Speak and Sketch: Improving Academic Language through Note-Taking and Verbal Rehearsal

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Introduction
Note-taking is potentially a powerful learning tool. Taking and using notes involves selecting and condensing what is read or heard, and then retrieving ideas from the brief notations and expanding them into the students’ own well-formed sentences.

However, good note-taking is hard, especially for students with learning disabilities. Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) are educational specialists who teach strategies like this through individualized oral language intervention.

This case study is a follow-up to a larger treatment study of Speak and Sketch, a procedure for teaching taking and using notes. The sketch part was pictography, which helped students use their own words, gave an oral practice opportunity, and provided a note-taking alternative. Treatment modifications in this version included more oral practice, more varied practice contexts, and the idea of whisper rehearsal.

Will Speak and Sketch treatment improve notes, oral and written reports, and strategy awareness?

Method – Treatment Procedure

- Six hours individual 20-min sessions
- Scaffolding with repetition, models, prompts, cues
- Challenging informational texts (940-980 Lexile, 450-475 words)

1-4: Cassowary
- Pictography notes
- Oral practice of sentences & report
- Repeat with written notes & oral practice
- Lots of scaffolding

5-10: Axolotl & Aye-Aye
- Repeat S1-4
- Less scaffolding

11: Resource Rm Presentation
- Report choice
- Whisper rehearsal

12-13: Animal Brochure
- Dictate sentence from notes
- Oral rehearsal

14-15: MJordan
- Notes & verbal rehearsal
- Minimal scaffolding

16: Resource Rm Presentation
- Independent whisper rehearsal
- Demo strategies to peers

Method – Participants & Testing Procedure

Participants
- One 4th and two 6th graders with language impairment
- Receiving language, reading, and writing SPED services
- SLP instructor, LCSD, Cheyenne WY

Pre/Post Session 1
Pre = Inca Nation
Post = Apache People

Pre/Post Session 2
Pre = Essay from notes
Post = Learning Interview + SLP Instructor perceptions

Results

Holistic Oral/Written Rating

2 raters
- Overall quality & reasons
- Oral & written reports
- 5/6 ratings post-test better
- Improvements: cohesion & academic

Conclusions

- Supported pictography, written notes, & verbal rehearsal improves comprehension & speaking in tx
- Hints of benefits for independent use & empowerment outside of tx
- Further research: Improve strategy use by increasing connections with classroom & teaching older students

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