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Experiences with predictable text in a Chapter I reading program

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Abstract

Nurturing children's emerging literacy is currently a well-publicized goal for schools. Much concern is expressed by educators and the public for students who finish their education without acquiring language abilities that will support them in their adult life. Educators are recognizing that literacy emerges at an early age, long before children come to school. Educators are building school reading and writing programs on the oral and written language experiences children bring to school. As in their preschool years, children in school instruction should have opportunities to use language in ways that are purposeful, meaningful, and natural within the structure of whole units rather than in isolated fragments.

Experiences With Predictable Text

in a Chapter I Reading Program

A Graduate Project

Submitted to the

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of the Requirements for the Degree

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by

Rona R. Loss

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Nurturing children's emerging literacy is currently a well-publicized goal for schools. Much concern is expressed by educators and the public for students who finish their education without acquiring language abilities that will support them in their adult life.

Educators are recognizing that literacy emerges at an early age, long before children come to school. Educators are building school reading and writing programs on the oral and written language experiences children bring to school. As in their preschool years, children in school instruction should have opportunities to use language in ways that are purposeful, meaningful, and natural within the structure of whole units rather than in isolated fragments.

An overarching influence in school literacy programs today is the whole language concept. In extending this concept into instructional programs, educators recognize the nature of language and the development characteristics of children. Through engaging in the language processes within the structure of a whole unit--a story or a poem, children can create meaning and extend their thinking-language abilities (Goodman, 1986).

The whole language concept is implemented through an environment that extends children's language through quality literature. Literature provides models of language for

children, thus nurturing their sense of story and motivating
them to engage in the process of reading.

Purpose of the Paper

The purpose of this paper is to explore predictable
literature as one means of supporting young children's language
growth in a Chapter I reading program and to develop experiences
with this type of literature to nurture children's language
abilities. Professional literature will be reviewed and then
related to suggestions for the implementation of predictable
books into an instructional program.

Support for Experiences with Predictable Books

In this section, the instructional needs of young children,
the value of quality literature in instructional programs, and
predictable books as a means of nurturing literacy will be
discussed.

Young Children's Language

Traditional methods of reading instruction are being
challenged by recent research on young children's emerging
literacy. Traditional teaching methods have isolated and
fragmented language. Teachers have isolated reading and writing
into small skill-drill sequences. Young readers are asked to
attend to phonics rules, one word at a time, and "getting the
word right." These approaches to reading all hinder involvement

in the process to create meaning, which according to Frank Smith (1988) is what reading is all about.

Many reading programs for young children are composed of a reader series that consists of workbooks, skill sequences, practice materials, and pre-test and post-test assessment. Brian Cambourne (1988) relates that a highly structured reading program does not promote literacy. Such a program produces people who need to be continually told what to do when confronted with learning tasks rather than those who through reading and writing are creating much of their own learning.

In traditional programs, young children's language development begins with formal instruction in school (Goodman, 1986). Researchers have come to realize that children come to school with many language abilities. Children have developed these levels of literacy through social and cultural interactions with adults and other children (Morrow, 1989).

Goodman (1986) relates that children entering school are developing language and the ability to learn. They are learning language naturally from whole to part. They are using language to communicate and to make sense of the world.

Schools that are extending the whole language concept into the language arts instructional program attempt to make language easy by building on children's prior knowledge. Children, as naturally active participants, are provided opportunities to

engage in meaningful whole experiences (Goodman, 1986; Morrow, 1989). Their language abilities are nurtured through engaging in the processes and experiencing models of more sophisticated language offered through quality literature and their teacher's behavior.

Value of Quality Literature

Quality literature should be central to the learning environment. Literature serves as a model for language and provides strong motivation for learning to read and write.

Children who are introduced to literature at an early age develop sophisticated language structures. These experiences nurture background knowledge, appreciation of books, and interest in learning to read (Huck, Hepler, & Hickman, 1987).

Morrow (1989) stresses the importance of providing children with daily opportunities to experience, discuss, relate, and share literature. Regie Routman (1988) defends the presentation of quality literature experiences, for they promote thinking and language abilities and develop readers rather than skills.

Providing a rich language environment to foster young children's emerging literacy involves reading aloud to children. Listening to stories introduces children to patterns of language, extends their vocabulary and comprehension abilities, and influences writing abilities (Huck, 1987).

Quality literature facilitates the whole language concept by keeping language whole rather than fragmented. Children's literature can produce rewarding changes in the performance and attitudes of remedial readers by providing pleasure and motivation to engage in the language processes, thus improving the performance and self image of remedial readers (Shumaker & Shumaker, 1988).

