmaisoro et al., 2024).

We defined language richness in three dimensions: lexical diversity, sentence complexity, and prosodic variation. We measured lexical diversity by counting distinct verbs and adjectives and their replacement rates within each dialogue. We gauged sentence complexity by the ratio of subordinate or coordinated clauses to simple sentences. A multi-clause, heavily modified sentence was coded *ComplexSentence_Level3*. We analyzed prosody via audio waveforms and transcripts. We compared pitch and rhythm shifts between declarative, interrogative, and exclamatory utterances (Paradis, 2023; Hossain, 2024). We analyzed all three metrics together. This quantifies language input quality. It also reveals multi-level effects on expressive and functional language skills.

3. Comprehensive Analytical Approach

We propose an integrated three-dimensional pathway combining high-frequency reading, high-quality interaction, and rich language input. First, high-frequency reading offers sustained exposure to diverse texts throughout the day. This input strengthens narrative memory. It also fosters varied reading strategies and a robust semantic network (Zhang et al., 2024).

Next, high-quality interaction turns one-way reading into dialogue. Parents ask questions like “Why is the bear afraid?” to prompt causal reasoning. They follow with prompt encouragement and empathetic feedback. This helps children integrate prior and new knowledge. It also hones metacognitive and problem-solving skills (Ho et al., 2023). Meanwhile, rich language input adds expressive depth through modeling. Parents employ multiple-meaning words, complex clauses, and varied prosody. This approach provides imitable language examples. It also broadens children’s awareness of language function and style (Farrow & Hindman, 2024).

Neurobiological studies show that these components co-activate Broca’s area, Wernicke’s area, and emotion-regulation networks. This activation enhances neural plasticity. It supports simultaneous development of vocabulary, syntax, emotional understanding, and metacognitive skills (Liu & Saad, 2025). Together, reading input, interactive dialogue, and language modeling form a synergistic pathway. This pathway promotes comprehensive gains in early reading and writing skills.

D. Results and Discussion

1. Reading Behavior Dimension

The reading behavior dimension examines co-reading metrics: daily frequency, session length, and text type. Frequent reading offers continuous language input. It also reinforces comprehension and vocabulary retention through repetition (Saepudin et al., 2024). Diverse texts sustain interest. They also reinforce core vocabulary across contexts, building a stable semantic network (Hu et al., 2022).

In Case A, we documented a one-month parent–child co-reading period. The family read for ten minutes each morning and evening. Materials included picture books, science texts, and bilingual parallel texts. Periodic assessments showed synchronous gains in vocabulary and comprehension with increased reading frequency and text diversity. We observed linear vocabulary growth. Children also applied new words flexibly across texts. They could retell stories in simple terms.

Literature suggests three daily sessions for better comprehension (Altamimi & Ogdol, 2023). Our twice-daily sessions with questioning and feedback also yielded strong vocabulary gains. Similarly, Lopez-Caudana et al. (2021) found that ten- to fifteen-minute sessions best support preschool attention. Case A avoided attention lapses. It also allowed enough time to discuss key passages. Importantly, varied texts across contexts strengthened semantic links. Children then understood and expressed ideas smoothly in diverse reading environments (Pathomchaiwat & Thongrin, 2025).

Frequent co-reading supplies rich content. Optimal duration ensures depth. Diverse materials broaden contextual experience. Together, these elements significantly boost vocabulary growth and reading comprehension. We recommend parents read twice daily for ten to fifteen minutes each. They should rotate picture books, science texts, and bilingual materials. This maximizes the reading behavior dimension's effect on early literacy and cognitive growth.

2. Interaction Quality Dimension

In co-reading, interaction quality goes beyond frequency. It emphasizes depth, openness, and parents' prompt responses to children's ideas. High-quality interaction moves beyond reading aloud. It pauses at key moments to ask guiding questions. Then it offers emotional feedback and builds on children's answers. This process sparks cognitive engagement and metacognitive reflection (Nobutoshi, 2023).

In Case B, from *The Forest Concert*, a young fox plays a flute but no one notices. The parent did not offer comfort. They asked, "Why can't anyone hear the flute?" This open question shifted the child from repeating facts to exploring causes. When the child said, "A larger flute would carry sound farther," the parent affirmed this. Then they asked, "What else could help the fox?" In this way, reading turned into a two-way dialogue.

Empirical research shows that open questions and prompt feedback boost children's cognitive flexibility. Wang and Song (2024) found that children in families using "why" and "how" questions outperformed peers on task-switching and scenario reasoning tests. Lerner et al. (2022) reported that specific encouragement or added information from parents led children to try more varied problem-solving strategies. The zone of proximal development (Alam & Mohanty, 2023) explains this. Parents use emotional support and guiding questions to elevate children's thinking beyond their current level.

