

Developing meaning at the sentence level through the explicit teaching of the RIDER strategy will improve reading comprehension for Year Five and Six students.

Abstract

A major focus of the CLaSS project in the first three years of schooling has been on decoding words. Word-decoding skills are the first step in developing good comprehension. Good readers use a variety of strategies to comprehend what they are reading. They monitor their reading, initiate corrective action and decide when to re-read or self-correct. They also create mental images to represent the ideas in the text. On the other hand, readers with reading disabilities have poor self-management strategies.

This study examines the explicit teaching of the R.I.D.E.R. strategy to three students in Grade Five and Grade Six and investigates the improvement in reading comprehension of each participant. The results indicate that teaching students a visualisation strategy increases their spontaneous retell of text and improves their comprehension. The study supports researchers who have found that when students use visual images and self-questioning strategies their reading comprehension improves. Research also indicates that students of all abilities can be taught the strategy.

The finding of this study has specific implications for literacy education. It indicates the value of explicit strategy training in visualisation and supports the implementation of such a strategy in a school's literacy teaching.

Introduction

The Underlying Problem

Despite massive investment in programs designed to improve outcomes for students at risk, a significant proportion of students continue to fail to reach a satisfactory standard of literacy. In 1996 the National School English Literacy Survey, conducted on behalf of the State and Federal Ministers for Education by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), using Year 3 and 5 students, indicated that around 30 per cent of students failed to reach the minimum benchmark standard. The gap between high and low achievers in classes widens as they progressed through school. In 1997 Professor Peter Hill and Carmel Crevola from the University of Melbourne were commissioned by the Melbourne Catholic Education Office to develop the CLaSS project design and a professional development component for teachers. Since then a major focus in the first three years of schooling has been on decoding words. If this is the primary focus of reading instruction, students merely become *word callers* who do not have an understanding of the words they have called (Raines, 2004).

Current Relevant literature

Decoding text does not ensure that meaning will be constructed successfully (Garner, 1991). If word level processes are the primary focus of reading instruction, students merely become *word callers* who do not have an understanding of the words they have called (Block, Gambrell, Pressley, 2002). Pressley (2000) describes word-decoding skill as the first step in developing good comprehension. He points

out that good readers are extremely active as they read and rely on a variety of strategies to comprehend what they are reading. They generate questions about the ideas in the text while they are reading and construct mental images which represent the ideas in the text.

We read by processing text at a number of different levels. The Multiple Levels of Text Processing [MLOTP] model (Munro, 2005) is a framework that outlines these levels and demonstrates developmentally how we acquire literacy knowledge. The model can be used to pinpoint reading problems which then enables the teacher to develop an effective teaching strategy for the student concerned.

The model describes five levels of text processing needed to be a competent reader which are - the word level, the sentence level, the conceptual level, the topic level and the dispositional level. At the sentence level good readers will be able to visualise and paraphrase what they are reading. They will know that visualising a sentence helps reading and they will be able to talk about the strategies they use as they read. At the conceptual level they will be able to link the ideas between sentences and they will be able to predict, anticipate and infer ideas and feelings.

Students with reading disabilities have poor self-management strategies. They are non strategic and passively engaged in the reading process. Therefore, they do not monitor their reading, initiate corrective action or decide when to re-read or self correct. Disabled readers may also have difficulty transferring into oral language experiences or visual imagery knowledge.

To be a good reader, an individual needs to be proficient both at the decoding or word level, and at abstracting meaning from print (Center, Freeman, Roberston & Outhred, 1999). Poor comprehenders fail to remember and understand connected text. They do not make inferences from a passage or integrate ideas from different sections of the text to form a coherent representation in the same way that skilled comprehenders do. They may, however, benefit from imagery training because it enables or forces them to integrate the information in a text that they would not normally do. Recent research (Oakhill & Yuill, 1995; 1996; Oakhill & Patel, 1991) supports the view of Pressley (1976) that poor comprehenders, after training in visual imagery, showed a marked improvement in their memory for reading comprehension passages, and to a greater extent than good comprehenders. The conclusion drawn from this study is that representational imagery training improves the listening and reading comprehension skills as well as the story event structure of students.

The knowledge of how to learn is as important as the knowledge of specific facts. A learning strategy model will facilitate the acquisition, manipulation, integration, storage and retrieval of information across situations and settings (Clark, Deshler, Schumaker, Alley and Warner, 1984). Learning strategies teach students how to learn content rather than teach them the content. As a consequence, they will be able to attack situations not previously encountered (Becker et al, 1971) and they will be more actively involved with the content as they manipulate and integrate the information by using the learning strategy. Strategy use is perhaps more readily trainable and manipulable than other components of comprehension such as prior

knowledge and inferencing skills. A strategy is a conscious, intentional, flexible tool that readers use to update their understanding of the text (Johnson-Glenberg, 2000).

