

## Predictable Books in English and Development of English Language Skills in Children

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In this paper, how children can develop their language skills is examined, using predictable books. To make their reading effective, parents or instructors should produce their positive attitudes. Parents and instructors create and keep children's motivation for reading, and cultivate their interests. To find out predictable books, characteristics of them are presented. Then as a conclusion, how to use predictable books and the effectiveness of them are discussed.

### Introduction

Children pick up languages from television, other printed materials, signs, their parents, and friends. These and other factors affect the learners' attitude and sense of direction regarding what kind of readers and writers they will be. In these days, instructors and parents need to help children develop a desire to learn and a curiosity about the printed words. This will help children develop a strong interest in books and an enthusiasm for learning.

Reading involves more than simply looking at words on the printed page. It is an active, creative process of communication among the writer, the readers and their parents. It is essential that the main point of reading is to build a message in the mind of the readers and get meaning.

These early experiences will shape children's opinion of reading. If they feel good about their progress, they are likely to stick with reading and continue to improve. On the other hand, if their first reading experiences are negative, they may avoid books altogether. Children need instructors' and parents' help to overcome some of the hurdles which children may face. The more instructors or parents can do to make reading interesting and meaningful, the more likely your child is to succeed in their future.

In this paper, how children can develop their language skills is examined, using predictable books. In the beginning of this paper, to make their reading effective,

their positive attitudes should be produced by parents or instructors. Secondly parents and instructors create and keep children's motivation for reading, and cultivate their interests.

Predictable books can be a first step for children to read (listen to) the books among many books for children. To find out predictable books, characteristics of them are presented. Then as a conclusion, how to use predictable books and the effectiveness of them are discussed. In addition, I made a list of predictable books as a supplementary note.

### Children's Interests and Attitudes

Interests and attitudes influence the things on which children will concentrate. It is valuable to take reasonable steps to examine ways that instructors or parents can use children's interests and develop positive attitudes that will help their language skills concentrate long enough to learn. Concentration is not simply an act of the will that becomes powerful through practice. It is more than that.

For instance, when the topic is interesting for some children, their concentration improves. Therefore it is necessary for children to find books that interest them. Children are more likely to pay attention while reading. They are more likely to concentrate on what they are doing. Finding interests is a good place to start.

According to Carl Smith (1991), some interests seem to develop naturally, because they are somehow a part of our genetic code. Some people seem to have an inborn

interest in active, physical subjects such as sports. Others seem to have an inborn propensity for reflective activities such as Mozart. There are other interests that are learned or developed over time. Children may develop these interests by watching those around them, by watching television, or even doing Play Station II. Children, likewise, may admire a person and then want to do the things that person does.

Reading should be as one of children's most valuable tools, because reading fluently means so much to school success and to job success in their future. If instructors or parents can get children interested in reading in the first place, only an attitude can be built. In other words, the instructors and parents have to help them develop an interest in reading, whether they have an inborn affinity for it or not. In addition, children will find pleasure and learn about life through reading. That is another reason why it is important to start as early as possible to build an interest in this essential tool.

By the age of six, children learn to recognize a large number of spoken words, perhaps as many as twenty thousand different forms. This background in spoken language can help children develop their abilities in reading and using the printed word. The big advantage of the language story approach is that it builds on something children can already do successfully: express themselves through language. Using the language story approach is like telling children: "Your language is good. Start with it and learn how to develop it."

Instructors and parents keep encouraging new interests of children. The reason to discover their new interests is to open up a broad world of reading. They already know many of the things their children like just by listening. Simply talking or answering questions about things seen on television can give them an idea of what interests children: animals, cartoon characters, and so on. The best way to discover children's interests is to talk with them and listen closely to what they say.

Daily opportunities not only reveal children's interests but also give instructors and parents chances to suggest what kind of books is proper for their further exploration. When children have done something that marks a step forward in the process of learning to read, don't forget to offer some small reward or sign of recognition. Sometimes, as simple a gesture as a pat on the head or words of praise from instructors and parents

mean more than any prize.

