



# Session 9

*Indeed, can it be doubted the children learn speech from adults; or that, through asking questions and giving answers, children acquire a variety of information; or that, through imitating adults and through being instructed about how to act, children develop an entire repository of skills? Learning and development are interrelated from the child's very first day of life.*

*-Vygotsky, 1978*

## Teaching Print Knowledge Using the Co-Participation Strategy

### Learning Objectives

- ◇ **Review** the terms print knowledge, alphabet knowledge, concept of word, letter naming, emergent writing, and high-support strategy, and **define** the term co-participation strategy.
- ◇ **Demonstrate** use of the co-participation strategy when teaching print knowledge.
- ◇ **Analyze** children's responses to the co-participation strategy in a print knowledge activity.
- ◇ **Reflect** on how the co-participation strategy can be used in your classroom to improve children's print knowledge.
- ◇ **Describe** how the co-participation strategy can be used to address all four *Read It Again–PreK!* domains.

### Overview

Developing print knowledge is critical to the process of learning to read. We discussed in Session 2 the following points about print knowledge:

1. **Print knowledge is an umbrella term which includes five areas of development:**
  - **Print interest:** Children's interest in, and motivation to learn about, print
  - **Print terms:** Children's knowledge of different print forms, such as letter, word, title, and author
  - **Print concepts:** Children's knowledge of how print is organized in books and other genre, such as where to start reading on a page and where the title is located
  - **Concept of word:** Children's knowledge of what a word is in written language, that a word is made up of letters, and that written words correspond to spoken words
  - **Alphabet knowledge:** Children's knowledge of the names of the alphabet letters, including upper- and lower-case forms.

2. Children’s development of print knowledge begins soon after birth. For instance, a 2-year-old toddler might recognize a letter on a toy, or point to a road sign and shout “Stop!”

By the age of 5 years, children demonstrate a significant increase in print knowledge and are likely to: identify all the letters in their own name; write their own name; point along to the words while someone else reads a book; identify the author and title of a storybook; read familiar signs in the environment; use such words as *period*, *comma*, *letter*, and *word* to talk about print; understand the different purposes of print genre—such as lists, signs, and calendars; differentiate between upper- and lower-case letters; produce writing in a variety of print genre, such as letters and lists.

3. Alphabet knowledge is a critical indicator of a child’s future reading success. Children who enter kindergarten knowing many letters of the alphabet typically develop reading skills much faster than those who know only a few letters. There is no particular order in which children learn letters; however, due to the *own name advantage*, children are 11 times more likely to know the first initial in their name. This is interesting in that it suggests that learning letters is a highly individualized process.

If a child is having difficulty developing print knowledge, there are typically two issues at play: the child has a developmental disability, such as a language disorder or cognitive disability, and/or the child lives in a home in which literacy experiences rarely occur, if at all. For these children, the move to beginning reading instruction can be extremely difficult because they arrive without sufficient preparation, particularly in the area of print knowledge. Without solid print knowledge, a child is likely to experience difficulties learning to read because the amount of print knowledge a child has entering into the primary grades is a strong indicator of later reading success. For this reason, it is critical to provide early support to help children develop a strong foundation of print knowledge.

In this session, we focus our attention on how to support children who are having difficulty with activities that target print knowledge. We have described high-support strategies in previous lessons as gentle nudges designed to support children as they climb the learning ladder. As teachers use high-support strategies over time, children improve their print skills and move up the ladder, gradually climbing with increased independence and confidence.

## The Co-participation Strategy

The high-support strategy we describe in this session is **co-participation**.

**The co-participation strategy provides children with the correct answer to a question through their completion of the task with another person – the teacher or a peer.**

When using co-participation as a strategy, the child is asked to complete a challenging task simultaneously with another, who serves as a model. Print knowledge concepts can be targeted using the co-participation strategy in a variety of ways: making the shapes of letters in the air, tracking print with the teacher, or manipulating a book (such as turning pages). Regardless of the task, the child completes it with another person. In this way, co-participation is a fun, interactive way to support struggling children in your classroom. Just as with other high-support strategies, co-participation provides the child with a direct model of, or an answer to, the task since performance co-occurs with the teacher or a peer. Let's look at an example:

**Teacher:** Patrick, I need some **help pointing to the words** in our story as I read. Come on up here and **help me point**. Keep your finger on top of mine as **we point together**.

Notice in this example that the teacher makes an explicit request of the student for a particular print task—identifying words in the story as she reads. In order to maximize her support, the teacher asks Patrick to put his finger on hers. This serves to limit the number of mistakes he makes and to clarify the lesson. By co-participating in this activity, Patrick is able to point to the words, albeit with assistance from the teacher.

