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An Action Research on Improving Fluent Reading Skills of Third-Grade Primary School Students *

Mehmet Aşıkcan [1], Ahmet Saban [2]

Abstract

This study aimed to improve the fluent reading skills of third-grade primary school students by developing and implementing action plans based on fluent reading strategies. It employed the participatory action research design, one of the qualitative research approaches. A total of 27 third-grade students attending a state primary school in Konya during the spring of 2017 participated in the study. First, pre-measurements were performed to determine students' current states regarding the three fluent reading components (*accurate reading, reading speed,* and *prosody*). Next, ten action plans related to the three components were developed and implemented in 10 weeks. Later, post-measurements were performed, and pre- and post-measurement results were compared. Also, feedback about the implementation process (*qualitative data*) was sought through participant observations, conversation type interviews with the classroom teacher and students, reflective journals, and video recordings. According to the findings, students' reading mistakes in all the three text types (*narrative, informative,* and *poetic*) decreased, reading speeds increased, and reading prosody levels enhanced. The use of various technological tools, software programs, and different reading strategies during the implementation process helped students focus more on the activities, raised their interest in them, and made their learning more pleasant. Moreover, the use of grouping strategies such as *reading choir, reading theatre,* and *dart playing* affected students positively for learning. It is concluded that the study has great potential to contribute to the research literature by reflecting the practical experiences.

Keywords

Fluent Reading
Accurate Reading
Reading Speed
Prosody
Third Grade Primary School Students
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[1] Necmettin Erbakan University, Ahmet Keleşoğlu Faculty of Education, Department of Primary Education, Turkey, mehmetasikcan@gmail.com

[2] Necmettin Erbakan University, Ahmet Keleşoğlu Faculty of Education, Department of Primary Education, Turkey, ahmet_saban@yahoo.com

Introduction

The ultimate purpose of reading is to understand and make sense of the text being read. Every child who starts primary school usually learns to read during his/her ordinary developmental period. However, even if some children learn to read, they have difficulty in reading fluently and experience problems in understanding what they read. Among the common reading mistakes seen in such students include *inversions* (e.g., *ve* instead of *ev*, meaning *and* instead of *home*), *additions* (e.g., *evden* instead of *ev*, meaning *from home* instead of *home*), *removals* (e.g., *ev* instead of *evden*, meaning *home* instead of *from home*), and *repetitions* (repeating words frequently while reading) (Akyol, 2006). For example, in a study by Gökçe-Sarıpınar and Erden (2010), it was observed that compared to their peers, primary school students with reading difficulties were more likely to make reading errors like letter-syllable skipping, letter-syllable addition, inaccurate reading, changing letter positions (such as *d* instead of *b*), or replacing with different letters. Similarly, Fidan and Akyol's (2011) study showed that a fourth-grade primary school student with a mild learning disability experienced such difficulties in reading as following the text with a finger, reading slowly, giving long breaks between words, not recognizing words, or confusing letters.

It is claimed that approximately 15% to 20% of primary school children have difficulty in reading and writing (Yılmaz, 2008). Most of those with reading difficulties generally experience a problem in fluent reading because reading fluency is considered to be a prerequisite skill for reading comprehension (Başaran, 2013; Baştuğ & Akyol, 2012; Bigozzi, Tarchi, Vagnoli, Valente, & Pinto, 2017; Fuchs, Fuchs, Hosp, & Jenkins, 2001; Pikulski & Chard, 2005; Powell, 2008). Children with improved fluent reading skills can read accurately at a certain speed and tone. From this aspect, fluent reading has a more critical function compared to other components that affect the development of reading (Rasinski, 2010; Tankersley, 2003, 2005). Figure 1 illustrates the components that affect the development of reading.

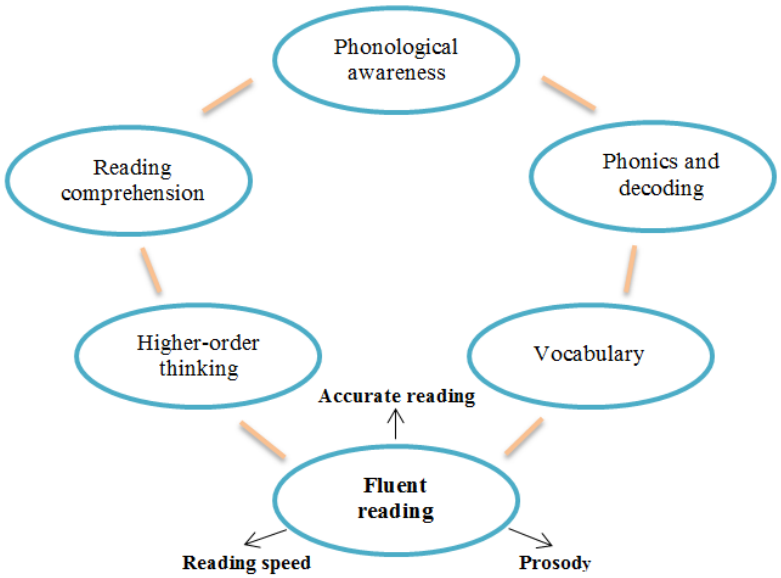

Figure 1. Components of Reading

Phonological awareness is viewed to be the most essential component of reading. It is defined as the recognition of some structural features of a spoken language (e.g., realizing that letters form syllables, syllables form words, and words form sentences) (Allor, 2002; Anthony & Francis, 2005; Bruck, 1988; Chard & Dickson, 1999; Erdoğan, 2012; Gray & McCutchen, 2006). This situation is also considered to be an indication of readiness to read. For example, in a study by Karakelle (2004) with 107 first-grade

primary school students, it was found that phonological awareness had a significant effect on reading fluency.

For a child to learn reading (fluently), it is also essential that he/she establishes the sound-letter relationship (***phonics***) (Onan, 2013), recognizes the clues in the text (***decoding***) (Pikulski & Chard, 2005), and has a rich repertoire of words (***vocabulary***) (Tankersley, 2005). Although schools are the primarily responsible institutions for developing vocabulary, this is often not the case. For example, in a study by Karadağ (2005) with 3135 primary school students, it was found that 50% to 60% of the words in students' repertoire did not match the concepts contained in the Turkish textbooks. Similarly, in another study by Gür, Coşkun, and Sağlam (2013), the Turkish textbooks taught in the second, third, and fourth grades were analyzed in terms of their effects on improving students' vocabulary. The study reported that as the grade levels increased, the number of different words in the textbooks also increased at a specific rate. Still, due to word repetitions across grades, the textbooks were insufficient in introducing students with new concepts in terms of the total number of words.

Another essential component of reading is ***reading comprehension***. For reading comprehension to occur, it is vital to utilize some ***higher-order thinking skills*** such as apprehending the message of the text, making sense of its content, or evaluating its value (Tankersley, 2003). However, concerning reading comprehension, ***fluent reading*** has a much more critical role than other reading components. Through fluent reading, the text is read at a specific flow rate, and this helps the reader to grasp it in a coherent way rather than partially (Ülper, 2010). For example, a study by Powell (2008) with 2437 third-grade primary school students indicated that students with higher levels of fluent reading also had higher levels of reading comprehension.

Fluent reading is generally defined as a type of "reading done as if speaking with attention to punctuation, emphasis, intonation and meaning units, without returns and word repetitions, and unnecessary spellings and pauses" (Akyol, 2006, p. 6). Students must acquire some skills that are also conceptualized as components of fluent reading to achieve it (Hudson, Pullen, Lane, & Torgesen, 2009; Kuhn, Schwanenflugel, & Meisinger, 2010; Rasinski, 1989, 2012). Below, these skills are explained briefly.

Accurate reading. Accurate reading is the correct pronunciation of words in a text. This skill also includes many sub-skills such as understanding the principles of the alphabet, grasping sound-related events, having a rich vocabulary, or taking advantage of the clues given in a text to predict the unknown words (Klauda & Guthrie, 2008; Rasinski, 2006; Welsch, 2006). Children who do not have this skill often repeat words while reading because they cannot pronounce them correctly, so they exhibit difficulty in reaching accurate meaning.

Reading speed. Being fast enough in reading depends on automatically performing the reading action (Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005). Individuals who can read fluently can see words better in each eye focus, and therefore, do not need new concentration or a return on the same word (Rayner, 1998). When words are not recognized automatically during reading, there is less focus and more eye leaps, the reading speed decreases, and intermittent reading occurs. As a result, it becomes difficult to reach the meaning of the text because there is a strong relationship between how fast the text is read and how well it is understood (Tankersley, 2005).

Prosody. Prosody is the ability to read smoothly with appropriate clauses or phrases (Deeney, 2010), or reading aloud the text like an authentic verbal speech (Rasinski, 2009). Prosodic reading contributes much to a better understanding of the text (Whalley & Hansen, 2006). For example, a study by Schwanenflugel, Hamilton, Kuhn, Wisenbaker, and Stahl (2004) concluded that prosodic reading

affected reading comprehension and word recognition levels of both groups of participants (123 children and 24 adults).

