Reading habits of 11 – 12 years old as related to language instruction according to the whole language approach / Dalia Vardon Benari

Abstract:

The aim of the current study was to investigate whether the "whole language" approach of reading instruction is positively correlated with reading habits of 11 - 12 years old school children.

Reading habits were measured by five criteria:

- 1. Amount of reading.
- 2. Enjoyment from reading.
- 3. Development of personal "reading taste".
- 4. Extent of repertoire.
- 5. Influence of reading on personal development.

The study was done on two groups of *kibbutz* and *moshav* scool children. The research group consisted of 87 sixth grade pupils from an elementary school near Jerusalem, who have been instructed according to the "whole language" approach.

The control group was made up of 110 sixth grade pupils from an elementary school in the *Negev*, who has been instructed in the traditional method, called "Without Secrets".

The main research tool was a questionnaire, designed to measure the five above mentioned variables (criteria).

Main findings:

Concerning the variable of the <u>amount of reading</u> – it was found that in the "whole language" group the amount of reading per month was significantly higher.

Also, the ratio of children defined as "reading for enjoyment" (those reading at least one book per week) was higher in the "whole language" group: 51.7 % vs. only 39.3% in the "traditional" group.

Concerning <u>Enjoyment from reading</u>, a positive attitude towards reading was prevalent in both groups as evidenced in the high average index grade of positive statements: "whole language" 3.92; "traditional" 3.24.

However, notable differences were found in two central components:

- a) Negative statements: a higher number of negative statements were made by children of the "traditional" group.
- b) The choice to add personal comments: more children from the "whole language" group chose to add comments, 60% as opposed to only 53.3 % of the "traditional" group.

Regarding <u>development of personal taste</u> - a high degree of similarity was found among the two groups in both the way of choosing books and the type of stories preferred.

Regarding the <u>Repertoire</u> – A preference for book reading was noted in the "whole language" group while the "traditional group's" preference was for magazines and material considered more superficial.

5. Concerning <u>Personal attitude towards reading</u> – a difference was found in the number of children who chose to answer in detail the choice questions regarding the influence of specific books read: 72.4% of the "whole language" group related to these questions as opposed to 57% of the Traditional group. In summation, one may say that the "whole language" group rated higher on most of the five criteria used to measure reading habits. The most obvious finding was regarding the extent of reading: the "whole language" group read more books and devoted more time to reading than the "traditional" group.

It is worth noting that the findings reinforce the claims of "whole language" supporters in their ongoing argument with those who advocate the traditional approach.

System no. 000549172 E028.55 ורד-בנ.הר תשס"ב