

Turning Pages, Turning Minds: Scaffolding Conversations During Shared Book Reading

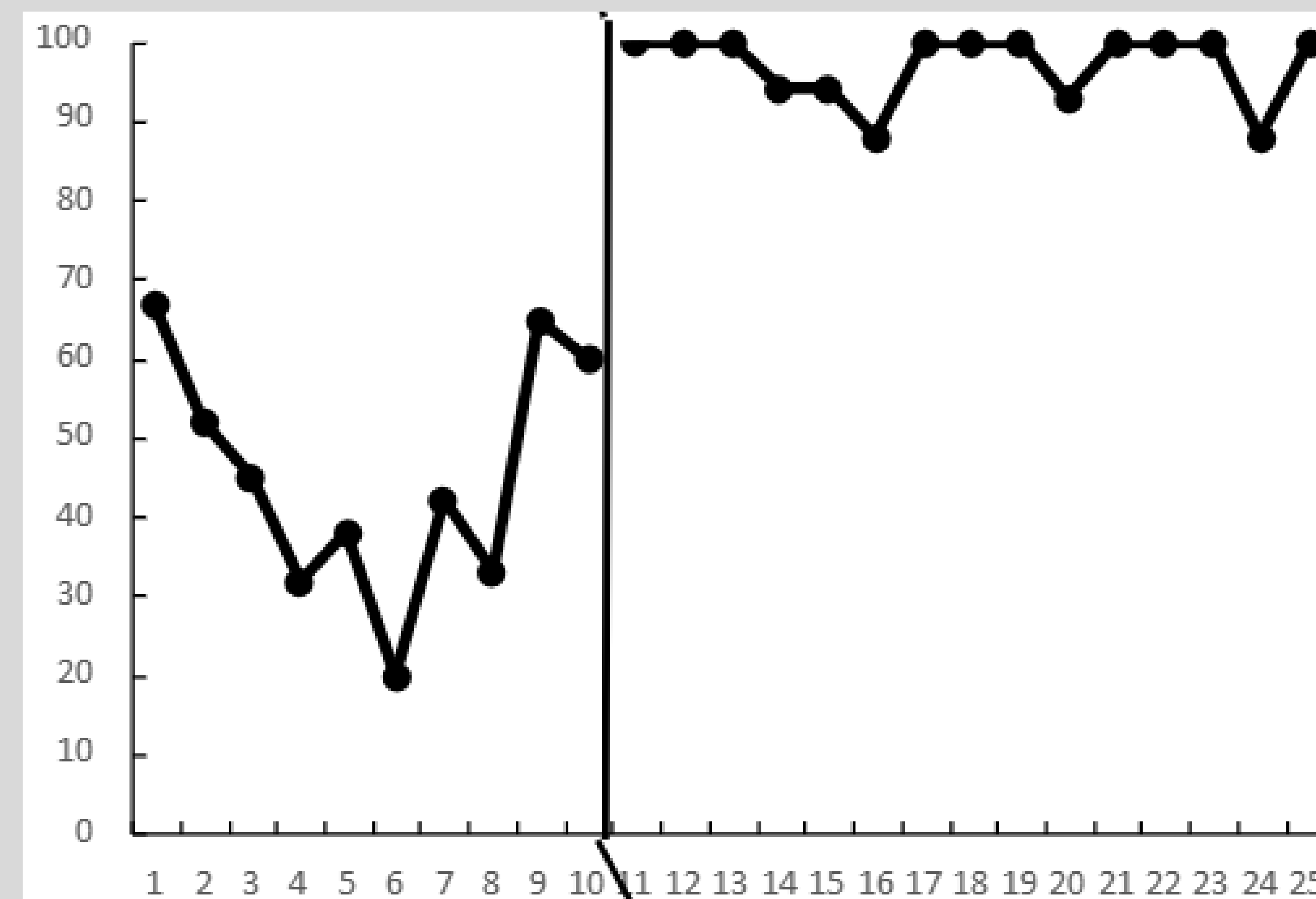
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Introduction

