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Natalie Sara Thompson
Utah State University

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PHONEMIC AWARENESS IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS

by

Natalie Sara Thompson

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree**

of

Communication Disorders with an emphasis in Speech and Language Pathology

DEPARTMENT HONORS

in

Communication Disorders and Deaf Education

Approved:

Thesis/Project Advisor

Sonia Manuel-Dupont

Department Honors Advisor

Sonia Manuel-Dupont

Director of Honors Program

Christie Fox

**UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
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When children scribble on a paper or draw a picture to write a story, they are in the early stages of emergent literacy. Emergent literacy is a process which children become aware of written language. Before children write their name, they are learning about print, its meaning, and the relationship it has to language. Along their path towards reading and writing, children then begin to understand another important process, phonemic awareness. My senior thesis is based on the concept of phonemic awareness.

In order to understand my justifications, one must first understand phonemic awareness. Language is composed of phrases which are formed by words. In turn, words can be segmented into syllables and syllables into even smaller units, phonemes. A phoneme is the smallest unit of a speech sound (Sensenbaugh, 1996 para. 1). Phonemic awareness is an umbrella term that includes alliteration and rhymes, onset and rime, phonemic manipulation tasks, phonemic segmentation, and phonemic synthesis (Hempenstall, 1997 Phonemic Awareness: What Does It Mean? section, para. 4). To understand that some words end in the same sound, rhyme, shows a primary level of metalinguistic knowledge. The individual is beginning to see beyond the meaning of the word and consider a portion of the word. Alliteration is a skill similar to rhyme. Instead of looking at the end of the word, a child learns that some words begin with the same sound (Hempenstall, 1997 Rhyme and Alliteration section, para. 1). Onset and rime is the relationship within a syllable. The onset is the initial sound in the syllable. The rime is the following vowel and remaining consonants. For example, sip and slip have an onset of /s/ and /sl/. They share a rime of /ip/. Onset and rime is a useful skill for both reading and spelling. -Ing, -ight, and -ain are common rime phonograms. A child who learns rime understands how to pronounce those syllables. They also learn how to spell that syllable. So, when required to spell flight, night or sight, an individual could do so without previous exposure to the words. (Hempenstall, 1997 Onset and Rimes section, para. 1)

Phonemic manipulation is a skill where the child is able to substitute one sound for another and thus create a new word. Such a task may be to alter cat to cab by substituting the /t/ for a /b/. Phonemic segmentation is the ability to segment the sounds in a word, and phonemic synthesis is a skill to build the sounds together to form a word. For example, ball can be split into b-a-l and the sounds c-a-r forms the word car (Hempenstall, 1997 Phonemic Awareness para. 2). Phonemic awareness prepares a child for reading fluency and writing skills.

A child with disorders such as dyslexia will likely struggle with phonemic awareness. They may not learn these skills independently (Hempenstall, 1997 Phonemic Awareness: What Does It Mean? section, para. 1). Therefore, it is essential for that child to undergo individualized therapy. Through therapy, a child learns phonemic awareness skills through play, practice, and instruction. A struggle for children is generalization or application of what they learn in therapy into daily conversation and reading tasks. As a result, clinicians often need to create a home program. A home program can be a task that a child must complete for a short amount of time through the direction of a parent. The task could be a game, a poem, or a story.

For my senior thesis, I have written stories for the purpose of phonological awareness. The stories are ones that can be used in either a clinical setting or in a home program. I wrote two types of stories: concrete and abstract. I wanted to experiment with different varieties of stories in order to determine which will be received positively. In a survey of my peers, both types encountered varying results. Some preferred the abstract over the concrete and vice versa. I concluded that each person has individual preferences and dislikes. People will respond differently to each story. As a therapist, it is imperative to follow the child's lead. Little can be accomplished when the client does not respond to the planned activities. A clinician must be aware of the client's preferences and plan accordingly.

Works Cited

- Hempenstall, K. (1997). The role of phonemic awareness in beginning reading: A review. [Electronic Version] *Behaviour Change*, 14(4), 210-14.
- Sesenbaugh, R. (1996, June 13). Phonemic awareness: an important early step in learning to read. Bloomington, Indiana. ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication Digest No. 119.

Story One: Tip Top Secret Pear Tree

My name is Tommy.
I have a tip top secret hideout.

It is called The Pear Tree
My map helps me keep it secret.

I creep down the stairs past my sleepy pop and penny's glares.
{penny the cat on dad's big belly}
I tip toe past my mom and grab some plumb bombs.

I'm on my way, it's time to play!
Skip around the popcorn trees and jump over the puppies.

~~Then~~ I slump under the pokey blackberry bush and wait for the ambush.
There is my pesky brother!

He is always dipping, tapping, zapping. He is a bother.
He's a pesky prickly sap. He always tries to steal my map!

I speed to the pear tree and climb up up up!
Up to the tip tip top!

My pesky prickly brother pulled off his cap and rolled up his sleeves.
There he goes, he's turning on the garden hose!

It's time for the plumb bombs

{Tommy in tree house throwing plumbs, brother on ground spraying water}

Ha Ha! Victory!

My tip top secret hideout is a tip top secret still.

Story 2: Baseball, Boys, and Beth?

Tommy! It's time to go. {MOM talking}
I play baseball.

I need my bat, my baseball and my baseball mitt.
I throw them in my bag and I'm ready to go!

There's Bobby, Billy, and Benny! Here come the boys!

Here is Brad, Bo and.....Beth?

