Research Summary

Hands-On English With
Linking Blocks™

Linking Blocks Partners, LLC

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Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ Research Summary

The manipulative, multisensory English grammar program
General Literacy
Remediation
Learning Disabled
English Learners (EL)
Adult Literacy
Response to Intervention (RTI)

Linking Blocks Partners, LLC
3904 S. Walnut St
Bloomington,IN 47401
812.202.0822
www.LinkingBlocks.com
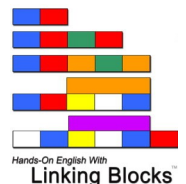
Powerful Understanding Inside

Multisensory Learning

...TOUCH   ...SEE   ...HEAR   ...LEARN
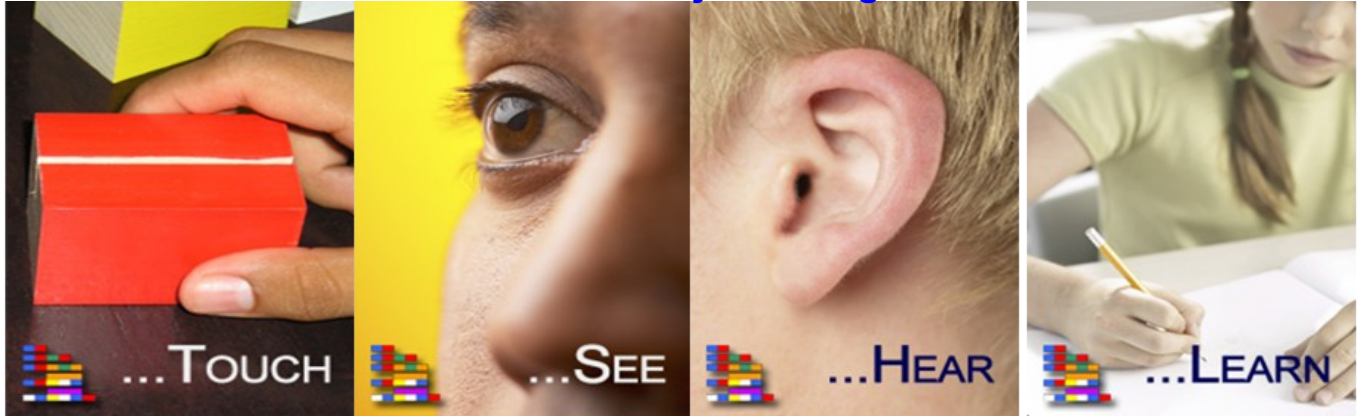
Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ is a multisensory grammar curriculum that uses color-coded blocks that allow students to build simple sentences and progress to complex ones. These easy tools allow for an infinite number of word and phrase combinations, making them effective for all age groups.

Hands-On English With
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Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ is a foundational course for teaching grammar. A more robust teaching technique than pen and paper, it can be used as a classroom intervention tool. These resources are intended for students who have already attained basic vocabulary, but need assistance on word order for writing and communication. Using this program as an enhancement helps to engage the multiple senses of individuals for better retention.

Words fit together in predictable, patterned ways to build rigid structures called sentences. Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ builds sentence structures using blocks. Colors are assigned to these blocks to represent each part of speech. In this way, the student can better see the structural patterns that exist within English sentences.

Next, the color patterns of the most common sentence structures are taught. This method introduces a new way to learn English! As the student manipulates tangible, three-dimensional objects that represent words, certain principles of the language become evident in ways that are obscure or unnoticed in a two-dimensional study on paper. Furthermore, some students who are challenged with normal pen and paper learning will readily grasp a more visual, object-based presentation. In either case, we will all enjoy a surprising and interesting look at the English language.

Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ provides simple techniques to help teachers guide students to grammar excellence using fun linking blocks. This interactive system can teach anyone how to write and speak English.
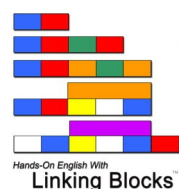
Hands-On English With
Linking Blocks™

Research Summary

Developer

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Website: www.LinkingBlocks.com
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Scope of use

Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ is designed to be used as a foundational course for teaching grammar. This intervention is an enhancement to engage the multisenses of individuals for better retention. It is a more robust teaching technique than pen and paper. The scope of use for this product can be used in various situations: general literacy, remediation, learning disabled, English Language programs, adult literacy, and as part of response to intervention initiatives.

Key Points Linking Blocks Teaches
1. The parts of speech
2. Word functions within sentences
3. Sentence syntax
4. Direct, explicit instruction
5. Multisensory techniques
6. A three dimensional domain
7. Repetition and reinforcement
8. Practical applications for writing
9. Understanding structure and style
10. Effective oral and written communication

Research

Supportive research can be found in the following document titled "Research Summary." This research focuses on these areas of classroom instruction: modeling, manipulation, systems of visualization and patterns, dictation, and writing.

Extent of Evidence

Supportive evidence includes research on these focus areas of classroom instruction from various studies and testimonials, as well as student and teacher reported results.

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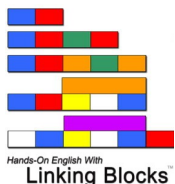
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Teaching

Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ is an innovative, multisensory program for teaching English grammar. Students learn the parts of speech and sentence structure by color. They manipulate colored three-dimensional blocks to create and revise sentences.

Effective ways to reach students includes engaging them and having them learn by doing. This type of teaching style uses tactile or kinesthetic methods to help students make models of concepts. Students with any learning style can use manipulatives, but they help kinesthetic learners understand concepts and objectives. Some students cannot succeed by listening to lectures or reading information from a book. They need to touch manipulatives, actively role play, or listen to music in order to create a system of learning that works for them.

Authors

John Menken earned a B.S. in English at Indiana State University. He has taught high school English in public and private schools, designed and taught English courses for home school students, and has been a technical writer, editor, and workshop presenter. He is author of the Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ series.

Beverly Menken earned her B.A. in English at Indiana University and is a certified reading instructor. She has taught elementary and high school English in classrooms, home school co-ops, and parent workshops. She has special training in teaching children with learning difficulties.

John and Beverly operate their own learning center in Machesney Park, IL, where they enjoy teaching in a multisensory, hands-on fashion that makes English understandable and enjoyable.

Cost

Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ is a robust multisensory product with supportive research-based books, workbooks, teacher demonstration supplies, and student manipulatives. (Supplementary materials are available; See pages 8-9 for details.)
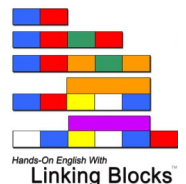
Teacher's Manual
The heart of Hands-On English with Linking Blocks instruction, this thorough resource offers a wealth of teaching ideas and suggested dialog. $69

Student Workbook
This companion to the Teacher's Manual supports each lesson with practice activities, writing applications, and mastery tests. $39

Prescriptions for Good Grammar
This book skillfully prescribes remedies for common composition errors, and uses Hands-On English with Linking Blocks to visualize those remedies. Self tests give students immediate feedback. $27
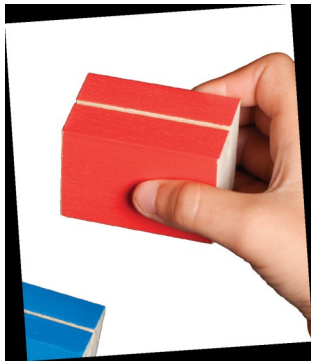
Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ Set
Comprehensive set includes Hands-On English with Linking Blocks Kit, Teacher`s Manual, Flash Cards, Part of Speech Songs CD, and Poster. $174

Hands on English with Linking Blocks™ Kit
Multisensory kit includes 50 Linking Blocks; Word, Function, Part of Speech Cards; and Foam Links; Carrying Case. $89

