THE GENESIS OF SILENT READING PROSODY: AN EXPLORATION OF FOUR PROSODIC READERS

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ABSTRACT

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Most research and instruction ignores the hallmark of fluency achievement: prosody (Schwanenflugel, Hamilton, Kuhn, Wisenbaker, & Stahl, 2004). Prosody is the component of fluency that describes the ability to read with appropriate phrasing, intonation, and expression (Allington, 1983; Dowhower, 1991). If prosody has not been mastered, it is unlikely that students will completely understand what is being read (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Rasinski, 2004). Little research has been done with regard to how and when students acquire oral reading prosody, how it is most effectively taught, and finally, how many students actually obtain oral prosody.

In this study, 28 third-, fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students participated in an oral prosody screening, the goal of which was to select four students to participate further in the study. Four students who scored a high level of oral prosody were selected to participate in both a more comprehensive oral prosody assessment as well as a silent reading prosody interview. The oral prosody screening and the oral prosody assessment were both based on an oral prosody scale created by Zutell and Rasinski (1991). One student from each grade was selected and participated in a more complete oral prosody assessment and a silent reading prosody interview.

Based on the results of the interviews, each of the four students demonstrated the presence of silent reading prosody by describing silent reading prosodic components such as hearing character voices and sounds while reading silently. While all four of the students demonstrated the presence of silent reading prosody, their specific experiences were unique, although they did often show threads of similarity.
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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Imagine listening to students read aloud—one student reads in a choppy, word-by-word manner, rarely exhibiting proper expression; this student is also notably inaccurate in word recognition and reads at a slow pace. Based on these signs, it is very unlikely that the student has acquired the vital reading skill of fluency. To read with fluency is the ability to read orally with accuracy, appropriate pace, and prosody or expression (Zutell & Rasinski, 1991). Fluent oral reading is marked by the ability to read text in an effortless, fluid manner (Clark, 1995). To a listener, fluent reading can be recognized as reading which sounds like natural spoken conversation (Richards, 2000).

Fluency is one component of reading that is critical for students to acquire in order to become proficient readers (Allington, 1983; Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005; Nathan & Stanovich, 1991; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Zutell & Rasinski, 1991). According to Hudson, Lane, and Pullen, proficient readers are characterized by the ability to read fluently. Also, fluency acquisition has a strong correlation with comprehension performance (Allington; Schreiber, 1980). If a reader fluently conquers a passage, it is more likely that he or she will enjoy the reading as a result of being free from laborious decoding and more able to focus on aesthetics, thus fully appreciating the passage. Fluency is known to be a vital factor in overall reading ability and development (Rasinski, Padak, Linek, & Sturtevant, 1994); however, fluency is an area of reading that needs to be researched more fully and practiced more often in the classroom setting.

Fluency can be acquired through classroom instruction and practice by participating in engaging fluency activities; therefore, fluency instruction should be a component of all literacy programs. Readers Theatre, repeated readings, and listening to books on tape are just a few of the
many activities known to increase reader fluency (Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005; Richards, 2000). Not all children have the innate ability to read fluently without instruction; therefore, fluency must be taught and practiced to ensure that each student is being reached (Allinder, Dunse, Brunken, & Obermiller-Krolikowski, 2001; Pinell, Pikulski, Wixson, Campbell, Gough, & Beatty, 1995).

Statement of the Problem

Research shows that fluency is a characteristic of proficient readers, but missing in struggling readers (Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005); however, fluency instruction is absent in many classroom reading programs (Kame’ennui, & Simmons, 2001; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). In 2000, The National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development) reviewed reading research relative to essential reading components. Fluency received a thorough review as being a critical component of literacy development. After this review, more educators began to view fluency as a significant skill for students to master; however, fluency instruction is still a neglected component of many literacy curricula (Rasinski, Padak, Linek, & Sturtevant, 1994). The lack of fluency research and instruction is a major concern. If students are not receiving adequate fluency instruction, they may not be developing the skills needed to master fluency.

Another current problem related to fluency is the lack of information regarding how many students achieve fluency. Fluency is correlated with comprehension and general reading ability (Allington, 1983; Schreiber, 1980); therefore, it must not be neglected in classroom instruction, literacy research, and educator preparation instruction. In addition, when fluency is addressed in education, prosody is usually not included.
Prosody is the component of fluency that describes the ability to read with appropriate phrasing, intonation, and expression (Allington, 1983; Dowhower, 1991). The research and literature available on fluency instruction and assessment primarily focuses on the rate and accuracy components (Dowhower, 1991). This model of fluency ignores one of the hallmarks of fluency achievement: prosody (Schwanenflugel, Hamilton, Kuhn, Wisenbaker, & Stahl, 2004). If a student reads with accuracy and speed, but has not mastered prosody, it is unlikely that the student will completely understand what is being read (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Rasinski, 2004). However, little research has been done with regard to how and when students acquire oral reading prosody, how it is most effectively taught, and finally, how many students actually obtain oral prosody.

If fluency, particularly prosody, is ignored in textbooks, education research, teacher preparation, and classroom literacy instruction, students will be negatively affected. For instance, the relationship between internal or silent reading fluency and oral reading performance is an aspect of fluency that has barely been explored. While oral prosodic fluency has been examined, little research has addressed how prosodic fluency is internalized. In other words, little is known about how and if students use prosody while reading silently. This is important because as students become older, silent reading is the preferred method of reading. Since research has shown that oral prosody is correlated with reading proficiency (Dowhower, 1987), it might be concluded that silent reading prosody might also improve overall reading proficiency in older students as well. Little systematic study has been done to understand the relationship between oral prosody and silent reading prosody. As a result, it is unknown whether students who read orally with prosody are in turn able to read silently with prosody. Since reading with oral prosody represents the attainment of oral fluency, silent reading prosody would signify the
attainment of silent reading fluency. It is quite possible that students who have mastered oral reading prosody have indeed mastered silent reading prosody as well; however, there does not appear to be research to support this conclusion. As students progress through the educational system, silent reading becomes the main vehicle of reading in the classroom. Proficient readers need to have silent reading skills to be successful; one area of silent reading instruction that is neglected is prosodic fluency.

It is also unclear at what age students are acquiring fluency and how this development changes as students become older. Most fluency research examines how fluency activities increase fluency but do not examine the different levels of attainment at different ages. While researchers such as Chall (1983) have discussed potential time frames for fluency acquisition, little research has actually been done to determine whether students at these ages are actually learning to be fluent readers. Pinnell et al. (1995) found that 44% of students were disfluent readers. Further research needs to be done to examine how fluency is being acquired and how this development differs among children in the third and fourth grades which fall within the proposed fluency acquisition stage.

Research Question

In this study, several aspects of fluency were addressed, one of which was the lack of prosodic fluency research and instructional activities. Research is limited on whether elementary students have attained prosodic oral reading; therefore, the relationship between silent reading prosody and oral reading performance, as well as the processes that occur while students read silently, were examined. Lastly, the relationship and differences between elementary age students and fluency attainment was also studied.
To address these issues, this study focused on addressing the following questions: Do third-, fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade readers exhibit oral reading prosody behaviors, to what extent, and how do the students acquire these behaviors? How do oral prosodic readers internalize oral prosodic behaviors into what is termed “silent reading prosody”?

**Rationale**

Fluency is a critical component of literacy development and achievement. This study has several implications for the field of education. Since it is known that fluency should be investigated and taught, it is critical to assess elementary students’ attainment of fluency. Also, fluency is linked to comprehension and general reading ability; unfortunately, however, one aspect of fluency, prosody, is often ignored. It is important to discover more about the often neglected fluency component, prosody. Educators need to know more about how prosody is internalized to understand more fully the processes occurring while students read silently. When teachers have a better understanding of both oral and silent reading prosody, they will be more able to adequately instruct students in how to achieve prosody.

It is also important to study prosody from the angle of how it is acquired and how it differs between age groups. Understanding the differences among ages will help to guide future instructional activities and how and when fluency should be taught in the classrooms.

**Definition of Terms**

Terminology that is helpful in understanding this study is defined in this section.

**Duration** - length of time a sound is held (Schreiber, 1991).

**Fluency** - the ability to read a text with appropriate rate, accuracy, and prosody (Zutell & Rasinski, 1991).
**Intonation** - the perceived rise and fall of pitch while pronouncing a word (Schreiber, 1991).

**Oral Reading Fluency** - the ability to read orally with appropriate speed, accuracy, and prosody, or expression, in a manner that is smooth and effortless (Zutell & Rasinski, 1991).

**Oral Reading Prosody** - the ability to read orally with appropriate intonation, pitch, stress, and duration, the combination of which results in expressive reading (Allington, 1983; Dowhower, 1991).

**Silent Reading Fluency** - the ability to read silently with appropriate speed, accuracy, and prosody, or expression, in a manner that is smooth and effortless.

**Silent Reading Prosody** - the ability to read silently with appropriate tone, pitch, stress, and duration, the combination of which results in expressive reading.

**Stress** - “syllabic prominence” (Schreiber, 1991).

**Limitations**

There were several aspects of fluency that were not examined in this study. First, exactly how prosody impacts comprehension was not tested or examined. Many studies have already been performed on rate and accuracy; therefore, these two components of fluency were not studied. Also, only a select number of age groups were examined in this project. This project did not attempt to analyze how oral and silent reading prosody was acquired in the early childhood grades kindergarten through second grade, or in young adolescent students from grades seven through adulthood.

For the purpose of limiting the possible range of research for this study, it was determined that only students who read with oral prosody were candidates for further assessment and the silent reading prosody interview. It was theorized that if students were unable to read
orally with prosody it was less likely that the students would internalize the process and as a result would be unable to read silently with prosody. While it is quite possible that this theory does not hold true for every student, this research study utilized this theory to limit the number of students studied. This was a limitation of the study in that it did not investigate whether or not students who did not read with oral prosody were able to read silently with prosody; rather this study focused only on students who had acquired the ability to read orally with prosody. Future research may study the relationship between silent reading prosody and the link to prosodic oral readers as well as non-prosodic oral readers.

If this research study were to be replicated, there is a chance that the results may vary. The first limitation identified was that examining a different age group might result in different findings. Students’ reading ability levels might be different, potentially causing concluding results to differ. Examination of students from different socio-economic status may result in slightly different conclusions. Finally, the results of this study might be unique to the specific students being examined.
CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Fluency is a fundamental element of reading. This chapter discusses the characteristics of fluency and, specifically, the component prosody, or the ability to read with appropriate phrasing, intonation, and expression. This chapter also explores why fluency and prosody are educationally significant and how they can be taught in the classroom setting. Overall, this chapter will attempt to explore the facets of fluency and prosody, including characteristics, research findings, educational significance, and implementation.

What is Fluency?

Fluency is the ability to read with appropriate speed, accuracy, and prosody or expression in a manner that is smooth and effortless (Clark, 1995; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Zutell & Rasinski, 1991). Fluent reading sounds as if the reader is speaking in a conversation, rather than reading word-by-word. According to Zutell and Rasinski, fluency “conforms to the rhythms, cadences, and flow of oral language” (1991, p. 212). Allington (1983) refers to fluency as a hallmark of proficient readers and explains that fluency should be a goal of literacy instruction. According to Kame’enui and Simmons (2001), while fluency is a critical aspect of reading, it is still relatively unexplored theoretically and instructionally.

Educators in the past as well as the present have differed on the appropriate definition of fluency (Hoffman & Isaacs, 1991; Kame’enui & Simmons, 2001). Initially, fluency was defined as simply the ability to read with speed and accuracy, which frees the reader from laboring on decoding words, allowing for more reserved energy to focus on comprehension (Schreiber, 1987). Rate is the ability to read a passage at an appropriate pace. When a student is reading at a slow pace it is likely that there is a deficiency in the ability to read with appropriate rate. This
type of reader might actually have adequate comprehension but the inability to read with appropriate speed is still detrimental. If a student is a slow reader, he/she will probably become frustrated with reading and not read very often. The student will not gain as much exposure to the process of reading resulting in further reading deficits (Rasinski, 2000). Another dimension of fluency is accuracy, which refers to one’s ability to identify words correctly. Students need to be automatic as well as accurate when reading silently and orally. However, while this early definition of fluency is useful, neglects prosody, the aspect of fluency that gives expression to reading.

More recently researchers have argued that earlier definitions of fluency were too narrow and did not embody all of the components of fluency. According to Hoffman and Isaacs (1991), “Common usage of the term [fluency] ranges across a broad continuum of meaning from an emphasis on the mechanical aspects of rapid reading to an emphasis on the connections between fluency and the expression of thought” (p. 186). While most educators now agree that there are three characteristics of fluency—rate, accuracy, and prosody—there are still educators who view fluency as simply the ability to read with appropriate speed and accuracy.

Hudson, Lane, and Pullen (2005) suggest there are other behaviors that fluent readers demonstrate. Fluent readers are able to read fluently for an extended period of time. In other words, the fluent reading behavior is consistent throughout readings. Also, fluent readers retain the ability to read fluently even if the skill has not been practiced for a period of time. Lastly, a fluent reader is generally more focused on text and less easily distracted than disfluent readers.

What Were the Fluency Findings of the National Reading Panel?

The National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) clearly emphasized the importance of fluency and its inclusion in literacy
instructional programs. The panel claimed fluency as one of five critical components of reading. The introduction of the executive findings discussed the definition and importance of fluency as a reading skill. The discussion of fluency literature in the report is similar to the review of literature discussed in this thesis. The purpose of the National Reading Panel report was to determine the effectiveness of guided repeated oral readings and increased student independent reading on the development of general reading ability, including fluency skills. The research panel performed a meta-analysis of studies relating to this topic.

In the National Reading Panel study, a total of 51 articles were examined. These articles were categorized into four different types of studies. The first set of studies was labeled the Immediate Effects Articles; these articles studied the immediate impact of repeated reading and guided oral reading on overall reading ability without examining how the ability transferred to further readings. All of the studies in this group concluded that guided reading improved fluency ability. The second group of articles was labeled the Group Experiments, which studied the impact of repeated reading on overall reading ability of students in grades K through 12. The findings of all but two of the studies in this group showed that students participating in guided repeated reading activities performed significantly different than the control groups. The conclusion of these articles suggested that guided repeated reading had a moderate impact on reading ability. The third set of articles, Single Subject Studies, examined the impact of repeated readings on students in grades K though 12 by way of single-subject designs. The conclusion of these studies was that repeated reading improves reading ability, including fluency. The fourth group of studies, Methods Comparisons, compared the effectiveness of different types of repeated reading activities. Based on the results, it could not be determined which activity was the most effective type of guided repeated reading activity because there were not enough
activities represented in the studies to make accurate comparisons. Overall, the analysis of all of the studies indicated that repeated readings are very effective in improving reading ability.

The National Reading Panel (2000) also examined the effect that encouraging children to frequently read independently has on student reading ability and fluency. The panel examined 14 research studies that focused on the impact of increased independent reading such as sustained silent reading (also known as SSR, DEAR, or SQUIRT) on reader achievement. None of these studies measured how increased independent reading impacted overall fluency, but rather the impact that independent reading had on general reading ability. The majority of the studies found that increased independent reading did not increase overall reading ability.

The summary findings indicated that fluency is acquired primarily through reading practice or repeated readings. Additionally, it was noted that fluency instruction is appropriate for students in second grade through high school. The panel also stated that fluency instruction was beneficial for proficient as well as struggling readers. The result of the publication of this report was that fluency became a more evident and recognized component of literacy instruction (Rasinski, Padak, McKeon, Wilfon, Friedauer, & Heim, 2005).

How Does Fluency Fit Into Reading Development?

One theory in particular explains the role of fluency in reading, the theory of automatic information processing. In the initial stages of reading, children read by decoding individual words, resulting in a slow and choppy oral rendering of text, despite a modest level of accuracy in word recognition (Nathan & Stanovich, 1991; Schreiber, 1991). In the theory of automatic information processing, according to LaBerge and Samuels (1974), readers have a limited supply of concentration available to focus on reading.
For a student to be fluent, he/she must have mastered the ability to automatically decode words in a given passage of text. Not only must a student decode or identify the words but he/she must also be able to interpret and give meaning to these words. Word decoding and comprehension are two areas that require focused concentration during reading. According to the automatic information processing theory, a student who spends all of his/her mental energy or concentration on the word-decoding task is subtracting the available energy needed to devote towards comprehension (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974).

As students develop their word recognition skills, they are able to focus on understanding the meaning of what is read (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). At this stage, the child is a more fluent reader and is able to express prosodic features by appropriate use of phrasing and expression (Schreiber, 1991). The automatic information processing theory explains that the characteristics of fluency, rate, and accuracy are critical skills to acquire because it allows for the reader to be free to focus on comprehending what is read (LaBerge & Samuels).

Another reading development theory, developed by Chall (1983), proposed that there are six stages of reading development. The first stage (Stage 0) is an emergent literacy phase called the Prereading Stage, where the child learns concepts of print and an understanding of the syntax or grammar rules of language. This stage spans from birth to age six. In the second stage (Stage 1), titled the Decoding Stage, children develop decoding skills and learn the basic skills necessary to read; this stage typically lasts from age six to seven. Fluency is acquired in the third developmental stage. Chall refers to this stage as the Confirmation, Fluency, and Ungluing from Print stage (Stage 2). Readers in this stage are less focused on decoding words and more confident in identifying high frequency words. These readers are also more aware of story structure and are more able to focus on phrasing and fluency rather than on slowly decoding
every word on a page. This stage typically occurs for children in second and third grades. The next stage is called the Reading for Learning the New: a First Step (Stage 3); in this stage, readers utilize reading for the purpose of learning new information. Readers in this stage of development have mastered many of the early fundamental reading skills needed to successfully comprehend most instructional level text. Students at this development stage are typically in the fourth grade. The fifth stage is called the Multiple Viewpoints: High School stage (Stage 4). This stage usually occurs for students ages 14 through 18. The main characteristic of reading in this stage is the ability to examine thoughts and ideas presented in text from different points of view. Reading materials at this level often include multiple levels of information, or layers of facts and concepts, which build upon prior knowledge. The final stage of reading development is titled Construction and Reconstruction-A World View: College (Stage 5). This stage occurs for most individuals at the age of 18 or older. This stage is considered to be the most mature reading stage and usually occurs during the college years. Readers at this stage are able to use information read in a text to construct meaning from the text. This relies on analysis, synthesis, and judgment. Chall argues that, at this stage, readers, “create one’s own ‘truth’ from the ‘truths’ of others” (p. 24).

Chall’s (1983) reading development stages flow from stage to stage. Each developmental stage uses the knowledge acquired in previous stages to advance the reader into more complex stages. In other words, the six stages build upon the skills learned earlier. It should also be noted that skills mastered in previous stages are not dropped, but are still required and utilized in later stages. Students in the more advanced reading stages still need previously learned decoding skills to read complex names or unknown words. Stage 3 requires readers to use fluency skills that were acquired in Stage 2. “Only when the fundamental decoding skills are mastered (Stage 1)
and fluency has become habitual (Stage 2) can reading become useful as a tool for learning…” (Chall, p. 26). It can be concluded from these findings that fluency is not only an important part of Stage 2, but also vital to Stages 3, 4, and 5.

In addition to the above-mentioned theories, other studies have attempted to identify at which age fluency is acquired and what age fluency instruction is most effective. In a meta-analysis performed by Kuhn and Stahl (2003), it was found that instruction in fluency appeared to be most effective with children preprimer level to second grade. However, in a study done by Pikulski and Chard (2005), it was found that fluency instruction should extend beyond elementary school because many students have not mastered fluency in the elementary grades. This study found that fluency was still an area of reading that was weak for high school students. Stayter and Allington (1991) also emphasized the importance of instructing and practicing fluency skills in children older than the primary grades.

Why is Fluency Important?

Fluency is a critical component of reading. Hudson, Lane and Pullen (2005) argue that, “Research has clearly demonstrated the significance of fluency in the development of reading proficiency…” (p. 702). Proficient readers are known to decode words accurately and quickly, read at a fluid pace, as well as with appropriate expression and phrasing (Zutell & Rasinski, 1991). These characteristics of proficient readers are all dimensions of fluency. According to Zutell and Rasinski, fluency is a necessary dimension of proficient reading. In other words, fluency is a defining characteristic of proficient readers. The National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) stated that fluency is an “essential ingredient in successful reading development” (section 3, p. 1). There are several specific reasons why fluency is an important skill: fluency is connected with comprehension; fluency is
connected with general reading ability, and reading rate specifically is correlated with comprehension.

It is obvious that fluency and comprehension are connected, but exactly how is still debated. Some researchers theorize that fluency is correlated with comprehension (Allington, 1983; Dowhower, 1991; Samuels, 1988; Schreiber 1987). In addition, the National Assessment of Educational Progress in Reading (Pinell et al., 1995) established from a large data analysis study that fluency and comprehension were clearly correlated. Another study that found a correlation between fluency and comprehension was conducted by Kuhn and Stahl (2003). A meta-analysis of 58 studies was conducted to determine how fluency relates to comprehension and what fluency activities are the most beneficial. The results showed that the majority of studies found that when there was an increase in fluency there was also an increase in comprehension. Kuhn and Stahl also found that when fluency activities, as compared with the basal reader only activities, were incorporated into classroom literacy programs, fluency as well as comprehension increased. Other researchers such as Stecker, Roser, and Martinez (1998) determined that fluency and comprehension have a reciprocal relationship with both components strengthening the other.

According to LaBerge and Samuels (1974), it appears that fluency might have an impact on comprehension. The connection between comprehension and fluency is evident in their theory of automatic information processing, which states that for readers who have not achieved automatic recognition of words, these students will use all of their available concentration on decoding the text when reading. These readers will not have enough cognitive attention or energy to focus on the meaning behind the words being read. Therefore, comprehension is negatively impacted by a student’s lack of fluent reading. Furthermore, Nathan and Stanovich
(1991) also found that fluency had a direct impact on comprehension: “Fluency may be almost a necessary condition for good comprehension and enjoyable reading experiences” (p. 176).

Fluency is important not only because of the relationship with comprehension, but also because of the relationship it has with overall reading ability. According to Young and Bowers (1995), non-proficient readers are less fluent and expressive than proficient readers. They noted in their investigation that when the non-proficient readers were given a text at their independent level, they were unable to read with as much expression as the proficient students who also read text at their individual independent level. These findings indicate that fluency, including the characteristic prosody, is correlated with overall reading ability.

