

The Effect of a Speed Reading Course: A Replication

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This research replicated a previous study (Chung & Nation, 2006) in order to check whether similar results could be obtained, and to examine factors that might prevent some learners from increasing their reading speed. The results of this research matched those of the previous study. However, unlike those in the previous study, all students made a speed increase possibly because the researcher paid extra attention to slow readers identified in the initial stages and checked out their progress regularly. Two major factors that might hold some learners back were the habit of translating texts into their first language and negative attitudes toward speed reading training. The advantage of speed reading training is that it requires only a small amount of classroom time and it typically results in substantial gains in reading speed while maintaining good comprehension. Thus it would be worth spending time on practicing speed reading with learners of English as a foreign language.

Introduction

Quick decoding skills are a prerequisite if learners wish to become fluent readers. Fluent readers recognize words automatically, whereas slow readers give a large percentage of their attention to decoding, and in turn they need more time for comprehension (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Samuels, 1979). According to the automaticity theory (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Samuels, 1979), developing reading fluency can come through extensive or focused practice. The reason for practicing is that learners become automatic at what they are doing. In terms of reading, practice means providing a large amount of exposure to reading materials within or below learners' proficiency level so that slow readers can shift from analytical identification to automatic word recognition. Fluent reading