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PREVIEW

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**The effect of the dialogue journal process of fifth grade students'
written responses to literature**

Danielson, Kathy Everts, Ph.D.

The University of Nebraska - Lincoln, 1987

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PREVIEW

THE EFFECT OF THE DIALOGUE JOURNAL PROCESS
ON FIFTH GRADE STUDENTS' WRITTEN RESPONSES TO LITERATURE

by

Kathy Everts Danielson

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College in the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Interdepartmental Area Of
Administration, Curriculum
and Instruction

Under the Supervision of Professor Gordon Greene

August, 1987

TITLE

The Effect of the Dialogue Journal Process on Fifth

Grade Students' Written Responses to Literature

BY

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PREVIEW

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I gratefully acknowledge the following people:

--Dr. Gordon Greene, whose encouragement and service as my advisor is greatly appreciated.

--Dr. Karla Hawkins Wendelin, who offered excellent advice regarding this study, as well as being a good friend.

--Dr. F. William Sesow, who served as a reader and offered valuable input.

--Dr. O.W. Kopp and Dr. Herbert Schliesser, who served on my supervisory committee.

--Norris Elementary School, in particular John Zetterman, Rogene Hesseltine, and the fifth grade students who gave graciously of their time and facilities.

--Marilyn Weidner, for her time and word processing expertise.

--Phi Delta Kappa, who provided a grant that funded this study.

--My husband, Steve, whose empathy, support, and sense of humor helped immensely.

--My mother and other family members, who offered much encouragement.

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THE EFFECT OF THE DIALOGUE JOURNAL PROCESS
ON FIFTH GRADE STUDENTS' WRITTEN RESPONSES TO LITERATURE

Kathy Everts Danielson, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 1987

Advisor: Dr. Gordon Greene

The purpose of this study was to investigate fifth graders' written responses to literature in dialogue journals.

Sixteen picture books from four different genres (fantasy, traditional literature, contemporary realistic fiction, and historical fiction) were read to twenty-three fifth graders. Students were asked to respond to the books in dialogue journals.

Pretest and posttest writing instruments, adapted from Diederich's (1974) analytical scale, were used to determine changes in writing after the dialogue journal process. Four raters scored the pretest and posttest writings, and analysis of variance was utilized to determine differences in the writings by sex and time. A significant interaction was found. Girls scored significantly higher on the pretest than the posttest. T-tests were conducted to determine significant differences between boys and girls both in the pretest and posttest. The girls scored significantly higher than the boys on the pretest.

Both the pretest and posttest writings, as well as the dialogue journal entries, were examined in terms of the percentage of T-units (Hunt, 1965) of the Purves - Rippere (1968) categories of response (engagement, perception, interpretation, evaluation, and miscellaneous comments). A T-test was utilized to compare the frequency of occurrence of the categories in the pretest and posttest writings. A multivariate analysis of variance was conducted to determine any significant frequency of occurrence of the Purves - Rippere (1968) categories in the dialogue journal entries within the four different genres of books read to the children. Frequencies of occurrence were significantly different for all categories, as determined by a Tukey (1977) test. In order of frequency of occurrence, these categories were engagement, evaluation, perception, interpretation, and miscellaneous statements. This was the order for all genres except fantasy, where miscellaneous comments were fourth in order of occurrence and interpretation was last.

It was concluded that the dialogue journals had been effective in eliciting more engagement responses, but students had not shown significant gains in their overall writing, as measured by the pretest and posttest.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background for the Study

Researching elementary students' responses to literature is a fairly new area of study. Junior high and high school students have participated in response studies (Beach, 1983; Cornaby, 1975; Faggiani, 1971; Cooper, 1970; Whiteman and Kosier, 1964), but few studies have been reported that examine elementary students' responses to literature. Applebee (1978) described the characteristic responses of children within each of Piaget's developmental stages. Cullinan, Harwood, and Galda (1983) confirmed Applebee's ideas about the developmental levels in children's comprehension of and response to literature. The progression from basic recall to analysis in younger and then older children was evident in Cullinan, Harwood, and Galda's study of 18 participants in grades 4, 6, and 8. Petrosky (1975) concluded from his descriptive profile of 14- and 15-year-olds that those students who fell into the Piagetian stage known as formal operations gave responses to short stories, poems, and novels based upon their own identity theme and their

stage-specific thought processes. Pillar (1983), Van Cleaf and Martin (1986), and Galda (1986) have reported similar results.

