

Developing Oral Language Using Illustrated Books: A Content Analysis of Illustrated Books in an Elementary School Library

Nancy B. Christie*

* *United States Virgin Islands, Department of Education*

Abstract: The purpose of this study was to complete a content analysis to discern the number of oral language characteristics present in illustrated books in the Emanuel Benjamin Oliver Elementary School Library Easy collection. A content analysis of a sample of 768 books determined the presence of two or more oral language characteristics: no words, repetitive words, rhyming words, song lyrics, and humorous words and/or pictures. The results suggest the selection process for the acquisition of books meant for the development of oral language in Easy collections should be made by examining the content of the books to determine the number of oral language characteristics in the selected books.

Keywords: School Libraries, Oral Language Development, Oral Language Characteristics, Content Analysis, Illustrated books.

1. Introduction

Improving student reading performance has always been a goal of elementary educators. But with the passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, schools are faced with implementing research-based learning strategies that will increase student achievement in all academic areas but with the emphasis on reading. The *No Child Left Behind Act* includes the Reading First program, a research-based program that outlines how federal funds will be spent to improve the reading achievement of students in kindergarten to third grade (U.S. Department of Education, 2003a). Through the *No Child Left Behind Act* the Federal Government has offered 'to significantly increase the Federal investment in scientifically based reading instruction programs in the early grades' (USDE, 2003b).

To determine if the Reading First program is increasing students' reading achievement, information is gathered at the state level and submitted to the Federal Government. The requirements from the states, as outlined in the *No Child Left Behind Act*, are as follows: '(1) prepare an annual report showing the greatest gains in reading achievement; (2) reduce the number of children in grades 1-3 who are reading below grade level; and (3) increase the percentage of children who are reading at grade level or above... Research shows that children who read well in the early grades are far more successful in later years; and those who fall behind often stay behind when it comes to academic achievement' (USDE, 2003a).

The *No Child Left Behind Act* provides funding but also demands accountability, the states, 'must produce annual state and school district report cards that inform parents and communities about state and school progress'. If progress is not made, then schools must change their teaching methodologies and practices or they will lose funding (USDE, 2003c). Given this student reading achievement mandate, schools are working to implement research-based reading instruction to raise their students' reading scores. School libraries must assist with this reading instruction effort by developing library collections that facilitate the development of oral language. In this way, librarians can help emergent readers learn to read and enjoy the experience.

McCaw, a member of Learning Points trainers that help states comply with the Reading First initiative, contends in her 2004 workbook that libraries should be the focus area for reading instruction and the quality of school libraries is reflected in their collections. But what types of books should be selected to help improve the reading instruction for students in kindergarten and first grade?

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The research indicates a link between oral language development and reading ability. As Norton (2003) explains in *Through the Eyes of a Child an Introduction to Children's Literature*, children's books that are wordless facilitate the development of oral language in children. Certain characteristics in children's books such as the presence of repetitive words, rhyming words, song lyrics, and humorous words or illustrations facilitate the development of oral language. It would be useful if collections are evaluated to determine the number of books that contain one or more of these characteristics.

1.2 Problem Statement

The focus of this research was to determine how many and what percentage of the illustrated book collection of E. Benjamin Oliver Elementary School contained books characterized by the inclusion of repetitive words, rhyming words, songs, humorous text, humorous illustrations and wordless picture books.

Sub-Problems

1. In the Easy section of the library, how many and what percentage of the illustrated books contained repetition of words?
2. In the Easy section of the library, how many and what percentage of the illustrated books contained rhyming words?
3. In the Easy section of the library, how many and what percentage of the illustrated books contained songs?
4. In the Easy section of the library, how many and what percentage of the illustrated books contained humorous text?