According to the dual code theory of Paivio (1971,1989) there are two distinct systems for representing and processing information, namely linguistic and image based. Johnson-Glenberg's (2000) study involved training third through to fifth grade students who were poor comprehenders in either the verbally based reciprocal teaching program, or the visually based visualising / verbalising program. In this study the visually based group answered significantly more implicit, inferential open-ended questions that the control group.

Clark, Deshler, Schumaker, Alley and Warner (1984) completed a study designed to determine whether using visual imagery and self-questioning learning strategies increases reading comprehension. They found that when students used visual imagery and self-questioning strategies their reading comprehension improved. Their results support data available in the literature regarding the effectiveness of visual imagery (Kerst & Levin 1973, Lesgold, McCormick & Golinkoff 1975, Paivio 1969) and questioning (Manzo 1969). Their data also supports other results using visual imagery and questioning procedures with learning disabled children (Wong 1980, Hori 1977, Warner 1977). For students who mastered the two strategies in grade level materials, the maximum number of total practice sessions required was seven. Visual imagery and self-questioning practice took about 15 to 20 minutes each session. The total instructional time ranged from five to seven hours.

Danko (1993) used a similar strategy to investigate whether using visual imagery and verbal rehearsal by self-questioning would help Chapter 1 students to improve comprehension. Each student was told to pretend to be a video camera and record the reading. Playback meant to stop and review the recording in the mind by questioning and retelling. As with Clark, Danko used *who, what, when, where* and *how* questions to initiate the self-questioning strategy. The strategy made use of the knowledge that students already had of the record, rewind and playback functions of camcorders. The technique of visualisation and verbal rehearsal to help recall text improved the students' reading comprehension scores.

According to Wood and Endres (2005) decades of research have proven that getting students to create visual images before, during and after reading is a viable way of enhancing comprehension. The most compelling finding of the strategy of Wood and Endres (IEPC) – Imagine, Elaborate, Predict and Confirm, was that students expressed positive reactions and attitudes when using imagery. They acknowledge that not all students are proficient at creating mental images in response to text but research indicates that students of all abilities can be taught the strategy. It requires strategic demonstrating, modelling and prompting from the teacher because students do not normally offer a positive response without encouragement.

Hibbing & Rankin-Erickson (2003) found that students who lack the ability to create visual images when reading often experience comprehension difficulties. Many reluctant and low-ability readers with comprehension difficulties are not able to describe the pictures in their minds as they read. Hibbing and Rankin-Erickson

believe that this is not surprising because many readers have limited vocabulary, little background knowledge about many topics, lack understanding of the relationships represented in the language of the text and lack of awareness that attempting to visualise what is happening might be useful. Television these days normally creates the mental images for children which is very different to using one's own experiences to create visual images that support comprehension.

There is some evidence that successful readers automatically make connections between the verbal and non verbal coding systems to create images and the ability to make verbal and nonverbal connections quickly and efficiently is related to learning disabilities (Swanson, 1989). Many of the low-ability readers Hibbing & Rankin-Erickson worked with did not automatically create images and were unable to do so with conscious effort. Instead of creating images associated with the meaning of the text, they were too busy focussing on the decoding of the words. Other students read the words fluently but still lacked the ability to create mental images that related to the text. In both cases connections between the words and images were not made putting comprehension at risk.

Research on mental imagery demonstrates that comprehension of text is enhanced when students are prompted or taught to use mental imagery (Hibbing & Rankin-Erickson, 2003). When students are taught to generate mental images as they read, they experience greater recall and enhanced abilities to draw inferences and make predictions (Gambrell 1981; Gambrell & Bales 1986; Pressley 1976; Sadowski 1983,

1985). According to Suzuki (1985) there is evidence that prompting students to use imagery and verbal elaboration has a powerful effect on learning and remembering.

Hibbing & Rankin-Erickson (2003) use the analogy of a television in the mind to help students to realise that there is more going on than just reading the words. They emphasise the importance of the pictures readers make matching the words that they read. Limited vocabulary and background knowledge can impact on the imagery of the reader. When students become aware of the lack of an image, they can be taught to use fix-up strategies such as changing their rate, rereading, refocusing attention or asking for clarification to overcome the confusion. The ability to regain an image related to the text becomes an indication that comprehension is back on track. There is a need to teach and model the fix-up strategies to use when the picture is missing or fuzzy.

Hibbing & Rankin-Erickson found that a drawing or quick sketch is a useful tool to help create understanding. A simple sketch could be worth a thousand words for some students and may have two benefits. Firstly, it can inform the teacher about a student's level of understanding of a text. Secondly, it can assist the student with the retention of information.

Gestalt imagery – the ability to create imaged wholes – is a critical factor in oral and written comprehension (Bell, 1991). Good decoding, good vocabulary and adequate background experiences do not guarantee good comprehension skills. Many individuals experience weak gestalt imagery and process parts instead of wholes

when listening or reading. Bell says that this contributes to a language comprehension disorder accompanied by symptoms that include weak reading comprehension, weak oral language comprehension, weak written language expression, difficulty following directions and a weak sense of humour. Bell's clinical research identified imagery as critical and basic to language comprehension. She noted that good comprehenders reported good imaging and weak comprehenders reported weak imaging. She found that stimulation of imagery resulted in substantial gains in comprehension. Bell also points out that television provides images rather than stimulates images. It also consumes reading time, storytelling time and language interaction time – time that once stimulated imagery.

