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ABSTRACT

This paper explains two observation guides that teachers can use to describe emergent reading behaviors among young children during the children's interactions with familiar storybooks. The guides are derived from a review of research and focus on independent and assisted interactions. When observing children's independent interactions with storybooks, teachers can examine the following factors related to children's oral reconstruction of a story: (1) the nature of text created; (2) completeness of the story; (3) the source of the story; (4) accuracy of text creation; (5) book-handling behaviors; and (5) oral delivery. During assisted storybook interactions, when adult assistance is needed on a continuous basis, children's responses can be assessed in three categories: the nature of text segments created, the source of the child's response, and book handling. By using these guides to carefully watch young children interact with storybooks, teachers can become aware of children's emergent literacy knowledge. A list of 53 references, copies of teacher's assessment forms, and examples of children's story retelling are provided. (MM)

Informal Assessment of Emergent Reading Behaviors Through Observations of Assisted and Independent Storybook Interactions

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RUNNING HEAD: Observing Storybook Interactions

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to describe emergent reading behaviors that can be observed as young children interact with familiar storybooks. Two observation guides are introduced and explained: one for assisted storybook interactions and one for use with independent storybook interactions. The guides presented here are offered as a way teachers can begin observing young children's interactions with storybooks. Frequent, thoughtful observations can provide teachers with an awareness of children's growth toward literacy, as well as their need for literacy-related activities.

Informal Assessment of Emergent Reading Behaviors Through Observation of Assisted and Independent Storybook Interactions

An inherent part of teaching/educating young children involves tracking and evaluating their learning and development. For some time formal assessment measures have been the dominant technique for determining the status of children's development and learning (Stallman & Pearson, 1990).

Dependence on formal assessment measures has recently come under question (Smith, 1990; Teale, 1988). The concerns center on the relationship of standardized test content to the entire range of literacy-related behaviors (e.g. listening, speaking, composing, reading) and the processes involved (not just the products resulting from literacy behaviors). Standardized test measures have also been faulted for providing little usable information to teachers in planning for daily classroom interactions and curriculum implementation. Advances in reading theory (Smith, 1990) and accompanying changes in curriculum (i.e. from a subskill focus to an emergent literacy/holistic focus) (Teale, 1988), have increased educators' awareness of the need for other ways of examining young children's developing literacy knowledge (Bredekamp, 1988; Morrow, 1990).

Informal assessment differs from formal, standardized assessment in several respects, most notably in format. While formal measures often require a paper and pencil response to a series of carefully selected, isolated stimuli (Stallman & Pearson, 1990), informal assessment often focuses on behavior within daily contexts and learning situations (Smith, 1990) and looks at learning-in-progress rather than the product or end-knowledge.

The use of careful, systematic observations of young children's interactions in literacy-related events has been identified as a valuable way for teachers to obtain ecologically valid information about the "why, what, and how" of emergent literacy behaviors (Teale, 1988, 1990).

"Kidwatching" is a term used by Goodman (1985) to describe purposeful observations of young children's development and learning within a classroom setting. Teachers are encouraged to become careful observers of children's literacy-related interactions, so they, as teachers, can perceive in-process development (Goodman, 1985; Watson, 1985).

Children's independent attempts to read storybooks have been documented in naturalistic, ethnographic studies involving home environments as well as early childhood classrooms (Doake, 1981; Martinez & Teale,

1989). Thus, planning to observe children engaged in this activity within their natural environment can provide for unobtrusive assessment.

Early storybook experiences have been associated with important literacy-related developments: (a) early reading acquisition (Briggs & Elkind, 1973; Clark, 1976; Durkin, 1966;); (b) learning the structure and function of written language (Chomsky, 1972; Irwin, 1960; Smith, 1971); (c) acquiring a desire and interest in reading, (Arbuthnot & Sutherland, 1977; Smith & Parker 1977); and (d) growth of vocabulary and sense of story structure (Mandler & Johnson, 1977; Morrow, 1985).

Several assessment measures have been developed through exploratory research in language development (Genishi & Dyson, 1984) and emergent literacy (Morrow, 1990; Sulzby, 1985), and have contributed important ways of describing children's developing literacy knowledge.

The purpose of this article is to explain two observation guides that can be used by teachers to describe emergent reading behaviors among young children during interactions with familiar storybooks. These observation guides have been derived from a review of research (Doake, 1981; Genishi & Dyson, 1984; Morrow, 1990; Otto 1984, 1990a, 1990b; Sulzby, 1985, 1991).

Before explaining the observation guides, it is necessary to consider the nature of the literacy task for emergent readers as they attempt to read storybooks.

Sources Used for Reconstructed Texts

As children interact with storybooks, they attempt to reconstruct the story. The term reconstruct is used here to describe the child's active attempt to re-create the familiar story for an adult listener. Because these children are not yet conventional readers, the task is a challenging one. By closely examining their behavior as they attempt reconstruction, it is possible to see their knowledge of the process of reading emerge.

