Story Grammar for Reading Comprehension

Traditional stories that students read follow a general order. Students who are aware of this order sometimes find it easier to follow along, anticipate events, and comprehend the story. This requires an awareness of the sequential nature of stories. Instruction that makes the order of stories explicit is likely to be helpful to students. This intervention is designed to help students focus on the order of things they read. Stories generally have a specific grammar and order:

1. Introduction, including a description of
   • The main character
   • The setting
2. A problem encountered by the main character
3. Events or attempts on the part of the main character to solve the problem
4. A solution or resolution to the problem

Students who are aware of the order of a story have a structure to relate to and a way to anticipate the events of the story. Teaching this structure and anticipation reduces the amount of effort needed to read a story and helps the student focus on the important parts of the story.

How to Teach Story Grammar

A basic idea for helping a student with Successive processing problems is to provide strategies to remember or practice the order of things. Instruction should begin by describing the idea of story grammar, the order of most stories, and each of the parts. Once story grammar has been described, one (or both) of two approaches can be used.

1. The student reads a story and recalls the parts and order of events in the story. This generates an opportunity for the teacher. The teacher can indicate any mistakes and instruct the student to find where he or she went wrong and try again. Simple stories should be used first; the student can proceed to more complex stories as he or she masters basic skills.
2. The student may also be provided with a card (or poster on the wall) that lists the parts of a story and the order of the story. The student should be instructed to reference the card and determine where in the order he or she is.

Who Should Learn Story Grammar?

Story grammar is useful for students who have trouble following or understanding what they read. This intervention may be particularly helpful for students with Successive processing problems by providing a story structure to follow (Naglieri, 1999). It is also intended to help the student focus on the order of the story.
Resources