

L2) Steiner's Holism in Literacy, Literature and Language Education. By Dr Robert Rose

As with all aspects of Steiner / Waldorf education, language, literature and literacy education are dependent on the principles of child development. It will be seen below, that Steiner recommended particular aspects of language corresponding to the “mode of consciousness” that the child is in at any given time. The reason for this lies in the distinct elements of language having supportive roles in the development of this changing consciousness.

As a starting point for the study of this part of the module it would be good to read: Avison, K & Rawson, M (eds) (2014): *The Educational Tasks and Content of the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum*, Floris Books, chapter 13, which deals specifically with English Language and Literature.

As will be seen, this lecture focuses on the underlying **philosophy** of literature / language education in Steiner settings. This can be interpreted as a set of different types of “Wholes to Parts” relationships which, for Steiner, are at the very core of all types of learning.

A Teacher's Knowledge of Language

Steiner was of the conviction that a teacher's knowledge of the inner nature of language is crucial to the teaching of it. After having spoken about this he said:

“I said these things to you because as teachers and educators you must be permeated by them. It will be up to you to use them in teaching language and speech. We shall speak tomorrow about how we can permeate them with consciousness to awaken in the children the sense for a consciousness of personality”. Steiner, R (1919): Practical Advice to Teachers, Anthroposophic Press, p. 61.

For Steiner, the central task of language education is the raising of consciousness:

“What do we do when we raise unconscious speech to the grammatical realm, to the knowledge of grammar? We make a transition with our students: We lift speech from the unconscious into the conscious realm. Our purpose is not to teach them grammar in a pedantic way but to raise something to consciousness that otherwise takes place unconsciously”. Steiner, R (1919): Practical Advice to Teachers, Anthroposophic Press, p. 55.

He goes on to describe how the teacher's knowledge of the language needs to be related to the inner nature of the types of words:

“Grammar tells us, for instance, that there are nouns. **Nouns** are names for objects, for objects that in a sense are self-contained in space. It is not without significance for us that we find such objects in life. All things that can be expressed by nouns awaken us to the consciousness of our independence as human beings. By learning to name things with nouns, we distinguish ourselves from the world around us. By calling a thing a table or a chair, we separate ourselves from the table or chair; we are here, and the table or chair is there. It is quite another matter to describe things using **adjectives**. When I say, “The chair is blue,” I am expressing a quality that unites me with the chair. The characteristic that I perceive unites me with the chair. By naming an object with a noun, I dissociate myself from it; when I describe it with an adjective I become one with it again. The development of our consciousness takes place in our relationship to things when we address them; we must certainly become conscious of the way we address them. If I say a **verb** - for example, “A woman writes”—I not only unite with the being in relation to whom I used the verb, I also do with her what she is doing with her physical body. I do what *she does*—my *I-being* does *what she* does. When I speak a verb, my I joins in with what the physical body of the other is doing. I unite my I with the physical body of the other when I use a verb. Our listening, especially with verbs, is in reality always a form of participation. What is at this time the most spiritual part of the human being participates; it simply suppresses the activity.” Steiner, R (1919): Practical Advice to Teachers, Anthroposophic Press, p. 55/6.

We may represent this as follows:

Nouns	Through these, human beings distinguish and separate themselves from other beings.
Adjectives	Through these, in perception the human being joins with other beings.
Verbs	Through these, the human being participates in the activity of the other being.

From this he goes on to emphasises the significance of good listening and speaking in the formation of **Self** and a **healthy social life**. Re-read now chapter 4 from: Steiner, R (1919): Practical Advice to Teachers, Anthroposophic Press.

The Language – Literature – Literacy Relationship

In the context of Steiner Education, Language, Literature and Literacy are never truly separated. In fact it may be fair to say that language and literacy are learned through good literature. So what is good literature? For Steiner, this depends on the age phase a child is in. When it comes to the early years and first sub-phase of the lower school, Steiner was of the view that stories offered in the context of teaching were best done out of the teacher's own creativity:

“After the change of teeth... those whose task is to teach children of this age need an artistic ability that will imbue everything they bring with life... Teachers must let plants speak, and they must let animals act as **moral** beings. Teachers must be able to turn the **whole world** into fairy tales, fables, and legends... Of course, sometimes you have to make do with inferior arrangements, but this method is far from ideal. Ideally, teachers would prepare themselves so well for this task—which does require thorough preparation—that a conversation between plants, or a fairy tale about a lily and a rose, comes to children as the **teacher's own creation**... If, on the other hand, you are creative in your work as a teacher, your material will radiate with growing forces, it will be fresh and alive, and this is what feeds the souls of children. Until the end of the ninth year, **everything children learn** about plants, animals, and stones, about the sun, moon, and stars, or about clouds, mountains, and rivers should be clothed in pictures, because children will feel at one with the world. In those young days, a child and the world are one whole”. Steiner, R (1922): Soul Economy, Anthroposophic Press, p. 161-63. (My Bold)

This idea that the teacher should ideally create their own stories is valid not only in the context of literature, but also in relationship to nature studies. We will return to this aspect in the next module.

