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Effective Sight Word Methods for Young Readers

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Effective Sight Word Methods for Young Readers

by

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Purpose of the Study

Kindergarten standards and expectations have increased over the course of many years. Time in an educational setting has continued to increase. Schools have gone from every other day and half days, to the current mode of all day, every day Kindergarten. Common findings show that full day programs provide significantly higher reading scores (Thompson & Sonnenschein, 2016). Through the expansion of time spent inside a classroom, the state standards and Kindergarten skill sets have also increased. Not only are students learning their letters names, formations, and sounds, they are expected to blend them in order to read and write. Within the Minnesota state standards, there are four detailed, specific kindergarten objectives that ask for those rigorous foundational skills (Minnesota Department of Education (2016). With these growing expectations, educators have been looking for ways to improve students' reading levels. According to Volpe, Mulé, Briesch, Joseph, and Burns, (2011) the development of sight word recognition is a key skill for emergent readers. It is an important role in their reading development. Sight word recognition is the ability to read high frequency words in text with atomicity and accuracy. When readers are able to read words correctly in a timely manner, they increase their reading fluency. As fluency is enhanced, their reading comprehension, or ability to understand what is being read, also increases. As fluency and comprehension increase, one's overall reading ability becomes greater. Since sight words are present in primary elementary education, the purpose of this study was to find out if sight words are in fact an essential component to reading skills and if so, what methods work best in order to teach sight words. Specific methods that are discussed are the use of flashcards and different multisensory

approaches. This research provides evidence as to what method is most effective for future

instruction in regard to increasing reading skills.

Sight words are recognized, pronounced, and understood by readers without any effort

(Ehri, 2005). Readers do not need to break the word apart and try to decode it. Decoding takes

time, energy, and focus on a particular word, which takes away from the overall meaning of the

text. When constant decoding occurs, comprehension is being disrupted (Ehri, 2005). If readers

can recall words from memory, they will develop a skill that will help increase their reading

efficiency. Because sight word recall enhances fluency, "building a sight [word] vocabulary is

essential for achieving text-reading skills" (Ehri, 2005, p. 170).

Sight words are presented each week within my school's reading curriculum titled,

Reading Street. Using their scope and sequence, two to three new sight words are introduced

each week, and the students are assessed for trimester report cards. In order to create small

reading groups, students undergo a Developmental Reading Assessment or DRA to find their

current reading level. My interests in sight words come from this assessment. It asks the

students not only to read, but also think about and answer questions from the text. My personal

experience has taught me that if a reader is fluent and can continue to read, then they are able to

focus on the content and answer questions based on the text. I have also witnessed students

having to stop and decode words, and later have trouble recalling what happened in the story.

Because I assume sight words increase fluency, which increases comprehension, which then

leads to successful reading ability, I see sight words as an essential foundational piece for

reading development. The main component to focus on is sight word recognition. It is shown

that students need direct instruction with new unknown words (Phillips & Feng, 2012). I plan to

search for ways to improve student sight word recognition which will enhance student reading

ability, focusing on certain methods. The methods I researched are the use of flashcards and

manipulation within small groups. It has been found that the flashcard method promotes

atomicity and the ability to recognize sight words (Volpe et al., 2011). With the drill method,

students learn and recognize more words. Also, due to accuracy and speed being included in the

drill practice, there is an expectation and motivation for being correct. Within the research by

Phillips, it is also said "multisensory education involves auditory, visual, and kinesthetic

interactions with direct explicit instruction in the reading content" (p. 12). When instruction

meets the needs of multiple learning styles, the rate of success increases. This method allows

students to use different activities such as singing and the use of different manipulatives in order

learn unknown words.

Research Questions

1. Do sight words play a role in reading development?

2. What are effective methods to teach sight words?

To answer these questions, I used academic search engines, such as EBSO, to review the

literature on:

- Sight words

- Reading development

- Fluency

- Comprehension

- Flashcard Drill

- Multisensory Approaches

According to Veenendaal, Groen, and Verhoeven (2015), decoding skills are an important foundational skill for reading comprehension. Although reading skills are taught simultaneously, these skills do build on each other. According to the University of Iowa's Reading Research Center, there are two types of sight words. Some are decodable, where as some need to be memorized due to the atypical letter-sound patterns. Once students are exposed to both types of high frequency words, they become a part of their sight word vocabularies, allowing them to read them automatically and accurately. As students are able to recognize more words with automaticity, they begin to string words into phrases, making their overall reading more fluent. Without reading fluency, comprehending reading material becomes very difficult. With lack of automaticity, there is too much time being lost to the effort of decoding words and not enough to understand what is being read (Fasko & Fasko, 2010). Learning sight words impacts reading fluency in a positive way.

