Answer the question based on the reading below….

1. Referring to this topic's readings, discuss some pre-reading activities, activities to use during reading, and activities to use after reading to promote vocabulary and reading comprehension when working with adolescents.

Abstract

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This commentary responds to the implications for child language intervention of Catts and Kamhi's (2017) call to move from viewing reading comprehension as a single ability to recognizing it as a complex constellation of reader, text, and activity. Reading comprehension, as Catts and Kamhi explain, is very complicated. In this commentary, I consider how comprehension has been taught and the directions in which it is moving. I consider how speech-language pathologists (SLPs), with their distinctive expertise and resources, can contribute to effective reading comprehension instruction. I build from Catts and Kamhi's emphasis on the importance of context and knowledge, using the approaches of staying on topic, close reading, and incorporating quality features of intervention. I consider whether and how SLPs should treat language skills and comprehension strategies to achieve noticeable changes in their students' reading comprehension. Within this multidimensional view of reading comprehension, SLPs can make strategic, meaningful contributions to improving the reading comprehension of students with language impairments.

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**Headnote**

Purpose: This commentary responds to the implications for child language intervention of Catts and Kamhi's (2017) call to move from viewing reading comprehension as a single ability to recognizing it as a complex constellation of reader, text, and activity.

Method: Reading comprehension, as Catts and Kamhi explain, is very complicated. In this commentary, I consider how comprehension has been taught and the directions in which it is moving. I consider how speech-language pathologists (SLPs), with their distinctive expertise and resources, can contribute to effective reading comprehension instruction. I build from Catts and Kamhi's emphasis on the importance of context and knowledge, using the approaches of staying on topic, close reading, and incorporating quality features of intervention. I consider whether and how SLPs should treat language skills and comprehension strategies to achieve noticeable changes in their students' reading comprehension.

Conclusion: Within this multidimensional view of reading comprehension, SLPs can make strategic, meaningful contributions to improving the reading comprehension of students with language impairments.

Catts and Kamhi's (2017) elucidation of all that is involved in reading comprehension informs but likely does not comfort those on the front lines of practice. Reading comprehension "ability" comprises myriad linguistic skills, cognitive skills, specific topic knowledge, and broader world knowledge. It involves recall, inference, synthesis, evaluation, and application. Comprehension is affected by the purpose and conditions of the activity, the topic and difficulty of the text, and the attitude and skills of the reader. What, then, are the implications of this landscape for speech-language pathologists (SLPs)? In a study of SLPs in schools, a teacher explained language as, "What isn't language?" (Ukrainetz & Fresquez, 2003, p. 288). In her view, all educators and educational activities contribute almost indistinguishably to students' language competence. This educator might have the same response about reading comprehension.

Although the possibilities for intervention are innumerable, there are strategic choices by which SLPs can make a noticeable difference for their students. My recommendations are crafted around the distinctive expertise and resources of these particular educators: (a) treating underlying language and cognitive skills to help students become more competent, independent learners across the curriculum (b) through individualized therapeutic instruction involving oral exchanges around academic texts, topics, and activities (c) typically for less than an hour a week to individual and small groups of children with various language-learning disabilities. The focus of this article is on pull-out service delivery, wherein the SLP has enough control for evidencebased indicators of quality treatment, including repeated opportunities for intense, systematically supported, explicit intervention plus attention to learner motivation and engagement (RISE+; Ukrainetz, 2015a; cf. Gillam et al., 2008; Kamil et al., 2008; Torgesen et al., 2001).

Are We Really Doing That Badly-And for That Reason?

