Repeated Reading as a Strategy to Improve Fluency; Practices for Struggling Readers in a First Grade Classroom

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Abstract

Fluency is reading written text with accuracy, which leads to comprehension, the ultimate goal of reading. Research shows that repeated reading has impacted struggling readers in a positive way by improving fluency. The research question is how can repeated reading be used to increase fluency? This study was conducted to research and analyze the reading rate of a subject whom has been exposed to an unfamiliar text passages multiple times in an attempt to determine the fluency rate through familiarization. Overall fluency improved as demonstrated by more accurate reading, improved rate, and use of pitch, stress, and intonation. Repeated reading offers multiple strategies to put into practice in a literacy curriculum, which have shown effectiveness. Overall students can increase fluency when more directed modeling and focused practice is implemented.
Table of Contents

Abstract .............................................................................................................................. 2
Table of Contents ............................................................................................................. 3
Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 4
Theoretical Framework .................................................................................................... 6
Review of Literature ....................................................................................................... 8
Methodology ................................................................................................................... 18
Data Analysis/Findings ................................................................................................... 23
Implications ..................................................................................................................... 27
Conclusion ...................................................................................................................... 28
References ....................................................................................................................... 31
Introduction

As we educate our future generations, teachers should be focusing on literacy, but most importantly fluency. Fluency is reading written text with accuracy, which leads to comprehension, the ultimate goal of reading. Fluency involves three components. According to Nichols, Rupley, and Rasinski (2009), those three components are: accuracy of recognition, automaticity of word recognition, and reading orally with appropriate expression. According to Nichols et al., (2009) understanding and responding to thoughts within writing is the core of reading. Therefore the goal of reading is comprehension. Teachers today must recognize that fluency is one of the most important fundamental components that bring about this capability. According to Welsch (2006), “Fluency is a vital dimension of reading. The neglecting of fluency as a reading element can no longer happen. Decoding and comprehending is a needed critical aspect in order to be a successful reader” (p. 180). She also stated that, “our education system tends to overlook instruction on reading fluency, while stressing decoding and comprehension” (Welsch, 2006, p. 180). This has led to many students who are not fluent readers. According to Gorsuch and Taguchi (2010), “Fluent readers are accurate and fast in their ability to recognize words, and in their use of prosodic and syntactic knowledge to better comprehend text” (p. 28). A fluent reader should display effortless reading, which entails silent or oral reading with appropriate phrasing, expressiveness, speed, and good comprehension. Readers with specific fluency problems often need more directed modeling combined with more focused practice. There are multiple strategies that have been proven effective to increase oral reading fluency (Begeny, Krouse, Ross & Mitchelle, 2009). Hasbrouck and Tindal (2006), added, “Helping our students become fluent readers is absolutely critical for proficient and motivated reading” (p. 642). Fluency is one of many skills, which is a vital part of reading.
One issue that dominates fluency is, engaging teachers to examine fluency and the struggles within a class. This examination will eventually allow for more corrections to be made during the reading process. By teachers gaining awareness regarding, fluency one will be able to spot specific behaviors that may indicate struggling readers. When students make errors it forces the teachers to pay closer attention, and focus on fluency based instruction.

According to Hasbrouck and Tindal (2006), “Helping our students become fluent readers is absolutely critical for proficient and motivated reading” (p. 642). Teachers need to examine and identify disfluency in the classroom. For one to teach this topic effectively, differentiating instruction must be incorporated into instruction. Differentiating instruction to meet the individual learning needs within a class could be provided by utilizing such means as visual materials, technology, or small group activities. Teachers also need to be advised how to teach fluency effectively based upon research. It must be noted however that fluency is not a reachable stage with all texts. As stated by The National Center On Education And The Economy (2009), “When readers encounter a new text full of unfamiliar words, they need to build their fluency by reading and re-reading. Fluency is fostered through practice” (p. 3) According to Nichols et al., (2009), “fluency is a gateway to comprehension that enables students to move from being word decoders to passage comprehenders” (p. 11). Fluency instruction is important and frequently neglected. In 2002, Chard, Vaughn, and Tyler concluded, “This is likely due in part to the fact that effective interventions for improving fluency are not widely known” (p. 387). Chard et al. provided an example why some strategies aren’t always effective. “For example, whereas there is a consensus that fluency is dependent on adequate word recognition skills, there is also an understanding that word recognition proficiency may not always yield fluent readers” (Chard, et al. 2002, p. 387). Therefore, to improve reading fluency a proven effective strategy of instruction must be utilized as
we reevaluate how to teach the basic and higher order reading skills due to the decrease in reading success.

