On Reading Books to Children

Parents and Teachers

Edited by

Anne van Kleeck • Steven A. Stahl
Eurydice B. Bauer

CIERA
Center for the Improvement of
Early Reading Achievement

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Preface

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Divides between different groups of scholars seem to be common in literacy scholarship. The research on book sharing—a seemingly innocuous practice—is no exception. On the one hand, it is easy to presume that "everyone" knows how important it is to read to young preschool and school-aged children. Parents, or at least middle-class parents, seem to know: Adams (1990) suggests that her son received over 1,000 hours of exposure to print and stories prior to first grade. Teachers seem to know, and have been heard to tell parents that their failure to read to their child is a reason for the child's failure to learn to read. Policymakers also know the importance of storybook reading: as Teale (this volume) notes, the major literacy policy document of the 1980s, *Becoming a Nation of Readers,* concluded that "the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children" (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985, p. 23).

While it may seem that book sharing is a panacea for reading difficulties and illiteracy, this conclusion has lately been called into question. Family book sharing with young preliterate and early literate children is by no means a universal practice across cultural, linguistic, and social lines. Where it is practiced, it may be negotiated in a variety of ways, many of which are quite different from those favored in middle-class White families. As such, interventions based on research among middle-class White families may be inappropriate, and hence less effective, for families from other backgrounds. Furthermore, careful analysis of book sharing research raises the question of whether or not the practice is as effective in promoting print literacy as accepted wisdom suggests.

The traditional focus on book sharing is also very narrow. It ignores the fact that the young children of our time are growing up in a world in which multiple literacies have often become the norm.

The research on book sharing often endorses, either implicitly or explicitly, very particular cultural and political viewpoints. By focusing on the book sharing context itself, the traditional research on home and family literacy immediately biased itself toward cultural groups that valued and engaged in this particular practice, and who did so in a manner that closely matched the literacy practices of mainstream schools. Studies of book sharing's effect on the development of print literacy in school have tended to view the practices of mainstream-culture families as providing children with the most effective socialization for school literacy.

When these research-validated "effective practices" become the basis for interventions for children who are at risk for difficulty in developing print literacy and engaging in the literate practices of the classroom (e.g., Zevenbergen & Whitehurst, this volume), then the enterprise becomes political. That is, the focus on mainstream book sharing practices, which are assumed to best prepare the child for mainstream classroom practices, shape policy that dictates the "best" practices that will be taught to parents and teachers. This hegemonic approach has been resisted by recent efforts to consider literacy as a social practice and promote socioculturally appropriate interventions (e.g., Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; New, 2001). It has also prompted several contributors to this volume to question a variety of the assumptions underlying book sharing research (e.g., Anderson, Anderson, Lynch & Shapiro; Barrera & Bauer; Carrington & Luke; Teale).

The polarized view is that the problem boils down to either blaming families or blaming schools for children's literacy deficits. One school of thought claims that families are not providing the basic literacy practices and values that will facilitate their children's transition into school. The other holds that it is educators' outdated, culturally biased views of literacy that create the greatest barriers to scholastic achievement, particularly for those children who do not hail from white, middle-class, two-parent families (see Carrington & Luke, this volume).

But the divide between these two perspectives goes still deeper, to the question of "deficits." One group sees deficits in the child's basic knowledge about domains that are considered foundational to developing print literacy. This includes knowledge of print concepts, the alphabet and how it relates to spoken language, text and narrative construction, decontextualized or abstract language, the syntax and vocabulary of literate language, and so on.

The other group might go so far as to eschew the idea of "deficit" altogether (see Carrington & Luke, this volume). From this perspective, children's difficulties in achieving adequate literacy are seen to emanate from a mismatch—not between home and school cultures, but between the school's narrow view of literacy and the reality of multiple literacies in today's society; and between educators' notion of "family" and the more complex reality of modern family structure. As one might expect, this perspective calls for the

development of new and more complex notions of family, community, and literacy.

We believe there is much value in both of these perspectives. It is critical that we become aware of the culturally shaped, and hence biased, assumptions of much book sharing research. We also need to further expand our research into other literacy activities and media that reflect the range of literacy practices characteristic of society today. But we also take the stance that much important knowledge has been learned from the traditional research in this field. Furthermore, we suggest that much remains to be clarified by critically questioning, with the greater clarity afforded by hindsight, what has been done thus far, and then figuring out how this line of research might be more effectively conducted in the future. Our understanding of how children can be effectively socialized to use books in ways that promote their school success does not have to, and should not, come at the price of insensitivity to the fact that such practices may not be appropriate to, and hence effective in, other cultural contexts.

What is needed is continuation of, and dialogue between, the two perspectives described herein. Clearly, more research is needed to illuminate the diversity of literacy practices in homes and schools. The assumptions underlying educational policies and practices must be made explicit, so that cultural biases can be acknowledged and notions of literacy expanded. At the same time, research on mainstream families and book sharing will continue to provide us with valuable information on what can be learned, and how it can be learned in this particular context. While an emphasis on book sharing sets aside the complexity of multiple literacies, this simplification may also bring into focus important mechanisms for the teaching and learning of print-based literacy.

Continuing research on a variety of cultural and linguistic groups might effectively build upon the excellent scholarship that is beginning to accrue, including work with Mexican-American families (e.g., Goldenberg, Reese, & Gallimore, 1992; Valdés, 1996; Vernon-Faegans, Hammer, Miccio, & Manlove, 2001), Puerto-Rican-American families (Volk & de Acosta, 2001), African-American families (e.g., Anderson-Yockel & Haynes, 1994; DeBaryshe, 1995; Gadsden, 1993; Heath, 1983), and Turkish and Surinamese Dutch families (Bus, Leseman, & Keultjes, 2000; Leseman & de Jong, 1998). Educators in preschools and elementary schools should integrate information about diversity in literacy practices into their understanding of what constitutes literacy, and into their notions about the variety of contexts and activities that might promote literacy development among children from diverse backgrounds. However, until all schools are effectively accommodating children from all cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds at all levels in the educational system, it may be helpful to teach non-mainstream children to become bicultural with respect to literacy practices.

In acknowledging the need of literacy research to expand beyond book sharing, the implication is that book sharing is widely practiced in educational settings. Such is not the case, as Dickinson, McCabe, and Anastasopoulos (this volume) report, based on data from 133 preschool classrooms in the Boston area. Of their 166 observations, 66 classrooms did not engage in book reading at all. In the remaining 100 classrooms, the average time devoted to book sharing in a day was only about 10 minutes. On a composite score of several measures of the overall classroom environment, only 13% of the classrooms were rated as "strong" in their support of language, literacy, and curriculum, while 44% were rated as "low quality." We might wonder, then, how many children are even learning the most basic print-based literacy skills in mainstream educational institutions. Do findings of this nature reflect a lack of opportunities for children to learn the complex array of multiple literacies that they need to face today's world? We would guess they might, but research which defines literacy more broadly will be needed to verify this hunch.