Children appear to use two main resources in reconstructing text: (1) knowledge of oral language (i.e. linguistic knowledge) and (2) knowledge of written language. Children start learning language when they are newborns. First, their listening vocabulary begins to develop, followed by attempts to create their own words or to produce approximations of adults' words (Reich, 1986). By the time a child is four or five years old and attending preschool or kindergarten, the child has significant receptive and productive oral language knowledge. This linguistic knowledge has five components (Gleason, 1989): (a) syntactic information, which represents the child's awareness of grammar, rules for putting words together in utterances; (b) semantic

information, which refers to concepts and labels for those concepts; (c) phonetic information, which includes the child's awareness of the sound system of language; (d) morphologic information, which represents rules governing the use of morphemes in language; and (e) pragmatic information, which involves the child's knowledge of how language is used in different contexts.

It is this language ability or body of linguistic knowledge that the child brings to the storybook interaction and provides the basis for the interaction. As the child approaches conventional literacy, knowledge of written language develops in each of the components of linguistic knowledge described above. Through examining children's reconstructions of familiar storybooks prior to conventional reading, we are able to better understand the process of becoming literate.

Research in emergent literacy has documented the growing presence of knowledge about written language among children during their early years (Clay, 1972; Doake, 1981, 1985; Goodman, 1980, 1986; Snow & Ninio, 1986; Sulzby, 1982; Taylor, 1983). From a review of this research and other research, four beliefs or principles of written language emerge, beliefs that appear to be present (in varying degrees) when children's story reconstructions are carefully observed: (1) A story text is stable. It does not vary

substantially from reading to reading (Sulzby, 1982). (2) Illustrations in a book communicate the story (Golden & Gerber, 1990; Snow & Ninio, 1986). (3) Print can be a source of the story (Haussler, 1985; Sulzby, 1982). (4) Adults can mediate (or translate) the story for the child (Doake, 1981; Taylor, 1983).

In a sense these areas of knowledge become "resources" children use when attempting to reconstruct a familiar story; i.e. memory for text, illustrations, print, and adult assistance. Along with their oral linguistic knowledge, the way in which children use these resources contributes to the story reconstruction. By examining story reconstructions for evidence of these four resources we can get a notion of their emergent literacy knowledge.

Memory for text. Prior to emergent literacy research, young children's verbatim-like renditions of text prior to conventional reading were dismissed as simple "memorization." Children were told by teachers and parents, "You're not really reading, you just memorized it." Today, it is clear that memory for text is very complex (Bransford, 1979; Kintsch, 1974; Klatsky, 1980) and is part of the reading process (Smith, 1988; Sulzby, 1982).

Certain text characteristics can contribute to a child's memory for text: familiarity, syntactic complexity, patterning in text, and rhyming in text (Doake, 1981; Sulzby, 1982). These characteristics should be acknowledged whenever storybook interactions are used for the purpose of informal assessment, as they may be associated with different levels of emergent reading behavior.

For example, a highly familiar book that has been read numerous times is likely to be more easily reconstructed than a less familiar text (Doake, 1981). A text that is not syntactically complex will be easier to reconstruct than will a complex text (Otto, 1990a). For example compare the two opening lines in Are You My Mother? (Eastman, 1960) with Harry the Dirty Dog (Zion, 1956) (See Figure 1).

Insert Figure 1 about here

Text patterning. Text patterning is another factor that appears to enhance text reconstruction (Doake, 1981; Otto, 1991). There are two types of patterning: repetition of phrases and rhyme (final syllables that phonetically match).

Thus, story reconstructions with highly familiar, syntactically simple, rhythmic, or patterned texts are

likely to be associated with higher emergent reading behaviors than will attempts to read unfamiliar, complex or non-patterned text. For this reason, observations of children's storybook interactions should note text familiarity, text complexity, and patterning.

Illustrations. In young children's books, illustrations play an important part in communicating the story by visually representing concepts and events (Golden & Gerber, 1990). Illustrations provided in the text may help cue recall of text or they may stimulate conversation or comments about the story events and characters. At other times, children's comments about illustrations may clearly digress from the story text, creating a new version of the story.

Print. Print is a major source of the message when conventional reading occurs however, emergent readers, too, may draw some information from print (Sulzby, 1982, 1985). Children may begin pointing to print long before they are actually decoding print. This may reflect their imitation of adult readers' actions or may be an attempt to read isolated words, upon which additional text is cued.

Adult assistance. During the course of a storybook interaction some children will overtly appeal to the adult, by directly asking for help: "What does that

say?" or "What is that?", or "I can't read. You read.". Others draw the adult into the interaction more subtly by saying, "See, there he goes!" or "Look at the little kittens" (Otto, 1984; 1990a; in press). The appeal for continued adult assistance may reflect the child's need for scaffolding (Bruner, 1978). It is also possible that the child is attempting to recreate the interactive style of storybook reading modeled by their classroom teacher or parent. Examining children's responses during this assisted reading can also provide information on the child's zone of proximal development, a concept introduced by Vygotsky (1978).