Value of Predictable Literature

Frank Smith (1988) relates that there is only one way in which language can be comprehended and that is by having meaning brought to it by the reader through the process of prediction. Prediction is a critical factor in reading for a number of reasons: It allows the reader to keep ahead of the text, to project possibilities, to reduce ambiguity, and to eliminate irrelevant alternatives. Prediction and comprehension are closely related. Prediction involves asking questions, and comprehension occurs when the answers to those questions are found.

Traditional programs have disconnected and fragmented language, distracting from the comprehension of the whole. In such programs, readers are more concerned with "getting the word right" rather than trying to make sense of what is being read. Reading one word at a time does not ensure that the reader is reading for meaning (Smith, 1988).

Children's literature that is written in a predictable format can assist in making learning to read easier for children (Bridge, 1979). These stories are written in a rhythmical, repetitive pattern that allows children opportunities to predict what will be the next idea and the next pattern of words. These stories allow readers to use all the clues provided by language--phonetic, syntactic, and semantic--to aid them in comprehension. Analyses of basal readers reveal that many of their selections consist of unnatural language that lacks story structure (McClure, 1985).

The study done by Bridge and Burton (1982) demonstrated the effectiveness of teaching sight vocabulary to beginners through patterned language. The studies conducted by Bridge, Winograd and Haley (1983) conclude that slower first graders learned sight words better in the context of predictable books rather than in less patterned stories.

Leu, DeGroff and Simons (1986) relate from their study that predictable texts can give poor readers opportunities to make inferences, draw conclusions, predict outcomes, and engage in other comprehension processes. The rhythmic flow of predictable literature promotes language development and thinking (Routman, 1988).

Remedial Readers

Remedial readers do not see themselves as competent readers and do not read because they believe they cannot read successfully. They do not believe that reading can help them in school and in daily life or that they can use reading to solve problems and to develop insights. These students need to learn to analyze a reading task and to devise plans for reading, to construct meaning from reading, and to overcome obstacles while reading. Unless these feelings are changed, at-risk readers are likely to remain at-risk (Vacca & Padak, 1990).

Teachers can work to accommodate the needs of remedial readers by shifting from skill drills, reading games, isolated work on phonic or spelling rules, whose purpose they may not see and whose relevance they doubt, to whole units provided by stories and poems. Frank Smith (1988) believes that the more children are involved in the process of reading, the more they will learn to read. The more they can recognize words, the easier they will be able to understand phonic correspondences, to employ context clues, and to identify new words by analogy. The more that children are able to read the more they are likely to discover and extend these strategies to themselves. The easy way to learn words is not to work with individual words at all but with meaningful passages of text.

Children's literature can produce rewarding changes in the performance and attitudes of remedial readers. A literature-based program can serve as a preventive force replacing remedial measures. Shumaker and Shumaker (1988) relate that children's literature can assist in breaking the cycle of failure and can reduce the isolation of the struggling student.

Predictable Literature: A Resource for Instruction

This section will include suggestions for the implementation of predictable books into a Chapter I instructional program as resources of instruction for nurturing children's oral language and reading and writing abilities. Students in this Chapter I, a pull-out program, are characterized as low socioeconomic, at-risk readers. They have limited exposure to books outside of school and have no or limited reading models at home. These children are unfamiliar with fairy tales, nursery rhymes, and children's literature. Therefore, predictable literature is important for reading, writing, and language experiences.

Implementation of Reading Predictable Stories

Predictable literature can be one means of supporting young children's language growth. According to Regie Routman (1988) there are many goals of predictable literature experiences: (a) to create a positive learning environment, (b) to motivate and foster reading development and positive attitudes through

literature, (c) to incorporate works of quality literature that have rhyme and rhythmic qualities, repetitive sentence patterns, and predictability of story, (d) to have children hear quality literature daily, (e) to have children experience repeated readings of favorite books, and (f) to promote and develop independent reading both at school and at home. These goals serve as the basis of the writer's Chapter I reading program.

In 1984, Andrea Butler and Jan Turbill developed the teaching strategy Shared Book Experience. In using this strategy the teacher selects a predictable story, introduces and reads the story, reads the story again, and then the children read the book independently. The teacher follows with expressive activities. This procedure was designed to increase children's participation, to teach book knowledge and reading strategies, to develop sight vocabulary, to provide experiences with context and to learn sound-symbol. Through the use of patterned books, children are learning to read by immersion in meaningful whole language.

An example of a shared book experience involves reading from a Big Book, Caps for Sale by Esphyr Slobodkina, or a similar book made by the class or the teacher. Such a book is designed so that everyone in the group can see the pictures as the teacher reads and points to the print while it is being read.