1.3 Hypotheses

- H1. More than 25 percent of the illustrated books contained repetition of words.
- H2. More than 25 percent of the illustrated books contained rhyming words.
- H3. More than 5 percent of the illustrated books contained songs.
- H4. More than 50 percent of the illustrated books contained humorous text.
- H5. More than 50 percent of the illustrated books contained humorous pictures.
- H6. More than 5 percent of the illustrated books were wordless.
- H7. More than 50 percent of the illustrated books had two or more characteristics: repetition of words, rhyming words, songs, humorous text, humorous pictures, are wordless.

1.4 Limitations and Assumptions

This study was limited to the illustrated books located in the Easy section of the E. Benjamin Oliver School Library. The format of the illustrated books included various sizes including Big Books. Books that were in kits with, for example, a tape or CD were not included in the study.

It was assumed that the illustrated books in the library's collection were accurately shelved and available for examination.

1.5 Importance of the Study

If the evaluation of the library collection indicated that the number of books was not sufficient to meet the specified students' reading needs, then a collection development policy to purchase books with these characteristics may be considered by the school's site-based management team. The results of the study could reinforce the need for librarians to facilitate collection analysis in school libraries as a tool for collection development.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Early Reading Success Predicts Later Reading Success

'Research shows that children who read well in the early grades are far more successful in later years; and those who fall behind often stay behind when it comes to academic achievement' (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998). Reading is a developmental skill and if students cannot master a first-grade level reading skill such as phonemic awareness, it will be difficult for them to sound out the longer words introduced in second grade. A student's ability to read is a basic skill needed to achieve in other subjects - students must decode words and comprehend to make sense of subject specific content. Therefore, if students do not develop basic reading skills, then they fall behind exponentially as they move from one grade level to the next.

When adults read storybooks to children, children are exposed to the alphabet, the format of the narrative, the link between the written and spoken language and phonemic awareness is developed. Justice (2005) notes, 'Children who seldom interact with written language (e.g. through parent-child shared storybook reading experiences) have more difficulty acquiring emergent literacy knowledge compared to peers with more frequent literacy opportunities'.

2.2 Oral Language Acquisition and Reading Ability

Many studies have linked oral language acquisition to reading ability. 'Reading is a language based skill that shares many of the processes and the knowledge used in understanding oral language' (Kamhi & Catts, 1999). Young children who have difficulty reading also have difficulty with oral language. The interactions between the adult reader and the child will improve the child's oral language and develop emergent literacy skills. Children whose language is delayed need to have opportunities to grow their language and once oral language is at the required level then reading skills can develop accordingly.

Craig notes in his 2003 article, 'Early Positive Predictors of Later Reading Comprehension for African American Students: A Preliminary Investigation' the correlation that exists between language and reading. When he studied a group of kindergarten students, two of the indicators were the number of words spoken and the grammatical structure of the spoken words. The students who performed better when tested at the third-grade level had the advantage of attending public preschool. Craig contends that public preschools that include language development and literacy can help African American children to overcome the effects of low economic status on their reading and writing ability.

Walsh (2003) studied the oral responses of children to two picture books that were read to them. The children's responses were recorded and the 'range of oral responses was categorized as labeling, observation, textual, meta-textual, intertextual, affective or evaluative comments'. The children's responses to the visuals indicated their level of language proficiency. For example, one child may be able to label the illustration of the pig in the illustrated book as a pig,

whereas another child may be able to label the pig as a dirty pig and even suggest why the pig is dirty, and still another child may be able to relate the pig illustration to an encounter they had with a real pig. Walsh concluded that reading pictures is a multifaceted act that can help children to develop literacy.

2.3 Methods of Developing Oral Language

How do educators develop oral language? Allor and McCathren (2003) note, 'Interactive storybook reading has been shown to produce substantial gains in oral language development, particularly for children from low income environments who demonstrate language delays'. Interactive does not mean reading the story straight through to the end, instead a 'mature' reader stops to answer a child's question or statement about an illustration or the text, asks questions that demand reflection on the child's part and adds commentary.

