

**PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS IN READING COMPREHENSION**

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**Abstract:** Issues with reading comprehension occur when students struggle to understand the meaning behind words, phrases and other texts. Signs that may indicate a reading comprehension difficulty include: trouble with letter and word recognition. difficulty understanding words and ideas. Talk about what they're reading. This "verbal processing" helps them remember and think through the themes of the book. Ask questions before, during, and after a session to encourage reading comprehension. Patterns of reading difficulty provide an educationally useful way to think about different kinds of reading problems, whether those problems are mainly experiential in nature (e.g., those common among English learners) or associated with disabilities (e.g., those typical of children with dyslexia). This article reviews research on three common patterns of poor reading: specific word-reading difficulties, specific reading-comprehension difficulties, and mixed reading difficulties.

**Key words:** Issues, reading, understanding, verbal processing, reading-comprehension difficulties, specific interests, learning experiences, systematic phonics interventions.

**Introduction.** The purpose of the article is to explain how teachers can use assessments to identify individual struggling readers' patterns of reading difficulties, and how this information is valuable in differentiating classroom instruction and planning interventions. Recently I visited the classroom of a third-grade teacher. many teachers had a diverse group of students, which included many children who were English learners or who had limited home experiences with academic language and literacy. Several children with disabilities also were included in her classroom, three with learning disabilities and one with high-functioning autism. Teacher had great enthusiasm and dedication for teaching her students, but she was concerned about the number of children who entered her class with problems in reading, commenting quietly to me at one point, "So many of them are needy, but in different ways." Individual children do vary in important ways, including in their specific interests, personalities, and prior learning experiences. However, when it comes to reading problems, three common patterns of difficulties tend to recur repeatedly, and most struggling readers in Teacher's class probably fit one of these patterns. Recognizing the underlying pattern of poor reading is particularly helpful to providing effective intervention and differentiation of classroom instruction. This article reviews research on common patterns of reading difficulties and explains how understanding those patterns is useful both to classroom teachers and literacy specialists. As displayed, the three common patterns (often termed profiles) of poor reading involve specific word-reading difficulties (SWRD), specific reading comprehension difficulties (SRCD), and mixed reading difficulties. The descriptions of common types of reading problems in this article build on continuing scientific studies as well as earlier research, who outlined six types of reading difficulties, which are consolidated in these three common patterns.

Many studies have shown that children with difficulties in word reading benefit from explicit, systematic phonics interventions, whereas children with comprehension difficulties benefit from explicit teaching and modeling of text comprehension strategies as well as from interventions that promote vocabulary and oral language development. Students studied the performance of elementary-age struggling readers who received differentially targeted interventions, depending

on whether they had weaknesses specific to word recognition (systematic phonemic awareness and phonics intervention) or comprehension (intervention in comprehension strategies such as questioning and summarization). Relative to comparison children who received undifferentiated intervention in resource rooms, the intervention groups made significantly more progress in their weak area of reading.

Differentiating classroom instruction according to different patterns also may improve children's reading outcomes. For example, observed four experienced grade 1 teachers at two schools serving primarily low-income students throughout a school year. At the end of the year, overall reading achievement was lowest in the classroom of the teacher who provided the least differentiation of instruction.

In addition, however, children who entered first grade with the lowest phonics skills did best in reading with the teacher who provided the most emphasis on explicit, systematic phonics for the first half of the school year, with more emphasis on vocabulary and discussion of text later in the year. Conversely, children who began grade 1 with strong basic reading skills did very well in reading with a teacher who provided relatively little direct phonics teaching but emphasized discussion of text from trade books and meaning-oriented writing activities from the start; presumably, these children had less need for systematic phonics teaching because they already possessed these skills. This study suggests that differentiating classroom reading instruction according to individual children's word recognition needs and comprehension needs can be beneficial.

The three types of difficulties mentioned in the preceding section involve underlying patterns of strengths and weaknesses in specific language and reading abilities, sometimes termed components of reading. Important components of reading include phonemic awareness, word decoding, fluent text reading, vocabulary, and listening comprehension. The first step in determining a struggling reader's pattern involves assessment of these abilities that underlie reading development.

