

Investigating the reading fluency, interest in, and attitudes towards reading of first-year Entrepreneurship students at Cape Peninsula University of Technology

1st Southern African Conference on the First-Year Experience

University of Stellenbosch

08-10 September 2008

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Introduction

- High unemployment rate in South Africa
- Government cannot create enough jobs
- Entrepreneurship encouraged
- Financial Management, Small Business Management, and Marketing require extensive reading and critical thinking
- Necessity of Academic literacy development programme
- Content-language integration

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Introduction (continued)

Students' background

- Public schooling
- Mostly Xhosa-speaking
- Working class parents - secondary school education

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Contextualising the study (continued)

- Pretorius (2000): investigated reading ability (inferencing skills) and academic performance among undergraduate Unisa students. Found distressingly low reading levels and slow reading speeds.
- Pretorius (2003): examined inferencing skills of first-year psychology students and concluded that if they have difficulty making inferences they will have difficulty understanding texts.

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Contextualising the study (continued)

- Niven (2005): investigated reading practices of 14 'underprepared' students from poor, socio-economic backgrounds, township school education, with English as additional language at Rhodes. Found a mismatch between lecturers' 'Expressive' frame and students' 'Cognitivist' frame.

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Contextualising the study (continued)

- Pretorius & Bohlmann (2003): used reading skills to determine whether students would become more adept at 'reading to learn'. Concluded that it is dereliction of duty not to do anything to help students with low reading levels.

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Contextualising the study (continued)

- Zulu (2005): investigated effect of matriculation performance on students' reading ability. Found that students with upper grades have better chance of success than those with middle or lower grades.

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Study objectives

1. Ascertain students' fluency (automaticity or decoding accuracy and prosody).
2. Determine students' reading comprehension levels.
3. Establish students' interest in, and attitudes towards reading.

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Theories underpinning study

Fluency theories

1. Automaticity Theory (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974)
- Fluency plays a critical role in efficient and successful reading.
 - Premised on notion that attentional resource capacity is limited.

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Automaticity theory

- Posits that part of reading process should be executed with a slight amount of attention to achieve successful reading comprehension.
- Focuses on lower-level decoding processes, BUT there is still higher order process of understanding sentences, paragraphs and whole texts.

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Theories underpinning study (continued)

2. Verbal Efficiency Theory (Perfetti, 1985, 1988)
- High-level reading processes can be made automatic through practice.
 - Hierarchy between letter identification and word recognition.
 - The quicker a reader and more accurate word identification is, the more attentional resources will be available for better information transmission from lower- to higher level processes.

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Beliefs about reading motivation

Per Clark & Rumbold (2006)

- Personal goals, intrinsic & extrinsic motivation, and belief in one's capabilities are vital.
- "Motivation to read and reading ability are synergistic, mutually reinforcing phenomena" (attributed to Baumann & Duffy, 1997:6).

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Beliefs about reading motivation (continued)

- Lack of motivation results in the “Matthew Effect”: Better readers tend to read more because they are motivated to read, which leads to improved vocabulary and better skills. On the contrary, poor readers tend to read less because they are not motivated to read, leading to weak vocabulary and poor skills.

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Beliefs about reading motivation (continued)

- There are two aspects to reading motivation:
- Reading attitude: one’s feelings and beliefs about reading.
- Reading interest: one’s preference for genres, topics, tasks or contexts.

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Beliefs about reading motivation (continued)

Intrinsic motivation to read is determined by:

- Importance: value attached to reading;
- Curiosity: desire to learn something of interest;
- Involvement: enjoyment of certain types of texts;
- Challenge: satisfaction gained from assimilating complex ideas in text.

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Beliefs about reading motivation (continued)

Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is based on:

- Recognition: pleasure for success.
- Grades: favourable evaluation.
- Competition: desire to outperform others.

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Method

Instruments to measure dependent variables:

- Pre- & post-tests based on Dale-Chall Readability Index for fluency/reading rate (decoding accuracy & prosody).
- Pre- & post- cloze tests for reading comprehension.

