**A Systematization of a Research-Based Reading Assessment in Two Middle School Students**

**Sistematización de una Evaluación de Lectura Basada en Evidencia Científica de dos Estudiantes de Enseñanza Media**

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## Abstract

The main objective of the present study is to systematize an experience of a research-based reading assessment of two middle school students from a public school in Manhattan, New York during the Fall 2022. In order to select the assessment tests, I assumed the Science of Reading along with the Simple View of Reading perspectives. The tests applied addressed to assess students in three aspects: decoding, fluency, and encoding (spelling). Results showed that, in a nutshell, students are reading below their grade; nevertheless, the fact that they are Colombian immigrants living one year in the U.S., may explain their results on the assessment tests. In the discussion section, I put into perspective the student's assessments' results with their context and personal background so as to have a broader understanding of their reading skills. The implication of this study is to acknowledge the necessity to use research-based assessment to make the best decision to improve student's reading skills.

*Keywords*: science of reading, simple view of reading, reading assessment, literacy instruction, fluency, decoding, encoding

**Resumen**

El objetivo principal del presente estudio es sistematizar una experiencia de evaluación de lectura basada en evidencia científica de dos estudiantes de secundaria de una escuela pública de Manhattan, Nueva York durante el otoño de 2022. Para este estudio, asumí la perspectiva de la Ciencia de la Lectura y el Modelo Simple de Lectura; este marco me permitió seleccionar las pruebas de evaluación que están alineadas con dichas perspectivas. Las pruebas aplicadas apuntaron a evaluar a los estudiantes en tres aspectos: decodificación, fluidez y codificación (ortografía). Los resultados mostraron que, en resumen, los estudiantes leen por debajo del grado escolar en el que están; sin embargo, el hecho de que sean inmigrantes colombianos que viven un año en Estados Unidos, puede explicar sus resultados en las pruebas de evaluación. En la sección de discusión, pongo en perspectiva los resultados de las evaluaciones de los estudiantes con su contexto y antecedentes personales para tener una comprensión más amplia de sus habilidades lectoras. La implicancia de este estudio es reconocer la necesidad de utilizar evaluaciones basadas en evidencia científica con el fin de tomar buenas decisiones para mejorar las habilidades de lectura de los estudiantes.

*Palabras clave*: ciencia de la lectura, modelo simple de la lectura, evaluación de lectura, alfabetización, literacidad, fluidez, decodificación, codificación

**Author Note**

In 2022, the autor was studying a Master of Arts in New York University, where he wrote the first draft of this paper. Isaac Valer today is a profesor at IESPP El Nazareno, in Huanta city, Perú, where he wrote the last versión of the paper. The Spanish translation was done by Gony del Carmen Torres Belliki.

**A Systematization of a Research-Based Reading Assessment in Two Middle School Students**

According to the last report of the NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress), in 2022 the reading comprehension for students in fourth grade has declined nationwide: in 2019 the average national reading score was 220 points (out of a total of 500 points); whereas in 2022 the scored dropped to 217 points. This is the lowest score in this kind of assessment since 1992 (U.S. Department of Education, 2022). These results mean that students in fourth grade across the United States are not meeting the standards, i.e., they are not 'reading to learn'. Furthermore, those results have stirred the debate on how literacy instruction should be carried on (Goodman, 2022), especially on what teachers can do to improve their teaching practice.

In this context, from the perspective of the Science of Reading (The Reading League, 2023; LEXIA, 2022) and the Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986) the purpose of this study is to systematize an experience of a research-based reading assessment of two Latino students in three aspects: decoding, fluency, and encoding (spelling). The students mentioned attended to a public school in the area of Manhattan, New York; and the assessments took place in the Fall of 2022.

The methodology used for this study (in both students) is as follows: we used the data collection instruments for the following aspects: decoding, fluency, and encoding. In the first place, I used the Informal Decoding Inventory from the Differentiated Reading Instruction in Grades 4 & 5: Strategies and Resources (Walpole, McKenna, & Philippakos, 2011) which is geared towards students in the upper elementary grades who are in late full and consolidated alphabetic phases. This assessment helps to know whether the student needs review or systematic instruction in some specific syllable type. In the second place, we used the Fluency Assessment from the same book. The objective of this test is to measure student's reading speed, accuracy and prosody. Finally, we used the Upper-Level Spelling Inventory from Words Their Way: Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling Instruction (Bear, Invernizzi, & Templeton, 2008) with the intention of identifying syllable types students are struggling with, and to determine what is the students' spelling stage (Templeton & Bear, 2011).

