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Title: Teacher/Child Question Use During Shared Reading

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Abstract

Background/Context

Participation in interactive shared reading experiences is among one of the most widely recommended practices within early childhood education (United States Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, Office of Head Start, 2000; van Kleeck, 2003; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Interactive shared reading refers to an adult-child interaction that prompts the child to actively engage during the reading process as the adult encourages the child's responses to the reading. Through this interactive format, that occurs almost daily in early childhood classrooms (Pentimonti, Zucker, & Justice, 2011), the book serves as a focus of joint attention and a catalyst for meaningful conversations that are often referred to as extratextual talk (i.e., talk between teachers and children beyond the reading of the text itself). Simply reading the text is not as effective as an interactive reading style (NELP, 2008). Through this meaningful interaction, the shared reading experience becomes a highly valuable activity that takes up a relatively small amount of instructional time, but has the potential for great reward in terms of engagement and educational significance.

Purpose

Examining teacher and child conversations (specifically various question forms used in conversation) is particularly important within the shared book reading context because meta-analytic research shows interactive shared reading experiences that feature adult questioning are more effective than passively listening to a story read aloud (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). The present study aims to describe teacher and child question form use during interactive shared reading.

Setting and Participants

Participants were 53 preschool and kindergarten teachers from Ohio or Texas, and the children in their classrooms. Children ranged in age from 3-6 years. The primary language of instruction in all classrooms was English. All of the participating teachers and children were volunteers in the studies and provided informed consent to participate in a set of activities that

spanned the entire academic year. The teachers and children participated in the 2015-2016 academic years.

Design and Coding Procedures

As part of study procedures, videotaped shared book reading sessions were collected from the 53 participating teachers. Teachers' and children's extratextual talk was transcribed and coded from these videos using an observational coding scheme, the Systematic Assessment of Book Reading (SABR 2.1; Zucker, Pentimonti, Justice, Tambyraja, & Bowles, 2017). SABR coders completed an exhaustive training process to become reliable in their use of the SABR coding scheme. Three main steps were taken in this process: (a) extensive training and practice (b) consensus coding, and (c) independent coding with drift checks. Coders were found to be reliable in consensus coding (ranging from 85%-96%) and then continued coding with frequent drift checks.

Analysis and Findings

For purposes of the present study, the SABR codes directly related to teachers' and children's questions (10 of the 45 larger set of codes) were included in analyses. See Appendix B for a list of question codes and definitions. Descriptive analyses revealed that 35% of teacher's extratextual talk was coded as questions. In regard to question form, 75% of teachers' questions were closed questions (i.e., required a one word answer) and 58% could be considered test questions (i.e., have a known correct answer). When examining question wording, our analyses revealed that teachers more frequently asked wh- (38% of teacher questions), auxiliary fronted (27%), and yes/no questions (24%) and less frequently asked why (4%), how (3%), and turn taking questions (3%). For child-level extratextual talk, analyses revealed that only 4% of children's extratextual talk was coded as questioning, and in 13 of the 53 coded shared book reading sessions, children asked no questions.

Factor analysis of teacher question codes identified one general question factor, with moderate to strong positive factor loadings across all items, with the exception of 'turn taking' questions, which loaded negatively onto the general factor. Further analyses will consider how teacher's and children's use of questioning relates to children's language and literacy outcomes.

Conclusions

Results of this study further our understanding of the types of questions teachers and children use during shared reading sessions. Findings are consistent with the larger literature showing that about 30% of teacher talk in the general classroom context can be characterized as questioning (Massey, Pence, Justice, & Bowles, 2008). Additionally, our finding demonstrating that the majority of questions teacher asks can be considered closed (i.e., requiring a one word answer), highlights a gap between research and practice, as previous research supports the importance of also asking complex, open-ended questions that encourage more sophisticated talk from children (van Kleeck, 2003; Wasik & Bond, 2001). Encouraging elicitation of sophisticated child-level talk is valuable given the benefits of interactive shared reading techniques for children's language and early literacy development.

Appendix A. References

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Appendix B. SABR Question Codes

Category	Codes	Brief Description or Example
What is the Question Wording?	Wh- Questions	Who, what, when, where (but not Why) + interrogative sentence form
	Why questions	Why + interrogative sentence form
	How questions	How + interrogative sentence form
	Auxiliary-fronted questions	Auxiliary verb is the first word in question (<i>Do...? Did...? Will...? Can...? Have...? And all "to be" verbs - Am, Is, Are, Was Were...</i>), which are typically yes/no
	Yes/No Questions without auxiliary verb	These are slightly more informal ways of asking a yes/no question than the auxiliary-fronted question format (<i>See that? You think he's cool</i>)
	Turn taking questions	Where the questioner uses a question form, but it does not fit the above categories and is designed to give the responder a turn to speak.
Is a Single or Multi-word Answer Required?	Open questions	Questions that require a multiple word (2+ word) response to be adequately answered (<i>What's going on here?</i>)
	Closed questions	Questions that can be adequately answered with only a 1-word response (<i>What is this?</i>); Yes/No question (<i>See that? Do you see that?</i>)
Is the Answer Known?	Real	Information-seeking questions presume the questioner does not have the information/answer.
	Test	Known-information or test questions have a known correct answer. The purpose is to evaluate the response accuracy/recall/comprehension.