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## The Effect of Oral Reading Rate Feedback on Reading Performance

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THE EFFECT OF ORAL READING RATE FEEDBACK  
ON READING PERFORMANCE

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Graduate Faculty  
Central Washington State College

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Education

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by  
Kristi M. Anderson

July, 1972

APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

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An attempt was made to determine the effects of oral reading rate feedback on reading performance of third grade children in a self-contained classroom, using self-selected materials. Two measuring devices were used. The Botel Reading Inventory (Word Opposites Test-Reading) showed a mean gain of 1.75 grade levels. The oral reading rate mean increase was 57 words per minute. All students achieved at third grade level or higher.

CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

The pressures that are felt about teaching of reading in the first grade are less evident in the second, but may reappear in the third (Gans, 1963), especially in reference to the slow learner. Youngsters not successful by then may feel pressure from teachers and parents as well as their peers. As Gans points out, at the ages of seven and eight, children begin to be aware of their status within a group and to become more conscious of being achievers or non-achievers. Youngsters not successful by the third grade become more articulate about their lack of enthusiasm about school.

Problem

It is well established that children of any given school grade level are not identical in learning capabilities. Regard for individual potentiality requires helping not only the slow learner but also the avid reader. Few studies have been done on the relation of measuring oral reading rate to reading progress. Studies have been conducted using contingency management to increase oral reading rate. Those studies typically were done in settings



in which the pupil-teacher ratio was small and using specific reading programs.

Individual reading programs are geared to the individual child. Periodic measurement of oral reading rate is a means to measure the progress. This study was designed to examine the relation between measuring oral reading rate and progress in reading ability.

### Purpose

The educational purpose of this study was to design a reading program that could be used in a regular self-contained classroom, that would provide success for the retarded reader and be challenging to the more able reader, and to determine whether reading rate affects reading achievement.

### Setting

This study was conducted in a regular self-contained third grade class of twenty-six children, with one teacher and no additional help, using student selected materials.

### Review of Literature

The review of literature was directed toward the values of individualized reading programs, the importance to both pupil and teacher of measuring and recording progress, and how oral reading rate can provide a diagnostic tool for the teacher.

A great deal has been written on the advantages of individualized reading programs for the retarded reader and the able reader and how such programs provide for individual differences. The basis of individualized reading is that the child chooses material meaningful to him (Trusty, 1971). The individual reading program provides each child with an environment allowing him to seek what stimulates him, to choose materials that help him to develop most readily and to work at his own rate, independently of others (West, 1964). According to Veatch (1959), reading is a highly individual matter; each child differs from every other in the ability to read.

In an individualized program, interests and abilities can develop as rapidly or as slowly as inherent growth potential allows, according to Odom (1971). He gives as the principal values of individualized reading that it promotes high interest in reading, enthusiasm for reading, and skill to work independently. West (1964) argues further that the more time children spend reading individually, not discussing or listening to other children or taking turns reading, the more likely they are to comprehend what they are reading. Pfau (1967) adds that the opportunity for the privacy in the individual conference of teacher and child to assess progress is helpful. A child will say simply, "This book is too hard for me." He is much less likely to say

this in a group situation where prestige and ego are at stake.

An advantage of individualized reading programs, according to Odom (1971), is that the bright children are not held back and slow learners are not publicly stigmatized. Group competition is removed: the individual reader competes only against himself, his own ability becomes the standard by which he is judged. The absence of interpersonal competition relieves tensions and pressures that often inhibit efficient reading and study. Individualized reading programs are designed to help not only the slow learner but also the avid reader who "eats up" books, exercises, and learning projects of all kinds (Gans, 1963). Materials should be available for many interest and ability levels. One way of providing these materials is to ask each child what his interests are and to find books or magazines on the subject at the appropriate level.

Reading practices vary among classrooms; differences preclude all teachers being equally successful with given procedures (Heilman, 1967).

According to Davis and Lucas (1971), children must have almost unrestricted freedom to choose reading material. In order to tell if a child is progressing satisfactorily or if the level of material he chooses is too difficult, continuous measurement of reading progress is necessary

(Kunzlemann, 1971). Starlin (1972) also feels that measurement is the key, e.g. by measuring each day the teacher can tell when it is time to change the material. Busse and Henderson (1972) used continuous measurement of reading rates to make daily decisions as to the student's progress and effects of contingency management.