Procedures for Observations

Observation of children's interactions with familiar storybooks should be as natural and as unobtrusive as possible. The ideal time to conduct an observation is when a child approaches the teacher and indicates willingness or desire to "read" a book. Insisting that children participate or perform before they are ready may increase their personal concern about becoming readers.

Two observation guides were developed for teachers to use in examining children's storybook behaviors, one for independent interactions and one for assisted interactions. (See Figures 2 and 3).

Insert Figures 2 and 3 about here

Both guides focus on observing children's use of linguistic knowledge, memory for text, use of illustrations, use of print, and adult assistance. Information with respect to text familiarity, syntactic complexity, and text patterning are also documented.

Procedures. Based on a review of research in emergent literacy (Doake, 1985; Otto, 1984, 1990a; Sulzby, 1982), the following procedures are suggested:

1. Have a tape recorder and blank tape available to tape the interaction. This frees you up to be the audience for the child. Explain to the child that you are taping the storybook reading so you can remember their story better.

2. Select (or have the child select) a book that is moderately familiar; note book title and familiarity level on the observation form (low, moderate, high).

3. Note any patterning or rhyme in text, as well as the level of text complexity (low, moderate, high) on the observation form.

4. Find a relatively quiet corner in the classroom and sit beside the child.

5. Ask the child to read (not tell) the story to you. The emphasis is on the child's approximation of

reading; thus, children are not instructed to "tell" the story (c.f. Sulzby, 1985). If the child does not respond, begin with a series of prompts, such as those developed by Sulzby (1985). If the prompts do not result in an independent interaction with the book, assist the child in reading in oral-cloze fashion (Otto, 1984).

6. Make no notes during the child's reading, as this destroys the meaning-centered focus of the storybook interaction; however, mentally note important non-verbal behaviors (e.g. pointing to pictures or print, focus of eyes on print or pictures) to document later.

7. Be an interested listener during storybook interaction. Avoid prompting or correcting child's verbal behaviors or non-verbal behaviors.

8. For assisted interactions, focus on reading segments of text and pausing for the child to respond. Avoid correcting the child's errors or asking the child leading questions.

9. End the interaction by saying how much you enjoyed having them read their story to you. For assisted interactions, say how much you enjoyed sharing the book with them.

10. At a later time, but not more than one day later, listen to the taped interaction while comparing

the child's reconstructed text with the actual storybook. Use the appropriate observation guide to structure your comparisons. Keep the completed observation form in child's portfolio along with other assessment information.

11. Periodically repeat this assessment and note changes in emergent reading behaviors.

Cautions. Young children's interactions with storybooks are dynamic and complex, and behaviors can be judged to be at a lower or higher level with respect to emergent literacy knowledge; however, there is insufficient longitudinal data on representative samples of children to determine whether "stages" of emergent reading ability exist. Thus, children should not be placed in stages, categorized or grouped based on their responses to one storybook. Rather, storybook interactions should be viewed as part of "formative evaluation". That is, storybook interactions should be considered a way of observing the growth process, not a means of judging outcome or achievement.

In the sections that follow, categories of behavior described on the observation sheets will be highlighted. Example behaviors have been drawn from a larger study of emergent literacy among kindergarteners (Otto, 1990a, in press).

Independent Storybook Reconstruction Behaviors

Independent interactions are those in which the child responded to the read request with a monologic reconstruction of the text. While the child may have occasionally engaged the adult verbally, the child clearly was in predominate control of the text reconstruction, and rarely, if at all, appealed to the adult for assistance.

Six categories of reconstruction behaviors are examined in independent storybook interactions: the nature of text created, completeness of the story, source of the story, accuracy of text creation, book handling behaviors, and oral delivery.

Nature of Text Created

This category refers to the degree to which book language is reconstructed: oral language-like text; written language-like text, verbatim-like text.

Oral language-like text. Oral language-like text contains deitic references to illustrations (e.g. there, this, those, that). Gestures may indicate on-going action in the illustrations (e.g. Look, there he goes."), as if the child is a reporter on the scene of the story. Sentences may be joined with and, or and then (Sulzby, 1989). Characters may only be referred to with pronouns; their real identity is not clarified. In other sentences, pronoun referents may be ambiguous.

Text actions are not always referred to in the past tense. Intonation flows like that of an oral storyteller (Sulzby, 1991).

For example in LaLen's reconstruction (See Figure 4), she begins by referring to the dog, while the story explicitly states the identity of the dog. Several sentences are joined with the conjunction and.

Insert Figure 4 about here

Written language-like text. Written language-like text is characterized by decontextualization (Olson, 1977) and pronoun reference is clear. Dialogue and dialogue carriers are present. Intonation is reading-like. Storymarkers (e.g. "once upon a time," "the end") may be used.

In Jennifer's story reconstruction (See Figure 5) clear reference pronoun reference occurs though Harry is not identified as a dog. A story marker is used to begin the story. Decontextualization is present in the references to the actions of Harry, since there is not exophoric reference to the pictures. Jennifer orally delivered the story using reading intonation, carefully pronouncing the words and with a rate that resembled conventional, fluent reading.

