Teaching prediction strategies to low achieving Year Two students, with reading difficulties, before reading a text, improves literal comprehension.

ABSTRACT

The strategy of predicting is a strategy that supports the acquisition of text comprehension in reading a narrative text. This study explores the effects of explicitly teaching readers to predict before reading in order to improve decoding and comprehending the text.

The students identified for this study were in Year Two and had been involved in the Reading Recovery Program in the previous year. These students were also identified as experiencing difficulties reading and in comprehension.

The study examines the outcomes after pre and post tests. The intervention group was exposed to 10 sessions concentrating on the strategy of predicting prior to reading the text. The students were withdrawn from their regular literacy lesson for a period of 20 to 30 minutes.

The results suggest that teaching prediction strategies before reading a text is a successful strategy and should be explicitly taught to assist students to improve in their reading and their comprehension ability.

An implication of this result is that even though students who are involved in the Reading Recovery Program are taught the strategy of orientating to the story it does not become apart of their “Inner Language” and consequently they do not use it every time independently.
INTRODUCTION
The purpose of reading is to gain meaning from the text. Comprehension understands the writer’s message. It is the outcome. Comprehending is the action. Examples of this are visualising, rereading, predicting, making links and paraphrasing using synonyms.

Munroe and Munroe (1994) suggest that we read by working on information in a text at a number different levels. At any time readers combine these areas of knowledge in their thinking. These levels are outlined in the MLOTP, Model Level of Text Processing (Munro, 2002). These levels include; word level, sentence level, conceptual level, topic level and dispositional level. It also includes management and control strategies, existing knowledge and sensory input. All of these need to be working together. When one of these doesn’t make sense the reader must re-read.

The problem is that students who have been involved in an intensive individualized program (Reading Recovery) often learn to be more successful decoders of print but it becomes evident as they leave the program they do not always maintain these decoding skills and they do not comprehend what they are reading effectively. The students reading ability after completion of the program shows a marginal improvement and even with continued classroom support often their reading ability remains the same or dips backwards.

An aspect of comprehension is predicting. Many children in the early years of schooling, who read words accurately still experience difficulty with comprehension. Wakier, (2006) believes that the primary purpose of reading is comprehension, or understanding, and that the key to increasing reading comprehension is to tap into students’ prior knowledge about the topic and have a means or a reason to retrieve it. Dupree and Iversen (1994) say that reading is a complex process which needs to be taught. They state, “In order to become competent, independent readers and writers children need to control a range of strategies” (p.8).

Marie Clay (1993) describes Orientation as the means of adjusting or aligning oneself or one’s ideas to surrounding or circumstances. “This effort to facilitate responding might be explained in terms like recency and familiarity. Another explanation is that the teacher is ensuring that the child has in his head the ideas and the language he needs to produce when prompted in sequence by print cues. He should know what the story is about before he reads it” (p.37)

Wood and Enders (2005) state, “To make predictions about a text, students must have prior knowledge about the topic and a means or a reason to retrieve it. This strategy takes the predictive process back to its origins in the imagination and extends it throughout the lesson” (p.346)
Giving students the skills to predict using features of the text and their own knowledge of the text being read allows them to tune their thinking to assist with vocabulary or concepts that may appear in the text. The specific strategy for this study will be as follows “I am going to teach you something that you can do that will help you to remember what you read. It is called thinking ahead or predicting.” Students will need to be focused in initially with the title, front cover and pictures throughout the story. Gradually the skill of locating Key Words on a page is taught and this then becomes part of the readers predicting strategy. The students are encouraged to make their predictions in complete sentences. The students then check their prediction at the end of reading the text. Wood and Endres (2005) designed a strategy called the Elaborate, Predict and Confirm Strategy. Their research showed that all students no matter what their reading level will improve their reading ability and comprehension by taking on this strategy.

Activities for prior discussions and prediction are important for comprehension to occur. Fountas and Pinnell (2001) say that a reader’s first response is in the head but by talking for example through prediction before reading, a deeper understanding will occur.

