Use of Remedial Instruction for Disfluent Readers among Grade 7 Students

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ABSTRACT: This study examined the effectiveness of remedial instruction on disfluent readers among Grade 7 students at the Mindanao State University – University Training Center, Marawi City. Ten disfluent readers selected from the target year level and officially enrolled during the school year 2022–2023 were included in the study. It used the characteristics of nonfluent readers of Spafford and Grosser (2005), as cited by Cacumba (2014), to identify and classify the disfluent readers and the Effective Intervention for Disfluent Readers and TALA _ Effective Instruction for Middle School Students with Reading Difficulties for the remedial instruction. The results showed that most disfluent readers were female and had difficulties reading, such as mispronunciations, omissions, letter reversal, and stuttering. However, some respondents improved from disfluent to average readers after the remedial intervention.

KEYWORDS: remedial instruction, disfluent readers, reading intervention, fluent readers

INTRODUCTION

Reading is an essential part of life. Books, newspapers, and magazines contain words that have to be read. In order to understand the text that is read, readers should possess the components of reading: phonological awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, motivation, and reading fluency. Reading fluency has three characteristics: accuracy, pacing, and prosody. Fluent readers can decode words and phrases accurately without stumbling over their pronunciation and read at the right pace with the right rhythm and intonation.

Disfluent readers are typically associated with stuttering (Yaruss & Quesal, 2004), described as sound/syllable repetition, monosyllabic whole-word repetition, prolongations, and broken words. They decode laboriously without automaticity and have lower-than-expected reading rates for their age or grade level (Gagen, 2007). Disfluent readers are also characterized by repeated speech movement and impairment in the rhythm of speech production, including their adjustment in articulation (Bloodstein, 2008). Learning to read is important for accessing the knowledge found in texts. Many studies (Bloodstein, 2008; Van Moere, 2006) have found significant relationships linking reading fluency to comprehension. People who lack reading fluency may have poor reading comprehension because they concentrate only on the text. They are trying to decode rather than understand what the text conveys.

Some readers who decode words accurately often read with long pauses to attempt to pronounce a word, or they may read a word several incorrect times until they correct it. These disfluent readers are often known by multiple stops, restarts, and rereading of correctly read words or phrases. This results in a laborious, slow, and exhausting reading for students (Paige & Magpuri-Lavell, 2014).

According to Wixson and Lipson (2009), a child should develop how to distinguish letters, words, and sentences to avoid the interruption of not understanding the text they read to become a fluent reader. For appropriate instruction to be developed and designed for the disfluent reader to access meaning in print, an understanding of what a fluent reader does while reading must be determined (Griffith, 2004).

Students who read fluently do not grasp and learn the grammatical features of language as easily as students who do not read fluently. This is especially true for children with language learning disabilities; a common one being dyslexia. Usually, it takes 4-15 times to reach the stage of automatic word recognition, while such readers, as well as poor readers, require 40 or more such repetitions (Balsiger, 2009). Research has also indicated that the precise speed of accessing a specific word is a perfect predictor of reading fluency. Linguistically impaired children require additional time for processing to read letter/sound correlation, mindful recognition of sight words, and finding the meaning of individual words in a sentence. Reading, being mainly a linguistic skill, children who experience early speech or language disorders are at a greater risk of developing reading difficulties as they advance in age.

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A study has indicated that students can improve their oral reading, progress through reading, and refine their oral reading skills through programs based on the structural analysis of acquired skills and deficiencies (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). These weaknesses include phonemic awareness, memory, encoded-word knowledge, vowels, morphological knowledge, syllable segmentation strategies, and lexicognostic processes (Ehri et al., 2001). It is necessary to work with high-frequency words and phrases for the improvement of fluency, which needs a better automated tool for word and phrase recognition and the availability of their retrieval systems (Rasinski, 2012). Components of an oral reading fluency program are reading aloud, emphasizing intonation, phrasing, and visual imagery (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). Parents can augment this process by reading aloud alongside utilizing echo reading and choral reading (Allington, 2009). Oral reading of a passage also enhances general reading ability since students get practice in phrasing, scanning, and reading with proper intonation, prosody, and word identification (Hudson, 2005).

