



The Importance of Teaching Reading: Emphasize for Reading Fluency or Accuracy in Improving Students' Reading Comprehension in EFL Context

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Abstract

Current methods for teaching reading comprehension tend to emphasize the products of comprehension and neglect the processes of comprehension. Teachers often provide insufficient opportunities for learners to practice English in teaching reading. To make the situation worse, both teachers and learners frequently use Indonesian language throughout English classes. There are two sets of skills that are particularly important to teach. The first set includes comprehension monitoring skills that involve readers' monitoring their continuing processing for possible comprehension failure and taking remedial action when failures occur. Comprehension failures can occur at various levels, including: particular words, particular sentences, relations between sentences, and relations between larger units. For each kind of failure, there are specific remedial actions readers can take. The second set of processing skills that can be taught involves using clues in the text to generate, evaluate, and revise hypotheses about current and future events in the text. During teaching reading in a class teachers may confuse to give exercises relate to fluency or accuracy. The correlation between fluency and reading comprehension showed a significant positive relationship between oral reading fluency and reading comprehension performance. Therefore, automaticity of decoding fluency is essential for high levels of reading achievement. Hence, what educators should do now is conscientiously try to shift educators' attention from emphasizing the accuracy of students 'oral presentation to developing their ability to express themselves both accurately and fluently in English.

Keywords: teaching reading, reading fluency, reading accuracy

Introduction

Problems in teaching and learning English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) relates to both teachers and learners. This problem is partly affected by teaching methods. Lochana & Deb (2006), state that most EFL teachers teach language by lecturing and focusing on grammatical rules instead of language use. It is much more effective to teach language from context and meaning (Ellis, 2003). Teachers often provide insufficient opportunities for learners to practice English. To make the situation worse, both teachers and learners frequently use Indonesian language throughout English classes.

According to Ruso (2007), learners do not like teachers who spend most of class time lecturing. Lecturing time demotivates them because they do not like being passive in class. Consequently, learners have limited input to the learning process. Learners face various additional difficulties in learning English. Many EFL learners cannot effectively use English in conversation or correspondence with others. According to Xiao (2009), EFL learners avoid employing target language and cannot apply it in genuine communication. Hashim (2006) shows that learning a language flourishes most when learners are in a positive environment and are given opportunities to communicate in authentic situations. Accordingly, it has been suggested that teachers abandon the traditional teaching approach and replace it with communicative language teaching (Lochana & Deb, 2006).

Current methods for teaching reading comprehension tend to emphasize the products of comprehension and neglect the processes of comprehension. There are two sets of skills that are particularly important to teach. The first set includes comprehension monitoring skills that involve readers' monitoring their continuing processing for possible comprehension failure and taking remedial action when failures occur. Comprehension failures can occur at various levels, including: particular words, particular sentences, relations between sentences, and relations between larger units. For each kind of failure, there are specific remedial actions readers can take. The second set of processing skills that can be taught involves using clues in the text to generate, evaluate, and revise hypotheses about current and future events in the text. In teaching these processing skills, the teacher should first model these skills by reading and thinking aloud and then gradually turn over the processing responsibilities to the students.

As defined by Alyousef (2005) Reading can be seen as an "interactive" process between a reader and a text which leads to automaticity or (reading fluency). In this process, the reader interacts dynamically with the text as he/she tries to elicit the meaning and where various kinds of knowledge are being used: linguistic or systemic knowledge (through bottom-up processing) as well as schematic knowledge (through top-down processing).

Discussion

The Importance of Reading Fluency

Fluent reading comprises three key elements: accurate reading of connected text at a conversational rate with appropriate prosody or expression (Hudson, Mercer, and Lane, 2000). A fluent reader can maintain this performance for long periods of time, can retain the skill after long periods of no practice, and can generalize across texts. A fluent reader is also not easily distracted and reads in an effortless, flowing manner. The most compelling reason to focus instructional efforts on students becoming fluent readers is the strong correlation between reading fluency and reading comprehension (Allington, 1983; Johns, 1993; Samuels, 1988; Schreiber, 1980).

Each aspect of fluency has a clear connection to text comprehension. Without accurate word reading, the reader will have no access to the author's intended meaning, and inaccurate word reading can lead to misinterpretations of the text. Poor automaticity in word reading or slow, laborious movement through the text taxes the reader's capacity to construct an ongoing interpretation of the text. Poor prosody can lead to confusion through inappropriate or meaningless groupings of words or through inappropriate applications of expression.