The importance of this study lies on the fact that teachers need to make decisions based on scientific evidence for the purpose of enhancing students' reading skills. In addition to this, when it comes down to reading instruction, we need to know accurately when and how to intervene. For this purpose, several tools for reading assessment were developed such as the data collection instruments mentioned. This study was carried for the course of Literacy for learning at Steinhardt, New York University, during the 2022 Fall semester. The students assessed are siblings and I could reach them through their mother who asked me to help them to improve their academic standing, specifically to make them 'more interested' in reading.

The first step when beginning to work with students who have troubles with reading is to determine what specific decoding skills they are having trouble with. Then it is necessary to know how they are reading in terms of fluency (rate, accuracy, and prosody); since "There is considerable evidence to suggest that the relationship between reading fluency (with an emphasis on accuracy and rate) and comprehension is reciprocal" (Hudson, Pullen, Lane, & Torgesen, 2009, p. 14).

This study was done according to the Science of Reading perspective, since it is "a vast, interdisciplinary body of scientifically based research about reading and issues related to reading and writing." (The Reading League, 2023). In that sense, the science of reading involves taking into consideration how reading operates, develops, and is taught. It is also considered how aspects such as motivation, emotion interacts with context. Last but not least, the Science of Reading also involves genetics, biology, environment, history, and culture; and it acknowledges its influence in the acquisition and use of reading.

In addition, I also assume the Simple View of Reading (SVR) perspective (Gough & Tunmer, 1986). This perspective reckons that the student's ability to understand a group of words relies on the student's ability to sound out the words (decode) and the ability to understand the meaning of those words, as Gough & Tunmer stated: "Reading equals the product of decoding and comprehension, or R = D x C, where each variable ranges from 0 (nullity) to 1 (perfection)." (1986, p. 7). Emphasis is mine.

It was also useful for the purposes of this study to use Hollie Scarbourough's model of reading which is usually known as the 'Scarbourough's rope' (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*Strands of early literacy development 1*
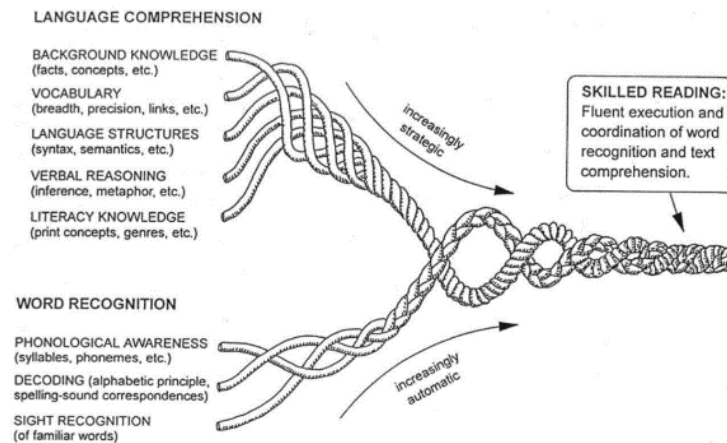


*Note*: H. S. Scarborough (2002) cited in Munger (2016).

As seen in Scarbourough's rope, a skilled reading is compound by two braids: Language comprehension and word recognition. Each one of them are also compound by other elements. While word recognition becomes automatic with practice, language comprehension gets increasingly strategic. It is important to acknowledge that students need to build automaticity in order to not to waste cognitive energy decoding words, since they need to reserve that energy to understand the words (language comprehension) which is highly cognitive-demanding. Now, I am going to give some details about the students assessed.

**Adam**

In this section I am going to give some details about the first student I assessed who I am going to refer to as 'Adam'. First, I am going to describe his academic and linguistic background. Then, I am going to describe the kind of reading instruction he has received in school. Finally, I will explain the reason I chose this specific student.

At the moment of the assessment Adam was a 12 years and 4 months old male student. He was born in Colombia and studied his first years of school there. In September 2021 he moved for the first time to the U.S. with his mother and sister ('Mary', Adam's sister). Since then, he started studying at Robert Wagner public school in Upper East Side, Manhattan. At the moment of the assessment, Adam was in 7th grade.

Regarding his linguistic background, he has Spanish as his first language. According to his mother his English level was "next to zero" when they arrived in the US.

Before the assessments I had a first encounter to get to know him better. I started talking to him in English and he was able to understand it with no difficulty (I speak English as a second language. My native language is Spanish). He also had no problem with understanding all the prompts and directions as I was assessing him.

Regarding his academic background, according to his mother, Adam was an average student: he used to be good at math in Colombia, but it was not the same for reading and writing; however, his mother said that he was interested in writing short stories. Now, in Wagner Public School, according to her mother, he is not doing well at math, and that's her biggest worry. Regarding reading instruction, Adam said that in Colombia teachers used to give him daily short readings about different topics. Teaching was focused on strategies (identifying main ideas, types of text, etc.). Whereas in Wagner he feels that he has more time to delve into some subjects and to write about them. For instance, he mentioned that the American conquest is a topic they are learning, and he finds it very compelling. Finally, he mentioned that in his math tests he has to write explanations for some problems. Nevertheless, I could not retrieve whether reading and writing instruction was systematic, explicit or structured.