Clark, Deshler, Schumaker, Alley and Warner (1984) devised the R.I.D.E.R. strategy to assist students with poor visual imagery skills. The strategy consists of:

- Read** Read the first sentence or section of the text.
- Image** Try to make an image - a picture in your mind.
- Describe** Describe your image.
- Evaluate** Evaluate your image for its completeness. Check to make certain your image includes as much of the sentence as possible. If content is missing, adjust your image and continue.
- Repeat** Read the next sentence and repeat the previous steps.

Present Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether the explicit teaching of visualisation through the RIDER strategy will improve a student's comprehension.

A trend has emerged from extensive testing in this school that clearly indicates that there is a discrepancy between reading fluency and reading comprehension that needs to be addressed. Poor readers do not have adequate self management strategies in place and the participants will be taught the visualisation strategy.

The hypothesis being investigated is:

Developing meaning at the sentence level through the explicit teaching of the RIDER strategy will improve reading comprehension for Year Five and Six students.

Method

Design

An OXO design will be used in which each student will be explicitly taught to *Read, Imagine, Describe, Evaluate and Read On* using a text that they are able to read with reasonable fluency with the purpose of improving their comprehension.

Participants

Student A

Student A is a 12 year old female in Grade Six who dislikes reading, finds it boring and avoids reading at every opportunity. Her parents read to her when she was a baby because they were poor readers themselves at school and did not want their children to suffer the same fate. They stopped reading to her when she started bringing home readers from school.

Student A was recommended for Reading Recovery at the start of Grade 2 because she missed out in Grade 1. It had also been suggested that she repeat Grade 1 at the time. Unfortunately, there was a new reading recovery teacher that year, and reading recovery teachers can only take Grade 1 children in their training year. In Grade 2 the teacher told her parents that she was reading at text level 26. However, the following year in Grade 3 her teacher told her parents that she was nowhere near that level. Student A now wears glasses and has attended an optometrist's visual perception courses.

Student A reads quite fluently with good intonation and expression but her word attack skills with unknown words is very poor because she relies almost exclusively on distinctive visual features to decode. Her comprehension ability is below average and she has very limited self management skills when reading.

Student B

Student B is an 11 year old female in Grade Five. Despite her learning difficulties, she has an excellent attitude to learning and is enthusiastic and industrious in class. Her Grade Four teacher described her as lacking deep thinking processes and an inability to predict and infer. Her articulation is very poor and she reads in a monotone voice without any expression. In Grade Three her reading age on the PROBE test was 5 years for both fiction and non fiction text with an accuracy of 40% and 60% respectively. Student B has experienced extreme difficulty in her literacy learning but was never offered Reading Recovery or any other intervention to this point.

Student C

Student C is an eleven year old female in Grade Five from an ESL background. She has a fairly good bank of words that she recognises automatically but she reads every word in isolation and not in the context of the sentence. She does not self correct when she makes an error, even if what she says makes no sense. She has poor intonation and fluency, often stopping inappropriately.

Student C has very limited oral language knowledge. At the word level she has a restricted knowledge of word meanings. She is unable to link ideas at the sentence or topic levels. Consequently she does not engage with the text in any meaningful way. When engaged in conversation her responses are in incomplete sentences and usually there is no real connection with the topic.

Student C has literal comprehension difficulties and she doesn't use strategies such as visualisation and paraphrasing. She doesn't use prior content or text structure when reading and doesn't organise text data in her working memory or elaborate, infer or summarise while reading. She is unable to identify the topic of the text or organise the information contained in the text and subordinate ideas.

Materials

PM Benchmark Kit 2

Students are asked to answer both literal and inferential questions using unseen, meaningful texts. The kit was used to pre and post test the students and for the instructional sessions. The PM Benchmark Kit has 30 accurately levelled texts ranging from emergent level to reading age 12. Tests 20 -30 were used for the intervention.

Texts Used

PM Benchmark Kit

1. Kwan the Artist
2. Trees on Our Planet
3. The Miller, His son and Their Donkey
4. A New Skate Park
5. Beavers
6. Saved by a Sense of Smell
7. Preparing for a Day in the Forest
8. Tracks by the Stream
9. Cyclone Tracey destroys Darwin
10. Black Beauty Encounters a Stream Train

Torch – Tests of Reading Comprehension. Second Edition.

Torch provides an estimate of a student's level of reading comprehension achievement. The test comprises of a Cloze passage that aims to assess the extent to which the reader is able to obtain meaning from text. The Torch test was used for both the pre and post testing to determine whether there was an improvement in the students' reading comprehension.

Probe

An assessment tool that measures literal, reorganisation, inference, vocabulary, evaluation and reaction comprehension skills. Each student's level of comprehension was plotted according to their reading age and the percentage of questions that they answered correctly.

