The efficacy of electronic books in fostering kindergarten children’s emergent story understanding

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A counterbalanced, within-subjects design was carried out to study the efficacy of electronic books in fostering kindergarten children’s emergent story understanding. We compared effects of children’s independent reading of stories electronically with effects of printed books read aloud by adults. Participants were 18 four- to five-year-old Dutch kindergarten children in the initial stages of developing story comprehension but beyond just responding to pictures. Electronic reading produced experiences and effects similar to adult-read printed books. Children frequently interacted with the animations often embedded in electronic stories, but there was no evidence that the animations distracted children from listening to the text presented by electronic books, nor that the animations interfered with story understanding. Findings suggested that children at this stage of development profited from electronic books at least when electronic books are read in a context where adults also read books to children.