Insert Figure 5 about here

Verbatim-like. In this category the child's text reconstruction is nearly the same or exactly the same as the text. (See Figure 6).

Insert Figure 6 about here

In Erica's story reconstruction, much of the text is verbatim (exactly the same as the text). In instances where her reconstructed text differs, it is still written language-like. Although most of her text was written language-like there were several instances that reflected still emerging linguistic knowledge. Two instances indicated Erica was still learning about past tense of irregular verbs. She used sing for sang, and later gived for gave. In another instance, Erica used the objective pronoun them when the nominative pronoun, these, had been used in the original text.

Completeness of Story

This aspect of text construction refers to the amount of the original story that was recreated. Three categories are represented: disconnected fragments, gist of story, and complete story. While the nature of text category described the text reconstructed, this category refers to the completeness of the story.

A text that is oral language-like may be only reconstructed in fragments or it may be a fully reconstructed story. Similarly, verbatim-like text may be reconstructed only in fragments or may be complete.

Disconnected fragments. In Jennifer's story only a few story events are mentioned, nor are the events tied together, while the original story (Mr. Gumpy's Motor Car, Burningham, 1973) is lengthy (75 t-units) and has high cohesiveness. (See Figure 7)

Insert Figure 7 about here

"Gist" of story. In this story reconstruction the story core is recreated; however, minor events are not included. Maying's story reconstruction contained a gist or summary of the original story. (See Figure 8)

Insert Figure 8 about here

In the last three lines of Maying's story, she summarized the last six lines of the original story. Although she reconstructed a shorter version, it communicated the story line accurately.

Cohesive & complete story. Crystal's story was complete and all story events were mentioned (See Figure 9).

Insert Figure 9 about here

Although Crystal's story was not verbatim, it was complete and fairly cohesive. All of the animals initially played in the mud, were then washed by Mrs. Wishy Washy and then returned to play in the mud again (Mrs Wishy Washy, Crowley, 1980).

Source of Story

As described earlier, when emergent readers are reconstructing a story, they may draw from five sources of information: linguistic knowledge, illustrations in the storybook, memory for text, print, and adult assistance. Linguistic knowledge underlies the use of the other four sources. Children's use of these other four sources of information can be observed in their story reconstructions. Children may use a combination of sources of information in reconstructing their stories. Examples of each category are found in the following children's story reconstructions.

Illustration. In Crystal's story (Harry, the Dirty Dog, Zion, 1956) she mentions a restaurant, and that "nobody didn't notice him." These parts of her text came from the illustration because the original text does not contain the word restaurant or the phrase "nobod' didn't notice him", however, both events are

illustrated by the pictures accompanying the text. (See Figure 10).

Insert Figure 10 about here

Memory for text. Paul's story reconstruction resembled the original text, and his accompanying behaviors indicated he was consciously trying to recall the text. (See Figure 11)

Insert Figure 11 about here

Paul's repeated attempt to reconstruct the text (self-corrections) and his metalinguistic comment indicating he could not remember a specific part was a clear indication he was consciously trying to recall the text.

Print. When reconstructing text, children may refer to the print by pointing with their finger. When this happens notice the direction and accuracy of the pointing---left to right, top to bottom or backwards, and bottom up. Voice pointing occurs when the child appears to be focusing on the text word by word.

Both finger pointing and voice pointing may occur even though a child is not accurately decoding text. This verbal or non-verbal reference to print should be

noted since it indicates the child recognizes that print is a source of story information, and should be attended to when attempting to read.

Appeal to adult. Occasionally children will directly ask the adult for story information. For example in David's story reconstruction, he paused and asked the adult: "What's this part say?" After his question was answered, David resumed his independent monologue.

Accuracy of Text Reconstruction

A fourth aspect of text reconstruction involves the accuracy of the reconstructed text. Three levels of accuracy have been represented in children's reconstructed texts: created different story; reconstructed story; and reconstructed and expanded story.

Created different story. In Solanna's story reconstruction, fragments of a different story were created that had little resemblance to the original. Solanna used reading intonation during her interaction, which gave her text a primer-like quality. (See Figure 12)

Insert Figure 12 about here

Reconstructed story. In this category the story

has been reconstructed accurately and does not deviate from the original story line. (See Figure 13)

Insert Figure 13 about here

Reconstructed and expanded story. In another story reconstructed by Rachel, the major events and characters were included along with expanded dialogue and events. (See Figure 14)

Insert Figure 14 about here

Rachel changed the name of the major character to Hector (a classmate of hers), inserted direct dialogue, and inserted a specific event, "digged a hole."

Book Handling

Observation of book handling behaviors can help teachers become aware of other important emergent literacy knowledge (Clay, 1972). During storybook interaction assessment, children hold the book and turn pages themselves. Spontaneous (unprompted) behaviors to look for include:

1. Does the child use front to back directionality?
2. Does the child indicate a book title or author?
3. Is there correct book orientation (or is the book held upside down)?

4. Are pages turned at appropriate times (or does child appear to need cueing from adult)? In some children's interactions, they clearly self-corrected their timing when turning pages.

