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Using Wordless Books to Help Emergent Literacy Skills

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Abstract

Wordless books are a new literacy tool that teachers can use in the classroom, but can they help student's emergent literacy skills development? Emergent literacy skills help guide students in learning how to read. As teachers we need to find strategies to help student's development in those skills to become successful readers. First grade students from Floyd Elementary School were used in this study to find out if their emergent literacy skills would improve if they wrote the text to a wordless book. Pre and Post assessments were used during the study. The results could have been different if we had used computers for typing the sentences and had a longer period of time to work with the wordless books.

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Using Wordless Books to Help Emergent Literacy Skills

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Abstract

Wordless books are a new literacy tool that teachers can use in the classroom, but can they help student's emergent literacy skills development? Emergent literacy skills help guide students in learning how to read. As teachers we need to find strategies to help student's development in those skills to become successful readers. First grade students from Floyd Elementary School were used in this study to find out if their emergent literacy skills would improve if they wrote the text to a wordless book. Pre and Post assessments were used during the study. The results could have been different if we had used computers for typing the sentences and had a longer period of time to work with the wordless books.

Can Wordless Books help student's emergent literacy skills?

Wordless books are those in which the story is told only through a series of pictures—often provide a meaningful context for enhancing students oral and written communication skills (Smith, 2003). Wordless books can be used in the classroom in numerous ways. Using wordless books in the classroom allows students to show their creative side. As a teacher I am giving students the opportunity to write the text to a wordless book. Through this activity it is hoped that students will improve their emergent literacy skills.

"Emergent literacy is traditionally thought of as referring solely to children's emerging knowledge about print" (Lysaker2006, Purcell-Gates 2001 and Sulzby 1985 p. 34). It is also defined as and seen in three areas: oral language, phonological awareness, and print awareness (Allot & McCathren, 2003). Elliot and Olliff studied emergent literacy and letter recognition skills. They believe that students need to have knowledge of alphabet, phonological awareness, letter-sound correspondence, awareness of print concepts, and experience using writing as a form of communication (Elliott, Olliff, 2008). Emergent literacy has also been defined to using the following literacy elements: phonological awareness, alphabetic principles, comprehension, concepts about print and vocabulary development (Parette, Hourcade, Boeckmann and Blum 2008).

Theoretical Framework

"Literacy is a multifaceted set of social practices with a material technology, entailing code breaking, participation, with the knowledge of the text, social uses of text and analysis/critique of text" (Freebody &, Luke, 1990 p. 15).

Children's acquisition of language and literacy happens early on in their life. Parents and culture are highly influential in their children's acquisition of language and literacy. Everyone is part of a culture and that culture can influence parents and children's attitudes about language and literacy. The way parents speak can influence how a child learns their language and how they use language as they grow up. When children become more familiar with language they pick up on patterns and things their parents say. When children are young they repeat what their parents say. As children grow older they notice how their parents talk to others, this in turn can effect how their children talk to other children and adults. This can be a positive and negative experience for children.

Children generally acquire literacy from living in literate societies and learning from their parents. Also the culture a child lives in affects how they acquire literacy. Cultural words, belief systems, gender, religion, parent occupation, socioeconomic status, nationality, and literacy practices in the home all play a role in learning how to read. Especially with my topic about letters and sounds, a child first learns about letters and sounds from their parents. A child's parents are their first care givers and are the first ones to discuss, mediate and support a child's language development. When a child is young parents are constantly talking to their child trying to help them learn new words and identify objects around them.

In the study *What No Bedtime Story Means: Narrative skills at home and school* conducted by Heath (1982). Heath looked at two different towns and how the parents influenced their children's language and literacy acquisition. In one town called Roadville parents had everything from colorful rooms, music and literacy based stimuli in the baby's rooms when they came home from the hospital. Roadville children participated in structured literacy activities with their parents all throughout their life. When these children went to school their knowledge

of structure in literacy was strong, but when it came to answering questions about feelings these students struggled.

In another town called Trackton, children came home with less literacy stimuli than the Roadville children. Trackton children were exposed to adult reading material and conversation. Trackton children did not learn about the structure of literacy rather the feeling part of literacy. This study showed how two different cultures taught their children about literacy and language and how it affected them in the long run. The study also showed how parents view of literacy and language acquisition can differ.

As it has been stated culture does play a large role in student's language and literacy acquisition, teachers should allow students to bring in different artifacts or books about their culture. This will give other students a better understand of each others culture. Students need to be given the opportunity to share their background knowledge about their own literacy experiences. Literacy experiences can be many things, including book reading, reading signs, magazines, menus, and items/objects in a store, just to name a few.

Technology is another aid in children acquiring language and literacy. Presently technology is becoming more and more enriched into students lives. The students that I am working with in schools know more about technology than I did when I was their age. In the classroom teachers have access to Smart Boards, Promethean Boards, IPods, wikis, blogs and class websites. When I worked in a kindergarten classrooms, the students learned how to use the Promethean Board just as quick as I did.