### Children's Motivation for Reading

Children's motivation is the persuasive power to keep their interests in reading books. Motivating forces play a powerful role in the reading process. If children feel outside pressures are the only reasons for reading, they may begin to view reading as a chore, as something one has to do. Their vision can be expanded by focusing on their interests and by stressing that reading is rewarding on its own terms, not just something that must be done to meet a school requirement. Instructors and parents want children to see reading a book as a positive experience, both for learning and for pleasure.

The main reason to concern about motivation is that motivation gives instructors and parents the energy to work long enough to develop positive attitudes. Attitudes, that is, habits of the mind, guide their actions. They can help build children's positive attitudes by what they say and do. Since motivation involves purpose and energy, motivation helps understanding. Without purpose and energy, children will not comprehend a book.

Their attitudes can be positive or negative, strong or weak, but attitudes themselves do not determine whether or not they read well. Children may be strongly motivated to read a certain book because it discusses a subject of great interest to them. If the material is badly written, however, or is beyond children's ability to understand, they may develop a negative attitude toward the book. If that negative experience happens often enough, they may begin to reject reading itself; it just isn't worth the pain to struggle with dull or difficult material.

Instructors and parents want children to have a positive attitude, a good feeling about reading. These good feeling result from previous successes or from the fun promised by listening to Daddy read or from the warmth of being close to Mammy when she reads. They also result from the fun that a reader experiences from certain types of books.

Very young children are attracted to books with plenty of colorful pictures. With such book parents can show their children the excitement of words and pictures. Children love to find details in pictures. Once hooked, children find that books can fill areas of their interest, and a positive attitude toward reading grows

naturally. By paying attention to children's likes and dislikes, parents can help build positive attitudes.

After repeated negative statements at home or in the neighborhood, it is very difficult for young children to believe that reading will benefit them. Therefore instructors and parents try to counteract negative attitudes by relying heavily on motivational techniques. If children are exposed only to materials they feel dull, outside their interest, or beyond her understanding, they will develop a negative attitude toward reading. With the enormous number and variety of children's books available today, there is no reason for this to happen to the children.

### Characteristics of Predictable Books

Among many books, predictable books are accepted to be a first step of reading experience for early and young children. It is very difficult, but important to select good predictable books, in order to help children develop their language skills. In the beginning, the guidelines of good books listed below may help you to select other appropriate books for early and young children.

- \* Choose books slightly above children's reading ability to extend his language development.
- \* Choose books that children can understand.
- \* Choose books that you enjoy yourself when selecting a book to read to children. Your enthusiasm for a book will show in the reading.
- \* Choose books that are well-written, with well-drawn characters, an important theme, a lively plot, and an appealing style.
- \* Choose books with interesting language that will enrich children's vocabulary and show him how language is used in a book.
- \* Choose books that stimulate the imagination.
- \* Choose books that will invite participation.
- \* Choose books with attractive, interesting, and enjoyable illustrations that prompt a love of beauty.
- \* Choose books that support the cultural background of your child.
- \* Choose books that present a positive role model for the minority child.
- \* Choose books that children have already enjoyed, as younger children frequently like repetition of the same book.

- \* Choose several books by the same author.

In the selection of good books, predictable books should be found out. Predictable books are literary works that contain at least one of the following characteristics:

- \* The author uses the repetitive or cumulative pattern that children are able to utilize after only a few pages.
- \* The familiarity of story, story line, concept or sequences to most children
- \* The rhyme of the language
- \* The good match between the text and its illustrations

These characteristics render predictable books very different from typical materials for the children.

In reading predictable books, children can quickly begin to predict what the author is going to say or the content of the story and how he is going to say it or the language of the story. Vocabulary is not controlled in the predictable book to the extent found in most instructional materials. Language or content of the predictable book is not stilted, because the language should flow naturally, and the vocabulary and content reflect what the children know about their world.

Once children become aware of gratification of reading (listening) the predictable book, they love to tell the same story over and over, and they get great pleasure from making up their own stories. This interest in predictable books can be used to motivate them to read. What is more important, it can be used to help children understand the link between speech and written words. This is known as the "language story" technique. It involves having children tell a story they have made up themselves. It also involves that instructors or parents write their own story for their children and the children can reread it. Children's own language is used to write the story. The impression that this creates in the mind of children follows this logic:

- \* What I can think, I can say.
- \* What I can say can be written down, so others can read it.
- \* What others can read, I can read.

