



A comparison between big books and traditional-sized books in the kindergarten reading program
by Myra Gwen Taylor

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education
Montana State University

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Abstract:

The problem of this study was to determine if there were differences in understanding of print concepts, sight vocabulary knowledge and attitudes about reading between kindergarten children who had been taught for one semester with predictable books of traditional-size and children who had been taught for one semester with the same predictable books in a big book format. Aspects examined in conjunction with print size were gender, frequency of school attendance and age range of kindergarten students (younger and older kindergarten students).

Marie Clay's "Ready to Read Word Test" and "Concepts About Print Test" were used to gather information for the cognitive areas of this study. An adaptation of Betty Heathington's "Primary Attitude Scale" was used to gather information for the affective area of the study.

Two-way analysis of variance was used to test for interaction and differences between mean gain scores identified by the testing instruments. Chi square was used to evaluate the results of the attitude survey. A structured interview conducted with teachers involved in the study was used to determine perceptions about using big books. This information was reported in a narrative format.

The conclusions of this study, based on statistical findings, support the hypothesis that kindergarten students who were in classrooms where big books were used obtained significantly more growth in concepts about print knowledge and sight word vocabulary knowledge than children who did not have exposure to big books. Information gathered through teacher interviews supported the findings of other researchers (Holdaway, 1982; Lynch, 1986; Peetoom, 1986), that children enjoyed having big books read; but there was no statistically significant evidence gathered from this study which indicated that student attitudes about reading differed between the two groups.

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by

Myra Gwen Taylor

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

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APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Myra Gwen Taylor

This thesis has been read by each member of the thesis committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

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Date June 10, 1988

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ABSTRACT

The problem of this study was to determine if there were differences in understanding of print concepts, sight vocabulary knowledge and attitudes about reading between kindergarten children who had been taught for one semester with predictable books of traditional-size and children who had been taught for one semester with the same predictable books in a big book format. Aspects examined in conjunction with print size were gender, frequency of school attendance and age range of kindergarten students (younger and older kindergarten students).

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The conclusions of this study, based on statistical findings, support the hypothesis that kindergarten students who were in classrooms where big books were used obtained significantly more growth in concepts about print knowledge and sight word vocabulary knowledge than children who did not have exposure to big books. Information gathered through teacher interviews supported the findings of other researchers (Holdaway, 1982; Lynch, 1986; Peetoom, 1986), that children enjoyed having big books read; but there was no statistically significant evidence gathered from this study which indicated that student attitudes about reading differed between the two groups.

CHAPTER 1

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

"Reading is a complex act that must be learned" (Burns et al., 1988, p. 11). But how can teachers of young children lead them toward meaningful acquisition of reading ability? Reading must be more than the ability to decode print; reading must make sense and have meaning for the reader (Smith, 1986). When dealing with beginners who are just learning to read, the teacher needs to assist those readers, as they interact with print, to obtain both meaning and pleasure from the print and the act of reading (Alexander, 1988; Burns et al., 1988; Cullinan, 1987). What reading method might a teacher use with young children to help them become confident, enthusiastic, eager readers who have positive attitudes toward reading?

Three primary reading programs currently in use are: (1) a basal reader approach, (2) an individualized approach, and (3) a language experience approach (Alexander, 1988; Burns et al., 1988).

A basal reader approach is both a systematic and sequential program for reading instruction. A basal

reading program includes, but is not limited to: (1) a series of student readers which have controlled vocabulary; (2) instruction in sight word vocabulary and information about the principles of phonics; (3) supplementary materials such as workbooks, duplicating masters, placement tests, and mastery tests; and (4) explicit directions for teachers to use (Alexander, 1987).

An individualized approach to teaching reading is based on the belief that each child has within him/herself a timetable for his/her own individual development (Alexander, 1987). Instruction is based on individual assessment of achievement, interests, and abilities of each child in the classroom. The students have choices and they are allowed to make decisions about learning objectives for themselves. When using individualized instruction, students, with the help of the teacher, select materials and pace themselves as they develop reading ability (Alexander, 1987; Blackburn & Powell, 1976).

