

“Teaching onset and rime and blending will enhance the prose reading with year one students who are at risk.”

Abstract

Grade one students on the “Tentative Selection” List for Reading Recovery participated in this action research project designed to teach onset and rime and blending. The pre-testing showed that students appeared to use little phonological knowledge and the teaching sessions were designed to develop Rapid Automatised Naming, two syllable rime and blending . Students were asked to articulate what they had learnt each day and in the next session I would remind them of the work done the previous day.

Post tests showed there was a general improvement trend in the students who participated in the research in their phonological and phonemic knowledge but it hadn’t transferred to the prose reading at that point. Further monitoring of these students might show a transference to their prose reading at a later date.

The implications of this research is that I will continue to encourage the use of onset and rime, blending and analogy with the students at risk .

Introduction

At the beginning of each year we regularly have a large students who have not attained the required the Benchmark at the end of the Prep year in Literacy. We have one Reading Recovery teacher and the reality is that not students will be able to go on the Program. The students who do go on the program usually take the full twenty weeks, so not all students will get the intervention they need to help them accelerate. Over the years of teaching Reading Recovery I have observed that the “at-risk” students do not have a lot in place phonologically speaking. They come to the Program with letter names and a few sounds, no word families or understanding of analogy. During this year I have used rime analogy with my students “if you know c-at, cat then you know ...h-at, hat.” Students have responded well and have started looking for words they know. In conversation they will often comment “if I took away the .. **d** from **day** and put **m** it would say **may**.”

My research project was to test the students who were on the tentative selection list for Reading Recovery and investigate if I could improve their reading readiness through the development of onset and rime so they would not take twenty weeks to attain the benchmark. Also to support the year one teachers by investigating and identifying specific needs in their low scoring students.

In the article titled “The phonemic-orthographic nexus: The Phonemic-Orthographic Literacy Program by John Munro, it states that “Phonological and phonemic awareness have been identified as key influences on literacy acquisition.”

The research conducted Usha Goswami -“ In the Beginning Was the Rhyme?” also discusses the importance of phonological sensitivity of reading acquisition in all languages.

The problems with the acquisition of literacy is vast and varied, however the underlying cause is lack of phonological awareness an phonemic awareness.

My hypothesis:

Teaching onset and rime and blending will enhance the reading of prose with year one students at risk. I am investigating if explicit teaching of onset and rime and how it will impact on the way students learn to read. I will be encouraging the students to recognise letter families and read them and develop blending strategies rather than sounding out letter by letter.

Method

Design :

The study uses a case study OXO (Assess Teach Assess) design, in which the gain in rime recognition and blending will enhance the reading of prose. The teaching group were withdrawn from the classroom for 45 minutes for a series of ten lessons. The lessons were conducted between the two adjoining classrooms which helped the students feel still part of their classroom.

Participants :

Nine (Year one) students were involved in the study, five were part of the teaching group and the remaining four the control group. The nine students were selected from the tentative selection list for Reading Recovery. The four students in the control group were the oldest students (with one exception) and who were mostly likely to go onto the Reading Recovery program next. The teaching group were made up of the remaining students who were less likely to go onto the program until the second intake.

Student 1 is a male and is part of a single parent family with an older brother who is in the senior school and has no apparent learning difficulties. **Age: 80 months**

Description of Learning Difficulties

- Has a speech problems (difficulty saying a number of sounds) and is currently seeing a speech pathologist.
- His self-efficacy is quite low (“I’m not clever...”)
- Low scores in all the Observation Survey (Marie Clay)
- Not hearing sounds in words
- Not able to blend sounds together
- Poor letter formation and handwriting
- Not all alphabet letters known
- Not all alphabet sounds known
- Relies on picture cues when reading
- Can articulate what you should do when you come to a word you don’t know but can’t put it into practice.
- No awareness of one to one when reading (not matching oral with text)

Student 2 is a female and the only child in a two parent family. **Age: 78 months**

Description of Learning Difficulties

- Low scores in all the Observation Survey (Marie Clay)
- Guessing at words,
- Not able to blend sounds together
- Not all alphabet sounds known
- Relies on picture cues when reading
- No awareness of one to one when reading (not matching oral with text)
- Easily distracted and finds it hard to stay on task even in small group situation