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Method

Independent variable: Intervention

Literature circles and excursions to Vulindlela Reading Club used as intervention strategies to influence the dependent variables.

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Literature circles

Seven 90 minute sessions (Ongoing)

- Metacognitive strategies: connecting, predicting, questioning, summarising & visualising.
- Comprehension & inferencing skills developed.

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Analysis

- Quantitative data analysed statistically (t-test: compared average pre- and post-test scores).
- Qualitative data: inductive coding method to capture recurring patterns, trends, relationships, hierarchies and themes/categories.

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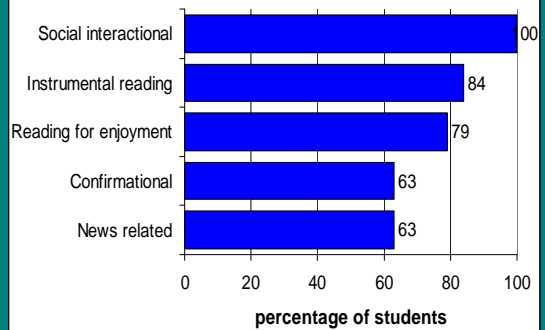
Findings

1. Reading interest & engagement survey

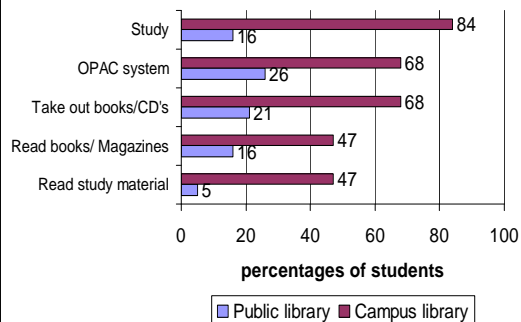
- Purpose for reading
- Library use
- Computer usage

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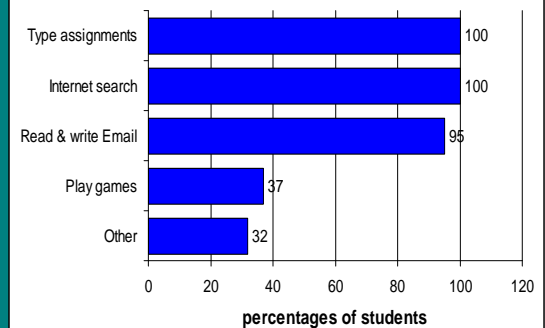
Purpose for reading



Reasons for visiting the library



Computer usage



Findings (continued)

2. Pre- and post- cloze tests

- Improvement: 5 participants.
- Regression: 8 participants.
- Static: 6 participants.

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Findings (continued)

- 3. Reading rate and accuracy (or fluency) and prosody
 - Fluency is determined by decoding skills and prosody
 - The components of prosody are: expression & volume, phrasing and smoothness (Rasinski, 2008:120).
 - The target norm for fluency is 140-160 words correct per minute (Pretorius, 2000:43). Information below relates to fluency:

Exceed target: 1 participant.

On target: 3 participants.

Below target: 15 participants.

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Findings continued

- Prosody: no significant difference.

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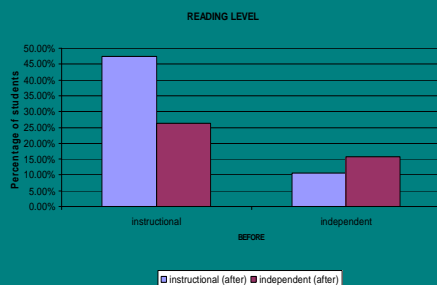
Reading levels

There are three levels of reading accuracy (Rasinski, 2004:6):

- Independent: 97-100%
- Instructional: 90-96%
- Frustration: <90%

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Reading level



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Interpretation

- 1st burgundy bar (26 % of the participants) started out instructional and ended independent.
- 2nd burgundy bar (15%) were independent, but became instructional.
- 26% + 15% = 41% (that is why success rate on next slide is given as 41%).

