Select Bibliography

Robert Root and Patricia Stock


The authors report on a study in which different students interpreted an ambiguous passage of prose according to their prior interests and knowledge. The authors conclude that readers interpret text as they do because they bring schemata for interpretation to the texts.

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Berry's book is devoted mainly to the elements of writing — word choice, sentence structure, rhetorical devices — but also contains very short sections on forms of writing — description, narration, exposition, argument — and on the writing process.


Bloom reports on both her study of the emerging grammars of three children and other psycholinguistic studies of language development in children. She concludes that the grammars which will account for the language developed by her three subjects were different from one another. She suggests that an ideal account of language development of individual children must specify three interrelated components: linguistic experience, non-linguistic experience, and cognitive-perceptual organization.


The authors present a useful historical account of theories of language and their relationship to thinking and learning.


Building upon the notion of Shank and Abelson that people use scripts — cognitive schemes for stereotyping actions — to organize information and remember it — the authors had subjects collect script norms (descriptions of commonplace activities) and then examined subjects recall of texts narrating actions from those scripts. Subjects (1) confused actions from the scripts and their memories, (2) tended to recall scrambled events in texts in the order in which they might have been expected to occur (3) accelerated their reading rates when events were reported in "natural" sequence, (4) accelerated their reading rates in the second half of texts and (5) remembered goal-relevant deviations from a script better than script actions. The authors also discuss some problems they find with script theory and suggest an alternative view to the comprehension process in which "the reader progressively builds up a model or image of the situation which the text is about."

The authors report on an experiment which demonstrates that "current information and activated knowledge" are important for understanding visual information as well as linguistic information.


The authors review a series of experiments which demonstrate the importance of the use of strategies in successful learning.


The authors report on readers' ability to comprehend a seemingly incomprehensible passage. Some readers read the passage without benefit of an appropriate knowledge framework or context; others received the necessary background information; still others received some of the necessary background information in the form of a picture in which the relations among the objects were different. Readers who were supplied with context information before reading understood the passage significantly better than those who received the information after reading and than those with partial or no background information.


In this textbook designed for undergraduates, Bransford reports on current work in cognitive psychology relating basic research to the applications of that research. He explores how research is conducted and why it is relevant, emphasizing the active nature of learning, understanding, and remembering, the importance of using what is known in order to interpret new information.


Brown's essay describes metacognition.


The authors classify strategy training studies into three categories - blind, informed, and self-regulated - according to the amount of rationale given to the learner for the training and the extent to which the learner is an active participant.

Brown defines metacognition, discusses strategies, reviews the literature on metacognition development, cites some problems with studying metacognition in children, and suggests directions for future research in the field.


The authors report on a series of five experiments which demonstrate that individuals with a substantial knowledge of baseball were more successful at learning and retaining information from reading an unfamiliar text about the topic than readers who had minimal knowledge about baseball. The authors conclude that "pattern recognition and rapid access to long-term memory" were facilitated in readers who knew a great deal about baseball because those readers had pre-existing cognitive structures for processing the new information.


The authors report on a study demonstrating that previously acquired knowledge affects readers' quantitative and qualitative ability to learn and comprehend the information in new texts. The authors believe that readers who had substantial previous knowledge about baseball - the topic of the experimental text - (1) relate new information in the text to what they knew about the goal structure of the game and (2) maintain more information in their working memories.


This theoretical article based on work of Noam Chomsky and Morris Halle explores the relation of orthography to sound structure and the motivation behind non-phonetic aspects of spelling.


In this textbook for undergraduates, the authors present a comprehensive and balanced introduction to psycholinguistics that reflects a variety of current theories and evidence in the field today.


Diederich describes procedures for evaluating writing.


The authors report on a number of students' ability to comprehend several passages of metaphorical prose when some students were first presented with a short title reflecting the themes or main ideas of the passages and some were not. The authors conclude that students who understood the theme of the passages comprehended the texts better than students who did not understand the themes of the passages.


Flavell summarizes the Piagetian and information-processing views of the development of cognitive skills in children.


Flavell develops his theory of metacognition.


Goodman presents a psycholinguistic and scholarly view of language and reading: definitions, descriptions of processes, a model of reading, techniques and strategies, critical reading.


The authors present an extended analysis of text features which create cohesion: reference substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, lexical repetition and lexical collocation.


The authors provide a conceptual framework for their collection of essays in their article "Comprehension as Setting." The anthology contains essays on the following topics: comprehension and inference (Tierney, Vaughn, and Bridge); comprehension and measurement (Tuinman); product and process measures in reading (Page and Vacca); need for an expanded definition of comprehension (Gould; Riggs and Taylor); how knowledge is acquired (Smith); comprehension as artifact of instruction (Rhodes); comprehension principles (Tierney and Spiro); theory and practice (Goodman); methodological concerns (Pearson).