One dominating issue in today’s classrooms is how to engage teachers to examine fluency in the classroom. Close assessment of fluency will allow for teachers to make corrections during the reading process, which will assist in the process of improvement in fluency. Awareness will allow a teacher to spot specific behaviors that may indicate struggling readers. Zutell and Rasinski (2001) suggest a multi-step process for supporting teachers’ use of fluency instruction. Teachers must mark phrase and clause boundaries as they listen to children’s oral readings. Teachers should listen for eventual attainment of an instructional word accuracy level of 90 to 95 percent. Fluency strategies should be researched to improve and monitor fluency to evaluate students and address their specific instructional needs.

Differentiating instruction with the use of repeated reading is one way fluency instruction can be taught. It is crucial to continue assessing and tailor instruction to student needs. How can repeated reading be used to increase reading fluency?

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical perspective related to this topic is the Constructivist Approach. According to Cohen and Cowen (2008), the “constructivist approach claims that each learner must actively construct meaning for himself or herself—that learning is based on the individual’s background knowledge, experiences, and previous conceptualizations” (p. 618). Here the learner constructs his or her own meaning rather than memorizing the correct answers. In the classroom this approach can be seen through experiments, real life problem solving, and research based inquiry projects. All of these approaches provide individualism along with some collaboration with peers that are not just for general education but extend to those on with special educational needs. According to
Cohen and Cowen (2008), “students with learning disabilities can perform well in this environment because it allows them the opportunity to ‘learn through their strength’ by providing many different learning styles to present material” (p. 618). This approach allows for differentiating instruction to meet the needs of students’ within a class. The students’ take charge with exploring and generating ideas while the teacher stands nearby if assistance is needed.

This theory is important to use in a literacy classroom because it provides student based learning, while the teacher assists others who are in need of additional instruction. Teachers need to keep in mind that structure needs to remain in place so as to avoid confusion. A few strategies that produce a strong structural background with student based learning are repeated reading, use of models of fluent reading, and story innovation. According to Cohen and Cowen (2008), “this is a child-centered environment whereby student interacts with student, with the teacher intervening occasionally” (p.621). Students’ working together can construct their own meaning through collaboration.

Kucer (2005), states that there are five reading and writing features of the reading process. Those five features are: knowledge search, context, goals and plans, strategies, and evolving text. When beginning the reading process the teacher should activate the students’ prior knowledge to make connections and or predictions. The context within a story should initiate a conversation between the reader and text. By setting a goal and creating a plan the reader is creating a problem. When reading different texts the reader should read with a different purpose or outcome. Not every text is meant to be read with the same attained goal. Strategies guide the reader and allow one to see what areas are strong versus what areas are weak. By providing specific strategies the reader can then improve on any struggles he or she encounters. Lastly, evolving text is when the reader relies less on the surfaced meaning and more on the deeper
contextual meaning. All of these features have an effect on the reader when learning to read or improve reading skills.

Fountas and Pinnell (2001), have explained, “the ultimate goal of the literacy program is to enable students to learn how satisfying reading and writing are and to establish lifelong reading and writing habits” (p.10). Children acquire and learn language and literacy through thoughtful and well-organized instruction time. Through the overlapping of a well-balanced literacy instruction automaticity becomes possible (Kucer, 2005, p. 147). According to Kucer (2005), “This allows the reader the time and cognitive capacity to construct an interpretation for the clause or sentence in which the words are embedded” (p. 148). Having an efficient instructional literacy time daily allows for a more structural framework, which will prepare the students for success within literacy instruction.

**Research Question**

According to Welsch (2006), “Fluency is a vital dimension of reading. Reading fluency is needed to be a successful reader” (p. 180). Teachers today must recognize that fluency is one of the most important fundamental components of reading. There are numerous strategies to help improve fluency; it’s a matter of finding a strategy that works for that particular struggling reader. How can repeated reading be used to increase reading fluency?

**Review of Literature**

More than ever before, classroom teachers should be focusing on literacy, but most importantly fluency. Fluency is reading written text with accuracy, which leads to comprehension, the ultimate goal of reading. Fluency involves three components. According to Nichols, Rupley, and Rasinski, (2009), those three components are: accuracy of recognition, automaticity of word recognition, and reading orally with appropriate expression. According to Nichols et al., (2009),
understanding and responding to thoughts within writing is the core of reading. Teachers today must recognize that fluency is one of the most important fundamental components that brings about this capability of reading comprehension. The neglecting of fluency as a reading element can no longer happen. Decoding and comprehending is a critical aspect in order to be a successful reader.