It is quite clear from the above, that Steiner's preferred that pure literature should have its source in the teacher's creative imagination. In terms of pure literature studies as such, there is an emphasis more on the fictional rather than the factual. For this context, embedding the factual within a story is not so important as in Nature studies for this age range. Here the pure imagination can take priority over the factual, but bearing in mind that the inclusion of a **moral** to the story is a constant.

Steiner's recommendations for existing written literature are a little more complicated for the 10th year onwards as his suggestions were derived from German literature. So when it comes to an actual literature base in English, it is important that it mirrors the requirement of the age phase concerned. We will consider this later.

In the lower school, as we have seen from module 3, the young person's development is essentially concerned the emergence of the imagination, couple together with the feeling life. The primary task of the story or literature is to fire this capacity for imagination. This needs to be done in accordance with the way the imaginative capacity changes across the three sub-phases.

But there are other dimensions to this. As mentioned previously, Steiner was of the view that stories, and literature education generally, should have a moral connected with them. There are two aspects to this:

- 1) Ethical elements embedded within the literature;**
- 2) Learning about the human condition and the human psyche.**

This concept affects the teacher's choice of a story or how they create one.

As we will see, it is from out of the rich milieu of a story or literature with morals, or with a moral about the human condition, that the more formal aspects of English are taught. Another way to interpret this is that the literature is the context within which grammar and other elements of language are taught. The teacher's task then is, in part, concerned with the teaching of grammatical rules from out of, or through, the context of stories and literature. One could say here then that: **Good Literature is the Whole from out of which the Parts of Language are derived.** The teacher will then need to be able to:


- 1) Create stories on this basis of these principles and / or
- 2) Identify and use literature which exemplifies these principles.

Language Education in the Early Years and Kindergarten

In terms of Waldorf Kindergartens, the below is a re-formulation of what we have seen in Module 3 on Child Development. As was shown there, education is not done formally in Steiner Kindergartens, but there is nevertheless a great deal of learning happening through the process of **Imitation** and much is required of teachers and carers in respect of a child's acquisition of language:

“Just as speaking comes from walking and gestures, thinking develops from speaking. We need to give **love** when helping children learn to walk, and likewise we must be **truthful** when they are learning to speak, because they inwardly imitate their surroundings. Also as children are completely beings of sensory perception and physically re-create spirit, we need to emphasize **clarity in our thinking**, so they will develop proper thinking from speaking.” Steiner, R (1923): A Modern Art of Education, Rudolf Steiner Press, p. 112.

As can be seen, speaking, as an aspect of language and literacy, is dependent on two streams. Firstly, speaking is connected to a previous sub-phase of “walking and gestures” or movement generally; it also connects on to the next sub-phase, namely “thinking”.



The second stream of influence, is that of the “psychological” states of the teachers, parents and carers: **love, truth and clarity of thought**. These are two further aspects of Steiner’s Holistic Education. In the first stream, the connection of language education is formed in terms of the holistic process during child development, i.e. a prior stage and the next stage; for the second stream, a deep link is made to the inner state of the adults around the child.

More details of language education are found in the following slide. As can be seen, much of language education depends, for Steiner, on the previous development of movement, gesture and walking. The structure and meaning of sentences, the melody of speech as well as the modulation of speech are dependent on the corresponding elements of movement learning:

