WILL STORYTELLING ACTIVITIES INCREASE DRA READING COMPREHENSION SCORES OF 2ND GRADERS?

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A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

May 2007

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ABSTRACT

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Story retelling is often used as a measure of reading comprehension. Hence, the ability to retell a story read (a literary tale) has become an important academic skill (Benson & Cummins, 2000, Bloome, Katz & Champion, 2003). Teachers need to have pedagogical approaches that are effective for retelling a literary tale that strengthens reading comprehension for all students. This study proposed that adding the art of storytelling to an already literacy-rich classroom environment would be an additional educational approach to accomplish this outcome. The research question that this case study attempted to answer was, “What effect will training second grade students in the art of storytelling have on their Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) reading comprehension scores?” A classroom of twenty-one students from a northwest Ohio school district was taught a unit on oral storytelling over an eleven-week period.

Subsequently, pre-and-post-reading comprehension scores were obtained for fourteen students who participated in the study. The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) was chosen for the assessment tool. Scores were analyzed based upon the criteria set forth in the DRA and categorized into four reading profiles: good decoders/good comprehenders, good decoders/poor comprehenders, poor decoders/good comprehenders and poor decoders/poor comprehenders.

The results of this case study indicate that teaching the art of storytelling in a literacy-rich environment did not have an adverse effect upon the reading comprehension scores for any of
the fourteen participants, and appeared, with this population of students, that it may have had a favorable effect on reading comprehension.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis was written for all who struggle with the written tale but are born storytellers. What a gift you have to give to the literacy world!

This is dedicated to Elaine Bornstein, a sixth grade teacher who many years ago took a risk and moved a student from the group of struggling readers to the proficient reading group. They read Moby Dick… “Call me Ishmael.” Her vote of confidence has never been forgotten.

To my dear friend and colleague, Tami Lynch, who graciously helped with the research and editing of this thesis. You were always there!

To my treasured friend and colleague, Donna Luidhardt, who enthusiastically embraced my idea and allowed me to enter her world twice a week for eleven weeks.

To Kathy Zachel who somehow found time in her schedule to support my study by sharing a wealth of knowledge and information about storytelling,

To Judy Maxy who kindly and willingly helped me with her expertise in APA style.

To my dear friend Kate Mertler, who offered simple but powerful words of encouragement along my Master’s Degree journey.

To Dr. Craig Mertler, who took the time to help me understand the statistical aspects of a study, whether used this time or for a future study.

To Dr. Cindy Hendricks, who pulled apart an unconvincing whole and as a result, greatly strengthened the final gestalt.

And finally, to Dr. Nancy Fordham, whose knowledge, grace and eloquence will forever serve as an inspiration to be the best teacher and colleague I can be.
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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

To be a person is to have a story to tell.
Isak Dineen

When I was young I remember being mesmerized with the stories told by marionettes on stage in the gymnasium of my elementary school. I remember the excitement of watching the drama play out as my favorite fairytales were performed on stage at the neighboring college campus during elementary fieldtrips. I remember being enthralled while watching story time episodes on our classroom TV when the narrator told a story about Curious George while drawing the action of the scene. I could not wait to tell these stories to my family.

However, retelling stories that I read or that my teacher read aloud was a task I could not do. Perhaps the inability to comprehend a story from the referent of a book was the result of poor decoding skills or an inability to visualize and imagine the text, or a little bit of both. Later, I began wondering if there was a way to link comprehension of an oral tale to a written tale.

As an adult, I began telling stories to classrooms of students. I was immediately struck by the mesmerized looks on students’ faces as they listened. It reminded me of my youth when stories came alive for me. All students were enthralled with the stories, not just the strong readers who were very capable of retelling stories they had read, but also the students who struggled with reading. For students who struggle with decoding and for those who can decode well but cannot comprehend what they read, retelling a story previously read can prove to be a very difficult task. However, the National Council of Teachers of English (2000) believes students at any level of schooling who do not feel as competent as their peers in reading are often masterful at storytelling. The comfort zone
of the oral tale can be the path by which they reach the written one. With practice, all students can become storytellers. According to Schimmel (1982), the skills of choosing, learning, and telling stories can be acquired.

Statement of the Problem

On any given school day, teachers assess reading comprehension by asking a student to read a story previously read, and then retell it. A correlation between a student’s ability to retell the story and reading comprehension is drawn. Consequently, comprehension is measured by students’ ability to retell the main points of what they have read. As a result, retelling stories has become an important academic skill for students (Benson & Cummins, 2000; Bloome, Katz & Champion, 2003)

When students struggle with retelling a text, it affects comprehension across all content areas. Thus, the ability to retell a text that has been previously read (a literary tale) is of paramount concern to general education teachers. In any one classroom, a teacher may have students who fall into four broad categories of readers: students who are poor decoders and poor comprehenders, poor decoders and good comprehenders, good decoders and poor comprehenders and good decoders, and good comprehenders. Within these profiles are students who read below grade level, on grade level, and above grade level. Hence, classroom teachers are faced with determining pedagogical choices that would be beneficial to all students.

According to Strong and Hoggan North (1996), storytelling is a process that offers opportunities to practice organizing, categorizing, and remembering information concurrently with practice in predicting, summarizing, comparing and contrasting information—all academic communication functions and reading comprehension.
strategies. Successful storytelling requires critical thinking skills. These skills include being able to identify the parts of the story and how they relate to the whole, having adequate vocabulary and language skills to tell the story, being able to organize thoughts into a logical sequence and, finally, having a strong link between expressive communication abilities and effective storytelling. Student storytelling is more than an assessment. Storytelling provides a medium through which students can actively construct meaning. Each time a story is told, language learning takes place. These skills parallel the skills necessary for a successful oral retelling of a text that a student has previously read.

Instructing students in the art of oral storytelling may be a medium to teach a range of reading comprehension strategies to all students, regardless of their decoding and comprehension skills, whether they read below grade level, on grade level, or above grade level. Storytelling is a medium in which all students need to develop visualization and imagery skills. The process of connecting language and thought to imagery is the basic element involved in oral and written language comprehension, language expression, and critical thinking (Bell, 1991).

Research Question

Recently, a colleague who is a second grade teacher requested assistance to investigate additional teaching strategies that might increase reading comprehension scores for her students. The teacher used The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) tool to determine reading comprehension. The DRA determines reading comprehension by assessing students’ ability to orally retell a story they have previously read. After discussing storytelling as an instructional strategy, the teacher and researcher decided to
work collaboratively to conduct an action research case study. This study sought to
answer the following question: What effect will training second grade students in the art
of storytelling have on their DRA reading comprehension scores?

Rationale

Though current research on storytelling as an instructional tool is limited, a
review of the literature indicates storytelling has the potential to be a positive
instructional tool to add to the repertoire of strategies already in place in a literacy-rich
classroom (Isbell, Sobel, Lindauer, & Lowrance, 2004). Further, positive experiences
with literacy may lead to an increase in reading motivation (Pachtman & Wilson, 2006).
Though reading motivation was not the primary objective of storytelling with this
population of students, it is a beneficial outcome that may occur naturally.

Definition of Terms

Specific terms are often used in the literature when discussing storytelling and
reading comprehension. For the purpose of this study, the following terms and definitions
are used:

1. **Developmental Reading Assessment** (DRA): an assessment tool used to
measure and document primary students’ development as readers over time. The
assessments are conducted during one-on-one reading conferences as students
read specially selected assessment texts. A set of 20 stories, which increase in
difficulty, are used for the assessment. The DRA evaluates two major aspects of
reading: accuracy of oral reading and comprehension through reading and
retelling of narrative stories (Beaver, 2001).
2. **Gestalt**: a set of elements such as a person’s thoughts and experiences considered as a whole and regarded as amounting to more than the sum of its parts (Bell, 1991).

3. **Literary tale**: a story created by a writer for the specific purpose of being read.

4. **Narrative**: a story or an account of a sequence of events in the order in which they happened.

5. **Oral literature**: story telling.

6. **Retelling**: a repeating of an account or story that has been told or read before.

7. **Storytelling**: a process in which a person (the teller) using vocalization, narrative structure, and mental imagery communicates with the audience who also uses mental imagery and, in turn, communicates back to the teller primarily via body language and facial expression. The communication cycle is ongoing, and in the process, a “story” is created (Roney, 1996).

