**Flaws In Reading**

Presented here are a few English bloopers sent in by our readers -- they are good lesson in the English language!

Let's start off with a few common blunders that reader Sunita R Kamath comes across frequently:

**1**. ~ "It was a blunder mistake."

Correction, people! The word 'blunder' means mistake, so you could say:

~ "It was a blunder," or   
~ "It was a big mistake."

**2**. ~ "It would have been more better."

The word 'better' itself implies that the option in question is superior -- the use of the word 'more' in the sentence is, therefore both inappropriate and unnecessary. Thus the correct sentence would go as follows:

~ "It would have been better."

**3**. ~ "Why don't he get married?"

The term 'don't' applies when discussing a plural subject. For instance, "Why don't they get married?" The right way to phrase that sentence would be:

~ "Why doesn't he get married?"

**4**. ~ "I want two Xeroxes of this card."

The term 'Xerox' is used in North American English as a verb. Actually, 'Xerox' is the name of a company that supplies photocopiers! The correct thing to say, therefore, would be:

~ "I want two photocopies of this card."

**5**. ~ "Your hairs are looking silky today."

This is one of the most common Indian bloopers! The plural of 'hair' is 'hair'! Thus:

~ "Your hair is looking silky today."

Get Ahead reader Nasreen Haque says, "We must realise that English is not the native language of Indians. Having said that, we should tell ourselves, 'Yeah, I could go wrong and I could make innumerable mistakes, but of course there is always room for improvement.'"

Here are a few bloopers Nasreen has across often:

**1**. ~ Loose vs lose

Many people make this mistake. They inevitably interchange the words 'loose' and 'lose' while writing. 'Lose' means to 'suffer a loss or defeat'. Thus, you would write:

~ 'I don't want to lose you," and not ' don't want to loose you.'

'Loose', on the other hand, means 'not firm' or 'not fitting.' In this context, you would write,

~ "My shirt is loose," not "My shirt is lose."

**2**. ~ "One of my friend lives in Kolkata."

This is one of the most common Indian English bloopers ever! The correct way of putting that is:

"One of my friends lives in Kolkata."

Why? Because the sentence implies that you have many friends who live in Kolkata, but you are referring to only one of these friends.

**3**. ~ Tension-inducing tenses.

People often use the wrong tense in their sentences. For instance, someone might say:

~ "I didn't cried when I saw the movie."

Unfortunately, the word 'didn't' is never followed by a past tense verb, in this case 'cried'. The correct way of putting it would be:

~ "I didn't cry when I saw the movie."

**We** [**invited readers**](http://in.rediff.com/getahead/2007/apr/19invite.htm) **to share common English bloopers with us. This is the first in a series of articles featuring your response.**

<Error Finding , process>  
For simplicity's sake I've broken those layers down to **four** separate processes.   
  
  
**First**, to properly comprehend a written passage a child must be able to decode the words on the page.   
  
  
**Second**, the child needs to hold the information in working memory long enough for the information to be more extensively processed.   
  
  
**Third**, the child must have adequate vocabulary, grammar and syntactical skills to organize and interpret the written message efficiently.   
  
  
**Fourth**, the child needs to access higher order thinking skills to process the written message and go beyond the surface layer of the text and **infer** possible meaning.   
  
  
If a breakdown occurs in one or more of these steps then the child *may* fail to grasp the meaning of the text, which often results in reading comprehension problems and failure.

**Working Memory**

Working memory can be thought of as a **mental workspace** where new information is held briefly before being transferred to higher level language and executive functions. Reading comprehension tasks can place enormous strain on a child's working memory capacity, particularly if the child has poor language skills. For more information about working memory please follow this [link.](http://speechlanguage-resources.com/working-memory-guide.html)

**Language**

Deficits in language ability, particularly receptive language, can significantly compound students' reading comprehension problems. These are the students who on testing don't present with language disorder but have *low* abilities in key language areas, such as [grammar,](http://speechlanguage-resources.com/student-resources-grammar.html) [syntax](http://www.speechlanguage-resources.com/syntax.html) and, perhaps most importantly, [vocabulary](http://speechlanguage-resources.com/vocabulary.html) knowledge.   
  
<Classic Example>  
To explore *one* example, problems with understanding syntactical rules can result in students not understanding the difference between [simple,](http://speechlanguage-resources.com/simple-sentences.html) [compound](http://speechlanguage-resources.com/compound-sentences.html) and [complex](http://speechlanguage-resources.com/complex-sentences.html) sentences, which can result in confusion in understanding the author's intended meaning. This is certainly the case in non fiction text where authors, who write history and science texts, use complex and compound-complex sentences routinely to communicate more detailed and elaborate ideas.   
  
  
But complex sentence use is not restricted to non-fiction text. Let's look at the following passage from **Herbert & Harry** by popular children's author, Pamela Allen. The story, Herbert & Harry is a grade 2-3 level text.   
  
  
'Át last Herbert lay down to sleep. But even though it was very dark, and he was very tired, he could not sleep.'   
  
  
The second sentence contains a compound-complex structure, which in my experience, some students find difficult to comprehend when they read it.   
  
  
When asked questions about this passage, some students fail to recognize that it's *'very dark'* or that *'Herbert is tired.'* Certainly, the context of the story helps with comprehension in that we know Herbert is tired, and on the run from his brother. But, when read in isolation, and without context the students' understanding of this particular sentence tends to unravel.   
  
  
**Why does this occur?**   
  
  
I believe, in this instance, that reading comprehension failure is caused by the *complexity* of the passage and its intricate construction. The clause *'he could not sleep,'*is preceded by the **subordinate clause**, *'But even though it was very dark,'* the **coordinating conjunction** *'and,*' and the main clause, *'he was very tired.'*   
  
  
As we can see, the construction of this particular sentence could quickly overload a student's working memory capacity and syntactical understanding. Even if the student had only a mild deficit in working memory and reasonable understanding of syntax.   
  
  
Pamela Allen, and other authors who write for this age group, construct their passages with, at times, quite complex passages. To my mind, reading comprehension problems often occur because of students' lack of experience and knowledge with complex sentences.   
  
  
This is an area that perhaps requires extra research and more targeted intervention.

**Inferencing**

Research indicates that children with reading comprehension problems have poor inference skills. To infer what's happening in a story is a vital cognitive skill. It enables the reader to go beyond surface meaning of a text and to go deep and discover the author's concealed meaning.   
  
  
Of course, in children's fiction not everything on the page is concrete and literal. An important part of reading and comprehending fiction is to **infer** from what the author *doesn't* say, but *hints* at.   
  
  
Children with poor comprehension skills don't **'read between the lines'** well. Poor inferencing skills could result from poor background knowledge, weak vocabulary and semantic word knowledge, and incomplete knowledge of [story grammar](http://www.speechlanguage-resources.com/children-s-narrative.html) and prediction.

