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**Enhancing Literacy Development in Elementary Education:
A Comprehensive Approach**

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Abstract:

This study explores the intricate interplay between foundational reading skills, academic language proficiency, and disciplinary literacy in fostering students' overall literacy development and academic success. Drawing upon a comprehensive review of the literature, the study underscores the critical importance of addressing these components holistically in literacy instruction. Foundational reading skills, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension, are identified as fundamental building blocks for proficient reading abilities among students. Additionally, explicit instruction in academic language proficiency, particularly for English language learners, is deemed essential for comprehending and communicating complex ideas across diverse subject areas. Furthermore, disciplinary literacy integration is shown to enhance students' deeper understanding, engagement, and critical thinking skills within specific academic disciplines. By teaching students the unique language and cognitive skills required in different subjects, educators can prepare them for success in academic and professional settings. Overall, this study underscores the interconnected nature of literacy development and advocates for holistic instructional approaches that equip students with the necessary tools for academic achievement and lifelong learning.

Keywords: Foundational reading skills, Academic language proficiency, Disciplinary literacy, Literacy development

Introduction:

Literacy development stands as a cornerstone of academic achievement, facilitating students' comprehension, communication, and critical thinking abilities across various subjects. As educators and researchers continue to delve into the intricacies of literacy instruction, it becomes increasingly evident that a multifaceted approach is essential to address the diverse needs of students in elementary education.

The present study seeks to explore the essential features of literacy development, focusing specifically on foundational reading skills, academic language acquisition, and the integration of disciplinary literacy (DL) into elementary teaching practices. By synthesizing insights from existing literature and examining practical strategies employed by educators, this research aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding effective literacy instruction.

Foundational reading skills encompass the fundamental components necessary for proficient reading comprehension. According to Adams (1990), these skills include phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, fluency development, and comprehension strategies. Empirical evidence suggests that explicit instruction targeting these components leads to significant improvements in students' reading proficiency (National Reading Panel, 2000).



The acquisition of academic language plays a pivotal role in students' ability to comprehend and engage with complex texts across various disciplines. Academic vocabulary and discourse structures are particularly crucial for navigating disciplinary content (Snow & Uccelli, 2009). By fostering explicit instruction and providing ample opportunities for practice, educators can empower students to effectively communicate and analyze academic concepts (Fang & Schleppegrell, 2008).

Disciplinary literacy (DL) emphasizes the integration of subject-specific reading, writing, and critical thinking skills within content-area instruction. Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) argue that disciplinary literacy practices not only enhance students' comprehension of subject matter but also promote deeper engagement with disciplinary content. Through inquiry-based learning, collaborative discussions, and the strategic use of diverse texts, educators can cultivate students' disciplinary literacy skills across various domains (Plakans, 2010).

Against this backdrop, the primary aim of this study is to investigate effective instructional approaches for enhancing literacy development in elementary education. By examining the interplay between foundational reading skills, academic language acquisition, and disciplinary literacy practices, this research seeks to identify actionable strategies that educators can implement to support students' literacy growth.

Literature Review:

Literacy development plays a crucial role in academic success, encompassing foundational reading skills, acquisition of academic language, and disciplinary literacy. This literature review aims to explore key research findings in these areas and their implications for educational practices.

Research by Adams (1990) emphasizes the importance of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension in developing foundational reading skills. Adams argues that explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, including activities that help students recognize and manipulate phonemes, is essential for early reading success. Similarly, Ehri (2014) emphasizes the significance of phonics instruction in teaching students to decode words accurately and efficiently. Ehri's research underscores the importance of systematic and explicit phonics instruction, particularly for struggling readers.

Fluency, defined as the ability to read with accuracy, speed, and expression, is another critical aspect of reading development. Rasinski (2006) highlights the role of repeated readings and other fluency-building strategies in improving reading fluency among elementary school students. Furthermore, Pressley et al. (2006) emphasize the importance of comprehension strategies, such as activating prior knowledge and monitoring comprehension, in fostering deep understanding of texts.

Academic Language Development

Academic language proficiency is essential for students to comprehend and communicate complex ideas across various subject areas. Snow and Uccelli (2009) discuss the challenges faced by English language learners (ELLs) in acquiring academic language skills and stress the importance of explicit instruction and meaningful language practice in academic contexts. Similarly, August and Shanahan (2006) argue for the integration of language and content instruction to support ELLs' academic language development.