Reading fluency also is a predictor of reading comprehension. "The ultimate goal of reading development is reading comprehension (Veenendaal et al., 2015, p. 214). Reading requires the understanding of what the text is saying in order to take away its meaning. If sight word vocabularies are not built, decoding is taking up the time and effort of the reader. By the end of the sentence, readers have pushed themselves to read the words individually, rather than understand what the words mean all together. Because automaticity, fluency, and comprehension skills build on each other, my focus was the alleged building block; sight words.

My focus was on the primary level of education. As young students, play is still an important aspect of their development. "Play should be viewed as a valuable activity that enables children to develop a wide variety of social and academic skills" (Lynch, 2015, p. 348).

My research in multisensory approach stems from this stage. Continuing to look at learning factors, young children cannot focus and keep attention for long periods of time. "Flashcard traditional drill requires very little time and enhances automaticity" (Volpe et al., 2011, p. 135). The developmental aspects and the educational expectations of this age have increased my interests, guiding my research to further explore methods that would be both effective and appropriate for primary students.

Use of Findings

This research will be used to analyze the best ways to retain sight words that will impact reading fluency, comprehension, and the growth of reading levels. The findings from this study may be used within my own classroom, school, and other districts to discuss what the best method is for introducing and teaching sight words. Based on the research, I hope to have an improved insight on what are the best practices for students to learn and recognize sight words, suggesting their important role in reading development. As students decrease the amount of time it takes to decode words, this will increase their fluency. Because they are able to read more fluently, they will be able to focus on the meaning of the text, ultimately enhancing their reading comprehension. The ability to understand and answer questions about the text also becomes greater. Reading comprehension is one aspect when assessing reading development. By doing this research, I hope to better identify strategies that are effective for sight word retention, maintenance, and generalization. Although students study and learn the unknown words in isolation, it is important that we transition "the newly acquired words in unfamiliar contexts" (Volpe et al., 2011, p. 120). This changeover is called generalization, which is crucial for the connection of sight words and reading development. This will better inform my classroom

decisions when choosing successful methods to introduce and teach sight words. The information found could also be seen as a potential topic of discussion within my Professional Learning Community (PLC). These collaborative PLC times together are meant to bring up ideas and different approaches to help classroom teacher instruction to improve individual students succeed. Since our local PLC has been focusing on reading development, this research is timely and will prove to be very valuable in our discussions and future curriculum development.

Limitations

This research is limited to the studies that were collected for this purpose and the search engines that were used. The collected studies are exclusive to certain approaches and do not include all methods. The findings are based solely on the literature review, as well as the years they were published. This research is also limited to the particular age group of primary elementary students, which does not include methods that may be effective for older students.

Definitions

- Sight Words--high frequency words when read are automatic to the reader

- High Frequency Words--words that are presented in text recurrently

- Decodable Words-high frequency words that follow phonetic patterns and can be sound out

- Irregular Words--high frequency words that do now follow typical letter-sound correspondences and need to be memorized

- Sight Word Recognition--the ability to recognize and read aloud high frequency words with automaticity

- Manipulation--physically handling tangible items

- Reading Comprehension--ability to understand what one reads and answer questions about the text

- Retention--being shown the sight word and reading it

- Reading Fluency--ability to read words and sentences accurately, in a timely manner, in phrases, and with expression

- Small Group--an educator working with 3-4 children at a time focusing on similar needs

- Generalization--ability to transfer isolated sight words into text

- Maintenance--ability to recall sight words after a period of time.

- Onset--the first phonetic sound in a word. Example: cat

- Rime--the remaining unit of the word following the onset. Example: cat

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reports research found on the role of sight words as well as how they can be taught, learned, and retained by students. The focus is to relay the importance of this foundational skill for reading development, the instruction and results of specific flashcard drills, and the approach of using hands-on activities to reach sight word recall. It will discuss the meaning of sight words and methods and the role of its presence in the classroom.