Delivery

In this observation category, children's oral delivery is examined, with respect to three behaviors: conversational dialogue with adult, monologue, and reading intonation.

Needed verbal assistance. When children appear to need continuous adult assistance/scaffolding, use the Assisted Interaction Guide. Occasional assistance in an otherwise independent interaction can be noted in this section on the Independent Interaction Guide.

Conversational dialogue with adult. In some storybook reconstructions, a child's verbal behaviors have a conversational quality rather than a text-like quality. This category represents instances when a child comments about the story text or illustrations. Occasionally the child asks a question of the adult as a way of drawing the adult into conversation about the storybook. In an assessment situation the adult's comments should maintain participation without leading the child or prompting story content. (See Figure 15)

Insert Figure 15 about here

Monologue. In a monologue a story is reconstructed without frequent assistance or dialogue with an adult. The child verbally dominates the story reconstruction.

Reading intonation. When reconstructing a story, some children sound as if they are really reading. Each word is clearly pronounced and at a rate that resembles conventional reading. When a child does this prior to conventional reading, it indicates an awareness that reading has different prosodic features than speech. In some cases, a child may give asides that contrast with "reading" and clearly indicate what is read and what is simply spoken. For example, Jennifer made several asides to the adult that were different in prosody and seemed to serve an explanatory function to her text. (See Figure 16)

Insert Figure 16 about here

Differences in Jennifer's intonation indicated she knew what was to be text, and what was not. There is even a section of text within text as Jennifer describes her sister's reconstruction of the same story.

Assisted Storybook Reenactment Observation Guide

Assisted storybook interactions are those interactions in which adult assistance is needed on a continuous basis. Assisted interactions are initiated by the teacher when a child appears hesitant or apprehensive about reading (reconstructing) the story independently. As indicated in the procedures section, some children will verbally refuse when given a prompt to read the storybook.

A hesitancy or open refusal by the child may be influenced by a lack of familiarity with the book, or lack of familiarity with the teacher. Sometimes a child's low level of verbal expressiveness constrains that child's independent reading attempt. Although these different factors lead to an assisted interaction, much can be learned from a child's responses during this type of interaction.

Throughout an assisted interaction the teacher focuses on the text, reading segments of it and pausing within the sentences to allow a response from the child (Doake, 1981; Otto, 1984). Because the focus is on reading, the teacher should avoid departing from the text to ask questions about the illustrations or story.

Assessment of children's responses in assisted interactions examines three categories of behavior:

nature of text segments created, source of child's response, and book handling.

Nature of Reconstructed Text Segments

When children engage in assisted reading, the text segments they construct are represented by five categories (Otto, 1984): conversational responses; echo-like responses; unison responses; semantic-like responses, and verbatim-like responses. While some children's responses with one storybook are represented by one category, other children's responses represent several categories, e.g. echo, semantic, conversational. For illustration purposes, examples of individual categories are described below.

Conversational response. The conversational category is represented by children's responses that do not respond to the pause in reading with text, but appear to take the pause just as chance to "talk" with the adult. (See Figure 17)

Insert Figure 17 about here

Echo-like response. When a pause occurs as the text is read by the teacher, some children respond by repeating what has just been read by the teacher. For example, in Kha's assisted interaction, he echoes the last two words read in both lines. (See Figure 18)

Insert Figure 18 about here

Unison response. This response resembles the echo response, however the timing of delivery differs. While the echo response occurs after the adult pauses, the unison response occurs as the adult reads. The child attempts to say the text as the adult reads, sometimes exactly as the adult reads, sometimes slightly behind the adult, mumbling along. The difference in timing between echo and unison responses reflects different emergent reading knowledge.

Echo responses indicate the child hears what is read and can repeat it; however, in order to give a unison response a child must predict upcoming text. If a child is going to keep up with the adult reader, then text prediction is even greater. Unison responses, then, indicate more knowledge of the exact text than do echo responses. (See Figure 19)

Insert Figure 19 about here

Semantically-equivalent response. In this type of response, a child reconstructs a segment of text that communicates the meaning of the text, but does not use the exact wording of the text. Sometimes semantically-equivalent responses involve only one word. In other

instances, the response is a phrase. (See Figure 20)

Insert Figure 20 about here

Verbatim-like response. This type of response occurs when a child reconstructs the text segment exactly as the original text. Memory for text is clearly evident in verbatim-like responses; however, it is not the result of simple, rote memorization. Children who give verbatim-like responses usually show other types of response as well (e.g. semantic, or conversational). These other responses indicate the child has a strong memory for the meaning (text comprehension). Verbatim-like responses also indicate a child's awareness that text is stable, i.e. What words are in the text stay the same; Words do not vary from reading to reading, but are stable.

Source of Child's Response

Sources used by children in reconstructing text segments during assisted storybook interactions are the same sources used by children in independent interactions: linguistic knowledge, memory for text, illustrations, print, and appeal to an adult. Examples of children using these sources in assisted interactions resemble those examples already given; however, the volume or amount of the text reconstructed by a child in

an assisted interaction usually will be less than the amount reconstructed independently.