Many different strategies exist in the literature to develop fluent reading skills of students. Below, the most common of these strategies are introduced briefly.

Repeated reading. This strategy is based on reading a short and meaningful text repeatedly as a group or individually until it is read fluently. It requires the individual with reading difficulty to read the text more than once under the guidance of a fluent reader. After repeating reading systematically, a decrease in reading errors, an increase in the interest towards reading, and an improvement in reading comprehension occur (Bulut, 2016; Huang, Nelson, & Nelson, 2008; Therrien & Kubina, 2006; Yılmaz, 2008). For example, in a study by Yılmaz and Köksal (2008) with four third-grade primary school students with reading difficulties, repetitive reading activities were performed on 24 second-grade level narrative texts based on four hours per week for each student. The study concluded that this strategy significantly improved the reading comprehension skills of participating students.

Paired reading. Paired reading is a type of reading done with the help of a professional or a volunteer with some training in reading and is considered to be a strategy that readers of all ages can use (Akyol, 2013). A family member, a teacher, or a good-reading peer can be paired with the individual who needs assistance in reading. In this strategy, first, a text that is slightly above the level of the reader is selected, and then reading aloud is performed. If the reader has even the slightest difficulty, the partner gets involved in the process immediately, and after the reading difficulty gets eliminated, the act of reading is resumed.

Echo reading. Echo reading is based on the teacher's reading of words, sentences, or short paragraphs aloud, and of students' echoing them back in the same way (Tankersley, 2003, 2005). Echo reading is a profitable strategy as it allows one to focus on how his/her sound should be used during reading. For example, based on using echo reading in their study with a fourth-grade primary school student experiencing reading difficulty, Duran and Sezgin (2012) reported that this strategy reduced reading aloud mistakes by 57%, increased the word recognition rate from 90% to 98%, and improved the level of comprehension from 15% to 85%.

Reading theatre. Reading theatre is a strategy based on the repetitive and directed reading of a text to an audience. In this strategy, the text does not need to be memorized word by word, but reading it several times and becoming familiar with its content is essential before enacting it. Students need to read the text quickly and automatically as if they were the characters in the text to impersonate them best (Keehn, 2003; Tyler & Chard, 2000; Young & Rasinski, 2009). Through this strategy, students may dramatize poems, short stories, or some historical events.

Choral reading. Choral reading is a reading-aloud strategy where at least two or more weak and good readers come together to read a text synchronously (Keskin, 2012). It is particularly well suited for the text types having rhythms and rhymes like poems (Richek, Caldwell, Jennings, & Lerner, 2002). However, weak readers need to continually check their reading and follow good readers to be able to read in harmony with the choir.

Repetition of a single text. This strategy is applied in groups of pairs. First, the pairs are given a text slightly above their independent reading levels. Afterward, one of the pairs reads some part of the text, while the other listens carefully. When the reader finishes his/her part, the listener gives feedback about the positive points he/she observes during reading. Later, the reader continues to read with such positive feedback. After reading a few more paragraphs in this way, the roles are changed, and the reading process is repeated (Tankersley, 2003, 2005).

Interest-based reading. In this strategy, developed by Smith and Elley (1997), a student is first asked to choose a book, a story, or an article in line with his/her interest. A good reader is, then, asked to read the text slowly in 5-10 minutes, and this reading is recorded with a video camera or an audio-recorder and played back to the student. Afterward, the student is asked to read the text aloud while being accompanied by the recorded reading. This practice continues until the student's reading becomes fluent, and when the student feels ready, he/she reads the text independently.

Forming semantic units. Hudson et al. (2005) argue that focusing on semantic units makes reading more efficient and suggest that readers should read the text by separating it into some semantic groups. This strategy is applied in the form of a small pause by using a single apostrophe (/) or a slightly longer pause by using a double apostrophe (//) in places where the meaning groups within the text start differing from one another.

Converting a text into a poem. In poetic texts, readers decode patterns of spelling (like word groups, nursery rhymes, or count outs) through words ending with the same verses. As readers process such spelling-sound patterns seen in many concepts, it becomes easier for them to recognize different words and code their meanings. While implementing this strategy, prefixes, suffixes, word phrases, or vowel-consonant combinations can be used (Rasinski, Rupley, Paige, & Nichols, 2016).

There are many studies of fluent reading in the literature. In some of these studies *the current fluent reading states of students* were examined (Baştuğ, 2012; Kaya & Yıldırım, 2016; Kocaarslan, 2017; Seçkin, 2012; Yıldırım & Rasinski, 2014; Yıldırım, Rasinski, & Kaya, 2017; Yıldız, Yıldırım, Ateş, & Çetinkaya, 2009), in some others *the relationships between fluent reading and reading comprehension* were analyzed (Başaran, 2013; Baştuğ & Akyol, 2012; Çankal, 2018; Pikulski & Chard, 2005; Powell, 2008; Sidekli, 2005; Yıldız et al., 2014), and in a substantial amount of them *the effects of various reading strategies or programs on fluent reading* were investigated (Akyol & Ketenoğlu-Kayabaşı, 2018; Akyol & Kodan, 2016; Begeny & Martens, 2006; Bulut, 2016; Çayır, 2014; Duran & Sezgin, 2012; Güzel-Özmen, 2011; Kaman, 2012; Karasu, 2013; Kaya-Tosun, 2018; Kurban, 2018; Schwanenflugel et al., 2009; Sidekli, 2010; Therrien, Wickstrom, & Jones, 2006; Ulu & Başaran, 2013; Uysal, 2018; Yılmaz, 2008; Yılmaz & Köksal, 2008).

This study also aimed to improve fluent reading skills of third-grade primary school students through action plans prepared based on fluent reading strategies. In line with this general-purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What are the current fluent reading levels of third-grade primary school students?
2. How (with what kind of action plans) can their fluent reading skills be improved?
3. What are the opinions of participants regarding the implementation process?
4. How did the implemented action plans affect students' fluent reading skills?

It is thought that the present study differs from many other studies in the literature in some points, and hence, has the potential to make significant contributions to the literature in terms of these points. It is possible to list them as follows:

- Most fluent reading studies in the literature were conducted in the *experimental design* (within the framework of pre-designed activities). Done in the *action research design*, however, the present study was based on action plans developed during the implementation process rather than utilizing pre-designed activities. In this way, it was aimed to meet the learning needs of students that might appear during the implementation process.
- While most of the studies in the literature used the *narrative* texts, the *informative* texts were less preferred than the narrative texts, and the *poetic* texts were hardly used compared to the other two text types. Conversely, in the present study, activities related to all the three types of texts were developed and implemented. In this way, it was aimed to reflect student achievements based on different text-types.

- While most of the studies in the literature used only one or two teaching strategies at most, the present research applied many teaching strategies together. In this way, it was aimed to enrich students' experiences and increase their interests in the activities.
- While most of the studies in the literature focused on the development of only one fluent reading skill, or the three fluent reading skills but separately (such as *accurate reading* first, *reading speed* second, and *prosody* third), this study emphasized all the three components simultaneously. In this way, it was aimed to enable students to conceptualize the phenomenon of fluent reading wholly.
- While most of the studies in the literature were conducted only with children having reading difficulties, the present research included all students in a real classroom setting. In this way, it was aimed to contribute to improving all students' fluent reading skills irrespective of the phenomenon of reading difficulty.

Method

This study employed the *participatory action research* design (McTaggart, 1994), one of the qualitative research approaches. In the literature, action research is generally conceptualized as "a scientific research process in which the main focus is on providing change and improvement, individuals' practices are investigated, data are collected systematically, reflective inquiries are made, and new action plans based on them are prepared and implemented with cyclical or spiral steps" (Gürgür, 2017, p. 39). In this type of research, a practitioner frequently working in an educational institution and personally involved in practice (such as an administrator, a teacher, etc.) either directly by himself/herself or together with a researcher "conducts a research process including systematic data collection and analysis to understand and solve an already existing problem" (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016, p. 307). Figure 2 illustrates the stages of the action research process implemented in this study. Below, these stages are explained in detail.

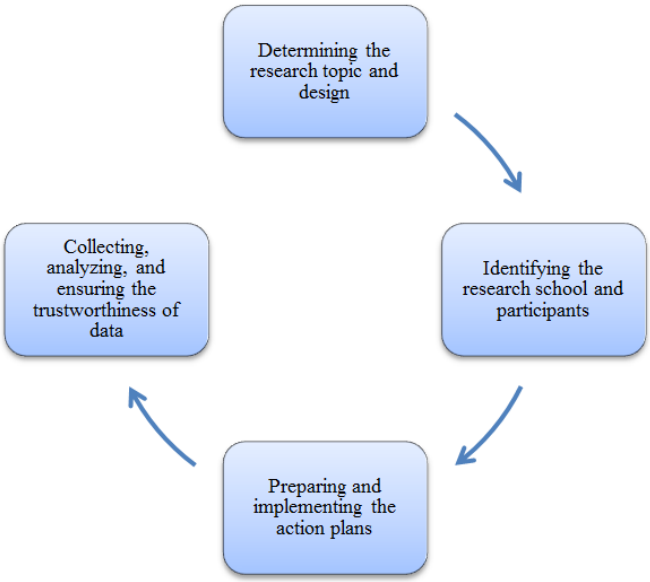

Figure 2. Action Research Process Implemented in the Study

Determining the Research Topic and Design

The inspiration for this study dates back to the primary school years of the first researcher when he had difficulty in reading due to his mild stuttering. This situation, however, started to change in third grade with a newly appointed classroom teacher. The fact that this teacher did not only spend time with successful students but also with those who needed special attention and support made him feel valued as an individual in the classroom and encouraged him to invest more effort to read (fluently). This situation also caused him to focus heavily on the idea of reading difficulty in his graduate education.

