Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Dato' Razali Ismail

LGA3103 Stories for Young Learners

Topic 7: Exploring Language Through Stories

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Topic 7: Exploring Language through Stories

As we have talked about in previous topics, as well as sheer enjoyment (for motivation) and allowing an aesthetic response from the children, the purpose of storytelling is for them to explore language and improve their proficiency in English.

Developing Fluency and Cohesion

What are 'fluency' and 'cohesion'? And why are they important?

What is fluency?
Here is a short definition of 'fluency':

> Fluency refers to the ability to produce rapid, flowing, natural speech, but not necessarily grammatically correct speech. This is often contrasted with accuracy.
>
> (Bogglesworld ESL, 2013)

Discuss with your partner/group: Why is 'fluency' often contrasted with 'accuracy'?

Summarise: ....

....

....

Here is a short article explaining 'cohesion', which is slightly more complex. Read it and summarise below – discuss with your partner/group.

What teachers should know about cohesion
Introduction

Cohesion is the term for the quality of a text such that it appears as a single unit, not as a random sequence of thoughts or sentences. Cohesion is achieved by a number of devices or ties as explained below.

ESL students may have trouble understanding a text that seems to have easy words and concepts because they fail to identify the cohesive ties. Conversely, the teacher may fail to understand the ideas or arguments that the ESL student is trying to express because the student has not yet learned how to tie English sentences together clearly and naturally with the appropriate cohesive devices.

Mainstream teachers who have explicit knowledge of the following cohesive techniques will be in a better position a) to help their ESL students understand the difficult texts in their coursebooks or found on the internet, and b) to avoid problematic cohesion in their own worksheets and tests.

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Backward reference

The most common cohesive device in texts is the backward reference to something that has been mentioned before. The technical term for this type of reference is *anaphora*. Three examples of anaphoric reference are:

1. Use of a pronoun to refer back to an already-mentioned noun.
2. Use of the definite article to qualify a noun that has been already been introduced with the indefinite article.
3. Substitution of an already mentioned noun by a synonym or hyponym.

Here are examples of each:

- My sister's on the phone. **She** says she needs the drill **that** she lent us.
- When I looked out of the window yesterday I saw a man and a woman standing by the gate. **The** man was wearing a hooded jacket and **the** woman was carrying a baseball bat.
- There was so much delicious **food** on display, but I'm on a diet so I had to stick to the **salad**.

Forward reference

Another common cohesive device is forward reference or cataphora. Here are two examples of cataphoric reference:

- Perhaps I shouldn't tell you **this**, but when I was young I had hair down to my waist!
- Please send your reply to the **following** address.

Ellipsis

Ellipsis is a third cohesive device. This is the omission of words on the assumption that the listener or reader will be able to supply them mentally. Examples:

- The horse (that was) injured in the road accident had to be put down.
- I would love to visit New Zealand but I can't afford to. (.. visit New Zealand.)
- I'd rather talk to someone on the phone than send them an email. Wouldn't you? (.. rather talk to someone on the phone than send them an email?)

Conjunctives

A final and very important device that makes texts cohesive is the use of conjunctives or adjuncts. These are the words that show how ideas are connected. For example: *firstly, secondly, so, however, nevertheless, in conclusion, by contrast, on the other hand, etc.*

(Shoebottom, 2013)

Summary – What is Cohesion?

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....

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In his book Storytelling with Children, Wright explains some of the language benefits of storytelling, including various types of fluency. Read the section and answer the questions below.

Why Stories?

Stories, which rely so much on words, offer a major and constant source of language experience for children Stories are motivating, rich in language experience, and inexpensive! Surely, stories should be a central part of the work of all primary teachers whether they are teaching the mother tongue or a foreign language.

Here are some of the most important reasons why stories should play a central role in teaching a foreign language to teaching.

Motivation

Children have a constant need for stories and they will always be willing to listen or to read, if the right moment is chosen.

Meaning

Children want to find meaning in stories, so they listen with a purpose If they find meaning they are rewarded through their ability to understand, and are motivated to try to improve their ability to understand even more. This is in contrast to so many activities in foreign language learning, which have little or no intrinsic interest or value for the children.

Fluency

Listening and reading fluency

In conversations with native speakers the most important ability is to be able to understand a sustained flow of the foreign language in which there are words which are *new* to the listener. The ability to do this can only be built on practice.

Listening and reading fluency is based on:

- a positive attitude to not understanding everything
- the skills of searching for meaning, predicting and guessing.

Children are expert at doing this in their own language but it takes time and encouragement for them to build up these skills and attitudes in the foreign language. If you feel that you are not fluent in English that is partly because your teachers did not give you enough time and encouragement!

Speaking and writing fluency

Fluency in speaking s not only essential in conversation but is, for many people, the spearhead of how they learn Fluency is based on a positive attitude to 'having a go' with the language one knows and not being afraid of making mistakes. It is also based on the skill of constructing meaning with limited language. Some people learn best by 'having a go' when they have nothing to fear or be anxious about; all their intelligence and creativity is employed to the full. I am sure that for many children this is the natural way to learn. This means that the teacher must give more importance to what the child achieves than to the mistakes he or she might make. It also means that the teacher

must encourage situations in which the child can be fluent and can 'have a go'. Stories offer a perfect diet for the build-up of fluency in all four skills.

Language Awareness

Stories help children become aware of the general 'feel' and sound of the foreign language. Stories also introduce children to language items and sentence construction without their necessarily having to use them productively. They can build up a reservoir of language in this way. When the time comes to move the language items into their productive control, it is no great problem because the language is not new to them.

An obvious example of a language point introduced and made familiar through stories before the children are expected to use it fluently themselves is the simple past tense.