Reading rate, another specific component of fluency, has also been correlated with comprehension (Dowhower, 1987; Rasinski, 1989). Slow reading is tied to low comprehension; thus, this type of student reads less, resulting in a slower progression through reading development (Rasinski, 2000). The ability to read a text at a normal pace or rate is one of the defining characteristics of fluency. Regardless of reading rate’s connection with comprehension, it has direct implications on reading ability. For example, if a reader spends an excessive amount of time reading a passage, he or she will be disadvantaged compared to other readers who read at a normal rate (Rasinski, et al., 2005). If a student is struggling to read at a normal pace, the student will have difficulty staying with the pace of the classroom instruction. The disfluent reader will fall behind in the assigned readings. According to Rasinski, et al., reading at an excessively low rate can result in feelings of frustration, avoidance of reading, and failure in academic performance. So, it is evident that if students read at a very slow speed, even if comprehension is average, these students are still lacking when compared to the rate at which the
students are expected to read and complete assigned readings. These ideas support the argument that fluency is a critical component of reading.

Why Do Some Students Lack Fluency?

It is interesting that even though it is agreed upon that fluency is a necessary dimension of proficient reading, many students have not acquired this skill. Allington (1983) described five hypotheses as to why some students succeed in fluency while others lack fluency. Allington’s first explanation is that some students have not been exposed to fluent reading. These students might not have been around adults who modeled fluent reading behaviors. The second possible explanation for why some students do not acquire fluency, according to Allington, is termed the Matthew Effect (Stanovich, 1986). In the Matthew Effect, students who are proficient readers are more likely to receive feedback and encouragement to read with appropriate rate, accuracy, and expression. This encouragement causes students to read further and more often. On the other hand, poor readers receive less positive feedback and classroom instruction primarily focuses on decoding words. These struggling students are less likely to be encouraged to practice fluency skills. The third possible reason why some students succeed in fluency while others do not is that struggling disfluent readers usually are required to read text that is above their independent reading level (Allington). It is very unlikely that students who always have to read texts at their frustration level will acquire fluency. Students who experience frustration level text will more than likely give up trying to read the texts. Allington’s fourth explanation is that proficient fluent readers read more quickly; therefore, they have more time to read silently and to reread passages that are unclear. Finally, proficient readers know that it is important to read with appropriate expression (Allington).
Why Has Fluency Been Neglected?

The National Reading Panel Report (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) referred to fluency as a neglected component of reading. Even though fluency has been researched and evidence shows it to be an important aspect of reading development and achievement, many educators still do not teach or practice fluency skills in the classroom. Zutell and Rasinski (1991) believe that one possible reason for the lack of instruction of fluency skills is that fluency is defined quite differently amongst educators. In the confusion of what fluency really is, teachers might not know how to teach fluency since the definition is not always clear (Zutell, & Rasinski).

Bear (1991) proposed another reason that fluency instruction and theory is unclear for some teachers. In the past, fluency might have been overlooked due to the debate over phonics and whole language instruction. While teachers focused on determining which of the two philosophies were more appropriate, skills such as fluency were overlooked.

Allington (1983) and Zutell and Rasinski (1991) believe that another factor that might be contributing to the lack of fluency instruction is that most basal series do not emphasize fluency instruction, but rather an emphasis is placed on decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension. It appears that these instructional materials view fluency as an outcome of the ability to recognize words as opposed to being viewed as a contributing factor (Allington; Zutell & Rasinski).

Another reason for the lack of fluency instruction is that the subject of fluency is often neglected in pre-service teacher instruction (Dowhower, 1991; Rasinski, 1989). It is also interesting to note that most general education textbooks do not include a wealth of information about teaching fluency to students; even more disturbing is that some textbooks do not mention fluency at all (Dowhower; Rasinski).
Fluency may have been neglected because in the primary grades great emphasis is placed on word identification. Students should be taught how to decode words; however, according to Zutell and Rasinski (1991) if students are too focused on reading word-by-word, they will be less likely to be able to understand what they are reading as well as less able to use the flow of language to assist them in reading quickly and accurately.

According to the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) report, the neglect of instruction in fluency skills is beginning to wane as more research is being conducted that involves the investigation of fluency. The Panel emphasized that while fluency is now a more recognized dimension of reading, it still needs to be emphasized in classroom instruction and studied in the research field further.

What is Prosody?

Prosody is a construct of reading fluency which can be defined as the ability to read with appropriate intonation, stress, and duration (Allington, 1983; Dowhower, 1991; Schreiber, 1980). These features of prosody combine to result in expressive reading. Prosody can also be viewed as the ability to “project the natural intonation and phrasing of the spoken word upon the written text” (Richards, 2000, p. 535). In other words, prosody is the ability to read a text where the reader’s voice sounds natural, as if the reader was speaking in a conversation rather than “reading.”

In 1991, Schreiber described in detail the three features of prosody: intonation, stress, and duration. Intonation is the rise and fall of pitch when saying a word; for example, in the phrase one, two, three, a rise in pitch typically follows the ends of the first and second words. Stress is “syllabic prominence”; for example, in the word lecture, the first syllable is stressed (Schreiber). Duration is a length of time; certain words in different contexts may be pronounced for a longer
period of time. In conclusion, these features of prosody signal excitement, questioning, and other meanings that are not portrayed by words alone (Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005).

Prosody is a linguistic term that can also be described as the rhythmic and tonal aspects of speech: the music of oral language (Dowhower, 1991; Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005). Attainment of prosodic reading is demonstrated by the reader being able to “project the natural intonation and phrasing of the spoken word upon the written text” (Richards, 2000, p. 535). Prosodic reading is most commonly recognized as oral reading with appropriate expression. Non-prosodic readers are often described as reading with a monotone voice, without expression, and using inappropriate phrasing (Hudson, Lane, & Pullen). When a reader gives an oral rendition of a passage with appropriate expression, the words on the page are translated into reality. Reading with expression can allow readers as well as listeners to experience the written text more fully. When students give “voices” to the characters and demonstrate realistic expressions, the storyline comes to life.

The process behind prosody is complicated. Research has attempted to explain how and what processes allow readers to read with prosody. Schreiber (1980) suggested that prosodic features such as stress, duration, and intonation are contained within oral language. Prosodic features help readers to segment text into appropriate syntactic units and assist in creating meaning. In other words, while readers are reading text, they are organizing the information into suitable syntactical phrases. In written text, prosodic cues are absent, causing readers to rely on syntactic and structural cues to accurately segment the text. This is a difficult concept to acquire because the reader must focus only on morphologic and syntactic cues to determine how to phrase a passage (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974; Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003). Schreiber (1991) suggests that if a student is given decoding instruction and yet the student’s performance
continues to fail, the student might benefit from instruction in organizing text into appropriate
phrases. A student who has difficulty with phrasing is very easy to recognize based on the word-
by-word, monotonous rendition of text.

According to Dowhower (1991), there are six markers that encompass prosody: pausal
intrusions, length of phrases, appropriateness of phrases, final phrase lengthening, terminal
intonation contours, and stress. The connection is made between written text and oral language
when readers correctly use these six prosodic markers.

Dowhower (1991) defines pausal intrusions as the inappropriate use of pauses or
hesitations within a single word or a syntactic phrase. The following are examples of pausal
intrusions: (a) do // g, (b) the // dog, or (c) on // the log. Length of phrase is similar to pausal
intrusions. Length of phrase simply refers to the amount of words a student is able to read in a
phrase before reaching a pausal intrusion or a natural pause. With practice, children are able to
increase the average length of phrases. Appropriateness of phrases refers to the ability of the
student to not just read in phrases, but in appropriate phrases. Dowhower considered appropriate
phrases to be ones that are syntactically and phonologically correct. Phrase-final lengthening
refers to the event when “the last stressed syllable of a phrase is longer than the same syllable in
a non-phrase-final position” (Dowhower, p. 167). Intonation contours refers to the rise and fall of
pitch, which are clues to the chunking or organization of syntactic information. This concept is
easily recognized when a question is asked; in this type of sentence there is a rising intonation
contour at the end of a question. Another example of an intonation contour is the downward
pitch glide signifying the end of a sentence. Stress can be defined as the intensity with which a
phoneme, syllable, or word is spoken. Stress can also refer to accenting or emphasizing specific
phrases or sentences.
Why is Prosody Important?

Prosody is a vital construct of fluency because of the major role it plays in proficient reading and comprehension. Proficient readers not only read with appropriate speed and accuracy, but also with accurate phrasing and expression (Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003). According to Dowhower (1991), “the melodies and rhythms of our language appear to play a significant role in how young children process both written and spoken language” (p. 168).

Research shows that young children are highly aware of the prosodic features of oral language (Dowhower, 1991; Schreiber, 1987). Children as young as infants rely on prosodic features to help discover the syntax of their language. It is also interesting to note that infants’ babbling follows the “characteristics inherent in the prosody of their spoken language” (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003, p. 6). Not only are children highly aware of prosodic features of language, but they depend on these prosodic cues for creating meaning more than adults (Schreiber). It can be assumed that since children rely so heavily on prosodic cues in oral language to determine meaning, it is very likely that children rely on these features to assist in developing meaning of written text (Allington, 1983; Dowhower; Schreiber, 1991). Therefore, prosody plays a major role in creating overall early reading development.

Dowhower’s (1991) six prosodic markers described earlier, excluding pausal intrusions, are all behaviors that are evident in proficient readers. First, according to a study performed by Eagen (1975), children who scored low in comprehension also exhibited more pausal intrusions (first marker) than those children who had higher comprehension scores. In a study performed by Dowhower (1987), it was found that with repeated readings students were able to increase length of phrases (second marker) as well as comprehension. Also, non-proficient readers read in
inappropriate phrases (third marker), while proficient readers read with appropriate phrasing. It was found that students who use phrase-final lengthening (fourth marker) generally understand how to chunk text into meaningful phrases. Students who read with appropriate intonation contours (fifth marker) were among the highest performing readers; the lowest performing readers used inappropriate intonation contours (Clay & Imlach, 1971). Stress (sixth marker) is also a prosodic feature that proficient readers utilize. Clay and Imlach discovered that proficient readers used an appropriate number of words stressed in a sentence, compared to non-proficient readers who stressed more than one time per word.

It is evident that prosody and comprehension are closely connected, but the exact nature of this relationship is uncertain. Some studies have found correlation relationships between comprehension and prosody. One study found that students who rated higher on a prosody scale also scored higher on the main NAEP reading proficiency test (Pinell et al., 1995). Dowhower (1987) found that when comprehension increased, prosodic reading increased as well.

Studies such as a meta-analysis performed by Kuhn and Stahl (2003) have found that fluency instruction increases comprehension. In their study, they also noted that speeded recognition of isolated words did not increase comprehension. It was concluded that rate and accuracy alone does not increase comprehension; therefore, prosody plays a major role in assisting students in understanding written text. The National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) stated that students need to acquire prosody to fully comprehend written text. There is also research showing that children who are unable to chunk text into syntactically meaningful phrases have comprehension deficits (Clay & Imlach, 1971; Eagen, 1975).
Prosody allows a reader to bring the text to life and to form meaning based on appropriate expression. The written language can at times be deceiving. Identical sentences written on a page can hold radically different meanings. For example, *Can you believe that she did that?* may be interpreted several ways if the sentence is written and not spoken orally. This sentence can hold the meaning of shock and amazement, or it could also be filled with anger and frustration. Prosodic elements cue the reader to bring surprise, anger, question, exclamation, and other meanings to the written text that are not visually evident.

Another important element of prosodic reading is the ability to convey the reader’s understanding of the text. Appropriate parsing of the text represents that students comprehend what they read (Clark, 1995; Young & Bowers, 1995). Kuhn and Stahl (2003) state that, “Prosodic reading provides evidence that the reader understands what is being read” (p. 6). In other words, the manner in which a student reads a passage should demonstrate understanding by producing a syntactically correct rendition of the written text. These prosodic readings contain clues as to “an otherwise invisible process; they act as indicators of the reader’s comprehension” (Kuhn & Stahl, p. 6).

Chafe (1988) suggests another reason why prosodic development is a vital skill for students to acquire. Chafe discusses that it is quite likely that prosody plays an important role in skillful writing. An author constantly monitors his or her writing by reading silently with prosody. This internal silent prosody helps an author to develop the craft of writing.

Why are Some Students Unable to Read with Prosody?

The same reasons that some student do not read with overall fluency could also explain why some students do not read with prosody. There are, however, specific explanations for why
students might not be able to master the prosodic feature of fluency. This section will address these explanations.

For a student to read fluently, he or she needs to have an appropriate grasp on rate, accuracy, and prosody. If prosody is neglected, one of the three main components of fluency is being ignored. According to Cowie, Douglas-Cowie, and Wichmann (2002), prosody is the area of fluency study that is most often neglected in research and in literacy instruction programs. This lack of research and study on the role and importance of prosody implies that prosody is not as important a component of fluency as its partners, rate and accuracy. Many articles focus on improving student oral reading rate and accuracy (Cowie, Douglas-Cowie, & Wichmann). It is evident, based on the number of articles and research about rate and accuracy, that these two components are the aspects of fluency that have been most commonly viewed as the defining or most important characteristics of fluency. If prosody is not studied in research and students are not given opportunities to practice prosody in the classroom, it is unlikely that many students will acquire prosody (Cowie, Douglas-Cowie, & Wichmann). One possible reason for not devoting tremendous amounts of research to prosody is that expression and phrasing are more difficult to measure than rate and accuracy. Dowhower (1991) believes, “However, as a component of fluency, reading with expression has been a vague instructional phrase, rarely defined explicitly either by teachers or by texts on teaching reading” (p. 165).

Another reason that reading with prosody can be very difficult for readers to master is that the written text does not specifically instruct the reader how to prosodically read the passage. An example given by Schreiber (1991) illustrates this point: the sentence, Jack and Jill / went up the hill / to fetch a pail of water, has two phrasal breaks. These phrasal breaks are examples of prosodic features that are invisible in written text. Readers must take their knowledge of
semantics and syntax and apply it to the written text. A critical skill of fluent reading is the ability to supply the prosodic features in a text, even though the features are not graphically represented (Schreiber, 1980). For students reading orally, it might be difficult to read with expression as well as to phrase the text appropriately because the text often times does not leave clues for the reader as to appropriate phrasing. Schreiber also suggests that fluent readers compensate for the lack of prosodic information present in written text by relying on morphemic, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic cues. The reader uses these cues to assist in arranging the text into meaningful phrases, resulting in the ability to read with appropriate prosody. In this situation, non-prosodic readers fail to recognize the syntactic structure of written text. According to Schreiber (1991):

If children use prosody as one of the primary perceptual cues to indicate the appropriate syntactic phrasing of spoken sentences, and if the acquisition of reading fluency depends on the ability to chunk (written) sentences into syntactic phrases, then initial readers confront a potentially difficult task, even after they have acquired basic decoding skills. The reason, as indicated above, is that written sentences lack consistent graphic cues to phrase structure. (p. 162)

In traditional classroom literacy instruction, word identification strategies such as decoding or sight word recognition are emphasized while instruction in how to appropriately chunk words into appropriate syntactic phrases is rarely taught (Richards, 2000; Schreiber, 1991). It seems that teachers often believe that knowledge of syntax from oral language will be automatically transferred to oral reading. Efficient readers are often able to naturally apply this information without instruction, but on the other hand, for struggling readers, it can result in “unrewarding reading experiences that lead to less involvement in reading-related activities”
(Nathan & Stanovich, 1991, p. 177). According to Schreiber, these struggling readers do not necessarily have a deficit in syntax, but rather a deficit in transferring knowledge of oral language syntax onto written language syntax.

How Does Oral Reading Prosody Relate to Silent Reading Prosody?

A student reads a narrative passage silently, and in the student’s mind an “inner voice” is speaking. In the mind of this student, the sound of words is heard: the voices of the characters, the sounds of the environment in the story, and the excitement or tension of the moment present in the characters’ voices. The natural rhythm and melody of spoken language are apparent in the silent rendition of text. It is intuitive that internal or implicit prosody must be present in some readers; however, it is unclear exactly what types of readers exhibit silent reading prosody. It may be assumed that only students who have mastered oral reading prosody can possibly internalize the process. It also seems logical that if proficient readers are the ones who are able to read orally with prosody, then proficient readers may be able to read silently with prosody as well. Pikulski and Chard (2005) state that fluency is more than simply an oral reading ability; fluency should be defined as a silent reading behavior as well.

There are only a few research studies that have attempted to explore the hidden realm of silent or implicit prosody. According to Ashby and Clifton (2005), little experimental research exists that studies silent reading prosody. One researcher, Fodor (1988), briefly touched on the theory that while reading silently, readers employ prosody on written text. Fodor argued, “I assume that in silent reading a prosodic contour is imposed on the input string, and that the syntactic parser is sensitive to the prosodic phrase boundaries even though they were fabricated by the perceptual system itself” (p. 303). Fodor also argued that prosodic processors are fully innate and universal.
A study conducted by Ashby and Clifton (2005) investigated whether prosody occurs while reading silently. These researchers were interested in testing what they call the implicit prosody hypothesis, which is based on the idea discussed earlier by Fodor; this theory states that during silent reading readers are constructing prosodic contours. Ashby and Clifton report, “The presence of prosody during silent reading is intuitively apparent, as inner speech seems to mirror the intonation patterns of external speech” (p.89). It was theorized that if research could support evidence of prosody during silent reading, it would suggest that readers must bring prosodic information to the reading that is not present in the orthography, or written text.

In this study by Ashby and Clifton, the participants were required to read high and low frequency target words that contained either one or two stressed syllables; these target words were embedded within sentences. Therefore, words with one stressed syllable were compared to words with two stressed syllables (the selected words had the same number of letters and syllables). Lexical stress was measured by studying eye movement during the silent reading of the sentences. The results of this study found that lexical stress did impact eye movements. Words with two stressed syllables took longer to read and also received longer eye fixations than words with only one stressed syllable. This finding indicated that readers attend to stress while silently reading. It was also noted that stress cues are not present in written text; therefore, the readers supplied the phonological information during the silent reading.

In conclusion, based on the findings of this study, it is likely that stress and intonation patterns are present during silent reading, resulting in inner speech. The findings of this study indicated that during silent reading, proficient readers create “phonological representations that include prosodic information”; it also supported Fodor’s theory (1988) that readers utilize prosody while reading silently.
Chafe (1988) also makes an argument that there is introspective evidence for the presence of prosody in silent reading. Chafe suggests that when writing, a person sub-vocalizes the words, and the intonations of those words are heard in the mind. Also, when a person reads silently, he or she “experiences auditory imagery of specific intonation, accents, pauses, rhythms, and voice qualities, even though the writing itself may show these features poorly if at all” (p. 397). Chafe also comments that this covert prosody is something that should be quite apparent to a reflective writer or reader. It was also noted that internal prosody is equated to oral prosody that is demonstrated when the text is being read aloud. Chafe reasoned that to demonstrate a reader’s silent prosodic reading ability, the reader should be asked to produce the reading orally while trying to duplicate the exact way it sounded when the text was read silently. In other words, “Reading aloud converts written language into spoken language, spoken language necessarily has a prosody, and from that prosody we can see (or, better, hear) the prosody that is hidden in the writing” (p. 405).

Chafe was interested in discovering how punctuation relates to internal prosody. The author made the conclusion that it would be feasible to study the relationship between punctuation and prosody by comparing the read aloud prosody of a text with the punctuation of that text. For this study, 20 college students were asked to read a written text orally into a tape recorder. The readings were analyzed for prosodic markers and compared to the presence or absence of punctuation for the prosodic behaviors demonstrated. It was found that while punctuation did prompt prosodic behaviors, there were also many prosodic behaviors that were not signaled by punctuation marks in the writing. Chafe concluded that readers use additional written language signals in addition to punctuation to read with internal prosody.
Another study performed by Steinhauer (2003) attempted to explore the inner voice that Chafe discussed earlier. Steinhauer explained the concept of internal prosody as the phenomenon that demonstrates the introspective experiences of written text, which in turn activates the texts’ corresponding phonological representations. Steinhauer describes silent prosody as covert, subvocal, and implicit. Like Chafe, Steinhauer theorized that silent reading prosody is impacted by punctuation. Steinhauer determined that to study this phenomenon it would be necessary to incorporate a method called event-related potentials. This method reflects the real time electrophysiological brain activity of processes that are time-locked with the viewing of target stimuli (Steinhauer, 2003). Steinhauer’s research examined six studies that utilized event-related potentials to examine the relationship of prosody and punctuation. The conclusions of all six studies discovered that the inner voice or internal prosody is impacted by punctuation.

Without purposeful exploration it cannot be known what is occurring in the mind of a student while reading silently. It is difficult to obtain knowledge about silent reading prosody because it is not observable. Baer (2005) discussed frustration at not being able to know what is occurring in the minds of students during silent reading. In a study by Baer, the Symbolic Reading Inventory was utilized in the classroom. The Symbolic Reading Inventory, created by Edmiston (1990), attempts to represent visually the experiences encountered while reading silently. In this inventory the students are asked to place themselves, in their minds, as participants or observers of a scene in the story. The students then create the scene by manipulating torn paper to form a collage. The students then are asked to explain what they were feeling, hearing, seeing, and tasting while reading the story.

Baer (2005) found that sounds (prosody) as well as images were occurring in the minds of adolescent readers while reading silently. During silent reading one student heard the buzzing
of dreams floating in the air above him while reading. Another student heard nothing because the scene of the story was very quiet and still. One student heard the sound of a fire truck and voices screaming during a silent reading of a story about a fire. In another silent reading session, a student heard the sound of crows. All these students demonstrated characteristics of silent reading prosody. The students were able to experience the sound of the stories in their minds. It was also discovered that these students experienced the story in other ways such as mental images and smells derived from the scenes of the story. In conclusion, Baer discovered that the students in this study were showing signs of silent reading prosody.

Why is Silent Reading Prosody Important?

Proficient silent reading is generally the end goal of reading instruction (Stayter & Allington, 1991). Teachers strive to move students from reading only orally to being able to read silently in a proficient manner. As students exit the primary grades, greater expectation is placed on independent silent reading (Stayter & Allington). Pikulski and Chard (2005) pointed out the fact that most readers spend the majority of the time reading silently as compared to a miniscule amount reading orally. While oral fluency is critical, especially for students not developmentally ready to focus on silent reading, silent reading fluency lacks the same amount of current research. It can be assumed that the reasons oral reading prosody is important would also apply to silent reading prosody. Students need to be able to orally and silently read text accurately at an appropriate rate and with prosody. Since it has been discussed why oral prosody specifically is an important construct of fluency, silent reading prosody should be equally as important. However, research dealing with oral prosody is available, while silent reading prosody has barely been explored.
How are Rate, Accuracy, and Prosody Assessed?

The most common way to assess fluency is to calculate reading accuracy. To get this score the total number of words read correctly is divided by the total number of words read. This number is converted to a percent; this percent is the student’s reading accuracy.

