An Investigation of the Effects of Repeated Reading and Listening While Reading on Third Grade Students With Reading Problems

Thesis

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By
Felicia Lawson

State University of New York
College at Brockport
Brockport, New York
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SUBMITTED BY:

Felicia Lawson — 4-18-01

Candidate — **Date**

APPROVED BY:

Cathy E. Smith — 4/18/01

Thesis Advisor — **Date**

Robin E. Umber — 4/18/01

Second Faculty Reader — **Date**

Patricia E. Bake — 4/22/01

Director of Graduate Studies — **Date**

ABSTRACT

Repeated reading and listening while reading are both effective strategies used to improve reading fluency. There is a great deal of research showing that both strategies when used appropriately will help children to read faster and with better accuracy. However, there is only limited research that takes a look at both strategies to see if one approach is more effective or has better results than the other.

The purpose of this study was to compare the effects of repeated reading and listening while reading on reading fluency. Fifteen third-grade students from an urban elementary school were selected to participate in this study. All of these students were performing well below grade level in reading. Each student participated in two testing cycles. Cycle1 focused on repeated reading while Cycle 2 focused on listening while reading. Each cycle lasted five days. Both cycles began with a pre-test and ended with a post-test. Word recognition errors and speed were recorded to show any type of improvement from the pre-test to the post-test.

The results of the study showed that repeated reading and listening while reading are both effective strategies to use when trying to improve reading fluency. Both strategies showed that students had a significant gain in their mean scores at the end of each post-test. Neither strategy proved to be better than the other. It was recognized that both strategies had features that would compliment the other when used together.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to compare the effects of repeated reading with listening while reading on third grade students' reading fluency.

INTRODUCTION

Many children have difficulty understanding what they read. Problems in reading are usually caused by weak decoding and comprehension skills. Children with reading problems often times find it difficult to focus their attention simultaneously on decoding and comprehending the message. As a result these children tend to fall further behind their peers and struggle in reading from year to year.

Research shows that repeated reading and listening while reading can benefit children with and without reading difficulties. Repeated reading gives children the opportunity to reread a passage until fluency is achieved. Listening while reading provides the same opportunity for reading achievement by allowing children to reread a passage silently while simultaneously listening to a fluent rendition of the same passage (Chomsky, 1976).

Both repeated reading and listening while reading are effective in promoting reading fluency and general proficiency in reading (Rasinski, 1990). When fluency is achieved, children are then able to focus on comprehension. There is research showing that the amount of time a child is actively engaged in reading is

strongly related to achievement (Reitsma, 1988). Repeated reading gives children the chance to master the material before moving on (Samuels, 1979).

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Research shows that repeated reading and repeated listening while reading are effective strategies used to promote reading fluency. However, there is very little research that goes further to show which strategy may produce better results for children in terms of individual reading ability and attitudes towards reading. In this study the effectiveness of repeated reading and listening while reading in promoting fluency for 3rd grade students is compared.

As educators, the most important aim in teaching should be to help all children see themselves as effective readers. We can do this by helping children develop an ability to use a variety of reading strategies independently in a balanced integrated manner. This includes teaching children the strategies that are appropriate for specific purposes and ways to monitor and regulate themselves as they read. Repeated reading and listening while reading are excellent strategies that children can use to help build confidence in themselves as readers.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- This study was limited to a small number of students.
- Each student was paired with another student during the repeated reading cycle for management purposes.
- Both treatments required some form of listening while reading which may have affected the results.
- A more valid study would have compared independent repeated reading to repeated listening while reading.

CHAPTER II

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to compare the effects of repeated reading and listening while reading on third grade students' reading fluency.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Helping children to read fluently has always been an important goal in reading instruction. Unfortunately, fluency has not been easily achieved for all children. There are many children who continue to struggle with reading books in a word by word manner, which prevents them from being able to bring meaning to the text. The method of repeated readings requires children to reread a short, meaningful passage several times until a satisfactory level of fluency is reached (Samuels, 1979). The procedure is then repeated with a new passage. Chomsky (1976) proposed a similar method in which children listen to tape-recorded stories, follow along in the text, rehearse to the point of memorization, and reread the story until oral fluency is reached.