There are also so many online games for students to use in the classroom. Another website used in my kindergarten classroom was called starfall. There were many letter and sounds activities students could do on their own. These games were also enjoyable for students

and helped them learn their letters and sounds. I think Baron sums up the idea of new technology in our world and how we need to deal with it by saying "a new technology like the computer comes along and we are thrown into excitement and confusion as we try it on, try it out, reject it, and then adapt it to our lives—and of course adapt our lives to it" (Baron, 1999, p. 71).   Wordless books and technology are connected in a way that they are different from the norm everyone is used to. Wordless books are a new way to read to children and technology is something that is ever changing our lives.

I believe that the use of wordless books will let students across all different cultures have more creative input into their acquisition of letters and sounds. I will be giving students the creative freedom to create their own stories.

Through this project I hope to gain more insight into student's acquisition of literacy and how their emergent literacy skills are affected by wordless books.

Research Question

During this project I am going to have to be sensitive to the background knowledge my students have. Also just reading to your child on a daily basis can help their letter and sound recognition. Not all parents read to their children. I would also like to encourage parents to use wordless books with their children through my study. Wordless books might be less threatening to parents if they do not have a strong literacy background. With a wordless book a parent and their child can create the story together and then work out the letters and sounds together. My final question is how can wordless books help student's emergent literacy skills?

Literature Review

Wordless Books and Literacy

Wordless books are those in which the story is told only through a series of pictures—often provide a meaningful context for enhancing students oral and written communication skills (Smith, 2003). Wordless books can be used in many ways to help develop literacy skills in children. They offer visual literacy, cultural literacy and literacy with print (Jalongo, Dragich, Conrad and Zhang, 2002). Wordless books are often less used in the classroom for a variety of reasons. Teachers report that they don't know how to choose a wordless book for their classroom, teachers had not thought about literacy being affected by wordless books and the availability of wordless books is not high in many school or public libraries.

Wordless books also help student's emergent literacy skills. In the article <u>Using Wordless Picture Books to Support Emergent Literacy</u>, it is mentioned that using wordless books can help aide student's concept about print. These types of books can allow students to learn about where the front, back, top, and bottom of a book are. Students can also learn about turning pages in a book and that you move from left to right in a book. Children, who are older, have limited in English Proficiency, or have reading difficulties, are given the opportunity to create their own story using a wordless picture book (Jalongo, Dragich, Conrad and Zhang, 2002). Students are encouraged to tell a story in different ways and have the opportunity to integrate different subject matters into one book.

Wordless books also offer teachers different literacy activities to complete with their children as they read a wordless book together. When a teacher read a wordless book with their class, the class can dictate the entire book to the teacher following this teacher and students can read the story back and revise parts of it. They can write it in another language, and re-write the

story from another characters point of view (Jalongo, Dragich, Conrad and Zhang, 2002).

Teacher can also work on plot, point of view, investigate the illustrator's style in the book, take a book with text and make a wordless book out of it, and compare wordless books to other books or media in your classroom.

Wordless Books and 'self readers'

Author Judith T. Lysaker looked at wordless books and how they can effect students "self that reads" (Lysaker, 2006). Lysaker studied children ages 5 and 6 before they had the ability to decode print to see how they react to text, specifically in wordless books. Through her study, students read a wordless book to a researcher and the text was then analyzed how the students revealed themselves in the reading. Students were categorized by reactors, observers and narrators. Students who were reactors to the book labeled the pictures in the story without any real narration of what was happening in the story. As they move along the continuum created by Lysaker students started including more details in their descriptions as if they were in the story. Lysaker hypothesizes that students who are exposed to literacy background are given the opportunity to create a 'self as reader' which in turn will help them develop capacities necessary for reading (Lysaker, 2006). Through this study wordless books are used in a way that can help students before they become readers in the classroom. A new study would help identify if the wordless book experiences helped or inhibited these children as they began to learn how to read.

Wordless Books to Support Writing Development

Wordless books have been used in many different classrooms. Second grade teacher Colleen Reese used it in her classroom and found out that her children loved working with wordless books. Ms. Reese began using wordless books by having pairs of students write the text for a wordless book. Through this the students complete the writing process together. They

went through creating rough drafts, editing, and creating final copies to present to other classrooms.

Through the editing, students became more excited about writing. They were writing longer and more descriptive sentences (Reese, 1996). Students also started to enjoy the revising process and showed more interest in completing it. The students also took students feed back into consideration for when they worked on their next piece. Students showed so much interest in writing their text for a wordless book that they wanted to do it by themselves (Reese, 1996). Wordless books turned into a positive experience for Ms. Reese's classroom.

Wordless books can be used with all ages of students. Wordless books can be used with struggling readers as a way to increase their confidence in reading. A middle school student named Robert was given the opportunity to use a wordless book to help him read. When it was first introduce Robert did not say much about the book, but when the teacher modeled how to use a wordless book, he became enthusiastic about reading and wanted to write his own story. Roberts's teacher had him record his story, it was then typed, Robert cut out his sentences and then had the opportunity to but them in a photocopy of his book (Cassady, 1998). Robert had the opportunity to then read his book to other people. His confidence, automaticity and vocabulary development improved from the wordless book experience.

