



Implementation of Classwide Peer Tutoring Strategies to Facilitate Idiom Comprehension

1645

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INTRODUCTION

Idioms are phrases such as *a dime a dozen* and *let sleeping dogs lie* that have fixed figurative meanings (Ackerman, 1982; Nippold & Martin, 1989) but may also have a literal interpretation. The research literature is sparse regarding interventions to support comprehension of idiomatic expressions in either a therapeutic or classroom setting. Idioms should be an integral part of vocabulary and reading instruction in the classroom; however, idioms are often neglected perhaps due to emphasis placed on other instructional goals (e.g. decoding, fluency, comprehension), uncertainty regarding how to teach idioms, or a lack of instructional time. Only a single study by Ezell and Golstein (1992) pertained to the treatment of idiom comprehension.

On the contrary, a multitude of studies has demonstrated the effectiveness of classwide peer tutoring (CWPT). Classwide peer tutoring, in which students are taught by peers who are trained and supervised by classroom teachers, presents a promising set of instructional strategies to teach idiom comprehension in the general education classroom. Since CWPT methods are flexible, they can be used across a variety of ages, grades, and subject areas. Given the complexities of figurative language, students require explicit instruction and repeated exposure to figurative language as can be gained through the novel implementation of classwide peer tutoring procedures to teach idiomatic expressions in the classroom.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Does a positive change in the students' comprehension of idioms occur following implementation of classwide peer tutoring?
2. Do the students and teacher implement the CWPT protocol for idioms with fidelity?

METHOD

Design

A multiple baseline design (A=baseline, B=treatment, A=maintenance) across three sets of idioms was used to determine the effects of the CWPT intervention on idiom comprehension.

Participants

Four seventh grade female students (mean age: 12 years, 6 months old).

The students were identified for inclusion per:

- Reading scores obtained from the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) from their sixth grade year. Each scored a level 2.
- The students scored at or below the 16th percentile on the "Idioms" subtest of *The Fullerton Language Test for Adolescents-2nd Edition* (Thorun, 1986).

Gender	Age	FCAT 5th Reading Score (Range 1-20)	FLTA Idioms (Index)	FCAT/PT	FCAT/PT	Free or Reduced Lunch	Ethnicity
Chelsy	F	12.6	201	16	119	102	African-American
Kiley	F	12.9	201	16	89	95	African-American
Jenny	F	12.2	279	14	88	125	African-American
Becca	F	12.8	204	14	94	87	Caucasian

Setting

All classwide peer tutoring (CWPT) sessions were conducted in the students' regular education classroom.

MEASURES

CWPT stimuli

A set of 30 idioms were selected for classwide peer tutoring (CWPT) training. The 30 idiomatic phrases were randomly assigned to one of three training sets. The idiom phrases averaged 3.9 words in length.

Set 1	Set 2	Set 3
School of hard knocks	A fly in the ointment	Deaf as an ear of corn
A red letter day	Circle the wagons	Behind the eight ball
A bitter pill	Put your finger to the wall	Bring in the dead
Along at the switch	Made on like a bandit	Water over the dam
Sheep in wolf's clothing	Let's make a deal	Point your finger at someone
Go by the book	Be as you beget	Walk on water
Shy as a cat	Aluminum around your neck	Eligible for the moon
A pretty penny	Run around the bush	Under the wire
Walt on up	Sell down the river	Blow under
Pull up your own case	Jump the gun	Get your bottom dollar

The idiom phrases were positioned at the end of a short story context.

Idiom: To go into one's shell

Juan was a new student at school this year. Juan was shy, and he had trouble in new places. Juan's parents worried Juan might go into his shell.

What is the meaning of "go into his shell"?

A. Juan might be very friendly and talk to everyone.
 B. Juan might be withdrawn and keep away from others.
 C. Juan might be excited to be at a new school.
 D. Juan might hide from the teachers and students.