Book Handling

In assisted interactions children should hold and manipulate the book by themselves, without adult assistance. When this is done, the teacher can observe a child's knowledge of book handling, e.g. front-to-back directionality, book orientation, and how and when pages are turned.

Another area of observation can involve a child's response when encouraged to take over the assisted interaction, leading to an independent interaction. On some occasions, children seem to need adult assistance to get a storybook interaction started, and then are comfortable taking the lead in story reconstruction. Other children will become non-verbal when encouraged to "Go ahead. You read it now, any way you want to,." or "It's your turn now."

When children respond to the go-ahead encouragement, the teacher should listen attentively, provide long pauses, and be accepting of whatever the child contributes. As this encouragement is repeated in subsequent assisted interactions with familiar storybooks, a child is likely to become more active and confident in reconstructing story text.

Summary

By carefully watching young children interact with storybooks, a teacher can become aware of children's emergent literacy knowledge. The observation guides presented here are offered as a way teachers can begin documenting young children's interactions with storybooks. Frequent, careful observations can provide teachers with an awareness of children's growth toward literacy as well as their need for literacy-related activities. When teachers share their observations with parents of emergent readers, parents can see how valuable at-home storybook experiences are and how children's responses to storybooks indicate emerging literacy knowledge.

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Figure 1: Examples of Two Texts of Different Syntactic Complexity

[Eastman, P.D. (1960). Are you my mother?]

A mother bird sat on her egg. The egg jumped. "Oh, oh!" said the mother bird. "My baby will be here! He will want to eat." (pp. 3-5).

[Zion. G. (1956), Harry the dirty dog.]

Harry was a white dog with black spots who liked everything except ... getting a bath. So one day when heard the water running in the tub, he took the scrubbing brush... and buried it in the back yard. (pp. 1-2).

Figure 2:

INDEPENDENT STORYBOOK INTERACTIONS OBSERVATION GUIDE

FOR EMERGENT READING BEHAVIORS

Child's name_____Date _____

Book name_____

Book familiarity level:_____low _____moderate _____high

Text complexity: _____low _____moderate _____high

Patterned text: _____yes Rhyming text: _____ yes

Emergent Reading Behaviors

1. Nature of reconstructed text

oral language-like

written language-like

verbatim-like

Comments:_____

_____

2. Completeness of story

disconnected fragments

"gist" of story

cohesive & complete story

Comments: _____

_____

Figure 2, continued.

3. Source of story

illustrations

memory for text

print

appeal to adult

Comments: _____

_____

4. Accuracy of text reconstruction

created different story

reconstructed story

reconstructed and expanded story

Comments: _____

_____

5. Book handling

front to back

correct book orientation

turned pages without reminder

Comments: _____

_____

Figure 2, continued.

6. Delivery

needed verbal assistance (use Assisted Interaction Observation Guide)

conversational dialogue with adult

monologue

reading intonation

Comments:

_____

_____

Otto, 1991.

Figure 3:

ASSISTED STORYBOOK INTERACTIONS OBSERVATION GUIDE

FOR EMERGENT READING BEHAVIORS

This is a guide for observing a child's behaviors when the child is participating in a storybook reading with an adult.

Child's name _____ Date _____

Book name _____

Level of familiarity: ____low ____moderate ____high

Text complexity: ____low ____moderate ____high

Patterned text: _____yes Rhyming text: _____yes

Emergent Reading Behaviors

1. Nature of reconstructed text segments

conversational

echo

unison

semantically equivalent

verbatim-like

Comments: _____

_____

Figure 3, continued.

2. Source of child's response

illustrations

memory for text

print

appeal to adult

Comments: _____

_____

3. Book handling

Front to back directionality

Correct book orientation

Turned pages without reminder

Comments: _____

_____

Otto, 1991.

Figure 4: Oral language-like text: LaLen

Child:	Text: Harry the Dirty Dog (Zion, 1956, pp. 1-11)
The dog didn't want to take a bath. And he saw some _____ and he ran. And he goes downstairs. And he's going to see, _____,played in dirt with other dogs. And a kid looked at him. And he's changed. Get dirty again.	Harry was a white dog with black spots who liked everything except getting a bath. So one day when he heard the water running in the tub he took the scrubbing brush...and buried it in the back yard. Then he ran away from home. He played where they were fixing the street and got very dirty. He played at the railroad and got even dirtier. He played tag with the other dogs and became dirtier still. He slid down a coal chute and got the dirtiest of all. In fact, he changed from a white dog with black spots, to a black dog with white spots.

Figure 5: Written language-like text: Jennifer

Child:	Text: Harry the Dirty Dog (Zion, 1956, pp. 1-3)
Once upon a time Harry he heard the bath water running. He got the scrubbing brush, ran downstairs with the scrubbing brush in his mouth. He digged it, he digged a hole up in the backyard and he put his scrubbing brush in it. Soon he runned away from home	Harry was a white dog with black spots who liked everything except getting a bath. So one day when he heard the water running in the tub he took the scrubbing brush...and buried it in the back yard. Then he ran away from home.