Let's look at another example.

**Teacher:** Oh, look here, this is the letter M. Everyone, look at the shape of the M. **Now, let's take our fingers and make the shape of the letter M in the air. Follow along with me.**

In this example, the teacher points to the letter M and asks the children to take note of the shape of the letter. Then she asks them to make the shape of the letter M with their fingers using the visual depiction of the M in the book as their guide. Children who do not yet know the letter M reap the benefit of co-participation with the teacher and peers. As a result, children for whom this would otherwise be an impossible task are able to meet with success.

# Terms and Background Knowledge

## Vocabulary

**Print knowledge** – Children’s early understanding of the forms and functions of print.

**Alphabet knowledge** – Children’s knowledge of the names of alphabet letters, including both lower- and upper-case forms.

**Concept of word** – Children’s knowledge of what a word is in written language—that a word is made up of letters and that written words correspond to spoken words.

**Emergent writing** – Children’s early writing attempts, which may include unconventional directionality (e.g., right to left instead of left to right), word/letter spacing and use of random symbols and letters.

**High-support strategy** – A strategy that teachers use for tasks that are very difficult for a child, tasks that he or she is far from being able to do on his or her own.

**Co-participation strategy** – A high-support instructional strategy that provides children with the correct answer to a question through their completion of the task with another person – the teacher or a peer.



## Activity 1. Teacher Implementation of the Co-participation Strategy

As we think about using the co-participation strategy, let’s consider how to support children’s print knowledge by providing exact models of ideal responses to these types of tasks. When using co-participation as a strategy, the teacher may join the child in answering the question, for instance: by joining the child in manipulating the book, asking the child to join her as she engages in an activity such as tracing letters in the air, or joining in a choral response. Let’s examine this classroom-based interaction:

**Teacher:** Who can show me where the author’s name is?  
James, come on up here and show me.

**James:** It’s here! (He is pointing to the picture on the front cover of the book.)

**Teacher:** Let’s think about this. These words are the author’s name. They say “Mary Murphy.” Now you show me where the author’s name is.

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## Activity 1. Teacher Implementation of the Co- participation Strategy

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**James:** I like the picture of the penguin.

**Teacher:** Here, give me your finger. There you go (running the child's finger along the author's name), that says "Mary Murphy," and she is the author of the book we are going to read today.

**James:** That's the author's name (running his finger over the name on his own this time).

Now, answer these questions about the preceding exchange.

Give an example of an instance when the teacher could have used the co-participation strategy, but did not.

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Give a specific example of an instance when the teacher did use the co-participation strategy.

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How did the teacher know when it was necessary to support the child through co-participation?

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Describe the child's response to the teacher's use of co-participation. Was the child able to successfully complete the task?

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Compare the child's response to the print knowledge task when the teacher did and did not use the co-participation strategy. How did the child's responses differ?

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## Activity 2. Learners' Ladders

Review the strategy of co-participation as addressed in four *Read It Again–PreK!* Learners' Ladder Print Knowledge Lessons. These lessons are:

- Learners' Ladder Lesson 7
- Learners' Ladder Lesson 15
- Learners' Ladder Lesson 51
- Learners' Ladder Lesson 59

Of the examples provided in these lessons, which ones do you feel you use often in your daily instruction?

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Next, review these two examples taken from Learners' Ladder Lesson 51.

Example 1:

**Teacher:** Marlena, help me pick out one word on this page.

Example 2:

**Teacher:** Cole, come up here with me and we'll play the letter-word game again. I'm going to help you. When I say *letter*, we'll point to a letter. When I say *word*, we'll point to a whole word.

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## Activity 2. Learners' Ladders

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Reflect on these questions:

How does the teacher's strategy in each of these examples support the participation and learning of a child who has difficulty with these particular types of tasks?

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Rewrite each of these examples so that the teacher does not use the co-participation strategy. Predict how a child with limited print knowledge would perform given these revised examples.

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# Listen and Learn

## Activity 3.

Turn on your DVD player and select **Session 9, Activity 3** from the RIA DVD menu. You will see a teacher reading a book to a group of children. Complete the activity as described below.

Watch this teacher use the co-participation strategy to discuss new print knowledge concepts while reading *Clifford Goes to Dog School* by Norman Bridwell.

Now, answer these questions about the reading activity:

Which print knowledge concept was the teacher trying to target?

Describe the teacher's use of the co-participation strategy.

Describe how the children responded to this strategy.

Now, listen to what we have to say.

Turn on your DVD player and select **Session 9, Activity 3 Discussion** from the RIA DVD menu.