I choose Adam because he is a student in need of support with his reading skills, given the fact that he is an immigrant student has to face an environment of cultural and linguistic diversity.

**Mary**

In this section, I am going to refer to the second student I assessed as 'Mary'. First, I am going to briefly describe her academic and linguistic background. Then I am going to describe the kind of reading instruction she has received in school, both in America and Colombia. Finally, I am going to explain the reasons I chose this specific student.

At the moment of the assessment Mary was a 11 years and 1-month old female student. She was born in Colombia and studied her first years of school there. In September 2021 she moved for the first time to the U.S. with her mother and brother (Adam). Since then, she started studying at Robert Wagner Public School in Upper East Side, Manhattan, New York. At the moment of the assessments, she was in 6th grade.

Mary is a native Spanish speaker; even though she took English classes while she was in Colombia; according to her mother, both of her kids had poor English knowledge

when they arrived in the US. In our first encounter, we could have a fluent English conversation. She also did not show any struggle to follow the directions for the assessments.

According to her mother, Mary is doing well at school. Unlike his brother, she is not so interested in video games. The kind of reading instruction she has received is similar to her brother's (both attended the same school in Colombia): reading randomly selected texts with emphasis in reading strategies. Just like her brother, I could see one of her math notebooks and she had to write in order to explain some exercises. When talking to her, she also told me that she liked her current school and that her favorite place was the library. She highlighted that reading and writing instruction in her current school was 'way different' from her Colombian school. She was excited that she has access to many books to read. When asked about writing instruction, I could not notice anything relevant in her answer, even though I tried to retrieve if there was some explicit and/or structured instruction on writing and/or reading.

I choose Mary because she is a student in need of support with his reading skills, given the fact that she is an immigrant student has to face an environment of cultural and linguistic diversity.

**Methodology**

In order to determine the students' reading skills, we applied three assessments. The purpose of these assessments is to determine what type of syllable reading the students are having trouble with; what is their fluency; and how they are encoding the words they hear.

The first assessment addresses the student's decoding skills: the objective is to identify possible troubles they are having when reading some type of syllable. In English spelling there are six written syllable-spelling conventions that are used: open (a syllable with a short vowel, spelled with a single vowel letter ending in one or more consonants, e.g. table, recent.); closed (a syllable with a short vowel, spelled with a single vowel letter ending in one or more consonants, e.g. hostel, beverage.); vowel consonant – e (a syllable with a long vowel, spelled with one vowel + one consonant + silent e, e.g. compete, despite.); vowel teams (syllables with long or short vowel spellings that use two to four letters to spell the vowel, e.g. trainer, spoilage); r-controlled vowel patterns (A

syllable with **er**, **ir**, **or**, **ar**, or **ur**. Vowel pronunciation often changes before /r/, e.g. consort, charter); and finally, consonant-le (an unaccented final syllable that contains a consonant before /l/, followed by a silent e, e.g. beagle, little) (Moats & Tolman, 2009).

This first assessment is the Informal Decoding Inventory (Walpole, McKenna, & Philippakos, 2011) and its divided in two parts: Part I assess skills used to decode single-syllable words: Short vowels, consonants blends and digraphs, r-controlled vowel patterns, vowel-consonant-e, vowel teams (See Table 1). In this section students read 10 real words and 10 non-sense words for each type of syllable, since real words might be identify at a sight. Part II assesses skills used to decode more complex syllables: compound words, closed syllables, open syllables, vowel consonant – e syllables, r-controlled syllables, vowel team syllables, and consonant-le syllables (See Table 2).

**Table 1**

*Scoring table for the 1st test, Informal Decoding Inventory*

| Subtest | Real Words | | | Nonsense Words | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mastery | Review | Systematic Instruction | Mastery | Review | Systematic Instruction |
| Short Vowels | 8–10 | 6–7 | 0–5 | 6–10 | 4–5 | 0–3 |
| Consonant Blends and Digraphs | 8–10 | 6–7 | 0–5 | 6–10 | 4–5 | 0–3 |
| *r*-Controlled Vowel Patterns | 8–10 | 6–7 | 0–5 | 6–10 | 4–5 | 0–3 |
| Vowel–Consonant–e | 8–10 | 6–7 | 0–5 | 6–10 | 4–5 | 0–3 |
| Vowel Teams | 8–10 | 6–7 | 0–5 | 6–10 | 4–5 | 0–3 |
| Total | 40–50 | 30–39 | 0–29 | 30–50 | 20–29 | 0–19 |

*Note*: Walpole, McKenna, & Philippakos, 2011

If the student score 8 – 10 real words in any subsection (each type of syllable), then the student is at a mastery level in the correspondent subsection. If the student scores between 6 – 7 in any or all given types of syllables, then he/she needs some review in the subsection where the student scored 6 – 7. If the student scores less than that, the student need systematic instruction. In the case of non-sense words, students should score 6 – 10 non-sense words to be at a mastery level in any or all given types of syllables. If the student scores 4 – 5 in any or all given types of syllables, then he/she

needs some review in the subsection where scores were 4 – 5. If the student scores less than that, the student need systematic instruction.

