Explicit teaching of self-script to improve self-efficacy

Abstract

Hypothesis:
Grade 1/2 students with low self-efficacy who are positively encouraged and taught self-scripts to use before, during and after reading, will improve their personal self-efficacy.

Outline of Method Used:
During 10 intervention sessions, conducted over three weeks, a selection of 6 Grade 1/2 students displaying traits of low self-efficacy received targeted teaching in the use of self-scripts and positive praise. They were pretested on two separate occasions prior to the study commencing, to act as a control.

Summary of Findings / Implications:
The outcome of this research showed a positive improvement in self-efficacy in all the students. This indicates that students with low self-efficacy can improve their reading as a result of the direct teaching of self-scripts to use before, during and after reading.

Introduction

Self-efficacy: What is the problem?

"Whether you think that you can or you can't, you're usually right." (Henry Ford)

“[W]hat people think, believe, and feel affects how they behave” (Bandura, 1986, p. 25). According to Stahl et al (1998), part of teaching children with reading problems is convincing them that they can learn to read, in spite of their experience to the contrary.

Related Literature Research

Researchers are in agreement that students who possess the ability to self-regulate their own learning differ in a variety of dramatic ways from those who lack the ability to self-regulate their learning (Nevill, 2008). Self-regulated learners set goals, successfully manage motivation, and affect and apply strategies consistently and effectively (Winne, 1995). Students with low self-efficacy struggle to remain motivated during periods of difficulty and become discouraged. McCombs and Marzano (1990) identify that there are strong links between the areas of self-efficacy, metacognition and self-regulation.

Importance of Metacognition

Metacognition is defined as knowledge about when and where a person may use particular strategies for learning or for problem solving. Flavell (1979) proposed that metacognition is important in the areas of oral communication, reading comprehension, writing, attention, memory, problem solving and various types of self-control and self-instruction. Students with low self-efficacy often have difficulties with a variety of these areas, which in turn can have a severe impact upon the metacognition and ability of the student to read with confidence.
**Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy is defined by Bandura (1986) as an individual’s belief in one’s ability to acquire new information or complete a task or activity to a prescribed level of performance. It is a major component within social cognitive theory and a primary focus of the current study.

Bandura (1997) postulates that four major sources of information are influential in the development of self-efficacy beliefs. These sources include mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social or verbal persuasion and psychological states.

First, *mastery experiences* are the most important and meaningful source of information. The successful completion of a task raises efficacy beliefs while failures lower them. Early family and school influences have great effect on the development of mastery experiences. Teachers nurture the development of self-efficacy by providing a variety of scaffolded experiences, designing instruction so that students slowly gain in mastery of introduced tasks (Pintrich & Zusho, 2002).

Second, *vicarious experience* is a powerful means of efficacy related information; especially if the model is similar to the observer (Bandura, 1997). Modeling is a powerful way of imparting new skills and behaviors (Schunk, 2003). The observed response of others to the behavior, whether it is rewarded or punished, has a significant impact on the likelihood of the behavior being exhibited by the observer. Reinforced behaviors are more likely to be copied than behaviors that are punished (Schunk, 2003).

Third, *social or verbal persuasion* can impact self-efficacy beliefs if within reasonable bounds. In students early school experiences, teachers lavish praise and positive feedback on children for participation and effort, often over the quality of their work. This trend changes as teacher (and parent) comments become both more skill focused and more critical and directive.

The fourth area of information is *physiological states*. People use their internal feelings of anxiety, stress or fear generated when confronted with a task as in indication of their confidence in completing the task. Individuals with high levels of self-efficacy visualise success scenarios that guide present behavior. Those with poor self-efficacy visualise poor outcomes.

**Academic Achievement: The link between research and the implications for this study**

Pintrich and DeGroot (1990) provided empirical support that student who believed in their own ability displayed greater levels of cognitive engagement, strategy use, and self-monitoring of performance.

In a time of tremendous technological and economic change, the ability to read well has never been more important. The adults of tomorrow will need the skills to manage their own learning throughout their lifetime. While metacognition and self-efficacy have been productive areas of research, the theoretical linkages between these constructs to the broader area of self-regulated learning have yet to be fully explored (Nevill, 2008).
Educators realise that the era of simply imparting basic factual knowledge to their students has passed. What is required now is the pedagogical knowledge and skill to facilitate the creation of lifelong learners. Zimmerman (2002), states that self-regulation is important because a major function of education is the development of lifelong learning skills.

