IMPROVING PREKINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S COMPREHENSION OF STORYBOOKS

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THE BACKGROUND: PROSODY

- Refers to the rhythmic and tonal features of speech

- Made up of pitch (intonation), stress (loudness), and duration (timing)

- Part of fluency along with rate and accuracy
Psycholinguistic Effects of Prosody

- Provides natural breakpoints in speech

- These breaks allow parsing, or chunking, of text that breaks information up into meaningful units

- These chunks allow a person to hold an auditory sequence in working memory while the information is being processed (Frazier, Carlson, & Clifton, 2006)
**Direction of Research on Prosody**

- Prosody seems to be related to comprehension for the reader, however, directionality is unknown.

- Does prosodic reading improve comprehension? Does comprehension during reading result in prosodic reading? Or is the relationship reciprocal?

- What about for the listener?
The Problem

- Parents and teachers are always encouraged to read with expression, but there has been no research to determine whether this practice improves comprehension.

- Does prosodic reading, reading with expression, improve prekindergarten children’s comprehension of storybooks?
THE STUDY

- 92 four and five year olds.
- Two similar stories
- Two recordings of each story, one expressive and one inexpressive
- First half got natural prosody, second half got time controlled prosody
RESULTS

- Found several effects:
  1. **Effect of prosody**
  2. Effect of order: practice effect
  3. Effect of natural prosody vs. time controlled prosody