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The (Mis)Match between Texts and Students Who Depend on Schools to Become Literate

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Texts are central to the act of reading. Children can learn a great deal about the language and content of texts through listening to experienced readers read texts aloud; however, unless children's eyes are making contact with print and translating that print into meaning, they can't be described as reading. The critical role of texts in reading is recognized in the educational marketplace where a substantial amount of money is spent annually on textbooks. The amount of energy devoted to debating appropriate texts for beginning and struggling readers within the educational community is also substantial (Allington & Woodside-Jiron, 1998; Chall, 1967/1983). However, relative to the amount of the expenditure on texts, the amount of research on appropriate texts for beginning and struggling readers has been inconsequential. This sparse research base is surprising in light of claims by policymakers and publishers that the current basal reading programs have been validated empirically. For example, a study on the copyrights of the two basal reading programs mandated for use in California (McGill-Franzen, Zmach, Solic, & Zeig, 2006) appeared in the archival literature just as California issued man-

dates for its next textbook adoption (California State Board of Education, 2006).

The massive swings in text features for beginning readers over the past 20 years, in particular, have had little research examination (although an extensive amount of rhetoric). Descriptions of the textbook programs adopted in Texas in 1993 (Hoffman et al., 1994) and in 2000 (Hoffman, Sailors, & Patterson, 2002) offer evidence that changes were substantial over this 20-year period. The first-grade texts in the 1993 adoption emphasized literature and deemphasized controlled vocabulary, while those in 2000 had high percentages of decodable words. These rapid changes in policies have produced a scattered approach to the curriculum of basal reading programs with the vestiges of one approach alongside the activities of a second, discrepant approach (Hiebert, Martin, & Menon, 2005). The influence of the literature-based approach is represented in the presence of many multisyllabic words in beginning texts (Foorman, Francis, Davidson, Harm, & Griffin, 2004; Hiebert, 2005a), while the influence of decodable texts is reflected in the presence of many single-appearing words chosen on the basis of individual grapheme–phoneme correspondences (Foorman et al., 2004; Hiebert, 2005a). This seesawing of policies has resulted in texts with features that are contrary to long-standing findings such as Juel and Roper/Schneider's (1985) that beginning readers are challenged by multisyllabic words and Reitsma's (1983) that developing readers require at least a modicum of repetition with some words to develop automatic word recognition.

Shifts in patterns that make texts more difficult (e.g., high percentages of multisyllabic words and many single-appearing words) have occurred during a time of extensive immigration and increased numbers of children who live in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). The percentage of students who do not reach the benchmark of basic on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (Perie, Grigg, & Donahue, 2005) has remained fairly robust—approximately 38–40% of a fourth-grade age cohort. Students who are poor and/or speak a first language other than English in their homes have a high probability of being "below-basic." It is these students for whom school instruction makes the biggest difference and who are referred to, throughout this chapter, as students who depend on schools to become literate.

This volume considers responses to the discrepancy between the proficiencies of students who depend on schools to become literate and the typical tasks of texts. Within the volume, ideas are presented for how teachers can adjust, adapt, supplement, and augment instructional texts. To understand the need for this adaptation, the problem needs to be recognized. This chapter lays the foundation by describing the nature and

scope of the problem. Specifically, I ask and answer two questions about the nature of the task posed by current beginning reading texts:

1. How does the beginning reading task compare to the proficiencies required to read texts in subsequent grades?
2. How do the task demands of current texts compare with the proficiencies of students in the 10th, 25th, and 40th percentiles?

THE NATURE OF THE TASKS POSED BY TEXTS

Analyses of the features of texts for beginning readers have a fairly long history (see Chall, 1967/1983). Several researchers have described recent changes in texts for beginning readers. As noted earlier, the descriptions of Hoffman and his colleagues (Hoffman et al., 1994; Hoffman et al., 2002) show substantial differences in the features of texts for beginning readers within the Texas textbook adoptions of 1993 and 2000. Whereas texts were chosen for the quality of their literary engagingness in 1993, the texts of 2000 were chosen for the presence of words with particular phoneme–grapheme correspondences. Hypotheses can be offered as to what these differences mean for students learning to read. However, analyses that describe how students at particular stages of development perform with these different types of texts have not been conducted.

