

Effectiveness of visualising and verbalising therapy for children with comprehension deficits as part of specific language impairment: a collaborative approach

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Summary:

11 children (aged 12 to 14 years) with a primary language impairment participated in this study. Visualising and Verbalising therapy (Bell, 1991) was delivered collaboratively by class teacher, special teaching assistant and SLT during English lessons twice a week for 30 minutes, for five weeks. We devised a set of comprehension questions to use as outcome measures. The questions were a balance of concrete, inference and inference 'plus'. Inference 'plus' questions involved a higher level of abstract thinking. Post-therapy scores were significantly better than the pre-therapy scores and there was no interaction between the type of questions and the time of testing. This means that all types of questions improved to a similar degree with therapy.

References: Scott, Turner, Sutton, Vinton & Ebbels (2009). *Effectiveness of visualising and verbalising therapy for children with comprehension deficits as part of specific language impairment: a collaborative approach*. Poster presented at RCSLT conference, London.

EFFECTIVENESS OF VISUALISING AND VERBALISING THERAPY FOR CHILDREN WITH COMPREHENSION DEFICITS AS PART OF SPECIFIC LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT: A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

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Background and aims

- Many students with SLI have comprehension difficulties, including comprehension of texts (e.g., Norbury & Bishop, 2002)
- Secondary aged students attending a Specialist residential school for SLI were identified as needing a specific approach to develop their comprehension of texts.
- Most previous studies have focused on improving comprehension of vocabulary (e.g., Parsons, 2005, Nash & Snowling, 2006) and grammar (e.g., Ebbels, 2007). However, some studies demonstrated that understanding of texts can be improved using an approach focusing on mental imagery (e.g., Gill et al., 2003). An approach which may therefore be effective is the Visualising and verbalising programme (Bell, 1991)
- This programme had already been used in the classroom and delivered collaboratively in English lessons.
- The aim of this study, therefore, was to investigate if the programme was effective in changing comprehension of texts in these secondary aged students with SLI.

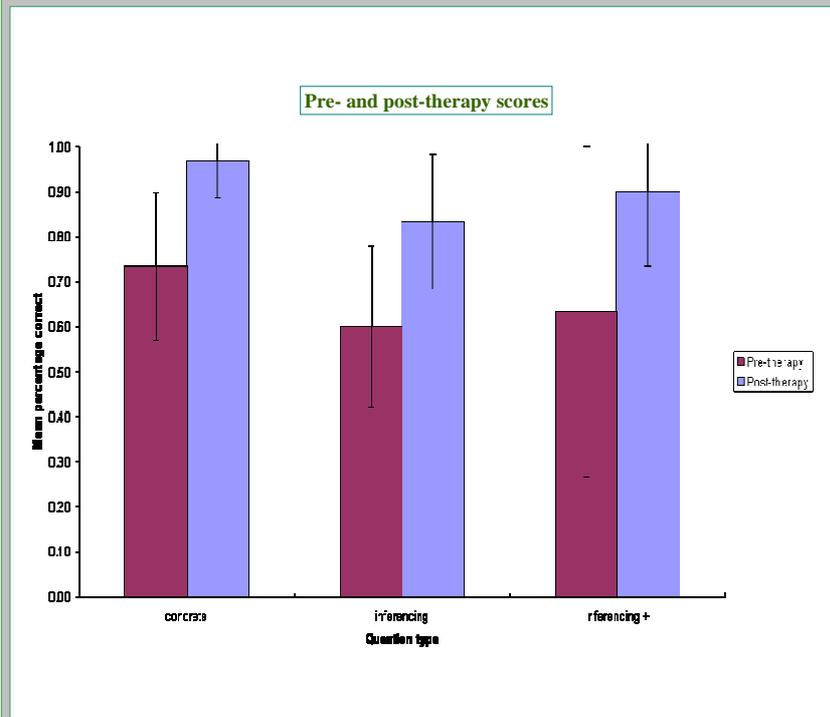
Methods

- **Participants**
 - 11 children from years 8 & 9 (aged 12-14 yrs) from the same class.
- **Therapy**
 - Therapy was delivered during English lessons twice a week for 30 mins. over five weeks.
 - Delivery was collaborative and involved class teacher, special teaching assistant and SALT.
 - The Visualising and verbalising programme was followed from picture through to text level.
- **Testing**
 - A set of questions to use as an outcome measure was devised.
 - Questions were a balance of concrete, inference and inference 'plus' - which involved a higher level of abstract thinking.
 - Outcome measures were taken pre- and post-therapy.

Summary

- Therapy significantly improved the students' comprehension as measured on a specifically designed test.
- There was improvement on both concrete and inferencing questions.

Results



Outcomes

Post-therapy scores were significantly better than the pre-therapy scores, $F(1,15)=13.9, p=0.002, \eta p^2 = 0.48$. There was no interaction between the type of questions and the time of testing, $F(2,15)=0.03, p=0.97, \eta p^2 = 0.004$. This means that all types of questions improved to a similar degree with therapy.

Conclusions

- Results suggest that using Visualising and verbalising significantly improves student's comprehension.
- Improvements were found in processing of both concrete and abstract information.
- Visualising and verbalising can be collaboratively delivered in a classroom setting.
- Students were encouraged to use their visualisation skills in other lessons.
- This group of students have strengths in visual skills (50 % are taking G.C.S.E Art) which could be an indicator of the success of using this programme.
- Further investigation of the effectiveness of other techniques to improve inferencing skills would be an area of interest for future study.

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