

Verbal Rehearsal

Why Is This Strategy Useful?

Verbal rehearsal aims to improve short-term memory in literacy recall tasks of students with learning disabilities. Students are prompted to repeat aloud words to be recalled after a delay period, as a memory strategy. Researchers think this strategy is helpful because some students with learning disabilities do not use memory strategies on their own without prompting.

Description of Strategy

Teachers lead a memory task, working with students individually in 35- to 45-minute sessions. The materials needed are seven line drawings of common objects such as a spoon, a baby, an apple, a bus, a ball, a flag, and a cup. The seven pictures are arranged in a different order on each page of a booklet. The teacher holds one page of the booklet in front of the student and points to three pictures in a sequence at the rate of 2 seconds per picture. The teacher asks the student to repeat the name of the object in the picture as the teacher points it. Then the student closes his or her eyes for a 15-second delay period. The teacher turns the page of the booklet while the student’s eyes are closed. The student opens his or her eyes, and the teacher tells the student to point to the pictures in the same sequence the teacher did. This can be repeated with four and then five pictures.

Research Evidence

At least one correlational study provides evidence that verbal rehearsal is an effective memory and literacy strategy. In the study, 32 second-grade students were divided into two groups: one with reading difficulties and one with no reading difficulties. Researchers administered two memory tasks to each group. In the first task, students received no instruction, and in the second task, the students were required to say aloud the names of the pictured objects during the presentation and recall phases. The measure was students’ use of verbal rehearsal during the delay phase before the recall phase. In the first task, the group with no reading difficulties verbalized and then recalled significantly more than the students with reading disabilities. In the second task, the students with reading difficulties made significant improvements in verbalization and in recall.

Sample Studies Supporting This Strategy


The present study investigated the hypothesis that frequently found short-term memory deficits in poor readers may reflect a lack of ability or inclination to use efficient task strategies on some memory tasks. The performance of second-grade good and poor readers was compared on a task which allowed direct observation of the use of verbal rehearsal as a mnemonic strategy. Children in the two reading groups differed significantly in both total recall score and amount of verbalization (rehearsal) observed, with the poor readers obtaining lower scores on both measures. On a variation of the task which had been previously demonstrated to facilitate the use of rehearsal, the poor readers improved significantly in both amount of verbalization and
total recall scores. On this latter task, the memory and verbalization scores of good and poor readers were not significantly different from one another.

Sample Activity

(Source: Learning Strategies Database: http://www.muskingum.edu/~cal/database/general/memory5.html)

The RCRC strategy (Read, Cover, Recite, Check) is used for studying information carefully or memorizing information. It helps to study definitions, factual information, math facts, and foreign language translations.

The steps in the RCRC strategy are:

• Read: Read and reread a portion of the information.
• Cover: Cover the material with a piece of paper.
• Recite: Recite what you have read in your own words.
• Check: Check the accuracy of recitation against the written material.

Additional Resources