Self-Regulated Strategy Development "TREE" for Improving Persuasive Writing of Children with Writing Difficulties: A Case Study

Erica Learning, Janina Alzate, Giovanni Paul, Jacqueline Murdocca and Anthony D. Koutsoftas
Seton Hall University

Introduction

- Writing is a complex process which includes cognitive linguistic skills such as transcription, text generation, self-regulation, and memory. Students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) or Communication Impairments (CI) can exhibit difficulty in any one of these skills and therefore may require explicit instruction and scaffolding to engage in the writing process and to do so at multiple levels of language.
- According to Ritchey et al. (2016), the writing process centers around the Simple View of Writing (Berninger & Amtmann, 2003), and includes scaffolding and levels of language framework.
- One approach to writing instruction with substantial evidence is Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) instruction whereby a student is taught six recursive phases: Develop background knowledge, Discuss it, Model it, Memorize it, Support it, and Independent performance (Graham & Harris, 2005).

Purpose

- The purpose of this case study was to provide an intensive intervention targeting organization of writing in fifth and sixth grade students classified as SLD or CI using an SRSD.
- The SRSD strategy used was TREE, which stands for **T**opic sentence, **R**easons, **E**nding, and **E**xamine (Graham & Harris, 2005).
- TREE is an organization strategy that allows students to improve their persuasive writing.

Intervention

- **Intervention goal:** By the end of a six-session intervention, students will demonstrate use of the TREE strategy to produce a persuasive paragraph that includes a topic sentence, three supporting reasons and details, and an ending sentence.
- **Intervention dosage:** Twice per week for 30 minutes in a group session from May to June, for a total of 3 weeks. The intervention took place in a speech therapy classroom.
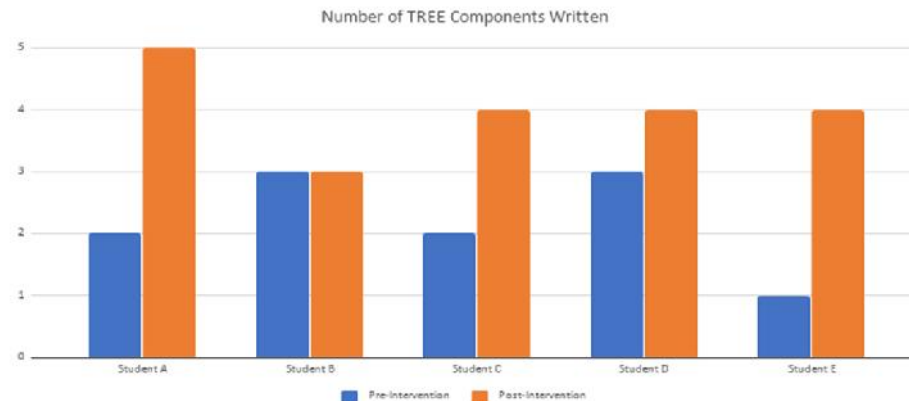
Participants

Student	A	B	C	D	E
Age (year; months)	12; 6	11; 11	11; 10	12; 3	12; 11
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male
Grade	5	5	5	6	6
IEP Qualifying Category	CI	SLD	SLD	CI	SLD

Results

Number of TREE Components Written

Writing Quality Scores

Materials

Summary

- The average number of TREE components present increased from 2.2 to 4 and the average writing quality scores increased from 2.5 to 3.14, pre-intervention to post intervention.
- Individual growth indicated gains on the number of TREE components and writing quality scores.

Conclusion

- This case study demonstrated the effectiveness of the TREE strategy in a short period of time to improve the organization of the persuasive writing of fifth and sixth grade students classified as CI and SLD, as made evident by the increase in thought organization in 4 out of 5 students. Additionally, this strategy improved the overall quality of writing in 4 out of 5 students.
- SLPs can work collaboratively with OTs and classroom teachers to target writing goals using an SRSD such as TREE for students with CI and SLD.

Limitations and Future Directions:
- It is to be noted that Student D presented with difficulty with self-regulation during the post-assessment, possibly influencing his writing quality performance. If this intervention were being presented outside of the construct of a research study, the post assessment would not have been given to this student.
- At the end of the intervention, at least one session should be held in the classroom in order to promote generalization and carryover into multiple settings.

References:
- Berninger, V.W., & Amtmann, D. (2003). Preventing written expression disabilities through early and continuing assessment and intervention for handwriting and/or spelling problems: research into practice. In H.L. Swanson, K. Harris, and S. Graham (Eds.) Handbook of Learning Difficulties (pp. 345-363), New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Graham, S. & Harris, K.R. (2005). Writing better: Effective strategies for teaching students with learning difficulties. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.
- Ritchey, K. D., McMaster, K. L., Al Otaiba, S., Puranik, C. S., Kim, Y.-S., Parker, D. C., & Ortiz, M. (2016). Indicators of fluency writing in beginning writers. In K. Cummings, & Y. Petscher (Eds.), The fluency construct (pp. 21-66). Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.