



*3.6 Minutes Per
Day: The Scarcity
of Informational
Texts in First
Grade*

Conceptual Framework

- This study is built upon the belief that discourse knowledge has a substantial impact on the lives of individuals and groups.
- The ability to read and write informational texts is one form of semiotic capital valued in multiple settings in advanced schooling, community, and work.
- This study examines informational text experiences offered to students from two distinct socioeconomic settings to ascertain whether opportunities to acquire informational discourse knowledge in two schooling contexts, which are low SES and high SES.

Text Features of Informational Text as Defined for the Purposes of This Study

- Function to communicate information about the natural or social world
- An expectation of durable factual content
- Timeless verb constructions
- Generic noun constructions
- Technical vocabulary
- Classification and definitional material
- Comparative/contrastive, problem/solution, cause/effect, or like text structures
- Frequent repetition of the topical theme
- Graphical elements such as diagrams, in dices, page numbers, and maps

Informational Texts Divided into Three Types for the Purposes of this Study

- Informational
- Narrative-Informational
- Informational Poetic

Assumptions About Genre Development

- Development is genre specific
- Genre development requires substantial experience with genre
- The nature of the genre experience matters too
- Genre development is possible at young ages

Method

- A descriptive observational study of 20 first-grade classrooms in 10 school districts in the greater Boston metropolitan area.
- Ten first-grade classrooms were chosen from among the 6 highest SES school districts in the area
- Ten first-grade classrooms were chosen from among the 4 of the 6 lowest SES districts in the area

Method Continued

Data Collection Procedures

- Strictly observation with no interaction.
 - Print on classroom walls and other surfaces
 - Print materials in the classroom library
 - Any classroom activities that involved print in any way
 - ❖ All observations were recorded as having a specific genre involved with the display or the activity.

Results Low SES and High SES

Displayed Print

- There was little informational text on classroom walls or other surfaces. Percentage of displayed text that was informational.
 - Low SES 1.5%
 - High SES 3.6%

Classroom Library

- Informational texts were scarce in the classroom libraries studied. Percentage of the classroom library that was informational.
 - Low SES 6.9%
 - High SES 12.7%

Results Low SES and High SES Cont.

Written Language Activities

- Here again, informational texts were scarce. Percentage of time spent with written language that involved information text in some way.
 - Low SES 1.9%
 - High SES 3.8%
- ❖ Results of this study reveal an overall scarcity of informational text in these first-grade classrooms.

Strategies for Addressing the Scarcity of Informational Text

- Encourage publishers of literacy programs, basal and otherwise, to incorporate more informational text into their materials.
- Curricular mandates and reform projects may provide a mechanism for addressing the scarcity of informational text.
- Teacher training
- Include more informational text in home reading programs.
- Work on increasing the budget available for reading materials in the early grades.
- We should NOT attempt to increase time spent with informational text solely through decreasing attention to narrative text.