Teacher's Demo Set
Set includes 18 large Magnetic Blocks (perfect for demonstrating from the board); Foam Links; and Carrying Case. $75

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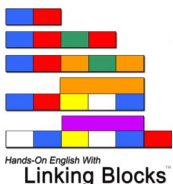
Part of Speech Songs CD

Favorite childhood melodies with Hands-On English with Linking Blocks lyrics help younger students retain lessons. $9

Parts of Speech Poster

This large, full-color poster shows the 10 block colors, names their part of speech, and tells the function that each may play within a sentence. $3

Word, Function, & Part of Speech Cards

Preprinted cards fit into slots on linking blocks. A blank card template lets you expand the vocabulary of your block set to make it age and ability appropriate. $9

Flash Cards

Give students a quick and fun way to review parts of speech and typical constructions. $12

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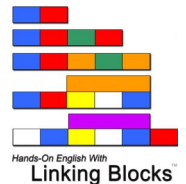
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Overview

Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ is an innovative, multisensory program for teaching English grammar. Students learn the parts of speech and sentence structure by color. They manipulate colored three-dimensional blocks to create and revise sentences.

Effective ways to reach students includes engaging them and having them learn by doing. This type of teaching style uses tactile or kinesthetic methods to help students make models of concepts. Students with any learning style can use manipulatives, but they help kinesthetic learners understand concepts and objectives. Some students cannot succeed by listening to lectures or reading information from a book. They need to touch manipulatives, actively role play, or listen to music in order to create a system of learning that works for them.

A. Working with Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™

Supportive Products

Teacher`s Manual; Student Workbook; Program Handbook; Prescriptions for Grammar Book; Block Manipulatives; Teacher Demonstration Magnetic Blocks; Flash Cards; Word, Function & Part of Speech Cards; Parts of Speech Songs CD; and Classroom Poster.

Initial Resources

<u>Teacher's Manual</u>: 221-page manual with extensive lesson content, rationale behind the techniques, composition interfaces, lesson plan forms, and pre- and post- assessments
<u>Program Handbook</u>: Summary overview of the program, which presents each lesson's major concept and gives sample patterns and sentences
<u>Student Workbook</u>: Supports the Teacher's Manual by providing practice activities, writing applications, and mastery assessments. The lessons are divided into two exercises. Exercise 1 puts a tightly-controlled focus on the part of speech being studied. Exercise 2 continues to work with that part of speech in a less controlled fashion. There are also cumulative review exercises and lesson assessments. They work together to help the student see the connection in a more natural way.
<u>Prescriptions for Good Grammar</u>: Presents each major concept of English grammar and gives sample block patterns and sentences, lists key points of English grammar, and also identifies common writing maladies and prescribes remedies. Finally, a self-assessment for each lesson serves as model of composition, including descriptive, narrative, and expository writing.
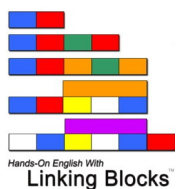<u>Linking Blocks Kit</u>: Manipulatives, which includes 50 Wood Blocks in 10 colors; Word, Function & Part of Speech Cards; and Foam Links all in a carrying case.

Hands-On English With
Linking Blocks™
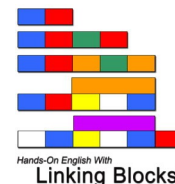
Research Summary

B. Working at Multilevels

All the lessons in the Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ books are designed to be multilevel. Across each activity, there is something for students to learn regardless of whether they are struggling or accelerated. The program follows a deliberate order of presentation. The goal is to master the most common structure systems that comprise conversational and written English. Students build sentence structure using blocks to represent each part of speech. In this way, the student can better see the structural patterns that exist with English sentences. In this program, students will learn the color patterns of the most common sentence structures.

C. Linking Blocks™ instruction example

A blue Block represents a noun. Nouns are people, places, or things. Even feelings like "sadness" or "happiness" need names. Names are nouns. They may be used in many places in your sentence. Teacher's Note: Names of persons, places, or things are called concrete nouns, while names of ideas are called abstract nouns.

Model/Demonstrate a noun: the blue block names something

Cars go.
Jill jumps.
Dogs bark.

Next ask the student to use one block per word to match the following sentences. Use blue Blocks for naming words and neutral-colored blocks for all words that are not naming words.
Sentence   Answer
Mike slept.

The deer ran.

In Linking Blocks™, the student will see parts of speech serving several different functions, and will label those functions with cards. Students will also see that the words retain their color, whatever function they are serving within the sentence.

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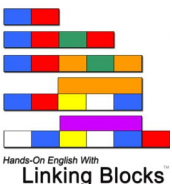
Research Summary

D. Presentation

1. Ask students to take the pre- and post- assessments to measure program success.
2. The program is designed for one student or a classroom of students.
3. Follow the deliberate order of presentation, as this will assist in facilitation of "new" material.
4. Use practice activities, writing applications, and mastery assessments in order to achieve mastery.
5. The program teaches the following:
   - Nouns
   - Nouns as subject
   - Proper nouns
   - Verbs as simple sentences
   - Conjunctions
   - Conjunctions and compound sentences
   - Pronouns
   - Helping verbs
   - Helping verbs and interrogative sentences
   - Adjectives
   - Articles
   - Articles before vowel sounds
   - Subject/predicate agreement
   - Subject/predicate agreement, with pronouns and adjectives
   - Adverbs modifying verbs
   - Adverbs modifying adverbs
   - Adverbs modifying adjectives
   - Prepositions
   - Prepositional phrases as adjectives
   - Prepositional phrases as adverbs
   - Complements, direct object
   - Complements, indirect object
   - Linking verbs
   - Complements, predicate adjectives
   - Complements, predicate nominatives
   - Interjections
   - Contractions

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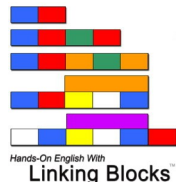
E. Lessons

Lessons follow a seven-part plan from the concrete to the abstract. <u>This seven-part plan is research supported, and the evidence can be seen in the following pages of this document.</u>

Modeling for the Student:
Part 1   Block **Review**
Part 2   New Block Introduction and **Demonstration**

Application by the Student:
Part 3   Block **Manipulation**
Part 4   Sentence **Analysis**
Part 5   **Visualization**
Part 6   Sentence **Dictation**

Lessons use controlled sentences. They focus on the topic under consideration while avoiding those details that would interfere with learning that topic. For example, a sentence in early lessons that focuses on noun/verb simple sentence will avoid prepositional phrases because they are not helpful for understanding the topic being taught.

Likewise, Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ lessons also use controlled vocabulary. They are designed to be used with young students, challenged learners, and English language students as well as older, more advanced students. For that reason, this program has used simple, monosyllabic words wherever possible. Additional sentences using in the Student Workbook, provide more advanced vocabulary.

Sentences in italics give the teacher instructions. There are also *Teacher's Note:* prompts. These give additional professional insights for teaching grammar.

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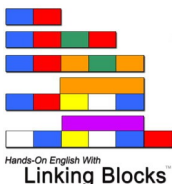
Research Summary

"If you keep doing what you've always done, you'll keep getting what you've always got."
—Anonymous

This is an overview of the common lesson plan, insights into what makes it work, and instructions for implementing it yourself.

Parts 1 and 2: Teacher Modeling
The teacher begins most lessons with a review. Then he/she demonstrates new concepts with blocks, a song, and text provided in the Teacher's Manual.
Lessons in Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ are cumulative. Parts of speech learned in previous lessons are built on and used in the following lessons. This lesson structure provides a constant, natural review. Some concepts, however, do not appear in every lesson, so a special effort to weave them into the current lesson for review will be helpful as students learn the new material. Individual students also grasp concepts at different rates, and the Teacher's Manual cannot anticipate those differences.