Catts and Kamhi (2017) open with the crisis in reading achievement in America. They report data showing how badly we are doing compared with other countries. Although current educational attainment is certainly not satisfactory, another view lends more hope:

In international assessments of schoolchildren, the performance of our fourth-graders is above average [Provasnik, Gonzales, & Miller, 2009]. However, the performance of our high school students is average, at best. The results of our own National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show a similar contrast: while the reading ability of younger students has been improving over time, that of older students has not. NAEP's analysis of changes in reading performance between 1971 and 2008 shows that average scores of 9-year-olds increased by 12 points. Those of 13-yearolds increased by four points. But the average scores of 17-year-olds have not changed. (Adams, 2011, p. 4; author's additions appear in brackets)

These findings indicate that, over the years, elementary and middle schoolers have been improving in reading comprehension. This and SAT results suggest that it is primarily in high schools that achievement troubles lie (Adams, 2011). Improving high school performance may involve reaching downward into the lower grades, but at least, if teachers are to be blamed for student failings, perhaps they should also receive some credit for where they may be teaching better than they used to.

Close reading of Catts and Kamhi's (2017) opening paragraph reveals other concerns. The authors indicate that a reason for what is going awry in American education, compared with that of other countries, is that we use a unidimensional concept of reading comprehension and that classroom instruction commonly occurs "as if reading comprehension was a single entity" (p. X). However, no evidence is given of such teaching practices. Moreover, it is not apparent that educators in other countries view the construct of reading comprehension so differently from American educators or that this differing view is the cause of any differences in teaching.

Rather than teaching only one aspect of comprehension, the literature suggests that the problem used to be an absence of instruction. Decades ago, Pearson and Fielding (1991) described how the teaching of reading comprehension had formerly been limited to assigning passages of increasing difficulty, followed by posing content recall questions. In this approach, the teacher served primarily as task director who simply required, supervised, and evaluated student performance. However, Pearson and Fielding describe how comprehension instruction was moving to a more interactive, process-oriented approach. In addition to content questions, teachers were addressing text structure, background knowledge, and students asking their own questions, as well as demonstrating to students how to think during purposeful reading. Since then, recommendations have been extended to include vocabulary and comprehension strategies, text choices that support instruction, extended discussions of text meaning, and student engagement (Kamil et al., 2008; Shanahan et al., 2010). Although consistent classroom implementation remains challenging, American teachers have been trying to teach in a multifaceted manner for a long time.

Despite this progress, there has been an unintended consequence of a well-intentioned change in curriculum. In 2011, Marilyn Adams, the author of the landmark Beginning to Read (1990), turned her detective eye to the disappointing levels of reading proficiency of graduating students. Adams presents a strong empirically based argument that a substantial drop in the difficulty of high school texts, intended to improve accessibility, has had damaging effects on students' reading comprehension. I will explain how Adams's recommendations for repairing this dovetail neatly with Catts and Kamhi's (2017) emphasis on student knowledge and with recent changes in comprehension instruction (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, 2012).

Contextualized Treatment

Catts and Kamhi (2017) recommend tailoring treatment to the specific texts and tasks set before each student. Such contextualization does not require SLPs being in their students' classrooms. Rather, it requires knowing what is taught in each grade and how each teacher approaches instruction. It involves systematically addressing particular skills within activities that are functionally and topically linked to the classroom and curriculum and that motivate and engage the learner (Ukrainetz, 2015a, 2015d).

SLPs can link to the curriculum with thematic wholepart treatment units. For example, a 6- to 8-week unit on the topic of national parks can address a small number of specific skills, perhaps one for each of vocabulary, syntax, discourse, and self-regulation that come together in communicative activities. The SLP can choose a particular park (e.g., Yellowstone National Park), features (e.g., geological formations), or issues common to many parks (e.g., being "loved to death" by high visitation rates). To encourage engagement, students can have choices of the culminating project (e.g., speech, brochure, newsletter). The SLP looks toward the classroom in selecting information sources and crafting treatment activities. An extended process of reading sources; taking notes; composing, practicing, revising, and delivering the presentation; and then reviewing performance allows RISE+ within these integrated skill tasks (Ukrainetz, 2006, 2015a, 2015d). Additional practice opportunities for individual skills can occur through brief focused skill tasks (e.g., constructing 10 relative clause sentences to express two pieces of information, such as "Yellowstone Park's geysers are holes in the ground that release hot plumes of steam." After the student achieves some competence in this controlled setting, the SLP moves to coaching application of the skills within related activities in the classroom.

