This collection of abstracts is part of a continuing series providing information on recent doctoral dissertations. The 25 titles deal with a variety of topics, including the following: (1) the effect of reading ability, mode of presentation, and passage familiarity on the general and precise comprehension of expository text; (2) a constructivist perspective on the reading comprehension process; (3) the effect of textual moves and dialogue on the reading comprehension of first grade children; (4) imagery, postquestions, and children's learning from prose; (5) the relationship between cognitive style, motivation, and reading comprehension achievement; (6) the effects of expository textual structure on the reader's ability to form inferences; (7) a function-based comparison of illustrations providing literal and analogical representations on comprehension of expository prose; (8) the effects of different kinds of questions on children's comprehension of stories; (9) an analysis of the process of ambiguity resolution; (10) the relationship among literal and inferential reading comprehension skills and selected cognitive processes; (11) an ethnographic study of comprehension in the beginning reading process; (12) a qualitative study of the elementary age child's interaction with story; and (13) reading as signification. (EL)
Reading, Comprehension and Memory Processes:

Abstracts of Doctoral Dissertations Published in Dissertation Abstracts International, January through June 1985 (Vol. 45 Nos. 7 through 12).

Compiled by the Staff of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills
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Abstracts of the following dissertations are included in this collection:

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THE EFFECT OF READING ABILITY, MODE OF PRESENTATION AND PASSAGE FAMILIARITY ON THE GENERAL AND PRECISE COMPREHENSION OF EXPOSITORY TEXT

Chase, Nancy Davidson
TEXT PROCESSING AND READER RESPONSE CRITICISM: A CONSTRUCTIVIST PERSPECTIVE ON THE READING COMPREHENSION PROCESS

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Siegel, Marjorie Gail
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Stone, Nancy Rose
THE INFLUENCE OF MOTIVATION ON THE COMPREHENSION AND COMPREHENSION MONITORING OF NINTH-GRADERS

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Vaughan, Nancy E.
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Williams, Brenda Reuben
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A KNOWLEDGE OF LOGICAL CONNECTIVES AND THE RETENTION OF EXPOSITORY MATERIAL

Wallace, Randall Reed
THE ABILITY OF SECOND AND THIRD GRADE STUDENTS TO DRAW INFERENCES AFTER READING SELECTIONS OF PROSE

Williams, Brenda Reuben
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A KNOWLEDGE OF LOGICAL CONNECTIVES AND THE RETENTION OF EXPOSITORY MATERIAL
The purpose of this study was threefold to determine if listening and reading result in different forms of comprehension as measured by both recall and recognition tasks, to ascertain the effect of subject prior knowledge upon both modes, and to investigate whether language and reading comprehension are independent or interdependent entities. The subjects were 64 high school students equally divided into good and poor readers. Each subject read and listened to two familiar expository passages and two unfamiliar ones. They were then asked to recall what they had read or heard. They were also asked to recognize explicit, implicit and identical statements as congruent with text content. Recall was scored in terms of the number of explicit, important and idiosyncratic propositions recalled and the specificity of this recall. Idiosyncratic recall was scored separately as either inferences or errors. The between subjects factors were age and reader ability. The within subjects factors were mode of presentation (listening or reading) and passage familiarity or unfamiliarity. Results indicated no significant differences between listening and reading. However significant differences were noted for passage familiarity. Exposure to familiar text resulted in more recall of explicit, important and idiosyncratic propositions and greater recognition of implicit statements. Exposure to unfamiliar text resulted in more recall of erroneous propositions and greater recognition of explicit and identical statements. Results were interpreted within the framework of a schema theoretic view of comprehension processes. An independent model of language and reading comprehension was also supported in that good and poor readers differed quantitatively but not qualitatively on all dependent measures.

