

TEACHING READING FLUENCY TO HAUSA ADULT LEARNERS USING GRADUAL RELEASE OF RESPONSIBILITY MODEL

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INTRODUCTION

Effective instruction for struggling adolescent readers is currently at the forefront of literacy. Teaching reading is a complex undertaking, especially when the learner is an adult. Unlike children, adult learners cannot spend several hours in a classroom every day. Most adults learning to read find it difficult to attend classes at all; those who enroll in a basic education program can spend, at most, a few hours a week working on their reading.

When adult students arrive in the classroom, they can be at just about any level in their reading development, from beginning readers working on the fundamentals to more advanced readers ready to begin study for a high school level equivalency diploma. Emotional factors such as motivation, engagement, and fear of failure play a major role in reading success. These feelings can be especially intense for adults, particularly for learners who have spent years struggling with reading and hiding their inability to read from family members, friends, coworkers, and employers. Given the complexity of the task, what methods should educators use to help adult learners make substantial gains in their reading skill?

READING FLUENCY

Fluency is the ability to read with efficiency and ease. Fluent readers can read quickly and accurately and with appropriate rhythm, intonation, and expression. Individuals who are learning to read often are not fluent. Their reading is choppy and filled with hesitations. They make false starts and mistakes in pronunciation. But even mature readers may read less fluently if they try to read texts that contain many unfamiliar words. Their reading may slow down and be characterized by more hesitations and mispronunciations than usual.

Without fluency, readers attend more to decoding than to understanding the meaning of what they are reading. Fluency promotes comprehension by freeing cognitive resources for interpretation. Fluent reading also signals that readers are pausing at appropriate points to make sense of the text. When a reader can reproduce the rhythm intended by the author, he or she can grasp the meaning more easily.

There are activities that a teacher can use to improve fluency such as: Choral reading, learners read a portion of text together. Tape reading, in this activity, the teacher tapes the learners reading individually. This can be done with the microphone on an interactive whiteboard or a tape recorder. The learners then listen back to what they have read, self-assess their own reading. The teacher may work with a small group or the whole class to model fluent reading and the learners repeat the reading back to the teacher. They echo the teacher's expressions and intonation. Fluency is an issue for adult beginning readers, intermediate readers, and for some who read at more advanced Adult Basic Education levels. In a large-scale assessment of over one thousand young adults, those with poor fluency had a silent reading rate of about 145 or fewer words per minute almost 100 words per minute slower than the fluent readers. The oral reading rate and accuracy of adult beginning readers closely resembles those of children who are beginning to read (Curtis and Kruidenier, 2005). In Nigeria the situation is more than that, some adults read not more than ten words per minute even in their first language. This is the rationale for the study to see how literacy rate can be enhanced.

Reading fluency can be measured formally with standardized tests, or informally with reading inventories, miscue analyses, pausing indices, or measures of rate. Typically, a student reads aloud while the teacher observes and records reading accuracy and reading rate. Reading accuracy is the number or percentage of words read correctly in a text. Reading rate or speed is the number of words read in a given amount of time, such as the number of words read in a minute, or the average number of words read per minute. Sometimes measures of oral reading accuracy and rate are combined, as in determining the average number of words read correctly in a minute. Fluency can also be estimated by timing how long it takes to read a passage of text silently.

Another way to assess fluency is by the rhythm a reader has while reading. Some researchers developed a four-point fluency scale based on pauses. Level one on the scale represents readers who read word by word, while level four represents those who pause only at the boundaries of meaningful phrases and clauses.

Although most researchers consider prosody important, the subjectivity of judging students' prosody makes it a difficult component of fluency to study. Many researchers have focused on the more easily quantifiable components of fluency (rate and accuracy) and, therefore, some basic questions about prosody — like what should be expected in second grade versus sixth grade — have not been answered. Nevertheless, students'

prosody is an extra piece of information for making instructional decisions. When students' speed and accuracy are at appropriate levels, reading with proper phrasing, expression, and intonation should be the next goal.