A language experience approach to teaching reading is based on the language of the learner as a foundation for reading instruction. The personal experiences of the learner are used to develop reading materials, to help the child see the relationship between written language and oral language, which is already familiar. In a language experience approach for beginning reading, the importance of communication is stressed through all of the language

arts: speaking, listening, writing and reading. The child's speech patterns are the basis for developing personal materials to aid the reading learning process. The underlying belief with this approach to beginning reading is that reading will have greater significance for the learner if the materials used for learning have personal meaning (Hall, 1981). One of the initial advocates and guides for the language experience approach to reading instruction, Sylvia Ashton-Warner (1963), stressed the importance of using the child's own language "whether it is good or bad stuff, violent or placid stuff, coloured or dun" (p. 34).

Evolving from language experience approaches is an approach which has gained in popularity among teachers in the 1980s. This approach is known as the whole language approach to reading. The whole language approach has been built upon the premise that language learning is natural and easily handled by young children until they begin formal instruction in school. If speaking and listening skills develop easily and naturally, then reading and writing skills should be aspects of language that can be learned easily and naturally. By keeping language whole, rather than breaking it into parts, language can be learned more readily (Brontas, 1987). Learners need to see language learning as meaningful and purposeful in their own lives. Learners need to use language in real activities

which have meaning for them, rather than learning isolated skills through repeated exercises which may lack interest for them. Learners should learn through a need to communicate rather than through sequenced instructional materials which have little to do with a pupil's real life experiences (Goodman, 1986).

Each approach has had ample supporters of good repute advocating its use. These three approaches to teaching reading (a basal reader approach, an individualized approach, and a language experience approach) are currently found in many schools in the United States. However, Aukerman (1984) identified 165 different methods which have been used for beginning reading instruction. Each method claimed to be a "sure-fire" method for teaching beginning reading. Yet no one method had been found to teach beginning reading effectively to all children.

Spache and Spache (1977) reported that a basal reader approach to teaching beginning reading is used in 95 percent of the classrooms in the United States. Approximately 50 percent of all elementary classrooms use a basal reader approach as their sole reading program. Yet there has been no research to support the use of a basal reader approach as being superior to any other beginning reading approach when used by itself (Spache & Spache, 1977). First grade studies, conducted by the United States Office of Education during 1964, resulted in no conclusive

findings as to whether one single method of teaching beginning reading was superior to any other when examined by the researchers (Aukerman, 1984; Spache & Spache, 1977).

Since no one approach to teaching beginning reading has been found to be superior for instruction, researchers began to explore the environments of children who seemingly learned to read spontaneously before formal instruction commenced (Clay, 1972; Durkin, 1974). The results of these studies indicated that children who had early reading abilities came from literate environments, where reading and writing activities were used often by others in the child's family or immediate environment. Reading aloud was a common activity often done with the child (Bennett, 1986). Children from literate environments were encouraged to participate in reading and writing activities, which they selected for themselves. These children were also found in secure and supportive environments, where participation in literate endeavors was met with positive encouragement. Environmental factors, such as socio-economic level of the parents, educational level of the parents, and the verbal interaction among family members, affected a child's reading development (Burns et al., 1988).

Researchers have found that students in classrooms which have psychologically secure, safe, supportive environments had a tendency to have less trouble learning

than did children in non-supportive environments (Holdaway, 1979; Goodman, 1986; Leeper, Witherspoon & Day, 1984; Peetoom, 1986). Risk-taking has been identified as an important aspect of learning because by attempting something new, learning can take place (Spiegel, 1978). Students did not feel free to take risks and attempt learning in an environment that was not supportive. Environments which encouraged risk-taking, with acknowledgement for attempts at learning as well as correct answers, helped beginning readers develop into competent, successful readers (Martin, 1987).

Clark (1982) and Dixon (1984) reported that knowledge about the conventions and mechanisms of print and the knowledge we often take for granted about books, such as front, back, beginning, end, punctuation, spacing, words and letters, were important aspects of developing literacy. Conventions and mechanisms about print were learned best from repeated exposure and involvement with printed text. Understanding basic concepts about print was an aspect of beginning reading overlooked by many teachers. Teachers assumed that students knew these concepts about print; yet research has shown that many beginning readers were unaware of these basic concepts, even at the second grade level (Alexander, 1988).

Bridge (1979) found that teachers who used predictable reading materials for beginning instruction in reading and

writing produced readers that possessed greater sight word vocabularies. These children also used context clues better and held more positive feelings about reading than did children who were taught with a traditional basal reading program.

Based on personal classroom experiences and observations in numerous educational settings, Don Holdaway (1979), aided by colleagues, developed a beginning reading program which was built upon many of the techniques other researchers had found to be beneficial for beginning reading instruction. His technique is known as the shared-reading approach. It is also known as the big book approach to reading. The big book approach to beginning reading incorporated the use of an enlarged format of traditional-sized books, so that all children in a group could readily view the print and pictures. The big book approach to beginning reading also depended on the use of predictable materials which children enjoy.

