

Increasing Vocabulary Gains in Preschool:
The Timing of Discussion in Repeated Read-Alouds

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To recap, Dickinson and Smith (1994) found that discussion both before and after the read-aloud produced the most vocabulary gains with four-year-olds. Their method involved videotaping teachers reading to students and coding it to make groups based on where the discussion took place. Brabham and Lynch-Brown (2002) found that discussion during the read-aloud produced the most vocabulary gains with first and third graders. Their method was using scripts for the teachers to tell the students when discussion would be allowed to take place.

In addition, Coyne et al. (2009) found that both embedded vocabulary instruction (providing brief definitions during story reading) and extended instruction (further discussion of words after story reading) demonstrate gains in word learning from pretest to posttest in kindergarteners. However, only extended instruction gave students more full and complete knowledge of words versus the limited and partial knowledge that embedded instruction provided (Coyne et al., 2009). This means certain techniques may be better at teaching more words, but result in less knowledge of the words. However, the effective extended instruction may take more time. Once again, the best way to teach vocabulary must take into account not only the effectiveness of the technique, but the feasibility of it.

Statement of the Problem

We know that using special techniques and discussing vocabulary words with children during storybook readings is beneficial, but the present findings are unclear on when the discussion should take place, which is an important issue for teachers to determine how to spend their time. Also, the age of participants in the two studies

(Dickinson & Smith, Brabham & Lynch-Brown) differed, from pre-K to third grade children. Differences in learning vocabulary for this range of ages may be great. The results on effectiveness of discussion do indeed seem to differ for different ages.

However, we know that reaching children at an earlier age is crucial in order to prevent children from starting out school behind already and disadvantaged to catch up. Therefore the purpose of this study is to examine closer the relationship between the timing of discussion in read-alouds and vocabulary gains in preschoolers.

Many studies have focused on older age groups whom have more prior knowledge and background experience in reading and other life experiences than preschoolers. This means their aptitude to learn vocabulary is different and any results on vocabulary development studies cannot be generalized to earlier age groups. In addition, it's important to note that the studies on placement of discussion thus far have used read-alouds, not repeated read-alouds, which are more beneficial for increasing vocabulary gains. In sum, the research discussed does not address vocabulary development in the context of repeated read-alouds with preschoolers, which are both important elements.

The present research question is: What are the effects of the timing of discussion, in repeated read-alouds with preschoolers, on vocabulary gains? Researchers will investigate the use of discussion techniques during repeated read-alouds (D condition), and before, during, and after the repeated read-alouds (BDA condition), for their effect on vocabulary development of preschoolers. It's hypothesized that 1) vocabulary gains will be greater for words directly taught during

the read-alouds compared to words that were not taught; and 2) words taught in the before, during, after condition will show significantly higher vocabulary gains than words taught in the during condition.