Sub-Phases 1 & 2 (0-4 ^{2/3} years): From Movement to Speech Development

**Learning to Move
and Walk leads
to:**



**Learning to
Speak**

**Firm and even
Steps leads
to:**



**Structure and
meaning of
sentences**

**Harmonious arm
movements leads
to:**



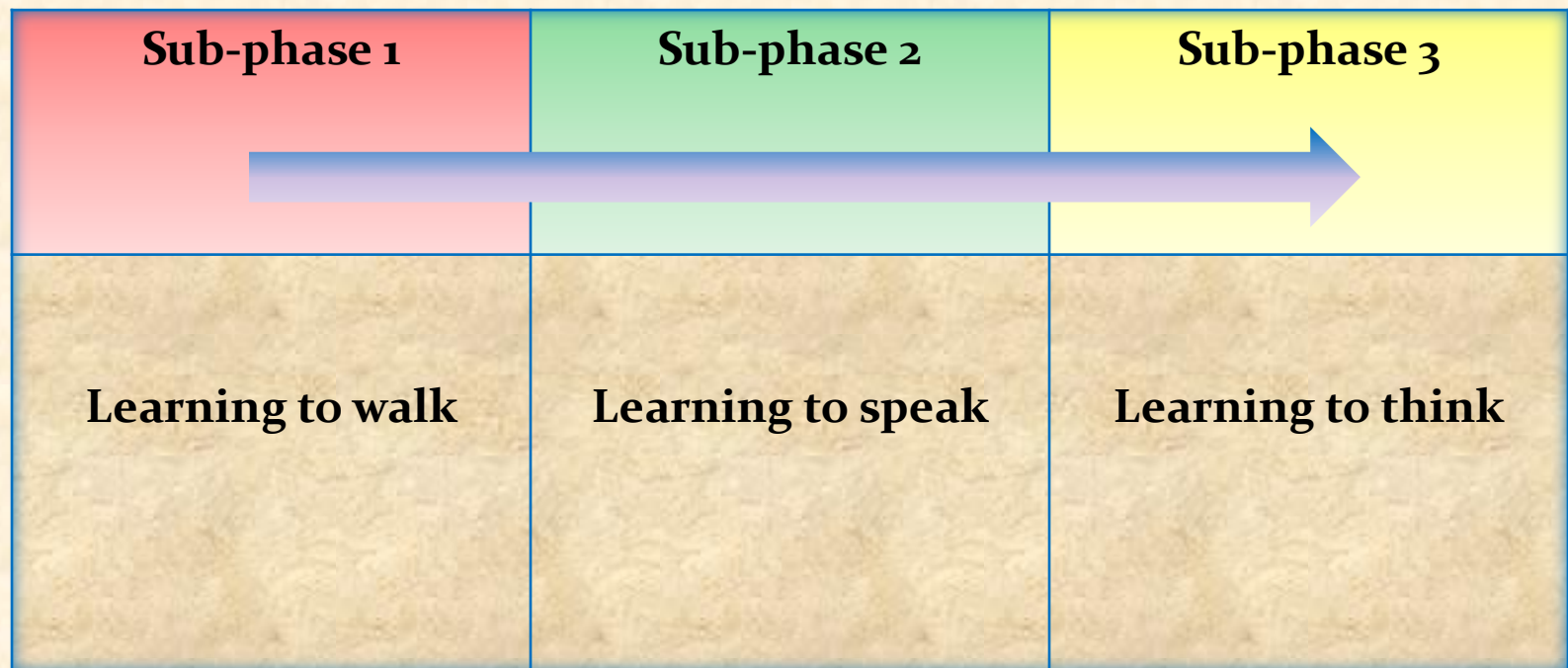
**Melodious
Speech**

**Sensitive
Fingertips leads
to:**



**Modulation of
Speech**

For Steiner, then, speech, or language learning generally is a precondition for the development of thinking. As we have seen this in turn, depends of movement / walking. Getting the right sequence of child development is then crucial for the further phases of development to come:



Hearing and Speaking

The role of hearing and speaking plays a vital function in language education as the Children learn to speak from what they hear in their environment. So it is important that teachers and parents speak to them in a way that is appropriate to their development. The imitative process here is in consideration of the child's near future and that the teacher and parents should speak to this future. This also lays the foundations for future literacy:

“Always speak to the child some years ahead - do not the men of genius speak to us centuries ahead in books? Talk to the one-year-old as if he were two, to the two-year-old as if he were six, for the difference in development diminishes in inverse ratio with the age.” Steiner, R (1909): The Education of the Child in the Light of Anthroposophy.

The **tone** of voice (not just the level of **content**) used by the teacher / parent is also crucial to Steiner in addition to the development of linguistic skills as this tone works deeply into the organism of the developing child:

“This means that if, for instance, a child hears an angry or passionate voice, if it is surrounded by loud and ill-tempered shouting, it will absorb something the animal keeps out. The animal lets itself be shaped only by the larynx and its neighboring organs, but members of the human species allow vehement or passionate voices to enter their inner being. These sounds flow into the human form, right into the structure of the most delicate tissues. If children hear only gentle speech in their surroundings, this too flows right into the structure of their finest tissues. It flows into their very formation, and especially so into the more refined parts of their organization.” Steiner, R (1996): *The Child’s Changing Consciousness*, Anthroposophic Press, p. 31/2.

The Literacy Power of the Story

Much of what we have seen previously concerning language development, also plays into the story time in the Kindergarten. As shown, the basic form of a morning in this context is:

- 1) Creative play / activity**
- 2) Tidy up and circle time**
- 3) Wash and Snack**
- 4) Outdoor play**
- 5) Story time**

(Source: Lynn Oldfield: “Free to Learn”)

In the story time, the children acquire an experience of literature and literacy in an informal way. But within this the teacher makes sure that there lies in the delivery all the qualities described earlier in this lecture: love, truth and clarity of thought, calmness of tone, etc.

General Principles of Literacy, Language & Literature Education in the Lower School

In the Lower School, education becomes more formal but again the approach is a holistic one in which the learning process is aimed at engaging the whole human being and not just the intellect:

“In the previous lectures, I showed that when children reach the usual age for school (at the transitional change of teeth), all teaching should be given **artistically in the form of images**. Today, I will take those ideas further and show how this method appeals directly to a child’s **heart and feelings** and how everything develops from this. A few examples will show how writing can arise from the artistic element of painting and drawing. I have already said that, if education is to be in **harmony with natural human development**, **children must be taught to write before they learn to read**. This is because one’s **whole being is more active** in writing than it is when reading. Writing involves the movement of only one member of the body, but the forces of one’s whole being become involved in this movement. When reading, only the head and the intellect are engaged, and in a truly organic form of education, everything must be developed from the qualities and forces of a child’s **whole nature**.” Steiner, R (1923): A Modern Art of Education, Anthroposophic Press, p. 121. (My bold)

There are a number of different aspects to this which we will consider in the next slides.