8. **Think aloud**: the process of verbalizing internal thoughts while reading orally.

9. **Visualization**: the creation of a clear picture of something in the mind.

**Limitations**

The action research design model for this study followed that recommended by Mertler (2006) for qualitative educational research. A case study where the researcher was a full participant was chosen. Specific limitations of this study need to be addressed. First, other variables unaccounted for in the study could have influenced the post-treatment DRA scores. For example, post-scores may increase due to maturation over time, regardless of treatment. Additionally, students’ levels of motivation to engage productively in the treatment may affect post-treatment scores.
Further, students’ expressive communication abilities may impact ability to effectively retell a story they have heard or read.

Secondly, since a rubric was used to assess reading comprehension, it was subjective, therefore influencing the reading comprehension score. Further, the rubric does not consider how proficiently a student delivered the retelling. For instance, was the retelling characterized by ease and clarity of thought or were pauses noted with numerous rephrasing and false starts? Thirdly, decoding skills were not addressed in the treatment of this study. However, decoding skills were assessed in the DRA and were part of the overall DRA composite scores. Fourth, 11 weeks of treatment in storytelling may not be a sufficient length of time to significantly affect DRA scores. Finally, the nature of a case study indicates that the results cannot be generalized to other populations.
CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

“Narration is as much a part of human nature as breath and the circulation of blood.”

A.S.Byatt (Simmons, 2001, p. 27)

Nessel (1985) states there is nothing quite like hearing a captivating story, told simply and effectively, without a book in evidence. Stories capture the imagination, engaging the emotions and opening the minds of listeners. Consequently, any point that is made in a story or any teaching that is done afterwards is likely to be much more effective. Smith (1988) postulates that the human brain is essentially a narrative device. The knowledge stored in the brain is largely in the form of stories. Stories are far more easily remembered and recalled than a sequence of unrelated facts. The U. S. Department of Education (1986) noted that students with low motivation and weak academic skills are more likely to listen, read, write and put forth greater effort academically in the context of storytelling.

Research investigating storytelling as an effective teaching tool was plentiful in the 1980s and 1990s. Aix (1988) noted that numerous articles and papers entered in the Education Resources Information Center database between 1985 and 1988 discussed the benefits of storytelling in developing language abilities, appreciation of literature, critical thinking and comprehension, and understanding of community and self. The theories and research behind these areas are among some of the many topics of current research in the area of reading comprehension. Specifically, these topics include exposure to literature and cognitive strategies, visualization abilities and reader response theory.

This chapter explores the history of storytelling, storytelling as an instructional strategy, and reading comprehension strategies--specifically read aloud, think aloud,
visualization and reader response. Finally, the chapter explores how strategies used for
successful storytelling are similar to strategies used for proficient reading comprehension.

History of Storytelling

*We are lonesome animals. We spend all of our lives trying to be less lonesome. One of
our ancient methods is to tell a story begging the listener to say—and to feel—“Yes that is
the way it is, or at least that is the way I feel it. You’re not as alone as you thought.”*

John Steinbeck (Simmons, 2001, p.181)

The first written description of an action that vaguely resembles storytelling
appears to be in the Egyptian papyrus known as the Westcar Papirus, recorded sometime
described these stories, the Tales of the Magicians, as the first grouping of stories around
a central idea. Maguire (1985) further described them as the first cautionary tales.

Evidence of storytelling has been found in widely divergent cultures. Pellowski
(1990) notes there are a number of early examples of stories or story fragments in texts
from ancient Babylonian, Canaanite, Hittite, Sumerian, Egyptian, Chinese and Sanskrit
cultures. Storytelling has also been noted in the Bible and, to a greater degree, in Sanskrit
scripture indicating storytelling was practiced for religious and secular reasons.
Additionally, Pellowski reports evidence that suggests some forms of early storytelling
took place in India as well as in Buddhist teaching, Taoism, and Confucianism.

However, scholars postulate that storytelling thrived long before the first written
account of storytelling. Both Sawyer (1962) and Maguire (1985) discuss the antiquity of
storytelling and its inception with tribal peoples. Sawyer suggests that long before there
was language, there had been intelligent purpose. Experience began to be remembered.
After thousands of years of action, there began to be reaction, involving emotions, ideas, and the faculty to reason, which, in turn, resulted in storytelling. Primitive stories were made up of simple chants, in the first person, impromptu, giving expression to pride or exultation over some act of bravery or accomplishment. Sawyer suggests that as interest beyond self began to widen, the beginnings of social interest developed. Out of social interest, a willingness to listen as well as to tell developed, and gradually narrative adopted the third person. Maguire notes that as third person narrative evolved, stories stepped beyond the self-involved story to stories designed to influence the listener’s behavior. Those who could tell best told stories, and those who could listen best, listened. The role of the storyteller began to evolve. Pellowski (1990) speculates that the ancient peoples who preserved any records at all probably experienced their history, both past and recent, as stories told orally by someone specializing in that art.

Maguire (1985) comments on the similarity of characteristics noted in a number of the oldest stories of record. The stories were tales of physical prowess or individual contributions to important events. In successive retellings, it is postulated that as each new storyteller told the story, a new version was told until precise names, places and dates became uncertain and irrelevant. Thus, the stories survived on the strength of their capacity to arouse general human interest and emotion.

According to Sawyer (1962), storytelling began to emerge as a conscious literary form. Storytellers gave attention to the effects of presentations upon the listener. As the ability to exaggerate and idealize became infused into the stories, different types of stories emerged, i.e. the hero cycles and sagas, folktales, mythical tales, and the beast or totem stories.
By the time of the Roman Empire, storytelling was well established and served a multitude of purposes: to entertain, preserve history, interpret the mysteries of nature, to express the aesthetic need for beauty and order, and educate children. The expansion of the Roman Empire into Asia and Europe helped create the single most pervasive distribution of stories among different cultures (Maguire, 1985).

After the fall of the Roman Empire, the most significant disseminators of stories were the gypsies. Little is known about their early history; however, Maguire (1985) and Sawyer (1962) theorize their language was derived from Sanskrit or Prakrit, and they were descendants of the first pharaoh of Egypt. They were nomadic, wandering from the east westward. Manuscripts of the Middle Ages speak often of them. The gypsies were prized for their storytelling, but were also known to steal. Consequently, they did not stay in one place for very long.

The third source of distribution of stories throughout the Eastern Hemisphere came from the crusaders and pilgrims of the Middle Ages. Maguire (1985) and Sawyer (1962) note that during this time, two distinct disciplines of storytelling evolved from the Celtic tradition. One was the Gaelic School of Ollamhs in Ireland and the other the Cymric School of Bards in Wales. By the beginning of the 13th century, each school achieved a degree of professionalism that attracted both scholars and would-be storytellers from all over the known world. During this period, professional storytellers held a high social status. Eventually, the strife between Ireland and Wales with England resulted in the demise of these schools (Maguire).

During the 13th and 14th centuries, storytellers traveled with itinerant bards and minstrels throughout Europe and the Near East. Maguire (1985) and Sawyer (1962) note
most performances took place in the public squares and marketplaces rather than in the courts and homes of the rich. The stories gradually shifted from stories about kings, queens, and milestones of history to stories about common folk, familiar animals, and popular superstitions.

In the 15th century, two events profoundly altered the nature of storytelling: the invention of the moveable-type printing press around 1440 and the European discovery of the Americas in the 1490s. Maguire (1985) indicates that as a result of the printing press, stories were available in print to a mass audience. Literacy rates soared and increasing numbers of storytellers became authors. The rapid increase of books provided storytelling opportunities to a wide range of people who would have otherwise never been exposed to them. Professional oral storytellers declined. For the first time in history, a literary tale, which is a story created by a writer for the specific purpose of being read, appeared. The printing press also fostered the collection and preservation of time-honored tales. A perception emerged that the printed version of a story was the “correct” version of the story.

Concurrently with the invention of the printing press was the discovery and colonization of the Americas. Maguire (1985) and Sawyer (1962) suggest that a whole new world of experiences offered a whole new world of stories. As waves of immigrants poured into America, a melting pot of folklore was created. For example, The British brought their “Jack” tales, such as “Jack and the Beanstalk.” African slaves told of tales that eventually took shape as the “Br’er Rabbit” stories.