**Table 2**

*Scoring table for the 2nd test, Informal Decoding Inventory*

| Subtest | Real Words | | | Nonsense Words | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mastery | Review | Systematic Instruction | Mastery | Review | Systematic Instruction |
| Compound Words | 8–10 | 6–7 | 0–5 | 6–10 | 4–5 | 0–3 |
| Closed Syllables | 8–10 | 6–7 | 0–5 | 6–10 | 4–5 | 0–3 |
| Open Syllables | 8–10 | 6–7 | 0–5 | 6–10 | 4–5 | 0–3 |
| Vowel–Consonant–e Syllables | 8–10 | 6–7 | 0–5 | 6–10 | 4–5 | 0–3 |
| *r*-Controlled Syllables | 8–10 | 6–7 | 0–5 | 6–10 | 4–5 | 0–3 |
| Vowel Team Syllables | 8–10 | 6–7 | 0–5 | 6–10 | 4–5 | 0–3 |
| Consonant–*le* Syllables | 8–10 | 6–7 | 0–5 | 6–10 | 4–5 | 0–3 |
| Total | 56–70 | 42–55 | 0–41 | 42–50 | 28–41 | 0–27 |

*Note*: Walpole, McKenna, & Philippakos, 2011

The second assessment is the fluency assessment. According to the NAEP, fluency can be defined as:

> the ease or "naturalness" of reading. It recognized certain key elements as contributing to fluency. These included the reader's grouping or phrasing of words as shown through intonation, stress, and pauses and the reader's adherence to the author's syntax. They also included expressiveness as reflected by the reader's interjection of a sense of feeling, anticipation, or characterization in oral reading. These elements are called prosody. When readers use appropriate volume, tone, emphasis, and phrasing, they give evidence of comprehension. They demonstrate that they are actively constructing meaning from the text. (McGraw-Hill Education, 2017, p. 2)

The objective of the fluency assessment is to determine the reading's rate (Words Correct Per Minute, WCPM), the accuracy percentage, and the prosody (which is compound by 5 features). Students are given 2 texts from Wonders Fluency Assessment, Grades 1 – 6 (McGraw-Hill Education, 2017), according to their grade. First, students are asked to read aloud each text and then to answer two questions for each one. Teachers must count the number of words the student has read in one minute, but they should allow

the student to continue reading the text. From the total of words read in one minute, teachers should discount misread words, the result is the rate or the Words Correct Per Minute (WCPM); then, the division between WCPM and the total amount of words read is the accuracy percentage. Finally, as the student is reading, teacher should also measure student's ability in the following areas: Reading in Phrases, Pace, Syntax, Self-correction, and Intonation, according to the Oral Fluency Scale on Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Oral fluency scale*

| Oral Fluency Scale | |
|---|---|
| Level 4 | The student: reads in large, meaningful phrases; may occasionally repeat words or short phrases, but the overall structure and syntax of the passage is not affected; reads at an appropriate rate of speed with expressive interpretation. |
| Level 3 | The student: reads in three- or four-word phrases; reads primarily in phrases that preserve the passage's syntax and structure; attempts to read expressively; generally reads at an appropriate rate of speed. |
| Level 2 | The student: reads mainly in two-word phrases, with some longer phrases and at times word-by-word; may group words awkwardly and not connect phrases to the larger context of the passage; reads sections of the passage excessively slowly or quickly. |
| Level 1 | The student: reads word-by-word, with some longer phrases; does not phrase meaningfully or with an appropriate rate of speed; reads the passage excessively slowly. |

*Note*: McGraw-Hill Education, 2017, p. 7

The third assessment is divided in two parts. The first part aims to place students in the correspondent spelling stages (Templeton & Bear, 2011): within word patterns, syllables and affixes, and derivational relations. According to these authors, the first three stages are preliterate, pre-phonetic, and letter-name. For this, the teacher must dictate aloud a list of 31 words (which are ordered by difficulty) to sample the features of the spelling stages mentioned above. The teacher has to determine which spelling stage's features, students are having difficulty with. These features are compound by blends and

digraphs, vowels, complex consonants, inflected endings and syllable juncture, unaccented final syllables, affixes, reduced vowels in unaccented syllables, Greek and Latin elements, and assimilated prefixes (See Table 4).

