# *Bark on* about Fluency

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# Reading fluency:

# From words to meaning

## To create a complete reading program instruction must cover the following components:

1. Alphabetics
   - Phonemic awareness
   - Phonics instruction
2. **Fluency**
   - Guided repeated oral reading
   - Independent silent reading
3. Comprehension
   - Vocabulary development and vocabulary instruction
   - Text comprehension instruction
   - Teacher preparation and comprehension strategy instruction

NRP, 2000

# Reading fluency

Successful reading requires readers to process the text (the surface level of reading) and comprehend the text (the deeper meaning).

Reading fluency refers to the reader's ability to develop control over surface level text processing so that he or she can focus on understanding the deeper levels of meaning embedded in the text.

Rasinski, 2004

# Reading fluency

One goal of reading instruction is to help children become fluent readers. When children are fluent they read automatically, decoding words quickly and accurately.

Fluent readers read with prosody – that is, they use the appropriate pitch, pace, phrasing, and expression. Fluent reading aids comprehension.

Mandel Morrow, Kuhn and Schwanenflugel, 2006

# Reading fluency

Fluency moves beyond automatic word recognition to include rhythm and expression, or what linguists refer to as *the prosodic features of language.*

Kuhn and Stahl, 2003

# Reading fluency

Fluency in reading is the ability to read rapidly with ease and accuracy, and to read with appropriate expression and phrasing. It involves a long incremental learning process, and text comprehension is an expected outcome of fluent reading.

Grabe, 2009

# Reading fluency

Fluent readers are able to read orally with speed, accuracy, and proper expression.

Fluency is one of several critical factors necessary for reading comprehension.

Unfortunately, it is a neglected component of skilled reading.

NRP, 2000

# Reading fluency

It is often assumed that if students can decode they will become fluent. Research has indicated that this is not necessarily so, and therefore students need training in fluency strategies.

Mandel Morrow, Kuhn and Schwanenflugel (2006)

# Three dimensions of reading fluency

Reading fluency has three important dimensions that build a bridge to comprehension.

## *1. Accuracy in word decoding*

Readers must be able to sound out the words in a text with minimal errors. This dimension refers to phonics and other strategies for decoding words.

Rasinski ,2004

# Three dimensions of reading fluency

## 2. *Automatic processing*

Readers need to expend as little mental effort as possible in the decoding aspect of reading so that they can use their finite cognitive resources for meaning.

# Three dimensions of reading fluency

To that end they need to develop a large sight vocabulary.

A large sight vocabulary is the basis of fluent reading.

In fact, it may be considered a precondition for fluent reading.

Day and Bamford, 1998

# Three dimensions of reading fluency

## 3. *Prosodic reading*

The reader must parse the text into syntactically and semantically appropriate units.

If readers read quickly and accurately but with no expression in their voices, if they place equal emphasis on every word and have no sense of phrasing, and if they ignore most punctuation, blowing through periods and other markers that indicate pauses, then it is unlikely that they will fully understand the text.

Rasinski, 2004

# Reading rate

Reading rate may be an indicator of fluent or disfluent reading.

A slow reading rate may be symptomatic of inefficient word recognition or lack of sensitivity to the phrase – the natural unit of meaning in reading.

Rasinski, 2000

# Reading fluency

Grabe addresses four components of reading fluency:

- automaticity
- accuracy
- reading rate
- prosodic structuring

Grabe, 2009

# Components of reading fluency

**Automaticity** :

In discussions of fluency, automaticity is defined as processing operations that are rapid, relatively resource-free, not subject to interference, unconscious, and hard to suppress.

It is also assumed to require long periods of training.

Grabe, 2009 p. 291

# Components of reading fluency

## Accuracy:

Accuracy is also seen as an essential component of reading fluency, whether it involves recognition skills at the subword level, word level, or text level.

Accuracy, as a component of reading fluency, is most closely associated with word recognition in that fluent word recognition must not only be rapid and automatic, it must also be complete and accurate.

Grabe, 2009 p. 291

# Components of reading fluency

## Reading rate:

A third component needed for reading fluency is a *rapid overall rate of reading for comprehension*.

Fluency requires an ability to maintain ease of comprehension throughout an extended text.

Such an ability assumes the above skill components as well as a large recognition vocabulary, automaticity with basic syntactic processing, and plenty of practice.