This study compares four theories of prose comprehension two from text processing research, and two from reader response criticism. The theories of Walter Kintsch, Jean Mandler and Nancy Johnson, Wolfgang Iser, and Stanley Fish are compared with implications for the concept of readability and instruction. This comparison attempts to gain insight into the variables that contribute to the comprehensibility of a text. Three different variables are considered as contributing to text readability/comprehensibility. These variables include text structure, the reader's pre-existing knowledge of the world, and the reader's knowledge about text structure. These three factors provide the framework for comparing the theories of comprehension examined. Conclusions acknowledge that the commonalities between text processing research and reader response criticism have an impact upon the concept of readability and the instruction of reading. This impact, however, involves verifying several previously identified practices as helpful in enhancing reading comprehension, e.g., schema building activities, directed and shared reading experiences, and attention to the difficulties encountered when using varied types of texts.

The data were analyzed using a multivariate multiple regression analysis. Moves and Dialogue were the independent variables and Ability, as measured by a test of Sight Vocabulary, was a control variable. Total Comprehension for each story (open and closed-book tests combined) were the dependent variables. The results of this analysis did not verify the hypotheses. Low Moves did not produce significantly better comprehension than High Moves. Passages with High Moves produced significantly better comprehension than passages with Low Moves. With regard to Dialogue, High Dialogue did not produce significantly better comprehension than High Dialogue. Low Dialogue did not produce significantly better comprehension than High Dialogue. There was no significant difference between High and Low Dialogue. Because the findings were not as predicted, the reasons for these results were explored and several hypotheses were proposed to account for these findings. The findings are discussed with regard to the hypotheses and to their relationship to previous research. Finally, proposals for future research are suggested based on the findings and limitations.

This study was designed to examine whether the number of speaking turns (Moves) and the proportion of characters' speech (Dialogue) would influence first grade children's comprehension of stories. It was predicted that a low number of Moves and a low percentage of Dialogue would place fewer processing demands on young readers and would therefore be more facilitative of selective aspects of comprehension than a high number of Moves and a high percentage of Dialogue. To examine these predications, 63 first grade students read two stories in one of four passage conditions and responded to open and closed book questions about each story. The four conditions were created by manipulating the number of Moves and the proportion of Dialogue in the same passage. A low number of Moves was 10 and a high number of Moves was 25 and a low percentage of Dialogue was 20 and a high percentage was 70. Subjects in condition I read stories with Low Moves and High Dialogue. Subjects in condition II read stories with Low Moves and Low Dialogue. Subjects in condition III read stories with High Moves and High Dialogue and subjects in condition IV read stories with High Moves and Low Dialogue.

Because the findings were not as predicted, the reasons for these results were explored and several hypotheses were proposed to account for these findings. The findings are discussed with regard to the hypotheses and to their relationship to previous research. Finally, proposals for future research are suggested based on the findings and limitations.
Achievement test, Form C, administered in the fall of 1982. Using social studies type content, a set of passages was prepared for each experiment. Comprehension was evaluated by an every fifty-word close deletion pattern.

Each subject was pretested on a random sample of words from the passages to omit subjects with word recognition difficulties. Subjects were then administered one passage version for each experiment. Anovas, 2 x 3 and 2 x 4 (Reading Achievement Level x Passage Version) tested six hypotheses, accepted at 05.

Results In both experiments, no difference was found among language structures, statistical significance was found for the reading achievement variable. No interaction was found in either experiment. Post hoc examination of raw data revealed differences in comprehension of restrictive relative clauses and phrases.

Conclusions Both achievement groups comprehended relative clauses, phrases, separate sentences, and combinations with a similar degree of accuracy.

The taxonomy of relationships thought to facilitate inferencing was developed by the experimenter. This taxonomy is based upon inferencing passages, each with three questions: what, who, when and why. Informational inferencing, and are: (1) a logical inference with enable causation; (2) a logical inference with reason causation; (3) an informational inference with result causation; (4) an informational inference with initiation causation; (5) an informational inference with enable causation (when); and (6) an informational inference with enable causation (where). These passages were termed facilitating passages. The logical inferences answer the questions of how and why. Informational inferences answer the questions, what, who, when and where.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COGNITIVE STYLE, MOTIVATION, AND READING COMPREHENSION ACHIEVEMENT Order No. DA8418738

