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What Three-, Four-, and Five-Year-Olds do in a Classroom Library Corner: Interactions with Books

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WHAT THREE-, FOUR-, AND FIVE-YEAR-OLDS DO IN A CLASSROOM

LIBRARY CORNER: INTERACTIONS WITH BOOKS

THESIS

Submitted to the Graduate Committee of the

Department of Education and Human Development

State University of New York

College at Brockport

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Masters of Science in Reading

by Deborah Jill Buddle

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August 1994

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Abstract

This study looked at the types of interactions three-, four-, and five-year-olds had with books In a preschool classroom library corner. This study took place In a rural cooperative preschool program consisting of 21 students.

Questions addressed were:

1. What percentage of time spent In the library corner was actually spent interacting with books?

2. What Interactions did students have with books In the library corner?

3. What percentage of time spent In the library corner was spent on each type of interaction with books?

The data were collected over 32 classroom observation periods. Each observation took place during center time which was ten minutes dally. Every sixty seconds the researcher placed a tally mark In the correct Interaction category on the checklist for each student in the library center. The six categories observed were adult reading to child, child reading to adult, child reading to self, student reading to student, choosing books, and off task. The researcher completed both a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data collected.

This study shows that children exposed to literature are taking advantage of the opportunity. This can be seen In the fact that these 21 preschoolers were on task interacting with books 77% of the time.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Learning to read is a developmental process. Some children

may not be ready to read until kindergarten or first grade while

others are ready by age three or four. Although a child must be

ready to read, parents and preschool teachers alike can help

foster a print rich environment. In many instances, children do

not encounter literature or literacy environments at home.

Therefore, it becomes the role of the daycare provider or

preschool teacher to immerse children in literacy and provide

them with positive literature experiences (Walter, 1986).

> On the one hand, what children do not experience in
> their home environment must be provided by the school
> environment if children are going to be successful in
> their efforts at reading and writing. If children
> have not had experiences with books and writing at
> home, then the school must provide them. One the
> other hand, the school environment should become more
> like the home (p. 11).

Robinson (1990) describes a developmentally appropriate

preschool as one with a print-rich environment. It has displays

and activities designed to facilitate a natural interaction

between children and written language. An important part of that

print-rich environment is a classroom library corner where the

children can experience literature first hand. A teacher can read

to a class all she wants, but children must be allowed to

experience literature for themselves (Cochran-Smith, 1984;

Strickland & Morrow, 1988).

Durkln (1978) states that "It Is Impossible to know whether any given child Is ready to read untIl he/she Is given the opportunIty to learn" (p. 176).

What three- and four-year-olds do In a book corner and how they Interact wlth books Is part of the readIng process. Although they are ususally consIdered nonreaders, they are lookIng at books and galnIng meanIng. ThIs Is one of the fIrst steps to becomIng a reader.

Purpose

The purpose of thIs study was to observe how three- and four-year-olds Interacted wlth books In a classroom lIbrary corner and to determIne how much tIme they spent durIng lIbrary corner tIme actually Interacting wIth books.

Questions to be Answered

1. What percentage of the tIme spent In the lIbrary
        corner Is spent actually InteractIng wlth books?
    2. What Interactlons do students have wIth books In
        the lIbrary corner?
    3. What percentage of the tIme spent In the lIbrary
        corner Is spent on each type of Interactlon wIth
        books?

Need for the Study

A visitor to a primary elementary classroom usually will see student art work, bulletin boards, alphabet, number line, color chart, classroom library and everything labeled; chair, table, desk, sink, etc. Research has shown that the same is not true of preschool classrooms (Morrow, 1982; Robinson, 1990). When entering a preschool classroom you most likely will find children playing with one another or making art projects. Parents read bedtime stories to their children at home, so why should the children in preschools not have story time and not be allowed to interact with books?

If a teacher takes the time to show her students the value of books, the children will learn to treasure the books also (Morrow, 1982).