Styles and Arizpe (2001) studied children's oral responses to Anthony Browne's book entitled *Zoo*, and reported 'many children in this study labeled as below average readers were capable of subtle and engaged analysis of visual text within an enabling environment: through the facilitating process of talking in a focused yet open-ended way with peers and a teacher/researcher with high expectations of what the children could achieve'. Styles and Arizpe outlined a process to engage children so that they would improve their oral language ability. Initially, the researcher asked children about the feeling a picture solicited, then asked what made them respond to the picture in that way. Once the child responded, the researcher asked if he/she could add anything more. In this instance, reading the picture books and questioning the children about the content of the picture books allowed children the opportunity to develop and express comprehension of the text on many levels. The skills of comprehension were being modeled and these same skills will be necessary when children are asked to read independently.

Evans (1998) recorded children's responses to the book *Angry Arthur*. She asked students to respond to the book's meaning. The younger children responded on the literal level and the older children expressed opinions that brought more meaning to the text. Evans noted that all the children who responded to the book could also make connections to other works when discussions took place. Evans concludes, 'Being encouraged to talk about and to respond to story books allows children to think more deeply about the texts and pushes them into negotiating meaning with the texts in ways that they might not have done if left to their own devices'.

Jalongo (2002) relates that wordless picture books can be used by educators to encourage children to create a story to match the pictures. 'As they invent narratives, children develop the sense of story, demonstrate an understanding of sequence, practice oral and written storytelling skills, and expand their cognitive abilities'. Interacting with wordless picture books can be considered the first step onto the scaffold of reading skills. Students create a storyline to match the

illustrations and in doing so, take into account the sequence of events. Wordless picture books allow students an opportunity to offer their oral and/or written interpretation of the text thus developing oral language and thinking skills.

Strong (2004) addresses the use of picture books that include repetition to encourage children's response to a story. 'Repeated phrases invite children to be part of the story. Done with expression and rhythm, they help train a child's ear to detect the cadence of speech and music'. For example, a child will listen for the refrain in Wanda Gag's *Millions of Cats* so that he/she can join in. The adult reads the text with expression and attends to the rhythm of the text and the child experiences the expression and rhythm of the text.

Word repetition is found in picture books that include songs. Norton (2003) in *Through the Eyes of a Child: An Introduction to Children's Literature*, explains that children's books allow children 'to listen to the sounds of language and experiment with these sounds'. For example, exposure to nursery rhymes makes it easy for children to experiment with language since they include rhyme and are short in length, which allows children to easily commit them to memory. Norton notes 'songs contain repetition and actions that are enjoyed by children'. Short, Lynch-Brown, and Tomlinson explain in their 2013 book *Essentials of Children's Literature*, how music adds to the enjoyment of the lyrics, 'Melody further emphasizes the innate musicality of these verses and turns some verses into games ('Ring around the Roses') and others into lullabies ('Rock-a-bye Baby')'. The result is that children quickly memorize the language of the verse. If the text of the picture book is sung, then the music captures the attention of the children and underscores the rhyme, rhythm, and repetition in the text and children are more apt to learn the lyrics.

Strong also recommends humorous picture books during story time. She notes in her 2004 article, 'Children enjoy being in on a joke...Children laugh at incongruity'. Children's laughter is an indication of understanding of an oral presentation of text. Thus, reading aloud during story times builds on comprehension of text through oral presentations of humorous books. Norton (2003) explains that humour is presented in picture books by using different elements: '(1) word play and nonsense, (2) surprise and the unexpected, (3) exaggeration, (4) the ridiculous and caricatures, and (5) superiority'; these elements stimulate and encourage children to comprehend the text and accompanying illustrations to understand and enjoy the humour.

Justice (2003) worked with pre-schoolers to develop skills that would improve their reading ability and mentions rhyming as one of the necessary reading skills. She recommends at-risk children be exposed to texts that include rhyme. Culatta (2003) explains her use of rhyme as part of early literacy instruction and states, 'phoneme awareness and rhyming are important precursors to the development of more advanced reading abilities'. Thus, a child's ability to rhyme is one indicator of future reading ability. Culatta found that children who

are read books that contain rhyme will develop skill in rhyming, which will help them to become skilled readers.