Today, many high school students have difficulty reading texts, ranging from easy to complex (Hussain & Sajid, 2005). These students with reading difficulties in areas of reading fluency may continue to experience problems with reading comprehension throughout their lives (Hudson, 2005). Therefore, the researchers aimed to study these disfluent readers to find out if they read carefully words and passages, pronounce them correctly, and read with the right pacing. These can be achieved by giving remedial instruction to these disfluent readers through reading words with different difficulty levels and reading two passages with different difficulty levels.

This study sought to determine the reading fluency of disfluent readers of Grade 7 students at MSU-UTC Main Campus and apply remedial instruction to these disfluent readers. This study aims to find answers to the following questions:

1. What is the result of the respondents' performance before the remedial instruction in word recognition in terms of:
    1.1 Easy List
    1.2 Moderate List
    1.3 Challenging List
2. What is the result of the respondents' performance before the remedial instruction in the passage reading in terms of:
    2.1 Easy Reading Passage
    2.2 Moderate Reading Passage
3. What is the result of the respondents' performance after the remedial instruction in the reading recognition in terms of:
    3.1 Easy List
    3.2 Moderate List
    3.3 Challenging List
4. What is the respondents' performance after the remedial instruction in the passage reading in terms of:
    4.1 Easy Reading Passage
    4.2 Moderate Reading Passage
5. Is there a significant difference between the pre-tests and post-tests of the disfluent readers?

METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study utilized a quasi-experimental design, specifically the Single Group Pretest-Posttest design, to evaluate the performance of Grade 7 disfluent readers from MSU-University Training Center before and after an intervention. A qualitative approach was also employed to assess the effectiveness of remedial instruction provided during the study. The independent variable consisted of the characteristics of disfluent readers identified by their English teachers. In contrast, the dependent variable was the respondents' performance on pretests and posttests, which included word recognition and passage reading in easy, moderate, and challenging categories.

The research process began with obtaining approval from the School Principal through a formal letter and consulting Grade 7 English teachers to identify potential respondents. Out of the identified students, 10 were selected. The pretest assessed reading fluency using word lists and passages, highlighting the respondents' specific challenges. This was followed by a four-week remedial instruction program comprising individual, pair, and group reading sessions. After the intervention, the same pretest materials were administered as the posttest to evaluate progress.

The schedule of activities included the selection of respondents on March 29, 2022, the pretest on April 3, 2022, and the intervention sessions held on various dates throughout April 2022. The final posttest was conducted on April 24, 2022. Data from the pretest and posttest were tabulated and analyzed to determine the impact of the remedial instruction on the respondents' reading fluency.

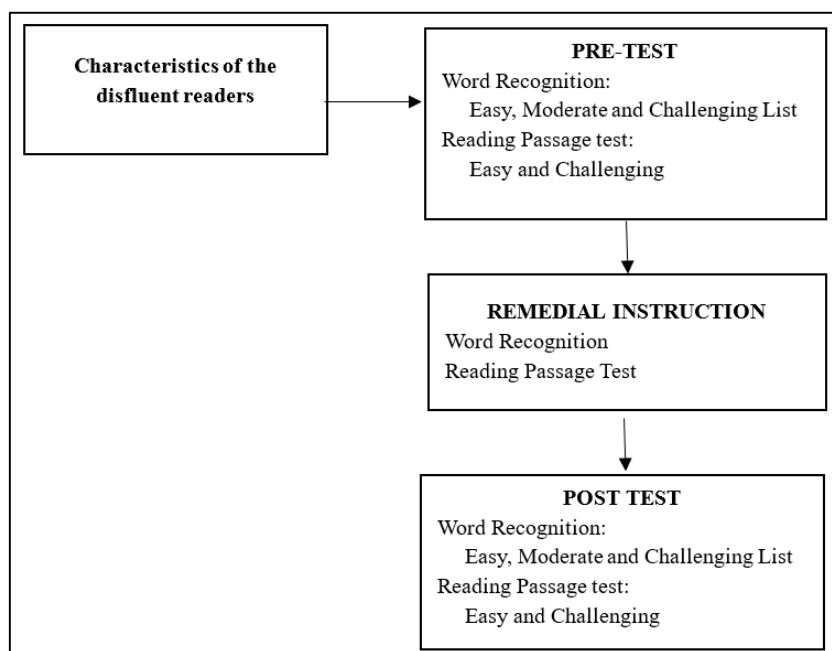**Use of Remedial Instruction for Disfluent Readers among Grade 7 Students**

Figure 1: Design Paradigm of the Study

B.   Participants of the Study

The researchers considered Grade 7 students of MSU-University Training Center as the respondents of this study. The respondents were chosen based on the characteristics of the disfluent readers, and their English teacher checked it since their teacher knows them better.