By the year 1995, two out of every three preschool children will have both parents in the work force. It is becoming apparent that day care providers will be responsible for the children's emergent literacy needs (Schuman & Relihan, 1990). "Since early literature exposure has a strong influence on success in beginning reading, books should play a significant role in the life of young children" (Morrow, 1982, p. 340). Children bring a lot of prior knowledge to the classroom and can usually find something in a story which relates to them. "What children bring to a story influences how they interpret it" (Conlon, 1992, p. 15).

Children need to be given the chance to explore books even when they are prereaders. By reading to them, they learn that print has meaning, books have authors and illustrators, and one reads from left to right. By rereading stories with children they begin to "chime in" when they hear familiar parts of the story. Before long, prereaders are "reading" books. They can then go into the classroom library and independently reenact stories or feel confident enough to choose a new story and make up the story that goes with it. Sulzby and Teale (1991) feel that the research indicates that children's independent reenactments of books play an important role in their literacy development. Independent reenactments provide opportunities for the children to use what they experienced through other storybook reading activities.

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Definition of Terms

prereaders   — children from birth until formally taught to recognize and read words (Burns, Rowe, and Ross, 1984, p. 32)

emergent literacy   — term evolved from 1980's and derived from Marie Clay's work in early literacy. "Emergent literacy is concerned with the earliest phases of literacy development, the period between birth and the time when children read and write conventionally" (Sulzby & Teale, 1991, p. 728). "Reading and writing behaviors that precede and develop into conventional literacy" (Sulzby & Teale, 1991, p. 728)

direct instruction   — the teaching of letter names and sounds to all students at the same time

delayed instruction   — the teaching of reading skills, letter names and sounds when a child is developmentally ready

Independent reenactment   - "occasions when children read

familiar books in ways that are not

yet conventional reading. Children

reenact books spontaneously and show

behaviors that indicate their growing

awareness of features of written

language" (Sulzby & Teale, 1991,

p. 735)

cooperative nursery school - a preschool setting where parents

take an active role in their child's

education by being part of the admin-

istration for the school and

volunteers in the classroom

(Hildebrand, 1976, p.13)

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study was the small number of children studied.

A second limitation was that all the children were white and residing in small towns. They all attended one type of preschool, a cooperative one, which is not the 'typical' preschool environment.

The children in this study were of three age levels and were all considered prereaders. Therefore, the results of this study were looked at as a whole and not at three different age levels.

The teacher of this particular cooperative nursery school was also the researcher and therefore, may not not have been objective at all times.

The parents of the students volunteered their time in the classroom and therefore did not necessarily follow the routine of always being in the book corner with the children. Because the parents and the children's groupings changed throughout the study, the results are varied.

Because of these limitations, this study cannot be generalized for all preschoolers and is limited to the specific preschool and children studied herein.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Reading and young children go hand in hand. Not only do researchers investigate what kindergarteners and first graders know about reading, but they have become intrigued by what preschool children know about reading. These children at the preschool level are usually referred to as prereaders. They have not yet acquired the skills necessary to read words, sentences and books, but enjoy listening to stories being read. Huba (1986) and Harlin (1984) feel that a knowledge of reading increases with age, and that even by kindergarten some children still do not understand the concept of reading. Therefore, they too can be referred to as prereaders. For the purposes of this study, prereaders will be evaluated at the preschool level only.

<u>Preschool Reading Philosophies</u>

Various preschools have their own philosophy on "teaching" reading to their youngsters. MacLachlan-Smith (1991) views preschool with a freeplay philosophy. The freeplay philosophy sets up the environment for children to learn, but in order to learn, each child must engage himself with what is provided "active learning through play" (MacLachlan-Smith, 1991, p. 1). Another philosophy of preschool reading programs is the developmentally appropriate approach. In developmentally appropriate preschools, the classroom creates a print-rich environment which is designed to "facilitate a natural interaction

between written language and the children" (Robinson, 1990, p.1).
This immersion in a print-rich environment may provide some
children with surroundings which prepare them for reading
instruction at an early age. Some instruction in letter names and
letter sounds is introduced to prepare them for reading.