John Munro Spontaneous Retelling Analysis

This was used to assess the main ideas children were able to recall in pre and post testing.

RIDER Cue Cards

Cue cards were designed for students to use during instructional sessions.

The Procedure

The initial assessment stage used tasks in the following order:

1. TORCH Tests of Reading Comprehension. 2nd Edition
2. John Munro Spontaneous Retelling Analysis
3. PM Benchmark Tests. Kit 1 & 2
4. PROBE Reading Assessment (Triune 2002)

This teaching unit was designed to assist students in Years Five and Six who were experiencing difficulty with comprehension. The three students were withdrawn from their classroom to participate in nine forty minute sessions. The sessions took place over a three week period. During each session the participants were explicitly taught the RIDER strategy to assist them with their reading comprehension.

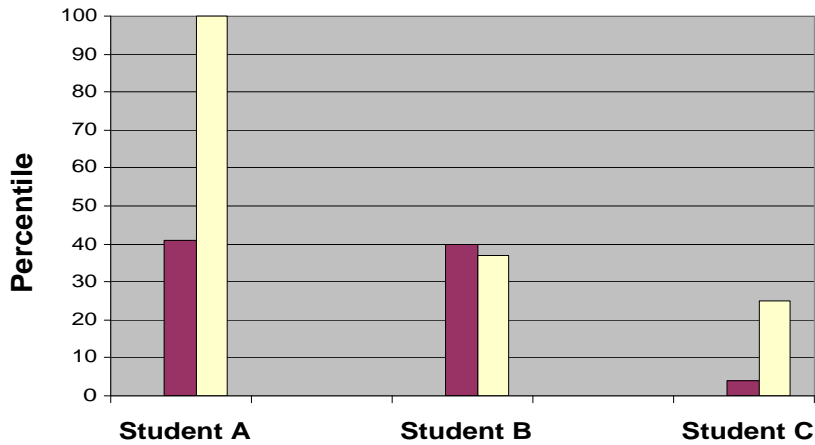
The RIDER strategy was used to prompt for imaging information. RIDER stands for READ, IMAGE, DESCRIBE, EVALUATE and REPEAT

The purpose of these lessons was to improve the students' ability to visualise what they were reading by transferring the information / key words into mental pictures. They were taught to summarise the key elements of the text and clarify what they had read by evaluating the image they had created.

Steps followed

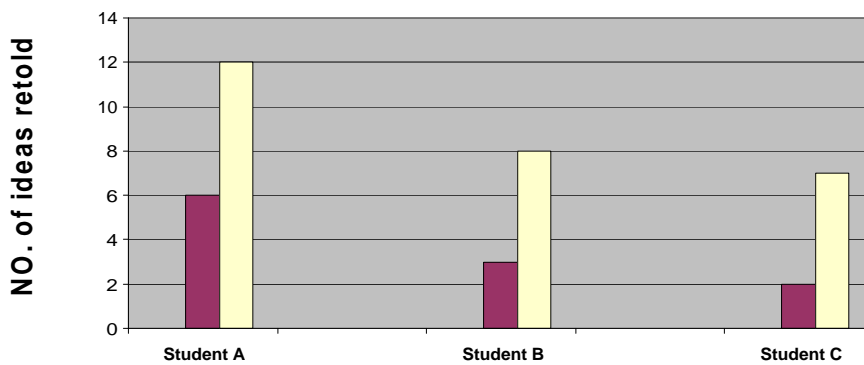
- R: Read the passage with the student
- I: Break it down into information chunks and ask the student how they might draw or image each piece of information. The students were asked to make a picture of the text they had just read and then draw the picture, including everything that they can remember from the image they had created in their mind. Later: they will just make an image in their mind.
- D: The students were asked to turn over the picture they had drawn and describe it. Later: If they are imaging in their mind, they are asked to now describe back what they see. This step ensures that the student is retaining the information.
- E: With the student, re-read the chunk that they have just described. Evaluate whether any important pieces of information have been omitted, revisit the first two steps
- R: Repeat this process for each of the chunks the student needs to read until the passage has been read in its entirety.

Pre and Post Test Results for TORCH



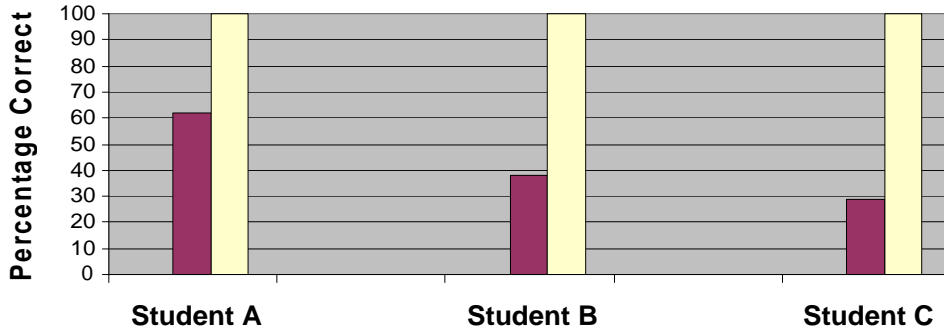
On the TORCH test of reading Student A made the most dramatic improvement from the 42nd percentile to the 100th percentile. Student B actually regressed slightly in the TORCH test and Student C's result increased from a very low 4th percentile to the 26th percentile. Although C's post test score was still a serious concern, a significant improvement occurred in just nine lessons.

