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A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ORAL COMPREHENSION AND
SILENT READING COMPREHENSION

By
Christine M. Menold

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts in Learning Disabilities Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
May 14, 2004

Approved by _____
Professor

Date Approved May 14, 2004
May 14, 2004

ABSTRACT

Christine M. Menold
A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ORAL COMPREHENSION AND
SILENT READING COMPREHENSION
2003/2004
Dr. Stanley Urban
Master of Arts in Learning Disabilities

The purpose of this study is to compare the relationship between the comprehension levels of a student's silent reading level to their oral comprehension level when a passage is read to them. It will also address the theory that reading is a visual symbol system superimposed on auditory language. Theorists state that reading is a symbol system twice removed from the realities, which they represent. This statement implies a developmental progression as described by Myklebust. That is, the child first integrates nonverbal experience directly. Next he acquires auditory, then later a visual verbal system which represents both the experience and the auditory symbol. By working on improving reading we are assuming a higher level of oral comprehension.

The individuals who will participate in this study are 20 special education students from this researcher's middle school. The 15 males and 5 females, ranging in age from 14 years 3 months to 10 years 4 months have been selected as a convenience group (N=20) from three self-contained special education classes ranging from grades fifth through eighth. Ten of these students, ranging from fifth to seventh grade, have been students of this researcher's class since September, 2003 will be identified as a treatment group. The participants were selected because they are readily available to this

examiner. The population of interest is all special education classes in this examiner's school. Generalization of results will be to this population.

Data obtained from the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, Fourth Edition, (SDRT 4) as well as the Jerry John's Basic Reading Inventory, (JJBRI) were utilized in both the pre and post reading testing. The participants were from both this examiner's class and two self-contained classes.

Using the students levels of reading the five components of a balanced reading program were implemented in this researchers classroom throughout the week's lessons. The five basic components which are: (1) Read aloud, (2) Shared reading, (3) Guided reading and writing, (4) Paired/cooperative Reading and Writing, and (5) Independent Reading and Writing, were used by this researcher to strengthen as well as maintain reading comprehension skills of the students. Five generalized competencies, which are also necessary for a student to acquire self-confidence and motivation in learning reading were taught. The five competencies are: (1) fluency, (2) word knowledge, (3) flexible strategy use, (4) motivation, and (5) continued reading.

The post reading assessments were given at the end of March, 2004 to the eighteen remaining students who were left following transfers. The reading prompt was identical to the prompt given to the study group in September 2003. Results showed minimal improvement in reading ability.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1 – Introduction	1
Purpose of the Study	2
Significance of the Study	2
Need for the Study	3
Research Questions	4
Definitions	5
Limitations	6
Chapter 2 – Review of the Literature	7
Introduction	7
The Process Approach	8
Reading Strategies	9
Chapter 3 – Design of the Study	15
Population and Method of Sample Selection	15
Treatments and Methodologies	17
Instrumentation	18
Data Collection and Analysis	19
Chapter 4 – Analysis of Results	22
Introduction	22
Results	24
Analysis of Results	25
Chapter 5- Summary	29
Findings	31
Discussion	31

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension are the five components of reading. In today's schools there are many children who are struggling with learning how to read. Poor reading achievement has many negative long-term consequences including reduced self-confidence and motivation to learn. Also, reading is a tool subject and effects later school performance. Currently an extensive knowledge base exists which identifies the skills that children must possess in order to read well and prevent the predictable consequences of early reading failure. The National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) is an independent federal organization, whose purpose is to support the development of high-quality literacy services so that all Americans can develop literacy skills needed to succeed at work, at home, and in the community. Together with the National Reading Panel (NRP) the NIFL has documented weaknesses in the five areas of reading. Among these weaknesses is the comprehension of materials read independently as well as comprehension of information when being read to. Research in this area is important to teachers, administrators as well as students when striving towards achieving high-quality literacy.

Reading comprehension skills involve not only decoding the printed words but the child must also understand the content of the materials they are reading. Children with learning disabilities frequently have significant problems involving reading. For many this is the cause of their low academic performance and can also be related to their functioning in other than academic activities such as clubs, sports and social

relationships. Appropriate reading instructional methods as well as assessments can be very beneficial as well as valuable in identifying and rectifying reading comprehension deficiencies in children with learning disabilities.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to compare the relationship between the comprehension levels of a student's silent reading level to their oral comprehension level when a passage is read to them. It is also being used to explore the theory that has been suggested that reading is a visual symbol system superimposed on auditory language (Myklebust and Johnson, 1962). Johnson (1960) stated that reading is a symbol system twice removed from the realities which they represent. This statement implies a developmental progression as described by Myklebust (1954). That is, the child first integrates nonverbal experience directly. Next he acquires auditory, then later a visual verbal system which represents both the experience and the auditory symbol. By working on improving reading we are assuming a higher level of oral comprehension.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study is found in the low to below average reading level scores of the basic reading inventory tests administered in class as well as scores of the New Jersey statewide TerraNova test, which is a norm referenced standardized test

used in testing fifth, sixth and seventh grade students. The scores for each grade taking the TerraNova in the spring of 2003, for the representative school being used for this study, are as follows:

Total General Education students: 139

Total Special Education students: 47

	<u>Grade</u>	<u># students</u>	<u>National %tile</u>
General Education	5 th	71	39.9
	6 th	6	36.8
	7 th	62	43.9
Special Education	5 th	18	26.2
	6 th	12	15.9
	7 th	17	30.0

NEED FOR THE STUDY

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), approximately 40% of students across the nation cannot read at a basic level. Nearly 70% of low-income fourth grade students cannot read at a basic level. In Addition almost half the students living in urban areas cannot read at a basic level. Average-performing students have made no progress over the last 10 years, and the lowest-performing readers have become less successful over this same time period.