The major aim of this project is to establish whether a student’s reading ability and comprehension can improve with explicit predicting strategies. Another expectation is that students need to be able to take a role in their learning. They must articulate new learning, reflect on it and then have a go in a new setting. They need to plough this new knowledge into existing knowledge. It needs to be apart of their self language. Collins (1989) Model of Teaching and Learning considers the nature of learning, especially students who require intervention. This model developed by Collins, Brown & Newman (1989) has six principles of instruction. Three of these are the teachers and three are the students. The students are expected to Articulate, Reflect and Explore.

The present study aims to investigate the influence of the explicit teaching of predicting strategies, before reading, to Year Two student who have already been a part of an intense, individualized program (Reading Recovery) on comprehension of a text.

**Prediction:** Teaching prediction strategies to low achieving Year Two students before reading a text improves literal comprehension.

**METHOD**

**Design**
An OXO design has been employed in which the gains in reading comprehension skills following explicit teaching in the comprehension strategy of predicting prior to reading prose is monitored for Year Two students who are ex reading recovery students experiencing reading difficulties. The prediction will focus on using the
title, front cover, illustrations throughout the book and key words. Through the sequence of ten lessons (see Appendix 1) the students’ ability to make predictions based on title, front cover, pictures and key words will be monitored. The study compares two groups of students, a control group and an intervention group.

**Participants**
The five students (four males and one female) chosen for this study are in Year Two. They are in two different classrooms. All students have been participants in the Reading Recovery Program in the previous year. The control group is made up of five Year Two students (two males and three females).
The students in the Intervention group were chosen for the study because they had been participants in the Reading Recovery Program and the 2008 Pre testing deemed they were still “At Risk”. The students text level indicates they are in the bottom third of the Year Two students.
The Matched Control group had not been part of the Reading Recovery Program but were in the lower third of the Year Two cohort text level pre test 2008. The reason for the control group was to gauge by comparisons whether specific teaching in the strategy of prediction led to changes in learning behaviour.
All participants attend a primary school in a western suburb of Melbourne.
Further details of each student participating in the action research project can be can be found in Table 1

**Materials**
Materials used include the following:
*Reading Progress Test 1-(Denis Vincent, Mary Crumpler, Mike de la Mare, 1996)*
The Reading Progress Test is the 1st of 6 tests which tests comprehension for students in the range of 5 to 6 and 6 to 7 years of age.
The tests are made up of three main types of comprehension
  1. Identifying the meaning of individual words.
  2. Selecting the right passage from a number of choices after reading a short story
  3. Choosing, or supplying, missing words in a short story
Questions relating to continuous texts cover inferential as well as literal comprehension

*Running Records-Marie Clay*
Alpha Assess
*PM Benchmark Books*

1. A selection of picture story big books were used. They were selected for their interest value and the illustrations carried the storyline (see Appendix List)
2. Multiple copies of picture story books at an *Easy* and *Instructional Level*
for students to read independently (see Appendix List)

3 A selection of picture storybooks selected by the students from the library for independent reading

*Cue Cards*. These were used to help recall. They had the words written on them: Prediction, Title, Front Cover, Pictures, and Key Words

**Procedure**

Pre and Post tests were administered to students in the Intervention and the Control Group. The Record of Oral Language was administered first, followed by the running records and comprehension questions from the Alpha Assess set of graded material for the Pre test and The PM Benchmark set of graded text were used for the Post test. The Reading Progress Test 1 was administered for both Pre and Post tests.

There were 10 lessons conducted for 20 minutes duration. These lessons were usually held in the mornings during the reading component of the literacy block. It was a focus teaching group held in a withdrawal situation. The control group remained in the classroom and continued to be apart of the normal literacy lesson held by the classroom teacher. The lessons were taught consecutively over a two week period by the schools Literacy Leader.

Each teaching session involved oral language, prediction and literal comprehension. Each session began with a recap of the information developed in the previous session and concluded with a reflection of each session’s focus.

