Coherence inferences. Coherence inferences facilitate comprehension by establishing associations between statements with implicitly common concepts on the basis of pre-existing knowledge (Kintsch 1974; Kintsch and van Dijk 1978; Alba and Hutchinson 1987). Given a goal-related relationship, a given point of view, or a causal relationship, readers will interpret a series of statements into a coherent story or episode (Black, Galambos and Reed). Goal-related inferences, for instance, result from the implied relationship between statements regarding a common goal or a plan to achieve a goal. Statements like “Suddenly it started raining. Everyone headed for the store. The entire stock of umbrellas was depleted,” are linked by the implied goal of keeping dry (the goal) by buying an umbrella (the plan) (Abbot and Black 1982). A series of statements can also be interpreted as a coherent story given a consistent point of view, the perspective from which a story originates (e.g., as told by the main character or by an observer). When there are changes in the point of view from which a story is told, the inferences generated and the level of comprehension readers can achieve are compromised (Black, Turner and Bower, 1979).

Causal inferences are generated given a causal relationship that is not explicitly stated but is implied by the statements. For instance, “He walked over to the refrigerator bumping a bowl he had left on the table. Suddenly it fell off the edge and broke,” implies that the bowl fell and broke from the bump to the refrigerator. Once these statements have been integrated into a coherent unit they are recalled as a unit rather than as separate statements, and often the implied relationship is recalled as if it had been explicitly stated. Black and Bern (1981) in fact found that the above statements were recalled together, and were recalled better than statements without an implied causal relationship. Moreover,