However, stories thrived in the Americas long before its discovery by the Europeans and colonization. Many of the Native American storytellers held high social
status in their communities as moral and religious leaders. Maguire (1985) describes how the Native American storyteller retold ancient legends about creation, supernatural forces, and forms of life. Some of the Native American stories mirror characters, plots, and themes of stories that flourished independently in Europe, Asia and Africa, confirming that all stories share common roots.

In conclusion, Sawyer (1962) notes that storytelling is currently at the exact spot where it was at its inception--every man his own storyteller.

Storytelling as an Instructional Strategy

*The answer is always in the entire story, not a piece of it.*

*Jim Harrison* (Simmons, 2001, p. 83)

Isbell, Sobol, Lindaur, and Lowrance (2004) note that storytelling and story reading are similar in content, but they diverge in crucial ways in their processes. They state that when a story is read, the primary referent of the communication event is the text. In a storytelling event, the words are not memorized, but are recreated through spontaneous, energetic performance, assisted by audience participation and interaction.

Roney (1989) believes storytelling is a process. The teller uses vocalization, narrative structure, and mental imagery to communicate with the audience, which also uses mental imagery and, in turn, communicates back to the teller through body language and facial expression. The communication cycle is ongoing, and the process of the story is created (Roney). Nelson (1989) maintains that storytelling is a co-creation, a powerful and enjoyable language experience. Nelson describes two connotations of meaning occurring during a story telling event: what the story is actually about and how it affects
the listeners personally. Whether reading a text or storytelling, creating story meaning on a personal level is a critical component to the listener’s comprehension.

Storytelling accesses oral language to facilitate academic growth (Strickland & Morrow, 1989). A majority of children have mastered the oral aspects of language by the time they enter school. Strickland and Morrow note that children are active participants in their learning of language. Based on Vygotsky’s theory (as cited in Gunning, 2005), children learn in a social context, interacting with other children and adults and constructing (or reconstructing) language as they learn. They play with language and create their own language use and way of saying things when they do not have the conventional words. Much of the language children learn is a reflection of adult models to which they are exposed. Vocabulary development and syntactic complexity in oral language are enhanced in children who are exposed to stories. Nessel (1985) postulates story language is the language of literature, different from everyday language. The characters of stories often use sentence structures and vocabulary that are more sophisticated than what children use in their daily language. As students hear the stories, they learn to understand the structures and vocabulary that they will encounter in their reading. Repeated exposure to vocabulary through storytelling or story reading has been found to foster language growth (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000a, 2000b)

Nessel (1985) notes that during storytelling, students are more attentive and relaxed, yet highly focused. Eye contact between the students and teller is a constant when there is no text to read. Nessel says the storyteller focuses on keeping the listeners actively involved, and the students feel very much a part of the told story and are eager to
help with the telling. The teacher and students together bring the story to life. Students’ imaginations are stimulated since no illustrations are incorporated. Hence, storytelling lends itself to the creation of mental pictures that make the story vivid and meaningful (Nessel). By creating a good listening environment, commanding attention, and stimulating the imagination, storytelling gives students many opportunities to develop the listening comprehension skills that are the foundation of reading comprehension.

Gere (2002) notes that storytelling involves imagination combined with the use of language and gestures to create scenes in the listener’s mind. Through visualization, the teller and the listener come together to create the scenes of the tale. Storytelling uses the left brain’s functions (language, a story line, sequences of cause and effect) to speak the right brain’s language of symbolic, intuitive, imaginative truths. Storytelling helps the brain to integrate its two sides into a whole (Gere).

Roney (1989) expands on the idea of stimulating the imagination through storytelling. In pure storytelling, where no props are used, if the telling is to be successful, the members of the audience must generate mental images as the teller speaks. Roney postulates that this image-making process may be the most valuable aspect of storytelling as fosters a child’s developing ability and desire to write.

Malo and Bullar (2000) suggest that students who are consistently exposed to storytelling gain skills that prepare them for reading. Some of these skills include the concept of story. Students intuitively acquire a sense that stories feature an adventure or a problem that will be resolved. Listening vocabulary expands as stories are told and retold (Malo & Bullar). As previously noted, visualization through words is another skill developed through stories. Both storytelling and reading rely on the ability to picture a
scene, a setting, a person, and a situation as a mental image. Through words, the listening students create mental images, which are primary for understanding the story (Malo & Bullar).

Hamilton and Weiss (1990) note that when students have the opportunity to retell stories they have heard, and eventually search for their own stories to tell, they begin to develop a better understanding of themselves and their world. They also gain an internalized sense of story form and comprehension improves substantially. Sebesta states “…storytelling, by lifting the [retelling] experience to the level of transaction, gives comprehension a motive and significance” (Sebesta, 2000, p. 248).

Bloome, Katz and Champion (2003) discuss narrative development or the ability to become increasingly able and sophisticated in creating and communicating a “good story” (p. 206). They note that narrative development is important to academic success because the narratives or stories produced by students are a major vehicle for assessing what students know and are able to do. Further, being able to create an effective narrative is a way to conceptualize experience and meaning, which is an important tool for learning.

Strickland and Morrow (1989) assert that giving children the opportunity to tell stories helps their language development by enhancing vocabulary, syntactic complexity, sense of story structure, and comprehension. It allows them to become active participants in the creation of language and allows book language to serve as a model for their own. Because children often tell stories cooperatively to other groups of children, or to the teacher, the activity provides a social context as well.
The National Reading Panel’s Conclusions about Reading Comprehension.

“A fact is like a sack – it won’t stand up if it’s empty. To make it stand up, first you have to put in it all the reasons and feelings that caused it in the first place.”

Luigi Pirandello (Simmons, 2001, p. 49)

In 1997, The National Reading Panel (NRP) convened to assess research-based knowledge of the effectiveness of various approaches to teaching children to read. Of pertinence to this paper is the section on comprehension (NICHHD, 2000b, p. 4-1). The panel noted three predominant themes in reading comprehension: (1) vocabulary development, (2) text comprehension instruction, and (3) teacher preparation and comprehension strategy instruction. The closest the NRP report came to discussing oral language was in the vocabulary instruction section. The panel noted, “If a word is not in the reader’s oral vocabulary, the reader will have to determine the meaning by other means, if possible. Consequently, the larger the reader’s vocabulary (either oral or print), the easier it is to make sense of the text” (NICHHD, 2000a, p.13). The panel’s findings note that vocabulary instruction must be appropriate to the age and ability of the reader. The panel also noted that vocabulary may be learned in the context of storybook reading or in listening to others, through repeated exposure, and substituting easy words for more difficult words, especially for low-achieving students. Additionally, instruction should occur both directly and indirectly and should actively engage students. However, the panel noted there is little research on the best methods for vocabulary instruction.

(NICHHD, 2000a, p. 14)

Regarding text comprehension, the NRP defined comprehension as “intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between text and
reader” (Harris & Hodges, 1995). The NRP noted that readers need to be engaged in intentional problem solving thinking processes, to be able to relate text ideas to their own knowledge, and to mentally visualize from memory to comprehend the text. The panel specifically noted seven strategies that appear to improve comprehension in “non-impaired readers” (NICHHD, 2000a, p 15). Based on a review of the literature, five of the seven strategies are incorporated in storytelling activities, as well as in reading instruction. They are (1) cooperative learning; (2) use of graphic and semantic organizers (including story maps); (3) question answering; (4) story structure; and (5) summarization. The NRP mentioned evidence that suggests teaching a combination of reading comprehension techniques was effective in assisting in recall, question answering, question generation, and summarization of text, and these techniques may “improve results in standardized comprehension tests” (NICHHD, 2000a, p.15). It was noted that comprehension instruction was most beneficial when multiple-strategy instruction was implemented with the teacher generally modeling the strategies for students until the students were able to employ the strategies independently. Further, the NRP noted that teaching specific cognitive strategies was beneficial. Again, these strategies--listening, speaking, and visualizing--are integral to the teaching of oral storytelling, though student reading of text is not involved.

The NRP (NICHHD, 2000a, p.16) noted the importance of teachers developing two approaches to reading comprehension: direct explanation and transactional strategy instruction. In direct explanation, teachers help students view reading as a problem-solving task and think strategically. In transactional strategy instruction, teachers facilitate student discussions in which students work together to gain greater and deeper
text comprehension. As with vocabulary and comprehension strategies, both teaching approaches are employed in the facilitation of storytelling.

