

## THE INFLUENCE OF READING COMPREHENSION ON READING FLUENCY

**Dr. Khalid Hamednalla Albadawi**

Taif University, College of Arts and Education (Turabah Branch), Saudi Arabia

**ABSTRACT:** *The aim of this study was to investigate the influence of reading comprehension in reading fluency. The lack of teaching reading comprehension effect on learning reading fluency. This study aims at determining the relationship between reading comprehension and reading fluency. Two subject groups represent different situations were selected for an investigation. An instrument for data collection and statistical analysis to gain results. These instruments are pre and posttests. Certain procedures were followed in conducting the pre and posttests. The two scales of reliability and validity of the tests were used to achieve consistent answers. The above instruments helped draw significant findings. These findings proved the importance of reading comprehension in reading fluency and explained the relationship among the English reading fluency and the effective ways of teaching English reading comprehension. In addition, the study emphasized that most of reading fluency difficulties can be solved through effective ways such as reading comprehension.*

**KEYWORDS:** Meaning, understand, recognition

### INTRODUCTION

Alvermann & Montero (2003) say, "Reading is the process of deriving meaning from written or printed text". It is a complex process, which includes many components. According to Armbruster (2001) "phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension are the five major areas of reading". Alvermann and Montero believe instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency impact children's early reading development. It is necessary for a child to learn and understand each area in order for a child to achieve reading success. Phonemic awareness is necessary for the development of phonics; phonics is necessary for word recognition; word recognition is necessary for fluency; and fluency is necessary for reading comprehension (Eldredge, 2005). Pardo (2004) emphasizes the relationship shared between all components of reading when noting that, before establishing good comprehension skills, students must acquire decoding skills, fluency skills, background knowledge, vocabulary, motivation, and engagement.

Decoding is the process of recognizing letters and sounds in order to read words. Effective readers use decoding skills to translate printed text into the sounds of language. These skills involve instruction in phonics, phonemic awareness, and word recognition. As decoding skills become more proficient for a child, less attention can be spent on identifying what a word is and more time can be spent identifying what the word means.

Fluency is seen as the link between decoding and comprehension. Problems with fluency may stem from poor decoding skills. A recent study conducted by Rasinski and Padak (1998) reviewed a large number of remedial readers and found almost all the children were well below grade level in comprehension, decoding, and fluency. Fluency was the biggest area of concern due to the lengthy manner in which the students decoded the words and read the passages. Since decoding and word recognition skills were so poor, it made it difficult for the students to

comprehend any of the passages (Rasinski & Padak). Students may view reading as pronouncing words correctly and may not focus on comprehension. When students read words automatically they have good accuracy, and speed is not interrupted by frequent attempts to decode words. This automatic reading can free a student's attention to focus on comprehension skills and strategies, and can promote a better understanding of the text.

Hudson, Lane, & Pullen (2005) state that "Reading fluency is the ability to read text accurately and quickly". Fluency also involves reading a text with proper expression. There are three major components of fluency: accuracy, which refers to the person's ability to read words correctly; rate, the speed a person reads; and prosody, which is commonly referred to as reading with feeling and involves the stress, intonation, and pauses when reading (Hudson et al.; Rasinski, 2006). According to Rasinski (2003) "readers must be able to decode words correctly and effortlessly and then put them together into meaningful phrases with appropriate expression to make sense of what they read". Eldredge (2005) says that phonemic awareness and word recognition were a precursor of fluency. Kuhn (2004) believes one important reason for the need of fluency instruction is that fluent readers no longer have to decode the majority of the words they encounter, but instead can recognize words accurately and automatically. This can allow readers to shift their focus to comprehension and provides the main reason why fluency is so important.

Armbruster (2001) says, "Modeling is a very important aspect of fluency instruction. Students need to hear and see what fluent reading sounds like. Modeling is the basis of all good fluency instruction. Teachers can implement daily classroom practices such as read alouds, books on tape, and partner or buddy reading to provide modeling. Another method of fluency instruction is the use of repeated readings. With repeated readings, students read a passage or story several times and are given guidance and instruction from their teacher. The National Reading Panel investigated two approaches to teaching fluency: repeated reading and independent silent reading. It was found that repeated reading improved overall fluency and reading achievement, as well as comprehension (Armbruster et al.).