Questions also arise regarding mainstream, middle-class families. While children from such backgrounds are somewhat less likely to have reading difficulties than their non-mainstream peers, many certainly do struggle in learning to read and write. Part of the reason may be that not all mainstream preschoolers receive the kind of socialization during book sharing that is associated with better print literacy achievement later on. In fact, the variation in the amount of book sharing discussions among White, middle-class parents is enormous (e.g., Martin & Reutzel, 1999; van Kleeck, Gillam, Hamilton, & McGrath, 1997), and the different styles found within this group are not all equally conducive to positive outcomes for children's language and literacy skills (Haden, Reese, & Fivush, 1996; Reese, Cox, Harte, & McAnally, this volume).

Listening to stories does improve children's reading, but not in all ways, for all children. The reality is that storybook reading is not as powerful an influence on children's reading as has been claimed. Meyer and colleagues first found this out while analyzing the data from a longitudinal study of children's reading (Meyer, Stahl, Wardrop, & Linn, 1994). They correlated reports of parents reading to children and observations of teachers reading to children with a variety of reading achievement measures. Not only did they fail to find correlations significantly different from zero, but most of the correlations were negative. They speculated that many of their measures were print-specific, and that time spent reading to children may have usurped some of the time normally devoted to print-related instruction.

Further, they discovered that theirs was not the only study that had found such effects (see Stahl, this volume). Scarborough and Dobrich (1994), in their meta-analysis of storybook reading studies, found that storybook reading had disappointingly small effects on reading achievement, acounting for only 8% of the variance. Bus, van IJzendoorn, and Pellegrini (1995), who used somewhat

different techniques to analyze their data, nonetheless found results similar to those of Scarborough and Dobrich. These smaller-than-expected (but statistically reliable) effects suggest that the reality of reading to children is more complex than the optimists propose. Instead, some of the effects of reading to children which are explored in this volume might:

- Be stronger on measures of vocabulary (deTemple & Snow) than on measures of word recognition (Stahl).
- Depend on the style of reading by the parent (Reese, Cox, Harte, & McAnally) or the teacher (Dickinson & McCabe).
- Relate to the emotional bonding between parent and child (Bus).
- Be different among parents and children from different cultures (Anderson, Anderson, Lynch, & Shapiro; Barrera & Bauer) or children with language delays (van Kleeck & Vander Woude).

In short, simply reading to children will not, in itself, cure or prevent children's reading problems.

We try, in this volume, to integrate chapters on the effects and limitations of book sharing with children with chapters discussing promising programs involving storybook reading. Thus, we have included chapters by Morrow and Brittain and by Teale on primary grade teachers reading aloud to children, by Zevenbergen and Whitehurst on their long-term research on dialogic reading, and by McKeown and Beck on their new research on the Text Talk program.

The last section of this volume, entitled "Where Do We Go From Here?", opens with a chapter by van Kleeck that tries to place book sharing within the larger context of emergent literacy, by deconstructing the global manner in which the effects of adults reading with children have often been viewed. Van Kleeck suggests that in order to get a nuanced view of the effects of book sharing, we need to examine how adults read, what text they read, and how and when we measure the effects of book sharing. Pellegrini and Galda suggest looking at the *context* of book sharing, to see how it fits into a larger model of social relations. Yaden is similarly concerned with context, but suggests using dynamic systems analysis to understand the connections and disconnections between parent and child, and how these might relate to learning.

The research literature on reading stories to children is a rich one. We certainly could have included more chapters, reflecting more lines of research. We perhaps could have even added another volume. But we also hope that the ideas set forth in this volume will stimulate new lines of research as well as refinements of current methods, yielding far richer findings in this small but important arena of literacy development.

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I
Book Sharing in Families

1
Social-Emotional Requisites for Learning to Read

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My interest in the question of how book reading affects young children's reading development goes back to my experiences as a reading specialist in an Amsterdam inner-city neighborhood. The low level of reading accomplishment in this neighborhood made me realize that one cannot become a conventional reader by systematic reading instruction alone. Despite a strong emphasis on phonics and extra practice for children who lagged behind, I saw the majority of these immigrant and low-income Dutch children get bogged down in the lower levels of reading accomplishment.

I hypothesized that the contributions of the home—and probably the interrelationship between home and school—should be taken into account when one is examining the roots of literacy. I began to study parent-preschooler book reading, thinking that this activity might be an important incentive for learning to read. There are, of course, other literacy-related activities that contribute to children's literacy development; however, book reading seems to be one of the most influential "natural," literacy-related family activities (Bus, van IJzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995). This chapter discusses the outcomes of a series of studies in which I closely examined various aspects of parent–preschooler storybook readings. The studies' results suggest one possible explanation of how book reading supports children's literacy development during both the preschool and elementary stages.

A SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL BASE FOR CHILDREN'S ENGAGEMENT IN BOOK READING

The first studies assumed that children's interest in books and joint reading is rooted in social context, rather than in a biologically endowed trait for exploration of uncharted territories stimulating their development (e.g., Crain-Thoreson & Dale, 1992). I felt this affinity with the social construction hypothesis because simply reading a text aloud seemed an insufficient method

for starting a process in which children learn about reading by sharing books with their parents, particularly in the beginning stages of book reading.

As long as children are unfamiliar with the structure of stories and the manner in which they are phrased, they may need their parents' help to bridge the gap between their own world and that presented in the book. It therefore seemed plausible to me that the benefits of book reading would strongly depend on how parents supported their children. I hypothesized that children needed support from an adult who was sensitive to their motives and understandings. Parents might need to find ways to immerse their child in books by capitalizing on the child's personal interests and motives (cf. Baker, Scher, & Mackler, 1997; Dickinson & Tabors, 1991; Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, & Hemphill, 1991).

To test these assumptions I tried to compose groups of parents who differed in their ability to support their child sensitively in complex learning situations. Because the quality of the parent–child attachment relationship seemed an excellent criterion by which to determine the extent of parents' sensitivity and supportiveness, I started a research program that compared the book reading experiences of parent-child pairs who had a secure attachment relationship with those of pairs having an insecure one (Bus, 1994, 2000, 2001; Bus & van IJzendoorn, 1988, 1992, 1995, 1997; Bus, Belsky, van IJzendoorn, & Crnik, 1997).

Attachment categories represent children's mental representations of their interactions with their parents. Children develop these representations on the basis of experience. They anticipate that the parent's future behavior will be similar to the past interactions on which the child's representations are based. Secure parents who have generally responded to their child in a sensitive and supportive way thus strengthen the child's expectation that they will continue to do so in the future. An insecure relationship, on the other hand, implies that parents are less sensitive to their children's needs; consequently the children have not developed trust in the parent's support in unknown and often somewhat frightening situations.