According to Gorsuch and Taguchi (2010), “Fluent readers are accurate and fast in their ability to recognize words, and in their use of prosodic and syntactic knowledge to better comprehend text” (p. 28). A fluent reader should display effortless reading, which entails silent or oral reading with appropriate phrasing, expressiveness, speed, and good comprehension. Readers with specific fluency problems often need more directed modeling combined with more focused practice. There are multiple strategies that have been proven effective to increase oral reading fluency. Hasbrouck and Tindal (2006), added, “Helping our students become fluent readers is absolutely critical for proficient and motivated reading” (p. 642). Fluency is one of many skills, which is a vital part of reading.

According to Nichols et al., (2009), “fluency is a gateway to comprehension that enables students to move from being word decoders to passage comprehenders” (p. 11). Fluency instruction is important and frequently neglected. In 2002, Chard, Vaughn, and Tyler concluded, “This is likely due in part to the fact that effective interventions for improving fluency are not widely know” (p. 387). Chard et al. provided an example why some strategies aren’t always effective. “For example, whereas there is a consensus that fluency is dependent on adequate word recognition skills, there is also an understanding that word recognition proficiency may not always yield fluent readers” (Chard, et al. 2002, p. 387). Therefore, to improve reading fluency a proven effective strategy of instruction must be utilized as we reevaluate how to teach the basic and higher order reading skills due to the decrease in reading success.
One issue that dominates fluency is engaging teachers to examine fluency and the struggles within a class. This examination will eventually allow for more corrections to be made during the reading process. By gaining teachers awareness on fluency one will be able to spot specific behaviors that may indicate struggling readers. Zutell and Rasinski (2001) suggest a three-step process for supporting teachers’ use of fluency instruction. Firstly, teachers mark phrase and clause boundaries as they listen to children’s’ oral readings. Teachers are listening for eventual attainment of an instructional word accuracy level of 90 to 95 percent. Lastly, Zutell and Rasinski (2001), stated that:

They mark specific disfluent behaviors, rate the fluency of the reading on a graded scale, discuss the qualities of the reading that led to their judgments, speculate on factors that contributed to the fluency or disfluency of the reading and, if appropriate, suggest instructional activities that would help students learn to read more fluently (p. 212).

In this activity, the holistic aspect of reading is being monitored. When students make errors it forces the teachers to pay closer attention, and focus on fluency based instruction.

According to Allinder, Dunse, Brunke and Obermiller-Krolikowski (2001), “fluency is hypothesized to be the result of automatic decoding” (p. 48). When children read at a slow pace they are often using the word-for-word decoding method (Allinder et al.). As a result, the majority of the time is spent on decoding. As children become better decoders, and advance to the automatic level of decoding, more time will be spent on the cognitive learning. Children need to be able to recognize words at first sight rather then relying on decoding. Children can’t rely on the sounding out method if he or she wants to become a fluent reader. According to Young and Rasinski (2009),
Repeated Reading Strategy 11

Accuracy in word recognition refers to readers’ ability to read the words in a text without error in pronunciation. Automaticity refers to the ability of proficient readers to read the words in a text correctly and effortlessly so that they may use their finite cognitive resources to attend to meaning while reading (p. 4).

One of the most important skills, which will lead a child to becoming a successful fluent reader, is word recognition.

As a result, Hasbrouck and Tindal (2006), affirm that, “Helping our students become fluent readers is absolutely critical for proficient and motivated reading” (p. 642). Teachers need to realize and be open-minded that students are struggling fluently. In 2001, Allinder et al. concluded, “As children become more adapt at decoding individual words and advance to the automatic level of decoding, they are able to devote more of their cognitive resources to understanding the meanings of the words they are decoding” (p. 48). However, fluency is not a reachable stage with all texts. How can repeated reading be used to increase reading fluency?

**Why Repeated Reading is Used**

“Repeated reading involves having a student re-read a short passage 2 or more times, sometimes reading the passage until a suitable reading fluency level is met” (Begeny, Krouse, Ross, & Mitchell, 2009, p.212). Students are given short passages that contain familiar words. The students are asked to read the passage several times until the appropriate fluency rate is attained. Once they have mastered the fluency rate they then choose a new passage at a higher level and continue with the repeated reading cycle. The reading is timed and then the data is charted.

Repeated reading should become a routine for students.

Therrien (2004), noted that repeated reading has a wide-ranging research base (p. 253). According to Nichols et al. (2009), “repeated reading is the most recognized approach for
developing fluency” (p. 5). The more time and exposure a student has with the reading material the
more knowledgeable one will be. According to Morra and Tracey (2006), repeated reading
improves children’s understanding of the phrasing of words and may also increase comprehension
when given multiple exposures. Frequent opportunities to practice with the same text can be
effective and will enhance ones reading performance. In a study done with second graders by
Cooper and Paccia-Cooper, prior to implementing the repeated reading, adequate word decoding
was displayed but at a slow word-by-word pace. As a result, Morra & Tracey (2006), stated, “After
repeated reading practice, children made fewer pauses not dictated by sentence structure and
showed greater sentence-final vowel lengthening” (p. 177). This approach appears to be one of the
most powerful. Morra and Tracey (2006), state that this activity will facilitate the children to further
understand the wording of text, which may lead to increase comprehension due to the multiple
exposures.

