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Predictable pattern books with beginning readers in a Chapter 1 classroom

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Predictable pattern books with beginning readers in a Chapter 1 classroom

Abstract

In school reading programs, students need opportunities to engage in the language processes. They need experiences that are meaningful to them and ones in which they find success. Children can enhance their literacy with an abundance of quality literature experiences and exposure to a print rich literary environment (Meek, 1982). One means of supporting beginning readers in breaking the written language code is to provide opportunities in the instructional program to experience language patterns over and over, such as are found in predictable pattern books. These works provide a source of support for children while they are trying to make sense of print. They are easy to read because they contain whole units of meaning that flow naturally with the assistance of specific language patterns. These qualities can offer immediate success for beginning readers (Routman, 1988).

Predictable Pattern Books With
Beginning Readers in a Chapter 1 Classroom

A Graduate Project
Submitted to the
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
In Partial Fulfillment
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Master of Arts in Education
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by
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of Master of Arts in Education.

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Introduction

Rationale of the Paper

In school reading programs, students need opportunities to engage in the language processes. They need experiences that are meaningful to them and ones in which they find success. Children can enhance their literacy with an abundance of quality literature experiences and exposure to a print rich literary environment (Meek, 1982).

One means of supporting beginning readers in breaking the written language code is to provide opportunities in the instructional program to experience language patterns over and over, such as are found in predictable pattern books. These works provide a source of support for children while they are trying to make sense of print. They are easy to read because they contain whole units of meaning that flow naturally with the assistance of specific language patterns. These qualities can offer immediate success for beginning readers (Routman, 1988).

In predictable literature, the language often follows a set pattern. Language patterns commonly found in predictable texts include four main categories: repetition, cumulative structures, sequential episodes, and rhythmic and rhyming language (Huck, Hepler, & Hickman, 1994). Many pieces of literature contain one or more language patterns. These literature experiences can encourage children to listen, chime in, read in chorus and

dialogue, recite by memory, and read aloud together. Predictable texts can help students make meaning of print.

Purpose of the Paper

The purpose of this paper is to explore the effectiveness of predictable pattern books with beginning readers in a Chapter 1 classroom. An analysis will be presented of commercially-prepared materials and teacher-selected pieces that offer experiences with predictable texts. The paper will also include a discussion of appropriate experiences with predictable stories.

Importance of the Paper

Students in Chapter 1 reading programs are reading below their estimated ability. These students benefit from additional reading experiences. However, in many programs, these underachievers are involved less in the reading process and spend more time on isolated skill exercises and drill (Cambourne, 1988). For remedial readers whose literacy development is delayed, having to rely on phonetic decoding may increase the difficulty (Smith, 1994). Some of these young students come to school missing the essential background of experiences with literature and, as a result, have not developed an adequate sense of story. Some have no idea that sounds and letters are related and are unfamiliar with the basic concepts of print, such as how

to hold a book or the left to right flow of print on the page (Slaughter, 1993).

The key to making reading easier for beginning readers is finding material for instruction that is easy and meaningful to the students, thus predictable. Chapter 1 students can usually read or at least read along with the teacher with the text of predictable books. From such experiences, children in Chapter 1 can begin to perceive themselves as readers and make connections between oral and written language; thus, experiences with predictable books can encourage literary-delayed children to read for enjoyment and can reinforce their sense of story structure and concepts of print. As these children's ability to predict is extended, they will be able to read more difficult texts.

Methodology

Method of Identifying and Locating Sources

An ERA search was conducted to find professional literature addressing experiences with predictable texts for beginning readers. In searching for published predictable instructional materials, the area education agency and the Instructional Support Center of the Mason City Community Schools provided sample reading instruction kits for previewing. These kits included teacher's manuals, student books, and additional instructional materials, such as overhead transparencies, posters, workbooks and word cards. The Instructional Support

Center provided a list of publishing companies that produce reading materials. Publishing companies from this list were contacted for information and samples of their programs.

Criteria of Assessing Published Predictable Texts

A criteria based on professional sources was developed for assessing published instructional materials with predictable text.

1. The instructional program should focus on whole units of language rather than on isolated instruction of fragmented elements.
2. The literature base should be developed from quality works representative of the different genres. Elements of quality stories are a lively well-constructed plot, a theme that is meaningful to young children, an authentic setting, a credible point of view, convincing characterization, appropriate style, and attractive format.
3. Different predictable language patterns should be represented in the texts.
4. The language of the texts should flow naturally and not be stilted by a controlled vocabulary.
5. Connections between oral and written language should be made.