Hypothesizing that book reading depends on the parental ability to engage children in books, the frequency and quality of book reading sessions may differ as a function of this measure of the parent-child relationship. Assuming that insecure parents are less able to respond to and support their children in complex situations, I hypothesized that a positive history of interactive experience with the parent (experienced by the so-called "securely attached" children) would foster more frequent and more productive book reading interaction, while the negative interactions experienced by the "insecurely attached" children would limit the occurrence of book reading and its learning potential.

I expected that the insecure pairs would have disciplining problems and that the children would often be distracted. Because of their prior negative experiences, such children might not expect much from the interaction, and

consequently might refuse to listen. Their parents might not succeed in adapting the reading to their children's interests, motives, and understandings in order to lower the child's resistance to reading. The setting might not be stimulating for both parent and child. And as a result, these pairs might not share books as often as the securely attached pairs.

To test whether sensitive parental support, rather than the child's interest or disinterest (Crain-Toreson & Dale, 1992), could explain differences in children's book reading experiences and derivative learning, I started a series of studies in which I compared parent–child pairs that differed in the quality of their social-emotional relationships (Bus et al., 1997; Bus & van IJzendoorn, 1988, 1992, 1995, 1997).

MOTHER-CHILD ATTACHMENT SECURITY PREDICTS THE QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF BOOK READING

The outcomes of studies that test interaction patterns during book reading support the hypothesis that securely attached children show more interest in joint book reading than their insecurely attached counterparts. Comparing securely and insecurely attached mother–child pairs during joint book reading sessions, I repeatedly observed differences in the engagement and enjoyment levels of the children in these two groups.

Insecurely attached children appeared to be more often disengaged from their mothers or the book reading than securely attached children, as shown by measures of child attentiveness, maternal interventions to control the child's behavior, and child responsiveness (Bus et al, 1997; Bus & van IJzendoorn, 1988, 1992, 1995, 1997). From a cross-sectional study of interactive reading with 18-, 32-, and 66-month-old children (Bus & van IJzendoorn, 1988), for example, it appeared that the atmosphere surrounding the interaction of securely attached dyads was more positive than that around the insecurely attached pairs. There was less need for discipline in securely attached dyads; these children were less distracted than their insecurely attached peers.

Even in a group of 1-year-old infants with little book reading experience at best, children's interest in books still varied as a function of attachment security, suggesting that interactive experiences with the mother other than those involving books may also affect children's responses to book reading (Bus & van IJzendoorn, 1997). In this study I observed mothers and their 44- to 63-Week-old infants in the university laboratory. Among other tasks, the mother-infant pairs shared a simple expository book with thematically ordered pictures typical for this age range: each page showed a farm setting, accompanied by a one-sentence text describing the events in the picture.

Similarly to other studies of book reading to babies (e.g., van Kleeck, Alexander, Vigil, & Templeton, 1996), we found that most maternal energy was

devoted to getting and keeping the baby's attention and encouraging participation in the routine. However, the insecurely attached children were less attentive than the secure ones: they often looked at other objects in the environment or made attempts to escape from the mother's lap. Insecurely attached children responded less to the book content by referencing: they were less inclined to make animal sounds, touch the pictures (for example, caressing an animal picture), or make movements to represent a pictured object (like horse-riding in response to a picture of a horse). Their mothers were more inclined to control their behavior by putting an arm around the child, thus restricting the infant's movements, or by keeping the book out of reach.

If adults frequently fail to engage their children in book reading sessions, the children may remain dependent on the parent for understanding stories, rather than becoming actively engaged and eliciting book interactions. Books may not become an attractive parent–child activity, and joint book reading may not be established as a family routine. To test this hypothesis, another study (Bus & van IJzendoorn, 1992, 1995) was designed that explored the frequency of parent-preschooler book reading as a function of attachment security. I expected that the securely attached parent-child pairs would more often share a book than the insecurely attached pairs.

The mothers selected for this study differed in the frequency of reading books to their children. One group of mothers reported that their children never seemed to have enough of book reading; these mothers read books to their children one or more times a day, often at the child's request. The other group of mothers reported that joint book reading occurred at most a few times a week. A few mothers in this group admitted that they had stopped trying to read to their children out of frustration. One of these mothers, for instance, thought that another reading attempt in the university laboratory did not make sense, since her son showed so little interest in books. Subsequent observations confirmed that this child did not enjoy sharing a book with the mother. In fact, he turned nasty when his mother tried to immerse him in a picture storybook that other children of his age group seemed to like.

The findings of this study were in accordance with my expectation that attachment security related to the frequency of joint book reading. As expected, most of the frequently reading pairs were securely attached (73%), whereas only a minority of the infrequently reading pairs were securely attached (23%). This is a strong effect, taking into account that the assessment of parent-child attachment security was completely independent of book reading. An attachment researcher blind for the grouping based on reading frequency and not knowing how the mothers read to the children coded how the child responded to the parent in a so-called "strange situation," in which the child was reunited with the parent after a short separation in a strange environment.

Arguing strictly logically, the differences in attachment security may result from differences in book reading experiences. Positive interactive experiences

during book reading sessions may help to develop basic trust in the mother's supportive presence. Although I can not exclude this interpretation, I do not consider it very plausible. Other results (Bus & van IJzendoorn, 1992) have revealed evidence for the hypothesis that the manner in which parents interact with their young children is deeply embedded in the parent's own biography.

Simply reading a text aloud is not in itself sufficient to encourage children to learn from being read to. My studies so far, all of which included an assessment of the parent-child attachment security, strongly suggest that the parent's supportive presence affected how a child would immerse in books. The studies yielded clear-cut evidence that the quality of the parent–child relationship had to be taken into account to explain why some children found being read to boring or unpleasant, while others loved it. Assuming that attention is critical for learning to take place, the former group may not have been internalizing much from the books.

In many studies of book reading it is assumed that certain didactic types of utterances during storybook reading may support children's learning from that reading (e.g., Dickinson, De Temple, Hirschler, & Smith, 1992; Heath, 1982; Reese & Cox, 1999). It is an adult who helps the child maneuver purposefully through a maze of text, illustrations, and unfamiliar vocabulary. However, the consistent correlation between book reading and attachment security suggests that there are other, emotional dimensions to book reading that may explain whether young children learn from the process. In subsequent studies I tried to better understand these dimensions,

CAPITALIZING ON THE CHILD'S PERSONAL INTERESTS AND MOTIVES

As long as children's linguistic knowledge is limited, adults have to find ways to make a book interesting in spite of such obstacles. In line with my finding that attachment security relates to book reading I did not expect that merely explaining a book's content would be an effective way to keep the child's interest. Numerous studies identified variability in potentially important types of utterances for children's story skills: e.g., discussing what has happened, why it happened, and which feelings the story may elicit (e.g., Reese & Cox, 1999; Whitehurst et al., 1988); however, knowing from my previous studies that the emotional level of parent–child interactions influenced the reading process, I now hypothesize that parental success in the early stages might largely depend on the creation of an interactional context that fostered children's engagement.

