Patterned Language Books in the Classroom

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Abstract

One type of patterned language book has a repeated phrase or idea throughout the literature. This type of book can be used in several ways that have been shown to enhance literacy. These books are useful for teaching young children to read for many reasons, primarily because they allow the child to experience success even if not all the words are known through memorizing the phrase. Included are two examples of patterned language books I have written from my own travel experiences to Berlin, Germany, and New York, New York. Photos from the actual places described in the text are used to illustrate the book.
Patterned Language Books in the Classroom

Reading is one of the most important skills children learn as they go through the school system. It is a skill each student will use for the rest of his or her life (Good, Simmons, & Smith, 1998). Implicit reading instruction starts the minute a child steps foot into a school and continues throughout the majority of formalized education. Actually learning to read is a complex interaction between employing top-down (data-driven) and bottom-up (conceptually-driven) processes. Through the bottom-up approach, students learn to recognize letters, learn their names and corresponding sounds, and eventually are able to string those sounds together to read words (Farris, Fuhler, & Walther, 2003). A top-down approach is more of a holistic approach. It focuses on the reader as an individual and the experiences he or she have had and it is those experiences that foster comprehension (Farris et al., 2003). An interactive approach combines these two. In this process, a student uses semantic cues (the context of the word), syntactic cues (structure of the selection and grammar), and graphophonic cues (individual letters and their associated sounds) combined with meaning and prior knowledge, to read a selection (Farris et al., 2003).

Approaches to Reading Instruction

There are several different teaching approaches that evolve from these three processes. These include a whole-word approach, phonics approach, whole-language approach, and a balanced approach (Good et al., 1998; Matlin, 2005; National Reading Panel, 2006). The whole-word approach is one in which a student can link the meaning of a word to the word as a unit. In this approach, the link between the written and spoken word is emphasized (Matlin,
A phonics approach to reading is one in which the letter-sound correspondence is emphasized. Time is spent first teaching the students the letter and the way the letter sounds, then bringing their knowledge of all the sounds to whole words, stringing the sounds together to make the whole word (National Reading Panel, 2006). The whole-language approach emphasizes meaning. After reading a whole book, a student is expected to be able to interpret the meaning of a story and be able to pick out the meaning of a word based on context before being expected to spell (Matlin, 2005). This is an approach that is based on top-down processing: using the whole represented by the book to pick out the pieces represented by the meaning and word definitions (Cunningham, Cunningham, Hoffman, & Yopp, 1998).

Phonological awareness comes from a student's ability to decode the phonological structure of one's language (Good et al., 1998). It focuses on teaching students to recognize the phonemes, or individual sounds, in their language (National Reading Panel, 2006).

What one must understand in working with any child in any setting is that each and every child is different. The unique characteristics and experiences that a child brings to the classroom will influence how he or she best learns and the strategies needed to best suit his or her instructional needs (Schleper, 1995; Grossen, 1997). Thus, in order to teach reading, a balanced approach is called for (Gunning, 2006). This approach is based on the principle that students have different learning styles and that reading is a complex process that requires many strategies and components working together. A child learns to read through being introduced to all of these strategies and learning to apply them to their own reading experiences.

Although there are many different strategies that foster reading, a teacher is called to employ these different strategies one at a time instead of using every strategy in one lesson, and vary the strategy chosen from lesson to lesson for exposure to them all (Grossen, 1997). When a
teacher is able to employ a wide variety of instructional materials, approaches to reading, and reading-based activities, he or she is best able to reach all the diverse learners in the classroom (NRP, 2006).

As these approaches are considered, there are several questions that a teacher has to answer when structuring a reading instruction program. What is the best way to teach a child to read? What materials are best suited for the job? This paper is an attempt to answer some of these questions.

Classroom Literature

There are numerous ways in which one can accomplish a balanced approach to reading instruction. One of these ways is through the use of real literature in the classroom. When choosing this literature, there are several factors to consider. These factors include the students' interests, instructional level, quality of the literature, purpose for which one will be using it, activities that can be generated, background knowledge, and curricular needs (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997). One type of book, when used correctly, can satisfy many, if not all, of the needs of reading instruction of emergent (or beginning) readers is patterned language books.

How to Use Patterned Language Books

There are several types of predictable books or texts. A predictable book is one in which the author uses familiar language, draws on the reader's background knowledge, focuses on common language patterns, or uses other similar devices that help a reader to anticipate or predict what will come next in the story. A pattern language book is a type of predictable book that has some sort of pattern or recurring style that students can easily learn after very few exposures, usually after only a couple of pages (May, 2002). Common examples of patterned
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language books include *Is your Mama a Llama* by Deborah Guarino, *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown, and *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* by Bill Martin.

