

**Critical Review: Evidence supporting the use of print focus during storybook reading  
at increasing pre-literacy skills in vulnerable preschoolers**

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This critical review examines the effect of using print focus techniques during storybook reading to increase the pre-literacy skills of vulnerable children. Research designs include randomized control trials and single-subject, multiple probe designs. Overall, the research suggests that using print focus techniques will increase emergent pre-literacy skills in vulnerable preschool children.

***Introduction***

The term emergent literacy is used to describe the pre-literacy skills

### *Study 1*

Justice and Ezell (2000) examined the effectiveness of shared storybook reading within the home environment. The study focused on the parents' use of print-referencing for increasing their child's pre-literacy skills. Twenty-eight parents and their preschool child met all required criteria and participated in the study. The children were matched based on their receptive language ability and their parents' education level. Then one child was randomly assigned to either the experimental or control group. The authors completed a pretest-posttest design study which involved training the parents in the experimental group to use verbal and non-verbal print-referencing techniques. The parents in the control group had no training. Posttest analyses were conducted in order to determine what effect training parents to use print-referencing techniques had on the pre-literacy skills of their child.

The authors of this article completed a repeated measures Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) in order to examine the changes in rates at which both groups used the print-referencing techniques. A significant increase in all five of the print-referencing techniques (commenting, questions, requests, pointing, tracking) was found. This indicates that even when the techniques were not used, each child saw improvements in their pre-literacy skills. A significant difference between the groups at posttest was found in three out of the five subtests (Print Concepts, Words in Print and Word Segmentation). There was no significant difference found in the Alphabet Knowledge or Print Recognition subtests. These results indicate that by using print focus techniques the child will have a better understanding of print concepts, concepts involving words in print and how to segment strings of words. This study consisted of a between groups Randomized Clinical Trial (RCT) where the participants were tested at pre- and post-intervention. This type of experiment consists of level 1 evidence which is very strong and has low false positive and false negative results. The independent variable of this study was the effect of having print-referencing training or not having the training at all. The dependent variable was the

The authors noted a limitation being the small sample size (n=4) which makes it difficult to generalize the results to other children with communication disorders. Another limitation involves the various communication disorders, as the results may be vary for a child with a phonological disorder versus ,



The study was conducted over thirteen weeks by a certified S-LP in the classrooms of each preschool child. Each child had to successfully complete the baseline and generalization probes before continuing on to the intervention sessions. During the intervention sessions, the S-LP used explicit techniques such as commenting, tracking and pointing, all of which did not require the child to respond. By not being forced to respond, this technique allows for the child to initiate or respond whenever they feel necessary. The goal of this technique is to have the child attend to the story and listen to the explicit comments, instead of being bombarded with questions. After each intervention probe was completed the child would move onto the next probe. However, by the end of the intervention sessions, not all children had completed all probes. A post-intervention assessment using the CPA indicated that all children showed a dramatic improvement of their knowledge on print concepts, even if all probes were not complete (Lovelace & Stewart, 2007). This result indicates that a child did not have to do all tasks, only a few involving print focus techniques, to see improvements.