In a subsequent study, Hoffman, Roser, Patterson, Salas, and Pennington (2001) examined first graders' ability to read texts similar to those in the 1993 copyrights and ones that continue to dominate the anthologies of basal reading programs. Hoffman and his colleagues examined texts leveled according to the four criteria of Reading Recovery and its classroom application, guided reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 1999): (1) book and print features; (2) content, themes, and ideas; (3) text structure; and (4) language and literary elements. A text is assigned a single level based on a judge's evaluation of all four dimensions. Hoffman et al. gave beginning readers a group of texts that represented different levels. They concluded that students' performances validated the leveling system in that high-performing students read texts at all levels of their distribution, including the highest levels, middle-performing students read texts at the middle levels, and so forth. However, a full 40% of the students were not highly accurate with any of the texts, including those at the earliest levels.

Cunningham et al. (2005) have confirmed that texts, such as those used in Reading Recovery and the basal reading programs, may be difficult for beginning readers who are not proficient at word recognition. Cunningham et al. (2005) analyzed a set of texts based on Reading Re-

covery levels to determine how supportive such texts are for instruction of word recognition. They concluded that these texts provided only a moderate amount of support for word-recognition instruction and almost none for decoding instruction in the use of onsets and rimes. They also reported that leveled texts do not consistently increase in word-level demands as their levels increase. Johnston's (2000) analyses of student performances with such texts confirm that, even after at least 10 readings of a text, most beginning readers learn a limited number of unfamiliar words. Johnston reported that students who began with low levels of reading learned only a small portion of the words in these texts (approximately 4–5%).

Foorman et al. (2004) analyzed the textbooks that were adopted for use in Texas in 2000 according to phonics patterns, high-frequency word status, and the number of repetitions within and across the six instructional blocks that comprise a school year. They reported that 70% of the words were taught as single units with the percentage reaching 84 in 6-week blocks of several programs. According to Foorman et al., only 229 words were common to all six programs that they analyzed, and 116 of these shared words were on the Dolch list. At the conclusion of their analyses, Foorman et al. questioned how first graders can be expected to acquire and apply letter–sound correspondence knowledge when only 20% of the words in texts are repeated two or three times.

I have used a framework called TExT (Text Elements by Task) to describe the task that a text poses for beginning and struggling readers (Hiebert, 2005a, 2008). Based on reviews of reading acquisition, I have identified two dimensions of texts as most influential on independent word identification: (1) the cognitive load represented by the number of new, unique words per 100 and (2) the linguistic information of the new, unique words. Linguistic content refers to the knowledge about phonology, orthography, and morphology that is required to read words successfully. There are two kinds of linguistic information that are particularly important. The first is the frequency of a word's appearance in written English. I have proposed that the words found in school texts (Zeno, Ivens, Millard, & Duvvuri, 1995) can be classified into seven word zones according to their frequency in written English (Hiebert, 2005b). The word zones differ in size and in the number of times the words in them can be expected to appear in a million-word sample of words. The number of words in the highly frequent zones (zones 0-2), where words can be expected to occur at least 100 or more times per one million words of text, is relatively small (930). Approximately 4,660 words are in zones 3 and 4, where words are predicted to appear with moderate frequency (from 99 to 10 times per one-million words). Zones 6 and 7 are large (approximately 150,000 words). These words appear

rarely in texts with likely occurrences from 0.01 to 9 times per million words.

The second kind of linguistic information pertains to common, consistent vowel patterns in words. In order for students to develop automaticity in reading, they must be able to generalize and apply knowledge about the relationships between letters and sounds. The two forms of linguistic information intersect in that all written words in English, no matter how frequent or infrequent, are alphabetic.

I used the TExT framework to analyze the changes in a basal reading program over the 40-year period from 1962 to 2000 (Hiebert, 2005a). I was particularly interested in whether programs showed a developmental pattern with texts becoming increasingly more difficult from grade to grade. The numbers of new, unique words per 100 at the end of first and second grade were as follows: 8 and 11 (1962); 10 and 12 (1983); 20 and 17 (1993); and 19 and 18 (2000). Regardless of the year of the program, the rate at which new words appeared in the programs remained fairly consistent from first grade to second grade. From 1983 to 1993, however, the rate of new, unique words increased substantially in both first- and second-grade texts.

I also analyzed the percentage of words that fall within the 1,000 most-frequent words at the ends of grades 1 and 2, respectively, across these four copyrights: 1962 copyright—60, 40; 1983 copyright—53, 30; 1993 copyright—34, 24; and 2000 copyright—37, 25 (Hiebert, 2005a). While the number of new, unique words remained the same from the ends of grade 1 to 2 for a copyright, the types of words changed. Just as the number of new, unique words changed from 1983 to 1993, so too the percentage of new, unique words accounted for by highly frequent words changed from 1983 to 1993. In the 1962 and 1983 copyrights, highly frequent words consumed a majority of the words through the end of grade 1. Beginning in 1993, highly frequent words did not account for the majority of words even in the latter part of grade 1.

