Assessment of 5th Graders' Reading Fluency in Urdu

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Abstract

Fluency is an ability that is developed through deliberate effort. This ability enables a person to read a text speedily, accurately and with expressions (Rasinski, 2006).If someone is unable to read the text fluently, he/she will not be able to fully comprehend the text. It plays a pivotal role in forming the bridge to comprehension. A fluent reader pays particular attention to content in the reading, rather than focusing on the decoding of each individual word. As student read the text fluently, they are able to interact with text on a higher level. However, if children are not able to read the text fluently, their overall success with reading is hindered. Reading Fluency was consisted of three factors. These factors were Speed, Accuracy and Prosody. The purpose of the study was to measure 5th graders reading fluency in Urdu. Sample size of the study was 100 students (50 male students and 50 female students) from 5th grade of public schools situated in municipal corporation Kunjah. Urdu Reading Assessment Scale (URAS) was developed to assess 5th graders' reading fluency. An assessment scale was comprised of three sections. These were accuracy, speed, and prosody. Students' reading fluency was measured by listening the reading stories from students on assessment scale. Percentage was calculated to find out the 5th graders reading speed, accuracy, prosody. (Add results and recommendations)

Keywords: reading fluency, speed, accuracy, prosody.

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Introduction

Reading is a skill that involves the ability to decode words and simultaneously understand the meaning of words. Children are not born with the ability to read. They learn reading skills that enable them to read with understanding. Teachers teach reading to develop the skills among the students needed to become good readers. Learning to read is a developmental process and students' progress from one stage to another as they learn to interact with the letters, words and ideas in texts. Although the process of learning to read is fast for some children and slower for others but all children can learn to read if taught the proper skills in an active and nurturing environment with relevant pedagogy. Students need to be able to read fluently to remember and comprehend what they read.

Fluency is an ability that is developed through deliberate effort. This ability enables a person to read a text speedily, accurately and with expressions (Rasinski, 2006). It has irrefutable significance in text comprehension. If someone is unable to read the text fluently, he/ she will not be able to fully comprehend the text. It plays a pivotal role in forming the bridge to comprehension. A fluent reader pays particular attention to content in the reading, rather than focusing on the decoding of each individual word. As student read the text fluently, they are able to interact with text on a higher level. However, if children are not able to read the text fluently, their overall success with reading is hindered. Non-fluent readers not only grapple with words but also with decoding and allow the time to elapse in an unproductive manner. Such readers are destined to unclear understanding of text. Therefore, to become a fluent reader decoding skills are necessary for a student.

The actual meaning of fluency is misunderstood which affects both the learning and teaching of reading. Reading fluency has developed to be known as reading speed by many students and teachers, which is not the actual purpose of fluency (Meeter&Murre, 2004). The desired goal of reading is not to display the reading speed but to grasp the meaning of text. To develop reading fluency, it is absolutely necessary for a student to get instructions through different teaching strategies. Constant practice can improve the reading fluency. Reading fluency includes three main components i.e. Speed accuracy, and prosody. Speed rate means a person reading rate, accuracy refers to one's ability to read the words inaccurately and third one is prosody which referred to as read the text with feeling, intonation and pause, while reading (Hudson, Lane & Pullen, 2005). Reading fluency provides a bridge between word recognition and text comprehension.

At present students are struggling with reading in Pakistani schools. Annual Status of Education Report (2013) indicates that, 63% of CLASS 3 and 54% of CLASS 5 students cannot read an Urdu sentence at grade level in public schools.

Statement of the Problem

Fluency enables people to understand and remember what they read. Reading becomes easy for fluent readers and they obtain information more quickly. Reading fluency is one of the characteristics of good readers, and a lack of fluency is a common characteristic of poor readers. Fluency is an important reading skill that is crucial in the understanding of text. If children are not fluent in their reading, they will not be able to understand the text. Reading fluency is an important skill to master as it creates a bridge to reading comprehension. Present study was focused to find out the 5th graders' reading fluency in Urdu.

Objective of the Study

Following was the objective of the study at hand.

1. To assess 5th graders' reading fluency (speed, accuracy, prosody) in Urdu.

Research Questions

Following were research questions of the study at hand.

1. What is the percentage of reading speed of the 5th grade students for intervention, instructional, independent, and advanced level?
2. What is the percentage of reading accuracy of the 5th grade students for independent, instructional and frustration level?
3. What is the percentage of reading prosody of the 5th grade students for poor prosody, good prosody and excellent prosody?

Research Instrument

The purpose of this study was to assess reading fluency of 5th grade students. The quantitative approach was used for this research. Urdu Reading Assessment Scale (URAS) was developed by the researcher herself to assess the 5th graders' reading fluency. Detail description of the scale is given as under:-

Urdu Reading Assessment Scale

Urdu Reading assessment scale (URAS) was developed by the researcher herself with the help of literature. It was developed to assess 5th graders' reading. This scale was consisted of two

sections. Two Urdu stories were included in this scale. An assessment scale was comprised of three sections. These were related with assessing speed, accuracy and prosody. Complete procedure of assessing speed, accuracy and prosody has been illustrated below.

