

New Evidence for Fluency Instruction

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This summary reports on findings and conclusions from two recent studies about relationships between fluency and comprehension in adult readers. This is important to ABE reading teachers because most fluency research has been based exclusively on children. Fluency is defined as a combination of accurate word reading, efficient rate or speed, and the use of prosody, or meaningful phrasing and expression. It is considered a bridge to oral and silent reading comprehension.

One study explored the relationship between **prosody and comprehension** in skilled and less skilled adult readers. The comparison groups included 24 college students and 52 ABE students from Massachusetts. All subjects completed five tests measuring decoding, oral fluency, and comprehension skills. Not surprisingly, the researchers found that ABE students paused longer and more frequently, stumbled over more words, and showed less variation in pitch than college students while orally reading narrative text. **The researchers concluded that (1) the prosody results explained significant variance in comprehension and (2) repeated reading, a fluency technique involving numerous modeled and guided readings of the same text, may also benefit less skilled adult readers.**

Another study sought to identify the relationship between **rate, accuracy, and comprehension** in adult readers. The subjects included 276 ABE/ASE students from 13 Midwest programs performing at functional levels 1-6. All completed three tests: an oral reading that identified total words read (TWR) and word error rate (WER), a passage comprehension cloze test, and a CASAS Reading test. The researchers found significant interactions between TWR (rate) and WER (accuracy) that differed in relation to passage or CASAS reading tasks. **They concluded that (1) ABE/ASE students with academic goals (such as comprehending textbooks) might benefit from fluency instruction with an emphasis on moving through text quickly and smoothly and (2) ABE/ASE students with functional goals (such as filling out forms) might benefit from fluency instruction with an emphasis on correct word reading.**

- If you want to know more about fluency techniques and FREE leveled text, visit the ATLAS/EBRI website: atlasabe.org/resources/ebri/ebri-fluency
- If want to view video clips of STAR teachers and students using fluency techniques, visit the MN ABE channel: youtube.com/channel/UClUrz7VTkCnXb_7wPfh2U1w

References

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Mellard, D.F., Fall, E.E., & Woods, K.L. (2013). Relation and interactions among reading fluency and competence for adult education learners. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 28, 70-80.