Stimulus for speaking and writing

The experience of the story encourages responses through speaking and writing. It is natural to express our likes and dislikes and to exchange ideas and associations related to stories we hear or read.

Communication

Listening to and reading stories and responding to them through speaking and writing, drama, music, and art develop a sense of being and having an audience and sharing and collaborating. Learning a language is useless if we do not know how to communicate – how to listen to others and how to speak and write so that listeners and reader will want to listen and read and be able to understand. Story sharing builds up this crucial sense of awareness of others.

General Curriculum

Most stories can be used to develop the children's powers of awareness, analysis, and expression, as well as relating to other aspects of the curriculum, such as cultural and social studies, geography, history, mathematics, and science. (See chapter 4).

Danger! Story health warning!

If the teacher uses stories merely to introduce and practise grammar or particular lexical areas or functions, the children may lose their faith in the teacher and what she or he means by the word 'story'. When focusing on features of the language be careful not to lose the magic of the story altogether!

(Wright, 1995, pp. 3-10)

Questions for 'Why Stories?'

1. Why should stories be a central part of the work or all primary teachers?

Stories are ....

rich in ....

and ....

2. Why will children always be willing to listen or read to stories?

....

3. Why are children motivated to try to improve their ability to understand?

....

4. What are listening and reading fluency based on?

* ....

* ....

5. What is, for many people, the 'spearhead' of how they learn?

....

6. Fluency is based on a positive attitude to what?

....

and not being afraid of ....

Also the skill of ....

7. What must the teacher do to encourage this positive attitude and lack of fear?

....

8. What do stories help children to become aware of?

....

9. What happens when children finally need to use language items heard in stories?

....

10 How does listening to stories help in speaking and story writing?

....

11. What do listening to and reading stories and responding to them through speaking and writing, drama, music, and art develop a sense of?

....

12. What warning is given about focussing on features of the language?

....

This much longer article talks about three strategies – all related to what is called 'Repeated Reading' - which are designed to improve fluency.

The author is talking about use of stories, but not only in the original read/tell by the teacher, more in the ongoing activities. Also note that the author is not talking about 'young learners' as such, and so not all of the strategies will necessarily be applicable in the Malaysian Primary School situation.

Read the article quickly (skim) and answer the questions below:

Building Fluency through the Repeated Reading Method

If you have sympathized with students who stumble through reading passages or pore over every word in an expressionless manner while barely comprehending, this article is for you. For the last two years I have used Repeated Reading (RR) to teach reading fluency in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms in colleges and universities in Japan. RR is a method where the student reads and rereads a text silently or aloud from two to four times to reach a predetermined level of speed, accuracy, and comprehension. All my students made progress, many in relatively short periods of time. By practicing RR and the skills associated with it, students learn to read faster and more accurately and to apply gains made to more challenging texts.

Although using RR to develop fluency appears best suited for beginning readers who have difficulty with pacing, expression, or word recognition, I also have used the method successfully with mature readers. Providing opportunities to read age appropriate, authentic content such as prose, poetry, novels, and newspapers is excellent practice for learners with some ability to read because it gives them a chance to integrate skills they have already begun to acquire, such as flow, fluidity, and comprehension (Koskinen and Blum 1986; Dowhower 1989).

Providing second and foreign language (L2) learners with sufficient exposure to and experience with reading can be a challenging task. In particular, students who are not yet fluent readers seldom read when it is not required and tend not to enjoy the process when they do engage in it. The opposite, however, can be said of good readers—the more they read, the more they improve their reading abilities. It is probably safe to say that reading ability and reading confidence are very closely related. RR supports the learning of English by creating confident readers who enjoy reading, and the three techniques described in this article will illustrate how the method can be used to develop fluency, comprehension skills, and greater reading self-esteem.

Background of the Repeated Reading method

First popularized by Samuels (1979), RR was initially designed for special needs students in first-language (L1) settings. The method was so successful that it is now used widely with developing L1 readers (Kuhn and Stahl 2000). For over 30 years it has been used extensively in L1 environments to help build fluency and is supported by research (LaBerge and Samuels 1974; Samuels 1979; Dowhower 1989).

RR works as a scaffold for struggling readers by providing them with short-term, achievable mini-goals such as completing a passage in faster time (speed), increasing words read correctly (accuracy), and reading for a better understanding of the text (comprehension). The resulting success learners

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experience through RR builds their confidence and encourages them to invest more time and effort into achieving the skill of reading fluently (Dowhower 1994; Nuttall 1996).

However, RR has not received the same recognition in L2 classrooms, where the method has been slow to catch on. Its benefits have seemingly gone unnoticed, and very little research has been published in support of the method as a fluency-building tool for L2 learners (but see Taguchi 1997; Taguchi and Gorsuch 2002; and Taguchi, Takayasu-Maass, and Gorsuch 2004 for excellent coverage of RR's great potential in developing reading fluency among L2 learners).

One explanation for RR's relative absence from L2 classrooms may be that some educators feel fluency develops naturally over time. As other reading skills progress and gradually improve, so too does the ability to read fluently. Another possibility is that teachers faced with big class sizes, limited contact hours, and strenuous curriculum demands may not have the time to focus on fluency as an essential reading skill.

Fortunately, the RR method is firmly rooted in sound linguistic theory, and good theory often leads to practical outcomes. There are a variety of simple-to-implement techniques for using RR in the L2 context that require little preparation on the teacher's part, including:

(1) Oral Repeated Reading,

(2) Paired Repeated Reading, and

(3) Reader's Theatre.

