Reading: An Effective and Enjoyable Way to Boost Language Skills

Rory Rosszell

> [Reading] fluency is what allows a reader to experience a much larger amount of L2 input, to expand the breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge beyond direct instruction, to develop automatic word-recognition skills, to read for additional learning, to build reading motivation, and, in L2 university contexts, to read the large amounts of material that might be assigned every week… For these reasons, fluency must be a curricular and instructional goal for reading development. (Grabe Reading 290)

As is reflected in the quotation above, reading has the potential to serve as a stepping stone to the development of a variety of L2 skills, as well as to the achievement of a wide range of academic, personal, and occupational goals. Palumbo and Willcutt are not the first to make this point: "English is fast becoming the foremost language in global commerce. English skills are not only for reading street signs, books, manuals, or voting, but they also provide access to status, power, and voice in the community" (169). Well over a decade ago, Champeau de Lopez ("Increasing") reminded us that every day, hundreds of millions of non-native speakers depend on having efficient English reading skills to keep up with the latest developments in their professional fields. Similarly, Anderson ("Developing") pointed out that reading is the most important skill for foreign university students to master, not only because it enables them to deal with the large volume of reading that is required, but because it enables them to make greater progress in all academic areas. Table 1 provides a more detailed list of the wide ranging benefits that leamers can

Table 1. *The range of benefits that learners can derive from reading*

1. For reading
    a. Fluency
    b. Speed/Automatisation (lower-level/bottom-up processes, ER)
    c. Comprehension/Efficient strategy use (higher-level/top-down processes, ER and IR)
    d. Vocabulary depth and breadth (ER and IR)
    e. Grammar (ER and IR)
2. For other language skills
    a. Writing (especially IR)
    b. Listening (ER and IR)
    c. Speaking (ER and IR)
3. For test scores (e.g., TOEFL, TOEIC, course exams, etc.) (especially IR)
4. Other benefits
    a. Pleasure (especially ER)
    b. Motivation (especially ER)
    c. Educational value (ER and IR)
    d. Convenience (anytime/any place)

potentially derive from developing their reading skills.

However, despite these authors calling for the recognition of reading skills as the key to the achievement of higher L2 proficiency, in many reading classrooms the development of reading fluency continues to be an assumed outcome rather than one that is explicitly addressed.

The following paper begins with a description of a fluent reader, and then goes on to examine the challenges facing L2 learners in developing such a complex skill, as well as those faced by teachers in designing programs that will nurture the development of this essential skill in their students.

Challenges Facing L2 Learners

Among the various definitions that have been proposed, Grabe ("Fluency") describes a fluent reader as someone who is able to efficiently recognise words and combine information from various sources while reading at 250-300 words per minute (wpm). To explain why many learners have diffi-

culty developing such skills, Nathan and Stanovich propose that "the combination of lack of practice, deficient decoding skills, and difficult materials results in unrewarding early reading experiences that lead to less involvement in reading-related activities" (178). Although this observation was made with regard to poor L1 readers, it applies equally to many L2 learners, and even more so to those in foreign language (FL) contexts.

With regard to the amount of practice necessary to develop rapid processing and automaticity in word processing, Grabe and Stoller claim that it typically takes a learner thousands of hours, and support Nathan and Stanovich claim that L2 learners are seldom given sufficient time to develop such processing skills. Japanese learners, for example, are taught largely by the grammar-translation method at junior and senior high school and are given few opportunities to practice their reading skills (Hunt and Beglar; Miura; Taguchi; Mizuno), their exposure to L2 input is limited, and they therefore "face a number of problems effectively utilizing reading as a venue for L2 development" (Taguchi and Gorsuch 43). A further and significant consideration for some students (e.g., Japanese EFL students), is that the development of reading skills requires even further practice when the reading involves an unfamiliar writing system, a lack of background knowledge, and different cultural assumptions (Kitao and Kitao; Grabe "Foundations"; Koda Insights).

Resulting largely from the limited opportunities that they have for practice, L2 learners' progress in reading is further hampered by their poor decoding skills. Anderson ("Improving") states that L2 learners tend to read word by word, at speeds that are "suffocatingly slow" (183) and far below what is generally considered necessary for fluent reading comprehension, at about one-half to one-third the rate of an L1 student (Grabe Reading), and even after finishing a reading course, advanced level ESL learners may still be reading very slowly (Anderson "Developing"). Elaborating on the consequences of poor decoding skills, Nation points out that L2 learners' eyes fixate too frequently, for too long, and too often regressively.