The ability to gain meaning from sentences and paragraphs involves a complex blend of many skills and abilities. To give your son the right kind of reading support, it will help if you know exactly where the breakdown in his [reading comprehension](https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/child-learning-disabilities/dyslexia/5-essential-skills-needed-for-reading-comprehension) is occurring.

## Decoding and Word-Recognition Issues

[Decoding](javascript:void(0);) is the term for sounding out letters and words. Being able to match letters to their sounds is an essential step in learning how to read. In fact, decoding is the foundation on which all other reading instruction builds.

If your son can’t decode effectively, he’ll struggle to understand what he reads. Specific types of reading instruction can help him with this. [Orton–Gillingham](https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/child-learning-disabilities/dyslexia/12-terms-to-know-if-your-child-struggles-with-reading) and other multisensory approaches are the gold standard for teaching struggling readers how to connect letters with sounds.

## Reading Fluency

Decoding is very important. But [sight words](https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/child-learning-disabilities/reading-issues/the-difference-between-decodable-words-and-sight-words) are important too. The more words your son can recognize at a glance (without having to sound them out), the faster he’ll be able to read.

Why does reading fluency matter? If your son has to sound out each word, it will take him longer to get through each sentence. This makes it harder to remember all the words in the sentence and understand how they fit together.

Seeing the same word several times is one way to help your son shift from sounding out the word to recognizing it by sight. That’s why reading the same passage multiple times can [help him build fluency](https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/partnering-with-childs-school/instructional-strategies/7-ways-to-improve-reading-fluency).

## Reading Level

Even if your son has accurate word reading, he may be reading books that are too far above his current reading level. Teachers occasionally give reading assessments to help them understand how well a student is able to read and comprehend text. These assessments also give teachers important information about where a student needs help.

Talk to your son’s teacher about his reading level. You can ask his teacher to recommend books at his current reading level. You can also [find books on your own](https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/learning-at-home/encouraging-reading-writing/4-steps-to-choosing-books-at-your-childs-reading-level).

## Focus and Attention Issues

Attention issues are another reason why your child might have trouble understanding what he reads. Good [reading comprehension](javascript:void(0);) depends on being able to ignore distractions.

If your son struggles with this, you may want to read about [ADHD](https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/child-learning-disabilities/add-adhd/understanding-adhd) and [executive functioning issues](https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/child-learning-disabilities/executive-functioning-issues/understanding-executive-functioning-issues). These issues can affect his ability to hold key information in his [working memory](https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/child-learning-disabilities/executive-functioning-issues/5-ways-kids-use-working-memory-to-learn). [Taking notes](https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/learning-at-home/homework-study-skills/5-simple-strategies-for-note-taking), highlighting important information and breaking down reading assignments into manageable chunks are just some of the ways that can help to lessen the load.

**<Must Take>**

## Comprehension Skills and Strategies

I often tell my students that “reading is thinking.” This phrase helps my students understand that good readers are active readers. It gives them permission to wonder things like Why is that character feeling this way? What will he do next?

You can teach your son to become a more active reader. Encourage him to ask questions and use tools like [graphic organizers](https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/learning-at-home/encouraging-reading-writing/download-graphic-organizers-to-help-grade-schoolers-with-writing) to make connections between what he’s reading and what he’s thinking.

Remind him that active readers also monitor how well they understand what they’re reading and re-read confusing portions of the text. Active readers look for context clues around a sentence or phrase. For example, pictures or the words in nearby sentences can help a reader understand the meaning of the words. Help your son become familiar with these strategies by modeling them as you read aloud.

Reading Comprehension questions are more familiar to most people than the other verbal questions on the GMAT. Part of it is that most people have encountered them before on the SAT or ACT, and part of it is that the task of reading a passage and answering questions about it is more familiar than the tasks of fixing the grammar of sentences and analyzing the logic of arguments. But there are still plenty of ways to go wrong in Reading Comprehension. The following are five common mistakes people make that prevent them from maximizing their performance on Reading Comprehension.

## 1) Reading the passage in too much detail the first time

Clearly, you need to know something about the passage before you tackle the questions. You don’t need to know everything, though. One of the biggest mistakes people make with Reading Comprehension is reading the passage slowly and in great detail the first time through. These passages are dense with information and most of it is not important, because the test will only ask 3 or 4 questions about each passage. Trying to absorb everything is a waste of time. You get no points for reading; you only get points for answering questions correctly. Therefore, the first time through the passage you want to read quickly, paying attention to the following two questions: 1) What is the general idea (topic, purpose, author’s tone)? 2) What is the structure of the passage (organization, location of details)?

## 2) Not clarifying the question

After reading the question you’re ready to go back and find the answer, right? Well, hold on. Are you certain you know what you’re looking for? Be sure to take a moment to clarify what the question is asking. What is the actual task? For example, some questions more or less ask you to retrieve information from the passage. “According to the passage, which of the following is one of the mating rituals of the moth?” That’s a straightforward question that requires you to find out what the passage said. But what about, “The author mentions the mating rituals of the moth in order to”? That’s a little different. That’s a question that isn’t interested in what was said, but rather why it was said. It’s a question about purpose and intention, and you have to think about the context of the passage to answer it. Or how about, “Which of the following can be inferred about the mating rituals of the moth?” Here we’re looking for something that wasn’t explicitly stated, but must still be true based on the text of the passage. In order to answer questions successfully, you need to know what information you’re reading for in the first place, which means you need to know exactly what the question is asking.

## 3) Failing to go back to the text to prove your answer

One consequence of spending too much time initially reading the passage (see point 1) is that you’re tempted to answer questions from memory rather than go back to the passage and read closely to find the necessary information. Reading Comprehension is like an open-book test. Everything you need is there in the passage — it’s just a matter of finding it. One of the main reasons you don’t need to read the whole passage carefully the first time is that you should be going back to the passage later anyway to read the important sections when it’s time to answer specific questions. Reading Comprehension answer choices can turn on tiny details in the passage, and it’s unlikely you’ll know them by heart. Train yourself to find the text in the passage that proves the answer choice you pick.

## 4) Turning to the answer choices too soon

You’ve read the paragraph that the question asked about. Time to hit the answer choices, right? Not so fast. There’s a big difference between reading and understanding. Reading is a mechanical skill, but comprehension is not. Everyone has experienced this at some time. You’re reading something, reading along, reading along, and it suddenly occurs to you that you have no idea what you’re reading anymore. Your eyes are still processing the words but the part of your brain that actually understands the words checked out a few paragraphs back. The point is that after you read the relevant text from the passage, you need to give yourself a moment to process that information before you turn to the answer choices. Think about what you’ve just read and what it means, especially in light of the question you’re trying to answer. The clearer of an idea you have about what you’re looking for, the easier it will be to work with the answer choices.

