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Teaching of Inference Making in the Adolescent Classroom

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Inference is making predictions, drawing conclusions, using context clues, activating background knowledge, filling gaps, creating interpretations, and visualizing meaning (Bintz, 2012).

Research Questions

- How do I encourage students to think critically about fiction texts in regards to making inferences?
- How can I use scaffolded strategies to help students infer implicit meanings from fiction texts?

Methodology

- **Participants:** 24, fifth grade students from a large school district
- **Data Sources:** Field notes and student assessments
- **Subject:** English Language Arts

Literature Review

- The use of nontraditional texts in the classroom allows for students to access their particular learning styles (Shannahan, 2013).
- According to Lucking (1976), teachers use scaffolded questioning techniques to encourage students to develop upon the explicit meanings of texts.
- Some students are not accessing their background knowledge (Nokes, 2008).
- Students are unable to access new information that can be linked to relevant background knowledge for comprehension (Elbro, 2013).
- According to Levine (2002), peer friendships and interactions are valued in the cognitive development stage of adolescence.

METHODS

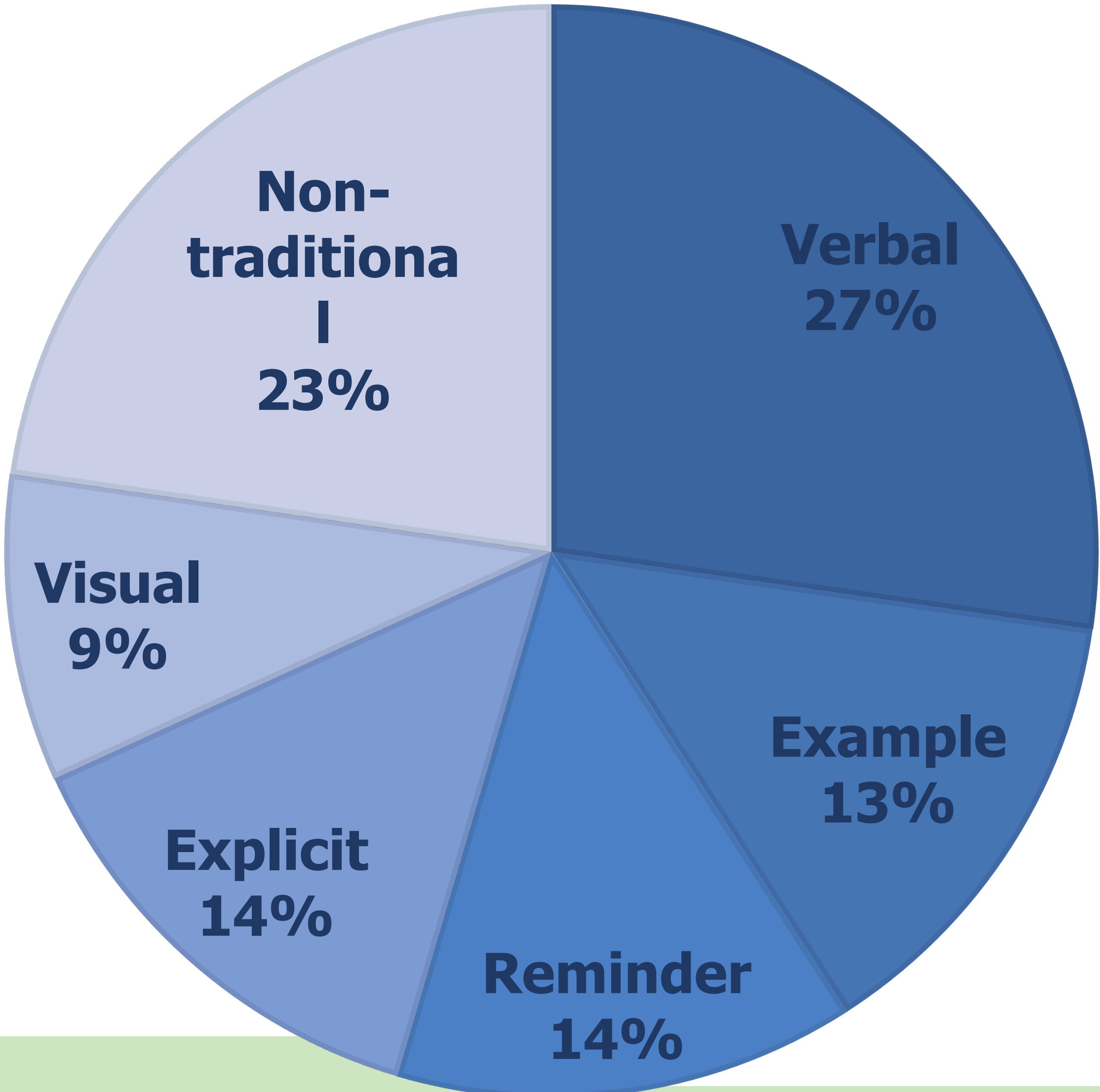


Figure 1. Techniques are not limited to paper assessments. Student understanding is improved with multiple methods.

Results and Data Analysis

- Positive student responses to scaffolded questioning techniques were supported through analysis of field notes.
- Field notes pointed towards effective group and peer collaboration in enhancing inference making abilities.
- The use of nontraditional texts increased student engagement and performance.
- Reminders of inference making techniques and strategies are necessary in helping students stray from the normal question and answer process.
- Scaffolded and additional questioning improved students' performance on assessments.
- Activating prior knowledge engages students in the text and hence involves higher order thinking skills.

Conclusion

- Findings suggest that students benefit from both verbal and written scaffolded questioning in response to assessment questions requiring inference making.
- An array of tools aids students in recognizing inference making in traditional texts.
- Further study is required in the development over time of students' ability to respond to inference making assessments.