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# **Improving the Reading Comprehension of Struggling Year Nine and Ten Readers**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
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## Abstract

The objective of this project was to investigate to what extent metacognitive reading comprehension strategy training would influence the reading comprehension growth of a group of struggling Year Nine and Ten readers in a low decile New Zealand secondary school. The metacognitive comprehension strategy training framework Transactional Strategies Instruction (TSI) provided the theoretical basis of the project. TSI incorporates teacher-led explicit explanation and modelling of strategies as well as the guided practice of their use by students. The high levels of teacher involvement means that TSI potentially works within Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development and is therefore expected to help accelerate student comprehension growth. Developments in adolescent cognitive abilities also support comprehension growth within a TSI-style intervention. A ten week intervention which targeted four metacognitive comprehension strategies was carried out with a group of Year Nine and Ten students across two classes who had a history of reading comprehension under-achievement. The pre- and post-intervention comprehension test results demonstrated that above expected growth was achieved by many of the students as a result of the strategy training. The extent of the movement in student achievement data was significant in relation to national norms. Case study analysis of student think aloud transcriptions and class work revealed that students who accelerated their progress during the intervention were primarily aided by the explicit strategy instruction in that it transformed these students from passive decoders into active comprehenders. For students whom the intervention did not apparently work, factors which negated its success included negative attitudes towards the use of strategies and poor decoding skills. The intervention's results suggest metacognitive reading comprehension strategy training has the potential to improve the comprehension of some underachieving adolescent readers significantly and, considering the duration of the intervention, relatively quickly.

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## Dedication

To all the Dub-T kids that I have taught, do teach and will teach, thanks for being amazing.

“You is kind... You is smart. You is important.”

-Kathryn Stockett, *The Help* (p. 443)

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