Figure 6: Verbatim-like: Erika

Child:	Text: Harry the Dirty Dog. (Zion, 1956, pp. 16-18)
Harry tried to show them he was Harry. He started to do all his old tricks, clever tricks. He flip-flopped, flopped, and he flipped-flopped. He rolled over and played dead. He danced and he sing.	..he tried very hard to show them he was Harry. He started to do all his old, clever tricks. He flip-flopped and he flop-flipped. He rolled over and played dead. He danced and he sang.

Figure 7: Disconnected fragments: Jennifer

Child:	Text: Mr. Gumpy's Motor Car (Burningham, J., 1973, pp. 1-4)
In go in the car. He saw all the kids. Asked can we go? They had to get and push. That's all,	Mr. Gumpy was going for a ride in his car. He drove out the gate and down the lane. "May we come too," said the children.....(Text is 75 t-units in length.)

Figure 8: "Gist" of story: Maying

Child:	Text: Mrs Wishy-washy (Crowley, 1980, pp. 4-16)
"Oh, lovely mud," said the _____. Along came Mrs Wishy-washy. Along came the cow, wishy-washy, wishy-washy. Along came the pig, wishy-washy, wishy washy. Along came the the duck, wishy-washy, wishy-washy. Mrs. Wishy-washy went away and they all jumped in the mud.	"Oh, lovely mud," said the pig, and he rolled in it. "Oh, lovely mud," said the duck, and she paddled in it. Along came Mrs Wishy-washy. "Just look at you!" she screamed. "In the tub you go." In went the cow, wishy-washy, wishy-washy. In went the pig, wishy-washy, wishy-washy. In went the duck, wishy-washy, wishy-washy. "That's better," said Mrs Wishy-washy, and she went into the house. Away went the cow. Away went the pig. Away went the duck. "Oh, lovely mud," they said.

Figure 9: Cohesive and complete story: Crystal

Child:	Text: Mrs Wishy-washy (Crowley, 1980, pp. 4-16)
The pig found mud, and it rolled in it. The duck found mud and it walked in it. Here come Mrs. Swish-swaps. She said (laughs) They said, "Get in the tub." And then she had to wash off the duck and the pig. And they saw more mud, the duck, the pig and the cow. They got in the mud. They got all dirty again.	"Oh, lovely mud," said the pig, and he rolled in it. "Oh, lovely mud," said the duck, and she paddled in it. Along came Mrs Wishy-washy. "Just look at you!" she screamed. (laughs) "In the tub you go." In went the cow, wishy-washy, wishy-washy. In went the pig, wishy-washy, wishy-washy. In went the duck, wishy-washy, wishy-washy. "That's better," said Mrs Wishy-washy, and she went into the house. Away went the cow. Away went the pig. Away went the duck. "Oh, lovely mud," they said.

Figure 10: Illustration as a source of story: Crystal

Child:	Text: Harry the Dirty Dog (Zion, 1956, p. 13)
He looked in a restaurant and nobody didn't notice him. He said, "I guess I go home."	He felt tired and hungry too, so without stopping on the way, he ran back home.
	[Picture: Harry is looking in the restaurant window. There are several people in the restaurant looking out towards Harry.]

Figure 11: Memory for text: Paul

Child:	Text: Mr. Gumpy's Motor Car (Burningham, 1973, pp. 12-14)
"I don't like these clouds, Mr. G. said. "We better go way back." "Let's put up the /h/ "Let's (pause) "I don't like the clouds," Mr. G. said. "We better go way back." See, I forgot that part.	"I don't like the look of those clouds," said Mr. Gumpy. "I think its going to rain," said Mr. Gumpy. Very soon the dark clouds were right overhead. Mr. Gumpy stopped the car. He jumped out, put up the top, and down came the rain.

Figure 12: Created different story: Solanna

Child:	Text: STOP!
(reading intonation)	(Crowley, 1982, pp. 1-16)
Cats, two cats, run,	"Stop!" said the milkman,
Cat jump, green (pause)	but the truck went on. "Stop!"
Run (pause) cat _____	said the boy, but the truck went
bike. Blow whistle.	on. "Stop!" said the girl, but
Cat said ____ (pause)	the truck went on. "Stop!" said
/captain/ Cat jumped.	the postman, but the truck went
Run all people, run.	on. "Stop!" said the policeman,
Milk (pause) Milk fall	but the truck went on. Stop!
down. Cats.	Stop! Stop! "Stop!" said the
	traffic light. CRASH!

