

Disfluent, Dysfluent, and Nonfluent

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Recently Sue Casson described on our Standard Celeration Listserve how fluency training in basic math skills overcame Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) symptoms in a young learner (Casson, 1997). Sue called not being fluent "disfluent." Others of us call it "dysfluent." Others think of "disfluent" and "dysfluent" as merely alternative spellings for the same word. Not true. "Disfluent" and "dysfluent" have different roots and different meanings. Here follow the differences between these words and suggestions for how we might use them.

Disfluent The Latin prefix "Dis" means apart, away,

Therefore "disfluent" means a partial fluency. It could describe a performance that did not become fully fluent and met only one or two of fluency's defining effects - Retention, Endurance, Application, and Stability (REAPS).

"Disfluent" might be reserved for performances that we attempted to make fluent, but did not succeed. Our attempt to produce REAPS effects only partially succeeded..

Dysfluent The Greek prefix "Dys" means disordered, difficult, faulty, abnormal, bad, ill. It means the opposite of good.

Therefore "dysfluent" means a fluent performance that was faulty or diseased or went awry. It might describe a performance that was once fluent but has lost its fluency, and no longer produces all of the desired REAPS effects.

"Dysfluent" might be reserved for performances that once were fluent, but have lost their fluency and no longer produce REAPS effects.

Nonfluent The Latin prefix "non" means not, no, reverse of.

Therefore a nonfluent performance would be one that had not been brought up to fluent frequencies. No attempt had ever been made to produce fluent performance.

When in doubt we should use nonfluent most often because more readers understand it than understand the niceties of disfluent and dysfluent.

References

Casson, Sue (1997, November 25). Fwd: ADD/ADHD,
Posted on the Standard Celeration Listserv
(Sclistserv@lists.acs.ohio-state.edu).