Talkies®

Visualizing and Verbalizing®

for
Oral Language
Comprehension and Expression

Nanci Bell
and
Christy Bonetti

This is a sample of the *Talkies*® *Manual*. For more information about the *Talkies* program or the *Talkies Manual*, please visit www.GanderPublishing.com.

The *Talkies*® program aligns with a theory of cognition, Dual Coding Theory, and through sequential steps brings the nonverbal code of imagery to consciousness. The goal is to engage the individual to consciously create and access mental representations and stimulate his or her awareness of the imagery-language connection. *Talkies*® is not intended to diagnose or be an exclusive treatment for speech-language pathology and audiology disorders.

Illustrations: Phyllis Lindamood

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3 *Visualizing and Verbalizing* Meets *Talkies*

The *Visualizing and Verbalizing for Language Comprehension and Thinking* (*V/V*) program was developed without knowledge of the theoretical model of dual coding, but it soon became evident that the premise and steps of *V/V* embodied DCT.

The goal of the *V/V* program is to develop concept imagery for oral and written language processing. As noted earlier, some individuals are able to rapidly and automatically create an imaged gestalt from language they hear or language they read. They easily bring parts of language (words, sentences, paragraphs) to a whole and from that imaged gestalt they can comprehend oral language, comprehend what they read, problem solve, think logically, think creatively, "get the big picture," move from concrete to abstract thinking, express themselves relevantly, make their point, get humor, read social situations, make inferences, draw conclusions, and attend to all levels of communication.

This ability to create an imaged gestalt is a basic and primary asset in the sensory system, yet there are many children and many adults who find concept imagery difficult, slow, or unavailable. However, these individuals may visualize parts well, such as facts or details. Rapid imagery of words and sentences is required for concept imagery but it isn't required to process parts, which could explain why individuals with weak concept imagery often appear to be stuck on parts. It is the parts that they are able to image. They can create images for small bits of language—letters, isolated facts, parts of oral language, parts of directions, parts of written language, parts of movies, and parts of social situations. Sometimes the parts seem to be overwhelming and consuming.

In processing oral language, such as in a conversation, the problem caused by primarily grasping parts can be confusing to everyone, including the individual

with the disorder. A part of a conversation or lecture is imaged and processed, and then discussed irrelevantly because the point of the conversation may have been missed. The main idea is lost somewhere in an array of random bits and pieces. The critical thinking ability to make an inference or draw a conclusion is impaired by a limited gestalt from which to think and from which to express language. The random and unconnected imaged bits and pieces bounce back in the form of random and unconnected verbal expression lacking sequence and relevance. Parts go in and parts come out.

Social situations often suffer the same fate. Parts of social interaction and communication are grasped, and then often misread and reacted to with negative consequences. Personal interaction is difficult if language is swirling around with a jumble of parts that are processed and expressed.

Symptoms of Weak Concept Imagery

Weakness in concept imagery ranges from mild to severe. Some individuals may experience very moderate difficulty creating imaged gestalts and can compensate by doing something rather easy, like rereading text. However, as the weakness in imaging gestalts becomes more severe, so do the symptoms and the labels, such as hyperlexia and/or ASD.

Individuals with weak concept imagery may have the following symptoms:

- They have a tendency to process parts more than, or rather than, wholes. They get details rather than the big picture and they attend to facts more than concepts.
- They experience difficulty with conceptual, critical, logical, and abstract thinking. They get stuck on details and parts, enjoying facts rather than concepts. They appear to be concrete thinkers because their processing strength is in parts-specific images.
- They have difficulty grasping oral language, whether stories, conversations, or lectures. They don't enjoy or respond to oral language and find it difficult to sustain attention because they miss the point or have experienced unsuccessful interactions. They appear to process irrelevant or incidental parts of what is expressed, sometimes asking and re-asking the same question, and they may be labeled a poor listener or inattentive.

- They have weak reading comprehension. They may have good skills in oral vocabulary and decoding, but words go "in one ear and out the other" when they read. They have difficulty grasping the whole and answering higher order thinking questions such as the main idea, an inference, a conclusion, and a prediction. They often have to read sentences, paragraphs, and chapters more than once and they still may not be successful in answering questions.

- They experience difficulty following oral and written directions. They find themselves confused with more than one or two directions, and language appears to go in and out without being held long enough to process all the directions.

- They experience weakness in verbal expression. Their language expression is often an array of parts, facts, and details that they have imaged, stored, and retrieved. Their language is disconnected and not sequential. Sometimes their verbal expression is repressed, or sometimes it is excessive but scattered and disconnected.

- They experience difficulty in social situations. They are lost in social situations because of their weakness in comprehending and expressing oral language. With weak communication skills, they may make inappropriate comments or exhibit inappropriate behavior, appearing unresponsive to others.

- They have difficulty in written expression. Their writing reflects their parts-thinking. They write in disconnected, unrelated parts and misinterpret the question.

- They have difficulty getting humor. They take language literally and may miss the point of a joke, as they can't see the imagery of the play on words. They may respond to physical humor such as a pie in the face but can't process language-based humor. In trying to fit in socially, they may laugh at inappropriate times.