Therrien and Kubina (2007) also state another valid reason why one may use repeated
reading:

According to the contextualized linguistic effect, each time a student re-reads a passage the
following occurs; students gain fluency with word recognition, they become more familiar
with specific word combinations in the passage, they learn the prosodic nuances inherent
in the passage, they increase their background knowledge, and they build a more complete
understanding of the passage as a whole. (p. 180).

With all of these practices in place, subsequent reading should be developing. Repeated reading
is a meaningful task, which allows the students to read interesting content. A student's
comprehension maybe poor at first, but with additional rereading of the same text, the decoding
barrier will slowly decrease allowing the reader to gain a better understanding. According to
Gorsuch and Taguchi (2010), “the implied ultimate goal of RR is to lead learners into becoming independent readers, with the ability to achieve sustained silent reading, to comprehend a variety of texts of personal choice, and to effectively choose and use reading strategies according to the texts being read” (p. 28). Chard et al. (2002), explained that struggling readers find it to be a challenge in becoming a fluent reader while also overcoming the lack of understanding of what is being read. “For example, Chard et al. (2002), examined the effects of 24 studies that addressed components of reading interventions and found that RR was associated with significant improvements in reading fluency and comprehension for students with learning disabilities” (Begeny, Krouse, Ross, & Mitchell 2009, p. 211). Fluency instruction needs to play a more prominent role in literacy instruction to meet the needs of each and every individual including those with special needs. According to Therrien (2004), “Reading difficulties are even more pronounced for students with special needs, who often struggle with reading throughout their school careers and into their adult live” (p. 252). Chard, Vaughn, and Tyler (2002), noted that a core issue is the lack of ability to read sight words, decode words, and read automatically with speed. Students with learning disabilities can also have significant gains in reading fluency and comprehension when implementing repeated reading.

Therrien (2004), stated, “When decoding is to slow, a ‘bottleneck’ is created that impedes the flow of thought and hampers comprehension. Poor readers often spend a great deal of their cognitive resources on decoding and have little left for comprehension” (p. 252).

Fluency strategies used within the classroom are emphasized. Students plus teachers benefit from repeated exposure to reading activities. Reciting past stories allows for readers to build upon their confidence level and gain the abilities to experience the love for reading. Kuhn and Rasinski, (2007) stated that, “These approaches can become regular components of your
lesson plans for younger readers who are making the transition to fluency or integrated into your literacy curriculum as needed for older struggling readers who have not achieved fluency to date” (p. 207). Therefore, no matter what level reader one is working with, repeated reading should be a regular component within literacy instruction.

Morra and Tracey (2006), provide an example of how repeated reading is used and its effectiveness. A study was conducted using an eight years, seven-month-old Caucasian girl named Susanne who attends an upper middle class suburban school in Northeastern United States. In second grade, concerns were raised and Susanne was placed in both instructional and small group reading services. Susanne’s oral reading lacked expression, appropriate phrasing, and pause structures. Throughout this study multiple strategies were used to increase her reading abilities, but the strategy that is being examined here is repeated reading. “The fourth session consisted of a repeated reading from *Horrible Harry* and the *Kickball Wedding*. Susanne practiced reading a segment of text and was then timed for one minute. She continued to practice reading the same passage and WCPM were noted each time” (Morra & Tracey, 2006, p. 181).

The repeated reading process was completed four times. A final timed reading was conducted with an unfamiliar passage from the same text. During sessions five through eight, Susanne was expected to practice other strategies. Session nine was another repeated reading from the same text just a different passage. This time through, the reading process was five rereads rather than four. At the end of the twelve-week session Susanne’s fluency improved tremendously. According to Morra and Tracey (2006), “Her reading fluency improved tremendously as text was read repeatedly” (p. 182). The end product of repeated reading in this instance is an improvement in rate and accuracy, which subsequently transferred to new text. Therefore, Morra and Tracey (2006) concluded that, Susanne displayed a significant increase in the number of words read
correctly during each interval. As stated above, researchers have found repeated reading to be one of the most effective strategies for developing fluency within reading. This is in fact true for Susanne.

