

### **"IMPROVING READING IN THE DISCIPLINES— DIRECTIONS FOR DEVELOPING AND REFINING AN INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNIQUE": A REACTION**

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As reported by Brown, Campione, and Day (1981), there are three types of instructional procedures which have been used to aid student learning. Students can be taught to use a strategy without understanding the reason for the strategy, they can be taught a strategy and informed how the strategy can help them learn, or they can learn how to evaluate and monitor personal performance as they use a strategy. The goal of this third approach, self control training, is to help students learn to learn. It is intended that students will transfer self-learning tasks to various materials without further teacher intervention.

Otto and his colleagues have developed a multifaceted and comprehensive approach to the use of glossing for the purpose of developing independent learners. Their studies have attempted to systematize a set of procedures for teachers and a set of skills and strategies for students. They have developed glossing techniques which accommodate the interaction among the variables of curriculum, teachers, students, and texts.

Rather than attending only to the students' skills, or self-learning strategies, or amount of comprehension gain, Otto and his associates have attended to all three factors. Glossing, or the use of "marginal notes and other extratext notations," is used to direct the students' attention to specific concepts by demonstrating to the student how s/he can use appropriate strategies and skills to interpret these concepts.

Otto and his colleagues suggest a sound and logical progression of stages for glossing notations: (a) demonstration, (b) development, (c) internalization, and (d) fading. Active involvement by the reader in the process of comprehending the text is built into each stage of glossing. Skills and strategies are taught (even some skills, excursions, are taught in isolation) and then applied directly to the text. Students are shown how to use the skills and strategies when they are asked to define, paraphrase, explain and react to the ideas presented in the materials.

Another value of their approach to glossing is the selection of a representative set of skills and strategies which are taught to the students. Rather than presenting a long list of isolated

skills, the four general skill areas interrelate several others so that they can be used in a comprehensive manner. Similarly the four strategies are those that are comprehensive, interrelated and have "high utility" for processing the material.

As Otto and Hayes illustrated, glossing techniques can be applied to a variety of materials. Glossing is appropriate to explain abstract concepts and ideas in content materials (e.g., social studies texts which explain the War of 1812 in two paragraphs or math texts which contain complicated word problems). As Singer and Donlan (1980) indicated, the notations provide a "semantic bridge" between the new information and the students' prior knowledge (p. 332). Also glossing would seem to be appropriate for basal materials, supplementary materials, and skill practice manuals—perhaps even teachers manuals and textbooks. Even though the nature of glossing might vary according to the materials, students' familiarity with the techniques presented in varying materials might heighten the use and application of these skills and strategies.

As indicated in their presentation, the comprehensiveness of this approach requires intensive preparation for both students and teachers. Students need to be taught how to use the skills and strategies at each stage of the glossing procedure. As the notations change with different materials according to the variance in structure and/or concept load, students need to learn to adjust their expectations and use of gloss.

Teachers need to be taught how to prepare gloss notations and monitor their students progress. Neither of these tasks seems to be easy. As Witte indicated, the reading teacher/consultant can communicate ideas of research about the reader, the text, and their interaction as a way of helping teachers understand and develop glossing techniques for their own curriculum needs. To be successful with gloss, teachers need encouragement and a solid knowledge base. They need to be able to identify the goals of their curriculum, assess the knowledge and skill level of their students, and analyze the concepts and structure of the text. Systematic teacher preparation is critical to the success of this technique as is teacher commitment to the project of glossing the text. Witte's description of the process she used to involve the teachers with whom she worked seemed to be an excellent method for teacher inservice. Systematic training can also be developed through teacher education programs in colleges and continuous inservice school programs.

Even with the provision of precise instruction for teachers, some of the teaching tasks remain quite weighty. Assessing prior knowledge and analyzing text structure can be complicated. So far, methods to analyze text structure have produced procedures which are time consuming and probably unrealistic for the classroom and/or content teacher.

As Hayes and Otto indicated, several major questions are yet to be answered. It is not known what the "optimal amount of gloss notation for enhancing" comprehension will be. Nor is it known how to judge the optimal time for each student to experience each stage of glossing. The appropriateness of glossing in different sets of materials and at different levels of instruction remains to be studied.

Otto and his colleagues have advanced the use of glossing with a careful presentation of the theory and practice of this technique and how it interfaces with the various components of the reading process and content curriculum. In their future work, it seems that they will continue to investigate the questions which they have identified and those yet to be established.

There are other questions and problems which may deserve their attention. While it is the goal of this strategy to move students "systematically from one stage of the next", it is also important to identify guidelines to prepare the teacher to monitor student progress. How will it be determined whether students are maintaining and generalizing their use of the varied skills and strategies? How will it be determined when teacher intervention can be "faded"? Perhaps a method such

as the protocol analysis presented by Olshavsky (1976-1977), which asks the students to talk about what they do and think as they read would be useful to determine how students are "processing" the material.

Another question relates to how teachers could individualize the process and skill learning for students. While it may be virtually impossible to prepare a different gloss for each student, methods to adjust and monitor the gloss notations seem to be essential.

Marginal glossing could produce fragmented learning unless accommodations are made in the process of developing the notations. Each marginal notation may help the student understand a section of the text, but the separate notations may not lead to an integrated learning of several ideas. Notations which review previously learned concepts and relate new information to prior learning, and the use of reading-study guides in addition to glossing could facilitate integrated learning. Asking students to talk about their interpretation of the reading and what they were thinking as they studied may be another method to promote integration of ideas.

Otto and his colleagues have made significant contributions to the use of glossing as a technique to help students learn to learn. They have clarified the theory and issues of glossing and have presented a systematic procedure for developing gloss notations. Through their precise study of this strategy, they have identified questions which need to be answered. Research which evaluates classroom practices is needed to further refine the use of this strategy. Glossing has great potential as a method which develops the product and process of comprehension.

#### REFERENCES

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