In assessing reading fluency, Teachers need to listen to students read aloud to make judgments about their progress in reading fluency (Zutell & Rasinski, 1991). Systematic observation helps assess student progress and determine instructional needs. Teachers observing students' oral reading fluency should consider each critical aspect of fluent reading: word-reading accuracy, rate, and prosody.

In assessing accuracy, measurement of students' word-reading accuracy can take numerous forms. Simply listening to oral reading and counting the number of errors per 100 words can provide invaluable information for the selection of appropriate text for various instructional purposes for an individual or group of students. A running record and miscue analysis (Clay, 1984, 1993) provides more detailed information about the student's accuracy. Through careful examination of error patterns, a teacher can determine which strategies the student is using and which strategies the student is failing to use. For example, observation of a student's attempts to figure out an unknown word might yield evidence of phonemic blending, guessing based on context, or a combination of decoding and contextual analysis. These observations can provide information about areas in need of further instruction to improve word-reading accuracy.

Contextual reading rather than reading words in a list (Jenkins, Fuchs, van den Broek, Espin, & Deno, 2003) and oral reading rather than silent reading (Fuchs, Fuchs, Eaton, & Hamlet, 2000 cited in Fuchs et al., 2001) were both found to be the best measures of reading rate. Measuring reading rate should

encompass consideration of both word reading automaticity and reading speed in connected text. Assessment of automaticity can include tests of sight-word knowledge or tests of decoding rate. Tests of decoding rate often consist of rapid decoding of non-words. Measurement of non-word reading rate ensures that the construct being assessed is the student's ability to automatically decode words using sound-symbol knowledge.

Timed readings are conducted using books or passages the student has read before that are at an in-dependent reading level (i.e., books the student can read with 95% accuracy or above). To conduct timed readings, follow these steps:

1. Record a baseline rate on a new passage by having the student read the passage without knowing that he or she is being timed. The number of words read correctly for that minute is recorded as the baseline.
2. Note the errors as the student reads. After the reading, discuss any errors and work on them by rereading the parts that were difficult or by doing word-study activities.
3. Set a goal for the next reading by asking the student to read five or six more words, or maybe another line. The goal should be a reasonable one that can be attained within the next few attempts. If the student made three or more errors in the first attempt, the goal may be to decrease the errors and keep the correct word per minute (CWPM) the same.
4. Record the goal on the graph with a highlighter.
5. Time the student again for one minute and record the CWPM and errors.
6. Discuss the errors; set another goal and repeat the process.
7. Timings should be done at least three times per week in order to build consistency.
8. When the student levels off and is no longer increasing the CWPM, it is time to select a new passage.
9. Select a new passage and begin the process again by taking a baseline reading.
10. Once students become familiar with the procedures involved in timed readings, they can record their own progress on the timing chart, record an audiotape of their own oral reading and chart their progress, or work in pairs to listen and record the reading rate and accuracy of their peers.

Transferring Teachers' Roles

With more and more attention being focused on improving students' communicative competence, the roles teachers have to play must be redefined. The best teachers are usually the ones who impart an attitude or an orientation related to the acquisition of mental abilities, or who are associated with the particular values that one finds personally motivating and inspirational. Specifically speaking, lecturers should take on the following roles in modern

English classroom teaching.

First, instead of being the dominating authority in the classroom, lecturer must become learning facilitators to facilitate the communicative process between all participants in the classroom and between these participants and the various activities and text (Breen & Candlin, 1980), giving guidance and advice when necessary. Lecturer should also act as interdependent participants within the learning-teaching group (Breen & Candlin, 1980), which means that Lecturer need to perceive students as having important contributions to make, and then Lecturer must continually seek potential and exploit and actively share the responsibility for learning and teaching with them. Lecturer must realize that any un-necessary intervention from us may prevent them from becoming genuinely involved in the activities and thus hinder the development of their communicative skills. However, this does not necessarily mean that lecturer should be passive observers. Instead, lecturer should develop students' potential through external direction and help them develop their distinctive qualities.

Second, just as lecturer want students to be life-long learners, lecturer must exhibit a passion for learning, a desire and an aptitude to continue discovering new knowledge and exemplify by constantly refreshing educators' knowledge and skills to keep abreast with the latest developments in educators' area of specialization.

Third, to keep pace with the times, lecturers also need to be creative and innovative in integrating educators' teaching with thinking and learning processes. Lecturer must give students more opportunities for expression and provide an environment where creativity can flourish. Lecturer must encourage students to question and to express their thoughts freely so that they will have inquisitive minds.