Read Aloud

>You may have tangible wealth untold:

> Caskets of jewels and coffers of gold.

> Richer than I you can never be-

> I had a mother who read to me.

*Strickland Gillilan, (Trelease, 2001, p. xii)*

Reading aloud to children builds the foundation of literacy learning. Listening comprehension comes before reading comprehension. According to Fisher and Medvic (2003), the more stories students are exposed to, the more opportunities they will have for hearing rich language, learning new vocabulary, grasping story structures, and developing a love of reading. Hamilton and Weiss (1990) point out that because it takes time to learn a story to tell, most of the stories teachers share must be read aloud.

Both Lesesne (2006) and Trelease (2001) refer to the research in *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (Anderson, Heibert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985) as a seminal statement in support of reading aloud to children at home and at school, starting with young children and continuing throughout the school years. Parents who read to their children provide them with a wealth of literacy knowledge. Children from such homes come to school with stronger vocabularies and background knowledge than children who have not had this experience. Children whose parents have read to them also have a sense of story structure. Their listening comprehension and attention to stories are strong (Trelease, 2001).
Benefits of the read-aloud continue from home to the classroom setting. A teacher might use a read-aloud to introduce a new topic of study, teach new skills and strategies, or for pure enjoyment and pleasure of a story. Fisher, Flood, Lapp and Frey (2004) also comment on the positive motivating factors of the read-aloud and the growth of oral language as benefits. Vocabularies continue to be developed, background knowledge expanded, and concepts of print and genres are explored through the read-aloud (Fisher et al.).

Fisher and Medvic (2003) conducted a two-part investigation to determine if there are essential components of an effective read-aloud for students beyond kindergarten. They found that classroom teachers were skilled at presenting many of the components of an effective read-aloud, but concluded that the effectiveness of the read-aloud would be strengthened if all components were included. Their data revealed seven components of an effective read-aloud. They include:

1. Books appropriate to students’ interests and that match students’ developmental, emotional and social levels.
2. Previewing and practice of selection by the teacher.
3. The establishment of a clear purpose for the read-aloud.
4. Teacher modeling of fluent oral reading.
5. Use of animation and expression during the read-alouds.
6. Periodic and thoughtful questioning of students to focus on specifics of text.
Think Aloud

Read-alouds segue naturally into think-alouds. In a read-loud, teachers and students comment about the text. However, in a think-aloud, instructor comments are made about the thinking processes used to comprehend the text while reading. Duke and Pearson (2002) note a think-aloud involves verbalizing the thinking process aloud while reading orally. A key aspect of this technique is the intent to promote internal dialogue in students that good readers use naturally when they read (Allington, 2001). The teacher think-aloud gives students an opportunity to understand the teacher’s thinking when reading, the connections being made, the questions being asked, and the inferences and predictions being made (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000). Studies suggest teacher modeling during think-alouds is most effective when it is explicit, leaving little for the student to infer about the strategy (Duke & Pearson, 2006).

Think-alouds can be engaged in by both teachers and students. Studies indicate that when students are asked to think-aloud while reading, they are more proficient at summarizing information, and comprehension scores increase. To explain why student think-alouds are effective in increasing comprehension, one theory indicates that the process of thinking out loud decreases student impulsiveness while reading. Think-alouds may lead to more thoughtful strategic reading (Duke & Pearson, 2002). As in an effective read-aloud, Block and Israel (2004) identify essential components of an effective think-aloud. To be effective, think-alouds need to explain what good readers do before, during and after they read. Block and Israel describe 12 think-aloud processes that were implemented in a recent study involving 1,200 kindergarten through fifth-grade students in the southwestern United States. Results indicated students’ reading vocabulary,
comprehension and fluency scores on standardized tests increased significantly after implementation of the 12 think-aloud processes. Five think-alouds addressed what good readers do as they begin to read, four think-alouds addressed what good readers do while reading, and three think-alouds addressed processes good readers use after reading a large section (Block & Israel).

According to Block and Israel (2004), the following are examples of think-alouds: The teacher tells the class that a good reader knows how to select a good book. He/She demonstrates the book selection process, as well as how to activate prior knowledge about the text’s topic. The teacher stresses that a good reader knows how to focus on important information. The teacher demonstrates how to identify clues that point to the most important sentence in the paragraph. A good reader also connects ideas to a central theme. The teacher demonstrates how to link main idea sentences to the theme the author is addressing. A good reader activates relevant prior knowledge. The teacher demonstrates talking about prior knowledge of the text and eliminating irrelevant or tangential information. A good reader places him or herself in the book. The teacher demonstrates pretending to be the main character (Block & Israel).

Block and Israel (2004) explain that during reading, a good reader revises understanding and predicts as she or he reads. The teacher models how to describe what textual features prompted the prediction. A good reader analyzes how and when authors introduce ideas. The teacher demonstrates how to recognize an author’s writing style. A good reader has several strategies to infer unknown words. The teacher demonstrates several strategies for determining unknown words. The teacher also demonstrates how to use several decoding strategies together to understand unknown words. Good readers ask
themselves questions while they read. The teacher demonstrates the process of verifying incoming thoughts and models how to reread if the incoming thoughts are confused (Block & Israel).

Block and Israel (2004) believe that after a good reader finishes reading a large amount of text, he/she reflects on the author’s writing style. The teacher demonstrates how to notice genre, the author’s word choices, and individual writing style. A good reader relates the content of the book to his or her life. A teacher demonstrates how to reflect upon what was read. Finally, good readers connect knowledge from one text to another. The teacher demonstrates how knowledge gained in one text can be used to comprehend a different one (Block & Israel).

Visualization

“If I can’t picture it, I can’t understand it”

Albert Einstein (Bell, 1991 p.1)

Lack of visualization when reading may be the nemesis of some students who struggle with reading comprehension. Similarly, Hibbing and Rankin-Erickson (2003) note that the ability to create visual images when reading affects comprehension. Visual imagery abounds through television, movies, videos, computers, and illustrated texts. Unfortunately, this bombardment does not necessarily increase students’ ability to create mental images that support reading comprehension. Gaining meaning from an action sequence, as in television or video, is very different than using one’s own concrete external experiences to create internal visual images that support comprehension. Television viewing may be detrimental to the visualization process because while it
provides images, it also consumes what may have been reading time, storytelling time, and language interaction time—time that stimulates imagery (Bell, 1991).

Hibbing and Rankin-Erickson (2003) report that the role of imagery in making sense of text has its theoretical roots in the work of Paivio and his colleagues (Clark & Paivio, 1991; Paivio 1971, 1983, 1986; Sadoski, Paivio, & Goetz, 1991). From this perspective, knowledge is represented both verbally and nonverbally in what is referred to as a dual-coding system, including both verbal and nonverbal representations of knowledge. Verbal representations of knowledge are composed of words (the verbal code) for objects, events, and ideas. The imagery or nonverbal system represents knowledge in “nonverbal representations that retain some resemblance to the perceptions giving rise to them” (Pressley & McCormick, 1995, p. 71). The concept of dual coding suggests that the elements of both systems are intricately connected. This connection between the verbal and nonverbal coding systems allows us to create images when we hear words and to generate names or descriptions of things we see in pictures (Hibbing & Rankin-Erickson).

Bell (1991) also refers to the dual coding system of verbal and nonverbal knowledge, noting the same research mentioned in the previous paragraph. Bell further explains the dual coding system by referencing the right and left hemispheres of the brain. Most research indicates that the left side and right sides of our brains are two semiautonomous systems that process information differently and can be used in a specialized manner. It is believed that the left brain is involved in logical, analytical, linear, sequential thought process and specific linguistic abilities. It controls the right side of the body. The right side of the brain is involved in spatial relations, musical, spiritual,
intuitive, creative, and holistic thought processes. It controls the left side of the body. In regard to speculation about reading and brain activity, Levy (as cited in Bell, 1991) states:

When a person reads a story, the right hemisphere may play a special role in decoding visual information, maintaining an integrated story structure, appreciating humor and emotional content, deriving meaning from past associations and understanding metaphor. At the same time, the left hemisphere plays a special role in understanding syntax, translating written words into their phonetic representations and deriving meaning from complex relations among word concepts and syntax. (p. 29)

Bell (1991) stresses that students must know what they will learn and why it is relevant. Based on this premise, Bell developed an imaging strategy that combines both Levy’s premise and Paivio’s dual coding theory. Students are told that words change to “pictures” in the mind and those pictures change back to words when talking. A simple diagram of the brain showing the right and the left hemispheres can help individuals grasp this understanding. An explanation of how the right hemisphere is linked to imaging and the left hemisphere is linked to talking is discussed, as well as the fact that visualizing improves the ability to understand and remember what is read or heard, and verbalizing improves the ability to express oneself orally or in writing (Bell).

