Teaching Adults to Read
Fluency & Reading Comprehension
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Comprehension Breakdown

The Components of Reading
Print-Based Components
Alphabets: Phonemic Awareness
Whole Language: Association of sounds and words
Fluency
Meaning-Based Components
Vocabulary
Comprehension

What is Fluency?
The ability to read smoothly and with expression, at an adequate rate, without making errors in pronunciation.

The Three Aspects of Fluent Reading
- Speed
- Accuracy in word identification
- Phrasing and expression (prosody)
Findings: Fluency

- Fluency can be taught to adults.
- Teaching fluency increases reading achievement.
- Strategies for fluency instruction include guided repeated oral readings of text to improve accuracy, rate, and rhythm.

Findings: Fluency (continued)

- Practice: Teach fluency using repeated readings.
- **Effective K–12 strategy:** guided repeated oral reading
  - Also useful for those with reading problems
  - Motivational (leads to quick success)

Fluency

- Why is it important?
  - Fluency is required for comprehension. Accurate and efficient word identification allows the reader to pay attention to meaning.
  - Fluent reading is comprehensible because it sounds like speech.
- Who needs it?
  - Most adult beginning readers and many others.

Mastery vs. Automaticity

- **Mastery:** the ability to perform a skill reliably without obvious deliberate effort but with some obvious conscious application of underlying skills needed to accomplish a task.
- **Automaticity:** the ability to perform a skill with ease, accuracy and speed and without the conscious application of underlying skills needed to accomplish a task

Fluency Assessment

Oral Reading Rate

- Why do we need to measure oral reading rate? It is a measure of word recognition automaticity. It is the first step in an informal assessment of fluency.
- How do we measure reading rate?
  - words per minute = (number of words in passage ÷ reading time (in seconds)) x 60

Oral Reading Rate Formula Practice

"It was on a dreary night of November that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might now infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet..."

100 wpm; 200 wpm; 250 wpm; 300 wpm

Frankenstein
Diagnostic Assessments of Reading (1992); Riverside: Itasca

Level 6
Fluency Assessment (continued)

Rapid Automatized Naming

a s d p a o s p d
d a p d o a p s o
o s a s d p o d a
s p o d s a s o p
a d p a p o a p s

n=18.9 seconds not a processing problem; 21.3 borderline disabled; 26.3 disabled

Fluency Assessment (continued)

Reading Accuracy

- Are words read correctly?
- Does the reader pay attention to the punctuation?

Fluency Assessment (continued)

Scoring Oral Reading Accuracy

Real Errors
- Mispronunciations—count only first time the error is made
- Substitutions
- Insertions
- Omissions
- Supplied words

Fluency Assessment (continued)

Not Real Errors
- Self-corrections
- Repetitions
- Errors in word endings: –ing, –ed, –s
- Pronunciation errors in proper nouns

Fluency Assessment (continued)

Assessing Oral Reading Accuracy

A type of drawing of a person that we often see in newspapers is a caricature. A caricature portrays someone so that he or she can be recognized, but looks peculiar or funny. Usually the people who are drawn are famous politicians or public figures.

“Caricature”
Fluency Assessment (continued)

One of the secrets of caricatures is to take part of the person's face which is in real life rather striking (a big nose, perhaps) and use that feature as the basis for the drawing. Very few of us have regular faces with everything of standard size, and perhaps if you look in the mirror, you will find something that is specially you."


Total real errors for the passage 7

Prosody Scale Adapted from the NAEP Oral Reading Study, 2002


"...We do know that the music with the odd name, bred in the most humble circumstances, has become the first truly global art alongside the other form intrinsic to the twentieth century, the motion picture.

The message of jazz, direct and immediate, speaks to the heart, across cultural, linguistic, and political barriers."

Fluency Assessment (continued)

Rate, Accuracy and Prosody

"The growing specialization of work and the demand for industrial efficiency under the impact of advanced industrial development resulted in the imposition of age-related standards of usefulness and productivity in American society beginning around the turn of the century, but retirement at a specific age was an invention of the twentieth century."