The authors describe their development of the Delphi Seminar - built upon the Delphic principle, know thyself - "a self-study group to discover how the distinctive character of each of our minds affects the literary transactions we engage in and the critical statements we make." In their talking and writing, students (1) were encouraged to avoid the intellectual, analytical responses to literature required in most English classes and to concentrate on feelings, associations and persons; and (2) were directed eventually to write about each other's responses to literature.

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Holland describes four principles which he has developed after observing five student readers putting literary texts together from the patterns and structures in their minds. As he argues that readers respond to literary work by using them to re-create their own characteristic psychological processes, Holland describes the inner dynamics of the reading experience: (1) Style Seeks Itself, (2) Defenses Must Be Matched, (3) Fantasy Projects Fantasies, and (4) Character Transforms Characteristically.

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Holland presents ideas treated more fully in his treatises: *The Dynamics of Literacy Response* and 5 Readers Reading by introducing his theory of the "Psychoanalysis of Literature." Arguing that literary works are inseparable from human minds, Holland examines (1) the relationship between poetic style and total personality (identity) as revealed in the poetry of one poet, (2) the reading or re-creation of poems of this poet by two different readers, through their unique lifestyles and (3) the way these personal experiences and private readings become communal ones.

Jolly reviews research which studies the interrelationship among the language arts. He cites studies conducted primarily at the elementary school level which demonstrate how training a practice in one or more of the language arts contributes to development in one or more of the other language arts. Jolly also cites teaching resources available to those who would teach the language arts holistically.


Jones uses tagnemic analyses to demonstrate how readers see certain features as central to an author's message and others as marginal.


Judy offers an overview of literacy that emphasizes an holistic, rather than piecemeal approach, and specifically treats “Science Reading and Writing” and “Reading and Writing ‘for Real’.”


In chapters 8 and 10 (pp. 113-125 and 135-141), the authors discuss how to integrate reading and writing by offering practical suggestions to teachers.


Judy offers five techniques for teaching critical reading in the writing class and rationale behind them.


The authors propose a model for describing the semantic structure of texts at both a local and a global level. They demonstrate how to analyze texts—as well as recall and summarization protocols of those texts—using their model.


Lerner’s work is an introductory text on learning disabilities.


Lichtenstein argues that human identity is established "by a specific use of the nonprocreative sexual function." He presents evidence demonstrating "that nonprocreative human sexuality is instrumental in establishing the earliest and most basic outlines for the development of behavioral or existential identity."


Lloyd describes a procedure for using a weekly letter to parents to entice elementary students to reading and writing.


The authors describe both the philosophy behind and an example of a story grammar before reporting on an experiment in which second-, fourth-, sixth-graders, and adults were asked to retell “ideally” constructed stories and stories whose elements had been jumbled. In the re-tellings, students and adults reshaped the jumbled stories to fit an “ideal” story structure. Mandler and DeForest conclude that “through experience with hearing stories and experience with typical event sequences in the world, people form cognitive structures that reflect the underlying structures of stories as outlined by the grammar.”

Memering, Dean, “The Reading/Writing Heresy,” College Composition and Communication, 28 (October, 1977), 223-226.

Memering gives attention to the interest in language shared by students of literature and composition and suggests that literature teachers ought to be able to help writing students in the kind of reading they need to do.

Meyer, Bonnie J.F., “Prose Analysis: Procedures, Purposes, and Problems,” in B.K. Britton and J. Black (Eds.) Analyzing and Understanding Expository Text, Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, forthcoming. Meyer describes her approach to the analysis of prose: First, she defines three primary levels of expository texts—(1) the sentence or micro-proposition level, (2) the paragraph or macro-proposition level, and (3) the top-level or overall organization of the text. Second, she defines five basic logical relations in texts—(1) collection, (2) causal, (3) response, (4) comparison, and (5) description. Third, she defines procedures for building prose structure. Fourth, she compares her approach to the analysis of prose with the approaches of other text grammarians.

The authors report on research in which 20 texts of varying levels of readability were analyzed, in an extended and formal manner, according to the Kintsch and van Dijk model for processing text and then read by 120 subjects. They conclude that readability is not a property of text alone, to be measured by a formula; rather it is determined by certain text properties - arrangement of the propositions in the text base, word frequency and sentence length - interacting with the readers' plans and resources for processing the texts. Miller and Kintsch argue that the interactions between readers and texts determine readability of texts.


Many different methods of winning belief are covered in this book. The emphasis is on oral communication. Minnick goes into the psychological and behavioral aspects of persuasion. The final chapter is on the ethics of persuasion.


The authors describe a complete language arts curriculum and provide teachers with ideas for useful instructional activities.


First Nix argues that "specific skills are not discrete skills at all, but rather 'category names' which cover 'unsystematically overlapping' inferential skills; then he argues for defining a set of cognitive skills that can be named and taught to children. Nix, like many of his colleagues, is asking teachers to define both cognitive and meta-cognitive skills for themselves, first, and then, for their students.