Parts 3 through 7: Student Manipulation
After the teacher has presented the new concept, the student manipulates according to the instructions given in the Teacher's Manual. These manipulative activities include:
- Mix and match (The student learns the concept by placing and exchanging appropriate word cards in the designated block.)
- Arrange the blocks (The student duplicates a dictated sentence with the colored blocks.)
- The Mongo Sentence Challenge (The student uses the blocks to build as long a sentence as possible with the parts of speech he has learned.)
- Tap-the-block (The student identifies the part of speech by its color.)
- Tap-the-block (The student identifies the function being served by the parts of speech.)
- Color-coding (The student recognizes and underlines the targeted part of speech within sentences.)
- Visualization (The student identifies the part of speech by color from memory.)
- Dictated writing (The student writes sentences that you read from the lesson plan.)
- Creative The student integrates Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ study with other language arts curriculum.)

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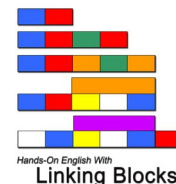
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Best Practice and Supportive Research
Modeling

> **Modeling** for the Student:
> Part 1   Block **Review**
> Part 2   New Block Introduction & **Demonstration**

How does modeling help the learner?
The teacher provides students with a clear, multisensory model of the skill or concept. The concept is divided into critical features/elements. The teacher clearly describes the concept, then models the desired outcome by using visual, auditory, tactile, and/or kinesthetic instructional techniques describing the process aloud. Examples and nonexamples can be used to show students expectations. Stopping frequently will give students time for input or to ask questions. This technique of modeling provides high levels of student/teacher interaction.[2]

Why use modeling in classroom instruction?
Modeling takes place first through the literature itself, and the way it is organized in lesson units. Modeling of specific strategies and skills provide clear examples for struggling students. This is achieved by displaying the strategies and skills intended for the student. This content can be demonstrated as minilessons, and may be formal or informal. Modeling by the teacher is also done through reading aloud, demonstrating response activities and discussions, and sharing writing. Students also provide modeling for each other through cooperative learning.[2]

How does modeling impact student learning?
Teacher as model makes the concept or skill clear and learnable. A high level of teacher support and direction enables the student to make meaningful cognitive connections. It also provides students who have attention, processing, memory retrieval, and metacognitive difficulties an accessible "learning map." Links between subskills are directly made, making confusion and misunderstanding less likely. Multisensory cueing provides students multiple modes to process and thereby learn information.[3]

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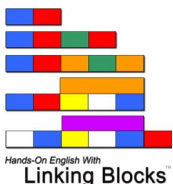
Research Summary

Best Practice and Supportive Research
Modeling

<u>What does the research say about modeling?</u>
Research has shown that modeling is an effective instructional strategy in that it allows students to observe the teacher's thought processes. Using this type of instruction, teachers engage students in imitation of particular behaviors that encourage learning. According to social learning theorist Albert Bandura, "Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action." [1,5]

<u>Modeling with Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™</u>
The teacher begins every lesson in this plan with modeling, reviewing, and demonstrating the new material. There is new block or system introduction and demonstration for each topic . The teacher will then work for understanding before giving the student self discovery time. The teacher may use many program resources in order to model the lesson including blocks, Teacher's Demonstration Magnetic Block set, white board instruction, or song lyrics from the Parts of Speech Songs CD to reinforce the lesson.[4]

Example:
> Block Review: The teacher reviews previous concepts using the following tools flash cards, songs, blocks, and links

> New Block Introduction and Demonstration: The teacher manipulates the blocks to teach the new concept. The Teacher's Manual gives block patterns and teaching dialogue plus the things to say about the new pattern. Songs and blocks are recommended.

<u>Resources for modeling:</u>
1. Coffey, Heather. Learn NC. UNC School of Education of Chapel Hill, 8/5/2010. http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/4697
2. Intel. Designing Effective Projects; Instructional Strategies, Modeling. 8/5/2010
   http://www97.intel.com/in/ProjectDesign/InstructionalStrategies/Modeling/
3. Math VIDS. Explicit Teacher Modeling. 8/5/2010. http://fcit.usf.edu/mathvids/strategies/em.html#top
4. Menken, John Hands-On English with Linking Blocks. *Teacher's Manual, Second Edition.*2009.Bloomingtion, IN
5. Wallace, Susan. New Horizons for Learning. Effective Instructional Strategies for English Language Learners in Mainstream Classrooms. 2004. 8/5/2010. http://ww.newhorizons.org/spneeds/ell/wallace.htm

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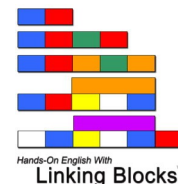
Research Summary

Best Practice and Supportive Research
Manipulatives

> **Part 3** Block **Manipulation**

How do manipulatives help the learner?
Manipulatives serve many purposes, all leading toward a better understanding of concepts and more success in figuring out correct answers. They provide a visual representation, which sticks with students longer and better than abstract- or language- based concepts. Manipulatives also help to hold the attention of inattentive learner. Even if they have a grasp of the concept, anxious learners benefit from the option of being able to first reassure themselves by visualizing the concept with manipulatives before writing it down.(4)

Why use manipulatives in instruction?
Teaching a toddler the concept of "three" or the significance of the numeral "3", almost immediately always results in visualization. A teacher will hold up three fingers. Better yet, you will have the child hold up three fingers. By doing so, the teacher will have just taught with manipulatives.

Much of modern instruction is concept based, using abstracts (words or symbols). Many students do not grasp what a noun or a verb or a complete sentence is because they cannot see them. Like the toddler, these students need something tangible to represent the concept. Students get colored blocks, each color performing its specialized task (like an individual chess piece). This is multisensory instruction, and it works. Better yet, the student can arrange and move those colored blocks. Like a toddler flexing his own fingers, the student's muscular activity of arranging blocks reinforces learning. This physical movement combines multisensory instruction and manipulative instruction for a supercharged learning process.(3)

How does the teacher adjust instruction to impact student learning?
Teaching with manipulatives requires some adjustments in the teacher's thinking. Most didactic teaching (where information is presented orally to be remembered) requires more activity for the teacher and less activity for the student. One of the teacher's greatest challenges in didactic teaching is keeping the student's attention.

Manipulative instruction, on the other hand, is largely inductive. The student learns by actively doing the lesson instead of passively listening to it. Manipulative instruction, therefore, has more trial-and-error built into the method. What is the teacher's role? He/she sets up the learning environment with blocks, links, cards, etc., introduces the concept, and then guides the student's activity. This teacher spends less time talking and much more time quietly observing the process, coaching, and asking questions that lead the student to further experimentation. This teacher is more involved with the dynamics of learning as it progresses, and less involved with telling information.(3)

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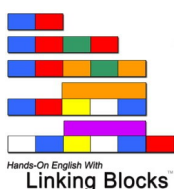
Research Summary

Best Practice and Supportive Research
Manipulatives

<u>What does the research say about manipulatives?</u>
Research suggests that manipulatives are particularly useful in helping children move from the concrete to the abstract level. Teachers, however, must choose activities and manipulatives carefully to support the introduction of the abstract. This type of instruction is also helpful for students who have difficulties learning to read, write, and spell in their primary language. Research on instructional methods show that Multisensory Structured Language Approach (MSL) is the best in order to teach direct and explicit letter/sound patterns, word and sentence patterns, and the prefix/suffix/root meanings of words. The MSL approach emphasizes sequenced skill development and conscious attention to the structure of the language.[1,2]

<u>Manipulatives with Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™</u>
This program teaches using multiple input/output strategies: visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic. Using several learning channels simultaneously, as research findings suggest (listening, speaking, reading, writing, and mnemonic devices for memory), helps differentiate instruction and gives the students a better chance. This is coupled with the use of visual aids when appropriate. Examples include: illustrating a sound, color-coded endings to illustrate gender and subject/verb agreement.[1,3]

Example:
> Block manipulation: After the lesson is modeled and taught, students are encouraged to use colored blocks and foam links to reinforce the learning. This gives students a fun and quick way to demonstrate their retention, and for the teacher to assess their skills. There are activities presented: Mix and Match, Arrange the Blocks, and Mongo Sentence Challenge.