For example, in a study that he carried out as a requirement for one of his doctoral courses to eliminate the reading difficulty of a student with such problem, he realized the existence of many other students with the same problem in primary schools and recognized the importance of fluent reading for them (Aşıkcan & Akyol, 2014). Afterward, in the conversations he carried out with his advisor (the second author of this article) to determine the focus of his doctoral dissertation, it was decided that a study aimed at improving the fluent reading skills of primary school students would be appropriate. Later, in his review of the literature on this subject, he mainly focused on strategies that improved fluent reading. This process also helped him establish the theoretical framework of the study as well as the relationship between the research topic and the action research design. Due to the nature of action research, the researcher considered it essential for him to be a part of the implementation process.

Identifying the Research School and Participants

The researcher planned to carry out the study in a state primary school where there were students with reading difficulties and in a classroom where its teacher would be willing to solve this problem. To this end, he sought a primary school appropriate for the research. After encountering several refusals, he was introduced to *Teacher C.* by an assistant principal who continued his graduate studies in the same doctoral program with the researcher. In this meeting, *Teacher C.* was verbally informed of the research purpose and particularly requested her approval of the video recordings to take place in her classroom during the implementation process. *Teacher C.* stated that she had some students who had reading difficulties, that this was a significant reason for her to involve in the research, and that she could give all kinds of support to the researcher in this respect. In her diary dated 22.02.2017, *Teacher C.* explained her initial reaction to the researcher and expectations from the study:

> "I think this study will improve my students' fluent reading skills; thus, their success in all subjects will increase. For this reason, I believe it is important that this study is conducted in my classroom. I am very excited to give the necessary support to the researcher and get involved in the study. I suppose that the researcher's academic knowledge will enlighten my students and me. We will complete the study by devoting *Free Activities* class time and *Game and Physical Activities* course hours for this study. I expect the study to be full of innovations, interesting, and contributing to my students' fluent reading skills. Because of these reasons, I volunteered to participate in the study."

The researcher also explained his opinions about *Teacher C.* in his diary dated 22.02.2017 as follows:

> "I have finally found the class I was looking for and a truly enthusiastic teacher. *Teacher C.* appears to be very eager for this study and also loves her students very much. I also think that the heterogeneity of students in terms of their reading levels will be a great advantage for the activities I plan to implement in the classroom."

After deciding the research school, an application was made to the Directorate of National Education in Konya for research permission. Parents were also informed about the video recordings to take place in the classroom by *Teacher C.* The primary school, which is located in a neighborhood where families from relatively low socioeconomic levels live, offers full-time schooling. In the two-story school building, there are 13 classrooms, a staff room, a guide teacher room, an auditorium, and a school garden.

The class of 3B, where the present study was conducted, is located on the school's entrance floor. As the school offers full-time education, all the materials in the class are used by only 3B students. The classroom has a whiteboard, a teacher's desk with a chair, student desks, two bookshelves, a projector, a printer, and a few clipboards. Students in the classroom sit in two rows facing each other. Also, although the class consisted of 29 students, the research data were obtained from 27 students (12 boys and 15 girls) since one student was a foreigner, and the other had a chronic illness.

Preparing and Implementing the Action Plans

A total of 10 action plans were designed to improve students' fluent reading skills and implemented within 10 weeks between 13.03.2017 and 19.05.2017. Each action plan was implemented weekly in six class hours (a total of 60 class hours). To this end, the first drafts of the action plans were prepared by taking into consideration *Teacher C.*'s ideas and students' fluent reading levels elicited during the pre-measurements. Great care was given to associate each action plan with at least one or more of the fluent reading components. When needed, necessary changes or improvements were made in the action plans based on students' participation in them, *Teacher C.*'s opinions about the activities, the researcher's participant observations, and the *Validity Committee*'s suggestions regarding the action plans. Figure 3 illustrates the weekly cycle of the action plans implemented in the study.

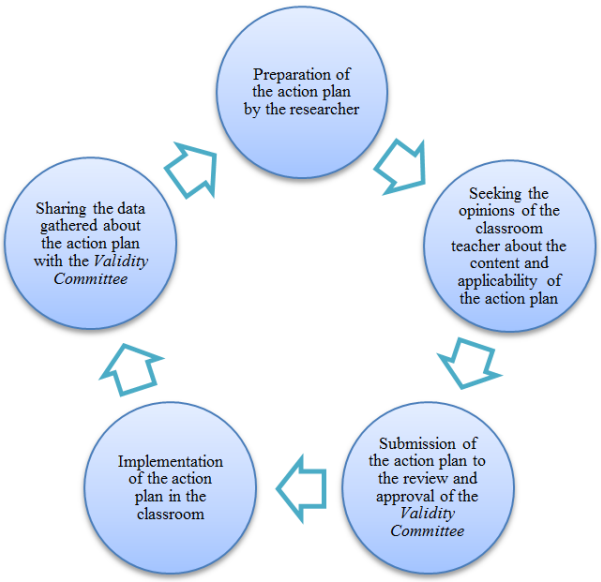

Figure 3. Weekly Cycle of Action Plans

Collecting, Analyzing and Ensuring the Trustworthiness of Data

Although action research is mostly associated with the interpretive paradigm as an extension of the paradigmatic transformation that occurs on a larger scale (Özden & Saban, 2017), both qualitative and quantitative data can be utilized in action research. In this regard, both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered simultaneously in the study. Qualitative data were collected through participant observations, reflective diaries, conversation type interviews with *Teacher C.* and students, video recordings, and the *Validity Committee* reports. Quantitative data were collected through the pre- and post-measurements of students' fluent reading skills. Below, first, the data collection techniques used in the study are explained in detail. Later, the procedures related to ensuring the trustworthiness of the study data are discussed briefly.

Participant observations. Participant observations help the researcher to develop a good understanding of the context by drawing a holistic picture of behaviors, interactions, or events within it (Schoen, 2007). In this study, the researcher carried out participant observations at every stage of the research process. He also spent time with students during breaks to become a part of the class. Data obtained from participant observations were used to design the action plans and interpret the research findings.

Reflective dairies. Reflective diaries refer to the written records of thoughts, feelings, impressions, or comments related to personal experiences (Ersoy, 2015; Johnson, 2014; Mertler, 2006). In this study, the researcher kept a reflective diary of his experiences at every stage of the research process. Similarly, *Teacher C.* kept a diary to write down her feelings, thoughts, and suggestions regarding the classroom activities. Students, on the other hand, engaged in guided dairy writings that included questions about a specific teaching activity. Feedback received from these diaries contributed to the improvement of teaching activities and the interpretation of study findings.

Conversation type interviews. According to Patton (2014), there are three types of interviews: conversation type interviews, semi-structured interviews, and structured interviews. In this study, conversation type interviews were conducted with *Teacher C.* and students during the implementation process. In the interviews, participants' opinions about the application of teaching activities (i.e., whether they were useful and interesting, or what other types of activities could be applied) were sought with open-ended questions.

Video recordings. Video recordings allow a researcher to evaluate both himself/herself and the implementation process with an objective eye (Avcı, 2016). All the teaching activities throughout the study (including pre- and post-measurements) were video-recorded. Video-recordings were instrumental in analyzing the issues of students' participation in the study and their reactions to it, the researcher's effectiveness in applying teaching activities, student dialogues in the classroom, etc. They were also helpful in informing the *Validity Committee* about the implementation process and making action plans more effective.

Reports of the validity committee. In this study, the *Validity Committee* consisted of three members, including the researcher's advisor and two other faculty members working in the same department. One of the committee members is an expert in teaching reading-writing in primary schools and the other in the primary-school curriculum. The *Validity Committee* meetings guided the researcher in designing the action plans, identifying prominent or overlooked issues in the implementation process, and seeking solutions to the challenges encountered. All the *Validity Committee* meetings were recorded with a voice recorder.