2.4 Content Analysis of Children's Illustrated Books

Adams (1981) analysed the content of fifty-seven children's books for multicultural representation or cultural group. She used nine cultural group categories for the analysis and found that more cultural representation occurred with the passage of time and that more cultural representation was present in the Newbery books than the classic books.

Olen (1998) conducted a content analysis to study the role of grandparents in English South African picture books and chose twenty-five current picture books that were 'suitable for reading with or by children between the ages of four and eight' to 'evaluate the image and role of the grandparents'. A coding form was used 'to assess the physical appearance, the roles and activities of the elderly in books'. Olen found that roles and actions of grandparents varied depending on whether the grandparent lived in the same household as the grandchild. He concluded that writers should include grandparents as characters who are worthy of respect and who enrich the child's life by being a source of family history.

3. Methodology

3.1 School Setting

Emanuel Benjamin Oliver School is a public school located on the island of St. Thomas in the United States Virgin Islands in the Tutu area of St. Thomas. There are 570 students enrolled in this elementary school and all the students were eligible for the federal free lunch program. Thirty-seven teachers and one librarian served the student population. The grades ranged from kindergarten to sixth grade, with 3 kindergarten classes, 3 first grade classes and 1 transitional kindergarten/first grade class.

3.2 Data Collection Procedures

The books selected as research objects were found in the Easy section of the Emanuel Benjamin Oliver School library. The author, title publisher, publication date and illustrator were recorded for each book in the study. The pages in each book were physically consulted to determine if they contained any of the following characteristics: repetition of words, rhyming words, song lyrics, humorous text, humorous pictures, and wordless pictures. The characteristics in each book were noted on a coding form, which allowed for coding whether the book had humorous text by noting if the text was exaggerated, described ridiculous situations and/or characters, expressed surprise and the unexpected or offered a humorous play on words. The coding form also allowed for coding whether the book had humorous illustrations by noting if the illustrations used exaggeration, portrayed ridiculous situations and/or characters, depicted surprise

or the unexpected. The coding form was tested by an educator who used it to review the contents of two books and the results were the same as the results found by the researcher.

If there were more than one copy of a specific book, only one copy was coded. The data in book coding forms were compiled to find the total number of books used in the study. This total was used to calculate the percentage of the books with each of the specific characteristics and the percentage of books with two or more of the characteristics.

4. Results

4.1 Data Analysis

Once data were collected, they were entered in an Excel spreadsheet to determine the number of books with each of the specific characteristics compared to the total number of books in the Easy section. A table was generated to show the percentage of each of the characteristics compared to the total number of books in the Easy section (Table 1). Another table was generated to show the total number of books that had two or more of the characteristics for oral language development and the result as a percentage (Table 2).

Table 1. Number & Percentage of Books with Oral Language Development Characteristics

Characteristics for Oral Language Development	Number of Books With Characteristics	% of Books with Characteristics Out of 768 Books
Repetition of words	133	17.3%
Rhyming words	169	22%
Song(s)	41	5.3%
Humorous Text	133	17.3%
Humorous Illustrations	50	65.4%
Wordless	14	1.8%

Table 2. Number & Percentage of Books with Two or More Oral Language Development Characteristics

Characteristics for Oral Language Development	Number of Books	Percentage of Books
Two or more Characteristics present	273	35.5%

4.2 Hypotheses

H1. More than 25 percent of the illustrated books examined in this study contain the repetition of words.

The percentage of books that contained the repetition of words was 17.3 percent. This result does not support the first hypothesis.

H2. More than 25 percent of the illustrated books examined in this study contain rhyming words.

The percentage of books that contained rhyming words was 22 percent. This result does not support the second hypothesis.

H3. More than 5 percent of the illustrated books examined in this study contain songs.