**Table 4**

*Distribution of spelling stage features 1*

**Words Their Way Upper-Level Spelling Inventory Feature Guide**

Student's Name _____     Teacher _____     Grade _____     Date _____

*Words Spelled Correctly: _____ / 31     Feature Points: _____ / 68     Total: _____ / 99     Spelling Stage: _____*

| SPELLING STAGES → | WITHIN WORD PATTERN | | | SYLLABLES AND AFFIXES | | | DERIVATIONAL RELATIONS | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Features → | Blends and Digraphs (EARLY) | Vowels (MIDDLE) | Complex Consonants (LATE) | Inflected Endings and Syllable Juncture (EARLY) | Unaccented Final Syllables (MIDDLE) | Affixes (LATE) | Reduced Vowels in Unaccented Syllables (EARLY) | Greek and Latin Elements (MIDDLE) | Assimilated Prefixes (LATE) | Feature Points | Words Spelled Correctly |
| 1. switch | sw | i | tch | | | | | | | | |
| 2. smudge | sm | u | dge | | | | | | | | |
| 3. trapped | tr | | | pped | | | | | | | |
| 4. scrape | | a-e | scr | | | | | | | | |
| 5. knotted | | o | kn | tted | | | | | | | |
| 6. shaving | sh | | | ving | | | | | | | |
| 7. squirt | | ir | squ | | | | | | | | |
| 8. pounce | | ou | ce | | | | | | | | |
| 9. scratches | | a | tch | es | | | | | | | |
| 10. crater | cr | | | t | er | | | | | | |
| 11. sailor | | ai | | | or | | | | | | |
| 12. village | | | | ll | age | | | | | | |
| 13. disloyal | | oy | | | al | dis | | | | | |
| 14. tunnel | | | | nn | el | | | | | | |
| 15. humor | | | | m | or | | | | | | |
| 16. confidence | | | | | | con | fid | | | | |
| 17. fortunate | | | | | ate | | | fortun | | | |
| 18. visible | | | | | | ible | | vis | | | |
| 19. circumference | | | | | | ence | | circum | | | |
| 20. civilization | | | | | | | liz | civil | | | |
| **Subtotals** | / 5 | / 9 | / 7 | / 8 | / 7 | / 4 | / 2 | / 4 | / 0 | / 46 | / 20 |

*Note*: Bear, Invernizzi, & Templeton, 2008

The second part of the assessment is the diagnostic spelling test. The objective of this test is to monitor the students 'progress and to determine the their spelling mastery from beginning (first grade) to post-college. For this test we used a list of 50 words "arduously arranged by increasing difficulty by Leonard P. Ayres." (Sanseri, 2009, p. 197). According to the students' score, teachers can place students in a grade equivalent to their spelling level (see Table 5). The first word the student misses indicates which grade should the student start practicing (there is a corpus of texts that were elaborated for every grade the student is in). So, if the first word the student missed is the 28th word, then the student level is at fifth grade, second month. This diagnostic test also helps to

identify tension-of-learning level. This indicates where students can work and practice with thee corpus of texts without frustration but also still feel challenged.

**Table 5**

*Evaluation table*

| EVALUATION TABLE | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| WORDS CORRECT | GRADE STATUS* | SPELLING SECTION | WORDS CORRECT | GRADE STATUS* | SPELLING SECTION |
| 0 | 1.0 | | 26 | 4.9 | Q |
| 1 | 1.3 | A | 27 | 5.1 | Q |
| 2 | 1.5 | A | 28 | 5.2 | R |
| 3 | 1.7 | A | 29 | 5.4 | R |
| 4 | 1.8 | A | 30 | 5.6 | R |
| 5 | 1.9 | A | 31 | 5.8 | S |
| 6 | 2.0 | A | 32 | 6.0 | S |
| 7 | 2.1 | H | 33 | 6.2 | T |
| 8 | 2.2 | H | 34 | 6.4 | T |
| 9 | 2.3 | I | 35 | 6.6 | T |
| 10 | 2.4 | I | 36 | 6.8 | U |
| 11 | 2.5 | J | 37 | 7.0 | U |
| 12 | 2.6 | J | 38 | 7.3 | V |
| 13 | 2.7 | K | 39 | 7.5 | V |
| 14 | 2.9 | K | 40 | 7.7 | V |
| 15 | 3.1 | L | 41 | 8.0 | W |
| 16 | 3.3 | L | 42 | 8.4 | W |
| 17 | 3.4 | M | 43 | 8.8 | W |
| 18 | 3.5 | M | 44 | 9.3 | X |
| 19 | 3.7 | N | 45 | 9.8 | X |
| 20 | 3.9 | N | 46 | 10.5 | X |
| 21 | 4.1 | O | 47 | 11.2 | Y |
| 22 | 4.2 | O | 48 | 11.7 | Y |
| 23 | 4.3 | O | 49 | 12.5 | Y |
| 24 | 4.5 | P | 50 | 13.0 | Z |
| 25 | 4.7 | P | | | |

*Grade 1.0 means beginning first grade. Grade 1.3 means first grade, third month.