Fluency Assessment

- Questions? Comments?

Fluency Instruction

- Research-based Tips
  - Use a fluency measure with (at least) beginning- and intermediate-level readers.
  - Use guided, repeated oral reading techniques to build reading fluency.

Guided, Repeated Oral Reading Techniques

- Reading to the teacher or tutor
- Echo reading
- Dyad and choral reading
- Paired or partner reading
- Tape-assisted reading
- Performance reading
- Cross-generational reading

Fluency Instruction Practice

- Echo reading: Time Machine passage (prosody)
- Dyad reading: Huckleberry Finn passage (speed)

Another Approach:

If word identification is part of the fluency problem, phonics instruction and sight-word practice may make a difference.
Other Issues in Fluency Development

- Appropriate difficulty level of materials
  - For speed and phrasing
  - For accuracy (decoding practice)
- Audiotapes
- Teacher guidance
  - Limit interruptions
- Silent reading (before oral)

An Online Fluency Resource

- “Reading Skills for Today’s Adults” on the Marshall, Minnesota website: http://www.marshalladulteducation.org

- An online collection of stories and articles for reading practice across a wide range of readability levels
- Oral readings users may access for each selection (readings at three different speeds)
- A timer that users may download to time their own readings
- A downloadable chart students may use to record their timed readings

Readability

Comprehension

The Components of Reading

Print-Based Components
- Alphabets: Phonemic Awareness
- Word Analysis: Decoding, Encoding, Vocabulary
- Fluency

Meaning-Based Components
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension

What is it?

Reading comprehension has been defined as “the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language.”

(Rand Reading Study Group, 2002)
Comprehension (continued)

Why is comprehension-strategy instruction important?
- Many readers don’t know they’re not “getting it” or just pretend to understand.
- Less literate adults don’t always “demand that it makes sense.”
- Many are unaware of the kind of active processing good readers do.
- They might not know what they’re missing or notice inconsistencies.
- They don’t know what’s causing the “comprehension breakdowns”.

What causes comprehension breakdowns?
- Limited vocabulary and/or background knowledge
- Weak decoding skills and slow word identification
- Limited use of strategies

Who needs strategy instruction?
- Most (maybe all) learners in ABE and family literacy classrooms can benefit from comprehension-strategy instruction.

Research Related to Comprehension

Findings: Comprehension Instruction

Research
- ABE reading instruction can lead to improved reading comprehension but specific instructional practices are only beginning to be identified.
- One principle suggests that effective approaches provide direct as opposed to incidental instruction in comprehension strategies.
- A trend suggests focusing on more than one component or aspect of reading during instruction.
- Several trends suggest that enabling settings or approaches are effective.

Findings: Comprehension (continued)

K–12 results provide support
- Multi-components: Teaching alphabets, fluency, and vocabulary all lead to improved reading comprehension.
- Direct instruction in specific strategies
- Most support for multiple-strategy instruction

Assessment of Comprehension
Assessments are available in written and oral forms. Most standardized tests are written tests of silent reading comprehension, mostly multiple choice. Curriculum-based tests are usually multiple choice or short answer. Informal reading inventories include oral comprehension assessments.

May allow learners to demonstrate comprehension in other ways. May allow glimpse of other aspects of reading outcomes. Tutoring/classroom activities provide opportunities for informal assessment.

Questions to Ask:

What's behind the comprehension problem?
- Print skills?
  - Word-reading difficulty?
  - Limited decoding skills?
- Fluency problem?
  - Slow/inaccurate word identification?
  - Lack of phrasing or expression?

Questions to Ask (continued):

What's behind the comprehension problem?
- Meaning skills?
  - Limited vocabulary?
  - Limited background knowledge?
  - Few comprehension strategies?
- Or both: Limited print and meaning skills?

Comprehension Strategy Instruction

For good readers procedural strategies for understanding are automatic. We do them without thinking.