In the same study (Hiebert, 2005a), I examined whether this particular program (one of two that Chall (1967/1983) identified as a prototypical mainstream basal reading program) was representative of five additional basal reading programs. All but one of the six programs was included in the mandated programs in the 2000 Texas textbook adoption. All six programs had a similar rate of introducing new, unique words per 100 at the end of grade 1: a range from 16 to 21. There was somewhat more variation for the exit grade-2 texts: a range from 14 to 22. Percentages of high-frequency words for exit grade 1 were similar (33 to 40), while percentages for the end of grade 2 were lower but within a similar range (20 to 25). The pattern that was apparent in the program used for historical analysis was also evident in the other major

programs available in the marketplace in 2000, for both the number of unique words and the percentages of high-frequency words.

In a second study, my colleagues and I (Hiebert, Martin, & Menon, 2005) analyzed the shared words across components of three programs (two of which had been included in Hiebert, 2005a). The three components of the programs were the anthology, decodable texts, and leveled texts. Across the three components of the two programs that are regarded as mainstream basal programs, the percentage of shared words was exactly the same—28%. In the third program (Reading Mastery, a decoding-oriented program), the percentage was higher—40%. In all cases, the majority of shared words fell within the 300 most-frequent words.

AN EXAMINATION OF DIFFICULTY OF WORDS ACROSS A CURRENT PROGRAM

My studies (2005a; Hiebert et al., 2005) and studies by Foorman et al. (2004) indicate that the percentage of unique words in first-grade basal reading programs is high and that the proportion of repeated words consists primarily of high-frequency words. The basal reading programs analyzed in these studies were published from 1995 through 2001. Since features of texts may be specific to a particular program's copyright due to state mandates, one might wonder whether the features of texts reported in the studies (Foorman et al., 2004; Hiebert, 2005a; Hiebert et al., 2005) also apply to recent copyrights of basal programs. Have publishers made changes in programs (and policymakers in mandates) as a result of descriptions of the inaccessibility of basal reading programs, especially for students who depend on schools to become literate? To answer this question, I analyzed a sample of texts from the most recent copyright of a program—the same one used in my historical analyses (2005a). Since I was particularly interested in the developmental changes of the tasks posed by texts, I analyzed a sample of texts from kindergarten through sixth grade.

Database

I chose the Scott Foresman program (Afflerbach et al., 2007) because of its 2007 copyright and because it is the only remaining basal that was included in Chall's (1967/1983) influential analyses. The texts in the program's anthologies were the focus of my analyses since this component is the focus of the teacher's manuals and is the one for which states and districts typically allocate funds.

A corpus of 2,000 words from the middle units of the anthologies for grades 1 through 6 was chosen. The middle unit was used because it captures the typical demands of the grade level. For grades 1 and 2, all of the selections for unit 3 and part of unit 4 were used. Single texts become longer at the upper grades. Initial analyses of 2,000-word corpora, based on a single text at grades 5 and 6, indicated a substantially lower number of unique words per 100 than at grades 1 and 2. Consequently, a consistent sampling procedure of 500-word excerpts from four different texts was used for grades 3 through 6. For kindergarten, where there is no anthology at the present time, the texts from decodables comprised the sample.

The TExT software (Hiebert & Martin, 2003) was used to obtain the following information for each of the seven 2,000-word corpora: (1) number of unique words, (2) number of words within word zones 0–2 (frequent words), 3–4 (moderately frequent words), and 5–6 (rare words), and (3) mean decodability of words within a word zone. The latter was based on the following set of categories: categories 1–3 group words with vowel patterns with a one-to-one phoneme–grapheme correspondence (e.g., *go, at*); categories 4–5 group words with vowel patterns where two graphemes represent a "long" phoneme (e.g., *ate, eat*); categories 6–7 group words with complex vowel patterns (e.g., *oar, owl*); and categories 8–9 group multisyllabic words.

The Nature of the Task from Grades K through 6 in a 2007 Basal Reading Program

Table 1.1 presents a summary of the features of words within each grade-level, 2,000-word sample. Three patterns are evident in the data in Table 1.1. The first has to do with the rate of introduction of new, unique words per 100 running words. There are three different rates of introduction of new, unique words across the seven grade levels: (1) 12 (kindergarten), (2) 22–23 (grades 1 and 2), (3) 30–33 (grades 3 through 6).