Kontos (1986) states that although most researchers feel some
type of reading instruction is needed at the preschool level,
these children should not be subjected to workbook type drill
sessions. Although the freeplay and developmentally appropriate
preschool reading philosophies are meant to promote reading,
Morrow and Weinstein (1986) and Morrow (1992) found that books are
not read to children on a regular basis. Robinson (1990) stated
that 92% of the preschool teachers from his study reported reading
to their students at least once a day while Morrow (1986) found
that preschool teachers only read to student 58% of the time they
were observed. Robinson (1990) found that of the 903 public and
private preschools he studied, 87% had calendars, 76% had an
alphabet posted, 71% had a helper board, 27% labeled furniture,
26% had written signs for children. Of these 903 preschools
studied by Robinson (1990), teachers trained in early childhood
education were polled to see what approaches they used for
teaching reading; 63% endorsed an emergent literacy approach, 10%
used direct instruction, and 18% delayed instruction until a child
was developmentally ready.

What Three- and Four-year-olds Know About Print

From the day a child is born he/she begins to experience print through labels, signs, television, and soft-cover toy books (IRA, 1986; Neuman & Roskos, 1993; Stickland & Morrow, 1988a). "These early contacts with print represent the beginnings of a life-long process of learning to read and write" (Neuman & Roskos, 1993, p. 35).

"Children as young as 3 have already internalized a great deal of information about literacy" (Mass-Feary, 1991, p. 14). Harlin (1984) found that prereaders do have knowledge of story processing strategies and that this knowledge varies according to age, task format, and home reading experiences. After testing and interviewing kindergarten and entering first grade children, Mason (1980) found that most of the 200 students could recite the alphabet, call off words form a billboard, name and print letters of the alphabet, and "read" road signs. In Lavine's 1977 study, she found that three-year-olds had difficulty differentiating letters from numbers, but recognized both as print. Some researchers feel that these are not indicators that a child can read. Mason (1980) and Sulzby and Teale (1991), feel that although these may not be considered signs of reading, these "reading episodes" fall into the category of emergent literacy.

When adults read books to children, the children become aware that print has meaning, one reads from left to right, pictures can tell the story, and books have authors and illustrators (Conlon, 1992). When children are read to at an early age, they begin to

pick up on these elements of literacy. Yaden, Smolkin, and Conlon, (1989), state that "the child's own contribution to the process---via frequent questions and comments during the reading---is a more useful index of the rate and content of the child's acquisition of literacy knowledge" (p. 190-191).

After reviewing research by Hiebert (1981) and Kontos and Huba (1983 & 1985), Kontos (1986), has concluded that "print awareness emerges by age three and increases significantly prior to first grade" (p. 60).

Preschools' Role in Fostering Literacy

Children are continually observing what is around them. By doing so they learn from others: adults, parents, or older siblings (Teale, 1982). In Walter's (1986) study, she quotes Cochran-Smith (1984) as saying that "three-year-old children will learn about books, stories, and reading by listening to the teacher read books, by talking about the stories, by 'pretend-reading' and by acting out the stories" (p. 12). Some children do not have literate adults to emulate. Schuman and Relihan (1990) state that by 1995, two out of every three preschoolers will have both parents working. By the year 2000, it has been predicted that 70 to 80 percent of children under five will have mothers with full-time employment outside of the home (p. 20). Therefore the preschool must provide a reading environment when the home does not (Harlin, 1984; Snow, 1983; Walter, 1986). "The process of becoming literate is an active and developmental one in which children construct knowledge about

written language. Children therefore need time to experiment with reading and writing in the classroom by engaging in meaningful literacy activities" (Freeman & Hatch, 1989, p. 23).

What is Emergent Literacy?

