



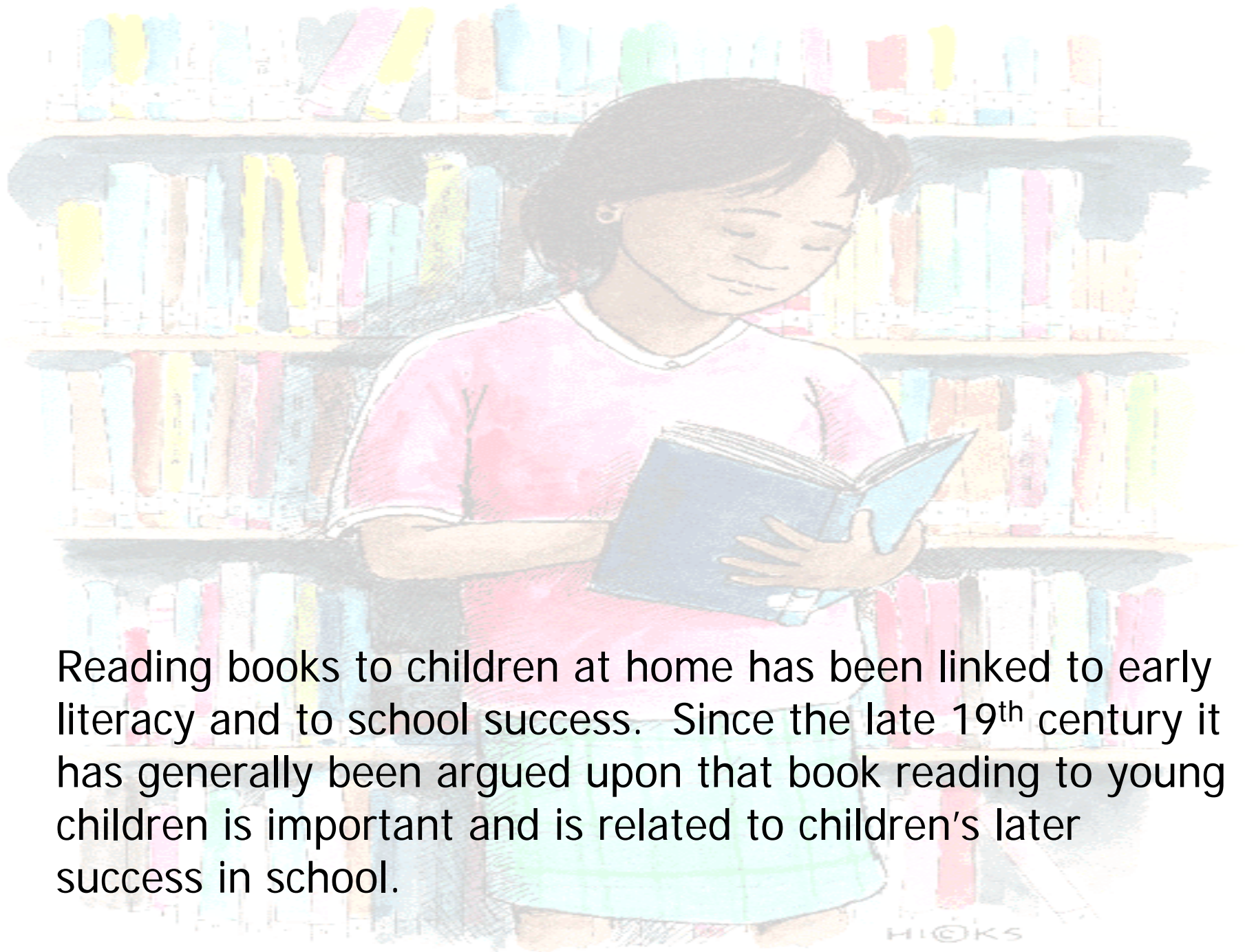
Parents and Children Reading Books Together

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Reading books to children at home has been linked to early literacy and to school success. Since the late 19th century it has generally been argued upon that book reading to young children is important and is related to children's later success in school.

Book reading may be used as an opportunity to enrich involvement with children and provide:

 Quiet laptime for children

 Teaching skills and facts believed to be used later on in Kindergarten

 Creating a setting for intentional reading of books

 An opportunity to explore imaginary worlds, creating springboards to generate elaborate childhood fantasies

Several hypotheses have been proposed as to why these activities may be associated with strong literacy and language skills later on.