Student 3 is male who has two older siblings in a two parent family. The older siblings are at secondary school and both were on the Reading Recovery Program at the primary school they attended. **Age: 74 months**

Description of Learning Difficulties

- Low scores in all the Observation Survey (Marie Clay)
- Not hearing sounds in words
- Not able to blend sounds together
- Not all alphabet letters known
- Not all alphabet sounds known
- Relies on picture cues when reading not looking at text
- No awareness of one to one when reading (not matching oral with text)
- Can articulate what you should do when you come to a word you don't know but can't put it into practice
- Easily distracted and finds it hard to stay on task even in small group situation.
- Deliberately tries to distract other students

Student 4 is male who has a younger sibling (under a year) in a two parent family. He speaks very quietly but tends to have a slight lisp.

Age: 74 months

Description of Learning Difficulties

- Low scores in all the Observation Survey (Marie Clay)
- Not hearing sounds in words
- Not able to blend sounds together
- Not all alphabet letters known
- Not all alphabet sounds known
- Relies on picture cues when reading
- Can articulate what you should do when you come to a word you don't know but can't put it into practice.
- No awareness of one to one when reading (not matching oral with text)

Student 5 is female who an older sibling in a one parent family. The older brother is in the senior school and has no apparent learning difficulties. **Age: 85 months**

Description of Learning Difficulties

- Low scores in all the Observation Survey (Marie Clay)
- Not hearing sounds in words
- Not able to blend sounds together
- Not all alphabet letters known
- Not all alphabet sounds known
- Relies on picture cues when reading
- Can articulate what you should do when you come to a word you don't know but can't put it into practice.
- No awareness of one to one when reading (not matching oral with text)

Materials

For Testing

Sutherland Phonological Awareness Test (Neilson, 1995)

Rime Test

Letter Identification Test (Marie Clay)

Text level Set of Benchmarking Texts (Running Record)

Consent Forms for the Research Project

For Lessons

Scrapbooks for children

Flashcards

Textas Whiteboard and whiteboard markers

Word slides & Rotation Wheel

Noughts & Crosses Board and counters

Set of words for the rime units for games

Counters

Bingo board

Magnetic letters

Teacher notebook (to record any findings or difficulties to help plan for the next session.)

Procedure

Pre tests were administered to the year one students who were participating in the Research Project. *Sutherland Phonological Awareness Test (Neilson, 1995); Rime Test; Letter Identification Test (Marie Clay); Text level (Running Record)* Scores were entered on an spreadsheet for later analysis.

Ten lessons were conducted over a three week period for 40 minutes each session in an adjoining room to the classrooms. The timetable of lessons would vary due to specialist lessons and my commitments but most of the sessions were conducted in the morning session and the rest just before lunch recess.

Each session started with an explanation of what we would be doing during the session and revision of the previous day's work which was usually a game based activity. (Bingo, beat the clock) See Appendix 1

I intended to cover ten rime units but in reality I only covered four as the students were not able to retain the knowledge from the previous day. I knew the students were at a low level of phonological awareness but was very surprised at how low. I thought that I would be able to move the students along quite well and see obvious changes in their reading levels. Therefore the analysis of the data scores were surprising showing some value added in most areas of the testing. I subtracted the post score from the pre score of individual students to see "Value added". I also averaged out the pre and post scores for both Teaching and control Group. I subtracted the Averaged Pre Score from the Averaged Post Score to see "Value Added".

Results

The in the teaching group results showed an improvement across all test except for the reading and there was little change in the control group. The teaching group started at a much lower level than the control group and therefore had more room to improve with the extra teaching time. The teaching group's Letter Identification (L.I.) was low with only two having a score over 50. The other three ranged from 40 to 48. The group had many confusions with the vowel long and short sounds. This was especially evident for student 1 who has articulation problems with his speech. Student 4 also had quite a low score on the L.I. The Teaching Group's scores all improved with lowest achieving student attaining the full score for the test.

Student 3 did not do as well as the rest of the group in all areas of performance as he was only engaged spasmodically. The student was often distracted and distracting to the other students. The Sutherland Phonological Test showed that students in the Teaching Group(T.G) knew how to count syllables and detection of rime in stimulus pictures, they were able to produce rime as in ..man, can, *fan*. Students 1,3,5 all had difficulty with the identification of Onset. They also struggled in the Phonemic level Consonant Vowel Consonant and Blends. The rime units that we used were taken from the John Munro's list of two letter dependable rimes.