One could describe the first form of language education in Steiner / Waldorf Schools as the **Pictographic Method** which has particular relevance for consonants:

“For example: Let us take the word *Mund*—(*mouth*). *Get the children to draw a mouth, or rather paint it. Let them put on dabs of red colour and then tell them to pronounce the word; you can say to them: don't pronounce the whole word at first, but begin only with the sound “M”. And now you can form the letter M out of the upper lip (see drawing). If you follow this process you can get the letter M out of the mouth that the children first painted.*” :



For Steiner, however, the approach for vowels is different from that of consonants and require what we might call “**Emotographic Method**”:

“Consequently, you find that we must view vowels as nuances of feeling, whereas we find that consonants, f, b, m, and so on, are imitations of external things. Hence, I was correct yesterday when I showed you how f is related to a fish, since I imitated the shape of the fish. It is always possible to trace **consonants back to an imitation of external objects**, whereas vowels are very elementary **expressions of feeling nuances in people toward things**. Therefore, we can view speech as a confrontation between aversion and affinity. Affinities are always present in vowels, and aversions are always present in consonants.” Steiner, R (2000): Practical Advice for Teachers, Anthroposophic Press, p. 22. (My bold)


The letters for vowels then were to be modelled on gestures derived from feelings such as wonder and awe:

“It is not so easy for the vowels. But perhaps for the vowels the following is possible. Suppose you say to the children: “Look at the beautiful sun! You must really admire it; stand like this so that you can look up and admire the glorious sun.” The children can stand, look up, and then express their wonder thus: Ah! Then you paint this gesture and you actually have the Hebrew A, *the sound “Ah,” the sound of wonder. Now you need only to make it smaller and gradually turn it into the letter A. (see drawing below)...*



Eurythmy will be a very great help to you because the sounds are already formed in the eurythmy gestures and movements. Think for instance of an O. *You embrace something lovingly. Out of this you can obtain the O (see drawing below). You can really get the vowels from the gesture, the movement.*” Steiner, R (1924): The Kingdom of Childhood, Anthroposophic Press, p. 25/26







Summarising, Steiner states:

“Thus you must work out of **observation** and **imagination**, and the children will then come to know the sounds and the letters from the things themselves. You must start from the picture. The letter, as we know it today in its finished form, has a history behind it. It is something that has been simplified from a picture, but the kind of magical signs of the printed letters of the present day no longer tell us what the pictures were like.” Steiner, R (1924): The Kingdom of Childhood, Anthroposophic Press, p. 27

We might depict this in the following way:

Consonants	Vowels
<p data-bbox="208 458 853 508">Imitation of external objects</p> <p data-bbox="421 629 641 679">Objective</p>  <p data-bbox="394 972 668 1022">Pictographs</p>	<p data-bbox="1023 458 1779 565">Expressions of feeling nuances in people toward things</p> <p data-bbox="1282 629 1518 679">Subjective</p>  <p data-bbox="1246 972 1555 1022">Emotographs</p>

Steiner intended that the learning of literacy engage the whole human being in accord with the phase of development a child was in. So, for instance, from the 7th to the early 10th year, he envisaged as a predominantly “artistic” phase which at the same time engaged the forces of will through whole-body experience:

“When children enter class one, we are expected to teach them writing as soon as possible, and we might be tempted to introduce the letters of the alphabet as they are used today. But children at this age—right at the onset of the change of teeth— do not have the slightest inner connection with the forms of these letters... Therefore, when introducing writing, we must refrain from immediately teaching today’s abstract letters. Especially at this time of changing teeth, we must offer children a **human** and **artistic bridge** to whatever we teach. This implies that we have children connect what they have **seen with their eyes** and the results of their **will activity** on paper, which we call writing. Experiencing life actively through their own **will** is a primary need for children at this stage. We must give them an opportunity to express this innate **artistic** drive by, for example, allowing them to physically run in a curve on the floor. Now, when we show them that they have made a curve with their legs on the floor, we lift their will activity into a partially conscious feeling. Next we ask them to draw this curve in the air, using their arms and hands. Now another form could be run on the floor, again to be written in the air... Thus the form that was made by the entire body by running was then reproduced through the hand. This could be followed by the teacher asking the children to pronounce words beginning with the letter *L*. Gradually, under the teacher’s guidance, the children discover the link between the shape that was run and drawn and the sound of the letter *L*. Steiner, R (2003): *Soul Economy*, Anthroposophic Press, p. 142. (My bold).

