

Research

Co:Writer®

Staples, A., Heying, K. & McLellan, J. (1995) A study of the Effects of Co:Writer Word Prediction Software on the Writing Achievement of Students with Learning Disabilities.

A six-week descriptive study incorporating an ABABAB design was conducted to evaluate the effects of Co:Writer word prediction software on the writing achievement of elementary school pupils with learning disabilities. Eight boys and two girls ranging in age from 7-10 years participated in the study. Pupils wrote daily for fifteen minutes using either a word processor or word processor with Co:Writer word prediction software. During weeks one, three, and five pupils wrote using a word processor. During weeks two, four, and six pupils wrote using Co:Writer. Pupils wrote in three different writing genres—descriptive, free writing, and narrative. Informal reading inventories, spelling tests, decoding tests, writing samples, and a writing apprehension survey were administered pre and post test to determine gains in reading skill, writing quality and quantity and attitudes toward writing.

Findings:

- Pupils received significantly higher scores on spelling and general mechanics (usage, punctuation, grammar) when using Co:Writer than when they used a word processor alone.
- There was a significant positive change in decoding skills for initial consonant blends by the end of the study. Pupils improved their decoding of initial consonant blends by as much as 30% in some cases.
- Pupil apprehension toward writing was significantly reduced. Pupils reported that they enjoyed using Co:Writer, felt it helped them with their writing by reducing the mistakes they ordinarily made (spelling, backwards letters) and helped them keep their ideas flowing. This is perhaps the most significant finding of the study because if pupils feel more able to do a task such as writing, they will persevere more and give up less readily which in turn will positively affect their writing quality.

Booker, B.W., (1995). An Evaluation of the Program & Its Implementation. The University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario.

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This study was conducted to monitor changes in pupils' writing through use of a new software program. The results of a four-month pilot study of the word prediction computer program Co:Writer are reported and discussed in this project. Seven Primary/Junior special education pupils used Co:Writer for creative writing purposes. Writing samples were collected over the test period and analyzed quantitatively according to words per minute, words per sentence, total number of words, and percent of spelling errors. Co:Writer work was compared to handwritten journal entries.

Findings:

- Words per minute increased significantly and spelling errors were reduced to almost zero.
- Co:Writer was very motivational for the pupils in the study and using the program encouraged them to write more often.
- Significant increases in total number of words written were also noted