To engage a young reader in the world of the book, it is of the utmost importance that parents capitalize on intimate knowledge of their child's personal world; on familiar and meaningful settings, possessions and sensations; and on the language with which these are associated (Jones, 1996), Research has

revealed numerous examples of caregivers changing the print or altering the text during book reading to make it more attractive to the child (e.g., Martin & Reutzel, 1999; van Kleeck et al., 1996). One of Martin and Reutzel's mothers, for instance, added a dog to a simple story, even though this animal was not mentioned in the original text, but was only present in one of the illustrations. Later on the mother explained that the child was very fond of dogs. The mother expected that inserting the dog into the story would make the text more exciting for the child.

A study involving 18-month-old Caucasian American boys (Bus et al., 1997), all very similar in age and book reading experiences, confirmed the hypothesis that parents who have an insecure relationship with their child are less likely to create an interactional context that fosters children's engagement. Profiles of interaction differed as a function of the attachment categories. Some insecurely attached children were inclined to be more unresponsive to book content and to be more distracted than the children from the secure group. The mothers in this study read from a book in which each page contained a short text accompanied by a series of pictures of babies making faces, crawling, staying, walking, playing, eating, drinking, being dressed or bathed, and sleeping. Taking into account that most children in this age range have problems understanding language, it makes more sense to focus their attention on appealing pictures, and on details that might make children aware of some events, than to read the text. Most mothers in the insecure group, however, were inclined to merely read the text, ignoring other ways to immerse the child in the book.

These mothers may have proceeded this way in order to terminate an unproductive and unsatisfactory interaction with an unresponsive and distracted child. Looking at the sessions, one gets the impression that these children do not expect support and help from the mothers during reading. I often saw the children squirm out of their mothers' laps. The mothers, on the other hand, were unable to break through their children's negative expectations and support them at the appropriate level of understanding. They limited themselves to holding their children tightly or telling them to sit and listen, Because of the lack of maternal support for their understanding and motivation, these insecure children may have been more unresponsive to the book content and more distracted than other children.

Another group of insecurely attached children was superficially more engaged, but a better look at the sessions revealed several problems. The mothers initiated labeling routines to the same extent or even more often than secure mothers. However, these insecure mothers were also inclined to overstimulate and overcontrol. For instance, they did not allow the child to skip a page or part of it when he or she was bored or eager to explore another one. The mothers insisted on exploration of all details before a new page could be read.

Their children were not obviously disengaged but were less responsive than other children. They also differed from the rest by showing aggression towards the mother (pushing or hitting her) and by responding at a low level to the book (for example hitting the book). By encouraging book-orientation, these mothers may have been attempting to circumvent their children's aggressive responses. I had the impression that because these mothers stressed dialogic reading so much, they may have provoked their children to express frustration through these behaviors.

This detailed study of parent–child interactions during book reading sessions supports the hypothesis that interactions are often awkward if the parent–child relationship is insecure. Overall, the in-depth study of differences in interaction suggests that less engagement by the children coincides with their mothers' inability to bridge the worlds of the young reader and the book. Secure parents may be more inclined to drift away from the official storyline by improvising different main characters and events. A secure parent is careful to note the child's real-life interests where they occur in the picture, even if they bear little or no obvious relation to the story as a whole (Jones, 1996). Insecure parents, on the other hand, may be less inclined to tune in to the child by identifying visual content ("look, that's your ball") or linguistic coding ("see the baba lamb?") that would attract the young reader's attention. These speculations are in line with my observations, but go beyond the "hard" results so far.

HOW BOOK READING MATTERS FOR LITERACY-LEARNING PROCESSES

In more recent studies I have begun to explore how children's learning is tied up with their book reading experiences (de Jong & Bus, 2002; Bus, Sulzby, & Kaderavek, 2001), I discuss here the outcomes of a study focused on low-income mothers with limited education and their 2-to 3-year-old children (Bus et al., 2001). It tested what children dissimilar in their book reading history would internalize from a story after four interactive readings of the book. The age at which their mothers reported to have started reading to the children ranged from before the first to around the third birthday. Previous research has proved that emergent reading of favorite books is a sensitive measure for subtle differences in children's knowledge of a story's structure, phrasing, and written characteristics (e.g., Elster, 1998; Sulzby, 1985). Even emergent readings by very young children with speech-language impairment have some characteristics of written stories (Kaderavek & Sulzby, 2000).

Children differed in their ability to reconstruct a cohesive story that included the location, the characters, the problem, the attempts to solve the problem, and the resolution (cf. Neuman, 1996). Insofar as the preschoolers in this study produced a story-like emergent reading, they described the main character's

attempt to solve his problem and the results of that attempt; after four re-readings of Sam *Vole and His Brothers* (Waddell & Firth, 1992), some children discussed how sad Sam becomes when he rummages alone through the garden, but noted that he feels happy again when he encounters his two big brothers. Hardly any child described either the setting (two big brothers who collect grass and nuts for Sam) or the main character's problem (Sam wants to show that he can collect things by himself).

When children began to reproduce facets of the story, then the phrasings of their emergent readings became more similar to the original text: i.e., their emergent readings included nouns, verbs, and whole phrases derived from the focal book. Through repeated readings the children internalized discourse structures (e.g., "all by myself," "slipping out of the house") and vocabulary (e.g., "meadow," "happily") typical of this book.

Not until children had been involved in book reading routines for a long time did they reach the more advanced levels of internalization. Two-and 3-year-old children in this study who had started book reading with their parents early (before 14 months) internalized more from the focal book after four re-readings than their later-starting peers. Apparently, internalization of a story's content and phrasing is not just rote memorization stimulated by the re-readings. Children use the knowledge of story structure and phrasing that they have acquired through previous experiences with books to make sense of new texts and internalize a story's structure and phrasing (cf.Purcell-Gates, 1988; Sénéchal, 1997; Sulzby, 1985; Sulzby & Zecker, 1991). Children who have internalized the chains of events and phrasings typical of storybooks are better prepared to recognize events and structures in new texts. MacNeil (1989), looking back at his own early book reading experiences, suggests that words and word patterns accumulate in layers; as the layers thicken, they govern all understanding and appreciation of language thenceforth.

Examination of correlations between characteristics of the interactive reading sessions and children's internalizations strengthened the hypothesis that parents should adapt their book reading styles to each child's level of book understanding. The amount of discussion decreased as children were involved in book reading for a longer period. In line with another study (Bus & van IJzendoorn, 1995), the more experienced children needed fewer explanations and less verbal support during the reading of text. That is, they were interested in the story without needing much extra textual support. The interactions of mother–child dyads with longer book reading experience focused more on making inferences. These mothers initiated discussions about the main characters' motives. In other words, the discussions became more complex as children knew more about stories—knowledge accumulated as a result of previous book reading experiences.