Besides, because the dynamics of society and industry are changing very fast and whatever knowledge and skills one acquires today may not be relevant tomorrow, lecturer need to remain sensitive and receptive to changes. Moreover, they need to be able to anticipate further changes that may come their way. And at the same time lecturer must inculcate in students a mindset for adapting and receiving changes to prepare them for the changing need of society.

In a word, in addition to imparting knowledge, lecturer need to be in the best positions to determine the most effective teaching methods to bring out the best in each student. For this purpose, on the one hand, lecturer need to recognize learning as an interpersonal undertaking over which no single person can have full control, and realize that there will be differences between ongoing learning processes. Lecturer have to accept the fact that different learners learn different things in different ways at different times and that some learners may enter periods when it seems that little or no progress is being made and that sometimes learning is typified by silent reflection.

On the other hand, lecturer should continually develop new skills and embrace new ideas to bring a fresh perspective to every lesson and to inspire in students a love for learning and passion for their subject; lecturer should motivate students to always make full use of their time, talents and abilities; lecturer should develop students as individuals according to their talents and abilities. In other words, to help students fit in with the needs of the society, lecturer should work as organizers of resources and as resources; as guides and managers of the classroom procedures and activities and as re-searchers and learners, with much to contribute in terms of appropriate knowledge, abilities, and actual and observed experience in the nature of learning and organizational capabilities (Breen & Candlin, 1980).

Knowledge and Teaching Methods

Lecturers must know something about linguistics, psychology, sociology, anthropology, education and so on, and be able to demonstrate the target language with enough accuracy, but lecturer are also expected to know a variety of teaching methodologies, correct ways to research, and some basic principles of testing. Lecturer must realize that it is obligatory for lecturers to adopt different methods when dealing with different teaching materials and when faced with students with different levels of English proficiency. To achieve the purpose, lecturer must enrich knowledge of English and improve educators' English skills by various means such as listening to programs in English, watching English programs on TV and surfing the English versions of various news items on the Internet frequently. In a word, to improve students' oral proficiency, lecturer should try every possible means to make ourselves walking encyclopedias so that lecturer can teach any student anything with skill and ease.

Attaching Equal Importance: Accuracy & Fluency Exercises

As is mentioned above, accuracy and fluency are so closely related that they are inseparable. Skehan (1998) proposed that because learners have a limited capacity of attention, there could be trade-off effects between accuracy and fluency. That is, when attention is paid to accuracy, fluency is likely to suffer and vice versa (Patanasorn, 2010). So attaching equal importance to both accuracy and fluency exercises is a must.

Accuracy exercises encourage a thoughtful use of language and the information is intended to help students understand how English works, while fluency exercises invite them to take the parts of different characters when role-playing and to continue a dialogue in their own way, that is, the fluency exercises encourage free expression. Doing accuracy exercises does not mean 100% error-free, but a high degree of accuracy is required, and as a result, students are encouraged to make as few errors as possible and to manipulate the language

as spontaneously and flexibly as possible. Generally speaking, soon after the students have mastered the language forms, they ought to be given intensive fluency practice, which is directed at inviting them to express themselves freely without being at all concerned about 100% accuracy. At this stage, lecturer should not only tolerate students' errors and encourage them by emphasizing that error-making is a natural and common practice in the learning of a foreign language, but also assess their performances at the end of each fluency practice so that they can realize their own weaknesses and become more and more conscious of their errors. In this way, accuracy and fluency, which are interdependent, can be practiced al-most simultaneously.

But when assigning accuracy and fluency exercises, lecturer had better keep in mind the following: For one thing, lecturer had better assign exercises that need the knowledge with which students are familiar, because it is found that the personal task which is based on information well known to learners allows them to be more fluent in their performance.

For another, lecturer had better give students more planning time. With regards to planning, it has been suggested that providing learners with more planning time prior to conducting the task helps learners produce more fluent and complex language (Patanasorn, 2010). Generally, the more planning time they are given, the more familiar they will be with the inherent structure of discourse and as a result, the more accurate and fluent they will be in their performance, because familiarity with content and opportunity to plan help lessen the load of information processing which allows learners more intentional resources to focus on formal aspects of language as well as help them to become more fluent in their performance (Patanasorn, 2010).