Pre and Post Test Results - Spontaneous Retell



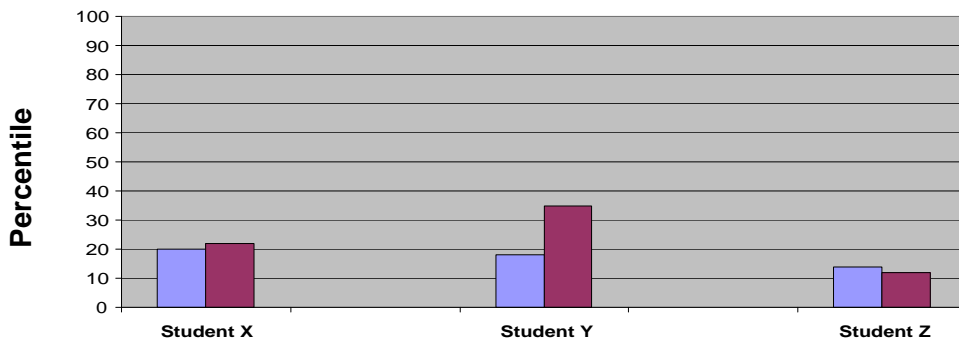
On the spontaneous retell test all students made very pleasing progress. Student A and B increased their recall of the text by at least 100% and student C increased her recall by more than 200%. This was achieved in a three week period.

Pre and Post Test Results -PROBE



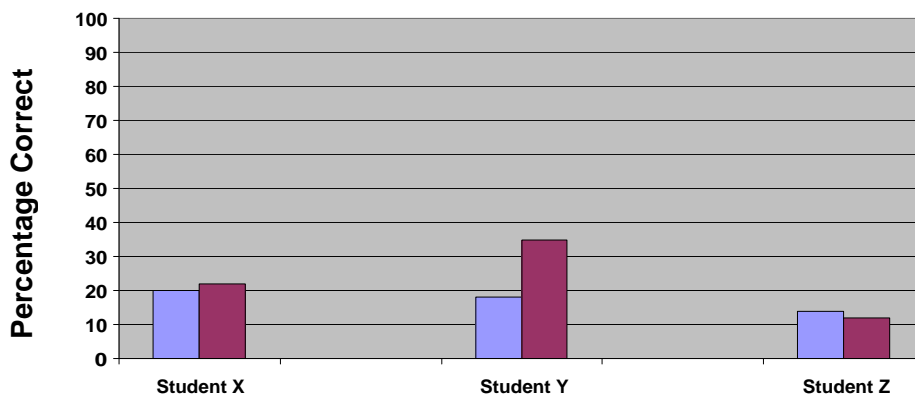
Student A's Probe pre test score was 60% accuracy with comprehension, Student B's score was 40% and Student C's score was 30%.

Control Group Pre and Post Test - TORCH



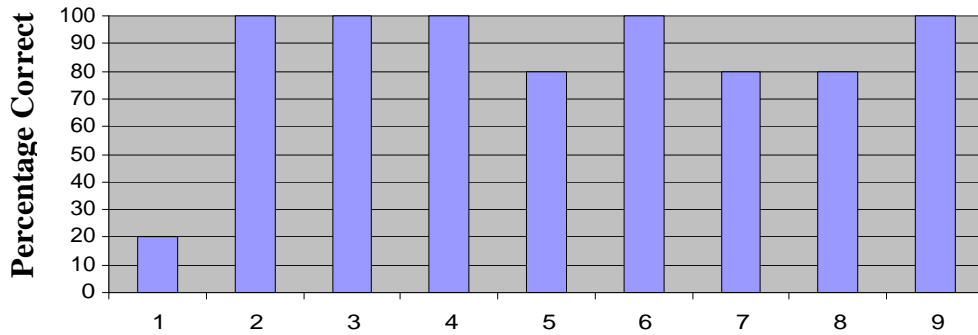
Students X and Z had virtually no change and student Y improved considerably but was still only at the 35th percentile. The results for the PROBE test were almost identical to the TORCH test for the three students in the control group.

