A study of the effects of shared peer reading on students' reading attitudes

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A STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF SHARED PEER READING
ON STUDENTS' READING ATTITUDES.

by
Christine Ellen Arsenis

A Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Science in Teaching
in the Graduate Division
of Rowan College
June 25, 1996

Approved by

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of shared peer reading on students' reading attitudes. It was hypothesized that students who participate in shared peer reading would show significant reading attitude improvements, as measured by the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, over students who do not participate in shared peer reading. The study was a quasi-experimental design consisting of students in two first grade classrooms. Twenty students from each classroom participated in the study. One class was identified as the "participation group" and the other class was identified "nonparticipation" group. Both groups were first pretested using the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey. The "participation group" was then engaged in "shared peer-reading experiences" for a period of ten weeks. Both groups were then posttested using the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey. A 2x2 factorial Analysis of Variance was employed for this study. The levels were identified as level A, status; with two sublevels $a_1$ and $a_2$, known as participation and nonparticipation, and level B, test trials; with two sublevels $b_1$ and $b_2$, known as pretest and posttest. Significant differences were generated by main effect A. These differences are attributed to the decrease in scores of the nonparticipation group.
Do students' attitudes toward reading improve after participating in shared peer-reading experiences? The reading attitudes of forty first grade students were investigated to determine if participation in "shared peer-reading experiences" would improve reading attitudes. Results are significant for participation status. Significance was not found for other factors.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to thank the following individuals who provided priceless support and encouragement in her life to help her reach this level;

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My parents, for bringing me into this world and always giving me their love and support, they are a part of who I am.

The rest of my family, for the encouragement and determination needed to fuel my dreams.

Dr. Randall Robinson, for professional guidance and support with everything I've done and learned.

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My sisters, all four of you! Each one of you offers a special talent to this world and I take my place among you now as one of five of a special family with a special talent. I love you all!

All the teachers, administrators, and students, who have made this road a most pleasant one and from whom I have learned many things.

Bettie Cross, my first grade teacher, who provided my earliest memories of a caring teacher and who I can credit for being a part of the teacher I am.
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Chapter I
Scope Of The Study
Introduction

This study investigated the reading attitudes of first grade students who participated in "shared peer reading experiences". Would participation in a reading experience with classmates improve reading attitude scores? Turner and Paris (1995) discuss how motivation to read reflects reading attitude. The most reliable index of motivation for literacy is the daily tasks that are provided in the classroom (Turner and Paris, 1995). The general purpose of this study was to investigate students attitudes toward reading after participating in reading experiences with their classmates.

Statement of the Problem

Do students attitudes toward reading improve after participating in shared peer reading experiences?

Significance of the Research

Classroom teachers search for methods to increase student interest in reading (Duran, 1994). Increasing interest for students in reading raises the opportunities for them to explore books and read more (Cramer and Castle, 1994). The researcher found evidence that other authors looked at motivation to read as a way to increase student reading (Stone, 1994). Students interests have been investigated as a source in motivating students to read (Seagoe, 1970). Virgil (1994) argues that when given more free reading time and choice in reading materials, student will develop lifelong reading habits.
This present study was designed to investigate the effect of student interactions on reading attitude.

Hypothesis

Students who participate in "shared peer-reading experiences" will show significant improvements in reading attitude as measured by the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) compared to students who do not participate in "shared peer-reading experiences".

Limitations of Study

The following were found to be the limitations of this study: The population size was not random. A quasi-experimental design was selected because the subjects chosen were students from an elementary school.

There were different teachers for the participation group and the non-participation group. The study required the use of two classes within the same grade level, therefore, there was a necessity to have separate teachers. Teacher style and enthusiasm for reading were not studied. These factors may have influenced student attitude toward reading.

Both teachers, of the participation group and the nonparticipation group, had their own unique reading programs established within their classrooms during the length of this study. These reading programs may have influenced student attitude.

The treatment was limited in the amount of time permitted for each "shared peer-reading experience" and in the frequency per week of each "shared peer-reading experience" at the request of the teacher. More time spent in shared peer-reading could have altered the results of this study.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined for the purpose of this study:

"Shared Peer Reading Experiences" (SPRE)- defined as a twenty minute period
occurring once a week in which students were given the freedom to choose books from the classroom library. Students were directed to select books, pair up with one other student, and read and share books with each other.

Participation group—those students, pretested and posttested, who engaged in SPRE.