Foundational Skill

Sight words are words that can be recognized with little or no effort. To have sight word recognition is to have the ability to read words accurately and automatically, which is an early literacy skill playing a role in reading development (Volpe et al., 2011). When readers are able to recall words with ease, it allows them to read a text with fluency, or the ability to read accurately and quickly (Mulé et al., 2018). The goal is for students to come to a word, read it, and move on to the next. When automatic recall happens, the brain processes the word's pronunciation and meaning without struggle (Gaskins & Ehri, 1996, p. 317). As more and more words are being recalled and read with ease, these words begin to be strung together in phrases, similar to natural speech, when read aloud. This is called prosody, which is a component of reading fluency. This helps with understanding and using appropriate punctuation as well as proper phrasing (Veenendaal et al., 2015).

As students build their sight word recognition, this recall allows "children to focus on gaining meaning from the text" (Volpe et al., 2011, p. 118), "thus enhancing reading compression" (Mulé et al., 2018, p. 241). If a reader needs to stop, decode, analyze or predict one word, the reader will be distracted from understanding the overall text, disrupting their

comprehension (Ehri, 2005). The result of Ehri's research shows that recalling sight words is a

foundational skill that leads toward reading development and stronger readers.
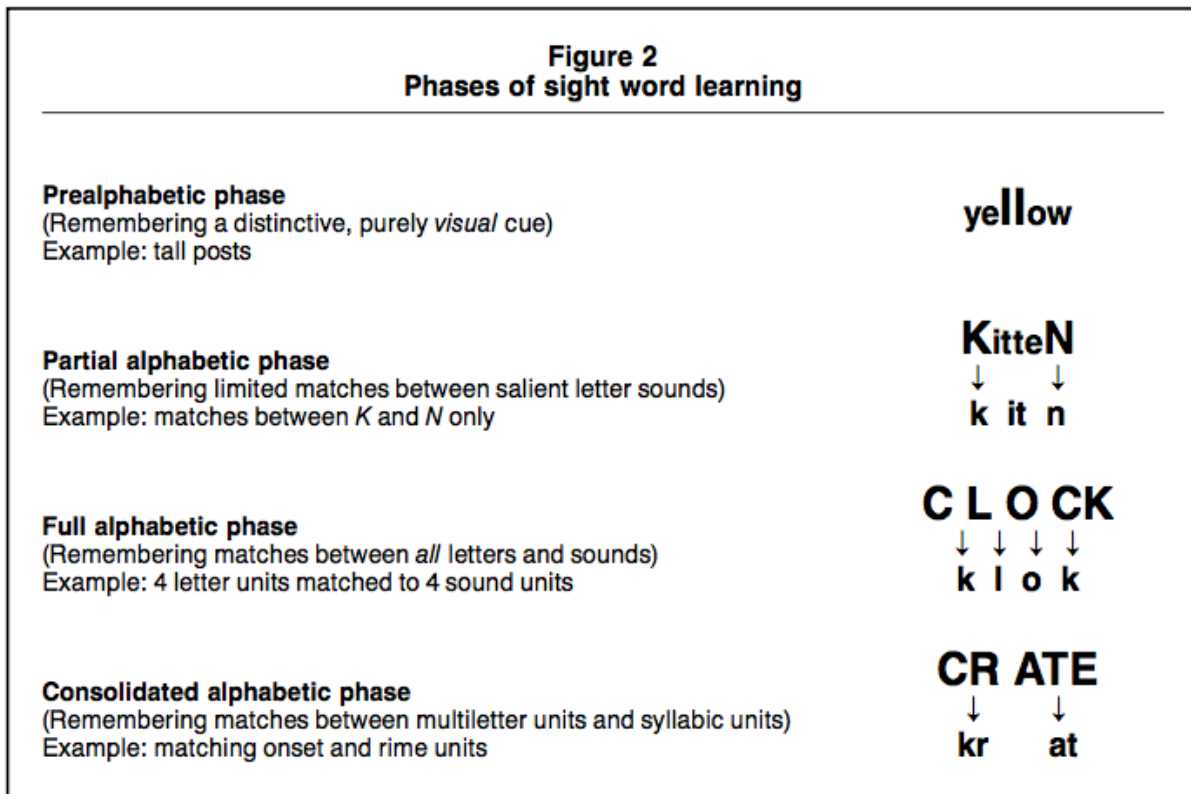
However, other research has noted, along with sight word recognition, "they must also