The teaching sequence consisted of

a) **Explicit teaching-Least cognitive demanding situation-Speaking and Listening**

**LESSON ONE**
Focus: To model the prediction strategy before reading by using the title, front, front cover and pictures.
‘Read to’ Strategy

**LESSON TWO**
Focus: To introduce how to select key words in a text.
‘Read To Strategy’

**LESSON THREE**
Focus: To model the prediction strategy before reading by using title, front cover pictures and key words.
“Read to Strategy”

b) **Explicit teaching-Scaffolding in a more complex demanding situation**

**LESSON FOUR**
Focus: To reinforce the prediction strategy emphasizing using the key words.
“Shared Reading Strategy”
c) Prompt to predict. Students to take ownership and explain how it helped them to read

LESSON FIVE
Focus: To have the students make a group prediction and check the prediction with an individual text.
Guided Reading

LESSON SIX
Focus: To have students make a prediction in pairs and then check by reading an instructional text.
“Guided Reading”

d) Pass control to the student

LESSON SEVEN
Focus: The students will make an individual prediction which is checked by reading an instructional text.
“Guided Reading”

LESSON EIGHT
Focus: The students will verbalise how the prediction strategy helped them read and understand the text.
“Guided Reading”

e) Practice – Apply to other situations

LESSON NINE
Focus: the students will verbalize their prediction strategy before reading independently.
“Independent Reading”

LESSON TEN
Focus: The students will verbalize their prediction strategy on a library book.
“Independent Reading”

Refer to Appendix 1 for complete session outlines

RESULTS

Results indicate support for the hypothesis that teaching prediction strategies to low achieving Year 2 students with reading difficulties before reading a text will improve literal comprehension.

The student’s involvement in all sessions demonstrated an improvement in their ability to predict. All five participants were enthusiastic about the activities and in each session demonstrated that learning had taken place. This was evident by the predictions made on the text and then by answering the questions to check their literal comprehension. Even as the text level increased and the facilitator withdrew her support and if the students predicted before reading (using the title, front cover, pictures and key words,) they were better able to comprehend.
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The results for the intervention group gained from taking running records on Alpha Assess indicated an upward trend for decoding after intervention with all but one student increasing their instructional level from 2-3 levels. The results for the Control group showed a majority of its members increased their reading level but only between 1-2 levels. It is important to note that students in the control group demonstrated higher comprehension scores in pre testing.
A majority of the students displayed an increased ability to recall facts from the text. This testing occurred after the reading of an instructional text by using the Alpa Assess Reading Behaviour Analysis Sheet. The three categories were no facts (0), few facts (1-2), many facts (4+). Three of the students showed gains, by moving to the higher category and two remained the same. All the students in the intervention group were able to answer a literal question correctly on the text, at their instructional level in the post test.

Figure 3 Average Standardized Reading Progress Scores

The data from the Reading Progress Test which measures an individual’s progress in reading in comprehension showed that 80% of the teaching group showed an increase of between 6-11 standards. 20% of the group showed no gains.

“The Reading Progress Test has three main types of comprehension questions:

1. identifying the meaning of individual words
2. selecting the right answer from a number of choices after reading a short story
3. choosing, or supplying, missing words in a short story” (Vincent,Crumpler & de la Mare1996 p7)

The control group all exhibited growth over the time. 100% of the students showed gains ranging significantly from 2-15 standards. The control group had a higher starting point than the teaching group.
**Student A** was an outgoing group member who readily contributed a detailed prediction. He has well developed oral language skills. Student A post-test results indicated that he had improved his decoding skills by increasing his instructional text level by 3 levels. His ability to recall facts from the instructional text improved by Few (1-3) to Many (4+). He was also able to answer both a literal and an interpretive question accurately in the post test. The results from the Reading Progress Test showed an increase of 6 standardized points. His score increased from 86 to 92. This gave him a percentile ranking of 37%. This score is still below the average for his age. His reading age is 7:5 which is significantly lower than his chronological age of 8:1. His ability scale score is 100.