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*Note*: The number of words read correctly determines the grade and month students should be placed in order to practice (Sanseri, 2009).

**Results**

In this section, I am going to share the results of the assessments described in the previous section to both students, Adam and Mary.

***Adam***

In the first part of this assessment (Informal Decoding Inventory), results showed that Adam is at mastery level when it comes to decode single syllable words. According to the data, he read correctly 49 out of 50 real words (only failed one in the vowel-consonant 'e'). Whereas in nonsense words he made 48 out 50: the failures were in the same type of syllable (vowel-consonant 'e'). However, I have to point out that failures in nonsense words can be explained by some linguistic interference, since the nonsense words where he failed are real words in Spanish: 'nube' and 'pene'. This last nonsense

word in English actually baffled him, and he was hesitant to read it; I just had to told him to pronounce it as if the word was an English word.

Regarding the second part of this first assessment (decoding multisyllabic words), the correct answers were lower, but Adam is still at a mastery level: for real words Adam read 63 out of 70 words correctly. For nonsense words, he read 62 out 70 words correctly. It is important to highlight that the lowest scores were at the consonant-le syllables (8 and 6 correct words for real and nonsense words, respectively). Whereas the lowest scores were at the vowel-consonant e syllables: 8 and 7 correct words for real and nonsense words, respectively.

Regarding the fluency assessment, on the first passage he read the text 'Emperor Penguins' (Walpole, McKenna, & Philippakos, 2011, p. 220). He scored 82 WCPM, with 96,4% accuracy. In regards of prosody he scored level 3 in all prosody's features, except in syntax where he scored level 4: his average prosody score was 3,2. In the second reading passage 'How Turtle Flew South for Winter' (Walpole, McKenna, & Philippakos, 2011, p. 218), Adam scored 125 WCPM, with 97,6% accuracy and 3,8 in prosody: level 4 for almost all the features, except intonation. It is remarkable that in both passages, Adam scored level 4 in syntax, since he paused appropriately in the punctuation marks as well as he always tried to interpret the text as he was reading. The average for prosody was 3,5. On average his WCPM is 103,5 which places him in the 50 percentile: this means that despite he is in 6th grade his reading fluency is at 4th grade.

Regarding his basic comprehension, he could answer the two tests' four questions. Even though he did not provide the full information required in just one question, all of his answers stayed on the topic. This is totally understandable, since he read the text once and he is not used to several English features.

Regarding the spelling assessment, there are at least four key scores that are relevant to highlight. On inflected endings and syllable juncture (syllable and affixes spelling stage), Adam scored 5 out of 8; for affixes (for syllable affixes and derivational relations spelling stages) he scored 6 out of 10, for Greek and Latin elements (derivational relations spelling stage), he scored 3 out of 7, and for assimilated prefixes (derivational relations spelling stage), he scored 2 out of 6.

***Mary***

Regarding the Informal Decoding Inventory in part I, Mary is at a mastery level. She made only two mistakes (r-controlled vowel patterns and vowel-consonant e). In nonsense words she is at mastery level too, but I have to highlight that the error pattern is at the same types of syllables in real words, i.e. r-controlled and vowel-consonant 'e' syllables. In contrast, in part II, she made more mistakes: in real words, her lowest scores were at open syllables, compound words, and magic e (7, 8, 8 correct answers, respectively). She also failed one at an r-controlled syllable. Regarding nonsense words, her lowest score was at magic e (5 out of 10).

In the fluency aspect, Mary's WCPM was 80, with 91,9% of accuracy and 2,8 in prosody, for 'Let's Go Skating' (Walpole, McKenna, & Philippakos, 2011, p. 212). Mary scored level 3 for syntax, self-correction, intonation, and reading in phrases; and level 2 for peace. In the second reading passage, 'The Fox and the Grapes' (Walpole, McKenna, & Philippakos, 2011, p. 214), she scored 90 WCPM, with 97,8 % accuracy and 2,6 in prosody. In this passage she scored level 2 for reading in phrases and pace, whereas for the rest of the prosody elements she scored level 3. I have to remark that in both passages she was aware of syntax as she attempted to interpret the text while reading and did not make 'weird' pauses. On average, her WCPM is 85, which means that she is reading at the level of 3rd grade. Her result for prosody is 2,7 on average.