From of Texas and Texas end

What is the meaning of "go into his shell"?

A. Juan might be very friendly and talk to everyone. **Not quite.** Let's read the story again to look for clue words and think about what is happening in the story.
 B. Juan might be withdrawn and keep away from others. **That's correct. You're right!**
 C. Juan might be excited to be at a new school. **Not quite.** Let's read the story again to look for clue words and think about what is happening in the story.
 D. Juan might hide from the teachers and students. **Not quite.** Let's read the story again to look for clue words and think about what is happening in the story.

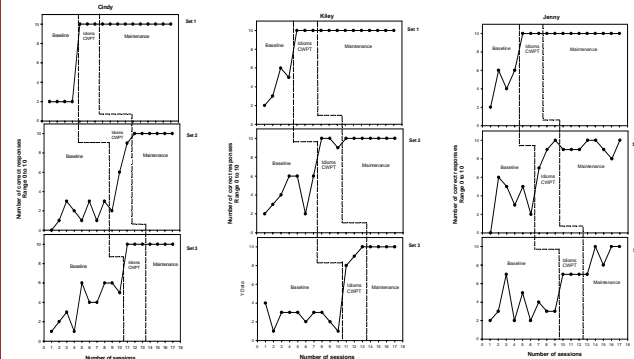
Final Answer: That's correct, you earned 2 points!

If the second attempt is incorrect, Read the correct answer. 0 points

Back of Texas end

The three sets of idiomatic phrases (30 idioms) were assessed during baseline, CWPT implementation, and maintenance conditions at the conclusion each CWPT session. The figurative meaning of the idiom was presented, and the participant selected the corresponding idiom from four choices including the correct idiom and three randomly selected idioms.

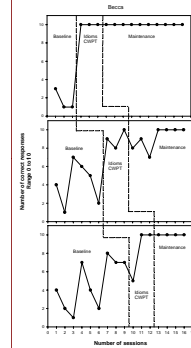
RESULTS



Question 1: CWPT and idiom comprehension

Overall, a positive change in idiom comprehension was demonstrated following implementation of classwide peer tutoring (CWPT) for the four seventh grade female students across idiom sets. As evidenced by the overall analysis of Figures 1 to 4 only after implementation of CWPT the students' comprehension of idiomatic phrases increased and remained largely stable.

RESULTS



Question 2: Treatment fidelity

The PI attended 50% of CWPT sessions. Items on a treatment fidelity checklist (developed for this study) were scored as present or absent following procedures similar to Greenwood et al. (1987).

A total score for each section and a total composite percentage was obtained. Procedural reliability was determined through an interval agreement formula (e.g. $A/A + D \times 100\%$ where A=agreements, D=disagreements). Procedural reliability for program materials and occurrence of teacher behaviors ranged from 86% to 100% with a mean of 96%, whereas, procedural reliability for peer tutoring behaviors ranged from 67% to 100% with a mean of 95%. The composite mean score for procedural reliability was 96%.

CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

The current study adds to the research supporting CWPT procedures, while extending that literature in the area of idiom instruction. These results add to the literature regarding interventions to facilitate idiom comprehension. Because idioms are pervasive in popular culture (e.g., magazines, newspaper, movies, television), as well as, classroom language (Lazar et al., 1989) including core American reading programs (Nippold, 1991), the failure to comprehend idiomatic phrases can impact language and reading comprehension in academic settings.

Teachers and speech-language pathologists can successfully implement CWPT procedures to teach students idiom phrases as part of vocabulary and reading instruction to meet the individualized needs of students and classrooms. CWPT procedures for teaching idioms are flexible, effective, and time efficient.

Future research should explore the utilization of CWPT for teaching idiomatic phrases to diverse samples of students such as language impaired adolescents and the use of a specific reading comprehension or vocabulary strategy (e.g. context clues, contextual redefinition) to examine not only comprehension of idiomatic phrases but generalization of strategy use.

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