Pre- and post-measurements. In this study, the pre- and post-measurements were performed within two weeks each; the pre-measurements between 27.02.2017 and 10.03.2017, just before the implementation of action plans, and the post-measurements between 22.05.2017 and 02.06.2017, just after the implementation of action plans. During the pre- and post-measurements, *Snowman* was used as the narrative text, *Falcons* was used as the informative text, and *National Anthem in Tongues* was used as the poetic text. They were selected from the *Third-Grade Turkish Textbook* published by the Ministry of National Education in 2014 and decided together with *Teacher C.*

The pre- and post-measurements started with the narrative text *Snowman*. After adjusting the video-camera angle in the classroom, the researcher called each student to the teacher's desk according to the class list to read the text. Students were reminded that they would not be given any grades for their readings and that this practice was carried out only to determine their current fluent reading levels. They were also reminded to be quiet during their peers' readings of the text and continue their silent readings under the supervision of *Teacher C.* After the first student in the class list was called to the teacher's desk and sat on the chair, the researcher made the following explanation in a way that all students could hear. This explanation was also repeated several times more during the pre- and post-measurements:

> "I want you to read the text in front of you loudly and continuously. Meanwhile, I will follow your reading from my text. Also, the whole reading process will be recorded with the video-camera. We can start when you feel you are ready."

After indicating his/her readiness, the student began to read with the researcher's *start* command. The same process was followed with the other two text types. The video camera recorded all students' reading processes, and their fluent reading levels were determined by examining these records one by one. In the case of having a problem or encountering a dilemma in labeling the fluent reading level of any student, the *Validity Committee* was consulted.

In determining students' ***reading speeds***, the strategy suggested by Hudson et al. (2005) was used. To this end, first, the total number of words read by each student was calculated. Then, the total reading time was determined in terms of seconds (i.e., *the total number of words read was multiplied by 60, which is the unit value of a minute*). Next, the words that were misread by each student were subtracted

from the total number of words, giving the number of words read correctly. Later the correct reading time of each student was determined in terms of seconds (*the correct number of words read was multiplied by 60, which is the unit value of a minute*). Finally, the reading speed score was calculated by dividing the correct reading time with the total reading time (*Reading speed = the number of words read correctly X 60 / the total number of words read X 60*). Rasinski (2010) explains that the ranges of word numbers that primary school students are expected to read in a minute vary according to their grade level and semester. Table 1 shows the ranges which were used in this study as well as by some other researchers in the literature (Baştuğ, 2012; Çayır, 2014; Kaya, 2016; Kaya & Doğan, 2016). Accordingly, the winter-term scores were used to interpret the pre-measurement results, and the spring-term scores were used to interpret the post-measurement results.

Table 1. Ranges of Word Numbers to be Read by Primary School Students in a Minute

	Fall	**Winter**	**Spring**
Second grade	30-80	50-120	70-130
Third grade	50-110	70-120	80-140
Fourth grade	80-130	90-140	100-140

Source: Adapted from Rasinski (2010, p. 194).

The determination of ***accurate reading percentage*** is based on listening to a student's reading aloud and detecting his/her reading mistakes (Rasinski et al., 2017). To this end, first, the student is provided with a text appropriate to his/her reading level and is asked to read it. Later, the misread words are counted and subtracted from the total number of words read, giving the number of correctly read words. Finally, the number of correctly read words is divided by the total number of words, and the result is multiplied by 100 (*Accurate reading percentage = the number of correctly read words / the total number of words read X 100*). In this study, in interpreting students' accurate reading percentages, the classification offered by Vaughn and Linan-Thompson (2004) was used. According to this classification, scores of 96% and above reflect *the free reading level*, scores between 90% and 95% reflect *the improvable reading level*, and scores of 89% and below reflect *the worrying reading level*.

In determining students' ***prosody levels***, the *Reading Prosody Rubric* developed by Zutell and Rasinski (1991) and adapted to Turkish by Yıldız et al. (2009) was used. This rubric consists of four dimensions: *expression and volume, semantic units and intonation, smoothness,* and *speed*. For each dimension, student's reading performances are scored in the range of 1-4 points. For example, for the *speed* dimension, one point is given if the student continues to *read slowly and with difficulty*, and four points are given if he/she *reads nonstop as if speaking*. The same procedure is followed for the other three prosody dimensions, and in total, a prosody score ranging between 4 and 16 is calculated. In this study, scores between 13 and 16 were assumed to represent *the free reading level*, scores between 9 and 12 *the improvable reading level*, and scores between 8 and below *the worrying reading level*.

Accordingly, the following parameters were used in *the **analysis of quantitative data***:

- The *pre-measurement reading speed scores* are to be in the range of 70-120 words per minute (*the third-grade reading level* for winter term), and those below 70 words are to be defined as *the second-grade reading level*. The *post-measurement reading speed scores* are to be in the range of 80-140 words per minute (*the third-grade reading level* for spring term), and those below 80 words are to be defined as *the second-grade reading level*.
- The *pre- and post-measurement accurate reading percentages* between 96% and over are to be defined as *the free reading level*, between 90% and 95% as *the improvable reading level*, and 89% and lower as *the worrying reading level*.
- The *pre- and post-measurement reading prosody scores* between 13 and 16 are to be labeled as *the free reading level*, between 9 and 12 as *the improvable reading level*, and between 8 and below as *the worrying reading level*.

*The **analysis of qualitative data*** was carried out simultaneously with the data collection process. To this end, first, all the video recordings were carefully monitored weekly. At his stage, the focus was on determining the critical issues in the implementation process (such as what was applied effectively or ineffectively, the extent to which the action plans served in developing students' fluent reading skills and students' reactions to them, or the effectiveness of the teaching strategies, etc.). Then, comments made through participant observations, reflective diaries, and conversation type interviews with *Teacher C.* and students on the implementation of action plans were examined. At this stage, especially positive/negative criticisms and suggestions (if any) made by the researcher, *Teacher C.*, and students were tried to be underlined.

Ensuring the trustworthiness of data in action research includes such strategies as the diversification of data sources and types, spending enough time in the field, the repetition of action cycles, detailing data collection and analysis processes, checking if the data obtained from different sources confirm one another, and supporting the interpretations with direct quotations from the participants (Gürgür, 2017). In the present study, great attention was given to diversifying data sources and types, including the researcher, *Teacher C.*, students, and the *Validity Committee*. Data collected from these different sources were checked continually in terms of if they confirmed one another. All the interpretations made about data were also supported by direct quotations taken from the opinions expressed by the researcher, *Teacher C.*, and students. The simultaneous use of these data sources and types made significant contributions to establishing the trustworthiness of findings. Moreover, the ten-week cycle of action plans implemented in the research has been described in detail. Finally, all the data obtained during the study, and the comments made about them were transformed into findings after they were shared and discussed at the *Validity Committee* meetings.

Results

Figure 4 reflects the chronology of findings obtained in this study. Accordingly, in this section, the pre-measurement results are presented first (*findings related to the first sub-question*). Next, the ten action plans implemented in the study are introduced (*findings related to the second sub-question*) with the opinions of the researcher, *Teacher C.*, and students regarding their implementations in the classroom (*findings related to the third sub-question*). Later, the post-measurement results are shared, and the pre- and post-measurement results are compared (*findings related to the fourth sub-question*).

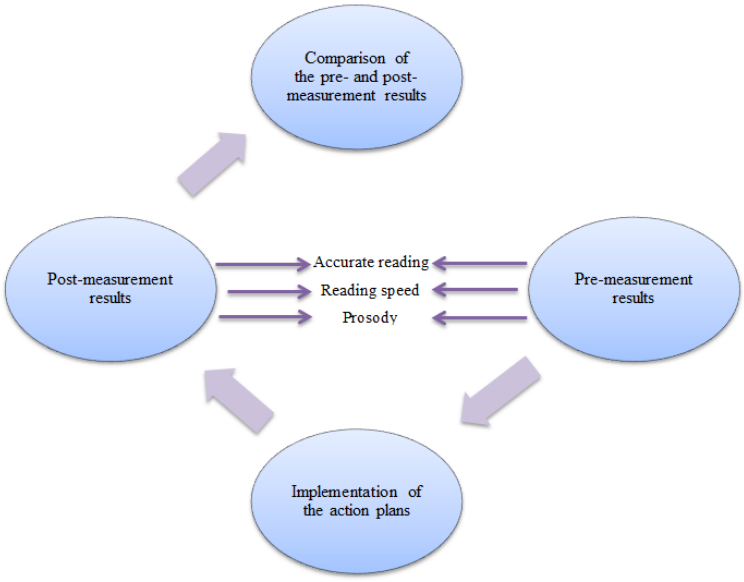

Figure 4. Chronology of Research Findings

Pre-Measurement Results

Table 2 shows the pre-measurement results related to fluent reading components across text types.

According to Table 2, the reading speed scores of students in the *narrative text* type ranged between 20 and 86, the accurate reading percentages ranged between 83% and 100%, and the reading prosody scores ranged between 5 and 16. When the data related to the *narrative text* type were analyzed in detail, it is seen that:

- The reading speed scores of 11 students were in the range of 70 and 120 words (*the third-grade reading level*), while 16 were in the range of 69 words and below (*the second-grade reading level*).
- The accurate reading percentages of 10 students were in the range of 96% and above (*the free reading level*), 13 were in the range of 90% and 95% (*the improvable reading level*), and four were in the range of 89% and lower (*the worrying reading level*).
- The reading prosody scores of 15 students were in the range of 13 and 16 (*the free reading level*), 11 were in the range of 9 and 12 (*the improvable reading level*), and one was in the range of 5 and 8 (*the worrying reading level*).