Measurement is important not only because it provides feedback necessary to teacher decisions but for student reinforcement. Bond and Tinker (1967) recommend that gains in reading ability be made known to the student by means of daily results; knowledge of these results can act as incentive to the student to improve. Hewitt (1968) says that some children who have learning difficulties are highly motivated if timed records are kept of their work. This record keeping may provide a high degree of motivation to practice reading. Busse and Henderson (1972) state the knowledge of results was important in their study because the consequences the child received were contingent upon his meeting expectations established in advance.

Starlin (1970) has found that the aim of reading 100 words per minute orally is extremely important. Henderson, Clise, and Silverthorn (1971) felt that a child who reads 150 to 200 words per minute at the appropriate grade level has mastered the decoding skills of reading and should not be considered in need of remedial help.

Chall (1967) concluded that oral reading rate should precede silent reading in order that the teacher can determine that child can read accurately. Chall also stated that oral reading is essential for the feedback of visual symbols. If the child is to develop a phonetic sense he must have enough oral practice for the phonetic relationship to become conscious. We want to hook up reading with speech. If the child reads orally, one knows at least that he has gone over the word. If he reads silently it is more difficult to test him.

## CHAPTER II

### METHOD

#### Subjects

Twenty-six students enrolled in a third grade self-contained classroom served as subjects for this study. Because of absences and students' moving, only seventeen were present for the entire study, which began the third week of September and ended the first week of June. The study results are based on these seventeen children, seven girls and ten boys ranging in age from 8.1 years to 9.6 years; the mean age was 8.5. The subjects' I.Q. scores ranged from 91 to 132; the mean was 111. Seven of the boys were placed in this class because they were classified as disciplinary problems or slow learners. The teacher had a background in special education and was willing to work with these students.

#### Material and Apparatus

A wide variety of materials was available to the students including reading texts; primer to sixth grade level, and a wide assortment of library books, donated books, and books that the children brought from home to share with their classmates. A stopwatch was used by the teacher to time the students' reading. Graph paper was used by the students to

record their daily reading rates. The teacher maintained a record sheet of daily rates. By continuous measurement, the teacher could tell immediately if the level of material was too difficult for the student.

Two measuring devices were used to assess individual reading progress during the study. The Botel Reading Inventory (Word Opposites Test-Reading) was used to measure reading skills: form A was used as a pretest, form B as a posttest. The second measure was the individual reading rates recorded daily. An average 10 day's rate taken at the beginning of the study was compared to an average 10 day's rate taken at the end of the study.

#### Procedure

The students were timed on oral reading rate daily. The teacher allowed the students five minutes to get books out and to be "ready to read" before she approached any student. Being "ready to read" meant feet on floor, sitting in chair, and book on desk. This limit was set because it was found that the students were able to achieve a better rate when in this position than they could when they were tipping the chair, or when they had books in their laps. It also made it easier for the teacher to follow along. The student had to be "ready to read" before he could be timed.

After the student read orally, he counted the number of words read. The errors were subtracted and the number of correct responses was recorded by the student on his graph and by the teacher on her record sheet. The teacher paired the recording on the graph with verbal praise when the student was successful. The teacher intermittently checked the count; the children sometimes had undercounted. All of the rates for the class were available at a glance together with the previous week's average for each student.

The reading texts and library books were stored together at one end of the room, for self-selection. Children were not required to complete any book they had selected.

If the child was reading successfully, the teacher would challenge him to see if he could read at a more rapid rate the next time. This goal always was selected very close to the child's current rate, and usually was surpassed. Stress was on settling for a thimbleful of progress rather than striving for a bucketful (Hewitt, 1968).

The students took the charts home when they were completed.



## CHAPTER III

### RESULTS

Scores of equivalent forms of the Botel Reading Inventory (Words Opposite Test-Reading) pretest and posttest were compared. Differences in the scores were analyzed employing a t-test. The pretest mean indicated a class grade level of 2.29. The posttest indicated a mean of 4.04. There was an individual mean grade level gain of 1.75, significant at .001 (see Table 1). The reading rate was computed using a pre-study rate based on 10 day's reading rates taken before charting began. The pre-study mean was 101 words per minute, the mean for the last 10 days of the study was 158 words per minute, showing a mean gain of 57 words per minute, significant at .001 (see Table 2). All students achieved at third grade level or higher. For the pretest all of the students read from a second grade reader. For the posttest they were timed on whatever material they chose.

Because the library books were labeled in grade ranges it was not possible to give specific levels for posttest rates.

TABLE 1

Comparison of Botel Reading Inventory (Word  
Opposites Test-Reading) Pretest and  
Posttest Grade Level Means

N=17

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Pretest mean	2.29	
Posttest mean	4.04	
df=16		t=5.73

---

Significant at .001.