"The term emergent literacy evolved during the early 1980's. It was derived in part from Marie Clay's (1966, 1967) influential research and from increasing references to emergent literacy in books and articles" (Sulzby & Teale, 1991, p. 727). Emergent literacy stresses that literacy learning begins at an early age "with listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities developing concurrently and interrelatedly" (Teale, 1988, p.176) for children in literate societies. Children engage in literate behaviors long before they can read and write conventionally. Some of these literate behaviors include 'pretend' reading and independent reenactments of stories (Sulzby, 1985; Sulzby & Teale, 1991). Emergent literacy encompasses all literate behaviors that take place prior to being able to read conventionally (Sulzby, 1985).

Learning in a Print-rich Environment

Whether it be preschool, daycare, or an early elementary school setting, everything needs to be labeled. These labels provide printed words when a child asks: "What is that called?" Labels are not the only print that should be visible in the classroom. The alphabet, posters, numberlines, calendars, helper and birthday charts should be posted for all to see (MacLachlan-Smith, 1991; Robinson, 1990; Walter, 1986).

In her 1990 study, Robinson sent questionnaires to 903 private and public preschools. Of those 687, 296 responded as to how they implemented activities, displays, or materials to create a literacy-oriented classroom. The most frequently found displays were calendar (87%), alphabet (76%), names and helpers (71%), furniture labeled (27%) and written signs for children (26%) all were prepared by teachers.

Importance of Library Corners

The issue addressed in this current research revolves around children's interactions with literature made available to them. Many educators and researchers have stressed the importance of a "well-designed library corner" in the classroom. (Morrow & Weinstein, 1982). Teale and Martinez (1988) state that there is a three way approach to promote children's interactions with books: 1) read aloud to children daily, 2) establish a classroom library, and 3) utilize strategies that encourage children to visit and use the classroom library. The research of Sulzby (1985) suggest that how children interact with storybooks is similar to the

> Piagetian stance, it is based on the belief that children's notions are conceptual, but, following Vygotsky, it is also assumed that the form of the physical environment is shaped by the social environment in which it is experienced, including the language used (p. 462).

Feeley (1983) suggests that preschools need to encourage a prerequisite knowledge for beginning reading by providing colorful and inviting picture books, a comfortable area for reading, and frequent sessions in which children are read to.

Children are provided with immediate access to books when a library is located right in their own classroom. This area should be partitioned off from the rest of the room to create privacy. It should include book cases which allow the books to be arranged so as to see the covers, a rug, pillows, armchairs, a table and chairs, and, if possible, a couch. Strickland and Morrow (1988) also suggest adding stuffed animals (related to books), flannel board, puppets, and viewmasters. These create a homey and relaxed atmosphere where children can feel comfortable reading.

Some activities that take place in the library corner are not considered reading by most people, but are considered to be ways of interacting with books: browsing, silent studying, discussing books or illustrations, acting out stories, listening to someone else read, storytelling, book handling, and emergent readings of books (Martinez & Teale, 1988; Morrow & Rand, 1991; Teale & Martinez, 1988).

In Shure's 1963 study, she investigated what children did during their nursery school's center time. These centers included blocks, art, books, dolls, and games. After 20 days of observations, she concluded that the book area was the least popular choice during the free play period.

Martinez and Teale (1988) observed children using books seven different ways in the book corner. The results of their study is as follows: 31% browsing, 31% silent studying, 27% emergent reading. The remaining 11% were considered infrequent uses.

Morrow (1982) and Morrow and Weinstein (1986) specifically studied the frequency of using of library centers. Out of 133 preschool - 2nd grade classrooms, 85% of the rooms only allowed the children to use the library corner during freetime. (Morrow, 1982). Morrow and Weinstein (1986) stated that

> It is important to emphasize that the increase in library center use reflects an increase in actual reading. When children choose to go to the library center during free-choice time, reading--either alone, with a friend, or in conjuction with a felt board or roll movie---accounted for almost 70% of the activity that occurred there (p. 342).