As can be seen, the prior stage to this requires that the artistic activity connects onto something the children have “seen with their eyes”. More generally, “World Experience” is the background to this and the teachers need to link onto it. Clearly then, Steiner wanted the children to acquire literacy not directly through immediate immersion in reading, but that the artistic activity, including the will, should **precede** reading:

“The only safe way of introducing writing to young children is the one just advocated, because at that age all learning must proceed from the realm of the **will**, and the inclination of children toward the world of **rhythm** and **measure** arises from the will. We must satisfy this inner urge of children by allowing them controlled will activities, not by appealing to their sense of observation and the ability to make mental images. Consequently, it would be inappropriate to teach reading before the children have been introduced to writing, for reading represents a transition from will activity to abstract observation. **The first step is to introduce writing artistically and imaginatively and then to let children read what they have written**”. Steiner, R (2003): Soul Economy, Anthroposophic Press, p. 148. (My emphasis)

Other examples from Steiner:



From Fish to F

From Bear to B

From Mouth to M

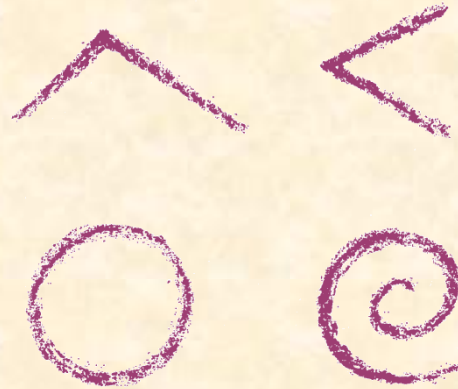
Form Drawing and Artistic Pre-writing

As a part of this artistic precursor to writing Steiner recommended the use of something that has come to be called “Form Drawing” (see Margaret Frohlich (1974): *A Practical Guide to Form Drawing*, Rudolf Steiner School, New York):

“Parallel to such telling and retelling, we introduce the children to a certain visual language of forms [Form Drawing]. We have them draw simple round and angular shapes simply for the sake of the forms. As already mentioned, we do not do this for the sake of imitating some external object, but simply for the sake of the forms themselves. Also, we do not hesitate to link this drawing to simple painting, placing the colours next to each other so that the children get a feeling for what it means to place red next to green, next to yellow, and so on. On the basis of what we achieve through this, we will be able to introduce the children to writing in the way that we have already considered from the perspective of educational theory.” Steiner, R (1919): *Discussions with Teachers*, Anthroposophic Press, p. 183.

It is through Form Drawing that the children engage in the artistic/feeling activity coupled with the will element that the foundations for writing and later reading can be laid.

Steiner gave the following examples:



From Steiner, R (1919): Practical Advice to teachers, Anthroposophic Press, p. 10.

Phonics and the Whole Word Method

Steiner argued against a one-sided view of teaching literacy. He made the case that the different approaches were complementary perspectives on the whole question of how children may learn to read. For him, the phonic and the whole word methods, together with others may be helpful if **preceded by the artistic approach** he recommended:


“It is easy to fall in love with one’s own particular perspective because it appears to be so convincing. And so one might, with good reasons, defend the spelling method, the phonetic method, or the whole-word method to the extent that anyone else with an opposite opinion could not refute one’s arguments. Yet even the best of reasons may prove to be only one-sided. In real life, everything has to be considered from the most varied angles... If the letter forms have been gained through *painting drawings* and drawing paintings, and **if one has gone on** to a kind of *phonetic* or *whole-word* method-which is now appropriate because it leads the child to an appreciation of a **wholeness**, and prevents it from becoming too fixed in details - if all this has been done, there is still something else that has been overlooked in our materialistic climate. It is this: the **single sound**, by itself, the separate *M* or *P*, this also represents a reality. And it is important to see that, when a sound is part of a word, it has already entered the external world, already passed into the material and physical world. What we have in our soul are the sounds as such, and these depend largely on our soul nature.” Steiner, (1923): *The Child’s Changing Consciousness*, Anthroposophic Press, p. 79/80. (My emphasis)

Analysis and Synthesis in Language Education

As we have seen many times so far, Steiner's approach to literacy can be considered to be a rich type of holistic education. At this point we want to now present the process as a whole:

“Thus we work with human nature as it is when, instead of beginning with letters and synthesizing them into words, we begin with whole words and analyze them into letters.... If we were to develop in children those analytical activities that begin with **“unified word pictures”** and then analyze them into letters, the child would be able to activate its capacity to analyze at the age when it first wants to do so”. Steiner, R (1920/2001): *The Renewal of Education*, p. , p. 170. (My emphasis).

The starting point then is this **“unified-word-picture”** including an artistic creation from a real life object that the children have experienced. From this, a form is derived either as a pictograph or an emotograph depending on if it is a consonant or a vowel that is aimed at.