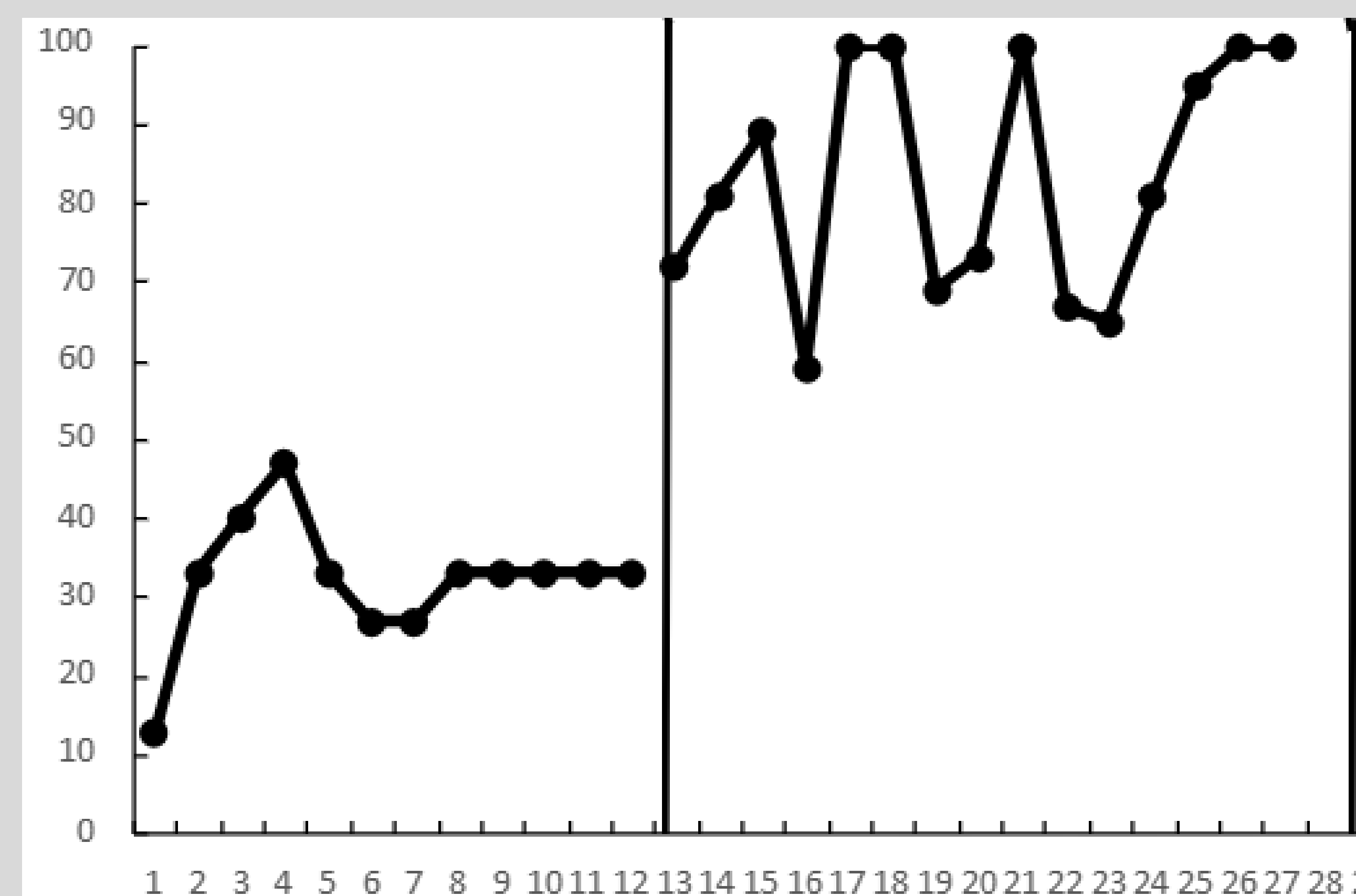
- Shared Book Reading (SBR) is a well-established approach that supports early childhood development, particularly in areas such as oral language skills, vocabulary acquisition, and reading comprehension (Hoyne & Egan, 2019). By engaging preschool children in rich, back-and-forth conversations during book readings, SBR fosters critical language skills over time (Zurek, 2014). These interactions are often guided by scaffolding techniques, where adults adjust the level of support based on a child's needs. For example, they may ask simpler questions if a child is struggling or more challenging questions if the child is progressing well. This targeted approach helps children better understand the story and strengthens their speaking and listening abilities, which are foundational for overall language comprehension.
- A key factor in maximizing the benefits of SBR is ensuring that paraprofessionals—the teacher aides who often lead these activities—are well-equipped to use scaffolding effectively. However, many paraprofessionals lack access to high-quality professional development (Will, 2022), which limits their ability to fully support children's literacy development. One promising method for improving paraprofessional training is practice-based coaching (Lindsay, et al., 2023), particularly when delivered through text messaging. This approach provides ongoing, real-time feedback, helping paraprofessionals maintain high-quality interactions with children during SBR sessions.
- This research will explore the question: “What are the effects of practice-based coaching, delivered via text messaging, to support the fidelity of scaffolding implementation, on paraprofessionals' use of scaffolding strategies during Shared Book Reading?” By examining this question, the study aims to better understand how text-based coaching can help paraprofessionals enhance their use of scaffolding techniques, ultimately improving early childhood literacy outcomes.

Methodology

- The study begins with a baseline phase in which four paraprofessionals engage their students in multiple book readings. During this phase, they ask five sets of scaffolding questions without prior guidance on effective implementation. Following the baseline, an intervention phase is introduced, where paraprofessionals receive training on how to scaffold conversations. The intervention is staggered across participants, meaning paraprofessionals receive different amounts of reading practice before the intervention is introduced.
- After training, paraprofessionals apply the newly learned scaffolding strategies in subsequent book readings. During these sessions, they receive real-time feedback via text messages to refine their implementation. After a period without structured readings, they are observed in the classroom to evaluate whether their use of scaffolding has improved.
- The research assistant is responsible for preparing book-related materials, coding text message feedback to ensure fidelity in coaching, and testing the intervention slides and presentations. Additionally, they code audio recordings from both the reading sessions and the intervention training to assess fidelity and adherence to research guidelines.



Paraprofessional 3's performance graph before and after intervention (training)



Paraprofessional 4's performance graph before and after intervention (training)

Findings

Expected results are that the paraprofessionals will increase their ability to correctly use upward and downward scaffolding during shared book reading because of the ongoing practice-based coaching that they are receiving.

While the study is still ongoing with the maintenance stage upcoming, thus far all four paras have improved their adherence to the question structure. Additionally, student answers seemed to improve in the second readings thus far.

While the findings have not been interpreted, there seems to be a clear positive effect of the intervention.

Discussion

These results highlight the potential of real-time, text-based coaching as a scalable and accessible professional development tool for paraprofessionals. By reinforcing best practices through consistent feedback, coaching helped participants sustain high-quality interactions with children, leading to richer language exchanges and more meaningful engagement during SBR sessions. Given the crucial role of scaffolding in fostering early literacy and language development, these findings suggest that implementing similar coaching interventions on a broader scale could significantly enhance the effectiveness of early childhood education programs.

Future research should investigate ways to further refine and personalize how coaching strategies could help maximize their effectiveness. Overall, this study underscores the importance of ongoing, practice-based coaching support for paraprofessionals as an effective mechanism for training them to uptake evidence-based practices.

References

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