Table 1: Characteristics of the Disfluent Readers Applicable to the Respondents

Decode laboriously, without automaticity, and with reading rates lower than expected for age or grade level.
Place a reading emphasis on identifying or decoding words in isolation before discerning meaning because of word recognition difficulties.
They have limited sight vocabulary compared to fluent readers of similar age or developmental level.
Often, they rely on one or two "fix-it" strategies when problem-solving during word recognition.
Experience a diminished ability to comprehend text because more cognitive energies are spent on decoding and identifying words.
Have difficulty adjusting reading rates according to reading purpose and text difficulty.

(Spafford and Grosser, 2005:208-209, as cited by Cacumba, 2014)

Table 1 shows the descriptive characteristics of a disfluent reader. These characteristics are the criteria for choosing the respondents and were checked by their English teacher. Readers who struggle to decode words accurately often read with long pauses as they attempt to pronounce them. Disfluent reading is commonly characterized by frequent pauses, repeated attempts, and rereading of words or phrases that were initially read correctly. This pattern makes reading a slow, arduous, and tiring process for students. Yet another issue common for people, who struggle with reading fluency, is the difficulty to parcel words into meaningful phrases. At times, readers might operate at the text level well by decoding words, but they only skim over text as if they are in a hurry, thus ignoring punctuation guides such as commas, periods, and question marks. Some learners, at whatever rate they read, are also likely to display inadequate expression when reading fluently or otherwise. If a student has problems with one of the three elements of key reading skill, then comprehension and speed become more difficult, and if the problem is with two or more of the key reading elements, then comprehension may become severely affected (Hudson et al., 2009; Rasinski, 2012).

If cognitive resources are channeled towards decoding activities beyond a certain point, the reader is unable to pay attention to the content and make sense of it. This task only becomes even more complicated, with the work of considering complex texts. On the other hand, skilled readers combine the three identified aspects of fluency, namely, precise and quick word identification; reading at the rate that corresponds to speech Tempo; and appropriate vocal emphasis, as a seamless and natural kind of reading that supports meaning construction (Rasinski, 2012; Kuhn et al., 2010).

There were too many disfluent readers among Grade 7 students, but the researchers could only gather 10 students. The pretest and posttest were observed with the number of words read correctly, number of errors, time read, and word count per minute of the respondents. The researchers gave four weeks of remedial reading instruction with several activities after the pretest. The researcher

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used different reading strategies in the remedial instruction: individual reading, paired or buddy reading, and group reading activity. Based attempts included Individual sounds, mispronunciations, Substitutions, Reversals, Omissions, and Cases in which the examiner provided the word after waiting for about 2-3 seconds without any attempt or response from the student.

C. Instrumentation

The first instrument used in this study was Spafford and Grosser, 2005:208-209, as cited by Cacumba (2014), in identifying the disfluent readers among the respondents. The second instrument was the Effective Intervention for Struggling Readers and TALA – Effective Instruction for Middle School Students with Reading Difficulties and remedial instruction conducted by National Education Psychological Services (NEPS), 2012, as used for the remedial instruction and Effective Intervention for Struggling Readers. The panel members and research adviser scrutinized these to validate the remedial instruction. The selected word list recognition read by the respondents was used in Texas Reading Fluency in Texas Middle School and categorized into three categories. The two reading passages validated by the panel members and the adviser were entitled "A Walk in the Rain" and "The Pen." The third instrument, which helped to measure the errors and fluency of the respondents, was the Word Count per Minute. To identify the participants, the guidelines from Table 2 were used:

