Attachment 10

The simple view of reading

What is the 'simple view of reading'?

The simple view of reading provides teachers with a tool to understand how students are progressing with the 2 key factors of success: reading accuracy and language comprehension. This understanding means that individual learners can be better supported in differentiated ways to become successful readers.

Reading is a complex cognitive process. It involves reading accurately and with understanding. The simple view of reading (SVR) takes both of these factors into consideration. The developers of the model, Gough and Tumner (1986)[1], call it the simple view of reading, not because reading is a simple process, but rather their model is a conceptually simple representation of what a beginning reader needs to master.

Decoding means accurate word recognition. This involves phonological awareness and phonics (see the Big Six). Knowing letter–sound correspondences, the English code, is essential for decoding words.

Language comprehension means the ability to understand, or comprehend, spoken language and refers to oral language and vocabulary. As skills in both word recognition and language comprehension develop, students also develop reading fluency and reading comprehension (see the Big Six).
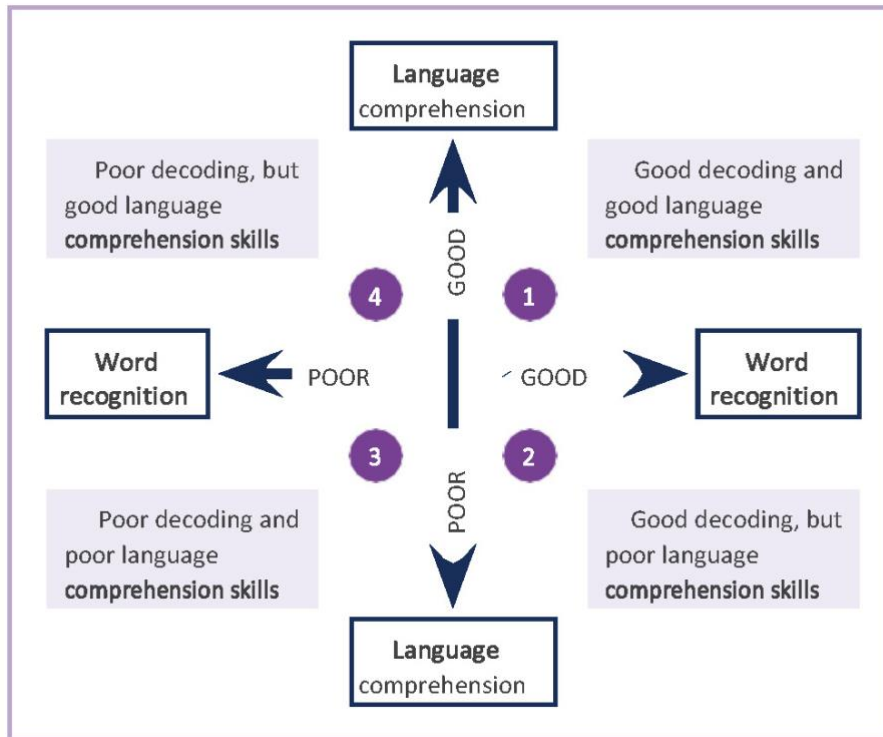
Reading comprehension is the product of both decoding and language comprehension rather than decoding being added to language comprehension. If one aspect is missing then reading comprehension is not occurring (just as zero multiplied by anything is still zero). The simple view of reading ensures both decoding and language comprehension are taken into account when assessing a child's ability to comprehend written text. If one aspect is low, then reading comprehension is also low. If only one aspect is well-developed – for example, a student who can decode words accurately, but their understanding of language is low – then reading comprehension will be deficient.

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[1] Gough PB & Tunmer WE (1986) 'Decoding, reading, and reading disability', *Remedial and Special Education*, 7(1), 6–10, doi:10.1177/074193258600700104, available from http://TLinSA.2.vu/GoughTumner1986

The SVR quadrants

The simple view of reading can also be plotted on a quadrant chart, with accurate word recognition (decoding) on one axis and language comprehension on the other (Rose, 2006)[2].

Simple view of reading quadrant chart (adapted from Rose, 2006[2])

Students who both recognise words quickly and have a good comprehension of language would be in quadrant 1. Students who have both poor word recognition skills and poor comprehension skills would be in quadrant 3.