Technique 1: Classic Oral Repeated Reading

Oral Repeated Reading (ORR) is a technique that is fun and easy to carry out and that provides a window into readers' ability to integrate the skills associated with reading fluently (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development 2000). Oral reading helps students associate printed language with spoken language, improves their reading rate and rhythm, and provides opportunities to experience the pleasure of reading with a real purpose (Rasinski 2003). It can also build confidence and strengthen learners' perceptions of themselves as readers (Greenberg, Buggey, and Bond 2002). Oral reading has also been shown to correlate with reading comprehension (August and Shanahan 2006) and to help learners acquire a greater understanding of how to comprehend material that is read silently (Opitz and Guccione 2009).

In the classic version of ORR, students read and reread short, meaningful passages of text aloud, typically four times. I find setting short-term goals, such as reading faster or reading with more appropriate phrasing, helps learners stay focused. Alternatively, you can set criteria for speed, accuracy, and comprehension.

After four readings or when the criteria are met, learners may proceed to the next section of the text. Other versions of ORR include using pre-recorded audio to provide a model and the use of computers to record, time, track, and chart learners' progress.

Oral Repeated Reading classroom suggestion: Chunk it

Oral reading fluency is best developed when learners focus on reading sentences seamlessly, as opposed to word by word. A *chunk* (or *sense group*) is a meaningful part of a sentence, such as a phrase or a clause, and often corresponds to the places where an individual will naturally pause or use appropriate intonation when reading a text out loud. The following four steps will help your students begin to visualize sense groups.

Step 1: Begin with a compelling poem or story

Most genres of writing work well as ORR activities, including prose, poetry, speeches, fables, short or serialized stories, recipes, radio/TV commercials, and public service announcements. For learners who can sight-read easily, but have not yet mastered reading with expression or good rhythm, find a poem or a short story with dialogue. I like Shel Silverstein's poetry, because it is often accompanied by pictures that serve as visual support for learners (e.g., Silverstein 1996). Graded readers (books divided into levels and written with controlled vocabulary), limericks, and simple speeches also work well.

Step 2: Break the text into chunks

Write the poem or story's lines (on the blackboard or on an overhead transparency) in a narrow column with one sense group per line. Three- to four-word phrases work best; however, you can also break phrases into longer or shorter chunks depending on the skill level of your learners. Alternatively, you can write each sense group on cue cards. You can easily change the length of the chunk that readers work with.

By breaking the text into chunks you help introduce your learners to the notion of taking in increasingly longer chunks as they read.

Step 3: Model the reading of chunks

Show students how good readers cluster portions of text together rather than saying words individually. If you have arranged the text into a column (as above), use a card guide or cardboard mask about the same width as the column to expose the text line by line. You can also create and display sentence strips and model reading the sense groups one at a time.

Step 4: Practice reading the text to build proficiency

To build confidence with the text, have students read the lines together out loud as a group. Hold the cardboard mask just above the first line and then, as they read, move it down the column at the desired speed. Time and resources allowing, you can provide students with an individual copy of the text and their own cardboard mask. Once they gain proficiency and confidence reading the piece together, you can call on individual students to read for the class. Assigning the piece as homework the night before is one way of guaranteeing success for this type of task. Finally, you can reinforce the reading of sense groups in guided reading activities by using the same poem or story and pointing to the lines that were previously read as an ORR activity.

Technique 2: Paired Repeated Reading

The objectives of Paired Repeated Reading (PRR) are similar to those of ORR. Both focus on pronunciation and prosody (the variation in loudness, pitch, and rhythm); however, PRR includes a

measure for self and peer-assessment. Research reports from L1 teaching environments indicate significant improvement in support of oral fluency and comprehension when teachers incorporate PRR regularly into their classrooms (Fuchs and Fuchs 2005; Koskinen and Blum 1986).

To use PRR, simply select an interesting reading passage and have your students work in pairs. I use novels serialized into instalments to maintain learner interest and enthusiasm; however, short stories, poetry, and fables work nicely too. If it is not possible to give each student a copy, make an overhead transparency or write the text where all students can see it. You can also pass out one handout per student pair to cut down on copy costs and encourage more teamwork and cooperation between learners.

Alternatively, you can ask students to self-select materials. Be sure the content is on their independent reading level and does not contain too many unknown words or difficult grammatical structures (e.g., relative clauses, passive phrasing, or ambiguous time references).

Paired Repeated Reading classroom suggestion: Free yourself
The real beauty of PRR lies in its capacity to free up teachers, allowing them to monitor their students' progress with minimal management. Following is a three-step technique, adapted from Koskinen and Blum (1986), that I use to kick off PRR and help students collaborate in developing fluency.

Step 1: Teach the role of the reader
Learners need opportunities to practice reading. Explain to students they will be reading and rereading a passage several times to improve their skills. An analogy such as soccer players taking corner kicks to improve their accuracy may help students realize the value of practicing repeatedly. You can also remind them that good readers keep their listeners engaged by reading with appropriate speed, rhythm, and intonation.

Step 2: Teach the role of the listener
It is worthwhile for teachers to explain that listeners can help their partners improve their reading fluency in two big ways with PRR: first, by giving help where possible with unknown words or mispronounced phrases, and second, and perhaps more importantly, by providing feedback about how the reader has improved between readings. Do not worry about your students' inability to catch every word; listeners do not need to be high-level learners to appreciate and comment on good delivery and effort.

Teachers can encourage active listening and collaboration by calling on students to report how their partner read or by making a handout and collecting it after the activity. Something as simple as one or two sentences jotted on the board can provide students with positive things to say to one another. For example, in response to the question "How did your partner improve?" suggest answers such as "(name) read more smoothly," "(name) knew more words," or "(name) read with more expression." Another option is to develop a Likert scale for learners to give and receive feedback to each other while working together. The scale can be passed out (or written on the board). A single question such as "How well did your partner read today?" written two or three

times should suffice. Label the accompanying Likert scale ranges from "Nice job" to "Needs work" as in the example below and show learners how to respond to it.