HARRISON, ORDA LIMAR, Ph.D. Washington University, 1984. 312pp. Chairman, Dr. Richard deCharms

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the effects of cognitive style and motivation on performance on people-oriented and thing-oriented reading comprehension passages. The two independent variables were cognitive style (field independence), empathic motivation (people sensitivity/people-insensitivity). The dependent variable was reading comprehension on the Immediate Test. It was predicted that people-sensitive children would achieve higher scores than people-insensitive children on people-oriented reading comprehension passages, and field-independent children would achieve higher scores than field-dependent children on thing-oriented reading comprehension passages. Further predictions were that males and females would not differ on field-independence and that there would be no relationship between people-sensitivity and field-independence.

The results supported these predictions. Two unexpected findings were that people-sensitive children scored slightly higher than people-insensitive children on thing-oriented reading passages, and field-independent children scored significantly higher than field-dependent children on people-oriented reading comprehension passages. Results from the present study provide information for educators, helping them to gain a better understanding of the relationship between cognition, motivation personality characteristics, and the acquisition of knowledge.

THE EFFECTS OF EXPOSITORY TEXTUAL STRUCTURE ON THE READER'S ABILITY TO FORM INFERENCES Order No. DA8501319

HARRISON, ORDA LIMAR, Ph.D. Washington University, 1984. 214pp. Chairman, Dr. Richard deCharms

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of textual structure of expository text on reader's inferential capacity. The three passages were randomly chosen from the social studies textbook, People and our world. A study of world history by Kowslar and Smart. The three passages were rewritten to include relationships in the text thought to stimulate inferencing, and are: (1) a logical inference with enable causation; (2) a logical inference with reason causation; (3) an informational inference with result causation; (4) an informational inference with initiation causation; (5) an informational inference with enable causation (when); and (6) an informational inference with enable causation (where). These passages were termed facilitating passages. The logical inferences answer the questions of how and why. Informational inferences answer the questions, what, who, when and where.

Passages were again rewritten to omit the relationships thought to facilitate inferencing. These passages were termed inhibiting passages. The taxonomy of relationships thought to facilitate inferencing was developed by the experimenter. This taxonomy is based upon an inference taxonomy created by Warren, Nicholas, and Tabassos (1970), and also upon the basic unit of relationship between conceptualizations, the causal link (Shank, 1975a, 1975b).

A checklist developed by the experimenter based upon the taxonomy of inferencing facilitating relationships was used to evaluate the passages. The passages were evaluated by judges to verify the ratings of facilitating or inhibiting.

THE EFFECTS OF EXPOSITORY TEXTUAL STRUCTURE ON THE READER'S ABILITY TO FORM INFERENCES Order No. DA8501319

IMAGERY, POSTQUESTIONS, AND CHILDREN'S LEARNING FROM PROSE Order No. DA8501319


The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of postquestions and imagery on children's learning from prose. The sample consisted of 256 fifth grade subjects. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of six treatments resulting from crossing two imagery conditions (imagery, no imagery) with three questions conditions (inserted questions, massed questions, no questions).

The line was to investigate the effects of imagery, postquestions, and children's learning from prose. The materials were six treatment-based versions of a 1,400-word passage on the tarantula. Subjects worked through the materials, then completed a 30-item short-answer test and an attitude questionnaire. The test was readministered after three days.

Test data were analyzed using a 2 (imagery) x 3 (questions) x 2 (time of test) analysis of variance with repeated measures on the last factor. Study times and attitude questionnaire responses were also analyzed. On the 30-item immediate test, mean scores for the questions conditions were 24.12 for massed questions, 24.00 for inserted questions, and 15.73 for no questions. Scores for the questions conditions were significantly higher than those for the questions condition, but were not significantly different from each other. Mean scores for imagery and no imagery on the immediate test were 21.35 and 21.04 respectively, a non-significant difference. The overall mean score was significantly lower on the delayed test than on the immediate test. However, the pattern of scores by treatment was consistent across the two tests.

Study times for the three questions conditions were significantly different from each other. Massed questions required the most time and no questions took the least. Imagery required significantly more time than no imagery.