Assessment of Reading Speed

Speed is the first component of reading fluency. It is the count of number of correct words read by the readers in one minute. It is determined by using following formula.

Speed = (total words in a story – Errors) ÷Time taken to read the story.

Speed has been categorized into four levels i.e. Intervention, Instructional, Independent, and Advanced level. These levels are determined using following criteria.

Table 1: Level of Performance Reading Speed

Sr. #	Level	Speed	Description of Level
1.	Intervention level	Less than 109 (WCPM)	Relatively easy for the student to read
2.	Instructional level	WCPM between 110 and 129	challenging but manageable for the reader
3.	Independent level	WCPM between 130 and 145	Difficult text for the student to read
4.	Advanced level	WCPM 146+	read without error and with smoothness

It is the count of words read by the reader in one minute. There were four level of reading Speed. These were Intervention level of speed (0-109 or less), Instructional level (110-129), Independent level (130-145), Advanced level (146+). On the basis of speed, the reader was categorized into one of the above mentioned categories i.e. Intervention, Instructional, Independent, and Advanced level.

Assessment of Reading Accuracy

Accuracy is the second component of reading fluency. It is an ability to read the text correctly along with correct pronunciation. Accuracy is measured in percentage. It is determined using following formula.

Accuracy = (speed ÷ total words) x 100.

There are three levels of accuracy viz., Independent, Instructional and Frustration. These are determined using following criteria.

Table 2: Level Performance Reading Accuracy

Sr. #	Level	%age
1.	Independent level	95-100%
2.	Instructional level	90-94%
3.	Frustrational level	below 89%

On the basis of percentage of accuracy, the reader was categorized into one of the above mentioned categories i.e. Independent, Instructional or Frustrational.

The prosody Rating Scale

The prosody is the third component of reading fluency (Zutell & Rasinski's ,1991). The prosody rating scale included the reader's volume/ expression, phrasing, smoothness and pace in their voices (Rasinski, 2003).

 Prosody is an ability of the reader to read the text with proper expression, phrasing, smoothness and pace. There are three levels of prosody i.e. Poor prosody, good prosody and excellent prosody.

Table 3: Level of Performance Reading Prosody

Sr. #	Level	Score
1.	Poor prosody	Between 4 and 8
2.	Good prosody	Between 8 and 12
3.	Excellent prosody	Between 12 and 16

Poor prosody (4-8). Good prosody (8-12).Excellent prosody (12 – 16). Scoring range of this scale was from 4 to 16 scores. Students' scores range 4-8 indicated poor prosody. Students' scores range 8-112 indicated good prosody. Students' scores range among 12 - 16 indicated excellent prosody. On the basis of prosody score, the reader was categorized into one of the above mentioned categories i.e. poor prosody, good prosody or excellent prosody.

Data analysis

Table 4: Percentage and Frequency of the 5th Graders' Reading Speed

Level of Reading Speed	Frequency	Percent
Intervention	56	56
Instructional	15	15

Independent	2	2
Advanced	27	27
Total	100	100

Table 4 shows that out of 100 students, (56%) of 5th graders' reading speed were at intervention level. It shows that mostly students cannot read the text fluently and without teacher assistance. They were non fluent readers. Only 2% of 5th graders' read the text independently, 27% students were at advanced level they read the text with good speed. Figure 1
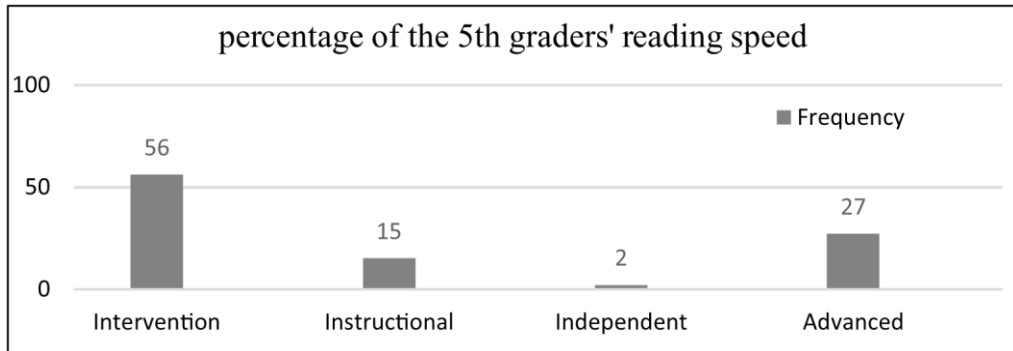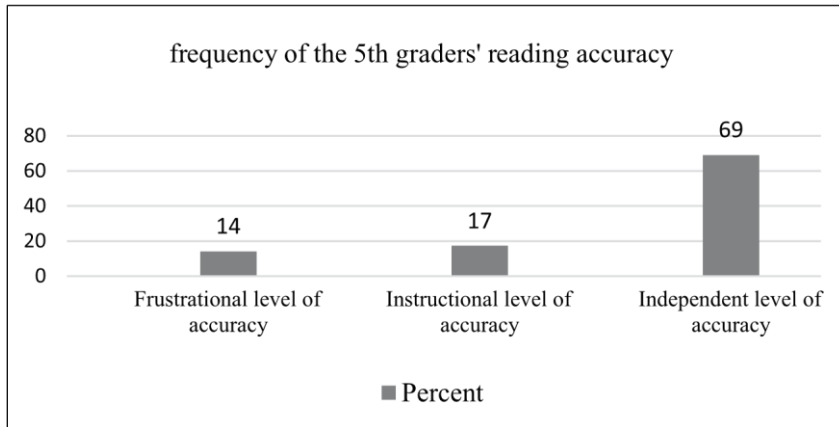

Similarly graphical representation shows highest number of students fall in intervention category whereas very few students are at independent level.

