First Graders Use of Explicit Multiple Strategy Instruction and Multi-Layered Scaffolding

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Introduction

Today, there is a wide body of research supporting the explicit teaching of comprehension strategies (Courtney, King, & Pedro, 2007; McLaughlin & Allen, 2002; Keene, 2002, 2007). In earlier years comprehension had been thought of "as the natural result of decoding plus oral language," but today comprehension is seen "as a much more complex process involving knowledge, experience, thinking and teaching" (Fielding & Pearson, 1994, p. 62). Furthermore, teachers no longer see comprehension as assigning questions to be answered by students after reading a text but rather "a complex process regulated by cognitive, emotional, perceptual, and social experiences" (Dorn & Sofios, 2005, p.14).

This article suggests that in one first grade classroom, students were able to articulate explicit comprehension strategies as it details two first grade students' development of negotiated metacognitive events that exemplify the use of explicit multiple comprehension strategies. The use of explicit, multiple strategies, through multiple layers of teacher scaffolding, followed up by specific teacher explanations, and debriefing for students, promoted a truly metacognitive approach to reading.

Purpose

This article focuses on a brief episode from a larger, ongoing study, which examines both comprehension instructional practices and students' use of explicit, multiple comprehension strategies. In a previous study, researchers found that the lack of time spent on debriefing during a formal closing activity at the end of reading time, may have significantly impacted students' abilities to become metacognitive about the strategies they use during reading (Courtney & Abodeeb-Gentile, 2009). The purpose of the current and ongoing research in this classroom was two-fold. First, it was hoped that the teacher and the researcher would be able to examine classroom practices for the teaching of multiple and explicit comprehension strategies in an effort to improve teacher scaffolding and promote more widespread and effective use of comprehensions strategies by students. Secondly, the teacher and researcher also intended to seek out ways for students to routinely debrief about the practices they were using to both inform teacher practice and help students to become more metacognitively aware of the strategies they were using.

Background

Early studies of classroom practices note the lack of time and commitment to teaching comprehension strategies in the United States (Durkin, 1978). Durkin's research discovered that teachers spent considerably more time assigning and evaluating comprehension rather than teaching it. The Rand Reading Study Group (2000) defined reading comprehension as "the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction..."