At some point in the process, when the children have acquired sufficient abilities, whole sentences are written and then analysed into their component parts:

“For this reason in the Waldorf School we always teach beginning not with letters, but with **complete sentences**. We analyze the sentence into words and the words into letters and then the letters into vowels. In this way we come to a proper inner understanding as the child grasps the meaning of what a sentence or word is. We awaken the child’s consciousness by analyzing sentences and words...” Steiner, R(1920/2001): *The Renewal of Education*, p. 171. (My emphasis)

We can then represent the whole process in the following way:

Wholes

Unified-Word-Picture

Sentences

Words

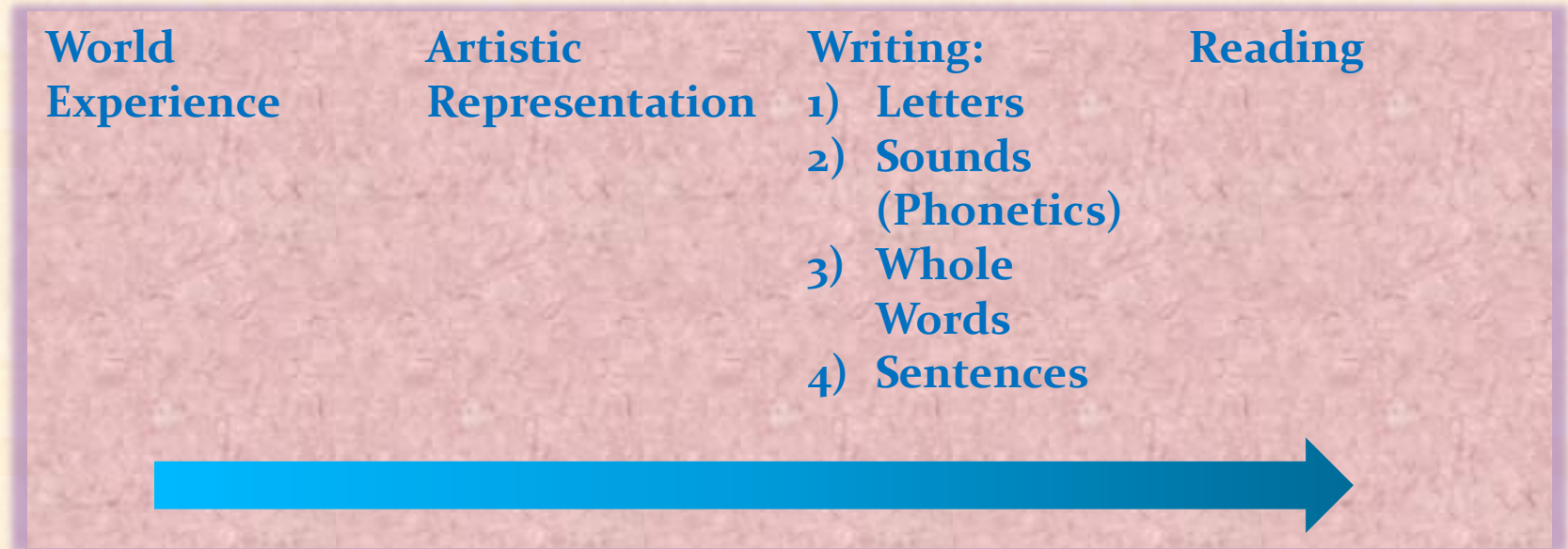
Vowels & Consonants

Parts

Analysis

Synthesis

Putting these ideas together to show the process of literacy development:



As can be seen there is a very distinctive direction to the process. Rather than just teaching children to read, Steiner recommends that literacy teaching begins with making a connection to their World Experience, i.e. the child's real life perceptions of the World. Then artistic representations are created from which letters and phonemes are derived and written. In time, after learning to write sentences, the children will learn to read.

Language Across the three Sub-Phases of the Lower School

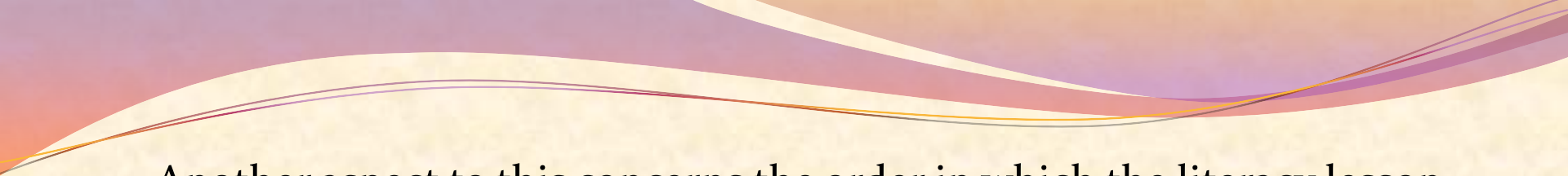
As will be seen in the following, Steiner's approach to language education followed a path from wholes to parts also across the three sub-phases of the lower school. Beginning with whole language learning the process moves on to grammar and then syntax in the following two sub-phases. If you want to learn more about grammar and syntax, read the two short Encyclopaedia Britannica articles attached.

Sub-Phase 1 (7th to 10th year)

As we have seen, in terms of the general learning procedure in early literacy of sub-phase 1 of the second phase of child development Steiner argued:

“We can say that the first stage of schooling lasts until the ninth year. What do we do during that period of time? Our starting point will be the artistic realm. We shall work musically and in painting and drawing with the children in the way we have discussed. We shall allow **writing to proceed gradually out of painting and drawing**. Step by step the **forms of writing** will arise out of the **forms of our drawings**, and then we shall move on to **reading**.” Steiner, R (1919/2000): Practical Advice to Teachers, Anthroposophic Press, p. 130. (My bold).