learn how to decode new, unfamiliar words that they encounter while reading" (Rodgers, 2017,

p. 526). Word problem solving needs to be done quickly and accurately so that readers do not

get tied up on words, "otherwise, comprehension will suffer" (Rodgers, 2017, p. 526). Although

the idea of decoding is different than the simple recognition of sight words, the outcome is still

the same. Both sight word recall and decoding strategies need to be learned so students will be

able to read text quickly and efficiently because comprehension will be lost. As readers gain

those skills, their reading of words becomes effortless, increasing their fluency. This allows

them to focus on the content of the text and gain understanding from their reading.

According to Rodger's (2017) study, there are three approaches in order to figure out

words while reading. They include *meaning*, *structure*, and *visual* information. First, readers

may use *meaning,* or the meaning of the story. By using context clues, students can predict the

word based on what would appropriately make sense. Secondly, using *structure* or the rules of

oral language can assist students with identifying unknown words. It sounds like it would be

correct based on the set up and syntax of the sentence. Thirdly, *visual information* refers to the

presented letters of a word. This approach looks specifically at the set-up of the word and an

understanding of letters and their sounds a big part of being able to use this method to solve

unknown words. This can be seen as a separate foundational skill from sight word recognition,

as not all sight words "can be phonetically sounded out or manipulated" (Phillips & Feng, 2012,

p. 6). Conversely, future presented research will show the importance of letter-sound

relationships and the ability to decode in order to transfer words into sight words or to be easily retrieved.

According to Ehri (2005), there are phases of learning sight words that emerging readers go through. As children make their way through the phases, it is evident that a strong letter and sound relationship needs to be understood for a reader to be successful. A grapheme is the written representation of a letter, while the phoneme is the sound of a letter that is produced. Readers must have a strong understanding of the alphabetic system in order to match phonemes with their graphemes. It is interesting because sight words are learned by the memory process, rather than by the decoding process (Gaskins & Ehri, 1996). "The most effective way for beginning readers to store sight words in memory is to fully analyze the sounds in the spoken word and to match those sounds to letters in the printed form of the words" (Gaskins & Ehri, 1996, p. 315). To reach this destination, students will make their way through the four phases of sight word learning.

According to Ehri (2005), the four phases are pre-alphabetic, partial alphabetic, full alphabetic, and consolidated alphabetic. Each stage continues to add knowledge about grapheme and phoneme relationships. Figure 1 depicts the understanding of those alphabetic concepts. The pre-alphabetic phase does not consist of reading actual words at all, but remembering visual attributes (Ehri, 2005). The first stage is the focus on environmental print as readers in this stage have little or no knowledge with letters and their corresponding sounds. Referring to Figure 1, children in the pre-alphabetic stage may remember the word *yellow* based on the two pillars in the middle. Preschoolers are more likely to read visual cues from logos rather than printed letters themselves (Gaskins & Ehri, 1996). As children retain more knowledge of the alphabet,

Figure 2
Phases of sight word learning

Prealphabetic phase (Remembering a distinctive, purely *visual* cue) Example: tall posts	ye**ll**ow
Partial alphabetic phase (Remembering limited matches between salient letter sounds) Example: matches between *K* and *N* only	KitteN ↓ ↓ k it n
Full alphabetic phase (Remembering matches between *all* letters and sounds) Example: 4 letter units matched to 4 sound units	C L O CK ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ k l o k
Consolidated alphabetic phase (Remembering matches between multiletter units and syllabic units) Example: matching onset and rime units	CR ATE ↓ ↓ kr at

(Gaskins & Ehri, 1996, p. 317)

Figure 1

Phases of Sight Word Learning

their letter names and matching sounds, they head to the partial alphabetic phase. Usually, in

this stage the initial and final sounds are recognized but attention to vowel sounds is lacking.

