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THE INFLUENCES OF AN ANTICIPATION GUIDE ON READERS' RESPONSE TO A BASAL SHORT STORY

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Many advances have occurred in the field of reading in the past ten years, not only in theories of the reading process but also in views of how readers comprehend texts (Vacca & Vacca, 1983). We predict that the major thrust of reading research in the next decade will shift from issues concerning the reading process to questions dealing with instruction and reading development.

One question in particular that is on the minds of many classroom teachers is how to encourage children to bring background knowledge to bear during reading. The question is one of schema activation. It presupposes that a child already possesses relevant background knowledge to bring to a specific reading situation, but may not be aware of its importance to reading or does not know how to activate it. One way to activate background knowledge is to create a classroom environment in which students are encouraged to anticipate and predict what a reading situation is going to be about.

Background

Creating an anticipatory set helps readers to think positively about a text selection to be read. Stauffer (1975) described the importance of the reader's anticipation of what will be learned through print. He suggested that anticipation is heightened when students learn how to raise questions before reading.

A potentially useful instructional tool is to encourage anticipation and prediction-making is an anticipation guide (Vacca, 1981). An anticipation guide may be used

during the prereading phase of a lesson to draw upon whatever relevant background knowledge the reader possesses in relation to a particular reading selection. In operation, students respond individually to a series of statements that represent major ideas which may be reflected in the material.

How anticipation affects the way a reader responds to text in a classroom situation remains open to speculation. Therefore, we designed a descriptive, exploratory study 1) to understand how young readers respond to text when a teacher uses an anticipation exercise within the framework of a small group or large group discussion, 2) to observe and describe the dynamics operating in classroom instructional situations which use anticipation in small group or large group contexts.

The Study

Forty-seven third grade students from two classrooms in a semi-rural school district in Northeast Ohio were assigned randomly to one of four classroom discussion situations: 1) a small group of five members who participated in an anticipation guide discussion prior to reading; 2) a small group of five members who participated in a regular pre-reading routine as prescribed by the basal manual; 3) a large group of nineteen members who participated in an anticipation guide discussion prior to reading; and 4) a large group of eighteen students who participated in regular prereading instruction as suggested by the basal. These four groupings were not to be compared experimentally with one another to determine statistically significant differences in readers' responses to the basal story. Instead, the study was action-oriented by design to answer the question: How do young readers respond to a story once a teacher has activated their schema for a particular topic through an anticipation exercise discussed within a small or large group context?

The anticipation guide was developed by the investigators to activate the students' schema for the topic "deafness" in everyday life. Statements for the anticipation guide (see the Figure) were prepared to correlate with story information from the basal selection, "I Have a Sister, My Sister Is Deaf" in Golden Secrets (Scott Fores-

man and Company, 1981).

After reading the story, all students were asked to freely respond in writing to the story. They were directed as follows: "Your ideas about the story are very important. Please do your very best to tell as much as you can about the story." The written recalls were analyzed according to the Modified Purves Categories (Galda, 1982). Essentially, reader responses to the story were classified as personal (recalls which reflected statements about the reader or about the work, expressing personal enjoyment); descriptive (recalls about the narrative, describing aspects of plot, character, setting, etc.); interpretive (recalls which reflected inferences about parts of the story or the work as a whole) and evaluative (recalls about the emotional appeal of the story, its construction, or its significance).

Results and Implications

We found several emerging patterns of response to the short story on deafness:

1. Teaching reading with anticipation as a prereading objective influences the quality of readers' responses, not the quantity in small group settings. The overall number of responses for the two small groups were about the same. Yet the type of response differed, with a greater number of personal responses about the reader or the work made by readers in the small group who were given the anticipation guide (15% as compared with 10%). They also produced several written responses at the evaluative level, while those not given the guide did not produce any at that level.

2. The use of the anticipation guide in the context of a large group appeared to facilitate the total number of responses made during recall, interpretive responses and evaluative responses. It didn't, however, influence the number of personal engagement responses produced (fewer than 5% of total responses).

3. There is a strong tendency for third graders, at least the young readers in this study, to make more descriptive responses to a basal story than any other type of response. Regardless of the instructional context,

Figure 1

"I Have a Sister, My Sister Is Deaf"

Directions: You are going to read a story about a girl who is deaf. She has a sister who can hear. You will be reading about some things that have happened in their lives. They have some differences. What do you think those differences will be? Before reading the story, place the letter D in front of the phrases that you feel best describe the deaf sister. Place an H in front of the phrases which you feel best describe the sister who can hear. DO NOT mark the phrases which you feel would apply to both of the girls equally.

_____ 1. more interested in playing the piano.

_____ 2. more likely to enjoy playing outside.

_____ 3. more likely to be afraid during a storm.

_____ 4. more likely to notice unusual things.

_____ 5. better able to understand what people say.

_____ 6. more likely to be able to tell people how she feels.

_____ 7. better able to tell when a dog is barking near her.

_____ 8. more likely to be afraid of the dark.

_____ 9. better able to let people know how she is feeling.

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readers at this age and stage of development recall and describe common elements of a story. They are unlikely to make personal connections or to reflect on a given story's worth and significance.

4. If the desired learning outcome is personal engagement or evaluative responding to the text, then the use of anticipation prior to reading may be helpful in a small group context. There is some evidence from this study that when young readers in a small group context are encouraged to use schema to anticipate and predict story content, their patterns of response change. One can only speculate on the benefits of training in anticipation during

prereading instruction over time. Will young readers who are shown how to use what they know to anticipate meaning respond to story content by consistently making personal connections with and evaluations of a story?

5. Finally, the teacher's handling of a prereading anticipation activity may vary according to group size and, in turn, influence readers' response to stories. The teacher's handling of a large group (more than eighteen) anticipation activity may even inhibit readers' personal or evaluative responses to the story. It was apparent from the observations in this study that teachers relied more heavily on a "turn taking" model of instruction in large groups and in the small groups following a regular routine.

Early in their development as readers, children must learn to use what they know to respond to narrative selections. Strategies which help them to anticipate story content activate their schemata for particular reading selections. However, there is a large gap that needs to be further reduced between an anticipation guide and its extension into the natural context of the classroom.

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