6. From the literature experiences, opportunities to engage in many forms of intertextual experiences, or expressive activities, to create one's own meaning should be encouraged.

7. The guidelines for teachers should encourage their focus on children's responses and on extending their emerging literacy rather than promoting a step-by-step approach to instruction.

These points can provide a structure for analyzing published materials.

Review of Professional Literature and Analysis Discussion

This section will present a review from professional literature on these topics: language systems and beginning readers, the nature of predictable texts in beginning reading instruction, the effectiveness of predictable text in beginning reading instruction, and the value of quality predictable texts. Then, an analysis of commercially-prepared programs for beginning reading instruction that include predictable texts and a review and discussion of teacher-selected strategies and materials will be presented.

Language, Predictable Texts, and Beginning Readers

As readers engage in the reading process, they encounter three language systems--syntactic, semantic, and phonetic. The syntactic system is the organization of words to create clause patterns. The semantic system is the anticipated meaning of

the text. The phonetic system is the sound elements that are represented by letters in written text. In learning to read, knowledge of these systems that are interrelated to create meaning aids readers in the prediction of the text (Smith, 1994).

Beginning readers use syntactic cueing along with phonetic and semantic cueing as they encounter printed language. Their knowledge of syntax patterns enables them to predict the occurrence of words that fit the expected context. For this reason, it is important that reading material for many beginners contain familiar language patterns (O'Donnell & Wood, 1992).

Semantic cues along with phonetic and syntactic clues enable readers to predict the meaning and the pronunciation of unknown words in context. Readers connect their prior knowledge with semantic clues to create meaning from the text (O'Donnell & Wood, 1992). When the material encountered by beginning readers is relevant to their background, they can use their semantic cueing system to support their limited word recognition ability (Bridge, 1979).

Nature of Predictable Text

Children learn to be efficient predictors of meaning, or economical users of visual information, through involvement in the reading process. Reading ability is achieved through much engagement in this process. The materials for early reading

instruction need to be meaningful and predictable (Goodman, 1976).

Stories children enjoy and have read over and over again have natural language and satisfying plots that encourage reading. Many of these books utilize repeated language and story patterns which help children learn to read naturally as they join in on the refrains or predict the action of the story. Books that can help children begin to read may be identified by such characteristics as repetitive patterns, or story patterns, such as patterns of three and cumulative plots, or the use of familiar sequences as numbers, the days of the week, or hierarchical patterns. Frequently texts combine several of these characteristics in a single story (Huck et al., 1994).

Rhythmic language and rhyme are used in nursery rhymes and songs that children soon learn by heart. They enable children to act like readers. Children can hold the books or point to a large chart and read the words because they know the verse or song. They are learning that these symbols stand for the words they already know (Huck et al., 1994).

Effectiveness of Predictable Text in Beginning Reading

Instruction

When teachers read aloud literature with frequently heard predictable language patterns, children are able to build language knowledge that will support them in predicting written

text (Bridge, 1979). From their study Reutzek and Hollingsworth (1991) concluded that as reading material for beginning readers, predictable narration can promote successful reading experiences. They found two chief advantages associated with providing materials with predictable narration. They assist students in developing effective reading prediction strategies and in recognizing and internalizing the text structures.

Chandler and Baghban (1986) found in their study that readers' knowledge of the text's structure affects their comprehension in the reading process. Those students who have difficulty learning to read would benefit from text with story structure that is familiar. They found that experiences with predictable text also added fluency in oral reading. When reading patterned selections, students were able to process phrases and sentences as chunks of meaning.

Experiences with predictable texts can assist students in looking for meaning in print. Children can predict and confirm meaning, and reread and self-correct when their prediction is faulty (Lynch, 1986).

When beginning readers are involved in a shared book experience using predictable texts, they are engaging in reading-like behavior. Even though they are not quite matching the exact written words to spoken words, they are beginning to rely on contextual clues and upon prior knowledge of the story to predict

and create meaning from the story. The children's attention is focused on gaining understanding of the story. They are not relying on word recognition, but they are reading to gain meaning from the printed page. Students are then able to transfer this meaning to their own responses, such as story retellings and writing. From her study Sulzby (1985) concludes that children often create patterns in their oral and written language that reflect their literature experiences. Such behavior can be observed even in preschool-age children.

In their study Bridge, Winograd and Haley (1983) reported on the effectiveness of experiences with predictable text in beginning reading instruction for slow learners. The materials seemed to spur on students' progress in developing vocabulary and to encourage them to apply context clues when encountering unfamiliar words. Such reading abilities seemed to promote more positive feelings toward reading aloud. Heibert, Colt, Catto, and Gury (1992) in their study also found that predictable pattern books were effective in fostering the reading ability of students in a Chapter 1 program.