Walters (1986) states that "most concepts are learned when children reconstruct the language and the behavior of the teacher when they 'pretend-read' on their own" (p.16). Teale and Martinez state it much more simply; "Children learn to read by reading" (p. 14).

What is a Cooperative Nursery School?

A cooperative nursery school is one where the parents take a large part in their child's preschool education. They usually have fewer teachers and more parents in the classroom. Because there are so many adults in the room, it allows for a high adult-child ratio (Hendrick, 1980). In a cooperative setting parents "pool their time, energy, money, and hire a qualified teacher" (Hildebrand, 1976, p.13). Tuition for these schools tend to be lower than the norm because parents volunteer much of their time as assistants in the classroom (Hildebrand, 1976).

Summary

Children are always aware of what is going on around them. There observations contributed to their emergent literacy. Once children have knowledge of literacy, they must be allowed to put this knowledge to use. This can easily be done through the use of a library corner. It gives the children a chance to explore reading at their own will. The present study incorporates much of the research stated to determine how students actually interact with books when in the classroom library center.

Chapter III

Research Design

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to observe how three-, four-,
and five-year-olds interact with books in a classroom library and
to determine how much time they spent during library corner time
actually interacting with books.

Questions

1. What percentage of the time spent in the library corner is
    actually spent interacting with books?

2. What interactions do students have with books in the library
    corner?

3. What percentage of the time spent in the library corner is
    spent on each type of interaction with books?

Methodology

Subjects

The subjects for this study were 21 preschool children,
ranging in age from 3.7 to 5.2, from a rural cooperative preschool
program. They were split between two classes, Monday/ Wednesday/
Friday for the older students and Tuesday/Thursday for the younger
students. Of the 21 students, 8 were three-years-old, 10 were
four-years-old, and 3 were five-years-old.

Materials

The students used a variety of picture books, easy readers, storybooks, nursery rhymes, class-made books, and big books in a classroom library.

The library corner consisted of a two-tier book shelf where books were displayed face front. Cushions, soft chairs, pillows, and a bulletin board were part of the library corner to allow for comfort while the students "read" books.

Procedures

Before the study began, the researcher spent a week observing the students in the library corner to determine the six categories that were used for the interaction checklist. The six categories were adult reading to child, child reading to adult, reading to self, read with another student, choosing books, and off task.

Each day students were assigned to one of four groups during center time. Each group consisted of 2-3 students and was assigned to the art center, playdough center, puzzle and game center, or the library center. (After the first four weeks of observations, the puppet theater center replaced the art center and the coloring center and drawing center replaced the playdough center. All other centers remained constant.) Students went to their assigned center directly after finishing their snack. Center time lasted for 10 minutes daily. Each group attended a different center every class day until the four center cycle was completed (Monday/Wednesday/Friday or Tuesday/Thursday). After the cycle was completed, student groupings were changed so that

they could learn to work and socialize with all the students.
Then the four day class cycle started again. On Fridays the
Monday/Wednesday/Friday class had a free day where they could
choose their group of students to work with and which center they
attended.

While at the library center, students had the opportunity to
read books to themselves, with the teacher or parent volunteer, or
with another student. The researcher used a checklist to observe
the students every 60 seconds. With every observation the
researcher placed a tally mark in the correct box on the checklist
(see Appendix A) as to which interaction the student was having
with the books. Some students were distracted by other students
in the room and were considered to be "off task." The
observations took place for 32 class days, not including five free
days. The total number of minutes observed for the 21 students
was 770 minutes, not including the free days. Observations did
not take place when students chose to use the library corner at
other times during the day, such as free time or during bathroom
break.