In the past, reading instruction was implemented with the use of basal readers. Basal readers were elementary school books that incorporated simple stories and

practice exercises to progressively reinforce what students are learning. This was followed by the debate between phonics versus whole-language instruction.

Today in the 21st century, however, it has been found that the debate now centers on the essential components of a comprehensive reading program. This includes the whole-language approach emphasizing reading comprehension where students focus on whole words and draw meaning from the context of words within sentences and paragraphs.

As teachers of reading we choose and build our reading instruction around a foundation of a single or many instructional methods and approaches. This in turn results in developing a students' reading skills both efficiently and effectively.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following general research questions will be answered in this study:

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between comprehension scores obtained by students reading silently when compared to comprehension scores where selections were read orally to the students.

Research Question 2: Will students in a treatment group receiving supplemental reading strategies maintain or improve reading levels in both silent reading comprehension and in selections read orally to the students?

DEFINITIONS

The following list of words has been defined for the purpose of understanding this research.

1. Basal Readers elementary school books that incorporated simple stories and practice exercises to progressively reinforce what students are learning.
2. Comprehension The process of understanding words in a written text.
3. Fluency is the ability to read a text accurately and quickly.
4. Phonemes are the smallest sound units in speech.
5. Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear identify, and manipulate the individual sounds – phonemes in spoken words.
6. Phonics is the understanding that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes and graphemes.
7. Norm referenced testing is when student performance is compared with the performance of other students.
8. Standardized testing is when all students take the test under the same, or standard, conditions.
9. Vocabulary refers to the words we must know to communicate effectively.
10. Oral language comprehension – Understanding what you hear when spoken to.

LIMITATIONS

There are certain limitations that must be taken into account when generalizing the results of this study. They are as follows:

1. The 20 students are a combination of three self-contained special education classes ranging from grades five through seven only and not the total special education population of the district.
2. Only one class, 10 students, will be used as a treatment group and exposed to strategy instruction by one teacher, the researcher.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE
INTRODUCTION

In the nations schools far too many children struggle with learning to read. As many teachers and parents will attest, reading failure can cause long-term negative consequences for children's developing self-confidence and motivation to learn. (Put Reading First, National Institute for Literacy, 2001). Along with improved self-confidence and motivation that is associated with academic achievement. Bloom (1976) found that as much as 25 percent of all achievement can be attributed to the affective domain. Self-concept also plays an important role in how a student perceives their abilities, value, self-worth, and identity. Many students who struggle with reading do not see any value in themselves and feel little or no self-worth. Many become so discouraged that they may give up or create a disturbance to get attention even if it is negative.

Curiosity or interest in a topic, whether it is in reading or other academic subjects, is a motivational element in learning. Successful experiences and self-confidence also contribute to building this interest. Providing the motivation, as well as specialized support to students who have difficulty in reading can help insure success and promote maximum development of reading abilities. (Jerry Johns Basic Reading Inventory, 2001). However, developing interest in reading can be as diverse and complex since each student possesses unique interests and abilities.

THE PROCESS APPROACH

Becoming a capable adult reader requires that students acquire five generalized competencies (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkenson, 1985):

These five competencies are:

1. *Fluency*. Capable readers recognize words readily. They appear to read effortlessly. They can do this because they have practiced *decoding* (turning print into oral language) enough that it is *automatic* (requires no conscious work) (Lagerge & Samuels, 1974).
2. *Word knowledge*. Capable readers use their knowledge of the world to construct the meaning of what they read.
3. *Flexible strategy use*. Capable readers adapt their reading to fit the material they are reading and their understanding of it. When they encounter unfamiliar or difficult words, they slow down and read more carefully. When they realize that they have not been understanding what they have reading, they employ strategies such as rereading.
4. *Motivation*. Capable readers read because of what it gives them, new knowledge or learn the resolution of a story.
5. *Continued reading*. Capable readers not only learn fundamental reading skills, but also continue to read. As they do so, they become more and more skillful. Reading becomes a lifelong pursuit.

Five areas of reading instruction are also included in the reading process:

1. *Phonemic awareness*. The ability to notice, think about, and work with the individual sounds in spoken words.
2. *Phonics*. Teaches children the relationship between the letters (graphemes) of written language and the individual sounds (phonemes) of spoken language.
3. *Fluency*. Is the ability to read a text accurately and quickly. It provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension.
4. *Vocabulary*. Refers to the words we must know to communicate effectively. Oral vocabulary refers to words that we use in speaking or recognize in listening. Reading vocabulary refers to words we recognize or use in print.
5. *Comprehension*. Is the reason for reading. If readers can read the words but do not understand what they are reading, they are not really reading.