Because of these gaps, "partial phase readers have much difficultly decoding unknown words"

(Ehri, 2005, p. 5). The readers in this stage often confuse similarly spelt words as they same

word. As readers gain more and more knowledge of the alphabetic system, transition to the full

alphabetic stage occurs. Students are aware of many letter-sound relationships, allowing them to

distinguish similar spelt words as different words. Because of this skill, readers are able to see and visualize them as a whole and be retrained as sight words. Once they alphabetic system is fully understood, readers are able to see sound patterns in words, like rimes, syllables, and morphemes (Ehri, 2005). Readers can apply them to unknown words and add those words to their sight word bank. This stage is the consolidated alphabetic stage where students can read unknown multisyllabic words (Gaskins & Ehri, 1996). Once words are continuously introduced and are a part of a child's sight word vocabulary, these words may be considered "old" due to the high familiarity or because an individual's ability to retrieve the information (Rossi-Arnaud, Pieroni, Spataro, & Cestari, 2011).

Although sight words are *recognized* through memory rather than decoding, Ehri's (2005) four phases suggest that *learning* sight words come from decoding strategies. Ehri (2005) found the alphabetic system helps students secure new vocabulary words in memory, both their pronunciation and their meanings and that this is one more reason why beginning readers need a strong alphabetic foundation when they learn to read. Before entering students into methods to remember sight words, it is clear that they must have a solid foundation of letters and their corresponding sounds in order to be successful.

Flashcard Drill

As this study continued, I searched for not only *why* sight words are crucial skill for reading, but also *how* it can become a skill for young readers. According to Erwin (2016), being able to recognize words on sight is still considered a skill worth building, especially for English Language Learners. This learning of automatic and effortless word recognition can be done with repeated practice. Flashcard drill methods have been used to "promote automaticity and improve

word recognition skills" (Volpe et al., 2011, p. 118). Flashcard drill is a known method for sight

word retention, or ability to recall sight words. Not only is this strategy effective for sight word

retention, but according to Fasko and Fasko (2010), it is also a way to boost reading fluency.

Because this method targets words that increase automaticity, the method indirectly affects oral

reading fluency. Interestingly, there are variations of this strategy. When looking at these

different drill types, they must be effective and they must be efficient (January, Lovelace, Foster,

& Ardoin, 2017, p. 163). To be effective means the intervention proved beneficial. To be

efficient is to be aware of the time span.

Traditional Drill Practice (TDP) is the presentation of 100% unknown words.

According to Springer (Volpe et al., 2011), the instructor models each unknown word. As the

session begins, the student tries to read and recall the word on his or her own. The instructor will

provide appropriate feedback. This occurs until all unknown words become learned. With this

strand of flashcard use, it gives the reader continuous opportunities to respond (OTR) which

allow students to interact with the unknown words.

Incremental Rehearsal (IR) is another strategy that uses interpersonal training. IR allows

unknown sight words to be introduced with known words. "The inclusion of known words

increases motivation, task preference, and task competition" (Volpe et al., 2011, p. 118). IR is

when an unknown word is presented five to nine times in a series with known words. That

unknown sight word becomes the known word in the next series with new unknown words. This

pattern allows students to interact with sight words multiple times and giving readers several

opportunities to respond.

Strategic Incremental Rehearsal (SIR) is another interpersonal training method that is a version of IR and TDP. Like TDP, SIR introduces all unknown sight words, but are introduced certain numbers at a time, similar to IR. With this method, "SIR is different from IR and TDP in that each word is periodically probed to assess maintenance or read 1 week after intervention" (Volpe et al., 2011, p. 124), and replaced back into the instructional word pile if the student does not read it accurately" (January et al., 2017, p. 154). Because of this system, SIR generates more responses, retention, and maintenance. It is easy and less time consuming to implement. This study showed that SIR is both effective and efficient for teaching sight words.

Because TDP is 100% unknown words, the OTR rate is higher, thus more efficient for word retention. With IR, words come back inconsistently, giving readers fewer interactions (Volpe et al., 2011). Also, once administered to the maximum amount, new unknown words are still introduced, although they might not be fully learned. With SIR, all the words were unknown, giving higher OTR. They also were tested for maintenance during SIR and sight words must have been mastered before introducing more unknown words (January et al., 2017). Looking at these findings, it is safe to say flashcard drills are in fact are effective in teaching sight words. Flashcard traditional drill requires very little time and resources to implement and the research showed that students gained sight word retention (Volpe et al., 2011).