Bouchard & Trabasso (2003) state "Reading comprehension can be defined as the level of understanding of a passage or text". Pardo (2004) states, "It is a process in which readers construct meaning by interacting with text through the combination of prior knowledge and previous experience, information in the text, and the stance the reader takes in relationship to the text". The ultimate goal of reading is to understand what has been read (Nation & Angell, 2006). To be a good reader it is critical to not only be able to identify the words, but to understand them as well. If readers can read the words, but do not understand what they are reading, they are not really reading.

Bukowiecki (2007) states "Effective instruction includes direct explanation, modeling, guided practice, and application". Comprehension skills should be taught and applied before, during, and after reading takes place (Bukowiecki). Instruction in comprehension can help students understand what they have read, remember what they have read, and communicate to others what they have read (Armbruster et al.). A primary method of teaching reading comprehension is modeling reading comprehension skills, a technique that accelerates the improvement of reading comprehension. Teachers must model effective comprehension strategies.

Comprehension strategies must be explicitly taught, and scaffolding should be used to ensure appropriate utilization of the strategies (Dougherty-Stahl, 2004). Nation & Angell (2006) say that Effective strategies include making predictions, drawing conclusions, making inferences, monitoring and clarifying, asking questions, connecting events to prior knowledge, visualizing, and summarizing. Dougherty-Stahl reported that good readers apply numerous comprehension strategies such as predicting, visualizing, making inferences, monitoring, synthesizing, and summarizing. These strategies “have the potential to provide access to knowledge that is removed from personal experience” and allows readers to understand and recall more of what they read (Dougherty-Stahl, p. 598). In a recent study conducted by Kolić-Vehovec and Bajšanski (2006), upper elementary school children’s use of comprehension monitoring, a strategy used by readers to monitor their understanding as they read, revealed a significant improvement in text-level comprehension. The correlations showed that comprehension monitoring is considerably and consistently associated to reading comprehension for upper elementary school-aged children (Kolić-Vehovec & Bajšanski). Furthermore, reading comprehension can be developed by teaching comprehension strategies and by helping readers use those strategies, flexibly and in combination (Armbruster et al., 2001; Bukowiecki, 2007). By providing direct explanation, modeling, guided practice, and application, teachers can ensure the comprehension success of their students.

Comprehension is not guaranteed with fluency, but it is difficult without fluency. If a reader has to frequently, stop to figure out unknown words, most likely the reader will not remember or understand much of what is read (Perfetti, 1985, 1999; Pikulski & Chard, 2005; Samuels & Flor, 1997). Often students skilled in comprehension read faster than students with poor reading comprehension (Jenkins, Fuchs, van de Broek, Espin, & Deno, 2003). Fluent readers recognize words and comprehend at the same time, whereas less fluent readers must focus their attention on figuring out the words, leaving them little attention for understanding the text (Armbruster et al., 2001; Perfetti; Samuels & Flor). When gains are made in fluency, readers can focus their attention on comprehension and understand more of what is read (Pikulski & Chard).

According to Hudson (2005), “each aspect of fluency has a clear connection to reading comprehension”. For example, inaccurate word reading can lead to misinterpretations of the story, poor automaticity can strain the reader’s ability to construct ongoing interpretation of the story, and poor prosody can lead to confusion through inappropriate groupings of words or the inappropriate use of expression (Hudson et al).