The percentage of books that contained the song characteristic was 5.3 percent. This result does support the third hypothesis.

H4. More than 50 percent of the illustrated books examined in this study contain humorous text.

The percentage of books that contained humorous text was 17.3 percent. This result does not support the fourth hypothesis.

H5. More than 50 percent of the illustrated books examined in this study contain humorous pictures.

The percentage of books that contained humorous pictures was 65.4 percent. This result supports the fifth hypothesis.

H6. More than 5 percent of the illustrated books examined are wordless.

The percentage of wordless books was 1.8 percent. This result does not support the sixth hypothesis.

4.8 Data analysis for Hypothesis 7: More than 50 percent of the illustrated books examined have two or more of the following characteristics: contain repetition of words, contain rhyming words, contain songs, contain humorous text, contain humorous pictures, are wordless illustrated books.

Result: The percentage of books with two or more characteristics was 35.5 percent. This result does not support the seventh hypothesis.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Repetition of Words in Illustrated Books

The research indicated that 17.3 percent of the books in the Easy section contained repetition of words throughout the text. At the onset of the study, it was hypothesized that 25 percent or more of the illustrated books in the Easy

section would contain repetition throughout the text. There were 133 books that contained the repetition of words but only 47 of those contained the repetition and rhyming words. For example, in Cynthia Rylant's book *When I Was Young in the Mountains*, the author used repetition of words to emphasize the feeling of nostalgia in the work but she did not use rhyming words. Whereas, Joanne Oppenheim used the repetition of words and rhyming words to add humor in her book *'Not Now' Said the Cow*. For the most part, the books that contained both rhyming words and repetition would be better suited to read to kindergarten and first grade students. These books had simple plots, as seen in Joanne Oppenheim's book *Do You Like Cats*, or they were concept books, such as Mary Ann Hoberman's *A House is a House for Me*. These works included repetition and rhyme, allowing students to hear language more than once, which helps them to internalize the repeated language (Strong, 2004).

5.2 Rhyming Words in Illustrated Books

The research showed that 22 percent of the books in the Easy section contained rhyming words. This result did not support the hypothesis that more than 25 percent of the illustrated books would contain rhyming words. A book was considered to have the rhyming words characteristic if the book included words that rhyme, words that rhyme within sentences, at the end of sentences or if the book was a work of poetry. The content of the books that contained the rhyming words characteristic varied. Some of the books were fiction, for example, Wanda Gag's *Millions of Cats*; others were concept books such as Lloyd Moss' book *Zin Zin Zin a Violin* and Margaret Wise Brown's *Baby Animals*, and Faustin Charles' *Caribbean Counting Book*. *Gathering the Sun* by Alma Flor Ada was a fictional account written as poetry. This would be a wonderful introduction to poetry for children in kindergarten and first grade. All the books that contained rhyming words could easily be used with kindergarten and first grade students. Of the 41 books that contained songs, 23 contained words that rhyme. For example, in *Rub a Dub Dub* by Kin Eagle, the text of the book is the actual song and the rhyme is included within sentences and at the end of sentences. This inclusion of rhyme and song makes the work more powerful as a vehicle for developing the oral language of kindergarten and first grade students.

5.3 Song in Illustrated Books

The research indicated that 5.3 percent of the illustrated books in the Easy section contained songs. This result supported the hypothesis that more than 5 percent of the illustrated books in the study would contain songs. In *The Eeency Weency Spider* by Joanne Oppenheim, the words of the song were the actual text and the song and music were included as part of the book. Teachers and librarians using this book would be able to sing the song while showing students the illustrations. In other books, such as *Arthur's Chicken Pox* by Marc Brown, one song was included as part of the book, which would help to emphasize the language and add humor to the work. In contrast, Simms Taback's book *There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly* included song, repetition, rhyming

words, humorous illustrations and humorous text. These characteristics combined to offer students repeated opportunities to hear words, to hear rhyme, to hear music put to words, to view humorous illustrations and to enjoy the humor in the text.