Table 2: Description of Mean Scale Used in the Study

Stage	Describing the Child's Reading Behaviors
Beginning Reader	The main feature of this stage is that readers cannot access print independently and may not yet be aware that the text carries meaning. Readers are likely to need a great deal of support with the reading demands of the classroom.
Early Reader	Early readers can tackle known and predictable texts with growing confidence but still need support with new and unfamiliar ones. Readers are growing able to make sense of what they read, drawing on illustrations, their knowledge of the language and the world, and the words on the page.
Developing Reader	A developing reader is gaining control of the reading process. Children in this stage link reading to their experiences and can read simple texts independently. Readers show interest in a growing range of reading material and can branch out into various books and other texts, including simple information texts, poetry, picture books, digital texts, and print in the environment.
Moderately Fluent Reader	Moderately fluent readers are well-launched on reading. Readers read confidently for more sustained periods but still need to return to a familiar range of texts while simultaneously exploring new kinds of texts independently.
Fluent Reader	Fluent readers are capable readers who now confidently approach familiar texts but still need support with unfamiliar materials. Readers are developing the stamina to read longer and cope with more demanding texts.

(Centre for Literacy in Primary Education, n.d.)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Pretest and Posttest Result in Word Recognition and Passage Reading

Table 3: Pretest Result of the Respondents in Word Recognition

Pretest	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Easy	10	35.6	11.0775	Early Reader
Moderate	10	18.5	7.230337	Beginning Reader
Challenging	10	15.6	7.183314	Beginning Reader

Mean Scaling for Word Recognition: 1.0 – 20.0: Beginning Reader; 21.0— 40.0 Early Reader; 41.0— 60.0 Developing Reader; 61.0— 80.0 Moderately Fluent Reader; 81.0— 100 Fluent Reader

Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation pretest of word count per minute of the students from the word recognition in the Easy category, Moderate category, and Challenging category. As can be seen, the average word count per minute for the pretest of the respondents is 35.6 with a standard deviation of 11.0775 in the Easy category; the respondents read carefully and gracefully. There were only a few mistakes and a few mispronunciations. Most of them could read many words, approximately 20-30 words per minute.

The Moderate category shows a mean of 18.5 with a standard deviation of 7.230337. The respondents had difficulty reading the word list; these were the moments when they replaced the letters /f/ with the letter /p/ and /b/ with the letter /v/. Some respondents also added letters to the words that were not present in their reading words. The respondents tended to reread the word more than 3 times and quickly gave up reading the words they found hard to read.

The table shows that the Challenging category has a mean of 15.6 with a standard deviation of 7.183314. The Challenging category of word recognition was difficult for the researchers and the respondents. The respondents read only less than 15 words and were

unsuccessful, either. There were many mispronunciations, omissions, and skips. The respondents usually gave up before reading the word, and they would shake their heads and say, "*Teacher, di ko kayang basahin*" (Teacher, I cannot read it) in response. The researchers did not force the respondents to read the list of words anymore.

Wardhaugh (1971) has observed that theories about language acquisition, behavioristic, nativistic, and cognitive, explain the parts played by the recurrence of stimuli, echoing, elaboration, and sense in learning. According to Mason and Allen (1986), both speech and print are modes for conveying meaning. In most cases, a specific context is needed to determine the meaning of the message. Acquiring spoken and written language means creating language and looking for the structure. For example, a beginning speaker can memorize the rule that adding '-ed' to a base makes the past tense of it and apply this rule inappropriately, a novice writer, after memorizing that an 'e' at the end of a word makes it silent may add this 'e' to many words and an early reader after reading the word 'help' several times may read 'helper' instead of 'helicopter'.

Higher speaker variability because the children were young and spoke several languages: Black et al., 2010. Some of the learners were in the initial stages of learning to read and speak English, therefore there were many more cases of reading errors. First, the researchers chose the default strategy for identifying the reading errors – substitutions, deletions, and mispronouncing of words. For instance, pronouncing "rip" wrong as "ripe". The rewards and adoptions of the features in a decision tree classifier were used together and done with a 91% agreement of human evaluators.

Table 4: Pretest result of the respondent in Passage Reading

Pretest	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Easy	10	66.6	22.77035	Moderately Fluent Reader
Challenging	10	71.8	16.86416	Moderately Fluent Reader

Mean Scaling for Passage Reading: 1.0 – 60.0: Developing Reader; 61.0 – 120.0: Moderately Fluent Reader; 121.0 – 180.0: Fluent Reader

Table 4 shows the Passage reading's mean and standard deviation pretest results. The Easy category of passage reading entitled "The Pen" shows that it has 66.6 for its mean with a deviation of 22.77035. The researchers found that the respondents preferred to read passages rather than the word list since they liked to omit many words or letters in the passage. During the pretest, it was a relief to the respondents that they read approximately 100–140 words, and there were only a few mistakes and mispronunciations.