Consistent with the assumption that reading promotes the understanding of basic storybook concepts, which in turn facilitates the understanding of new

books, a child's history of book reading with their parents seems to determine the extent to which they will internalize a story's structure and language from repeated readings. When parents began book reading sessions with their children at an early age, those children internalized more information from repeated readings of a book. Over time and with guided practice, preschoolers begin to notice similarities between chains of events and phrasings of events and emotions in the present story and in previously read stories. In addition to internalization of the story's structure and language, one may expect that older and more experienced children would also internalize vocabulary and features of the written text (cf. de Jong & Bus, 2002; Murray, Stahl, & Ivey, 1996).

CONCLUSION

Children do not learn simply from their parents reading a text aloud. Particularly in the youngest age groups, stories may not be attractive by themselves. The series of studies described here supports the assumption that a child's interest in books and joint reading is rooted in adults' ability to engage the child, rather than in some biologically endowed trait urging children to explore uncharted territories and stimulate their own development (e.g., Crain-Thoreson & Dale, 1992). As the parent–child relationship becomes more secure, children derive more enjoyment from being read to and become more engaged during these sessions (Bus et al., 1997; Bus & van IJzendoorn, 1988, 1995, 1997). This result was replicated several times, among various age groups.

The finding that parent-child attachment relates to the quality and quantity of book reading suggests that parents add something of their own to book readings in order to make them more exciting for their children. This is particularly true with very young children, for whom books are hard to understand and not enjoyable as such. Children's commitment and learning depends on the parental ability to bridge the child's world and the world of the book by using their intimate knowledge of the child's personal experiences, of familiar and meaningful settings, possessions and sensations, and of the language with which these sensations are associated, More secure parents seem to know better how to adapt the pictures and text that will interest their child, even though their book reading sessions may look very similar to those of less-secure parents. With very young children (1-to 2-year-olds), even drastic adaptations may be required in order to immerse the child in a reading, when text is part of the book. Parents may ignore the focal story and create new stories for their own children; a disproportionate amount of adult speech time may be devoted to details from the pictures that have little to do with the printed story that accompanies them (cf. Jones, 1996; Martin & Reutzel, 1999).

I doubt that there is a strong basis for promoting specific styles (such as non-immediate talk) for reading books to the very young (cf. Dickinson & Tabors,

1991). Speculations, extensions and inferences are, of course, part of many discussions surrounding parent–child readings. But there is no evidence that the growth of early literacy skills is particularly fostered by challenging discursive-language abilities. Research suggests that parental style reflects the extent to which book reading has become a routine, and children begin to understand stories without much support (Bus et al., 2001). The amount of parent—child interaction during book reading, for instance, decreases as preschoolers grow older and more experienced (e.g., Bus et al., 2001; Bus & van IJzendoorn, 1995). Supportive interactions are required during the transition from looking at pictures to understanding a story's structure and phrasing. Once children have built up basic conceptions of stories by sharing books with their parents, they may be able to internalize the structure and phrasing of new stories just by listening to read-alouds.

Some researchers believe that children's learning from book reading may not become manifest until late elementary school, when they begin to read stories and other texts on their own (Leseman & de Jong, 2001; van Kleeck, Gillam, Hamilton, & McGrath, 1997; Whitehurst et al, 1999). Another hypothesis holds that vocabulary and story understanding affect beginning reading skills, as well (e.g., Bus, 2001). The internalization of stories' phrasing and vocabulary may make text more transparent and predictable, and in this way may contribute to the transition from emergent to conventional reading. Furthermore, book reading may affect knowledge of the written form of text and words, and thus support beginning reading skills. Kindergartners internalize physical features of the book and of print when they become more proficient in understanding stories. Mapping out effects of book reading in a group of 5-to 6-year-olds has revealed internalization of features of written text, as well (de Jong & Bus, 2002).

The bottom line of the results is that the process of learning to understand books in the early stages of reading development strongly depends on the social-emotional qualities of the parent—child interaction. Parents raise children's interest in books by the way in which they mediate stories. The emotional qualities of reading sessions seem more important than content-related aspects such as inference, active participation by the child, or quantity of discussion. This is true at least as long as children are relatively inexperienced, as were the children in the studies I have discussed here in this chapter. Given that many parents have problems bridging the gap between the world of their young child and that of books, the admonition "read to your child" perhaps should not be taken too literally.

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2
Learning Words From Books

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Looking at and reading books with young children is widely recommended as a contribution to children's school readiness and as preparation for learning to read. No doubt there are multiple paths by which such experiences contribute to children's development during the preschool period—including the positive affective consequences of having an adult's full attention; opportunities for becoming familiar with the conventions of text and the organization of books in various genres; exposure to print leading to knowledge of letters and numbers; opportunities to develop phonological awareness from books focusing on rhyme and word play; exposure to culturally valued information; and engagement in linguistically relatively complex conversations. In this chapter, though, we focus on examining the potential of shared book reading to contribute to a very specific, and, we argue, crucial aspect of preschool development: children's vocabulary,

Our goal is not to provide a comprehensive review of the sizeable body of research which has shown empirical links between book reading experiences and vocabulary (e.g., Beals, De Temple, & Dickinson, 1994; Sénéchal, LeFevre, Hudson, & Lawson, 1996; Sénéchal, LeFevre, Thomas, & Daley, 1998), Rather, it is to link analyses of interaction during book reading and the particular affordances of book reading to the body of research on the nature and course of children's vocabulary development.

Vocabulary development is a key challenge during the preschool period, and indeed throughout childhood and adolescence (Nagy & Herman, 1987). Vocabulary size is highly correlated to reading ability, via mechanisms that probably shift from the preschool to the adolescence period (Anderson & Freebody, 1981). High correlations between the vocabularies of preschool-aged children and their early reading progress no doubt reflect in part the correlation of vocabulary size with other factors that promote literacy development, such as knowledge about concepts of literacy, capacity to engage in phonological analysis of words (Walley, 1993), and greater world knowledge. The correlation of vocabulary with reading later in a child's school years probably reflects the fact that wide and intensive reading is the only way for children to learn many

relatively infrequent words—thus, only good and avid readers have optimal opportunities to expand their vocabularies (Elley, 1989), Of course, knowing more words also enables comprehension (e.g., Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986), which in turn is prerequisite to the capacity for learning new words from reading.

Vocabulary knowledge is wildly variable among normally developing children, with estimated vocabulary sizes of first-graders varying by a factor of five (Shibles, 1959). This variation is strongly related to density of oral language exposure (e.g., Huttenlocher, Haight, Bryk, Selzer, & Lyons, 1991), which in turn is strongly related to social class (Hart & Risley, 1995). Vocabulary relates to reading skill (and amount of time spent reading) in school-age children (Chall, 1987), and in the preschool period relates to being read to interactively.[1]

As a background to discussing the basic claim of this chapter, that book reading with preschoolers can be a major stimulus for vocabulary development, we first review briefly some of the conclusions drawn from research on child language development about the nature of vocabulary learning in preschoolers.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT VOCABULARY ACQUISITION FROM BIRTH TO AGE 5?