Baseball is for boys. Girls are babies. Girls play with dolls and bows.

Oh, boy, mom says I have to let her play.
This is definitely going to be a bad game.

Bobby is on first base, Billy is on second base. And Benny is on third Base.
Bo is up to bat.

Brad winds up for the pitch...Bam! Bo launches the ball to left field.
Now it is my turn.

Strike one! Strike two! I bunt the third pitch and I am on base.

Great, it is Beth's turn.
--"Hey boys move on in"

Beth steps up to the plate. She's pointing up to the sky like Babe Ruth, the Great Bambino.

Brad winds up for his Big Heat fast ball. BOOM!!!! The baseball is going, going, gone!

Beth hit a home run! But girls play with dolls and bows.
There she goes, first! Second! Third! And home! Beth hit a homerun!

Okay, I guess Beth is good at baseball, for a girl.
Next time, Beth can play on my team.
Beth doesn't play with dolls and bows. Beth plays baseball.

Story 3: What is down the well?

What if there is a witch with a wand?
Maybe there is a genie in a magic lamp who will grant my wish?
Or a bed of flowers that never wilt.
Is there a pond filled with wondrous fish?

What if there is a cowboy from the west fighting a wicked villain.
Maybe there are spiders weaving webs of silver thread.
Or a world of lions and tamers with whips.
Is there a herd of walruses sleeping in their icy beds?

What if there is a winter wonderland filled with white snow?
Maybe there are caterpillars dreaming in their cocoons.
Or a beach with waves of water and walls of rock.
Is there a flock of winged creatures flying from a wild typhoon?

What if there are whimsical clowns?
Maybe there are magical wizards?
Or chests of jewels and gold.
Is there a pack of yellow polka dotted lizards?

What is down the well?
There is a mountain of coins for every wish whispered.
There is magic and hope.

Story 4: Mr. Zooguy's Zazoo Days!

We are going to Mr. Zooguy's Zany Zazoo!
He has animals from the far tundras of zeezog zoomzog land.

Look! Here comes the the zippy zipzain train!
Welcome to the zoo! I am Mr. Zooguy!
Come and see all the animals.
First we have the zany zoolamuze.
He has one zillion spots.
He likes to eat cheese balls and cheese strings and cheese pees.

Ah! Here are the zillos!
There is zimizillo, zillazillo, and zipazillo!
They buzz up and down the maze.

Next there is ziger and zager.
Haha, they zig and zag.
they race around the cages.

Here is the busy, buzzing, zumzel zuzzle zee.
He has a bigzel nose.
Don't forget to see the zeema and zarazizz or the fizzy and fuzzy zatazillars.

Please enjoy my amazing and zany zazoo days!

Story 5: Two Colors

My friends have two colors.
One color on the outside and one color on the inside.

Kyle's outside color is like coffee,
but his inside color is like cool ice cream, refreshing.

Kelly's outside color is like chocolate cake,
but his inside color is more like a red race car, quick and cool.

Micah's color is like cold pale ice,
but inside his color is like a lake, he is clear and calm.

Kelly is looks like sand on the outside, but she is more like the night sky on the inside.
She is dark with speckles of sparkling stars.

Kipp is the color of a cooked marshmallow, but inside is color like cool grass. He likes
to hop, skip, and play in the sun.

Kenny's outside color is like cream with caramel sprinkles.
But his inside color is like fire, active and hot.

My friends colors are different. Their colors make them unique.
Their inside colors count more than the outside color.
Their inside color tells me what they like and what they are, but you have to look inside
to see, the right color.

Story 6: Meanie Mike the Mobster

Secret Agent Tommy, we have a mission for you.
Be warned, you may miss bedtime.
I will stand by the mossy rock, Meet me at midnight.
Come if you will accept the mission.
Signed, Commander Moose

I will accept commander!

Hello Tommy. As you know, Meanie Mike the Mobster is a menace.
Meanie Mike has made a mess of Marvin M. Monkey's mansion and Marvin is missing.
Agent meow and agent moleman will help you.
You must save Mr. Monkey and stop Meanie Mike the Mobster!
Yes sir, Mr. Commander Moose sir!

Agent Meow, Agent Moleman, What can you tell me about Meanie Mike the Mobster.

Meanie Mike is hiding at the milkymud.
Mini Monster will let us in after the mime act.

Good. Moleman, find out what room meanie is in.
Meow, you will send in a mosquito missile.
One minute later, we will break in Meanie Mike's room, arrest him then find M. M.
Monkey.

The Milkymud is next to the farmer's mill.
{Show creeping to milkingmud}
Psst...psst...Mini Monster, what room is Meanie Mike in?
Room 321.
Meow, do you have the mosquito missile ready?
Yes agent Tommy.
Let's Go.

There is Meanie Mike's room. Tip Toe...
Meow, send in the mosquito missile.
One minute... thirty seconds....ready...
NOW!!!
{Breaks down the door, mosquitoes distract}
Meanie Mike the Mobster. In the name of Commander Moose, you are under arrest for
the kidnapping of Marvin M. Monkey and Mess Making!
Thank you mosquitoes, you may go home.
Look! There's Mr. Monkey!
OO, OO, EE! Untie Me!

Well done Agent Meow, Agent Moleman, and Agent Tommy.
Thank you Commander Moose

Meanie Mike is no longer the menace.
Tommy you must get to bed before your momma sees.
Mouse's Mighty Balloon will take you to your bedroom window.
Good Night Tommy