Nonparticipation group—those students, pretested and posttested, who did not engage in SPRE.
Chapter II

Related Literature

Motivation to Read

Low motivation to read reflects, among many things, poor student attitude toward reading. The way that students feel about reading will determine their attempts to read. Smith (1992) writes about the importance of schools making the commitment to teach students that reading is enjoyable. Teaching that reading is enjoyable is a way to change students' motivation to read.

Palmer, Codling, and Gambrell (1994) were interested in what motivates students to read. Their study gave four influences on elementary students motivation to read. These influences were prior experiences with books, social interactions with books, easy access to books, and most significant for this author's present study, students "consistently revealed that they were more motivated when given opportunities to read books of their own choosing" (Palmer et al, 1994, p.177).

The first effort at doing anything is always neutral. Student dislike for reading is based on prior negative experiences (Seagoe, 1970). It is important for first experiences with reading to be pleasant, otherwise future interest and attempts to read will be avoided (Seagoe, 1970). Students need to see that reading is enjoyable. Turner (1994) writes about the many factors that influence students attitudes toward reading and recommends these different strategies for demonstrating to students the joys of reading; "creating
reading partnerships, creating literacy environments, and using a variety of reading materials" (Turner, 1994, 52-53). Teacher attitude has a great influence on student motivation to read (Moustakes). Teacher attitude toward reading is shown by the enthusiasm a teacher shows about reading to students.

Other authors investigating motivation (Turner and Paris, 1995) have looked at the different tasks teachers use to teach reading and suggest that tasks in the classroom effect students' desires and motivation to read. Turner and Paris (1995) discuss giving students projects that provide independence and choice in deciding what to do and how to do it, "open tasks provide challenge, choice, student control over learning, opportunities to collaborate with others and to construct meaning through reading and writing" (Turner and Paris, 1995, p.664).

Activities which promote student choice in selecting reading materials help students to become interested in reading. More importantly, Turner and Paris (1995, p.665) found "because children are expected to select books for free reading and reading with the teacher, they frequently browse in the classroom library. Compared to children whose daily reading experiences are confined to basal stories, these children have rich experiences in selecting, evaluating, and enjoying literature" (1995, p.665).

Reading for Pleasure

If students aren't motivated to read it is because they do not get pleasure from reading. Teachers should provide opportunities for students to engage in activities that make reading enjoyable. Fun reading activities help students to develop positive attitudes toward reading. MacCarry (1987) describes a program that is used in seven day care centers in Florida. The program has two objectives. The most important of these objectives in relation to this present study is to involve students in activities related to books so the stories become meaningful and enjoyable. It is important for students to feel that reading is enjoyable. Teachers can demonstrate that reading goes beyond reading for
academics and includes reading for pleasure.

In an effort to determine students reading habits, Manna, Misheff, and Robitaille (1988) distributed a survey to 407 middle school students. Responses reveal that students read outside of school and believe reading is an important part of their lives. Students develop their own interests through reading and more often than not will choose books to read that satisfy their own interests. Students own interests can be beneficial when demonstrating that reading can be pleasurable. Stone (1994) describes the use of stimulating books that match the interests of the child when teaching children to enjoy reading. Often educators feel negatively toward popular television shows. The use of television, as a vehicle for developing cooperative group activities for the discussion of novels, has proven to be a positive way to use students to show that reading can be fun (Kinnish, 1993).

Modeling that reading is pleasurable to build positive reading attitudes in students is a way to increase reading (Duran 1994). However, students with educational deficiencies often receive reading instruction with a lot of skill and drill and are not exposed to reading activities that are fun. The skill and drill approach develops negative attitudes in students about reading while reading activities other than skill and drill helps students to see that reading can be fun (Duran 1994). Duran (1994) talks about the importance of students developing good reading habits, "students who do a lot of reading on their own become better readers" (Duran, 1994, p.23).

Reading aloud to others or listening to others read is a beneficial and enjoyable experience. Crum (1991) discusses the positive effects of one classroom teacher's idea for helping her students to find reading enjoyable. The first grade students are instructed to read books to silent partners. These silent partners are actually stuffed animals that serve the same purpose as having another student to read to. The benefit of reading to a stuffed animal rather than another student is that the student can read to the stuffed
animal without fear of embarrassment or judgment by another student. French (1991) also suggests that reading aloud is an effective way to enhance literacy development and comments that the social interaction of one student reading to another helps student want to read.

Strategies for Creating Love of Reading

Literacy environments are warm and nurturing. Students should feel that they can take risks with their reading without negative reprisals from the classroom teacher. Reading to children is the most effective way to create a love of books in children (Vacca, Vacca, and Gove, 1995). In addition, the act of sharing books with children gives them stimulation for relating speech to print (Vacca, Vacca, and Gove, 1995).