To measure students' oral reading speed and accuracy, researchers have developed a simple and very brief procedure that uses regular classroom texts to determine the number of words that students can read correctly in one minute. To obtain a words-correct-per-minute (WCPM) score, students are assessed individually as they read aloud for one minute from an unpracticed passage of text.

To calculate the WCPM score, the examiner subtracts the total number of errors from the total number of words read in one minute. An error includes any word that is omitted, mispronounced, or substituted for another word. Words transposed in a phrase count as two errors (e.g., reading "laughed and played" instead of "played and laughed"). Each time a word is read incorrectly it is counted as an error. Words read correctly that are repeated more than once, errors self-corrected by the student, words inserted by the student that do not appear in the text, and words mispronounced due to dialect or speech impairments are not counted as errors. They do, however, impact the final score since they slow the student down and, therefore, reduce the number of words that are read correctly in one minute.

If the passage is randomly selected from a text or trade book, an average score should be taken from readings of two or three different passages to account for any text-based differences. If standardized passages are used (in which the text has been carefully controlled for difficulty), a score from a single passage may be sufficient.

GRADUAL RELEASE OF RESPONSIBILITY MODEL

Research on what motivates and engages less-effective readers is accumulating rapidly. It is expected that struggling learners need purposeful instruction in reading skills and strategies, access to a wide variety of texts, motivation to read, and authentic opportunities to read and write both inside and outside of school (Alvermann, 2001; Ivey, 1999; Paterson & Elliott, 2006; Williams, 2001). One way teachers can provide more targeted, individualized instruction is to use the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model (GRR) (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). This instructional model requires that the teacher, by design, transition from assuming all the responsibility for performing a task to a situation in which the students assume all of the responsibility (Duke & Pearson, 2002). The gradual release may occur over a day, a week, or months. The gradual release of responsibility emphasizes instruction that mentors students into becoming capable thinkers and learners when handling the tasks with which they have not yet developed expertise" (Buehl, 2005).

One element which is crucial to the success of the GRR model is the notion related to instructional scaffolding which is broadly recognized as a successful approach for moving classroom instruction from teacher-centered, wholegroup delivery to student-centered collaboration and independent practice. The model is grounded in Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the "Zone of Proximal Development." This is described as the distance between the actual developmental level of a learner as determined by their independent problem solving abilities and the level of potential development through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. That is, the distance between what the learners can do without assistance and what they can accomplish with the assistance of more capable peers. The Zone of Proximal Development can be applied as an umbrella over the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model (GRR). Learners are given support in the form of scaffolding and differentiate instruction throughout all four phases of the process. Teachers can offer more challenging material to high-achieving learners, and assist lower-achieving learners in needs-based groups. Teachers support students as needed throughout the four steps and finally allowing for the eventual independence of each student. The GRR model, assumes that the learners will need some guidance in reaching that stage of independence and that it is precisely the teacher's role to provide such guidance.

Although the GRR model is based on the work of Piaget (1952), the influence of Vygotsky's constructivist theory and learning in the classroom has become more popular because it considers the influence of group processes and social contexts that are, in themselves, influenced by such constructs as cultural diversity and stages of development. The GRR model emphasizes instruction that supports and mentors students into becoming capable thinkers and learners when handling tasks with which they have yet to develop expertise in. It is a successful model and has been documented as an effective approach in teaching many subject areas and a variety of content, from writing achievement, reading comprehension, and literacy outcomes for English language learners (Kong & Pearson, 2003) The present study tested the model by teaching reading fluency in Hausa language to adult learners.

The GRR model has four steps. The focus Lessons component allows teachers to model their own metacognitive processes as active readers. This is usually brief in nature; focus lessons establish purposes for reading and clue students into important learning objectives. The next stage is the guided instruction stage where teachers prompt, question, facilitate, or lead students through tasks that increase understanding of a particular text.

The collaborative learning component in the gradual release of responsibility model, students consolidate their understanding of the content and explore opportunities to solve problems, discuss the content negotiate meaning, and think with their peers. Independent learning addresses the most important goal of instruction which provides students with practice in applying skills and information in new ways. As students transfer their learning to subsequent tasks, they synthesize information, transform ideas, and solidify their understanding. They become active readers and capable learners. The gradual release of responsibility instructional framework purposefully shifts the cognitive load from teacher-as-model, to joint responsibility of teacher and learner, to independent practice and application by the learner (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983).