Table 2. Pre-Measurement Results related to Fluent Reading Components

	Narrative text			**Informative text**			**Poetic text**		
	Reading speed	**Accurate reading %**	**Prosody**	**Reading speed**	**Accurate reading %**	**Prosody**	**Reading speed**	**Accurate reading %**	**Prosody**
S1	86=89-3	97	14	96=98-2	98	16	87=92-5	95	15
S2	61=66-5	92	14	59=63-4	94	10	73=74-1	99	13
S3	76=79-3	96	15	66=70-4	94	14	62=63-1	98	13
S4	59=66-7	89	9	73=80-7	91	10	65=70-5	93	12
S5	43=46-3	93	9	41=43-2	95	8	42=44-2	95	9
S6	59=62-3	95	10	61=64-3	95	10	46=51-5	90	12
S7	81=83-2	98	14	79=82-3	96	14	74=75-1	99	15
S8	86	100	16	84=85-1	99	15	88	100	16
S9	70=75-5	93	15	63=64-1	98	13	73=75-2	97	15
S10	50=60-10	83	11	64=72-8	89	10	62=66-4	94	13
S11	59=64-5	92	11	59=60-1	98	10	61=63-2	97	11
S12	56=58-2	97	10	60=65-5	92	9	55=57-2	96	10
S13	45=48-3	94	11	52=60-8	87	11	54=57-3	95	12
S14	62=67-5	93	14	71=83-12	86	12	64=75-11	85	13
S15	80=82-2	98	14	75=80-5	94	13	73=76-3	96	14
S16	61=71-10	86	11	71=79-8	90	10	73=77-4	95	11
S17	73=74-1	99	14	75=79-4	95	13	67=68-1	99	15
S18	71=75-4	95	15	65=68-3	96	14	73=74-1	99	14
S19	20=22-2	91	5	20=23-3	87	5	21=22-1	95	5
S20	71=75-4	95	15	92=96-4	96	14	91=92-1	99	15
S21	62=63-1	98	15	74=75-1	99	14	75	100	15
S22	65=70-5	93	12	71=75-4	95	11	68=72-4	94	13
S23	74=76-2	97	11	70=75-5	93	11	75=81-6	93	11
S24	58=65-7	89	13	61=66-5	92	12	65=68-3	96	14
S25	63=67-4	94	10	66=69-3	96	12	71=73-2	97	12
S26	71=74-3	96	14	82=86-4	95	14	87=89-2	98	15
S27	66=70-4	94	13	60=68-8	88	11	64=69-5	93	13

The reading speed scores of students in the *informative text* type ranged between 20 and 96, the accurate reading percentages ranged between 86% and 98%, and the reading prosody scores ranged between 5 and 16. When the data related to the *informative text* type were analyzed in detail, it is seen that:

- The reading speed scores of 13 students were in the range of 70 and 120 words (*the third-grade reading level*), while 14 were in the range of 69 words and below (*the second-grade reading level*).
- The accurate reading percentages of nine students were in the range of 96% and above (*the free reading level*), 13 were in the range of 90% and 95% (*the improvable reading level*), and five were in the range of 89% and lower (*the worrying reading level*).
- The reading prosody scores of 11 students were in the range of 13 and 16 (*the free reading level*), 14 were in the range of 9 and 12 (*the improvable reading level*), and two were in the range of 5 and 8 (*the worrying reading level*).

The reading speed scores of students in the *poetic text* type ranged between 21 and 91, the accurate reading percentages ranged between 85% and 100%, and the reading prosody scores ranged between 5 and 16. When the data related to the *poetic text* type were analyzed in detail, it is seen that:

- The reading speed scores of 13 students were in the range of 70 and 120 words (*the third-grade reading level*), while 14 were in the range of 69 words and below (*the second-grade reading level*).
- The accurate reading percentages of 15 students were in the range of 96% and above (*the free reading level*), 11 were in the range of 90% and 95% (*the improvable reading level*), and one was in the range of 89% and lower (*the worrying reading level*).
- The reading prosody scores of 17 students were in the range of 13 and 16 (*the free reading level*), nine were in the range of 9 and 12 (*the improvable reading level*), and one was in the range of 5 and 8 (*the worrying reading level*).

Implementation of the Action Plans

In this study, the action plans prepared to improve students' fluent reading skills were implemented each week in the sixth and seventh class hours on *Tuesday-Wednesday-Friday*. All the draft action plans were revised in light of the pre-measurement results and the suggestions of *Teacher C.* and the *Validity Committee* and implemented with the necessary changes or improvements offered by them. Below, the ten action plans implemented in this study, and participants' opinions regarding their implementations are explained in detail.

Action plan 1: Fluent reading. In this action plan, first of all, the meaning of fluent reading was explained, and the characteristics of individuals who can/cannot read fluently were discussed. Later, using his voice, the researcher recorded two sample videos regarding the narrative story of *What Happened to the Wasp?*: one represented *fluent reading* and the other *non-fluent reading* (i.e., misreading some words, phonemes or syllables; reading at an unnecessarily low or fast pace; reading with a flat tone of voice without paying attention to punctuation marks). After having students watch these two videos in the classroom, they were asked to discuss the differences between them. Through this activity, students became aware of such concepts as *accurate reading, reading speed,* and *prosody* and their importance in fluent reading. They recognized that when fluent reading does not occur, comprehension of the text also becomes difficult. As one student reflected in her diary:

> "I experienced great difficulties in this activity, requiring us to find the incorrectly pronounced words because it was difficult to find them by listening to someone else's voice. So I should not hurry up while reading a book, I should read with better intonation so that my friends do not get bored while listening to me." (Student 21, Female, 17.03.2017 dated Diary)

Action plan 2: Non-fluent reading. This action plan aimed to enable students to realize the types of reading mistakes that are committed when non-fluent reading is performed. To this end, the

researcher read the first three paragraphs of the informative text *The First Flying Human* in a *non-fluent reading* manner and the last two paragraphs in a *fluent reading* manner with his voice and video-recorded them. Later, the original form of the text (for the first three paragraphs) was handed out to students, and they were asked to watch the *non-fluent reading video*. Students were required to find the phonemes, syllables, or words that were misread, skipped, or added. They were told to underline the word on the text if it was read inaccurately in the video, circle the word if it was skipped, and draw an arrow if a new word was added from the point where it was added. While finding such mistakes, students were also required to make corrections on the text. A reverse process was followed for the last two paragraphs of the text. This time, the researcher handed out students the last two paragraphs of the text with different reading mistakes and asked them to watch the *fluent-reading video*. They were then required to find and correct the mistakes in the text by the fluent-reading video. At the end of this activity, students made self-criticism of their reading habits and expressed that they also committed similar reading mistakes. When student dialogues and reflective diaries were examined, it was understood that students realized the importance of fluent reading in becoming a good reader. For example:

> "For our reading to be understood well, we need to be careful. We need to read words correctly, we must not read too fast or too slow, and we need to pay attention to prosody." (Student 8, Female, 24.03.2017 dated Diary)

> "We have understood the points to be considered while reading. I like reading very fast but then my friends cannot understand me. My reading would not be prosodic either" (Student 20, Male, 24.03.2017 dated Diary)

Action plan 3: Identifying same words. In this action plan, first, the words in the narrative text *Atatürk's Love of Children* were grouped by the researcher according to the number of phonemes/letters, from the ones with two phonemes/letters to the ones with 17 phonemes/letters. Some words were grouped in the same written format (e.g., *kitap-kitap*, meaning *book-book*), while others differently in terms of phonics (e.g. *kitap-bitap*, meaning *book-exhausted*). Then, these words were shown on the computer screen next to each other. Students were asked to find the words having the same spellings and mark them on their worksheet by the sign of plus (+) and the words spelled differently by the sign of minus (-). When the activity was repeated several times, an increase in students' correct matching was observed. Although the time in which the words were shown on the screen was shortened in each repetition, most students' readings of two words simultaneously increased. On the other hand, it was observed that some students had difficulties matching long words. Nevertheless, all students enjoyed participating in this activity. For example:

> "It was exciting to try to pay attention to two words at the same time. We, as a group, competed not to miss what was being read. It was a wonderful moment." (Student 7, Female, 31.03.2017 dated Diary)

> "During this activity, we tried to decide whether the words were the same or different. When we started to work with long words, I found it challenging. After the teacher [researcher] implemented this activity, I felt as if I had completed an eye test." (Student 17, Female, 31.03.2017 dated Diary)

Action plan 4: Word recognition. In this action plan, first, the researcher uploaded the narrative text *Magical Cake* containing 342 words to the AceReader program. Then, the text was displayed on the computer screen with the preferred background text color, and the words were shown either one-by-one, in pairs, or trios, and with different speed and focus area settings. Students were asked to read aloud these words in compliance with the sequence of the words in the text. When the speed and number of words were increased gradually, students' reading speeds and correct reading rates also increased. Furthermore, it was observed that students had difficulty in reading when the background color was white, the whole text was silver-grey, and the words to be read were black. On the other hand, they could read easier when the background color was black, the whole text was silver-grey, and the

words to be read were yellow. Student dialogues and reflective diaries showed that students participated in this activity enthusiastically. For example:

> "The lessons delivered by the teacher [researcher] started to be enjoyable. This week's activity in which the speed was adjusted on the computer was wonderful. It was great fun to try to catch the words showed with increasing speed." (Student 20, Male, 07.04.2017 dated Diary)

Similarly, *Teacher C.* expressed her opinions about this activity in her diary dated 07.04.2017 as follows:

> "I also participated in this activity together with my students. I felt proud when some of my students were able to read faster than me. The researcher used a wonderful program, which increased students' participation in the lesson. I have always paid great attention during my teaching career to train students as the ones who can read quickly and understandably, comprehend what is read correctly, and express themselves well. I think that this activity made important contributions to my students in these respects."