According to Reutzel and Hollingsworth (1993), “fluency development showed a positive effect on second graders’ reading comprehension”. The study assessed the effects of developing second-grade students’ oral reading fluency using the oral recitation lesson (ORL) and the effects that fluency training had on reading comprehension (Reutzel & Hollingsworth). Results of this study found that the performance of students who participated in the ORL group was “superior to that of the control group” (Reutzel & Hollingsworth, p. 329), suggesting fluency development had a strong effect on reading comprehension (Reutzel & Hollingsworth). Repeated reading is considered the most commonly recommended procedure for improving reading rate (Armbruster et al., 2001). Repeated reading of text aimed at developing fluency also may be related to improvement in students’ reading comprehension (Reutzel & Hollingsworth, 1993). When accuracy and reading rate are considered together, reading rate accounts for a significant difference in reading comprehension, suggesting that rate is more related to comprehension than accuracy (Jenkins et al., 2003). A study conducted by O’Conner,

White, and Swanson (2007) found that repeated reading not only improved reading rate, but also word identification and reading comprehension for below-level readers in grades two through four. This suggested that repeated and monitored oral reading improved reading fluency and overall reading achievement.

## **METHODS**

It is used a correlational design in order to gain insight into the relationship between two variables: reading fluency and reading comprehension. Participants in this study completed two measures that assessed their level of reading fluency and reading comprehension. The results of both assessments were then correlated to determine the relationship between the variables. Both assessments were completed over a three-week period.

### **Participants**

The sample of this research were 30 university students ranging in age from 17 to 19 years old from Taif University. The sample consisted of 50 males. Taif University is a government university, located in Saudi Arabia.

### **Instruments**

In this study, two instruments for data collection. First, oral perception and production test was designed to measure the actual levels of learners' performance by giving some samples of practical questions. This oral perception and production test was in a form of a pre-test and post -test. Second, a questionnaire was designed to collect data about the influence of reading comprehension on reading fluency.

### **Reading skills Test**

The purpose of this test was to limit the level of students' reading skill and the influence of reading comprehension on it. To obtain these goals, the test consisted of simple words and sentences that were selected based on frequency and recognition. Some phonological terms were used to direct and draw the attention to the points being tested.

The test consisted of four questions; each question consisted of five branches. The first question consisted of lists contained words chosen based on the degree of reading difficulty. These lists focus on allophones and silent letters. The second question consisted a lists of double consonants, double vowels and consonants and vowels sequences. The third question consisted of short simple sentences consisted the intonation, weak and strong forms and the place of stress. The fourth question included some sentences tested the features of connected speech such as: assimilation, elision, linking and rhythm. The mentioned lists consisted of items from the most problematic areas in reading and they require intensive practice for the sake of tackling and controlling them.

### **Questionnaire**

The questionnaire consisted of twelve points. These points investigated reading skills difficulties of Saudi Students, the influence of reading comprehension on students learning reading skills of English.

These points were conducted in a questionnaire to collect data from teachers from different universities. This questionnaire confirms on the influence of reading comprehension on handling the required features of better reading skills in a kind of fluency. Besides, it contained

points to explore the role of effective teaching on learning a language as a foreign language and its reading skills in particular.

To achieve these goals, special attention was paid to the language used. The questions were sequenced in a manner as each question was put on a single line while the choices were distributed on two lines. They were put according to the alphabetical order of (a) – (b) - (c) – (d) and (e) with a box in front of each choice. Teachers should choose only support, oppose or withdraw. Besides withdrawing, supporting response contained two choices: agree and strongly agree, and opposing contained the choices: disagree and strongly disagree. This way of organization helped the researcher in saving time and effort in conducting results.

### **The Procedures**

This section gives a detailed description of the actual steps taken in collecting data through the reading skills test and questionnaire. The researcher adopted these procedures to achieve the reliability and constant answers of the reading skills test and true or factual responses of the questionnaire.

### **The reading Test**

The same procedures were conducted in the pre-test and the posttest. The teacher of English of the subject group participated in conducting the test. The group was asked to read lists of words and short sentences and conversations in each question individually one after another as suggested by the test instructions. The tester underlined the incorrect answers on a separate sheet of the same test. The order of the questions appeared was intended to be from the easiest to the most difficult question. At the end of the test, the answer sheets of the group were collected and put according to their subject group. Then the total number of correct and incorrect answers were calculated for specifying the results.