The early language acquisition of hundreds of children, learning several dozen different languages, has now been described. We know there is considerable variability in the course of language development, reflecting differences among children, the settings in which they learn to talk, and language structures. Thus, the brief sketch of vocabulary acquisition that we present here is of necessity simplified and incomplete.

Time Course

Children typically speak their first recognizable words at about 1 year of age, and typically acquire their first 25 to 50 words relatively slowly, and with great effort, often losing earlier-learned forms as new forms emerge. These early

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[1] The title of this chapter reveals the assumption underlying this analysis of the association between reading and vocabulary; Reading has an impact on vocabulary. Like Stanovich (1986), we recognize that the nature of the association is bidirectional. Children with greater vocabularies probably enjoy reading more, have a better understanding of content, and are able to draw on a wider array of reading material, thereby reading more and increasing their vocabularies. Young children with greater vocabularies may be more engaged or attentive while being read to and they may request book reading more than those with smaller vocabularies. Mothers and children with greater vocabularies may engage in more interesting or complex conversations about books, thus exposing the child to new words.

words may be pronounced correctly, or in ways that are greatly simplified (e.g., *baba* for "blanket," "baby," "bottle," and/or "booboo"). Early words are often used in semantically unconventional ways (e.g., using *dog* only for the family dog, or, conversely, using it for all four-legged animals), and the communicative meanings expressed by early words are quite limited when compared to those expressed only a few months later. Thus, for example, nouns might be used for naming in the context of reading a particular book or for requesting favored objects, but not for referring to those same objects with other communicative purposes.

Typically, it is sometime between the ages of 18 and 28 months when children move beyond the early word period, in which words are acquired one by one, into a period referred to as the "vocabulary spurt." At this point, lexical acquisition suddenly becomes more rapid (going from a new word every few days to several new words a day) and systematic (words become more conventional in meaning, more regular in pronunciation, and seem to be related to one another within a semantic system). For children learning English, Dutch, Spanish, and certain other, less-studied languages, this vocabulary spurt is normally characterized by a sudden increase in the percentage of common nouns that children know (Fenson et al., 1994). Speakers of languages such as Korean, Japanese, and Hungarian may focus more on verbs during the spurt, for reasons that have to do with language structure and characteristics of parent–child interaction. It is interesting to note how picture books designed for very young children in the English-speaking world reflect (and perhaps enhance) the noun bias by offering many pictures of objects. Such a strong noun focus may be atypical in picture books designed for young Korean and Japanese speakers, who are themselves more focused on learning verbs (Gopnik & Choi, 1995).

Facilitating Word Learning

A long line of research with English-speaking children has robustly demonstrated that children learn nouns in the context of joint attention, that is, when mother and child are both looking at or manipulating an object, and the mother provides a name for it (Tomasello & Farrar, 1986). Conversely, though, verbs seem to be learned in the context of impending, rather than current, action (e.g., a mother, saying of an unsteady tower of blocks, "watch out, it's going to fall," creates a context for learning the verb *fall*; Tomasello, 1995). Part of the reason why vocabulary development is so rapid under conditions of rich input is that preschool-aged children have robust capacities for social analysis, which enable them to figure out adults' likely referents even when the connection between word and referent is not straightforward or immediately apparent (Tomasello & Barton, 1994).

As already noted, language input is a major predictor of speed of vocabulary acquisition. Children who hear more words per unit of time learn more words.

Within the limits of amount of speech ever addressed to children in the real world, the relationship seems to hold. Part of the density effect is presumably mediated by frequency—we know that children normally need several exposures to a word in order to learn it. Young children learn their first words from among those that are most frequent in their language environments (Hart, 1991), although older children with larger vocabularies can learn words from fewer exposures.

In addition, perceptual salience influences word learning. Thus, words presented in isolation, words that are stressed, words in brief utterances, and words in initial or final position within utterances are most likely to become part of the child's vocabulary. Words are also more easily learned if they are presented in the exaggerated prosody and stress patterns typical of child-directed speech (Golinkoff, Hirsh-Pasek, Bailey, & Wenger, 1992).

Words that have high affective value are also more easily learned. For example, children's early words typically include the names of important persons, and words used to request or mark enjoyable activities (e.g., *peek-a-boo;* Ninio & Snow, 1996). Later on, words embedded in highly valued narratives or activities are more easily acquired (Snow & Goldfield, 1983).

As children's vocabularies grow, word learning becomes easier. This is largely because of the paradigm effect—children come to understand paradigmatic relationships among words, and can then quickly learn new words that fill slots in their paradigms. Thus, after children have mastered *red, green, yellow, blue, black,* and *white,* the more infrequent color words like *purple, orange,* and *pink* become learnable. Children who know the names of 15 dinosaur species can more easily learn a new dinosaur name than children who know no dinosaur names at all.

The paradigm effect is one aspect of the facilitative effect of semantic embeddedness. Words heard in semantically rich linguistic contexts are learned better. Semantic support might derive from physical contexts (using a word in conjunction with a picture that clarifies its meaning) or linguistically informative contexts (e.g., saying "I was enraged, I was really angry, I have never been so mad"). Weizman and Snow (2001) showed that maternal use of low-frequency lexical items in rich semantic contexts predicted later vocabulary growth more strongly than these items' use in lean or uninformative contexts (see the following section for examples from book reading interactions). Similarly, contexts drawing on detailed world knowledge can be helpful (e.g., if the task were to learn the nonce word *maxillosaurus,* the dinosaur maven could benefit from a sentence like "the maxillosaurus resembles the stegosaurus in size, but unlike the stegosaurus it had pointed teeth and a huge jaw, because it was a meat eater,").

Word learning is not an all-or-nothing process. Children can start to establish a lexical item in their memory after one or two exposures, in a process called fast-mapping; but full specification of the item's phonology, meaning, and usage

may require many exposures (Carey, 1978; Clark, 1973, 1993). Occasional re-exposure will also be required in order to retain words by consolidating memory traces (Nagy & Scott, 2000).

Finally, because "knowing a word" means knowing its phonological, semantic, and syntactic properties in detail, passive exposure supports learning less effectively than do opportunities to use the word (Nagy & Scott, 2000). Thus, environments that support word learning permit children to engage in conversations with adults, during which the children find opportunities to use words that they are in the process of acquiring.

HOW MIGHT BOOK READING PROMOTE VOCABULARY ACQUISITION EVEN MORE EFFICIENTLY?

We turn now to consider the features of book reading interactions that have been described in our own research and that of others, and to consider how those interactions that have been described as effective or high-quality might be influencing vocabulary. Many researchers have analyzed conversations around book reading in order to identify the features or aspects of those conversations that effectively support children's language and literacy development (e.g., Ninio, 1983; Ninio & Burner, 1978; Snow & Ninio, 1986). In some cases, these features have even been incorporated into intervention programs, which in turn have shown effects on children's development (Lombard, 1994; Whitehurst et al, 1994). There is, fortunately, considerable convergence among the various findings on the question of which interactive features are facilitative. Here, we briefly present a description of these facilitative features of or approaches to book reading, together with a summary of the research findings that suggest that these features are, indeed, effective. (Many of these enhanced book reading styles are discussed in greater detail by their originators in other chapters of this volume.) We also discuss—somewhat more speculatively—how each feature or strategy might contribute specifically to children's vocabulary development. Future research will, we hope, subject these speculations to rigorous empirical study.

