

Abstract:

This study forms part of a series of studies on the use of mental imagery in learning. Preliminary data suggests that high mental imagery techniques are as effective as phonological based techniques in the remediation of the English language abilities of learners with difficulties in reading and written expression, and may lead to greater improvements where children have previously not learned using phonic approaches to learning to read, write and spell. Preliminary data further suggest that cognitive improvements, which cannot be explained purely by maturation factors, are also apparent as a result. The primary focus of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of high mental imagery techniques in improving the simultaneous and successive processing abilities of Grade V learners with learning disorders of reading and written expression. It also aimed to explore the usefulness of mental imagery techniques in improving the English spelling, reading and writing abilities of these learners.

Eight Grade V learners attending a remedial primary school were selected to participate in this study. These learners were those who, in view of their scholastic history, were considered to be 'treatment resisters', implying that they had progressed poorly and had not responded well to other forms of traditional remedial intervention received in improving their English language abilities. Each participant's cognitive, spelling, reading and writing abilities were pre and post tested utilising various psycho-educational and cognitive psychological assessment tools and their phonic skills were analysed. The sample received six months of bi-weekly individual remedial tuition in accordance with the remedial intervention strategy of the study group to which the participants had been randomly assigned. Four participants were tutored via high mental imagery techniques (experimental group) and four participants tutored utilising a phonological approach, forming the contrast group.

Aggregated case study methodology was utilised to analyse the data. The results of this pilot study suggest that high mental imagery techniques are useful in improving the successive and simultaneous processing abilities and reading, spelling and writing skills of learners suffering learning disorders of reading and written expression. It should be noted that statistical analysis of the results was not undertaken owing to the small numbers of participants comprising the sample. However, when results obtained were analysed on a case by case

basis as well as through aggregated case contrasts, there were strong indications to suggest that the gains made by the those participants tutored using high mental imagery techniques exceeded those of participants tutored in phonological techniques.