Once again looking specifically at Japanese EFL learners, the average initial reading speeds of the junior college students in Utsu's ("Part 1"; "Part 2")

two studies were 78 wpm and 91 wpm, respectively, and for the 45 most proficient university students in Atkins' study, 128 wpm. These figures are supported by the findings from other contexts, which suggest that, before training, L2 learners read at speeds of only 120–150 wpm (Chung and Nation; Champeau de Lopez "Developing"; Plaister). More specifically, of Chang's 84 Taiwanese university students, 24 percent were below 100 wpm, and only ten percent read at rates above 150 wpm.

While the inability to read at higher speeds is no doubt a handicap for many L2 learners, the discussion of an "ideal" reading speed commonly seems to be oversimplified and misunderstood. The focus is often on ESL learners' inability to read at a rate of 200–300 wpm, which is widely considered to be the minimum rate necessary to ensure an adequate level of comprehension. However, while readers do sometimes struggle through a difficult passage with little comprehension, most researchers would no doubt agree that provided a learner doesn't read so slowly as to overtax his or her short-term memory (Samuels "Toward"), slowing down usually results in better, not worse comprehension. Therefore, a slow reading speed could indicate either a struggling reader who is comprehending very little, or a competent reader who is consciously reading slowly to comprehend more. Further, Palumbo and Willcutt point out that correlations between reading rate and reading comprehension may not be strong for English language learners (ELLs) "due to vocabulary problems and differences in grammatical structure of the ELLs first language" (175).

As Carver pointed out, an optimal reading speed represents the best compromise between speed and comprehension, and is not a straightforward case of "the faster the better". This was confirmed by his data indicating that L1 college students slow their reading down to comprehend and retain more, not less. He found that the average reading rate for college students was 300 wpm (just to understand the message), 200 wpm for learning (to acquire information), and 138 wpm for memorizing (to be able to recall facts), and concluded that reading at a rate between 250 and 350 wpm allows readers to comprehend a text most efficiently (with efficiency rather than completeness of comprehen-

sion being the criterion of focus).

Finally, although the intensive reading (IR) of more difficult texts should form one part of one strand of a well-balanced reading program (see below), Nuttall's now well-known distinction between vicious and virtuous reading cycles highlights the consequences of this component being too heavily over-represented. If L2 learners are fed a steady diet of overly difficult reading texts, they are much more likely to enter a *vicious* reading cycle involving a downward spiral of reading less, understanding less, learning less, becoming frustrated, and therefore reading less. In contrast, learners are much more likely to enter the *virtuous* reading cycle when presented with level-appropriate texts that they can read with greater fluency, and to progress in an upward spiral of reading more, understanding more, learning more, enjoying more, and therefore reading more. With specific reference to Japanese junior and senior high school contexts, because reading classes continue to consist largely of *yakudoku* (the careful analysis and translation of difficult English passages into Japanese) (Waring; Mizuno), learners tend to be discouraged from reading and unfortunately tend towards the vicious rather than the virtuous cycle of reading (See Kitao, for a more comprehensive description of how Japanese students tend to be taught to "read" English).

In sum, as a result of lack of practice, poor decoding skills, and overly-difficult reading materials, L2 learners often feel discouraged from reading (Taguchi, Takayasu-Maass, and Gorsuch; Taguchi, Gorsuch, and Sasamoto), and developing the automatic word recognition and basic comprehension skills necessary to become fluent readers becomes a huge challenge (Grabe and Stoller; Koda "L2 word")—especially for those whose L1 is written with a different orthography (Taguchi and Gorsuch).

Challenges Facing L2 Instructors

According to Anderson ("Developing"), second language reading teachers face the following challenges in the classroom:

1. Teaching students how to utilize their L1 skills and knowledge.
2. Developing vocabulary skills.

3. Improving reading comprehension.
4. Improving reading rate.
5. Teaching readers how to coordinate the use of reading strategies.
6. Teaching readers how to monitor their own development.
7. Facilitating each learner's discovery of the most effective ways to develop the skills listed above.

Eskey lists one further challenge as being vital to the achievement of many of the goals listed above, namely, the assembly of a collection of reading materials specifically geared towards the learners' interests and reading levels.

Grabe and Stoller also highlight the range of challenges teachers face, "The complex nature of reading and the many factors that must be taken into account when assessing students' needs and planning meaningful reading instruction" (37). However, despite the effort involved, Nation describes how a well-planned reading program can become the foundation for a successful language program:

> A well thought out reading course can be the core of the language programme as it can give rise to activities in the other skills of listening, speaking, and writing, and can provide the opportunity for a useful, deliberate focus on language features. It can quickly become an effective means of showing that language learning can be successful and enjoyable (8).