## 5) Looking only for good stuff in the answer choices

Most people examine answer choices with one question in mind: Is there anything here that I like? If there’s something about an answer choice that you like, it stays. If you don’t like anything about it, it goes. Ideally, you find one that you like the best and pick it. There’s nothing inherently wrong with that, and sometimes it’s all you need. But too often it’s not enough, particularly when you like more than one answer choice or you don’t like any of them. What too many people never develop is the ability to spin their perspective 180 degrees and look for flaws in answer choices. You need to think like a prosecutor. “What is the strongest case I can make against this answer choice?” The human brain is wired in many ways to focus on one thing at a time. If I’m looking for reasons to choose an answer, it’s harder for me to see reasons to eliminate it. There are parts of answer choices that you literally will not even notice unless you are specifically looking for flaws. Ultimately, this is just one example of a larger principle that has resonance across the whole GMAT — it’s very hard to find certain things unless you are specifically looking for them.

Below are several error-correction techniques and one procedure for vocabulary drill-and-practice that teachers, tutors, or parents can use with developing readers.

## Word Supply:

Before the student begins to read, tell the student, "If you come to a word that you do not know, I will help you with it. I will tell you the correct word while you listen and point to the word in the book. After that, I want you to repeat the word and continue reading. Try your best not to make mistakes." When the student commits a reading error (e.g., substitution, omission, 5-second hesitation), immediately pronounce the correct word for the student, have the student repeat the word correctly, and then direct the student to continue reading. NOTE: To avoid too many reading interruptions, do not correct minor student errors (e.g., misreading or omitting the or a, dropping suffixes such as -s, -ed, or -ing)

Word supply is the simplest error-correction to use, so it can be ideal for student tutors or parents to use. On the other hand, the approach is less powerful than others described here for building student reading vocabulary (Singh, 1990).

## Sentence Repeat:

At the start of the reading session, say to the student, "If you come to a word that you do not know, I will help you with it. I will tell you the correct word while you listen and point to the word in the book. After that, I want you to repeat the word and then read the rest of the sentence. Than I want you to read the sentence again. Try your best not to make mistakes."

When the student commits a reading error (e.g., substitution, omission, 5-second hesitation), immediately pronounce the correct word for the student and have the student repeat the word correctly. Then direct the student to reread the entire sentence in which the error occurred. The student then continues reading the passage. (If the student repeats the original reading error when rereading the sentence, you should again pronounce the word correctly and have the student repeat the word. Then continue on.) NOTE: To avoid too many reading interruptions, do not correct minor student errors (e.g., misreading or omitting the or a, dropping suffixes such as -s, -ed, or -ing) (Singh, 1990).

## 'Word Attack' Hierarchy:

In this approach, the instructor prompts the student to apply a hierarchy of word-attack skills whenever the student misreads a word. The instructor gives these cues in descending order. If the student correctly identifies the word after any cue, the instructor stops delivering cues at that point and directs the student to continue reading. NOTE: To avoid too many reading interruptions, do not correct minor student errors (e.g., misreading or omitting the or a, dropping suffixes such as -s, -ed, or -ing).

Here are the 'Word Attack' Hierarchy instructor cues:

* 1. "Try another way." This cue is given directly after a reading error and alerts the student to the fact that she or she has misread the word.
* 2. "Finish the sentence and guess the word." The student is encouraged to make use of the sentence context to discover the correct word pronunciation.
* 3. "Break the word into parts and pronounce each one." The student is directed to sound out the segments of a word independently.
* 4. Using an index card, the tutor covers over parts of the word and each the student to sound out only the part of the word that is visible. This approach teachers the student a method for reducing the amount of visual information in each word.
* 5. "What sound does '\_\_\_' make?" As the tutor covers selected parts of the word with an index card, the student is directed to use phonics information to sound out the word.
* 6. "The word is \_\_\_." If the student cannot decode the word despite instructor support, the instructor supplies the word. The student is directed to repeat the word and to continue reading.

(Haring, et al., 1978).

## Error Word Drill:

The Error Word Drill is an effective way to build reading vocabulary. The procedure consists of 4 steps:

When the student misreads a word during a reading session, write down the error word and date in a separate "Error Word Log".

* 1. At the end of the reading session, write out all error words from the reading session onto index cards. (If the student has misread more than 20 different words during the session, use just the first 20 words from your error-word list. If the student has misread fewer than 20 words, consult your "Error Word Log" and select enough additional error words from past sessions to build the review list to 20 words.)
* 2. Review the index cards with the student. Whenever the student pronounces a word correctly, remove that card from the deck and set it aside. (A word is considered correct if it is read correctly within 5 seconds. Self-corrected words are counted as correct if they are made within the 5-second period. Words read correctly after the 5-second period expires are counted as incorrect.)
* 3. When the student misses a word, pronounce the word for the student and have the student repeat the word. Then say, "What word?" and direct the student to repeat the word once more. Place the card with the missed word at the bottom of the deck.
* 4. Error words in deck are presented until all have been read correctly. All word cards are then gathered together, reshuffled, and presented again to the student. The drill continues until either time runs out or the student has progressed through the deck without an error on two consecutive cards.

“Is reading an art or a science?”  To answer this, reading teachers and students, as well as adult non- or limited readers, may benefit from review of what I like to call “**The Super Seven**.”   These are the **seven skills, processes or talents** needed to be proficient and competent at both the art and science of reading:

1. decoding—sound-symbol association
2. vocabulary—definition and pronunciation of words
3. fluency/prosody—appropriate speed with accuracy and inflection
4. syntax—sentence structure, word and phrase associations
5. semantics—changes of word meanings in context
6. schematics—prior knowledge, culture and memories
7. pragmatics—intended meaning of the writer

Adults and children who struggle with the science of reading often do not get to the art of reading, so they do not experience the joy and wonder of all the knowledge and entertainment available through the printed page.

**Error Pattern Analysis** is one tool a reading tutor or volunteer can use to help a student with both the science and the art of reading.

**How does the tutor know if an adult student did not learn a skill, learned a skill incorrectly, or has a reading disability?**  By listening, marking and discussing error patterns from a brief 100-150 word passage, the tutor can make a difference in the confidence and reading skills of an adult learner from the first day!

A **simple system** to consistently record the most common errors while listening to a passage allows a volunteer to analyze reading error patterns to plan or choose lessons for correction or practice.  Adult students can also see progress by comparing the error patterns from the first reading to subsequent readings after tutoring and practice.

Tutors can also assess whether a passage is within a student’s **reading level**:  independent (can read alone with few errors); instructional (requires a tutor’s assistance, some errors); or frustration (cannot read, multiple errors).  Working within a student’s instructional level is the best scenario for improvement in every reading session.

**<Must take>**

**The 10 Most Common Errors:**

1. saying the wrong word
2. skipping a word/word part
3. skipping a line of text
4. adding a word/word part
5. repeating a word/phrase
6. sounding out a word
7. self-correcting
8. tell/ask for word
9. try-again
10. start over

The last four are considered errors for the purpose of helping the tutor to improve a reader’s proficiency and comprehension.

**Vocabulary and comprehension:** It's a truth universally acknowledged that students with larger vocabularies are also much better at reading. (Apologies to Jane Austin readers!)   
  