Bell (1991) discusses gestalt imaging ability. A gestalt is defined as a whole that is more than the sum of its parts. Gestalt imaging refers to the connection to and the interpretation of incoming language. Bell believes that whatever the cause, gestalt imaging ability appears to be a separate function unto itself. According to Bell,
“Although impaired phonological processing and decoding, weak oral vocabulary, and reduced prior knowledge and background experiences may contribute to weak imaging during reading, these factors in and of themselves to not appear to be causal” (p. 24). Many students with good vocabulary for isolated words are not able to comprehend written language efficiently. Even students with wide experiences and good educations may not be able to comprehend efficiently; and the same is true of good decoders. In contrast, however, Bell believes that many poor decoders are able to comprehend efficiently. If concepts or content are presented to them orally, they have superior ability to interpret and reason.

On the other hand, Bell (1991) notes that weak decoding can be a primary contributor to weak gestalt imagery during reading. A student can have good imagery and good comprehension only if he or she can decode enough words critical to the integration and processing of the gestalt. A few decoding errors may cause ridiculous images and necessitate rereading for contextual cues and correction. However, a severe phonological processing disorder, causing numerous decoding errors, may cause enough image distortion so as to interfere with comprehension (Bell).

According to Bell (1991), weak vocabulary also may interfere with gestalt imagery if the unknown words are critical to the whole. If not critical to the gestalt, the imaged concept--context--may serve to stimulate vocabulary development. It is not clear which problem existed first--poor vocabulary or poor gestalt imagery--though it is evident that stimulating images for vocabulary aids in the storage and retrieval of meaning for isolated words (Bell).
Further, Bell (1986) notes prior knowledge and background experience also may affect comprehension and imaging. Techniques to access prior knowledge such as first discussing material with children, setting the scene, and teaching vocabulary do not necessarily stimulate independent comprehension. Students will need to set the scene by decoding, imaging, and interacting with stored images to facilitate the construction of meaning. Additionally, they will need to have imaging ability to hold and integrate vocabulary with incoming language and images, thus creating a gestalt (Bell).

Hibbing and Rankin-Erickson (2003) state that the coding of knowledge in both verbal and nonverbal representations suggests that the elements of both systems are intricately connected. This connection between the verbal and nonverbal coding systems allows us to create images when we hear words and to generate names or descriptions of things we see in pictures (Hibbing & Rankin-Erickson). Visualizing strengthens our inferential thinking. When we visualize, we are in fact inferring, but with mental images rather than words and thoughts. When children are taught to generate mental images as they read, they experience greater recall and enhanced abilities to draw inferences and make predictions. Furthermore, prompting students to use imagery and verbal elaboration has a powerful effect on learning and remembering (Hibbing & Rankin-Erickson).

Hibbing and Rankin-Erickson (2003) suggest that teacher-generated drawings may help students visualize events and relationships portrayed in text. Likewise, drawings done by students can inform the teacher about what students are or are not understanding about the text. Drawings that are related to the topic but not the text should prompt the teacher to question students to determine whether they are comprehending the text or simply drawing something from related background knowledge that is not tied to
the events of the text. A student’s failure to produce complete or accurate drawings can reveal comprehension gaps at an early stage in the learning process.

Hibbing and Rankin-Erickson (2003) also suggest that drawings can aid in retention of information. However, as Peeck (1987) cautioned, drawings need to be accurate, and time spent drawing needs to be evaluated in terms of net gain. To facilitate structured students’ drawings, Hibbing and Rankin-Erickson have had students quickly draw one sketch on a series of television screens each day after a read-aloud. This builds on their analogy of “television in the mind” and communicates to the students that the purpose of the drawing is to track the action of the story and to represent the main idea or events of each day’s reading. The drawings of the previous day also serve as a tool to help students make predictions about subsequent readings. The drawings have an additional benefit in that they not only show the students’ understanding of specific events in the text but also of larger issues represented by these events or the gestalt. (Hibbing & Rankin-Erickson).

Whether a story is presented orally from a storyteller or read from a text, visualization of the content is imperative for comprehension to occur. The visualization strategies mentioned here are beneficial for instruction in both student reading and student storytelling.

Reader Response Theory

The artist finds a greater pleasure in painting than in

having completed the picture.

Seneca (c. 4B.C. – 65 A.D.)

Roman philosopher and statesman (Mansoor, 1995 p. 36)
Literature response is significant to story comprehension, but is also a critical component of storytelling. Rosenblatt (1995) explains that a traditional response to literature is teacher-centered. Teachers ask questions and students answer. The discussion flows between the teacher and student, not among students. The questions typically refer to story structure or facts. Conversely, reader response theory addresses a deep, personal response to literature. Rosenblatt defines what the reader is feeling during the act of reading as aesthetic response. Reading for information, facts or concept understanding is an efferent response to the act of reading. With every reading there is the reader, the text, and what Rosenblatt terms “the poem” (p. xvi 1995). The poem is what results from the transaction between the reader and the text. This personal transaction or aesthetic response can be described only by the reader, whereas the efferent response can be summarized by others. Both aesthetic and efferent responses occur on a continuum during reading, with the reader moving back and forth between one stance and the other (Routman, 2000).

Reading aesthetically results in a deeper level of involvement for students. Keene and Zimmerman (1997) suggest teaching students to make three kinds of connections while reading: text–to-self, text–to-text and text-to-world. The theory behind the connections is that responding aesthetically to the text while reading builds a relationship between the reader and the text. Rosenblatt (2005) refers to this process as “creating a live circuit between readers and books” (p. 66). Harvey and Goudvis (2000) summarize literary response theory by stating:

The best reason to ask students to respond to literature is that crafting a response enhances understanding for the respondent. When we ask students to respond, we
are asking them to go deeper, ask critical questions, argue with the author, or make connections to their own lives. (p. 38)

Cox and Many (1992) comment that children need time to respond to what they read, with ample opportunity to share thoughts and opinions and discuss the text. Taberski (2000) notes the importance of developing students’ oral responses. Time spent enriching students’ oral response to text is important because it sets the stage for an interactive classroom and broadens students’ abilities to comprehend both the whole text and its parts. Angelillo (2003) expands Taberski’s point by noting that without the practice of generating ideas around conversation, students will have difficulty expressing them in writing.

Bleich (1970) suggests that teachers think of literature discussion groups as interpretive communities. In interpretive communities, children respond to literature by sharing and discussing ideas (Cox & Many, 1992). According to Eeds and Wells (1989), good book conversations have a natural give-and-take manner. The atmosphere is safe. Students respond knowing that the response will be respected. Eeds and Wells call discussions of this type “grand conversations.” Borders and Naylor (1993) state that the teacher’s role in literature discussions is to listen and the student’s role is to work at creating meaning for him or herself. By listening carefully, teacher’s questions can be carefully phrased to stimulate higher levels of thinking or more informed reflections.

Literature must be experienced by students (Rosenblatt, 2005). During a storytelling event, both the teller and the listener cannot interact with the story without developing a personal experience with the story. After reading a text, reflection is imperative to develop an aesthetic stance.
Summary

A review of the literature indicates that storytelling and story reading are both beneficial to the development of story comprehension. Undoubtedly, however, storytelling has survived the test of time as an educational approach dating back to the beginning of mankind. Similar to learning a story from text, the benefits to using storytelling as a way to strengthen story comprehension are in the process of learning to orally reproduce the story. The process involves forming mental images, understanding story structure, developing vocabulary, creating meaning and accessing critical thinking skills. These skills parallel the skills current research supports on reading comprehension.