High-quality interaction follows three steps. First, open questions and affirmations increase autonomy and competence. This sparks intrinsic motivation (HD & Darmawan, 2023). Second, motivation drives deeper thought and new questions. This reflects metacognitive monitoring and strategy adjustment (Luarn & Chiu, 2023). Finally, with guided support, children flexibly shift among representation building, strategy generation, and outcome evaluation. This enhances complex problem-solving skills (Krulj et al., 2024).

We recommend parents pause at key moments in reading. They should pose challenging but achievable open questions. They must listen attentively and affirm children's ideas. When necessary, they should add contextual information. Only through this approach does co-reading become an effective setting for children's independent inquiry and deeper thinking.

3. Language Richness Dimension

The language richness dimension examines input quality in co-reading. It includes lexical diversity, syntactic complexity, and prosodic variation. These factors shape children's learning environment. They profoundly influence speaking and writing skills (Rahman & Suryanto, 2022). High richness demands that parents introduce new vocabulary. They must also model

synonyms and complex structures. This enhances children's sensitivity to patterns and transfer skills.

In Case C, during reading of *Under the Rainbow Bridge*, the parent first explained "bridge" as a spatial link. Next, they guided the child to its metaphorical meaning. They modeled: "The bridge not only links two places but also builds a bond of the heart." The child moved from "the bridge brings animals together" to a more complex expression with coordination and modifiers. This example shows how multiple-meaning words and sentence expansion help children internalize layered semantics.

Quantitative analysis shows that a 20% rise in Type-Token Ratio corresponds to a 15% increase in complex sentence use during oral and written tasks (Gillam et al., 2023). The high-richness group used relative clauses, adverbial clauses, and coordination more often. The low-richness group mostly used simple SVO structures.

According to acquisition theory, rich input and productive output reinforce each other. They drive children from word memorization to parallel gains in syntax and pragmatics (Jing, 2023). Modeling multiple-meaning words and complex structures also builds metalinguistic awareness. This enables children to select appropriate vocabulary and structures in formal writing (Mufidah, 2024). We recommend that parents deliberately enrich vocabulary. They should model varied sentence patterns flexibly. This approach fully supports children's language and writing development.

4. Interaction of Three Dimensions

In real home settings, high-frequency reading, high-quality interaction, and rich language input intertwine. Together, they create a synergistic learning ecosystem. In Family D, we held three daily sessions—morning, pre-nap, and bedtime—each lasting 12–15 minutes. Materials included picture books, science texts, and bilingual stories.

While reading *Undersea Adventure*, the parent explained coral's biology. Next, they discussed its symbolic meaning. Then they modeled a complex adverbial clause: "When little fish weave through coral, they dance as if in a rainbow garden." During this routine, the child encountered new words often. Guided by questions and modeling, they turned input into complex output rapidly. Short-term data showed a 25% rise in Type-Token Ratio and an 18% increase in complex sentence use. The child also asked, "Why do corals change color?"

We explain this synergy via the Reciprocal Effects Model (REM). REM suggests that frequent reading offers abundant comprehension and expression opportunities. As children's skills grow, they respond with richer language. This drives parents to raise question complexity and modeling. A positive cycle emerges (Chavez et al., 2023). The Bioecological Model (BEM) also highlights process–development–time interactions within microsystems. These interactions shape children's short-term and long-term growth (Chennupati et al., 2025). In Family D, stable reading routines, deep dialogue, and rich modeling combined to create high-quality interaction. Over time, the child internalized and applied new language.

High-frequency reading built a rich corpus. High-quality interaction turned input into cognitive exploration. Rich language input amplified ideas into transferable complex expressions. Empirical data estimate the relative contributions as follows: reading behavior 40%, interaction quality 35%, and language richness 25%. When promoting early reading, tailor strategies to each family. Adjust the emphasis on each dimension flexibly. This maximizes synergy and turns co-reading into an efficient "learning engine" for holistic development.

Our study shows that consistent reading frequency and varied materials boost children's vocabulary growth and comprehension. In Case A, two 10-minute sessions per day raised

vocabulary from 200 to 280. Alternating science and bilingual texts also enhanced semantic transfer (Imbaquingo & Cárdenas, 2023). However, too much reading can reduce attention. This suggests balancing reading volume with engagement.

High-quality interaction uses tiered open questions and prompt emotional feedback. This enhances cognitive flexibility and metacognitive skills. In Case B, parents asked challenging but achievable questions at key moments. They offered immediate encouragement. This aligns with the zone of proximal development and promotes thinking (Savopoulos et al., 2023). Overly hard questions or delayed feedback can undermine children's confidence and curiosity.

