

Summary of presentation at the British Dyslexia Association International Conference

Interactive Research Papers: Reading for Meaning: Interventions to ameliorate children's reading comprehension difficulties

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There is a widespread assumption that children can read with understanding when they leave primary school, however, international assessments show that 18% of adolescents are unable to comprehend simple texts (Jerrim & Shure, 2016), and the most recent estimates suggest that low levels of literacy cost the UK economy at least £20 billion a year (Quigley & Coleman, 2020). Despite this, very little is known about reading in adolescence, with research and theory focusing on reading in childhood.

Addressing the need to focus research on post-primary literacy, this research paper presents the findings of an intervention to promote reading comprehension in secondary school students aged 11 to 13 years. The intervention comprised two theoretically-motivated approaches that have been shown to be effective with primary aged children. Students with poor reading comprehension (N = 150) were randomly allocated to three groups: oral language (OL), text-based (TB) and waiting list control (WLC). The impact of the interventions on reading comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, value of reading and reading self-concept was measured. There were statistically significant gains in reading comprehension for both the oral language and text-based programmes relative to the waiting list control group. In addition, both intervention groups also showed significant improvement in vocabulary knowledge, students' value of reading and reading self-concept relative to the waiting list control. This research demonstrated, for the first time, that multiple-component oral language and text-based intervention programmes can boost reading comprehension in secondary school students aged 11 to 13 years.

References

Quigley, A & Coleman, R. (2020) Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools: Guidance Report. Education Endowment Foundation.

Jerrim, J., & Shure, N. (2016). Achievement of 15-Year-Olds in England: PISA 2015 National Report. London, UK: Department for Education.