The children can remember most of what they said even if they cannot figure out all of the words if written elsewhere. In being able to read their own story, they experience success and learn a valuable lesson about the

link between ideas, speech and print. Using their own story, instructors or parents can even help their children discover various punctuation marks, for example, that the "?" means a question is being asked: that s after the word dog means there is more than one: and so on. That experience will help them understand stories written by the other people.

Even for older children, nothing works as well in getting across the link between speech and prints as having children read back what has been just spoken. The attitudes of reluctant readers may begin to change as they see their words become real and valuable.

### Different Ages and Stages of Development of Children

The following is a list of typical characteristics of under five-, five- and six-year-old children. These characteristics should not be regarded as rigid norms; they simply show the kinds of behaviors that tend to occur at each age.

#### Under Five-Year-Old Children

##### Emotional Development: They

- \* Have capacity for friendship.
- \* Show fear of imaginary characters-unable to distinguish between fable and truth.
- \* Are learning to express sympathy.
- \* Like to brag and are highly sure of himself.
- \* May be aggressive.
- \* Demonstrate extreme emotions (love a lot and hate a lot).
- \* Seek approval of adults.

##### Social Development: They

- \* Are independent.
- \* Are dependable.
- \* Go from one thing to another.
- \* Try to gain attention by showing off.
- \* Prefer children to adults but still have strong family ties.
- \* Have imaginary playmates.
- \* Dislike isolation from the group.
- \* Like to plan ahead.
- \* Need firmness and freedom, both within limits.
- \* Seek regularity and rule in the happenings around him.

##### Intellectual Development: They

- \* Like explanation and are curious.

- \* Are interested in letters and numbers.
- \* Know colors.
- \* Know what familiar animals do or say.
- \* Like new, big words.
- \* Like to make up words and rhymes.
- \* Enjoy repetition.
- \* Have vivid imagination; tell tall tales.
- \* Expand language beyond the immediate situation.
- \* Can tell what is happening in pictures.
- \* Have memory for sentences.

#### Five-Year-Old Children

##### Emotional Development: They

- \* Need a sense of belonging.
- \* Respond to praise and encouragement and consistent direction.
- \* Search for trust, fairness, and definite standards.
- \* Gain a feeling of security from definite routine.
- \* May allow the emotional tone of the morning to govern the entire day.
- \* Are prone to show fear of the new and unusual.
- \* Are not always able to distinguish right from wrong by adult standards.
- \* Have growing sense of humor.

##### Social Development: They

- \* Seek companionship of other children and are eager to gain group approval.
- \* Play best in groups of two to seven children.
- \* Need adult help in learning to share materials and taking turns.
- \* Are not able to work and play without constant approval.
- \* Are willing and eager to assume responsibility within his level of maturity, but do not always assume responsibility for care of personal belongings.
- \* Are self-centered.
- \* Are a great talker.

##### Intellectual Development: They

- \* Are active, eager, interested, and curious.
- \* Learn by doing, experiencing, observing, questioning, imitating, examining, exploring and investigating.
- \* Derive satisfaction from the doing rather than from the product.
- \* Are eager to learn but are not ready for formal

abstract work.

- \* Cannot always distinguish between fact and fancy.
- \* Have a short attention and interest span.
- \* Like to be read to.
- \* Need much opportunity to manipulate and experiment with tools, materials and ideas.
- \* Can carry play from one day to another.

### **Six-Year-Old Children**

#### **Emotional Development: They**

- \* Try to leave babyhood behind.
- \* Enjoy being with adult-wants to help do tasks around house or schoolroom.
- \* May demand attention, and have little regard for others.
- \* Feel no responsibility for group goals, but may join a group activity, then will leave if they don't get desired part.
- \* Have difficult time with decisions and choices.

#### **Social Development: They**

- \* Display little social responsibility for organized games.
- \* Want to be first; scrambles for whatever they want with pushing, fighting, and quarreling.
- \* Want to be the leader and to win, and it is hard to lose.
- \* Have keen sense of competition, often boasting and comparing possessions, heights and even families.
- \* Enjoy dramatic play.

