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The Challenges of Implementing Best Practices: Experiences of Dialogic Reading by Teachers of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

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The Challenges of Implementing Best Practices:
Experiences of Dialogic Reading by Teachers of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

Jacquelyn M. Urbani, Ph.D.

Abstract

Deaf and hard of hearing children frequently have delayed language and little experience with books because they do not share a common language with their hearing parents. However, there is little research concerning their language and literacy development in the classroom and equally little discussion of teacher responsibilities to address these issues.

This study investigated the implementation of dialogic reading, which aims to engage students in active discussion and retellings of stories, using American Sign Language. Because dialogic reading research with language delayed, hearing preschool students resulted in significant improvement of language skill (Whitehurst, Arnold, et al., 1994; Whitehurst, et al., 1999), it was a logical candidate for implementation with DHH students.

Dialogic Reading Strategy

Teacher Communications	Examples
Prompt	
Completion ask to complete a phrase	*"Corduroy lost a _____."*
Recall ask to remember details	*"Do you remember what happened with the security guard?"*
Open-Ended encourage use of new vocabulary and discussion of story ideas	*"What happens when Corduroy looks for his button?"*
Wh-Word Questions who, what, when, where, which	*"When did Lisa return to the store?"*
Distancing Connect something in book to students' lives	*"What kind of toys do you like?"*
Evaluate provide gentle correction to misunderstanding	*"That is not an elevator. It's called an escalator."*
Expand provide further information	*"People live in many types of housing. Lisa lives in an apartment building with many floors."*
Repeat encourage student to repeat correct response	*"Tell us again why Lisa's mom didn't want to buy Corduroy."*

Research Questions

1. What specific knowledge and skills do teachers need to implement dialogic reading practices in order to address the language and literacy needs of Deaf and hard of hearing students?

1. What are challenges to implementing dialogic reading? What aspects impede implementation, fidelity, and sustainability? What factors are consistent with sustained practice?

1. How does dialogic reading need to be adapted to meet the particular needs of these students?

    a. In what ways do these adaptations surface across grades, settings, levels of hearing loss, and communication needs?

    b. What are critical features of supplemental direct instruction connecting ASL signs to English print?

Methods

A hybrid of case study and design-based research methods was used to investigate the implementation of dialogic reading with 4 elementary teachers. The research followed these procedures:

Prior to the Intervention
- Observations of baseline practices
- Questionnaire
- Interview

Training
- Introduction to study and supporting research base
- Dialogic Reading Video
- Discussion

Implementation
- Observations of reading practices
- Collaborative meetings
- Document review
- Exit interview

Participants

	Erin	Rachel	Arielle	Meg
	Deaf School		**Special Day Class**	
Grade	1	2	2-3	4-5
Number of Students	7	6	9	5
Years Teaching	7	18	1	2
Meeting Hours	4.9	4.3	5.8	9.6
Reading Sessions	17	11	9	18

Findings

Findings indicate that the teachers were hindered first by a lack of knowledge and then subsequently by the difficulties of implementation. These difficulties included those identified in previous research: teacher time for small groups, a difference in philosophy of teaching and learning, and teacher effort (Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998).

Specifically, teachers were not regularly engaged in reading to students, admitted they did not know how to address language delays within the classroom, and felt additional adaptations for their students competed with their professional commitment to other curricular areas.

Future research needs to investigate implementation issues for the purposes of sustainability, and teacher education programs—for pre-and in-service teachers—need to prepare teachers for the multifaceted, complex nature of instruction.

Impediments to Implementation

Time for Small Groups
- Grouping Students
- Planning & Coordinating Simultaneous Activities
- Communicating with staff

Teaching Philosophy
- Fostering primary language development vs. literacy development
- Different purposes for reading: reading books *to* students, guided instruction *with* students, independent reading *by* students
- Responsibility to curriculum vs. to child

Teacher Effort
- Facilitating & maintaining conversations
- Simultaneously supporting student participation while monitoring behavior

Adaptations for DHH Students
- Modeling conversation & turn-taking skills
- Visual Attention Needs: seating arrangements, pre-reading book, holding book
- Bilingual Support: comparisons between American Sign Language & English print