Questionnaire data of their treatments. Significantly more subjects in each of the questions conditions than in the imagery condition reported that their treatment was helpful. Subjects in the inserted questions condition responded more frequently than those in the other treatments that the passage was easy to read.

The results indicate that questions are an effective prose learning strategy for fifth grade children. Consequent and study time are important practical factors to consider in choosing between a massed and an inserted question strategy.
A FUNCTION-BASED COMPARISON OF ILLUSTRATIONS PROVIDING LITERAL AND ANALOGICAL REPRESENTATIONS ON COMPREHENSION OF EXPOSITORY PROSE

Order No. DA8424332

Hurt, Jeffrey Alan, Ph.D. University of Kansas, 1984. 122pp.

This study demonstrates the effectiveness of two illustrations, which possess differences concerning the type of representational format they provide in supplementing text, in serving two distinct instructional functions, both of which assist in the overall comprehension of a textual passage. Specifically, an illustration which provides a literal representation of information introduced in the passage is shown to be more effective in serving the instructional function of identifying physical properties of phenomenal information introduced in the text. Conversely, an illustration which provides an analogical representation of information introduced in the passage is shown to be more effective in serving the instructional function of clarifying nonphenomenal information in the text. These findings suggest that, in instructional situations similar to the one in this study, illustrations possessing literal representation are more effective than illustrations possessing analogical representation when the instructional function to be served is identification of properties of phenomenal information, and illustrations possessing analogical representation are more effective than illustrations possessing literal representation when the instructional function to be served is clarification of nonphenomenal information.

QUESTION UNDERSTANDING: EFFECTS ON CHILDREN'S COMPREHENSION OF STORIES

Kormos, Lilli, Ph.D. McGill University (Canada), 1984.

This study investigated the effects of different types of questions on discourse comprehension. In addition, it examined performance on questions and its influence on comprehension. Within a theoretical framework of discourse processing, the research focused on question type, passage structure, and individual differences in comprehension. Comprehension was measured by analyzing propositions recalled and inferred during free recall. Performance on questions was measured by analyzing answers for the presence of particular types of inferences.

Third grade children read selected fictional passages, answered questions about them, and recalled them. Results revealed that the effects of questions on comprehension are complex, interacting with passage structure, reading level, and response type. Findings also indicated that questions influence the selective processing of propositional information in text. Question-answering performance was found to reflect an interaction between question type and passage structure. Furthermore, ability to generate the appropriate inferences was measured by responding to questions facilitated by text comprehension.
AN ANALYSIS OF THE PROCESS OF AMBIGUITY RESOLUTION (DISAMBIGUATION) IN SENTENCE PROCESSING

Order No. DA8422279

LOEFFLER, WILLIAM ROBERT, Ph.D. The University of Michigan, 1984. 167 pp. Chairman: Donald E. P. Smith

Several models have been advanced in the literature pertaining to the process of ambiguity resolution known as disambiguation. The key models include: (1) The MacKay Model; (2) The Schvaneveldt Model; (3) The Single Meaning/Multiple Meaning-Hypothesis; (4) The Selective Access Hypothesis; and (5) The Prior Context Hypothesis. This dissertation, through means of a literature search and a field experiment, attempts to sort the usefulness of these models according to their validity with respect to a large ambiguity edifice, in this case a paragraph from the U.S. Bankruptcy Code. A test instrument was developed which elicited responses through a progressively more complex and structured set of questions about the ambiguity in the sentences. These data were analyzed according to dominant response characteristics and by means of Pearson r correlations for relationships between linguistic level, order of processing, and subjects' decision-making. Test data were consistent with evidence for the above-mentioned models, but restricted their use to particular steps within a general process of disambiguation. The data showed surface structure to be a less important factor in disambiguation than lexical and underlying/symbolic structures for the tasks performed. Data also show context influences in the decision-making process of ambiguity resolution. The literature review and test data are incorporated into a proposed general paradigm of the disambiguation process which interfaces knowledge-based mental activities with structure-based mental activities.