Grabe, 2009 p. 292

# Components of reading fluency

## Prosodic structuring:

A final component of fluency that is increasingly cited is the *recognition of prosodic phrasing and contours* of the text while reading.

Differences in reading fluency along these lines are most evident during oral reading as opposed to silent reading, but even with silent reading, it is difficult to imagine a fluent reader pausing at inappropriate junctures or processing text chunks in ways that do not match structural units in the continuous prose.

Grabe, 2009 p. 292

# Assessing prosody

To assess prosodic reading listen to a student read a grade-level passage and then judge the quality of the reading using a rubric that scores a student on the elements of expression and volume, phrasing, smoothness, and pace.

Students who score poorly may be considered at risk in this dimension of reading fluency.

Rasinski ,2004

# Why is prosody problematic?

There are features present in spoken language that provide clues to a speaker's intent such as gestures, facial expression, intonation, and stress. These are not present in printed text.

Hook and Jones, 2002

# Mapping prosody onto text

The absence of these prosodic features in text inhibits some readers from chunking words (grouping by semantic and syntactic features) into meaningful units.

Hook and Jones, 2002

# Mapping prosody onto text

Just as we teach students to make sound-symbol correspondence during decoding instruction, we also must teach readers to map the prosodic features of spoken language onto the printed text. Structured and systematic instruction in this area will facilitate spoken-to-print prosodic correspondences and enhance comprehension.

Hook and Jones, 2002

# Why is chunking so important?

Memory span is limited by the number of chunks it can hold where a chunk is a meaningfully coded unit.

The idea of chunking is that a group of pieces of information can be organized into a new unit that is easier to process mentally than the several individual units of which it is composed.

Clark and Clark, 1977

# Linking decoding and comprehension

If text is read in a laborious and inefficient manner, it will be difficult for the reader to remember what he has read and to relate the ideas expressed in the text to his or her background knowledge.

In other words, both integration of information and meaning construction will be negatively affected.

Reading in meaningful units (chunks) links decoding and comprehension.

# Chunking

To read for meaning a reader must bring meaningful groups of words into short-term memory.

Letter-by-letter or word-by-word reading fills short-term memory with meaningless units; no meaningful information gets through to combine with the reader's background knowledge for placement in long-term memory (where knowledge is stored in the form of concepts or ideas, not words).

Eskey, 2002

# Chunking

One of the earliest findings from memory research was that short term memory holds a fairly constant number of units, units likely to be chunks of information, composed of several rather than single items.

Even though these chunks may be larger and contain more information than discrete items, their number still remains fairly constant in memory, and their size increases as we become more familiar with remembered material, permitting us to store and recall more information.

Nattinger and DeCarrico, 1992

# Chunking

… a good reader takes in the sense of a whole chunk without pausing to consider individual words. It is quicker to fit together the sense of two or three chunks than to do the same with all the separate words that compose them.

Nuttall, 1996

# Chunking

When readers cannot recognize a word they usually know they cannot. When they cannot chunk text, they may not even realize it.

Lewis, 1993

# Chunking

The student's problem is often that he does not know the target language well enough to chunk effectively. Many students read word by word, especially if the text is difficult, so to encourage good reading habits, a lot of practice with easy texts is needed.

Nuttall, 1996

# Reading fluency – a neglected goal

According to the report of the U.S. National Reading Panel, fluency is a predictor of reading success. Although it has been found that fluency is a major goal in reading instruction, teachers are not as familiar as they should be with fluency strategies, and they are not using them regularly.

Mandel Morrow, Kuhn and Schwanenflugel (2006)

# When should fluency be emphasized?

A key fluency issue involves identifying the relevant stage in the cycle of learning new information in which fluency is emphasized. After new L2 knowledge is learned and practiced, the build-up of fluency skills that follows should not be constrained by a simultaneous need for building accuracy.

Grabe, 2009 p. 293

# When should fluency be emphasized?

Fluency practice should place relatively few attentional demands on getting the language right.

Getting the language right, even if tentatively, should be the precursor of fluency development. In much L1 research on fluency, accuracy is an assumed subcomponent.