First Reading: How did your partner read today?

☺	-----	😐	-----	☹
Nice Job	Nearly perfect	OK	Nearly there	Needs work

Step 3: Combine reading, listening, and assessment

The final step offers learners an opportunity to combine the reading, listening, and assessment elements of the technique. It helps to begin PRR by reading to the class, and you may find it useful to model a poor, choppy reading of a few sentences and then model a fluent reading of the same sentences. Teachers should supervise the student pairs as they take turns reading and listening, and especially during the evaluation process. You can ask listeners to fill out the evaluations after the first and last readings, after the final two readings, or in any combination you like. In situations where both partners are lower proficiency readers, have them start with the easiest material you can find. As an alternative to providing feedback to each other, learners can complete a set of listening questions or tasks (e.g., a very easy worksheet) for which they need information from the text their partner is reading.

Technique 3: Reader's Theatre

Reader's Theatre (RT) is the reading aloud of a written text to communicate a story. Although commonly confused with drama or acting, RT is actually quite different; there are no costumes, no props, and most importantly, no memorization. Instead, student groups are assigned to read different parts of a script. Adaptations of books, movies, fables, historical events, or even popular TV shows can all be scripted to create an RT presentation.

The goal of RT is simple: to increase reading self-confidence by practicing multiple readings of a text, thereby improving comprehension, fluency, and accuracy. Second language learners are thought to gain accuracy and improved fluency by the repetition of tasks (Bygate 2001), and the rereading required in RT presentations gives them valuable practice in moving from decoding printed words into sounds to fluid and automatic word recognition (Samuels, Schermer, and Reinking 1992).

Scripts can vary in length depending on the proficiency of your learners, but a good script will provide every student with at least two or three lines to read. Roles can include several characters, as well as a narrator who guides the story. More advanced, outgoing, or daring readers may choose bigger parts, whereas less-skilled or shy readers may choose fewer lines. Regardless of classroom size or dynamics, RT can be customized to fit a variety of learning environments.

If your RT groups are small, a script may have more roles than readers. In that case, assign individual readers more than one role. (But be sure they are not in the same scene reading two different parts!) You can also cut characters out completely or combine two roles together. If your groups are

large, use more than one narrator and split character roles into two or more parts. Very often a character can be divided to create two or more speaking parts. You can also assign silent characters to help with the storytelling or assign non-speaking roles. Crowd scenes can also incorporate groups of extra readers. Figure 1 contains an excerpt of a script I wrote to introduce my learners to a series of tasks revolving around life at sea.

NARRATOR 1: Bunglie was hungry. He quietly left his pen and looked down out of the window onto the deck below. Sparky was there, along with the sheep.
SPARKY: Got any food?
LOXY: No. Not a thing.
TRIXIE: My heavens, no. We haven't had anything for almost two days. Whatever are we to do?
SPARKY: Birds!!! How 'bout you? Have you got any food?
BUB AND CHUB: *[together]* Sorry no.
SPARKY: Cows… You have any food?
COWS 1, 2, 3, and 4: *[singing]* No, no, no. We haven't got any food.
ZOOTIE: *[looking at husband]* We're going to get some food. I know a safe place.
HUSBAND: *[scared, in a whisper]* Are we going without asking a human? Won't it be dangerous?
SPARKY: We'll be careful. *[creeping away]* Don't worry!
NARRATOR 2: Then Sparky left with Zootie and her husband in search of something to eat.
NARRATOR 1: But Bunglie could not stay in his pen. He had to eat something…
　　　[in a louder voice] …now!!

Figure 1: Excerpt of Reader's Theatre Script

Scripts can be simple or detailed and complex. I prefer to keep the writing simple because I feel it leads to more authentic dialogue. For busy teachers who do not have time to write original material, the Internet can be a valuable resource, as there are dozens of adaptable RT scripts online. If your Internet access is limited, you can always have your students write their own RT scripts. This is a popular alternative to teacher-selected content because student-generated material provides teachers with a chance to observe what learning objectives have been internalized by their students. Teachers can encourage the inclusion of important dates, vocabulary, or grammar points to raise the complexity of the dialogue or the assignment. Regardless of where the script comes from, doing RT almost always leads to laughter and language learning. Following is a five-session plan for a Reader's Theatre presentation.

Reader's Theatre classroom suggestion: All the world's a stage

Session 1:
Model fluent and expressive reading by reading aloud from the script or the story on which your script is based. Time and interest allowing, consider focusing on some aspect of problematic pronunciation for students to keep in mind as they practice (e.g., reduced schwa sounds, consonant clusters, suprasegmentals). Pass out copies of the script and encourage students to read silently all the parts by themselves. If you lack the resources to give each student a script, you can create pairs or small groups and have students share. Once they have read over the dialogue fully, allow time to discuss the meaning and content.

Session 2:

Divide students into groups and hand out scripts. Students read through the scripts entirely, each time concentrating on a different role. For example, if there are four students and four roles, the script should be read four times with each student reading aloud a different role every time. In situations where there are more roles than readers, ask students to take on more than one character. Circulate among the groups, coaching and offering advice and support.

Session 3:

This is the same as the Session 2; however, toward the end of this session, have students divide up the parts. Alternatively, you can assign the roles for the final session. Students read their parts as homework and begin preparing for their performance.

*Sessio*n *4:*

Students read and rehearse their parts together with their group members. Toward the end of the session, students can make character nametags and plan any necessary movement or decide where groups will stand during their turn.