**How Repeated Reading is Used**

Repeated reading can be done with a teacher or paraprofessional. The passages should consist of anywhere from 100 to 200 words at the students’ instructional level. While the student is reading, the teacher or paraprofessional should be the timer/counter. In addition, while the student is reading the teacher or paraprofessional should be marking down the incorrect or missed words. After each interval is over, immediate feedback should always be given to the student. It is the reader’s job to respond to the teacher or paraprofessional with the correct pronunciation for words he or she missed. According to Therrien and Richard (2006), this exercise of repeated reading can easily be integrated into any reading program and creativity can be incorporated to engage students of all abilities. However children can resist simple repeated reading exercises and other means of repeated reading must be explored.

Another way repeated reading can be conducted is through the use of modeling another individual which entails active listening to a fluent reader. “By listening to good models of good fluent reading, students learn how a reader’s voice can help written text make sense” (Welsch, 2006, p. 182). It is important that teachers read daily to students with expression, accurate word recognition, proper punctuation, and most importantly confidence. By reading smoothly, the teacher is modeling what a fluent reader should look and sound like. According to Nichols et al. (2009) “having a coach directly working with you, modeling the desired outcome and providing scaffolded practice is better than just practicing on your own” (p. 4). Students need to be
provided with these opportunities to read with a model, which will then develop his or her fluency skills.

**Additional Methods**

In addition to repeated reading with a model and without a model there is also Readers Theater, which promotes repetition. According to Young and Rasinski (2009), “Readers Theater is a performance of a written script that demands repeated and assisted reading that is focused on delivering meaning to an audience” (p. 5). This is where the “model” and “without a model” intertwine. Both techniques are being used to construct a culminating end product. Typically over a five-day span Readers Theater is implemented. On the first day the teacher presents a mini-lesson on what will be expected for the entire week. Then the teacher reads the scripts out loud fluently and expressively. Each individual child is given a script and is expected to practice independently or with a buddy. “Meanwhile, the teacher circulated among the groups, listening to the oral readings, modeling, coaching, encouraging and providing specific suggestions to foster fluency” (Keehn 2003, p.47). The culminating end product is the performance at the end of a Readers Theater workweek. This method gives the child a reason to do repeated reading. It moves beyond simple repeated reading passages and addresses the issues of boredom and resistance as they are actively participating. The main objective here is to be able to read the script fluently after a weeks worth of repetition. In a study conducted by Keehn (2003), “Second grade students at all levels made significant gains in rate, phrasing, fluidity and expressiveness, as well as in comprehension and word recognition measures via the implementation of Readers Theater in their classrooms” (p. 52). According to Keehn (2003), with these repeated readings the second graders were able to develop word recognition and comprehension. “Through Readers Theater students were offered modeling and repeated reading in a manageable text
toward the goal of an oral reading performance” (Keehn, 2003, p. 54). This motivational tool keeps the students engaged which allows for fluency practice and improvement to occur.

Poetry reading is another way repeated reading could be implemented into a literacy curriculum. According to Wilfong (2008), “In this strategy, a piece of text is read and reread to help build fluency, confidence, and comprehension in students” (p. 4). Poetry is fun, creative, and tends to be shorter in length. In order to have a repeated reading session be successful the students need to be engaged at all times. The student can practice at home or with a peer at school. “The student would take the poem home and read it aloud to as many people as possible, gathering signatures from listeners to verify the reading” (Wilfong, 2008, p. 5). Lastly, the student reads the poem one last time in front of his or her teacher. If the student has mastered that level then the teacher introduces a new poem and the cycle would then repeat. Students who participated in the poetry study made great gains in fluency. They increased by 45% within the words counted per minute WCPM. Repeated reading during the poetry academy did increase fluency for the participants. “The Poetry Academy helped readers create that comfort and success toward academic reading” (Wilfong, 2008, p. 10). Some of the students who took part in this academy were asked how it helped them grow. The first student responded with “It helped me understand more words” and another student responded with “It helps you figure out words” (Wilfong, 2008, p. 11). The poetry academy challenges students to grow and become stronger readers. Allowing the repetition to occur, allows for more success to be produced. Not only does poetry increase fluency by repeated reading, but it also increases the confidence and attitudes of the students.

**Conclusion**
How can repeated reading be used to increase reading fluency? According to Keehn (2003), “The National Reading Panel (2000) affirmed repeated reading as a tested and proven method for increasing reading fluency” (p. 42). Also, by rereading a text it contributes to comprehension. Due to the multiple conceptions of reading fluency, many experiments have been conducted to see which strategy promotes the best practices of fluency. Overall, repeated reading has impacted many struggling readers in a positive way. Explicit instruction within fluency does add to the growth of an individual's reading process.

More than ever before, today's classroom teachers should be focusing on literacy, but most importantly fluency. According to Nichols et al., (2009) “fluency is a gateway to comprehension that enables students to move from being word decoders to passage comprehenders” (p. 11). Fluency is reading written text with accuracy, which leads to comprehension. Students need to be given the opportunity to read multiple texts at the appropriate reading level with the privilege of rereading them as well. As shown above, repeated reading offers multiple strategies to put into practice into a literacy curriculum, which have all been proven effective to increase oral reading fluency. By implementing all of these repeated reading strategies reading fluency within our students will blossom.