  
This is an important point. Understanding a written passage is so much more than *just* reading the words; understanding, or comprehension, is directly linked to a child's [vocabulary knowledge.](http://speechlanguage-resources.com/vocabulary.html)   
  
  
It has been argued that reading comprehension relies heavily on vocabulary knowledge and also metalinguistic awareness. This is because when a child learns a new word (adding the word to his vocabulary) he makes use of his [metalinguistic awareness skills.](http://speechlanguage-resources.com/metalinguistics.html)   
  
  
**Let me explain.**   
  
  
Metalinguistic awareness has been defined as *'the ability to objectify language and dissect it as an arbitrary linguistic code independent of meaning.'*Roth, F.P., Speece, D.L., & Cooper, D.H. (2002)   
  
  
Ok, let's look at that definition in some detail, and work out what it actually means. The construction of the sentence is formal English, and the language chosen is quite complex. So it will take some work to break down its parts and comprehend its meaning.   
  
  
To start with, *'the ability to objectify language,'* refers to being able to examine language, or the way we use spoken and written language. The term *'objectify'* could also mean to use conscious thought to think about the structure of language. To *'dissect'* refers to the ability to examine the parts of language. *'Arbitrary linguistic code,'* probably refers to the ability to inquire and investigate the unlimited ways that language can be constructed to communicate an idea, or ideas.

**Vocabulary and Comprehension cont...**

Simply by analyzing the construction of the above definition we are actually using our metalinguistic awareness skills. If we were to read the above definition at a shallow level only, we could scarce understand its meaning; it's just too complex.   
  
  
**What do I mean?**   
  
  
Well, firstly, the language is unfamiliar; its construction is highly technical and peppered with words such as *'arbitrary,' 'objectify'* and *'dissect.'*   
  
  
These are not common words, unless you're a research psychologist and used to reading and writing similarly technical words.   
  
  
I had to consult a dictionary to find the the exact meaning of the words, *'dissect,' 'objectify'* and *'arbitrary.'* I have come across the words before, but must confess, the use of those words in the context of metalinguistic awareness puzzled me.   
  
  
By consulting a dictionary and examining the meaning of each word I was able to break the sentence down into fragments. I was thus able to deconstruct the passage and unlock its code. This is despite, at first glance, the language of the passage being largely indecipherable.

**Vocabulary and Comprehension cont...**

This is an example of metalinguistic awareness in use. It was my metalinguistic awareness skills that enabled me to examine the unfamiliar text (the metalinguistic awareness definition) and understand its meaning. Also, the words *'arbitrary'* and *'objectify'* and their meaning have been added to my mental dictionary, my lexicon. My vocabulary and comprehension knowledge have thus been slightly increased.   
  
  
This is a pretty good example of how we use metalinguistic awareness. As we can see from the above example, it has a vital role in aiding comprehension and building vocabulary knowledge.   
  
  
The good news is metalinguistic awareness is a skill that can be taught. The focus is on shaping the student's ability to consciously attend to the construction of unfamiliar language, and work out its meaning.   
  
  
Children who *have* this skill in spades are generally good readers, have large vocabularies, and have good comprehension skills. When they do come across a **new** word they have the skills to understand the meaning of the word. They either use the *context* of the passage, or they *consult* a dictionary - and know how to use one.   
  
  
Children who *don't* have good metalinguistic awareness skills, are consequently prevented from unlocking the code of difficult or new language. And so they will often skate right on past difficult text, oblivious to its meaning.   
  
  
They may decode the words reasonably well, but not attend to the passage's meaning - reading failure is often the result.   
  
  
Reading failure occurs, not because students can't *read* the words, but because they can't comprehend the *meaning* of the passage, and don't have the strategies to construct meaning from unfamiliar text.   
  
  
By not attending to the meaning of difficult words students often fail to acquire new and difficult words, and thus fail to add to and build their vocabularies.   
  
  
Their vocabularies remain poor, which is compounded when they read other new and difficult material.   
  
  
And the cycle continues.   
  
  
This cycle becomes most noticeable by the time the child reaches grade 4. He/she may be proficient at decoding but has difficulty comprehending what he/she reads.   
  
  
The problem becomes worse when more [decontextualized language](http://speechlanguage-resources.com/contextualized-language.html) is encountered, which becomes more prevalent as the child moves through his/her school years.   
  
  
For more information about **vocabulary and comprehension** and the effect of **context** please follow this link [here.](http://speechlanguage-resources.com/vocabulary-and-context.html)   
  
  
To read more about **reading comprehension problems** please follow this [link.](http://speechlanguage-resources.com/reading-comprehension-problems.html)

**<Must take>**

**Why do we need to evaluate the student’s reading errors?**

We can learn much by carefully evaluating what children are doing incorrectly when they read. Much like a coach watching a child swing a bat or a physical therapist watching a patient walk, observing the details of what the individual is doing incorrectly helps us teach to strengthen their skills and rectify their difficulties. Remember students face difficulties reading because they lack specific skills necessary for proficient reading. Students make reading errors because they lack necessary skills to read the word correctly. Often by carefully observing their exact errors we can learn specific weaknesses and determine which skills we need to help the student develop so they can advance their reading. The bottom line is we can learn much from our mistakes.

“All men make mistakes, but only wise men learn from their mistakes.” *Winston Churchill*

“A man’s errors are his portals of discovery” *James Joyce*

“By ignorance we mistake, and by mistake we learn” *Latin proverb*

**Examples of actual errors, grouping of error patterns, and the specific reading problems these types of errors may indicate.**

The following examples show common errors made by children and students who struggled with reading and the types of problems these errors may indicate. Once again, it is not a single error but the patterns of repeated mistakes that are informative. All these examples came from actual experiences with students who struggled with reading. While each student is unique, these types of errors are common with struggling readers. Although these listed examples may not apply to your student, they illustrate how we can gain valuable information from a student’s errors. For descriptive purposes, the errors are grouped into categories. These are not clear-cut categories and overlap is common. For examples ‘whole word’ readers often are not tracking and often do not know their sounds.