Session 5:

Each group performs the reading for the class or possibly in front of an audience. To set the stage for future endeavours, you may wish to have learners assess themselves and their group members' effort leading up to the reading. Ask learners to respond to statements like these: "Next time, to improve my reading fluency, I plan to ," or "To achieve my goal, I will " Another simple and effective way to encourage self- or peer-reflection is to provide students with a checklist of statements grouped into the following categories:

Put a check mark (√) next to the areas you feel you/your partner did well:	
1. Phrasing/Fluency	
	(I/My partner) paid attention to the author's language.
	(I/My partner) read longer phrases.
	(I/My partner) had good expression.
2. Pace	
	(I/My partner) used good speed when reading.
	(I/My partner) did not pause too much.
3. Accuracy	
	(I/My partner) could read the words easily.
	(I/My partner) read quickly, but
	(my/my partner's) words sounded meaningful.

Conclusion

Readers who lack fluency often read in a plodding, word-by-word manner and are slower and less accurate than fluent readers. Moreover, because their reading is so laborious, their understanding of the text is often limited. With such ineffective reading patterns, non-fluent readers typically fall behind their peers and do not learn to enjoy the act of reading. In the past, fluency-building techniques like oral reading have been neglected in the L2 reading classroom for a variety of

reasons. Time constraints, teacher philosophy, and misuse of techniques like Round Robin Reading (taking turns reading aloud around the classroom) have eclipsed the benefits of fluency development and have cast a negative light on oral reading.

The method of RR was developed to help struggling readers improve their fluency, accuracy, and comprehension. In the L1 classroom, reading aloud to a teacher or to a peer is an important first step toward developing fluent decoding and comprehending skills; both are a necessary preparation for silent reading. The three techniques presented in this article are designed to help learners achieve reading fluency and have just as much value in the L2 classroom as in the L1 classroom. As L2 learners read aloud and convey the message of the text to sympathetic and interested listeners, they strengthen their skills and self-confidence. Most importantly, RR activities encourage L2 learners to enjoy reading and to practice the skill more frequently, which is critical to the development of advanced proficiency.

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JOSHUA COHEN is an instructor of English as a Foreign Language in the Business Department at Kinki University in Japan. This article is dedicated to his late mother, Diane, who introduced him to the value of repeated reading by reading (and rereading!) tirelessly to him when he was young.

(Cohen, 2011)

Questions about Building Fluency through the Repeated Reading Method

1. What is RR? ....

....

2. What is RR best suited for? ....

....

3. What is ORR? ....

4. What happens in the classic version of ORR? ....

....

5. What do other versions of ORR include? ....

....

6. What is a chunk? ....

7. Where can you find a compelling poem or story for chunking? ....

....

8. Where can you write the chunks? ....

9. How can you practise until the students gain proficiency? ....

....

10. What is PRR? ....

11. What kind of assessment can PRR include? ....

12. How can you use PRR? ....

....

13. How can teachers encourage active listening and cooperation? ....

....

14. What is RT? ....

15. What is the goal of RT? ....

....

16. How can you raise the complexity of your RT script? ....

....

The article below discusses several strategies and techniques for improving fluency. Read the article and make notes in the questions below.

Fluency: Instructional Guidelines and Student Activities

By: Texas Education Agency (2002)

The best strategy for developing reading fluency is to provide your students with many opportunities to read the same passage orally several times. To do this, you should first know what to have your students read. Second, you should know how to have your students read aloud repeatedly.

Guidelines for instruction

- Provide children with opportunities to read and reread a range of stories and informational texts by reading on their own, partner reading, or choral reading.
- Introduce new or difficult words to children, and provide practice reading these words before they read on their own.
- Include opportunities for children to hear a range of texts read fluently and with expression.
- Suggest ideas for building home-school connections that encourage families to become involved actively in children's reading development.
- Encourage periodic timing of children's oral reading and recording of information about individual children's reading rate and accuracy.
- Model fluent reading, and then have students reread the text on their own.

What students should read

Fluency develops as a result of many opportunities to practice reading with a high degree of success. Therefore, your students should practice rereading aloud texts that are reasonably easy for them – that is, texts containing mostly words that they know or can decode easily. In other words, the texts should be at the students' independent reading level.

A text is at students' independent reading level if they can read it with about 95% accuracy. If the text is more difficult, students will focus on word recognition and will not have an opportunity to develop fluency.

The text your students practice rereading orally should also be relatively short – probably 50-200 words, depending on the age of the students. You should also use a variety of reading materials, including stories, nonfiction, and poetry. Poetry is especially well suited to fluency practice because poems for children are often short and they contain rhythm, rhyme, and meaning, making practice easy, fun, and rewarding.

Model fluent reading

By listening to good models of fluent reading, students learn how a reader's voice can help written text make sense. Read aloud daily to your students. By reading effortlessly and with expression, you are modelling for your students how a fluent reader sounds during reading.

Repeated reading

After you model how to read the text, you must have the students reread it. By doing this, the students are engaging in repeated reading. Usually, having students read a text four times is sufficient to improve fluency. Remember, however, that instructional time is limited, and it is the actual time that students are actively engaged in reading that produces reading gains.

Have other adults read aloud to students. Encourage parents or other family members to read aloud to their children at home. The more models of fluent reading the children hear, the better. Of course, hearing a model of fluent reading is not the only benefit of reading aloud to children. Reading to children also increases their knowledge of the world, their vocabulary, their familiarity with written language ("book language"), and their interest in reading.

Activities for students to increase fluency

There are several ways that your students can practice orally rereading text, including student-adult reading, choral (or unison) reading, tape-assisted reading, partner reading, and readers' theatre.