Repeated reading of the same text has been recognized as a corrective method for children with reading problems (Levy, Nicholls, & Kohen, 1993). Repeated reading has also been used as a study strategy. It is thought of as being equal to or better than other strategies such as note taking, outlining, or summarization, when used to help children understand and recall text (Dowhower, 1989). Repeated reading fosters reading fluency, better recall of details, and improved word recognition. Repeated reading seems to build students' self-confidence as a reader.

Research suggests that repeated reading is an effective strategy used in studying, listening, and oral reading for mature and beginning readers. Repeated reading helps students remember and understand more, increases their oral reading speed and accuracy, and seems to improve students' oral reading expression (Dowhower, 1989).

There are two methods of repeated reading that are often used in the classroom. These methods are referred to as assisted and non-assisted repeated reading. Assisted repeated reading requires the help of the teacher in the form of modeling or by audiotape. Unassisted repeated reading allows the student to read independently without any type of modeling. During assisted repeated reading commercially produced tape-recorded materials can be used as well as teacher-made tapes. Teacher-made tapes allow the teacher to create tapes that are suitable for a specific student's reading or interest level.

A similar method used to develop reading fluency is referred to as repeated listening while reading. This method is slightly different from repeated reading. Repeated listening while reading requires students to read a passage silently while simultaneously listening to a fluent rendition of the same text (Rasinski, 1990). Repeated reading may prove to be more effective in improving reading fluency when children are allowed to listen to a fluent oral model of the same text (Schreiber, 1980). The listening while reading method is easy to use in the classroom and can be used with students working independently and in small groups. Research shows that listening while reading is an effective strategy used to promote reading fluency (Chomsky, 1976).

Rasinski (1990) compared the effects of repeated reading and repeated listening while reading on the reading fluency of third grade students. In this study he found that both methods were effective in improving reading speed and word recognition accuracy.

In a similar study Dowhower (1987) compared repeated reading and listening while reading. Dowhower found very few differences in rate, word recognition accuracy, and comprehension between the two methods. Dowhower did find, however, that the listening while reading method allowed students to move into independent repeated reading of a passage, once students felt that they could read a passage without oral assistance.

Repeated reading requires children to reread a short, meaningful passage several times until a desired level of fluency is reached (Samuels, 1979). Reading for the beginning reader can be slow and difficult which takes away the child's interest in the story (Reitsma, 1988). Beginning readers should be allowed to hear a correct spoken form of the words they are reading so that they have a model to imitate (Reitsma, 1988). This can be achieved with the listening while reading method, where children listen to a live person reading orally and fluently or by listening to a tape-recorded story and simultaneously following along in the printed text.

Repeated read-alouds followed by oral retellings improve the story comprehension of children. Listening to the story again and having a chance to retell it several times gives children a chance to recall and organize the elements of the story more logically and thoroughly (Kann, 1983).

There are some critics who believe repeated readings may become boring to the reader (Moyer, 1982). However, in a repeated reading study involving five third-grade students, Chomsky (1976) found that parents and teachers reported positive changes in children's general motivation and attitudes towards reading. These students worked regularly with the remedial reading teacher and had received a great deal of phonics training. Their decoding had improved, but with very little interest or understanding of the text. Chomsky decided to have the children memorize a book by repeatedly listening to a tape-recorded version of the

storybook while following along in the text. The children repeated this activity until they were able to read the entire book independently without difficulty.

Carver and Hoffman (1981) investigated the effects of repeated reading on low achieving high school students by using a computer based instructional program. The students read programmed passages on the computer repeatedly until they increased their RGR score (Rate of Good Reading Score) to a desired level. The results of the study found that repeated reading increases reading fluency and transfers to new material when the same type of performance task is needed. Carver and Hoffman also pointed out that repeated reading might not produce a gain in reading ability for everyone. Students who have a listening ability that is higher than their reading ability will benefit more from repeated readings.