## Activity 3.





## Activity 4.

Turn on your DVD player and select **Session 9, Activity 4** from the RIA DVD menu. You will see a teacher reading a book to a group of children. Complete the activity as described below.

Now watch this teacher use the co-participation strategy to discuss new print knowledge concepts with her students while reading the book *Red Leaf, Yellow Leaf* by Lois Ehlert. After watching the video, look at your copy of the book and complete the following activities.

Choose another print target from the book that will most likely be new for your students.

Write down the exact words you could use to implement the co-participation strategy when asking your students to identify this new print target.

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Now, listen to what we have to say.

Turn on your DVD player and select **Session 9, Activity 4 Discussion** from the RIA DVD menu.

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## Activity 4.

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## Activity 5.

Turn on your DVD player and select **Session 9, Activity 5** from the RIA DVD menu. You will see a teacher reading a book to a group of children. Complete the activity as described below.

Watch this teacher use the strategy of co-participation to discuss a different domain than that of print knowledge, namely vocabulary. She uses this strategy with her students while she is reading the text *Clifford Goes to Dog School* by Norman Bridwell. Answer these questions about the activity:

Which vocabulary word was the teacher targeting?

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What words did the teacher use to implement the co-participation strategy?

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How did the children respond to this strategy?

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Now, listen to what we have to say.

Turn on your DVD player and select **Session 9, Activity 5 Discussion** from the RIA DVD menu.

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## Activity 5.

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# Reflect and Apply

## Reflect

1. Think about a child in your classroom who is having a difficult time developing print knowledge. Write that child's name here: \_\_\_\_\_.

How often do you currently use co-participation with this child when implementing print knowledge instruction?

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To what extent would this child benefit from more exposure to this strategy?

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2. Look again at the co-participation strategy as discussed in the *Read It Again-PreK!* Learners' Ladders. Do you use this strategy often in your classroom? Why or why not?

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If you were to increase your use of this strategy in the area of print knowledge, which children in your classroom do you think would benefit most?

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3. Read over this excerpt from the book *The Recess Queen* by Alexis O'Neill and Laura Huliska-Beith.

Mean Jean thundered close behind.

BOUNCITY

KICKITY

SWINGITY.

The Recess Queen was NOT amused.

She raced and chased and in-your-faced that Katie Sue.

No one spoke. No one moved.

No one BREATHED.

Next, reflect on these questions:

How could you use this excerpt to teach children the difference between upper- and lower-case letters? Give a specific example of what you might say or do to teach children to understand the difference between upper- and lower-case letters in this excerpt.

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Are there children in your classroom who may have difficulty following what you say or do to teach this concept?

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If there are children who may have difficulty following what you say or do to teach this concept, describe how you would use the strategy of co-participation to support their learning.

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## Apply

1. Find a storybook in your classroom that has just a few words on each page. Select a child in your classroom to read with and pause while reading to ask the child to point to each word on the page. Practice using the co-participation strategy to help the child perform this task with 100% accuracy (with your assistance). Did you feel that this detracted from the storybook reading session? Did you feel that your use of co-participation helped the child to learn this print knowledge concept?

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2. Gather a small group of children in your classroom who know few letters of the alphabet. Ask the children to draw letters in the air (with their fingers) as you name them. First, deliver the activity without providing the high-support strategy of co-participation. Describe here the exact words you use:

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Now, deliver the activity using the co-participation strategy. Describe here the exact words you use to implement this activity, and describe how the children's performance changes:

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3. Gather a small group of children in your classroom who have difficulty with the *Read It Again-PreK!* phonological awareness objectives. Choose a rhyming book from your classroom library. As you read the book, ask the students to help you identify rhyming words. Do this by saying “Juan, tell me a word that rhymes with the word \_\_\_\_\_ on this page of the book.” First, deliver the activity without providing the high-support strategy of co-participation. Describe how children perform:

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Now, deliver the same activity but use co-participation. Does the children’s performance on the rhyming task change? If so, how much and why? If not, why do you think their performance did not change?

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## Resources

Bridwell, N. (2002). *Clifford goes to dog school*. New York, NY: Scholastic, Inc.

Ehlert, L. (1991). *Red leaf, yellow leaf*. New York, NY: Scholastic, Inc.

Ezell, H.K., & Justice, L.M. (2005). *Shared storybook reading: Building young children’s language & emergent literacy skills*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

O’Connor, R.E., Notari-Syverson, A., & Vadasy, P.F. (2005). *Ladders to literacy*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

O’Neill, A., & Huliska-Beith, L. (2002). *The recess queen*. New York, NY: Scholastic, Inc.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