The general paradigm of the disambiguation process follows order-of-processing steps in the following manner: (1) Associate memory retrieval based on prior context or previous knowledge-base; (2) Scanning of the three fundamental linguistic levels for the purpose of locating the "field" in which the ambiguity resolution is to occur; (3) Problem-solving within the selected linguistic level; (4) Tentative ambiguity resolution (disambiguation) based on a meshing of the lexical and underlying correlates; (5) Evaluative feedback of the resolution based on tentative utilization; and (6) More permanent integration of the resolution into the total language context or "field at a given time."
A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE ELEMENTARY AGE CHILD'S INTERACTION WITH STORY

Order No. DA8424243

It was the purpose of the study to explore, describe, and analyze the process by which children at various age levels within the elementary classroom make sense and make meaning from literary works over time.

The methodology was qualitative, employing an adapted use of ethnography for educational research. The study included five primary sections: first, second, third and fifth grade. Story experiences were set up for these classes which included multiple oral readings of four stories, open-ended discussions, drawing and dramatic activity around the story.

The data primarily emerged from interviews done with a portion of each class after each story experience. A secondary data source was teacher observation.

The analysis was done in two stages: The first stage identified patterns and themes in the children's responses to the stories. The second stage was interpretive. This stage related the data to existing theory and research in the cognitive, affective and imaginative domains. A phenomenological approach was also used to explore how children made unique personal relationships with the stories.

The findings confirmed the existence of developmental patterns of story schema and a tendency toward story schema in younger children that has been noted in previous research. At the fifth grade level there emerged patterns which showed the ability to relate life experience to the story material. The findings also pointed out how individuals often departed from the patterns that have been formalized in the research.

A perspective was formulated from the findings of the present study and the existing research on the pedagogical dimensions of working with literature in the elementary classroom.

COMPARISON OF THE EFFECTS OF CONTINUOUS AND INTERMITTENT PURE TONE AT LOW AND HIGH FREQUENCIES ON READING COMPREHENSION

Pellegrini, Pierre N., Ed. D. University of Southern California, 1984. Chairman: Professor Frederick Knirk

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of continuous and intermittent pure tone noise at low and high frequencies at a dB level of 7O, in comparison with quiet condition on a reading comprehension test. The comprehension test involved a task of a high cognitive level ("evaluation" in terms of Bloom's taxonomy).

One hundred volunteers, undergraduate students with normal hearing, were randomly assigned to five experimental conditions: (1) Quiet, (2) 70 dB continuous noise 500 Hz, (3) 70 dB intermittent noise 500 Hz, (4) 70 dB continuous 8000 Hz, (5) 70 dB intermittent 8000 Hz. The experimentation took place in sound-proof studio and the five conditions were heard by the children. All conditions were presented in a randomized order.

Data were analyzed by ANOVA and the Dunn's procedure was used to analyze the a priori orthogonal comparisons on the effect of the sound on performance, noise, gender, GPA and age being the independent variables. The score and the number of questions answered in 30 minutes being the dependent variables. Also the Pearson Correlation coefficient was computed to study the influence of GPA upon the two dependent variables.

These analyses indicated that the noise conditions were significantly more detrimental on the score performance than the quiet condition. No significant difference was found between continuous and intermittent sound. The high frequencies were significantly more detrimental than the low frequencies. No significant difference was found on the quantity of work done from the quiet condition to the noise conditions. No significant difference was found between gender as between age. The correlation between score and GPA was positive and low between GPA and quantity of work.

RELATIONSHIPS OF THE AGE AND SEX OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN TO THEIR PERFORMANCES ON TASKS OF STORY SCHEMA: SEQUENCE, INCONSISTENCIES, STORY COMPLETION, AND STORY TELLING

Order No. DA8421262

The purpose of this research was to observe outward manifestations of story schema in preschool children. The null hypotheses stated that positive relationships would not be found between performance on tasks of story schema and the age and the sex of the child. The population in this research was ninety eight (98) children enrolled in a private, Christian preschool. In individual sessions, conducted by the researcher or a trained assistant, the children were asked to respond to four types of tasks pertaining to facets of story schema. The four types of tasks were: determining logical sequences, detecting and correcting inconsistencies in script-type stories, story completion of a story stem, and story telling using manipulative props (toys). All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed later for scoring.