Grabe, 2009 p. 293

# Lexical chunks in vocabulary acquisition and language processing

# Terminology

Different terminology has been used over the years to describe the phenomena of multi-word vocabulary or chunks. Labels include *lexical phrases, prefabricated patterns, routine formulae, formulaic sequences, lexicalized stems, chunks, (restricted) collocations, fixed expressions, multi-word units/expressions, idioms* etc.

O'Keeffe, McCarthy and Carter, 2007 p.63

# Vocabulary knowledge and reading

Research repeatedly points to the importance of vocabulary knowledge for reading, and the value of reading as a means of increasing vocabulary and refining the knowledge of words from context.

Day and Bamford, 1998

# Lexical phrases

…vocabulary is not necessarily learned word by individual word, but is often learned initially in 'lexical phrases' several words long.

Lexical phrases are sequences of words which the mind learns as wholes and attaches a single meaning to.

They are single lexical items which are cognitively processed much the same as single words.

Schmitt and McCarthy, 1997

# Strings of words in corpora

Studies of large corpora by linguists such as Sinclair have shown lexis to have a far more central role in the organisation of language and the creation of meaning than was generally previously conceived.

A big, general corpus can show how large numbers of language users, separated in time and space, repeatedly orientate towards the same language choices when involved in comparable social activities.

O'Keeffe, McCarthy and Carter, 2007 p.60.

# Strings of words in corpora

What corpora reveal is that much of our linguistic output consists of repeated multi-word units rather than single words.

Language is available for use in ready-made chunks to a far greater extent than could ever be accommodated by a theory of language which rested upon the primacy of syntax.

O'Keeffe, McCarthy and Carter, 2007 p.60.

# Strings of words in corpora

Pursuing this radical view that it is lexis, rather than syntax, which accounts for the organisation and patterning of language, Sinclair argues that there are two fundamental principles at work in the creation of meaning. He calls these the 'idiom principle' and the 'open choice principle'.

O'Keeffe, McCarthy and Carter, 2007 p.60

# Strings of words in corpora

The idiom principle is the central one in the creation of text and meaning in speech and writing.

The idiom principle holds that speakers/writers have at their disposal a large store of ready-made lexico-grammatical chunks (i.e., the grammar of such chunks is preformed as part of their lexical identity, rather than vice-versa).

O'Keeffe, McCarthy and Carter, 2007 p.60

# Strings of words in corpora

Syntax, the slots where there are choices to be made (the open choice principle) far from being primary, is only brought into service occasionally, as a kind of 'glue' to cement the lexical chunks together.

Sinclair sees meaning and form working hand in hand: different senses of a word will typically be manifested in different structural configurations.

O'Keeffe, McCarthy and Carter, 2007 p.60

# Strings of words in corpora

In the Cambridge International Corpus, out of 100 examples of *be touched by,* only 14% have the meaning 'experience physical contact', while 86% have a non physical meaning (e.g., emotionally affected by, tinged with, affected by human activity), and, in turn, 80% of these non-physical senses have the meaning of 'emotionally affected by'.

There is a strong correlation between the occurrence of *touch* in the passive voice and non-physical (typically emotion-related) senses.

O'Keeffe, McCarthy and Carter, 2007 p.61

# Strings of words in corpora

The delicate relationship between syntax and lexis extends the original notion of collocation to encompass longer strings of words and includes their preferred grammatical configurations or ‘colligations’.

Collocation and colligation together produce unitary meaningful strings or chunks of language which are stored in the memory and which give substance to the idiom principle.

O’Keeffe, McCarthy and Carter, 2007 p.61.

# Strings of words in corpora

Chunks are ready for use at any moment and do not need re-assembling every time they are used.

O'Keeffe, McCarthy and Carter, 2007 p.61.

# Strings of words in corpora

Thus we can also partly account for the notion of 'fluency', a term frequently used to describe smooth, effortless performance in a language but one that is often only loosely defined.

O'Keeffe, McCarthy and Carter, 2007 p.61

# Conclusion

Chunks support Sinclair's notion of the idiom principle at work, and are best viewed as being evidence of single linguistic choices rather than assembled piece by piece at the moment of speaking. They make fluency a reality.

O'Keeffe, McCarthy and Carter, 2007 p.75

# Processing chunks

There is evidence that the use of chunks ‘frees up’ the cognitive processing load so that mental effort can be allocated to other aspects of production such as discourse organization and successful interaction. In that sense, chunks liberate the learner and allow a degree of automaticity to take over in both comprehension and production.