As I think about my own classroom, how can I implement the idea of flashcard drill? Technology is a growing aspect in education, as more one-to-one devices are being accessed in schools. By using PowerPoint, teachers can customize their sight words lists and transfer them to automatic slides. "These digital flash cards may enhance learning when used for instruction, review, and practice in automatic recognition of not-yet-mastered sight words and build

confidence in their reading skills" (Erwin, 2016, p. 38). There are also popular sight words

songs that include digital sight word flash cards that are both beneficial and engaging. These

findings show an effective way to teach sight words.

Multisensory Approach

Kindergarten students are still in the process of learning the school environment along

with its social cues. They are also in the transition of play and rigorous academic standards.

Along with students, teachers are facing the challenges of incorporating play as kindergarten

makes the shift to more academically focused instruction (Lynch, 2015). However, "play in the

classroom fosters improvements in such subjects as mathematics, language, early literacy, and

socio-emotional skills" (Lynch, 2015, p. 348). Rather than cut out playtime, why not incorporate

this time of discovery into our academic routines? If play helps promote academic areas,

educators should be using this approach to enhance learning opportunities. "Play should be

viewed as a valuable activity that enables children to develop a wide variety of social and

academic skills" (Lynch, 2015, p. 348). Keeping this in mind, another method for early readers

to build their sight word banks is to incorporate multisensory activities to combine play and early

literacy foundational skills.

According to Ehri (2005), "multisensory education involves auditory, visual, and

kinesthetic interactions with direct and explicit instruction in the reading content (p. 12)."

Students can physically manipulate and/or use physical movements while learning reading skills.

It is the focus of hands on activities. In the study done by Phillips and Feng (2012), the

multisensory approach consisted of "sky writing" specific sight words with arm movements

(p. 18). Students were also asked to "chop out" the words. Participants stretched out their arm, starting at their shoulder and spelt words down their arm. Each letter was one chop (Phillips & Feng, 2012). They also used texture to practice spelling as they wrote sight words on paper that was on top of a ridged screen. When activities were complete, the children were asked to verbally say the word in a sentence. Apart from reaching students with different learning styles, a multisensory strategy helps promote a strong alphabetic system, or the understanding of letter-sound relationships. According to Labat, Vallet, Magnan, and Ecalle (2015), there have been many experiments investigating phonological awareness and findings that show physical manipulation and multisensory training support this alphabetic principal. When students physically manipulate letters to build words, they are discussing the rules of phonics, generating encoding and decoding skills. The ability to decode is important for those words that have not yet been transferred to sight word memory. As these readers build and break apart words using these multisensory approaches, they are "segmenting words into their smallest sounds, comparing the sounds to letters they see, and determine which letter or letters match each sound" (Gaskins & Ehri, 1996, p. 315). Once words are learned by decoding, it is important for readers to have numerous opportunities to interact with them in order for them to be a part of their sight word bank so they can be read automatically (Gaskins & Ehri, 1996).

Because these decoding abilities are being taught as an early literacy skill, it is also important that these early readers are developing a visual memory, as well (Richardson, 2009). With the different senses at work, actions like tracing, hearing, and seeing words enhance brain activation. The more senses being used when learning new content, the more retrieval from memory (Labat et al., 2015). In fact, Labat et al. (2015) stated, "tracing seems to promote better

memory encoding of letters than visual learning" (p. 382).   Richardson (2016) also agreed as her

book says, "Tracing is by far the fastest and easiest way for children to learn their letters" (p. 31).

Not only are early readers expected to form the representations of letters, they need to produce

the sounds by recognizing them in print. This skill helps with reading. When students learn to

write words, they need to do the opposite. They must listen for the phoneme and know how to

form the correct grapheme that represents what they hear. Students are using kinesthetic

feedback to form speech sounds by manipulating their articulation movements (Weggelaar,

2006). These skills are closely connected to the ability to write. As children repeat the

formations of letter sounds and match them with writing movements, they are able to quickly

recall correct letters in order to spell. Because of the relationship between the articulated sound

and the corresponding letter formation, there is evidence to support those students with

articulation disorders struggle with writing, as their speech does not produce accurate phonemes.