All of the examples of actual reading errors are shown as: **actual word 🡪 what the student said**

(For example, **spread 🡪 prize** means the student looked at the word ‘spread’ and incorrectly read it as ‘prize’ )

**“Whole Word” Errors:** These types of errors occur when the student is attempting to ‘see’ or ‘visually recognize’ entire words as a unit instead of processing the print by sound. The student tries to recognize the overall visual appearance of the word. Often the words ‘look similar’ to words the student has already learned as ‘sight’ words. Words usually contain some visually similar letters or structure. Frequent ‘whole word’ type errors indicate the student is not processing print phonetically. Examples of ‘whole word’ type errors include:

exit 🡪 next every🡪very simple🡪smile sprout 🡪 poured

van🡪 have roam🡪 more dim🡪 made years 🡪 yours

value 🡪 volume afraid 🡪 after include🡪locating agree🡪argue

lord 🡪 rod speed 🡪 sleep cork 🡪 clock text 🡪 next

vane 🡪 have being🡪belong navy 🡪 very clang 🡪 change

adult 🡪about spread 🡪 prize will 🡪while shift 🡪finish

since 🡪nice scrape🡪 escape when 🡪 then district 🡪distance

swallowed 🡪shallow child🡪could relocate 🡪 recycle scoundrel🡪school

prolong🡪program blinking 🡪 belong wild🡪would remind🡪random

empty🡪empathy relic 🡪recycle pilgrim🡪program enact🡪enchant

combine 🡪 become balcony 🡪 balance

**“Word Guessing” Errors**: Frequent ‘word guessing’ errors are somewhat similar to ‘whole word’ errors because the student is not processing print phonetically. In ‘word guessing’ the student often only looks at the first letter and then guesses a word. Frequently, errors are completely ‘off’. Sometimes a recently used word will be used or a word will be guessed from an illustration. Sometimes the student will look at you (instead of the print) and in quick succession chant several options. Word substitutions are considered ‘word guessing’ errors as the student is not reading the print but instead guessing their own word from context. Occasionally these are the ‘I have absolutely no idea where that come from’ type errors. These types of word guessing errors are closely associated with students who do not process print phonetically and instead are relying on ‘whole word’ visual recognition techniques. There is usually overlap between ‘whole word’ errors and ‘word guessing’ errors. Examples of ‘word guessing’ errors may include:

pencil 🡪 pear spoil🡪special hound 🡪 hundred gentle🡪great..giant.

graft 🡪 giraffe hound 🡪 hundred true 🡪 tunnel plenty 🡪 prehistoric

command 🡪 computer detest 🡪dentist vitamin 🡪 vacuum

chart 🡪chimp (read a book with the word ‘chimp’ so now says ‘chimp’ for words starting with ‘ch’)

value 🡪 Valentine (because it is February and student was recently exposed to ‘Valentine’)

shell 🡪 shark (because there was an illustration of a shark on the page)

never 🡪 nurse (because there was an illustration of a nurse on the previous page)

stir 🡪 shirt..sister..sitter (student looking up at me while guessing various words)

angry 🡪 mad or class 🡪 school (word substitutions guessed on context instead of reading print)

**Tracking Errors:** These errors can sometimes appear similar to ‘whole word’ errors. The distinction is that the student appears to be attempting to sound out words. However, they are not properly tracking left-to-right. The words they say often contain the same sounds but are out of order. These tracking errors are closely related to ‘whole word’ processing. If the student looks at the word as a ‘whole’ instead of processing correctly in an orderly left to right manner they frequently ‘mix up’ the sounds within the word. Improper tracking is a symptom of whole word processing. Students can also make tracking errors if they are ‘hopping’ around looking for familiar bits and pieces that they ‘recognize’. These types of errors indicate the student need to develop proper left to right directional tracking. Examples of tracking errors include:

was 🡪 saw no🡪on slip 🡪 spill left 🡪 felt step 🡪 pest

lots 🡪 lost slot 🡪 lots form 🡪from miles 🡪 smiles balk 🡪 black

last 🡪 salt tired 🡪 tried act 🡪 cat persist 🡪 preset tarnish 🡪 tranish

**Lack of Code Knowledge/Difficulty with Complexities**: When the student makes frequent errors or has difficulty with words that contain vowel combination and r-controlled vowel combinations it often indicates they lack knowledge of the complete phonemic code. If the student did not know the complexities in isolation and has difficulty reading words that contain these sounds, often the student needs is some direct instruction and practice in these sounds. These students sometimes read correctly and accurately with the basic sounds and are attempting to sound out words but lack the complete code knowledge therefore struggle with the complexities. Examples of difficulty with code knowledge include:

--a classic example of lack of code knowledge is exhibited by many young beginners when they learn t=/t/, h=/h/ but are not yet taught th=/th/. They frequently make errors, reading ‘that’ as /t/ /h/ /a/ /t/ or ‘the’ as /t/ /h/ /e/. Similarly they read ‘sh’ as /sss/ /h/ instead of /sh/.

--mispronunciations where the sounds of vowel combinations are sounded out separately such as

sound 🡪 /s//o/ /u/ /n//d/ tease as /t/ /ee/ /a/ /z/ ‘compete’ as /k//o//m//p//e//t/ /ee/

--difficulty with words that contain complexities when simple code is read accurately and easily

--lack of knowledge of the alternate sounds, for example every time the student comes across ‘ow’ they use the /ow/ sound and do not know and apply the /oa/ sound

--student will start sounding out the word and then ‘word guess’ because they don’t have knowledge to sound out correctly

**Consonant Cluster Errors**: These errors occur primarily with common ‘blended clusters’ such as s-st, st-str, d-dr, c-cl, c-cr, t-tr, g-gr, f-fr and ending clusters p-mp, and d-nd. In these types of errors the student will insert the ‘blended cluster’ sounds into words even when it is NOT present. These type of errors occur frequently in students who were taught consonant clusters as a unit (student learned the consonant cluster as a unit such as st, str, tr, mp, gr, fr, dr…) The student consequently ‘sees’ and processes the blended sounds even when they are actually not present in a word. Often the student will look at the word several times repeating the same error. Examples of ‘consonant cluster’ errors include:

flip 🡪 flimp clip🡪climp cap 🡪 camp stiff 🡪 striff gab🡪 grab

tying 🡪 trying dip 🡪 drip cop 🡪 crop speak 🡪 spreak sand 🡪 stand

tide🡪 tride fog 🡪 frog chat 🡪 chant tease🡪 trease stout 🡪 strout

steak🡪 streak widest 🡪 windest taper 🡪 trapper tendency🡪 trendency

**Attention to Detail Errors:** These types of errors are when the student does not pay close attention detail, carefully processing all the letters in order. Attention to detail is closely associated with proper tracking and correct phonologic processing. The ‘attention to detail’ errors are when the student misses bits and parts of the word. Consonant cluster errors are a type of attention to detail error. Sometimes the student will be sounding out the words correctly but misses parts. The ‘fast and sloppy’ readers often make frequent errors with the details. Examples of attention to detail errors include:

inspect 🡪 insect father 🡪farther must 🡪 most son🡪soon explain🡪 exclaim

explore 🡪 explode invent 🡪 invert powder 🡪power retorted🡪reported adapt🡪adopt

+ missing details with plural words (inaccurately leaving off or adding /s/ /es/)

+ changing or missing other endings (such as ing, ed)