O’Keeffe, McCarthy and Carter, 2007 p. 77

# Processing chunks

Wray (2000) stresses the non-analytical nature of formulaic language in native speaker competence.

Attempts by teachers and textbooks to encourage the analysis of chunks by learners are, in Wray's words, 'pursuing native-like linguistic usage by promoting entirely *un*native-like processing behaviour' (p.463, her emphasis).

O'Keeffe, McCarthy and Carter, 2007 p.78

# Processing chunks

The more the learner has successfully acquired a repertoire of chunks, the easier it becomes to reflect and analyse them at a later stage, so that certain aspects of grammatical acquisition may flow from the knowledge and use of chunks, rather than vice-versa.

O'Keeffe, McCarthy and Carter, 2007 p.79

# Needs only analysis

Within first language acquisition (which continues through an individual's life), a major strategy for learning from input, and indeed the one that operates by default, is Needs Only Analysis (NAO):

The process of analysis which the [native speaker] child engages in is not that of breaking down as much linguistic material as possible into its smallest components. **Rather, *nothing is broken down unless there is a specific reason*.**

Wray, 2008 p. 17.

# Needs only analysis

The impetus for NOA can be conceptualized in terms of minimizing the speaker's and/or hearer's processing, in that it is preferable to engage in as few operations as possible to express or interpret a message.

Fewer operations are required to select a partly-fixed unit and apply one or more lexical insertion rules, than to select individual morphemes and words and assemble them using rules.

Wray 2008, p. 18

# Needs only analysis

Another way to conceptualize the motivation for NOA is in terms of the social pressure to speak like others, something that can be achieved by adopting the multiword patterns already in use in the speech community.

Wray 2008, p. 18

# Needs only analysis

The default is to engage in the least processing necessary in order to map the intended idea(s) onto linguistic forms that can be understood effectively by others.

The need to communicate effectively, however, means that along with the speaker's own needs or preferences for how an idea is expressed, the needs and expectations of the hearer must also be taken into account.

Wray 2008, p.20

# Needs only analysis

Taking the hearer into account will generally encourage the speaker to be more formulaic. Just as formulaic material is easier for the speaker to encode, so also, when hearers have a lexical entry for a word string, they will find it easier to decode, compared with something more novel.

That is, where a novel word string could be interpreted on the basis of any reasonable meanings arising from the word combination, a formulaic one will often be pre-associated with particular overtones or significance.

Wray 2008, p.20

# Needs only analysis

As a result, a great deal of meaning can be triggered with very little processing and, more importantly, other possible meanings can be downgraded as candidates for interpretation.

Wray 2008, p.20

# Collocations

Language consists largely of prefabricated ‘chunks’ of lexis.

The key feature to the formation of these chunks is ‘collocation’ – the way words occur together in predictable combinations (e.g., *an utter disaster, a shady deal).*

Hill, 1999

# Collocations and expectations

…collocations permit people to know what kinds of words they can expect to find together.

We have certain expectations about what sorts of information can follow from what has preceded, and so often are able to guess the meaning after hearing only the first part of familiar collocations.

This is another demonstration of the fact that we understand in ‘chunks’.

Nattinger, 1988

# Collocation is the key to fluency

Native speakers can only speak at the speed they speak because they are calling on a vast repertoire of ready-made language in their mental lexicons.

Similarly, they can listen at the speed of speech and read quickly because they are constantly recognising used chunks.

http://stewardess.inhatc.ac.kr/philoint/usage/collocation-4.htm

# Lexical phrases and fluency

Native speakers have a repertoire of lexical phrases running to tens of thousands. Fluency is based on these lexical phrases.

Hill, 1999

Fluency is a natural consequence of a larger and more phrasal mental lexicon.

http://stewardess.inhatc.ac.kr/philoint/usage/collocation-4.htm

# The fluency strand

The fluency development strand should involve all the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

In this strand, the learners are helped to make the best use of what they already know. Like meaning-focused input and output, the fluency development strand is also meaning-focused. That is, the learners' aim is to receive and convey messages.

Nation 2007, p. 7

# The fluency strand

The fluency strand only exists if certain conditions are present.

(1) All of what the learners are listening to, reading, speaking or writing is largely familiar to them (i.e., no unfamiliar language, or largely unfamiliar content or discourse features).