Student-adult reading

In student-adult reading, the student reads one-on-one with an adult. The adult can be you, a parent, a classroom aide, or a tutor. The adult reads the text first, providing the students with a model of fluent reading. Then the student reads the same passage to the adult with the adult providing assistance and encouragement. The student rereads the passage until the reading is quite fluent. This should take approximately three to four re-readings.

Choral reading

In choral, or unison, reading, students read along as a group with you (or another fluent adult reader). Of course, to do so, students must be able to see the same text that you are reading. They might follow along as you read from a big book, or they might read from their own copy of the book you are reading. For choral reading, choose a book that is not too long and that you think is at the independent reading level of most students. Patterned or predictable books are particularly useful for choral reading, because their repetitious style invites students to join in. Begin by reading the book aloud as you model fluent reading.

Then reread the book and invite students to join in as they recognize the words you are reading. Continue rereading the book, encouraging students to read along as they are able. Students should read the book with you three to five times total (though not necessarily on the same day). At this time, students should be able to read the text independently.

Tape-assisted reading

In tape-assisted reading, students read along in their books as they hear a fluent reader read the book on an audiotape. For tape-assisted reading, you need a book at a student's independent reading level and a tape recording of the book read by a fluent reader at about 80-100 words per minute. The tape should not have sound effects or music. For the first reading, the student should follow along with the tape, pointing to each word in her or his book as the reader reads it. Next, the student should try to read aloud along with the tape. Reading along with the tape should continue until the student is able to read the book independently, without the support of the tape.

Partner reading

In partner reading, paired students take turns reading aloud to each other. For partner reading, more fluent readers can be paired with less fluent readers. The stronger reader reads a paragraph or page first, providing a model of fluent reading. Then the less fluent reader reads the same text aloud. The stronger student gives help with word recognition and provides feedback and encouragement to the less fluent partner. The less fluent partner rereads the passage until he or she can read it independently. Partner reading need not be done with a more and less fluent reader. In another form of partner reading, children who read at the same level are paired to reread a story that they have received instruction on during a teacher-guided part of the lesson. Two readers of equal ability can practice rereading after hearing the teacher read the passage.

Readers' theatre

In readers' theatre, students rehearse and perform a play for peers or others. They read from scripts that have been derived from books that are rich in dialogue. Students play characters who speak lines or a narrator who shares necessary background information. Readers' theatre provides readers with a legitimate reason to reread text and to practice fluency. Readers' theatre also promotes cooperative interaction with peers and makes the reading task appealing.

Excerpted from: Guidelines for Examining Phonics and Word Recognition Programs, Texas Reading Initiative, Texas Education Agency (2002)

Questions for 'Fluency: Instructional guidelines'

1. What is the best strategy for developing reading fluency? ....

....

2. Your students should practice rereading aloud texts that are...……

....

3. How often should you read aloud to your students? ....

4. How many times should students repeat the reading? ....

5. Do you think you could arrange student-adult reading? ....

....

6. For choral reading, what must the students all be able to do? ....

7. What sort of books should Readers Theatre scripts be derived from? ....

....

Shared Reading and Round Robin Reading

If you Google 'Round Robin Reading' (RRR) you will get a long list of articles about why you should NOT use RRR, and alternatives to using RRR.

What we want is a form of reading aloud where the children are all participating. The children need to be able to all see the words – as in a Big Book, or each having their own copy as in RRR.

If a 'Big Book' is not available for a (picture) book that you want to read aloud to, and do shared reading with, the children then you can always scan the book and create a set of PowerPoint slides.

Exercise: Reading aloud and shared reading

Work with a partner / group.

- Choose a (picture) book.
- Plan 2 lessons:
  1. A shared reading lesson using a Big Book / projected version of the book. Describe activities page by page, questions you would ask.
  2. A lesson where the children read aloud – if it is 'Round Robin' then make sure you avoid the problems that can be there with this type of lesson (Google round Robin Reading first!). There are many other types such as Repeated Reading (in the articles you have read).

One of the things that children can learn through stories – whether reading them or listening to them – is critical thinking skills. Children do not necessarily just develop skills without guidance from the teacher. ***Read the article and answer/discuss the questions below:***

Towards Developing Critical Thinking Skills in Young Learners

This is a summary of a webinar hosted by Cambridge English Teacher and presented by Herbert Puchta on October 10th, 2012.

The 'attention-grabbing' approach to teaching

Even very young children are able to think, attend and remember, but their thinking, attending and memory are very reactive. Children growing up today are subjected to sensory overload constantly. Television, for example, is fast-paced, loud, full of movement, and has colourful, constantly changing scenes. As a result, today's youngsters have very short attention spans.

'Reactive learners' need fast-paced, sensory bombardment to learn even very simple information. This leads to the teacher being an entertainer which is totally exhausting.


Learning as a 'self-directed activity'

- Children increasingly learn to direct their attention, memory and problem-solving skills on their own.
- Children gradually take more and more responsibility for their own learning.
- Children acquire the mental tools to help them think better.

So,

- Tools of the mind (mental/cognitive tools) help to extend a child's cognitive capabilities.
- Tools of the mind reduce the workload for the teacher.

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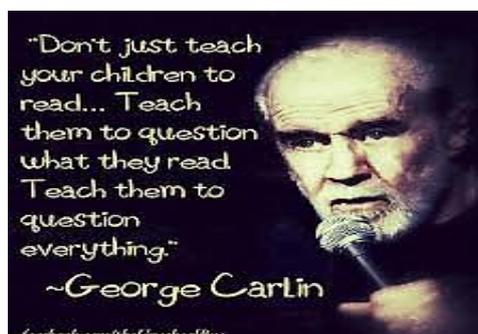
Why teach thinking skills?