Communicative competence refers to the knowledge about a language and other aspects of communicative language use and the skills in using the knowledge when interacting in actual communication (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980). In communicative competence, there is a great deal of emphasis on how to use the language, yet linguistic competence still has its weighty impact in communication. This is because "in order to be able to communicate effectively, learners need an adequate mastery of grammar and vocabulary" (Byrne, 1991). Thus, this is where the accuracy of spoken English is emphasized. Fluency, on the other hand, is also taken into account as the two notions, fluency and accuracy, are relatively crucial in spoken language. This is because oral fluency is the main goal in teaching the productive skill of speaking (Byrne, 1991). According to Byrne (1991), fluency can be defined as "the ability to express oneself intelligibly, reasonably accurately and without too much hesitation; otherwise communication may break down because the listener loses interest or gets impatient" (p.9). Thus, this sums up that the ability to speak English accurately and fluently is an essential skill for effective communication.

However, in a nonnative English speaking environment, it is not possible for non-native speakers of the target language to achieve the competence of being able to speak as accurately and fluently as the native speakers. Gao (2001) stated that “native speakers acquire their first language at an early age by picking up naturally in the rich cultural and linguistic environment they were born or grew up in”, but not for the non-native speakers. This is due to the reason that the non-native speakers, who may be either children or adult learners, are selective in the kind of input they take since they have already learnt their first language (Gao, 2001). Thus, non-native speakers “cannot feasibly learn a second language as they did in acquiring their first language” (Gao, 2001). Moreover, Davies (2003) stated that the non-native speakers are normally “exposed to limited set of encounters and has little or no exposure to the cultural beliefs and knowledge which the target language bears”. In addition, there is lack of exposure and good model of English native speakers, and there is less opportunity to use the language, particularly in a non-native English speaking environment. Therefore, the only success that these non-native speakers have is “through learning the knowledge, learning like a book” (Davies, 2003).

Fluency

The two definitions of fluency by Fillmore (1979) are taken into account, which are:

1. “The ability to talk in coherent, reasoned and semantically dense sentences, showing a mastery of the semantic (meaning in language) and syntactic resources of the language”; and
2. “The ability to have appropriate things to say in a wide range of contexts, so that you do not become tongue tied or lost for words” (as cited in Brumfit, 1984).

In other words, fluency is about coherence and context sensitivity in utterances. In this study, the fluency of spoken English in the simulated role play situations which involve social interactions between two interlocutors is measured. The fluency level is measured using hesitation. This is because hesitation is one of the criteria considered in determining fluency in major standardized test such as Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

How Do Teachers Measure Fluency?

The easiest way to measure fluency in most skills is to select a repeatable action such as saying a word or writing the answer to a math problem, and to count how many times a person can complete that action in a fixed period of time. An educational methodology known as Precision Teaching (Binder, 1988; Binder and Watkins, 1990) has identified ranges of count per minute performance

describing fluency for hundreds of academic skills. By specifying a range of count per minute of correct responses on specific types of materials and procedures, it is possible to set goals for practice that help both teachers and learners make timely decisions to change or modify educational programs with individual learners.

Sometimes lecturer might time the student for ten seconds, and sometimes two minutes. But for the sake of comparison, lecturer always does the simple math to reduce measures to count per minute. Lecturer often keeps track of multiple counts at the same time, such as correct, incorrect, and self-corrected responses. Educators' goal is for learners to achieve a certain range of correct responses per minute, and to reduce or eliminate errors, skips, hesitations, or responses that require added help.

Lecturer start all timings with a respectful, but clear instruction, "Please begin," and lecturer end with "Please stop." It is easy to find out how quickly and accurately skilled people are able to perform. As an example, ask a small group of literate adults to copy a passage of text as rapidly as they can for a minute. Most of them will probably be able to copy between 100 and 150 letters in that time period. Similarly, being able to write correct answers to printed addition problems (e.g., $3 + 4 =$) at between 70 and 110 per minute, or reading a passage of text aloud at between 150 and 200 per minute, each represents fluent performance.

Once educators decide what to count, they set "aims" (Haughton, 1972; Binder, 1996) or performance criteria that serve as practice goals, and lecturer conduct daily timings to monitor progress towards the aims. Lecturer use these measures to make decisions about whether to change learning programs either because students have achieved their aims, or because they are not improving and need an intervention to accelerate learning. Passing students on to harder curriculum when they are below fluency aims negatively affects self-confidence and attitude as well as reducing the chance that they will be able to retain or apply the skill. Millions of students each year fail to achieve fluency on basic skills and require later re-teaching on the same skills. This is a terrible waste of students' and teachers' precious time. Reaching fluency the first time supports steady, rapid progress through curriculum, without allowing students to fall back.