Reading Strategies

Comprehension is critically important to the development of children's reading skills and therefore to the ability to obtain an education. Indeed reading comprehension has come to be the "essence of reading" (Durkin, 1993), essential not only to academic learning in all subject areas but to lifelong learning as well.

"Students May Forget What We Teach Them, Not How We Teach Them" Garrison, (2003) states that building relationships with students is the key to creating a supportive environment that maximizes learning and sets the tone for the school day. It is, in fact, our primary responsibility as educators. Relationships are the fourth 'R,'

after reading writing and arithmetic, and are just as important for the overall success of the student-especially students with special needs.

How best to teach children to read has long been debated. Adopting a balanced approach, one that includes direct, explicit instruction as well as extensive opportunities for authentic reading and writing, has been advocated by many reading educators for decades (Adams, 1990; Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985; Chall, 1967; Spiegel, 1992, 1996). Using this approach also makes it necessary for teachers to understand the relevant research and instructional implications that support a balanced approach.

Learning to read is based on complex cognitive, emotional, social, and instructional factors (Lipson & Wixson, 1997). For students who are able to decode words easily reading becomes rewarding and fun. Comprehension may also be focused on as background knowledge, along with vocabulary and reading skills continuing to develop, leads to students becoming “good readers.” However, students that struggle at these tasks, reading can become very frustrating.

The negative effects of reading problems are well documented (Harris & Sipay, 1990). There is evidence that reading disability is associated with social, economic, and psychological problems. There is little evidence, however, that efforts to correct reading problems through remedial reading programs or through special education placement have been very successful (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989; Hiebert & Taylor, 1994; Johnston & Allington, 1991; Karweit, Slavain, & Wasik, 1992-93; Kennedy, Birman, & Demaline, 1986; Rowan & Guthrie, 1989). Instead, there is evidence to suggest that children who encounter difficulty in learning to read fall

further and further behind their achieving peers (Stanovich, 1986). Traditional approaches to dealing with reading problems, such as tracking and grade retention, do not help; indeed, they often appear to be detrimental to eventual student achievement (Shepard & Smith, 1989; McGill-Franzen & Allington, 1993).

Because of the diversity of processing difficulties attributed to children with LD (e.g., Borkowski, Weyhing, & Carr, 1988; Olson, Wise, Johnson, & Ring, 1997; Shankweiler & Crain 1986), there are divisions about the most effective method of teaching reading (see Adams & Brock. 1993; Foorman, 1994; Palincsar, 1986; Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Pressley & Rankin, 1994; and Velluntino et al., 1996, for a review). Among the variety of methods in reading instruction, the focus on phonological awareness, which is the ability to code words into individually assigned units, has been a part of several studies. From these studies, it has been derived, that a revision in teaching methods on a nationwide basis is called for including the current context-based reading instruction to be replaced with instruction in phonological rules and other applications to print, which is highly structured, explicit, and also includes intensive instruction.

A highly structured and explicit reading and writing instruction method includes:

- The components of a balanced literacy program on a daily basis
- Explicit instruction woven through the components of the balanced reading program
- Ongoing assessment and evaluation to monitor student progress

Explicit instruction is essential for effective reading and writing instruction. By modeling and identifying for students the strategies and the skills used in the context of reading and writing, the teacher helps students develop a clear understanding of how to use those strategies. Explicit instruction is offered through mini-lessons, teacher-modeling and thinking aloud, individual group conferences, and guided reading discussions.

Assessment and evaluation of student performance and instructional practices should take place on an ongoing basis. Student progress may be monitored through running records and miscue assessment, anecdotal records, checklists of reading and writing strategies and skills, reading inventories, writing samples, audio and video tapes of student performance, student self-assessments and other reading/writing assessment instruments.

Components of a balanced reading program should be included in classroom instruction every day.

These components include the following:

- *Read aloud* where the teacher or other person reads different kinds of texts to the children.
- *Shared reading* when the teacher and children read and re-read chorally big books, poems, and songs.
- *Guided reading and writing* when the teacher “guides” the students to use reading & writing strategies appropriately. The teacher helps students in small groups to talk, think, and question their way through the reading or written

process. In Guided Reading, books are at the children's instructional level, and the children do the reading.

- *Paired/Cooperative Reading & Writing* has students read and write together without the teacher's participation.
- *Independent Reading & Writing* involves the students reading and writing the whole text independently.

To complete or fully round out the components of effective reading instruction there are some foundational principals and learning skills that are also applicable. They include.

- Active Learning, Self – Questioning
- Vocabulary, Background Knowledge and Reading Comprehension
- Visualizing and Summarizing
- Reading and Annotating
- Metacognition
- Graphic Organizers
- Self-Questioning
- Critical Thinking Exercises and Self-Questioning
- Active Learning and Prompt Feedback

I believe that reading instruction is the culmination of many components that are implemented to assist a student in achieving success as well as an understanding of the reading process. To achieve this, teachers must be aware of as well as sensitive to the cognitive abilities along with the social/emotional needs of their students.

Sharon J. Crowley, King Merrill (1996) state t hat as an educator you strive to

organize your classroom teaching based on your students' needs. In addition, is one of the major features that will characterize classrooms of the new century, is student diversity (Margo A. Mastropieri, Thomas E. Scruggs, 2000).