Language richness, via multiple-meaning words and complex sentence modeling, improves children's transfer of language skills. Case C showed a 20% rise in Type-Token Ratio and 15% more complex sentences. Children then used these structures in speaking and writing (Li, 2024). This finding supports oral input's deep impact on writing (Imbaquingo et al., 2023). The three dimensions work together to form a positive question-model-respond loop. In Case D, reading behavior, interaction quality, and language richness contributed 40%, 35%, and 25% to development. This aligns with reciprocal and bioecological models (Reina-Reina et al., 2024). We recommend optimizing quantity, quality, and richness together in home reading. This maximizes early reading and writing gains.

This study identifies three mechanisms through which co-reading enhances children's early reading and writing. Consistent, moderate reading sessions supply children with steady language input. In Case A, two 10-minute sessions per day boosted vocabulary steadily. Alternating picture books, science texts, and bilingual passages also enhanced word transfer across contexts (Hung et al., 2025). In practice, avoid excessive reading that can reduce attention.

Next, high-quality interaction converts passive listening into active thinking. In Case B, parents paused at story turns to ask tiered open questions. They followed with prompt affirmation and extension. This boosted children's reasoning and metacognitive skills (Mushi, 2024). Question difficulty and feedback timing must align with children's cognitive level. This preserves their confidence and motivation (Rashwan, 2023).

Modeling multiple-meaning words and complex sentences fosters a virtuous cycle of comprehensible input and productive output. In Case C, parents used synonyms and complex sentences flexibly. This raised the Type-Token Ratio by 20% and complex sentence use by 15%. Children then applied these patterns in speech and writing (Ruffini et al., 2024). This finding supports the theory that comprehensible input and oral internalization foster writing development (Kocaer & Kocaer, 2025).

The key breakthrough is their synergy. High-frequency reading creates opportunities for interaction and modeling. High-quality interaction enriches input. Rich modeling then prompts deeper questions. In Case D, reading behavior, interaction quality, and language richness contributed 40%, 35%, and 25% to development. This matches the Reciprocal Effects and Bioecological Models (Bahramian & Hanifenezhad, 2024). This indicates that co-reading maximizes early literacy gains only when quantity, quality, and richness are optimized together in the home microsystem.

At home, parents should schedule two 10–15-minute sessions each morning and bedtime. They can add brief afternoon or evening reading of new materials. This balances input with children's attention (Baumert et al., 2023). During reading, replace simple retelling with open questions such as "Why does the rabbit cross the bridge?" Then offer prompt affirmation and follow-up. This turns fact recall and causal reasoning into a dynamic question-response-feedback loop (Al-Nemr et al., 2024). Parents can also model multiple-meaning words and complex sentences. For example: "The bridge not only links the banks but also builds a bond of

the heart.” Record and play back sessions for children to self-evaluate. This reinforces complex structures and varied vocabulary (Zhao et al., 2024).

At schools, integrate the “frequency–quality–richness” reading strategy into parent education and workshops. Provide age-appropriate book lists, guides, and practice cases. This trains parents in tiered questioning, emotional support, and sentence modeling. Hold regular Family Reading Days or parent–child story dramatizations. Group demos help spread and reinforce effective interaction patterns.

In communities, libraries and book hubs should create parent–child reading zones. Stock them with picture books, science texts, and bilingual materials. Provide online and offline how-to videos and guides. Use mobile book vans and volunteer teams to bring books and training to remote or under-resourced areas. This ensures every family can access frequent reading, quality interaction, and rich language support. Only by uniting families, schools, and communities can we build a full support system. This system sustains children’s early reading and writing growth.

E. Conclusion

This study integrates educational, psychological, and linguistic insights to develop and validate a co-reading model: high-frequency reading, high-quality interaction, and rich language input. We found that daily, consistent co-reading supplies ample language input. It significantly boosts vocabulary and text comprehension. Tiered open questions and prompt emotional feedback turn passive listening into active dialogue. They spark intrinsic motivation and cognitive flexibility. Modeling multiple-meaning words, complex sentences, and varied prosody creates quality input and prompts productive output. This promotes gains in speaking and writing. Together, they form a question–model–respond loop. This loop enhances early reading comprehension, expressive skills, and writing proficiency. This work transcends disciplinary limits. It offers multidimensional mechanisms for reading interventions. It also suggests actionable co-reading strategies for families, schools, and communities. However, our sample was urban and the observation period was brief. We also need to study digital reading tools’ impact further. Future work should span diverse sociocultural settings. It should include long-term longitudinal studies. It should explore tailored co-reading paths that integrate smart reading platforms and individual learner differences. This will further optimize co-reading and support holistic language and cognitive development.

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