Catts and Kamhi (2017) remind us that part of a reading activity is how the reader approaches a text. Recent changes in comprehension instruction have moved teachers and students toward the approach of close reading (Calkins et al., 2012). Close reading involves seeking to understand what the words on the page say, explicitly and exactly, and then making logical inferences from and finding textual evidence for claims made. In the past, teachers were directed to move quickly from recall and comprehension to higher levels of application and evaluation (Bloom, 1994). Students were encouraged to make personal connections with the texts and with their own limited background knowledge, often based only on quick and impressionistic reading (Calkins et al., 2012). Now, at least in districts that are following the Common Core (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010), students are learning to engage in close reading of challenging texts. This anchor standard starts in kindergarten, with identification of key details in read-aloud texts, and continues through the grades with increasing expectations for explicit comprehension and use of textual evidence.

Attending carefully to what is said on the page can be built into SLP treatment. In addition to learning new knowledge and skills, students can be supported into conducting close reading of short sections of revisited text. In this familiar material, they can notice word choices, such as a gushing versus a bubbling geyser, how a claim is moderated with typically or rarely, or that however negates a previous claim. From what they know about a topic, they can judge whether evidence seems to be fact or opinion. Reading closely can also help students recognize when they do not understand and decide if they need to fill the comprehension gaps. To bypass decoding weaknesses, the SLP can read a passage aloud and have the student follow along in the text. They then return together to the text to highlight and make notes. Simplified or "leveled" texts allow independent reading, but reliance on this avenue has its costs (more on this next).

Using this contextualized skill approach, treatment is crafted, as Catts and Kamhi (2017) suggest, to each individual student's needs. Because children with language impairment have many areas of weakness, and the weaknesses are shared by many children, the crafting is not so much in the goals or the activities as in the particulars of structural and interactive scaffolding for each student.

It is also individualized in how the SLP helps each student navigate the opportunities and obstacles to applying the improved skills to the particulars of each classroom.

Dealing With Background Knowledge by Staying on Topic

As Catts and Kamhi (2017) have observed, poor readers with specialized topic knowledge can match or exceed good readers on texts dealing with their area of expertise (e.g., basketball). Having a deep and coherent knowledge of a topic is immensely beneficial for reading comprehension. The repeated message to develop students' background knowledge should be taken seriously. However, Catts and Kamhi do not say how SLPs should do this, other than providing alternative ways into knowledge, such as graphics and videos.

I return now to Adams (2011). Until recently, the American approach to instruction has been to superficially teach a little about many topics. In the later grades, to allow students access to these topics, the approach has been to simplify texts. Adams explains how high school texts on specialized subjects such as chemistry and civics are essentially no more challenging than eighth-grade texts. These high-low texts (high interest, low difficulty) have been stripped of specialized concepts and lexicon so that a poor reader with little background knowledge can read them independently. Although occasional use of this option can be helpful, "making textbooks easier ultimately denies students the very language, information, and modes of thought they need most to move up and on" (p. 9).

Instead of simplification, Adams (2011) and others (e.g., Calkins et al., 2012; Ehren, Murza, & Malani, 2012) recommend that academic texts in the secondary grades retain the disciplinary vocabulary, syntax, and discourse needed to transmit advanced levels of knowledge and disciplinary modes of thought. To scaffold students into comprehending these texts, Adams proposes that reading be organized across subjects and classes such that each text bootstraps the language and knowledge needed for the next text and the next grade. Moreover, topically linked, sequenced instruction should begin in the earliest grades and proceed systematically through the grades. General topics such as national parks and wildlife can lead into subtopics such as Yellowstone and wolves and related topics, such as public lands and animal habitat. Furthermore, not every word need be taught: A budding ecologist can infer the meaning of new environmental terminology as it arises in the text.

The approach of "staying on topic" across subjects and grades and sequencing learning within those topics are critical pathways to high levels of reading proficiency and academic achievement (Calkins et al., 2012). Common Core includes an example of grade-sorted, topically linked texts that move a student from reading about senses and body parts in kindergarten into texts on circulatory and endocrine systems by fifth grade. In this way, students gradually take on texts of increasing depth and complexity, until by high school, they are well into the disciplinary literacy needed for college readiness and global competitiveness.