![Student A Test Results](image)

**Student B** has poor oral language ability and although always keen to make a prediction, his predictions were not always plausible. He relied heavily on using the title and front cover. He had difficulty scanning a book and locating key words. Student B post-test results indicated that he had improved his decoding skills by increasing his instructional text level by 3 levels. His ability to recall facts from the instructional text remained the same. The pre and post-test both showed he was only able to recall a Few (>3) Facts. He was also able to answer a literal question in the post-test. The results from the Reading Progress Test showed an increase of 8 standardized points. His score increased from 98 to 106. This gave him a percentile ranking of 63%. This score is just about the average for his age. His reading age is 7:2 which is about correct for his chronological age of 7:1. Student B is up to 12 months younger than other students in the same year level. His ability scale score is 106. This is slightly above the mid-point of the ability range.
Student C has an ESL background and his oral language ability is low. He was a willing participant and always displayed a positive attitude to the group work. He made very basic predictions and had difficulties expressing his predictions in complete sentences. He had difficulty locating key words. Student C post-test results indicated that he had improved his decoding skills by increasing his instructional text level by 2 levels. His ability to recall facts from the instructional text improved from No Facts to Few (>3) Facts. He was also able to answer a literal question in the post-test after no response in the pre-test. The results from the Reading Progress Test showed no improvement. Student C is the only member of the Teaching Group who showed no improvement in this test. His score remained at 98. This gave him a percentile ranking of 37%. This score is below the average for his age. His reading age is 7:7. This is an accurate match for his chronological age of 7:7. His ability scale score is 101. This is at the midpoint of the ability range.
Student D experiences a variety of difficulties when reading. She loses meaning due to her difficulty in automatically decoding and recording of words. She has a tendency to continue reading even when her decoding does not make sense. Student D has missed an extended period of school. This lack of consolidation has had an impact on her early literacy learning. Student D attended 75% of the intervention lessons. Student D post-test results indicated that she had made no improvement in her decoding skills. Her instructional text level remained at Level 11. Her ability to recall facts from the instructional text remained the same. The Pre and post-Test both showed she was only able to recall a Few (>3) Facts. She was also able to answer a literal question in the post-test. The results from the Reading Progress Test showed an increase of 11 standardized points. This was the greatest increase of all the teaching group participants. With such a dramatic increase in comprehension it is surprising that there was no increase in her text level. Her score increased from 83 to 94. This gave her a percentile ranking of 38%. This a score below the average for her age. Her reading age is 7:2 which is slightly under for her chronological age of 7:5. Her ability scale score is 98. This is slightly below the mid-point of the ability range.
Student E has severe hearing problems and is nearly deaf in one ear and partially in another. He has a hearing aid which he uses always and a microphone for the teacher that is attached to his hearing aid. Student E post-test results indicated that he had improved his decoding skills by increasing his instructional text level by 2 levels. His ability to recall facts from the instructional text remained the same at only a few facts recalled. He was also able to answer both a literal, interpretive and inferential question accurately in the pre and post-test. The results from the Reading Progress Test showed an increase of 7 standardized points. His score increased from 91 to 98. This gave him a percentile ranking of 47%. This a score slightly below the average for his age. His reading age is 8:2 which is slightly lower than his chronological age of 8:8. His ability scale score is 109. This is the mid-point of the ability range.
This study’s aim is to attempt to determine whether teaching the strategy of prediction to students in Year 2 experiencing reading difficulties will improve their comprehension. Assessments were made by comparing results from pre and post-test results of each child and the intervention group as a whole, and then making comparisons with the control group students who did not receive the intervention.

Over the series of 10 lessons it became clear that the teaching of prediction had its benefits to the student’s ability to decode and comprehend the text. This was shown through the increase in text level and the Reading Progress Test. The Reading Progress Test tests for comprehension.

As Wood and Endreas (2002) state in their Imagine, Elaborate, Predict and Confirm strategy, giving students the opportunity to activate their prior knowledge, make predictions and develop an interest in a text they may be about to read, will improve their ability to better comprehend the meaning of the text.