Regarding her basic comprehension, Mary answered correctly 3 out of 4 questions. The only question she answered wrong was "what is the author's position on in-line skating?". Mary's response was "put your arms in front of you". This answer might be related to errors she made in the reading test, since she misread 'in-line', as well as in the same text she read 'that' instead of 'than' (which appeared right after 'on'). My explanation for this phenomenon is as follows: Mary lacks background knowledge and/or is not well familiarized with prepositions, especially when they appear close to each other, and it has an impact on her prosody, as well as her understanding.

For the spelling test, I started with the Upper-Level Spelling Inventory, but after the first 10 words I noticed that she had made more than 5 mistakes in the first 8 words. So I changed to the Elementary Spelling Inventory (ESI) (Bear, Invernizzi, & Templeton, 2008, p. 270), and Mary has no major problems with encoding at the ESI: she made more than

one mistake on inflected endings only (2 out of 5). In the diagnostic spelling, Mary correctly spelled words were below 20, which places her in third grade.

**Discussion**

***Adam***

Even though, in the 1st assessment, Adam is at mastery level, it will be helpful for improving his reading skills to reinforce and practice multisyllabic words with vowel-consonant 'e' as well as consonant '-le' words (especially those that have more than one consonant before the '-le' ending). On Appendix 1 I developed two word lists; the criteria to choose those words are as follows: I developed a wordlist for Vowel – Consonant – e syllables because when reading those types of words, Adam struggled more. Specifically, I selected long 'i' and long 'u' words since I detected a misread pattern on nonsense words, such as 'lompise', 'plinsipe', 'indube'. I also added multisyllabic words to challenge his reading skills.

The 2nd assessment, reveals us that the effort he put into pronouncing them well is an indicator of his phonemic awareness, but he needs more opportunities to pronounce and sound words, e.g. 'migrate', 'layer', etc. Given Adam's background knowledge in English, I may hypothesize that he is not familiar with many of the words, and he needs to see them more often: let's keep in mind that a student needs to read from 5 to 10 times a word in order to make those words sight words. Adam seems to be in that way. In a nutshell, he needs a fluency-building program.

In addition, I feel that his WCPM may have some impact on his text understanding (bear in mind that he did not give full answer in one question), given the fact that he made some effort to decode words and to be fluent; therefore, he might have been spending more cognitive energy on decoding rather than understanding. Even though Adam scored below his grade, it was surprising that he tried to make sense as he was reading: he was aware of syntax, and stopped appropriately in the periods and commas. His word recognition might not be the best, but given the time he is in the U.S. it seems that he is improving, but needs urgent practice in order to gain automaticity and expand his vocabulary. In order to improve his fluency skills, Adam needs major exposure to printed words so he can easily recognize more words at a sigh. It would be helpful for him to have

more opportunities to read aloud short meaningful texts and to receive feedback immediately.

Regarding the spelling assessment, I could find some correlation between the decoding assessment and his failures for Greek and Latin elements in the spelling assessment: in the decoding assessment, Adam failed when reading nonsense words 'nube' and 'pene' (he read them as if they were Spanish words); this pattern is similar for his encoding skills (spelling assessment): he wrote 'monarquy' instead of 'monarchy'. This reveals that sometimes he experiences some confusion with cognates. It also tells us that the 'mix' -quy may be a transition's learning mistake that may require more encounters with the written English word 'monarchy'.

The results to determine the spelling phase for Adam are, to some point, uneven: for blends and digraphs Adam scored 3 out of 5; whereas he scored almost perfect for reduced vowels in unaccented syllables (6 out of 7). In addition, he scored 5 out 8 for inflected endings and syllable juncture. In contrast, he scored 7 out of 9 for unaccented final syllables. Overall, I would place Adam between the late syllables and affixes and early derivational relations stage; however, instruction and practice for blends and digraphs, as well as inflected endings and syllable juncture along with affixes is highly recommended. I have to remark that complex consonants could be a good start, since he did not write 'smudge'; and in the Informal Decoding Inventory he scored the lowest at consonant -le syllables: sprinkle, scanfle, dafle, cogle, pubble. For Adam I would recommend vocabulary teaching –embedded in content– that includes the most critical aspects mentioned above, but starting with consonant -le and complex consonants. See Appendix 1 where I made a list of words he can practice reading aloud.

### Mary

The first assessment shows us that Mary's word recognition needs to be improved. This can be explained by the fact that she has only one year studying in the U.S., so it is highly probable that she is not familiar with several printed words in English yet. This assessment also sheds lights on where instruction should be focused: vowel-consonant 'e' and r-controlled syllables.

Regarding the second assessment, since Mary's average WCPM (85) is below her grade level, it has some impact on her text comprehension; thus, she needs to improve

her WCPM and prosody in order to gain more confidence (to correctly understand what she is reading) and to enhance her learning process. Regarding her accuracy, she needs more reading aloud practice and feedback right afterwards. Since a student needs to read words at least from 5 to 10 times in order to make them sight words, it is understandable that Mary needs a major exposure to English words, with a special focus on pronunciation. I also have to point out that her Spanish background may have interfered when reading English, even though her mistakes were not abundant. Taking into consideration the first assessment, Mary needs a fluency-building program.