To aid instructors in meeting this challenge, Nation has proposed the following four-strand approach to the design of reading programs:

1. Meaning-focused Input
2. Fluency Development
3. Language-focused Learning
4. Meaning-focused Output

To gain insight into the variety of reading activities necessary to create

Table 2. *A classification of types of reading and their corresponding activities*

Types of Reading

1. Meaning-focused
   a. For Pleasure or Information
      i. Reading in the usual sense of the word (e.g., websites, magazines, newspapers, books).
      ii. *Extensive Reading (ER)*—involves doing large quantities of instruction-level reading to develop reading fluency and to establish familiar words (i.e., vocabulary depth/usage). The density of unknown words can be selected in accordance with one of two purposes:
         1. To develop lexical depth, lexical breadth, and reading fluency, a minimum of 95% coverage (few unknown items) is recommended.
         2. To shift the focus toward the development of reading fluency, a minimum of 98% coverage (virtually no unknown items) is recommended.
      iii. *Narrow Reading*—taps the student's intrinsic motivation by enabling learners to reads passages on favourite topics, and is aimed at increasing learning through frequent exposure to the same key words, phrases, and grammatical constructions (see, for example, Palumbo and Willcutt).
   b. For developing reading fluency
      i. *Timed Reading* (TR)—involves reading instructional-level passages as quickly as possible while attaining 70-80% comprehension.
      ii. *Repeated Reading* (RR)—involves rereading short (usually instructional-level) passages three to five times, sometimes while being assisted by a recorded model (i.e., *Assisted RR*).
2. Strategy-, form-, and meaning-focused
   a. For developing reading strategies, and knowledge of language features
      i. For developing reading strategies
         1. *Skimming*—involves the use of knowledge of text structure to read quickly and selectively for gist/main points (e.g., thesis statement, topic/concluding sentences, concluding paragraph) (meaning-focused).
         2. *Scanning*—involves very quickly searching a text for specific information (e.g., facts, names, dates, statistics, etc.) (form-focused).
         3. *Inferring word meanings from context*—involves the use of local (e.g., morphology) (form-focused) and global (e.g., sentence and paragraph level) clues (form and meaning focused)).
   b. For comprehending, analysing, and translating texts
      i. *Intensive Reading*—involves the slow analysis of the lexis and grammar in unsimplified texts, and the use of reading strategies, for the purpose of under-

standing the texts (form- and meaning-focused).

ii. *Yakudoku*—involves the careful analysis and translation of English passages into Japanese (form-and meaning-focused).

such a balanced and comprehensive program, while recognising that their purposes are seldom mutually exclusive, Table 2 expands on the first three of Nation's four strands and provides a list of reading activities classified according to their purposes.

Within the *Meaning-focused Input* strand, the number of unfamiliar words can be varied from as high as five percent (for greater lexical development) to as low as zero (for greater fluency development), depending on the reading purpose. However, given that the ultimate goal of this strand is the development of reading fluency, the *Fluency Development* strand is essentially a subcategory, with the primary distinction being that the language in the activities in the *Fluency Development* strand is at the very low end of familiar-unfamiliar language continuum (i.e., contains virtually no unfamiliar language), and that the activities often involve some form of repetition. For this reason, the treatment of these two strands is combined in the following discussion of the development of reading fluency.

The Importance of Fluency

As mentioned above, despite the calls for greater recognition of the need for reading fluency instruction to be explicitly addressed (e.g., Anderson "Developing"; Champeau de Lopez "Increasing"; Palumbo & Willcutt), in many reading courses it remains an assumed outcome rather than an explicitly stated goal, and gets short shrift. Although all reading activities ultimately have better comprehension as their goal, there often exists a bias towards language-focused learning as the more effective approach, particularly in FL settings (see below). Nation suggests that this is at least partially due to teachers and learners feeling that the focus of courses should always be on learning new language rather than developing fluency with language that learners already know. However, as suggested in the introductory quotation by Grabe (Reading)

above, because reading fluency is not only an essential reading skill, but an essential language learning skill as well, it should be given priority as an instructional goal (Taguchi, Takayasu-Maass, and Gorsuch), and because few L2 learners can read fluently, Anderson ("Developing) feels that it is one of the greatest challenges facing L2 reading teachers.