Materials for the tasks were devised by the researcher and field tested in a pilot study. Reliability of the scorings was established by an inter-scorer procedure. Reliability of the tasks was estimated by a test-retest procedure and by comparative analyses.

Scores obtained were subjected to regression and other analyses. In some of these analyses, the scores of the children were grouped according to their ages, three, four, or five and by the sex of the child for the specific purpose of the acceptance or rejection of the null hypotheses.

Findings indicated that the age of the child was positively related to performance on the task of story schema. The sex of the child was not positively related to performance on tasks of story schema.

Implications for further research include using these facets of story schema in classroom activities to build the story schemata of young children as foundations for reading comprehension.

Implications for further research include suggestions for observing performances on tasks of story schema by older children, or adapting the materials for other observations.
significantly potential.

From the theoretical and methodological perspective of semiotics it is more efficacious to view reading as more than mere representation. This calls for a reconsideration of models of direct instruction and the continued exploration of the potential which...
Purpose of the Study. The purpose of this study was to investigate the comparability of free written retellings, written retellings with retrieval cues, and hierarchically structured comprehension questions. A second purpose was to describe any differences in immediate and delayed comprehension assessment.

Procedure. The subjects for the study were 28 seventh-grade students. Subjects were asked to read silently a five-page expository reading selection. Next subjects randomly received one of the three assessment devices, the free retelling, the cued retelling, or the hierarchically constructed comprehension questions, for completion.

Two days later students were asked to complete a delayed measure of comprehension recall. Subjects re wrote subjects same measurement device they had completed two days previously.

Findings. Based on a descriptive analysis of the data, the findings of the study were (1) Different measurement devices of reading comprehension produce different profiles of reading comprehension (2) Free and cued retellings elicit different amounts as well as different types of information (3) Hierarchically constructed comprehension questions limit the comprehension profile to the specific areas probed (4) Fre retellings yield a rich variety of scriptal information (5) The cued retellings elicit considerably more content-based information (6) The cued retellings produce less information loss in the delayed measure of reading comprehension than the free retelling protocol (7) Responses to the hierarchically structured comprehension questions differ little between the immediate and delayed measures of reading comprehension.

Conclusions. The results of the investigation warrant the following conclusions (1) The comprehension that readers display is largely dependent upon the type of protocol used in the measurement of reading comprehension (2) There is a difference among reading scores derived from free retellings, cued retellings, and hierarchically structured comprehension questions (3) There is a difference in assessment of comprehension based on protocols administered immediately after reading compared with administration of the same protocols two days after reading an expository passage (4) Free written retellings elicit a reader constructed rendering of what was comprehended in an expository passage (5) Cued written retellings focus comprehension toward content based information (6) Hierarchically designed comprehension questions probe text-based comprehension and limit the scope of the comprehension profile that can be generated.
ascertain a median, subjects were placed in either the High Knowledge of Connectives Group or the Low Knowledge of Connectives Group. In addition, students were randomly assigned to one of four retention intervals, with each interval consisting of twenty students.

All subjects read an expository, textbook-like passage that contained specific logical connectives. A criterion test based on this passage was administered to the twenty subjects assigned to Retention Interval I to ascertain immediate retention. The remaining sixty subjects were tested by group for delayed retention during the following times, two days, one week, and two weeks. Upon completion of the criterion test, all subjects were administered a questionnaire which was utilized as a method of probing students' perceptions of their own cognitive processing strategies.

Using a subsumption model extrapolated from the assimilation theory of meaningful reception learning, the study shows that students' comprehension of written passages is facilitated by their understanding of logical connectives. This understanding contributes to meaningful learning, and thus increases the probability of extended retention.

Since extended retention is one of the primary goals of schooling, these results have practical implications for education.
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