Control Pre and Post Test - PROBE



Intervention session results

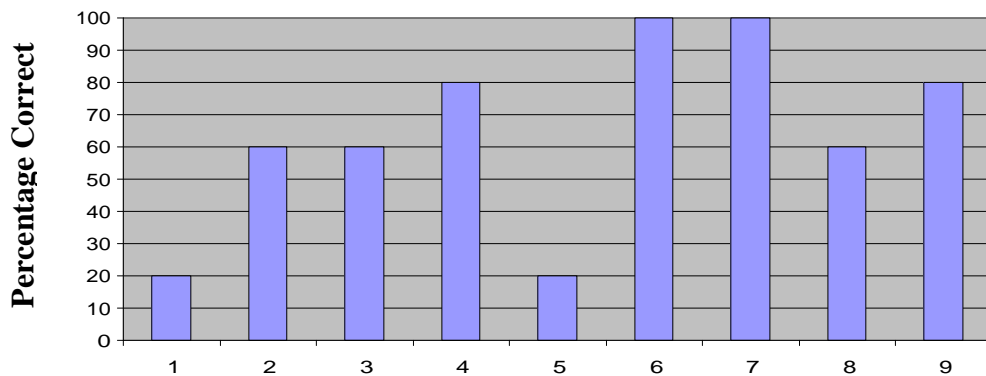
Student A



Comprehension Results for each session

The test after each instructional session indicates that student A made gains in spontaneous recall and comprehension at both the literal and inferential levels. Her improvement was almost immediate once she mastered the visualisation technique. In five of the nine sessions she achieved 100% on the post intervention comprehension test. Visualisation also assisted her to link each part of the text by summarising and paraphrasing the ideas she was forming into images.

Student B

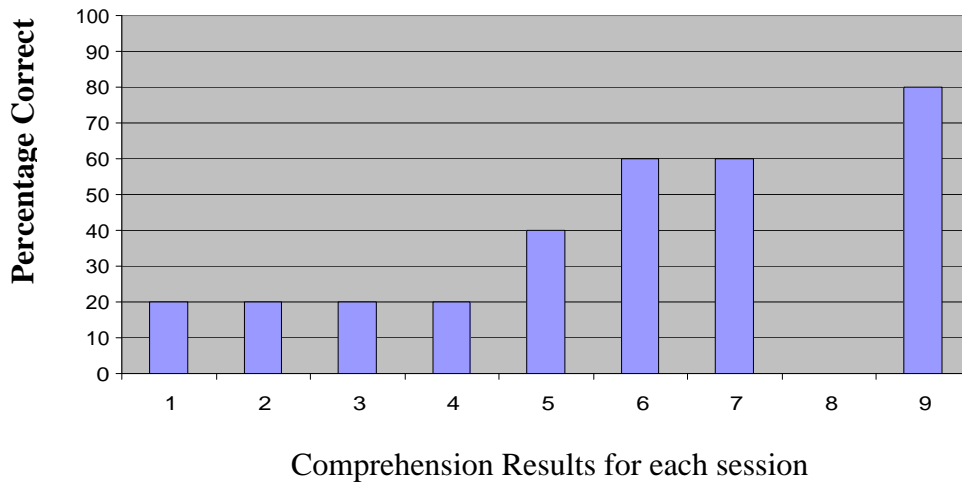


Comprehension Results for each session

Student B made steady progress and in two of the sessions she was able to answer all the comprehension questions accurately. In the first session she had a score of 20% correct but the visualisation strategy was a new experience for her. There was another poor result in session five but overall, using the R.I.D.E.R. technique, she continued to make very good gains with an average improvement of 300% in her literal comprehension.

Intervention session results (cont)

Student C



Student C showed no improvement for the first four interventions. There was a noticeable change from session five onwards (100% increase in comprehension). She received a nil score at session eight and achieved her best score with the final session when she answered 80% of the questions correctly compared to 20% in the first session.

Discussion

Strategy training in visualisation and self-questioning using the R.I.D.E.R. method improved the reading comprehension of the Grade Five and Six students in the study. The results support the use of the visualisation strategy to enhance reading comprehension reported by researchers (Kerst & Levin 1973, Lesgold, McCormick & Golinkoff 1975, Paivio 1969; Clark, Deshler, Schumaker, Alley and Warner, 1984; Oakhill & Patel, 1991; Danko, 1993; Center, Freeman, Roberston & Outhred, 1999; Oakhill & Yuill, 1995; 1996; Hibbing & Rankin-Erickson, 2003; Wood & Endres, 2005).

Following the teaching provided, the comprehension skills of the three students improved significantly using the visualisation strategy. This suggests that their use of visualisation is comparatively low and that any further training is likely to further improve their comprehension.

All three participants began the instructional sessions very tentatively. They lacked confidence and had very poor self management skills. They have now begun to self manage and control the strategies that they use in the reading process. They have become more strategic and now use self talk that will enable them to self- instruct and engage in a personal dialogue that will guide their reading. The visualisation strategy has assisted them to organise the information that they have gained from their reading into meaningful concepts and link them. This has resulted in each of

them initiating corrective reading action and attempting to correct mistakes by re-reading.

Student A has made the most significant progress during the study and should continue to improve with ongoing assistance. Her reliance on a whole word decoding strategy still needs to be addressed.

