

AVID RATER: Learning to Make Sense of Primary Source Readings

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The AVID RATER system helps students identify key information from journal articles. Overall, students using the system did better on test items related to the reading than students not using the system. Implications of these findings, a critique of the methodology used, and suggestions for improving the system are explored.

Background

- Reading primary sources poses a particular challenge for students that are used to reading textbooks designed for ease of use.
- Too often, key information in journal articles of empirical research is buried among citations and unfamiliar terminology. We tested a system designed to guide students as they read primary source materials of empirical studies.
- The AVID RATER system, developed by Ross, works to keep students focused on extracting fundamental aspects of the research from the reading.

AVID

- A - read **Abstract**
- V - identify **Variables**
- ID - **Identify Direction**

RATER

- R - **Review** the literature
- A - note **Assumptions**
- T - identify **Theory**
- E - **Evaluate** methods
- R - identify **Results** and the **Relevance** to research and practice with diverse populations

Research Question

- Did students who used the AVID RATER system do better on the test than students who did not use the system?

Participants

- 123 students in 300-level psychology and social work classes participated.
- 90% female; women tend to be over-represented in these majors on our campus.
- 4 Asian students, 26 Black students, one Hispanic student, 88 White students, and 4 students whose race was unknown.
- 38 students were enrolled in our adult-degree program and the remaining students were traditional aged students.

Method

- In five upper division classes across two semesters, instructors taught the AVID RATER system using an example article that was appropriate for the course content.
- Students were given the option to use the AVID RATER system when reading the assigned course materials.
- All students were then tested on the required readings.

Analyses

- Chi square tests of independence were conducted comparing students that used the AVID RATER system with students that did not use the system for whether or not they correctly identified the following information: IV, DV, research question, hypothesis, population being studied, research design, theory, and implications.

Results

- Students using AVID RATER were more likely than students not using AVID RATER to correctly identify:
 - the IV, $X^2(1, N = 123) = 4.627, p = .031,$
 - the DV, $X^2(1, N = 123) = 3.015, p = .082,$ & design, $X^2(1, N = 123) = 11.633, p = .001.$
- For these, most students using AVID RATER gave a correct response while most students not using the system gave an incorrect response.
- Remaining items: No difference between the two groups; however, in each case, students using AVID RATER were more likely to provide a correct response than an incorrect response.
- With the exception of identifying theory, the ratio of correct to incorrect responses for students using the AVID RATER was either equal to or greater than the ratio of correct to incorrect responses of students not using the system.

Discussion

- Overall, students using the AVID RATER system did better than students not using the system.
- Implications of these findings: AVID RATER can be used to help students focus on the important aspects of journal articles.
- Critique of the methodology used: Controls are lacking; self-selection potentially biases the results; classroom applicability is strong.
- Suggestions for improving the AVID RATER system: Need to better address theory.