Neurological Impress Method

The Neurological Impress Method (NIM) is a remedial instructional technique that utilizes repeated reading whereby the student and the teacher read a story aloud, simultaneously at a rapid rate. During the NIM procedure the teacher sits slightly behind and to the right side of the student. The teacher then leads the reading while sliding a finger under the words of the sentence being read. The instructor's voice is directed toward the right ear of the student. The teacher in the NIM serves as a model of correct and fluent reading for the child. The NIM focuses on fluent, rapid, and oral reading patterns. No corrections are made during or after the reading session (Heckelman, 1986).

Some critics believe that the NIM procedure does not provide enough repetition to produce oral reading fluency (Kann, 1983). A modified version of NIM as described by Downs (1990) combines both repeated reading and the

neurological impress method to improve reading fluency. The modified NIM gives low achieving readers the opportunity to hear the passage being read fluently. It also provides them with an adequate amount of practice in order to improve their word accuracy, reading rate, and comprehension.

The procedures used in the modified NIM are the same as the original version of NIM as described by Heckleman. However, with the modified NIM students are instructed to reread the passage. As students reread the passage, the teacher follows along pointing to each word and helping the students to sustain an acceptable reading rate. The students are kept informed of their improvements in word accuracy and speed, which enables them to move toward fluency more rapidly.

Fluency

Fluency in oral reading involves accuracy and speed. Reading accuracy is defined as the number of errors per passage. Reading speed for a passage is defined as the number of words read per minute. In order to achieve fluency in reading there needs to be a decrease in errors and an increase in speed (Moyer, 1982). In order to build fluency, children need to read an easy, short passage until they are able to reach a set reading rate (Dowhower, 1987).

Fluent readers, unlike beginning or remedial readers are able to decode automatically without attention. Therefore they are able to process meaning at the same time that they decode words. Samuels (1979) indicated that if two tasks are performed simultaneously, at least one of them is automatic. He set 85 words per minute as the rate at which decoding is considered automatic. The repeated reading procedure (Samuels, 1979) emerged as a way for developing automatic decoding with unskilled readers.

Samuels (1979) studied the effectiveness of repeated reading on the fluency of average and poor readers, as well as on mentally retarded students. The results showed that the number of repetitions needed to achieve fluency decreased over a period of time as rereading continued, and that repeated reading of one passage transferred to the reading of new material.

Comprehension

Comprehension requires fast and accurate word recognition (Martens, 1997). In repeated reading, readers read the same text a number of times until desired goals of speed and accuracy are reached. Repeated reading helps children read faster and more accurate (Dowhower, 1987; Rasinski, 1990). Comprehension involves decoding words automatically. When children are able to decode words quickly and accurately it becomes easier for them to focus their attention on comprehension (Samuels, 1979).

Homan, Klesius, & Hite (1993) investigated the transfer effects of repeated reading and assisted nonrepetitive strategies such as echo reading, cloze reading, and unison reading on reading rate, error rate, and comprehension. The results showed that both repetitive and nonrepetitive reading strategies are effective in improving students' fluency and comprehension.

Levy, Nicholls, and Kohen (1993) performed a study that included good and poor readers in Grades 3, 4, and 5. The students were required to read stories four times while crossing out misspelled word. The number of misspelled words changed after each reading. The reading times of both good and poor readers decreased after each of the repeated readings for all grade levels. Comprehension was also improved.

Martinez and Roser (1985) found that children who listened to a story repeatedly began to talk more about the story with parents, teachers, and peers. This resulted in the children having a greater understand for the story. The repeated readings gave children more opportunity to clarify, fill the gaps, and to make connections. Students can improve their story comprehension by listening to the same story read aloud several times (Dennis & Walter, 1995).

Herman (1985) studied the effects of repeated reading on reading rate, speech pauses, and word recognition with eight low achieving intermediate grade level students. The results of the study showed that repeated readings helped to increase reading rate, accuracy. The study showed that there were significant increases in comprehension. Herman found that speech pauses remained unchanged.