When children listen to adults read they benefit greatly. The joy of reading is modeled from the reader to the listener. When children read to other children the benefits are two-fold, they share the love of the story and words, and model the joy of reading. When children read to other children, they take on roles that can give teachers appreciation into what they think about reading and their reading abilities (Saban, Ahmet, 1994).

Attitudes Toward Reading

Students have many diversions in their lives to distract them from books. The fast pace of videos, computers, and television outrank the slower pace of books. Younger students tend to have more favorable attitudes toward reading than older students (Tunnell, Calder, and Pheup, 1991). Other researchers have also found a drop in reading attitudes across the upper elementary school years (Barnett and Irwin, 1994).

Smith (1992) sought to improve students attitudes toward reading by engaging students in positive reading activities. Other researchers have used variations of reading activities to attempt to improve students attitudes toward reading. Chandler and Aldridge (1992) looked at the effect of predictable books on student attitude toward reading and
found that predictable books have no effect on student attitude toward reading. Brungardt (1994) found no significant improvement in attitudes toward reading of third graders participating in a whole language program. Fresch (1995) found that self selection of books supported growth in reading of first graders. In full, reading with a friend and the shared reading of books were found to be effective practices in literacy development.
Chapter III

Procedure And Design Of The Study

Introduction

This study investigated student attitudes toward reading and its effect on student motivation to read. Do students view reading as a negative and fearful activity? Can students' attitudes toward reading be changed through participation in a positive, self-directed, reading activity? Do positive interactions with peers, while reading, have an effect on student attitude about reading?

This study explored these questions closely and hypothesized that students who participated in shared peer reading experiences would show significant improvements in reading attitude.

Subjects

The subjects of this study consisted of two intact first grade classes from an elementary school in southern New Jersey.

The class chosen to receive the shared peer reading experience, known as the participation group, consisted of 23 students. Of the 23 students in the participation group, 12 were males and 11 were females.

The class chosen as the nonparticipation group consisted of 23 students, 13 of which were males and 10 of which were females.

The socioeconomic environment of the surrounding neighborhoods was working middle class. From review of student records the majority of students came from two
parent households where one parent works out of the home and one parent stays at home. The researcher observed an active P.T.A. in the school and parental involvement in other areas of school life such as; class trips, room mothers, book sales, and plays.

Description of Treatment

Treatment for the participation group began on February 23, 1996 and ended on April 24, 1996. On the first treatment date, known as "Activity 1", students in the participation group were prefaced about the SPRE. This introduction to the reading experience included identification of the books students would use for SPRE, identification of the days each SPRE would occur, length of time for each SPRE, and rules for reading during SPRE (see appendix A). Directions were given to students to find a reading partner to read to and share books. Time allotted for the first SPRE was twenty minutes. At the beginning of the first SPRE students were introduced to a doll named "Wilbur". Wilbur's purpose was to be a reading friend to any students who found themselves without a reading partner. Six childrens' books were introduced to supplement the classroom library. Every six weeks new books were rotated into the classroom library to sustain student interest (see appendix B).

Activity 2- Students were reminded of the rules for SPRE (see appendix A). Six new books were introduced for students to use (see appendix C). The room was quieted of any extraneous noises and distractions. Students found comfortable places throughout the room to sit and read. Time allotted for this experience was twenty minutes.

Activity 3- Rules for SPRE were displayed (refer to appendix A). Six new books were added to the classroom library for students to read (see appendix D). Time allotted for this experience was twenty minutes.

Activity 4- Rules for SPRE were displayed (refer to appendix A). Six new books
were added to the classroom library to maintain student interest (see appendix E). Student interest in "Wilbur" (the doll) was intense and students continued to use him each week as their reading friend.

Activity 5- Time allotted for this experience was twenty minutes. Rules for SPRE were displayed (refer to appendix A). Six new books were added to the classroom library for students to read (see appendix F).

Activity 6- Time allotted for this experience was twenty minutes. Rules for SPRE were displayed (refer to appendix A). Six new books were introduced for students to use along with the classroom library books (see appendix G).

Activity 7- Time allotted was twenty minutes. Rules for SPRE were displayed (refer to appendix A). Six new library books were rotated into the classroom library (see appendix H). "Wilbur" (reading doll) continued to be exhibited for students to use.