One can perceive in this a naturalistic process from a child's world experience through to the abilities to write and read with a general command of language as a whole. The aim is then to proceed from this to the individual parts of language as in phonetics, grammar and syntax.



Another aspect to this concerns the order in which the literacy lesson should take:

“Then the children can be brought gradually to the point of writing down the stories we tell them. After they have had some practice in writing down what they hear, we can also have them write short descriptions of what we’ve told them about the animals, plants, meadows, and woods in the surroundings.” Steiner, R (1919): Discussions with Teachers, p. 185/6.

Clearly, for Steiner the story needs to be told first, and this is then followed by writing. At the beginning of class 1, this may be as simple as writing a letter derived from a story and picture. As this progresses, the teacher may write whole sentences derived from the story that has been told. In class 2, this may be developed to the point where the children may be able to write directly down what they can remember from the story without it being written on the board. The process so far then looks like:

1) World Experience

2) Telling Story – Creating Picture

3) Writing

4) Reading



Sub-Phase 2 (10th to 12th year)

In the second sub-phase, Steiner recommends the shift from whole language learning to a specific part, namely grammar:

“During the tenth year, at the turning point of life mentioned several times, a new situation calls for an introduction to the first fundamentals of **grammar**. These should be taught without any pedantry whatever. It is necessary to take this new step for the benefit of the children’s healthy development, because at this age they must make a transition from a predominantly **feeling approach toward life** to one in which they must develop their **I-consciousness**. Whatever young people do now must be done more consciously than before. Consequently, we introduce a more conscious and intellectual element into the language that students have already learned to speak, write, and read. But when doing this, we must avoid pedantic grammar exercises. Rather, we should give them stimulating practice in recognizing and applying fundamental rules. At this stage, children really need the logical support that grammar can give, so that they do not have to puzzle repeatedly over how to express themselves correctly”. Steiner, R (2003): Soul Economy, Anthroposophic Press, p. 203. (My emphasis)

For Steiner, language learning is not just about the language itself but also the development of the child's consciousness. In this case, the practice of grammar is thought to help the development of the I-Consciousness from out of a Feeling centred consciousness.

“As mentioned, before the age of nine, children have an entirely **feeling relationship** to language. Yet, unless we also introduce the thinking element in language, their self-awareness cannot develop properly, and this is why it is so important to bring them the intellectual aspect of language. This can be done by judiciously teaching grammatical rules, first in the mother tongue and then in foreign languages, whereby the rules are introduced only after children have begun to speak the language. So, according to these indications, teachers should arouse a feeling in students around the age of **nine or ten** that they are beginning to penetrate the language more consciously. This is how a proper **grammatical sense** could be cultivated in children.” Steiner, R (2003): Soul Economy, Anthroposophic Press, p. 205. (My emphasis)


The other side to language education however is that it should not be just about an intellectual understanding, but should also be directed towards the feeling life, such as an experience of the beauty of language:

“By the time children reach the age of twelve, they should have developed a feeling for the beauty of language—an **aesthetic sense of the language**. This should stimulate “beauty in speaking” in them, but without ever falling into mannerisms. After this, until the time of puberty, students should learn to appreciate the dialectical aspect of language; they should develop a faculty for convincing others through **command of language**. This third element of language should be introduced only when they are approaching graduation age.” Steiner, R (2003): Soul Economy, Anthroposophic Press, p. 205/6. (My emphasis)

Sub Phase 3 (12th to 14th year)

It is in the third sub-phase that syntax is taught in the lower school. This is at the onset of a more conceptual approach as outlined in module 3 in which this age of child development involves the first powers of thought but still imaginatively:

“At the **third stage**, leading up to around **fourteen**, we start to teach **syntax**; children are really ready to study syntax only at about twelve years of age. Before that age, we treat in an instinctive way what can lead the children to the forming of sentences.” Steiner, R (1919/2000): Practical Advice to Teachers, Anthroposophic Press, p. 133. (My emphasis and amendment)



In this third sub-phase, there is also the education of what Steiner calls the “dialectical aspect” of language i.e.. the use of language in debating and arguing in the search for the truth.

“After this [the 2nd sub-phase], until the time of puberty, students should learn to appreciate the dialectical aspect of language; they should develop a faculty for convincing others through **command of language**. This third element of language should be introduced only when they are approaching graduation age.” Steiner, R (2003): Soul Economy, Anthroposophic Press, p. 205/6. (My emphasis)

Summarising the Three Stages of Language Education:

Steiner then brings this together to form a picture of the three stages of language education in the lower school:

“To briefly summarize the aims of language teaching, children should first develop, step by step, a feeling for the **correct use of language**, then a **sense of the beauty of language**, and finally the power inherent in **linguistic command**. It is far more important for teachers to find their way into an approach to language teaching than to merely follow a fixed curriculum. In this way, teachers quickly discover how to introduce and deal with what is needed for the various ages. After a mostly artistic approach, in which students up to age nine are involved very actively, teachers should begin to dwell more on the descriptive element in language, but without neglecting the creative aspect.” Steiner, R (2003): Soul Economy, Anthroposophic Press, p. 206. (My emphasis).