**Study Prediction:**
Taking into account that children who experience successful completion of activities often experience an increase in their self-efficacy, the prediction of this study is that students with low self-efficacy who are positively encouraged and taught self-scripts to use before, during and after reading, will improve their personal self-efficacy.

**Method**

**The Participants:**
All students were selected from the same Grade 1/2 class. The class is one of four multiage 1/2 classes in a school in the southern suburbs, participating in the CLaSS Literacy Project.

**Table 1: Pre test data and factors effecting choice of students for the study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Age (y/m)</th>
<th>Gender (M/F)</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>No of wks in Reading Recovery at the completion of the study</th>
<th>Wear glasses Y=yes N=No</th>
<th>ESL Y=yes N=No</th>
<th>Parents P=ESL</th>
<th>Pretest 1 Text Level &amp; Error Rate</th>
<th>Pretest 1 Self Efficacy Score</th>
<th>No of Reading Strategies Used</th>
<th>Pretest 2 Text Level &amp; Error Rate</th>
<th>Pretest 2 Self Efficacy Score</th>
<th>No of Reading Strategies Used</th>
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**How students were selected:**
There was a mixture of students chosen for the study. Three out of the six students are undertaking the Reading Recovery program in various degrees. Both boys and girls were included in the study, including four boys and two girls. None of the students are ESL as the school taking part in the study does not have a very high ESL population, although Student E’s parents grew up speaking Arabic. They only use English with their daughter at home, but their pronunciation and grammar can vary from Standard English.
The students selected were all Grade 1 students from the same multi-age Grade 1/2 class. Students were chosen according to their low self-efficacy scores, irrelevant of their grade level. A selection of three Grade 1 students who each display traits of low self-efficacy (scores 0-4) and three Grade 1 students who have medium self-efficacy (scores 5-7) were chosen.

Differences between participants

**Student A**
Prior to the commencement of the study, Student A was very self-conscious and doubting of her own ability. She often cried when asked to read and her mother had reported that they were having great difficulty getting her to read at all at home. She has high oral language capabilities, and enjoys talking but ‘shuts down’ when asked to read or write in any context. She displayed a strong negative attitude, referring to herself as ‘dumb’. She had few reading strategies to call upon and relied heavily upon looking at the pictures and the first letter of the word.

**Student B**
Prior to the commencement of the study, Student B was accepted into the Reading Recovery program. He was very quiet during Guided Reading sessions and reluctant to have-a-go at reading or answering questions about texts. He has a good general knowledge and has so far gotten by with accurate ‘guesses’ based upon the first letter of a word and the context of the story. Student B is colour-blind and recently got reading glasses. When he began Grade 1, he did not know the name of all the letters or numbers.

**Student C**
Prior to the commencement of the study, Student C was very reluctant to take chances and have-a-go. He relied heavily upon adult and peer support, rather than taking any risks in his own learning. He also relied heavily upon picture cues and guessing words that he knows starting with the same first letter. He very rarely re-read sentences when given prompts by the teacher and did not tend to recall these words when coming across them later in the context of the same text.

**Student D**
Prior to the commencement of the study, Student D was accepted into the Reading Recovery program. He has recently begun wearing reading glasses and is awaiting a referral for Speech (articulation). He does not have a high opinion of his reading, but does not display the same sense of hopelessness as Students A, B and C have. He tends to listen to other students reading to themselves during guided reading sessions and imitate/copy what they are saying.

**Student E**
Prior to the commencement of the study, Student E struggles in retaining previously learned information and she tended to do what came to mind rather than implement taught strategies. Her parents have immigrated from an Arabic speaking country just a few months after she was born and although they only speak English with her at home, it was noted that
in the presence of her parents, her ‘accent’ become very similar to her parents, while at school, in class, she speaks with more of an Australian accent. Her parents accent and pronunciation and slightly different grammatical structure is believed to have an influence on Student E’s ability to hear mistakes in her own reading and confusion in letter/sound correlation. She has begun wearing glasses prior to the commencement of this study, but often leaves them at home, and at one stage broke them (therefore, not able to use them for week 2 of the intervention).

