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Speak and Sketch: Improving Academic Retention in Students with Language-Related Learning Disabilities

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Introduction

Note-taking can be a powerful learning tool for students. Effective note taking asks students to condense information for recall and then expand ideas back into paraphrased full sentences to use in presentations and essays. However, note-taking is hard for students with learning disabilities. Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) are educational specialists who can help. This case study is a follow-up to a larger Speak and Sketch treatment study. Students were taught three learning strategies: pictography, written notes, and verbal (or whisper) rehearsal of their own spoken, well-formed sentences.

Research Question: Will the Speak and Sketch treatment improve students’ notes, presentations, written reports, and strategy awareness for different topic articles?

Methods

Participants
Three students (two 6th graders & one 4th grader) with learning disabilities worked with the school SLP for 16 individual 20-min sessions, for a total of 6 hours of treatment.

Pre/Post Testing
Tester read aloud either an Inca Nation or Apache Empire article, then students took notes with their choice of "words or pictures", then they gave oral report from their notes. After 2 days, students wrote reports from their notes.

Treatment Sessions
Sessions 1-10: Using unusual animal articles, students learned to make simple pictography and bulleted notes on important and interesting ideas, with verbal rehearsal of full, well-formed oral sentences & presentations
Sessions 11-16: Students practiced applying their strategies of pictography, written notes, and verbal or whisper rehearsal on an animal brochure, a Michael Jordan article, and presentations in the resource room.

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Conclusions

- Students with learning disabilities can learn pictography, written notes, & verbal rehearsal and it helps their presentations and reports on articles different from treatments.
- Further research is needed to improve strategy use by increasing classroom practice.

Figure 1 – Student #3 pictography & written notes in treatment

Figure 2 – Student #1 pre (A) and post (B) notes

Figure 3 – Student #2 post-test pictography

Figure 4 – Student #2 pre (A) and post (B) report notes

Two raters rated 3/3 post-test reports as better, describing them as more academic, organized, cohesive.

Figure 5 – Students #3 and #1 strategy awareness

Did you say anything in your head as you took notes?
#3 Pre: Well, when you were reading it, well I said in my head that I didn’t know about the empire was the largest kingdom.
#3 Post: I was saying in my head, “What should I write?” or “What should I do, like bulleted notes or pictography?”
#1 Pre: It was kind of hard and easy ‘cause I was reading the paper and then I was thinking in my mind, “Is that a place or something that will happen?”
#1 Post: When I’m writing I whisper it to myself and then I show it to you.

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