Action plan 5: Forming semantic units. This action plan was intended to teach students that each text includes semantic unities and that a coherent text can be created by combining them. To this end, first, all the punctuation marks in the informative text *Living in Space* were removed, and the spelling of all the words except the special names have been rearranged to be lowercase. Later, students were asked to read the text, find the expressions making up a semantic unity without using punctuation marks, and separate it from the others by using the sign of a single apostrophe (/). This activity contributed to students' reading of the text as a meaningful whole but not word by word. It was observed that after students had created a semantic unity, they automatically moved to the next. Also, as students became more familiar with both the researcher and the implementation process, they became more willing to participate in the activities. For example:

> "I used to feel bored with the activities in which the teacher [researcher] wanted us to write. But the recent activities started to be more enjoyable. We are playing, competing, and having fun." (Student 10, Male, 14.04.2017 dated Diary)

The researcher also expressed his feelings and opinions about this activity in his diary dated 14.04.2017 as follows:

> "In the first few activities, students got a bit bored because they do not like writing much; they are more open to verbal communication. Therefore, in this action plan, taking into account the suggestion of the *Validity Committee*, I tried to gamify the activities to increase students' participation. Also, every time I go to the class, I get to know students a bit more, and they get to know me better. I think that the recent activities are becoming more efficient."

Action plan 6: Reading choir. In this action plan, first, students were asked to form three intertwined circles for the poem *12 Months*, made up of 15 stances with two verses each. Each group of students in the circles read each stance in the chorus, starting from the inner-circle to the outer-circles and later from the outer-circle to the inner-circles respectively, and finally, the whole class read the entire poem in the choir. Through this choral reading activity, students were able to control themselves and their classmates, see their own mistakes, and evaluate the choir's general coherence. This activity contributed to students' development of accurate reading, reading speed, and reading prosody skills. Although students liked to read poetry on their own, they tried to pay attention to the group's harmony while they were in the choir. Students developed their fluent reading skills by keeping pace with the group tempo and paying attention to stress and intonation as a group. For example:

> "When the teacher [researcher] asked us to form circles, I did not quite understand this because I thought we would only read a poem. It was very delightful for us to act in

harmony with others in the circle and stand up and read poems when it was our turn. In this way, we corrected our reading mistakes. I look forward to the next lessons from now on." (Student 6, Male, 21.04.2017 dated Diary)

Action plan 7: Reading theatre. In this action plan, first, the narrative text *Long Live Democracy* was handed out to students. Later, by creating the classroom's necessary setting, the text's characters were assigned to students in groups, and they were asked to enact the story. Students who were not assigned any roles were asked to evaluate their peers. Through this activity, not only students read the text correctly at an appropriate pace and prosody but also reflected the feeling of the event in the story. Also, students' evaluation of their classmates' performances contributed to the development of their reading skills. At the end of this activity, students with reading problems were observed to have improved their self-confidence in reading. Especially, *Student 16*'s increasing willingness to participate in the activities was considered to be an essential development in this respect. For example, *Teacher C.* reflected her opinions about this activity in her diary dated 28.04.2017 as follows:

"During this activity, I realized improvements in some of my students. Especially *Student 16* was very timid, excited, and stuttering while reading. This activity improved his self-confidence. An increase in his self-confidence also had positive effects in other classes because there is a considerable improvement in general."

Similarly, the researcher commented on his observations about *Student 16* in his diary dated 28.04.2017 as follows:

"The fact that students participated in the activities of this action plan enjoyably served the purpose of the research and made my work easier. When they get bored in the activities, they clearly show it. Therefore, the gamification of activities works well. I also think that these types of activities contribute to students in many ways. Particularly, in the reading theatre activity, *Student 16* showed exceptional willingness and development because he used to stutter while reading or speaking; these activities increased his self-confidence and helped him to develop his reading skills. Personally, observing this development was of great value to me."

Action plan 8: Rhymes-songs-poems. In this action plan, first, some nursery rhymes (such as *Neighbor-Neighbor, Autumn,* etc.) were given to students to read them as plain texts as well as with the accompaniment of a metronome to accelerate its rhythms at certain speeds. At this stage, the emphasis was more on rhythmic reading. Later, a song called *Make a World for Children* was read like a poem and sung as a song by students accompanied by a guitar (played by a colleague of the researcher from the music education department). Reading of nursery rhymes at varying speeds increased students' participation in the lesson. Reading poems in song formats also augmented students' awareness of the texts, thus enabling them to understand the primary sense of poems better. This activity mainly contributed to students' reading speeds and prosodic readings. When rhythms or song formats were added to the texts, it was observed that students participated more. For example:

"The device tick-tacking [metronome] brought by the teacher [researcher] was interesting. It was first confusing, but later we got used to it. It was fun to read nursery rhymes with it. However, singing a song with a guitar was the best." (Student 6, Male, 05.05.2017 dated Diary)

"We had great fun in this week's activities. It was nice to read the nursery thymes rhythmically. In this way, it was easier to read, and we did not feel bored. We read the poem *Make a World for Children* in a usual poetic manner. Then we sang it; we had great fun. A friend of our teacher [researcher] played the guitar, and we sang. We both enjoyed a lot and better grasped the meaning of the song." (Student 13, Male, 05.05.2017 dated Diary)

Action plan 9: Dart game. This action plan was implemented as an additional activity based on students' interests in the nursery rhymes and their desire to do extra work with them. In this action plan, a list in which the nursery rhymes were ordered from one to nine (ascending order of difficulty) and a *Dart* were used. Students were first divided into two groups, and then asked to shoot three arrows at the *Dart* in turn and read the rhyme corresponding to the highest hit number at appropriate speed and accuracy. As the activity was repeated, students began to read the rhymes, even the hardest ones, more fluently. Those who had to win points for their group in the activity took greater care to read the nursery rhymes more carefully. During the activity, it was also observed that all the students enjoyed participating in it. *Teacher C.* reflected her opinions about this activity in her diary dated 12.05.2017 as follows:

> "Students enjoyed participating in this activity. The nursery rhymes used in the *Dart game* activity were tough; I had difficulty reading some of them either. The selected nursery rhymes were nice, but their readings were difficult. In this activity, making use of nursery rhymes instead of an ordinary text was highly elegant. The *Dart game* increased students' desire to read the rhymes. They continued reading the rhymes, which even I found difficult, more easily. They developed their reading skills by playing and having fun."

Action plan 10: Rhymed texts. In this action plan, first, the narrative text *Heated by the Star* was distributed to students. Later, they were asked to read the story in its both standard and rhymed forms and enact its rhymed form in the classroom. During this activity, it was observed that students enjoyed reading the rhymed form of the story. The enactment of its rhymed form was the idea of students, and they played their roles free of the text (as an improvisation). When student dialogues and guided diaries were examined, it was understood that students participated in this activity with pleasure. Also, the rhymed text activities increased students' interest in reading and improved their fluent reading skills. For example:

> "It was wonderful to act out *Nasreddin Hodja*. Our teacher made a beard from cotton, wrapped my head with a towel, and gave me glasses. We did not have much difficulty while acting out the story. It was easier when reading it like a poem. I memorized my part in a short time." (Student 1, 19.05.2017 dated Diary)

Teacher C. also expressed her opinions about this activity in her diary dated 19.05.2017 as follows:

> "Students liked this activity and *Nasreddin Hodja*'s story very much. I think it was wise to read the story poetically. The desire to enact the story naturally occurred in students' minds. I helped them while working on the enactment of the story and the provision of costumes. I think their participation with pleasure developed both their reading skills and self-confidence."

Post-Measurement Results

Table 3 shows the post-measurement results related to fluent reading components across the text types.

According to Table 3, the reading speed scores of students in the *narrative text* type ranged between 21 and 95, the accurate reading percentages ranged between 89% and 100%, and the reading prosody scores ranged between 5 and 16. When the data related to the *narrative text* type were analyzed in detail, it is seen that:

- The reading speed scores of 13 students ranged between 80 and 140 words (*the third-grade reading level*), while 14 were in the range of 79 words and below (*the second-grade reading level*).

