

THE EFFECT OF TEACHER'S IMPLEMENTED STRATEGIES ON STUDENTS' TEXT COMPREHENSION

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Abstract

Text comprehension is the key to successful participation in society, and it should be mastered at a sufficient level by the end of basic school. Various strategies should be used to support students' vocabulary and text comprehension at different cognitive levels. The teacher's role is crucial in this process. In order to identify how teachers' strategies affected students' vocabulary and text comprehension at different levels, basic school students were pre- and post-tested, and their language teachers were questioned. In the strategic intervention, the effects of six comprehension strategies were examined. Students' better comprehension was influenced by teaching them to form and answer questions. Comprehension was positively affected by the monitoring strategy. In contrast, the use of summarising the text and improving vocabulary negatively affected students' inferential comprehension. Teacher's proper usage of strategies is essential for promoting students' comprehension skills.

Keywords: Text comprehension, teaching strategies, intervention effects, basic school.

1. Introduction

Text comprehension is the key to successful participation in society, and it should be mastered at a sufficient level by the end of basic school. Various strategies should be used to support students' vocabulary and text comprehension. Empirical studies have identified multiple strategies to facilitate students' text comprehension (Duke & Pearson, 2009; NRP, 2000). However, the controversial effects of strategies on students' proficiency to understand text has found in previous studies (Duke & Pearson, 2009; Uibu & Männamaa, 2014). The reason might be that teachers cannot explicitly teach appropriate strategies to students (Duke & Pearson, 2009) and differentiate them for students developmental and school levels. Therefore, the effects of strategies on students' results might be lower than expected (Guthrie, Klauda, & Ho, 2013). Providing students with opportunities to gain mastery in using different strategies is crucial in explicit instruction. In strategic intervention the effects of different comprehension strategies on students' results might be lower than expected.

2. Design

Previous studies have suggested explicit teaching strategies as an effective approach to enhance students' comprehension and promote reading success (Archer & Hughes, 2011; NRP, 2000). The present study focuses on teachers' use of comprehension strategies to promote basic school students' vocabulary and text comprehension at different cognitive levels. Six strategies were chosen (Boulware-Gooden et al., 2007; Elleman, 2017; NRP, 2000; van Keer & Verhaeghe, 2005). In this regard, the study aimed to investigate the effects of comprehension strategies employed by the language teachers in the instruction on their students' vocabulary and text comprehension skills.

3. Objective and methods

The study conducted in Estonia, data set comprised students from 15 regular classes. In order to identify how teachers' strategies affected students' vocabulary and text comprehension at different levels, basic school students were pre- and post-tested, and their language teachers were questioned. In the strategic intervention, the effects of six comprehension strategies were examined. It was hypothesized that in intervention the effects of different comprehension strategies on students' results might be lower than expected. The test to measure students' vocabulary and text comprehension at different cognitive levels

and a questionnaire to assess teachers' comprehension strategies were compiled. The students were pre- and post-tested with the same tests and the teachers rated the use of six comprehension strategies in their instruction on the five-point Likert scale. The effects of teachers' implementation of strategies on their students' vocabulary and text comprehension at three levels were assessed by Structural Equation Modelling (SEM).

4. Discussion and conclusions

When analysing the impact of various strategies on the students' post-test results, several significant effects were indicated. Firstly, students' better inferential and evaluative comprehension was influenced by teaching them to form and answer different kinds of questions. According to earlier studies, using different types of questions improves students' comprehension at each comprehension level (Eason et al., 2012; Graesser, McNamara, & VanLehn, 2005). By teaching these strategies, teachers enhance students to a higher level of comprehension. Secondly, comprehension at literal and inferential levels was affected by the monitoring strategy. Students with good monitoring skills are more conscious of how to adjust their reading according to the difficulty level of the text (Graesser et al., 2005) and become more skilled at reading. In contrast, various comprehension strategies had a greater impact on students' inferential comprehension and the use of summarising the text and improving vocabulary negatively affected students' inferential comprehension. Thus, teachers' use of comprehension strategies may foster, but also hinder students' text comprehension at different levels.

To conclude, teacher's proper usage of strategies is essential for promoting students' comprehension skills. Better results in students' higher-level text comprehension can be expected if teachers implement more elaborated strategies. Thus, the awareness gained from interventions should become a part of instruction and the teachers should continue the use of various text comprehension strategies after intervention – to ensure permanent results among students. It is also recommended for pre- and in-service training programmes and for systemic compliance in language lessons at schools.

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