Just as reading words multiple times can be transferred to visual memory, so does the act of

writing. According to Richardson, (2009), "the more a student writes the word correctly, the

better chance of building visual memory of that word" (p. 86).

Research done by Rule, Dockstader, and Stewart (2006), stated the experimental group

worked with multisensory activities to improve their phonological awareness. From past

research (Mulé et al., 2018), having a strong phonological awareness, or strong understanding of

letters and their corresponding sounds, leads to success with learning and retaining sight words.

Because the students in the experimental group completed the Phonological Awareness Test

(PAT) near 10 minutes faster than the control group, they were able to decode and read the

words with less effort. As those strong letter-sounds connections are made, the ability to decode

words becomes quicker and easier, transitioning those words into their sight word bank. This study shows that by using a multisensory approach, this enhances decoding skills, which then promotes sight word learning (Rule et al., 2006).

Richardson (2009) stated that flashcards do not support learning the word in detail, thus promoting the multisensory approach as a way to help learn and retain sight words. Richardson provided multisensory activities that may be done during small-guided reading groups. These activities "will help students develop visual memory, establish left-to-right visual scanning skills, and increase automatic recall" (Richardson, 2016, p. 78). *What's Missing?* is a game where students study a sight word, close their eyes while the instructor erases a letter from the word (Richardson, 2016). Students open their eyes to add the correct letter to complete sight word. After each letter is manipulated, the entire word gets erased and the students must spell the entire word. Although this is game play, it has the students look closely at the word. *Mix and Fix* is when each student has access to his or her own letter tiles that make up the targeted sight word (Richardson, 2016). Students build the word and when instructed to "mix," they scramble the letter tiles. They then "fix" the tiles to reform the sight word. Another multisensory activity is the motion of their fingers as they "table write" the sight word being introduced. As they from the word, students spell and say the word aloud. The more senses they use, the more the brain will recognize for later recall (Labat et al., 2015). Another way for students to practice sight words is the use of spelling games. Another activity calls for students try to write the target sight word on whiteboards as many times as they can in one minute. This promotes motor skills, recall, and motivation.

From Phillip and Feng's (2012) research, it is fair to say that using multisensory approach supports student letter-sounds relationships aiding the ability to read and transfer words into their sight word vocabularies.

Limitation of the Study

With this study, there are limitations to the information presented. There are other components apart from sight word recognition to aid the development of reading. It was shown that phonemic awareness is essential for young readers. Children need a strong understanding of letters and their corresponding to sounds in order to decode unknown words. Sight word recognition is beneficial for words that are already stored; however, readers need strategies to overcome new words in text. The different studies consisted of their own limitations. Some focused on particular sets of words, gave attention to particular reading curriculums, selected specific methods to teach sight word recognition. The research also lacked certain populations, such as English Language Learners, and special education students. Most targeted general education students and some were rather small samples.

Chapter 3: Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter highlights the impact that sight words have in reading development. It also summarizes best practices to teaching and learning sight words in order to retain in in-text situations. This chapter stems from the literature review in the previous chapter.

Conclusion

In order to have the ability to retain sight words, one must have a sense of strong letter and sound relationships. Phonemic awareness tends to be a prerequisite for the foundation skill of sight word recall. Once students have this core alphabetic background, they can begin to interact with different methods to build their sight word vocabularies. Some of these methods include different flashcard drills as well as exploring different multisensory activities. Flashcard drills prove effective as they promote accuracy and automaticity of sight words (Volpe et al., 2011). However, multisensory approaches also support sight word learning and retention as they tap into different learning styles of students. The study that compares the two methods showed students gained from participating in multisensory approaches, as it was notably more engaging and included visuals during instruction (Phillips & Feng, 2012). However, according to Phillips and Feng, multisensory approaches should not take the place of flashcard use, but rather be combined together. "Flash cards do have a place in the classroom…for maintenance and quick practice of skills (Phillips & Feng, 2012, pp. 32-33). These two methods should be used together in effort to support sight word learning and to meet all the unique learning needs of students to help reach this goal. "The key determinant of automaticity is the quality of the word's representation in memory" (Gaskins & Ehri, 1996, p. 317). With this in mind, using both

flashcard drill and multisensory approaches together will create strong visuals of words, increasing student sight word vocabularies.