? Simple exposure to books and print prepare the child for literacy

? Through book reading the child becomes familiar with print and how books actually work

? Through the associated love of books, warm, affectionate time between child and parents is established

? What does a child and his/her parents “add” to the text including conversations, comments, and questions that occur during book reading.

The research of this article focuses on this last hypothesis, looking at the type of interaction and talk that mothers use beyond the text while reading to their children.

THE RESEARCH



The research in this article involved monitored reading of 54 children ages 3 to 5 by their mothers at home on three separate visits during their 3rd, 4th, and 5th years of age. Three books were selected to be read during the visits:

The Very Hungry Caterpillar



This was read to the children on all three visits. This is a narrative about the life of a butterfly with colorful illustrations and text.

What Next Baby Bear!

This is a narrative about a little bear's imaginary trip to the moon. (More complex in text and illustrations) Read to the children on the 2nd and 3rd visits.



Elephant

A non fiction children's book with factual information about different kinds of elephants. This book was used only on the 3rd visit.



Styles of Reading Observed



As each mother read to their child from the three texts, different reading styles were noted and observed. They ranged from:



Straight reading of the text



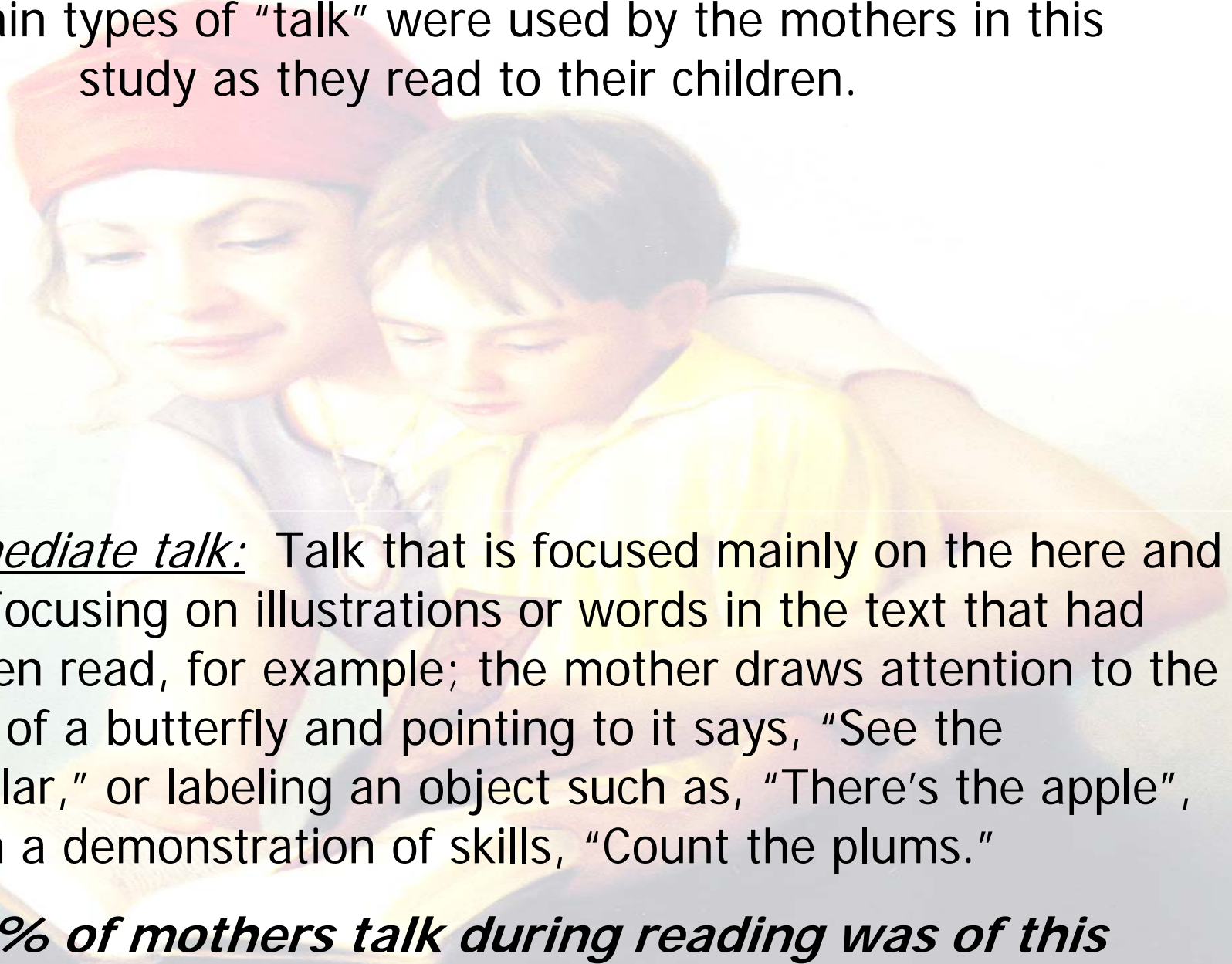
Talking about the illustrations



Telling the story with no reading



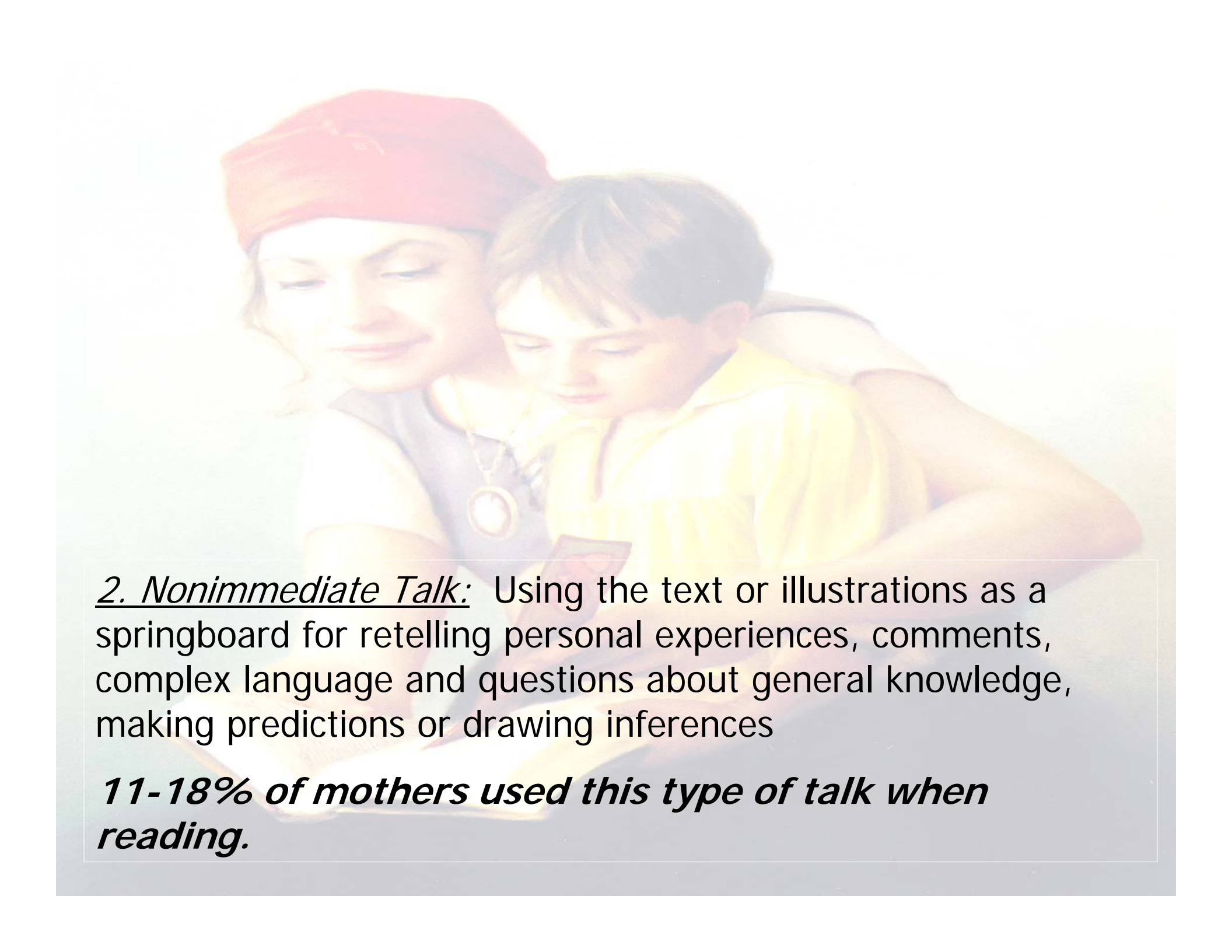
Reading with extensive interaction

A photograph of a woman with a red headscarf and a young boy with dark hair, both looking down at an open book. The woman is on the left, and the boy is on the right. They are both smiling slightly. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Two main types of “talk” were used by the mothers in this study as they read to their children.