This can be depicted as:

Sub-Phase 1	Sub-Phase 2	Sub-Phase 3
Correct use of language.	Beauty of language and grammar.	Linguistic command of Language

Summary of Indications for English Language and Literature Curriculum Content

(Derived from “Discussions with Teachers”)

Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	Class 5	Class 6	Class 7	Class 8
Telling and Re-telling stories.	Writing down heard stories.	Continuation of lessons from previous classes.	Continuation of lessons from previous classes.	Review and expand on class 4.	Review and expand on class 5.	Review and expand on class 6.	Review and expand on class 7.
Correct Listening and Speaking.	Writing descriptions of the natural world.	Develop feeling for length of sounds in speech	Composition of letters.	Active and passive verbs.	Develop awareness of subjunctive mode.	Develop linguistic expressions for emotions.	Develop awareness of longer pieces of prose and poetry.
Singing and music leading to auditory understanding.	The role of noun, verb and adjective in the construction of sentences.	articulation and for the structure and meaning of language.	Awareness of tenses, past, present and future.	Reproduce accurately what they have heard.	Composing simple business letters.	Cultivate sense for the flexibility of language.	Reading dramas and epics.
Form Drawing.		Types of words.	Use of prepositions.	The use of quotation marks.		Develop awareness of language in business as a further development of the use of language in the descriptions of Nature.	Introduction to Latin and Greek.
Introduction to the alphabet.	Poetry and the role of rhyme and meter.	Punctuation.		Writing assignments & clarity of who said what and when.			Continue development of foreign languages.
Writing from the spoken word.				Development of punctuation.			Drama.
Reading from writing.							

Further Study

It would be good to read now what Steiner's suggestions were for the different classes 1 to 8. These are drawn from "Steiner, R (1919): "Discussions with Teachers", September 6, p. 183-205, pdf version (See attachment).

For more details about the content of the English Literature and Language curriculum read:

Avison, K & Rawson, M (eds) (2014): *The Educational Tasks and Content of the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum*, Floris Books, chapter 13.

Exercise 1

As an exercise, imagine you are a new class 1 teacher about to teach your first lesson. You decide to start introducing the alphabet through a story. Let us say that you have decided to begin with the letter “A”. Think of something in the World whose name begins with “A”, consider its shape and see how you might transform that shape into an “A”. How would you draw this transformation and present it to the children say in the form of a self-made story? You may like to have a look at a book called “A - Apple Pie” which introduces all the alphabet from the example of an apple pie. Think about other activities you may do with the children in relation to the alphabet as described earlier in this lecture. Try this both as printed and cursive script.

Remember to use the principles introduced in this module (see also end slide).

Moreover, you don't want to spend a whole year doing the alphabet, so have a look at the next example of how to teach the whole set of letters in an economic way.

Exercise 2: The cunning fox and the lazy dog

As a further practical exercise, you might like to create a literacy lesson derived from a story of your own making and using the principles introduced in the power point here. Take the beginning as: “Once there was a cunning fox who was quick in mind as well as limb...” (Exercise: finish the story)



Within this story, include the sentence: “The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog”. This could be done as a song or a poem. As you may know, this sentence includes all the letters of the alphabet. Use the ideas presented in this module to process this. Remember also to use the relevant ideas outlined in lecture 1 of this module concerned with the form of a lesson (see end slide).

Further Exercises

- 1) Think of a person who you consider admirable and write a descriptive biography of them (for sub-phase 2). You might choose someone like Helen Keller, Mary Wollstonecraft, Nelson Mandela or Ghandi. Consider and design a curriculum to help pupils discuss the moral implicit in these and learn grammar from out of such a biography.
- 2) Identify a literature piece which either has been, or could be, used to exemplify, the subjunctive mood (for sub-phase 3). Think about how you would explore this, as well as other conditionals, with the pupils. What do these express in the literature as well as in human life? What kind of imaginative activity does this engage the pupils in? You might consider a scene from Romeo and Juliet: write a short part in which you would use conditionals to describe what might have happened if Benvolio had received the letter from Friar Lawrence. What conditional would have been necessary for him to have received the letter? (It may help for the sake of this exercise if you use a modern rendition of the story).

Main Lesson Form (8.30 to 10.30)	Focal Human Faculty appealed to:
<p>Part 1: Poem or a Song preview. Teaching Activity: Cognitive, Artistic, Practical. Such as: 1) Telling a Story, 2) Creating an Image of the Story; coloured blackboard drawing / painting, 3) Writing on the basis of the story. (See “Discussions with Teachers” notes for this process)</p>	<p>Whole Human Being: Head, Rhythmic, Metabolic / Limb Systems: - Perception, Memory / Feeling, Thinking, Will</p>
<p>Part 2: Recall – Feeling Activity</p>	<p>Rhythmic System: - Memory with Feeling, but also with thinking.</p>
<p>Part 3: Contemplative Activity (age phase appropriate type)</p>	<p>Head System: Cognition - Thinking</p>