Reading rate can be measured by having a student orally read a passage for one minute. The assessor identifies how many words were read correctly in that time period. This number is the student’s words per minute score. Norms can be used to compare a student’s words per minute rate with the student’s range of expectation for words per minute.

The methods mentioned above are formulaic ways to accurately assess rate and accuracy of reading, but assessing prosody relies on observation of an oral reading. To assess prosody an assessor should have a check list or form to record what prosodic features were demonstrated during an oral reading. The assessor should also note which prosodic behaviors were demonstrated onto a copy of the text that the student is reading. When assessing in this way, there are certain prosodic features to look for: inflection of voice, appropriate phrasing, stress, smoothness of phrasing, appropriate use of pausing, and expression. Assessors should also look for examples of fluency errors such as inappropriate pauses, sounding out words, multiple attempts, ignoring punctuation, inappropriate or lack of intonation and stress, and word-by-word reading (Zutell, & Rasinski, 1991).

After the assessor listens to the student read orally and marks observed behaviors on a copy of the passage, this information can be used to give a rating based on a fluency scale. Zutell and Rasinski (1991) designed a multidimensional fluency scale which educators can use to rate reader ability in three dimensions of fluency. The three dimensions that this scale measures are phrasing, smoothness, and pace. For each dimension of fluency there are four stages in which a
student can be placed. Statements of each stage are provided for teachers to easily determine what levels a student falls into for each dimension. The level 1 stages are the lowest level of fluency attainment and the level 4 stages are the highest level of fluency attainment.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (2000) also created a 4-point oral performance assessment scale; this measured fluency by distinguishing levels of prosody. Levels 1 and 2 represent behaviors of non-prosodic readers. Levels 3 and 4 represent behaviors demonstrated by prosodic readers. In this assessment scale, level 1 represents the least fluent prosodic behaviors and level 4 represents the most fluent prosodic behaviors.

Allington (1983) also created a prosody assessment scale. This assessment scale ranged from level 1 to level 6. The first level indicates behaviors of less prosodic behaviors and level 6 represents behaviors of the most prosodic readers.

What Are Ways That Educators Can Foster Fluency?

According to Rasinski, et al. (2005), fluency is acquired as other reading skills are: through exploration, exposure, instruction, and practice. Some students may acquire fluency naturally and without explicit instruction. However, according to Pinnell et al. (1995), even in classrooms that have rich literacy experiences, many students are unable to obtain oral reading fluency on their own. Consequently, educators need to include fluency instruction and activities that will teach students how to master and internalize fluency skills. There are many techniques that educators can use to develop fluent reading. Many of the activities address and strengthen the three components of fluency: rate, accuracy, and prosody.

Zutell and Rasinski (1991) state that a rich fluency program will include modeling of fluent reading a variety of literature that is within the independent reading level, available texts that demonstrate natural use of oral language that lends itself to being read with expression, and
experiences that allow for practice of fluency skills by repeated readings. One way to model fluency is to practice using read alouds in daily classroom instruction. Reading aloud to children allows students to experience what fluent reading sounds like (Worthy & Broaddus, 2002).

The most powerful activity that promotes the development of rate, accuracy, and prosody is the repeated readings technique (Dowhower, 1994; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003). Repeated readings involve the students rereading text to practice rate, accuracy, and prosody. It stands to reason that if a student practices reading a passage and becomes comfortable with that text he/she will read more quickly, more accurately, and with more expression. Rasinski (1989) found that repeated readings improve reading fluency as well as general reading proficiency. Another exciting finding is that repeated readings not only increase fluency and comprehension on practiced texts but it also increases overall reading performance on passages not encountered (Rasinski, et. al., 2005). Therefore, when students practice reading a particular section multiple times, it results in improved performance of all readings.

Several activities that incorporate the use of repeated readings can be incorporated in classroom instruction to add variety to typical repeated readings. Students can practice reading lyrics to favorite raps or songs. Classrooms can also incorporate open mike days where students are encouraged to read and reread poems, stories, raps, or songs for their classmates or small groups. Another way to incorporate repeated readings in the classroom is to pair older students with younger students. The older student can practice reading a story that will be read to the younger student (Sample, 2005).

Another activity to promote fluency is termed listening-while-reading. This activity requires that the student read a text while listening to a fluent reading of the same text.
According to Schreiber (1980), presenting a fluent oral rendition of a text is more effective than repeated readings without listening to the text being read simultaneously. Rasinski (1989) found that repeated readings and listening-while-reading were equally effective in promoting fluent reading. This activity is also referred to as assisted reading (Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003).

According to Worthy and Prater (2002), Readers Theatre is an activity that promotes fluency, and specifically prosodic development. In Readers Theatre students create scripts and use their voices and body language to communicate the message of the story. Since students rehearse the lines in preparation for a performance in front of an audience, they are unknowingly engaging in repeated readings. This type of fluency activity provides students with authentic purposes for engaging in repeated readings. The benefits are the same as repeated reading with the addition that involvement in Readers Theatre often results in positive attitudes towards readings (Worthy & Prater).

Another activity suggested by Hudson, Lane, and Pullen (2005) that is similar to Readers Theatre and that can be used with older students is called radio reading. Students create recorded copies of scripts, poems, or song lyrics. These tapes can be listened to repeatedly. This activity specifically fosters prosody because the students need to communicate certain emotions or ideas only through vocal expression. Listeners also have the benefit of being exposed to oral prosodic reading.

An activity to develop the ability to appropriately phrase written texts into syntactically appropriate units is the practice of phrase-cued texts. Phrase-cued text is an instructional activity that will assist students in identifying and using appropriate phrasing while reading orally. In this method, a text is marked with lines at the appropriate phrase breaks (Rasinski, 1994). In 1990, Rasinski found in a meta-analysis that a significant majority of studies found that the use of
phrase-cued texts resulted in positive results. Rasinski also discovered that phrase-cued texts may facilitate overall reading performance.

Summary

This chapter discussed the characteristics and importance of fluency and specifically the component prosody, or the ability to read with appropriate phrasing, intonation, and expression. Fluency is the ability to read with appropriate speed, accuracy, and prosody, or expression, in a manner that is smooth and effortless (Clark, 1995; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Zutell & Rasinski, 1991). A review of literature found that fluency is a vital component of reading and a characteristic of proficient readers (Allington, 1983; Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005; Nathan & Stanovich, 1991; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Zutell & Rasinski, 1991). It was also discovered that fluency is important for students to acquire because it is linked with comprehension and overall reading ability (Allington, 1983; Dowhower, 1991; Samuels, 1988; Schreiber 1987).

There are several models of reading development that explain how and when fluency is acquired. One such theory, according to Chall (1983), argues that fluency is acquired after a student has attained a basic concept of print and has mastered the necessary decoding skills. Literature found regarding fluency often mentioned that fluency was a neglected component of reading and, therefore, students are not achieving fluency goals. Bear (1991) proposed a potential reason that fluency instruction and theory has been neglected: in the past, fluency might have been overlooked due to the debate over phonics and whole language instruction.

Literature was reviewed to discover the characteristics of prosody, the importance of prosody, and the existence of current research on the topic of prosody. Prosody is a construct of reading fluency which can be defined as the ability to read with appropriate intonation, stress,
and duration (Allington, 1983; Dowhower, 1991; Schreiber, 1980). The research studies analyzed indicated that prosody is a key characteristic of fluency (Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003); prosody is critical because it demonstrates a reader’s ability to understand the text being read (Clark, 1995; Young & Bowers, 1995). According to Cowie, Douglas-Cowie, and Wichmann (2002), prosody is the area of fluency study that is most often neglected in research and in literacy instruction programs. If prosody is neglected, students are not likely to master prosody.

Silent reading prosody’s characteristics and value were also examined in the literature review. It was found that little experimental research exists that studies silent reading prosody (Ashby & Clifton, 2005). The studies that were performed relating to silent reading prosody indicated that prosody does occur during silent reading (Ashby & Clifton; Chafe, 1988; Fodor, 1988; Steinhauer, 2003). Research also indicates that silent reading prosody is present in proficient readers (Ashby & Clifton, 2005; Baer, 2005). Since it is known that oral reading prosody is vital for students to master, it can also be theorized that silent prosody would be vital as well, especially since an end goal of reading is to be able to read silently (Stayter & Allington, 1991).

This chapter also reviewed literature that discusses how to measure fluency, as well as examining numerous examples of activities to encourage fluency, and specifically prosody, such as Readers Theatre and guided repeated readings (Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003).
CHAPTER III. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Fluency is a critical component of reading development which has been shown to be correlated with comprehension and overall reading ability (Allington, 1983; Dowhower, 1991; Samuels, 1988; Schreiber 1988). Prosody—the ability to read with appropriate tone, pitch, stress, and duration, the combination of which results in expressive reading—is one of the key characteristics of fluent reading. However, prosody appears to be the component that is most often ignored in research and classroom practice. Essentially, there is a lack of information on the processes that occur while students read silently with regard to internal prosody. However, there is also a lack of research focusing on how and when students acquire oral reading prosody, and the relationship between oral prosody and silent internal prosody. This study attempted to explore these issues by addressing the following questions: Do third-, fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade readers exhibit oral reading prosody behaviors, to what extent, and how do the students acquire these behaviors? How do oral prosodic readers internalize oral prosodic behaviors into silent reading prosody?

Methods

Research Design

This research study consisted of assessments and interviews, the results of which were combined into multiple case studies. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2003), a case study carefully examines specific aspects of a given subject. The findings of these case studies were compared and contrasted. While this study consisted of a mixed-methodology approach, incorporating combinations of qualitative and quantitative research methods, it focused primarily on utilizing the qualitative research approach. According to Mertler and Charles (2005), quantitative research can be described as research that studies factors and issues by obtaining and
evaluating numerical data. Bogdan and Biklen describe the goal of qualitative research as focusing on rich, descriptive data rather than on numerical data. This approach often strives to view situations and issues from the subject’s point of view; as a result, the research population is viewed as individuals with a story to tell rather than simply a number to analyze (Bogdan & Biklen).

In this study, an initial screening fluency assessment was conducted. The goal of the screening was to determine statistically how many students in the given grades of the selected school were actually achieving the expected level of fluency for this age, making this assessment a quantitative research method. The next method utilized was a comprehensive, individually administered oral prosody assessment which served to quantitatively measure the selected students’ specific prosody levels. Lastly, students were interviewed individually. Interviews, which rely on narrative data, are generally viewed as a qualitative research method (Mertler & Charles).

Subjects

A small co-education private school located in northwest Ohio was selected for participation in this study. This school incorporates classrooms composed of students of mixed ages. There are three classrooms that consist of a combination of third- and fourth-grade students. This school also has four separate classrooms that are composed of a combination of fifth- and sixth-grade students. Each of the classrooms has a total of about 13-15 students. This school is categorized as an independent co-education private school. There are 475 students attending this school, ranging from preschool through Grade 12. The student teacher ratio is 10:1. The student body is represented by 28 different cultures: students of color comprise 24% of the student population. According to past records, 100% of graduating seniors have attended
college. This school was selected based on its reputation for being a highly prestigious school. It was theorized that this school would have a large population of proficient readers. Selecting a school that has a large number of proficient readers who are more likely to demonstrate oral prosody would provide a larger sample from which students could be selected for further study who will present rich information about how they read silently with prosody.

All third-, fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students who agreed to participate in this study (parent consent was also given) were given an oral prosody screening assessment. Of the students who were determined to have obtained some level of prosody, four students—one from each grade level—were selected to participate in further assessments and interviews. Selection was based on information gathered from the classroom teachers with regard to which students were most likely to provide rich information in the interview session. This study did not focus on whether or not the selected students were male or female, or belong to a specific race. The children’s and teachers’ personal information and identifications were protected; the students and teachers were assigned pseudonyms for this study.

**Instrumentation**

This study employed three instruments: (a) oral prosody screening, (b) oral prosody assessment, and (c) silent prosody interview. The oral prosody screening was individually administered by the author. This screening was an assessment that consisted of one narrative passage. The purpose of this screening assessment was not to determine what specific level of oral reading prosody each student had reached, but simply whether or not each student read with some level of prosody. The end goal of this screening was to gather a number of students from which to select future participants for the remainder of the study. The screening assessment was based on an oral prosody scale created by Zutell and Rasinski (1991). The scale was adapted and
used to in essence weed out non-prosodic readers from the population. The students read a passage and the assessor marked comments and prosodic behaviors on a copy of the narrative text for each student screened. Each of the students screened was assigned a score based on the criteria given in the rubric for the Zutell and Rasinski oral prosody scale. Only students who read with some level of prosody (scoring either a 3 or 4) on the three categories of prosody were considered to participate further in this study.

This study also incorporated a more in-depth oral prosody assessment of the four students who were selected for further analysis. The oral prosody assessment tool was a more thorough assessment based on the oral prosody scale created by Zutell and Rasinski (1991) that was used in the previous oral prosody screening. The oral prosody assessment was very similar to the oral prosody screening with the exception that more time was spent accurately recording all of the prosodic behaviors demonstrated by the readers. This assessment tool measured what level of oral prosody each of the four students had achieved.

Lastly, this study incorporated individually conducted interviews. Students were asked to read passages and subsequently asked questions about their silent reading prosody experiences. The purpose of the silent reading prosody interviews was to gather information about each individual’s silent reading experiences and to determine if silent reading prosody exists, and if so what this reading characteristic is like.

Procedures

*Oral Prosody Screening*

Consenting third-, fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students at the selected school were first given an oral prosody screening. The screening was given to students individually and was administered in a quiet location. Students read one narrative passage orally. There were several
different narrative passages available for use in this screening; passages were at the average independent reading level for each of the four grades, based on input from the classroom teacher (see Appendix A). While the student was reading the assessor marked a few comments on copies of the narrative passages that were being read. The assessor then marked the grading sheet with the appropriate markings (see Appendix B). Scoring was based on a prosody fluency assessment scale created by Zutell and Rasinski (1991). Students were graded on whether or not they exhibited behaviors of a prosodic reader (scoring 3’s or 4’s which are the two levels used in this prosody scale which indicate prosodic reading). For the passage, the assessor determined whether the student read with some level of prosody. The assessor completed a grading rubric that listed the criteria for meeting level 3 or 4. The assessor check-marked all behaviors that were demonstrated and the students were assigned either a level 3 (the minimal level of prosodic reading), level 4 (considered adequate level of prosodic reading), or a 0 (for non-prosodic reading) for each category (Phrasing and Expression, Smoothness, and Pace). These scores were transferred to an Excel spreadsheet. The oral prosody screening was individually administered and took approximately five minutes to complete.

Students who were identified as possessing some characteristics of level 3 or 4 prosodic readers were considered for further examination. Of these students, four individuals were selected for further assessment and interview. The selection of these students was based on information obtained from the classroom teachers on which students were the most likely to present rich detailed information in the interview session.

Oral Prosody Assessment

Each of the four selected students participated in a comprehensive oral prosody assessment that used two different texts, one narrative passage and one expository passage (see
Appendix C) from the passages used for the oral prosody screening. Again, the oral prosody assessment was individually administered, and the passages matched the independent reading level of each of the four students based on input from each of the students’ classroom teachers. The assessment served to determine what level of prosodic fluency each student had attained. This assessment was basically the same sort of assessment as used in the oral prosody screening, except that this assessment examined both a narrative and expository passage and it also studied more thoroughly the prosodic behaviors demonstrated by the students. In other words, more time was spent recording and evaluating the reading behaviors shown by the students when orally reading two new passages. While students were reading, the session was being audio recorded so that the researcher could review the tapes at a later time for accuracy. The assessment was developed based on the oral prosody assessment created by Zutell and Rasinski (1991) and was used as the grading scale for the oral prosody assessment. The assessor later listened to the recordings of the readings several times for each student. While listening to the tape the assessor marked behaviors on copies of the passages. For example, all phrasing was marked—beginning to end of a phrase was indicated by an arch over the group of words that were in the spoken phrase. Words or punctuation that were ignored were crossed out. Words that were emphasized or parts of a word that received more emphasis had a box drawn around the word. Words or punctuation that received great emphasis or expression were circled. Other comments regarding use of character voices or expression were written in the margin of the paper. As a whole, these notes were compared to the scoring rubric created by Zutell and Rasinski. The assessor used the comments made on the passages and the grading rubric to assign scores for each of the three categories of prosody. The scores for each of the four students were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet (see Appendix D).
Silent Reading Prosody Interview

Immediately following the oral prosody assessment each of the four students was interviewed individually. The entire interview was audio recorded and transcripts were created after the interviews. The recordings were listened to several times and the transcripts were analyzed. At the beginning of the interview, each student read a new narrative passage silently and then was asked a series of interview questions about what occurred in his or her mind while reading (see Appendices E & F). Again, each student had a narrative passage that was at his or her independent reading level. The questions attempted to determine what, if any, prosodic features were present during silent reading. Questions were asked that analyzed how prosody was utilized or absent in silent reading for these particular students. The interview concluded with a few more general questions such as how the student learned to read with prosody and how reading with prosody helped the student to be a better reader. The oral prosody assessment and the silent reading prosody interview took each student approximately 30 minutes to complete. The passages used for the oral prosody assessment and the silent reading prosody interview were carefully selected to ensure that each student was reading text that was at his or her independent reading level; therefore, levels of fluency were not tainted due to word recognition errors.

Data Collection

The scores for the initial oral prosody screening were recorded in an Excel document, as were the comprehensive oral prosody assessment data for the four selected students. The responses from the interviews were recorded using a digital audio recorder and then later transcribed into a single Word document together with handwritten notes taken during the interview.
Data Analysis

First, an analysis of the number of students in the third through sixth grades who were able to read with some level of prosody was examined. Analyses of the scores indicated what percent of each grade and of all the grades combined were achieving fluency. Next, an examination of the results of the comprehensive oral prosody assessments was performed. Results of the comprehensive prosody assessment were recorded and compared amongst the four selected students. Next, the interview transcripts for the silent reading prosody interview were studied. An analysis of each student’s interview session was written. Threads of similarity or trends amongst the interview responses was examined and analyzed. Patterns of behavior and responses were studied and described in narrative format. Connections between silent and oral reading prosody behaviors were also evaluated. How students internalize oral reading prosody was specifically examined. Finally, the findings were described, analyzed, and interpreted, followed by comparing and contrasting the results amongst the four case studies.

Summary

Consenting students in the third-, fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grades at a private school in northwest Ohio participated in a research study designed to provide insight into several questions relating to fluency. All of the participating students were given an oral prosody screening assessment to determine if they were able to read with any amount of prosody. Four selected students from this group participated in a comprehensive oral prosody assessment and a silent reading prosody interview. The assessment and interview served to collect data about the relationship between oral reading prosody and silent reading prosody. The information gathered from the assessment and interview was qualitatively analyzed and recorded in narrative format. This research study attempted to discover the status of student acquisition of prosody, the
relationship between oral reading performance and silent reading prosody, how these oral reading prosody behaviors translate to silent reading prosody behaviors, and finally, what silent reading prosody behaviors are present in these third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grade readers.
CHAPTER IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

In recent years more research has focused on studying fluency, but little research has focused on the fluency component called prosody. Prosody is the component of fluency that describes the ability to read with appropriate phrasing, intonation, and expression (Allington, 1983; Dowhower, 1991). Rate and accuracy are the components of fluency that are most often studied in the research and literature available about fluency instruction and assessment (Dowhower, 1991). This model of fluency ignores one of the hallmarks of fluency achievement: prosody (Schwanenflugel, Hamilton, Kuhn, Wisenbaker, & Stahl, 2004). Reading with accuracy and speed is critical, but if prosody has not been mastered, it is unlikely that the student will completely understand what is being read (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Rasinski, 2004). Little research has been done with regard to how and when students acquire oral reading prosody, how it is most effectively taught, and finally, how many students actually obtain oral prosody. If fluency, particularly prosody, is ignored in textbooks, education research, teacher preparation, and classroom literacy instruction, students will be negatively affected. This component of reading has been neglected and requires thorough examination.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this investigation was to discover the status of student acquisition of prosody, how these oral reading prosody behaviors translate to silent reading prosody behaviors, and finally, what silent reading prosody behaviors are present in third-, fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade readers. This study attempted to answer the following questions: Do third-, fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade readers exhibit oral reading prosody behaviors, to what extent, and how do the students acquire these behaviors? How do oral prosodic readers internalize oral prosodic behaviors into what is termed “silent reading prosody”? Consenting students in the third-,
fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grades at a private school in northwest Ohio participated in a research study designed to provide insight into several questions relating to fluency. All of the participating students were given an oral prosody screening assessment to determine whether they were able to read with any level of prosody. Four selected students from this group participated in a comprehensive oral prosody assessment and a silent reading prosody interview. The assessment and interview served to generate data about the relationship between oral reading prosody and silent reading prosody. Chapter 4 contains results and an analysis of the oral prosody screenings, oral prosody assessments, and the silent reading prosody interviews.

**Oral Prosody Screenings**

This research study began by administering the oral prosody screening to all of the consenting third-, fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students. Students could score a 1, 2, 3, or 4 in each section the screening. The screening was divided into three areas of prosody that were to be examined: phrasing/expression, smoothness, and pace. The students were assigned a 1, 2, 3, or 4 for each of these three areas. Level 3 was reading with adequate prosody; level 4 demonstrated reading with the highest level of prosody.

A total of 11 third-grade students returned permission slips and agreed to participate in the study and were given the oral prosody screening. Of the 11 third-grade students, 100% read with some level of prosody. This means that all 11 third-grade students demonstrated oral prosody behaviors that were considered to be at the third or fourth level of oral prosody (level 1 and 2 represents non-prosodic reading behaviors and levels 3 and 4 represent proficient and most proficient prosodic reading behaviors). Of the third-grade students, four students or 36% read with the highest level of prosody (level 4) while seven students or 64% of the third-grade students scored either entirely at level 3 or a mixture of level 3 and level 4. A total of eight
fourth-grade students returned permission slips and agreed to participate in the study and were given the oral prosody screening. Of the eight fourth-grade students, 100% read with some level of prosody. This means that all eight fourth-grade students demonstrated oral prosody behaviors that were considered to be at the third or fourth level of oral prosody. Of the fourth-grade students, six students or 75% read with the highest level of prosody (level 4) while two students or 25% of the fourth-grade students scored a mixture of level 3 and level 4.

Because this school incorporated multi-age level classrooms, third- and fourth-grade students were grouped together. Of the 19 third- and fourth-grade students who took the oral prosody screening, 100% read with some level of prosody; ten students or 53% scored at the highest level of prosody and 9 students or 47% of the third- and fourth-graders scored either entirely at the level 3 or a mixture of level 3 and level 4. Also, none of the students scored at the level 1 or 2 for any of the three prosody categories.