The Challenging category shows a 71.8 mean with a standard deviation of 16.86416. They read the passage entitled "A Walk in the Rain." It shows differences between the Easy and Challenging categories regarding how they read the passage. There were omitted words or letters and affixes such as "a," "the," and the suffixes "s" to the word, which were not included were included in the passage reading.

According to Khor et al. (2014), the error pattern that affected the readers' "reading accuracy was a misreading of low-frequency words such as "accompanied" and multi-syllable words like "environment," "experience," and "sympathetically."

There are possible reasons for this (Khor et al., 2014); the students could either lack phonemic awareness to decode those words correctly or not know the words. Since the respondents of this study are not native to English, they rely on their L1 to interpret each word aloud. As a result, their stress in each syllable is different and greatly affected by their mother tongue.

Table 5: **Posttest result of the Respondents in Word Recognition**

Posttest	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Easy	10	53.4	9.349487	Developing Reader
Moderate	10	33.1	9.79172	Early Reader
Challenging	10	25	9.706813	Early Reader

Mean Scaling for Word Recognition: 1.0 – 20.0: Beginning Reader; 21.0 – 40.0: Early Reader; 41.0 – 60.0: Developing Reader; 61.0 – 80.0: Moderately Fluent Reader; 81.0 – 100: Fluent Reader

Table 5 shows the mean and standard deviation posttest of word count per minute of the students from the word list. In the Easy category of the posttest, its mean is 53.4, with a standard deviation of 9.349487. The posttest has a more considerable mean value than the pretest, and it implies that there is an improvement in their performance. After the remedial instruction, the respondents could read the word list better in the posttest than in the pretest. However, their overall performance did not meet the researchers' aim, which was to make the respondents perform better. They were only able to improve from early readers to developing readers.

The Moderate category also shows an average score performance for the post-test with a mean of 33.1 with a standard deviation of 9.79172. It had a more considerable mean value than the pretest, implying a vast improvement in their performance. Many respondents could read faster than in the pretest; some have not developed. Those respondents could read the word by repeating it once or twice and then successfully. The researchers found that the more the respondents were encouraged by simple conditioning like smiling and using thumbs up, the more motivated they were.

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In the challenging category, the posttest's average score was 25, with a standard deviation of 9.706813. The posttest has a smaller mean value than the pretest, implying a slight improvement in the respondents' performance. The Challenging category of word recognition was, after all, difficult for the researchers and the respondents. After the remedial instruction, there is a slight improvement in the respondents' performance. The respondents only read 2–5 words successfully.

As pointed by Florin et al (2014) and as earlier discussed here, speech fluency can be defined by the rate of speech, frequency, nature and' effort required in speech. There is much evidence of an inverse relationship between certain key factors of fluency: When disfluencies are higher, syllables and words spoken per minute are lower, and vice versa. It is true that in this study communication disorder known as Stuttering is mentioned as fluency disorder, however results show that it has a distinct effect on spontaneous speech performance that allows for differentiation of clients who stutter and who do not, on all measures of disfluencies and speech rate. In this context the phenomenon discussed can be described as word repetition being one of the disfluencies.

Table 6: **Posttest result of the Respondents in Passage Reading**

Posttest	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Easy	10	80.66	24.15137	Moderately Fluent Reader
Challenging	10	83.7	23.31928	Moderately Fluent Reader

Mean Scaling for Passage Reading: 1.0 – 60.0: Developing Reader; 61.0 – 120.0: Moderately Fluent Reader; 121.0 – 180.0: Fluent Reader

Table 6 shows the mean and standard deviation of the posttest performance of the respondents in Passage Reading of Word Count per Minute from the Easy Category passage entitled "The Pen." It shows that the average performance of the respondents in the mean is 80.8, with a standard deviation of 24.15137. The posttest is slightly larger than the pretest; it implies an improvement in their performance. During the posttest, the respondents seemed to forget the lessons discussed during the remedial instruction since they would look at the researchers for guidance about the words they had forgotten to read.