Activity 8- Rules for SPRE were displayed (refer to appendix A). Time allotted for this experience was twenty minutes. Six new books were rotated into the classroom library (see appendix I). Students continued to use "Wilbur" (doll).

Activity 9- Rules for SPRE were displayed for students (refer to appendix A). "Wilbur" (doll) was displayed for students to use. Time allotted for this experience was twenty minutes. Six new books were rotated into the classroom library for students to read (see appendix J).

Activity 10- Students in both the participation group and nonparticipation group were posttested using the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (see appendix K). Time needed for this activity was twenty minutes. Directions and questions were read to students.
Research Design and Procedure

This study was a pretest/posttest quasi-experimental design. The pretest was administered first to the participation group, and then to the nonparticipation group. The posttest was administered, by the researcher, to first the nonparticipation group and then to the participation group. Directions and questions were read by the researcher, to the students.

Description of Instrument

Students in the participation group and the nonparticipation group were pretested and post-tested using the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) (refer to appendix K). The ERAS yields three scores: an academic score, a recreational score, and a total reading score. Both the academic and recreational sections of the survey consist of 10 questions each with scores ranging from 10 to 40. The total of both the academic and recreational sections yield the total reading score. Possible scores for the total reading score extend from 20 to 80 (refer to appendix K).

Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients are given by the authors of the ERAS, McKenna and Kear (1990), for each grade level, subscale, and composite scores. McKenna and Kear (1990) tested the validity of the academic scale by looking at the connection of scores to reading ability determined by teacher groupings. Construct validity was acquired by questioning students about library use and amount of television watched each night.
Chapter IV

Analysis of Findings

Introduction

Students who participate in "shared peer-reading experiences" will show significant improvements in reading attitude as measured by the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey than students who do not participate in "shared peer-reading experiences". Two first grade classrooms were chosen for this study. One group of students, known as the "participation group", received the treatment (SPRE). The second group of students, known as the "nonparticipation group", did not get the treatment (SPRE). Both groups were pretested and posttested to determine the effects of the SPRE.

Tabulation of Raw Scores

Scores for the pretest and posttest were tabulated for both groups. In the participation group a total of twenty students out of the original twenty-three participated in the study. Eight students of the twenty had scores that increased from the pretest to the posttest, nine students had scores that decreased from the pretest to the posttest, and three students showed no change in scores from the pretest to the posttest. In the nonparticipation group a total of twenty students out of the original twenty-three participated in the study. Three students scores increased from the pretest to the posttest and 17 students scores decreased from the pretest to the posttest (see table I).
Table 1
Pretest/Posttest Scores of ERAS for the Participation and Nonparticipation groups
*ys designates each participant*

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<th>Nonparticipation Group</th>
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The means for the participation group scores were as follows: pretest group mean was 65.8, posttest group mean 65.95. The means for the nonparticipation group were as follows: pretest group mean was 62.15, posttest group mean was 57.35.
A 2x2 factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed for this study. The levels were identified as level A, status; with two sublevels $a_1$ and $a_2$, also known as participation and nonparticipation, and level B, test trials; with two sublevels $b_1$ and $b_2$, also known as pretest and posttest.

Analysis of the data revealed these findings; the sum of squares for main effect A (status) was 750.31. The degrees of freedom and mean squares for main effect A were 1 and 750.31. The $F$-score for main effect A was 6.38 (see table 2).

The sum of squares for main effect B (test trials) was 108.11. The degrees of freedom and the mean squares for main effect B were 1 and 108.11. The $F$-score for main effect B was .92 (see table 2).

The sum of squares for the A/B interaction was 122.51. The degrees of freedom and the mean squares for the A/B interaction were 1 and 122.51. The $F$-score for the A/B interaction was 1.04 (see table 2).

The sum of squares for the within subjects variable, S/AB, was 8935.25. The degrees of freedom and the mean squares were 76 and 117.57 (see table 2).

The total sum of squares for all variables was 9916.1875. The total degrees of freedom and the mean squares for all variables were 79 and 125.52 (see table 2).