When you give students the opportunity like Robert had, you are more likely to help create a life long reader. Giving students the confidence to know that they can do it is important. Another opportunity for older students is to work together on a wordless book or help tutor struggling readers in lower grades. When students are paired they can write the story together, edit and then share their story with their class (Cassady, 1998). The older students were able to show younger students how they could write their own story in a wordless book. This gives

students the opportunity to increase their confidence in reading and also building social relationships with students.

Wordless books and Biliteracy

A case study was presented on the use of wordless books and emergent bi-literacy in English and Chinese for a 5 year old boy. A 5 year old Chinese boy went through a 10 week tutoring program to help develop his language and literacy development in English and Chinese (Hu, Commeyras, 2008). This study looked at alphabet and character recognition, directionality, and oral and reading vocabulary in English and Chinese (Hu, Commeyras, 2008). During each tutoring session a wordless book was chosen to use and literacy activities were generated based on the books chosen.

Data was collected during the tutoring sessions using: interviews, alphabet recognition assessment, character recognition chart, dolch/fry word list, and oral vocabulary in English and Chinese (Hu, Commeyras, 2008). Through the use of wordless books the boy's oral vocabulary was increased and he began to write more complex sentences. The boy's spoken English also improved through this process, the amount of English words spoken by the boy increased. It was also determined that he already had development abilities in the alphabet and character recognition. Carefully chosen wordless books can be used with non-English speaking children to support literacy development (Hu, Commeyras, 2008).

Critical Thinking and Wordless Books

Wordless picture books encourage students to use language and communication skills. Students are given the opportunity to dictate a whole story. Wordless books can help student's inference skills because they are creating the story. Smith gives an example of how a critical literacy model can be used with wordless books. The model given by Smith includes: activating

prior knowledge and predicting, sharing and discussing, generating text (optional), analyzing and describing the characters actions and extension (optional) (Smith, 2003). Through wordless books teachers can have discussions with students about each picture which then in turn can relate back to a students prior knowledge or prediction they made before they started talking about the text. Students need an opportunity to create their own picture about the story in their mind before they discuss it with the rest of the class (Smith, 2003). When a class creates the text in a story, the teacher can write the text on post it notes that way if students want something changed, the post it can be moved from different pages. "Wordless books require students to think critically in relation to their own experiences and extend knowledge" (Smith, 2003, p.80).

Emergent Literacy Models and Interventions

Authors Jill Howard Allor and Rebecca B. McCathren offer strategies about how storybook reading can help develop emergent literacy skills. They believe that if a student is showing signs of reading difficulties they need to receive assistance right away. Storybook reading has shown gains in student's oral language development. Through these types of stories, they children are involved in the story. Phonological awareness is another piece to emergent literacy where the research shows that direct instruction in that helps students respond to beginning reading instruction. Familiar story books can be used in phonological awareness activates. There are also different types of storybook activities. They include Storybook preview, storybook read aloud, storybook celebration, storybook sounds, storybook letters and words (Allor, McCathren, 2003). Each component of storybook activities can help emergent literacy activities. Through the read aloud teachers can discuss concepts about print, teach students about vocabulary and oral language development (Allor, McCathren, 2003). The

storybook sounds can help student's phonological awareness; teachers can pick different skills to focus on during different storybooks.

"Proficient reading remains the most essential skill required for academic success" (Gardner III, Morrison and Paul, Volume 5-Number 3 p. 138). From reading this quote an intervention strategy using Visual Phonics was used to help kindergarten students who were at-risk for reading failure. The following assessments were used for pre and post tests: DIBELS, and Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM). The visual phonics intervention otherwise known as See the Sound/Visual Phonics (STS/VP) provides a sign for every phoneme in the English Language (Gardner III, Morrison and Paul, Volume 5-Number 3). This intervention creates a concrete/tangible sound which allows for a stable foundation in phonemic awareness. There is one distinct hand movement for every phoneme (Gardner III, Morrison and Paul, Volume 5-Number 3). This program is similar to Reading Mastery I Curriculum. The STS/VP was originally used for students who were deaf or hard of hearing. The research showed that there was an increased on standardized measures after students were taught the intervention.

It was then decided to try the intervention with low-performing kindergarten students. Students who participated in the intervention showed gains in the DIBELS and CBM assessments after they went through STS/VP. The data showed that the students did not fall any farther behind compared to other students. The students who took part in the study should continue to make gains (Gardner III, Morrison and Paul, Volume 5-Number 3).

Another model for emergent literacy is the Early Literacy and Learning Model (ELLM) Curriculum. ELLM is a "research-based curriculum designed to improve the language and pre-literacy skills of young children 3-5 years old" (Elliot, and Olliff, 2008, p.552). The ELLM model was added to the Family Resource Center curriculum in Florida. In an ELLM classroom

activities focus on 6 emergent literacy concepts for at least 1 hour a day (Elliot, and Olliff, 2008). Students of the age 2 and 3 were used in the research, so some of the activities needed to be adapted to meet their needs. The teachers in the ELLM classrooms also wanted to get parents involved in the reading process with their child.   Alphabet recognition was a target goal in the program.

