

Gestalt Imagery: A Critical Factor in Language Comprehension

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SUMMARY:

Reading is cognition. Gestalt imagery contributes to the cognition process of comprehending oral and written language. The imaging factor, discussed for many years in the field of cognitive psychology, appears to be automatic for many individuals and has, perhaps, been assumed to be present for all. This assumed factor, as well as the focus on decoding, the lack of good oral and written comprehension tests, a culture addicted to television viewing, the continuing dispute over context, phonological processing, and sight word instruction has left comprehension without direct stimulation. Instructional procedures to develop comprehension have been in the format of reading and/or listening and answering questions—a format that tests comprehension rather than teaches comprehension.

Of late, because of the psycholinguists' cry for meaning and deep structure, the field of reading has been turning away from excessive concern over surface structure. However, increasing vocabulary and stimulating background knowledge or use of context clues does not guarantee comprehension development.

With specific attention to the integration of imagery and verbalization, it is possible to develop an imaged gestalt from which interpretation and reasoning can be processed. "According to the dual coding theory, meaning consisted of the relations between external stimuli and the verbal and nonverbal representational activity they initiate in the individual," Paivio (1986).

It is my hope that this initial inquiry will serve to generate further discussion and research focusing on the diagnosis and development of the imaged gestalt and language comprehension.

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