But poor readers need to be explicitly taught the reading strategies that good readers use.
Comprehension Strategy Instruction

“...when [mid-high level] readers are given cognitive strategy instruction, they make significant gains on measures of reading comprehension over students trained with conventional instruction procedures” (NICHD)

What is Strategy Instruction?

Teaching learning tools—
- Principles
- Concepts
- Rules
- or Multi-step Processes
learners can use independently to solve problems or accomplish learning tasks

Teach reading strategies for before, during and after reading

- Using titles, headlines, pictures
- Thinking about what you already know
- Making predictions
- Skimming, scanning
- Using context clues
- Re-reading
- Posing and answering questions

Comprehension Strategy Instruction

Research-based Strategies
- Comprehension monitoring (p. 80–82)
- Graphic organizers (p. 83–87)
- Story structure (p. 88)
- Question answering (p. 89–91)

Comprehension Monitoring

Think Aloud: A Teacher and Reader Strategy

What might you demonstrate for learners?
- Re-reading and restating a difficult passage
- Showing confusion by asking questions
- Identifying important or not-so-important information
- Figuring out meanings of words using context clues
Migration/Movement of Peoples

When did people first migrate to the Western Hemisphere?

From Europe’s discovery of the American “Indian” at the end of the fifteenth century to the present, the questions of who the native American populations are and how they came to the Western Hemisphere have intrigued scholars, clergymen, and laymen.

Early theories (put forth primarily by clergymen and not long after Columbus arrived in the Americas in 1492) posited that the New World’s indigenous people were descended from the ten lost tribes of Israel, or that the Indians’ ancestors were Welshmen, or even that the natives came from the fabled lost continents of Atlantis and Mu.


Think Aloud Pair Practice

- Assemble in pairs.
- Select a text to read.
- Plan a thinking-aloud demonstration.
- Perform your think aloud with your partner.

Activities

- Highlight first sentence
- Map student’s knowledge
- Create summary from pictures

Before they read …

- Introduce subject matter
- Relate subject to something student already knows—personal experience
- Review new vocabulary
- Ask predicting questions based on title, pictures, etc.

While they read …

- Be attentive, interested, enthusiastic
- Be reassuring
- Stop and ask predicting questions
- Break the story into manageable chunks
Activities: Getting the main idea/structure

- Manipulate online texts
- Scramble the paragraphs
- Remove key words
- Note-taking worksheet

Activity: Using Graphic Organizers

1. Stop after each sentence.
2. Picture what it is saying.
3. Ask questions.
4. Compare to what I already know.
5. Use my own words to retell it.

Activities: Encourage Purposeful Reading

- Margin symbols
- News stories (2 versions)
- Universal charts
- Divide reading into timed sections

After they read …

- Ask questions
- Ask if student has questions
- Have student summarize or retell
- Encourage students to reread
- Review vocabulary
- Write about the story
- Praise accomplishments

Activities: Responding to Reading

- Mark the text
- Use restatement or evaluation cues
- Have students decide whether they agree or disagree
- Create yes/no/I don’t know questions

Types of Questions

- Knowledge—recognize/recall information
- Comprehension—understanding of material
- Application—apply information, demonstrate principles or rules, use what was learned
- Analysis—identify reasons, uncover evidence, reach conclusions
- Synthesis—perform original/creative thinking
- Evaluation—judge the merit, informed opinion
Comprehension Strategies Group Activity

- Form small groups of 3-4 people.
- Select a text to work with.
- Select one of the following strategies to use with the text:
  - Graphic Organizers (pages 83-87)
  - Question Generating (page 89)
  - Summarization (pages 93-96)
  - Cooperative Learning (page 98)
- Plan an activity using your text and strategy.

Suggestions for Strategy Instruction

- Start with only one or two that are broadly applicable.
- For introduction, choose materials with familiar words and subject matter (unless the strategy involves word identification or using context clues).
- Be explicit about when to use it.
- Model strategy use and give lots of practice, reading text aloud so weaker readers can participate.
- Review strategies often.

Comprehension Strategy Instruction

- What questions or comments do you have about Comprehension Strategy Instruction?

Thank you!

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