Student F
Prior to the commencement of the study, Student F demonstrated the most confidence in his self-efficacy rating. He has some speech concerns, regarding the processing of instructions, and commenced a Speech Program related to this at the completion of the study. For this reason, during the explicit teaching phase, opportunities are made for Student F to articulate and re-phrase the learnings taught.

The Materials Used:
- Self-Script Prompt Cards
- Observational Notes (noting number of reading strategies articulated)
- Reader Level Texts
- Running Records (noting reading accuracy)
- Self-Efficacy Assessment (completed five times in total – Attached in Appendix)

The Procedure / Design:
This study was completed without the use of a control group, and therefore took the form of an O O X O study. Students were tested without intervention, tested without intervention again and then test during phases of intervention. The sessions were conducted as part of focus teaching group activities in the reading hour of the morning Literacy Block.

The intervention consisted of 10 focus session, administered over 3 weeks. Each session involved approximately 15-20 minutes of focus group teaching on self-scripts available to us with all six students and approximately 5 minutes of individual reading sessions with each individual participant where self-scripts are articulated and positive praise given. Student’s scores in reading accuracy (running record) and the number of reading strategies articulated were recorded at the end of each week (three assessments in total) and an additional self-efficacy questionnaire was also completed at the end of each week (allowing approximately 10 minutes to discuss and complete).
SESSION OUTLINE

1-2 mins **Prompt chart**
Teacher and student discuss prompt chart.
Cue student to think about good strategies they already use when reading.
“What do you do when you are reading?”

3-4 mins **Easy familiar reading**
Student reads prose aloud:
Revisit briefly previous days/ familiar text.

1-2 mins **Positive feedback**
*After* reading, teacher provides explicit praise for at least one self-monitoring strategy that has been used effectively. Use positive cues from focus sheet and any other relevant behaviours identified in running record:
“I like the way you…”:
“... point to the words when you are reading”
“... look at the pictures to help you with your reading”
“... think about the story before you start reading”
“... look at the start of the word and make the first sound”
“... fix your own mistakes”
“... make sure your reading makes sense”
“... look at the end of the word to check it is right”
“... go back to the start of the sentence to get help”
“... make your reading sound like talking”
“... read with expression”
“... think about the story when you are reading”
Teacher records on the focus sheet which form of praise was explicitly given to the student.

1-2 mins **Self monitoring**
Cue student to verbalise what successful strategies they used whilst reading:
As I read I listen to what I say and make a picture in my mind.
As I read I ask myself “Does this make sense?”
As I read I think about what will happen next.
As I read I think about what I will do if I can’t recognise a word.
If I make a mistake, I can re-read the sentence.
Cue the student to tell why the use of the strategy helped.
*[Self-Efficacy questionnaire filled out during Sessions 4, 7 and 10.]*

1-2 mins **Prompt chart**
Teacher cues student to think about the positive actions they are taking while reading:
“What reading actions do you think you might try today?”
“What do you already do when you are reading?”
“What are you getting better at?”
Build positive feelings about the reading.

1-2 mins **Orientation to new text**
Teacher introduces new text to student. This will be read in the following session.
Encourage the student to think about their thinking.
Cue the student to think about the front cover, title, what they already know about the topic:
“What do think the story will be about?
What does the title tell you?
What do the illustrations tell you?
What do you know about the topic already?
Cue the student to tell what they use to make the predictions.

4-6 mins **Reading of new text**
[Running Records are taken during Sessions 4, 7 and 10.]
Words that are read incorrectly are noted and written on flash cards by the teacher.

2-3 mins **Teaching, coaching and modelling the strategies**
Focusing on the words read with errors that were recorded on flash cards, students are asked to:
- Circle the parts of the word that they know how to sound out.
- Circle the words within words.
- Break the word into syllables (clap-able parts)
Draw student’s attention to one strategy that they may be making consistent errors with or that requires specific attention. Encourage problem-solving.

*There was a tricky part on this page.*
- Can you find it?
- What was it?
- Does that make sense?
- Does it sound right?
- How can we make it sound right?
Teacher records utilised strategies, and notes strategies not yet used that can be focused upon in the next session.

1-2 mins **Positive feedback**
After reading, teacher provides explicit praise for at least one self-monitoring strategy that has been used effectively. Students leave the session, remembering the sense of achievement of being able to implement current strategies.
**Results**

**Observations of the Group**

**Trends for the group**

Results for the group indicated that all the students improved their “self script” over the period of the ten lessons. These lessons were further supported by the combination of explicit instruction and positive affirmation given each student.