(2) The learners' focus is on receiving or conveying meaning.

Nation 2007, p. 7

# The fluency strand

(3) There is some pressure or encouragement to perform at a faster than usual speed.

(4) There is a large amount of input or output.

Nation 2007, p. 7

(5) Learners process language in chunks/phrases rather than at the level of individual words.

# The fluency strand

If the activity involves unknown vocabulary, it is not a fluency activity. If the focus is on language features, it is not a fluency activity. If there is no push to go faster, it is not a fluency activity.

The fluency strand should make up about one-quarter of the course time. It is time out from learning new items and is a time for getting good at using what is already known.

Nation 2007, p. 8

# The fluency strand

In most language courses not enough attention is given to fluency development, possibly because it does not involve the learning of new language items and thus is not seen as moving the learners forward in their knowledge of the language.

Nation 2007, p. 8

# Lexical chunks, collocations and fluency instruction

# Teach learners to identify different kinds of collocation

A collocation can be made up of two or more words:
verb + noun make a mistake
adjective + noun heavy traffic
adverb+ verb totally misunderstand
adverb + adjective extremely generous
adjective + preposition guilty of ....ing
noun + noun a ceasefire agreement

Collocations can be much longer. For example: adverb + verb + adjective + noun + preposition + noun = seriously affect the political situation in (Northern Ireland).

http://stewardess.inhatc.ac.kr/philoint/usage/collocation-4.htm

# Introducing phrasing

Once students understand the concept of phrasing, it is recommended that teachers help students chunk text into syntactic (noun phrases, verb phrases, prepositional phrases) or meaning units until they are proficient themselves.

Hook and Jones, 2002

# Chunking texts

Teachers should read texts aloud in class so that students hear the text correctly chunked.

http://stewardess.inhatc.ac.kr/philoint/usage/collocation-4.htm

To help students with chunking ask them to mark the chunks in their own texts as you read aloud.

Discuss the specific oral interpretation that you chose.

Rasinski, 2004

# Chunking texts

Students practice reading the text with correct chunking.

Remember: This skill needs to be transferred to other texts.

# Noticing, underlining and predicting chunks

Students should be asked to notice and underline useful collocations.

Students should be asked to predict collocations in texts by identifying and gapping them.

http://stewardess.inhatc.ac.kr/philoint/usage/collocation-4.htm

Practice can also take the form of re-inserting chunks into dialogues from which they have been removed.

O'Keeffe, McCarthy and Carter, 2007 p.77

# Glossing

If phrasal vocabulary is being glossed, it helps to make the phrases more salient by highlighting their form (e.g. by printing them in color, and/or underlining them), so that the learner can recognize them as chunks (Bishop, 2004)

Schmitt 2008, p. 351

# Recording/storing collocations

Students should be encouraged to store collocations in their notebooks in some retrievable way along with the L1 equivalent of the whole collocation.

http://stewardess.inhatc.ac.kr/philoint/usage/collocation-4.htm

# Cross linguistic comparisons

Cross linguistic comparisons with the learners' L1 might help them to see how their own language uses chunks and that they are not a peculiarity of English or any other language.

O'Keeffe, McCarthy and Carter, 2007 p.77

# Guided oral reading and silent reading

Guided repeated oral reading, encourages students to read passages orally with systematic and explicit guidance and feedback from the teacher.

Independent silent reading, encourages students to read silently on their own, inside and outside the classroom, with minimal guidance or feedback.

NRP, 2000

# Reading theatre

Passages meant to be read aloud as a performance - poetry, for example, or scripts, speeches, monologues, dialogues, jokes, and riddles – are perfect texts for developing fluency.

Rasinski, 2004

# Exploiting the collocational content of texts

**Goal: Encourage learners to notice larger chunks.**

Task: Finding collocations in a text.

Underline the verb used before the noun, if there is one.

Underline all the nouns in a text.

Where appropriate, underline the whole phrase in which the collocation is used.

Lewis, 2000

# Reconstructing content

## Task: Using lexical items to reconstruct content

In small groups, students read a text and then write 15 lexical items which occur in the original text on a sheet of paper.

Lexical items should be selected so that another group has the best possible chance of reconstructing the main content of the original text using the given 15 items as a framework.

Groups exchange papers and try to expand the notes to recover the main content of the original text.

Lewis, 2000.

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