Credit: Serhiy Kobyakov/Shuttterstock.com

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[2] Rose, J. (2006) *Independent review of the teaching of early reading*, available from http://TLinSA.2.vu/Rose2006

Word recognition (decoding): the horizontal axis

Teaching phonics

Schools are expected to teach synthetic phonics in a systematic manner. Phonics teaching allows students to master letter–sound correspondences so that they can accurately decode words. While these letter–sound correspondences are progressively learned during the first two years of schooling, some high-frequency words also need to be taught, such as *the*, *said*, *because*.

The Phonics Check helps teachers to assess if their students are gaining mastery over letter–sound correspondences and the English alphabetic code. Some students will sound out every letter of each word in the Phonics Check. As long as they blend these sounds together to say the word they can be marked as 'Got it' (correct). The Phonics Check only checks the student's ability to: decode letters, groups of letters and recognise words.

Some students will be able to say the word immediately, indicating they recognise that particular word. These students are developing decoding automaticity. Once they have a degree of automaticity, the cognitive load required to decode words is reduced, freeing up space in their working memory to attend to other aspects of meaning making from the written text. The evidence shows that words are read from memory when graphemes are connected to phonemes (Ehri, 2020) [3].

Students practise the letter–sound correspondences they are being taught by reading decodable texts, which include some high-frequency words in order to make meaningful sentences. Sounding out becomes their first 'reading reflex', building their confidence that English is a logical language that can be read, and preparing students to learn words that have a more complex morphology or etymology.

However, students with poor word recognition skills (eg they do not attempt many words in the Phonics Check or they sound out but do not blend the sounds into words) are developing or struggling decoders and could be placed in quadrant 3 or quadrant 4 on the SVR chart, even if their language comprehension is good. These students will need more explicit phonics teaching, or more time to master decoding and build up the neural pathways needed to be a successful reader.

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[3] (Ehri, 2020). ' The Science of Learning to Read Words: A Case for Systematic Phonics Instruction, Reading Research Quarterly, 55, S1, S45-S60, available from https://ila.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/rrq.334

Language comprehension: the vertical axis

Not only do students need accurate word recognition skills (decoding) but they also need to have good language comprehension skills. If a student performs well on the Phonics Check ('fluent decoder'), they might be in quadrants 1 or 2.

This can be narrowed down to one quadrant by considering the student's language comprehension skills. For example, if a student can read the text accurately, but gives little indication of understanding, they would be placed in quadrant 2. The teacher would then design learning to develop their language comprehension by engaging them in a range of rich children's literature and vocabulary building experiences to improve their reading comprehension. Teachers also need to consider how well the student understands spoken language. If the struggling reader shows a good understanding of stories when they are read to them, this would demonstrate placement in quadrant 4 and the learning focus would concentrate on mastering the alphabetic code. However, if the student also has poor language comprehension, then the focus has to be on both decoding and language development (quadrant 3).

SVR and the Big Six

Firstly, it is important to consider the effectiveness of your systematic synthetic phonics program. Are you confident that your students have had every opportunity to develop their letter–sound correspondences and practise them using decodable texts? Also consider how your reading program addresses the Big Six components of reading. Do you address all of the components in an integrated way? How often are your students engaged in open-ended, explanatory conversations that help them expand their vocabulary and syntax choices? How often do you read and discuss high-quality children's literature and information texts with your students? This is important for developing the language capabilities of your students.

Scarborough's (2001)[4] reading rope indicates the complexities of learning to read by displaying the aspects of word recognition and language comprehension as strands of a rope that need to be woven together through instruction and practice (IDA, 2018)[5]. The reading rope articulates aspects of word recognition (including phonological awareness, decoding and sight recognition) that need to become increasingly automatic and the many aspects of language comprehension that a reader needs to learn to use strategically.

> Language comprehension includes background concepts, vocabulary, language structures, verbal reasoning and literacy knowledge. Consequently, many synthetic phonics programs recommend spending half the literacy teaching time on developing decoding and accurate word reading, and the other half on reading quality literature to students and discussing it with them (Parker, 2018)[6].