5.4 Humorous Text in Illustrated Books

The research showed that 17.3 percent of the illustrated books in the Easy section contained humorous text. This finding did not support the hypothesis that more than 50 percent of the illustrated books in this study contained humorous text. Many of the books that had humorous text also had humorous illustrations. In *Never Ride Your Elephant to School* by Doug Johnson, the humorous text is complimented by the pictures. When a teacher or librarian reads this, students would enjoy both the humorous meaning conveyed in the text and the accompanying illustrations. Judi Barrett, the author of *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs*, writes outrageous text that adds to the hilarity of the book. Thus, this book too underscores the humor that words can convey. Another example of the use of humorous text was found in the book *Cinderella Bigfoot* by Mike Thaler. The text is humorous because it exaggerates the well-known Cinderella fairytale. The humor in this book will not be lost on students who know the original fairytale and hear the text as they view the accompanying pictures.

5.5 Humorous Pictures in Illustrated Books

The research indicated that 65.4 percent of the illustrated books in the Easy section contained humorous illustrations. This result supported the hypothesis that more than 50 percent of the illustrated books examined would contain humorous illustrations. There were a total of 503 books that contained humorous illustrations. It was noted that if a book had one characteristic that characteristic was usually humorous illustrations; however, the quality of the illustrations varied widely. For example, the line drawings with limited colors in Philip Wende's *Hector Has a Flea Circus* may not interest children as much as the bright and very colorful illustrations found in Paul Brett Johnson's *The Cow Who Wouldn't Come Down*.

5.6 Wordless Illustrated Books

The research found that 1.8 percent of the illustrated books in the Easy section was wordless. This finding did not support the hypothesis that more than 5 percent of the illustrated books examined would be wordless. There were 14 books that were wordless, five of which were concept books. One example was Tana Hoban's book *26 letters and 99 cents*, which introduces the alphabet, numbers and coins. Seven of the wordless books were works of fiction in that the illustrations told a story. In *The Grey Lady and the Strawberry Snatcher*, Molly Bang tells the story of an old lady who is pursued by a ghoulish figure but she ultimately eludes the ghoul and arrives home with her strawberries. The other two books in this sample use the hidden pictures technique to engage and delight the reader. Specifically, in *Anno's Animals* by Mitsumasa Anno, the

reader is challenged to find the hidden animals amidst the forest. However, kindergarten students may be more comfortable talking about the pictures in Tana Hoban's *26 letters and 99 cents* than they would be discussing the very detailed illustrations in Mitsumasa Anno's *Anno's Journey*. The quality and variety of wordless illustrated books demonstrate the need for librarians to examine books carefully to meet the needs of their young patrons.

5.7 Two or More Characteristics in Illustrated Books

Some illustrated books in the Easy section had two or more of the following characteristics: contain the repetition of words, contain rhyming words, contain songs, contain humorous text, contain humorous pictures, are wordless illustrated books.

The research found that 35.5 percent of the books had two or more of the six characteristics. This finding did not support the hypothesis that more than 50 percent of the books would contain two or more of the characteristics. Among the books in the Easy section of the library, 187 had none of the sought characteristics. For example, Tololwa Mollel's book *The Orphan Boy* is a fictional account of a boy with magical powers who helps an aging herdsman.

Of the 273 books found with at least two characteristics some had three, four and even five characteristics. For instance, Iza Trapani's book *I'm a Little Teapot* had five characteristics and would prove to be a good selection when developing oral language with children. The books with five of the oral language characteristics would be better vehicles to develop oral language. The results of this research study may add to the knowledge regarding the content of illustrated books to developing oral language in children so that when the librarian or teacher is selecting books to read to children, he/she will select a book with as many of the oral language characteristics as possible. Also, the results of the research study may encourage collection development policies that are based on collection analysis to assure the needs of the children the library serves are met.