Achievement Gains from Building Fluency

When lecturer pinpoint key skills, set fluency aims for each, and combine teaching and practice with measurement to help students achieve those aims, educational programs (whether school-based or home-based) often produce dramatic improvements in academic achievement. In an early demonstration program during the 1970's (Beck, 1979), adding just 20 to 30 minutes per day of practice, measurement, and charting of basic skill components to an

otherwise ordinary elementary school curriculum increased children's standard test scores by 20 to 40 percentile points, compared with other students in the same district. More recently, fluency-based instructional programs have reliably produced multiple grade levels of improvement in a summer program among students diagnosed with "learning problems" (Johnson & Layng, 1992). In addition, fluency-based programs have markedly improved students' ability to maintain attention to task while working on a variety of different activities (Binder, Haughton, & Van Eyk, 1990).

Selected Fluency Ranges

People generally specify fluency ranges of count per minute performance to account for individual differences and to recognize the fact that fluency for a particular skill is not a single, precisely defined level but a band on the spectrum of all possible performance levels within which most learners seem to retain and maintain skills, perform over extended durations without undue distractibility, and apply what they learn to more complex types of performance. This is not an exact science, and there are differences in opinion among practitioners about what levels are absolutely necessary for optimal results. Instead, most practitioners who are experienced with measuring count per minute performance can confidently report levels that are not sufficient to support optimal performance, whether or not they agree on the exact parameters of specific fluency ranges.

How Can Educator Help Students to Achieve Fluency?

Practice is the key to any fluency-based program. Athletes and performing artists have always been aware that focused repetition of important skills is the necessary pre-requisite for achieving great performance. Sad to say, however, many educators may not realize this basic principle of skill development. Even for those who understand the value of practice, it is important to focus on the right kind of practice to produce the greatest gains rather than on practice routines that are boring, painful, and ultimately ineffective. Some of the important differences between effective and ineffective practice programs include the following: Efficient practice always has a goal. Athletes are always striving to achieve goals, often motivated by attaining their "personal best" performances. Similarly, students who have count per minute goals for reading, writing, math, and other types of skills are generally more motivated than those told simply to "practice until you get better."

It is easier to attain fluency on small, achievable "chunks" or components of a larger performance than to attain mastery of the whole thing at once. This is perhaps the most important discovery of fluency-based educators (e.g., Starlin, 1971; Haughton, 1972). When students lack fluency in writing letters and digits, decoding words, saying vowel sounds, or calculating answers to basic arithmetic

problems, they often have great difficulty combining those skills into larger chunks. One of the most important ways to achieve fluency on anything is to find a way to practice and first master its smaller elements.

Correlation of Reading Fluency and Reading Comprehension

Definitions of Reading Fluency the National Reading Panel report defines reading fluency as "...the ability to read text quickly, accurately, and with proper expression". All three dimensions appear critical to a full definition of reading fluency (Dowhower, 1991). The fact that two of the three dimensions of fluency, accuracy and expressiveness, can be observed only through oral reading may have contributed to the limited amount of attention that fluency received until recently. Fluency was seen essentially as word recognition and oral reading phenomenon, and the importance of oral reading pales dramatically in comparison to that of silent reading comprehension.

Except, perhaps, as beginning readers in school, lecturer spend a miniscule amount of time doing expressive oral reading as compared to silent reading comprehension. The Literacy Dictionary: The Vocabulary of Reading and Writing, on the other hand, defines fluency as "freedom from word identification problems that might hinder comprehension" (Harris and Hodges, 1995). Samuels, a pioneer in research and theory in reading fluency, cites the alteration and enlargement of the construct of fluency to include reading comprehension as a major force in elevating the importance of the construct in the field of reading. He notes, "To experience good reading comprehension, the reader must be able to identify words quickly and easily" (Samuels, 2002).

The correlation between fluency and reading comprehension was clearly established by a large-scale analysis of data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress in Reading (Pinnell, et al., 1995). In that study, 44 percent of the subjects were found to be diffident when reading grade-level appropriate materials that they had previously read silently; the study also showed a significant, positive relationship between oral reading fluency and reading comprehension performance. A comprehensive definition then would seem to relate the centrality of fluency to reading comprehension and the established dimensions of the construct.