Student C's receptive and expressive oral language was classified as significantly below average by the speech pathologist and this was evident during the intervention phase. However, there was a noticeable improvement in this area as the lessons proceeded and she learnt to use imagery to interact more meaningfully with the text. It is noted in her Independent Learning Plan that to assist her difficulty in comprehending and recalling information from stories, the teacher would provide picture and word cues, teach visualising techniques etc. This study has shown that if the strategy suggested had been effectively implemented, she would have responded positively.

The study demonstrates that decoding, on its own, does not ensure meaning will be constructed successfully (Garner 1991). We read at a number of levels and if the primary focus of reading instruction does not include the multiple levels of text processing (Munro, 2002), students will just be word callers, like those in this study, who did not have any understand of the words or ideas that they were reading (Raines, 2004). Word decoding is only the first step in developing good comprehension (Pressley, 2000). Readers use a range of strategies to understand

what they are reading, and constructing mental images that represent the ideas in the text is very important at the sentence level, as shown by this study.

This study supports other research that indicates visual imagery training improves the listening and reading comprehension skills, as well as the story event structure of students (Oakhill & Yuill, 1995; 1996; Oakhill & Patel, 1991; Pressley 1976).

The data collected in this study supports other results using visual imagery and questioning procedures. This study also concurred with the claim that students can master the strategies used with a maximum of seven lessons. This intervention program was completed in nine sessions. Wood and Enders (2005) used a similar strategy to the R.I.D.E.R. method and claimed similar results to other researchers.

The finding of this study has specific implications for literacy education. It indicates the value of explicit strategy training in visualisation and supports the implementation of such a strategy in the school's literacy teaching.

The attitude of the three participants improved substantially as they became more confident. They started to find reading a more enjoyable and meaningful activity. As a consequence they will most likely read more regularly and their reading skills would be expected to continue to improve.

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Appendices

Lesson Outline

Aim:

To teach the R.I.D.E.R. strategy to the students
Use the strategy for sentence and / or paragraph visualisation

Method

Each instructional session the following will be done:

1. Explain / Revise the R.I.D.E.R. method of visualising using the bookmarks containing the steps in the strategy
2. Read the passage with the students
3. Break it down into information chunks and ask the student to make a picture of the text they had just read and then draw a picture, including everything that they can from the image they have created in their mind.
4. The students are then asked to turn over the picture they have drawn and describe it. *This step ensures that the student is retaining the information.*
5. With the student, re-read the chunk that they have just described. Evaluate whether any important pieces of information have been omitted, revisit the first two steps
6. Repeat this process for each of the chunks the student needs to read until the passage has been read in its entirety.
7. Give the students a written comprehension sheet to complete on the passage
8. Discuss and correct the answers when they have finished

Spontaneous Retell

Student A

Title: Parrot	Pre Test	Post Test
<i>The Main Ideas in the Text</i>		
News spread rapidly that Gordon Jackson had a parrot	✓	✓
All his friends arrived at the house	✓	✓
Larry was the first to arrive		
Always ready with an opinion		
The sort of parrot seen perched on pirates' shoulders		✓
Multi coloured plumage etc	✓	✓
Couldn't speak but plenty of squarking		✓
Air filled with high pitched screams and voices yelling words to the parrot		
All agreed on Hello Gordon		✓
Teach it the letters of the words		✓
No Larry - You can't teach it to spell		
Break the words into sounds like hel lo.	✓	✓
No Larry you can't do that		✓
Give it some breadcrumbs when it makes the right sound	✓	✓
They gave up		✓
While dropping off to sleep heard the parrot say No Larry	✓	✓

Student B

Title: The Puppy	Pre Test	Post test
<i>The Main Ideas in the Text</i>		
The puppy walked slowly through the rain		✓
He was wet, cold and tired		✓
Nowhere to go and hadn't eaten for 2 days		
Paws hurt on the rough road	✓	✓
Thought of the warm house where he lived and the person who fed him		✓
Everything changed when the fire came		✓
He had been frightened and ran away	✓	✓
Now lost and alone		✓
Didn't know what to do		
Tried to get a meal from people but had been driven away		✓
Surprised because he thought that all humans were kind & friendly	✓	
Heard noise of voices in the distance and saw a light		
Made his way towards the light		

Student C

Title: The Puppy	Pre test	Post test
<i>The Main Ideas in the Text</i>		
The puppy walked slowly through the rain	✓	✓
He was wet, cold and tired		✓
Nowhere to go and hadn't eaten for 2 days	✓	✓
Paws hurt on the rough road *		
Thought of the warm house where he lived and the person who fed him		
Everything changed when the fire came		
He had been frightened and ran away *		
Now lost and alone		✓
Didn't know what to do		
Tried to get a meal from people but had been driven away		✓
Surprised because he thought that all humans were kind & friendly *		✓
Heard noise of voices in the distance and saw a light		✓
Made his way towards the light		

PM Benchmark Kit 2

Title: Kwan the Artist	Reading Age: 8.0 years	Student		
		A	B	C
Questions to check understanding				
Why was Kwan feeling unhappy at the beginning of the story?		✓		
How long had Kwan been in this new country?		✓	✓	✓
Why did Kwan smile when he saw the paints and brushes?		✓	✓	
Why do you think the children came to watch while Kwan painted?		✓	✓	
Explain why Kwan couldn't understand all the words that his teacher said?		✓		
Accuracy Level		5	3	1