According to Goodman (1994), as cited by Kucer (2014), "whole language" teaching emphasizes the ability of oral expression, the ability of communication, the ability of thinking, and the ability of analyzing. Therefore, teaching reading, retelling the story, discussing the context and characters of the story, and performing a play are frequently techniques by the "whole language" teacher. The students improved their ability to express themselves orally and deepened their text comprehension through these activities.

B. Significant Difference

The following table shows the significant differences between the Pretest and the Posttest, and the respondents improved. It indicates the mean, standard deviation, and interpretation of the respondents' performance in word recognition and passage reading during the pretest and posttest.

Table 7: Significant Difference between Pretest and Posttest

Category		Mean	SD	Std Error Mean	Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
					Lower	Upper				
Word Recognition	Easy	44.5	12.59	8.90	8.17	27.43	3.883	18	.0011	Highly Significant
	Moderate	25.8	10.32	7.30	6.51	22.69	3.793	18	.0013	Highly Significant
	Challenging	20.3	6.65	4.70	1.38	17.42	2.462	18	.0242	Significant
Passage Reading	Easy	73.6	9.94	7.03	-8.07	36.19	1.133	18	.1987	Not Significant
	Challenging	77.7	8.41	5.95	-7.22	31.01	1.308	18	.2075	Not Significant

Table 7 shows the Paired T-test of the respondents' performance. As shown in the table above, the Easy and Moderate categories of Word Recognition are highly significant, and the Challenging category is significant. The Easy and Challenging categories of Passage Reading are not significant.

The high significant difference between the pretest and post-test scores in word recognition contributed to improving the respondents' reading fluency skills. According to Faulkner and Levy (1999), "When adult readers read fluently because the texts are at their reading level, then the reader focuses on the message, and transfer is mediated at that level. However, when the adult reader is forced to read in a word-by-word fashion, either through instructions (Carlson et al., 1991) or when the texts are difficult for them, then the focus of attention during reading is at the word processing level, and all transfer to later readings must also be at

that level." As several studies have shown (e.g., Cheming & Slavin, 2005; Florin et al., 2015) extensive guidance, practice, and support in applying self-regulation strategies, including goal setting, self-monitoring, and self-assessment with proper guidance have positive effects on the disfluent readers' performance in reading.

In reading fluency, one should be phonologically aware of the letters and the words they read. In this case, word recognition is a stepping stone to becoming a fluency master. Disfluent readers find it frightening and not enjoyable due to its complexity. Mostly, those who are afraid to read aloud or skip reading are afraid of possible judgments and criticisms. Practice and acceptance remedy their anxieties in reading correctly, and the learners need proper guidance. Additionally, when learners are engaged in reading activities and guided by experts, they will undoubtedly positively affect them.

In the Easy and Challenging category of Passage Reading, it is not significant. Therefore, this result may support the idea that in mastering reading fluency, passage reading is not the first option to do (NAEP, 2002). The fluent group processed the words as chunks. In contrast, the difference in processing times for the fluent groups was significant, indicating that they processed the words serially (Alt, 2011).

Disfluent readers depend on their existing recognized words to understand the text they read. As researchers have seen, learners tend to focus on what is within the text as a whole but not the details, leading them to express some ideas and limited thoughts. Being unable to read fluently leads to a lack of comprehension of the text they read. They would instead focus on reading certain words rather than understanding them, which hinders becoming a good reader. However, disfluent readers should start practicing letter recognition, followed by word recognition and passage reading, to become the good readers they want. Teachers, friends, and family should be their guides to learners as they go through the process.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

High school students face different text and complex topics across multiple content areas. Without proper guidance, readers face challenges in high school as topics gradually become difficult. This is why the teachers' guidance plays a significant role in helping students absorb texts and implement fluency strategies, eventually, supporting higher-order thinking skills. Fluency allows readers to shift focus from decoding to understanding, this is why struggling readers devote too much attention to word reading, hindering them from understanding the meaning of the text. By developing their fluency, students may be able to comprehend and engage critically with texts.

Curriculum developers should create customized reading projects that fit students' learning levels, and they can add specialized pronunciation courses. Researchers should examine remedial instruction effects for poor readers while improving experimental designs and intervention duration along with expanding participant numbers using observation checklists to discover efficient reading fluency and comprehension methods.

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