Educators would propose the following definition: Reading fluency refers to rapid, efficient, accurate word recognition skills that permit a reader to construct the meaning of text. Fluency is also manifested in accurate, rapid, expressive oral reading and is applied during, and makes possible, silent reading comprehension. Constructs of Reading Fluency While discussion of the construct of reading fluency is found as early as in the classic 1908 publication by Edmund Huey (Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler, 2002), most discussions of fluency trace its modern theoretical foundations to the 1974 seminal article by Le Berge and Samuels.

Those researchers argued that, based on information-processing theory and research, human beings are single-channel processors; that is, educators can attend to only one thing at a time. Educators are able to do more than one thing at a time if educators alternate educators' attention between two or more activities or if one of the activities is so well learned that it can be performed automatically. They pointed out that reading requires at least two activities:

- 1) Word identification or decoding and
- 2) Comprehension or the construction of the meaning of text.

In order for reading to proceed efficiently and effectively, the reader cannot focus attention on both of the processes. The non-fluent reader can, as do many beginning readers that have not yet developed automatic decoding skills, alternate attention between the two processes.

Constructing meaning which involves putting words into meaningful thought units, making inferences, relating information being derived from the text with background know-ledge, and responding critically to the meaning that is constructed always requires attention. For readers who must alternate between attending to the decoding of words and the construction of meaning, reading is a slow, laborious, inefficient, ineffective, and often punishing process. If the limited attention and cognitive capacity is drained by the processing of decoding words, little or no capacity is available for the attention-demanding process of constructing and responding to the meaning of a text. Therefore, automaticity of decoding fluency is essential for high levels of reading achievement. Keith Stanovich (1986) also contributed significantly to elevating the importance of reading fluency in a classic article in which he indicated a reciprocal relationship between fluency and the amount of reading in which a reader engages. Readers who have achieved some fluency are more likely to engage in more extensive amounts of reading than readers who lack fluency. The latter would find reading difficult and laborious. However, Stanovich goes on to point out that as a result of engaging in extensive amounts of reading, readers grow in all those skills that contributes to fluency and in fluency itself. Non-fluent readers who avoid re a ding fall further and further behind. Fluency has also been related to theoretical constructs of how reading precedes through developmental stages. Kuhn and Stahl (2000) summarize how the development of fluency is related to the stages of development described by Chall (1996) and by Ehri (1995). Chall's is a broad theoretical formulation that describes several stages of reading comprehension development in addition to decoding; therefore educators will focus on Ehri's theory, which focuses on decoding through a stage of fluency development.

In line with the theory of automaticity and the definition of fluency educators have proposed, Ehri (1998) has noted, "Being able to read words by sight automatically is the key to skilled reading of text. This allows readers to process words in text quickly, without attention directed to the word itself". Ehri has

developed a carefully researched, elegant theory of how readers systematically progress in stages from being non-readers to the point where they can recognize words effortlessly. Readers at the Pre-alphabetic Stage of Development have no appreciation of the alphabetic principle that in languages like English, there is a systematic relationship between the limited number of sounds of a language (approximately 40 in the case of English) and the graphic forms, or letters, of the language. At this stage children attempt to translate the unfamiliar visual forms of print into familiar oral language through some visual clue that is part of the print. For example, children might remember the printed word monkey by associating the descending shape of the last letter of the word with a monkey's tail.

Obviously this is not a productive approach and quickly leads to confusion since my, pony, honey, and many other words would also be read as monkey based on the selected visual clue. At the Partial Alphabetic Stage of Development, readers have latched onto the notion that there is a relationship between the letters and sounds and begin to use that insight. However, their ability to deal with the complexity of the sounds of words results in an incomplete use of that relationship. Therefore, they tend to focus on the most salient, easiest parts of a word to deal with and, consequently, use initial and, later, final letters as the clues to a printed word's pronunciation. For example, if readers at this stage of development are taught that the letter sequence g-o is the word go, they may focus just on the g and the sound it represents to identify the word. However, using this strategy of focusing on the first letter, the letter sequences give, get, gone, and gorilla might also, incorrectly, be identified as go. While children at this stage of development will make errors in identifying words, they are in a position to make progress since they have developed the insight that the letters of a printed word are clues to the sounds of the word. As children become more familiar with the forms of printed letters, are able to analyze the sounds that compose words, and become increasingly familiar with the sounds that letters are likely to represent, they move into the Fully Alphabetic Stage of Development.