Non-Immediate Talk During Book Reading

Non-immediate talk is that talk produced by mother or child which goes beyond the information contained in text or illustrations to make predictions; to make connections to the child's past experiences, other books, or the real world; to draw inferences, analyze information, or discuss the meaning of words and offer explanations. In the Home School Study of Language and Literacy Development (Snow, 1991), mothers' use of this type of talk while reading to their preschool-aged children was found to relate to their children's later performance on measures of vocabulary, story comprehension, definitions, and emergent literacy (De Temple, 1994, 1991).

One component of non-immediate talk is the discussion of vocabulary—for example, explanations of word meaning. Non-immediate talk creates opportunities for children to understand and use the somewhat more sophisticated vocabulary required for envoicing evaluative reactions to the book, discussing characters' internal states, making predictions concerning the next episode, and so on. These kinds of talk inevitably introduce relatively complex vocabulary,

In the following interaction, 3-year-old Laval's mother points to a picture while reading the picture book *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Carle, 1966), and asks him to produce the appropriate label. But when he's unable to do so she provides two non-immediate utterances, one that offers a defining feature of the desired word and another that suggests an evaluative element ("real hot").

Example 1. Laval, Age 39 Months
(Source: New Chance Observational Study)

Mother: What's that? [pointing to the sun]
Child: [shrugs]
Mother: What's that? What make you hot?
Child: I don't know. Huh?
Mother: What make you hot?
Child: [shrugs]
Mother: The sun don't make you hot?
Child: Mmhm. [nods]
Mother: It make you real hot? [nodding]
Child: Mmhm. [nods]

By contrast, Jamil and his mother engage in a rote type of interaction ("recitation style") while reading a substantial portion of the same book. However, upon completion of the text the mother focuses on real-world information (that caterpillars turn into butterflies) and the rare vocabulary word cocoon; both of these were classified as non-immediate talk. She not only draws attention to the purpose of the cocoon (i.e., what caterpillars live in) but also requires a standard pronunciation of the target word, making sure her son has learned the new word.

Example 2. Jamil, Age 57 Months
(Source: New Chance Observational Study)

Child: He built a small house.
Mother: Called a cocoon.
Child: Called a cocoon.

Mother: Around himself.
Child: Around himself.
Mother: He stayed inside.
Child: He stayed inside.
Mother: For more than two weeks.
Child: For more than two weeks.
Mother: Then he nibbled a hole.
Child: Then he nibble a hole.
Mother: In the cocoon.
Child: In the cocoon.
Mother: Pushed his way out and.
Child: Pushed his way out and.
Mother: He was a beautiful butterfly!
Child: He was a beautiful butterfly!
Mother: So what the cocoon turn into? I mean excuse me. What do
            caterpillars turn to?
Child: Butterflies!
Mother: Right. What do they live in?
Child: A butterfly house. Um, this, [points to cocoon]
Mother: What is that called?
Child: A cula.
Mother: A cocoon!
Child: A cocoon.
Mother: Okay.

The following example shows how reading an expository book about elephants (Hoffman, 1983), provided by the experimenter, provides a unique, rich opportunity for Domingo and his mother to discuss a topic that is remote from their day-to-day experience. Their discussion includes vocabulary words such as *tusk, ivory,* and *herd,* embedded in evaluative comments and connections to the child's life, which are classified as non-immediate because they go beyond the information in the text.

Example 3. Domingo, Age 5; 11 Years (Source: Home School Study of Language and Literacy Development)

Mother: That's a tusk see? It's white. Know what Domingo?
Child: Hmm?
Mother: Hunters kill these elephants for that.
Child: Why?
Mother: Because they want it for, um, well, they use it for different
            things I think um some museums buy them and I don't know
            about museums but I know that they kill the for this white um.

Child:	There's no tusk on these elephants though.
Mother:	See? That one's bigger so some of them die because of that. That is sad.
Child:	I wish there was not such things as hunters and guns.
Mother:	I know it me too. Oh there's a herd. That's a lot of them. See how they walk?
Child:	Ma here's ones that's dead.
Mother:	I don't think he's dead! Well we'll find out. "They use their tusks to dig." Oh see he's digging a hole! "They use their tusks to dig for salt…."
Child:	Hmm.
Mother:	Let's look and see if there's another page you might like. It's ivory! The tusks are made of ivory. And they can make things with these tusks and that's why some animals, they die, hunters kill them.
Child:	No wonder why they have hunters.
Mother:	Yeah that's sad.
Child:	I'm never gonna be a hunter when I grow up,
Mother:	Oh thank God I'm glad.

In classroom situations where teachers read to groups of children, it may appear to be more difficult to ask the open-ended questions characteristic of non-immediate talk. It also seems likely that the benefit of non-immediate talk would be lost without the opportunity for individual verbal participation. However, in the classrooms of 4-year-olds in the Home School Study of Language and Literacy, the amount of non-immediate talk used by the teachers while reading to the group was strongly associated with the receptive vocabulary scores of our target children (Beals et al., 1994).

Dickinson and Smith (1994) identified the importance of a particular type of non-immediate talk during group book readings in the preschool classroom. Child-involved analytic talk, which refers to analysis, prediction, and vocabulary utterances by both the teacher and children, was observed during book reading. Four-year-olds exposed to a high proportion of child-involved analytic talk during group book reading in preschool had higher kindergarten vocabulary scores, even when controlling for total amount of book-related talk. Child-involved analytic talk, like non-immediate talk during book reading at home, and like dialogic book reading talk, can be presumed to promote vocabulary development by presenting words in a rich semantic context, and by promoting children's use of novel lexical items. In a study of 4-year-olds from low-income families, Wasik and Bond (2001) found that even in group settings, book-presented words increased vocabulary if the book reading was interactive and stimulated child talk, provided a rich semantic context for novel vocabulary items, and repeated the words often enough.

Book Reading Quality

Book Reading Quality is a global rating of reader performance that captures an element of the book reading experience not necessarily reflected in codings of the conversation that occurs during book reading. Book Reading Quality combines ratings of the reader on three point scales in each of the following areas: Reading Intonation, Reading Fluency, and Comfort Level. Readers who include little or no talk about the book may nonetheless successfully engage chil-dren through the use of an effective, animated, and lively reading style that demonstrates their own enjoyment and comprehension of the story. Conversely, a halting, awkward reading style with misplaced emphases may impede a child's comprehension or interest.