Figure 13: Reconstructed story: Rachel

Child:	Text: Mrs Wishy-washy (Crowley, 1980, pp. 1-16)
"Oh, lovely mud, said the cow, and he jumped in it. "Oh, lovely mud," said the pig and he rolled in it. "What lovely mud," said the duck, and she paddled in it. Along came Mrs Wishy-washy. "Oh!" said Mrs Wishy-washy. "You are a mess. In the cow. In the pig. Wishy-washy. Wishy-wash. In! Wash the pig, wishy-washy, wishy-washy. In the duck, wishy-washy, wishy-washy. They ran away. "Oh, what lovely mud!" they said.	"Oh, lovely mud," said the cow and he jumped in it. "Oh, lovely mud said the pig and he rolled in it. "Oh, lovely mud," said the duck, and she paddled in it. Along came Mrs Wishy-washy. "Just look at you!" she screamed. "In the tub you go." In went the cow, wishy-washy, wishy-washy. In went the pig, wishy-washy, wishy-washy. In went the duck, wishy-washy, wishy-washy. "That's better," said Mrs Wishy-washy, and she went into the house. Away went the cow. Away went the pig. Away went the duck. "Oh, lovely mud," they said.

Figure 14: Reconstructed and expanded story: Rachel

Child:	Text: Harry the Dirty Dog (Zion, 1956, pp. 1-3)
Hector*, the dirty dog. (laughs) Hector was a white dog with black spots. He did not like baths. He heard the bath water running. "Oh, oh!" he said to himself. He He took the scrubbing brush and ran downstairs, and digged a hole, and put the scrubbing brush in there, and ran away.	Harry was a white dog with black spots who liked everything except getting a bath. So one day when he heard the water running in the tub, he took the scrubbing brush...and buried it in the back yard. Then he ran away from home.

(*Hector was the name of one of Rachel's friends.)

Figure 15: Delivery-Conversational: Jackie

(Storybook: Harry the Dirty Dog, Zion, 1956)

Child: He ran down the stairs with the brush. He digged in the hole. Then he ranned away. Look at the small kitty cat!

Adult: Oh, my.

Child: And there's the mother.

Adult: Yeah.

Child: He digged out where they're going to put some of this on there, and put the back dirt on there. Then he can't dig through.

Adult: Oh.

Child: Look all the smoke on there.

Adult: Uh-huh.

Child: Look, he, that dog is trying to chase him.

Adult: (laughs)

Child: and this dog has same like that (pointing to similar spots on two dogs)

Figure 16: Delivery-Reading Intonation: Jennifer
(Storybook: Mrs Wishy-washy, Crowley, 1980)

Child: "Oh, lovely mud!" said the cow, and she jumped in it. --Now they're going to get all messy.

Adult: Oh, really?

Child: Um-hum.

Adult: OK.

Child: "Oh, lovely mud!" said the pig and the pig rolled in it. (pause) --The pig's a he.

Adult: Oh, it is?

Child: and the cow's a she, and she's a she (pointing to duck).

Adult: OK.

Child: "Oh, lovely mud!" said the duck, and the duck paddled in it. --All the time, my sister, Marie, whenever her says "Oh, lovely mud," said the cow. Her says this, "Oh, lovely mud" said the pig. Her gets mixed up on the cow.

Figure 17: Conversational Response-Kenneth

(Storybook: Mr. Gumpy's Motor Car, Burningham, 1973, pp. 18-22)

Adult:..."NOT ME," SAID THE RABBIT. "I'M NOT VERY WELL." "NOT ME," SAID THE GIRL. "HE'S STRONGER." "NOT ME," SAID THE BOY. "SHE'S BIGGER."

Child: I don't see the bunny rabbit.

Adult: (pause) What don't you see?

Child: Oh (points to rabbit in illustration)

Adult: He's standing up. (resumes reading text) THE WHEELS CHURNED (pause)

Child: splush! Right in the mud!

Adult: Yeah

Child: Then they have to get out and push.

Adult: (resumes reading text) THE CAR SANK DEEPER INTO THE MUD. "NOW WE'RE REALLY STUCK," SAID MR GUMPY.

Figure 18: Echo Text: Kha

(Storybook: Who took the farmer's hat?, Nodset, 1963, p. 1)

Adult: THE FARMER HAD A HAT

Child: a hat

Adult: AN OLD BROWN HAT (child interrupts)

Child: brown hat

Figure 19: Unison reading: Billie

(Storybook: Mr Gumpy's Motor Car, Burningham, 1973, pp. 2-5)

Adult: HE DROVE OUT THE GATE AND DOWN THE LANE.

Child: out gate down lane

Adult: "MAY WE COME, TOO?" SAID THE CHILDREN.

Child: come said the children.

Adult: "MAY WE?" SAID THE RABBIT, THE CAT, THE DOG,

Child: "May we?" rabbit, cat, dog,

Adult: THE PIG, THE SHEEP, THE CHICKENS, THE CALF

Child: pig, sheep, chickens, calf

Figure 20: Semantically Equivalent Text: Ursula

(Storybook: Harry the Dirty Dog, Zion, 1956, pp. 4-9)

Adult: HE PLAYED WHERE THEY WERE FIXING THE STREET AND GOT (pause)

Child: muddy (TEXT: VERY DIRTY)

Adult: HE PLAYED AT THE RAILROAD AND GOT (pause)

Child: even muddier. (TEXT: GOT EVEN DIRTIER)

Adult: HE PLAYED TAG WITH THE OTHER DOGS AND BECAME (pause)

Child: muddy (TEXT: DIRTIER STILL).