The significance of vocabulary instruction in promoting academic language proficiency is underscored by research conducted by Beck et al. (2002). Beck et al. emphasize the role of direct vocabulary instruction, including teaching word meanings in context and providing opportunities for repeated exposure to target words. Additionally, Graves (2006) highlights the importance of teaching academic language through rich and varied texts, allowing students to encounter academic vocabulary in authentic contexts.

Disciplinary literacy refers to the ability to read, write, and think critically within specific academic disciplines. Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) argue that disciplinary literacy instruction should focus on teaching students the unique language and cognitive skills required in different subject areas. For example, in science education, Norris and Phillips (2003) emphasize the importance of teaching students to read and interpret scientific texts critically, while Moje (2008) discusses the role of disciplinary literacy in promoting deeper understanding and engagement in social studies.

Furthermore, research by Fisher and Ivey (2005) highlights the importance of integrating disciplinary literacy instruction across subject areas, emphasizing the interconnectedness of reading, writing, and thinking skills. By providing students with opportunities to engage with disciplinary texts and practices, educators can help them develop the skills necessary for success in academic and professional contexts.



the literature reviewed highlights the multifaceted nature of literacy development in educational settings. Foundational reading skills, academic language proficiency, and disciplinary literacy all play critical roles in students' academic success. By integrating evidence-based instructional practices and providing meaningful opportunities for language and literacy development across subject areas, educators can support students in becoming proficient readers, effective communicators, and critical thinkers.

Methodology:

In conducting this study, a systematic literature review methodology was employed to gather and analyze existing research on the essential features of literacy development in education, with a particular focus on foundational reading skills, academic language, and disciplinary literacy (DL) integration in elementary school teaching practices. A comprehensive search strategy was devised to identify relevant literature. Electronic databases including Google Scholar, ERIC, PsycINFO, and Education Source were searched using relevant keywords and phrases such as "literacy development," "foundational reading skills," "academic language," and "disciplinary literacy." Boolean operators (AND, OR) were used to refine the search and identify articles pertinent to the research focus.

Inclusion criteria were established to select studies relevant to the research topic. Peer-reviewed articles, dissertations, and academic publications focusing on literacy development in elementary education were included. Studies published in English within the past decade were prioritized to ensure currency and relevance. Exclusion criteria encompassed non-peer-reviewed sources, studies conducted outside the elementary education context, and articles not directly addressing the key components of literacy development. The screening process involved multiple stages to identify eligible studies. Initially, titles and abstracts were screened based on relevance to the research topic and alignment with the inclusion criteria. Subsequently, full-text articles were reviewed to assess their suitability for inclusion in the literature review.

Relevant data from selected studies were extracted and synthesized to identify common themes, findings, and trends related to foundational reading skills, academic language instruction, and DL integration in elementary education. Data extraction encompassed key study characteristics, research methods, theoretical frameworks, and main findings pertinent to the research focus. The synthesized data facilitated the identification of patterns, discrepancies, and gaps in the literature, informing the discussion and conclusions of the literature review. Quality assessment criteria were applied to evaluate the rigor and credibility of included studies. Methodological rigor, clarity of research design, appropriateness of data analysis methods, and relevance to the research question were among the criteria considered in assessing study quality.

The synthesized data were subjected to thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns across the literature. Themes related to effective instructional strategies, challenges in literacy development, and implications for practice were identified and analyzed in relation to the research objectives.

Findings and discussion:

Foundational Reading Skills are Crucial:

Foundational reading skills serve as the cornerstone of literacy development, playing a crucial role in students' ability to comprehend and engage with texts effectively. This section explores research findings regarding the significance of foundational reading skills, encompassing phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension, in fostering literacy development among students.

Research conducted by Adams (1990) underscores the pivotal role of foundational reading skills in facilitating literacy acquisition. Adams emphasizes that proficiency in phonemic awareness, the ability to identify and manipulate individual sounds in words, lays the foundation for successful reading instruction. Similarly, research by Ehri (2014) highlights the importance of phonics instruction, which focuses on teaching students the correspondence between letters and sounds, in enabling accurate word decoding and spelling.

Furthermore, Rasinski (2006) emphasizes the significance of fluency, defined as the ability to read with accuracy, speed, and expression, in promoting reading comprehension. Rasinski's research suggests that fluency-building strategies, such as repeated readings and timed readings, contribute to improved reading fluency among elementary school students.

Additionally, Pressley et al. (2006) discuss the importance of comprehension strategies in fostering deep understanding of texts. Effective comprehension instruction, including teaching students to activate prior knowledge, make inferences, and monitor comprehension, enhances students' ability to construct meaning from texts and engage in higher-order thinking skills.