Currently the process approach of teaching writing has received much attention. The focus of such an approach is on the meaning, rather than the particular skills of writing. Writing is viewed as a continuous process and not a single attempt (Smith, 1982). Writers are allowed to explore, confirm, and take risks in writing (Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983). The process of writing is viewed as collecting observations, connecting these observations with prior experience or to each other, writing them down, and then reading them as a prospective audience might view them. The act of writing is seen as a process of rehearsing, drafting, and revising (Murray, 1984).

Dialogue journals are also a recent addition to writing research. Dialogue journals have been used with kindergartners (Hipple, 1985) and with other primary grade students (Fulwiler, 1985; Gambrell, 1985; Palmer and Coon, 1984) as a vehicle for the development of young children's writing. Staton (1985) has also used dialogue journals with hearing-impaired students of all ages. In addition, Popkin (1985) and Davis (1983) reported the use of dialogue journals with junior and senior high school students where fluency in a foreign language was the

intended goal. Thus far, dialogue journals have not been researched regarding their use in the response process.

This study sought to find out if elementary students', specifically fifth grade students', responses to literature differed before and after the dialogue journal process.

The results of this study may provide information concerning the effectiveness of using dialogue journals within this process approach to writing as vehicles of response to literature.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the use of dialogue journals improved fifth grade students' written responses to literature.

Hypotheses

Ten main hypotheses were tested in the study at the .05 level of significance. They were:

1. There will be no significant change in the fifth grade students' writing after the process of dialogue journals as measured through analytic scoring.

2. There will be no significant differences between the fifth grade boys' and girls' analytic scores in the pretest writing.

3. There will be no significant differences between the fifth grade boys' and girls' analytic scores in the posttest writing.

4. There will be no significant differences between the response categories (Purves-Rippere, 1968) of the fifth grade students in their pretest and posttest writing samples.

5. There will be no significant differences between the fifth grade boys and girls in terms of the appearance of predominant response categories in the pretest writing.

6. There will be no significant differences between the fifth grade boys and girls in terms of the appearance of predominant response categories in the posttest writing.

7. One of the Purves-Rippere (1968) response categories (engagement, perception, interpretation, evaluation, miscellaneous comments) will not appear significantly more frequently than the other categories in the dialogue journal entries about fantasy.

8. One of the Purves-Rippere (1968) response categories (engagement, perception, interpretation, evaluation, miscellaneous comments) will not appear significantly more frequently than the other categories in the dialogue journal entries about contemporary realistic fiction.

9. One of the Purves-Rippere (1968) response categories (engagement, perception, interpretation, evaluation, miscellaneous comments) will not appear significantly more frequently than the other categories in the dialogue journal entries about traditional stories.

10. One of the Purves-Rippere (1968) response categories (engagement, perception, interpretation, evaluation, miscellaneous comments) will not appear significantly more frequently than the other categories in the dialogue journal entries about historical fiction.

Definitions of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms were used:

Dialogue Journals. Bound notebooks in which students write comments and responses. The dialogue is established when the teacher (or in this case, the researcher) responds in writing to what the students have written, thus creating a conversation in writing.

Response To Literature. Reactions of readers or listeners to literature. A highly personal, possibly interactive, and potentially dynamic process.

Categories Of Response - Purves-Rippere (1968):

Engagement. A statement of this category is a personal remark about a piece of literature. It shows the reader's/listener's involvement with the text.

Perception. A statement of this category denotes an objective description of the text, either through narration or observation.

Interpretation. A statement of this category is based upon inferences. Generalizations beyond the descriptive level occur.

Evaluation. A statement of this category involves the readers'/listeners' judgments.

Miscellaneous. A statement of this category includes irrelevant and divergent remarks, as well as unclassifiable statements.

Analytical Scoring. A writing evaluation technique that is used to score the overall merit of a piece of writing. The focus of the evaluation is on the ideas, organization, wording, and flavor of the writing.

T-unit. A minimal terminable unit "grammatically capable of being terminated with a capital letter and a period" (Hunt, 1965, p. 21). The number of grammatical clauses within a sentence used as an index for calculating quantity of writing.

DLTA. A directed listening thinking activity is a guided listening practice that can be done when students