Methods

Context

This study is being conducted to research and analyze the reading rate of a subject whom has been exposed to an unfamiliar text passage multiple times in an attempt to determine the fluency rate through familiarization. The research was conducted in the participant, JC’s home. JC, a Caucasian seven-year-old female lives in a suburb in Western New York with her mother, father, younger sister, and younger brother. The socioeconomic status of the family is middle
class and both parents are teachers within the school district. I have a very close relationship with the family which allowed me to conduct the study right within their home. JC’s house is located near her school. Multiple families with children JC’s age also live in the neighborhood. JC will be the only participant taking part in this study.

**Participant**

JC is a seven year old, Caucasian female. Currently, JC is in first grade and reading at a Developmental Reading Assessment level 28. She is not a typical struggling reader and loves to be challenged with higher level reading materials. She is a very energetic, outgoing, and creative child who enjoys lots of artistic activities. JC enjoys drawing pictures of unicorns, participating in art festivals, playing on the computer, watching television, and texting her aunt and uncles. At school, JC has lots of friends and the majority tends to be boys rather than girls.

**Research Stance**

As a researcher, I will be working one on one with JC. I have known JC’s family now for two years. Frequently, I baby sit for the family, which allows me to bond with JC. Also, her mother and I both teach sixth grade at the middle school. As well as teaching, I also am currently a graduate student at St. John Fisher College. I am completing my Master’s Degree in Literacy and have a bachelor’s degree in Birth-Sixth elementary education. While also working towards my certification in Literacy, I am currently working on obtaining a certification in both Middle and High school English. Throughout my observations, I will be collecting data to determine how repeated reading can be used to increase fluency.

**Method**

During this study, I will present the fluency strategy, repeated reading. Repeated reading is a strategy that is designed to increase the recognition of unfamiliar words more quickly and
pronounce them more accurately. JC will read an unfamiliar passage several times until a predetermined level of fluency or reading rate is attained. Implementing this strategy, JC’s word count per minute should increase, while the smoothness and proper pronunciation is enhanced when reading. During implementation, I will observe how JC recognizes words at first sight rather then relying on decoding.

JC and I met for three sessions lasting forty-five minutes each. Each session consisted of the same routine and expectations. First, I provided JC with an unfamiliar passage of one hundred words. Secondly, I had JC read the passage aloud, while I, as the observer, took notes on the words she mispronounced. To keep track of her mispronunciations I used a repeated reading tracking chart and also a running reading record. I timed her to see how many words per minute were recognized at first sight with correct pronunciation. With the information gathered, I was able to recognize if repeated reading could be used to increase JC’s fluency. Based on the literature review, frequent opportunities to practice with the same text should be effective and will enhance JC’s reading performance. JC could benefit from repeated exposure of the same text. To build upon this strategy, I utilized flash cards to enhance her ability to read unfamiliar words within a passage. The words that JC struggled with within the unfamiliar passages were the words chosen for flashcards. In between each reading, we reviewed the flashcards, which gave JC practice with the struggling words out of context. Therefore, she had practice with vocabulary words in and out of context.

**Credibility**

When conducting research, it is important to ensure the credibility of the study. According to Mills 2011, “The credibility of the study refers to the researcher’s ability to take into account the complexities that present themselves in a study and to deal with patterns that are
not easily explained” (p. 104). To help maintain credibility throughout this study, I applied specific strategies. I was persistent with my observations. I observed typical and atypical characteristics of JC while she read aloud. One typical characteristic I saw from JC was her ability to sound out unfamiliar words. An atypical characteristic that I saw from JC was her lack of sitting still at times or distractibility. At the end of each session I provided immediate feedback, which identified any issues I encountered. Also, I was able to do some peer debriefing. Peer debriefing provided me with the opportunity to share my observations and reflect orally on what I saw.

**Transferability**

Throughout my study, I also ensured transferability. According to Mills 2011, “transferability refers to qualitative researchers beliefs that everything they study is context bound and that the goal of their work is not develop ‘truth’ statements that can be generalized to larger groups of people” (p. 104). Within this study, I collected data that is very detailed and descriptive that is geared towards the topic of the study. I created a repeated reading tracking sheet. This repeated reading tracking sheet displayed the date, goal, passage number, rereading number, words read, errors, correct words, and goal met. This tracking sheet allowed me to reflect on what was completed throughout each reading session and provide immediate feedback to JC.