So how does staying on topic translate into SLP intervention? SLPs need to support the instruction of the classroom, but this is not the same as teaching new content knowledge. Instead, as discussed previously, an SLP can design multiple treatment activities around a single topic with a thematic unit. The topic can be linked to the classroom, to typical interests at a grade level, or to an individual student's interest-or even better, a choice that responds to all three. The main idea is that, rather than using random isolated bits of knowledge (as often occurs in workbook-type activities), treatment skills are applied to a single coherent information base. Skill use then makes more sense and helps the topic make more sense. The repeated visits to the topic also deepen, organize, and extend background knowledge. Long ago, Fey (1986) recommended that we teach young communicators new forms in old uses or new uses for old forms. Here, students learn to use new language and learning skills on "old" topics.

Should Language Intervention Treat Language Skills?

On the matter of language treatment, Catts and Kamhi (2017) report that effects on reading comprehension have been "less than optimal." The authors recommend contextualizing intervention and using outcome measures that align with the text and task of instruction. Both are very reasonable recommendations. However, the sense is that language treatment does not lead to major gains in comprehension or not nearly as large as those from decoding treatment.

Proficient word recognition is necessary for independent reading, and large gains can be made with intensive, systematic instruction (e.g., Torgesen et al., 2001). SLPs can have a role here and certainly have long been recognized for their expertise in teaching phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness is now a regular part of reading curricula, but supplemental doses in the early grades can support students getting on the right path to reading (Ukrainetz, 2009). However, beyond that area, SLPs must make choices about where their distinctive expertise can be most beneficially applied, and the priority may not be assisting with phonics instruction.

For language instruction, teaching vocabulary clearly makes a difference. Catts and Kamhi (2017) cited Elleman, Lindo, Morphy, and Compton's (2009) meta-analysis of 37 studies as an example of disappointing results. However, for outcome measures that matched instruction, moderate effect sizes were obtained. Considering the many dimensions of reading comprehension, any unidimensional instruction that achieves this impact is impressive. Even better, Elleman et al. stated, "Students with reading difficulties (d = 1.39) benefited more than three times as much as students without reading problems (d = 0.39)" (p. 1). These findings match the larger literature, which lists direct vocabulary instruction as key to improving reading comprehension (Kamil et al., 2008; National Reading Panel [NRP], 2000).

Thus, teaching students about words and the concepts they represent is important. However, the main business of vocabulary learning needs to happen in the classroom and through life experiences. SLPs need to find ways of supporting learning without having this area consume intervention. One contribution is helping students learn the pleasure and power of words through the thematic units and close reading described previously. As new, difficult, or useful words are encountered, they can be noticed, commented on, and collected for later use. A small array of curricular words can be taught, but the emphasis should again be on repeated, supported contextualized uses. By encountering challenging words in texts that build on existing knowledge, initial meanings can be formed and then deepened as the words recur within and between topically connected texts (Adams, 2011; Nelson & van Meter, 2006). By staying on topic in this way, students can even manage those specialized Tier III words (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2008) that SLPs are often cautioned against addressing (e.g., McGregor & Duff, 2015). Students can also see, in action, the comprehension strategies involved in figuring out word meanings. Vocabulary intervention should be about "how children learn words by needing them, and how they use word-knowledge to learn other things-particularly, to read and write. Further, it is about how learning to read and write can help children learn words" (Nelson & van Meter, 2006, p. 96).

Beyond vocabulary, what other language skills should be taught to improve reading comprehension? Although they do not call it language, Catts and Kamhi (2017) and the larger literature (e.g., Kamil et al., 2008; NRP, 2000; Shanahan et al., 2010) support the teaching of narrative and expository discourse structure. There is also evidence to support targeted instruction in the multimorphemic words, elaborated phrases, and embedded clauses of academic discourse (Carlisle, 2010; Neville & Searls, 1991). Again, it is important to target only a few structures important for transmitting meaning and teach those within contexts of use, rather than through analysis and drills (Balthazar & Scott, 2015; Eisenberg, 2006, 2013). The issue is not whether SLPs should treat language skills but rather which specific skills and how best to treat them for meaningful improvements in reading comprehension.