<u>Resources for manipulatives:</u>
1. Carreker, Suzanne, and Judith R. Birsh. Multisensory Teaching of Basic Language Skills: Activity Book. Baltimore, MD: P.H. Brookes Pub., 2005.
2. Ganschow, Miller, Schneider, Sparks. Best Practices in Differentiating Instruction: Identifying and Teaching Learners with Special Needs. Level 1 A35-A42. McDougal Littell, a division of Houghton Mifflin Company.
3. Menken, John Hands-On English with Linking Blocks. *Teacher's Manual, Second Edition.*2009.Bloomingtion, IN
4. Stover, Elizabeth. EHow. About the Use of Manipulatives in Math. 8/5/2010. http://www.ehow.com/about_5048097_use-manipulatives-math.html

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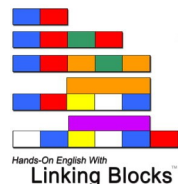
Research Summary

Best Practice and Supportive Research
Analysis & Visualization

> Part 4   Sentence **Analysis**
> Part 5   **Visualization**

How does analysis and visualization help the learner?

Visual learners obtain and retain information most effectively when presented with visual stimuli. The teacher can greatly enhance teaching by providing visual learners and/or special needs students with tools ideal for their learning type. These visual tools make it easier for students to develop an understanding of academic information and incorporate this information into their short and long-term memory.[2]

Why use guided grammar practice in instruction?

Grammar is the basis for a set of language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Learners are taught rules of language commonly known as sentence patterns. In the case of learners, grammatical rules enable them to know and apply how such sentence patterns should be put together. The teaching of grammar should also ultimately center attention on the way grammatical items or sentence patterns are correctly used. In other words, grammar should encompass language structure or sentence patterns meaning and use. Understanding is the mental ability to integrate separate details into a meaningful system. "The secret for remembering a multitude of details. Ask yourself to what system these details belong. How do they relate to each other? Find the system, and you will be able to arrange and remember the details-Dr. Ward Williams."[3]

How does analysis and visualization positively impact student learning?

Teaching grammar should encompass language structure or sentence patterns, meaning, and use. Grammar is thought to furnish the basis for a set of language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In listening and speaking, grammar plays a crucial part in grasping and expressing spoken language since learning grammar is considered necessary to acquire the capability of producing grammatically acceptable utterances in the language. Learning with analysis and visualization helps students draw on memory and is an effective way to assess learning.[3]

Hands-On English With
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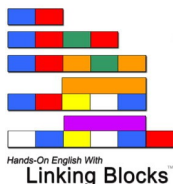
Research Summary

Best Practice and Supportive Research
Analysis & Visualization

What does the research say about analysis and visualization?
Teaching with patterns is about seeing relationships, and as children recognize and create patterns, they begin to see and understand how things work together. Generally students will work toward being able to create their own patterns at various difficulty levels such as: copy patterns that others have made; extend patterns that others have started, tell what is missing if part of a pattern is hidden; compare and talk about patterns that arise from their daily experiences; and identify a pattern which can contribute to a positive learning experience.[3]

Analysis and visualization with Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™
Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ uses systems and analysis to teach English grammar. The program builds systems, visualized through constructions of blocks. The systems, such as prepositional phrases, are reusable and show up in recognized sets in various places in sentences. Because students know the system, the language unfolds in an understandable and enjoyable way. [1]

Example:

Sentence Analysis: The exercises in this program support learning these systems that are presented by the teacher. A variety of activities are included that help develop self confidence and educate students how to self correct including: Tap the Block and Color-Code the Sentences. Both activities naturally review previous work. Weaknesses will be spotted during activities, and should be reviewed in the next class session.

Visualization: The student closes his eyes or looks up into space and draws from his memory. The teacher slowly dictates controlled sentences from the Teacher's Manual or Student Workbook and the student converts each word into its part of speech and its correct color by memory.

Resources for Analysis and Visualization:
1. Menken, John Hands-On English with Linking Blocks. *Teacher's Manual, Second Edition.*2009.Bloomingtion, IN
2. Schreiner, Erin. "How to Teach Kids With a Learning Disability Who Learn Visually."EHow To Do Just About Everything!.How To Videos & Articles." Web. 06 Aug. 2010. <http://www.ehow.com/how_6554081_teach-learning-disability-learn-visually.html>.
3. Widodo, Handoyo P. "Approaches and Procedures for Teaching Grammar. English Teaching: Practice and Critique." May 2006, Vol.5,Number 1. pg122-141

Hands-On English With
Linking Blocks
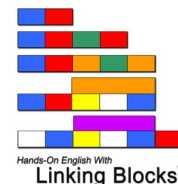
Research Summary

Best Practice and Supportive Research
Dictation

Part 6   Sentence **Dictation**

How does dictation help the learner?
Listening actively develops higher-thinking skills such as analyzing, synthesizing, predicting, and identifying causes and effects.[3]

Why use dictation to assist with instruction?
Dictation has been used in language learning for several hundred years, and methodologists have often made pedagogical claims for its value. Decoding the sounds of English and recoding them in writing is a major learning task, and dictation can be an effective way to address grammatical errors in writing that may be the result of mistaken audio perception of English. Dictation can help students diagnose and correct these kinds of errors as well as others. As students develop their hearing comprehension of meaning and also of the relationship among segments of language, they are learning grammar. Dictation ensures attentive listening; it trains pupils to distinguish sounds; it helps fix concepts of punctuation; it enables pupils to learn to transfer oral sounds to written symbols; it helps to develop aural comprehension; and it assists in self-evaluation."[5]

How does dictation impact student learning?
The ultimate goal of teaching grammar is to provide students with the knowledge of the way language is constructed so that when they listen, speak, read and write, they have no trouble applying the language they are learning. Language teachers are, therefore, challenged to use creative and innovative attempts to teach grammar that goal can be achieved. In other words, whatever exercises are given, the most crucial thing is that the teacher provides the students with an opportunity to produce the grammatical item making use of syntactically and semantically correct examples of sentences comprised of appropriate and relevant vocabulary.[6]

The student moves from the use of manipulatives (concrete) to writing sentences on paper (abstract). The student writes sentences and then underlines the part of speech being studied. This helps the student make a real-life application of the lesson, and also helps in the development of other language arts skills.

Hands-On English With
Linking Blocks
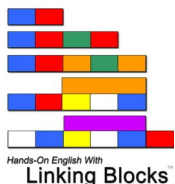
Research Summary

Best Practice and Supportive Research
Dictation

What does the research say about dictation?
Research in the classroom, shows dictation to be a valuable technique for language teaching and for assessing students competence in the language they are trying to learn. When students develop their comprehension of meaning and also of the relationship among segments of language, they are learning grammar. It has also been shown to improve short-term memory and help students retain phrases.(2)

Dictation with Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™
The Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ program asks students to dictate the phrases and systems they create with the manipulatives in order to reinforce the grammar they are creating through oral communication. Students dictate for the instructor how and why the words and parts of speech work together to create a sentence.(1)

Example:
　　　Sentence Dictation: The student moves completely from the concrete (blocks) into the abstract (words on paper). As the teacher dictates controlled sentences from the Teacher's Manual or the Student Workbook, the student writes the sentences on paper. The student will then use colored pencils to underline the part of speech under study in each of the sentences. The student begins to make real-life applications of the lesson. The lesson produces writing on paper in which the student can identify the part of speech and its function in the sentence.