Table 5: Percentage and Frequency of 5th Graders' Reading Accuracy

Level of Accuracy	Frequency	Percent
Frustrational level of accuracy	14	14
Instructional level of accuracy	17	17
Independent level of accuracy	69	69
Total	100	

Table 5 revealed that out of total 100 students (69%) of 5th graders' accuracy level was of independent level. They can read accurately. While 17% students need instructions for the improvement in reading, 14% students were of frustrational level of accuracy. They need more work hard for accurately read the text. Figure 2
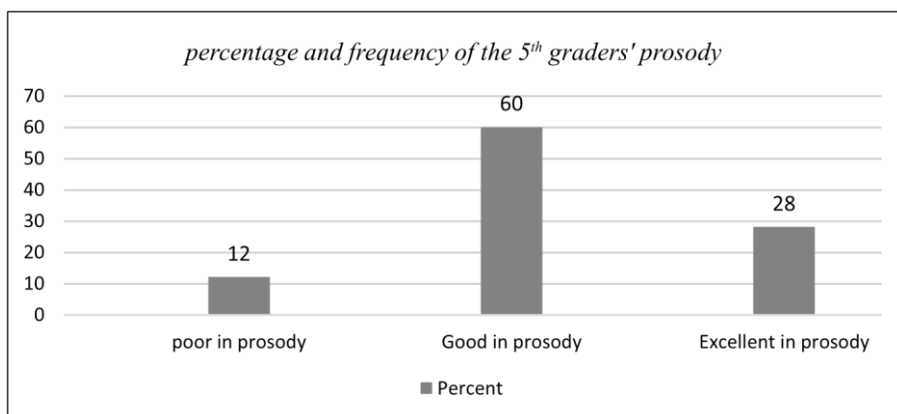
frequency of the 5th graders' reading accuracy

Similarly graphical representation shows highest number of students fall at independent level of accuracy whereas few students are at Frustrational level of accuracy.

Table 6: Percentage and frequency of 5th Graders' Reading Prosody

Level of Reading Prosody	Frequency	Percent
Poor in prosody	12	12
Good in prosody	60	60
Excellent in prosody	28	28
Total	100	

Table 6 shows that out of total 100 students (12%) of 5th graders prosody level was poor, 60% of 5th graders' prosody level was good, 28% of 5th graders' prosody level was excellent. This result reveals that most of the students were good in prosody. Figure 3

percentage and frequency of the 5th graders' prosody

Similarly graphical representation shows highest number of students fall excellent level of prosody whereas few students are at poor level of prosody.

Discussion

The major purpose of this research was to find out 5th graders' reading fluency. Analysis and interpretation of the study lead us towards following discussion.

The 5th graders reading speed indicated that the most of students were at intervention level and few students' reading speed was at advanced level. Percentage of 5th graders' male students was found more as compare to female students among the 5th graders who were at intervention level. The finding of study was also supported by the results of ASER report (2013) 54% of grade 5 public school students cannot read an Urdu sentence fluently.

The 5th graders' female students were found better as compare to male students in independent level of accuracy. The most of the 5th graders were at good progress level of prosody. The 5th graders' female students were found better as compared to male students in prosody.

Conclusion

In the light of statistical analysis and the findings of the study, the following Conclusions were drawn.

Most of the 5th graders' reading speed was found at intervention level so most of the students cannot read the text with speed. Male students reading speed was found poor as compare to female students. The finding of study was also supported by the results of ASER report (2013) 54% of grade 5 public school students cannot read an Urdu sentence fluently.

Most of the students were at independent level of reading accuracy so most of the 5th graders' read the text independently. The female 5th graders' score at independent level of accuracy was higher than the male score.

Prosody of 5th graders' was at good progress level. The score of female 5th graders was higher than the male students in prosody.

Recommendations

- Most of the 5th graders' reading speed was found at intervention level so most of the students cannot read the text with speed. Teachers should focus on 5th graders' reading speed. They may allocate more time for reading Urdu at early classes in the school.

- The regular assessment of reading fluency may be included as a significant part of instructions and teachers make sure it within the classrooms through assigning reading test as homework.

- Training sessions for teachers to teach reading may be organized.

- Similar researches may be conducted for different grade levels across different districts to find the reading fluency.

- Different research studies may be conducted on different subjects to assess reading fluency of the students.

- A study may be conducted to find out the impact of time restriction on reading fluency.

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