In a study involving 12 non-fluent, learning-disabled students, Rashotte and Torgesen (1985) investigated whether repeated reading had any effects on fluency and comprehension when there was an overlap of words in the reading passages. The study concluded that repeated reading contributes to increased fluency and comprehension. It also showed that when stories share some of the same words it is easier for children to learn to read them. Rashotte and Torgesen also found that repeated readings helped students to have a more positive attitude towards reading.

Speed

Results of Rashotte and Torgesen's (1985) study suggest that the repeated reading method increased speed but depended on the amount of shared words among stories. Rashotte also found that with elementary level, nonfluent, learning-disabled students, nonrepetitive reading was as effective as repeated reading.

However, repeated readings using stories with overlapping words were more effective for improving speed.

Dowhower (1987) performed a study involving 17 transitional readers. The results of the study showed that repeated reading produced gains in speed and accuracy in new unpracticed passages. Chomsky's (1976) study showed that repeated reading contributes to an increase in word recognition and oral reading speed.

Samuels (1979) suggested that in the rereading of a passage, speed should be emphasized instead of word recognition accuracy, and students should only be allowed to start a new passage when they have reached a set rate of speed. He also claimed that rereading a passage to a desired rate would increase word accuracy and comprehension.

In a study involving 30 third-grade students, O'Shea, Sindelar, and O'Shea (1985) found that reading rates increased with repeated readings. The researchers found that students had an average increase of 24 words per minute from a single reading to three readings and an average increase of 12 words per minute between three and seven readings. Speed is usually measured by words per minute (wpm) although there is less agreement on how to count errors.

Summary

The research shows that repeated reading and listening while reading are effective strategies when used to improve reading fluency. Children read faster and with fewer miscues when they are given the chance to reread a passage. Repeated reading allows children to feel confident in themselves as readers while working towards a set goal of fluency. Listening while reading provides the same type of support. However, with this strategy children are allowed to listen to a

fluent oral rendition of the same passage while they quietly read along. Both repeated reading and listening while reading have proven to be successful with children at all grade levels and reading abilities when used properly.

CHAPTER III

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to compare the effects of repeated reading with listening while reading on third grade students' reading fluency.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Is listening while reading more effective than repeated reading for improving fluency among third grade students with reading problems?

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

The subjects of this study were 15 third grade students in a classroom located in an urban public elementary school. For the 2000-2001 school year, 15 out of the 18 students in this third grade classroom had been identified as having reading difficulties and performing well below the other third grade students in the school. The subjects consisted of 6 males and 9 females from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Eleven out of the 18 students had the same teacher in second grade and were recognized in second grade as having low reading ability. This study focused on the results of the 15 students who are performing below grade level in reading.

Materials

Two equivalent passages at the third grade level from the Bader Reading and Language Inventory were used to assess students' reading fluency. Both passages contain approximately 123 words. A tape recorder was also used in order to keep an accurate account of each student's reading miscues. The readings were timed using a stopwatch.

Procedures

This study consisted of two testing cycles. During the two testing cycles students were expected to participate in a repeated reading (Cycle 1) and a listening while reading (Cycle 2) activity. Each cycle lasted five days. There was a four-week break in between Cycles 1 and 2. This was done in order to help limit the amount of carry over effects from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2.

On the first day of Cycle 1 each student was given a pretest. The pretest involved orally reading one of the two third-grade passages. The passage was timed and audio-taped during the pretest and posttest in order to calculate measures of reading speed and word recognition errors.

On the second, third, and fourth days of Cycle 1 each student was paired with another student of similar ability according to their test results given in September 2000 on the Slosson Oral Reading Test and The Harper & Row Informal Reading Inventory. The Slosson Oral Reading Test checks for knowledge of sight vocabulary. The Harper & Row Informal Reading Inventory tests students' word recognition and comprehension skills. Both tests were used to determine each child's reading level and whether they qualify for Title I Services. Performance in the classroom was another tool used to help determine each student's ability.