Now, even though they may never have seen it in print before, if they know the sounds commonly associated with the letters b-u-g, they can think about the sounds for each of the letters and blend them together to arrive at the pronunciation of the word bug. Ehri's theory then indicates that as a result of encountering the printed word bug several times, as few as four times according to a widely cited study (Reitsma, 1983), they come to accurately and instantly identify the word bug without attending to the individual letters, sounds, or letter-sound associations.

Ehri (1998) describes skilled reading in the following way: "Most of the words are known by sight. Sight reading is a fast acting process. The term sight indicates that sight of the word activates that word in memory including information about its spelling, pronunciation, typical role in sentences, and

meaning". This instant, accurate, and automatic access to all these dimensions of a printed word is the needed fluency that will allow readers to focus their attention on comprehension rather than on decoding. It is important to note that Ehri's theory and research indicate that it is the careful processing of print in the fully alphabetic stage that leads to this rapid, instant recognition. Partial alphabetic readers store in-complete representations of words and, therefore, confuse similar words such as were, where, wire, wore, etc. However, once the word form is fully processed, with repeated encounters of the word, it is recognized instantly. As readers gain skill in processing print, they move into the Consolidated Alphabetic Stage of Development and also develop another valuable attention-saving decoding skill.

In addition to storing words as units, repeated encounters with words allow a reader to store letter patterns across different words. Using Ehri's example, the multi letter unit 'est' will be stored as a consolidated unit as a result of reading the words nest, pest, rest, test, vest, and west. Upon encountering the word chest for the first time, a consolidated alphabetic reader would need to connect only two units: *ch* and *est*, rather than the five units that the fully alphabetic reader would need to combine. As noted, while this approach to reading a word is faster than blending the individual phonemes, it is not as fast and efficient as sight recognition of the word.

Modeled Reading

One way to enhance fluency is for teachers to read aloud to students (Dowhower, 1987; Hoffman, 1987; Smith, 1979). The process of reading aloud to students needs to be supplemented with procedures which actually engage students in interaction with text, but reading aloud does provide them with a model of how to pace reading in connected text and how to infuse expression (attend to dialogue marks and punctuation). Taped or computer modeled reading is also a viable way to provide fluency support. However, for younger and less able readers taped or computer modeled reading seems more effective than no model, but not as effective as a teacher model (Daly and Martens, 1994). For lower performing readers, an additional benefit of having text read initially by a model improved comprehension. It seems that the reading model allowed students to focus on the content of the passage initially before they read it independently (Monda, 1989). While it varies from study to study whether students followed along in copies of the texts, experts recommend this as a way to engage children in the text prior to their reading it independently.

Repeated Reading of Familiar Text

Rereading text or repeated oral reading is perhaps the most frequently documented approach to improving fluency (National Reading Panel, 2000;

Rashotte & Torgesen, 1985) and has been associated with improved outcomes for young students (O'Shea, Sindelar, & O'Shea, 1987) as well as college students (Carver and Hoffman, 1981). Generally, intervention research on fluency development has been dominated by research on repeated reading. This likely reflects the application of the theory that fluent reading is promoted by frequent opportunities to practice in familiar text and to increased exposure to words.

Wide Independent Reading

Research does not yet clearly indicate whether repeated reading is superior to wide, sustained reading of different texts. Currently, it seems that for more able readers, repeated reading of the same texts is not as necessary as it is for struggling readers and that increasing the amount of reading that is done is sufficiently, and more beneficial (Homan, Klesius, & Hite, 1993; Mathes & Fuchs, 1993; Rashotte & Torgesen, 1985). The beneficial effects of wide reading were somewhat called into question by the fairly recent Report of the National Reading Panel (2000) which concluded: "Based on the existing evidence, the NRP can only indicate that while encouraging students to read might be beneficial, research has not yet demonstrated this in a clear and convincing manner".

It is important to keep in mind that the NRP used very restrictive criteria for "research" and, also, that it clearly held out the possibility of beneficial effects for wide reading. Previous highly respected research syntheses have been far less restrained about the salutary effects of wide reading. For example, *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (Anderson et al, 1985) concludes: "Research suggests that the amount of independent, silent reading that children do in school is significantly related to gains in reading achievement" This same research review concludes: "Research also shows that the amount of reading students do out of school is consistently related to gains in reading achievement". In her critical review of beginning reading research Adams (1990) concluded: "If people want children to read well, educators must find a way to induce them to read lots". Adams also concludes: "Children should be given as much opportunity and encouragement as possible to practice their reading.