The model stipulates that the teacher moves from assuming "all the responsibility for performing a task to a situation in which the students assume all of the responsibility" (Duke & Pearson, 2002, p. 211). Graves and Fitzgerald (2003) note that "effective instruction often follows a progression in which teachers gradually do less of the work and students gradually assume increased responsibility for their learning. It is through this process of gradually assuming more and more responsibility for their learning that students become competent, independent learners. The gradual release of responsibility framework, the model from the onset was developed for reading instruction, reflects the intersection of several theories, it is now being used for teaching writing and mathematics.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The ultimate goal of instruction is that students be able to independently apply information, ideas, content, skills, and strategies in unique situations. We want to create learners who are not dependent on others for information and ideas. As such, learners need practice completing independent tasks and learning from those tasks. Among the Hausa speakers especially adults, there is difficulty in teaching them to read. This may be due to lack of motivation on the part of the learners. Therefore the research set out to teach reading fluency to adult learners of reading in Hausa using the gradual release of responsibility model in order to see if it could motivate them to read with fluency.

THE OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the research are to:

- a) Determine the usefulness of gradual release of responsibility model in teaching reading fluency among adult learners
- b) Find out if the gradual release of responsibility model can motivate adult learners to read.

INSTRUMENT

The instruments for the research were a collection of Hausa folktales titled *Hikayoyin Kaifafa Zukata* written by Malam Aminu Kano and *Ingantattun Magungunan Zuma* by Muhammad Khamis Kibiya which is a book on the benefits of honey. These books were chosen to vary the reading content. All the books have other volumes. Only the first volumes were used for the research.

THE PARTICIPANTS

The participants were 30 adults who scored between the third and fifth grade levels on the Letter-Word Identification. The participants attend the Ahmadu Bello University adult literacy programs which I am a volunteer teacher. Majority of the participants were between 25- 30 years and possessing an average educational attainment level of primary six equivalent to Hasbrouck and Tindal's grade level seven (7). Twenty-five percent of the sample were full-time house-wives, with the 5% working as casual workers.

PROCEDURE

The teacher introduces the lesson by setting the goals of the lesson, telling the learners the intention of making them become fluent readers within eight weeks. The books selected were of the level the students have reached. They could combine the letters of the alphabets to form words and combine the words into simple sentences. At the focus level, the teacher reads two of the stories from the book to capture the interests of the learners. The teacher reads and the learners read after her. This she did three times during each lesson. The learners were told what is meant by fluency and its components. They were told to look out for any that is lacking in their reading. During guided lesson the learners were asked to write some of the words that the teacher felt would be difficult for the learners to read on their own on the board. The teacher demonstrates reading the words using the phonic method. Then were instructed to read the words as the teacher listens, and corrected those that could not produce the words correctly. Each of the participants about 10-15 were asked to write a word from a text and read in a

day. Those that did not read were allowed to do the same with different words the next day. This approach was followed for three weeks. During the fourth week, the teacher read one passage fluently while the learners listen, then were each required to read the sentences in the stories, or one of the benefits of honey while the other learners listened. After reading the passage, the reader was asked to stay in front of the class where the rest of the class pointed out what she did wrong in relation to accuracy, rate and prosody.

The next step is the collaborative stage. This was done by allowing the learners to open any page they liked to read one of stories or the texts on benefits of honey one after the other. The learners were instructed to read while others listen to correct any mistake by the reader at the level of accuracy, rate and prosody. Then the teacher asked the learners to discuss the story to find out its purpose and meaning.

The last stage of the research consisted of the respondents reading the passage among themselves with the teacher going round to observe what they are doing. Eventually the teacher asked each of the students to read the full stories individually as the teacher assessed them. It was discovered that the subsequently the respondents were able to read the passages on their own. They even wanted to get the other volumes to read.

ANALYSIS

The analysis was done using a modified National Assessment of Educational Progress Fluency scale. The level one the non-fluent reader is one that read 5- 7 words per minute (WCPM) which do not preserve meaningful syntax. By the second phase the non-fluent respondents have improved their level of of reading by getting more than 12- 15 (WCPM) word groupings were awkward and unrelated to larger contexts of the passages.

