

**Research Digest:
Academic Intervention and Reading**

Valleley, R. J., Shriver, M. D., & Rozema, S. (2005). Using brief experimental assessment of reading interventions for identification and treatment of vocal habit. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, *38*(1), 129-133.

Habit disorders are often treated through an empirically supported process—habit reversal. *Habit reversal* includes awareness training, modeling, practicing, and reinforcing competing responses. Vocal habit disorders represent a dysfluency in vocal behavior during conversation and reading. Identifying effective reading fluency strategies is often accomplished by conducting brief experimental analyses with reading. John, an 11 year-old boy with a chronic motor disorder, added “ah” to the end of words while reading and during conversation. The authors targeted John’s vocal habit during reading.

John was pre-administered reading passages to collect information regarding his reading fluency and rate of vocal habits. From a brief experimental analysis of empirically supported reading fluency interventions, phrase error correction (PEC) was identified as the most effective intervention strategy to decrease John’s vocal habit and simultaneously increase his reading fluency. John’s mother was trained to implement the phrase error correction procedure during home reading practices over a 2 month period. The researchers found mixed results before an integrity check was conducted. After integrity increased, the vocal habit decreased and maintained at follow up sessions immediately, at one month, and at two months. In addition, the vocal habit decreased during John’s conversations, suggesting that the effects of the intervention may have generalized to conversational speech.

Results suggest parallels between empirically supported reading fluency interventions for vocal habits and habit reversal. Specifically, John reported that he was unaware of his vocal habit; therefore, error correction may have increased his awareness of the habit and gave him considerable practice of the alternative fluent reading of the phrase. In addition, a reinforcement strategy was used to decrease his vocal habit. Use of reading fluency interventions to decrease vocal habits warrants further empirical investigation.

This Research Digest is a product of the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools. The research presented is a sample of state-of-the-art research conducted in the area of Academic Intervention by faculty at UNL. For more information on the Center, please contact Holly Sexton at hsexton1@unl.edu