Rhodes (1981) relates that the goal of Chapter 1 reading programs is to develop a nurturing reading environment for students and a successful transfer to other reading situations outside Chapter 1. Presenting predictable pattern books can assist in creating an environment in which the children can

successfully apply what they know about language as they encounter and deal with unfamiliar aspects of written language. Successful readers of predictable materials can become successful readers of a wide range of materials.

Value of Quality Literature

Exposure to quality literature with a limited amount of text and predictable patterns is an excellent source to demonstrate the predictability of written language (Rhodes, 1981). Quality literature because of well developed elements offer models of language (Huck et al., 1994). Such texts appeal to children, and repeated involvement with the text is pleasurable to them. This meaningful practice not only fosters comprehension of the text but also children's fluency in oral reading and confidence in their ability to engage in the reading process (Rhodes, 1981).

Analysis and Discussion

In this section, predictable text experiences as found in commercially-prepared and teacher-selected programs will be presented.

Commercially-prepared instructional materials. Based on the criteria presented in the methodology section of the paper, an analysis of predictable text experiences found in commercially-prepared instructional materials has been conducted.

The discussion moves from the programs that represent the most criteria to the ones that are characterized by the least.

The instructional program that met most of the criteria was *The Literature Experience*, published by Houghton Mifflin (authored by Pikulski, Cooper & Durr, 1991). The literature base of the predictable texts consists of quality works from different genre, written by well-known authors. The works with predictable patterns include poems, chants, songs, and fiction. Examples of pieces found in the literature base are traditional songs such as "If You're Happy and You Know It" and "Ants Go Marching." Poems with predictable pattern are also included, such as *At the Zoo*, by Myra Cohn Livingston, *Notice*, by David McCord, and *A Matter of Taste*, by Eve Merriam. Stories with predictable patterns include Do You Want To Be My Friend? by Eric Carle; Three Little Kittens, by Paul Galdone; Have You Seen My Duckling? by Nancy Tafuri; Goodnight Moon, by Margaret Wise Brown; and Chicken Soup With Rice, by Maurice Sendak. The language of these pieces allows children to experience the natural flow of language rather than stilted controlled vocabulary. These literature pieces with predictable patterns involve children in all aspects of language--listening, speaking, reading, and writing--thus promoting their emerging literacy.

Different language patterns are included in the literature works. Many more predictable pattern pieces are in the

kindergarten than in the first grade section, reflecting that first graders are usually gaining ability to predict and do not need as many patterned reading experiences.

Connections between oral and written language are made through the shared book experience with predictable stories. The teacher reads aloud the whole story inviting the students to join in. Students can respond to predictable texts with personal written responses. This commercially-prepared program successfully combines quality literature experiences with predictable pattern with beginning reading instruction.

The program published by D. C. Heath (authored by Alverman et al., 1993) includes predictable pattern works based on quality literature. Chants, rhymes, and songs with predictable patterns accompany each story. However, the predictable pattern works represent few genres. Many related activities are suggested for each story so little time is spent reading predictable pattern works. The series lacks a variety of patterns, tending to concentrate on rhyme, rhythm, and repetition. The language of these texts does flow naturally and is not written with a controlled vocabulary.

The guidelines for presenting the predictable pattern stories do not focus on whole units of language. The instruction tends to isolate and fragment the elements of the works. To teach the pattern of each story, sentence strips and word cards

are made and displayed on pocket charts. These cards and sentence strips are matched to the text of a big book with a predictable pattern. Too much time is spent in this activity rather than engaging in the reading process.

The writing response activities for the predictable texts are limited to following a pattern of a specific text presented by the teacher. The children are encouraged to respond to their reading in personal journals.

The Rigby Literacy 2000 (1988), a supplemental program, is not based on quality literature. There is not a variety of language patterns, for the most part, rhyme and rhythm patterns. The language does not flow naturally and tends to contain limited vocabulary.

Suggestions are presented for many expressive activities. Examples are dramatizing, role playing, constructing a big book or wall story, and patterning one's ideas after a predictable story.

Connections are made between oral and written language. Children can read orally together from a big book but also can read silently from their own books. Emphasis is made in the teacher's manual to focus on children's responses in the reading experiences rather than on fragmented isolated skill instruction in isolation.