The second pattern has to do with the consistency of the distribution of word zones from grades 1 through 6. The percentage of high-frequency words in texts from grades 1 through 6 falls within a fairly narrow range: 82–85. The percentage of rare words (word zones 5–6) is also consistent from grades 1 through 6: 6–7%. Only kindergarten has a different pattern. In the kindergarten texts, a lower percentage of words falls within word zones 0–2 (58%) and a higher percentage falls within word zones 5–6 (19%).

The final pattern addresses the complexity of vowel patterns in monosyllabic words and the presence of multisyllabic words. The pat-

TABLE 1.1. Frequency and Decodability of Words in Grade-Level Text Samples

	Grade							
Word zone	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	NAEP
0–1	37[a] (4.0[b])	63 (5.3)	65 (5.3)	62 (5.4)	62 (5.4)	62 (5.6)	66 (5.0)	58 (5.3)
2	21 (3.7)	19 (5.8)	20 (6.4)	21 (6.5)	19 (6.4)	16 (6.9)	16 (6.2)	22 (5.6)
3–4	23 (2.7)	11 (5.9)	8 (6.3)	10 (5.7)	11 (6.9)	11 (7.0)	12 (7.0)	14 (6.7)
5–6	19 (2.6)	7 (6.9)	7 (6.9)	7 (7.0)	8 (7.4)	11 (7.5)	6 (7.3)	6 (5.9)
New, unique words per 100	12.1	22.9	21.7	29.8	30.8	33.4	32.1	62.6

[a]Percentage of total words in particular word zones.
[b]Average decodability of words in particular word zones.

tern for kindergarten differs from that of the other grades. For all word zones, words in the kindergarten program have a heavy concentration of vowel patterns with a one-to-one correspondence between graphemes and phonemes. The words in the first-grade texts have a higher vowel complexity rating, on average, than the kindergarten texts. Compared to the sixth-grade texts, however, the first-grade texts have less complex patterns. In the first-grade texts, the rarest of words (those in word zone 6) typically have either an *r*-controlled vowel pattern or a consistent but variant vowel pattern (e.g., *old*/*cold*, *night*/*right*) in a monosyllabic word. By contrast, the rare words in the sixth-grade texts are primarily multisyllabic or, if monosyllabic, have vowel diphthongs.

What can be concluded about the features of texts that comprise the core of a basal reading program? When a core component is a decodable (as is the case with the kindergarten program), the features differ from those of the anthologies. Differences in the types of words that appear in decodables and anthologies are apparent in the examples of texts that appear in Table 1.2. When writers are responsible for the words in text (as is the case with texts in the anthologies from grades 1 through 6), they are concerned with fulfilling expectations of what constitutes a literary text. They are not concerned about ensuring that students can decode words (as is the case with the example from the kindergarten decodable). Writers of narrative texts select words that communicate the nuances of their characters, settings, and plots, using words such as *chirping* and *balancing* rather than *singing* or *sitting*.

In views of reading acquisition that dominated American instruc-

TABLE 1.2. Examples of Texts

Kindergarten (Afflerbach et al., 2007)	*A Musical Adventure* Sit and play with me, Nat, Lin and Rob. Can you tap and rap and bam? We like to rap on the pot. We like to rap on the lid. We like to bam with the can. Can you tap and rap and bam? Nan can rap the tan pot.
Grade 1 (Afflerbach et al., 2007)	Toad looked at his garden. Little green plants were coming up out of the ground. "At last," shouted Toad, "my seeds have stopped being afraid to grow!" "And now you will have a nice garden too," said Frog. "Yes," said Toad, "but you were right, Frog. It was very hard work."
Grade 3 (Afflerbach et al., 2007)	The tree is old, and she has much to say. Some words are happy ones. They tell of chirping birds and budding leaves and children balancing on her branches. Some words are lonely ones. They tell of birds flying south and leaves blowing away and children staying in their houses,
NAEP (2005 ORF text)	Soon the house was buzzing with excitement. Megan sat on the stool watching while Mom and Aunt Nancy prepared the birthday dinner. Dad wouldn't be back for at least two hours. Jason wandered outside trying to think of something to do, but his thoughts kept returning to the box in the barn.

tion until the past two decades, critical factors in the design or selection of materials for beginning readers were the pace of presenting new information and the repetition of high-frequency words or words with common, consistent vowel patterns (Hiebert & Raphael, 1996). If there is a developmental ramp-up in the pace and repetition of linguistic information in current reading programs, it is in the kindergarten portion of programs. The rate of presenting new words is substantially slower at kindergarten relative to the first- and second-grade programs. While kindergarten programs contain a higher percentage of rare words than subsequent levels, these words are predominantly composed of simple vowel patterns. By the middle of first grade, the profile of moderately frequent and rare words is similar to that of subsequent grades. The profile of linguistic information, at least with regard to high-frequency words, is flat. The decodability of rare words in first grade is somewhat lower than

that in the higher grades, indicating that more of the rare words in the grade-six texts are multisyllabic than in the first-grade texts. Even in the first-grade texts, however, the average decodability levels of 6.9 for word zones 5–6 indicate the presence of many monosyllabic words with complex and variant vowels.