**Dependability**

According to Mills 2011, “dependability refers to the stability of data” (p. 104). Using multiple methods to overlap the data being collected compensates for any weak methods that might be used. After each reading session, I discussed the results with JC to help contribute to my findings. I also established an audit trial. Within this study my form of an audit trail was
seen through the use of the repeated reading tracking sheet. Throughout this study, I relied on my critical colleague to help process and examine the data that I collected. Having another individual interpret all the data allowed for more information to be gathered and new ideas to be developed.

**Confirmability**

Lastly, according to Mills 2011, “confirmability of the data, or the neutrality or objectivity of the data that has been collected” is important in determining the validity in qualitative research (p. 105). To address this issue of confirmability, two steps can be taken. The first step is practice triangulation “whereby a variety of data sources and different methods are compared with one another to cross-check data” (Mills 2011, p. 105). The second step, which I implemented within my study, was establishing an audit trail. I frequently referred back to my research question, which kept me researching more. I chose to keep a journal on my research so I was able to continuously reflect on my findings.

**Informed Consent**

Prior to the start of my research, I needed to obtain consent and protect the rights of the participant. I worked one on one with JC during this study. I gave her a consent form that outlined what she could expect while taking part in this study. In order to confirm authorization, I needed her signature to move forward with the study. At this time, I also explained that all names were anonymous and that identifying marks would be removed from the artifacts for confidentiality purposes. JC’s parents also received a consent form that explained the purpose of the study along with my request for permission. The participants name was replaced with a pseudonym to guarantee confidentiality.

**Data Collection**
As stated above, there are multiple ways to collect data. While working one on one JC, I performed active observation. Utilizing the active participant technique, I was able to analyze how JC performed when using repeated reading as a strategy to increase fluency. During each session, I took notes and drafted a chart to help organize the data that I observed. After each session, I was able to reflect back on my notes and see the improvements JC made during each repeated read. JC was informed of her improvements and areas of need to help her understand and gain the overall objective.

**Data Analysis**

Over the course of a few weeks interviews and observations were conducted to examine how repeated reading is used as a specific tool and strategy to monitor and improve fluency with a first grade reader.

At the first repeated reading session, JC was presented with an unfamiliar passage from the book *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, by Ronald Dahl, a level “P” book according to Fountas and Pinnell 2001. JC was asked to set an achievable goal for how many words she can read per minute fluently with accuracy and one hundred words per minute were chosen. During the first reading she read 51 words with four errors for a total of 46 correct words. These four mispronounced words were placed onto flash cards for JC to practice out of context. The second run-through JC read 51 words with zero errors for a total of 51 correct words. At this time flashcards were reinforced. The third rereading JC read 72 words with zero errors for a total of 72 correct words. The final read of the session JC scored the same as the third trial. In no trial did JC achieve the chosen goal of 100 words per minute.
For the second session, the book level was assessed and then decreased to an “O” according to Fountas and Pinnell 2001, which was more appropriate for JC’s reading abilities. This was done to determine if JC would demonstrate growth within fluency. She chose a goal of 80 words per minute and at her first reading of the unfamiliar selected passage in the book Henry Huggins by Beverly Clearly, she correctly read 69 words out of 70. This did not meet her goal. A flashcard was introduced as in the first session to reinforce mispronounced words. JC completed 91 words correctly out of 91 total words within 60 seconds. She achieved her goal in the instance. At this point in time she decided to increase her goal to 95 words per minute. In the subsequent trials three and four she surpassed this goal with 100 words correctly read out of 100. She was able to read 100 words fluently in 49 seconds in the fourth and final trial of session two.

For the third session JC set a goal of 100 words at the same “O” level book by Clearly using a novel passage. The first reading JC read 92 words with three errors resulting in 89 words read correctly per minute. The second trial JC read 95 words per minute with one error resulting in 94 words read correctly. In trials three and four, JC read at least 100 words, achieving her goal in 60 seconds or less.

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Within the interviews and conducting active research the researcher was able to find many common focal points. Overall, with repeated reading an increase of fluency was noted. From the repetitive process of repeated reading JC’s rate increased as accuracy also improved. Corrective feedback was found to be positive and credible as a technique.

Fluency

As JC was presented with her first unfamiliar passage she potentially set an unrealistic goal. Additionally, the book level chosen may have been slightly beyond her reading abilities. When adjusted for goal and reading ability level, repeated reading of passages increased fluency such that JC could reach an obtainable goal and demonstrated increased fluency with each trial. The researcher also noted that with repeated passage reading, less word-by-word reading was being produced which progressed to good use of pitch, stress, and intonation. Overall, smoothness of reading improved as JC included pauses where appropriate and linked phrases.

