Is there a difference between automaticity and fluency or are they the same thing?

Answer:

Oral reading fluency is the ability to read text quickly, accurately and with proper expression. Although the term automaticity and fluency are often used interchangeably, they are not the same thing.

Automaticity of word recognition refers to the ability to quickly recognize words, with little cognitive effort or attention. During the early stages of reading, students may be accurate but slow and inconsistent since their resources are focusing on those decoding skills. Some poor readers have a specific problem with fluent, automatic text reading even though they have learned basic phonics. Beginning readers must apply their decoding skills to fluent, automatic reading of text. Children who are reading with adequate fluency are much more likely to comprehend what they are reading.

A fluent reader can decode the words in the text accurately and automatically. He or she can also read with correct volume, phrasing and appropriate rate. The fluent reader also reads at a reading rate that facilitates comprehension.

What then are the key components that enable students to achieve fluency in oral reading? One important instructional component is repeated readings. These repeated oral reading activities develop automaticity of word recognition skills, speed and accuracy. The average child needs 4-14 exposures to a new word to recognize it automatically. Children with reading difficulties need 40 or more exposures to recognize it automatically. These repeated readings not only provide the exposure to many words, sentences and phrases that they now can read without effort but it also provides the reader with confidence to read aloud with expression and a true meaning of the passage. Throughout this process it is important to provide as many opportunities for students to practice fluency with guidance and support.