Three fifth-grade students returned permission slips and participated in the oral prosody screening. Of the fifth grade students, 100% read with some level of prosody; two students or 67% read with a mixture of level 3 and level 4 ratings and one student or 33% read with a level 4 for each of the three prosody criteria categories. Six sixth-grade students returned permission slips and participated in the oral prosody screening. Of these sixth-grade students, 100% read with some level of prosody; 5 students or 83% of these sixth-grade students scored a level 4 in each of the three prosody categories while one student or 17% read with a mixture of level 3 and level 4 ratings.

This school incorporated multi-age classrooms, where fifth- and sixth-grade students are combined. Nine fifth- and sixth-grade students participated in the oral prosody screening. Of the nine students, 100% read with some level of prosody. Six of the nine, or 67% of the students,
scored a level 4 for each of the three categories of prosody. These students read with the highest level of prosody. Three of the nine, or 33% of the students, scored a mixture of level 3 and level 4 across the three prosody criteria categories. None of the students scored at the level 1 or 2 for any of the three prosody categories.

*Oral Prosody Assessments and Silent Reading Prosody Interviews*

To select the four students to participate in the oral prosody assessment and the silent reading prosody interview, the investigator talked with the lead teachers about which students would be the most reflective about the processes that occur while they read silently. Students who would be most likely to offer rich information about the processes that occur in their minds while they read silently were the preferred students for interviewing. The two lead teachers suggested the students whom they believed met this requirement. It was interesting that the students they suggested all scored at the highest level of prosody on the oral prosody screenings. The names used in this paper are pseudonyms.

*Melissa, Third Grader*

The first student was a third grade girl with a pseudonym of Melissa. She scored a level 4 in all three prosody categories on the oral prosody screening. It was noted that she read very expressively and presented the passages in a natural, conversational manner. Upon meeting Melissa, the researcher noted that she was very vocal and willing to converse. It did not appear that she felt uncomfortable or would have problems honestly sharing her responses.

*Oral Prosody Assessment.* Melissa was asked to read a passage orally from *Charlotte’s Web* (See Appendix C). While she was reading, her reading behaviors were recorded on a copy of the passage. As with the oral prosody screening, she again scored a level 4 for the phrasing/expression, smoothness, and pace portions.
The first area examined was phrasing and expression. On one criteria of the phrasing and expression category Melissa scored a level 3. Melissa tended to read very quickly and in doing this, she sometimes ignored punctuation marks such as commas or periods. She, at times, did not pause, causing a few of the sentences read to become run-ons. On the rest of the criteria for phrasing and expression, Melissa scored at a level 4. For example, Melissa read in a manner that preserved the appropriate syntax; she used wonderful expression, and read in large, meaningful phrase groups.

When examining the area of smoothness it was noted that Melissa read very smoothly. There were a few times where she would stumble over a word or make an error, but when this occurred she quickly corrected these mistakes.

Melissa’s pace was also a level 4. Her reading was consistently conversational. It was noted that at times her reading seemed rushed. It is possible that she thinks reading as quickly as possible is a characteristic of a good reader.

Overall, Melissa read the passage with ease. The area that stood out the most for Melissa was her ability to read with appropriate expression. It was clear that she understood the meaning of the passage because she spoke the words in a way that orally proved her comprehension. Her voice gave emotion to the characters, showing that she could relate to and understand the emotions behind the text. At one point in the passage it says, “‘Oh,’ she whispered. ‘Oh, look at him! He’s absolutely perfect.’” Melissa whispered this line and her voice had a dreamlike quality and was raised to a higher pitch. By listening to her read, the researcher almost believed that Melissa was actually Fern, the character in the story, and that she loved this baby pig. This type of reading is an example of how she understood what she was reading and that this understanding is demonstrated without even being given a comprehension examination.
Next, Melissa was asked to read an expository text about sea creatures from the book *Whales and Other Sea Creatures* (See Appendix C). Again, she scored a level 4 on the phrasing and expression, smoothness, and the pace portions. For the area of phrasing and expression Melissa overall scored a level 4. However, again, as with the narrative passage, she scored a level 3 for run-ons. Melissa tended to read very quickly and in doing so, she sometimes ignored punctuation marks such as commas and periods. On the rest of the criteria for phrasing and expression she scored at a level 4. For example, Melissa read in a manner that preserved the appropriate syntax, she used wonderful expression, and she read in large, meaningful phrase units. Even though this passage did not have any characters and contained limited expressive punctuation, Melissa still read with appropriate expression. She emphasized certain phrases in the manner a person would if they were talking rather than reading. For example, when the passage read, “And they are very smart,” Melissa emphasized the word ‘very’.

Similar to the narrative passage assessment, Melissa again scored a level 4 for smoothness, indicating that she read very smoothly. There were a few times where Melissa would stumble over a word or make an error, but when this occurred she quickly corrected these mistakes. Melissa appeared to be reading for meaning because the errors that she made were semantically and syntactically correct; if the mistakes were not semantically and syntactically correct, she always self-corrected these specific mistakes.

Again, Melissa scored a level 4 for pace. Her reading was consistently conversational. It was noted that at times her reading seemed rushed. As mentioned earlier, it is possible she thinks reading as quickly as possible is a sign of a good reader. It might be helpful to instruct Melissa that she does not need to read so quickly to be a good reader.
Melissa read the expository passage with ease. Even though there were not the opportunities to include as much expression, she still used proper stress and intonation to create a feeling of listening to someone who is speaking rather than reading. As with the narrative passage, it appeared that Melissa understood what she was reading based on the fact that she orally read the passage in a way that follows the rules of spoken language. Overall, the reading of this passage was a very prosodic rendering.

**Silent Reading Prosody Interview.** Melissa was asked to read another passage taken from *Charlotte’s Web* silently (See Appendix E). When she was finished reading, the examiner asked her the proposed interview questions. The interview began with the researcher informing Melissa that this interview was simply to learn more about how students read and that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions. The following were the results of the interview.

First Melissa was asked a few probing questions that attempted to determine if she saw images or heard sounds and voices while she read. Melissa stated that while reading silently she was able to see pictures corresponding with the story events in her mind. She also stated that it was similar to watching T.V.—in her mind, the pictures moved as she read the text. When asked about sounds, Melissa responded that when she hears a sound in a story she will use that sound again later in the story. Also, the sounds Melissa hears while reading sound like real sounds. “…it sounds real, like I really am hearing it. Like if you’re in an airplane and you have like things on [pantomimes putting on headphones] and you change the radio station to a story then it’s like that [when reading silently].” Melissa verified that reading silently is like listening to a book on tape in her mind.

The next portion of the interview attempted to determine more specifically if Melissa heard character voices while reading silently, and if so, how these voices sound. Melissa stated
that she does hear character voices in her mind when she reads silently. She described adult female voices as being older and having a medium voice. If the character is a younger girl, she hears a higher voice; if it is a boy she hears a higher low voice, and a man would have an especially low voice. She was then asked if these voices sounded similar to anyone whom she knew. Melissa stated that adult female voices sound like her aunt; adult male voices sound like her uncle; younger girls sound like her friend Jill, while younger boy characters do not sound like anyone she knows. Baby characters sound like what she imagines her baby sister will sound like when she’s born. Melissa also indicated that these are the way character voices sound in every type of story that she reads. Melissa said that she actually hears these voices in her mind and that it is not that she thinks or imagines that they should sound a certain way, but that the voices are actually heard. Melissa did not know why she hears these character voices while reading, but she thought that it might be due to the fact that she sees these people very often. She also stated that sometimes she hears her own voice when she is reading silently. This was described as her being an announcer; this happens when she reads narrator parts or parts of a story that are not characters’ speaking lines. Melissa said that while silently reading the selection from *Charlotte’s Web* she heard other sounds and saw images. She said that she heard the pigs squealing and she could see how small the pig was.

Next, certain portions of text were singled out and Melissa was asked to describe how the characters sounded in her mind when she read the *Charlotte’s Web* passage silently. Melissa was asked to describe the sounds and emotions heard when reading lines 1 and 2 of the passage. Melissa stated that Fern sounded like her friend Jill and that her voice was sad and mad. Then she was asked to read lines 33-35. The father was said to have sounded low and deep.
Melissa was next shown specific lines from *Charlotte’s Web* that she had read silently earlier and was then asked to read the lines aloud and to try and make her voice sound as identical as possible to the voice(s) that she heard in her mind when she read the same passage silently. First, when Melissa read lines 19-21, her voice became noticeably higher than it had in previous assessments, and she sounded upset and angry. Her voice accurately portrayed the emotions behind the text. Then she read lines 9-10. While doing so, she read in the same tone of voice as for lines 19-21, since it was the same character speaking. She sounded extremely angry and upset; at the end of the line she sounded like the character couldn’t believe what she was hearing. Next, she read lines 33-35. Her voice was very deep and sounded stern and authoritative.

Melissa was asked to silently read an expository passage from the book *Turtles, Toads, and Frogs* (See Appendix E). She was then asked if she heard any voices or sounds when reading this passage silently. Melissa said that she heard the “ribbeting” of the frogs and imagined their little sharp teeth digging into a branch. She also heard the adults breathing and she imagined the tadpoles munching on a leaf and then an adult frog eating a grasshopper. She heard her own voice when reading this passage silently. She said that she also heard the frogs’ voices “ribbeting and talking to each other as they bounced around.”

Melissa was then asked to describe how she had learned to read with expression. She indicated that while she was in preschool she started reading and that she kept reading better books and that she reads often. Her mom also used to (and still does) read with her at night, and they take turns reading pages. Melissa said that by doing this it helped her see the emotions. Her mother also taught her how the characters might speak and that helped her get an idea of how to read with expression. She also stated that teachers have emphasized reading with expression.
Melissa said that she likes listening to people read with expression and enjoys it when they give the characters different voices. She said that to listen to people read this way is more interesting and it helps her to understand what she is hearing.

Melissa stated that she believes reading with expression, giving characters voices, and hearing character voices all help her to be a better reader and help her understand what is happening and what might happen next. Reading with expression also helps her to understand the emotions and feelings of the characters. Melissa indicated that this type of reading helps her stay interested and want to keep reading or listening to a story.

Derek, Fourth Grader

*Oral Prosody Assessment.* Next, a fourth grade boy who will be referred to as Derek was given the oral prosody narrative passage assessment. Derek was asked to orally read a passage taken from *Charlotte’s Web* (See Appendix C). Derek scored a level 4 for phrasing and expression, smoothness, and pace. These scores were the same as those he achieved on the oral prosody screening. It was noted that his overall performance was similar to his performance on the screening, except that the narrative assessment passage was read in a more somber tone. The narrative assessment passage was not as silly as the screening passage, which Derek read with great gusto.

The first category assessed was the phrasing and expression category. Derek used excellent expression. He gave the characters voices, in that he would lower or raise the pitch of his voice to make them sound older, younger, male, or female. At one point, the text indicates that the character Fern whispers, and Derek whispered the line. A line says, “Wash your hands and face, Avery!” and at this point Derek spoke in a stern, authoritative voice. Derek continued “giving the characters voices” throughout the entire passage. This indicates that he had a grasp of
the meaning of the story and the given situations as well as the appropriate emotions that the characters might be feeling. Derek also read in appropriate phrases that matched the rules of oral language. Preservation of the author’s syntax was consistent throughout the passage.

The second prosody criteria category is referred to as smoothness. Derek read the narrative passage with relative smoothness. There were a few errors such as substitutions and deletions of words; however, the majority of errors were self-corrected. Also, it was noted that his errors were semantically and syntactically correct.

The final prosody criteria category is pace. Derek read the majority of the passage in a conversational pace. His rendition of the text for the most part sounded like spoken language or a conversation rather than an oral reading. His pace was appropriate, neither too fast nor too slow.

Derek’s unrehearsed oral reading performance was an overall prosodic level 4. He displayed all of the specified prosodic behaviors. The area that seemed to be this student’s strength was the component of expression. He masterfully assigned voices to the characters and was very consistent in using these specified voices. Derek did not read in an overly dramatic fashion, but he gave life to the written text. When the narrator was speaking Derek presented a soothing non-distinct voice. It was very clear that this student had a thorough understanding of the text being read. It might be assumed as with Melissa that this student would perform very strongly if given a comprehension exam.

Derek’s performance on the expository assessment passage was very similar to his previous assessments. He scored a level 4 on all three of the prosody categories. Again, his phrasing and expression were good. Derek did not have specific character voices due to the fact that the passage contained, for the most part, non-expressive expository language; however, Derek did manage to give the passage depth by varying his pitch and tone throughout the passage.
as one would do in a natural conversation rather than reading word-for-word in a monotone “lecture” voice. He read in large, meaningful phrases that preserved the author’s syntax. It was interesting to note that at certain passages Derek gave emphasis to particular words that graphemically offered no cue to do so. His emphasis was appropriate for the meaning of the sentence. For example, in the passage, “It drinks its mother’s milk and grows even bigger,” Derek emphasized the words “even bigger.” The way he said these words was perfectly acceptable and demonstrated his innate understanding of the rules of spoken language and prosody. Derek read the passage fairly smoothly and had a few breaks due to recognition errors that were usually self-corrected. Lastly, his pace was natural and consistently conversational.

It seemed fairly evident that Derek comprehended what he read based on the prosodic behaviors demonstrated in all of his oral reading assessments. Derek and Melissa seem to be very prosodic readers, especially considering that they are still relatively young readers.

**Silent Reading Prosody Interview.** Next, Derek was asked to silently read a passage from *Charlotte’s Web* (See Appendix E). It was noted that Derek was a very talkative and expressive young man. It seemed that he should be able to answer the interview questions honestly rather than trying to determine what the researcher wanted him to answer. The interview began with the researcher informing Derek that this interview was simply to learn more about how students read and that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions. The following were the results of the interview session.

The first questions asked of Derek were to attempt to identify whether or not he heard sounds or character voices when reading silently. Derek mentioned that the story comes alive when he reads silently because he can imagine things without talking out of turn. When people read to him he has to focus on listening to them, but when he reads to himself he is able to focus
on imagining the story without any distractions. Derek said that he can hear the characters’ voices and he can see the scenes in his mind: “I visualize it, and can hear what they’re saying. And I have a really good imagination. I can actually replay the scene in my head.” He related this to how it is when he dreams, hearing voices and seeing images. Next, Derek said that he hears the characters’ voices and sees where they are. In this given story he heard the school bus honking and he heard the man walking and making the grass go “crunch, crunch.”

Next, a few questions were asked to determine if the character voices that Derek hears are the voices of people that he knows. Derek said that the character voices are not voices of people that he knows, just voices that he makes up. Adult male characters have rough voices; women have a voice similar to the researcher of this study, girls’ voices sound like a young girl’s voice, and boys sound like a younger boy. Derek said that these are the way characters sound each time he reads silently.

A discussion was held about the way certain Charlotte’s Web characters sounded when Derek read them silently. First Derek silently reread lines 1 and 2. Derek said that Fern sounded sad and confused. Then Derek reread lines 9 and 10. He said that in these lines Fern sounded scared and worried. Lastly, Derek read lines 19-21, and in this passage he said Fern was unable to control herself anymore and was very upset. Derek said that in his mind Fern sounded like a girl his age, or maybe bigger than him. He also said that Mrs. Arable sounded like an adult mom who doesn’t like to cry a lot. Mr. Arable sounded like a farmer who thinks that the littlest pig doesn’t deserve to live. Derek said that the dad’s voice sounded a little bit like his voice.

Next, Derek was asked to silently reread a few passages and then try, as much as possible, to orally read the lines and make his voice sound as much like it did in his mind. First Derek read lines 1 and 2. His voice was very high and he spoke in a confused voice. Next, Derek
read lines 19-21. He again spoke in the same high voice, although this time he sounded angrier and disbelieving. Lastly, he read lines 33-35; in this passage Derek read with a low, deep voice. The voice of Mr. Arable sounded irritated, as though he was giving in to something he did not particularly want to do.

Derek was then asked to read an expository text from the book *Turtles, Toads, and Frogs* (See Appendix E). After he had finished reading, he was asked whether or not he heard voices when he read this passage silently. Derek’s response was, “I heard toads croaking and shishishsihs…and ribbit rabbit.” Derek also said that the narrator voice sounded like a man on one of the animal information television shows.

Derek was then asked if reading with expression makes him a better reader. He responded that it does. Derek said sometimes he will read books twice because they sound different in his mind than when he listened to them the first time being read aloud. He said that when he listens to people read aloud, he is focusing on remembering everything the person reads and does not focus on imagining the pictures and sounds that go with the text. He said that when he reads silently, he is able to imagine the voices and images in his mind. Derek mentioned that hearing the character voices helps him to better understand the story.

Derek also mentioned that he enjoys being read to with expression. He explained that one of his teachers will read a story and stop reading at a cliffhanger part and that he wants to know what will happen next. He said that his teachers also give the characters voices. Derek stated that it is more fun to read and be read to in an expressive manner, especially when there are “goofy” voices such as animal voices.

Derek said that while growing up he read a lot with his mom and that he learned to read with expression by reading with her. He explained that when he was in second grade a teacher
was concerned because he was not reading with expression, so she discussed this with his parents. After that, his parents really encouraged him to read with expression. He was reading a book for school and tried to give the characters voices and read with expression; as a result, his mom was very happy. When Derek was in second grade, he would listen to the news and would observe how the reporters read. After observing this he would attempt to sound like the news reporter as he read.

Derek brought up some other interesting points about issues regarding silent reading. He said that sometimes when conversing with friends on the internet--for instance, if someone is trying to give him directions on how to play a game--he wishes that his friends were there in person because he does not know what they were really trying to say; he cannot hear their voices. Also, Derek said that sometimes while reading silently he has become stumped by a character’s name. For example, he might read lines about a character named Sam and think that the character was a boy; therefore, he hears the voice of a boy in his mind. Later he would discover that the character was actually a girl, and that would come as a surprise.

Krista, Fifth Grader

Oral Prosody Assessment. The next student was a fifth grade female who will be referred to as Krista. This student was first asked to read a passage from *Bud, Not Buddy* (See Appendix C). Her narrative assessment scores matched her narrative oral prosodic screening scores. Krista received a rating of level 4 for each of the three categories of prosodic reading. The narrative passage was very easy to assess and it was very clear that this student possessed all of the prosodic behaviors.

The first area evaluated in the narrative assessment was the prosodic components of phrasing and expression. Krista read in a well-phrased manner; her readings were kept within
clause and sentence units. There was also a sense of ease and enjoyment evident in her presentation. Krista did not give the characters voices; however, she did use adequate expression in that she followed the appropriate expressive punctuation cues (such as question marks and exclamation marks). Her performance conveyed expression and emotion.

The second area examined was smoothness. Krista read the passage in a very smooth manner. There were only two deviations from the print which she quickly corrected. It was very easy to listen to Krista read and not be jarred by errors and repetitions.

The final area that was studied was pace. Krista was consistently conversational throughout the entire text. She seemed to have more mastery in this area than the other two students previously described. She did not read too slowly, but she also seemed to understand that being a good reader does not necessarily mean that one speeds through a passage. It appeared that she was speaking the parts rather than reading them off paper.

Next, Krista was asked to orally read an expository passage from *Turtles, Toads, and Frogs* (See Appendix C). Her scores were very much the same as those she received on the narrative passage. Again, she scored a level 4 on each of the prosodic categories. She maintained the same voice throughout the text, which is not to say that she did not read with expression. Krista managed to make the text sound interesting. Again, she used appropriate phrasing and her reading of the passage was very smooth. The passage sounded natural and her performance was characterized by an easy manner.

It was noted that Krista was a more mature and advanced reader, as one would expect an older student to be. She read the passages with ease and confidence and had fewer errors. Derek and Melissa were both very prosodic readers and scored the same level of prosody as Krista;
however, overall it was noted that Krista appeared to have been slightly more accomplished in the area of prosody.

_Silent Reading Prosody Interview_. The interview began with the researcher informing Krista that this interview was simply to learn more about how students read and that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions. Krista was then asked to read a passage from _Bud, Not Buddy_ (See Appendix E) to herself silently. The following were the results of the interview session.

First, questions were asked to determine what happens in Krista’s mind while she reads silently. She stated that she hears characters’ voices when she reads silently and that she also sees images moving. She verified that it is similar to viewing television and watching the characters move and listening to them talk. Krista stated that she does not hear other sounds when she reads, only the characters’ voices.

Krista was asked to describe how some of the characters in _Bud, Not Buddy_ sounded in her mind. She described one of the boy characters as being whiny and sounding like a younger boy. The boy did not have the voice of anyone that she actually knew. Krista stated that the mother sounded mad, and that she had the voice of an older lady. When Krista read the parts of the story that had no conversation, simply narrator parts, she stated that she heard her own voice in her mind reading those specific parts.

Next, Krista was asked to silently reread some of the lines from _Bud, Not Buddy_ and explain how the characters sounded in her mind. First, she described lines 11 and 12. Krista said that Mrs. Amos sounded really worried and then at the end of the line she sounded angry. Then she reread lines 13-15 and said that Todd sounded whiny and had a voice that sounded like he was lying. Next, Krista reread lines 18-19 and stated that Mrs. Amos sounded furious.
Krista was then asked if any of the characters’ voices she just heard when reading *Bud, Not Buddy* sounded like the voice of any person that she knows. Krista said that Todd did not sound like anyone specific that she knew; he just sounded like the voice of a boy. Mrs. Amos did not sound like anyone that she knew; she was an imaginary voice that sounded like an adult woman. Krista said that she actually heard the voices when she was reading and that it was not that she “thought” that they should sound angry, mad, or sad.

Krista was next asked how she learned to read with expression. Krista said that she listened to how her teachers read. “When the teachers read aloud to us, I always listen to their voices and that they always make up different voices for each character, so I kind of adapted that when I read.” The teachers did not have specific lessons about reading with expression, but the teachers would ask the students to read aloud, so in that way the students practiced reading with expression. Krista also said that her parents both read to her very frequently when she was younger. She said that her father would read the *Harry Potter* books with a British accent. Krista thought that listening to her teachers and parents read with expression had given her examples and allowed her to read orally with expression as well as to read silently with expression. Krista was asked whether she thought that if adults had not read to her this way if she would have still been able to read with expression. She said that she wasn’t sure, but that she thought that she most likely still would. She explained that she hears her own voice with expression when she is thinking, so if she is angry her thinking voice would sound angry. This made Krista believe that she would still hear voices when she reads even if adults had not modeled and instructed her to read in this manner.

