

Text comprehension: The analysis of some factors*Leonor Lencastre, Duarte Costa Pereira, PORTUGAL*

Teachers frequently complain that students don't understand the meaning of the texts they read. This difficulty seems to persist till advanced education's levels. In an attempt to understand these difficulties, this study analyses some factors involved in text comprehension process: subject's prior knowledge about the domain and some textual factors (illustrations, signaling techniques and non linear text presentation - Guide). Subjects are university students with different levels of prior knowledge about the domain, that read an instructional text about the osmoses phenomenon. The assessment instrument is a comprehension test, with nine open questions about the osmoses phenomenon. Two parallel forms of this test were constructed, in order to apply a pretest posttest research design. Although a clear interaction effect between prior knowledge about the domain and text version was not found, this study raises some hypothesis: for subjects with a low structured prior knowledge about the domain. Signaling techniques seem to reduce themselves to an extra amount of textual information to be processed, not functioning as clarifiers of textual structure and of its semantic content. High prior knowledge students seem to be more sensible to these techniques. The other two textual factors analyzed in this study (representative illustrations and nonlinear text version in a structured knowledge domain) don't seem to depend on prior knowledge about the domain. Some recommendations for future researches are presented.

Pre-school children and their understanding of stories: The case of two fairy tales*Aikaterini Michalopoulou, GREECE*

In order to test the influence of the variable "story", each child is be presented with two stories: "The Three Little Pigs", by the Brothers Grimm (in the Kedros edition), and "The Three Little Wolves", by Evgenios Trivizas (Minoas Press). We feel that these two stories are at once similar and opposite, in that Trivizas has transformed the structures and the figures of the original folk tale. We anticipate encountering certain difficulties in comprehension when the roles of the characters change part way through a story, as well as when there is a contradiction between a character's narrative role and his thematic role. As for the objectives of comprehension, we feel that understanding the characters and their inter-relationships means the following. (1) Being capable of identifying the figures by their qualitative or functional characteristics and of assigning them to their appropriate positions in relation to the central figure, (2) being capable of justifying this positioning by reference to macro-relations and possibly to micro-relations as well, (3) being able to explain non-explicit relationships. For young children, therefore, understanding of a story comes through comprehension of the values presented by the text, and thus through the ideological dimension of the tale.