#### **Intellectual Development: They**

- \* Enjoy trying to make things but cannot be expected to produce finished products.
- \* Have short interest span; cannot sit still for long periods of time.
- \* Have difficulty cutting well or doing handwork which requires much skill or control.
- \* Are very eager to learn-assimilates countless words and phrases, then they describe objects more completely, and expand vocabulary.
- \* Learn by concrete observations and direct participation.
- \* Can identify opposite and rhyming words.
- \* Can define simple words.
- \* Can solve many problems independently.

Thus among these different ages and stages of development, instructors and parents should take care of children in reading a book to them.

### **How to Start Reading Predictable Books**

Before reading predictable books, instructors or parents should explain to children that the title is what the book is about, the author is the person who wrote the book and the illustrator is the person who drew the pictures for the book. Children may want to make predictions about what the book is about from the title or the illustrations. Show children how reading starts at the top of the page and goes down, line by line, from left to right. Show children how the illustrations tell about or enhance the story. After children has the knowledge about the parts of a book, he will feel more confident when starting another book.

The following list is matters to be attended to read predictable books to children.

- \* Allow children to settle down and adjust body and mind to the story. Mood is an important factor in listening.
- \* Remember that the art of listening is an acquired one. It must be taught and cultivated gradually. It does not happen overnight.
- \* Vary the length and subject matter of your reading. Occasionally read above the children's intellectual level and challenge their mind.
- \* Make sure children can see the pictures.
- \* Read slowly enough for children to build mental pictures of what he just heard you read.
- \* Read in a clear voice, using plenty of vocal expression. Enthusiasm and inflection make the story more interesting.
- \* Talk with children about what you are reading. Discuss the pictures and illustrations with children as you read to them, and integrate the illustrations into the story.
- \* Show appreciation for the book by handling it carefully, treating it as a treasure.

Very young children have short attention spans. Sometimes when the children start wiggling or seem to be distracted, you may want to take a short break from the reading and use this opportunity to interact with children in such different manner as the followings.

- \* After reading a story, allow time to talk about it

with children. Discuss the book and how children "feel" about the story.

\* Don't read stories that you don't enjoy yourself. Your dislike will show and that defeats your purpose.

\* Don't continue reading the book once it is obvious that it was a poor choice. Admit the mistake and choose another. You should avoid this problem by pre-reading the book by yourself.

\* Don't be unnerved by questions during the reading, particularly from very young children. Foster curiosity with patient answers, and then resume your reading.

When instructors or parents read a predictable book, please bear these points in mind.

In order to demonstrate how predictable books can be used for development of children's listening skills, the Report of the Commission on Reading (1985) will be reviewed. According to the report, "the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children. "Children who learn to read are ones who have been read to as young children." The most significant factor in determining children's success in reading is how much that child has been read to by siblings, parents, or non-reader are not determined by race, ethnicity, socioeconomic level, nor I.Q; the differences stem from being read to and having access to print.

The benefits of reading aloud to children are numerous. Steven Silvern, for example, found that reading to children increases their reading achievement, listening and speaking abilities, vocabulary, ability to recognize letters and symbols, ability to use more complex sentences and overall concept development. In addition to these academic benefits, they also get a great deal of emotional satisfaction from their listening experience. The benefits to children from their listening skill include:

- \* Stimulating in them the desire to learn to read.
- \* Providing a model of skillful oral reading.
- \* Introducing new words and expanding their vocabulary base.
- \* Increasing their attention span.
- \* Exposing them to various forms of literature.
- \* Developing in him a sense of story.
- \* Helping him acquire listening skills.
- \* Enriching him with increased general knowledge.

\* Providing the opportunity for him to build mental images while listening.

\* Adding pleasure to his day.

Children are given an adult's total attention and have opportunities to interact with an adult in a warm, supportive and nonthreatening setting. As a result, they associate reading with positive feelings and look forward to the opportunity to experience those feelings again. They feel better about themselves, recognizing that someone considers they are important enough to take twenty minutes to read a book just to them.

Although the research indicates that children who come from homes that value reading and who have been read to from an early age are generally the best readers, it also indicates that it is not too late to begin exposing children to stories and reading at school. There is just no substitute for reading one-on-one with an accomplished reader.