The findings of this study support the use of the prediction strategy to improve reading comprehension as noted by Munroe (2004) “Reading strategy instruction has been shown to improve reading comprehension “(p.836.) Munroe (2004) continues by stating “It is generally agreed that knowledge of how to predict…..and monitor comprehension facilities reading comprehension” (p.836.)
The implications from this research, for teaching, is that explicit pre reading instruction is a vital reading strategy and should be an intrinsic strategy taught in the classroom.

Although benefits were made from teaching pre prediction strategies, implications for teaching are that it would be important to include prediction strategies throughout the reading of the text. Students need to be taught to confirm and change their prediction throughout the reading. If a further study was conducted the students need to be taught that they can change their minds as they read, continually confirming and changing their ideas.

It is important to note that both the intervention and control group showed gains in decoding and comprehension. I believe that this comes about by good teaching practice in the Grade 2 Classroom. Each student is involved in at least two explicit focus teaching sessions a week.

It is also important to note that due to the small numbers in Year 2 is was difficult to choose a control group that was in as great a need as the intervention group. Therefore the control group pre tested at a greater level of competency in both pre and post testing. The students in the control group are more able readers and able to make gains without intervention. I don't believe the intervention group would have made the same gains in this period of time without the small group explicit teaching daily.

The entire intervention group had participated in the Reading Recovery Intervention Program, the previous year. They were all discontinued successfully. Marie Clay (1993) states that all Reading Recovery sessions should teach the strategy of Orientation before reading.

“Orientation by the child means the adjustment or alignment of oneself or one’s ideas to surroundings or circumstances. Introduce the book and make the child familiar with the story, the plot, the words, the sentences and the writing style. This draws the child’s attention to the important ideas” (p.37)

It can be concluded that the students have been exposed to the reading strategy of predicting prior to reading a text previously in Reading Recovery sessions.

This project raises a number of questions. If these students have been taught to orientate before reading during Reading Recovery why don't they do it now independently? It draws attention to the fact that that they are still passive learners. They have not developed into active readers and do not take what they have learnt into their own independent reading. These students need to be taught to have a role in their learning.

As stated in the model of teaching and learning developed by Collins, Brown & Newman (1989). There are three principles of instruction which is the responsibility of the student. They are to articulate reflect and explore.
This has implications for teaching practices in the classroom. These students need the self talk to be modeled, coached and scaffolded. They need to practice articulating new learnings and reflect on it and how they are going to transfer it to a new setting. Their inner or self language needs to be developed.

Further implications for teaching in the classroom is to place greater emphasise on predicting while reading. The students need to understand that a prediction is a guess and a guess doesn’t have to be correct. Students need to learn they can change their mind as they read.

Although this study suggests that the teaching prediction strategies prior to reading a text was a study done only over 10 lessons with 5 students it can be assumed that a more extensive and longer study, using a significant number of students would confirm this initial research.

This project could expand further to investigate predicting throughout the reading of the text. It could investigate how teaching visualizing and paraphrasing the title would add to the student’s gains. This would add to the student’s ability to plough into existing knowledge before reading.

These results support the initial hypothesis that: Teaching prediction strategies to low achieving Year Two students, with reading difficulties, before reading a text, improves literal comprehension.
REFERENCE


WEBSITES

APPENDIX 1

LESSON PLANS

Introduce the strategy

I am going to teach you something that you can do that will help you to remember what you read. It is called thinking ahead or predicting. This is what you do. Before you read it is important to look at the title, front cover and pictures and then think about what the story might be about. You must do this every time. Good readers do this.

LESSON ONE

Focus: To model the prediction strategy before reading by using the title, front, front cover and pictures.

‘Read to’ Strategy

1. The teacher introduces a big book “Grumpy Bear“-Jill Eggleton
2. The teacher explains the prediction strategy “I am going to teach you something that you can do every time you are going to read a book It will help you remember what you have read. It is called thinking ahead or predicting”
3. Have the words Prediction, Title, Pictures, Front Cover written on cards.
4. The teacher models how to use the title, front cover and pictures in the book. The teacher predicts aloud in a complete sentence. “I think the story
5. Have students work with a partner and tell each other what they think the story will be about.
6. The teacher reads the story to the group and the teacher and pairs check their prediction.