JC displayed specific fluency problems which demanded more direct modeling combined with more focused practice. Unfamiliar and mispronounced words were placed onto flashcards so that JC could practice these words out of context until effortless reading was displayed. These words included enormously, dumplings, scrubbing, memorized, crumpled, and slouched. It was
noted that these words might not be frequently seen daily by JC or part of her vocabulary. This out of context work further increased her fluency as rate of incorrect words decreased as trials progressed and no further errors were made with these words.

**Rate Appropriate**

JC stumbled through reading during early trials, which prevented her from having a successful rate per minute of words read. With the continual process of re-reading, the same unfamiliar passage became familiar and rate increased such that the goal of rate appropriateness was met. JC became accurate and fast in her ability to recognize words.

**Use of Corrective Feedback**

Providing JC with immediate constructive feedback enhanced each reading session in a variety of ways. The researcher noticed JC’s distractibility was an issue from the start of the reading sessions. When the researcher suggested proper reading posture JC accepted the constructive feedback and progressively made efforts to achieve correct posture. Furthermore, she became more confident overall as subjectively noted by the researcher and used elaborate punctuation and stress of words. JC additionally started off reading at a very fast pace. The researcher noted this and consistently made mention to JC to slow her pace. As she progressed through the repeated reading sessions and this positive feedback, JC read at a more adequate and fluent pace, while using proper expression when reading. She had better pace and sat still with two feet on the ground, which resulted in fewer overlooked miscues. It was because of JC’s quick reading and distractibility that she would overlook or change words that she knew. Her
attitude remained positive while reading, and when she realized she has made a mistake she corrected herself.

**Implications**

Fluency is an integral component of reading that strongly impacts comprehension. Fluency involves effortless reading with appropriate phrase, expression, and speed. Fluency instruction is often neglected and must be embraced by teachers to promote the ultimate goal of reading, which is comprehension. The results of this study provided clear implications for teachers about the benefits of repeated reading to improve fluency.

As JC’s ratio of correct words by total words presented per minute increased, her accuracy improved which according to Hasbrouck and Tindal (2006), allows a student to devote more of their cognition to comprehension. JC also improved in rate as noted by less time taken to complete the selected unfamiliar passage. This suggests that she became a better decoder and advanced to an automatic level (Allinder et al., 2001). Therefore, more cognitive function was put towards comprehension. Prosodic nuances inherent in the passages become more pronounced. Therrien and Kubina (2007), state that this builds a more complete understanding of a passage as a whole.

As a teacher, to effectively employ a repeated reading strategy, it must be stressed that the appropriate level of the student is chosen for accurate assessment and growth of fluency to occur. Working with the student to set an obtainable goal while challenging themselves is also critical to utilizing repeated reading. Once the appropriate level and goals are set and constructive feedback is provided, fluency can improve, thereby impacting comprehension.

Repeated reading as a strategy to increase fluency should be employed by teachers to create a well-developed literacy curriculum resulting in a proficient reader. Whether repeated
reading of an unfamiliar passage as was done in this study or another method such as modeling, readers’ theater or poetry reading is utilized, repeated reading as a technique must be embraced by teachers in every literacy curriculum. This strategy can be used with any level and or type of student reader making it a universal tool.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to show how repeated reading has the potential to increase fluency. Through the use of repeated reading of an unfamiliar passage a teacher or researcher can assess a student’s accuracy and rate of reading to identify any special instructional needs and help to create a more fluent reader. In order to help readers move from the process of word decoders to passage comprehenders, educators need to integrate repeated reading in the classroom more frequently.

Before conducting this research, the researcher explored multiple strategies for teachers to use to help monitor and improve fluency. The existing body of literature suggested repeated reading was a commonly used tool because of its universal reach and effectiveness. These results suggest that repeated reading is effective to improve fluency and comprehension thus supporting the literature.

These research findings support implementing repeated reading strategies for all students. To further the research findings, various measures can be implement. For example, using more students may show a stronger significance of the value of repeated reading. Additionally, the researcher could utilize various repeated reading strategies aside from the single modality used in this study to compare efficacy of different types of repeated reading exercises. Thirdly, a more diverse population of students including those with learning disabilities may extend the reach of the use of repeated reading in all students further supporting the findings.
Fluency instruction is important and frequently being neglected in today’s classrooms. Repeated reading is an effective tool for producing a more fluent reader. Teachers must recognize its importance and learn to appropriately assess and focus on the specific needs of each individual reader. By embedding repeated reading into the literacy curriculum then fluency will be fostered through practice. We will begin to produce stronger readers able to comprehend what they read impacting their learning in every subject matter. In conclusion, the findings from this research suggest that repeated reading used as an intervention for all readers is related to improved reading rates, accuracy, and comprehension. A more critical, proficient reader will be more motivated, engaged, and able to impact their environment and future.
References