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[4] Scarborough H (2001) Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis) abilities: Evidence, theory, and practice, in S Neuman & D Dickinson (eds), Handbook for research in early literacy, pp 97–110, New York: Guilford

[5] International Dyslexia Association (IDA) (2018) Scarborough's reading rope: a ground-breaking infographic, available from http://TLinSA.2.vu/IDArope

[6] Parker S (2018) Reading instruction and phonics: theory and practice for teachers, available at http://TLinSA.2.vu/Parker2018

Through discussion, students become more aware of the structure of the English language, including its grammar and syntax. Students' literacy knowledge is developed as they are read a range of text genres, including information texts and narratives, and they hear a much wider range of vocabulary within a book context than they would through everyday conversations. They can develop their verbal reasoning skills as they discuss inferences and unpack metaphors. The Big Six components of oral language and vocabulary can be developed in this way.

Using SVR to identify student needs

The placement of students in the SVR quadrants helps to inform the design of the classroom reading program.

Teachers could use the Phonics Check and other data to inform this placement (e.g. PAT-EY). Some students will need particular, specific interventions in order to develop their reading comprehension.

To determine appropriate interventions for struggling readers, the first diagnostic question to ask is: 'If I read this passage to this student, would s/he understand it?' (Kilpatrick, 2015).

If the answer is 'yes', then any reading comprehension problem is likely to be due to a weakness in word-level reading (decoding), placing them in quadrant 4. Intervention will then focus on practising decoding skills. However, if the answer is 'no', then the struggling reader is likely in quadrant 3 as they have not only difficulty with decoding, but may also have language comprehension or listening comprehension difficulties.

In either case, if the student is struggling with reading, they may also have an issue with decoding. Consequently, ask, 'What is this student's oral reading like?' If it is fast and accurate, this suggests the student is a good decoder (quadrant 2), but if they are struggling with reading, they may need intervention focused on the development of language comprehension. However, if they struggle with oral reading, this suggests they are in quadrant 3 and the focus will then be on both word recognition and language comprehension skills.

The following questions can be used to identify where each student's reading ability lies in the SVR quadrant chart:

1. Can the student quickly and accurately identify (decode) words?
   Yes – quadrant 1 or quadrant 2
   No – quadrant 3 or quadrant 4

2. Does the student have a good understanding of spoken language?
   Yes – quadrant 1 or quadrant 4
   No – quadrant 2 or quadrant 3
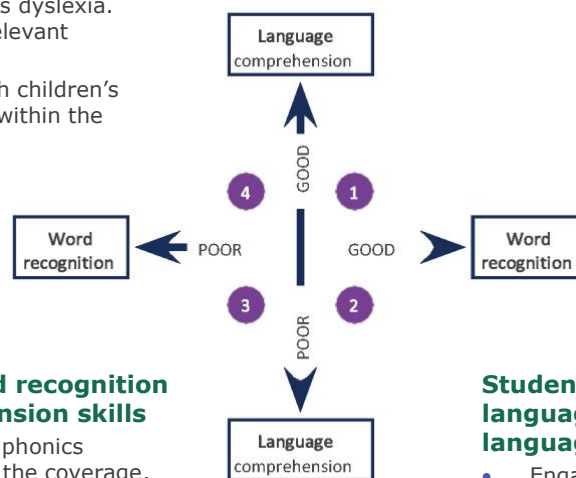
Using SVR to differentiate student learning

Once you have identified where students sit on the quadrant, you can consider how to address their differentiated learning needs. The following recommendations are provided for each of the quadrants.

Students with poor word recognition but good language comprehension skills

- Assess the effectiveness of your phonics program. Do you need to adjust the coverage, frequency or pace of your program? Do these students require further instruction with the teacher in decoding? These students may require multiple exposures and extra time to consolidate word recognition skills. It is possible that these students may have a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia. Seek support and advice from relevant professionals.
- Continue to read and discuss rich children's literature and information texts within the classroom setting.

Students with both good word recognition and good language comprehension skills

- Engage students in activities involving the extended alphabetic code.
- Encourage free choice reading in the area of the student's interest.

Students with both poor word recognition and poor language comprehension skills

- Assess the effectiveness of your phonics program. Do you need to adjust the coverage, frequency or pace of your program? Do these students need more time on task; peer tutoring; further instruction by the teacher in both decoding and language comprehension; and/or periodic review with an SSO?
- Explore the language comprehension skills the students bring to the classroom. Address any special needs. Acquire expert help if required. Continue to read and discuss rich children's literature within the classroom setting as children often learn from each other.

Students with good word language recognition but poor language comprehension skills

- Engage the students in oral language activities that involve dialogic talk.
- Read high-quality literature and information texts to students, accompanied with discussion incorporating shared, sustained interactions.