During the 1950s, some publishing companies used big books as a part of their basal reading programs (Peterson, 1987; Robinson et al., 1962). These big books consisted of large cards which accompanied the students' first pre-primer. Each big book had the cover, title page, text, and pictures of the first stories enlarged so an entire group could see the material. The basal readers used during this time had stilted language and stories which had little

interest for the children. Many of the stories were actually non-stories (Carbo, 1987). An example from a student text which had enlarged text to accompany it is (Robinson et al., 1962, pp. 4-10):

Go, go, go,
Go, Dick, go.
Help, help!
Look, Dick.
Dick! Dick!
Help Jane.
Go help Jane.

The texts in the 1950s were enlarged so that a group of students could read together. Likewise, the big book approach used in the 1970s and 1980s had enlarged print and pictures so that groups of children could see the print and read together. However, the language of the text was not stilted as it was in the past. Using predictable books, where children can easily anticipate upcoming text, was an important aspect of the big book approach in the 1970s and 1980s. This approach also used big books throughout the beginning reading program, not limiting the enlarged print to a few introductory lessons as was done in the 1950s.

Teachers who used the big book approach in the 1970s and 1980s encouraged children to join in with the reading of the text. This instructional technique was based on traditional bedtime story experiences which occurred in many homes. By enlarging the book, children could view the print and the pictures in the selected book, and have experiences similar to that of the child who was read to at

home in a one-to-one situation. Children in homes where bedtime story experiences were common learned about conventions and mechanisms of print, an important prerequisite for reading, in a natural, meaningful manner (Butler and Clay, 1983; Horton, 1978). It has been Holdaway's (1979) contention that by replicating the bedtime story setting in the classroom, by using big books, those children who did not come from homes where a bedtime story had been a tradition would receive the benefits that the children from such homes had received.

Holdaway (1979) did not claim to have the answers for all of the problems teachers of beginning reading encounter. He did claim to have an approach which would put children in a more literate environment than traditional beginning reading approaches. By using an enlarged format and the shared reading approach, the teacher established a safe, secure environment where children enjoyed learning. Learning was conducted through immersion in a literate environment, where text which was of interest to children was used, and where children had some choice in the text selection, rather than learning isolated skills which appeared meaningless in themselves. Using the enlarged format allowed children to view the materials from which they were expected to learn.

The use of predictable text helped the children feel confident since they were able to participate in the

reading because of their knowledge of the familiar, repetitious materials (Barrett, 1982; Bridge, 1979; Hall, 1981; Lynch, 1986). The use of the enlarged format enabled children to view the print and learn about the conventions of print such as spacing, left-to-right progression, punctuation, and front-to-back progression. Learning that the print contained the message, not the pictures, was another concept readily acquired from exposure to enlarged texts. Learning sight words in a meaningful context was another benefit when using an enlarged format where children can actually see the words. The big book approach for beginning reading instruction was one aspect of a whole language curriculum at the primary level (Dixon, 1984).

The big book approach to beginning reading has used predictable materials which have been found to be beneficial to beginning readers (Bridge, 1979). Holdaway (1979) and his colleagues believed that enlarging the print of predictable materials for beginning readers helped the students learn to read. Since this belief was based on observational data, a need for empirical study was evident. The use of the big book approach in a beginning reading program may help more children develop into readers than other traditional approaches to teaching beginning reading (Slaughter, 1983). A big book approach to beginning reading may help children learn the basic concepts about print which were often taken for granted by teachers

(Alexander, 1988). A big book approach to beginning reading may help children acquire sight vocabulary knowledge using meaningful text (Slaughter, 1983).

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was to determine if there were differences in understanding of print concepts, sight vocabulary knowledge, and attitudes about reading between kindergarten children who had been taught for one semester with predictable books of traditional size and children who had been taught for one semester with the same predictable books in a big book format.

Need for the Study

The use of big books is becoming popular with teachers in the United States (Holdaway, 1979; Slaughter, 1983; Tierney et al., 1985; Zdaniak, 1984). While incorporating the use of big books into the curriculum appears to be beneficial to students, there is little research to indicate whether or not the use of this approach is actually advantageous for beginning readers (Holdaway, 1979; Tierney et al., 1985).