**Word Family Errors**: These errors occur when the student inappropriately ‘pulls’ common word families out of words when they are reading. Hopping around looking for ‘word families’ that they recognize also confuses proper tracking. Often in these errors you can recognize the inappropriate use of ‘word family’. Examples include:

tra**in** 🡪 into p**ag**e 🡪 /p/ /ag/ /ee/ tra**in**ing 🡪 /tr/ /in/ /ing/ man**ag**er🡪/man//ag//er/

stre**am** 🡪 /str//ee//am/ indicate 🡪 /in//dic//at//ee/

**Difficulty with Multisyllable Words:** These types of errors occur when the student appears to sound out and accurately read the shorter words without problem and yet struggles with multisyllable words. If fundamental reading skills are established (processed phonologically, knows sounds, tracks correctly) then often the student simply needs instruction in handling these more complex multisyllable words. Errors with multisyllable words tend to include missing or changing parts of the word, dropping or adding sounds inappropriately, difficulty putting the words together and general trouble handling the longer words. Examples of multisyllable errors include:

inconsistent 🡪 inconstant opportunity🡪oppority eliminate 🡪elimate

committed 🡪 commititated determine 🡪 deterimmine objective 🡪 objectactive

representative 🡪 repsetive fundamental 🡪 funmental encountering 🡪 encounting

**Slow Processing:** If the student is ‘sounding out’ words but the phonetic decoding is slow and difficult, it may be that the reader is relying on indirect processing to phonologically process the print. For efficient reading the student needs to automatically convert print to the correct sound. If the student must first recall another word that contains the sound, extract the correct sound and then apply it to the new word, it involves slow indirect ‘long way’ processing pathways. While the student is able to extract the necessary sound knowledge it takes lots of effort. In this case the student needs to practice the direct print=sound relationship so the print can be processed rapidly and efficiently. In addition, once correct phonologic processing is established it still takes repeated practice of each word to develop fluency. Remember fluency is build word by word and requires repeated phonologic processing. Practice is necessary to build this ‘fast’ fluent reading.

**Blending Difficulty**: Difficulty blending is evident by the ‘choppy’ or ‘segmented’ sounding out. The sounds are said broken apart instead of being blended smoothly together. The ‘choppy’ sounding out is usually very noticeable. Sometimes the student says all individual sounds correctly but because they are segmented/separated they are not able to combine them back together. The student needs to learn to smoothly blend sounds. Have them take a deep breath before starting and if necessary sing the word. Directly teach smooth blending. See the article ***“Blending Explained”*** for more information.

**‘Fast and Sloppy’**: This is where students appear to be rushing through the reading, moving so fast and careless they miss entire words and sections. When they slow down their accuracy and reading improves dramatically. They appear to have necessary skills but are in too much of a hurry to apply them. These types of ‘going too fast’ errors often correspond with the personality of certain students. They are simply in too much of a hurry to be careful. These types of students simply need training in careful reading! These students have the necessary skills, they simply have to slow down and apply their skills. Guided reading, where you stop the student at every error is the best way to help these students develop careful reading skills. Impatient individuals usually do not like to stop so forcing them to stop and go back usually motivates them to improve their accuracy!

**Letter Confusion:** Letter confusion is most commonly encountered with the visually similar letters b - d - and p. For example:

big🡪dig drag🡪brag brown🡪drown

Letter confusion with other letters can also be created by certain writing styles. For example loopy cursive crossover print can create confusion with additional letters. The loopy cursive writing can create confusion between i-j-l. When curves and loops are added, i-j-l , these letters which are distinct under normal block print also become visually similar. Loopy writing of k & h as k-h can create confusion not just between k-h but also with ch-ck. As a result, some students who learn these loopy cursive crossover styles will make errors such as:

ask 🡪 ash much 🡪 muck mash 🡪 mask racket 🡪 rachet basket 🡪 bashet

hill 🡪 kill joint 🡪 loint

Remediation for these letter confusion errors is to have the student repeatedly print the letters with proper formation in normal block style print. While print or font style is usually irrelevant for skilled readers it can create additional difficulty in students who are learning the printed language.

**Memorization of Text:** Many intelligent youngsters can easily memorize text. It appears the child ‘reads’ the text perfectly. However, when you observe the child you notice he is not looking at the print when he says the words. To read the child must be processing print. If his bright eyes are not focused on the print, he is NOT reading! This is especially common in kindergarten and first grade where students are given simple stories with repetitive text and then repeatedly group chant the story. Check if your child focuses on the correct text as he ‘reads’. Notice if he can only ‘read’ books he already ‘knows’, tells the story from the pictures and if he is on the incorrect page as he ‘reads’ the text to you. I know a highly intelligent young boy who can memorize an entire book after hearing it one time. If you suspect your bright child is simply memorizing text, check their reading skills by having him read new material, without pictures or repetitive text.

<Must take>

## Semantic shadows of reading errors

In the first few years of the acquisition of literacy, the main channel for appraising a reader�s progress is oral rather than silent reading. As the reader produces successive words and phrases, the teacher�s first responsibility is to detect reading errors from the oral channel. This channel carries information about the reader�s ability to decode the printed text -- information coded in the spoken format that is the output of the reader�s phonetic, phonology and morphology. This output is related to the text in a complex way, as a set of one-to-many and many-to-one relations. Many different spellings are pronounced in the same way, and what first seems to be a correct reading may have been the selection of n irrelevant homonym: Thus (1) might be accepted by the teacher as a correct reading

(1) Text: The sun came up.

Reading: The son came up

.

But if the sequence in (1) were followed by additional information, as shown in (2) , the teacher would realize that the child had selected a wrong homonym, *son* for *sun*.

(2) Text: The sun came up; it was going to be a hot day.

Reading: The son came up; he was going to be hot.

A reading error can be defined as the selection of the wrong word in a printed text�that is, not the word intended by the writer of the text. A question of some importance is how broadly such incorrect selections affect the over-all interpretation of the text. As readers improve in fluency, the number of errors in function words may rise in an innocuous manner, since, for example, the substitution of the indefinite for the definite article rarely affects the broader interpretation of meaning in a detectable manner.

The reading error *son* for *sun* need not have produced an error in the text that followed in (2), and the reader�s misunderstanding might have been hidden until some later over-all assessment of comprehension was made. However, we can argue that a true reading error raises the probability of an error in the following text. The reading error can be said to cast a semantic shadow over the following text. We will use the term *semantic shadow* as a technical term in the analysis and, in the course of the report, develop a generalized method for deciding what is a reading error by measuring the semantic shadows cast by the potential error.

The determination of what is a reading error is an essential step in measuring readers� progress in mastering alphabetic relations. A comparison of the reading patterns of different groups cannot be made accurately without a satisfactory answer to this question. It has an equal and obvious importance for the construction of methods of intervention. Efforts to improve reading should plainly be concentrated on the types of words and constructions where errors in deciphering the text are maximal.

## Potential errors and clear errors

We can begin by examining some actual cases of potential reading errors, drawn from the diagnostic reading test used by the Urban Minorities Reading Project [UMRP]. The reading text incorporates the full range of orthographic and linguistic structures that have been shown to create decoding problems for beginning readers (Labov et al, 1998) in order to create a profile of the reader�s knowledge of complex alphabetic relations. The full text of the reading, �Ray and His Cat Come Back� [RCCB] is given in Appendix A.

Tutors administering the test are instructed to write down any deviation from the standard full pronunciation of the printed text, whether or not they believe it is a reading error.[[1]](#footnote-1)[2] Since we do not know in advance of analysis whether such a deviation is a reading error, we will refer to any notation written by the tutor that is not obviously a failure to identify the intended word as a *potential error* rather than an error. An example of a clear error can be seen in (3) below.