Over the period of instruction there was a marked increase in the willingness of all students to participate in discussions of reading and personal attitudes to reading became more favourable. As each student ‘took ownership’ of their learning, they became more willing to take risks. During share time, they had been students who previously struggled to identify their learning for the session.

During the intervention, students took ownership of the explicitly taught strategies and were able to share their use of these strategies with the class. The class responded encouragingly to these students learning and this in turn led to a feeling of pride expressed by the participants.

**Table 2:** Pre& Post Testing Data, including text level, error rate, self-efficacy score and number of strategies articulated before, during and after reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>2 weeks prior to Instruction</th>
<th>1 week prior to Instruction</th>
<th>Results after 4 session of Instruction Week 1</th>
<th>Results after 3 session of Instruction Week 2</th>
<th>Results after 3 session of Instruction Week 3</th>
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<td>A</td>
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</table>
Differences between participants (learning trends for individual students)

**Student A:**

![Graph 1](image1.png)

**Graph 1:** Identifying trends between Student A’s self-efficacy scores and the self-script / reading strategies used.

Throughout the intervention, Student A developed an expanding bank of strategies and self-scripts. As this bank of resources increased, so did her self-efficacy. Student A began the Reading Recovery program during Week 2 of the intervention. She made a 30% increased use of strategies in the first week of intervention and a further 30% increase by Week 3. She commented that she was enjoying reading and even created her own communication book where her parents could write supporting comments about her reading, which was shared with the classroom teacher. Her self-efficacy scores also rose considerably, she stated that she looked forward to reading sessions, eager to prove all the different things that she knew how to do.

**Student B:**

![Graph 2](image2.png)

**Graph 2:** Identifying trends between Student B’s self-efficacy scores and the self-script / reading strategies used.
Student B had been participating in the Reading Recovery program for 4 weeks before commencing the study. Although Student B began the pretesting with very few self-scripts and unprompted reading strategies, his self-efficacy score did not correlate entirely. However, as his knowledge and bank of self-scripts and reading strategies increased, so did his self-efficacy. His self-efficacy score rose at a slightly faster rate than his level of retained skill. Although Student B’s decoding skills were quite low at the beginning of the school year, he did not label himself as being of low ability. However, with the intervention provided by the study, his self-efficacy more than doubled and the number of strategies he was able to use more than quadrupled.

**Student C:**

![Graph 3: Identifying trends between Student C's self-efficacy scores and the self-script / reading strategies used.](image)

The intervention gave Student C an opportunity to internalize strategies that he could call upon without external assistance and this not only increased his error rate and the level of text that he was able to read, but also correlated in a higher self-efficacy score. He became more confident in his own ability to draw upon strategies that he could later use and gained confidence in what he was able to achieve without assistance from teachers and peers. This was a great achievement for this student as it was noted that he struggled to work without reassurance in every step of his learning.
**Student D:**

Graph 4: Identifying trends between Student D’s self-efficacy scores and the self-script / reading strategies used.

Student D began this study with about 4 weeks of Reading Recovery already completed. He was moderately confident in his self-efficacy score but reluctant to facilitate his own self-scripts. With the undertaking of this study he became more confident in his reading ability and showed an ability to draw upon 70% more reading strategies than prior to the study. At the end of Intervention Week 2, he requested that the teacher meet with his parents to discuss just how successful he had been in his increased number of reading strategies. The most significant stage of improvement in both self-efficacy and number of strategies that he was able to use occurred in the first week of the intervention.

**Student E:**

Graph 5: Identifying trends between Student E’s self-efficacy scores and the self-script / reading strategies used.

At the beginning of the study, Student E showed a moderate self-efficacy rating. Her confidence in her reading ability was not as low as some of the other students in the study, however, she did increase her self-efficacy scores as she developed a more varied bank of self-scripts and reading strategies. Student E’s Number of strategies increased steadily over
the period of the study, increasing by 20% (2 strategies) every week. Her self-efficacy score increased steadily by 10% every week, except for an increased score in Week 1 of the intervention (which remained constant in Week 2). This may have been impacted by the factor that this was the week when her glasses were broken. Knowing that she had broken her glasses and did not have them with her as a tool, may have affected her view of herself as a reader.