The construction, coloring, and preparation of a big book requires a considerable amount of teacher time (Slaughter, 1983). At present there are very few big books available for teachers to purchase. The big books that are

available for purchase are expensive. Therefore, if there is no clear advantage to using big books in a school district's beginning reading program, then the cost and the time commitment for teachers should be questioned.

Using predictable reading materials with students in beginning reading programs has been shown to be beneficial for students (Bridge, 1979). If the predictability of the materials used in a big book is the only factor that facilitates learning, then predictable materials of traditional size can be used in the classroom for much less cost and with less of a storage inconvenience. Also, time commitment on the part of the teacher would be greatly reduced if they did not have to develop big books to use for their reading programs.

To this point there are only observational data to support the use of the big book approach to beginning reading. An experimental study could add validity to the use of the big book approach to beginning reading instruction. Holdaway (1979), the primary advocate of the big book approach to beginning reading, suggested that research needs to be done to examine the use of this approach.

Though there are many methods for teaching beginning reading, no single technique has proven effective for all students (Aukerman, 1984). By using identical predictable materials, which have been found to be beneficial in beginning reading instruction (Bridge et al., 1983; Lynch,

1986), in both the experimental and the control groups, this researcher hoped to determine if the enlarged print is advantageous in beginning reading instruction. If using big books could significantly increase the number of young children who meet with reading success, this information would be of value to the field of education.

Questions to Be Answered

- (1) Will there be a significant difference in concepts about print knowledge and sight word recognition between kindergarten students when taught with traditional-sized books or when taught with big books?
- (2) Will there be a significant difference in attitude about reading between kindergarten students when taught with traditional-sized books or when taught with big books?
- (3) Will there be a significant difference in concepts about print knowledge and sight word recognition between kindergarten children taught with traditional-sized books who frequently miss school and kindergarten children taught with big books who frequently miss school?
- (4) Will there be a significant difference in concepts about print knowledge scores and sight word recognition scores between children taught by different teachers?

- (5) Will there be a significant difference in concepts about print knowledge and sight word recognition between children who turn age six before December first of the school year and children who turn age six after December first of the school year, who are taught using different sized texts?
- (6) What perceptions do teachers who use big books have about using big books in their classrooms?

General Procedures

During May of 1987, the director of curriculum and instruction for School District 5, Kalispell, Montana, was contacted regarding conducting this research project in that district. After her approval to proceed, principals, kindergarten teachers, and the district superintendent were contacted regarding the project. All those contacted approved of and agreed to participate in the research project.

In the fall of the 1987-1988 school year, prior to the beginning of school, the kindergarten teachers were individually instructed in classroom procedures to be used during the course of the research project.

During the first week of school, a random sample of kindergarten students were individually tested to determine their knowledge about print concepts and their level of sight word acquisition.

For five months (one semester) of the 1987-1988 school year, predictable big books were placed in half of the kindergarten sections and predictable traditional-sized books with the same content were placed in the other half of the kindergarten sections. The researcher visited each classroom each week during the research project to exchange books used for the project.

Letters were sent to parents of the kindergarten children informing them of the research project and the use of big books in the kindergarten program (see Appendix A).

At the conclusion of the research project, the students from the original random sample who had remained in the school system were individually posttested. Means from the gain scores between the pretests and the posttests were computed and analyzed to determine if there were significant differences in knowledge acquisition about print concepts and sight vocabulary between the experimental group and the control group. Information regarding student attitudes about reading was also gathered at the conclusion of the research project. Narrative information regarding teacher perceptions about using big books in the kindergarten program was also collected.

Limitations of the Study

- (1) Intact kindergarten classrooms were used.
- (2) The area of the country where the research took place was not randomly selected.
- (3) The study was limited to only one school district; therefore, only one reading series was used in conjunction with the research questions.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this research project, the following definitions will be employed:

- (1) Concepts about print knowledge: Knowledge regarding the understanding of basic concepts about print necessary for beginning reading was determined by administering Marie M. Clay's "Concepts About Print Test." The print concepts tested by this instrument included: beginning and ending of a book, that print contains messages, directionality, return sweep, word-by-word matching, punctuation meanings, capital and lowercase letter associations, and letter and word differences.
- (2) Sight word recognition: Sight word recognition knowledge was determined by administering Marie M. Clay's (1979) "Ready to Read Word Test." A sight word

is a word which is recognized instantly without the use of word analysis skills (Alexander, 1988).