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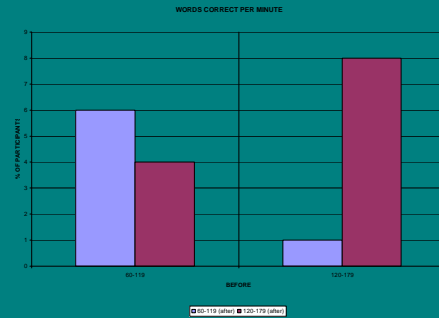
Reading level

Success rate: 41%:

- Progressed from Instructional to independent: 4 participants.
- Regressed from independent to instructional: 3 participants.
- Static: 12 participants.

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Decoding skills



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Interpretation

- 1st blue and burgundy bars started out weak.
- 2nd blue and burgundy started out well (6 participants).
- Burgundy ended well and blue ended weak.
- Blue stayed in same category (60-119 WCPM).

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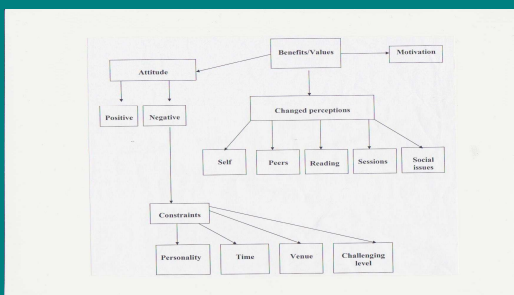
Decoding skills

Overall, no significant difference, but a definite improvement for certain individuals occurred based on those who started out poorly (10 participants) 9 were okay, therefore, no need to improve:

- **Improvement:** 4 participants (40%).
- **Regression:** 1 participant.
- **Static:** 6 participants.

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Mapping: diagram



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Mapping (participants' unedited comments)

Negative attitude

- "I felt that the work we're doing is quite useless and unnecessary."

Motivation

- "There is one thing I told myself if I keep reading like almost every day I will be perfect."

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Mapping (continued)

Own abilities

- “That’s whereby I have realised that I have the ability to talk in front of people and share my ideas with them. It really motivates me in a way because I am a shy person...”
- “...but I think if I keep trying all the time I’ll be fine.”

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Mapping (continued)

Reading club

- ‘I think this kind of club is something every community should have.’
- It is our responsibility to contribute to our kids’ future in reading.’
- I enjoy reading to other people especially kids because they pay attention and they would want you to explain when you done reading.’

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Mapping (continued)

Peers

- “When we did text to self, text to world and how we connected to the text we read in class I found it very interesting because I thought I was the only person who would read an article from a magazine and make connections to what I had learnt and what other people would say about the article and having my opinion.”

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Mapping (continued)

Reading

- “The sessions made me feel like reading other books.”
- “I used to hate reading newspapers but now I read them a lot because I discovered that they also talk about my favourite celebrities and they inform us about what is happening around us.”

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Mapping (continued)

Sessions

- “Didn’t have any connections to the text, now I have connections”.
- “I felt I was waking up too early for a class on Thursday where we do useless and unimportant work. My view on what we’ve done so far...I could say it was quite helpful and good for team-building.”

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Mapping (continued)

Social issues

- “Waiting something no longer available ...it is the waste of time I better move out to get something new.”
- “In that book [*Who Moved My cheese?*] I experienced that we mustn’t loose hope or we mustn’t give up so easily...it gives me knowledge about no matter how the world may seem or how tough life can be sometimes we must have faith or believe that there is a happy ending.”

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Bounded conclusions

- Participants' negative attitude towards information texts signals the need for explicit instruction in annotating these kinds of texts.
- The quantitative findings for the cloze post-test signal participants' lack of intrinsic motivation.
- Although significant, the overall improvement in participants' decoding accuracy is insufficient if it does not facilitate reading comprehension.

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Bounded conclusions (continued)

- Participants' changed perceptions about their peers indicate that they regard them as valuable resources.
- Lecturers should capitalise on participants' interest in technology by presenting relevant material using a web-based platform.

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Thank you!

Any questions?

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