QUESTIONING ENHANCES INFERENCE GENERATION

ARTICLE

Carlson, S. E., Broek, P. van den, & McMaster, K. L. (2022). Factors that influence skilled and less-skilled comprehenders' inferential processing during and after reading. *Elementary School Journal, 122*, 475–501
ions, and encourage participation to keep them engaged.

WHAT DID THEY DO?

Researchers conducted a study exploring the inferences made by children with varying comprehension skills during and after reading, aiming to understand children's ability to maintain understanding throughout a text and the influence of working memory (WM). (Quick note: Timothy Shanahan has defined inferences as "using what you know to figure out what you don't know..to make sense of what you are reading".) Sixty-one 3rd-5th graders participated, categorized as skilled (51st-83rd percentile) or less-skilled (3rd-38th percentile). Students were tested to ensure they did not have any decoding deficits. The study examined differences in inference types and numbers, the impact of WM on text coherence, and variations in text recall after making inferences. Inferences were measured during and after reading using narrative texts with similar structures, probing for local and global (global inferences can be defined as other parts of the text and/or background knowledge) connections.

WHAT DID THEY FIND?

The study revealed that some students encounter difficulties in generating inferences necessary for fully understanding the text after reading. The exact reason for this challenge among less-skilled readers remains unclear but may stem from a combination of factors including comprehension skills, WM capacity, text type, inference type, and timing of inference generation. Skilled and less-skilled comprehenders demonstrated a tendency to produce more accurate text-based inferences during reading compared to after reading. Notably, after reading, less-skilled comprehenders connected sections of the text out of order more frequently, thus negatively impacting their ability to make proper inferences. The findings emphasized the importance of both local and global coherence in comprehension in order to improve student recall after reading the text. like slides or props effectively to enhance your presentation.

WHAT COULD THIS MEAN FOR TEACHERS?

For teachers, fostering goal-driven inference generation through causal questioning activities during reading was highlighted as beneficial for developing and maintaining text coherence Emphasizing more "why" style questions can further encourage goal-driven inferences, promoting the construction of an accurate and more complete understanding of narrative texts. (For example, "Why did Annie and Sue begin to talk about dolphins?") Additionally, providing specific feedback during small group activities was recommended to support inferential comprehension skills, this can include, but is not limited to, additional questioning for children who do provide a correct response to an initial causal question. After reading the text, students should be encouraged to recall key details and make connections to deepen their understanding.

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