DOCTORAL DISSERTATION DEFENSE

of

BeckyAnn Harker

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Special Education

THE EFFECTS OF RICH VOCABULARY INTERVENTION ON COMPREHENSION FOR THIRD-GRADE STUDENTS WITH LANGUAGE LEARNING DISORDERS

Tuesday, February 27, 2024
1:00 PM
317 Moulton Hall
Kent State University

Teams Link: Link
BeckyAnn Harker

M.A. Communication Sciences and Disorders
Case Western Reserve University, 1998

B.A. French
Ohio University, 1995

BeckyAnn is a practicing speech-language pathologist with 25 years of pediatric experience. She has treated children in the clinic and school settings. She has been a school-based SLP for the last 12 years, where she provided services through special education. Recognizing that speech pathology straddles both the clinical and educational worlds, BeckyAnn sought to further her education in special education to improve SLP services in schools to help students with language learning needs.

BeckyAnn has taught courses in speech pathology at The University of Akron, and in special education at Kent State University. Her research interests include vocabulary interventions for comprehension outcomes and improving service delivery of school-based speech and language services. She had an article published in the ASHA Leader on caseload management, which resulted in invitations to present to SLPs and to participate in a 4-part podcast. She has presented her work on posters for ASHA Schools Connect and the Badar-Kauffman Conference at Kent State. She presented information on vocabulary, including the results of her dissertation study, to the Ohio School Speech Pathology and Educational Audiology Coalition (OSSPEAC). From this presentation, she was invited to present similar information this summer in a webinar that will be recorded for speechpathology.com. She wants to continue researching and teaching in higher education.

The Effects of Rich Vocabulary Intervention on Comprehension for Third-Grade Students with Language Learning Disorders

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of a rich vocabulary intervention on the comprehension and vocabulary learning of third-grade students with language learning disorders (LLD). The study used a repeated acquisition design (RAD), a single case design involving the repeated delivery of a vocabulary intervention on different sets of five vocabulary words. Each week, participants had repeated pre-post measurement of their comprehension and vocabulary acquisition of the different stimuli targeted that week. Students in the treatment group (n = 3) had three weeks of a baseline comparison phase, where they learned sets of five untested vocabulary words (n = 15 words), and five weeks of a treatment phase, where they learned sets of five tested vocabulary words (n = 25 words). The control group received intervention on untested words only.

Results indicated no treatment effect on students’ comprehension, but a statistically significant, moderate effect on vocabulary learning. Two students participated in maintenance phase testing after four weeks without intervention. Again, there were no treatment effects on comprehension. For vocabulary, students lost knowledge compared to immediate posttest scores, but they scored an average of one point higher than their pretest scores indicating some word learning. Students with LLD who participated in the study appeared to benefit from explicit vocabulary instruction, but vocabulary instruction alone was not enough to improve comprehension skills.