Learning Written Language Systems

Virtually every child learns oral language. It emerges naturally from interactions in the home. However, written language must be learned, and this is what literacy education is all about. This section focuses on the challenges of learning how written language works. We first focus on early reading behaviors—those essential understandings that young children must develop in order to understand how print works—for example, matching one spoken word to one written word or moving left to right across print. We then describe the important role of phonics as an instructional tool in helping readers. Chapter 12 focuses on how we can help readers learn words, particularly high-frequency words, and how those readers can use their known words as resources.
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