Analysis of Data

The researcher completed a daily checklist for each student
who was assigned to use the library corner during center time.
(see Appendix A) The data were compiled into a qualitative and
quantitative report as to which interactions the students chose to
have with the books and what percentage of their time was spent on
which type of interaction. The "off task" tally marks from the
checklist were transformed into a percentage so as to show if the
students actually used the book corner to interact with books when
they where given the opportunity.

Chapter IV

Analysis of the Data

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to observe how three- and four-year-olds interacted with books in a classroom library corner and to determine how much time was actually spent during library corner time interacting with books.

Findings and Interpretations

Each category on individual students' checklists was tallied to determine percentages of time spent on each of the six observed activities in the classroom library corner. The percentages were based on the number of minutes spent on each category divided by the total 770 minutes observed.

I. Time Spent Interacting with Books

Of the 770 minutes observed, 590 minutes were actually spent interacting with books. This is equivalent to 77% of the observed time that was spent interacting with books.

II. Types of Interactions with Books

Interacting with books was considered to be five of the six categories on the checklist. Those five interactive categories were defined as:

1. Parent/Teacher/Adult---reading to student or group of students

2. Child "reading" to adult---Adult listened as child retells the story

3. Child reading to him/herself---Child retold a familiar story aloud to himself, looked at the pictures alone, or handled the book without appearing to be "reading"

4. Student reading with other student(s)---one student shared a book with one or more students by "reading" aloud, looked at the pictures, discussed the story, talked and related story to another book or something they might have done similar

5. Picking out a book---student was choosing one or more books from the book shelf or was just browsing the shelf

The sixth category on the checklist was 'Off Task'. This category was defined as the student partaking in activities other than reading books, book handling, choosing books from the shelf, reading with other students, or listening to a story being read by an adult. Students were considered 'off task' if they were playing with free time toys in the library corner, wrestling on the cushions in the library corner, or if they left the book corner to see what a classmate was doing at another center.

Adult Reading to Child

Adults were instructed to proceed with their normal cleanup activities after snack time before proceeding to the library corner. At the beginning of the study, parents were very good about doing so. As the school year and research observations progressed some parents stayed away from the library corner. When parents did go to the book corner, students were eagerly waiting for the parents to read to them. It seems that parents frequently read the same books because they read what the children in the book corner chose. Some parents held the attention of all the children in the book corner quite well. Other parents read to only their child and did not involve the other children. Other parents did not ask students if they wanted to listen to their story or not. They were instructed to sit down, be quiet, and listen.

Katelyn (3.11) and her cousin, Liana (3.10) rarely looked at books on their own, but asked an adult to read to them every time. Katelyn and Liana sat on the reader's lap for the entire ten minutes and stared at the pictures in the book being read. They only moved when they got off the reader's lap to get another book from the shelf.

Parents who were enthusiastic about books got the students involved by asking questions and predicting. The students seemed to be engrossed in a particular book being read when they were on their knees crowding around the reader or on the reader's lap.

Child to Adult

The only child whom the researcher observed reading to an adult, the teacher, rather than a parent, was Matthew (4.11). While Matt was waiting for the rest of his group to join him in the book corner, the teacher told Matt he could go ahead and start picking a book. Matt chose a book about a mother chicken whose egg had rolled away and disappeared. Although the teacher had never read the book to the class, Matt was retelling the whole story almost word for word. After recognizing this, the teacher asked Matt if he would mind starting the story over and reading it to her. Matt was excited about reading to the teacher and pointed to the pictures as he told the story. It did not look as if he paid any attention to the words on the page, but was extremely familiar with the story.

Reading to Self

When reading to themselves the children snuggled up on one of two cushion type couches of a foldout cushion chair. Molly (5.1) usually read aloud to herself and chose a variety of books to read. Damien (3.10) read quietly to himself looking through various train books. Every time Damien came to the library corner he would read the same three train books. Alex (3.9) always had a book in his hand. The majority of the time Alex chose a book about a baby alligator who was raised by a mother and father robin. He would get so excited looking through the book that he would leave the book corner to find an adult to come "really read" it to him.