### **The Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was distributed firstly to small group as an experiment to make sure that it will achieve its goal. An additional question about the teachers' qualifications was put to make sure that they gave true responses. After that, the researcher called 30 teachers from different universities to conduct the questionnaire. The teachers were told about the importance of the questionnaire and its purpose. Before answering, the teachers were informed that the questionnaire was mainly conducted for research purpose to collect data about "The influence of reading comprehension on reading fluency". The conductor of the questionnaire made sure that teachers understood what required by explaining some examples on the board. Teachers were also instructed to respond by ticking the selected choice in the suitable box. This requires subjects to choose only one of the five choices given to express their viewpoints and reactions towards the given ideas. The questionnaire papers were distributed to the teacher on Saturday, 27th of January 2017.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results displayed the fact that, in all cases the experimental group has progress in learning. The experimental group that practice reading by using comprehension passages faced less reading problems and was able to read more accurate and fluent utterances. These were shown by the results provided by subjects as well as the improvement in their performance. The difference between the pre and post -test in the experimental group in terms of using

comprehension passages in learning English in general and reading fluency in particular was clearly reflected in the degree of accuracy and fluency in reading skills. That means, the experimental group was able to benefit of the circumstances provided by the comprehension passages such as teaching strategies, teaching methods, social interaction and good surrounding environment of the learning situation.

To sum up, the study achieved the researcher objectives, answered its questions and proved its hypotheses. The findings succeeded in drawing attention to the influence of reading comprehension on reading fluency on teaching English language in general and reading skills in particular. This influence because reading comprehension increased learners' phonological knowledge as well as phonological competence. The result of this increase was the ability to master the target reading skill.

## SUMMARY OF RESULTS

To extract the research results, the researcher conducted his investigation under the following categories:

- 1- The role of the effective ways of teaching reading comprehension in solving reading skill difficulties.
- 2- The influence of using reading comprehension on reading skills.
- 3-The results were compared to examine the achievements of the research hypotheses at the level of the existence of Students reading skills difficulties, less reading skills difficulties of learners who use reading comprehension in learning English.
- 4-Tables displayed the fact that, in all cases the experimental group has progress in learning. The experimental group that learned English by using reading comprehension faced less reading skills problems and was able to read and pronounce more accurate and fluent utterances. These were shown by the results provided by subjects as well as the improvement in their performance.
- 5- The difference between the pre and post -test in the experiment group in terms of using reading comprehension in learning English in general and reading fluency in particular was clearly reflected in the degree of accuracy and fluency in reading skills. That means, the experimental group was able to benefit of the circumstances provided by reading comprehension such as motivation and concern for good reading fluency.

## FINDINGS

This study emphasized that:

1. Most of reading fluency difficulties can be solved by teaching reading comprehension through effective instruments such as short passages and long stories.
2. Obtaining better features of reading fluency from comprehension passages previously prepared by well-qualified teachers developed learners' accuracy and fluency.
3. Intensive reading comprehension passages increased learners' phonological knowledge as well as phonological competence.
4. Effective teaching of reading comprehension can lead students solve most of reading skills problems.
5. Reading comprehension passages have a very important role in teaching English in general and reading skills in particular.

6. Reading comprehension helps students to develop themselves by activating self-learning process.
7. Reading comprehension affects teaching of English reading fluency positively.
8. Students who use reading comprehension in learning reading skills are better than those who do not.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the obtained results of findings, it is obvious that using reading comprehension in learning reading fluency is of significant importance for learners. Therefore, the researcher recommends that:

- 1- Teachers and learners of English should pay special attention to the reading comprehension.
- 2- Short training courses, technical and educational, for teachers regarding reading fluency.
- 3- A balance should be maintained among language skills during reading comprehension.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

This study succeeded in providing reasonable answers to important questions. The researcher suggests that more studies in the field of reading especially psychologically and the suitable age for beginning learning reading skills.