Data was collected twice during literacy activities and for the most part students who participated in the daily literacy activities increased their letter recognition. It is also important to note that "alphabet recognition is the most powerful predicator of later reading success" (Elliot and Olliff, 2008, p.555).

Technology as a New Form of Wordless Books

In our world today, technology is increasing at an incredibly fast rate. Students are coming into school know more about technology than I knew at many of their ages. These technologies are affecting literacy and will continue to affect literacy everyday. "New literacy's whether intentionally or unintentionally impact literacy instruction in classrooms" (Halsey, 2007, p.104). Teachers need to embrace the new technologies into their classrooms. Some examples of how to include technology in your classroom include: classroom websites, podcasts, and electronic book reading. In a classroom website, literacy can be used in many ways. Primary Teacher Sue Halsey created a podcast section and taught her children how to create a podcast. Each week students record themselves speaking about their week and then the podcast is uploaded to the classroom website. She has an exciting writing section where students are able to post their writing pieces for other classmates, parents, friends and family can read. She has also created "word power" and "book reviews" (Halsey, 2007). Each of these sections includes literacy elements in one way or another.

Electronic books (e-books) are also becoming more popular in classrooms. Korat and Shamir looked at electronic books vs. adults reading to children. Through this study student's emergent literacy skills were assessed using electronic books and adults reading to children. E-books include oral reading, written text, music, sound effects and animations. It is thought that sound, music and animation can distract students from actually reading the text. Through their study Korat and Shmair found that there wasn't a significant different in pre and post assessment scores. The students who read e-books and adults reading to them had improvements in all areas tests. The control group showed improvement but in small amounts as compared to the other groups.

Microsoft PowerPoint is another tool that can be used to support emergent literacy. Through the Making a Difference Using Assistive Technology Project, 10 preschool classrooms were given a technology package for their classroom which included Microsoft Office Suite. This program includes PowerPoint on it. Teachers were to use the technology package to create literacy activities for their classroom.

Through PowerPoint, teachers can use animation, color, large screen presentation format, audio output with voices/sounds, symbol size, shape and position (Parette, Hourcade, Boeckmann and Blum, 2008). By using PowerPoint teachers were able to create slides that include a picture cue, and sound cue for each letter that is introduced to the class. Students would see the letter, listen to the sound and then see the pictures that went with the particular letter. Noise and transitions could be added to the pictures to make it more engaging for the students. Interactive storybooks can also be created through PowerPoint. Teachers can record their own voice to create a fun and interactive story for students to read/listen to. The way and order information print is set up on each slide can help teach students about concepts about print.

These examples are just a few ideas about how to use PowerPoint in order to help student's emergent literacy.

A limitation to this article was that it did not give specific data on how the PowerPoint program helped or didn't help the preschool students who were a part of the Making a Difference Using Assistive Technology Project. The article just gave ideas about how to use PowerPoint with emergent literacy.

Technologies Effect on Literacy

Technology has had an ever increasing effect on students, teachers, classrooms and literacy. "In 2005, approximately 95% of K–12 classrooms in the United States had Internet access" (Parsad & Jones, 2005, p.292). With a high percentage of students having access to the internet, 80% of kindergartners are using computers and 50% of students ages 9 and younger are using the computer. Surprisingly students are only using the computer 12 minutes per week. Computers and the internet are available, but they are not being used enough.

For one classroom at Fernley Elementary School, teacher Todd Wright chose to enrich his classroom with technology by having every student working on a laptop. In Todd Wright's 4th grade classroom, students complete all their work on a laptop. Since kindergarten these students have been using technology in the classroom to build their skills for the type of classroom they will encounter in the future. Todd Wright found that student's motivation about learning has greatly increased through using the laptops. "Kids are sitting up and leaning into their learning" (Baronet, Wright 2008, p.303). Students are completing activities on their laptops that include creating music, podcasts, voice recordings, creating books on the internet, creating graphic organizers on the internet, blogs, email, and instant messaging (Barone, Wright 2008). On a daily basis students are conversing through instant messaging about information they are

reading in books and other tasks completed through out their day. Todd Wright has embraced

the idea that technology is just life and "schools need to connect education to their students' lives

with children of the future so it's their job to relate technology to the classroom" (Barone,

Wright 2008).

Technology Programs Used in Classrooms

Research has shown that the technology program Computers Helping Instruction and

Learning Development (Project CHILD) created by the Florida State University has increased

students test scores compared to traditional classrooms. Higher test scores have been shown in

reading, language arts and math (Butzin, 2001). In Project CHILD students are divided into

clusters across three grade levels. The teachers work with these students for a total of 3 years.