Above and beyond the process of learning to retell a story, creating story meaning on a personal level is a critical component to comprehension, whether created during reading a text or listening to a story told. During a storytelling event, the teller and audience are able to create an ongoing communication cycle without the reference of a book. The teller uses expression, story structure and imagery to communicate with the audience. The audience communicates back to the teller through facial expression and body language. This, in turn, provides for the co-creation of the story between the teller and the audience. The co-creation of the story during an oral storytelling event parallels Rosenblatt’s (1995) definition of an aesthetic response to literature. Rosenblatt theorized that with every reading there is the reader, the text, and the personal transaction between the reader and the text (the “poem). In storytelling, there is the teller, the audience, the story, and how the story affects the listeners personally (Nelson, 1989). Creating story meaning on a personal level is a critical component to comprehension, whether created during reading a text or listening to a story told. However, as Nessel (1985) states, there
is nothing quite like hearing a captivating story, told simply and effectively, without a book in evidence.
CHAPTER III. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to answer the question: What effect will training second grade students in the art of storytelling have on their Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) reading comprehension scores? The sample of students was taught a unit on storytelling. Pre-and-post-treatment DRA scores were collected and analyzed. This chapter will discuss the methods and procedures used for this study.

Methods

Research Design

The action research design model for this study followed that recommended by Mertler (2006) for qualitative educational research. The researcher utilized a case study approach wherein the researcher was a full participant. The driving question for this study was: What effect will training second grade students in the art of storytelling have on their DRA reading comprehension scores?

The literature review on storytelling indicated that when students have the opportunity to retell stories they have heard, and eventually search for their own stories to tell, they begin to develop a better understanding of themselves and their world. They also gain more of an internalized sense of story form while comprehension also improves substantially (Hamilton & Weiss, 1990).

This investigation used a second grade classroom. The researcher and classroom teacher co-taught a unit on storytelling to the students in the class. The unit consisted of a total of eight stories told. Each story told followed the same procedure, with the sequence unfolding as follows: The researcher told each story to the class. Next, the researcher and classroom teacher led a discussion of each story. The discussion focused on the following
reading comprehension strategies: predicting, inferring, visualizing, and questioning that leads to higher-order thinking, as well as how to use the strategies while reading. Additionally, during the storytelling activities, the researcher demonstrated the thinking process when making connections from the story-to-self, to other stories, or to worldly events, as well as asking questions to clarify incoming thoughts. Finally, the students orally told the stories to each other in groups of two. Once the students told the stories in pairs, two or three students volunteered to tell the story to the whole class.

Following the storytelling unit, the researcher procured permission to examine pre-treatment DRA scores and administer an additional DRA. The researcher requested permission to use existing data from student reading portfolios from the Assistant District Superintendent of Curriculum via a consent letter. The classroom teacher distributed parental consent forms for every second grade student in the class. The researcher collected and held the consent forms.

The classroom teacher and the researcher tested students individually using the DRA over the course of two weeks. Only those students whose parents granted consent were included in the study. The researcher obtained student assent before each assessment.

Participants

The study was conducted in an elementary building that housed three second grade classes in a northwest Ohio school district. The school did not qualify for Title I services, and only one student out of 21 in the study classroom qualified for free or reduced lunch. The school district community encompassed a university, a large farming community, and a small industrial community within the city limits.
The students were randomly assigned to each of the three classrooms by the school principal before the school year began. The study classroom, however, did not have any students who had documented disabilities. Twenty-one second grade students were part of the treatment group in this study; however, only 14 parental consent forms were returned with consent granted. Of the 14 students, nine were girls and five were boys. All students spoke English as their first language. Three students received daily services from the reading specialist, for 30 minutes. All students in the second grade classroom participated in the treatment, with no exclusions made.

Consenting students and parents gave permission for the release of their current and pre-treatment DRA scores. The Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum granted approval for use of the DRA scores. Each student who provided both a student and parental consent form was assigned a number to protect his/her privacy during the analysis and reporting portions of this project.

**Instrumentation**

The researcher chose the DRA assessment tool to determine reading levels because it was the instrument used by the school system where this study was conducted. The DRA assesses both reading accuracy and reading comprehension and documents student progress over time. The reading comprehension component of the DRA requires the student to read a leveled story and then retell the story to the assessor. A running record assesses reading accuracy, and a rubric is used to assess reading comprehension. Reading levels are determined by considering proficiency in both skills. A reading accuracy level of 94% and a reading comprehension score of 18 are necessary to advance to the next reading level. Specifically for second grade, a fall DRA level of 18 is
considered to be at grade level and continues to level 20, to level 24, and, finally, to level 28 in the spring. Because some students involved in the study had reading levels below second grade, the following information is pertinent to the study: First grade DRA levels begin at level 3 and move sequentially to levels 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14 and, finally, to level 16 by the spring of first grade.

Relevant to this study, the DRA comprehension scores are determined using a rubric. The rubric rates comprehension by describing a student’s retelling to determine the level of comprehension. A score falling between six and nine reflects very little comprehension; 10 – 15 represents some comprehension; and 16 – 21 represents adequate comprehension, with a score of 18 required to move to the next level. Scores in the 22 – 24 range represent very good comprehension. Descriptors are provided for six different areas, with each area using a rating ranging from one-to-four. The students are assessed and scored on the following criteria:

1. Tells one or two events or key facts in the story, to tells most events in sequence or tells most key facts;
2. Includes few or no important details from text, to includes most important details and key language or vocabulary;
3. Refers to one or two characters or topics using pronouns, to refers to all characters or topics by specific name;
4. Responds with incorrect information, to responds with interpretation that shows higher level thinking;
5. Provides limited or no response to teacher questions and prompts, to provides insightful response to teacher questions or prompts;
6. Requires many questions or prompts, to requires one or no questions or prompts.

To score the DRA comprehension rubric, the assessor circles the number corresponding to one statement in each area that best describes the student’s retelling. The numbers are added together to obtain a total score. The total score is then matched to the number that corresponded to the level of comprehension. For the current study, the total score was used. Post-testing using the DRA was implemented following the eleven-week treatment sessions.

Reading accuracy was determined by correlating the number of miscues on the running record section of the protocol with a percentage of accuracy found in the accuracy rate chart section of the protocol.

Procedures for Treatment

The researcher and classroom teacher taught a unit in storytelling to the class. It consisted of eight stories over an eleven-week period beginning in October of the school year and ending in mid-January. Prior to the first story, the researcher taught a precursor lesson that had its foundation in the work of Bell (1991). The lesson consisted of a discussion of the two hemispheres of the brain and demonstrated how one side pictures ideas and the other side uses words to express the ideas. When both sides of the brain work together, comprehension results. The researcher illustrated this concept on chart paper for all students to see and discuss (See Appendix A for illustration of visualization and verbalization concept). Additionally, she drew a child’s profile with dotted lines between the child’s eyes and a book, and then explained the DRA process. The students were told that when the teacher is giving the DRA, she/he is assessing two different
processes: (1) whether students’ eyes can read “s-u-n” as /sun/; and (2) whether students’ minds can turn the words read into pictures for comprehension. The researcher explained that the only way the teacher would know this is if students retold the story completely, from the beginning to the end, even though the teacher has just heard the students read it.

Each storytelling session lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, and each story needed three sessions to complete. The stories were simple tales from around the world, featuring plentiful action and minimal dialogue. All stories but one were about animals. The following teaching sequence was used for each of the eight stories taught: During the first session, the researcher told the story. Prior to the start of each story, however, the researcher asked the students visualization questions about the setting or characters of the story while drawing simple illustrations to elicit prior knowledge about the location, the climate, terrain and animal characteristics of the main characters in the story. Embedded in the storytelling, the researcher asked questions that elicited visualization, cause/effect awareness, predications, and inferences on the part of the students. Additionally, the researcher demonstrated the thinking process when making connections from the story-to-self, to other stories, or to worldly events. She also asked questions to clarify students’ incoming thoughts. However, for the first three stories, the researcher sketched the story on a white board for all students to see to assist with visualizing the story as it unfolded. The researcher ended each of the questions by stating, “This is what good readers do when they read.” (See Appendix B for examples of reading strategies discussed during the treatment phase).