## REFERENCES

- Alvermann, D. E. & Montero, M. K. (2003). Literacy and Reading. In *Encyclopedia of Education* (Vol. 4, pp. 1513-1518). New York: Macmillan.
- Armbruster, B. B., Lehr, F., & Osborn, J. (2001). *Put Reading First: The research building blocks for teaching children to read: Kindergarten through grade 3*. Washington, DC: CIERA.
- Bouchard, E., & Trabasso, T. (2003). Comprehension. In *Encyclopedia of Education* (Vol. 6, pp. 1977-1985.). New York: Macmillan.
- Brunsmann, B. A. (2004). Review of DIBELS: Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (6th ed). *Mental Measurement Yearbook*, 16. Retrieved March 2, 2008, from <http://www.unl.edu/buros/>.
- Bukowiecki, E. M. (2007). Teaching children how to read. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 43, 58-65.
- Chard, D. J., Vaughn, S., & Tyler, B. (2002). A synthesis of research on effective interventions for building reading fluency with elementary students with learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 35, 386-406.
- Dougherty-Stahl, K. A. (2004). Proof, practice, and promise: Comprehension strategy instruction in the primary grades. *Reading Teacher*, 57, 598-609.
- Eldredge, J. L. (2005). Foundations of fluency: An exploration. *Reading Psychology*, 26, 161-181.
- Good, R. H., & Kaminski, R. A. (2002). DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency passages for first through third grades (Technical Report No. 10). Eugene, OR: University of Oregon.
- Hudson, R. F., Lane, H. B., & Pullen, P. C. (2005). Reading fluency assessment and instruction: What, why, and how? *Reading Teacher*, 58, 702-714.

- Jenkins, J. R., Fuchs, L. S., van de Broek, P., Espin, C., & Deno, S. L. (2003). Sources of individual differences in reading comprehension and reading fluency. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 95, 719-729.
- Kolić-Vehovec, S., & Bajšanski, I. (2006). Metacognitive strategies and reading comprehension in elementary-school students. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 21, 439-451.
- Kuhn, M. (2004). Helping students become accurate, expressive readers: Fluency instruction for small groups. *Reading Teacher*, 58, 338-344.
- Nation, K., & Angell, P. (2006). Learning to read and learning to comprehend. *London Review of Education*, 4, 77-87.
- O'Connor, R. E., White, A., & Swanson, H. L. (2007). Repeated reading versus continuous reading: Influences on reading fluency and comprehension. *Exceptional Children*, 74, 31-46.
- Pardo, L. S. (2004). What every teacher needs to know about comprehension. *Reading Teacher*, 58, 272-280.
- Perfetti, C. A. (1985). *Reading Ability*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Perfetti, C. A. (1999). Cognitive research and the misconceptions of reading education. In J. Oakhill & R. Beard (Eds.), *Reading Development and the Teaching of Reading: A Psychological Perspective* (pp. 42-58). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Pikulski, J. J., & Chard, D. J. (2005). Fluency: Bridge between decoding and reading comprehension. *Reading Teacher*, 58, 510-519.
- Rasinski, T. V., & Padak, N.D. (1998). How elementary students referred for compensatory reading instruction perform on school-based measures of word recognition, fluency, and comprehension. *Reading Psychology*, 19, 185-216.
- Rasinski, T. V. (2003). *The Fluent Reader: Oral reading strategies for building word recognition, fluency, and comprehension*. New York: Scholastic Professional Books.
- Rasinski, T. V. (2006). Reading fluency instruction: Moving beyond accuracy, automaticity, and prosody. *The Reading Teacher*, 59, 704-706.
- Reutzel, D. R., & Hollingsworth, P. M. (1993). Effects of fluency training on second graders' reading comprehension. *Journal of Educational Research*, 86, 325-331.
- Samuels, S.J., & Flor, R.F. (1997). The importance of automaticity for developing expertise in reading. *Reading and Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties*, 13, 107-121.
- Shanahan, T. (2004). Review of DIBELS: Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (6th ed). *Mental Measurement Yearbook*, 16. Retrieved March 2, 2008, from <http://www.unl.edu/buros/>.
- University of Oregon. (2003). *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)*. Retrieved March 2, 2008, from <http://dibels.uoregon.edu>.
- Walczyk, J. J., & Griffith-Ross, D. A. (2007). How important is reading skill fluency for comprehension? *Reading Teacher*, 60, 560-569.
- Wood, D. (2006). Modeling the relationship between oral reading fluency and performance on a statewide reading test. *Educational Assessment*, 11, 85-104.