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## **"Reading It-Seeing It-Getting It":Using movies for Rapid Reading Improvement**

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### **Background**

Searching for possible reasons and cures for boys' underachievement in literacy has been part of spirited debate and populist discourse for over two decades in academic and public arenas and in schools. One response has been to develop practical approaches and resources that target boys' interest in reading and writing. The Audio Visual Achievement in Literacy, Language and Learning (AVAILLL) is an innovative, multimedia reading programme that supplements classroom literacy programmes is an example of such an approach. Developed by Dr Alice Killackey in the USA, AVAILLL is based on the premise that using popular movies can motivate students into reading books through the harmonious inputs of reading, viewing and listening simultaneously. The programme uses popular movies and subtitles in a six-week intensive instructional programme. It includes targeted literacy-based activities to engage students with quality literature. From preliminary research from both the USA and NZ contexts, particularly with the reluctant and underachieving reader (Parkhill & Johnson, 2009), the programme has proved effective and wholly engaging for both boys and girls at intermediate (middle) school levels.

### **Research Questions**

Part of a larger study, our current research extends previous research on AVAILLL into secondary schools where it investigates the impact of AVAILLL on achievement in comprehension and vocabulary for low literacy learners. A second research question focuses on engagement and motivation.

### **Methods**

Using a mixed method approach the study used both standardised tests (pre and post) in comprehension and vocabulary and an engagement survey, which included quantitative and qualitative responses. Data were drawn from five diverse, urban secondary schools. Participating in the 6-week programme were approximately 380 low literacy Year 9 and 10 students, identified by their teachers and from school records. Interviews with teachers and students also form part of the study.

This study draws on several literatures including: boys and literacy achievement; reading engagement; and the use of visual media/technologies to enhance literacy learning.

The concerns surrounding boys' literacy achievement continue. Bauntein & Stotsky, (2005) argue that whilst the gender gap has always been significant in reading, it widened dramatically between 1980 and 2004. The mismatch between home and school literacies is another argument used to explain the dip or plateau in reading achievement that occurs for many 9-13 year old students (Brozo, 2005; Chall & Jacobs, 2003; Hattie, 2007; McNaughton, et al., 2007; Pressley, 2007; Twist et al, 2004). Other studies have investigated the decrease in reading for pleasure and hence loss of reading mileage. Sax (2007), for example, suggests an overemphasis on the skills or mechanics of reading and a regime of testing in the early years may detract from developing a love of reading. Closer to home, the latest NEMP (National Education Monitoring Project) report in New Zealand (Crooks, Smith & Flockton, 2009) indicates that reading for pleasure has become a less popular activity outside of school for year 8 students in New Zealand, particularly for boys

Unsurprisingly, the literature also establishes strong links between high engagement and success in reading. For example, Pressley, (2007) suggests that reading self-efficacy influences a student's commitment to reading and that motivation is connected to academic achievement in reading.

Motivation to read is a direct predictor of reading amount, which in turn predicts achievement in reading comprehension (Guthrie, Wigfield, Metsala & Cox, 1999).

### **Frame**

Traditional treatments and interventions using print media are not always successful enough to motivate all students to engage in sufficient reading mileage to keep up with their peers. Screen literacy programmes appear to have particular impact for students whose initial literacy achievement is low and who have poor engagement in learning. While Elley's 1992 analysis of the IEA study of reading literacy showed that viewing television and films made in English with local language subtitles for students in five of the top performing countries may have contributed to higher results, he suggested that further research was needed. Yet research focussing on subtitles using popular film culture to enhance reading achievement is scarce, particularly in the last decade. The AVAILL program targets this area of needed research and the data will be analysed through the lenses of gender, achievement, and engagement.

### **Research findings**

Although not yet finalised, results to date indicate that the programme had a marked impact on student engagement. In particular, students' self-reported perceptions of improvements in both their reading achievement and motivation to read were noteworthy. Current analyses to determine achievement gains in comprehension and vocabulary levels are underway and will be reported as part of the presentation. Issues around sustainability will form the next phase of the research.