While word recognition is said to have been mastered sometime in elementary level, a more serious problem arises in high school, that is, problem in comprehension (Brock, 1995).

Since it is readily acceptable that word recognition and comprehension are two distinct skills, it would not be wrong to suppose that no matter how high the level of mastery learners have attained of the former, it could not be assured of the same level as the latter. This is the main reason why studies that investigate reading problems among high school students and even adult ones have their focus not on word recognition but on comprehension. Fowler and Scarborough (1993), however, argue that it would wrong, given the data available, to harbor the presumption that post-elementary or adult learners have acquired mastery in word recognition and spelling. Some other studies support this view (Finucci, Gottfredson, & Childs, 1985; Scarborough, 1990).

In their study, Finucci et al. (1985) observe that word recognition skills of high school learners are not enough to support comprehension that is so characteristic of their level. This means that to really evaluate the comprehension skills of learners in this level, it would be similarly necessary to measure their spelling and word recognition skills as they are significant aspects of the difficulties in comprehension. Also, it entails the stance that there is much need for reconsideration of the previous assumption especially that many learners end their formal training in schools even before high school.

Another study conducted by Juel, Griffith, and Gough (1986) examined the relationships between orthography and spelling skills and comprehension. They found that knowledge of how the orthography represents the phonology of words is largely based both in word recognition and spelling skills. In effect, Juel et al. (1986) are saying
that reading in terms of word recognition and writing in terms of spelling skills are foundational in developing or improving comprehension.

Because word recognition is highly related with spelling in neophyte readers (Stage & Wagner, 1992), it is very significant to take into great consideration if the word recognition skills’ relationship or close association with spelling skills in experienced readers are retain in the long run. Similarly, it is important to ask whether that relationship is able to explain accounts of individual differences (Shankweiler et al., 1996). Some scholars expect that this would not be the case, that is, the close association between reading skills and spelling skills will not hold long and will not be able to account for individual differences especially later in life of learners (Brock, 1995). Because of training and learning opportunities, Stanovich (1986) argues that learners may develop an independent sight lexicon which implies the need to translate printed words into sound automatically. As a result, decoding of printed text only and chiefly has something to do with the process of learning how to read learners undergo in the beginning steps. Implicit from this claim is also the indication that decoding or word recognition in relationship with spelling skills can only account for individual differences at the initial stages of learning in the elementary level.

Parallel to this assertion, Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1985) after evaluating results of their study on reading and spelling instructions proposed that “except in cases of individual need, phonics instruction should have been completed by the end of second grade” (p.43). The strength of this recommendation comes forth from the earlier contentions that the relationship between word recognition and spelling skills account only for individual differences at the initial stages of learning and thus able to detect individual need early.
References