Resources for dictation:
1. Menken, John Hands-On English with Linking Blocks. *Teacher's Manual, Second Edition.*2009.Bloomingtion, IN
2. Montalvan, R. 1990. Dictation updated: Guidelines for teacher-training workshops. In English language programs, U.S. Department of State <http://exchanges.state.gov/education/engteaching/dictn2.htm>.
3. Sholes, Delene. "Active Learning Styles.EHow.com." *How To Do Just About Everything!. How To Videos & Articles*. Web. 06 Aug. 2010. <http://www.ehow.com/about_5453156_active-learning-styles.html>.
4. Stansfield, C. 1985. "A history of dictation in foreign language teaching and testing." The Modern Language Journal, 69, ii, pp. 122-126.
5. Textbook, Using The. "Alkire - Dictation as a Language Learning Device (TESL/TEFL)." Internet TESL Journal (For ESL/EFL Teachers). Web. 06 Aug. 2010. <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Alkire-ictation.html>.
6. Widodo, Handoyo P. "Approaches and Procedures for Teaching Grammar." English Teaching: Practice and Critique. May 2006, Vol.5,Number 1. pg122-141.

Hands-On English With
Linking Blocks™
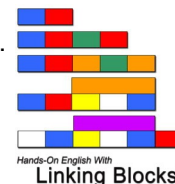
Research Summary

Best Practice and Supportive Research
Writing

How does writing help the learner?
When you write, your brain remembers things you already know and helps you put that knowledge together with new thoughts and ideas. You must think of a way to organize your writing so that someone else will understand it. When you write, you are not only using your brain, but you are also using your body.(4)

Why use grammatical exercises to improve writing?
Grammar teaching could be surreptitious, with a clear underlying theory of grammar, but minimal use of grammatical terminology. This is in fact how a lot of grammar teaching has been done, and in particular, there is a well-recognized activity called sentence combining. These lessons must be taught over a series of days or weeks depending on how fast students can move through the material. With grammatical writing exercises, students can work at their own pace. Those that need more time to absorb the material can review the resources provided as many times as necessary. Conversely, those who have a knack for grammar can breeze through the explanations of the parts of speech and parts of a sentence so they can spend more time focusing on improving their own sentences.(3)

How does writing impact student learning?
Exercises reinforce the production of language, and specifically the production of written language, so feed much more directly into the child's growing repertoire of productive skills than exercises in grammatical analysis do. The student can easily see the sentences form when working with the manipulatives and clearly write what is in front of them. The closely integrated instruction of sentence patterns, oral work, and writing lessons ensure the skills are not acquired in isolation and are more likely to transfer directly into a usable skill. Creative writing helps students write their own sentences by using past knowledge of vocabulary, spelling words, or other language arts curriculum. (3)

Hands-On English With
Linking Blocks
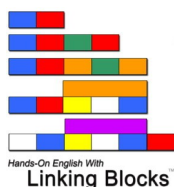
Research Summary

Best Practice and Supportive Research
Writing

<u>What does the research say about writing?</u>
Writing is not simply a way for students to demonstrate what they know; it is a way to help them understand what they know. In effective schools, learning and instruction related to knowledge and conventions of English and high literacy take place as separated, simulated, and integrated experiences. Separated and simulated activities refer to the introduction of a skill or knowledge item to the class, and the integrated activity is the purposeful application of it. The effective teaching of writing involves all three of these learning experiences, with an emphasis on the writer's craft, the use of high-quality writing exemplars, and time for classroom writing practice and thought reflection before, during, and after the writing.[5]

<u>Writing with Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™</u>
Students using the Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ program will easily see the transfer of the patterns and systems created with the blocks and carry this knowledge to their writing abilities. Emphasizing the placement and part of speech in the lessons, students will create unique sentences using all the parts of speech in the English language.[3]

Example:
> Creative Writing: The student writes sentences of his own creation, being sure to incorporate the part of speech or the specific block pattern just learned. This activity is an opportunity to coordinate the advantages of Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ with whatever other language arts curriculum you may be using to incorporate vocabulary, spelling words, or other objectives. The student may use word cards, Appendix C, or the Student Workbook for sentence-building material.

<u>Resources for writing</u>
1. Florida Department of Education. Proven Instructional Strategies for High-Quality Writing, Langer, Judith. 2005. 06.Aug.2010. http://www.putnamschools.org/fcat_resources/pdfs/bestpractices_writing.pdf
2. Hillocks, G., Jr. (1986). Research on written composition: New directions for teaching. Urbana, IL: National Conference on Research in English/ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills.
3. Menken, John Hands-On English with Linking Blocks. *Teacher's Manual, Second Edition.*2009.Bloomingtion, IN
4.Sholes, Delene. "Active Learning Styles. How To Do Just About Everything!. How To Videos & Articles. Web. 06 Aug. 2010. <http://www.ehow.com/about_5453156_active-learning-styles.html>.
5. *UCL Department of Phonetics & Linguistics*. 30 Nov. 1999. Web. 06 Aug. 2010. <http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/dick/writing.htm>.

Hands-On English With
Linking Blocks™
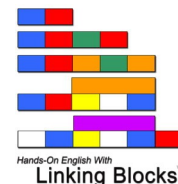
Research Summary

Student Evidence

Does Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ work?

Assessment results from the Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ program are impressive. Students took a 50-question assessment of English grammar before the course and again after the course. If the Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ program is this powerful in a small group, imagine its potential impact when applied to high-need, populations at risk such as dyslexic students!

Private Tutoring Assessment Results

	Pre-assessment	Post-assessment	Difference
Summer 2004			
Subject A	54	94	40
Average Improvement			**40**

	Pre-assessment	Post-assessment	Difference
Summer 2005			
Subject B	48	78	30
Subject C	38	88	50
Subject D	46	84	38
Average Improvement			**39.33**

	Pre-assessment	Post-assessment	Difference
Summer 2007			
Subject E	50	80	30
Subject F	38	80	42
Subject G	32	88	56
Subject H	32	88	56
Average Improvement			**46.00**

Research Summary

Student Evidence

<u>Classroom Assessment Results</u>

	Pre-assessment	Post-assessment	Difference			Pre-assessment	Post-assessment	Difference
2005-2006					**2006-2007**			
Subject A	24	44	20		Subject A1	21	48	27
Subject B	58	86	28		Subject B2	20	48	28
Subject C	32	56	24		Subject C3	4	60	56
Subject D	42	81	39		Subject D4	29	40	11
Subject E	40	65	25		Subject E5	28	52	24
Subject F	22	68	46		Subject F6	48	60	12
Subject G	38	62	24		Subject G7	24	38	14
Subject H	72	86	14		Subject H8	41	52	11
Subject I	14	58	44		Subject I9	45	68	23
Subject J	44	84	40		Subject J10	28	40	12
Subject K	28	96	68		Subject K11	28	72	44
					Subject L12	14	68	54
		Average	**33.82**		Subject M13	30	50	20
					Subject N14	67	90	23
					Subject O15	48	68	20
					Subject P16	59	86	27
					Subject Q17	4	34	30
					Subject R18	9	50	41
					Subject S19	37	62	25
					Subject T20	45	82	37
					Subject U21	43	76	33
					Subject V22	8	68	60
					Subject W23	30	38	8
					Subject X24	59	84	25
					Subject Y25	22	64	42
					Subject Z26	42	56	14
					Subject AA	14	66	52
					Subject BB	39	70	31
					Subject CC	44	46	2
					Subject DD	28	80	52
							Average	**28.6**