A Comparison of the Task of Texts and Proficiency of Students at the 40th Percentile and Below

The level of the texts at kindergarten- and first-grade levels in a current basal reading program would lead to the expectation that students in the United States are reading at earlier points in time. Conclusions about early acquisition of reading by U.S. students are difficult to make because the primary source for understanding the reading performances of U.S. students across states is the NAEP, which is not administered until fourth grade. The results of the NAEP at fourth grade (Perie et al., 2005) do suggest, however, that approximately 38–40% of a grade cohort is not reading texts with the features of current first-grade texts in core reading programs in mid-fourth grade. These fourth graders do not have the skills to read the typical mid-first grade texts accurately and at appropriate rates.

Further substantiation for the mismatch between the typical tasks of core reading programs and students' proficiency comes from a special study of the NAEP (Daane, Campbell, Grigg, Goodman, & Oranje, 2005). The features of the text that was used in this assessment of oral and silent reading appears in the two final columns of Table 1.1. Approximately 80% of the words in the NAEP text and the first-grade texts fall within the 1,000 most-frequent words. The percentage of rare words is almost identical: 7% for the first-grade texts and 6% for the NAEP fourth-grade text. Even the decodability levels are similar. Approximately 35% of U.S. fourth-graders read the NAEP text slowly (Daane, Campbell, Grig, Goodman, & Oranje, 2005). If students in a grade cohort can read the first-grade texts of the basal anthology fluently as first graders, they would be expected to read the text of the fourth-grade NAEP with automaticity, speed, and comprehension 3 years later. That has not proven to be the case.

To examine the match between the task for students in the lowest 40% of the U.S. profile and the task of reading textbooks across grade levels, I compared the task of the texts with students' performances on the sight word efficiency subtest of the Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE; Torgesen, Wagner, & Rashotte, 1999). The TOWRE is a widely used assessment for both research and instructional purposes. This analysis begins with first grade since the TOWRE does not provide norms for kindergarten students.

Test of Word Reading Efficiency

The sight word efficiency subtest of the TOWRE assesses a student's ability to recognize a particular set of words within a 45-second period. Each of the two forms of the subtest contains 104 words. The analysis of the reading proficiency required for this assessment was based on sets of words in multiples of 20: 20, 40, 60, 80, and 100. Each successive set includes words from each preceding set. Further, the words from both forms of the subtest were included in the analysis. That is, the analysis of Word Set 20 was conducted on 40 words (20 from Form A and 20 from Form B).

With one exception, similar analyses were conducted on these sets of words as had been conducted on the grade-level basal reading texts. The exception was the number of new, unique words per 100. This feature is not relevant for a word list where repetition of words would not be expected. A summary of the frequency and decodability of the words in the four word groups appears in Table 1.3. The data in Table 1.3 are used for two purposes: (1) to describe the proficiency of students in different percentile groups at different grade levels and (2) to compare students' proficiency levels with the tasks of current texts. Before applying the data to these two issues, the proficiencies represented by each benchmark level (e.g., proficiency with Word Set 20) are summarized.

Differences across the Word Sets

As would be expected in an assessment of sight word recognition, the 1,000 most-frequent words figure heavily in the TOWRE sight word efficiency subtest. Only in Word Sets 80 and 100 do less common, multisyllabic words become prominent. The shift from Word Set 60 to 80 is dramatic. Whereas 97% of the words in Word Set 60 are from the 1,000 most-frequent words (and the remaining 3% all have simple

TABLE 1.3. Frequency and Decodability of Words on TOWRE

Word zone	TOWRE20	TOWRE40	TOWRE60	TOWRE80	TOWRE100
0–1	80[a] (3.3[b])	67.5 (4.3)	54 (4.9)	42 (5.0)	33 (5.0)
2	20 (3.1)	30 (4.0)	42 (5.2)	42 (5.8)	36 (6.1)
3–4		3 (3.0)	3 (2.7)	8 (7.2)	13 (7.8)
5–6				8 (8.2)	18 (8.6)

[a]Percentage of total words in particular word zones.
[b]Average decodability of words in particular word zones.

vowel correspondences and come from zone 3), 10% of Word Set 80 consists of rare, multisyllabic words.