Strategy Instruction and SLPs: An Ideal Match

Finally, one important area of text comprehension is strategic reading. Catts and Kamhi (2017) recommend strategy instruction but caution that strategies be crafted to each context of use. Multiple reviews of the research have supported teaching students to more intentionally use their mental processes to improve their comprehension and learning across a range of reading levels (Gersten, Fuchs, Williams, & Baker, 2001; Kamil et al., 2008; NRP, 2000; Shanahan et al., 2010). There are persistent questions about what strategies to teach, how best to engender independent use of these strategies, and how to combine them with content instruction, but teaching students to read strategically and mindfully is a key part of comprehension instruction.

SLP intervention and comprehension strategies go together well. To name a few reasons: (a) Classroom teaching of content and strategies simultaneously can reduce the learning of both (e.g., McKeown, Beck, & Blake, 2009); (b) strategies taught through scaffolded spoken interactions can have powerful effects on reading comprehension (Clarke, Snowling, Truelove, & Hulme, 2010; Palincsar, 1986; Palincsar & Brown, 1984); and (c) poor readers show strong benefits from strategy instruction delivered through explicit, individualized interventions (Kamil et al., 2008). Furthermore, Palincsar, David, and Brown (1989) cautioned that little text is "covered" in a strategy lesson and that strategy acquisition takes more time than many teachers can allow. In addition, the oral scaffolding of strategy learning is not well suited to whole-class instruction. All of these are reasons why SLPs should add strategy instruction to their treatment repertoire (Ukrainetz, 2015b; Ukrainetz & Ross, 2006).

There are many possible strategies for prereading, during reading, and postreading that could be taught (Ukrainetz, 2015b, 2015c). Helpful strategies tend to be specific prompts or questions about text ideas and structure, not having students generate their own questions based on their perceptions of what is important (Rosenshine, Meister, & Chapman, 1996). Strategies selected for treatment need to be brief, simple actions that can be applied across a range of situations. Students will need explicit instruction with repeated opportunities and systematic scaffolding all the way from the treatment setting to the classroom to take ownership of those strategies.

There are some strategies that are relatively simple to learn and use beyond the treatment setting. Two of these are text preview (Bluestein, 2010; Kelley & ClausenGrace, 2008) and text lookback (Garner, Hare, Alexander, Haynes, & Winograd, 1984), which I explain in Ukrainetz (2016). Other simple strategies are, before reading, to identify the purpose of reading and to match approach to purpose, whether to skim for general ideas, search for specific pieces of information, read certain passages closely, or just read the whole thing from beginning to end. Some apparently simple strategies, such as identifying the main idea of paragraphs and passages, may first require systematic instruction in grouping ideas and extracting commonalties (Wong, Wong, Perry, & Sawatsky, 1986). Others, such as making summaries or evaluating evidence, are complex actions that have many component skills and steps.

I close with the earlier reminders about contextualization and old versus new. Strategies should be taught not as individual drills applied to diverse topics but rather in an integrated, purposeful manner that helps students achieve a reading goal-or know when they have not achieved it and try again. Strategies can be taught on curricular texts but not in situations in which the students must also master new content. Grade-level reading may continue to be difficult, but students equipped with a mindful approach to reading and some basic comprehension strategies will be better prepared to face these challenges.

Conclusion

SLPs are critically involved in improving reading comprehension, both because language skills are a major component of understanding academic texts and because language intervention is about so much more than language. As Catts and Kamhi remind us, reading comprehension intervention is a multifaceted endeavor. The challenge for SLPs is to make strategic choices about what to treat and how to treat it. Explicit, systematic intervention for a small set of language and learning skills, delivered in a contextualized whole-part manner on curricular topics, can make noticeable differences in students' reading comprehension across the grades.