- The accurate reading percentages of 18 students were in the range of 96% and above (*the free reading level*), eight were in the range of 90% and 95% (*the improvable reading level*), and one was in the range of 89% and lower (*the worrying reading level*).
- The reading prosody scores of 21 students were in the range of 13 and 16 (*the free reading level*), five were in the range of 9 and 12 (*the improvable reading level*), and one was in the range of 5 and 8 (*the worrying reading level*).

Table 3. Post-Measurement Results related to Fluent Reading Components

	Narrative text			**Informative text**			**Poetic text**		
	Reading speed	**Accurate reading %**	**Prosody**	**Reading speed**	**Accurate reading %**	**Prosody**	**Reading speed**	**Accurate reading %**	**Prosody**
S1	93=94-1	99	16	100=101-1	99	16	100	100	16
S2	80=82-2	98	15	78=81-3	96	15	88	100	14
S3	72=73-1	99	16	84=86-2	98	14	83=85-2	98	14
S4	84=86-2	98	13	76=79-3	96	12	98=100-2	98	13
S5	39=41-2	95	10	45=47-2	96	10	66=67-1	99	13
S6	51=57-6	89	10	64=67-3	96	11	61=63-2	97	13
S7	88=90-2	98	15	85=89-4	96	15	88=89-1	99	16
S8	95	100	16	94=95-1	99	16	95	100	16
S9	80=83-3	96	16	74=75-1	99	14	85=87-2	98	16
S10	78=82-4	95	13	79=85-6	93	11	74=78-4	95	15
S11	75=76-1	99	13	72=75-3	96	11	73=75-2	97	14
S12	69=70-1	99	11	70=73-3	96	11	69=71-2	97	12
S13	41=43-2	95	12	61=62-1	98	13	70=73-3	96	13
S14	95=99-4	96	15	99=104-5	95	15	95=98-3	97	16
S15	91=93-2	98	15	88=90-2	98	15	90=94-4	96	16
S16	71=78-7	91	13	94=97-3	97	12	85=88-3	97	12
S17	89=91-2	98	15	86=91-5	95	14	87	100	16
S18	85=87-2	98	16	82=84-2	98	15	87=88-1	99	16
S19	21=23-2	91	5	22=23-1	96	5	22=23-1	96	5
S20	95=97-2	98	16	100=101-1	99	15	100	100	16
S21	76=78-2	97	16	79=82-3	96	14	77	100	16
S22	79=81-2	98	13	82=85-3	96	13	81=84-3	96	14
S23	85=87-2	98	14	80=85-5	94	13	87=91-4	96	14
S24	77=81-4	95	14	81=83-2	98	13	83=86-3	97	15
S25	74=79-5	94	11	75=76-1	99	13	77=79-2	97	13
S26	81=85-4	95	14	85=87-2	98	15	96=99-3	97	16
S27	71=74-3	96	13	72=76-4	95	13	75=77-2	97	13

The reading speed scores of students in the *informative text* type ranged between 22 and 100, the accurate reading percentages ranged between 93% and 99%, and the reading prosody scores ranged between 5 and 16. When the data related to the *informative text* type were analyzed in detail, it is seen that:

- The reading speed scores of 14 students ranged between 80 and 140 words (*the third-grade reading level*), while 13 were in the range of 79 and below words (*the second-grade reading level*).
- The accurate reading percentages of 22 students were in the range of 96% and above (*the free reading level*), while five were in the range of 90% and 95% (*the improvable reading level*).
- The reading prosody scores of 19 students were in the range of 13 and 16 (*the free reading level*), seven were in the range of 9 and 12 (*the improvable reading level*), and one was in the range of 5 and 8 (*the worrying reading level*).

The reading speed scores of students in the *poetic text* type ranged between 22 and 100, the accurate reading percentages ranged between 95% and 100%, and the reading prosody scores ranged between 5 and 16. When the data related to the *poetic text* type were analyzed in detail, it is seen that:

- The reading speed scores of 17 students ranged between 80-140 words (*the third-grade reading level*), while ten were in the range of 79 and below words (*the second-grade reading level*).
- The accurate reading percentages of 26 students were in the range of 96% and above (*the free reading level*), while one was in the range of 90% and 95% (*the improvable reading level*).
- The reading prosody scores of 24 students were in the range of 13 and 16 (*the free reading level*), two were in the range of 9 and 12 (*the improvable reading level*), and one was in the range of 5 and 8 (*the worrying reading level*).

Comparison of Pre- and Post-Measurement Results

Table 4 compares the pre- and post-measurement results regarding fluent reading components.

Table 4. Comparison of Pre- and Post-Measurement Results regarding Fluent Reading Components

Text type	Component	Measurement	X	Sd	t	p
Narrative	Reading speed	Pre	64	14.09	-5.96	0.000
		Post	75.37	18.14		
	Accurate reading %	Pre	93.96	3.93	-3.53	0.002
		Post	96.41	2.72		
	Prosody	Pre	12.41	2.56	-6.57	0.000
		Post	13.56	2.54		
Informative	Reading speed	Pre	67.04	14.97	-8.63	0.000
		Post	78.04	16.57		
	Accurate reading %	Pre	93.63	3.78	-4.77	0.000
		Post	96.74	1.65		
	Prosody	Pre	11.67	2.52	-6.98	0.000
		Post	13.07	2.46		
Poetic	Reading speed	Pre	67	14.93	-10.14	0.000
		Post	81.19	15.81		
	Accurate reading %	Pre	95.81	3.30	-3.59	0.001
		Post	97.74	1.55		
	Prosody	Pre	12.81	2.35	-7.36	0.000
		Post	14.19	2.32		

As can be seen in Table 4, there are statistically significant differences between the pre- and post-measurements results related to all the three fluent reading components in favor of the post-measurements. This situation indicates that the action plans implemented in this study were effective in improving students' fluent reading skills. When the pre- and post-measurement data (Table 2 and Table 3) were analyzed in detail, the following results were obtained.

Regarding the narrative text type:

- An increase in the *reading speed* scores of 23 students and a decrease in the total number of reading mistakes (from 105 mistakes in the pre-measurements to 70 mistakes in the post-measurements) were observed. Also, three students with *the second-grade reading speed level* progressed to *the third-grade reading speed level*.
- Concerning the *accurate reading percentage*, three of four students who were at *the worrying reading level* progressed to *the improvable reading level* and the other to *the free reading level*. Another eight students who were at *the improvable reading level* progressed to *the free reading level*.

- Concerning the *reading prosody*, an increase in the scores of 22 students was observed. Also, six of 11 students who were at *the improvable reading level* progressed to *the free reading level*.

Regarding the *informative text* type:

- An increase in the *reading speed* scores of all students and a decrease in the total number of reading mistakes (from 118 mistakes in the pre-measurements to 72 mistakes in the post-measurements) were observed. Also, four students with t*he second-grade reading speed level* progressed to *the third-grade reading speed level*.
- Concerning the *accurate reading percentage*, three of five students who were at *the worrying reading level* progressed to *the improvable reading level*, and the other two progressed to *the free reading level*. Another 11 students who were at *the improvable reading level* progressed to *the free reading level*.
- Concerning the *reading prosody*, an increase in the scores of 23 students was observed. Also, eight of 14 students who were at *the improvable reading level* progressed to *the free reading level*, and another student who was at *the worrying reading level* progressed to *the improvable reading level*.

Regarding the *poetic text* type:

- An increase in the *reading speed* scores of all students and a decrease in the total number of reading mistakes (from 75 mistakes in the pre-measurements to 50 mistakes in the post-measurements) were observed. Also, six students with *the second-grade reading speed level* progressed to *the third-grade reading speed level*.
- Concerning the *accurate reading percentage*, one student who was at *the worrying reading level* progressed to *the free reading level*. Another ten students who were at *the improvable reading level* progressed to *the free reading level*.
- Concerning the *reading prosody*, an increase in the scores of 24 students was observed. Also, seven of nine students who were at *the improvable reading level* progressed to *the free reading level*.

Moreover, qualitative data indicated that students generally regarded the action plans implemented in the study as effective in developing their fluent reading skills. They also participated in these activities with great pleasure. For example:

> "I liked the activities very much. I am not stuttering any more during reading; I am more careful about stress and intonation. When I read, others can understand me." (Student 5, Female, 26.05.2017 dated Diary)

> "The activities we engaged contributed to my reading a lot. Now I am reading faster and much better. This situation made me more self-confident. I used to get stuck while reading, but not now." (Student 8, Female, 26.05.2017 dated Diary)

> "I could not read very clearly in the past, but now I can read more understandably. I can read more fluently. Moreover, while writing, I can express myself better." (Student 17, Female, 26.05.2017 dated Diary)

Teacher C. also expressed her opinions about the overall value of teaching activities implemented in the study in her diary dated 26.05.2017 as follows:

> "The activities implemented in the research enabled my students to be more active in the lessons and focus their attention more. Among them, the r*eading choir, reading theatre,* and *Dart game* were the most popular ones because dramatization was used, and students actively participated in them. They enjoyed the use of drama and the gamification of reading. Recording the implementation of the activities with the video-camera excited students at first, but later they forgot it completely. They felt freer and more comfortable while reading. I also intend to use these strategies in the future."