A benchmark, at least as indicated by the content of this test, is recognition of the 1,000 most-frequent words. Once students have developed automaticity with these words, the test makers needed to draw on words from the entire range of words represented in written English. For students in the bottom 40%, however, automaticity with the 1,000 most-frequent words is a proficiency that takes a long time to attain.

Grade- and Percentile-Group Performances on the TOWRE

TOWRE performances for students from grades 1 through 6 and for six percentile groups (10th, 25th, 40th, 50th, 75th, and 90th) are presented in Figure 1.1. When separate norms were given for the two halves of a grade (as was the case with grades 1 through 3), the norms for the second half of the year were used. In studying the patterns in Figure 1.1, it should be remembered that attainment of a particular level does not mean that students recognized only words within a particular set of words. Especially at the lower grades and lower percentile levels, it is unlikely that students will correctly recognize all of the words consecutively. Likewise, if students are unable to recognize words that occur with high frequency in texts, it is unlikely that they will recognize more infrequent words. Consequently, if 40th-percentile grade 3 students are averaging 50 words on the TOWRE, it is likely that the majority of these words come from Word Set 60.

If recognition of words from the 1,000 most-frequent words (as represented by Word Set 60) is a benchmark, the data in Figure 1.1 provide an indication of when that benchmark is achieved for students in different percentile groups of an age cohort. Students in the 90th percentile attain that benchmark in grade 1, while students in the 10th percentile have yet to attain this level by grade 6. For students at interim points in a grade cohort distribution, this benchmark is attained at different points: 75th: grade 2; 50th: grade 3; 40th: grade 4; and 25th: grade 5.

While students in the 50th percentile and below do not attain this benchmark until grade 3 or later, students in the bottom half of the distribution are able to recognize words. The students in the 10th percentile can recognize a sampling of words from the 1,000 most-frequent words by mid-grade 2.

A Comparison of the Text Demands and Students' Proficiency Levels

The earlier presentation of the tasks posed by the texts of the basal reading anthologies indicated that, already at grade 1, the anthologies have

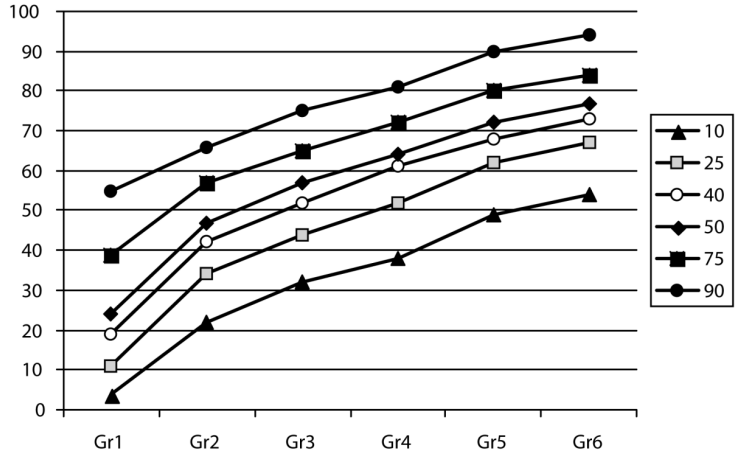

FIGURE 1.1. TOWRE levels for six percentile groups at end of grade.

high percentages of words that fall beyond the 1,000 most-frequent words. The analysis of the TOWRE performances indicated that students in the 90th and 75th percentiles can recognize a sample of words from the 1,000 most-frequent words automatically at grade 1. However, students in the bottom 40th percentile are not automatic with this corpus of words until grade 4 (and those in the 25th percentile, until grade 5). The gap between current texts and the proficiency of students in the bottom 40th percentiles is particularly large in grade 1. This gap decreases over the elementary grades as students gain proficiency with the 1,000 most-frequent words. This proficiency allows students to attend to the approximately one-fifth of new words in texts that, typically, contain complex vowels and/or multiple syllables.

SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM

The task of current reading instructional texts matches the proficiencies of students in the 25% of an age distribution. By mid-grade 1, students in the top 25% of an age cohort are able to recognize words from the 1,000 most-frequent words, leaving sufficient cognitive resources to attend to the one-fifth of words in anthologies that come from the moderate and rare word zones. For students in the bottom 40%, this level of proficiency will be gained much later in the elementary grades. Even so, they are given the same textbooks as their peers who are proficient readers. This volume is about solutions to this mismatch. As an overview for the perspectives developed in this volume, three points are particularly

germane: (1) responses to the needs of children who begin kindergarten without extensive book-literacy experiences, (2) responses for older, struggling students, and (3) responses for teachers, including beginning teachers who must rely on teacher's guides as their primary source of learning about reading instruction.