There are several different types of predictable books besides patterned language books. These include stories with a familiar sequence, such as Eric Carle's *Today is Monday*; cumulative text stories, in which one event is added, and the whole list is repeated, such as in Gavin Bishop’s *Chicken Licken*; chain or circular stories, where there is a sequence of several events that eventually lead back to the first event, such as Laura Numerhoff’s *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*; and stories with a repeated phrase, such as Penny Dale’s *Ten Out of Bed*.

Directed more towards young readers who are just learning how to read or the very basic print concepts, predictable books are very simple and have concepts children can relate to easily (Sullivan & Martin, 1994). These books have been shown to have a variety of benefits such as fostering fluency, adding to sight vocabulary, assisting in finding meaning, and motivating children to read (Marning et al., 2000).

*Ways to Read*

The most common use for a predictable book in the classroom is through shared reading (Sullivan & Martin, 2004). Shared reading is a time in which the teacher and students together read a book (Schleper, 1995; Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997). During this time, the teacher begins by introducing the book to spark interest. Initially, the teacher can read the book to the students while pointing to the words as she reads and stopping to ask questions at varying levels of difficulty. Usually, a book is used during shared reading for one week at the primary level, where students are just learning to read. As the students become familiar with the text, the teacher reads less and the students read more. A predictable book allows students to participate
from the beginning by repeating the phrase with the teacher as he or she reads (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997). This provides an advantage to beginning readers, as they feel involved even if they cannot read the words. The book is read once or twice every day, and then the teacher will assign an independent activity that reinforces concepts talked about during the lesson or conduct a group mini-lesson on one aspect of the text, such as using quotation marks.

There are several reasons why predictable texts make such excellent shared reading texts. First and foremost, students need to feel that they are successful at reading in order to continue to pursue it as a worthwhile activity and enjoy it (Saccardi, 1996; Sullivan & Martin, 1994; Maring et al, 2000). When a phrase is repeated, children are able to memorize that phrase and repeat it along with the teacher and the rest of the class. Even if the child is not actually reading the section, he or she is able to feel successful at being able to participate. This increases the child’s enjoyment of the reading task and causes him or her to want to read more often (Saccardi, 1996).

Also, the first step in the reading process is that students need to find meaning in the print they are to be reading (Maring et al, 2000). Students exposed to patterned language books are able to develop this meaning to aid in their comprehension of the reading process. Predictable books have been shown to increase comprehension through finding meaning by utilizing semantic and syntactic knowledge (Bridge, 1979). The benefits of using a patterned language book have been shown to be far superior as compared to a basal reader, which is an anthology of works commonly used to teach student to read (Sullivan & Martin, 1994). Through the repetition of the phrase, students are more easily able to understand features of printed language such as oral vocabulary, visual discrimination and letter and word recognition (Sullivan et al., 1994). Students learn by repetition. It is through the repeated exposures to and practice with a
phrase that the students are able to acquire these skills more readily than through the structure of a basal text.

Associated Activities

Another major area in which predictable texts enhance a student's reading skills is centered on a common theme of vocabulary. Using these texts has led to improvements in several different areas of vocabulary development. These improvements stem from the repetition of the vocabulary words as well as the activities that may be linked to the text. Through multiple exposures to and extensive work with vocabulary, students are able to pick up on spelling patterns and sounds. They are able to learn sight words more easily and apply their vocabulary knowledge to novel situations (Bridge, 1983). One study shows that students who work with predictable texts frequently develop the ability to decode unfamiliar words at a more advanced rate than those of their peers who work with other forms of literature (Sullivan & Martin, 1994). Another benefit of using these texts is that they help to enhance oral and sight word vocabulary (Sullivan & Martin, 1994; Maring et al., 2000). Any book with rich vocabulary that the students can still understand will lend itself easily to the enrichment of students' vocabulary.

Patterned language books are useful for assistance in the reading process for another reason. Students who are engaged in reading are more likely to read. Patterned language books lend themselves easily to playing with words (Saccardi, 1996). Books in which students can easily visualize what is going on or pick out words or phrases, which they can take and use as their own, will promote enjoyment. Patterned language books with a repetitive phrase allow students to take that phrase and apply it in a situation that is familiar to them.
Patterned language books also help in the development of writing. Beginning writers can take the pattern from the book and use it to write a story of their own based on their own experience or creativity. This allows some structure for a student to follow, but opens the activity to the creativity of the student (Saccardi, 1996). Providing the students with the structure of the pattern to follow gives them enough support to begin writing. It provides the students with the structure of sentences and punctuation so they can focus their efforts elsewhere. Using the repeated phrase from a published work ensures quality writing but allows the students to take ownership of the writing by also providing them an opportunity to use their own experiences and background knowledge to compose their work.