In their classrooms there are computer stations with at least 3 computers, a textbook station, and

exploration stations for hands on activities (Butzin, 2001). The students spend 1 hour in their

cluster classroom and then the rest of the day with their home base class. Since teachers work

with the same students for 3 years they have a better understanding of their students needs and

can use that information to find effective ways to integrate the appropriate software for their

students (Butzin, 2001).

This study found that students in the Project CHILD classroom scored higher on the

Stanford Achievement Test in the areas of math applications, math computations and reading

comprehension (Butzin, 2001). "Project CHILD has a positive effect on learning, especially

when students participate in the program for a full 3 year cycle" (Butzin, 2001, p.371).   Using

the computer as a tool in the classroom has turned out positive results for students.

Methods

Floyd Elementary School is part of the Harrisburg School District (all names are pseudonyms). Catherine Smith is the principal at Floyd Elementary School. During the 2007-2008 school year there were 62 teachers at Floyd Elementary School. It is comprised of grades K-8. From the New York State Report Card 2007-2008, grade 9 was still a part of the school. Since the 2007-2008 school year grade 9 was taken out of the building. For this study I am working with first grade students. During the 2007-2008 school year there were 669 students attending Floyd Elementary School. At Floyd Elementary School 89% of the students are Black or African American, 8% are Hispanic or Latino and 3% are white. At the Floyd Elementary School 82% of the students are eligible for free lunch and 9% are eligible for reduced-priced lunch.

The overall accountability status for Floyd Elementary School was in "good standing" for ELA, Math and Science. On the ELA test the percentages of students scoring at or above a level 3 ranges from 56% to 31%. The math scores at or above level 3 ranges from 90% to 41%. Floyd Elementary School also has a problem solving team for teachers to refer students to for strategies to help these students behaviorally or academically. There are also two response to intervention teachers who use the Wilson Fundations Reading Program for their students. At the elementary level the following assessments are used: DRA, Curriculum Based Measurement, Lexile Test and District wide benchmark tests.

Participants:

For this project I worked with three first grade students who are African American/Black. The first students name is Daisy (all names are pseudonyms). She is 6 years old and 4 months. Her reading level from the DRA testing is level A. I have been working with

her since November in a small group and then moved into working with Daisy in a 1:1 setting. She has struggled with sounding out words and has made progress in her letter identification for names and sounds. Overall Daisy enjoys school and is eager to learn how to become a better reader. Daisy is a polite, hard working, caring and cooperative student.

My second student is David; he is 7 years old and 2 months. His reading level is a 16. I know David from going into Ms. Baker's classroom to pick up my reading groups. David is a hard worker who enjoys reading. The final student I will be working with is Sarah. She is 6 years old and 11 months. Her reading level is a 4. I started working with Sarah in November. She was in one of my reading groups that I pulled out of Ms. Baker's classroom. When we gave the Curriculum Based Measurement in December, Sarah tested out of my group. When I did work with Sarah in a small group she was cooperative and hard working. Sarah enjoys school and likes to read.

Researcher Stance

I am in my final course for my Masters degree in Childhood Literacy at St. John Fisher College. I have 3 other certifications in early childhood education, elementary education and students with disabilities. I have recently finished a long term sub position working as a response to intervention support teacher. I love having the opportunity to use what I have learned so far in my graduate studies for this position. My ultimate goal is to become a Literacy Specialist or Literacy Coach.

I decided to look into wordless books because they are not used very often in the classroom. I was first introduced to them in one of my graduate courses. We had the opportunity to write the text to a wordless book. I want to see if I can prove a way to use wordless books to help student's emergent literacy skills. I think wordless books are an interesting way to bring in

a different type of literacy to students. I believe that wordless books allow students to express their creative side. Through using these types of books, students are given the pen to write a story.

As a teacher I am looking into how I can use wordless books to help my students. I will be modeling how to read a wordless book for my students and then giving them the opportunity to write the text for a wordless book that they choose. I'm excited to observe how they interpret each picture from the story. Children can have different views when they look at a picture. Through this study I will be allowing these students to express themselves. For many students this will be a new experience.

Methods

One: For this study I observed how students interpret the pictures from the wordless book and allowing them to write the text for each picture. I watched my students look at the pictures, to see how they decided to write each sentence for their story.   Prior to working with the wordless books, I conducted a pretest that analyzes letter recognition, letter sound recognition, word reading, phoneme segmenting, sight word recognition and reading fluency. I used the Curriculum Based Measurement Assessment. I had the students complete a survey to find out what they thought about wordless books, and gave them the same survey at the end of the 2 weeks to see if their opinions had changed. I have numerous artifacts that include pre-assessment, post-assessments, my story for the modeled wordless book, my student's text for their wordless book.

Two: I observed the students 3 times for 20 minutes, over a 2 week period of time. I modeled how I would write the text for a wordless book. During the modeling I showed the

students how I would think about writing each word when I get stuck. For example, I sounded out or tapped out words. I also reminded my students about all the parts of a sentence that you need. The modeling lesson was done in a whole group with the three students. After the model lesson I met with each student individually to work on their own story.