Students face various problems in reading comprehension. These include difficulties in understanding complex vocabulary, sentences, and paragraphs, as well as comprehending the overall content and main ideas of a text. Lack of vocabulary and motivation, as well as inadequate training of teachers and shortcomings in the English language curriculum, contribute to these difficulties. Additionally, students struggle with distinguishing between main ideas and supporting details, getting the main idea between paragraphs, understanding texts from different cultures, relating topics to background knowledge, understanding vocabulary, and making inferences from the text. Furthermore, students in the English Education Study Program face problems related to the reading comprehension process, motivation, background knowledge, lack of reading strategies, and language knowledge. Problems in reading comprehension can also arise from students' basic English ability, lack of interest, and motivation, as well as from teachers not using appropriate teaching methods.

Once teachers have information about the specific component abilities of individual struggling readers, they can interpret these data to determine the type of reading difficulties each student has. Teachers should look for patterns of specific strengths and weaknesses in important component reading and language skills. They also should consider the dynamic underlying children's problems in reading fluency as well as reading comprehension, because each pattern may (or may not) be accompanied by difficulties in reading fluency. Moreover, slow reading

may sometimes be an adaptive strategy, as when a child intentionally reads slowly better to comprehend a difficult text.

Despite their difficulties with word decoding, children with SWRD usually do well in situations in which information is presented verbally. These students may shine during teacher read-alouds and class discussions, able to answer sophisticated comprehension questions accurately and thoughtfully, especially when text content has been presented orally. Although some children with SWRD may have considerable knowledge of sight words, the hallmark of this pattern involves difficulty decoding unfamiliar words using phonics knowledge. These children also may have difficulties with reading fluency due to inaccurate or labored decoding, and they nearly always have poor spelling.

Sight-word knowledge, ability to use context cues, and verbal strengths may enable some children with SWRD to compensate well enough to score at average levels for reading comprehension; however, compensation becomes increasingly difficult as children advance beyond the earliest grades. In relation to implementation of the Common Core State Standards currently influencing English language arts instruction in many states, students with SWRD can grasp challenging vocabulary and comprehension standards as well as typical readers, particularly in an oral context or with accommodations for their difficulties in reading grade-level text, but will need help meeting foundational standards from the Common Core.

For all types of reading difficulties, the suggestions for intervention should be implemented as part of a more comprehensive program of English language arts instruction, with strong collaboration between classroom teachers and interventionists to ensure an effective program. For example, children with SWRD, need instruction in vocabulary, language, and comprehension; however, they do not need intervention in these areas and can usually receive their vocabulary and comprehension development as part of the core general education program, as long as any necessary adaptations of instruction are made (e.g., oral presentation of grade-level material that children cannot read themselves). Likewise, children with SRCD, like Calvin, need to learn the foundational decoding and spelling skills that are part of the expectations for their grade, but they do not need intervention in these areas.

Each pattern of reading difficulties may emerge relatively early or relatively later in schooling, with early-emerging problems generally defined as reading difficulties evident by grade 3 and late-emerging problems as those first manifesting in grade 4 or later. Some student's problems, apparent at the beginning of grade 3, would all be considered early-emerging.

**Conclusion.** Poor reading comprehension has a negative impact on students' academic performance. Students who struggle with reading comprehension often face difficulties in understanding passages, comprehending sentences and paragraphs, identifying main ideas, and comprehending complex vocabulary. There is no single known cause at this time. Environmental factors—such as children's experiences in the classroom or whether they were read too often as preschoolers—can play a significant role in reading ability. In addition, research suggests that difficulty with reading may be linked to a person's genes. In a majority of cases, many difficulties that appear to be related to reading comprehension are actually the result of a child struggling with word reading. In that case, teachers or intervention specialists may need to work more closely with students on phonics and practicing letter-sound correspondences.

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