Palumbo and Willcutt identify three essential steps in the development of reading fluency: 1) developing accurate word recognition skills, 2) practicing (overlearning) to develop fluency, and 3) maintaining motivation in achieving steps 1) and 2). To enable learners to accomplish these goals, Nation suggests that instructors design fluency activities which meet the three following criteria:

1. The focus of the reading must be on meaning or acquiring information.
2. Reading must be done in large quantities (i.e., 300,000-500,000 words per year, or one graded reader per week, for a minimum of two years (Furukawa; Nation).
3. The texts must be matched to the reader's reading level.

The Importance of ER

Among the types of reading listed in Table 2, ER is probably the most important because it is through reading large volumes that the skills which form the basis of fluent reading gradually become automatised. As learners see the same words repeatedly in different contexts, for example, they gradually come to recognise them as discrete, holistic units (Palumbo and Willcutt). However, it is important for instructors to recognise the magnitude of the challenge that learners face in maintaining the motivation that is required if ER is to bear fruit (see Palumbo and Willcutt's Step 3), above). ER is essentially reading (in the normal sense of the word), but for all but the most advanced learners, it necessitates the provision of texts that have been simplified—lexically, grammatically, and conceptually. As Hiebert states, "Texts with high percentages of highly frequent and common decodable words support the development of automatic, meaningful reading for beginning and struggling

readers" (206).

However, despite being widely available, many L2 learners are never provided with simplified texts, and as a result never have the opportunity to engage in reading activities which meet the three criteria listed above. As mentioned above, the result is that learners often find themselves caught in a vicious rather than a virtuous reading cycle, and their reading fluency skills are never given a chance to develop. In addition, the research suggests that the long-term effects of such limited reading carry into adulthood and affect vocabulary knowledge and processing mechanisms as well (Nathan and Stanovich).

Table 2 includes three slightly different forms of ER. The first, placing somewhat more emphasis on lexical development, requires a level of at least 95% of known lexis. The second shifts the emphasis from lexical to fluency development, and requires a higher rate of at least 98% known lexis. The third variety, know as *Narrow Reading* is a special form of ER in which, despite the percentage of known lexis being initially lower than the recommended rate of 95%, the learner can still attain good comprehension through a combination of intrinsic motivation in the topic and frequent exposure to the same key lexis. As an example, Hiebert suggests that because the unfamiliar words are "repeated often and in close proximity" (221), science texts can be useful in helping learners to develop their reading and vocabulary skills.

Summarising the research, Nation provides the following guidelines for instructors who wish to ensure that their learners will derive maximum benefit from their ER programs:

1. Read at least one graded reader per week.
2. Read at least five books per level (more at the higher levels).
3. Read 15-20 or more readers per year.
4. Learners should progress through the levels of a reader series.
5. Learners may need to study the new vocabulary at the easier levels or to use a dictionary when starting to read a particular level.

With regard to activities specifically related to the *Fluency Development* strand, Table 2 lists two of the most common ones. The first, *Repeated Read-*

ing (RR), is an activity originally proposed by Samuels ("The method"), in which readers typically re-read short, easy passages of 50-200 words (Rashotte and Torgesen; Samuels "The method") three to four times (Frye and Trathen). It has been widely used in L1 contexts over the past three decades. It is based on the information processing models proposed by LaBerge & Samuels' automaticity theory and Perfetti's verbal efficiency theory, which both suggest that RR develops automatic word recognition, thereby freeing cognitive resources and allowing readers to direct more attention to comprehension processes. The goal is for learners' gains in reading speed and comprehension to transfer to new reading passages (Taguchi, Takayasu-Maass, and Gorsuch), and ultimately, to create independent readers who can use reading as a significant source of linguistic input, particularly in FL settings where written texts may, for practical reasons, comprise the only source of such input (Gorsuch and Taguchi "Developing" 31).

The second fluency activity listed in Table 2 is *Timed Reading* (TR). Although the procedure is different and involves no repetition, the purposes of TR and RR are basically the same. In contrast, TR involves the regular reading of longer (simplified) passages of equal length and lexical difficulty over a period of weeks or months. Texts are read against the clock and are usually followed by a set of multiple-choice comprehension questions, which are answered without referring to the text (Crawford; Atkins). A final and motivationally important component of the activity is the recording of the reading speed and comprehension score on a graph after the completion of each passage.