5.8 Conclusion

Today librarians and teachers are faced with the issue of accountability that is measured in some part through student achievement on standardized tests. When school librarians interact with teachers and students, one goal is to increase student achievement. Collection development allows for the selection of materials that meet the needs of the students, teachers and the school curriculum. The research study attempted through content analysis to discern the number of oral language characteristics present in illustrated books. The contents of seven hundred and sixty-eight books were physically consulted to determine the presence of six oral language development characteristics. The contents were also reviewed to see if the number of oral language development characteristics in the illustrated books was two or more. If a book had two or

more characteristics, then it would seem better suited to develop oral language than a book that had one or no oral language development characteristics.

The research supported the stated hypotheses on presence of the song and the humorous illustrations characteristics. When ordering picture books, librarians are usually right in assuming many of them will have humorous illustrations and that a book that has as its title the title of a song will be a song book. But, the other characteristics for oral language development namely, repetition of words, rhyming words, humorous text and wordless require the librarian physically review the books to find out whether the characteristics are present. The librarians in the Virgin Islands usually read reviews of books in journals and online publications. They also review book catalogs produced by book sellers to make decisions about the purchase of illustrated books for their collections. In most cases, the librarians and teachers do not have the opportunity to preview the actual books since they do not have immediate access to book jobbers and may not be aware of the oral language development characteristics that they should take into consideration when selecting materials for purchase for their school libraries.

Another result of the research dealt with the number of oral development characteristics present in the illustrated books. The research did not support the hypothesis that more than 50 percent of the books examined would have two or more characteristics. The result may also indicate an area that could be used for further study. A researcher could physically consult books and search for illustrated books that have five of the oral development characteristics, then could read these books to students in kindergarten and first grade. After the reading is completed, a standardized test could be administered to see if the students' oral language improved. In this proposed study, one hypothesis could be that the books with five characteristics would improve the oral language of kindergarten and first grade students. There were five books in this study that had five characteristics and one of those books was Simms Taback's book *There Was an Old Woman Who Swallowed a Fly*. Taback's book won the Caldecott Medal and this begs the question as to whether other award winning books have numerous characteristics for oral language development. This question could be a basis for further research in content analysis of award winning illustrated books.

The research focused on oral language development characteristics and these characteristics are appropriate for auditory and visual learners. But some of the books included contents that encouraged students to touch sections of the book to recognize and internalize information. For example, in Eric Carle's book *The Very Busy Spider* the spider's web is embossed and students can feel the texture of the web and the design of the web. A content analysis of illustrated children's books that contained characteristics that addressed children's varying learning modalities would benefit librarians who are responsible for collection development.

This study analyzed the contents of the illustrated books in an Easy collection. The results established a need for collection development that considers the role illustrated books can play in the development of oral language in children. Collections that contain books that support oral language development for kindergarten and first graders, may result in children's gains in oral language and assure later reading ability.

References

- Ada, A.F. (1997). *Gathering the Sun*. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard.
- Adams, K. (1981). Multicultural representation in children's books. ERIC Document No. ED219750. Retrieved from: <http://lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Anno, M. (1977). *Anno's Animals*. New York: William Collins Publishers.
- Allor, J.H. & McCathren, R.B. (2003). Developing emergent literacy skills through storybook reading. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 39(2), 72 - 79. Retrieved from: <http://lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Bang, M. (1980). *The Grey Lady and the Strawberry Snatcher*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Barrett, J. (1978). *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs*. New York: Aladdin Books.
- Brown, M. (1994). *Arthur's Chicken Pox*. New York: Little Brown & Company.
- Brown, M.W. (1989). *Baby Animals*. New York: Random House.
- Charles, F. (1996). *A Caribbean Counting Book*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Craig, H.K. (2003). Early positive predictors of later reading comprehension for African American students: A preliminary investigation. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, 34, 31 - 43. Retrieved from: <http://www.asha.org>
- Culatta, B. (2003). Quantitative and qualitative documentation of early literacy instruction. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 12, 172 - 188. Retrieved from <http://www.asha.org>
- Eagle, K. (1999). *Rub a Dub Dub*. Milwaukee: Gareth Stevens.
- Evans, J. (1998). Responding to illustrations in picture story books. *Reading*, 27 - 31. Retrieved from <http://lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Gag, W. (1928). *Millions of Cats*. New York: Coward, McGann & Geoghegan.
- Hoban, T. (1987). *26 Letters and 99 Cents*. New York: Greenwillow Books.