- (3) Attitude--children: Attitudes of children regarding reading were determined by an instrument devised by the researcher based on the "Heathington Primary Attitude Scale" (Heathington, 1976). Attitudes were defined as the feelings children had about reading at the library, outside, after school, in a quiet place, at bedtime, on a trip, when it is warm, instead of watching television or coloring, and when a teacher read aloud.
- (4) Perception--adult: Perceptions of the teachers regarding the big books' effectiveness were determined by a structured interview instrument devised by the researcher. Teacher perceptions were defined as attitudes teachers held about using big books in relation to enjoyment, student attention to the story, amount of questions students asked, plans for future use of big books, and other benefits students may have derived due to exposure to big books.
- (5) Predictable book: A predictable book is one which enables a child to readily anticipate following text. Predictable books for this research employed at least one of the following schemes: (a) a rhyming scheme; (b) a repeated refrain; (c) a cumulative pattern; (d) a cultural framework scheme (days of the week,

counting scheme, months of the year, color words, an alphabet sequence, etc.); or (e) picture clues.

- (6) Big book: A big book is a story or poem which is enlarged to a size of approximately 18 by 20 inches, where the words are printed so that they can be seen easily at a distance of 15 feet.
- (7) Frequently miss school: Refers to a child who missed 10 days of school or more during the semester of the study.
- (8) Semester: The time period from September 1, 1987 until January 22, 1988.
- (9) Young kindergarten children: Refers to children in kindergarten who turned age six on or after December 1, 1987.
- (10) Old kindergarten children: Refers to children in kindergarten who turned age six before December 1, 1987.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter will be divided into five main parts. These five parts include: Early Readers, Whole Language Curriculum, Favorite Books, Predictability in Beginning Reading, and Shared-Book Experiences.

Early Readers

While most students enter school at various stages of readiness for reading, there are those who enter school already reading. Over the past two decades, particular attention has been paid to these students. Researchers have tried to determine what, if anything, has caused these students to have reading abilities unlike those of their peers (Clay, 1972; Durkin, 1966; Durkin, 1974; Holdaway, 1979). These researchers have found common trends among the children they have studied.

Researchers found that children who were able to read before the formal instruction of school began came from environments where they were surrounded by language usage. Reading was often observed by the children. Each child was

provided with a variety of language arts opportunities of his/her own choosing and met with positive reinforcement for participating in language experiences. Language experiences included, but were not limited to, access to a wide variety of books, magazines, paper, pencils, and crayons. Early readers were read to often by siblings or parents. They were listened to when they had questions to ask about reading and the questions were answered by a caring respondent. These early readers were in a secure and supportive environment where they felt free to attempt reading at their own level of development without harsh punishment or reprisals from others when errors were made during their attempts at literacy acquisition. An environment where risk-taking with language was accepted was the norm for students who entered school as readers (Fisher, 1987).

Forester (1977) found that children from environments, such as those described above, learned to read in what she termed a "natural" way. Natural reading had many parallels with the natural way in which children learned to speak. Early readers were not taught rules to follow in order to read, but rather learned from the modeling they saw in the world about them. This environment was one where reading and language usage were important but not stressed to unnatural proportions. Learning took place where there was a positive attitude about learning to use all aspects of

language in a natural manner. Specific attempts to teach decoding skills for literacy acquisition were not stressed (Durkin, 1966).

Durkin (1966) also found that the children she studied were curious, were persistent, were self-reliant, had good memories, and had the ability to concentrate. Yet these students were found to be heterogeneous as far as IQ, mental age, and home environment were concerned.

Manning and Manning (1984) found early readers from low socioeconomic environments had language experience backgrounds similar to the language experience backgrounds of early readers from higher socioeconomic environments.

When looking at early readers, the important variables found by researchers were that these children came from homes where parents or siblings readily answered questions about reading, where there was exposure to reading materials, and where oral reading was done often (Forester, 1977).

Whole Language Curriculum

The whole language philosophy for literacy development in school settings had practices similar to the practices found in the homes of children who came to school as readers. A whole language curriculum advocated the philosophy that reading, writing, listening, and speaking were part of the overall picture of language development

and should have been done in a natural manner, not in abstract ways which were unrelated to the experiences of the children who were supposed to be learning the language (Goodman, 1986).

Whole language teachers believed that learning to read should be as natural to learn as learning to speak is for younger children. Researchers in whole language saw that oral language was learned in a positive environment, where meaning was conveyed through learning. They asked, then, why students in schools were expected to learn other parts of the language arts, reading and writing, by having the language broken into parts, and having the reason for communication absent from the learning experiences (Goodman, 1986).