**Student F:**

![Graph 6](image)

**Graph 6:** Identifying trends between Student F’s self-efficacy scores and the self-script / reading strategies used.

Student F also exhibited moderate self-efficacy scores at the beginning of the study. He showed a steady increase in confidence over the study. His increase in confidence during the pretest time shows that there was some increase in his efficacy without the influence of the study, however, there is a slight increase in the beginning of the intervention which tends to reflect on the intervention having some effect upon the data. The commencement of the intervention reflected a significant improvement in the number of strategies that he was able to draw upon while reading.
**Overall Results:**
When looking at the individual student results, the data indicates that the lower the number of strategies internalised and the low self-efficacy score, the greater the influence of the intervention.

![Graph 7: All six student's self-efficacy scores over the 5 weeks of the study.](image)

The largest jump in self-efficacy scores occurs at the beginning of the implementation of the intervention. This would tend to suggest that these students were suffering without the explicit implementation of either positive praise and the scaffolding and teaching of self-scripts, leading to a sense of independence in reading and providing some intrinsic motivation.

![Graph 8: All six student's use of strategies / self-scripts over the 5 weeks of the study.](image)

The number of self-scripts that the students were able to call upon and use in their reading increased significantly throughout the intervention. The increase of 70% is a clear indication that this intervention definitely had an effect upon the outcome of the students' ability to draw upon multiple reading strategies.
Discussion

Summary of study prediction
The data indicates a support for the hypotheses, that teaching students with low self-efficacy who are positively encouraged and taught self-scripts to use before, during and after reading, will improve their personal self-efficacy.

Match between research findings and current literary research
Modeling is a powerful way of imparting new skills and behaviors and reinforced behaviors are more likely to be copied than behaviors that are punished (Schunk, 2003). The study aimed to encapsulate these ideas in focusing upon skilling the students with self-scripts and by modeling these new skills in small group, focus teaching contexts.

Social or verbal persuasion can impact self-efficacy beliefs if within reasonable bounds. In students early school experiences, teachers lavish praise and positive feedback on children for participation and effort, often over the quality of their work (Pintrich & Zusho, 2002). This tends to change in later years of schooling as teachers become both more skill focused and more critical and directive. In an effort to encourage these students and raise their self-efficacy, students were praised for their skill and directive just as much as their effort and participation. This assisted in creating a more substantial transition from one method of teaching to the next, and allow these students to still experience a feeling of success, despite their lack of skill (in the onset of the study).

Individuals with high levels of self-efficacy visualise success scenarios that guide present behavior. Those with poor self-efficacy visualise poor outcomes (Pintrich & Zusho, 2002). This study aimed to provide students with the experiences of positive outcomes, to allow them to use these experiences to motivate their attempts at newer and harder concepts. This prior experience at success facilitated in the students to set and consequently achieve this personal goal of success in reading.

Implications for teaching practice suggested by this study
This study identifies the importance of maintaining praise and positive feedback on children for participation and effort (Pintrich & Zusho, 2002), while introducing expectations for more skill focused outcomes. This transition in approaches to feedback for students needs to be made at a time when students are ready and have self-efficacy and metacognitive knowledge to cope with the transition.

Possible directions for further research
As there were two factors in the study that could have influenced the self-efficacy results, it is impossible to say for certain whether it was the positive praise and encouragement or the explicit teaching of self-scripts when reading that resulted in the increased scores of self-efficacy, or indeed if it requires the combination of both to raise self-efficacy. As with many studies in the field of education, there is also a need to facilitate this study in a larger and more comprehensive context.
References / Bibliography:


Self Efficacy Score Sheet

1) I think I am a good reader.  
   ☹ ☹ ☻

2) I can work out new words.  
   ☹ ☹ ☻

3) I understand each sentence that I read.  
   ☹ ☹ ☻

4) I remember what happens in the story as I read it.  
   ☹ ☹ ☻

5) I remember words I have read lots of times already.  
   ☹ ☹ ☻

6) I can tell that my teacher likes to listen to me read.  
   ☹ ☹ ☻

7) I feel good inside when I read.  
   ☹ ☹ ☻

8) When I read, I don't have to try as hard as I used to.  
   ☹ ☹ ☻

9) I make a picture in my mind as I read.  
   ☹ ☹ ☻

10) I feel good about answering questions about the story.  
    ☹ ☹ ☻

Score: ☹ ☹ ☻