Summarising the important role that fluency plays in the development of reading skills, Nation makes two points. The first is that rather than being the ultimate goal of fluency training, higher reading speed is best seen as "providing a wider range of choices for a reader. Sometimes it is good to read fast. At other times it is not. Being able to make the choice is an advantage" (72), and the second is that greater fluency results not just in quantitative changes in reading ability, but qualitative ones whereby the basic unit that the reader is working with gradually evolves from letter parts and letters, to word parts and

words. However, as a final point, despite the crucial role that fluency development plays, it is worth reiterating Nation's call for the four strands to be equally represented in a well-designed reading program.

The Importance of Language-focused Learning

The Importance of IR

In contrast to the fluency-oriented activities discussed above, the bottom half of Table 2 lists some of the more common activities that are used to develop reading strategies, as well as for analysing and translating texts. To enable learners to become more flexible readers, three strategies are commonly taught—*skimming*, *scanning*, and *inferring word meanings from context*. By learning to skim, learners learn to use their knowledge of text structure to quickly locate key ideas in the text, and by learning to move their eyes quickly over the text, scanning can help them to rapidly locate specific information. By looking carefully for word-, sentence-, and paragraph-level clues, learners can learn to infer word meanings from context, and to thereby simultaneously increase their vocabulary learning and reduce their dependence on dictionaries.

The second group of activities includes those related to the *Language-focused Learning* strand, and in which the emphasis is on accuracy rather than fluency. These include *Intensive Reading* (IR), a common activity in FL contexts in which the meaning of unsimplified texts is arrived at through the careful analysis of their vocabulary and grammar. In contrast, *yakudoku* is a unique Japanese variation of IR in which L2 passages are painstakingly translated into Japanese. As Nation points out, "Used on suitable texts and following useful principles, this [IR] can be a very useful procedure as long as it is only part of the reading programme…[and is] used to show how the language features contribute to the communicative purpose of the text" (25-26). For IR to yield maximum benefits, Nation recommends that the analysis should focus on:

1) High frequency and useful lexical items and grammatical features (ignore or deal quickly with infrequent items).
2) The use of strategies that can be used with most texts.

3) Ensuring that learners will encounter the same items and use the same strategies in several texts.

The Centrality of Vocabulary Development

Because vocabulary study is a key component of IR and the *Language-focused Learning* strand, its key role in the development of reading skills is deserving of some elaboration. Pikulski highlights the importance of this strand in L1 contexts in the following way:

> A heavy emphasis on phonological awareness, phonics, and related decoding skills may very well allow for the development of basic fluency skills; however, if there has not been a simultaneous emphasis on the development of vocabulary and language, children may falter in their reading progress after making initially good progress. (76)

Similarly, in L2 contexts, although extensive reading has been shown to be effective in both establishing previously learned vocabulary and grammar, and in learning new vocabulary and grammar, it is recognised that such learning is generally fragile, haphazard, and inefficient (Paribakht and Wesche "Vocabulary"; Laufer and Sim; Haynes; Nation), and that complementary explicit learning can significantly increase its development approach (e.g., Ellis and Laporte; Gu; Paribakht and Wesche "Reading"; Min). While knowledge of word parts and syntax can, for example, effectively be used as strategies for determining the meanings of unfamiliar words (Hiebert), such knowledge generally has to be taught.

ER and IR as Complements

Having now discussed both ER and IR, it should be evident that they are complementary rather than opposing or competing approaches. As different as they are, because they both allow learners to see words in meaningful contexts, and therefore to identify sight and previously unknown words with greater speed (Torgesen and Hudson), both practices nurture the development of greater word fluency and accuracy. In addition, learners learn new language features and reading strategies by analysing shorter and more difficult IR pas-

sages, and through doing large quantities of ER, they gain many opportunities for applying the strategies learned, and for contextualised exposure to the language features studied during IR sessions.

Reinforcing the complimentarity of ER and IR, Nation states that "It does not hurt if there is occasional language-focused learning through extensive reading where learners struggle through an interesting but difficult text. Moving around the levels provides these different levels of opportunities for learning" (56). In other words, different kinds of text serve different purposes in a reading program (Hiebert). Although reading a text which contains a higher number of unfamiliar language features results in a shift in the reader's focus away from *Meaning-focused Input* to *Language-focused Learning*, as long as the learner's and the instructor's choices of reading materials are made while recognising the different learning outcomes that will result, more and less difficult texts can both provide equally valuable learning experiences. However, because ER and other fluency-related activities are the focus of two of the four strands, and reading fluency takes huge amounts of practice to develop, despite the importance of IR, relatively more time should be spent doing ER.

The importance of Meaning-focused Output

Although activities related to the fourth strand in Nation's curricular framework were not included in Table 2 because they do not involve reading per say, given the important role that speaking and writing can play in reinforcing and extending the learning that results from reading, a short discussion seems appropriate.