In a study of teen mothers from a welfare sample reading to their preschool-aged children, Book Reading Quality was associated with the mothers' educational level and with a rating of the child's home environment (HOME-SF; De Temple & Snow, 1998). Mothers who were rated higher on Book Reading Quality also used more non-immediate talk while reading (both the percent of talk that was coded as non-immediate and the number of non-immediate utterances).

Higher Book Reading Quality could be assumed to promote vocabulary development specifically by presenting new words from the text in more easily comprehensible, semantic contexts, and by heightening their salience through fluent and dramatic oral reading. Such a reading style provides access to high-quality phonological models of new words, and furthermore promotes child interest in being read to, thus increasing density of exposure.

Dialogic Reading

Whitehurst and his colleagues (Zeverbergen & Whitehurst, this volume) describe a method of reading aloud to young children that is designed to enhance their language development. This approach is particularly applicable to early intervention programs for children at risk of academic failure, because such programs have well-established techniques for teaching parents and other caregivers how to implement the method. *Dialogic reading* is based on three theoretical principles: encouraging the child to become an active learner during book reading (e.g., asking the child questions), providing feedback that models more sophisticated language (e.g., expansions), and finally, challenging the child's knowledge and skills by raising the conversation to a level just above their ability (e.g., asking about characteristics of an object for which they already know the label).

In experimental studies, the preschool-aged children of middle-class mothers who were trained to use dialogic reading techniques did, in fact, score higher on measures of expressive language than the children of untrained mothers

(Whitehurst et al., 1988), though unfortunately these positive effects did not extend to receptive vocabulary as tested using the PPVT (Dunn & Dunn, 1981).

Further experimental studies focusing on children in low-SES families at risk for academic failure involved training daycare teachers in the use of dialogic reading to groups of children (Whitehurst et al., 1994). Children with teachers who used the technique scored higher on measures of both expressive and receptive vocabulary than children in the control groups. Those children whose parents *and* teachers were part of the experiment displayed the greatest language skill on these measures.

Another powerful test of the effectiveness of dialogic reading was implemented by Lim (1999; see also www.wri-edu.org/bookplay); she worked with Korean-immigrant families whose children were losing their spoken Korean as the family language gradually shifted to English. Lim taught dialogic reading techniques to the parents of these families in Korean, and provided Korean books for them to read with their children. The children in the experimental group showed significant improvements in their oral productive and receptive Korean skills, even though the book reading sessions constituted their major source of exposure. The length of time that the parents reported being engaged in Korean book reading was related to the gains made by the children.

The impact of dialogic reading can be related to a number of the vocabulary development principles listed in the first section of this chapter. Dialogic reading provides richer semantic contexts for novel words, tends to last longer than straight reading—thus giving children denser exposure to the book vocabulary, and promotes children's use of novel lexical items.

Comprehender-Style Book Readings

Several studies describing naturally occurring styles of reading to young children distinguish the styles of mothers called "describers," who focus on description (similar to immediate talk, which may involve simply labeling or describing pictures), from those they call "comprehenders," who focus on story meaning (similar to non-immediate talk, which may include inferences and interpretation of the story). These different styles are associated with children's language skills. Children of middle-class mothers using the "comprehender" style had higher vocabulary scores than children whose mothers favored the "descriptor" style focusing on labels; both maternal styles and child vocabulary differences remained consistent over the course of the longitudinal study (Haden, Reese, & Fivush, 1996).

Reese and Cox (1999) used an experimental design to investigate the effect of book reading style on preschoolers' emergent literacy skills, including vocabulary. They isolated three styles: describer, comprehender, and perfor-mance-oriented (in which the reader discusses the story after the reading). Their

results indicate that children's initial vocabulary skills are an important factor in determining the effect of reading style on vocabulary growth. Those children with lower initial PPVT scores showed more growth on the posttest if they were in the describer group, whereas those with higher initial scores seemed to benefit most from the performance-oriented style of reading.

These findings conform with what we would expect from our brief review of vocabulary development. Younger children (those still focused on acquiring nouns) benefit from the more noun-oriented describer style, whereas linguistically more advanced children benefit from the discussion associated with a comprehension focus, during which they are exposed to more sophisticated vocabulary and have opportunities to use novel words themselves.

Instructive and Helpful Interactions

Weizman and Snow (2001; see also Weizman, 1995) performed an analysis of the types of talk that surround the use of rare or sophisticated vocabulary items in book reading, as well as other interactive settings. They found that the incidence of interactions characterized as instructive or helpful (i.e., interactions in which information about the meaning of the word was available, and during which the child's attention and learning were scaffolded) explained as much variance in vocabulary outcomes as did the density of sophisticated words. Examples of these instructive and helpful interactions display how talk supported vocabulary learning:

Example 4. Five-Year-Old Child and His Mother Reading What Next, Baby Bear! (Murphy, 1983), Coded as Instructive and Highly Scaffolded (Source: Home School Study of Language and Literacy Development)

Child: I want to have…what are those? Those are those are little little um volcanoes?

Mother: Little volcanoes? Well yeah. Kind of. They're *craters*.

Child: *Craters?*

Mother: Yeah,

Child: And the fire comes out of it?

Mother: No. They just look like *volcanoes* but they're not.

Child: Yeah they're on the moon.

Mother: Yeah.

Child: Big things like when they have a round thing? That's the *volcano.*

Mother: Mmhm.

Example 5. Five-Year-Old and His Mother Reading What Next, Baby Bear!, Coded as Helpful, Not Scaffolded (Source: Home School Study of Language and Literacy Development)

Mother: What next, baby bear! We've read some of these other Pied
              Piper books. I guess not this one but they have other bear stories.
              There's that Christmas bear one?
Child: Yeah! We have it
Mother: They had a story about the bear that couldn't *hibernate*. He woke
              up in the middle of the winter and then a guy comes to his door.
              Yeah all dressed in red and he's cold and the bear lets him in the
              house in his cave and the bear plays guitar and he feeds the guy.
              Then he goes for a ride with the guy up in the sky.
Child: That's Santa Claus.

These examples demonstrate that book reading constitutes a context within which quite unusual words can be introduced, their meaning can be more easily explained because of pictorial and textual support, and the child's attention to the words and their referents can be effectively scaffolded.

Repeated Readings of the Same Book

Snow and Goldfield (1983) described changes in the nature of conversation between a single mother and her child during successive readings of a particular book. They documented that lexical items used by the mother during earlier discussions of a particular page or picture were often adopted by the child during later discussions, particularly if those words had been repeated by the child when first used by the mother. The child was also more likely to acquire items for use if they had been used more than once by the mother, that is, if a particular picture was discussed several times and the same words were used in discussing it every time.

   These findings relate clearly to the principles of lexical acquisition discussed previously—namely, that repetition and children's active use of novel lexical items promote their acquisition. This study also highlights one of the unique features of book reading interactions—that they allow parent–child dyads to revisit the same topics of conversation several times, and to rely on information brought up during previous encounters to enrich their discussions. Topics recur while looking at books in a much more reliable way than they do in other interactive settings, such as playing with toys or engaging in mealtime conversations.