Krista stated that being read to with expression as well as reading with expression herself has helped her to become a better reader. It seemed to her that she can better understand the
storyline and how the characters are feeling if she hears the emotions expressed through the characters’ voices. Krista also stated that she likes to listen to people read with expression. She said that she really likes listening to stories being read aloud and to have the characters be different voices. She also said that it is akin to watching a movie and that this entertains her. When the reader is talking, she can picture the images in her head.

Krista was asked to reread a few lines orally, the goal of which was to portray as closely as possible the way they sounded in her head when she read the same passage silently. First she read lines 13-15. While reading these lines her pitch remained the same as when she read the previous passages. She used great expression and emulated the emotions of a person who was exaggerating and faking; Krista paused at the appropriate places and stressed the right words. Next, she read lines 23-33. This time her voice was slightly higher pitched and she sounded snippy. At the end of this passage she sounded almost irate. The last passage that Krista read was lines 11-12. Again her voice was higher pitched and she sounded worried, then angry. This reading seemed to accurately portray what the characters might have been feeling.

Next, Krista was asked to read an expository passage from *Turtles, Toads, and Frogs* silently (See Appendix E). Krista said that she did not hear any sounds when she read this passage. She also said that she did not hear any specific voice other than her thinking voice.

**Leah, Sixth Grader**

*Oral Prosody Assessment.* The final student interviewed was a sixth-grade female who will be referred to as Leah. As with the other three students, Leah’s narrative and expository assessment scores matched her screening scores. Leah reached level 4 for each of the three prosody categories. First, Leah was asked to orally read a selection from *Bud, Not Buddy* (See
Appendix C). Her oral reading was scored according to the criteria of each of the three components of prosody.

The first category, phrasing and expression, seemed to be a very accomplished skill for Leah. She read in appropriate phrases; the syntax was preserved, and there was a sense of ease in the presentation. As with the fifth-grade student Krista, Leah did not give the characters specific voices; however, she used appropriate expression by sounding confused, angry, or excited.

Leah also read the passage smoothly. It appeared that she did not have any difficulty decoding words or maintaining the smooth quality. There were not many errors, and any errors that were made were quickly resolved. It was very relaxing to listen to Leah read, for even though this reading was considered a cold or unrehearsed reading, Leah read the passage with ease and in a soothing manner.

Lastly, Leah’s pace was appropriate. She did not sound laborious or too speedy. The speed with which she read was consistently conversational. In essence, Leah sounded as if reading this passage had been practiced and she was completely natural as if she was discussing ideas with a fellow student.

Next, Leah was asked to read a passage from the book *Turtles, Toads, and Frogs* (See Appendix C). As with the other assessment readings, Leah again reached level 4 for each of the three prosody categories. She read with appropriate expression. While this passage did not contain very many opportunities for expressive language, Leah read the passage as if she were talking with a friend. Leah’s phrasing was consistent and followed natural patterns of speech. Leah had no difficulty presenting the passage in a natural, conversational manner. She also read with appropriate pace and smoothness.
Silent Reading Prosody Interview. The interview began with the researcher informing Leah that this interview was simply to learn more about how students read and that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions. Leah was then asked to read a passage from Bud, Not Buddy (See Appendix E) to herself silently. The following were the results of the interview session.

Several questions were asked of Leah to determine whether or not she heard characters’ voices and other sounds while reading silently. Leah stated that when she reads silently she gets a picture in her head, and then as she’s reading, the text will give her more descriptions and her images are modified. Leah described her silent reading prosody by saying, “I’ll hear the people’s voices and then if it says that there’s something going on in the background, I might hear something like that.” Leah also mentioned that she will try to think of different voices while she is reading characters’ lines. She furthered explained this by saying that she sometimes tries to use voices of people that she really knows for the characters and sometimes the characters’ voices sound like her own voice. It appeared that Leah hears different types of voices in different stories. Leah stated that the characters’ voices usually match the voices of people she knows when they have similar roles in life. As an example, if she’s reading about a mom it usually sounds like her mom, but if the character is a grandmother she might think of and hear her grandmother’s voice. Leah also said that if the voice doesn’t sound like someone she knows she creates an imaginary voice based on the characteristics mentioned about the given character. These characteristics or traits allow her mind to create a voice that seems like it would fit the described character. Leah said that sometimes she will hear sounds that would be in the background if the story were real. For example, if the story mentioned trumpets playing, Leah might hear the trumpets playing in her mind.
Next, Leah attempted to describe how the characters in *Bud, Not Buddy* sounded in her mind while she read silently. Leah said that the character Todd sounded like a little boy, sort of like how her friends’ little brothers sound. Mrs. Amos sounded like an adult woman who sounded very angry.

Leah does not always hear the characters’ voices when reading silently. She mentioned that when she is reading in an environment that is noisy and distracting, she usually is unable to focus and does not hear sounds or characters’ voices. She explained this by saying, “I might just be reading the words.” When Leah is allowed to become engaged in the book without distractions, that is when she hears the characters’ voices and other sounds. It was also discussed that when Leah is rushed or does not have a lot of time to read she will still see images in her mind but not hear voices.

The next part of the interview required Leah to reexamine certain lines of the *Bud, Not Buddy* passage. She was asked to describe how certain characters sounded or what emotions they displayed in their voices. First she described lines 11 and 12. Leah stated that the mom sounded worried (about her son) and then annoyed (with the other boy, Bud). Next, Leah reread lines 13-15 and described Todd as sounding like he was lying or exaggerating to draw attention to himself. Next, she reread lines 18 and 19 and described Mrs. Amos as having a “yelling” voice and that she was worried about her son. Lastly, Krista reread lines 23-31 and said that the mom sounded really angry and disgusted.

Leah was next asked to reread aloud certain lines of the *Bud, Not Buddy* passage and to attempt to make her voice sound as much as possible like the characters’ voices in her mind. First, when Leah read lines 11 and 12, her voice was higher and it was clear that she was designating a different voice for Mrs. Amos; this character sounded concerned or worried,
followed by sounding angry. Then she read lines 13-15. Her voice sounded like her normal reading voice; she read the passage with appropriate expression but she did not give Toddy a different voice. Next, she read lines 18 and 19. This time she used the same voice that was used earlier for Mrs. Amos: her voice was higher pitched and angry. Leah then read lines 23-31. She again read with the voice she had been using for Mrs. Amos’s parts. Her voice sounded snippy and it was also noted that Leah read this portion with more expression than she had read any of the other assessment passages.

Leah was next asked how she learned to read with expression. Leah explained that she likes to act and that she read when she was really young. Leah also said that her parents would tell her that she should read with expression. When she read in school she already was a good reader, so she was able to put the details (added expression) in her reading. Leah also stated that in school the students would be put into reading groups and that sometimes they only read for information, but other times they would take turn reading the parts and that they were required to give the characters specific voices. Leah also said that she and her mom would (and still do) read a chapter from a book together. They used to read from *Harry Potter*; she said that she enjoyed listening to her mom do all of the voices and that it was easy for her to relax and just imagine. She also said that she and her mom would read *Nancy Drew* books as well, and that her father is a singer and that he loves to do the voices, so listening to stories is really fun.

Leah thought that reading aloud and silently with expression has helped her to be a better reader. She stated that if a person is reading along with no expression, he or she is not truly getting the story. A person might be missing out on understanding a character if he or she cannot hear the lines being read with expression. Leah also said that she enjoys listening as well as reading with expression. She stated that it is more fun to read this way. “Just reading without
expression is kind of like listening to mmmmmmmmmmm [hums a single bland note]. But then if you put it [expression] in, it’s easier and more exciting to listen to or to read.”

Next, Leah was asked to read an expository passage from the book *Turtles, Toads, and Frogs* (See Appendix E). She was asked if she heard any sounds or voices when reading this type of text. Leah did not hear as many character voices or sounds when she read this passage. She further explained this by saying that she sees the image of the frog jumping contest. Primarily, in this passage she heard her own voice because it’s not a specific person talking. She said that when she is reading a narrator or non-character part of a passage she sometimes hears her own voice and at other times she just takes in the words without hearing a specific voice. She thought that being rushed or distracted was the cause for her not hearing her voice when she reads a non-character speaking line. However, if she is reading a part that has a designated character speaking, she will usually hear distinct voices for those parts that are not her own.

Leah also said that she enjoys being read to more than actually reading a story herself. She described this experience as more relaxing because she can sit and focus on listening and creating images in her mind. Leah also said that when listening to a story being read, she would rather that the reader use an expressive voice that makes the passage sound more natural, like a conversation, rather than sounding like they are reading something. Listening to a story being read with expression is more interesting and catches her attention. Also, Leah said that if a passage was read without expression, she would probably partially understand what the characters were feeling, but not to the same degree as if the characters’ parts were read with appropriate expression. She said that the words used in a passage give her clues to how the character is feeling, but the way the line is read helps her to better understand the meaning and feelings of what is being read. Leah believed that as she becomes older, she will still hear distinct
character voices in her mind while she is reading silently. Leah said that she likes to read and that her opinions about reading with expression will probably remain the same.

Discussion of Results

The following questions were addressed by this study: Do third-, fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade readers exhibit oral reading prosody behaviors, to what extent, and how do the students acquire these behaviors? How do oral prosodic readers internalize oral prosodic behaviors into what is termed “silent reading prosody”? The following analysis suggests answers to these questions.

Do third-, fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade readers exhibit oral reading prosody behavior, to what extent, and how do the students acquire these behaviors?

Based on the oral prosody screening results, 100% of the tested third-, fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students read with some level of prosody. All of the students who participated in the screening scored at some level of prosody, demonstrating that these particular students had some mastery over the prosodic domain of fluency. Knowing that this private school has a reputation for excellent education and highly successful students, it is not entirely shocking to discover that 100% of the third- and fourth-grade students read with some level of prosody. It should be noted that these findings may not be universal. Based on the research supporting the connection between prosody mastery and comprehension, it can be predicted that these students would have a generally high level of comprehension as well (Allington, 1983; Dowhower 1991; Schreiber, 1991).

The extent to which the students have achieved oral prosody is specific to each individual student. It was noted that as the students became older, the average number of level 4 prosodic readers in a group increased. Twenty-eight third-, fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students were
given the oral prosody screening; of these students, 100% read with some level of prosody; 57% read with the highest level of prosody, scoring a four in each of the four categories of prosody: phrasing and expression, smoothness, and pace. A total of 43% read with either all level 3s or a mixture of level 3s and level 4s.

It was noted that the phrasing and expression and the pace categories both had the highest number of level 4 ratings. There were a total of 22 students with a level 4 rating for phrasing and expression, and there were also 22 students who scored a level 4 rating for pace, while 17 students had level 4 ratings in smoothness. It seemed that phrasing and expression, as well as pace, tended to be the areas of prosodic strength for the majority of these third-, fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students. Smoothness seemed to be the area that had the lowest number of level 4 ratings, which would indicate that smoothness was a slightly less developed area of prosody for these students.

An unexpected limitation of this study was the low number of students who participated in the oral prosody screening. The findings were accurate for this group of students; however, the results may not be applicable to the other students of this age group at this same school. The findings also may not be completely reflective of students in a different school setting.

*How do oral prosodic readers internalize oral prosodic behaviors into what is termed “silent reading prosody”?*

The following paragraphs describe what four oral prosodic readers experienced when reading silently. This analysis explores these internal oral prosodic behaviors. When the interviews of all four students were examined, several patterns emerged. It was noted that while there were patterns of similarities, each student’s responses regarding their silent reading experiences were unique. All four students appeared to have positive attitudes toward reading
and seemed to be proficient readers. Also, each of the four students were open and descriptive about the experiences encountered while listening to stories read aloud as well as while reading silently.

The first noted pattern was that all of the selected students read with level 4 prosodic behaviors on the oral prosody screening. These students also read with level 4 prosodic behaviors on all of the prosody assessment readings. When given a list of names that included all of the students who scored either a level 3 or 4 on the oral prosody screening, the teachers selected these four students: Melissa, Derek, Krista, and Leah. These students were chosen due to their perceived ability to think reflectively, intuitively, and abstractly about their reading practices. It was noted that these four students ranked among the highest scoring students on the oral prosody screening. It is wondered if there is a connection between higher level thinking and oral reading prosody. It may be that as students become generally more proficient and accomplished readers (including the ability to read orally with prosody), they are, in turn, more reflective and able to metacognitively evaluate their thought processes.

A second similar thread discovered in regard to silent reading prosody was that all four of the students interviewed experienced the phenomenon of hearing some form of character voices. Three of the four students heard voices that sounded like people they knew. Krista, however, mentioned that she heard character voices, but they were self created voices that did not sound like anyone she knew. For Melissa, these character voices were the same specific voices for every book she reads. Derek, Krista, and Leah heard different character voices depending on the description of the characters in the book. These results do not necessarily indicate that all students read with silent reading prosody, or that all students hear character voices when reading silently; rather, these results indicate that these particular students
demonstrated silent reading behaviors, and it is quite possible that many other students read with silent reading prosody as well. When designing the methodology of this investigation, it was decided to study only students who read with oral prosody in the screening assessment. It was theorized that it would be more likely that students who read with oral prosody would have internalized these behaviors into silent reading prosody than those readers who have not refined the ability to read orally with prosody. Therefore, by selecting students who first read with oral prosody during the screening, it would be more likely that information about silent reading prosody could be gathered from these types of students.

Another pattern that emerged was that all of these students expressed the phenomenon of not only simply hearing character voices, but that these voices expressed emotions. These students stated that the character voices had qualities about their tone or level of voice that portrayed a given emotion. For example, both Melissa and Derek stated that the character Fern sounded something like worried and upset when discovering that her father was going to kill the runt of the pig litter in the story *Charlotte’s Web*. In other words, both of these students heard a distinct character voice that was different from the other student’s character voice, but both character voices expressed the same emotions which were signaled by the way the voice sounded in the students’ minds. When asked about other characters in the passage, both of the students responded by describing how the characters sounded in their minds at specific points in the story and these descriptions of how the character sounded were very similar.

When Leah’s and Krista’s interview transcripts were examined, the same results were found. They too described the character voices in similar ways. The characters did not have the same voices, but for both girls, each character’s voice portrayed the same emotional qualities, such as anger, happiness, worry, and other emotions evident in the way a voice “sounds.” These
findings would seem to indicate that of the four students interviewed, all of them went through the same type of experience when reading silently. These students indicated that they heard character voices that were not monotone, but rather were voices that expressed a certain emotion. It should be noted that these students might not have heard the voices exactly as they described, but were describing how they thought the characters should sound. It would be impossible to determine the validity of the statements; however, the researcher took the students’ statements at face value, assuming that they understood the questions.

Another thread of similarity discovered was that Melissa, Derek, and Leah all heard background story sounds when reading silently. The students were not referring to actual sounds that were made in their environment, but sounds that were created by their minds to enhance the experience of the story. Melissa described hearing the frogs “ribbetting” to each other when reading a passage about frogs. Derek stated that he heard the bus honking when reading a passage that mentioned a school bus pulling up to the character’s house. In these situations, the text did not indicate that the frogs ribbeted or that a bus honked, but the readers automatically applied knowledge about sounds that buses and frogs make and activated those sounds in their minds while reading these passages. It was interesting to note that their brains were able to create a sound even when the text did not specifically call for the sounds. Krista did not hear other sounds when reading silently. Based on this information it could be inferred that while some students do hear story sounds while reading, not all students do. The reason for this is unknown. The students who experienced this phenomenon appeared to describe it as part of the total silent reading experience. Several of the students described silent reading as watching television in their minds. They not only saw images of the characters and their actions but they also heard characters’ voices and background noises as well. Based on these interviews, it might be
assumed that if a student experienced characters’ voices, there is a high probability that they will have also experienced certain background noises in a story as well.

It was also interesting to listen to the students reread passages that had been read silently earlier. For the most part, the students altered their voices at least slightly to give the impression of different characters speaking. Usually when asked to reread a passage orally that was previously read silently, the students read the passage with more expression than they had used in previous passages. This supported the previous comments made by the students in regard to hearing specific character voices with specific emotions expressed. This also indicated that these specific students naturally read silently with more expression or prosody than they did when they read orally. These findings also support the notion that these four students did actually hear character voices when reading silently. This is based on the fact that three of the four students noticeably altered the tone of their voice to more accurately portray the characters’ voices that the students stated were experienced in their minds.

Another observation made was that all four of the students indicated that they learned to read with prosody by observing a model. The students expressed that they had been read to often while growing up and that their moms or dads read with expression, often portraying the characters’ voices. Some of the students also said that they had observed their teachers read with prosody and that they tried to emulate their teachers. Derek stated that he would listen to how news reporters read the news and would think about his own reading and then would try to read as the news reporters did. These responses indicate that some students learn to read with prosody by being exposed to adults who read with prosody. Also, these students mentioned that, at times, they were taught or encouraged to read with prosody. They stated that sometimes teachers or parents would tell them that they should read lines a certain way. This shows that students can
also learn prosody by being instructed and encouraged to read with expression. Lastly, several students talked about how they read frequently and had been reading since they were very young. This may be an indication that students are able to focus more on prosody when they have practiced and become more adept at reading in general. These students who read frequently are more free from decoding or comprehension issues and are thus more able to use expression when reading silently as well as orally.

Another common thread discovered was that each of the four students expressed that they would rather be read to with expression than be read to without expression. They said that they like to listen to stories read with appropriate expression because it is more exciting and enjoyable. The students stated that this sort of reading helps to keep them hooked on reading a story. These findings are probably applicable to most readers.

These four students also agreed that reading with prosody helped them to become better readers. They said that reading and listening to text being read with expression helped them to better understand the story. They also agreed that prosody helps a listener or reader to more fully grasp the emotions of the characters.

It is noted that these students had many of the same responses to the given interview questions. The main differences were found when describing how character voices sound when reading (whether the voices sound the same for every book, whether the voices sound like a person the students know, etc…) and whether or not background sounds were heard while reading silently. This may have been a result of establishing the criteria of only interviewing students who were already shown to read with oral prosody. These students may be considered similar types of students; therefore, they were more likely to provide similar responses. This was an unexpected limitation of this study. In conclusion, if other types of students such as ones who
do not read with oral prosody were interviewed, the responses may have been more varied. The opposite of this theory is to interpret the similar responses as simply demonstrating what silent reading is like for oral prosodic readers.

In conclusion, these readers all indicated the presence of silent reading prosody. This is evident due to the fact that each of the four students indicated hearing characters’ voices. These students also were able to describe whether or not the voices sounded like people they knew or were imaginary and also whether these were the same voices heard every time they read a story silently. Most of the students were able to identify sounds they heard while reading a certain passage. Lastly, all four students were able, to the best of their ability, to orally replicate the way the characters’ voices sounded in their minds while reading silently. All of these findings indicate that all four oral prosodic readers also experienced silent reading prosody.

Summary

This chapter presented and analyzed data to determine whether third-, fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade readers exhibit oral reading prosody behavior, to what extent, and how the students acquire these behaviors. This chapter also sought to determine how oral prosodic readers internalize oral prosodic behaviors into what is termed “silent reading prosody.”

Twenty-eight third-, fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students participated in an oral prosody screening; 100% read with some level of prosody, scoring either a level 3 or 4 or some combination thereof. A total of 57% read with the highest level of prosody, scoring a four in each of the four categories of prosody: phrasing and expression, smoothness, and pace; 43% read with either all level 3’s or a mixture of level 3’s and level 4’s.

Four students were given an oral prosody assessment for a narrative and expository passage. All four of the selected students again read the prosody assessment passages with level
4 ratings for the categories of phrasing and expression, smoothness, and pace. These four selected students have reached the highest level of oral prosodic reading.

These four students also participated in a silent reading prosody interview. Each of the four students demonstrated the presence of silent reading prosody. While all four of the students demonstrated the presence of silent reading prosody, their specific experiences were unique but often times similar as well.

On a final note, silent reading prosody is not just defined as giving characters voices, although this is the only feasible way to measure the presence of silent reading prosody by means of an interview. It would be impossible in an interview to measure a reader’s pace, smoothness, intonation, and stress during a silent reading performance. When the conclusion was made that these four students had acquired silent reading prosody, this was measured by the component of the presence or absence of character voices.
CHAPTER V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2000, The National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development) examined research related to the components of effective reading instruction. In this report, fluency was reviewed and identified as being a critical component of literacy development. Since this review was published, more current research has focused on studying fluency but little research has been focused on the fluency component called prosody. Prosody is the component of fluency that describes the ability to read with appropriate phrasing, intonation, and expression (Allington, 1983; Dowhower, 1991). Rate and accuracy are the components of fluency that are most often studied in the research and literature available about fluency instruction and assessment (Dowhower, 1991). This model of fluency ignores one of the hallmarks of fluency achievement: prosody (Schwanenflugel, Hamilton, Kuhn, Wisenbaker, & Stahl, 2004). Reading with accuracy and speed is critical, but if prosody has not been mastered, it is unlikely that the student will completely understand what is being read (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Rasinski, 2004). Little research has been done with regard to how and when students acquire oral reading prosody, how it is most effectively taught, and finally, how many students actually obtain oral prosody. If fluency, particularly prosody, is ignored in textbooks, education research, teacher preparation, and classroom literacy instruction, students will be negatively affected. Prosody has been neglected and requires thorough examination.

Summary

The previous chapters presented and analyzed data to further study and examine the prosody component of fluency. The data analyzed served the purpose of answering the following questions: Do third-, fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade readers exhibit oral reading prosody behavior,
to what extent, and how do the students acquire these behaviors? Also, how do oral prosodic readers internalize oral prosodic behaviors into what is termed “silent reading prosody”? 

In this study, 28 third-, fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students participated in an oral prosody screening. The purpose of this screening was to identify students who read with some level of prosody, the goal of which was to select four students to participate further in the study. The oral prosody screening scale was based on an oral fluency assessment created by Zutell and Rasinski (1991). Of these 28 students, four students who read with some level of prosody (by scoring either a level 3 or 4 on the prosody scale) were selected to participate in a more comprehensive oral prosody assessment and silent reading prosody interview. One student from each grade was selected to participate in the oral prosody assessment and the silent reading prosody interview.

The selected four students were given two oral prosody assessments, one using a narrative passage and the other based on an expository passage. These students were scored to determine what level of prosody each student had obtained. Again, this assessment scale was created based on the oral fluency scale by Zutell and Rasinski (1991). These four students also participated in a silent prosody interview. Students’ responses were transcribed and then reported in Chapter IV, followed by an analysis of all of the four students’ responses. The results of the oral prosody screening, the oral prosody assessments, and the silent reading prosody interview were reported and analyzed in Chapter IV.

Conclusions

Results of the data collected helped to form a better picture of what silent reading prosody looks like. In other words, the information obtained from the silent reading prosody interviews helped to shape a beginning idea of what silent prosody is to four oral prosodic readers ranging
from grades three to six. Also, information was gleaned about how students learn to read with prosody, both orally and silently.