During the second session, the students made simple puppets using pictures from a computer program to represent the characters and setting of the story. While the
students were constructing the puppets, a story review discussion occurred that paralleled questions asked during the storytelling session. The puppets consisted of 2” x 2” colored illustrations printed on white paper that were cut out and taped to craft sticks. The puppets were stored in brown paper lunch sacks, called story bags, which the classroom teacher collected and kept for the third session.

During the third session, the story bags were passed back to the students. The students were paired into groups of two, a student with strong reading skills with a student with weaker reading skills, as determined by the classroom teacher. Each group received a puppet stage in the form of a shoebox that had small slits cut into the lid of the box, which supported the craft sticks. The students were instructed to take turns telling each other their stories. The classroom teacher and researcher circulated the classroom, listening to various groups tell the stories. When necessary, the classroom teacher and researcher assisted by coaching the student teller through a part of the story he or she found challenging.

Before the end of the third session, the classroom teacher called the class back to their seats. Two or three students, depending upon the amount of time left in the session, told the story to the class. Students volunteered; however, the classroom teacher kept a list of students who told a story to the class, requesting that eventually, all students try storytelling. Following each student telling, the classroom teacher, researcher, and classmates made positive comments about the storytelling to the student teller, for example, “I liked the way you added expression to your story,” or they asked questions about the student telling presentation, for instance, “What was the hardest part of the story for you to remember?” The classroom teacher and the researcher mentioned at the
end of the second and third sessions that, “When you retell a story previously read, you follow the same procedure as you do when storytelling.” After the third session, the stories were sent home and students were encouraged to tell the stories to family members.

For the stories that had accompanying storybook versions, the researcher read the book to the class at the beginning of the third session. The classroom teacher and the researcher held a class discussion comparing the oral version and the text version before the small-group student storytelling activities began. The researcher left the storybook version of the story in the classroom for the students to read during the following week.

Procedures for Assessment

Following 11 weeks of storytelling instruction, the researcher distributed parental consent forms and secured approval from the school district and the classroom teacher to use DRA scores for the purpose of the study. Student assent was obtained from those whose parents gave consent for an additional DRA to be administered. The researcher told students that their participation in the study was voluntary and would not affect their grade in anyway.

The classroom teacher and the researcher generated a list of students’ pre-treatment DRA levels to determine an appropriate level to assess for post-treatment. Once levels were determined, the researcher gathered protocols for the assessments. The classroom teacher or the researcher tested students individually using the DRA over the course of two weeks. Only those students with completed parental consent forms were included in the study. Before each assessment, the researcher obtained student assent.
The classroom teacher or the researcher conducted each assessment in a one-on-one environment lasting approximately 15 minutes. Each assessment was scored immediately following assessment.

Data Collection

The researcher gathered pre-treatment DRA reading accuracy, comprehension, and reading levels and entered the results into a chart. Immediately following the post-treatment assessments, the researcher scored the DRAs. The classroom teacher reviewed the post-treatment DRA results to validate the scores. Finally, the researcher entered all post-treatment data into the chart that listed the pre-treatment data. The researcher assigned arbitrary numbers to the students’ scores for analysis in order to protect the children’s privacy.

Data Analysis

The researcher used the criteria set forth in the DRA to determine reading profiles. Students in the poor decoders profile read below grade level as determined by the DRA. Students in the good decoders profile read at grade level. Students in the poor comprehenders profile scored less than 18 on the reading comprehension rubric for retelling. Students in the good comprehenders profile scored at or above 18 on the reading comprehension rubric.

Scores from the pre-and-post-treatment assessments were entered into an Excel computer program spreadsheet for analysis, and charts were generated to assist with interpretation of results. The researcher organized the scores by the following reading profile categories: good decoders/good comprehenders, good decoders/poor
comprehenders, poor decoders/good comprehenders and poor decoders/poor comprehenders.

Summary

The researcher conducted this investigation for the purpose of determining whether teaching the art of oral storytelling to second grade students would have a positive effect on reading comprehension. The study posed the following research question: What effect will training second grade students in the art of storytelling have on their DRA reading comprehension scores? The study design chosen was a case study in which the researcher was a full participant. The researcher taught a storytelling unit, consisting of eight stories, to 21 second grade students. The storytelling procedure was the same for each story, consisting of three sessions per story. The sequence consisted of the researcher telling the story to the class during the first session. During the second session, the students made simple puppets to represent the characters and setting of the story, while holding a class discussion regarding the story elements and strategies good readers use while reading. During the third session, students told the story to each other in groups of two. The researcher requested parental consent from the 21 students in the class at the conclusion of the eighth story. Fourteen parental consent forms were received granting consent for use of pre-treatment fall DRA scores and the administration of a post-treatment DRA.

The researcher chose the DRA assessment tool for the reason that it is the assessment tool used in the district participating in this study. It is also the assessment tool the classroom teachers use to determine both reading levels and progress over time. The researcher gathered the pre-treatment-DRA scores for the 14 students participating in
the study and administered a post-treatment-DRA. The classroom teacher verified the post-treatment-DRA results. The researcher entered both pre-and-post-DRA scores into an Excel spreadsheet for analysis to determine if instruction in the art of storytelling had an effect on post-DRA scores.
CHAPTER IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Throughout the school year, students in elementary school, especially the primary grades, are asked to retell literary tales to determine reading comprehension. Therefore, retelling a story previously read has become an important academic skill (Benson & Cummins, 2000).

When students struggle with retelling, it affects reading comprehension. Weak decoding skills may contribute to poor retelling abilities, but an inability to visualize the text may also be a contributing factor (Bell, 1991). Consequently, the classroom teacher may be faced with teaching students falling into four different reading profiles: good decoders/good comprehenders, good decoders/poor comprehenders, poor decoders/good comprehenders and poor decoders/poor comprehenders. If educators are to be effective in assisting all students to become better readers and comprehenders, then pedagogical choices need to available that are effective in strengthening these areas. The purpose of this investigation was to determine if teaching the art of storytelling would positively affect students’ ability to retell a literary tale. Because the Development Reading Assessment (DRA) was the tool used to determine reading levels, accuracy, and comprehension in the school district supporting the study, the DRA was also chosen for pre-and post-treatment data comparisons. The research question that guided this investigation was: What effect will training second grade students in the art of storytelling have on their DRA reading comprehension scores?

The treatment, storytelling, was taught to a second grade class over a period of 11 weeks. The researcher presented eight stories. Each story followed the same procedure: first, the researcher told a story to the class; second, the researcher and the students
together told the story; and finally the students told the story to each other. During the first and second procedure, the researcher embedded reading comprehension strategies termed “What good readers do when they read” during the teaching of the story. (See Appendix B for examples of reading strategies discussed during storytelling.) Following 11 weeks of treatment, the researcher and classroom teacher administered a post-DRA to 14 of the 21 students in the classroom who consented to participate in the study. Additionally, the researcher obtained the pre-treatment DRA scores for the 14 participants. This chapter will discuss the findings of this case study and the relationship between storytelling and its impact on reading comprehension as determined by retelling a story previously read.

Data Analysis

This study used the proficiency levels established by the DRA as a guide in determining the reading profiles for the 14 student participants. DRA reading proficiency levels for reading accuracy is 94%, with a reading comprehension score of 18. If both scores are obtained for a specific reading level, the student is determined to have proficient reading at that reading level. Thus, a reading accuracy rate of 94% is the minimum accuracy rate a student must achieve to be proficient at any reading level. A score of 18 on the reading comprehension rubric falls within the adequate reading comprehension range; however, a student may have a comprehension score of less than 18 and still be considered to be reading at a specific reading level as long as the accuracy rate is at a minimum of 94%. Established DRA second grade proficient reading levels range from levels 18 – 20 for fall assessments, to levels 24 – 28 for spring assessments. Because three students who participated in the study had reading levels below grade
level, first grade DRA levels were also identified. First grade proficient levels ranged from 3 – 6 at 94% accuracy for fall assessments, to 16 – 18 at 94% accuracy for spring assessments.

Pre-and-post-data were interpreted by reading profiles. Based upon the above DRA proficiency levels, the following criteria were used to classify reading profiles:

1. Poor decoders: students whose reading level was determined below grade level or a DRA less than level 18.
2. Good decoders: Students whose reading level was determined to be at grade level or a DRA level 18 or above.
3. Poor comprehenders: students whose comprehension score on the comprehension rubric was less than 18.
4. Good comprehenders: students whose comprehension score on the comprehension rubric was 18 or greater.