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

POPULATION AND METHOD OF SAMPLE SELECTION

The individuals who will participate in this study are 20 special education students from this researcher's middle school. The 15 males and 5 females, ranging in age from 14 years 3 months to 10 years 4 months have been selected as a convenience group (N=20) from three self-contained special education classes ranging from grades fifth through eighth. Ten of these students, ranging from fifth to seventh grade, have been students of this researcher's class since September 2003 will be identified as a treatment group. The participants were selected because they are readily available to this examiner. The accessible population of interest is all special education classes in this examiner's school. Generalization of results will be to this population.

The demographic information listed below was obtained from the *New Jersey School Report Card, 2001-2002* school year. This report provides information about the middle school from which the subjects were drawn and includes data pertaining to district teaching staff, class size, and finances, in addition to other data.

2001-2002 School Year

<u>Total Enrollment</u>	Grades 4-8	416.0	
<u>Students with Disabilities</u>		23% with IEPs includes speech only	
<u>Language Diversity</u>			
	English	98%	Mandarin 1%
	Spanish	1%	Turkish 0%
	Others	0%	

Percent of LEP (Limited English Proficient) students: 1%

<u>Average Class Size</u>	<u>School-Wide</u>		
Subject School	<u>State</u>	<u>My School</u>	<u>State</u>
<u>Grades 4-6</u>			
20.7	20.6	20.8	20.4

	<u>Subject School</u>	<u>State Average</u>
<u>Student Attendance Rate</u>	92.1	95.0
<u>Student Mobility</u>	21.2	13.8
<u>School Suspensions</u>	30.3	4.6
<u>Student/Faculty Ratio</u>	10.4	12.3
<u>Faculty Attendance Rate</u>	96.9	96.4
<u>Student/Administrator Ratio</u>	416.0:1.0	307.2:1
<u>Student/Computer Ratio</u>	3.5:1	4.7:1

Administrator and Faculty Degrees

<u>My School</u>	BA/BS	84%
	MA/MS	14%
	PhD/EdD	2%
<u>Length of School Day</u>	<u>My School</u>	<u>State Average</u>
	6 hrs: 50 min	6 hrs: 26 min
<u>Instructional Time</u>	<u>My School</u>	<u>State Average</u>
	6 hrs: 20 min	5 hrs: 36 min
<u>Per Pupil Expenditures</u>	<u>My District</u>	<u>State Average</u>
Total Comparative Cost Per Pupil	9,158	9,628

TREATMENTS AND METHODOLOGIES

The Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, Fourth Edition, Screening Test, (SDRT 4 Screening) as defined by the ESEA, section 1208(7(B)(ii)) “is a brief procedure designed as a first step in identifying children who may be at high risk for delayed development of academic failure and in need of further diagnosis of their need for special services or additional reading instruction”. The Jerry Johns Basic Reading Inventory, Eighth Edition, which will be used to place students in appropriate reading materials, assess comprehension, and determine the student’s strategies for word identification and comprehension. These assessments will be used for both the pretest and posttest reading activity. All participants were given a pretest on September 22, 2003.

Participant are students that possess low levels of reading skills in one or more areas of the following five areas of competency: fluency, word knowledge, flexible strategy use, motivation, and continued practice reading. Previous instruction has exposed students to the five areas of reading instruction, consisting of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. These are areas of reading and strategies that are familiar to students and which need to continue to be developed.

On a daily basis the treatment group, ten students of this examiner’s class, are exposed to the five areas of reading instruction listed above. The instruction is provided through the use of a reading series chosen to meet the students level of reading. This reading level had been predetermined from results obtained by the

pretesting of these students. In addition to this the treatment group will receive supplemental reading strategies. These strategies will incorporate the area of reading competencies through the use of independent reading of self-selected literature, group directed reading activities, and teacher directed activities throughout the curriculum. The strategies used in this study were developed in part to enable professionals of diverse training to enhance reading instruction in classrooms, resource rooms, diagnostic centers, and clinics. At the conclusion of my treatment, this researcher expects to answer the following Research Questions:

1. What is the relationship between comprehension scores obtained by students reading silently when compared to comprehension scores where selections were read orally to the students?
2. Will students in a treatment group receiving supplemental reading strategies maintain or improve reading levels in both silent reading comprehension and in selections read orally to the students?

INSTRUMENTATION

The researcher will use scores from a SDRT 4 Screening as well as the Jerry Johns Basic Reading Inventory scores to gather information about the current status of the students. This information will be used to establish a relationship between comprehension scores obtained reading silently compared to comprehension scores when selections were read orally. The SDRT 4 Screening is “a brief procedure designed as a first step in identifying children who may be at high risk for delayed

development or academic failure and in need of further diagnosis of their need for special services or additional reading instruction.” (ESEA, section 1208 (7)(B)(ii)). Using grade equivalents, students’ scores will relate to scores of the typical performance of students in specified grades tested in a given month of the school year. It is important that students take the Screening Test level intended for their grade level in order for the Performance Level indicator to be meaningful.

