

The Effects of Consistently Reading Whole Novels on the Reading Comprehension of Adolescents with Developmental Disabilities

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Abstract

This study was conducted to test the effects of introducing a consistent pace and volume of reading whole narratives on adolescents' reading comprehension with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The study is a replication of the '*Just reading': increasing pace and volume of reading whole narratives on the comprehension of poorer adolescent readers in English classrooms*' study by Westbrook et al (2017). The setting was a Free Special Education Needs school in England. Nine male and one female student, between 11-13 years old, across two classrooms participated in the study. All students had a diagnosis of ASD, and all were classified as advanced learners. The classroom teachers introduced reading a whole challenging novel in 12 weeks with consistency as the independent variable. The study used a quasiexperimental before-and-after design of testing the participants' reading comprehension using standardized tests. The participants made a remarkable 1.8 years' mean progress on the standardised tests of reading comprehension, with three participants making 4+ years progress. The researchers hypothesise that reading novels aloud and at a fast pace in each lesson, that are challenging but appropriate to the participants' learning level, may have a beneficial effect on the reading comprehension of adolescents with learning difficulties, giving them a more engaged uninterrupted reading experience over a sustained period. However, more studies need to be conducted to test the independent variable across a bigger and more diverse population.

Keywords: Autism, reading comprehension, developmental disabilities, narrative