Title: Trees on Our Planet	Reading Age: 8.5 years	Student		
		A	B	C
Questions to check understanding				
What are some useful things that can be made from wood?		✓	✓	✓
Why did people cut down millions of trees?		✓	✓	
When the heavy rains came, what happened to the land that had been cleared of trees?		✓	✓	
Why do you think huge areas of forest have been turned into farm land?		✓		
Explain why trees are so important for our planet?		✓		
Accuracy Level		5	3	1

Title: The Miller, His Son and Their Donkey	Reading Age: 8.5 years	Student		
		A	B	C
Questions to check understanding				
Why was the miller taking his donkey to town?		✓	✓	✓
Why did one of the men say that the boy was lazy?		✓	✓	
When did the donkey become exhausted?		✓	✓	
What do you think was the silliest thing that the miller did?		✓	✓	
The miller tried to please everyone he met. Explain why this didn't work.		✓	✓	
Accuracy Level		5	5	1

Title: A New Skate Park	Reading Age: 9.0 years	Student		
		A	B	C
Questions to check understanding				
What had the skateboarders damaged?		✓		✓
Why were some older people keeping away from the High Street shops?		✓	✓	✓
Why did the children think that it was a good idea to put the skatepark near the tennis courts?		✓		
Ramps, steps and pipes are features of a skatepark. What do you think are the most important features? Why?				
Explain why the children wrote the email to the city council.		✓		
Accuracy Level		4	1	2

Title: Beavers	Reading Age: 9.0 – 9.5 years	Student		
		A	B	C
Questions to check understanding				
How do beavers cut down trees?		✓	✓	✓
What do beavers do with trees that they cut down?		✓	✓	✓
When beavers build a dam across a stream, what happens to the water that cannot get away?		✓	✓	
Why do you think beavers need to build themselves an island lodge?		✓	✓	✓
Explain why some people use the phrase <i>as busy as a beaver</i> ?		✓	✓	
Accuracy Level		5	5	3

Title: Saved by a Sense of Smell	Reading Age: 9.5 – 10.0 years	Student		
		A	B	C
Questions to check understanding				
Why did Sophie feel for the handrail as she made her way down the steps into the backyard?		✓	✓	
When did Sophie come to stay with her friend Ella?			✓	✓
What gave Sophie an uneasy feeling just as she was drifting off to sleep?		✓	✓	
What do you think the author meant when she said that Sophie opened her eyes “to her usual dark world”?		✓	✓	✓
When Sophie smelled smoke she knew she had to rouse Ella immediately. Explain why this was very important.		✓	✓	✓
Accuracy Level		4	4	3

Title: Tracks by the Stream	Reading Age: 10.0 – 10.5 years	Student		
		A	B	C
Questions to check understanding				
What made the winds so cold when the pioneers reached the mountains?		✓		
In this story, what did the pioneers use for fuel for their cooking fires?		✓	✓	
What made the strange tracks by the stream?		✓	✓	
What do you think the author meant when she said, “They feasted their eyes on range after range of snow-capped peaks”?		✓	✓	
How do you know that this is not a modern story? Explain some of the details that are different from life today.		✓		
Accuracy Level		5	3	0

Title: Cyclone Tracy Destroys Darwin	Reading Age: 11.0-11.5 years	Student		
		A	B	C
Questions to check understanding				
What caused all the damage when this cyclone struck Darwin?		✓		✓
After the electric cables and telephone lines were broken, how was information about the cyclone sent to Darwin?		✓	✓	✓
Where did many people try to find shelter?		✓	✓	✓
Why do you think the city had to be evacuated?		✓	✓	✓
Explain what is meant by <i>the eye of the storm</i> ?		✓		
Accuracy Level		5	3	4

Title: Black Beauty Pre Test	Reading Age: 11.5 – 12.0 years	Student		
		A	B	C
Questions to check understanding				
This story uses the words <i>I</i> and <i>me</i> . Who is telling the story?		✓		✓
What was the careful training Black Beauty’s master gave him?				
What does <i>skirted by a railway line</i> mean?				
Why do you think the author believed that horses had feelings and could learn about the world?				
Explain why a horse that is terrified of trains would be a danger to itself an its rider?		✓	✓	
Accuracy Level		2	1	1

Title: Black Beauty Post Test	Reading Age: 11.5 – 12.0 years	Student		
		A	B	C
Questions to check understanding				
This story uses the words <i>I</i> and <i>me</i> . Who is telling the story?	✓	✓	✓	
What was the careful training Black Beauty's master gave him?	✓	✓	✓	
What does <i>skirted by a railway line</i> mean?	✓	✓		
Why do you think the author believed that horses had feelings and could learn about the world?	✓	✓	✓	
Explain why a horse that is terrified of trains would be a danger to itself an its rider?	✓		✓	
Accuracy Level	5	4	4	

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