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Factors that impact reading comprehension in children with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)

Hin, J., Leachman, M. A., & Pratt, A. S. (2024). A systematic review of factors that impact reading comprehension in children with developmental language disorders. *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, 149, 104731–104731. <u>https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ridd.2024.104731</u>

Who should read this?

School leaders, teachers, Speech Pathologists

What?

This systematic review examined factors that impact reading comprehension in children with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) - a lifelong condition characterised by oral language difficulties with no known cause. Given that there is a higher prevalence of reading comprehension difficulties in individuals with DLD, it is important to examine factors explaining these challenges.

Examining 44 studies from 1984 to 2020, the 'Active View of Reading' (AVR) framework was evaluated to determine if it could be applied as a model to understanding the reading skills of children with DLD. The AVR model builds upon the Simple View of Reading (Decoding x Language Comprehension = Reading Comprehension) by adding two additional components:

- Bridging Processes (e.g., reading fluency and vocabulary knowledge)
- Active Self-Regulation (e.g., executive functioning skills, motivation, and reading strategy use).

The review also investigated other factors beyond the AVR framework that affect reading comprehension skills in children with DLD.

So What?

Why is this important?

The review found that the AVR framework can be applied to children with DLD and is useful for understanding their reading comprehension skills and difficulties.

Factors that affect reading comprehension in children with DLD include:

• 'Bridging Processes', such as vocabulary knowledge, fluency and morphological awareness: Because oral language lays the foundation for Bridging Processes, challenges like those experienced by children



with DLD can significantly impact the development of these higher-order skills, ultimately affecting their reading comprehension.

- Working memory: Working memory, a component of the AVR model, was found to play a significant role in reading comprehension. Children with DLD can experience difficulties in this area. Challenges with working memory can affect the decoding and storing of words and retrieving word meanings which are all required for understanding texts.
- Assessment of reading comprehension: How reading comprehension is assessed is, in itself, a factor. Reading comprehension assessments often require students to use their expressive language skills to recall or write about what they have read. This place demands on expressive language, verbal or written, and is particularly challenging for students with DLD. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain whether the student with DLD is experiencing difficulties with comprehending the text, or with expressing and explaining their understanding of what they have read.
- The nature and severity of the DLD: This also has an impact on the level of reading comprehension challenges. Children with severe DLD were found to have poorer reading comprehension skills.

Now What?

What can I take away from this?

The findings highlight the challenges that students with DLD face in developing reading comprehension skills. Given that the purpose of reading is comprehension, it is beneficial to examine all the individual skills required for reading. This includes assessing word recognition (phonics, phonemic awareness), language comprehension, and 'Bridging Process' and 'Active Self-Regulation' skills to determine where breakdowns occur. Understanding a student's breakdowns can support the implementation of targeted intervention which can support individual skills required for reading. This can then have a positive effect on reading comprehension.

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