1. Immediate talk: Talk that is focused mainly on the here and now. Focusing on illustrations or words in the text that had just been read, for example; the mother draws attention to the picture of a butterfly and pointing to it says, “See the caterpillar,” or labeling an object such as, “There’s the apple”, or even a demonstration of skills, “Count the plums.”

43-60% of mothers talk during reading was of this type.

A photograph of a woman and a young boy sitting together, reading a book. The woman is wearing a red headscarf and a blue top, and the boy is wearing a yellow shirt. They are both looking down at the book with focused expressions. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

2. Nonimmediate Talk: Using the text or illustrations as a springboard for retelling personal experiences, comments, complex language and questions about general knowledge, making predictions or drawing inferences

11-18% of mothers used this type of talk when reading.

Results of the Home School Reading Survey Research

- Mothers who used a high percentage of *immediate talk* while reading to their preschoolers and kindergartners had children who had low scores on kindergarten measures of early literature.
- As the children grew older less talk occurred during reading but, the talk that did occur was more *nonimmediate*.
- 96% of the mothers in the study reported they read daily to their children.
- Most of the children in the study were also read to by someone else.
- Most of the families (62%) owned more than 25 children's books at the time of the first visit.
- Looking at picture books was not associated with later literacy skills.

- Reading or telling stories while looking through picture books was predictive of the child's knowledge of literacy at ages five and seven.
- Children who had greater home support for literacy (books owned, frequency of reading and variety of reading activities) demonstrated greater skills on early literacy measures.
- In a separate 1999 survey, children who were read to three or more times per week were twice as likely to show three or more of the emerging literacy skills than children who are read to less frequently.

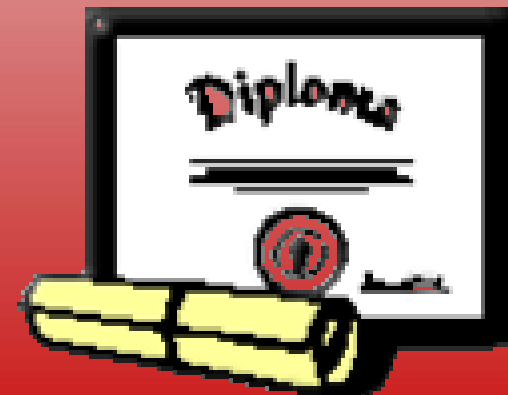
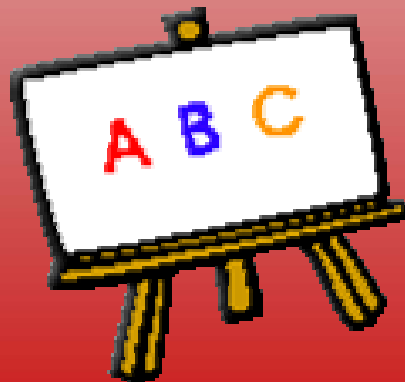
Table 2.1. Mothers' reports of home support for literacy

Question	3 year-old visit (<i>n</i> = 79)	4-year-old visit (<i>n</i> = 68)
Do you read to your child?	96%	97%
Daily?	66	70
Does anyone else read to your child?	83	77
One to two times per week	17	25
Three or more times per week	41	25
How many children's books do you own?		
1-10	11	8
11-25	27	11
More than 25	62	82
Do you get books from the library?	18	30
Do you get books from a bookstore?	42	42
Do you read anything else with your child?		
Funnies	32	28
Catalogs	61	34
Children's magazines	45	40
Newspapers	22	17

Figures represent percentage of mothers answering in the affirmative.

Conclusion

The children who had the highest scores on the kindergarten measures of language and literacy skills were the children whose environments provided the highest home support for literacy and whose mothers used a smaller percentage of immediate talk and more nonimmediate talk.



Suggestions for Parents

- Choose a variety of types of books to read and include stories with long text, stories with rhyme, picture books, chapter books and factual scientific books.
- Read books over and over again. Increase familiarity with the story and content of the book opens doors for more complex discussion.
- Discuss some aspect of the book before and after reading. It helps to be familiar with the book before starting to read it to your child.
- Vary intonation: use different voices to enhance comprehension and interest.

- Use gestures and point to aspects of the illustrations to add to your child's comprehension without interrupting the flow of the text especially when reading an unfamiliar word.
- Make the book reading experiences overflow into other areas of life. Make connections, comments, ask questions to help scaffold learning from everyday life experiences.
- Be a reader yourself. This provides a model for your child and helps you think of better ways to enhance the conversations between you and your child about books.

THE END



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(Along with our grade.)