Student with Student

Sometimes the students shared their books with each other. Kiernan (4.11) and Michael (4.11) would unfold the foldout chair, lie next to each other and hold the book up in the air so that they could both see the pictures. Zachary (4.10) and Robert (5.0) read different books but would call each other over to tell them what was happening in the story or to see a neat illustration. Kailan (4.8) and Ryan (4.6) looked at books together and made up stories to go along with the illustrations. They were frequently observed saying "No, that didn't happen. It happened this way...."

Choosing Books

Occasionally when the researcher looked into the book corner a student had finished a book and was choosing a new one. McKenzie (4. 8) was an avid book browser. She sat on the stool in front of the bookshelf, picked up a book, leafed through the pages, and then chose another book to leaf through. Nikohl (4.8) was another avid book browser. Instead of even sitting down to leaf through the book, she just stood on the stool, leafed through, and put it back on the shelf.

Off Task

Students were off task every time they were distracted by a nearby toy, when they were talking to someone else about something not literature related, they left the book corner, or were playing or horsing around on the cushions. A lot of the off task time is a result of whom the children were grouped with for center time.

The groups were changed three times during the observation period (38 days). Children were easily distracted by their classmates in the art center which was nearby. The art center students came over frequently to ask the library corner students to look at the neat pictures they were making.

Near the end of the observation time, late May into early June, students seemed to get off task more easily. Rather than read in the library corner, the students began using it as a hide out to play and tosee what they could get away since they thought no one could see them behind the book shelf.

III. Percentages of Time Spent on Each Type of Interaction

Of the 770 minutes observed by the researcher, parent/adult reading consisted of 269 minutes, child reading to adult consisted of 3 minutes, child reading to self consisted of 170 minutes, student reading with other students consisted of 69 minutes and choosing books consisted of 79 minutes. Students were off task for 180 minutes of the 770 minutes observed. The following table shows the number of minutes observed in each type of interaction and the percentages of the number of minutes in each interaction out of the total 770 minutes.

Table 1

Number of Minutes and Percentages of Time for Each Type of

Interaction

Category	Number of Minutes	Estimated Percentages (# mins./770 mins.)
Adult Reading	269	35%
Child to Adult	3	less than 1%
Reading to Self	170	22%
Student with Student	69	9%
Choosing Book	79	10%
Off task	180	23%

Chapter V

Conclusions and Implications

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to observe how three-, four-,
and five-year-olds interact with books in a classroom library and
to determine how much time they spent during the library corner
time actually interacting with books.

Conclusions

The results and observations from this study suggest a few
conclusions that can be drawn about three-, four-, and
five-year-olds' interactions with literature.

This study shows that children exposed to literature are
taking advantage of the opportunity. This can be seen in the fact
that these 21 preschoolers were on task (interacting with books)
77% of the time as opposed to being off task 23% of the time.

Students interact with books in a variety of ways. There
were five types of interactions in this study: adult reading to
children, children reading to adult, reading to self, reading with
other students, and choosing books are all components of emergent
literacy.

The 35% of time that adults spent reading to children, as
compared to the other results, shows that this is an important
type of interaction with literature for young children due to the
students' lack of traditional reading skills since they have not
been formally taught beginning reading skills and they have become

dependent on their reading role model - the adult. On the other
hand, the low percentage, less than 1%, of children reading to
adults shows that either the children did not take the initiative
to ask an adult to listen or they feel that they are not capable
of "real reading." The researcher tends to believe that the
second conclusion is more true. On occasion the researcher
observed the teacher asking various children to read to her and
they responded by saying, "I can't read that." The
researcher/teacher felt that in order to keep the study from being
swayed she did not interrupt or encourage the students in the
library corner for the ten minutes of daily center time.