- Children need to face the challenges of a changing and unpredictable world.
- They need problem-solving and decision-making skills to meet unexpected problems and tackle them.
- School curricula tend to promote systematic, error-free learning - correct answers, assimilation of facts, teacher's assessment.

The importance of divergent thinking

Divergent thinking (as opposed to convergent thinking) is extremely important - students need to learn that there is not necessarily one right answer. You can teach this by asking questions like:

Write down as many different uses as you can think of for:

- *a button*
- *a brick*
- *a blanket*

Here, you are encouraging children to think outside the box.

What does critical thinking involve?

- Working out whether or not we believe what we see or hear.
- Finding out whether something is true.
- Arguing one's case.
- Identifying when we need more information.
- Selecting information for a specific purpose.

There is always a connection between critical thinking and creative thinking. Both are higher order thinking skills.

Problem solving cycle

1. Gather and organise information
2. Define the problem
3. Generate approaches to solve the problem
4. Make an action plan
5. Monitor, check, evaluate
6. Communicate solutions
7. Transfer the problem solving skills learned to other problems

What thinking skills can we teach at the same time as we are teaching language?

A typology of thinking skills areas to be taught with EFL for young learners

- Making comparisons
- Categorising
- Sequencing
- Focusing attention
- Memorising
- Exploring space
- Exploring time
- Exploring numbers
- Creating associations
- Cause and effect
- Making decisions
- Solving problems
- Creative thinking

Practical examples

1. Where's Tom?
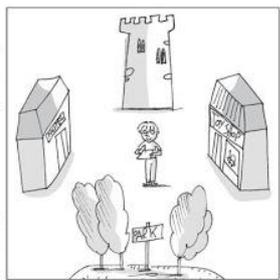
This is an example from Herbert Puchta and Marion William's book 'Teaching Young Learners to Think'.

It focuses on the 'exploring space' skill. To develop this skill, students need:

- a reference system to understand and control the space they live in.
- a sense of position, distance, direction, proximity and dimensions.

- the ability to imagine a change in position. This is necessary for hypothetical thinking - the ability to imagine another viewpoint.

2. Cars and bicycles
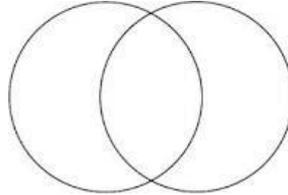
Draw a Venn diagram and ask the question:

> *What is the same and what is different between this pair of objects?*
> *Examples: car and bicycle*
> *tree and flower*
> *chair and table*
> *banana and pineapple*

The focus here is obviously on the skill of making comparisons, the basic building block of decision making. This kind of activity can be introduced at beginner level. Simply asking the question, 'What colour's my jacket?', for example, activates language, but it doesn't require any thinking on the part of the respondent. As teachers, we need to encourage thinking.

3. Missing information

Give three texts - three party invitations, for example, - each one with a missing piece of information (time, place, date, etc.). Students have to work out what is missing rather than the more usual task of answering questions on what is there.

4. Listen and imagine

Tell students to close their eyes and then play them a piece of music. Then ask them to draw a picture inspired by the music or write down a list of words they would associate with it. They then have to explain their picture or choice of words to a partner or small group.

Here, we are encouraging creative thinking, which, as we have already heard, is an integral part of critical thinking.

5. Cause and effect

Give students a statement and ask them if there is a cause and effect relationship in it. For example,

> *Jane doesn't play any musical instruments. Therefore, she isn't a musician.*

This kind of task is suitable for intermediate level students. They have to question whether or not there is enough information to establish a cause and effect relationship. If not, what other information is needed? The attention to detail required here is a great exercise for students.

To conclude:

Quoting Vygotsky's model:

Learning moves away from the goal of getting the answer correct to getting the answer correct because a specific process was used to get the answer.

(Puchta, 2012)

Discuss and answer these questions with your partner / group:

Questions about 'Towards Developing Critical Thinking Skills in Young Learners'

1. According to Punta, why do today's youngsters have a very short attention span? ....

....

2. Is it true?

- Do your younger siblings have a shorter attention span than you did at their age?
- Or are you one of 'today's youngsters'?
- Or has it always been this way?

Discuss.

3. What reduces the workload of the teacher? ....

4. What are the three reasons given for teaching reading skills?

- ....
- ....
- ....

Do you agree with them? (Don't just say 'yes'!)

Discuss.

5. What is a divergent thinker? ....

....

Are you a divergent thinker? Have you ever met anyone who is?

Discuss

6. With your partner/group do the button activity. How many ideas can you come up with? Try harder to think of some really 'crazy' ideas.

Discuss

7. Look at the list of 5 points under '*What does critical thinking involve?*'

- Choose of a particular story you might be telling/reading.
- Think of questions for at least three of the critical thinking points.

Discuss

8. Look at this '*typology of thinking skills'*.

• Making comparisons		• Exploring numbers	
• Categorising		• Creating associations	
• Sequencing		• Cause and effect	
• Focusing attention		• Making decisions	
• Memorising		• Solving problems	
• Exploring space		• Creative thinking	
• Exploring time		• Exploring numbers	

Mark the ones which <u>you</u> could apply to a story telling/reading session. *Discuss and share ideas.*

Identifying the Conflict in a Story

Conflict is the basis of story, and the following article talks about four types of story conflicts. You need to be able to identify the conflict in a story, and also guide the children into recognising it too.

The article below briefly describes (with examples) four different types of story conflict. Even if you are not familiar with the specific examples, you should be able to think of your own examples.

Read the article and discuss the questions below.