- Hoberman, M.A. (1982). *A House is a House for Me*. London: Puffin.
- Jalongo, M.R. (2002). Using wordless picture books to support emergent literacy. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 29(3), 167 - 177. Retrieved from: <http://lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Johnson, D. (1995). *Never Ride Your Elephant to School*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Johnson, P.B. (1993). *The Cow Who Wouldn't Come Down*. New York: Orchard Books.
- Justice, L.M. (2003). Emergent literacy intervention for vulnerable preschoolers: Relative effects of two approaches. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 12, 320-332. Retrieved from: <http://www.asha.org>
- Justice, L.M. (2005). Learning new words from storybooks: An efficacy study with at-risk kindergartners. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, 36(1), 17 - 32. Retrieved from: <http://www.asha.org>
- Kamhi, A.G., & Catts, H.W. (1986). Toward an understanding of developmental language and reading disorders. *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, 51, 337 - 347.
- McCaw, D. (2004). *Instructional Leader Literacy Workbook: Writing*. Learning Points Associates, 1 - 19.
- Mollet, T. (1990). *The Orphan Boy*. New York: Clarion Books.
- Moss, L. (1995). *Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Norton, D.E. (2003). *Through the Eyes of a Child: An Introduction to Children's Literature*. New Jersey: Pearson Education.
- Olen, S.I.I. (1998). Images of grandparents in English South African children's picture books. *South African Journal of Library & Information Science*, 66(2), 78-86. Retrieved from: <http://lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Oppenheim, J. (1993). *Do You Like Cats?* Milwaukee: Gareth Stevens.
- Oppenheim, J. (1991). *Ency Weency Spider*. Milwaukee: Gareth Stevens.
- Oppenheim, J. (1989). *'Not Now' Said the Cow*. Milwaukee: Gareth Stevens.
- Rylant, C. (1982). *When I was Young in the Mountains*. New York: Dutton.
- Strong, S. (2004). Story times that rock! *Children and Libraries*, 28-29. Retrieved from: <http://lynx.lib.usm.edu>
- Styles, M. & Arizpe, E. (2001). A gorilla with 'Grandpa's Eyes': How children interpret visual texts - a case study on Anthony Browne's *Zoo*. *Children's Literature in Education*, 32(4), 261-281. Retrieved from: <http://lynx.lib.usm.edu>

150 *Nancy B. Christie*

Taback, S. (1997). *There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly*. New York: Viking.

Thaler, M. (1997). *Cinderella Bigfoot*. New York: Scholastic.

Short, K.G., Lynch-Brown, C.M., & Tomlinson, C.M. (2013). *Essentials of Children's Literature*, 8th edition. New York: Pearson Publishing.

Trapani, I. (1996). *I'm a Little Teapot*. Boston: Whispering Coyote Press.

U.S. Department of Education (2003a). Questions and Answers on No Child Left Behind – Reading. Retrieved from: <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/methods/reading.html#6>

U.S. Department of Education (2003b). Executive Summary. Retrieved from: <http://www.ed.gov/print/nclb/overview/intro/execsumm.html>

U.S. Department of Education (2003c). Accountability. Retrieved from: <http://www.ed.gov>

Walsh, M. (2003). 'Reading' pictures: What do they reveal? Young children's reading of visual texts. *READING Literacy and Language*, 123 - 130. Retrieved from: <http://lynx.lib.usm.edu>