Support for Beginning Readers

The mismatch between existing texts in a basal reading program and the reading proficiency of students in the bottom 40% is greatest at the very beginning levels. For students who have not had the approximately 1,000 hours that Adams (1990) hypothesized some young children receive from birth to age 5 in their homes and communities, the task that confronts them when they enter kindergarten is enormous. In the kindergarten materials of the program reviewed in this chapter, students are introduced to 30 of the 44 grapheme–phoneme correspondences in English over the course of approximately 20 lessons. The underlying assumption is: If a phoneme–grapheme correspondence has been introduced in a lesson in the teacher's guide, students have learned it. Such expectations reflect substantial changes for kindergartners over the past two decades (Hiebert & Papierz, 1990). In the late 1980s, the basal reading programs provided kits, teacher read-alouds, and practice books for kindergartners. The practice books included a handful of foldouts that were intended for students to read. These foldout booklets used 10 to 15 words (e.g., *cat*, *dog*, *a*, *the*) to make stories.

The pace of introduction of new linguistic information has speeded up exponentially for kindergartners and first graders. The repetition of individual words is somewhat higher in kindergarten than in first grade (8 repetitions in kindergarten vs. 4.4 in first grade). Even so, 26% of the words appear a single time in the kindergarten program, and another 25% of the words appear two or three times. Young students who have not had extensive prior experiences with books are likely to see just a blur of illustrations and strange shapes in texts where 12 new words appear in every 100 running words.

Within the paradigm of reading acquisition that underlies the current programs, students who are not successful with this fast pace in kindergarten (approximately 40 to 50% of an age cohort) must be provided similar material (i.e., texts devoted to the 44 grapheme–phoneme relationships in English) in grades 1 and 2 (California State Board of Education, 2006). Further, a similar set of decodable texts must be provided to struggling readers for use in interventions in grades 4 through 8.

An alternative solution would be to involve students with many different texts. As Foorman et al. (2004) have observed, grade-1 basal reading programs have numerous components. However, the teacher's manu-

als devote most space to the anthologies and provide little guidance on what texts are appropriate for students at various stages of reading development. Decodable texts are available and, as Mesmer (2001) argues, can be accessible for beginning and struggling readers. Programs also have at least one set of leveled texts (Hiebert et al., 2005). These texts, when ordered appropriately, can be another source of exposure to words with consistent, common word patterns (Jenkins, Peyton, Sanders, & Vadasy, 2004; Menon & Hiebert, 2005). The best advice is not to depend on the texts in the anthologies for beginning and struggling readers but to rely on other sources such as decodable, leveled, and high-interest, low-vocabulary texts. The texts in the anthologies may be good for read-alouds and follow-up discussions. However, if the teacher and able readers are the only ones who can read these texts, the experience is unlikely to develop independent reading proficiency among beginning and struggling readers (Johnston, 2000).

Support for Older, Struggling Readers

The present analyses show that the mismatch between current texts and students' reading levels decreases once students reach second grade. Students who are able to read approximately 50 words on the TOWRE (as is the case with mid-year third graders at the 25th percentile) will be able to read most of the words in a third-grade text such as the one in Table 1.2. All but five of the words in this excerpt in Table 1.2 fall into the 1,000 most-frequent words: *chirping, budding, balancing, branches,* and *lonely.* The vowel patterns in four of these five words are fairly regular. With several readings of this portion of the text, students from the 20th–40th percentiles should be able to read the text fluently and meaningfully. For these students, it makes sense that they are given the grade-level texts. Opportunities for rereadings of portions of text and guidance with unfamiliar words (especially multisyllabic ones) need to be provided.

Texts are fairly even from grades 1 through 6; thus, teachers have an extensive inventory on which to draw for students who are not automatic, fluent readers. Given the evenness of texts, students can read those texts that are at their grade levels. However, teachers will need to select portions of texts and give students reasons for rereading these portions. One criterion to keep in mind when selecting texts is that the National Reading Panel's (NRP) subgroup on fluency found that the texts used in successful interventions were short—from 50 to 200 words each (NICHD, 2000).