The Steck-Vaughn (1991) predictable pattern reading material does not have a literature base with quality literature pieces or a variety of genres. However, the related readings suggested in the teacher's edition include pieces of quality literature with predictable patterns. The predictable language patterns are chiefly rhyme and rhythm. Because the language is controlled, the language does not flow naturally. Copies of the story are available for students to read on their own. The material provides opportunities for the students to respond to the stories and to engage in different kinds of activities in connection with the predictable pattern books. Such activities include shared book experience, story retelling and dramatizing the story, and innovating on the text.

Students' writing experiences are not emphasized. The written responses were limited in amount and included little opportunity for personal response.

The reading material that related to the least number of criteria was Modern Curriculum Press Reading Friends (authored by Arnell & Nayer, 1989). The program features only predictable pattern texts. The literature quality of the stories and the types of predictable patterns, mostly rhyming and repetition, are limited. The same author wrote all of the books in the series. The language of the text does not flow naturally and is written with a controlled vocabulary. The program involves students in a

shared book experience; however, the program does not focus on the story as a whole unit of language. Instruction is isolated in fragmented elements. The predictable texts are taken apart and the phrases are matched to the text. The teacher-directed instruction is step by step. This system directs the teacher to point out each word and phrase to the children. The children are then to respond with the word or phrase. No personal response on the part of the children to the predictable pattern story is encouraged.

Teacher-selected materials. Teachers are beginning to select literature for their instructional programs. When teachers select predictable texts and other appropriate literature experiences for beginning readers, they are able to make choices that reflect their students' abilities and interests. This literature section includes literature representing different genres and predictable language patterns. Expressive activities should naturally evolve from predictable texts, thus encouraging students to thoughtfully reexamine the text and demonstrate ideas generated from the reading process.

Many quality literature works are available with predictable text. These stories use repetitive words, phrases or questions which invite the children to join in the reading. For example, Eric Carle's The Very Busy Spider when read aloud invites active participation as the children repeat the spider's

responses to the farm animals who ask her to do activities with them. The spider's response is always the same. Each farm animal's name begins with the sound associated with them. Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? by Bill Martin, Jr., is an enjoyable question and answer book. The story begins with the Brown Bear being asked what he sees; he replies that he sees a red bird. The question is then directed to a different animal of a different color. The identification of the animals and the colors in the illustrations encourages children to chime in with the questions posed on each page. Other patterned language books may repeat certain words many times, as in Teeny Tiny, by Jill Bennett. These predictable pattern stories can be the basis for choral reading which involves children reading in parts, such as asking questions, responding with answers, reading and verse and refrain in parts, or chiming in on the repetitive phrases.

Predictable literature can involve sequential episodes as familiar sequences of numbers and days of the week. Eric Carle's cumulative story The Very Hungry Caterpillar builds on children's knowledge of numbers and days of the week. The caterpillar eats an increasing number of pieces of fruit as the days of the week progress; for example, one apple on Monday, two pears on Tuesday, and three plums on Wednesday until he eats a huge feast on Sunday. In Maurice Sendak's rhyming Chicken Soup With Rice, each verse begins with the month and ends with an idea about the soup.

Rhythmic language and rhyme are used in nursery rhymes and songs that children soon know by heart, such as Over in the Meadow, retold by Ezra Jack Keats; Roll Over!, retold by Mordicai Gerstein; Skip To My Lou, retold by Nadine Bernard Westcott; or Oh, A-Hunting We Will Go, retold by John Langstaff. Experiences with these stories enable children to act like readers. Children can hold the books or point to a large chart and read the words because they know the verse or song. They are learning that symbols found in the predictable text stand for the words they already know.

These patterned books are a natural springboard for writing. Children's adaptations of patterned stories can be constructed into big books with their own illustrations for shared reading experiences. As they write their own versions, using the patterns from the literature experiences, they are focusing on the elements of the stories.

The predictable patterned stories can also be extended through dramatization activities. The children can act out the story, using the language patterns. These stories can also be retold through flannel board experiences that offer concrete representations of characters and motifs as they relate to the progression of the plot. For students who are less confident in speaking in front of a group, narrative pantomime, which involves reenacting the story through body movements as a leader retells

the predictable pattern story, can offer participation activities. Puppets can be used in retelling a predictable pattern story. Students can make puppets of favorite book characters to serve as props for retelling.

Summary

The presentation of predictable books is one of many strategies that can be used to assist beginning readers in unlocking the language code, thus creating meaning from engaging in the reading process. Then, children can move on to more unpredictable works.

The selection of quality literature works for experiences with predictable text is crucial for the success of such experiences. Quality works are not only attractive to readers, but their well-developed elements compel their audiences to return again and again. Quality works also serve as models of language so children can learn language and use it to create their own ideas.

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