Four Types of Story Conflicts
January 6, 2012 by Pat Johnson

One of the standards listed in our district for fifth graders is to learn about the four types of story conflicts. Remember them? Person vs. person; person vs. nature; person vs. self; and person vs. society. I didn't learn about them until junior year in High School when we discussed *Huck Finn, Moby Dick*, and *The Scarlet Letter.* That difference, in when we teach certain literary elements, makes me wonder if we aren't pushing curriculum down too much too fast, but I'll save that argument for another day. Because kids may someday get "tested" on these conflicts, then teach them we must.

I like to start out just chatting with the students about some books that several kids in the class have read or ones that have been read aloud to the whole group in previous years. They easily realize that Harry Potter vs. Voldermort and the Narnia kids vs. the Ice Queen fall into the first category. Many students have heard about *Number the Stars* and realize that it falls into the last category because of the people who fought against the Nazi society. Any story of survival against the forces of nature, like *Hatchet* or *My Side of the Mountain*, is identified as a person vs. nature conflict. Then we discuss several picture books that have been read in the last few weeks and the kids decide that *Ish* is about the boy gaining confidence with his own artistic abilities, thus a person-vs-self text.

Over the next few weeks we read and discuss picture books in relation to these conflicts. Below are some ideas you may wish to use.

Person vs. Person:
> *Dogzilla* (Dogzilla vs. the mice army of Mousopolis)
> *My Rotten Red-Headed Older Brother* (a Polacco favorite)
> *The Three Wolves and the Big Bad Pig* (a spoof on the 3 Pigs)
> *The Mysterious Giant of Barletta* (giant vs. advancing army)
> *Suddenly (*Preston the pig vs the menacing wolf)

Person vs. Self:
> *Koala Lou (*realizes his mom loves him no matter what)
> *Owl Babies* (conquer their fear of being left without Mom)
> *Edward the Emu* (any story like this works – where the character is not comfortable being who he is and wants to be something else.)

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Person vs. Nature:

    Brave Irene (fights the blizzard in order to deliver the dress)

    Ghost Eye Tree (the little boy fears the spooky tree)

Person vs. Society:

    Holocaust books work well here (*Let the Celebrations Begin*, the picture book version of the *Diary of Anne Frank, The Lily Cupboard*.)

    Books about racism towards African Americans: *Teammates; Freedom Summer; Freedom School, Yes!*

    Books about the Japanese Internment camps during WWII: *The Bracelet, Baseball Saved Us, The Lucky Baseball, Journey Home*

    I suppose even the issue of homelessness would be considered a societal issue: *Fly Away Home, Lady in the Box.*

Sometimes students get confused when the 'person' is actually many people. A few students thought that the army in *The Mysterious Giant of Barletta* represented 'society.' They eventually came to realize that 'person' can mean one, two, or a whole group of people, or even animal characters. Later when we discussed 'person vs. society' they realized that that type of conflict had more to do with 'societal issues.' Many students had read *The Giver* and we talked about how that future society was set up in a different way than what we are used to today. At first the main character was excited to receive his job on the day the assignments were given out. But as the story continued, we get a real sense of a 'person vs. society' type of conflict. In the end, Jonas is ready to separate himself totally from the society.

Oftentimes it's not really clear which category the book falls in. But those discussions with the students just take their thinking to a deeper level. In *Amazing Grace* the class is going to put on a Peter Pan play. When Grace wants to play the part of Peter, some class members point out that she can't be Peter because she is black or because she is a girl. Some students thought the text was a 'person vs self' text because Grace gains more confidence in her dancing ability and convinces her classmates that she is indeed the best person to play the role. But others felt it was Grace against those other classmates and therefore it was 'person vs. person.'

And what about *The Big Orange Splot?* Is that a conflict of one man against society because the community in which he lives believes that all houses should look exactly the same? Or is it a person vs person conflict of the main character against all his neighbours?

We found the 'person vs self' type of conflict to be the hardest to find examples of. We first saw *Owl Babies* as this type of conflict. The baby owls try to get over their fear by telling each other reasons why the mom has disappeared; then they gather together all on one branch to protect each other. Some argued that it was more of a person vs nature story because the owls are feeling scared because of many of the things in the dark woods.

In the book *Suddenly,* Preston is constantly *almost* being attacked by the Wolf. It seems obvious that it's the pig vs the wolf. But is it really a person vs. person conflict if Preston, the pig, never actually realizes that the Wolf is about to attack him? He doesn't escape his conflict by his own strength or cleverness; it's always just a coincidence.

There were many books that the students examined during independent reading time —*Jumanji, Stega Nona, Big Anthony and the Magic Ring, Sylvester and the Magic Pebble, Caleb and Kate* – to name a few. Students will notice that the main character in each of these books has a problem; he is in conflict with something. But most of these books made us wonder if there shouldn't be a **fifth** story conflict of "person vs magic." And to that I say, "Why not?"

(Johnson, 2012)

Discussion Questions for 'Four Types of Story Conflicts'

1. What are the four types of story conflict?

- ....
- ....
- ....
- ....

2. What kind of books are being used as examples of different conflicts? ....

3. What age are the children in the writer's class who are learning about story conflicts? ....

4. How was the 'person' confusion sorted? ....

....

5. Which is the hardest type to find examples of? ....

6. What could the fifth type of conflict be? ....

7. Do you agree there should be a fifth type, or would you fit it into one of the others?

....

Discuss your answers with your partner / group.

Exercises

1. Work with a partner / group.

- Choose 3 books / stories – either your own or from the APPENDIX.
- Identify the conflict in each.
- Try to choose books / stories with different conflict types.
- Present your findings to the class.

2. Choose one story, and alter the point of conflict and/or the ending. Present your story to the class.

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