TABLE 2

Comparison of Daily Reading Rates During  
Pretest and Posttest Periods

N=17

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Pretest mean	101 wpm	
Posttest mean	158 wpm	
df=16		t=5.76

---

Significant at .001.

## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION

In this study an attempt was made to determine the effects of measurement of oral reading rates on performance of third grade children using feedback of rates as reinforcement. Results show a mean gain of 1.75 grade levels and a mean reading rate gain of 57 words per minute, with an increase of one grade level or more in difficulty of material. The highest gain on the reading test was 3.8 grade levels, the lowest -1.0 grade level (it should be noted that this subject was not feeling well the day of the test). The boys averaged gains of 1.9 grade levels, the girls 1.5 grade levels. The highest gain in reading rate was difficult to determine because the library books were classified in one to two grade level ranges. Nine of the children were reading at fourth grade level or higher.

#### Observations

The teacher, through recording reading rates, was aware of daily progression or regression of individual students. If a student made too many errors in a selection, the teacher would suggest that other material be chosen. If the child was achieving over 250 words per minute, the teacher might suggest more challenging material. If a

student was having difficulties, the teacher would suggest materials that would guarantee success. Many of the students could evaluate their own progress and make adjustments.

Children engaged in sharing information about books and reading material in class; for example, a slow reader finished an easy book that he enjoyed. A more able reader had missed reading this book which sounded interesting to him, so he chose it when the slower reader had finished. No stigma was attached because it was an easy book, the story was important. Student motivation was high in improving reading rate. Frequently, when free time was available, students practiced their reading. Students timed each other. The more able readers helped the slower ones. Students who had expressed negative feelings toward school at the beginning of the year, later often requested extra time for reading when they had finished their other work. They wanted to earn the chance to be timed even if they could not record it on their charts. Points were set, so when the children chose, they could earn extra timing by the teacher. The slower student seemed attracted to this more than the able student, who might spend his earned time reading and researching for projects or working on creative exercises. In the beginning, slower students accepted this individualized program more readily than the better readers: some of

the able readers complained that there were no reading groups. Because students were able to select their own materials, they learned that size of print, number of pictures, and books with few words to a page slowed their rate. The teacher learned that the more pages they had to turn, the longer it took them to read a given number of words.

The teacher enjoyed the program because the students were successful and learned to appreciate books. The teacher was introduced to new stories and books that she enjoyed, too.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY

In this study the effects of measurement of oral reading rates on reading performance of third grade children, using feedback of rate increase as student reinforcement, were evaluated. The study was conducted in a third grade class at Downing School, Tacoma, Washington. Results of the study are based on the data for 17 children (7 girls and 10 boys) who were available for the entire study.

Equivalent forms of the Botel Reading Inventory (Word Opposites Test-Reading) were used as pre and post test. Daily oral reading rate was recorded. Comparison of the results disclosed that an average of 1.75 grade levels gain was made and 57 words per minute rate gain was made. It was found that the reading rate and degree of difficulty of material increased. All of the students had experienced success at his own level. Both the slow and able readers were anxious to read and record their rates. Interest was shown by the students in the materials that were available in the class and where other materials could be obtained.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

Individual Grade Level Scores on  
Botel Reading Inventory Test

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Grade Level Pretest</u>	<u>Grade Level Posttest</u>	<u>Diff.</u>
1	M	2.1	3.2	1.1
2	M	2.1	4.0	1.9
3	F	2.1	3.2	1.1
4	M	5.0	4.0	-1.0
5	F	2.1	4.0	1.9
6	F	1.0	3.1	2.1
7	M	2.1	3.2	1.1
8	M	2.2	6.0	3.8
9	F	2.2	4.0	2.1
10	M	2.2	6.0	3.8
11	M	2.2	6.0	3.8
12	F	2.2	4.1	2.2
13	M	2.2	5.0	2.8
14	M	0.0	1.0	1.0
15	M	3.1	4.0	.9
16	F	3.1	4.0	.9
17	F	3.1	4.0	.9

## APPENDIX B

## Individual Reading Rate Averages

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>
1	55	140
2	55	122
3	135	*240
4	115	*154
5	67	*172
6	59	185
7	66	104
8	133	*160
9	215	*252
10	110	*127
11	132	*115
12	140	*134
13	57	114
14	39	130
15	69	101
16	139	*235
17	138	*215

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\*Indicates fourth grade level or higher.