Research Summary

Student Evidence

Classroom Assessment Results (continued)

	Pre-assessment	Post-assessment	Difference
2007-2008			
Subject Aa	36	82	46
Subject Bb	58	68	10
Subject Cc	24	52	28
Subject Dd	34	86	52
Subject Ee	8	86	78
Subject Ff	40	82	42
Subject Gg	42	76	34
Subject Hh	64	88	24
Subject Ii	40	70	30
Subject Jj	60	82	22
Subject Kk	58	90	32
Subject Ll	64	82	18
Average			**34.67**

	Pre-assessment	Post-assessment	Difference
2008-2009			
Subject AAA	30	84	54
Subject BBB	58	54	-4
Subject CCC	28	72	44
Subject DDD	48	92	44
Subject EEE	30	38	8
Subject FFF	40	50	10
Subject GGG	12	28	16
Subject HHH	18	30	12
Subject III	62	86	24
Subject JJJ	26	64	38
Subject KKK	62	80	18
Subject LLL	10	62	52
Average			**26.33**

*Unusually young group with 6 underage 11yrs

	Pre-assessment	Post-assessment	Difference
2009-2010			
Subject 111	32	56	24
Subject 222	68	100	32
Subject 333	30	76	46
Subject 444	16	44	28
Subject 555	44	90	46
Subject 666	52	70	18
Subject 777	32	66	34
Subject 888	28	56	28
Subject 999	42	92	50
Subject 000	8	84	76
Subject 112	12	72	60
Subject 113	84	96	12
Subject 114	34	66	32
Subject 115	32	80	48
Subject 116	20	54	34
Average			**37.87**

Research Summary

Success Stories

"The only source of knowledge is experience."---Albert Einstein

    "I have never had a clear understanding of English grammar until now! My son recently had the opportunity to learn grammar using "Linking Blocks" and I was able to learn along with him. The "Linking Blocks" program has brought me past rote memorization to grasping the how and why behind grammar by taking abstract language concepts and turning them into 3-dimensional forms. By using manipulatives and color associations, I could actually see the role of each part of speech and its relationship with the other parts. I can finally say, "I get it!" I am so thankful for the "Linking Blocks" program and for the opportunity that my son has also had to learn from it. Now he does not have to wait till he is an adult to be able to say, "I get it!""
Renee Detig
Oregon, IL

    "The Hands-on English with Linking Blocks multi-sensory and incrementally progressive approach using both color and dimension was instantly successful. By the second class my son said, "Mom, I get this. I really get this!" By the second paragraph assignment he said, "This could almost be fun!" The Hands-on English with Linking Blocks program is designed to fit all learning styles, but for my son, with his even more unique learning style, it is a must, a true Godsend."
Pam Johnson
Rockford, IL

    "For our family, the 'Hands on English with Linking Blocks' program has been such a blessing! I wish that I could have learned English grammar and sentence diagramming with this program when I was in school! The linking blocks bring the sentences to life and make learning sentence structure visual, instead of just an exercise in memorization. Using this program with our children has given me the chance to see them excited about a subject that I viewed as mundane. They truly understand how and why sentences are built the way they are.
    The other benefit is that I'm learning (or re-learning!) right alongside our children. They see my excitement about learning and what a great example it is for them to witness! It demonstrates that we're never too old to grow in knowledge and wisdom!"
Sincerely,
Bonnie Pescinski
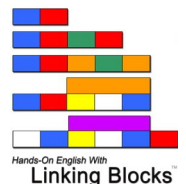
Hands-On English With
Linking Blocks

Product Reviews- **The Old Schoolhouse Magazine**

Product review by Heidi Miller-Ford, The Old Schoolhouse® Magazine, LLC, April 2010
A Review of Hands-On English with Linking Blocks by John Menken

Hands-On English with Linking Blocks appealed to me from the moment I read about it. My son has always had difficulties with English because it is always presented in a workbook format and usually accompanied by lots of writing. Hands-On English with Linking Blocks is definitely hands-on, but it involves many of the other areas of learning as well. The idea of the program is to use 50 wooden colored blocks, representing the different parts of speech, to build simple and eventually complex sentences. Students will actually be able to see a sentence and all its individual parts, making it much more concrete and easier to understand.

I received the following items to review:
Hands-On English with Linking Blocks Set ($174)
Linking Blocks Kit: 50 colored wooden blocks and foam links
Flash Cards Teacher's Manual--spiral-bound
Program Handbook--spiral-bound
Words, Function, and Part of Speech Cards
Parts of Speech CD
Parts of Speech Poster
Student Workbook--spiral-bound ($39)
Student Workbook Answer Key--spiral-bound ($10)
Prescriptions for Good Grammar--spiral-bound ($27)

This program is geared towards general literacy, remedial, and English as a second language populations. Depending on the level of your child, you could use this at many different grade levels. It would definitely work best in a homeschool or tutor setting, but it could be used in a classroom setting as well if you had a way to store all of the materials needed for each student. The course covers the most common structures in conversational and written English. Other programs can then be used to teach more advanced concepts. It can be used by itself or in conjunction with other programs. There is a specific order in which skills are presented, and the manual suggests using it in that order.

Each lesson is broken down into the following seven different parts. (The first two are to model for the student, and the other five are for the student to apply the new concept.)
Part 1--Block Review
Part 2--New Block Introduction and Demonstration
Part 3--Block Manipulation (three activities)
-Mix and Match
-Arrange the Blocks
-Mongo Sentence Challenge
Part 4--Sentence Analysis (two activities) Tap the Blocks Color-code Sentences
Part 5--Visualization
Part 6--Sentence Dictation
Part 7--Creative Writing

Product Reviews- The Old Schoolhouse Magazine (continued)

The Student Workbook includes review material, exercises for underlining the correct parts of speech, writing exercises, and assessments. Everything is in black and white except for the parts of speech. They are color-coded to match the program. The pages are not visually overwhelming, and the sentences have a nice amount of space between them so that underlining is easy. The answer key is in a separate book and is color-coded, making it very easy to glance at the answers and make sure they are correct. An older student could even correct them himself. The Linking Blocks company does make a student book that contains both the workbook and answer key in one if you wanted to cut down on the number of books to keep track of. I think I would have actually preferred that since there are such a large number of materials used with this program.

The Prescriptions for Good Grammar book can be used with the Linking Blocks as well as with other grammar programs. It's a reference book that will help diagnose and fix common grammar problems. For each part of speech, a definition is given and examples in sentence form. The most common problem for that particular part of speech is explained, followed by the prescription to fix it. A assessment is given at the end of each lesson, with answers provided in the appendix at the back of the book.

This multisensory program would really be useful for dyslexic or at-risk students, but I can see it benefiting all students. Every learning style is covered. The underlining in the sentences with colored pencils reinforces the visual aspect of the different parts of speech as well as the visualization exercises. The songs for each part of speech really hit home for the auditory learner. Physically building the sentences with the blocks is perfect for the tactile learner. The fact that there is not a lot of writing involved to complete most of the activities was a plus for us. Students who struggle with or are turned off by a lot of writing tend to get left behind in English programs.