When analyzing the results of this study three major conclusions were formulated: (a) silent reading prosody indeed exists (b) silent reading prosody experience can vary for each individual reader (c) prosody can be learned by observing a model and through continual practice. This section discusses these conclusions.

The first and most exciting conclusion gathered from this study was that silent reading prosody indeed exists. Based on the results of the interviews, each of the four students demonstrated the presence of silent reading prosody by describing silent reading prosodic components such as hearing character voices and story sounds while reading silently. These students were also able to replicate orally the character voices that were heard when reading a passage silently. The four students were very detailed in their descriptions of their personal experiences when reading silently. These descriptions were so thorough that the fact that they were so detailed supports the conclusion that these students indeed experience silent reading prosody. One such interesting description was made by Melissa who explained the experience of silent reading prosody as being, “Like if you’re in an airplane and you have like things on [makes a motion that resembles putting on headphones] and you change the radio station to a story then it’s like that.” Melissa was basically stating that when she reads silently it is similar to listening to a book on tape through headphones. Leah said that when she reads silently, “I’ll hear the people’s voices and then if it says that there’s something going on in the background, I might hear something like that.” These students and, it can consequently be assumed, other readers, experience silent reading prosody as evidenced by their hearing distinct character voices when reading silently.
Although a few studies examining silent reading prosody have attempted to determine whether or not silent reading prosody exists, little other exploration on the topic appears to have been conducted. One such study that argued for the presence of silent reading prosody is Fodor (1988) who argued, “I assume that in silent reading a prosodic contour is imposed on the input string, and that the syntactic parser is sensitive to the prosodic phrase boundaries even though they were fabricated by the perceptual system itself” (p. 303). In other words, Fodor is stating that while reading silently, prosody is an assumed presence. These findings are also supported by previous research conducted by Ashby and Clifton (2005) who reported, “The presence of prosody during silent reading is intuitively apparent, as inner speech seems to mirror the intonation patterns of external speech” (p.89). The conclusion that these specific students and potentially other students experience silent reading prosody is also supported by the findings of Chafe (1988) who suggested that when a person reads silently, he or she “experiences auditory imagery of specific intonation, accents, pauses, rhythms, and voice qualities, even though the writing itself may show these features poorly if at all” (p. 397). This current study’s first conclusion is supported by and correlates with the findings of the few studies that have explored the question of whether silent reading prosody exists.

The conclusion that silent reading prosody exists was a critical discovery for two specific reasons: silent reading prosody is motivational, and it is both an aid to and a representation of the reader’s comprehension. All of the students felt that reading with expression both orally and silently was exciting. One of the students, Melissa said, “…with more expression, then it [the story] sounds more interesting.” Another student, Derek, made a comment that demonstrates that reading with expression is fun and therefore a motivation to read: “It’s more fun [to read with expression] and it’s fun when the characters have funny voices like a mouse with a squeaky high
voice!” Also, Leah had this to say about the importance of silent and oral prosody in regards to motivation to read: “…it [reading with prosody] sometimes is just more fun. Just reading without expression is kind of like listening to mmmmmmm [hums a single blah note]. But then if you put it [expression] in it’s easier and more exciting to listen to or read.” Krista stated that listening to stories read with expression is a pleasurable experience, “Because it’s kind of like watching a movie, it entertains me. When they’re talking I can picture it in my head.” All of these students demonstrated that reading with prosody is critical because it is a motivation to read. Educators and parents are continually attempting to find ways to motivate children to read. Since oral and silent reading prosody are motivation to read, it can be concluded that students should be encouraged to read and practice reading with prosody because when prosody is mastered it results in a pleasurable reading experience. Motivation and enjoyment of the reading process is one of the reasons that the conclusion was made that oral and silent reading prosody are important features of reading. Also, it is important to note that the students who do not have silent reading prosody or experience oral reading prosody may be lacking part of the pleasure of reading. Students who do not have prosody may be suffering in that they may not enjoy or relate to a story as much because they are not truly “living” the story. This motivational aspect of reading is critical for readers to obtain in order for them to foster positive attitudes towards reading.

The second reason that the conclusion that silent reading exists is important is that reading with expression helps readers to comprehend what is read and heard. The students all mentioned that listening to a story being read with expression helps them to understand the storyline and how the characters feel. It was also discussed that reading silently with expression allowed the students to experience the story in a more comprehensive manner. Leah clearly describes how reading and listening to stories read with expression helps a reader comprehend the story, “…when you’re just
reading straight and no expression, you’re not really getting the story, because if there’s someone really bad, if you think of it [in your mind] or read it with expression you can really tell that they’re bad.” When asked if reading silently with expression helped Krista become a better reader she responded by saying, “I think so, because once I know if they’re angry and I can give them an angry voice then I can understand better. So it helps me understand more.” Based on the comments made by these four readers, reading prosodically as well as listening to prosodic renditions of a text help the reader to understand the text more fully. Oral and silent prosodic reading also demonstrate that the reader does indeed understand the text.

A second conclusion of this study was that silent reading prosody experiences can vary for each individual reader. While all four of the students demonstrated the presence of silent reading prosody, their specific experiences were unique, while still showing threads of similarity. In other words, silent reading prosody can manifest itself in different forms. One of the silent reading prosody characteristics that varied was the type and presence of character voices. Some students heard character voices at all times when reading silently. Leah, however, heard voices most of the time, but at times did not, “when it’s more crowded and noisy I wouldn’t hear the voices as much. Again, if it’s quiet, I probably would.” Another silent reading prosody characteristic that varied was that sometimes character voices heard were the same voices in every story read, but for others these voices changed with each new story read. This finding indicates that character voices heard by silent prosodic readers are unique and that the character voices heard can change based on what type of material is being read. Hearing sounds while reading silently was another silent reading characteristic that varied for each individual reader. Some of the students stated that they heard background book sounds while reading silently, while others did not. Derek said, “I hear the voices, where they are, in this case I hear the bus honking, I hear the man walking, and the grass
making [crunch noise].” This student is an example of one who hears the characters’ voices and hears story sounds the are not necessarily written into the text. A last characteristic of silent reading prosody that varied was that for a few of the readers the character voices heard when reading were identified as being the voices of specific people they knew, such as friends or relatives, while for others these voices were simply voices fitting the reader’s perception of the character and were not associated with any specific person whom the reader knew.

Only one study was found that addressed the nature and qualities of readers’ silent reading prosody experiences. This study was conducted by Baer (2005) who tested *The Symbolic Reading Inventory* in a classroom. The results of this study found that sounds (prosody) as well as images were occurring in the minds of adolescent readers while reading silently. It was also discovered that these students experienced the story in other ways such as mental images and smells derived from the scenes of the story. In conclusion, Baer discovered that the students in this study were showing signs of silent reading prosody. This current research study is supported by Baer’s findings of the presence of sounds while reading silently.

The conclusion that silent reading prosody experiences can vary is important information to be known. One reason for this is that general information about what silent reading prosody looks like and how it is experienced is practically unexplored. This information about how the experiences are similar or unique is important because it allows educators, parents, and students to know more about what silent reading prosody may be like. If readers are more aware of what these silent reading experiences may be like for individual readers, discussions can occur about this topic. If there is more awareness about silent reading prosody it may encourage further research to study more broadly what silent reading prosody is like for other types, abilities, and ages of
readers. With more awareness and knowledge about prosody more students will be exposed to and practice prosody and in turn increase their prosodic abilities.

A third conclusion of this study was that readers can learn to read with prosody by observing modeling of prosodic behaviors and by practicing these observed behaviors. Based on the responses of these students, it can be concluded that the acquisition of prosody is in part due to listening to proficient readers orally performing prosodic renderings of passages. Melissa stated, “When I was in preschool, I started reading the first grade books. When I was three I went on to better books, and kept going up. My mom and I used to and still do read together at night. That also helps me to see the emotions. She reads a page, I read a page, she reads a page, I read a page.” Derek also made similar comments, “My mom and dad always wanted me to read every night. So I would practice reading since I was like four. I read with my mom so much that I learned how to read with expression.” According to Krista, “When the teachers read aloud to us, I always listen to their voices and that they always make up different voices for each character, so I kind of adapted that when I read.” These students are demonstrating that prosody is learned by observing a prosodic reader in the process of reading, as well as by practicing the skill of reading including practicing reading with prosody. It can be concluded that prosodic behaviors are learned primarily through observing a model and then practicing these observed behaviors. Not only is observation important, but it appears that this action needs to occur often. The students in this study all mentioned that parents and teachers read with expression and that they were read aloud to very often since early childhood.

While the acquisition of oral prosody is becoming clearer, the acquisition of silent reading prosody is still unknown. Research studies have not specifically addressed how silent reading prosody is acquired. Further research will need to be conducted to support and further the findings
of this research study. The research on oral prosody acquisition focuses primarily on learning through practice and observation of a prosodic model (Dowhower, 1994; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003). The students in this study stated that they felt that they had learned to read silently with expression because they had practiced reading with expression orally. These responses support previous studies that indicate that one way oral prosody is acquired is through practice reading and reading with expression. This study takes these findings a step further and concludes that because students learn to read orally through observation and practice they are able to then take these skills and internalize them into silent reading prosody. Observation and practice may not be the only factors in the acquisition of silent reading prosody, though, so further research will need to be conducted to determine more fully how silent reading prosody is learned.

This conclusion of how oral and silent reading prosody is learned is important because individuals who work with children need to be aware of how children learn to read with prosody. The more that educators and parents learn about oral and silent reading prosody and its acquisition, the better equipped they will be to help foster these skills in their students and children. This finding is critical because it helps support research about how oral prosody is learned and sheds light on how silent reading prosody is acquired. If knowledge about prosody acquisition is lacking students will suffer because of the absence of prosodic training followed by the potential lack of prosodic ability.

The three conclusions of this study are each important for several reasons and are critical knowledge to be studied further for educators, parents, and students. As mentioned previously, silent reading prosody has barely been explored and any research and conclusions made about silent reading are important for furthering the information known about this topic.
Recommendations

*Parents and Educators*

This research study has shed more light on the relatively unexamined area of prosody. While the amount of information known about silent reading prosody is still relatively small, recommendations can be made based on information that has been gathered through this research study. Parents can be aware of the existence of silent reading prosody at least in some number of children. Parents can also be informed about ways to encourage oral and silent reading prosody. Teachers might also benefit from learning more about oral and silent reading prosody and how it impacts student reading. Teachers can be encouraged to model, teach, and encourage prosodic reading. Lastly, this research study has implications for teacher educators and researchers. It is suggested that these professionals expand the knowledge about silent and oral prosody by conducting further research studies focusing on this domain of reading.

*Parents/Guardians*

All of the students interviewed emphasized the importance of being read to as a child. These students stated that their guardians and teachers often read orally and that many of these guardians read with expression, including giving characters distinct voices. It is recommended that parents read often to their children. The benefits of reading to a child are numerous and the additional benefit of increasing their likelihood of being an oral and silent prosodic reader is crucial as well. Apparently, children learn to read prosodically by observing prosodic readers and by practicing reading with expression, smoothness, and appropriate conversational pace (Dowhower, 1994; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003). Parents can help support prosodic development
by reading to their children often and by attempting to read with expression. Parents can also encourage students to read orally with appropriate expression.

**Teachers and Educational Personnel**

Recommendations for teachers are similar to those for parents. Students need to hear stories read orally. These students also need to listen to passages read with appropriate expression. Teachers can help increase students’ prosodic ability by demonstrating prosodic behaviors. Teachers can also encourage prosodic reading by discussing and pointing out prosodic behaviors as they read. Instruction can focus on distinguishing reading that sounds like reading and reading that sounds like natural conversation. Teachers should also encourage students to read orally with prosody. Students can participate in activities such as Readers Theatre which encourages readers to speak lines with appropriate expression. Teachers should also be aware that some students are experiencing silent reading prosody. These teachers can discuss what silent reading prosody is like for them and discuss students’ own experiences with silent reading prosody. By discussing this realm of prosody, students will become more aware of their reading behaviors which may lead to development of silent reading prosody.

**Teacher Educators and Researchers**

Silent reading prosody is not often taught in college or professional development curricula. This phenomenon is fascinating and important for reading development and success. There are several implications for teacher educators and researchers that evolve from this research study. First, it is recommended that teacher educators study the realm of prosody and share this knowledge with students. Teacher educators need to be aware of this domain and are recommended to instruct future and practicing educators about prosody and its importance. If teacher educators have appropriate knowledge about prosody, it can be communicated to educators
so that educators can take the information into the classrooms and directly impact students.

Specifically for researchers, further research needs to occur to learn more about oral silent reading prosody, since this area of fluency is relatively unknown.

Future Research

This study answered several questions regarding oral and silent reading prosody; however, there are still many questions that need to be addressed. Further research in the area of silent reading prosody needs to occur to more fully understand this amazing phenomenon.

Further research could focus on studying silent reading prosody behaviors over a period of time. A longitudinal study could examine how specific young students begin reading with silent reading prosody and study whether or not these behaviors continue as the students age. Additionally, it would be interesting to study a large number of adults to determine if they typically read with silent reading prosody. The researcher of this study has had conversations with other adults and noted that a number of proficient readers do not hear character voices when reading silently. It is wondered if some readers tend to lose this ability as they age or if some adults have simply never experienced silent reading prosody.

Other research could study a larger number of students to determine more quantitatively how many typical third-, fourth-, fifth- and sixth-grade students experience silent reading prosody. Since this research sample was small and qualitative in nature, it would be revealing to study more holistically how many students read with silent reading prosody.

Studies could also focus on whether there is a connection between attitude toward reading and silent reading prosody. Since the students interviewed in this study stated that reading silently with prosody made reading more enjoyable it is wondered if students who enjoy reading also read with silent reading prosody. It is also speculated that a possible reason for negative attitudes
towards reading might be a result of the lack of silent reading prosody resulting in reading being a less entertaining experience.

Another avenue of research is to examine students who do not read with oral prosody. Since it was speculated that students who read with oral prosody are more likely to read silently with prosody, it would be beneficial to study the opposite. It is unknown whether or not students who do not read with prosody are able to read silently with prosody.

Also, it is unclear whether or not prosody is acquired simply by practicing reading and observing model prosodic readers or whether the acquisition of silent reading prosody is more complex. Research could examine more comprehensively how readers acquire silent reading prosody. Is this behavior a natural phenomenon that one is born with? Or is silent reading prosody something that is practiced and perfected? There may also be a connection between silent reading prosody and learning modalities. Some learners receive and retain knowledge best through a certain modality; silent reading prosody may be similar in that it is a modality that some readers experience while others do not.

Summary

Findings of this research study indicated that some students have indeed acquired silent reading prosody. Experiencing silent reading prosody appears to be enjoyable for the students interviewed in this study. It is important that other educational professionals and parents be aware of oral and silent reading prosody so that they can encourage and teach appropriate fluency skills.

This chapter addressed the conclusions of this research study. Students at the studied school were prosodic readers and the four interviewed students described silent reading qualities that indicate the presence of silent reading prosody in each of these four students. Recommended implications for teachers, parents, and teacher educators were also made. It is critical that teacher
educators stay current on prosody research so that they can inform current teachers about these findings. Teachers are encouraged to model and teach specific oral and silent reading prosody behaviors. Parents are encouraged to read often to and with their children while focusing on modeling expressive reading. Researchers are recommended to continue research in the uncharted territory of silent reading prosody.

Suggestions for further research were also discussed. Research involving studying a broader range of readers and their silent reading behaviors is greatly encouraged. Another suggestion for future research is to examine whether students who do not read with oral prosody are able to read silently with prosody. Further ideas for future research were discussed in this chapter.

The researcher found this study to be fascinating and an exciting journey into a relatively uncharted territory of reading. Hopefully further research and instruction will occur about this intriguing topic.
References


APPENDIX A.

Oral Prosody Screening Passages
“Are you in a bad mood today?” asked Mr. Todd.
“ROAR,” said Judy Moody.
“That’s too bad,” said Mr. Todd. “I was just about to ask who wants to go down to the office and pick up the pizza. It’s a welcome-back surprise.”
“Pizza? Pizza! For real?” The room buzzed with excitement.
“So. Who would like to pick up the pizza today?” asked Mr. Todd.
“Me!” yelled Judy. “Me! Me! Me! Me! Me!” everyone shouted at once, waving their hands like windmills in the air.
“Rocky, would you like to pick up the pizza?”
“Sure!” said Rocky.
“Lucky!” Judy said.
When Rocky came back with the pizza, the class grew quiet, everyone chewing teeny-weeny cheesy squares of Gino’s pizza and listening to Mr. Todd read them a chapter from a book about a pepperoni pizza-eating dog.
When he finished reading, Judy asked, “Mr. Todd, can I look at your little pizza table? I collect them,” said Judy Moody.
“Tell you what,” said Mr. Todd. “If you think you can come to third grade in a good mood tomorrow, it’s yours. Do you think you can agree to that?”
“Yes, Mr. Todd,” said Judy. “Yes, yes, yes, yes, YES!”
Bud, Not Buddy
Flesch-Kincaid Level: 4.8
Prosody Screening Passage for fifth/sixth graders

Here we go again. We were all standing in line waiting for breakfast when one of the
caseworkers came in and tap-tap-tapped down the line. Uh-oh, this meant bad news, either they’d
found a foster home for somebody or somebody was about to get paddled. All the kids watched the
woman as she moved along the line, her high-heeled shoes sounding like little firecrackers going
off on the wooden floor.

Shoot! She stopped at me and said, “Are you Buddy Caldwell?”

I said, “It’s Bud, not Buddy, ma’am.”

She put her hand on my shoulder and took me out of line. Then she pulled Jerry, one of the
little boys, over. “Aren’t you Jerry Clark?” He nodded.

“Boys, good news! Now that the school year has ended, you both have been accepted into
new temporary-care homes starting this afternoon!”

Jerry asked the same thing I was thinking. “Together?”

She said, “Why, no, Jerry, you’ll be in a family with three little girls…”

Jerry looked like he’d just found out they were going to dip him in a pot of boiling milk.

“…and Bud…” She looked at some papers she was holding. “Oh, yes, the Amoses, you’ll
be with Mr. and Mrs. Amos and their son, who’s twelve years old, that makes him just two years
older than you, doesn’t it, Bud?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

She said, “I’m sure you’ll both be very happy.”

Me and Jerry looked at each other.

The woman said, “Now, now, boys, no need to look so glum. I know you don’t understand
what it means, but there’s a depression going on all over this country. People can’t find jobs and
these are very, very difficult times for everybody. We’ve been lucky enough to find two wonderful
families who’ve opened their doors for you. I think it’s best that we show our new foster families
that we’re very…”

She dragged out the word very, waiting for us to finish her sentence for her.

Jerry said, “Cheerful, helpful, and grateful.” I moved my lips and mumbled.
APPENDIX B.

Oral Prosody Screening Scores
Oral Prosody Screening

*Check mark any of the following prosodic behaviors demonstrated
Name________________________
Grade/Teacher___________________

Phrasing and Expression

- 3, 4 word phrase groups ______ (level 3)
- Mixture of run-ons ______ (level 3)
- Mid-sentence pauses for breath ______ (level 3)
- Some choppiness ______ (level 3)
- Reasonable stress/intonation ______ (level 3)
- Some appropriate expression/intonation ______ (level 3)
- Well-phrased ______ (level 4)
- In clause/sentence units ______ (level 4)
- Adequate expression ______ (level 4)
- Larger, meaningful phrase groups ______ (level 4)
- Preservation of syntax ______ (level 4)
- Sense of ease in presentation ______ (level 4)

Smoothness

- Occasional breaks in smoothness ______ (level 3)
  (due to difficulty with specific words/structures)
- Generally smooth reading ______ (level 4)
  with some breaks
- Word/structure difficulties resolved quickly (usually through self-correction) ______ (level 4)

Pace

- Uneven, mixture of fast/slow reading ______ (level 3)
- Consistently conversational ______ (level 4)

*Student either scores at a level 3, 4 overall for each category or scores a 0 (meaning that the student does not demonstrate any level of prosodic behaviors for the given category)
All names are pseudonyms. Names that have a star are the four students who were selected to participate in the assessment/interview.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name</th>
<th>Teacher/Grade</th>
<th>Phrasing/Expression</th>
<th>Smoothness</th>
<th>Pace</th>
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<td>John</td>
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<td>3</td>
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APPENDIX C.

Oral Prosody Assessment Passages
Fern came slowly down the stairs. Her eyes were red from crying. As she approached her chair, the carton wobbled, and there was a scratching noise. Fern looked at her father. Then she lifted the lid of the carton. There, inside, looking up at her, was the newborn pig. It was a white one. The morning light shone through its ears, turning them pink.

“He’s yours,” said Mr. Arable. “Saved from an untimely death. And may the good Lord forgive me for this foolishness.”

Fern couldn’t take her eyes off the tiny pig. “Oh,” she whispered. “Oh, look at him! He’s absolutely perfect.”

She closed the carton carefully. First she kissed her father, then she kissed her mother. Then she opened the lid again, lifted the pig out, and held it against her check. At this moment her brother Avery came into the room. Avery was ten. He was heavily armed in—an air rifle in one hand, a wooden dagger in the other.

“What’s that? He demanded. “What’s Fern got?”

“She’s got a guest for breakfast,” said Mrs. Arable.

“Wash your hands and face, Avery!”

“Let’s see it!” said Avery, setting his gun down.

“You call that miserable thing a pig? That’s a fine specimen of a pig—it’s no bigger than a white rat.”

“Wash up and eat your breakfast, Avery!” said his mother. “The school bus will be along in half an hour.”

“Can I have a pig, too, Pop?” asked Avery.
“No, I only distribute pigs to early risers,” said Mr. Arable. “Fern was up at daylight, trying to
rid the world of injustice. As a result, she now has a pig. A small one, to be sure, but nevertheless a
pig. It just shows what can happen if a person gets out of bed promptly. Let’s eat!”

The school bus honked from the road.

“Run!” commanded Mrs. Arable, taking the pig from Fern and slipping a doughnut into her hand
Avery grabbed his gun and another doughnut
Whales and Other Creatures of the Sea
Flesch-Kincaid Reading Level: 4.5
Prosody Assessment Expository Third-Fourth Graders

Oceans cover most of our planet earth. People go to the seashore to swim and play. Children run up and down the beach looking for pretty shells. Sometimes they see crabs scuttling across the sand. They may even find a starfish.

For other people, the ocean is a place to find good things to eat. In the shallow water, a man and a woman are digging for clams. A fishing boat returns to dock loaded with silvery fish. Whales and dolphins live in the water, but they are not fish. They breathe air through a hole in the top of their heads. They are mammals-relatives of land animals like cows, horses, and dogs.

