Introduction

Rhyming Storybooks
• "The Gruffalo" chosen as favourite storybook in a 2010 poll by Booktrust
• "Green Eggs and Ham" and "The Cat in the Hat" voted the children’s top picture books in a 2000 poll conducted by the National Education Association.

Rhyme Assists Word Learning
• Read (1976) hypothesizes that rhyme increases children’s liking of and attention to verbal information, facilitating word learning.
• Phonological cues found in rhyming stories should support word learning. (Storkel 2001)
• Presenting a novel word alongside a familiar sounding word (i.e. rhyming) maintains a longer representation of that word in memory. (Cronk, Graham & Saulnier 2003)

Are Prose Storybooks Useful?
• Retention of general content of a story is increased if children are read a story written in prose. (Hayes-Chernoff & Palmer, 1982)

Research Questions
• Does rhyme still assist word learning when the storybook used has been created specifically with novel stimuli?
• Do children reading the prose storybook remember more details about the plot?
• Does the rhyming storybook prime children to recognize rhyming sounds?

The Experiments

Experiment 1
• After reading: four 4-alternative-forced-choice trials with pictures, then four 4-alternative-forced-choice trials with 3D novel objects from the story

Experiment 2
• 8 Plot Questions:
  • E.g., Was it sunny or raining?
  • Both sun and rain appear in the storybook

Results

Example of paragraphs taken from the rhyming and non-rhyming storybooks
• Each novel name appears four times in the book, next a picture of the novel object appearing in a natural setting

Discussion

• Rhyming books do not facilitate word learning
• Experiment 2 investigates this further
  • Does the rhythm of rhyme distract children?
  • If so they should be less accurate on plot questions
  • Does rhyme focus attention on individual words?
  • If so, children hearing the rhyming book should be primed to pick rhyme over onset.
• The current study has found the opposite, and more research is needed to investigate why.

References