The Basic Reading Inventory is an individually administered informal reading test. Composed of a series of graded word lists and graded passages, the inventory helps teachers gain insights into students’ reading behavior. Inventory results will help support the daily instructional decisions teachers need to make (Farr, 1992; Gillet and Temple, 2000; Johns. 1996). According to Tierney (1998, p. 388) “Assessment practices should enrich teaching and learning.” The Basic Reading Inventory can help teachers “to become better informed and make better decisions”. Such decisions can be used to help develop individual literacy plans for students (Felkner, 2000).

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Using the data obtained from the SDRT Screening the examiner will have established each student’s respective independent grade level in reading. This grade level will then be applied to the matching grade level of the Jerry Johns Basic Reading Inventory. By administering both norm-referenced tests the examiner can increase the reliability of the student’s true grade reading level.

The following data and analysis was used to obtain the grade reading levels of the twenty students used in this study.

<u>Student</u>	<u>Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test Screening</u>	<u>Jerry Johns Basic Reading Inventory</u>	<u>Silent Reading Level</u>	<u>Oral Reading Level</u>
Subject 1	3.3	3 rd	Inst/Frustration	Ind/Instructional
Subject 2	3.1	3 rd	Independent	Independent
Subject 3	3.1	3 rd	Independent	Independent
Subject 4	2.6	2 nd	Inst/Frustration	Frustration
Subject 5	2.6	2 nd	Ind/Instructional	Inst/Frustration
Subject 6	2.6	2 nd	Frustration	Frustration
Subject 7	2.4	2 nd	Ind./Instructional	Ind./Instructional
Subject 8	2.3	2 nd	Frustration	Instructional
Subject 9	2.3	2 nd	Ind/Instructional	Ind/Instructional
Subject 10	2.2	2 nd	Inst/Frustration	Ind/Instructional
Subject 11	2.2	2 nd	Inst/Frustration	Instructional
Subject 12	2.1	2 nd	Inst/Frustration	Ind/Instructional
Subject 13	2.1	2 nd	Frustration	Frustration
Subject 14	2.1	2 nd	Ind/Instructional	Instructional
Subject 15	1.9	1 st	Inst/Frustration	Ind/Instruction
Subject 16	1.9	1 st	Inst/Frustration	Independent
Subject 17	1.9	1 st	Instructional	Inst/Frustration
Subject 18	1.9	1 st	Inst/Frustration	Inst/Frustration
Subject 19	1.6	1 st	Frustration	Ind/Instructional
Subject 20	1.5	1 st	Frustration	Ind/Instructional

When comparing the silent reading level to the oral reading level of the Jerry Johns Basic Reading Inventory, the results provide information on the level of

instruction for each student in both silent and oral reading. These levels are then used as the point of departure for instructional planning and implementation.

As the results indicated subjects #6 and #13 sustained a frustration level in both silent and oral reading. Subjects #4, #8, #19, and #20 received a frustration level in only one of the two levels with the remaining fourteen receiving an independent or instructional level in both. These levels will be the basis of viewing how listening comprehension can be an indicator as to the ability of a student to acquire and understand material at their present grade level upon obtaining the necessary reading competence.

As stated in the Jerry Johns Basic Reading Inventory Manual, there are, of course, some limitations for using the listening level as an indicator of reading potential. Limitations within the assessment process as well as a student's auditory handicaps and /or unfamiliarity with standard English reduce the importance that the teacher should attach to a listening level.

The examiner as a basis of instruction will only use the levels from this analysis for the students in the test group. The remaining ten students will follow non-supplemented reading instruction. Both groups' results will be assessed using a post-test.

CHAPTER 4
ANAYLSIS OF RESULTS

INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is an important element in becoming a well informed reader. Effective reading instruction is crucial to achieve the necessary performance levels for understanding information read in a written text as well as information delivered orally. The purpose of this study is to determine how the essential components of a comprehensive reading program, included in the classroom instruction on a daily basis, can affect the ability to improve or sustain reading comprehension.

Twenty students from three self-contained special education classes, ranging from grades five through seven, were administered the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, Fourth Edition, Screening Test, (SDRT 4). Students were required to complete a battery of small tests, which corresponded to their present grade in school. The three areas tested are comprehension, vocabulary, and scanning. The teacher administered each section, as a single unit. The students were required to complete each section in a specified amount of time. Students recorded their answers on a separate answer sheet by filing in the correct answer to the corresponding circle on the answer sheet. The teacher read directions for each section orally. These directions instruct the students in the required procedure for the given section.

Comprehension: Read each passage. Then read each question about the passage.

Decide which is the best answer to the question. Mark the space for the answer you have chosen.

Vocabulary: Choose the word or group of words that means the same, or about

the same, as the underlined word. Then mark the space for the answer you have chosen.

Scanning: The purpose of this activity is to see how well you can scan an article for information. First read each question. Then look at the article that follows the questions read only enough to answer each question. *Do not read the whole article.* Fill in the space for the answer you have chosen.

Along with the SDRT 4 the Jerry Johns Basic Reading Inventory (JJBRI) was also administered to the same twenty students. Unlike the SDRT 4 which required each student to have the test administered at their present grade level, the JJBRI was administered using the grade level at which the student was currently assessed using the SDRT 4. This researcher used this information as a cross check of the accuracy and true level of reading comprehension for each student.