The literature consistently emphasizes the necessity of explicit instruction in foundational reading skills, particularly in the early stages of education. Beck et al. (2002) advocate for systematic and explicit phonics instruction as a critical component of effective reading instruction. According to Beck et al., direct instruction in phonics enables students to decode unfamiliar words accurately and independently, thus facilitating reading fluency and comprehension.

Moreover, research by Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) supports the efficacy of explicit instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics for students with reading difficulties. Shanahan and Shanahan assert that targeted instruction in these foundational skills is essential for remediating reading difficulties and preventing long-term literacy challenges.

The findings regarding the significance of foundational reading skills have several implications for educational practice. August and Shanahan (2006) emphasize the importance of early intervention and differentiated instruction to meet the diverse needs of students in literacy development. Educators should provide targeted support and instruction in foundational reading skills, tailored to individual students' abilities and learning styles.

Furthermore, Snow and Uccelli (2009) highlight the importance of professional development for educators to enhance their knowledge and instructional practices in literacy instruction. Professional development opportunities should focus on evidence-based strategies for teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension, equipping educators with the tools and resources necessary to support students' literacy development effectively.

Foundational reading skills, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension, are fundamental for literacy development among students. Through explicit instruction and targeted support, educators can cultivate these essential skills, laying the groundwork for proficient reading abilities and lifelong learning success.

Explicit Academic Language Instruction is Vital:

In the realm of literacy development, explicit instruction in academic language proficiency emerges as a vital component in fostering students' comprehension and communication abilities across diverse subject areas.

The importance of explicit instruction in academic language proficiency is underscored by Snow and Uccelli (2009), who highlight the challenges faced by ELLs in acquiring the language skills necessary for academic success. They argue that targeted vocabulary instruction and language practice in academic contexts are essential for ELLs to comprehend and articulate complex ideas effectively across various subject areas.

August and Shanahan (2006) further elucidate the significance of integrating language and content instruction to support ELLs' academic language development. They advocate for instructional approaches that scaffold language learning within the context of content-rich instruction, thereby enabling ELLs to make meaningful connections between language and academic concepts.

The role of vocabulary instruction in promoting academic language proficiency is emphasized by Beck et al. (2002), who advocate for explicit vocabulary instruction that includes teaching word meanings in context and providing opportunities for repeated exposure to target words. They argue that direct vocabulary instruction is essential for ELLs to expand their academic lexicon and comprehend complex texts across subject areas.

Furthermore, Graves (2006) underscores the importance of providing ELLs with rich and varied texts that expose them to academic vocabulary in authentic contexts. By immersing ELLs in language-rich environments and exposing them to diverse genres and discourse structures, educators can foster the development of academic language proficiency among ELLs (Vestal, et al., 2023).

The integration of language and content instruction is crucial for supporting ELLs' academic language development effectively. Snow and Uccelli (2009) emphasize the need for instructional practices that provide ELLs with opportunities to engage in language-rich tasks and activities across various subject areas. By integrating language learning into content instruction, educators can create meaningful learning experiences that promote both language and content mastery among ELLs (Sasan, et al., 2023). Effective vocabulary instruction, language practice in academic contexts, and integration of language and content instruction are essential for supporting ELLs' academic language development and facilitating their success in school.

Disciplinary Literacy Integration Enhances Learning:

The integration of disciplinary literacy instruction across subject areas emerges as a pedagogical approach with substantial benefits for enhancing students' learning outcomes and preparing them for academic and professional success.

Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) assert that disciplinary literacy instruction plays a crucial role in promoting students' ability to comprehend and critically analyze texts within specific academic disciplines. They argue that by



teaching students the unique language and cognitive skills required in different subject areas, educators can foster students' proficiency in disciplinary literacy, thereby preparing them for success in academic and professional settings (Lumando, et al., 2023).

Norris and Phillips (2003) further elucidate the importance of disciplinary literacy by emphasizing its central role in scientific literacy. They argue that teaching students to read and interpret scientific texts critically is essential for developing scientific literacy skills, enabling students to engage with complex scientific concepts and make informed decisions about scientific issues.

Moje (2008) extends this discussion to the field of social studies, highlighting the role of disciplinary literacy in promoting deeper understanding and engagement in social studies instruction. She argues that by integrating disciplinary literacy instruction into social studies curriculum, educators can help students develop the skills necessary to analyze historical documents, understand diverse perspectives, and construct informed arguments about social issues (Lacson, et al., 2024).