First and foremost is the need for recognition of the strong link between oral language skills and reading proficiency. Ehri's theory of reading development, for example, suggests that progress in reading beyond the initial stages is not possible without the prerequisite oral language development, and that reading fluency is dependent on familiarity with the oral form of the words. Reinforcing the interdependence of ER and IR, Ehri also claims that familiarity with the syntax and meanings of the words and phrases being read is a second prerequisite for the development of fluent reading skills. Palumbo

and Willcutt make some important additional points and suggest that because English language learners (ELLs) often have a different spoken language, the words they decode sometimes have no meaning for them, and that this is frequently the cause of their reading difficulties. In short, if the printed word cannot be connected to both its meaning and its phonological memory, it cannot be read. In contrast, however, they also state that "If vocabulary words can enter the ELL's oral-language repertoire and can be spoken with meaning, it is more likely that the students will understand them when they are encountered during reading" (165). Acknowledging the effort required to nurture such development, Pikulski concludes that "Developing the oral-language and vocabulary skills of children, particularly those who are learning English as a second language… is one of the greatest challenges facing us as educators" (81). (For an example of how small group discussions can be used as an extension of ER, see Rosszell.)

With regard to the integration of reading and writing activities, Palumbo and Willcutt highlight two benefits from students writing (and discussing) summaries of the books that they read. The first is that they enable learners to better comprehend their reading, as well as to relate the story to their own lives, and the second is the practical value for the instructor of being able to assess whether the independent reading was done or not. (For further discussion of the uses of reading and writing as mutually reinforcing activities, see Hirvela.)

In conclusion, the speaking and writing activities in the fourth strand (*Meaning-focused Output*) can reinforce and extend the learning from reading, thereby enhancing learners' understanding, enjoyment, and learning.

Future Research

Despite the progress that has been made, Grabe and Stoller's observation that "We know relatively little about how people become good L2 readers" (2) continues to be true. Although, for example, Taguchi and Gorsuch and their colleagues (e.g., Gorsuch and Taguchi "Repeated"; Gorsuch and Taguchi "Developing"; Taguchi; Taguchi and Gorsuch; Taguchi, Takayasu-Maass, and

Gorsuch) have conducted a series of investigations into the effectiveness of assisted repeated reading with FL learners over the past decade, because fluency is complex and context dependent, and therefore very difficult to measure reliably (Topping), the most effective way(s) to nurture the development of L2 learners' reading fluency remains unclear.

Directly related to this are important questions raised by Hiebert with regard to the most effective timing for and amount of fluency training. She found that the weekly gains made by her students in the first ten weeks were not maintained in the second half of a 20-week intervention, and raises the possibility of, as students' reading skills become more automatised, more fluency sessions having little effect, or even being counter-productive. Other issues that should be given priority include Palumbo and Willcutt's observation that "definitions and measures of fluency have not yet considered readers from different language backgrounds" (160), as well as the question of why and how best to deal with the fact that reading fluency is "one of the more difficult aspects of reading to remediate in older struggling readers" (Torgesen and Hudson). And finally, because the findings from much of the L2 reading research can unfortunately not be generalised due to the variety of L2 learners, as well as variations in their L1s and proficiency levels (Grabe and Stoller), there is a great need for more well-designed studies to be conducted in a range of SL/FL learning contexts.

Conclusion

Because millions of people's opportunities for success and prosperity are intertwined with their reading skills, as English continues to spread as a global language as well as the language of science, technology and advanced research (Grabe and Stoller), it is "an important societal responsibility to offer every person the opportunity to become a skilled reader, and in many cases, this means becoming a skilled L2 reader" (Grabe Reading 6). Although some educators may consider the development of reading fluency among struggling readers to be an impossible dream, with the identification of such learners' needs, and effective, researched-based methods, such an achievement is pos-

sible (Palumbo and Willcutt 175). With well-conceived and integrated reading programs, learners can learn to become more flexible and efficient readers and to better enjoy reading in English, and if they read on a regular basis, their language skills will benefit in the wide variety of ways described in this paper.

Works Cited

Anderson, N.J. "Developing active readers: A pedagogical framework for the second language reading class." System 22.2 (1994): 177–94. Print.

————. "Improving reading speed: Activities for the classroom." English Teaching Forum 37.2 (1999): 2–5. Print.

Atkins, A. "Timed reading: Increasing reading speed and fluency." JALT2009 Conference Proceedings. Ed. A.M. Stoke. Tokyo: JALT, 2010. 662–71. Print.