### Conclusion

For development of children's reading skill, there are two major purposes of the instruction using predictable books. First, instructors and parents wanted children to enjoy and become familiar with the content and organization of the books. They accomplished this in a way natural to most of the children-she read the book to them. Their and children's focus was on meaning, on sharing and understanding the author's story. The children's involvement in the book and their comments at the end were clues that they enjoyed and comprehended the book.

The second purpose was to encourage the children to use their knowledge of the world and language in interacting with the book. Instructors or parents asked the children to read along with her because she believes that reading consists of a meaningful interaction with a book and that her students were capable of such an interaction with predictable books. It was necessary to create an environment in which the children can successfully use what they know about language as they begin to encounter and deal with aspects of language they do not yet have control over. Their long-range goal is to encourage the children's development from successful readers of highly predictable materials to successful readers of a wide range of materials.

An effective way to develop written language in chil-

dren is to encourage them to manipulate and use printed language themselves. In other words, to gain control over how print operates, children should write. For beginning writers, composing can take many forms ranging from a word written on a drawing to the creation of an entire story. Though children can and should compose from the beginning without the aid of predictable books, children should also learn that other author's words can be used as resources for their own compositions. As children use predictable books again and again, they learn where to locate words and phrases they need for their own writing. It is very natural for children to make up and speak out their own stories, after they get great pleasure from predictable books.

Thus to bring up children and succeed in their future, it is most important for early and young children to develop their reading (listening) comprehension. Once children find pleasure and learn about life through reading, it is easy to keep their motivation to read high. Therefore it is important to start as early as possible to explore their interest in using predictable books. These early experiences will shape children's opinion of reading.

When children are too young to read predictable books, the instructors or parents have to read aloud and help them develop an interest in reading. Use predictable books as a first step to read, and children can be cognitively and communicatively developed their language skills, not only reading but also listening, speaking and writing skills as well.

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### Appendix A - Preschool Predictable Books

| Authors               | Titles                          |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Brooke, Leslie.       | Ring O'Roses.                   |
| Brown, Margaret Wise. | Goodnight Moon.                 |
|                       | The Important Book.             |
|                       | The Runaway Bunny.              |
| Carle, Eric.          | The Very Hungry Caterpillar.    |
| Ets, Marie Hall.      | Just Me.                        |
| Flack, Marjorie.      | Angus and the Ducks.            |
| Galdone, Paul.        | The Gingerbread Boy.            |
| Hutchins, Pat.        | Rosie's Walk.                   |
| Keats, Ezra Jack.     | Peter's Chair.                  |
|                       | Regards to the Man in the Moon. |
|                       | The Snowy Day.                  |
| Krauss, Ruth.         | The Bundle Book.                |
|                       | The Carrot Seed.                |
| Mayer, Mercer.        | Frog Goes to Dinner.            |
| Piper, Watty.         | The Little Eagle that Could.    |
| Spier, Peter.         | Crash! Bang! Boom!              |
| Zolotow, Charlotte.   | William's Doll.                 |

### Appendix B - Other Predictable Books

| Authors                          | Titles                             |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Brown, Margaret Wise.            | Four Fur Feet.                     |
|                                  | Home for a Bunny.                  |
| Carle, Eric.                     | The Grouchy Ladybug.               |
| deRegniers, Beatrice Schenk.     | Willie O'Dwyer Jumped in the Fire. |
| Emberly, Barbara.                | Simon's Song.                      |
| Ets, Marie Hall.                 | Elephant in a Well.                |
| Galdone, Paul.                   | The Little Red Hen.                |
| Keats, Ezra Jack.                | Over in the Meadow.                |
| Klein, Leonore.                  | Brave Daniel.                      |
| Langstaff, John.                 | Oh, A Hunting We Will Go.          |
| Lobel, Anita.                    | King Rooster, Queen Hen.           |
| Scheer, Julian. & Marvin Bileck. | Rain Makes Applesauce.             |
| Sendak, Maurice.                 | Where the Wild Things Are.         |
| Shulevitz, Uri.                  | One Monday Morning.                |
| Zolotow, Charlotte.              | Do You Know What I'll Do?          |