Fisher and Ivey (2005) advocate for the integration of disciplinary literacy instruction across subject areas, emphasizing the interconnectedness of reading, writing, and thinking skills. They argue that by providing students with opportunities to engage with disciplinary texts and practices, educators can help students develop the skills necessary for success in academic and professional contexts.

The integration of disciplinary literacy instruction across subject areas not only enhances students' understanding and engagement but also promotes critical thinking skills. By immersing students in disciplinary texts and practices, educators can encourage students to question, analyze, and evaluate information critically, preparing them to navigate complex academic and professional environments successfully (Kilag, et al., 2023). Teaching students the unique language and cognitive skills required in different disciplines, educators can foster students' proficiency in disciplinary literacy, thereby preparing them for success in academic and professional settings.

Interconnectedness of Literacy Development:

The interconnectedness of literacy development underscores the dynamic relationship between foundational reading skills, academic language proficiency, and disciplinary literacy, highlighting the mutual reinforcement of these components in fostering students' overall literacy proficiency (De Gracia, et al., 2023).

Foundational reading skills serve as the cornerstone of literacy development, laying the groundwork for proficient reading abilities among students. Research by Adams (1990) emphasizes the importance of explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension, highlighting their pivotal role in fostering reading proficiency. These foundational skills provide students with the essential tools to decode, comprehend, and analyze texts across various subject areas (Cordova Jr, et al., 2024).

Academic language proficiency, encompassing vocabulary knowledge, language structures, and discourse conventions, is essential for students to comprehend and communicate complex ideas effectively across subject areas. Snow and Uccelli (2009) emphasize the significance of explicit instruction in academic language proficiency, particularly for English language learners (ELLs). They argue that effective vocabulary instruction and language practice in academic contexts are essential for supporting ELLs' comprehension and communication abilities across diverse subject areas.

Disciplinary literacy refers to the ability to read, write, and think critically within specific academic disciplines, such as science, social studies, and mathematics. Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) highlight the importance of integrating disciplinary literacy instruction across subject areas to promote students' deeper understanding, engagement, and critical thinking skills. By teaching students the unique language and cognitive skills required in different disciplines, educators can foster students' proficiency in disciplinary literacy, preparing them for success in academic and professional settings (Andrin, et al., 2024).

The interconnectedness of literacy development underscores the need for holistic instructional approaches that address all these components synergistically. Pressley et al. (2006) advocate for instructional practices that integrate foundational reading skills, academic language proficiency, and disciplinary literacy instruction across subject areas. By providing students with opportunities to develop proficient reading, communication, and critical thinking skills holistically, educators can support students' overall literacy development and academic success (Abella, et al., 2024). Effective literacy instruction should address all these components holistically, providing students with opportunities to develop proficient reading, communication, and critical thinking skills across various subject areas.

Conclusion:



The literature reviewed underscores the multifaceted nature of literacy development and highlights the interconnectedness of foundational reading skills, academic language proficiency, and disciplinary literacy. The findings from this study emphasize the importance of addressing all these components holistically in literacy instruction to support students' overall literacy development and academic success.

Foundational reading skills, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension, serve as the building blocks of literacy proficiency, providing students with the essential tools to decode, comprehend, and analyze texts across various subject areas. Effective instruction in these skills is crucial, particularly in the early stages of education, to foster proficient reading abilities among students.

Academic language proficiency is equally vital for students to comprehend and communicate complex ideas effectively across diverse subject areas. Explicit instruction in academic vocabulary, language structures, and discourse conventions is essential, especially for English language learners, to support their comprehension and communication abilities in academic contexts.

Disciplinary literacy integration further enhances students' literacy development by promoting deeper understanding, engagement, and critical thinking skills within specific academic disciplines. By teaching students the unique language and cognitive skills required in different subjects, educators can foster students' proficiency in disciplinary literacy, preparing them for success in academic and professional settings.

The interconnected nature of literacy development underscores the need for holistic instructional approaches that address all these components synergistically. Effective literacy instruction should provide students with opportunities to develop proficient reading, communication, and critical thinking skills across various subject areas, thereby equipping them with the necessary tools for academic success and lifelong learning. By integrating evidence-based instructional practices and providing meaningful opportunities for language and literacy development across subject areas, educators can support students in becoming proficient readers, effective communicators, and critical thinkers, ultimately preparing them for success in school and beyond.

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