Students in the bottom 10% require more in-depth instruction, including instruction in decoding strategies with morphologically complex words (Nagy, Berninger, & Abbott, 2006). They also require opportuni-

ties to read extensively. *Extensive reading* is a term that has been used in instruction and research with college students who are learning English as a foreign language (EFL). As Taguchi, Takayasu-Maass, and Gorsuch (2004) define *extensive reading*, "readers self-select materials from a collection of graded readers (books which have reduced vocabulary range and simplified grammatical structures) with the goal of reaching specified target times of silent sustained reading" (p. 2). Extensive reading has been shown to be as effective as assisted, repeated reading (the technique that was supported by the findings of the subgroup on fluency of the NRP [NICHD, 2000]) in increasing EFL readers' fluency. As has become evident in this chapter, current basal readers do not have the controlled vocabulary that Taguchi et al. (2004) describe as characteristic of the graded readers. I have proposed an underlying curriculum for a concentration of words from particular word zones in the design of texts for struggling readers and have also developed texts that implement that curriculum (Hiebert, 2008). Studies to date have consistently shown that struggling readers improve their fluency when their teachers consistently use the texts that exemplify this curriculum (see, e.g., Wilson, Erickson, & Trainin, 2007).

There is also work demonstrating support for increased reading that can be provided to struggling readers with technology. Shany and Biemiller (1995) showed that participation in an audiotape intervention resulted in more time reading text than in a teacher-guided group. Digital voice recognition increases the quality of a reading experience for struggling readers by providing feedback on specific phrases and words, giving immediate information on accuracy, rate, and comprehension. This also allows students to compare their reading with that of a proficient reader. Adams (2006) reported that, after participating in a voice-recognition repeated reading intervention, students in grades 2 through 5 improved in fluency at levels significantly beyond that of students participating with typical texts. For elementary school students who have not attained the benchmark level of automaticity with the 1,000 most-frequent words, increasing opportunities for reading with voice recognition, especially when the voice recognition uses texts that provide significant exposure to the 1,000 most-frequent words, offers an alternative to the basal texts that, even at grade 1, fail to provide such experiences.

Support for Teachers

For beginning readers who depend on schools to become literate, the prominent nature of existing texts means that teachers will need to do substantial adaptation with texts. Barr (1974) showed that teachers compensated for texts that are too difficult. When texts were too diffi-

cult for first-grade readers, effective teachers whom Barr observed in the early 1970s spent considerably more time in instruction and reading. Thirty years later, it is not clear that such compensation is occurring, or even if it can, in the context of Reading First mandates and teacher's manual guidelines.

Teacher scaffolding of text is critical, and chapters in this volume attest to the importance of teacher scaffolding. What is especially critical to consider is how teachers, especially beginning teachers, learn to scaffold. When a minimum of 90 minutes is spent on reading daily (at is the case with Reading First), the teacher's manuals in reading are a primary source of information for teachers. However, the pacing guides within these teacher's manuals offer few suggestions as to how instruction should be adapted to ensure that students in the lowest 40% can be ensured the daily 60–90 minutes of focused reading that has been identified as necessary for struggling readers (Allington, 2001; Fisher & Ivey, 2006).

There are ideas within this volume for how teachers can mediate the difficulty of current texts. Text selection is one of the most basic forms of mediation. If teachers are selecting portions of text for repeated reading from a basal passage, it is useful to have some guidelines as to the length of texts and the features that make a text appropriate for repeated reading. For example, it is useful for teachers to know that the presence of single-appearing, multisyllabic words may require additional attention for developing readers.

Another form of scaffolding is the preteaching of key words prior to the introduction of a text. If students are to become more automatic with highly frequent words and words that have common syllable and grapheme–phoneme correspondences, they cannot spend all of their time on rare words that appear a single time in their texts. They need to have confidence in reading highly frequent words so that they can become more automatic at word recognition. Teachers need to ensure that struggling readers have sufficient encounters in pronouncing and understanding the meaning of these words before they are asked to read along in a text or to read the text independently.

CONCLUSION

If schools are using basal reading programs, students who depend on schools to become literate are being given texts that demand a high level of reading proficiency. While the match is a good one for students who enter kindergarten with hundreds of hours of prior literacy experience, the gap between the task of the texts and the existing proficiencies of

students who depend on schools to become literate is significant. Numerous initiatives can be launched to call for greater readiness for school entry. However, no preschool initiative can ensure readiness for a sizable portion of an American age cohort when the task demands of kindergarten and first-grade reading programs escalate as they have in the past 20 years.

Policies are needed that require a developmental trajectory in the task of the basal reading program texts. Until such policies are in place, it is unlikely that any mainstream publishers will provide texts that have a developmental trajectory that moves at an appropriate pace for students in the lowest 40%. Until such policies are in place, students in the lowest 40% will continue to progress poorly unless their teachers have solid understandings of how to select alternative texts and/or how to scaffold existing texts to support learning of critical words and common and consistent patterns within words. The remaining chapters in this volume aim to support teachers in developing an understanding of how to use current reading programs with the many students who depend on schools to become literate.

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