Beyond the basics, children's reading facility, as well as their vocabulary and conceptual growth, depends strongly on the amount of text they read". Keith Stanovich & his colleagues (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Nathan & Stanovich, 1991; Stanovich, 1986; Stanovich & Cunningham, 1992; Stanovich, Cunningham, & Freeman, 1984; Stanovich & West, 1989) have presented impressive research results and theoretical argument for the value of wide reading. The evidence and rationale that they present, however, is that the positive relationship between reading achievement and wide reading may not be affected exclusively through the development of fluency, but through the development of language

and cognitive abilities as well.

While the experimental evidence may not be as clear as it should be, there does appear, at least for achieving readers, strong evidence and support for the conclusion of Nathan & Stanovich (1991) that: "If children are to become fluent readers, they need to read a lot. Educators' job as educators is to see to it that children want to read that they seek new knowledge via the written word and derive satisfaction and joy from the reading process". Moreover, if students are making adequate progress with fluency, wide reading rather than repeated reading may lead to greater improvements in vocabulary and comprehension. However, for less able readers experiencing particular difficulties with fluency, repeat-ed reading remains an important aspect of an instructional program

Coached or Assisted Reading

Most researchers agree that accuracy alone is insufficient and that students need to read rapidly if they are going to understand the connections that need to be made between ideas in print (Nathan & Stanovich, 1991). Controlling the difficulty of texts and providing feedback for words missed during reading seem to be associated with improved rate and accuracy for those students developing fluent reading. Advancing students through progressively difficult text based on their performance seems to enhance their overall fluency as correction and feedback for words read incorrectly. Providing students with opportunities to read widely and targeting specific elements of fluency building, such as progressively difficult text with corrective feedback, appear to contribute to improved fluency (Kuhn and Stahl, 2000). Heibert and Fisher (2002) studied fluency development as it relates to the features of the texts used for promoting fluency. Specifically, they were interested in examining the effects of texts in which particular text dimensions or features were carefully controlled. The treatment texts Heibert and Fisher designed were characterized as having the following key features: a small number of unique words, a high percentage of most frequently used words, and often repeated critical words (those words that influence the meaning of the text most). Students in the comparison group read from texts typically associated with commercial reading programs. Using a repeated reading (three times) instructional routine in a nine-week intervention, students reading in the treatment texts made significant gains in fluency over their peers in the comparison condition. There also seemed to be an effect for comprehension for second language learners. These findings suggest that the features of the texts being used to promote fluency should be carefully considered.

Chunking Texts

Another approach to fluency building is to provide struggling readers with text in which meaningful groups or words or phrases are signaled for the reader as a

means of improving fluency and comprehension (Cromer, 1970; Young and Bowers, 1995). Research reveals that different amounts of text presented in repeated reading do not seem to change the outcome. However, control of the amount of text presented may be beneficial for students who are experiencing difficulty with reading accuracy as it may force them to focus on the words for a longer period of time (Cohen, 1988). Carbo (1981) used a phrased or chunked approach to assisted repeated reading. She had students listen to tapes and follow along in books in which the text was chunked into short phrases. Carbo reported significant gains in word recognition ability suggesting that this approach might be helpful for improving accuracy. Several re-searchers have studied the effects of parsing or chunking texts into phrase units. While most of these studies have been with older students, Kuhn and Stahl (2000) reported that reading phrase units rather than conventional text does seem to result in improved fluency.

Word Reading Practice

Based on Ehri's stage model of reading and previously offered theoretical descriptions of fluency, the importance of individual word reading automaticity would seem to have practical implications for fluency building. Studies in which teachers had students practice reading lists of words that they were to later encounter in connected texts consistently resulted in increased fluency (Fleisher, Jenkins, & Pany, 1979-80; Levy, Abello, & Lysynchuk, 1997). It is important to note, however, that there was no concomitant increase in comprehension.

Conclusion

In conclusion, with people's attention being focused more and more on the oral proficiency of English learners, teachers have realized the urgency of shifting their emphasis from form to use and communicative language principles are subscribed to. But the reality is that linguistic competence continues to be emphasized while there is no corresponding change in the classroom teaching modes and teaching methods. Hence, what educators should do now is conscientiously try to shift educators' attention from emphasizing the accuracy of students' oral presentation to developing their ability to express themselves both accurately and fluently in English, for which educators can employ various means such as combining grammar-translation method and communicative approach, transferring teachers' roles, and attaching equal importance to both accuracy and fluency exercises.

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