In order to develop concepts about print and books, the writer engages the children in the process of repeated readings. Regie Routman (1988) relates that fluency and comprehension improve if the students are given continuous practice. As the story is reread, the child can recognize the words more easily and then can focus more on the meaning. For example, if the child is familiar with the story of The Little Red Hen by Paul Galdone, he/she will be able to respond by engaging in the natural flow of language. Stories can also be recorded and used in a listening center for repeated readings.

Poetry Experiences

Poetry offers experiences with predictable text. Much of poetry is well structured with repetitive lines and stanzas, definite meter patterns, and rhyme schemes. Sources of predictable poetry are Eve Merriam's volumes Blackberry Ink and You Be Good and I'll Be Night.

Group Reading

Reading poetry aloud can foster interest in reading. At-risk readers can forget about their fears when participating with the group and learn cooperation as they work together. These readers need many opportunities to use oral language in interesting and meaningful situations.

Retelling Experiences

Retelling of stories can be an effective comprehension strategy for remedial readers. Retelling engages the child in holistic comprehension and organization of thought. It allows for personalization of thinking as children include their own life constructs with their retelling. Retelling contrasts with the traditional approach of teacher-posed questions that require children to recall information selected by the teacher (Gambrell, Pfeiffer, & Wilson, 1985). Rose, Cundick and Higbee (1983) found that retelling significantly increased the reading comprehension of elementary-age learning disabled children.

Because story retelling is not an easy task for young children, the books selected should have good plot structures that make their story line easy to follow and therefore easy to retell. Repetitive phrases, rhyme, familiar sequences, conversation, and general popularity of the story can add to a story's predictability and can help the initial retelling. Props can be used in story retelling such as rebus stories, story cloths, story ropes, filmstrip boxes, puppet shows, character cards, and flannelboards. They can prompt the student in the retelling process by focusing in a concrete sense on the parts of the story and major elements.

Story Cloths. From Ann Grifalconi's Osa's Pride children can learn about this type of story retelling. Children can

construct the characters in Ezra Jack Keats' <u>Over in the Meadow</u>
from paper or material and attach them to a piece of blue
cloth. Story cloths are worn as shawls, skirts, or hung on the
wall during storytelling. As the story is retold, the child
points to the images on the cloth.

<u>Rebus story</u>. This retelling technique combines words and
pictures in retelling through writing. For example, <u>The Carrot
Seed</u> by Ruth Krauss, can be developed into a rebus story. The
words and pictures can be placed on a chart pad.

<u>Story rope</u>. The parts of a story are identified. Then
these parts, usually represented by important images, are
developed into cut-outs and strung on a piece of rope or yarn.
As the story is retold, the child presents the images in the
sequence of the story. <u>Knots on a Counting Rope</u>, by Bill
Martin, Jr. and John Archambault, can show children the use of
a story rope as a tool in storytelling. The repetitive phrases,
rhyme, and familiar sequences of <u>I Know an Old Lady</u>, by Rose
Bonne and Alan Mills, adapts easily to a story rope.

<u>Filmstrip box</u>. Parts of the story can be placed on strips
of cardboard and pulled through a lighted shoebox as the story
is retold. <u>Little Red Riding Hood</u> is a tale which has well
defined parts so it adapts easily to this retelling technique.

<u>Puppets</u>. Stories with much dialogue are well suited for
puppet shows. At-risk children often feel secure telling

stories with puppets. Such stories as <u>The Gingerbread Boy</u>, by
Paul Galdone, and <u>The Three Billy Goats Gruff</u>, by Marcia Brown,
make good stories for this activity, for they are short, have
few characters, and have repetitions.

    <u>Flannelboard pieces and character cards</u>. In a Chapter I
reading program, these techniques are used frequently because
they support the student in story retelling thus providing
enjoyment and nurturing literacy. Stories with a limited number
of characters, such as <u>Mr. Gumpy's Outing</u>, by John Burningham,
lend themselves to retelling.

Writing Experiences

    Predictable literature is as natural a medium for
encouraging writing as it is for encouraging oral language and
reading. Predictable books provide patterns that children can
invent whole stories through cumulative patterns as in <u>The
Napping House</u>, by Audrey and Don Wood; familiar sequences, as in
<u>Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?</u>, by Bill Martin, Jr.;
repetitive language, as in <u>The Teeny Tiny Woman</u>, by Paul
Galdone; or interesting phrases as in <u>The Gingerbread Boy</u>, by
Paul Galdone.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

    Children enter school with prior knowledge and language
abilities. Schools can nurture their emerging literacy by
providing opportunities to engage in meaningful whole language

experiences. Children need to be immersed in a rich language environment with a quality literature base.

Predictable literature as part of the instructional program fosters young children's oral language and reading and writing abilities. The implementation of predictable texts into a Chapter I reading program makes learning to read easier for these at-risk students.

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