LESSON TWO

Focus: To introduce how to select key words in a text.

‘Read To’ Strategy

1. Have the students recall the prediction strategy taught in the last session
2. The teacher introduces the big book "Mrs Honey’s Tree“-Pam Adams
3. Go through each page and demonstrate where the key words or important words on each page.
4. Write these words on a chart.
5. Re-reading the list of words.
6. Model how we can make a prediction in full sentences
7. Write up this prediction.
8. The big book is read to the students.
9. The joint group prediction is checked
LESSON THREE
Focus: To model the prediction strategy before reading by using title, front cover pictures and key words.

'Read to' Strategy
1. Have the students recall the prediction strategy taught in the last session.
2. The teacher introduces a big book “Rascal’s Trick”-Paul Jennings
3. The teacher models the prediction strategy using title, front cover, pictures and key words.
4. The teacher predicts in a complete sentence
5. The students each have an opportunity to predict.
6. The teacher reads the story to the group and the group check their prediction.

LESSON FOUR
Focus: To reinforce the prediction strategy emphasizing using the key words.

'Shared Reading' Strategy
1. Have the students recall the prediction strategy taught in the last session.
2. The teacher introduces the big book "Who’s at the Door"-Jonathon Allen
3. The group selects the key words from each page. The teacher writes them up.
4. The group constructs a joint prediction, which the teacher writes up.
5. The book is read using a shared reading strategy
6. The group prediction is checked.
LESSON FIVE
Focus: To have the students make a group prediction and check the prediction with an individual text.

Guided Reading
1. The students recall the prediction strategy
2. The students have an individual copy of the book “Snowy Gets A Wash”- Beverley Randell, which at the groups easy reading level.
3. The group make a joint prediction which is written up by the teacher
4. The students read the story individually and the teacher listens and takes a running record on some of the group.
5. The group then checks the joint prediction.

LESSON SIX
Focus: To have students make a prediction in pairs and then check by reading an instructional text.

“Guided Reading”
1. The students recall the prediction strategy
2. The students have an individual copy of the book “Joey”-Beverley Randell which is at the groups instructional reading level.
3. The students work in pairs making predictions which they share with the group
4. The group reads the story together lead by the teacher
5. The group then checks the predictions

LESSON SEVEN
Focus: The students will make an individual prediction which is checked by reading an instructional text.

“Guided Reading”
1. The students recall the prediction strategy
2. The students have an individual copy of the same book “Roly Poly,A Story Box Anthology”-Hetty Hog and Hatty Hog Pg 14 which is at the groups instructional reading level.
3. The students in the group make an individual prediction which the teacher writes up.
4. The students read the story individually and at their own pace. The teacher listens and takes a running record on some of the group members.
5. The group then check the individual predictions
LESSON EIGHT
Focus: The students will verbalise how the prediction strategy helped them read and understand the text.
“Guided Reading”
1. The students recall the prediction strategy
2. The students have an individual copy of the same book “Roly Poly A Story Anthology, Windy Day”-pg 2 which is at the groups instructional reading level.
3. The students make an individual prediction
4. Have students say what they did and how it helped them
5. Individuals check their own predictions and explain to a partner how their predictions matched up.

LESSON NINE
Focus: the students will verbalize their prediction strategy before reading independently.
“Independent Reading”
1. Students say to a partner what they do before they begin to read. "Before I read I look at the pictures, front cover, title and key words and think what the story will be about. I say this in a complete sentence’
2. Students select a story at their instructional level and make predictions they share with the group.
3. Students will read their story and then share with the group how their predictions matched up.

LESSON TEN
Focus: The students will verbalize their prediction strategy on a library book.
“Independent Reading”
1. Students are to verbalise their self language and verbalise their reading strategy of prediction.
2. Students select a picture story book from the library and make a prediction to the group.
3. Students read the book silently and then check their predictions.
4. Share with the group how their predictions matched up.