Three: After the model lesson, I worked with each student individually. They chose which wordless book they would like to write the text to. I gave the students strips of paper to write the text on for each page. This way the strips of paper could be moved around if need be. I guided the students while they were writing each sentence.

Four: After the students had written their stories I typed the sentences up and made copies of the pictures from the wordless book. I gave the student a copy of their own book. They had the opportunity to read the book a few times with me. I also encouraged them to read it aloud to their teacher, classmates and family.

Five: After the students have completed their book readings, I completed the post tests for the students. Following this I analyzed my results to see if wordless books made an impact on the student's emergent literacy skills.

Ensuring Trustworthiness

Credibility is defined as taking account the complexity of the study and dealing with patterns that are not easily explained (Mills, 2007). There is the possibility that the students I have chosen for this project will not want to participate. I addressed this by explaining that the students have an important job in doing this and that they will have a book to take home at the end of the time working with me. The wide range of abilities could also cause a problem. I have chosen a few different assessments to help address this problem. The assessments showed what

students strengths are before the research and what the students have become stronger in or weaker in after the research is complete.

Transferability is defined as describing the context of my study so that you can help other people determine what is transferable to their situation (Mills 2007). I am working in a first grade classroom with African American/Black students. This classroom is part of a K-8 building in the Floyd Elementary School. These students reading levels are based on the DRA assessment. There is a wide range in the reading levels from A, 4, and 16. These students work in a vibrant classroom with lots of colors and academic posters all around the classroom. For this study I modeled how I would write the text for a wordless book and then allowed the students to write their own text to a wordless book. The student was assessed before and after the study was complete.

Dependability is defined as demonstrating that my data is stable and showing how someone else could do what I did and discover similar things (Mills 2007). By keeping organized documents, I have shared my results and ideas with other teachers. I shared my field notes, pre-assessments, post assessments and written text by my students and if teachers are interested I can make copies of the assessments I used. Another teacher in first grade or another primary or upper grade could pick a different focus point other than emergent literacy and research if wordless books could increase their student's skills. There is no stopping point for who you can use wordless books with.

Confirmability is defined as revealing my assumptions and predictions about my study (Mills 2007). I think that some of the students will make gains and some may not make gains in using wordless books. My goal is to help students gain more confidence in reading and writing. I hope that one student's confidence in sounding out words will increase. I think that having the

students read their story to others will help increase their fluency in reading and sight word recognition. My fear is that nothing for these students changes in the pre and post assessments. I think wordless books are still so new that there is not enough research out there about how you can use them in your classroom. I hope to find a positive strategy in wordless books to pass along to teachers. A limitation to this study is that it will be completed in a short period of time. For students to show improvements in emergent literacy skills, it takes repeated encounters with the text. I used the final surveys to find out if students are interested in doing more activities with wordless books.

I wrote letters to the parents of each student for informed consent. I am protecting the rights of my students through making their names anonymous and identifying marks are removed from the artifacts. All of my artifacts are carefully stored in a binder.

Data Collection

For this study I used active observations and modeling techniques for teaching my students about writing the text for wordless books. I took field notes of what my students did during the time that I allow them to write their own story for a wordless book. The students also completed a pre and post survey with me. The students were also assessed with pre and post assessments form the Curriculum Based Measurement Assessment.

The pre-tests were going to test some emergent literacy skills. I am going to use the wordless book activity to see if using wordless books would help increase the student's emergent literacy scores.

After the initial assessments were finished, I modeled reading a wordless book and how I would write the text for that book. I demonstrated how I would "tap" out a word if I was stuck and didn't know how to spell a word. We talked about the proper punctuation needed in

sentences. I also showed expression in reading the sentences I wrote for one of the wordless

books.

   After I completed the model lesson, the students had the opportunity to choose a book

that they wanted to write the text for. Each student worked with me individually to write the text

for the wordless book they chose.

Data Analysis

Initial and Post Assessment Data

   This study was completed during the time frame of working with each student

approximately 3 times. First I conducted a survey with the students to see what they knew about

wordless books and how they felt about writing the text for a wordless book. This was followed

by a pre-assessment using the Curriculum Based Measurement Assessment. The students were

tested on Phoneme Segmenting, Letter Names, Letter Sounds, Word Reading and Paragraph

reading. Each assessment was 1 minute long. Following the pre-assessment and pre-survey,

Curriculum Based Measurements Pre-Test Results

Daisy

Assessment:	Pre-Test
Letter Name Identification	37/37
Letter Sound Identification	17/19
Phoneme Segmenting	18/41
Paragraph Reading	0
Word Reading	2/8

Sara:

Assessment:	Pre-Test

Letter Name Identification	47/48
Letter Sound Identification	29/35
Phoneme Segmenting	43/51
Paragraph Reading	8/16
Word Reading	19/21

David:

Assessment:	Pre-Test
Letter Name Identification	50/50
Letter Sound Identification	36/37
Phoneme Segmenting	29/41
Paragraph Reading	74/75
Word Reading	46/46

