Case Study #1: Six-Year-Old John, an English Language Learner
by Sue Stout-Pipes

**Information About the Child**
John is a six-year-old boy in first grade. He lives with his mother, father, five brothers, and two sisters. He is the middle child. His mother and father speak Hmong and he speaks English as a second language. Because of his limited English, he has trouble pronouncing many words, especially the endings of words, which he frequently leaves off. For example, he pronounced *dad*, *da* and *with*, *wi*. John has a good attitude during our tutoring sessions and is always willing to participate in the activities I have brought for him. He seems to enjoy books, and he will often pick up a book and start telling the story before we read it.

**Assessments Administered and Results**

1. **Concepts about print**: 14/24 Correct. Stanine group 4.
   John read Clay’s *Sand* book. He read from left to right and top to bottom. He knew the front of the book, how to hold the book, when to turn the pages, and that the print is what carries the message. He did not understand the concept of the first part or the last part of the story and could not identify the bottom of the picture when the picture was inverted. Also, John did not notice when the line order was not in sequence or when the word order was not in sequence. John could tell me what the following punctuation marks were, but not what they meant: period, comma, and quotation marks.

   Confusion with X and S. Unknown letters: U, X, l, q, and d. Knew the sounds of the following letters: F, K, P, W, B, H, C, L, z, j, c, m, n, s, e, t, and g.

3. **Yopp-Singer Test of Phonemic Segmentation** - 14/22 Correct.
   Many of the words that were segmented correctly were not pronounced correctly. For example: *dog* was segmented /d/ /o/ /j/.

   John looked around the room to find the words he wanted to spell if he wasn’t sure how to spell them.

   John was using semantic and visual miscues while reading the list of words. For example: *Miss* for *Mr.* And *lamb* for *let*.

6. **Sight words** - 46/104 Correct.
   John tried to pronounce some of the words but made semantic and visual miscues such as, *did* for *does* and *house* for *mouse*. 
Running Record - On February 18, 2006, a level 6 book was too difficult. By April 1, 2006, a level 6 book was rated as too easy. The first running record miscues were mostly visual with only 2 self corrections out of 14. The last running record miscues were also visual, but he self corrected two out of five times.

Four out of the five correct responses were with the ending left off of a word and he said the beginning sound.

8. Kindergarten Phonemic Awareness Assessment  
    Rhyming - 70% - two of the three errors, John said the words rhymed, these words had the same vowel sound but not the same ending sound. 
    Oral Blending - 40% - The sounds he could blend had two phonemes. Three other words John tried to blend, but he did not say the correct word. For example: For /n/ /ew/ he said no. 
Identifying initial, middle and final phonemes of words - 60% - John identified three out of four ending sounds. He identified two out of four first sounds, but he could not identify any middle sounds in words.

9. Story Retelling - Book: Hurry Up, Franklin  
John identified three parts of the story without assistance. He knew that Franklin was the main character, he could tell one thing that happened in the middle of the story, and he knew that there was a birthday party for Bear at the end of the story. With prompts, John could identify several more things from the story. He knew that Franklin’s parents wanted him to hurry and that Franklin was going to Bear’s house for a special day. In the middle of the story, John looked at the book to indicate that Franklin played with Otter along the way. At the end of the story, John knew that Franklin and Snail stopped to pick blueberries, but he couldn’t remember what Snail was called. While John realized that Franklin was going to a birthday party, he thought the party was for Franklin.

10. Writing sample 
John wrote the following sentences about the book Hurry Up, Franklin: 
“The Franklin is go to the house he is sleep. The Franklin mom and dad is said Franklin is go to Bear house. The Franklin go to the Bear house he is give the blueberry.” While John spelled most of the words correctly (92.40%), and this classified him as spelling at the conventional stage, he did not write syntactically correct sentences.

Analysis of the Assessments  
John has a good understanding of the concepts about print. He can identify most of the letters in the alphabet but has trouble with most of the sounds. His phonemic awareness is limited, although he is better able to segment phonemes than blend them together.
John has learned how to spell many words. His strategies for unknown words are very effective. If he does not know how to spell a word, he will look around the room to spell it correctly. John could read about half of the sight words presented. It is interesting to note that he uses semantic and visual clues to read these words. This was noticed when he read Miss for Mr. Also, he often looked at the onset or rime to read a word incorrectly.

In two months time John went from reading a level 6 book that was too difficult, to reading a level 6 book that was too easy. He also had a higher percentage of self corrections with the last running record. John’s understanding of stories is limited. While he could retell the beginning, middle, and end of the story, he could not give many details with or without prompts. Also, he did not understand the basic premise of the story.

John’s writing is where most of his difficulty seems to be. While he can spell most of the words correctly, he cannot put them into a syntactically correct sentence. He often puts prepositions and pronouns in the middle of sentences when it is not appropriate. Also, he begins sentences with articles when it is not appropriate. For example, one of his sentences follows: “The Franklin is go to he house he is sleep.” I believe what he was trying to say was, “Franklin went to his house to sleep.”

Instructional Goals

I would begin reading instruction with John at a level 7 book. After each book he reads, I would have him write about it and encourage him to write syntactically correct sentences. I would alternate this approach with interactive writing and language experience activities to encourage proper use of language. Teaching him the proper use of pronouns would help eliminate unnecessary words from his writing. Also, I would work with John on his phonemic awareness, especially his ability to blend phonemes, to continue his growth in sounding out unknown words. I would continue to work with John on sight words also, through the use of gamelike activities. I would work on the following objectives with John:

1. John will demonstrate increasing phonemic awareness, by his ability to sound out words, by blending phonemes while reading.
2. John will increase the number of high frequency words he can read fluently, as demonstrated by reading books aloud.
3. John will write syntactically correct sentences with increasing proficiency, as demonstrated by a variety of writing tasks.
4. John will understand the proper use of nouns and pronouns, as demonstrated by a variety of writing tasks.