<table>
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<tr>
<td>AxB</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>122.51</td>
<td>122.51</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/AB</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>8935.25</td>
<td>117.57</td>
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<td>79</td>
<td>9916.1875</td>
<td>125.52</td>
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Analysis Related to Particular Purpose of Hypothesis

The significance level was set at $p < .05$ for this study. The critical value for all effects and interactions at this significance level was determined to be 3.98. Main effect B (test trials) and the A/B interaction did not generate significant differences. Main effect A (status) did generate significant differences. It is apparent that the significant differences in main effect A were generated by the decrease in scores of the nonparticipants between the pretest and posttest. Factors contributing to this decrease in scores for the nonparticipants are unclear and may be due to limitations and sample size addressed in Chapter One. It should be noted that there was no change in scores between the pretest and posttest for the participation group.
Chapter V
Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction
Two first grade classes, with twenty students each, participated in this study to determine if reading attitudes improve through participation in "shared peer-reading experiences". Both classes were pretested and posttested. One class received the treatment, known as participation in shared peer-reading. The second class did not receive the treatment and was used as a control group.

Summary of the Problem
Does student attitude toward reading improve as a result of participation in "shared peer-reading experiences"?

Summary of the Hypothesis
Students who participate in "shared peer-reading experiences" will show significant improvements in reading attitude in comparison to students who do not participate in "shared peer-reading experiences", as measured by the ERAS.

Summary of the Procedure
This study was a pretest/posttest quasi-experimental design. The pretest was administered first to the participation group, and then to the nonparticipation group. The participation group received the treatment of shared peer-reading. The posttest was then administered to the nonparticipation and then to the participation group.
Summary of the Findings

Results of the study show that the participation groups scores held constant. There were no significant changes between pretest and posttest scores of the participation group. The nonparticipation group actually had a large decrease in scores between pretest and posttest. This data is responsible for the large F-score for level A (6.38), status. There was found to be no significant differences generated by the effect of an A/B interaction.

Conclusions

It can be concluded that participation in "shared peer-reading experiences", for the students involved in this study, provided no real improvements in students' attitudes toward reading. It is not clear to the precise factor or factors influencing the results obtained. The author presumes that there are many variables contributing to the results. The participation group showed no significant changes, positive or negative, in reading attitude. However, it is possible for students' attitudes to become increasingly negative as evidenced by the decrease in scores for the nonparticipation group.

Implications and Recommendations

The author recommends that the subject of reading attitude be continued to be investigated as an area of study. Other researchers, in replicating this study, should consider the length of the particular treatment given to the students. Teacher enthusiasm and programs already in place in the classroom should also be considered as factors that may influence results. Time of year in which a treatment is given and students are tested are variables that need to be considered when investigating students' attitudes about learning. Future studies may want to address a possible natural decline in student attitude toward schoolwork in general as the year progresses.

Whatever suggestions and recommendations this author makes, the most important suggestion is that future educators find ways to keep students interested in what they are learning.
The world is complex and fast paced. Teachers find themselves in increasing competition with computerized games, arcades, and television, for their students' attention. To keep pace with the new technologies teachers must use new technologies, yet at the same time teach their students using some of the time honored methodologies. In doing so they will be using whatever ways they can to positively influence students' attitudes about reading and learning.
APPENDIX A

Rules for Reading during Shared Peer Reading
Rules for Shared Peer Reading

1. Take a book out of the classroom library
2. Find a partner to read with
3. Use "Wilbur" (reading doll) only if you don't have a reading partner
4. Take turns reading to each other
5. Read quietly
APPENDIX B

Students Reading Book List


Ungerer, Tomi. (1971). *I am Papa Snap and these are my favorite No such stories.* Harper and Row: New York.
APPENDIX D

- Students Reading Book List


APPENDIX E

Students Reading Book List


APPENDIX F

Students Reading Book List


APPENDIX G
Students' Reading Book List


APPENDIX H

Students Reading Book List


APPENDIX I

Students Reading Book List


APPENDIX J

Students Reading Book List


APPENDIX K

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey
Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

1. How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?

2. How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?

3. How do you feel about reading for fun at home?

4. How do you feel about getting a book for a present?
5. How do you feel about spending free time reading?

6. How do you feel about starting a new book?

7. How do you feel about reading during summer vacation?

8. How do you feel about reading instead of playing?
9. How do you feel about going to a bookstore?

10. How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?

11. How do you feel when the teacher asks you questions about what you read?

12. How do you feel about doing reading workbook pages and worksheets?
13. How do you feel about reading in school?

14. How do you feel about reading your school books?

15. How do you feel about learning from a book?

16. How do you feel when it's time for reading class?
17. How do you feel about the stories you read in reading class?

18. How do you feel when you read out loud in class?

19. How do you feel about using a dictionary?

20. How do you feel about taking a reading test?
REFERENCES


Palmer, R.M., Codling, R.M., Gambrell, L.B. (1994). In their own words: what elementary students have to say about motivation to read. The Reading Teacher, 48, 176-178.


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