Areas of Growth/Post Test Results

Daisy

Assessment:	Post-Test
Letter Name Identification	34/34
Letter Sound Identification	20/24
Phoneme Segmenting	26/41
Paragraph Reading	3/12
Word Reading	1/9

Sara:

Assessment:	Post-Test

Letter Name Identification	49/52
Letter Sound Identification	25/26
Phoneme Segmenting	45/48
Paragraph Reading	39/41
Word Reading	30/32

David:

Assessment:	Post-Test
Letter Name Identification	57/57
Letter Sound Identification	35/36
Phoneme Segmenting	36/41
Paragraph Reading	71/71
Word Reading	55/56

Findings

Looking at the Pre-test data, David scored high in most areas of the test, and had a high accuracy rate in many areas. Letter name identification and letter sound identification is a strength for David. In the word reading test David also scored higher than the other 2 students I was working with.   In the word reading section David showed ease in reading the words. On the paragraph that David read to me, he was monotone and did not show expression in what he was reading.

On the pre-test data for Sara, she showed strengths in letter name identification and letter sound identification. Sara also showed strength in the phoneme segmenting test, where she had to tell me the sounds she heard in the words I said to her. On the paragraph reading, there were

some words that Sara got stuck on which did not allow her to read as much of the paragraph as she probably could have.

Daisy, struggled the most on the pre-test. The phoneme segmenting, word reading and paragraph reading tests showed low scores. This relates back to Daisy academic struggles in that she does not have a way that she can sound out words that works for her. Daisy letter name identification was a strength for her. I think she could have scored higher on the letter sound identification.

From doing the initial testing, I do not think the curriculum based measurement was an appropriate assessment to choose because the students only had one minute to complete each task. I think the time limit showed lower scores for the students in some areas. Looking at the pre-test scores, I wanted to make sure I was emphasizing how to sound out words when I did the model lesson for my students. I also wanted to show expression in my reading in order to get the students excited about what we were doing.

Student Knowledge of Wordless Books

Before the students worked with the wordless books, I asked them a six question survey about wordless books. On the initial survey for Daisy, when I asked her "what do you think wordless books are?" she answered "they are words." She had never read a wordless book before and thought she would like writing the text for a wordless book. She was also willing to share the story she wrote with her family and class.

Sara told me that a wordless book was "a book without pictures you can look at." When I asked her if she had read a wordless book before she said "yes it was called Spiders in the house." Sara was interested in writing the text for a wordless book. When she was done with writing the text for the wordless book, she wanted to share it with her class and family.

David's initial idea about wordless books was that they are "a book without words."
David had never read a wordless book before and thought it would be fun to write the words for a wordless book. David was also interested in sharing his completed book with his family and class.

Areas of Strength

Sara and David were the most enthusiastic about doing the writing. Sara and David both wrote descriptive sentences. They also used similar strategies to figure out words they did not know how to spell. Sara and David tapped out and sounded out words they struggled with. Since Sara and David both showed strength in phoneme segmenting, they were able to tell me their sentence and then sound out or tap out words they were unsure of. This is similar to the phoneme segmenting test because they had to tell me the sounds they heard in a word. During our activity they were writing down the sounds they heard in different words.

Sara took pride in creating a character name for the girl in her story. When Sara saw the picture of the girl in the story, she told me right away that the girl needed a name. Sara also really looked at each picture carefully to decide what she wanted to write. David also took his time in looking at each picture and then writing his sentence. At some points they asked me if the sentence was ok, and I told them they were free to write whatever they wanted.

Sara and David also showed strengths in reading their book with me after I put them together. Each student was excited to read the book they wrote the text for. When Sara and David did read, they were monotone and did not show a lot of expression. They did use their tapping out strategy if they were stuck on reading a word.

Areas of Development

Daisy struggled the most with writing the sentences for her wordless book. Academically Daisy struggles with reading and writing and I think that carried over in writing the text for the wordless book. At least every few words, Daisy was asking me how to spell a word and I would encourage her to use the strategies her teacher had taught her about sounding out words. Daisy struggles with sound words out relates back to her low score on the pre-test for phoneme segmenting. She is unable to identify sounds when she tries sounding them out.

Daisy was very distracted with everything around us while we were working. We worked at a table in the hallway right outside her classroom. She would stop in the middle of a sentence and ask me about something on the wall or why there was something up on the wall. Many of these things were student work pieces. While Daisy and I were working she complained that there was too much writing and her hand hurt. She would ask numerous times when we would be done writing. She didn't have the drive and interest that David and Sara had in the whole process of writing the text for a wordless book.

After each student wrote the sentences for their book, I copied the pictures in the book and typed out each student's set of sentences. Following this I glued their sentences on each page and then we read their story together. David and Sara really enjoyed this. They wanted to make sure their name was on the front cover, saying that they wrote the text. Daisy struggled reading her story, and again did not show much interest in the story. The struggles that Daisy showed in reading her book after, related back to the struggles she had on the pre-test for the paragraph she read to me. On pre-test for the paragraph reading Daisy was unable to read any of the words from the paragraph, this connects with the Daisy being unable to read the story she

wrote. Her lack of strategies for sounding out words limits her skills to be able to read words alone or in a story. Daisy was excited that she would be able to take her book home.

