

Study Suggests Intervention for Overcoming Reading-Comprehension Difficulties in Children

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Effective reading requires recognizing words and also understanding what they mean. Between 7-10 percent of children have specific reading-comprehension difficulties. These children can read text aloud accurately but do not understand what they have just read. A study in *Psychological Science*, a journal of the Association for Psychological Science, identifies a training program which may help children overcome reading-comprehension difficulties.

Psychological scientists Paula J. Clarke, Margaret J. Snowling, Emma Truelove, and Charles Hulme from the University of York in the United Kingdom conducted a study to see which of three intervention programs is most effective in improving children's reading comprehension. Children (8- and 9-year olds) with reading-comprehension difficulties participated in one of three intervention programs: Text Comprehension training (TC), which emphasized metacognitive strategies (for example, re-reading and visualization) and involved working with written texts; Oral Language training (OL), which emphasized vocabulary and exclusively involved spoken language; and TC and OL training combined (COM) that integrated components from both training programs. Children's performance was assessed before they

started the training program, during the program, and 11 months after they completed their program.

The results showed that while all three of the training programs helped to improve reading comprehension, the largest long-term gains occurred for children who were in the OL training group. According to the authors, “The OL and COM groups also showed improvements in knowledge of the meanings of words that they had been taught and these improvements, in turn, helped to account for these children’s improved reading comprehension skills.” That children in the OL training group showed more improvement than did children in the COM training group indicates that the total amount of time devoted to oral-language training (the COM training program relied on half as much oral-language training than did the OL intervention) may be crucial for overcoming reading-comprehension difficulties. The authors note their findings suggest that “deficits in oral vocabulary may be one important underlying cause of children’s reading-comprehension problems.”

The results of this study have important implications for education and may help guide teachers in helping children overcome problems in reading comprehension.