Using the student levels of reading the five components of a balanced reading program were implemented in this researchers classroom throughout the week's lessons. The five basic components which are: (1) Read aloud, (2) Shared reading, (3) Guided reading and writing, (4) Paired/Cooperative Reading & Writing, and (5) Independent Reading & Writing, were used by this researcher to strengthen as well as maintain reading comprehension skills of the students. Five generalized competencies, which are also necessary for a student to acquire self-confidence and motivation in learning reading were taught. The five competencies are: (1) fluency, (2) word knowledge, (3) flexible strategy use, (4) motivation, and (5) continued reading.

Results

Both the pre and post reading tests were scored by this researcher and presented in two groups representing the scores from both the SDRT 4 and the JJBRI. The assessment tools used in scoring the samples were directly from the tests administered.

The evaluator looked for the following elements of reading comprehension. What were the differences in grade equivalent scores between pre and post testing as well as the difference in reading levels of the JJBRI?

The results of this study are as follows:

READING ASSESSMENT

Pre and Post Test Levels

Subject	Stanford Diagnostic Reading Inv.	Jerry Johns Basic Reading Inventory	Reading Levels		Stanford Diagnostic Reading Inv.	Jerry Johns Basic Reading Inventory	Reading Levels		Difference in GE Scores
	G.E.	Pretest G.L.	Silent	Oral	G.E.	Post Test G. L.	Silent	Oral	
#1	Transferred In				3.7	4 th	Ind./Inst.	Inst/Frust	
#2	3.3	3 rd	Ind/Inst	Inst/Frust	3.7	4 th	Ind./Inst.	Frust	+2
#3	3.1	3 rd	Ind.	Ind.	0	Transferred Out			
#4	3.1	3 rd	Ind.	Ind.	5.0	5 th			+1.9
#5	2.6	2 nd	Inst/Frust	Frust.	1.9	2 nd	Inst/Frust	Inst/Frust	-.7
#6	2.6	2 nd	Ind/Inst	Inst/Frust	Transferred Out				
#7	2.5	Transferred In	Not Tested		2.8	3 rd	Ind.	Ind.	+3
#8		Transferred In			2.5				
#9	2.4	2 nd	Frust.	Frust.	2.6	3 rd	Inst/Frust	Ind/Inst	+2
#10	2.4	2 nd	Ind/Inst	Ind/Inst	3.2	3 rd	Ind/Inst	Ind.	+8
#11	2.3	2 nd	Frust	Inst	2.4	2 nd	Frust	Inst/Frust	+1
#12	2.3	2 nd	Ind/Inst	Ind/Inst	2.8	3 rd	Ind/Instr	Ind.	+5
#13	2.2	2 nd	Inst/Frust	Ind/Inst	3.2	3 rd	Inst/Frust	Ind.Inst	+1.0
#14	2.2	2 nd	Inst/Frust	Instr	2.5	2 nd	Ind/Inst	Inst/Frust	+3

#15	2.1	2 nd	Inst/Frust	Ind/Inst			Transferred Out		
#16	2.1	2 nd	Frust	Frust	2.6		3 rd	Inst/Frust	Ind +5
#17	2.1	2 nd	Ind/Inst	Inst	2.3		2 nd	Ind/Inst	Inst/Frust +2
#18	1.9	1 st	Inst/frust	Ind/Inst			Transferred Out		
#19	1.9	1 st	Inst/Frust	Ind	2.6		3 rd	Inst/Frust	Ind. +.7
#20	1.9	1 st	Inst.	Inst/Frust			Transferred Out		
#21	1.9	1 st	Inst/Frust	Inst/Frust	1.7		2 nd	Frust	Inst/Frust -.2
#22	1.6	1 st	Frust	Ind/Inst	1.8		2 nd	Ind/Inst	Frust +.2
#23	1.5	1 st	Frust	Ind/Inst	2.1		2 nd	Frust	Inst/Frust +.6

The average increase between the pre and post test grade equivalent reading score of the SDRT 4 was found to be .4. The grade levels of the JJBRI showed four scores staying at the same grade levels, nine scores increasing one grade level and two scores increasing two grade levels.

ANNAYLSIS OF RESULTS

There was an increase of .4 in the grade equivalent between the pre and post test reading score of the SDRT 4. This chart depicts the number of students and the grade levels they attained.

<u>Pre-Test</u>		<u>Post Test</u>	
<u>Score</u>	<u>Number of Students</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Number of Students</u>
.0	1	.0	5
1.5	1	1.5	0
1.6	1	1.6	0
1.7	0	1.7	1
1.8	0	1.8	1
1.9	4	1.9	1
2.1	3	2.1	1

2.2	2	2.2	0
2.3	2	2.3	1
2.4	2	2.4	1
2.5	1	2.5	2
2.6	2	2.6	3
2.8	0	2.8	2
3.1	2	3.1	0
3.2	0	3.2	2
3.3	3	3.3	0
3.7	0	3.7	2
5.0	0	5.0	1

Subjects #5, #11, #14, and #17 showed no change in grade level between pre and post testing. Subjects #2, #9, #10, #12, #13, #16, #21, #22, and # 23 showed and increase of one grade level between pre and post testing. Subjects #4, and #19 showed an increase of two grade levels between pre and post testing. The remaining eight students, completing the total of 23 as listed in the above assessment, were unable to complete either the pre or post testing as indicated, having transferred in or out of the program.