Mainly, all three students had missing vowel sounds that included "e" in them somewhere. The following patterns with "e" in them were noted: en, et, es, and ed at the end of words. Examples of misspelled words are: bucket, kitchen, opened. In their stories the students spelled the words like this: "kitin", "opend" and "buck it." Also words with "e" at the end were also commonly missed. Having the middle vowel sound "ea" and "e" was also found.

David and Sara identified most of the initial sounds in their writing. Daisy was able to identify some initial sounds in words, but spelling the actual word was a struggle. She was able to spell sight words like cat, is, in, are, she, he, to, up and out. When she would sound out the word "the" the sound "va" came out.

Wordless Book Post Survey Student Answers

After completing the wordless book activity, David told me he would not do this again because his hand was hurting from all the writing he did. If the book was shorter he would write the words again for a wordless book. He enjoyed reading his book at the end of our activity. David's final definition of a wordless book is "it's a book with no words in it."

At the end of completing our activity, Sara said she would write the words again for a wordless book because "wordless books are fun to put words in." Her final definition of wordless books was a wordless book is "a book that doesn't have words, you can put words in it or else it can just be a picture book."

Daisy did not like writing the text for a wordless book, she said "it took too long and the book she used was too long." If the book was shorter she would do it again. Daisy also liked

getting a copy of the book when she was finished. Her final definition of a wordless book was "you have to write the words because it doesn't have words."

After looking at the test results for each student, there were some areas that the students greatly improved their scores on. There are also some areas that the students made small improvements or no improvements at all. Sara improved her score in paragraph reading and word reading the most. Her score went up 28 points in the paragraph reading and 11 points in the word reading. I think Sara's paragraph reading score went up because she had the opportunity to practice reading a book she wrote the text for numerous times. I think this helped increase her confidence in reading other materials. David's word reading increased 9 points. This would be related to repeated use of sight words in his sentences and then identifying for sight words on the word reading assessment. The other improvements made by Sara and David do not show a strong impact from using wordless books.

During the assessments, the students did not seem to have trouble with each task. Daisy struggled with the paragraph reading and asked me to tell her many words in the paragraph. The wordless book activity did not show any significant impact on Daisy's emergent literacy skills.

Implications and Conclusions

The findings from this research project can give teachers an insight into wordless books and how they affect students learning. The results from the pre and post assessment tests did not show a significant impact on the student's emergent literacy skills. It's important to remember that wordless books are one form of non-print materials that can be used in the classroom. My findings are related to non-print resources and I think it would be beneficial to study other non-print materials and what affect they have on student's emergent literacy skills.

After conducting the study, I would have liked to have modeled more wordless book readings with the students I worked with. I think the repeated interactions of seeing me write the sentences for a wordless book would have been helpful for them. I found that the students seemed to get tired after writing so many sentences and seemed to loose interest in what we were doing. Before I conducted the study, I thought the students would have enjoyed writing the sentences for a wordless book. Also I would like to have found shorter wordless books for the students to work with. The wordless books I used with the students were somewhat long. I would like to have also changed the assessments I chose to do with the students. I think I would have removed the letter name and letter sound identification from the assessments because the students seem to already know their letters and sounds after I have looked at my assessment results.

For the students I worked with, I believe that the emergent literacy skills for sounding out words played a factor in the successfulness of the students writing sentences for their story. The one student, who struggled with sounding out words, struggled with the writing portion of the story. This makes me become more aware of strategies my students need in order to help them succeed more in their writing. There needs to be more studies into wordless books and non-print materials and their affects on emergent literacy skills. I do not think wordless books are an appropriate tool to measure and build on student's phonemic skills. Wordless books can be used to develop sentence writing or story telling skills. Technology is another piece that could have been brought into the study because the students complained about their hands hurting from the writing. The students could have typed their sentences on the computer. The students may have written more sentences for their story if they did not have to write them by hand. I think the

students may have become more creative in their writing if they did not have to worry about the writing piece of the activity.

As a teacher, I am willing to take that chance to use new ideas and techniques to see if they work for my students. Other teachers out there need to take into consideration these ideas. Not all students learn the same way and I think non-print materials are something that could be used to help students gain a strong emergent literacy background.

Another implication that I had in this study was the amount of time I had to work with the students. If there was more time to work with the students, I think there may have been more change in their pre and post assessment scores. I would have also liked to look at wordless books effects on other aspects of literacy and writing. I would have liked to work on student's sentence structure and use of descriptive words in their writing. The pictures in wordless books give students the freedom to write about anything they want.

For teachers, I would encourage them to introduce their students to wordless books during read aloud. Wordless books are a different form of reading that students will enjoy. All three of the students I worked with hadn't looked a wordless book until they worked with me. As teachers we need to make our students aware of new literacy's that they can interact with.

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