Students were paired in order to insure that everyone was actively participating in the repeated readings. During this Cycle the paired students were instructed to read a third grade passage orally while his or her partner followed along in the reading, listening and reading silently. When the first student in the pair was done reading, the second student in the pair began reading the same passage orally. The first student in the pair was then expected to follow along reading silently and listening to his or her partner read. This type of cooperative repeated reading went on until each student had read the passage orally three times. Posttesting occurred on Day 5 of each cycle and replicated pretesting conducted on Day 1.

On the first day of Cycle 2 students were given a different third-grade reading passage to be read during the pretest. The procedures for this pretest were the same as in Cycle 1. Students read a different third grade passage orally while being timed and audio-taped in order to check for accuracy and speed.

On the second, third, and fourth days of Cycle 2 students were given a copy of the passage that was used for the second pretest. They were instructed to follow along reading silently as the teacher orally reads the passage in a fluent manner. The teacher read the passage fluently three times while students simultaneously listened while reading the same passage. This activity was done as a whole group for management purposes. Cycle 2 ended with a posttest that was similar to the posttest in Cycle 1.

Analysis of Data

The data gathered was recorded and entered into a statistical computer program. The t test was applied to the data in order to determine the presence of significant differences between rate and word recognition accuracy on the pretest and posttest of both types of repeated readings.

CHAPTER IV

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to compare the effectiveness of repeated reading and listening while reading on third grade students' reading fluency.

RESULTS

A goal of educators is to help students to become competent readers. This can be aided by using strategies to improve reading fluency. Reading fluency involves reading a passage with accuracy and speed. Fluency is achieved when the number of errors read in a passage is decreased and the speed is increased. Repeated reading and listening while reading are two strategies that have been used to promote fluency in children at all grade and reading levels. Research shows that both strategies are effective when used appropriately. However, there is little research that examines the equivalency of both strategies. This study focused on comparing the effectiveness of repeated reading and listening while reading in promoting increased reading fluency for third-grade students.

The results of this study show little difference between repeated reading and listening while reading when used to improve fluency among third grade students. Scores from each of the pre and post tests were used to compute a statistical analysis of the data. Table 1 and Table 2 summarize the analysis of the tests.

Table 1 – Reading Speed

	Pretest		Posttest		
	M	SD	M	SD	Gain
Repeated reading	82	26.97	49.13	9.26	32.87
Listening while reading	106.8	29.54	77.26	21.74	29.54
Repeated reading	$t = 5.07$		$p < .05$		
Listening while reading	$t = 8.08$		$p < .05$		

Note: Reading speed was calculated by timing the number of seconds each student took to read the passages.

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation scores for repeated reading and listening while reading. These scores focused on the reading speed of each student. Reading speed was calculated by timing the number of seconds each student took to read the passages. There were significant gains in the mean scores for both repeated reading and listening while reading at the end of each posttest. The reading speed for all of the students increased after using repeated reading and listening while reading. Neither strategy proved to be better than the other in helping students to read more fluently. The t scores for both repeated reading and listening while reading are significant at the .05 level.

Repeated reading and listening while reading showed positive results for students in reading accuracy. Reading accuracy was calculated by counting the number of word recognition errors students made while reading each passage. There was little difference observed between repeated reading and listening while reading as students used these strategies to improve reading speed and reading accuracy.

Table 2 – Reading Accuracy

	Pre-test		Post-test		
	M	SD	M	SD	Gain
Repeated reading	6.26	7.65	1.53	1.92	4.73
Listening while reading	13.2	18.03	4.06	4.52	9.14
Repeated reading	$t = 2.49$		$p < .05$		
Listening while reading	$t = 2.40$		$p < .05$		

Note: Reading accuracy was calculated by counting the number of word recognition errors each student made while reading the passages.

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation scores for repeated reading and listening while reading as it was used to increase reading accuracy. There were significant gains in reading accuracy after the pre and post tests of both repeated reading and listening while reading. Students increased their reading speed and had fewer errors after using repeated reading and listening while reading. Clearly both strategies are effective in helping children to read faster and with better accuracy. The tables go further to show the t value for each of the cycled pre and post tests. The t value is significant at the .05 level for each of the tests performed.