It is through the activities that can be linked meaningfully to the text that a student develops and learns the most. Patterned books lend themselves easily to several different types of assignments and activities. The more congruency there is in a classroom between what is being learned across the different content areas, the more easily a student is going to process information presented (Matlin, 2005). Patterned language books can be used as the basis for several different classroom activities that reinforce the concepts covered in the book and relate to the curriculum. They invite drama activities (Saccardi, 1996) and support writing activities and assignments (Saccardi, 1996; Palmer, 2003). The more closely the activity can be linked to the text and visited over the course of time, the better a child will glean the information. If a text can be used during a shared reading activity, then later during a social studies lesson, the students will have twice the exposure and twice the reinforcement of what is being taught from the book.

Predictable texts, including pattern language books, are one important piece of a balanced approach to literacy. There are several benefits to using these trade books in the classroom. They foster literacy in young children and aid in their acquisition of written and oral language.
Although pattern language books have many benefits, it is important to keep in mind that a student should be exposed to many different forms of literature and activities based on that literature. Pattern language books are just one aspect that can be used to enhance the process of learning to read.
Children's Literature

Bishop, Gavin. *Chicken Licken.*

Brown, Margaret Wise. *Goodnight Moon.*

Carle, Eric. *Today is Monday.*


Guarino, Deborah. *Is your Mama a Llama.*


Numerhoff, Laura. *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie.*
References


Introduction to Composed Works

Patterned language books are usually geared specifically to emergent readers (those that are just learning to read). The books I have composed are written on a higher level than other patterned language books have been. This is because they were written to pose a challenge to students who have had much experience with patterned language books and are nearing the end of their emergent phase. The vocabulary I have chosen is above that of a typical first grader’s level. This is to aid in the enrichment of vocabulary development. The repeated part is also longer than it is typically in other patterned language books. This is again to pose a challenge to students who have had experience with a shorter repeated phrase. It is to challenge memory and expand the capacity of a child’s short-term memory. The books are about my travel experience so they can be used to foster social studies lessons on travel, locating different places on a map or globalization.
Appendix A
Walking
New York

By Becky Veldman
Two of my friends and I decided we wanted to see some sites in New York City. We rode the train in and decided to go see the Empire State Building.
We walked and walked and walked some more. It was a long way, but we knew where we were going would not be a bore.
After seeing some awesome views of the city from the observation deck, we were off to Time Square.
We walked and walked and walked some more. It was a long way, but we knew where we were going would not be a bore.
Awed by all the flashing lights and neon signs, we wandered around for a bit. Once refueled with some lunch, it was off to Central Park.
We walked and walked and walked some more. It was a long way, but we knew where we were going would not be a bore.
The park was a haven of nature among the iron jungle of the city. It was a nice change, and fun to explore. Next we were off to a boat ride.
We walked and walked and walked some more.
It was a long way, but we knew where we were going would not be a bore.
The tour took us around the island New York City is on. We saw the skyline from the water, the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. When it was over, it was off to home.
We walked and walked and walked some more.
It was a long way, but we knew where we were going would not be a bore.
Our day was packed had been an adventure, and we were all extremely tired. After our ride on the train, we had only one leg of our journey to go- it was the walk home.
We walked and walked and walked some more. It was a long way, but we knew where we were going would not be a bore.
About the Author

Becky Veldman is a junior at North Central College. She is majoring in Elementary Education and Psychology. She hopes to teach for a number of years then go on to become a school counselor. Becky has two brothers. She loves her family, and feels blessed by them. In her spare time, she enjoys to read, work with children and spend time with family and friends. She is excited about her first publication!
Appendix B
Walking
Berlin

By Becky Veldman
I spent two weeks with a teacher and some other students in Berlin, Germany. After arriving at our hotel, we decided to see some sites.
We walked and walked and walked some more. It was a long way, but we knew where we were going would not be a bore.
It was Christmas time, so we decided to go to one of Berlin’s famous Weihnachtsmärkte (Christmas Markets). It was like a carnival.
We walked and walked and walked some more. It was a long way, but we knew where we were going would not be a bore.
After some delicious food and drink, we wished to see one of the most famous sights in Berlin: the Berlin Wall.
We walked and walked and walked some more. It was a long way, but we knew where we were going would not be a bore.
Another thing Berlin is famous for are churches. Some are beautifully maintained, some in ruins. We decided to go visit a few of those next.
We walked and walked and walked some more. It was a long way, but we knew where we were going would not be a bore.
Berlin wouldn’t be complete without delicious food. It was about time to sample some of that!
We walked and walked and walked some more. It was a long way, but we knew where we were going would not be a bore.
No trip to Europe would be complete without seeing some old castles, so they became the next and final stop on the list.
We walked and walked and walked some more. It was a long way, but we knew where we were going would not be a bore.
About the Author

Becky Veldman is a senior at North Central College. After she graduates, she is going to get married to the most perfect man, and hopefully get a job teaching somewhere in the Chicago-land area. She loves to travel and visit places she has read about in some of her favorite books. She would love to visit somewhere on every continent before she starts a family of her own.