I selected the following rimes for testing, an, it, ay, in, ot, ug, ap, at, aw, ip, op, and made three letter words to go with these rimes. Students 1, 3, 5 either responded in only saying the words they knew and moved onto the next word on the list, where as Students 2 & 4 would have a go at saying the word (no sounding out). The Post test was quite different with the exception of Student 3, all students had "a go" at working the words out that they didn't automatically recognise which proved to successful for them.

The learning trend for each student was one of growth and exploration. More time was needed to determine if the trends for each student would support your prediction because these students were at a much lower level and had very few strategies in place. E.g. They would read by pictures, and did not have one to one correspondence in place. They were not aware that blending letters together would result in a word .

Discussion

Teaching onset and rime, blending enhances the prose reading. Since the students involved in this Action Research were at a much lower level of phonological awareness I did not see a vast improvement in their Text Level however I did see improvement in their phonic and phonemic development over the period of the ten lessons. I saw students smile and show understanding when they were able to say "cat" change the letter onset letter and make "hat". The students' self efficacy improved and they were willing to take chances especially student 1 who would not offer any feedback early in the sessions when asked to contribute would say.... "I'm not good at that stuff."

The activities that the students did in their sessions were always building on what they knew and challenged them to go further. The development of skills and strategies were reinforced through questioning and posing a problem. "How can we make this into another word? The strategy of analogy was employed with the students and Student 5 was using this quite well. I know "dad" I can write "mad."

These students will benefit from explicit teaching using magnetic letters and playing with the chants to hear the rime in them. Research into Phonological awareness is known to be an excellent predictor of later reading acquisition. It remains unclear, however, whether phoneme manipulation alone best explains this association or whether an additional direct contribution of onset-rim awareness is predictive .Robert Savage, Sue Carless. (2005)

In the Developmental sequence in learning to read words John Munro illustrates the various stages of development and strategies students use when linking words to reading. The students in this study are still in the early stages of their development. They need more opportunities to manipulate and play with sounds, rimes & chants. The Development of Rapid Automatised Naming (John Munro) is essential to the reading process as the students need to be able to think about the text rather than decoding the every letter and word.

"Phonological sensitivity at different grain sizes is a good predictor of reading acquisition in all languages. However, prior to any explicit tuition in alphabetic knowledge, phonological sensitivity develops at the larger grain sizes—syllables, onsets, and rimes—in all languages so far studied. There are also developmental differences in the grain size of lexical representations and reading strategies across orthographies." Usha Goswami (2002)

Bibliographies / References

- Paige C Pullen, Holly B Lane, John W Lloyd, Rhonda Nowak, Justin Ryals. (2005). Effects of Explicit Instruction on Decoding of Struggling First Grade Students: A Data-Based Case Study. *Education & Treatment of Children*, 28(1), 63-75. Retrieved May 22, 2008, from ProQuest Education Journals database. (Document ID: 819370831).
- Pullen, P. C. (2002, October 1). Expert connection: Phonological awareness. Retrieve from http://TeachingLD.org/expert_connection/phonological.html.
- Roxanne F Hudson, Holly B Lane, Paige C Pullen. (2005). Reading fluency assessment and instruction: What, why, and how? *The Reading Teacher*, 58(8), 702-714. Retrieved May 22, 2008, from ProQuest Education Journals database. (Document ID: 846326311).
- Scheiner, Esther Y. (2005) How teaching word families affects beginners' reading and spelling. Ph.D. dissertation, City University of New York, United States -- New York. Retrieved May 22, 2008, from Dissertations & Theses: Full Text database. (Publication No. AAT 3187414).
- Suzanne Reading, Dana Van Deuren. (2007). Phonemic Awareness: When and How Much to Teach? *Reading Research and Instruction*, 46(3), 267-285. Retrieved May 22, 2008, from ProQuest Education Journals database. (Document ID: 1290313141).
- Walsh, Eva Lee (2001) The role of phonemic awareness in reading acquisition. M.Ed. dissertation, The University of New Brunswick (Canada), Canada. Retrieved May 22, 2008, from Dissertations & Theses: Full Text database. (Publication No. AAT MQ68279).