Students were off task 23% of the observed time. Perhaps
some reasons for this percentage were the time of the year, the
number of different adults involved, and the change of student
groupings. This study took place during the later months of the
school year, April, May and June. This is a difficult time of
year to collect accurate data due to the number of holidays and
the highly anticipated summer vacation. There was also a variety
of adults used in the reading corner. Although they were given
specific instructions each adult interacted differently with each
individual child. There was one change in the student groupings
that could have also affected the data. Some students were more
able to stay on task while involved in one grouping over another.
This could be attributed to a lack of or an excess of social
skills.

When the children were "reading to themselves" it is not
known for sure if they were actually reading or perhaps browsing,
looking at the illustrations or looking and pointing at the words.
By doing these elements of emergent literacy the students are on
their way to becoming readers as opposed to remaining prereaders.

The researcher was only able to record students picking out
books 10% of the time. Perhaps this is due to the fact that it
takes only seconds to choose a book as compared to minutes to read
a book. The students who were recorded picking out books for a
lengthy period of time may have chosen them for a variety of
reasons: the cover was familiar, the cover was visually
appealing, or they may have selected it at random.

This study reinforces the studies done by previous
researchers such as Sulzby (1985), Teale and Martinez (1988),
Teale (1982, 1988), and Robinson (1990) as to the importance of
emergent literacy in the lives of young children. Sulzby (1985)
found ten types of reading behaviors and that children develop
tremendously through interacting with storybooks. Sulzby
"indicates that, prior to formal instruction, important
development is going on" (p. 479).

Teale and Martinez (1988) concluded that:

> The enriched understanding of early childhood literacy
> development provided by the past decade of research
> has helped more people see how the classroom can
> promote young children's involvement in the act of
> reading on a daily basis and see why excellent early
> childhood educators have long combined reading aloud,
> discussing stories with children, extensive use of
> classroom libraries, and many, many kinds of informal
> drawing, writing, and "reading" activities. The
> combination of group storybook reading, the use of the
> classroom library, and cultivating emergent storybook
> reading behaviors seems an especially promising one
> for getting young children on the right road to
> reading (p. 14).

Implications for Future Research

The results of this study show that there are more areas of
emergent literacy that need to be examined.

Because three age levels were considered as one group in this
study, future research would benefit from comparing the
interactions with books of each individual age level to see at
which age level the use of a classroom library becomes most
beneficial to their emergent literacy needs.

Since this was a cooperative preschool setting, the frequent
change of parents played a role in the percentage of time adults
spent reading to children (35%). This may have been a greater
percentage if the parent or volunteer remained constant.
Therefore, future researchers may want to repeat this study in a
preschool program in which there is a paid aide or a single
volunteer who is able to devote time reading to the students in
the library corner on a consistent basis.

Although the free choice days were not included in this study, the results of those 200 minutes were: 1) adult reading to child 60 min. (30%), child reading to adult 1 min. (less than 1%), 3) reading to self 53 min. (26.5%), 4) student reading with students 18 min. (9%), 5) choosing book 17 min. (9%), and off task 51 min. (25.5%). These percentages are similar to those of the actual study. Therefore, the study may want to be repeated with the students choosing which center they wish to attend during center time.

Students were also observed using the book corner outside of center time. Future research may wish to include students' use of classroom libraries at any time of the day.

Classroom Implications

This study reinforces the idea that a classroom library is a beneficial item in every classroom. At the preschool level a classroom library gives the students a chance to interact with books on a daily basis. Because some children are not exposed to literature in their home environment, they need some type of exposure to literature before their elementary school days. By having a classroom library in the preschool setting where children are not required to read for an assignment, but rather as a free reading activity, they will be exposed to print, various types of illustrations, picture books, fairy tales, fiction, non-fiction, and big books. These kinds of exposure have been recommended by the studies of Martinez and Teale (1988) and Strickland and Morrow (1988a).

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Date _____

Name _____

category	number of minutes
1) Adult to Student	
2) Child to Adult	
3) Self	
4) Student to Student	
5) Choosing Book	
6) Off Task	