The following chart depicts the reading levels of the Jerry Johns Basic Reading Inventory for both silent and oral comprehension.

Subject Number	<u>Pre Test</u>		<u>Post Test</u>	
	Silent	Oral	Silent	Oral
1	Transferred into Program		Ind./Inst.	Inst./Frustr.
2	Independent/Instruction	Inst./Frustr	Ind./Inst.	Frustration

3	Independent	Independent	Transferred Out of Program	
4	Independent	Independent	Inst./Frust.	Independent
5	Instructional/Frust.	Frustration	Inst./Frust	Inst./Frust.
6	Ind./Inst	Inst./Frust	Transferred Out of Program	
7	Transferred In to Program		Independent	Independent
8	Transferred In To Program			
9	Frustration	Frustration	Inst./Frust.	Ind./Inst.
10	Ind./Inst.	Ind./Inst.	Ind /Inst.	Independent
11	Frustration	Instructional	Frustration	Inst./Frust
12	Ind./Inst.	Ind./Inst.	Ind./Inst.	Independent
13	Inst./Frust	Ind./Inst.	Inst./Frust.	Ind./Inst
14	Inst./Frust	Instructional	Ind./Inst.	Inst./Frust
15	Inst./Frust.	Ind./Inst.	Transferred Out of Program	
16	Frustration	Frustration	Inst./Frust.	Independent
17	Ind./Inst.	Instructional	Ind./Inst.	Inst./Frust
18	Inst./Frust	Ind./Inst.	Transferred Out of Program	
19	Inst./Frust.	Independent	Inst./Frust	Independent
20	Instructional	Inst./Frust	Transferred Out of Program	
21	Inst./Frust	Inst./Frust.	Frustration	Inst./Frust.
22	Frustration	Ind./Inst.	Ind./Inst.	Frustration
23	Frustration	Ind./Inst.	Frustration	Inst./Frust.

Subjects #13, and #19 showed *no change* in comprehension scoring of reading silently and selections read orally to student in both the pre and post testing of the Jerry Johns Basic Reading Inventory.

Subjects #2, #5, #10, #11, #12, #13, #17, #19, and #23 received the *same* scoring in comprehension of students reading silently in both pre and post testing.

Subjects #9, #14, #16, and #22 showed an increase in their silent reading level from pre testing to post testing scores.

Subject #21 showed a decrease in silent reading level from pre testing to post testing scores.

Subjects #4 and #21 received the *same* scoring in comprehension of selections read to student orally.

Subjects #5, #9, #10, #12, and #16, showed an increase in their scores received in comprehension of selections read to student orally.

Subjects #2, #11, #14, #17, #22, and #23 showed a decrease in their scores received in comprehension of selections read orally to students.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study is to compare the relationship between the comprehension levels of a student's silent reading level to the oral comprehension level when a passage is read to them. It will also address the theory that reading is a visual symbol system superimposed on auditory language (Myklebust and Johnson, 1962). Johnson (1960) stated that reading is a symbol system twice removed from the realities, which they represent. This statement implies a developmental progression as described by Myklebust (1954). That is, the child first integrates nonverbal experiences directly. Next he acquires auditory, then later a visual verbal system which represents both the experience and the auditory symbol. By working on improving reading we are assuming a higher level of oral comprehension.

The individuals who participated in this study are 20 special education students from this researcher's middle school. The 15 males and 5 females, ranging in age from 14 years 3 months to 10 years 4 months have been selected as a convenience group (N=20) from three self-contained special education classes ranging room grades fifth through eighth. Ten of these students, ranging from fifth to seventh grade, have been students of this researcher's class since September 2003 will be identified as a treatment group. The participants were selected because they are readily available to this examiner. During the time between pre and post testing three students transferred into the program and five transferred out of the program and as a result changing the total of students completing both pre and post testing. Three of the five students, which transferred out, were part of this researchers treatment group leaving seven who

completed both pre and post testing. The remaining two students that transferred out and the two students who transferred in were representative of the other two self-contained classes. The accessible population of interest is all special education classes in this examiner's school. Generalization of results will be to this population.

Data obtained from the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, Fourth Edition, (SDRT 4) as well as the Jerry John's Basic Reading Inventory, (JBRI) were utilized in both the pre and post reading testing. The participants, were from both this examiner's class as well as the two self-contained classes, were assessed in September, 2003.

Using the student levels of reading the five components of a balanced reading program were implemented in this researchers classroom throughout the week's lessons. The five basic components which are: (1) Read aloud, (2) Shared reading, (3) Guided reading and writing, (4) Paired/Cooperative Reading & Writing, and (5) Independent Reading & Writing, were used by this researcher to strengthen as well as maintain reading comprehension skills of the students. Five generalized competencies, which are also necessary for a student to acquire self-confidence and motivation in learning reading were taught. The five competencies are: (1) fluency, (2) word knowledge, (3) flexible strategy use, (4) motivation, and (5) continued reading.