Whales are the biggest creatures in the sea. The biggest of all is the blue whale. It can be 100 feet long. That’s bigger than the biggest dinosaur that ever lived! This is a fin whale. It’s very big too-up to 80 feet long.

When a baby fin whale is born, it is already as big as a car! It drinks its mother’s milk and grows even bigger. A young whale needs lots of food, and the cold seas near the North Pole are filled with fish and tiny sea creatures. So, in the late spring, the baby and its mother head north. They can swim thousands of miles in just a few weeks.

The killer whale is also known as the Orca. Do humans have to worry about killer whales? No. They do not eat people. In fact, they can be very gentle with humans. And they are very smart. Killer whales are often the star performers in aquarium shows. They let people feed them by hand-and sometimes give them a big whale kiss!
Mr. Jimmy said, “So what’s the scoop, little man?”
I didn’t know what that meant so I said, “Nothing, sir.”
Steady Eddie said, “How’s you sleep, kiddo?”
Great, sir.” Oops, I forgot I wasn’t supposed to call the band men sir.
He said, “Cop a squat.” He pointed at a chair. I guessed that meant “sit down,” so I did.
Miss Thomas said, “Were your ears burning last night, Bud?”
I said, “What, ma’am?”
She said, “There’s an old saying that when people talk about you behind your back your ears start to get real warm, kind of like they were burning.”
I said, “No, ma’am, my ears felt just fine.”
She said, “Well, they should’ve been burning, you were the subject of a very long conversation last night. But as sound asleep as you were, I’m really not all that surprised you didn’t notice. I had to check your pulse to make sure you were still alive!” Mr. Calloway and the band and I talked about you for a long time. We’ve come up with something we want to discuss with you, but we need your help deciding what to do.”
I said, “Yes, ma’am?”
She said, “We’ve got to talk to some people in Flint first, but if they say it’s all right, we were hoping that you’d stay here at Grand Calloway Station for a while.”
A gigantic smile split my face in half.
Miss Thomas said, “I’m going to assume that that smile means yes.”
I said, “Yes, ma’am! Thank you, ma’am!”
Miss Thomas said, “Before that grin gets stuck on your fact, let me tell you you’re going to have lots of chores and things to take care of around here, Bud, you’ll be expected to pull your own weight the best you can. We all like a very clean house and none of us are too used to having children around, so we’re all going to have to learn to be patient with each other. There’s one person in particular that you’re going to have to be very patient with. Do you know who I mean?”
I sure did. “Yes, ma’am, it’s Mr. Calloway.”
She said, “Good boy, give him some time. He can use some young, wiry hands to help him around. Think you can handle that?”

I said, “Yes, ma’am, my legs are a lot stronger than they look, most folks are surprised by that.”
Turtles are reptiles. So are snakes, lizards, and alligators. All of these cold-blooded animals have a backbone. But a turtle’s body is also enclosed in a protective shell. The part of the shell covering the turtle’s back is called the carapace. The part underneath the animal is called the plastron.

Box Turtles live on land, too. When they need to protect themselves, they can pull their legs, neck, and head completely inside their hard shell. Then they close the shell up tight. This makes it very hard for other animals to bite them! Box Turtles are usually very gentle. They are sometimes kept as pets.

Green Turtles are sea turtles. Like all sea turtles, they live in the ocean. Green turtles come on land only to lay their eggs. Females crawl slowly up the beach to beyond the water’s edge. There they dig a hole, or nest, in the sand and lay as many as 200 eggs. They cover the eggs with sand. Then they make their way back to the sea. Males never leave the ocean.

Leatherbacks are the largest of the sea turtles. They can be up to 8 feet long and weigh 2,000 pounds! A Leatherback’s shell is leathery rather than bony. It feels like a wet shoe. The shell has ridges on the back and sides.

Softshelled Turtles live in fresh water instead of in the sea. But like Leatherbacks, they have a soft, leathery shell covering their body. Some have short, sharp spines on their back. All have a long, snakelike neck and a tube-shaped snout. The snout is used like a snorkel for breathing. Softshelled Turtles are quick to bite.
APPENDIX D.

Oral Prosody Assessment Scale and Scores
Oral Prosody Assessment Scale

This scale is to be used to score the oral prosody assessment. The student is assigned a score of 1-4 for each category: phrasing and expression, smoothness, and pace. Phrasing and expression, smoothness, and pace are each scored independently of one another.

A. Phrasing and Expression
   1. Monotonic with little sense of phrase boundaries, frequent word-by-word reading. Author’s syntax is not preserved.
   2. Frequent two and three word phrases, oral rendition is choppy; improper stress and intonation that fails to mark ends of sentences and clauses.
   3. Usually three and four word phrase groups. Mixture of run-ons, mid-sentence pauses for breath, and possibly some choppiness; reasonable stress/intonation. Some appropriate expression and intonation.
   4. Generally well-phrased, mostly in clause and sentence units, with adequate attention to expression. Reads in larger, meaningful phrase groups. Preservation of the author’s syntax is consistent. Sense of ease is present in the oral presentation.

B. Smoothness
   1. Frequent extended pauses, hesitations, false starts, sound-outs, repetitions, and/or multiple attempts.
   2. Several “rough spots” in text where extended pauses, hesitations, etc., are more frequent and disruptive.
   3. Occasional breaks in smoothness caused by difficulties with specific words and/or structures.
   4. Generally smooth reading with some breaks, but word and structure difficulties are resolved quickly, usually through self-correction.

C. Pace
   1. Slow and laborious.
   2. Moderately slow.
   3. Uneven mixture of fast and slow reading.
   4. Consistently conversational.

Levels 1 and 2 are considered to represent characteristics of disfluent readers.

Levels 3 and 4 are considered to be characteristics of fluent readers.

Fluency scale (slightly adapted) found in:

**Oral Prosody Assessment Scoring Sheet**

Student name_________________
Teacher name________________
Grade______________________

**Narrative Passage**

1. **Phrasing and Expression**

   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Notes:________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________

2. **Smoothness**

   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Notes:________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________

3. **Pace**

   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Notes:________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________
Expository Passage

1. Phrasing and Expression

1 2 3 4

Notes:

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
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2. Smoothness

1 2 3 4

Notes:

__________________________________________________________________________
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3. Pace

1 2 3 4

Notes:

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Expository Assessment Scores

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APPENDIX E.

Silent Reading Prosody Interview Passages
“Where’s Papa going with that ax?” said Fern to her mother as they were setting the table for breakfast.

“Out to the hoghouse,” replied Mrs. Arable. “Some pigs were born last night.”

“I don’t see why he needs an ax,” continued Fern, who was only eight.

“Well,” said her mother, “one of the pigs is a runt. It’s very small and weak, and it will never amount to anything. So your father has decided to do away with it.”

“Do away with it?” shrieked Fern. “You mean kill it? Just because it’s smaller than the others?”

Mrs. Arable put a pitcher of cream on the table. “Don’t yell, Fern!” she said. “Your father is right. The pig would probably die anyway.”

Fern pushed a chair out of the way and ran outdoors. The grass was wet and the earth smelled of springtime. Fern’s sneakers were sopping by the time she caught up with her father.

“Please don’t kill it!” she sobbed. “It’s unfair.”

Mr. Arable stopped walking.

“Fern,” he said gently, “you will have to learn to control yourself.”

“Control myself?” yelled Fern. “This is a matter of life and death, and you talk about controlling myself.” Tears ran down her cheeks and she took hold of the ax and tried to pull it out of her father’s hand.

“Fern,” said Mr. Arable, “I know more about raising a litter of pigs than you do. A weakling makes trouble. Now run along!”
“But it’s unfair,” cried Fern. “The pig couldn’t help being born small, could it? If I had been very small at birth, would you have killed me?”

Mr. Arable smiled. “Certainly not,” he said, looking down at his daughter with love. “But this is different. A little girl is one thing, a little runty pig is another.”

“I see no difference,” replied Fern, still hanging on to the ax. “This is the most terrible case of injustice I ever heard of.”

A queer look came over John Arable’s face. He seemed almost ready to cry himself.

“All right,” he said. “You go back to the house and I will bring the run when I come in. I’ll let you start it on a bottle, like a baby. Then you’ll see what trouble a pig can be.”
Toads and frogs are amphibians. The word amphibian means “living a double life.” Most frogs and toads spend part of their lives in water and part on land. Most also have tiny, sharp teeth that help them hold on to struggling prey. Adults have lungs and breathe air. They may also take in oxygen through their skin. Tadpoles eat mostly plants. Adults feed mainly on insects.

A frog’s skin is moist and smooth. Frogs do not have bumps on their head. Frogs jump—sometimes several times the length of their body. Frogs lay their eggs in clumps.

Marine Toads are the giants of the toad family, measuring up to 9 inches long. They are found in warm climates throughout the world. Farmers like them because they eat lots of insects. This helps to protect the crops. Marine Toads usually have a faint line down the middle of their back.

American Toads spend most of their time on land, but they never go far from water. Many are brownish, but some are almost gray. The spots on their body are often red or orange. American Toads eat many insects. That is why people like having them in their yards and gardens.

Frogs and Toads capture meals with their long, sticky tongue. They swallow their prey without chewing. Male frogs and toads can sing. They do this by blowing up a pouch in their throat. Their trills and chirps are used to attract mates.

Spadefoot toads lay their eggs in big rain puddles. Their young must develop quickly, before the puddles dry up. It takes only about three to four weeks for a Spadefoot to grow from egg to tadpole to adult.

Bullfrogs can jump long distances. In many places, contests are held every year to see which frog can leap the farthest. Winners have mad leaps of more than 16 feet. That’s as long as a
school bus! Bullfrog tadpoles grow to be nearly 6 inches long. It takes them four to six years to become adults.
Todd started kicking me but his slippers couldn’t hurt me near as much as his fist had. The bedroom door opened and his mother, Mrs. Amos, came in. It seemed like she was having a hard time figuring out what was going on because Todd’s right leg got tired from kicking me and he switched over to his left one while she watched.

Finally Mrs. Amos said kind of soft, “Toddy?”

Todd looked up, fell on his knees and put his hands on his throat. He started huffing and puffing with his eyes bucking out of his head and his chest going up and down so hard that it looked like some kind of big animal was inside of him trying to burst out. This was my chance to get under the bed and pull the covers down so they couldn’t see me.

“How dare you! This is how you choose to repay me? Not only have you struck him, you have provoked his asthma!”

She looked over at me. “You are a beastly little brute and I will not tolerate even on night with you under my roof. Who knows what you would be capable of while we slept? I am not the least bit surprised at you show of ingratitude. Lord knows I have been stung by my own people before. But take a good look at me because I am one person who is totally fed up with you and your ilk. I do not have time to put up with the foolishness of those members of our race who do not want to be uplifted. Mr. Amos will show you to the shed tonight and you can come back in tomorrow for breakfast before you go. I do not know if I shall ever be able to help another child in need. I do know that I shall not allow vermin to attack my poor baby in his own house.”
Toads and frogs are amphibians. The word amphibian means “living a double life.” Most frogs and toads spend part of their lives in water and part on land. Most also have tiny, sharp teeth that help them hold on to struggling prey. Adults have lungs and breathe air. They may also take in oxygen through their skin. Tadpoles eat mostly plants. Adults feed mainly on insects.

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APPENDIX F.

Silent Reading Prosody Interview Questions
Silent Reading Prosody Interview

Student name________________
Date________________
Teacher name/grade_____________

Read this passage silently. Then I will ask you a few questions about how you read.

1. What happens when you read silently? How does it become real? In what ways does the story come alive?

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2. While reading silently, do you hear any sounds? For instance, when you read, are you transported to the place you are reading about where you can hear voices and the sounds of the environment, like the wind blowing in the trees? Basically, I want to know if you hear the sounds of the story.

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3. When you read this passage, did you hear voices? (Explain what is meant by voices if necessary.) If so, describe it for me. (Adjust interview at this point to invite rich responses from student.)

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4. How did this character sound when you read this line? (Point to specific portion of passage.) Did the character sound angry, sad, or have no emotion? Tell me as much detail as you can.
5. Did that character have the voice of a girl, boy, or your thinking voice, one of your parents’ voices, or one of your teachers’ voices? Please explain. (Repeat questions 3 and 4, selecting different characters.)

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6. Can you reread this passage for me aloud, and try to read it exactly how it sounded in your head. In other words, I want you to try and duplicate the way it sounded the first time when you read the passage silently.

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7. When you read orally to me earlier, you read with good expression and you made the passage sound natural as if you were having a conversation. How did you learn to read like this? Did you
learn this from instruction at school, from family members, from listening to other good readers, or some other way?

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8. Do you think that reading this way, with expression, helps you to be a better reader? If yes, how so? If no, why not?

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9. When I had you read a passage out loud you read _________ (expository or narrative) with expression but you did not read _________ (expository or narrative) with expression. Why is that?

*This section needs to be filled in according to how the individual student performed on the initial two-passage expository/narrative assessment. This question only applies to students who read only one of the passages with expression but not the other. This excludes students who read with prosody for both the expository and the narrative passages.

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10. Do you hear voices or sounds when you read narrative text? Do you hear voices when you read informational text? Do you hear these voices in your mind when you read all the time?
11. Do you prefer to have stories read to you with expression? Why, or why not? If the reader makes the passage sound like spoken language rather than words without expression, does this help you to understand the meaning of the words better?

Notes:
APPENDIX G.

Silent Reading Prosody Interview Transcripts
Silent Reading Prosody Interview Transcript  
Third grader--Melissa

**Researcher:** When you read silently in your mind what happens?

**Melissa:** I read faster because I don’t have to tell it, because then I don’t have to look at all of the words and like go through them in my mind to say them the right way…exactly…so I can read faster when I do this probably because my mind can read it faster because I’m not saying it.

**Researcher:** Does anything else happen in your mind?

**Melissa:** No, just the story.

**Researcher:** So, how does the story become real in your mind while you are reading?

**Melissa:** If it doesn’t have any pictures I usually make up pictures in my head with it. And if it does have pictures I see what I can say next on the next page with that.

**Researcher:** Is it like a T.V. that moves? So you see the action as it’s going?

**Melissa:** Yeah, like a T.V.

**Researcher:** What about sound?

**Melissa:** If I hear something I like put it in my mind and if that sound happens again I do it to the same sound that I already heard.

**Researcher:** So, you hear sounds what kinds of sounds are you talking about?

**Melissa:** Like if there was a bird chirp I use that same sound if it’s used again in the story.

**Researcher:** If you read, “the bird chirped” here and you hear it in your mind…does it sound like a bird you would hear outside, but in your mind?

**Melissa:** Yeah.

**Researcher:** But it sounds real?

**Melissa:** Yeah, it sounds real, like I really am hearing it.

**Melissa:** Like if your in an airplane and you have like things on [makes a motion that resembles putting on headphones] and you change the radio station to a story then it’s like that.

**Researcher:** So it’s like listening to a book on tape in your mind?
Melissa: Yes.

Researcher: So you said you hear sounds, do you hear the characters voices too?

Melissa: Uhh huh, like if it’s a girl…I have like a strong like high voice, and if it’s a lady I use a medium voice for her because she’s like older.

Researcher: What about when you read boys part?

Melissa: For boys I hear a lower voice so a boy would have a higher low voice. A man would have a really low voice.

Researcher: Do those voices sound like anyone you know?

Melissa: Uhh huh, my uncle, and my aunt, and my friend Jill.

Researcher: So are these the people’s voices that you hear when you read girl, boy, men, women parts all of the time or just in this story.

Melissa: Yeah I heard them in this story, but I hear them in other stories too.

Researcher: When we read Judy Moody the other day did Judy sound like your friend Jill?

Melissa: Yeah…every time I read a younger girl it sounds like my friend Jill.

Researcher: So when you read an adult lady it sounds like your aunt?

Melissa: Yeah it does.

Researcher: So it doesn’t sound like your mom or dad or other people?

Melissa: No, and if it sounds like a baby I am imagining it to be my almost new baby sister that’s in my step-mom’s belly. At least what I think the baby would sound like.

Researcher: So every time you read about a man it sounds like your uncle?

Melissa: Yes.

Researcher: So when you read an adult lady’s part it always sounds like your aunt?

Melissa: Yeah it does.

Researcher: So, when you read a young girls part is always sounds like your friend Jill?

Melissa: Yeah it always sounds like her.
Researcher: What about boys?

Melissa: Well, I don’t have a boy cousin or friend so I just hear a young boys voice but not anyone’s I know.

Researcher: And when you read a baby part you hear what you think your baby sister will sound like?

Melissa: Yeah it sounds like what I think she will sound like.

Researcher: So characters always sound like these people in your mind while you read silently?

Melissa: Yeah, the voices always sound like this when I read to myself.

Researcher: Why do you think this is? I don’t think there is a right answer to this…so it’s just what you think.

Melissa: I don’t know (giggles).

Researcher: Do you think it might be that you see these people a lot?

Melissa: Yeah, I think that might be it. I see them all a lot. I see my uncle a lot, definitely!

Researcher: When you read this passage, you said you heard character voices…like your aunt, and uncle.

Melissa: Yeah.

Researcher: So, this first line when Fern is talking, how did she sound?

Melissa: She sounds like my friend Jill.

Researcher: In your friends voice what emotion did she sound like?

Melissa: I heard her sound mad and sad.

Researcher: So then down here, we have the dad’s voice. He’s talking here on these three lines, how did he sound?

Melissa: Low and deep.

Researcher: So, when you’re reading this and you hear your friend’s voice and she sounds sad, does it really sound like if you were talking to your friend Jill and she was really sad about something? That’s how it really sounded in your head?

Melissa: Yeah, like that.
Researcher: So the voice had emotions?

Melissa: It had emotions, yeah.

Researcher: Do you ever hear your “thinking” voice when you’re reading? Like the voice you hear in your head when you’re thinking about something?

Melissa: Yeah, sometimes. I’m like the announcer.

Researcher: In your voice? The part where the characters aren’t talking. The narrator part. Is that in your thinking voice?

Melissa: Yeah. Like, that.

Researcher: Did you hear any other sounds in this passage?

Melissa: Right here… I imagined the pigs squealing, and I imagined how small the pig was, and big it could be if it was full grown.

Researcher: I want you to read these three lines, and I want you to try to think about how it sounded in your mind, and try your best to make it sound exactly like you hear it.

[reads the passage from Charlotte’s Web]

Researcher: Let’s try another one.

[reads a 2nd passage from Charlotte’s Web]

Researcher: One last one, and this one the dad is talking.

[reads the last passage from Charlotte’s Web]

Researcher: When you read out loud to me, you read with expression. You made it sound like how people talk, and you made it sound really natural. How did you learn to read like this?

Melissa: When I was in preschool, I started reading the first grade books. When I was three I went on to better books, and kept going up. My mom and I used to and still do read together at night. That also helps me to see the emotions. She reads a page, I read a page, she reads a page, I read a page.

Researcher: Did anyone teach you how to read like this with expression?

Melissa: My mom taught me some of the words, and she told me how some characters might speak, so then I kind of got the idea of what to do.
Researcher: So have your teachers ever said something like, “Ok, that was good, now read it again and try to read it with a little bit more expression this time,” or anything like that?

Melissa: Yeah, they have.

Researcher: Do you think that reading like this, with expression, giving the characters voices, does that help you to be a better reader?

Melissa: Yeah, I think so.

Researcher: Why do you think that is? How does that help you?

Melissa: Because I know the voice, and then when it happens again, I can do that same voice, but also, when I do that, if it changes immediately, then I have to get to another one.

Researcher: How would it help you understand what you’re reading?

Melissa: It helps me understand because how the voice sounds tells me what’s going to happen next. Or if it’s at the end of the chapter it makes me want to go on more to the next chapter because I want to see what happens.

Researcher: So it keeps you interested?

Melissa: Yeah, it keeps me interested.

Researcher: Do you think if you’re reading and you give it an emotion to make it sound mad, do you think that helps you to understand what the characters are doing and feeling?

Melissa: Yeah.

Researcher: Or if someone reads to you that way, then you can understand the storyline better.

Melissa: Yeah.

Researcher: Now I’m going to have you read this.

[reads passage on oceans and whales and researcher assesses for oral prosodic reading]

Researcher: Now read this passage silently.

[reads passage silently about frogs]

Researcher: Did you hear any sounds or any voices or anything in that one?
Melissa: I heard the ribbeting of the frogs and I imagined the little sharp teeth digging into a branch. And I could hear right in this paragraph the adults breathing. And I imagined the tadpoles munching on a leaf. And then I imagined an adult frog eating an insect, like a grasshopper.

Researcher: When you read this one, did you hear any person’s voice?

Melissa: I could hear my voice reading it, but I could also hear the frog’s voices ribbeting, and talking to each other as they bounced around.

Researcher: Do you like to have stories read with expression? Like if your teacher is reading a story….

Melissa: Yeah, I like that.

Researcher: Why do you like it better?

Melissa: I think I like it better because I can know what’s happening in the story. And with more expression, then it sounds more interesting
Silent Reading Prosody Interview Transcript
Fourth Grade Student--Derek

Researcher: What happens in your mind when you read silently?

Derek: I get more comprehension than I do when I read out loud. When I read out loud I always stumble up the words, like I can’t pronounce it. I can pronounce it in my head, but I can’t say it out loud without adding [incoherent mumbling]… When I read quickly I do, but when I look at it and read, I don’t do that.

Researcher: So when you read silently, how does the story become real in your mind?

Derek: It comes alive because I can imagine it without talking out of turn when I’m reading with my mom, like in a group, I have to listen to them. But when I do it by myself, I can think about it by myself without other people talking to me and distracting me.

Researcher: While you’re reading silently, do you hear any sounds? In your head, do you hear what’s going on in the story? For instance, while you’re reading about a farm, are you transported to that place that you’re reading, like you see the place, you hear Fern talking in the story?

Derek: Yeah.

Researcher: What’s that like?

Derek: What do you mean? I don’t get the question.

Researcher: Well, when you’re reading silently, in your mind you said you can imagine it, right?

Derek: Yeah, I imagine a lot.

Researcher: So what’s it like when you imagine. Do you hear things?

Derek: I hear the things that… I close my eyes and visualize it, and I can hear what they’re saying. And I have a really good imagination. I can actually replay the scene in my head.

Researcher: So you see it too? You see and hear it? So what other kinds of sounds do you hear?

Derek: I hear the voices, where they are, in this case I hear the bus honking, I hear the man walking, and the grass making [crunch noise].