Although students study and learn the unknown words in isolation, it is important that we transition "the newly acquired words in unfamiliar contexts" (Volpe et al., 2011, p. 120). This changeover is called generalization and it is crucial for the connection of sight words and reading development.

Recommendations

Due to sight words being a key component in reading development, as it is one building block to obtaining better reading fluency and comprehension, how should teachers work with both approaches to make teaching effective?

According to Rule et al. (2006), each child has unique learning needs and using one approach in a classroom will probably not address all student needs. Using multisensory approaches is key when meeting the different students within a classroom. This can be done in small literacy groups, or it can be done during whole group learning. Literacy groups range from three to four students that are working at the same ability or on the same skill. This method does take time to plan as well as a variety of supplies. Richardson (2016) stated that "you will need several different resources as children learn best with kinesthetic tactile resources" (p. 28). Some items to have are letter tiles, Play Doh, shaving cream, word puzzles, dry erase boards, markers, highlighters, scissors etc.

By using different hands-on items and kinesthetic activities, this allows students to manipulate and learn sight words on a deeper level, understanding the letters and their connection to their sounds through phonics instruction (Phillips & Feng, 2012). On the other

hand, flashcard drill is quick and easy to implement as they can be administered whole group.

Flashcards can also be done independently or in small groups. Unlike the multisensory

approach, flashcard drills can be given with little prep or resources. Using a document camera,

sight word cards can be shown on the SmartBoard as they work with you. Sight words can also

be incorporated into songs and visuals being displayed on the SmartBoard, as well. In fact, they

can be shown using technology. One can create slides of sight words that are being or have

already been introduced the classroom. They can even be "customized to include specific

content that the teacher selects and to align with the desired curriculum content (Erwin, 2016,

p. 38). Not only can this method be engaging by using technology, it also may add an "intrinsic

form of motivation" (Phillips & Feng, 2012, p. 34).

Multisensory activities provide opportunities for students to learn phonetic rules by

understanding letter graphemes with their letter phonemes. This assists students when they

arrive to unknown words. However, flashcards provide that automaticity and accuracy of

reading words, which plays into reading fluency. We know that sight words can consist of both

decodable words and irregular words. Decodable words have phonetic patterns present, allowing

readers to "sound out" the word. Irregular words do not, making the act of memorizing a must.

Because the multisensory method pertains and benefits decodable sight words, and the flashcard

drill method aids with reading irregular words, educators should be using both types of methods

in their classrooms. By using both methods, students will not only learn new content and skill,

but be able to apply them when reading. This not only reaches all types of learners, but all types

of sight words those learners will come across in text.

Together, these instructional methods teach young readers the basic skills and strategies for reading sight words. English Language Learner (ELL) students also need and will benefit from these strategies. "Research with ELL populations suggests that all children regardless of primary language must acquire the same beginning reading skills" (Kamps et al., 2007, p. 166). Students having English as their first language are obtaining these foundational skills by working with these methods. By using flashcard drill and multisensory activities, ELL students will have a similar foundation that will promote their reading development.

Further Research

It is clear sight words are an important factor to reading development. We are now aware of effective methods, such as flash card drills and multisensory activities, to teach sight words so readers can transfer and are able to generalize them in text. However, one could further this research by looking into what specific sight word should be taught.

Today, there are several different curriculums that include sight words to teach that correlate with their detailed scope and sequence. There are other known sight words lists including Fry High Frequency Word Lists and Dolch High Frequency Word Lists. "In almost every school, K-2 teachers assign these words for their students to study and to learn as they are the most frequently occurring words in children's texts" (Farrell, Osenga, & Hunter, 2013, p. 1). Fry's lists consist of 1000 words, but can is divided up into Fry's First 100, 200, and so on. Dolch has a list of 220 words. Fry's word list is rank based on grades 3-9, whereas Dolch's list is focused on Kindergarten through third grade (Farrell et al., 2013).

Where should educators start? What lists or lack thereof, would be best to start their instruction? Despite the lists and curriculum scope and sequences, high frequency words and

sight words are important. Although Fry and Dolch believe that these words could be used in phonics teaching, they believe that memorizing is the best way to learn them. However, according to Farrell et al. (2013) "sight words should be included in phonics instruction so that as early as possible, students use spelling patterns to read a greater variety of words than just those words on the high frequency list" (p. 7).

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