The post reading assessments were given, at the end of March, 2004, to the eighteen remaining students who were left following transfers. The reading prompt was identical to the prompt given to the study group in September 2003.

FINDINGS

By comparing reading levels of the non-treatment and treatment groups, it was found that the use of supplemental reading strategies given to the treatment group did not maintain or improve reading levels significantly in both silent reading comprehension and in selections read orally to the student. With three students transferring out of the program the remaining seven showed two students with improvement and five dropping in selections orally read. However, there was a noticeable improvement in the non-treatment group, which was indicated by two subjects #4 and #19 with a two-grade level increase. This non-treatment group started with ten students but ended with thirteen students at one time being in the group. There were three students who transferred into the program and were not pre tested and two students who transferred out of the program without being post tested. Of the remaining nine students, eight showed improvement in selections orally read with one student showing a score of lesser value from pre testing.

DISCUSSION

This researcher's goal was to determine the effects of supplemental reading strategies with a treatment group would have on reading comprehension scores obtained by students reading silently compared to comprehension scores where selections were read orally to students. In addition would a treatment group receiving

supplemental reading strategies maintain or improve reading levels in both silent reading comprehension and in selections read orally to the students?

Five areas of reading instruction were implemented over a five months period of time. The five areas of reading instruction which are (1) Phonemic awareness, (2) Phonics, (3) Fluency, (4) Vocabulary, and (5) Comprehension, were used to direct reading instructions. Along with the five areas of reading instruction components of a balanced reading program were included in classroom instruction every day. These components included:

- *Read aloud* where the teacher or other person reads different kinds of texts to the children.
- *Shared reading* when the teacher and children read and re-read chorally big books. Poems, and songs.
- *Guided reading and writing* when the teacher “Guides” the students to use reading & writing strategies appropriately. The teacher helps students in small groups to talk, think, and question their way though the reading or written process.
- *Paired/cooperative reading & writing* has students read and write together without the teacher’s participation.
- *Independent reading & writing* involves the students reading and writing the whole text independently.

This researcher also implemented the following components that are foundational principals and learning skills that are applicable to and effective reading instruction. They include.

- Active Learning, Self-Questioning
- Vocabulary, Background Knowledge and Reading Comprehension
- Reading and Annotating
- Metacognition
- Graphic Organizers
- Self-Questioning
- Critical Thinking Exercises and Self-Questioning
- Active Learning and Prompt Feedback\

This researcher structured two reading instruction periods for each school day.

The first instruction period lasted forty minutes and consisted of a review of vocabulary words found in the story presently being read. In reviewing these vocabulary words students were exposed to exercises practicing phonemic awareness, the ability to hear identify, and manipulate the individual sounds of a word, as well as phonics where the students, using the vocabulary words, practiced letter-sound correspondence. Included in the phonics lesson were the use of context clues and picture clues to assist in strengthening the use of the new vocabulary words as well as assisting in identifying unfamiliar words in the text. This instruction period was conducted as a whole class lesson with discussion and questions from both students and teacher. One-on-one assistance was also provided to those students who needed extended time to complete assignment. The second period was conducted in a forty-five minute period. At this time the students review vocabulary words from the story to be read. The story was introduced with each student taking a turn in reading a small passage a loud. This continued with students following along in their own book until the story was

completed. A discussion of the story followed with question and answers directed at the content of the story read. Here reading comprehension was measured with the completion of assigned work pages. These pages were at times completed as a class or independently with individual help when needed. Again one-on-one assistance was provided for those students who needed it. Supplemental work in the area of phonics and comprehension were also presented in addition to the pre directed instruction assignments. These supplemental assignments were designed to compliment the day's lesson by using vocabulary words and comprehension. Students worked individually or in small groups on these supplemental assignments. Repeated readings of two or three times of a story were also used to increase comprehension. In addition to the supplemental work students were called upon throughout the day to read from math, history, and science textbooks. Questions were presented to determine comprehension of subject matter being taught. When reading students were encouraged to use phonemic awareness skills and phonics skills along with prior knowledge and decoding skills to decode unfamiliar words. Many students found this to make the lesson more meaningful as well as interesting. This also provided many teachable moments where prior knowledge and skills could be recalled and practiced. It also provided an atmosphere for discussion, modeling, listening, sharing and asking questions.

The results indicated that by comparing reading levels of the non-treatment and treatment groups, it was found that the use of supplemental reading strategies given to the treatment group did not maintain or improve reading levels significantly in both silent reading comprehension and in selections read orally to the student. The participants showed that levels of comprehension, when a selection is read orally to

them, is not maintained or significantly improved. Over the five month time between pre and post testing, instruction consisted of many reading-comprehension strategies with the intention of increasing the level of comprehension scores. While the grade levels increased for most of the students tested comprehension on selections read orally did not. This researcher feels that given the amount of time to attain improvement together with the low age and grade equivalent in reading already existing of the treatment group was a defining factor in the final results of this research. This researcher also feels however, that the results shown in this research are not definitive in the use of supplemental instruction to improve comprehension. A longer instructional time period designed to strengthen comprehension skills this researcher feels would result in students attaining higher scores. No matter what reading level in comprehension a student is on exposure to continued instruction and experiences shared with others in the class can assist in the developing and understanding their reading of the written word.

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