Researcher: You already said you hear voices. What do those voices sound like? Does it sound like a man?
Derek: If it’s an adult, if it’s a man, I usually give him a rough voice, if it’s a woman I give it sort of similar to your voice. If it’s a kid, I give it a 7-year old girl’s voice, and if it’s a boy I give it an 8-year old boy’s voice. Unless it says that they’re in their teens, and I’ve seen lots of teens and I use voices that I’ve heard then.

Researcher: When you read this line, what did she sound like? Fern, what did she sound like to you?

Derek: She sounded like, sort of like she didn’t know what was going to happen with the axe. He’s going out without telling her, so he’s probably going to do something to someone with the axe.

Researcher: Was she happy, sad sounding? Was she scared?

Derek: Sad with not knowing.

Researcher: So kind of confused?

Derek: Confused and sad.

Researcher: What about [reads passage]? How does she sound here in your mind?

Derek: She sounds really, really scared for the runt, the kid. And she sounded like everything was going bad for her, and it didn’t seem to her like it deserved to die.

Researcher: So she sounded scared and worried about the pig, right?

Derek: Yeah.

Researcher: What about here?

Derek: She’s in control of her sadness and anger for her dad doing that, so she lets it out by saying I don’t want you to kill it. But she got so upset everything just came out. She can’t control herself any longer because she thought it’s unfair just because he’s small he should die.

Researcher: So with Fern, was that a boy voice, your voice, like your talking voice, my voice, girl voice, young girl?

Derek: I think it should probably be a girl my age, probably a girl who is a little bit taller than me.

Researcher: What about this person? In your mind when you read it, how did she sound?

Derek: She sounded like an adult. Who didn’t like this because it was a sad thing. She didn’t cry a lot, like my mom cries a lot.
**Researcher:** Does she sound like anyone you know, like your mom?

**Derek:** She sounds a little, but not like my mom. My mom would do a lot of sniffling. She cries more than me.

**Researcher:** Now what about this person, the father. What did he sound like?

**Derek:** He sounds sort of like a farmer who will do what he has to do, just because it’s the littlest one he thinks it’s going to die, it doesn’t deserve to live.

**Researcher:** So when you read his lines where he was talking, in your mind, does it sound like one of the adult teachers here, does it sound like your dad, does it sound like your voice talking?

**Derek:** It sounded a little like me.

**Researcher:** It sounded like you? Like your talking voice, or your thinking voice?

**Derek:** Yeah.

**Researcher:** Now, I want you to read this line right here out loud, but I want you to try to read it exactly how when you’re reading it silently in your head, the way the voices sounded in your head.

[reads the passages]

**Researcher:** Here you were reading with expression you gave the characters voices and you made them sound happy or angry…that’s reading with expression. Do you think that helps you to be a better reader?

**Derek:** Yeah, because, I’ve read books twice and I go back and the first time I read it aloud with my mom and I didn’t get it and I went back the next week and I read again to myself and it was a different story than I thought it was.

**Researcher:** It was different when you read it to yourself?

**Derek:** Yeah, I could visualize it in my mind but the first time I had to focus on my mom not to lose anything that she would say.

**Researcher:** If I was to read to you with expression, do you like that better than to be read to without expression?

**Derek:** Yes, because I read another book that my teachers read aloud because I love that book and it has a cliffhanger and wanted to know what happens next. I didn’t do the
voices that the teacher did and I thought the same thing as the last one…it is a series that you have to pay attention so you don’t miss anything.

Researcher: So giving expression and doing voices help you understand the story better?

Derek: Yeah. Sometimes it won’t make sense like a teacher will make a wrong voice character sound like they are mad and they are really happy and then you are like ‘huh’!

Researcher: Do you like it better to be read to this way?

Derek: It’s more fun and it’s fun when the characters have funny voices like a mouse with a squeaky high voice!

[read expository passage silently]

Researcher: Did you hear any sounds in your mind when you read this silently?

Derek: Yeah. I heard toads croaking and shishishsihs…and ribbit ribbit.

Researcher: This one doesn’t have any characters talking just a narrator. Did you hear any voices with this one?

Derek: Yeah. I’ve seen like nature television shows and the voice sounds like the narrator on the nature television show. It could be a he or a she.

Researcher: When you read it this time was it a he or a she?

Derek: It was a he.

Researcher: When you read the part about Fern did you actually hear a girl’s voice in your mind like a book on tape…or did you just know that it should sound like a girl’s voice?

Derek: I actually heard her.

Derek: Sometimes I’m confused because I’ll read a part where a character is named something that could be a girl or boy name like Sam. So in my mind I hear the character maybe like a girl and then I find out later that it’s a boy…and that’s shocking. I can get confused like that.

Researcher: How did you learn to read with expression?

Derek: My mom and dad always wanted me to read every night. So I would practice reading since I was like four. I read with my mom so much that I learned how to read with expression. In second grade, I didn’t read with much expression and she called my parents and they were concerned. And then we had to read the book Dear
Levi and I…I read with a lot of expression and my mom was sooo happy! So that is how I started to read with expression.

**Researcher:** So people wanted you to read with expression?

**Derek:** Yeah. Sometimes I talk to my friends on the internet and they will tell me directions on playing a game. But I wish that they were there in person because sometimes you don’t know what they are really saying because I can’t hear their voices.

**Derek:** Oh, and when I was in second grade, I would listen to the news I would listen to how they read and then I would think about how I read. So then I tried to read like them with expression.
Silent Reading Prosody Interview Transcript
Fifth Grade Student--Krista

Researcher: What happens when you read silently? What happens in your mind?
Krista: I just kind of try to picture everything. I try to picture how the people are talking.
Researcher: So you see images of what’s going on?
Krista: Yeah.
Researcher: And you said you try to imagine what they sound like?
Krista: Yeah.
Researcher: So do you actually in your mind hear them saying these things?
Krista: Mm-Hmm. (yes)
Researcher: Is it sort of like watching TV or a movie?
Krista: Yeah.
Researcher: In your mind like having headphones?
Krista: Yeah, like a little movie.
Researcher: So do you hear any other sounds or anything while you read?
Krista: No, not really.
Researcher: No sounds? So like if for instance a book says something like, “There was thunder,” would you hear something like the sound of thunder?
Krista: No.
Researcher: I want to tell you, there’s no right answer or wrong answer because everyone is different, I just am curious to see how kids read silently. So sounds, but you do hear voices and see pictures. When you read this passage did you hear voices?
Krista: Mm-Hmm (yes).
Researcher: Can you describe them for me?
Krista: Well, the one kid Todd kind of sounded whiny and bratty.
Researcher: Anybody else?

Krista: The mom sounded really mad. I don’t hear anyone else talk.

Researcher: What about this part where no one is actually talking? The narrator?

Krista: I just couldn’t picture it. I don’t hear the narrator voice.

Researcher: Did Todd, you said he sounded kind of whiny, was he, how else did he sound, did he have a guy voice, a girl voice, your voice?

Krista: He sounded like he was maybe younger.

Researcher: Younger than you are?

Krista: I don’t know, he kind of like acted that way. But it sounded like he could have been either age.

Researcher: Did he sound like a boy, though?

Krista: Yeah.

Researcher: Or did he sound in your mind as your listening to the words, did it sound like, it’s not your voice or a girl voice?

Krista: No, he sounded like a boy.

Researcher: What about Mrs. Amos?

Krista: She sounded like a girl. She sounded kind of old.

Researcher: So like a lady’s voice?

Krista: Yeah.

Researcher: So, when you read [reads part of passage], it didn’t sound like any voice in particular?

Krista: Well, it sounded like how I would say it.

Researcher: So sort of like your “thinking voice”?

Krista: Yeah.

Researcher: So you heard your thinking voice?
Researcher: So, when you read this part and it’s Mrs. Amos talking, how did she sound?

Krista: Kind of worried and… really worried, and then she got mad when she was talking to the kids

Researcher: So worried, and then she was angry when she talked with him. What about in this paragraph?

Krista: What Todd sounded like? He sounded like he was trying to sound really innocent and it probably sounded really fake to the other guy.

Researcher: Ok, trying to sound innocent? And it sounded fake?

Krista: Yeah, but the mom believed him.

Researcher: What about this one? With Mrs. Amos.

Krista: She sounded really mad.

Researcher: Did these people actually sound like people? Like Todd, did he sound like a boy you know? Or is just kind of a made-up voice, like if you’re watching TV and you don’t know the guy, it’s just a boy?

Krista: Yeah, just a boy.

Researcher: What about Mrs. Amos, did she sound like anyone you know?

Krista: No, I don’t think.

Researcher: So just kind of an imaginary voice?

Krista: Yeah.

Researcher: So when you’re talking about how they sound, and they have an emotion, like they sound mad or worried, you could actually hear that, it’s not like you’re just reading it and…

Krista: No, I can imagine their voice sounding that way.

Researcher: So it’s not like, for instance, I know they should be mad, because I understand the passage? It’s not that I know they should be mad, but you actually hear their voices, like listening to an audio tape, and they sounded angry. The narrator voice talking is angry.
Krista: Yeah.

Researcher: So when you were reading this, you read it with expression and you also just made it sound natural like you were talking with someone. How did you learn to read like that?

Krista: When the teachers read aloud to us, I always listen to their voices and that they always make up different voices for each character, so I kind of adapted that when I read.

Researcher: So the teachers made up voices for each character?

Krista: Right.

Researcher: So even though you can’t have a male voice if you’re a girl, you try to lower…

Krista: Make it sound… yeah.

Researcher: So you make voices for each character? So the teachers model it for you?

Krista: Right.

Researcher: What about… do they ever teach you how to do that? Like do they do a lesson where it’s all about just giving expression and things like that?

Krista: Not exactly, no. No, they don’t have a specific class for that, but the teachers will have us read aloud sometimes in the classroom when reading it, and ask, “Does anyone want to read this paragraph?” Kind of like for practice.

Researcher: So they don’t stop you and say, “Read that again, but make sure…”

Krista: Right, they just let you read it however you…

Researcher: Ok, so they don’t stop you or anything.

Krista: Right.

Researcher: Did you parents read to you a lot at home?

Krista: Yeah, my dad did a lot when I was younger.

Researcher: Does he do that, does he read with expression?

Krista: Yeah. He used to read the Harry Potter books with a British accent.
Researcher: So he read with expression. Do you think that helped you to take that and do it yourself?

Krista: Yeah.

Researcher: Do you think if you hadn’t had people read like that to you, do you think you would still do that?

Krista: I don’t know, because I’ve always been able to do that with other situations, like if I’m thinking in my mind, like if I’m really mad at someone and I’m thinking something in my mind then I’ll have like an angry voice in my mind. So, I think probably.

Researcher: So you think you probably would still?

Krista: Yeah.

Researcher: Do you think that reading this way, either to yourself or having someone read to you with expression, does that help you be a better reader?

Krista: I think so, because once I know if they’re angry and I can give them an angry voice then I can understand better. So it helps me understand more.

Researcher: So, understand maybe what the characters are thinking, or feeling, or maybe just what’s going on?

Krista: Yeah.

Researcher: Do you like to have people read to you with expression?

Krista: Yeah, that’s my favorite part, when the teacher, she tries to read every day, we’re reading a book called *Double Identity*.

[conversation goes off-topic about the author]

Researcher: So you like to have stories read to you with expression. Why is that?

Krista: I don’t know. Because it’s kind of like watching a movie, it entertains me. When they’re talking I can picture it in my head.

Researcher: You said earlier that listening to people read like that helps you understand.

Krista: Right.

Researcher: Now I’m going to have you read this passage aloud.
[reads passage aloud—expository passage. Researcher makes assessment of oral prosodic reading]

**Researcher:** Good, now I’m going to have you read this passage here silently.

[silence]

**Researcher:** So, did you hear any sounds of voices or anything when you read this one?

**Krista:** No, just kind of my voice.

**Researcher:** So you heard your voice all the way through?

**Krista:** Yeah.

**Researcher:** So, no hearing the frogs ribbit or anything like that?

**Krista:** No.

**Researcher:** Now, I want you to read this line to me, and I want you to do the best that you can to make it sound exactly like how it sounded when you read it silently. Try to make it sound like how it sounded in your mind when you read it silently.

[reads the passages]
Silent Reading Prosody Interview Transcript  
Sixth Grade Student--Leah

**Researcher:** So when you read this passage silently, what happened? Like when you read silently in general, what happens in your mind?

**Leah:** I kind of picture… sometimes I get a picture in my head, but then it tells me what it looks like, and then I kind of modify what I’m thinking. Sometimes I try to think of different voices saying things when they’re talking.

**Researcher:** So you’re saying that you’re reading along and your imagination has sort of created what you see, and then you read something and you’re like, oh, that’s how it’s supposed to be, and then you modify it so it changes in your mind. And then you also think of the different voices.

**Leah:** Yeah.

**Researcher:** So when you’re reading silently, do you hear any sounds in your mind? Do you hear any sounds that are going on in the story?

**Leah:** Kind of. I’ll hear the people’s voices and then if it says that there’s something going on in the background, I might hear something like that.

**Researcher:** So if they said something like there was thunder or there were trumpets playing in the background, would you hear in your mind those things?

**Leah:** Mm-Hmm (yes)

**Researcher:** My next question is did you hear voices? You sort of just said that you did, so could you tell me a little bit more about what that’s like in general when you read?

**Leah:** Well, sometimes, I like to think of someone that I know, and make it the same as theirs. Or I might just make that person sound like I do.

**Researcher:** So is it different for different stories?

**Leah:** Yeah.

**Researcher:** What are some of… you said there are sometimes people you knew that it would sound like those people. Who are those people, or would it just sound like whoever?

**Leah:** Well, if they’re a mother in the book, I might think of my mom or usually the same kind of person. Like if it’s a grandmother in a book I might think of my grandmother.
Researcher: So if it’s a dad you might think of your dad, or if it’s an uncle you’d think of your uncle?

Leah: Mm-Hmm (yes)

Researcher: What about for the main character, if it’s a girl or boy?

Leah: I would probably just think of what it said in the book, because usually it says all their personality traits and what they look like, and just kind of picture the person with what it says.

Researcher: The book gives traits, and so you kind of create our own sound?

Leah: Mm-Hmm (yes)

Researcher: So in this one, who did Todd sound like?

Leah: Like a little boy or something. Like a little brother talking.

Researcher: Do you have a little brother?

Leah: No, but a lot of my friends do.

Researcher: What about Mrs. Amos?

Leah: She kind of seemed like when my mom’s mad, or when a teacher is mad at someone.

Researcher: So did Mrs. Amos sound like you were listening to the voice of your mom? Or did she sound more like you were listening to the voice of your teacher?

Leah: Probably neither because they never really get that mad to call you a “beastly little brute.”

Researcher: So even though they might not say that, did it sound like her voice, or did it sound like just another adult?

Leah: Probably just another adult.

Researcher: What about… is there any other boy talking on this page… what does he sound like?

Leah: He kind of seems like a boy about my age. Just kind of like fending for himself, trying not to get in trouble.
Researcher: So when you’re reading a story and you read this characters’ lines and what they say, do you actually hear those character voices, or is it more like, I know Mrs. Amos is a mom and she’s mad, so she sound like an angry mom? Or is it more like when you’re reading it you’re listening to a book on tape with headphones?

Leah: Yeah, kind of. Well, it doesn’t always happen, but sometimes I tune out everything else and I’m just reading.

Researcher: So when you’re able to focus, when you’re not distracted, you can hear the voices? Is that what you’re saying?

Leah: Yeah.

Researcher: So is it something that when you’re reading a story, sometimes you might hear the voices but other times you might not because of distractions?

Leah: Mm-Hmm (yes). Because it’s just like if I’m in a big crowd, I might just be reading the words, but if I’m in my room, I can read better.

Researcher: So you’re just reading the words and not actually hearing anything? But if you’re quiet and able to focus… What about if you’re rushed for time, like if you have two minutes to read, or you’re reading at the doctor’s office or something? And you’re about ready to go, would you hear voices then do you think, if you’re rushed?

Leah: Probably not very much because sometimes if I really want to read something, like one time I really wanted to finish a book, and I really wanted to know what happened so much that I started skipping words and lines, so then I went back and was like, “oh, ok, that happened.”

Researcher: So when that’s happening, and when you’re rushing or you can’t concentrate, you don’t hear voices, but you know how you said you see pictures? Do you see those pictures either when you’re trying to…

Leah: Yeah, I see pictures, but not so much voices.

Researcher: Ok, so still see pictures when you’re rushed, but you don’t hear the voices.

Leah: Yeah.

Researcher: When you read this line and the mom is talking to her son, how did she sound?

Leah: She sounded kind of worried about her son, and then like really annoyed at the other boy.

Researcher: What about Todd talking here?
Leah: He was exaggerating and trying to draw attention to himself, kind of.

Researcher: So when you read that line silently, he sounded like if you knew someone who was kind of putting on a show, he sounded like that to you?

Leah: Mm-Hmm (yes)

Researcher: What about down here, Mrs. Amos is talking again. How did she sound? What does her voice sound like?

Leah: She sounded really angry, and disgusted.

Researcher: What about here, she’s talking again?

Leah: She kind of sounds like she’s really yelling at him because she was really worried about her son, and she thought that he would never do anything like that.

Researcher: Now I want you to read out loud for me. I want you to try to make it sound as much like it did you in your head. I know you can’t make up that male voice, like you can’t sound how it did in your head, but the best that you can. Try to show me how it sounded in your head. I want you to read these three lines.

[reads the passages]

Researcher: When you read now and when you read those other things earlier, you read with expression. You made it sound like you’re talking, and that’s what I call good expression. So, how did you learn to read like that?

Leah: I like to act. And I started to read pretty early with my parents, and they always told me that I should do that. And then when I got into school, I was already reading, so I could put the details onto it.

Researcher: So it’s sort of like since you started reading earlier and you were able to, you didn’t have to worry about trying to read all the words, and you could like you said put those details, make it sound more like a conversation rather than just [read with no expression or phrasing]? That just doesn’t sound like how you would talk, you don’t talk like that. So you can make sure it sounds like that if you practice reading?

Leah: Mm-Hmm (yes).

Researcher: So you said you started reading earlier, you like to act, your parents told you to put those details in. Did any of your teachers ever do anything to help you practice reading that way?
Leah: Yeah. We would do reading groups. Some of the books we read were just for information, but some of them we would go around the circle and read out loud, and we would have to be the characters.

Researcher: So that helped you?

Leah: Mm-Hmm (yes).

Researcher: What about listening to people read?

Leah: In the summer, even now and since I was little, my mom, we would usually read Harry Potter, one chapter a night. I listened a lot because sometimes it’s more fun than reading silently because there’s actually a person talking rather than… sometimes it’s easier to listen because you don’t have to do any work, you’re just listening.

Researcher: You’re not taking the words and then making all these images, you’re just listening and making images.

Leah: Mm-Hmm (yes)

Researcher: So she read Harry Potter, and you read together?

Leah: And we read Nancy Drew books, too. Sometimes my dad would read, and he’s a singer, so he does, he loves to do voices, so it’s really fun.

Researcher: Do you think listening to your parents do these things, that that also helped you to do this?

Leah: Yeah.

Researcher: Do you think reading this way, not just voices but making it sound like you’re talking, not choppy, more smooth, do you think reading this way helps you to be a better reader? Either out loud or silently?

Leah: Yeah, because you’re just reading straight and no expression, you’re not really getting the story, because if there’s someone really bad, if you think of it or read it with expression you can really tell that they’re bad.

Researcher: So if you don’t hear it or read it that way, if you don’t hear someone reading with anger or you don’t hear it in your mind, you’re missing part of what’s going on. Is there anything else that you think it might help you do? Or reasons that it’s nice to read that way?
Leah: Well, yeah, it sometimes is just more fun. Just reading without expression is kind of like listening to mmmmm [hums a single blah note]. But then if you put it in it’s easier and more exciting to listen to or read.

Researcher: Now I need you to read this one to yourself silently.

[silence—reads expository text]

Researcher: So this one is informational, it’s not people talking. Do you hear any sounds, or voices, or anything with this?

Leah: Not as much as in a story, but I see pictures of like the jumping contest, that’s kind of a funny picture. But I kind of more hear my own voice, because kind of… it’s not a specific person talking.

Researcher: So sort of like you’re thinking voice, like if you’re sitting in class and you’re thinking something, that’s the same kind of voice you hear?

Leah: Mm-Hmm (yes).

Researcher: So you hear your thinking voice when you read things that aren’t characters. Do you ever hear your voice at other times when you do have a story?

Leah: Well, when I’m reading, if it’s the narrator of the story, I don’t know if I, sometimes I actually hear my own voice, but then sometimes I just kind of take the works in and not hear anything. But for actual characters I do.

Researcher: So sometimes you hear your thinking voice or your own voice, but other times you just take in the words? When do you think it’s different? What makes that different? Why do sometimes you hear your voice and sometimes you just take in the words? What happens to make you do that?

Leah: I don’t really know, because sometimes it just happens. I’ll be reading, and then I’ll take in two words and then I’ll just actually hear myself. I don’t really know what the answer is for that.

Researcher: You don’t have to I was just wondering. Do you think that has to do with, you know how you said before that if you’re rushed or if you’re in a really noisy place you don’t always take it in as much? Do you think it’s that too, or is it just whenever?

Leah: Yeah, probably when it’s more crowded and noisy I wouldn’t hear my voice as much. Again, if it’s quiet, I probably would.

Researcher: You sort of talked about this earlier, but do you like, if you were having a teacher read to you, or another student, would you rather they read this way? With expression? More of like a conversation?
Leah: You mean would I rather have someone read to me? Or myself reading?

Researcher: You can answer both. First, would you rather have someone read to you, or would you rather read it yourself.

Leah: I kind of like listening better, because it’s just kind of relaxing because you’re just there and listening rather than having to read.

Researcher: Then the other question is do you like to have stories read to you, like if you’re listening to your teacher read, would you rather they read [reads passage without expression or phrasing]. Or more like a conversation.

Leah: Normal talking.

Researcher: You’d rather have with expression or character voices or just more like normal talking?

Leah: Mm-Hmm (yes)

Researcher: Why do you like that better?

Leah: It’s a lot more interesting because it kind of catches your attention rather than your mind just starting to drift.

Researcher: What about if I read the passage about Mrs. Amos, and I read it just sort of plain, and she was really, really angry in the part, but I read it really plain, would that affect how you understood the meaning of how she’s feeling and what’s going on in the story?

Leah: Well, I would probably understand that she’s angry, but I probably wouldn’t get that she’s really, really angry.

Researcher: How would you still know that she’s angry?

Leah: From the words that she’s saying and what she’s calling him.

Researcher: So do you think that as you get older, do you think that you would still hear these voices as you get older and keep reading?

Leah: I think so, probably.

Researcher: You don’t think it would change for some reason?

Leah: I don’t think so. Because I like to read, it will probably just stay the same.