Researchers with a whole language philosophy believed that learning to read and write should be an integrated curriculum, learned in a natural way, where obtaining meaning from learning experiences was the purpose for the learning (Goodman et al., 1987). The environment where formal learning took place should then be similar to the environment where early readers had learned to read naturally.

In a whole language curriculum, teachers needed to help students see language learning as meaningful. The whole language philosophy was based on the premise that learning is an exciting undertaking, where teachers and

learners share the responsibility for learning, where children and instructors value and appreciate each other as coworkers who are eager to learn material that they view as meaningful for them. There was the belief that each individual learner would learn according to his/his individual developmental level if the opportunities were made available (Fisher, 1987).

The whole language philosophy put the language, the culture, the community, the learner, and the teacher together to make language learning easier, more interesting, more stimulating, and more meaningful for the learners (Goodman, 1986). Language learning was considered an important aspect of learning for students because all humans needed to be able to communicate. But too often that learning became senseless, abstract, and vague once a child entered the formal school setting. By using meaningful communication activities with the students, by offering children daily opportunities to read and write, and by modeling in a positive manner the value of communication, a teacher in a whole language environment encouraged language development in the students being taught (Brontas, 1987).

Whole language programs emphasized the need to establish environments where children felt free to take risks in order to learn (Goodman, 1986). The environment where children were learning needed to be a warm and inviting place. Children should have opportunities to

talk, listen, read, and write about meaningful, purposeful activities (Walton, 1985). Only in such an environment would children see a reason for taking a risk which leads to learning new information.

A whole language philosophy was based on the premise that language could and should be easy, a natural part of language development. Barrett (1982) suggested that teachers should help students discover the enjoyment of books. Children who enjoyed good books would want to learn more about print and would grow in their ability to read. Goodman (1986, p. 8) listed what he believed helped to make language learning easy.

- It's real and natural.
- It's whole.
- It's sensible.
- It's interesting.
- It's relevant.
- It belongs to the learner.
- It's part of a real event.
- It has social utility.
- It has purpose for the learner.
- The learner chooses to use it.
- It's accessible to the learner.
- The learner has power to use it.

Language learning has been made difficult in many educational settings. According to Cochrane et al. (1984), schools have made reading difficult by stressing the skills approach which was more concerned with mistakes that children made than with the reading process itself. According to Goodman (1986, p. 8), the following is what has been done to make language difficult to learn:

It's artificial.
It's broken into bits and pieces.
It's nonsense.
It's dull and uninteresting.
It's irrelevant to the learner.
It belongs to somebody else.
It's out of context.
It has no social value.
It has no discernible purpose.
It's imposed by someone else.
It's inaccessible.
The learner is powerless.

A whole language approach to language arts instruction was dependent on the teacher for implementation. A whole language approach to instruction did not have specified materials and curriculum guidelines with a scope and sequence for an instructor to follow. A whole language approach to language arts instruction was considered a philosophy, not a packaged program. When a teacher made a decision to use a whole language approach, he/she accepted the responsibility for teaching each student at his or her individual developmental level using meaningful, interesting, relevant, real activities where the learning environment was student-centered rather than teacher-centered (Goodman, 1986).

A whole language approach to reading instruction was based on the belief that the basic responsibility of a school was to educate students in the use of language and to be able to think and use the knowledge which they acquire (Goodman et al., 1987). When teachers followed these beliefs, they based instruction on materials which

were of interest to students and where students had input as to the selection of the materials to be used for instructional purposes. In early grades, the use of selected favorite books of the students was one consideration of the teacher when selecting materials for instructional purposes.

Favorite Books

Children who have been read to regularly have developed strong ties to selected books (Holdaway, 1979; Trelease, 1982). These books have become favorite selections which have been asked for during reading sessions repeatedly. Bettelheim and Zelan (1981) believed that these selected books met some concern of the child and helped the child deal with a problem. When a certain problem was resolved, the child would change his/her favorite book selection. When parents reread favorite books to children, they helped the child deal with a problem. Children who had no apparent problem also developed strong desires for hearing certain books read (Trelease, 1982).

In an interview by Park (1982), Holdaway described stages through which a book passed as it became a child's favorite. First, a book was read for enjoyment. This procedure was often done as a bedtime story with a young child. There were no demands placed on the child. The