When I first opened the box, the amount of materials in there was quite overwhelming. There were so many manuals and books! It took a little time for me to sit down and go through everything to figure out how the program works. If I had anything negative to say about the program, it would be that there didn't seem to be enough of the Word, Function, and Parts of Speech cards for some of the sentences and activities. I found myself scrambling to make extra ones. There was even one card missing, but that was easily remedied by my making my own. Also, I think the cards would last longer if they were laminated, which I decided to do. There were a few times when we were short on a specific color of blocks when building sentences, but it would be hard to predict how many specific blocks a child is going to need. We just substituted other blocks and hoped it wouldn't be confusing. The price does seem high and possibly not affordable for a lot of homeschool families when this only covers one subject. However, I can say the quality of the materials does make it likely that the program would last for many years and multiple students, which may make it more appealing in the long run.

Despite the few cons I've mentioned, there are far more pros to this program, and I would highly recommend it to anyone. This program was a huge success in my house. My son has really improved his grammar in the short time we have been using it. I spent a year and a half trying to get him to remember what a noun and verb were, and now he can identify them, build his own sentence with compound subjects and predicates using conjunctions, and even connect compound sentences. Most importantly, grammar has become one of his favorite subjects. This hands-on approach will definitely keep him involved, working on level, and even feeling confident about what he is learning. It's such a good program that I plan to use it with two more children in the future.

The Old Schoolhouse- The Magazine for Homeschool Families
http://thehomeschoolmagazine.com/Homeschool_Reviews/4223.php

Research Summary

Product Reviews: The International Dyslexia Association, Illinois branch

Book Corner by Gina Cooke
A Review of Hands-On English with Linking Blocks by *John Menken*

Every year at the International Dyslexia Association's annual conference, I spend too much money. Besides the registration and travel costs, I usually drop a few bills in the exhibit hall. Between purchasing products for use by Masonic Learning Center tutors and my own personal acquisitions, I come back poorer, but better informed and much better equipped. In the past, I have purchased books, workbooks, software, videos, timers, reading aids (like tinted rulers), and pencil grips. I have learned to leave extra room in my suitcase while packing so I can easily haul home my treasures.

The only problem with this annual ritual is that I never seem to find the time to *use* everything I buy at the conference. Most items go on the shelf for tutors to explore and use. Books get added to the stack of things I want to read and end up loaned out or intermittently referenced more than fully read. This past fall's conference in Indianapolis was no exception. My wallet got as much exercise in the exhibit hall as it usually does. I bought several books, which have been skimmed but remain unread. Books I ordered as Christmas gifts got tangled up in Fed-Ex's web and didn't arrive until February. I was so busy that it didn't even dawn on me that they were missing until late January. But one 2006 purchase has already earned its keep…and then some. The materials contained in *Hands-On English with Linking Blocks*™ are creative, systematic, structured, flexible, and indeed, hands-on. They provide a valuable aid in teaching grammatical concepts for writing and comprehension while engaging every sensory pathway.

Written and developed over 7 years by John Menken and his wife, Beverly (who cheerfully demonstrated the product and answered questions at the IDA booth), the curriculum and materials are designed to teach both *part of speech* (noun, verb, preposition, etc.) and *grammatical function* (direct object, linking verb, modifier, etc.). Color-coding is central to its teaching of these grammatical categories, but the goods go beyond simple categorization tasks. Rather, the color-coding strategies serve to create visual images of grammatical roles and patterns. These visual patterns really make grammar multidimensional, multisensory, and accessible. Compared to sentence coding and diagramming, *Hands-On English* really reduces boredom and confusion.

Hands-On English can be purchased piece by piece or in sets, including large sets for classroom demonstration and instruction. The set I bought contains a teacher's manual and student workbook, word cards and function cards (like "direct object" and "predicate nominative"), color-based flashcards, color-coded neoprene strips, 50 color-coded blocks, and a poster with the key to the color code. The manual and student workbook give thorough scripted lessons and directions for use. Each lesson follows the same 7-part plan, incorporating teacher modeling and student application, review and new learning, reading and writing. The manual includes several appendices with duplicable forms: a pre- and post-assessment to measure grammatical knowledge, word lists and sentences for each lesson, and a blank lesson plan. Lesson plan structure and preparation instructions are also in an appendix.

The teacher's manual also includes song lyrics—set to common nursery rhymes and songs, like "Old MacDonald" or "Pop Goes the Weasel"—used to teach the function of specific parts of speech. As I am used to working with older children, I regarded the songs and rhymes dubiously at first. However, after using *Hands-On* with younger children, I can see how the songs are actually a solid mnemonic device. One little boy can tell me that a noun names a person, place or thing; he knows that every sentence needs a verb, but he requires the song with its off-rhyme of "happen" and "action" to remember what verbs do.

Research Summary

The word and function cards have to be cut apart. I laminated them first, so they're easy to write on with overhead markers. Blanks allow for more creativity with sentences, and the markers allow for adding suffixes (like –*s* to avoid constructions like "Dad run") and marking resulting spelling changes. The flash cards show color-coded patterns, and the child has to identify what pattern is represented (like *noun* or *prepositional phrase*). Admittedly, I haven't put the flash cards to much use at this point, though as my students learn more grammatical patterns, I can imagine that they would be useful.

Because the blocks are designed to be so hands-on, it's difficult to describe them. Even a picture would not do them justice. Each block is about two inches long and slightly less tall, with a slot running the length of the top to hold word and function cards. The notch can also hold neoprene strips to show the function of a phrase. For example, adjectives are represented with purple blocks. Adjective phrases can also be marked purple, even though they may be made up of words other than adjectives. The prepositional phrase *on the table*, for example, could be marked as an adjective phrase with a long purple foam strip that sits inside the three blocks of the prepositional phrase. The blocks create powerful visual images; so that the blue-red pattern of a basic simple sentence (*Dogs run* or *Dad honked*) can be tracked down somewhere in every sentence (*The **girl** in the red coat **led** her horse into the barn.*).

The vocabulary in the teacher's manual and student workbook is decidedly elementary, which is not a problem in and of itself. Any teacher could certainly rewrite or create entirely new sentences to reflect a more sophisticated vocabulary for an older student. The problem lies in an unfortunate gender-bound bias embedded in the elementary vocabulary. In scripted sentences, Moms frequently "cook", "wash", and even "iron", while Dads "do jobs" and "work". (It makes me wonder what cooking, washing and ironing are, if they're not work. I also see great irony in the likelihood that these materials are used mostly by women, in the largely female vocation of teaching children how language works). To me, this occasional slant speaks of somewhat careless editing; this tendency to stereotype should have been caught by a careful reader. The elementary vocabulary isn't the culprit; even simple vocabulary needn't be stilted. How about "Moms teach" or "Dads read" instead? The critique, however, is a minor one, and surmountable, given the overall utility of the system.

In the interest of full disclosure, I should say too that I'm generally not a fan of scripted lesson plans and curricula, and I have steered clear of using them. In a true Orton-based multisensory structured language education approach, a scripted lesson plan would defy the defining characteristics of diagnostic, flexible teaching. However, I have found that *Hands-On* was easily adaptable to different students. For an older student who grasps concepts readily, the blocks serve simply as a visual and tactile support for concepts that are familiar, yet fuzzy. I don't really consult the lesson plan and manual, but I do use the blocks and inserts to lend dimension to sentence and phrase structure and function. But, in targeting grammar and sentence structure specifically to aid comprehension and written expression, I have found the lesson plan structure to be very helpful. And there's no time limit: for a younger child, a single lesson may be split up over 2 or 3 days' work as necessary.

The authors acknowledge these flexible possibilities of the program. They suggest using larger words with older students, and suggest the program's viability for English language learners. They concede that the *Linking Blocks* ₜₘ can be used to supplement other grammar curricula, but suggest that their own lesson scope and sequence be observed when using this as a primary program. This perspective resonates with my experiences. In short, *Hands-On English* is a superb multisensory tool for teaching the system that organizes English grammar.