Carver, R.P. "Optimal rate of reading prose." Reading Research Quarterly 18 (1982): 56–88. Print.

Champeau de Lopez, C.L. "Developing reading speed." English Teaching Forum 31.1 (1993): 50–51. Web. 13 Aug. 2010.

————. "Increasing reading speed in English as a foreign language." Bulletin of Language Science and Humanities (Nagoya University of Technology) 10 (1996): 183–203. Web. Aug. 13. 2010.

Chang, A.C-S. "The effect of a timed reading activity on EFL learners: Speed, comprehension, and perception." Reading in a Foreign Language 22.2 (2010): 284–303. Web. 21 Oct. 2010.

Chung, T., and I.S.P. Nation. "The effect of a speed reading course." English Teaching 61.4 (2006): 181–204. Print.

Crawford, M.J. "Increasing reading rate with timed reading." The Language Teacher 32.2 (2008): 3–7. Print.

Ehri, L.C. "Stages of development in learning to read words by sight." Journal of Research in Reading 18 (1995): 116–25. Print.

Ellis, N.C., and Nadine Laporte. "Contexts of acquisition: Effects of formal instruction and naturalistic exposure on second language acquisition." Tutorials in bilingualism: Psycholinguistic perspectives. Eds. Annette M.B. de Groot and Judith Kroll. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1997. 53–83. Print.

Eskey, D.E. "Theoretical foundations." Teaching second language reading for academic purposes. Eds. F. Dubin, D.E. Eskey and W. Grabe. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1986. 3–23. Print.

Frye, E., and W. Trathen. "Fluency: Implications for classroom instruction." A silver jubilee of reading: Legacies, realities, and predictions. Yearbook of the American

Reading Forum, Vol. 25. Eds. B. Schlagal and W. Trathen. Boone, NC: Appalachian State University, 2006. Print.

Furukawa, A. "Extensive Reading–A million words. Yahoo! Groups Extensive Reading Discussion List. Web. 18 June 2006.

Gorsuch, G., and E. Taguchi. "Developing reading fluency and comprehension using repeated reading: Evidence from longitudinal student reports." Language Teaching Research 14.1 (2010): 27–59. Print.

————. "Repeated reading for developing reading fluency and reading comprehension: The case of EFL learners in Vietnam." System 36 (2008): 253–78. Print.

Grabe, W. "Fluency in reading—Thirty–five yeas later." Reading in a Foreign Language 22.1 (2010): 71–83. Web. Aug. 12. 2010.

————. "Foundations for L2 reading instruction." The Language Teacher 26.7 (2002): 3–7. Print.

————. Reading in a second language: Moving from practice to theory. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Print.

Grabe, W., and F.L. Stoller. Teaching and researching reading. Harlow, UK: Pearson Education, 2002. Print.

Gu, Y. "Vocabulary learning in a second language: Person, task, context and strategies." TESL–EJ 7.2 (2003): 1–25. Web. 10 July 2006.

Haynes, M. "Patterns and perils of guessing in second language reading." Second language reading and vocabulary. Eds. T. Huckin, M. Haynes and J. Coady. Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1993. 46–64. Print.

Hiebert, E.H. "Becoming fluent: Repeated reading with scaffolded texts." What research has to say about fluency instruction. Eds. S.J. Samuels and A.E. Farstrup. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2006. 201–26. Print.

Hirvela, A. Connecting reading and writing in second language writing instruction. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004. Print.

Hunt, A., and D. Beglar. "A framework for developing EFL reading vocabulary." Reading in a Foreign Language 17.1 (2005): 23–59. Web. 23 Oct. 2006.

Kitao, K. "Getting students to read actively." English teaching: Theory, research and practice. Eds. K. Kitao and S.K. Kitao. Tokyo: Eichosha, 1995. 273–96. Print.

Kitao, K., and S.K. Kitao. "Difficulties Japanese have in reading English." English Teaching: Theory, research and practice. Eds. K. Kitao and S.K. Kitao. Tokyo: Eichosha, 1995. Print.

Koda, K. Insights into second language reading: A cross–linguistic approach. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Print.

————. "L2 word recognition research: A critical review." The Modern Language Journal 80 (1996): 450–60. Print.

LaBerge, D., and S.J. Samuels. "Toward a theory of automatic information processing in reading." Cognitive Psychology 6 (1974): 293–323. Print.

Laufer, Batia, and D. Sim. "Measuring and explaining the reading threshold needed for English for academic purposes texts." Foreign Language Annals 18 (1985): 405–11. Print.

