Chapter 12
Enhanced Picture Books: Enhancing the Literacy Development of Young Children

Maria Cahill
Texas Woman's University, USA

Anne McGill-Franzen
University of Tennessee, USA

Dawn Peterson
Texas Woman's University, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter provides a rationale for using digitally Enhanced Picture Books (EPBs), electronic texts which pair text narration with animated pictures, with young children in the classroom and as a home-school connection tool. First, we synthesize the research on shared reading with young children. Next, we detail the research literature in the area of digital text use with young children. We suggest substantive variables to consider when selecting EPBs. Finally, we recommend practices for integrating EPBs into the primary and early childhood classroom in a manner that will advance young children's literacy development.

INTRODUCTION

Literacy learning has been the focus of educational conversations over the past decade with several large scale government initiatives to address literacy education (i.e. Reading First and Early Reading First). Research indicates that an individual's literacy experiences in the early years can tremendously affect the total academic trajectory (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Juel, 1988; Scarborough, 2001), and children with rich literacy exposure and participation have greater school success than peers lacking such experience (Adams, 1990).

Research has long supported the benefits of traditional storybook reading for children and the contributions that storybook sharing make to literacy development, content knowledge, and

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-3974-4.ch012

school readiness (vanKleek, Stahl, & Bauer, 2003). School and public libraries have long supported storybook reading for children through scheduled storytimes and encouragement to parents to read aloud to children (Public Library Association & Association for Library Service to Children, 2011).

Schools and libraries are beginning to provide children even greater access to storybook and information text reading through digital texts. A number of digital children's literature collections, with copies of linear and static digital representations of classic print books (i.e. digitally scanned print books), have recently become available through the Internet, essentially making what were formerly inaccessible resources instantaneously available (Houston, 2011). More exciting to most children and parents, however, are the more recently developed technologically enhanced storybooks, sometimes called animated picture books, e-storybooks, interactive books, living books, or moving picture books which pair text narration with animated pictures. These EPBs are widely available in a number of digital formats for a variety of devices including via CD-ROMs, through open access Internet sites, through subscription-based Internet sites, and as downloadable apps for touch screen devices.

Many schools and libraries are now incorporating these enhanced texts into their collections and making them available to children and parents (Brisco, 2007; Roskos & Brueck, 2009). In fact, Dickinson (2012) found that a significantly greater number of school libraries provide access to e-books now than just one year ago. Plus, in addition to providing these electronic materials through circulation and in-house use on school and library computers and mobile devices, quite a few also provide access to e-book collections through websites. Finally, a number of young children access these tools on personal computers and mobile devices belonging to themselves and/or their families. Interestingly, almost half of all apps developed for mobile devices are targeted to young children (Shuler, 2012).

Early childhood classrooms have begun providing children access to e-books during the school day (Ricci & Beale, 2002). In this setting the teacher typically allows students to use these interactive enhanced e-books during independent free-choice time or center time. In much the same way that many early childhood and primary grade classrooms have traditionally used audio books in independent listening centers, teachers are now beginning to use EPBs as independent learning tools. Indeed, "whether the words are handwritten, composed on a typewriter, or keyed into an iPad, it is the written word and its ability to reach and touch the minds and experiences of others that is truly miraculous. Our essential work of turning kids on to reading has not changed" (Kimmel, 2012, p. 12).

Enhanced Picture Book Formats and Tools

EPBs come in many different styles; however, Anderson-Inman, and Horney (1997) set four minimum criteria for classifying an e-book: text presented visually on a screen; book-like configuration (table of contents, pages, etc.); an organizing subject matter or topic; and multimedia enhancements. "Visual features [in EPBs] include cuts, pans, dissolves, and special effects; auditory features include music and sound effects; and more holistic characteristics include pacing (rates of scene and character change), physical movement (action), and variation" (Bus, Verhallen, & de Jong, 2009).

EPBs tend to take one of two forms. Traditionally, the more common form of EPB was that of a fairly static picture with narration and a few animations of images. More recently, however, EPBs are "film-like" productions with user-activated "hotspots" that provide additional levels of information or interaction, and this film-like style of EPB has been found to be more beneficial for the most at-risk beginning readers and second language learners (Bus, Verhallen, & de Jong, 2009;