

LITERACY DEVELOPMENT IN KINDERGARTEN

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This project was conducted in order to motivate students of transition grade in Hispanoamericano Conde Ansurez School to read through the use of strategies for story-telling. As the sample for this study, the five students who had the lowest language proficiency were selected.

According to the results, students improved their English, evidenced understanding of stories read in class and expressed more interest in reading. However, the process has to be continued because reading skills under development need constant practice.

Introduction

Last year I noticed that my students of transition grade had difficulties in getting the meaning of the sentences. For this reason I attempted to find a method that would integrate the development of reading skills in a way that would be more related to students' motivation and encourage them read in context, instead of learning a list of disconnected vocabulary. I opted for story-telling techniques that would motivate students and generate in them interest in reading.

The purpose of my investigation was to enhance students' motivation to read by getting meaning from the stories. I also wanted to explore how students evidenced understanding of the stories read in class and how they increased participation in the reading sessions. The action research project was carried out in transition grade from February to June 2001. This report reveals the impact the story-telling techniques had on the students.

Theoretical framework

Telling stories to children means reading stories aloud from big books with gestures, facial expressions and a variety of voices to make reading an enjoyable activity and language experience. Reading aloud to our students every day encourages them to describe pictures, associate sounds and meanings with written symbols. Reading aloud also stimulates the curiosity of children about characters, places, themes and actions. This is done by permitting only tantalizing glimpses of small selections from the text. These snippets can provide a need to read to complete an activity or to confirm an idea.

Here are some of the most important reasons why stories play a central role in teaching reading to children:

- Stories are particularly important in children's lives.
- Stories help children understand their world and share it with others.
- Stories offer a major and constant source of language experience.
- Children want to find meaning in stories, so, they listen to stories with a purpose.

Ellis and Brewster (1991) describe how children enjoy listening to stories by repetition. This frequent repetition allows certain language

items to be acquired while others are being overtly reinforced. Many stories also contain natural repetition of key vocabulary and structures. This helps children remember details and predict what is coming next in the story. Repetition also encourages oral participation and the practice of meaningful contexts. This also helps children summarize stories and act out in front of the class.

Research design

This research was carried out in two cycles. In the first cycle, I determined the problem and planned story-reading sessions. In the second cycle I used story-telling techniques to motivate children and analyze students' interest, ability to understand the meaning of the stories, ability to construct sentences, participation in the reading sessions and their work in groups. Classes were held in the classroom, the reading center and the video room.

Information was gathered by means of daily class programmers (which were designed using audio-visual aids and story-telling activities), and the teacher's diary observations, taking into account what the sample did and said during reading sessions. I also recorded some reading sessions in order to observe the motivation of the students and their reading improvement.



Results

The story-telling techniques and activities were applied according to the children's language level. Each story was followed by ideas of activities that helped children focus on the context of the story such as memory game, word pictures matching, pleonasm, bingo, master-mind, unscrambling words with alphabet cards and story summary.

During reading sessions I observed that the children were interested in the stories. When children took part in stories, they enjoyed them a lot. Sometimes they had difficulties with pronunciation, but they got it right by repetition.

The results of the analysis of how to motivated children to read showed a general improvement not only in reading but also in listening and speaking that can be part of future investigations. Stories help children get language-item skills and sentence constructions without their necessarily having to use them productively. They can build up a reservoir of language this way. When the time comes to move the language items into their productive control, it is no great problem because the language is not new to them.

When children retold or acted out the stories, they improved speaking. They could express likes and dislikes and exchange ideas and associations

related to stories they heard or read. Learning a language is useless if we do not know how to communicate, how to listen to others, and how to speak and write so that listeners and readers will want to listen and read and be able to understand.

Conclusions

Literacy development in kindergarten was an interesting and gratifying research because children were motivated by the stories read in class.

Students evidenced understanding of story moods and more interest in reading classes.

Story-telling techniques generated students' interest in reading. I could get that motivation started by reading aloud to students every day, and these story-telling techniques helped children focus their minds on the contents of the story.

The procedures that I followed help children want to read and promoted an atmosphere of confidence. Children were involved with and showed an affective response toward stories

References

Ellis, G. and Brewster, J. (1991). *The Storytelling Handbook for primary Teachers*. London: Penguin Books.