Min, H.–T. "EFL vocabulary acquisition and retention: Reading plus vocabulary enhancement activities and narrow reading." Language Learning 58.1 (2008): 73–115. Print.

Miura, T. "[Interview with Paul Nation: The past, present, and future of second language vocabulary acquisition]." The Language Teacher 29.7 (2005): 11–14. Print.

Mizuno, K. "Designing a reciprocal reading environment supporting interaction between books and readers." APACALL Newsletter 9 (2006, June): 3–18. Print.

Nathan, R.G., and K.E. Stanovich. "The causes and consequences of differences in reading fluency." Theory Into Practice 30.3 (1991): 176–84. Print.

Nation, I.S.P. Teaching ESL/EFL reading and writing. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2009. Print.

Nuttall, C. Teaching reading skills in a foreign language. 2nd ed. Oxford: Heinemann English Language Teaching, 1996. Print.

Palumbo, T.J., and J.R. Willcutt. "Perspectives on fluency: English–language learners and students with dyslexia." What research has to say about fluency instruction Eds. S.J. Samuels and A.E. Farstrup. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2006. 159–78. Print.

Paribakht, S., and M. Wesche. "Reading and "incidental" L2 vocabulary acquisition: An introspective study of lexical inferencing." Studies in Second Language Acquisition 21 (1999): 195–224. Print.

————. "Vocabulary enhancement activities and reading for meaning in second language vocabulary acquisition." Second language vocabulary acquisition. Eds. J. Coady and T. Huckin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. 174–200. Print.

Perfetti, C. Reading ability. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985. Print.

Pikulski, J.J. "Fluency: A developmental and language perspective." What research has to say about fluency instruction. Eds. S.J. Samuels and A.E. Farstrup. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2006. 69–93. Print.

Plaister, T. "Reading instruction for college level foreign students." TESOL Quarterly 2.3 (1968): 164–68. Print.

Rashotte, C.A., and J.K. Torgesen. "Repeated reading and reading fluency in learning disabled children." Reading Research Quarterly 20.2 (1985): 180–88. Print.

Rosszell, Rory. "Combining extensive reading and intensive vocabulary study in a Japanese university." Diss. Temple U, 2008. Print.

Samuels, S.J. "The method of repeated readings." The Reading Teacher 50.5 (1979/1997): 376–81. Web. 17 May 2010.

————. "Toward a model of reading fluency." What research has to say about fluency instruction. Eds. S. J. Samuels and A.E. Farstrup. Newark, DE: International

Reading Association, 2006. 24–46. Print.
Taguchi, E. "The effects of repeated readings on the development of lower identification skills of FL readers." Reading in a Foreign Language 11.1 (1997): 97–119. Print.
Taguchi, E., and G. Gorsuch. "Transfer effects of repeated EFL reading on reading new passages: A preliminary investigation" Reading in a Foreign Language 14.1 (2002): 43–65. Web. 12 Aug. 2010.
Taguchi, E., G.J. Gorsuch, and E. Sasamoto. "Developing second and foreign language reading fluency and its effects on comprehension: A missing link." The Reading Matrix 6.2 (2006): 1–18. Web. 12 Aug. 2010.
Taguchi, E., M. Takayasu-Maass, and G. Gorsuch. "Developing rereading fluency in EFL: How assisted repeated reading and extensive reading affect fluency development." Reading in a Foreign Language 16.2 (2004): 70–96. Web. 12 Aug. 2010.
Topping, K.J. "Building reading fluency: Cognitive, behavioral, and socioemotional factors and the role of peer-mediated learning." What research has to say about fluency instruction. Eds. S.J. Samuels and A.E. Farstrup. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2006. 106–29. Print.
Torgesen, J.K., and R.F. Hudson. "Reading fluency: Critical issues for struggling readers." What research has to say about fluency instruction. Eds. S.J. Samuels and A.E. Farstrup. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2006. 130–58. Print.
Utsu, M. "Timed Readings の利用とその効果 2 [Timed Readings and Their Effects on Students (Part 2)]." Bulletin of Yonezawa Women's College of Yamagata Prefecture 40 (2004): 27–34. Print.
————. "Timed Readings の利用とその効果 [Timed Readings and Their Effects on Students (Part 1)]." Bulletin of Yonezawa Women's College of Yamagata Prefecture 39 (2003): 31–37. Print.
Waring, R. "Graded and extensive reading-Questions and answers." The Language Teacher 21.5 (1997): 9–12. Print.