Relying on the theoretical framework and methodology of Newell and Simon, Olshavsky reports on her own research which demonstrates that readers use strategies as they read, lending support to the belief that reading is a problem-solving process. Olshavsky's research indicates that readers tend to apply more strategies when they are interested in what they are reading, when they are proficient readers, and when they are faced with abstract material.


The authors review the literature on metacognitive skills.


Payne gives detailed directions for writing essays and gives good explanations of the rationales behind various writing techniques. Students should find her exposition of the structure of an essay helpful.


The volume is a collection of readings and apparatus for studying them.


The authors maintain that "structure is not an invariant property of text, but rather that it depends upon perspective." They report on a study of college students who read texts from one of two directed perspectives or from a non-directed perspective, concluding that readers learn and remember ideas in texts which are important to them. The authors believe this evidence supports their belief that as readers impose different perspectives (schemata) on texts, "the relative significance of elements in the texts change."


Pinckert concentrates on basic skills, such as punctuation, word choice, and grammar, but includes sections on the writing process, persuasion, and style. This book is intended for adults.

Ponsot, Marie, "Total Immersion," *Basic Writing,* 1 (Fall/Winter 1976), 30-43.

Ponsot describes a six week (five hours a day, five days a week) intensive summer course with plentiful writing and substantial reading.


This collection of fourteen papers focuses on methodological issues in writing research (Pradl); acquisition of language skills using computer-based instruction (Caldwell); analogies between written and spoken language (Brause); needed research on processes of invention (Larsen); issues related to cognition and written language among elementary school
children (Bond); cognitive processes used to evaluate texts (Nold); styles of teachers' responses to written composition (Brienza); influence of prior knowledge on comprehension (Beach); problem-solving strategies in writing (Flower); strategies used in comprehending written stories (Mason and McClure); procedures for studying writers' cognitive maturity (O'dell); helping college students develop reasoning skills (Taylor); teaching children to write informally (Sandberg); acquiring and developing mental lexicons (Mayher).


The article includes description and explanation of Rumelhart's story grammar which is based upon Propp's (1968) analysis of Russian folk tales.


The authors argue sentence processing skills among pre-readers are an important facet of reading readiness.


Ryan reviews the literature concerning differences between good and poor readers.


The authors present a sub-species of schema theory of learning in their descriptions and reports of research into scripts, plans, and goals as cognitive structures of human knowledge and inquiry.


The author describes ways in which reading difficulties are overcome through writing workshops.


Smith gives an overview of "research into the significant phases of a child's language development," including a valuable bibliography.


This work is a "A concise, well-written, and clearly stated synthesis of the ideas" in Smith's Comprehension and Learning and the two other books cited here. An accessible and readable book with clear, if implicit, ties to Moffett's and Britton's approaches to writing.


Readers from the United States and India read letters about an Indian and an American wedding. The readers remembered the native passage more quickly after they had performed other tasks; and remembered more details in each of the passages which were considered important by other members of their cultural groups. The authors conclude that the perspectives (schemata) which readers bring to texts influence their comprehension of those texts.

Sternberg, Marilyn S., "Composition Teacher as Reading Teacher," College Composition and Communication, 27 (December, 1976), 378-382.

Sternberg discusses the need to teach students how to read the sentences that sentence combining and generative rhetoric would have them write.


The authors both describe six different means of examining text - story grammars, event-chain formulations, predicate structure of expository prose, mappable patterns, propositional analysis, and cohesion - and discuss their utility in research and educational practice.

Center for the Study of Reading, 1980.
The authors argue that implicit contractual agreements exist between readers and writers governing the role of writers as they create texts and the role of readers as they work to understand texts.

Tompkins' anthology provides the reader with a representative collection of essays by "reader-response" critics. The essays, which Tompkins notes do not represent "a conceptually unified critical position," constitute a useful introduction to criticism focusing upon the role of the reader in the meaning of literary works. The collection includes essays by Walter Gibson, Gerald Prince, Michael Riffaterre, Georges Poulet, Wolfgang Iser, Stanley E. Fish, Jonathan Culler, Norman N. Holland, David Bleich, Walter Benn Michaels, and Jane P. Tompkins.


Wahtmsley analyzes the relationship between reading and writing from linguistic, social, schematic, and strategic contextual perspectives. He argues that writers have some control over the clarity or obscurity they provide for readers' contexts; readers have less choice. Wahtmsley also suggests that research will have to focus on (1) demands which composing places upon writers versus demands comprehension places on readers and (2) writers' and readers' purposes for writing and reading.

Wilson reports on research which supports her argument that children learn to read and write as they learn to speak, by forming hypotheses and testing them. She indicates (1) that the processes of reading and writing must be taught integrally because of their mutual dependence upon one another and (2) that children's desire to make meaning must serve as a guide to instruction in those processes.

The author presents his theory of critical reading treated in the article by Patricia Sosnoski in this issue of forum.