Research Summary

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"However we teach, and whatever tools we use, the purpose is to help the child learn to read and write. The only way this can be accomplished is to provide opportunities for children to use language."

Anita Griffiths
Teaching the Dyslexic Child

Research Summary

Additional Resources: Multisensory Teaching

Research tells us that the more senses used in the learning process, the higher the percentage of retention. Multisensory teaching is simultaneously visual, auditory, and kinesthetic/tactile and enhances memory and learning. Links are consistently made between the visual *(what we see)*, auditory *(what we hear)*, and kinesthetic/tactile *(what we feel)* pathways in learning to read and spell.

Multisensory teaching with Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ requires that students are stimulated in their learning through a variety of modalities. They not only see words, they hear them read aloud and in sentence form, pronounce the words themselves, and manipulate colored blocks to learn grammar. In this way, children engage all their senses as they maximize the effect of learning English grammar.
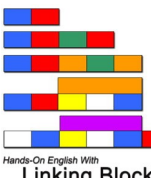
Our senses give us the information we need to function in the world. The senses receive information from stimuli both outside and inside our bodies. Every move we make, every bite we eat, every object we touch produces sensations. When we engage in any activity, we use several senses at the same time. Speech and language are entwined, but not the same. Speech is the physical production of the throat, tongue, lips, and jaw. Language is the meaningful use of words, which are symbolic representations of objects and ideas. Thus, language is a code for deciphering what words imply and how we use them to relate to others. Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ uses multisensory techniques in order to ensure the student learns. The approach is based on a Multisensory Structured Language (MSL) instruction approach.

MSL instruction is based on seven principles the instructor integrates into language instruction
1. Students are taught to use auditory, visual, and tactile/kinesthetic learning channels simultaneously.
2. Structured patterns of awareness are taught.
3. Teacher directly teaches the concept of sequential lesson concepts.
4. Provide student with practice and frequent review.
5. Concepts are taught in logistical, sequential steps.
6. Connect what they know with what is new.
7. Assess students with cross-linguistic challenges.

(Birsh, 2005,2006; Henry,1996; Rome &Osman, 2000Volume 42 Issue 1, Pages 55 - 76 Online: 31 Mar 2009 Language Annals. Linguistic Intervention Techniques for At-Risk English Language Learners pg38)

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Hands-On English With
Linking Blocks

Research Summary

Additional Resources: Learning Disabled

As we gain new knowledge about learning and language disabilities, we learn how these problems interfere with reading, writing, math and organization skills. Research shows that explicit grammar instruction improves learners at risk over time if new information is introduced in phases:
1. Explicit Demonstration of English Grammar and Phase
2. Guided Grammar Practice.

(Kunkell&Fotos, 2002; Volume 42 Issue 1, Pages 55 - 76 Online: 31 Mar 2009 Language Annals. Linguistic Intervention Techniques for At-Risk English Language Learners pg65.)

Children identified as at risk for language arts problems need
- More explicitly with words and their associated meanings
- More intensive time in small groups
- More support or scaffolding of basic skills
- Positive reinforcement before taking the next step

(Kutscher, Martin.L.,Tony Attwood, and Robert R.Wolff. Kinds in the Syndrome Mix of ADHD, LD, Asperger's, Tourette's, Bipolar, and More!: the One stop guide for parents, teachers, an other professionals. London. Jessica Kingsely, 2005. Priint.)

Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ helps children with writing disorders by using sequential instruction in sentence construction. This program allows the teacher to give frequent and immediate feedback to the learner. The program captures the student's full attention by maximizing multisensory learning through its lessons. It also introduces new information in chunks and the lessons are taught in small sections.

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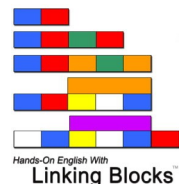
Research Summary

Additional Resources: English Learners

Teaching grammar plays a central role in every English teacher's classroom. How does the teacher ensure students learn the grammar? Research has detected that when young EL students are having problems in developing reading efficiency, even with simple materials, this should not be automatically attributed to their lack of oral language proficiency. They may benefit from an intervention that focuses on efficient word-recognition skills. (Geva, E. Yaghoub Zadeh, Z.(2006) Reading efficiency in native English and English-as-a-Second-language children...Scientific Studies of Reading, 10(1),31-57.)

Recent research findings indicate that most of foreign language learners at risk who are taught with the MSL approach
1) Improve language performance
2) Experience success in the classroom
3) Report proficiency levels comparable to other students after two years of foreign language study
Ganschow, L., Miller, K., Schneider, P., Sparks, R. *Best Practices in Differentiating Instruction: Identifying and Teaching Learners with Special Needs.* McDougal Littell.pg A36)

Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ provides the EL student ample time to recognize new structures with various tactile examples working with the blocks. This program provides an extensive amount of practice, ranging from simple recognition to learning new forms and sentence structures. As the student practices with the colored blocks, he/she will begin to notice and learn grammatical patterns. Through guided practice, students will then apply these patterns to their writing assignments.

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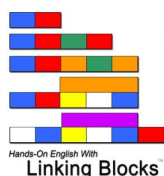
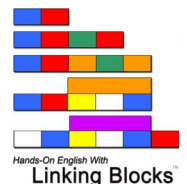# Research Summary

Additional Resources: Adult Literacy

The adult learner is typically defined by researches as someone beyond puberty. Teaching all of the rules of grammar does pay off for older learners. After being exposed to the rules and doing some exercises, students do transfer this knowledge to their writing.

Researchers in the field have noted the brain's right and left hemispheres regarding language functions is not complete until around puberty. The right hemisphere is associated with processing and patterns, while the left hemisphere is associated with the creative use of language and the motor operations involved in speaking and writing.

Older learners are better suited to study form and monitor themselves through a self-editing process. Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ provides this opportunity. The adult learner can easily self teach and self correct through exercises and answers provided. Supportive research also reveals that adults often want to know the nature of the errors they are making. That is, they want to study rules, do exercise, and discuss answers. This program allows for small groups to work together in repeated performances which can lead to automatic routines and learning.

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Hands-On English With
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Research Summary

Additional Resources: Response to Intervention

Response to intervention (RTI) integrates assessment and intervention within a multilevel prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavior problems. With RTI, schools identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions (depending on the student's responsiveness), and identify students with learning disabilities or other disabilities.

RTI should be presented to educators as effective teaching for the 21st century; an instructional paradigm that works for all struggling students. What strategies, techniques, and ideas will work for the students struggling in your class?

Tier 1: Coherent and viable core curriculum that embeds ongoing monitoring for all students.

Tier 2:   Immediate and powerful targeted interventions systematically applied and monitored for any students not achieving

Tier 3:   Intensive interventions focused on closing the gap

(Bender, William. Beyond the RTI Pyramid: Solutions for the First Years of Implementation. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree,2009.Print.)

Before consideration for placement in a learning disabilities class, a student should be exposed to at least one intensive intervention with high-quality daily performance monitoring. An intervention is a new strategy or modification of instruction or behavior management designed to help a student or a group of students improve performance relative to a specific goal.

Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ can be the intensive intervention your student needs to master English grammar and close the gap in your classroom. One of the great miracles of human development is the students ability to master the language of his culture. Hands-On English with Linking Blocks™ provides this development with play manipulating and learning through patterns of colored blocks. Play is perhaps the most basic outcome of a child's natural genius. The capacity to create new ideas, reel in novelty, and engage in world-making for its own sake may be the single most important factor responsible for the development of civilization.

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