Twitter Thread by The Reading Ape

The Reading Ape
@TheReadingApe

An appallingly tardy response to such an important element of reading - apologies. The growing recognition of fluency as the crucial developmental area for primary education is certainly encouraging helping us move away from the obsession with reading comprehension tests.

> Sorry - a bit of a brain dump post - but I'd appreciate any responses and/or directions towards any applicable research.@Suchmo83 @Mr_AlmondED @TimRasinski1 @ReadingShanahan @mrspennyslater @TheReadingApe @PieCorbett @ReadingRockets @teach_well
>
> — Mr Leyshon (@RyonWLeyshon) February 4, 2021

It is, as you suggest, a nuanced pedagogy with the tripartite algorithm of rate, accuracy and prosody at times conflating the landscape and often leading to an educational shrug of the shoulders, a convenient abdication of responsibility and a return to comprehension 'skills'.

Taking each element separately (but not hierarchically) may be helpful but always remembering that for fluency they occur simultaneously (not dissimilar to sentence structure, text structure and rhetoric in fluent writing).

Rate, or words-read-per-minute, is the easiest. Faster reading speeds are EVIDENCE of fluency development but attempting to 'teach' children(or anyone) to read faster is fallacious (Carver, 1985) and will result in processing deficit which in young readers will be catastrophic.

Reading rate is dependent upon eye-movements and cognitive processing development along with orthographic development (more on this later).

Prosody-the ability to make reading sound like authentic oral speech-is clear evidence of developing fluency (and comprehension-lots of evidence) but can also be encouraged through phrasing activities (Whalley,2006) and pitch rises and falls (Miller,2006)and repeated reading.

However, developing prosody indicates a top-down cognitive approach to reading (Stanovitch, 1980) with the reader bringing knowledge and schema to bear on the text - rather than merely extracting meaning from the words.

Thus, prosody is not merely expression, it is evidence of developing types of knowledge. Think how much easier it is to understand Shakespeare read by an experienced Shakespearean actor because of the prosodic reading.

Accuracy is often the most ignored. Historically, prosody has been the touchstone. Victorian teachers only received pay rises (from inspectors) for prosodic pupils (so they got them to learn the text) so obsessed with fluency was education.

Accuracy relates to instant word recognition which is the next stage after decoding becomes faster. This remarkable human ability to recognise multiple, legitimate letter patterns such that we can read the word faster than the letters is a bottleneck in reading development.

It requires lots and lots of practice and the regular exposure to words which means that it is self-taught (Share, 2002). That does not mean we just leave it to the pupils. The more children read and the more exposures they have to a word, the faster they will develop accuracy.

That requires regular and extended leveraged reading activities (probably whole class) with repeated reading - also used as an intervention - along with assisted reading. Decoding strategies for unknown words need to be well developed.

The danger is that we rush to fluency too quickly without allowing pupils the time to stutter and stumble over words as they develop their orthographic accuracy. As the Roman pedagog Quintilian insisted, reading should be ‘at first sure, then continuous and for a long time slow’

And the beauty of leveraged reading is that it benefits prosodic reading - through teacher-led exemplification - as well as rate through repeated reading.

Some of the instructional practices for fluency with research bases you may want to check out: FLUENCY ORIENTATED READING INSTRUCTION,WIDE READING,ORAL RECITATION LESSON,SHARED BOOK EXPERIENCE,FLUENCY DEVELOPMENT LESSON, RETRIEVAL AUTOMATICITY VOCABULARY ELABORATION ORTHOGRAPHY

GUIDED REPEATED ORAL READING WITH FEEDBACK,READING PARTNER ASSISTED FLUENCY PRACTICE,NEUROLOGICAL IMPRESS METHOD