Discussion

Both quantitative and qualitative findings obtained in this study show that the action plans implemented during the research process were effective in improving students' fluent reading skills and made their learning fun and enjoyable. They draw attention to the following issues:

First, during the implementation of action plans, it is essential to inform participants about their contents, how they will be implemented in the classroom, what is expected from the participants, and how the implementation will contribute to them. For example, in the first action plan of this study, students were given detailed information about the phenomenon of fluent reading. That way, they understood the importance of fluent reading to become a better reader. Providing such information to participants and trying to arouse their interest in and desire towards the research is also inherent in action research (Gürgür, 2017).

Second, action plans should be modified by considering participants' progress and aspirations regarding the research topic. For example, after the first action plan was implemented in this study, students became aware of their fluent reading levels and shared their ideas and thoughts on enhancing their fluent reading skills better. In this regard, participants' opinions and suggestions regarding the teaching activities were elicited continuously through conversation type interviews with students and *Teacher C.* during the implementation process. Indeed, although the *Dart game* activity in the ninth action plan was not included in the preparatory phase of the research, it was implemented based on students' desires during the research process. Additionally, the story *Heated by the Star* used in the last action plan was acted out in the classroom in its rhymed form based on students' requests. As pointed out by Güler, Halıcıoğlu, and Taşğın (2015) also, action research is shaped around the common interests, desires or concerns of both the researcher and participants because action research designed solely for the needs or interests of the researcher has a low chance of success.

Third, action plans should be developed and implemented in a way that they are extended over time and cover all aspects of the research topic. In this regard, the action plans implemented in this study were carried out about all the three components of fluent reading. It was observed that the activities applied in these action plans had a significant improvement in them. Similarly, in an action study by Çayır (2014) with 36 second-grade students, a program called *Fluency-Oriented Reading Instruction* was implemented. The study concluded that this program effectively improved students' accurate readings, reading speeds, and prosodic readings. The most crucial distinction between the present research and Çayır's (2014) study and other similar studies in the literature is that this study focused on all three fluent reading skills simultaneously. In the literature, although some researchers suggest studying these components separately (Hudson et al., 2005, 2009), most of the studies demonstrating a positive relationship among the components (Başaran, 2013; Baştuğ, 2012; Bigozzi et al., 2017; Rasinski, 2006; Yıldız et al., 2009) emphasizes that they should be addressed together. This because when one of the fluent reading components (say *accurate reading*) changes in a specific direction, the other two components (*reading speed* and *reading prosody*) also tend to change in the same direction (Schwanenflugel et al., 2004; Whalley & Hansen, 2006). Notably, it is emphasized that those who can read prosodically can also read accurately and automatically (Mathson, Allington, & Solic, 2006).

Fourth, the use of various technological tools or computer software programs in the implementation of action plans enables students to focus more on the activities and increase their desire to participate. For example, the *AœReader* program used in the fourth action plan of this study increased students' interest in reading the text and engaged them in the activities with more enthusiasm. There is

some evidence in the literature suggesting the use of tablets (Özbek & Girli, 2017) or computer-aided digital texts (Thoermer & Williams, 2012) as tools to contribute to improving students' (fluent) reading skills and increasing their motivation.

Fifth, not only individual activities but also group (or the whole class) activities should be included in the implementation of action plans, which contributes to students' motivation and success. For example, it was observed that *reading choir, reading theatre,* and *dart playing* conducted as group activities in this study increased students' self-confidence and motivation to read. The literature also shows that reading theatres enable students to read speedily and effectively (Keehn, 2003; Mraz et al., 2013; Worthy & Prater, 2002), while engaging them in an enjoyable reading (Tyler & Chard, 2000; Young & Rasinski, 2009).

Sixth, action plans designed to improve fluent reading must cover all the text types because the success of students varies in them. While the *informative texts* provide information on a particular subject, the *narrative texts* comprise a series of events involving multiple characters, goals, or emotions (Akbayır, 2006). On the other hand, a *poetic text* is a type of writing where feelings and thoughts are expressed differently (rhymed, etc.) than the plain texts (Akyol, 2013). Regarding the present study in which all the three text types were used, in terms of *reading speed*, students achieved the highest success in the *poetic text, narrative text,* and *informative text,* respectively. In terms of *accurate reading percentage*, the highest success was in the *informative text*, followed by the *narrative text* and the *poetic text*. In terms of *reading prosody*, the highest success was in the *informative text*, followed by the *poetic text* and the *narrative text*. Similar findings were reported by Türkmenoğlu and Baştuğ's (2017) study on the effect of peer education on fluent readings of ten fourth-grade students. In this study, regarding *reading speed* and *prosodic reading*, students achieved the highest success in the *poetic, informative,* and *narrative* texts, respectively. Regarding the *accurate reading percentage*, however, they made the highest success in the *poetic text*, followed by the *narrative* and *informative* texts. In another study by Sidekli (2005) with 411 fifth-grade primary school students, the text-type-based achievements were examined concerning some variables. For example, girls were found to be more successful than boys in both *informative* and *narrative* texts. On the other hand, students living in the city centers with high socioeconomic levels were found to be more successful in grasping *informative* texts than those living in towns or villages with low socioeconomic levels and vice versa regarding the *narrative texts*.

Seventh, the use of different reading strategies when designing and implementing action plans increases students' achievements in the desired skills, enables them to participate more enthusiastically in the relevant activity, and makes the learning environment more enjoyable. In the present study, great importance was attached to the use of different reading strategies in the implementation of teaching activities. For example, in the activity of *Rhymes-Songs-Poems* implemented in the eighth action plan, students' readings of various rhymes in different tempos and speeds, singing a poem in a song format, or using a guitar, etc. all made them more interested in the activities. Especially singing a poem in a song format made it easier for them to realize the poem's primary sense. Similarly, a study by Martin and Meltzer (1976) with 24 primary school students concluded that showing words on a television screen with melody was an effective strategy in improving students' fluent reading skills. Similarly, Biggs, Homan, Dedrick, Minick, and Rasinski's (2008) study of 24 middle school students revealed that the software program used to convert texts into melodies increased students' motivation, made them more autonomous, and added more richness to their reading efforts.

Moreover, the rhymes used in the *Dart game* activity (the ninth action plan of this study) helped students read more willingly, easily, and fluently even with the hard-to-read rhymes. They also tried to read the rhymes more carefully and meticulously to gain more points for their group. Similarly, Gupta's (2006) study with 25 second- and third-grade primary school students having reading difficulties reported that singing childish rhymes with karaoke contributed positively to students' reading fluency and reading motivation. Additionally, the activity of *Rhymed Texts* applied in the last action plan enabled students to analyze the words in the text more quickly. Thus, they had less difficulty in reading, became more willing to read, and read the text more fluently. Rasinski et al. (2016) state that when rhymed words are used, students comprehend the word patterns in the text better, decode the words easier, and once they master this skill, they also start to apply it to the whole text, becoming better readers.

Conclusion and Suggestions

In action research studies, educators who are usually practitioners (such as teachers, administrators, etc.) follow a systematic process to solve problems they encounter or improve their students' skills in different areas. In a similar vein, this study aimed to enhance the fluent reading skills of third-grade primary school students through action plans prepared and implemented based on various fluent reading strategies. In this respect, it is thought that the present study has great potential to make a significant contribution to the research literature by reflecting participants' practical experiences. On the other hand, the findings obtained in action research studies and the conclusions drawn out of them have a context-based value. Such factors as the researcher himself/herself, participants' specific situations related to the research problem, the nature of action plans implemented in the research, etc. make it necessary to judge the value of research from the perspective of the setting in which it was conducted. This situation is also inherent in all other qualitative research designs which do not aim for generalizable findings.

In light of the experiences gained from the present research, the followings can be suggested:

- More action research studies need to be conducted with participants from different school contexts by using similar to (or different from) the action plans implemented in this study, helping to grasp the fluent reading phenomenon more holistically. Also, it is thought that the teaching activities used in such studies will guide teachers in improving their students' (fluent) reading skills. For example, the classroom teacher who participated in this study played an active role in the design and implementation of teaching activities, provided important feedback through her reflective diaries, and expressed her will of benefiting from these experiences in her future teaching.
- The present research focused only on fluent reading. Therefore, new action research studies on the development of other reading components can also be carried out. Moreover, there might be additional neurological, physiological, affective, environmental, etc. factors that might affect the formation of reading action. So, in-depth qualitative research studies about these factors in different educational institutions or at various grade levels will help better understand the reading (difficulty) phenomenon.

- Action research plays an essential role in improving teaching practice, so more action research studies need to be conducted in Turkey. Mainly, teachers who are also practitioners must carry out action research studies to solve the problems they encounter. This action will enable them to handle such issues more systematically and scientifically. From this point of view, it is important that teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills in action research, starting with the pre-service teacher training.

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