CHAPTER V

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to compare the effects of repeated reading with listening while reading on third grade students' reading fluency.

DISCUSSION

The findings in this study show that repeated reading and listening while reading are both effective strategies when used to improve reading fluency in third grade students. Neither strategy proved to be more effective than the other. Listening while reading seemed to have a greater increase in word accuracy on the posttest. This was probably a result of the students being able to actually hear the words being read and pronounced correctly before they were expected to read the words out loud themselves.

Both methods had advantages and disadvantages. The listening while reading method gave the students a slight advantage over repeated reading since they were able to hear a fluent oral reading of the same passage. This advantage, however, was not significant enough to prove that listening while reading is a better method than repeated reading alone. During both cycles of the repeated reading, students seemed to gain more confidence in themselves as they read the passage out loud over and over again. The fact that they were actually doing the work of reading the words out loud seemed to help them to stay focused and full participants in the activity. During the listening while reading technique when students were expected to sit quietly while listening and reading along, the students seemed to be restless and not as attentive after a few readings. They seemed to get

bored with listening to someone read the same text over and over again even though they were suppose to be reading along silently. The results of this study show that when repeated reading and listening while reading are used properly, increased fluency will result.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The results of this study have shown that repeated reading and listening while reading are effective strategies to improve reading fluency. Both strategies have features that make them extremely valuable in the development of reading fluency. There is a great deal of research showing the effectiveness of each strategy as separate entities. However, there is not enough research comparing the effects of both strategies. Further research should be done to examine the relative effectiveness of repeated reading and listening while reading.

Another possibility for future research would investigate whether repeated reading and listening while reading are more effective when used together. Children might benefit if they were given the opportunity to reread a passage orally while listening to a fluent oral rendition of the same passage. The modified Neurological Impress Method (NIM) is an example of a strategy that is being used with students that combines both repeated reading and listening while reading. The modified NIM allows students to reread a passage while simultaneously listening to a fluent oral reading of the same passage. Research shows that the modified NIM has had positive results. Further research should be done in this area so that teachers will be able to choose the best approach for their students.

This study was performed with a small sample of students at the third grade level. A more conclusive study would include a larger sample size with different grade levels and reading ability levels.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM

Repeated reading and repeated listening while reading are effective instructional strategies that are used to help children achieve fluency. However, before these techniques can be used, there needs to be a decision regarding the type of benchmark to set for movement to new passages. The benchmark that is set will play an important role in determining the amount of instructional time that is necessary to achieve reading fluency.

Teachers need to be careful not to over use either strategy. Over use of any strategy usually leads to boredom. When students become bored, they tend to lose interest and focus. Teachers will need to be creative in their teaching approach by using a variety of strategies to help children reach a desired level of fluency. Each child has different needs academically, socially, and emotionally. These needs should be taken into account when planning any type of curriculum and/or learning environment.

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Appendix A

(Passage read for pre and post test during repeated reading)

James' Cut

It was after lunch when James cut his finger on the playground. He was bleeding and he hurt a little too. He went inside to find his teacher. He showed her his cut finger and asked for a Band-Aid. She looked at it and said, "Well, its not too bad, James. I think we should wash it before we bandage it, don't you?" James did not want it washed because he thought it would sting. But he was afraid to tell Miss Smith. He just acted brave.

When it was washed and bandaged, he thanked Miss Smith. Then he rushed out to the playground to show everyone his shiny new bandage.

Appendix B

(Passage read for pre and post test during listening while reading)

Today's Explorers

Astronauts fly far away from the earth. They explore space and the moon. Maybe in time, they will explore other worlds too. Deep-sea divers go to the floor of the sea. They explore places just as strange and wonderful as astronauts do.

You may have seen some beautiful fish in the ocean. If you were a diver, you could go far under water. You could stay there long enough to see many unusual creatures. You would find things you never dreamed of.

The only way you could stay underwater for more than a short time is to use special gear. You must use the same kind of gear divers use. A large air tank lets you stay underwater for more than an hour.

Today, explorers go under the sea and far into space.