Level three and four are classified as the fluent levels were the phrasings were accurate and preserved the syntax of the authors with prosody present. Level four was the stage that majority of the respondents were able to read the texts with accurate fluency. The respondents were able to bring out the meanings of the stories and the lessons they were supposed to teach. The respondents used some proverbs to show their understanding of the stories.

The texts on the benefits of honey were seen as more interesting because most of them wanted to know the other uses than the ones they already know. The uses also included the step by step procedures of using honey for the treatment of simple ailments.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion the paper feels that the gradual release of responsibility model is a very good way to teach adults to read due to its simplicity of use. Also the gradual withdrawal of the teacher makes the learners more reliant on collaborative learning which breeds learning independence. The model is flexible because it does not have a set time of stopping, it can be used continuously.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper recommends that the gradual release of responsibility should be used by teachers for teaching all aspects of language such as, listening, speaking, reading and writing.

The model should not be used for teaching English language only other Nigerian languages could be taught using the model.

The collaborative aspect of the model should be emphasized for learners to draw strength and be able to work in groups. This would enable the strong learners to draw the weaker ones.

The constructivist approach to learning is being emphasized this can help especially the Nigerian teacher to relax a little from the rigours of large classes.

The Scales Used for Assessing the Readers Fluency

Hasbrouck and Tindal's Oral Reading Fluency Norms for Grades 1-8									
PERCENTILE	FALL	WINTER	SPRING	AWI	PERCENTILE	FALL	WINTER	SPRING	AWI
	WCPM	WCPM	WCPM			WCPM	WCPM	WCPM	
GRADE 1					GRADE 5				
90	—	81	111	1.9	90	166	182	194	0.9
75	—	47	82	2.2	75	139	156	168	0.9
50	—	23	53	1.9	50	110	127	139	0.9
25	—	12	28	1.0	25	85	99	109	0.8
10	—	6	15	0.6	10	61	74	83	0.7
GRADE 2					GRADE 6				
90	106	125	142	1.1	90	177	195	204	0.8
75	79	100	117	1.2	75	153	167	177	0.8
50	51	72	89	1.2	50	127	140	150	0.7
25	25	42	61	1.1	25	98	111	122	0.8
10	11	18	31	0.6	10	68	82	93	0.8
GRADE 3					GRADE 7				
90	128	146	162	1.1	90	180	192	202	0.7
75	99	120	137	1.2	75	156	165	177	0.7
50	71	92	107	1.1	50	128	136	150	0.7
25	44	62	78	1.1	25	102	109	123	0.7
10	21	36	48	0.8	10	79	88	98	0.6
GRADE 4					GRADE 8				
90	145	166	180	1.1	90	185	199	199	0.4
75	119	139	152	1.0	75	161	173	177	0.5
50	94	112	123	0.9	50	133	146	151	0.6
25	68	87	98	0.9	25	106	115	127	0.6
10	45	61	72	0.8	10	77	84	97	0.6
WCPM: Words Correct Per Minute					AWI: Average Weekly Improvement				

Hasbrouck and Tindal, 2008

National Assessment of Educational Progress Fluency Scale

Fluent	Level 4	Reads primarily in larger, meaningful phrase groups. Although some regressions, repetitions, and deviations from text may be present, these do not appear to detract from the overall structure of the story. Preservation of the author's syntax is consistent. some or most of the story is read with expressive interpretation.
Fluent	Level 3	Reads primarily in three- or four-word phrase groups. Some small groupings may be present. however, the majority of phrasing seems appropriate and preserves the syntax of the author. Little or no expressive interpretation is present.
Non-Fluent	Level 2	Reads primarily in two-word phrases with some three- or four-word groupings. Some word-by-word reading may be present. Word groupings may seem awkward and unrelated to larger context of sentence or passage
Non-Fluent	Level 1	Reads primarily word-by-word. Occasional two-word or three-word phrases may occur but these are infrequent and/or they do not preserve meaningful syntax.

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