(3) Reader: Tyreke J., 8 years old, 3rd grade, African American, Philadelphia.

Text: My blood began to boil.

Reading: My boat began to bill.

The reading  *boat* for *blood* in (3) is a clear error and so is *bill for boil*. In both cases initial and final consonants are read correctly; the errors concern the initial cluster and the vowel pairs *oo* and *oi.* The second error *bill for* *boil* is in the semantic shadow of the first error. It seems clear that if *blood* were correctly decoded, and the reader knew the idiom involved, there would have been a higher likelihood of a correct reading of *boil.* In what follows, we will produce evidence to justify that inference.

Examples (4) and (5), are cases of potential errors.

(4) Reader: Filores J., 8 years old, 3rd grade, African American, Philadelphia.

Text: I played it cool and took a sip of my coke.

Reading: I play it cool and took a sip of my coke.

The potential error *play* for *played* in (4)is a common type of error found in our data and has a number of possible explanations. It may be a failure to decipher the past tense signal *�ed*, and indeed such readings of past tense forms as present tense are extremely frequent. On the other hand, it may represent a phonological deletion of the final /d/, though this is not as common for single consonants as in *played* as compared to consonant clusters in words like *served*. In any case, this potential error does not cast a strong semantic shadow: none of the ten words that follow the reading *play* are misread, and it therefore seems likely that the reader understood the sentence. The likelihood that the past tense meaning was understood is increased by the fact that *took,* the past tense form of *take* is preserved in (4).

(5) Reader: Raheem G., 11, 4th grade, Latino who learned to read in English first, Philadelphia.

Text: His teeth are as sharp as the edge of my knife.

Reading: His teef are as sharp as the edge of my knee.

The potential error *teef for teeth*  in (5)incorporates a well known dialect feature of African American Vernacular English [AAVE]: the realization of syllable final *�th*  as final *�f*  (Labov et al, 1968; Rickford, 1999). Members of the Philadelphia Latino community who have intimate contact with the black community share many of these features (Poplack, 1978). It is probable that the reader understood the second word as �teeth.� Yet, there remains a certain amount of doubt, since the reader may have decoded *teeth* as /tiyf/ but not made a firm connection with the meaning �teeth.� In the semantic shadow of this potential error there is a clear reading error, *knee for knife,* which we suggest would be less likely if �teeth� had been understood. The question remains, was this second reading error influenced in any way by the initial deviation?

An eight-year old student in the second grade read a sentence with three errors recorded as in (6) [dk = �don�t know�]:

(6) Reader: Maleek N., 8, 2nd grade, African-American, Philadelphia

Text: I told you all about Ray and his bad cat

Reading: I tol� you all about [dk] and has bad cat.

At first glance, it seems that the reading *tol�* is a phonological deletion, not a misunderstanding of *told* as *toll*. On the other hand, it is still possible that it represents an incomplete effort at decoding *told* and that the reader has not arrived at the meaning of �inform someone in the past.� The likelihood that this is so is increased by two following errors on words that are relatively easy to decode, the proper name *Ray* and the function word *his*. In (6) there are two clear errors realized in the semantic shadow cast by the potential reading error *tol�.*

## Potential error types

Homonym pairs like *son/sun* create a problem for the teacher more than for the reader, since these words are homophones but not homographs. The problem is shared equally by reader and teacher for homograph/homophones like *ring* �surround/sound out�, *cool* �not warm/admirable�, and *tire* �auto tire/fatigue.� The main problem that we will confront here is the result of variations in the pronunciation of a given spelling that creates new homophones. The simplification of final consonant clusters (Labov 1966, 1972; Guy 1980) is a process that affects the speech of all users of English, though it occurs with higher frequency in non-standard dialects. Speakers of nonstandard and standard dialects generally show the same patterns of simplification, but at different frequencies.

Thus for all speakers, the final cluster of *find* is frequently reduced so that it is pronounced like *fine.*  The range of such reductions are indicated in (7):

(7) find /fayn/ = fine

told /towl/ = toll

mist /mis/ = miss

rift /rif/ = riff

The same process affects the clusters formed by the regular past tense *�ed* suffix, though at a lower frequency:

(8) dined /dayn/ = dine

rolled /rowl/ = roll, role

missed /mis/ = miss

laughed /l�f/ = laugh

The potential loss of meaning of the reductions in (8) is the same for all items�the loss of the past tense meaning.[[2]](#footnote-2)[3]

Consonant cluster simplification occurs primarily with final clusters that have the same voicing throughout : /-nd, -lb, -ld, -st, -ft, -pt, -kt, -vd,/ etc. Simplification is much less common with clusters that have different voicing, where the first consonant is voiced and the second voiceless, as in /-kt, -nt, -mp, -lk, nk/. In this report, will be concerned with the first type, which are commonly referred to as *homovoiced* clusters.

Since the question of dialect impact on reading comprehension was first raised, it has generally been agreed that it is important to distinguish reading errors from differences in pronunciation (Goodman, 1965; Labov, 1965). However, it has not been generally recognized that these dialect differences are *potential errors*. When a reader says /fayn/ for *find*, we may be dealing with a colloquial pronunciation of the right word, or a misreading that has identified the wrong word, *fine*.

Though consonant cluster simplification occurs in all spoken dialects, the higher frequencies in nonstandard dialects, particularly AAVE, made this a particularly important issue for efforts to raise reading levels in inner city, lowincome areas. Accordingly, the UMRP made consonant cluster simplification a central focus in testing as well as in intervention methods. The RCCB text used as a reading diagnostic contains the following words with homovoiced clusters:

(9) *told, old, find, kind, around, worst, thirst, spend, stand, hand, ground, last, risk*

Reading errors, clear and potential, were entered by hand by tutors in the field and later checked against audio recordings of the test procedures. All items were then entered into a computer program [RX] (Labov, 2000), which automatically analyzes the orthographic structures responsible for errors and constructs reading error profiles that reflect the reader�s knowledge of alphabetic relations for each type of onset, nucleus and syllable coda, as well as the various grammatical suffixes involved.

