

Coyne, M., Simmons, D., Kame'enui, E., & Stoolmiller, M. (2004). Teaching vocabulary during shared storybook readings: An examination of differential effects. *Exceptionality, 12*(3), 145-162.

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Summary: A storybook intervention program with explicit vocabulary instruction was researched in this experimental study. The intervention focused on 34 kindergarten students who were at risk for reading difficulty. Results showed students in the treatment group, "with lower receptive vocabulary skills" (p.145), had greater gains in vocabulary acquisition than the control group. These findings suggest using shared storybook reading in conjunction with explicit instruction of word meanings can help reduce or prevent the widening of the "vocabulary gap among kindergarten students" (p. 145).

Assumptions:

- At the kindergarten level, at-risk students already have markedly different literacy skills.
- Early intervention strategies have shown encouraging results in promoting literacy skills among students who need intervention.
- Vocabulary instruction should be part of a literacy intervention program.
- Explicit instruction of word meanings does assist in the development of vocabulary for young students.

Results:

- The storybook intervention coupled with explicit instruction on vocabulary promoted greater growth when compared with the control group.
- "Students with lower receptive vocabulary skills demonstrated greater gains in taught vocabulary than students with higher receptive vocabulary." (p. 158).
- For words explicitly taught through the storybook intervention, greater gains were actually achieved by students who had lower receptive vocabulary skills.
- Growth of untaught vocabulary was similar for both groups. Therefore, the intervention of explicit instruction yielded the most growth for students.

Conclusion:

- Storybook intervention programs can be beneficial for increasing improving students' vocabulary knowledge when the teacher explicitly provides word meanings.
- Vocabulary gains can be achieved across all levels of vocabulary skill; however, greater gains were achieved in students who had lower receptive vocabulary skills when explicit intervention was provided.
- Possibly, no gains were perceived in incidental contact with words due to a delay in the posttest. That is, advanced words that were untaught when read from the storybooks were no longer recalled after several months.

Suggestions for Teachers:

- When using storybook reading, teachers should select unknown words to provide explicit instruction about in order to, increase a student's vocabulary.
- Incidental discussions about words do not provide growth in vocabulary in the same ways as explicit instruction. Teachers must be aware of the vocabulary base children bring to Kindergarten and then work to provide robust experiences and conversations about words to increase their knowledge of words.

Suggestions for Literacy Leaders:

- Encourage teachers to incorporate storybook reading with direct vocabulary instruction in their literacy lessons. It should be particularly advantageous for students with low vocabulary levels.
- Encourage teachers to teach words that will have the greatest gains in closing the vocabulary gap for students.
- Help teachers assess student language knowledge upon entering kindergarten to provide baseline information that can guide instructional planning.
- Early intervention programs for students at risk for reading difficulties can be beneficial for young students with "less developed vocabularies" (p. 159).