In order to improve her prosody and rate it is necessary for her to practice systematically reading. For this, she needs to read and reread short meaningful passages aloud. It is also recommended for her to read playscripts aloud and to receive feedback is a must for her improvement. I would also recommend practicing with some movie scripts, such as Shrek the movie, especially starting with this portion of the movie (QR on Appendix 3) which contains several 'on' prepositions.

According to spelling assessment, results showed me that she needs some review on inflected endings; for this, she should practice by reading a list of those critical words aloud; in addition, vocabulary instruction on those specific words may be effective, and a list of words I listed on the Appendix 2.

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**Appendix 1. Wordlists - Adam**

Word list 1:

 Vowel – Consonant – e Syllables

Long 'i': rise, wise, bite, cite, kite, mite, rite, site, characterize, improvise, jeopardize, generalize, summarize

Long 'u': dune, June, tune, fuse, muse, cute, execute, molecule, pedicure, manicure,


Word list 2: Consonant -le Syllables

sniffle, ruffle, snuffle, waffle, raffle, jungle, wiggle, juggle, giggle, bugle, twinkle, buckle, tickle, ankle, freckle

**Appendix 2. Wordlist - Mary**

WORDLIST 1 - Mary

Magic e:

Ape, cake, chase, grape, make, snake, spade, take, tape, whale, babe, bade, fade, fate, lame, lane, pale, pane, wake, wane, same

R-controlled - Mary

Birthday, circus, dirty, thirteen, thirsty, swirling, girlfriend, confirm, virtual, thirty, affirm, birdcage, skirmish, squirting, circle.

**Appendix 3**



Movie: Shrek

Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6m1B2IYgP3k

Script source linked here

-There it is, Princess. Your future awaits you.

-That's DuLoc?

-Yeah, I know. You know, Shrek thinks Lord Farquaad's compensating for

something,  which I think means he has a really - - Ow!

-Um, I, uh- -  I guess we better move on.

-Sure. But, Shrek? I'm - - I'm worried about Donkey.

{Blubbering}

-What?

-I mean, look at him. He doesn't look so good.

-What are you talking about? I'm fine.

-That's what they always say, and then next thing you know, you're on

your back. Dead.

-You know, she's right. You look awful. Do you want to sit down?

-Uh, you know, I'll make you some tea.

-I didn't want to say nothin', but I got this twinge in my neck, and

when I turn my head like this, look,

{Bones crunch}

-Ow! See?

-Who's hungry? I'll find us some dinner.

-I'll get the firewood.

-Hey, where you goin'? Oh, man, I can't feel my toes! I don't have any toes! I think I need a hug.

-Mmm. This is good. This is really good. What is this?

-Uh, weedrat. Rotisserie style.

-No kidding. Well, this is delicious.

-Well, they're also great in stews. Now, I don't mean to brag, but I make a mean weedrat stew.

{Chuckling}
{Sighs}

-I guess I'll be dining a little differently tomorrow night.

{Gulps}

-Maybe you can come visit me in the swamp sometime. I'll cook all kind of stuff for you. Swamp toad soup, fish eye tartare - - you name it.

{Chuckles}
-I'd like that.

{Slurps, laughs}

See the pyramids along the Nile
-Um, Princess?
Watch the sunrise from a tropic isle

-Yes, Shrek?

-I, um, I was wondering.

Just remember, darling all the while

-Are you- -

You belong to me

{Sighs}

-Are you gonna eat that?

{Chuckles}

-Man, isn't this romantic? Just look at that sunset.

-Sunset?

-Oh, no! I mean, it's late. I-It's very late.

-What?

-Wait a minute. I see what's goin' on here. You're afraid of the dark,

aren't you?

-Yes! Yes, that's it. I'm terrified. You know, I'd better go inside.

-Don't feel bad, Princess. I used to be afraid of the dark, too, until

- - Hey, no, wait. I'm still afraid of the dark.

{Shrek sighs}

 -Good night.

 -Good night.

{Door creaks}

-Ohh! Now I really see what's goin' on here.

-Oh, what are you talkin' about?

-I don't even wanna hear it. Look, I'm an animal, and I got instincts.

And I know you two were diggin' on each other. I could feel it.

-You're crazy. I'm just bringing her back to Farquaad.

-Oh, come on, Shrek. Wake up and smell the pheromones. Just go on in

and tell her how you feel.

-I- - There's nothing to tell. Besides, even if I did tell her that,

well, you know - - and I'm not sayin' I do 'cause I don't - - she's a

princess, and I'm - -

-An orge?

-Yeah. An orge.

-Hey, where you goin'?

-To get... move firewood.