## Dialect types

A *dialect type* is defined as a phonological or grammatical feature that varies with a reader�s language background. Twelve dialect types were identified in the text:

a.     words with final homovoiced consonant clusters in the base form: 13 items

b.     words with final homovoiced clusters formed by addition of the regular past tense suffix *�ed (sneaked, grabbed, served, jumped�)*: 15 items.

c.     other *�*ed words with regular past tense suffix �*ed* that does not form a consonant cluster (*started, stared, played, tried, poured*): 5 items

d.     words with the possessive suffix *�s* (*Ray�s, cat�s, Cindy�s, Matt�s*): 4 items

e.     words with the contracted copula *�s* (*Here�s, it�s what�s, that�s*): 8 items

f.      words with the 3rd singular verbal *-s* suffix (*wants, stays, likes*): 3 items

g.     words with the plural suffix *-s*: 5 items

h.     irregular past tense forms (*gave, flew, didn�t, said�*): 24 items

i.      words with initial *ch-* (*chips, chin, choose*�) 5 items

j.      words with initial *sh-* (*shame*, *show, sharp, shake*) 4 items

k.     the words *brought* and *bought*: 2 items

*l.* the word *sneaked*

The rationale for dialect types (a-c) are set out above. Types (d-f) are forms of the suffix or clitic *�s*, which are frequently absent in AAVE (Labov et al, 1968; Labov, 1972b; Wolfram, 1969; Rickford, 1999; Baugh, 1983; Weldon, 1994). The grammar of AAVE shows the absence of subject-verb agreement marked by verbal *�s,* the absence of the attributive possessive *�s,* and the variable occurrence of the contracted form of the copula *�s*. Type (g), the plural suffix, is added as a control item for the effect of dialect, since AAVE preserves plural {s}.[[3]](#footnote-3)[4] Type (h) is a similar control item, since AAVE uses irregular past forms consistently, with some lexical deviations from the standard usage.[[4]](#footnote-4)[5]

Dialect types (i-j) relate to potential errors common with Latino readers. It is regularly reported that speakers of English with Spanish language background alternate the palatal affricate and fricative in *choose, chips, shame,* etc. (Wald, 1981). The primary tendency is to substitute the *sh-* form for *ch-*, but the reverse occurs as well. Therefore, it is an open question as to whether the reading *It�s a chame*�represents a reading error or the reader�s pronunciation of the correct word, *shame*.

Studies of Latino English (Wolfram, 1974; Bayley, 1994; Santa Ana, 1992; Fought, 2003) also have noted variation in types (a-h), but with distributions that differ from AAVE. The study of the speech of UMRP subjects presented below will instantiate these differences.

Item (k) bears on the tendency of speakers of AAVE to alternate *br-* and *b-* in the two words listed, so that *brought* may be pronounced with an initial [b] and *bought* with [br].

Dialect type (j) is added as a second control. In many American dialects, the word *sneaked* has a non-standard form *snuck*, and this form is common among the readers in our sample. It is evident that the reading *snuck* is not a potential error in the sense defined above, but a correct reading. In order for the reader to produce *snuck*, he or she must decode *sneaked* accurately, locate the word that corresponds to the meaning �sneaked�, and produce the phonological representation that we spell *snuck*. The semantic shadow produced by *snuck* should be equal to that cast by the correct reading *sneaked;* that is, null.

A *dialect item* is defined as an occurrence of a dialect type as a particular word in the text.

Mispronunciations are counted as errors.

Example Text: The small gray fox ran to the cover of the trees. Student: "The smill gray fox ran to the cover of the trees."

Substitutions are counted as errors.

Example Text: When she returned to the house, Grandmother called for Franchesca. Student: "When she returned to the home, Grandmother called for Franchesca.

Omissions are counted as errors.

Example Text: Anna could not compete in the last race. Student: "Anna could not in the last race."

Transpositions of word-pairs are counted as 1 error.

Example Text: She looked at the bright, shining face of the sun. Student: "She looked at the shining bright face of the sun."

Words read to the student by the examiner after 3 seconds have gone by are counted as errors.

**Pronoun confusion**

Students get questions wrong simply because they don’t know who “he” or “she” refers to.  In addition to summarizing, when you’re doing guided reading, it’s a good idea to stop now and then and ask who is “he” or who are “they”?  Make sure students are able to identify the person the pronoun refers to.

**Contractions/Abbreviations**

Even fluent readers I work with get confused between Mr. and Mrs.  It makes a big difference in who we’re reading about.  Students read don’t as do or skip the word entirely and it changes the meaning of the sentence.

Are there any other comprehension errors you see your students making?

**<Must take>**

**Common Reading Errors**

**Sandy Treick-Shipman**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Behavior** | Error | Instructional Strategy |
| **1. Substituting words that make sense** | Student is paying more attention to meaning than matching sounds to letters | Use nonsense word activities, where student has to attend to the letters instead of meaning |
| **2. Substituting words that are visually close, but change the meaning** | Student is not attending to meaning | Buddy reading, tutor reading, guided reading where the buddy/guide asks: did that sentence make sense to you? Have students stop at then end of each sentence and ask if it makes sense. |
| **3. Substituting words randomly** | Not attending to meaning or text | Decrease level of book until accuracy = 94% or better. Choose either skill 1 or 2 to work on and follow strategies above. Teach only one strategy at a time. |
| **4. Substituting words that make context fit** | Student understands language structure, and missed a word earlier in the sentence and is now trying to make the sentence correct grammatically, or is trying to find a word that fits their (incorrect) grammar structure. | Ask student to reread carefully, slowly, etc. If the same mistake is made, ask them to make sure the words they read are the words on the page, or do a 1:1 match as they read (touch each word). Usually they will self correct. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **5. Repetition- student rereads word or phrase** | Often this is due to an unknown word coming up and they are trying to “get a running start” to see what would make sense. It can also be that a student is going back to check comprehension because what was read didn’t make sense. | This is a useful strategy and to be encouraged, until it occurs throughout the reading and interferes with fluency. If this is the case, lower the text level, even to baby books, until the bad habit is extinguished. |
| **6. Omission of little words: a, the, it, an,** | Student is reading fast. This really isn’t a problem until it interferes with meaning. Fluent readers do this all the time, especially silently. | When it changes meaning, use Strategy #2. |
| **7. Omission of words that change meaning** | Student is reading too fast and not attending to meaning. | Strategy #2 |
| **8. Insertion of words that don’t change meaning** | Student is probably trying to use syntax or is using background knowledge to make meaning. This is not a problem, until it interferes with meaning, or when the child encounters more complex text. | When it interferes or is becoming a bad habit, have student return to a 1:1 match (touch each word). Reduce text level until habit is extinguished. |
| **9. Insertion of words that do change meaning** | If the sentence still makes sense, student is probably trying to use syntax or is using background knowledge to make meaning. If the sentence does not make sense, student is not attending to meaning. | a. Have student read on and see if this sentence makes sense in context of paragraph.  b. Strategy #2 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **10. Uses first sound and guesses word** | Student is trying to use phonics, but has limited decoding strategies. | Teach phonics and decoding strategies listed below, one at a time. |
| **11. Says some wrong sounds in the word. Can’t read the word.** | Student does not have mastery in phonics. | Identify what phonic error occurred: single consonant, adjacent consonant, digraph (sh, th) single short vowel (basic code), complex vowel pattern (advanced code), word endings, syllabication. Then teach this phonic component. |

Decoding Strategies:

1. Sound it out
2. Find the chunks you know
3. Take a running start
4. Get your mouth ready. Read the sentence from the beginning and say the first sounds.
5. Use the picture clues
6. Use context clues
7. Skip it and come back
8. Think about what would make sense
9. Reread to make meaning

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)