- They have difficulty reading social situations. They grasp parts of conversations or social interactions, causing them to make inappropriate expressions or actions.

- They have difficulty grasping the concept of cause and effect. Their weakness in processing the whole prevents them from understanding cause and effect relationships that are inherently dependent on comparing a part to a whole.
- They may prefer their own company. If they experience many of the symptoms above, the communicating-world seems to be puzzling, disconcerting, and meaningless, often causing them stress, frustration, and unhappiness.

The Visualizing and Verbalizing Program

Individuals with weakness in forming gestalt images from language cannot just be told to picture language concepts. Concept imagery has to be directly and explicitly developed with specific steps and specific questioning to bring imagery to a level of consciousness as a tool to process language. Beginning with the smallest unit of language, a word, *V/V* extends the imagery-language connection to sentences and paragraphs of language. Here is a brief summary of the sequential *V/V* steps, for which *Talkies* is the primer.

1. Picture to Picture

   The goal of Picture to Picture is to develop fluent, detailed verbalization from a given picture, a prerequisite to developing detailed verbal descriptions of a generated image (the next *V/V* step). The student describes a given picture, using the *structure words*: *what*, *size*, *color*, *number*, *shape*, *where*, *when*, *background*, *movement*, *mood*, *perspective*, and *sound* as concrete descriptive elements to be included in a verbal description. The teacher questions to specifically direct the student's verbalization.

2. Word Imaging

   The goal is to develop detailed visualizing and verbalizing (dual coding) for a single word, a *known noun* that will become the subject of sentence imagery in later steps. The student describes a generated image for a single word, beginning with a personal image and extending to a high-imagery known noun such as *cowboy* or *clown*. The teacher questions to specifically direct the student's imagery.

3. Single Sentence Imaging

   The goal is to continue to extend the imagery and language from one word to a phrase or sentence. The steps are overlapped, enabling the student to use a previously visualized and verbalized known noun as the subject of a sentence. "Keep the clown you just visualized for this sentence: *The clown jumped on the red ball*." The teacher questions to develop imagery for the words in the high-imagery sentence.

4. Sentence by Sentence Imaging

   The goal is to extend the integration of imagery and language to a gestalt—sentence by sentence. The stimulation begins receptively from a short, self-contained paragraph. The student places a colored square to represent each imaged sentence. At the completion of the sentence by sentence imagery and verbalization, the student gives a sequential *picture summary* to reverbalize the images for each sentence, and then gives a *word summary* to verbally paraphrase the whole.

5. Sentence by Sentence with Higher Order Thinking (HOT)

   The goal is to apply the gestalt imagery (developing in the previous step) to critical thinking. The same sentence by sentence procedure of placing colored squares and sequentially summarizing the imaged-parts toward the whole is extended to processing the main idea, an inference, a conclusion, and a prediction. "What was the main thing you pictured from that paragraph? From all your images, why do you think…?"

6. Multiple Sentence, Paragraph, and Whole Page Imaging with HOT

   The goal of the next steps is to increase and extend the language input, either receptive or expressive, to develop the imaged gestalt and apply that sensory-cognitive base to critical thinking, problem solving, and interpretation.

The steps develop the sensory input of imagery to a conscious level that can be stored, retrieved, and consciously accessed for problem solving, critical thinking, oral and written language comprehension, following directions, play, and interpreting and interacting in social situations (pragmatics).

Visualizing and Verbalizing Meets Talkies

For many years, the *V/V* program has successfully developed receptive and expressive language comprehension/expression, critical thinking, and problem solving in many students. Soon the task of developing symbol imagery for reading and spelling acquisition presented itself, leading to the question as to whether or not dual coding was a widely applicable theoretic model for language and learning. Could imagery be directly and explicitly stimulated, developed, and applied—and the dual coding model adapted—to decoding and encoding skills? Years of clinical and classroom research provided an answer. Yes, conscious development and application of imagery with the *Seeing Stars: Symbol Imagery for Phonemic Awareness, Sight Words, and Spelling* program results in significant gains in reading and spelling, including contextual fluency.

Then came the question of whether or not imagery could be directly and explicitly developed and applied to math skills. Could the theoretical model of dual coding be applied to competence in mathematical computation? Again, years of clinical and classroom research provided an answer. Yes, the conscious development and application of imagery for mathematical concepts and computation with the *On Cloud Nine Math* program results in significant gains in math skills.

As the effectiveness of the above programs validated the premise that weakness in imagery can be directly and explicitly stimulated and applied to different aspects of learning, the next question was whether dual coding could be stimulated and developed for children with severely delayed language development or for those with an autistic spectrum disorder. It seemed clear that these children might be the most impaired in terms of creating and accessing imagery, the important "other half" of the code. Could they be taught to consciously perceive the sensory information of imagery? Was their language and the sensory input of their imagery too weak to respond to instruction? Given that some children on the autistic spectrum had responded to *V/V*, what steps could we add that would standardize and simplify *V/V* for children with severe weakness in oral vocabulary and language expression?

To meet this need, we whittled *V/V* down to a lower level. What emerged is *Talkies*, a program with lots of little steps within big steps to develop the imagery-language connection. *V/V* gave birth to *Talkies*.