The researcher analyzed the pre-treatment DRA results based on the above criteria to determine pre-treatment reading profiles.

Eleven participants met the criteria for good decoders. Eight participants who were good decoders also met the criteria for good comprehenders. Three participants read below grade level, placing them in the poor decoders profile. Six participants, the three participants who were poor decoders, plus three participants who were good decoders, were placed in the poor comprehension profile as a result of scoring less than 18 on the reading comprehension rubric. (See Appendix C for pre-treatment reading profiles.)

The post-treatment assessment data were analyzed based upon the same criteria used with the pre-treatment assessment data to establish post-treatment reading profiles.
The researcher made comparisons to determine if any students moved from one category to another.

Results of the post-assessment revealed 12 participants falling into the good decoders profile. The same 11 participants who were good decoders in the pre-assessment were also good decoders in the post assessment, with one student moving into the good decoders profile. Seven of eight participants who were good comprehenders in the pre-assessment were also good comprehenders in the post-assessment. Four students who were poor comprehenders in the pre-assessment moved to good comprehenders in the post-assessment, though one student moved to the poor comprehenders profile in the post-assessment from the good comprehenders profile in the pre-assessment. (See Appendix D for DRA reading levels and Appendix E for participants’ comprehension scores.)

To summarize the movement within reading profiles from pre-assessment to post-assessment, the following occurred: One out of three participants moved from poor decoders to good decoders. Four out of six participants moved from poor comprehenders to good comprehenders. Two participants remained in the poor comprehension profile for both assessments. Only one participant moved from good comprehenders to poor comprehenders on the post-assessment. However, examination of this participant’s reading comprehension rubric revealed a decrease of only one point from the pre-treatment assessment to the post-treatment assessment. (See Appendix F for post-treatment reading profiles.)
Discussion of Results

What effect will training second grade students in the art of storytelling have on their DRA reading comprehension scores? Of the 14 students who participated in the study, only one participant fell from the good to the poor comprehension profile, and two participants remained in the poor comprehension profile. Conversely, 11 participants remained in or increased their reading comprehension scores to the good comprehension profile. Seven participants remained in the good comprehension profile, and four participants moved into the good comprehension profile following the treatment. Of note, two participants who read below grade level for both assessments significantly increased their reading comprehension scores, one by nine points and the other by six points. This indicates that teaching the art of storytelling did not have an adverse effect on retelling a literary tale. Rather, the treatment may have influenced the emergence of a more comprehensive ability to adequately retell a literary tale.

Summary

The ability to retell a literary tale has become an important academic skill (Bloome, Katz & Champion, 2003). When students struggle with this skill, teachers often seek instructional approaches to strengthen reading comprehension. Teaching the art of storytelling may have a positive impact on reading comprehension and could be an effective pedagogical choice. Of the students who participated in this study, none were categorized as good decoders/poor comprehenders before the treatment began. Consequently, pre-and-post-comparisons of reading comprehension scores cannot be made. Therefore, no conclusion can be drawn as to whether storytelling would be beneficial for these students. Clearly, the findings indicate storytelling was not
detrimental to any of the students’ reading comprehension scores. Conversely, the findings indicate storytelling may be beneficial to growth in reading comprehension.
CHAPTER V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Retelling a story previously read is often used as a measure of reading comprehension. As a result, retelling has become an important academic skill (Benson & Cummins, 2000; Bloome, Katz & Champion, 2003). Teachers need to have pedagogical approaches that are effective for strengthening reading comprehension for all students. This study proposed that adding the art of storytelling to an already literacy-rich classroom environment would be an additional educational approach to accomplish this outcome.

This chapter provides a summary and the conclusions of a case study conducted in a second grade classroom. Additionally, the conclusions of this study and recommendations for future research on the topic of oral storytelling will be discussed. In conclusion, a final summary will be presented.

Summary

Retelling a story previously read has become a skill often used to assess reading comprehension (Benson & Cummins, 2000; Bloome, Katz & Champion, 2003). Retelling requires students to organize information and make inferences based on text information and their own prior information by constructing a personal rendition of the text. Thus, retelling focuses students’ attention on relevant text information, sequences, and causes and effects. It also requires students to organize that information into a coherent structure for retelling to another (Gillet, Temple, & Crawford, 2004). Certainly, this is a complex process. Within one classroom, a teacher may have students falling into four different reading profiles: good decoders/good comprehenders, good decoders/poor comprehenders, poor decoders/good comprehenders and poor decoders/poor
comprehenders. Effective pedagogical approaches need to be made available to teachers if the desired outcome is to strengthen reading comprehension for all students. Therefore, the purpose of this case study was to determine if teaching the art of storytelling would positively affect students’ ability to retell stories they had previously read.

Storytelling and story reading are both beneficial to the development of story comprehension. Undoubtedly, however, storytelling has survived the test of time as an educational approach dating back to the beginning of mankind. Similar to learning a story from text, the benefits to using storytelling as a way to strengthen story comprehension are in the process of learning to orally reproduce the story. The process involves forming mental images, understanding story structure, developing vocabulary, creating meaning and accessing critical thinking skills. These skills parallel the skills current research supports on reading comprehension.

The treatment phase of the study consisted of teaching eight different stories in the oral tradition of storytelling. The underlying theoretical frameworks on visualization, reader response, and learning in a social context were fundamental in the development of the storytelling activities. The three theoretical frameworks support both oral storytelling and reading comprehension. Current research on reading comprehension, reading aloud to children, and think aloud strategies were also linked to the objectives in the storytelling activities used in the treatment for the study.

First, visualization of a literary tale or an oral tale is imperative for comprehension to occur. The theoretical roots supporting the role that visualization plays in making sense of text is in the work of Paivio and his colleagues (Clark & Paivio, 1991; Paivio 1971, 1983, 1986; Sadoski, Paivio, & Goetz, 1991). From this perspective,
knowledge is represented both verbally and nonverbally in what is referred to as a dual-coding system. The duel-coding system refers to the right and left hemispheres of the brain. In the act of reading, simply stated, the left hemisphere is linked to decoding and the right hemisphere is linked to imaging (Bell, 1991). Similarly, in storytelling, the left hemisphere’s functions of word knowledge speak to the right brain’s language of imagination. Storytelling helps the brain to integrate its two sides into a whole (Gere, 2002). A primary objective of teaching the art of oral storytelling in this study was to stimulate the imagery process between hearing words and creating an image in an environment where discussion could occur about visualizing during reading.

Second, creating story meaning on a personal level is a critical component of comprehension, whether from a literary tale or an oral tale. Reader response theory addresses a deep, personal response to literature. Rosenblatt (1995) defines what the reader is feeling during the act of reading as aesthetic response. Reading aesthetically results in a deeper level of involvement by the reader. The reader creates personal meaning stimulated by the story. During storytelling, the story is a co-creation between the teller and the audience. The words are not memorized, but are recreated through spontaneous, energetic performance, assisted by audience participation and interaction (Isbell, Sobol, Lindaur, & Lowrance, 2004). Nelson (1989) describes two connotations of meaning occurring during the storytelling event: what the story is actually about and how the story affects the listeners personally. Retelling an oral tale cannot be done without creating a personal response to the story.

A second objective of the storytelling activities was to demonstrate how readers respond personally to characters and events in a story during reading. Discussions that
lead to understanding why characters react in a certain way were essential in learning to tell a story effectively. During this learning process, an analogy was made to reading a literary tale. For deeper understating of the story to occur, a personal connection must be made between the reader and the story.

Third, based on Vygotsky’s theory (1978), children learn in a social context, interacting with other children and adults in constructing (or reconstructing) language as they learn (Gunning, 2005). Strickland and Morrow (1989) note that children are active participants in their learning of language. These researchers assert that giving children the opportunity to tell stories provides a social context for active participation in language learning. Thus, a third objective of the storytelling activities was to provide a risk-free environment where the students told each other the stories in small groups and could volunteer to tell a story to the whole class, if they so desired.

Effective approaches to improve reading comprehension noted in The National Reading Panel report (NRP, 1997) were also considered in the development of objectives for the storytelling activities (NICHHD, 2000a, 2000b). The panel noted that vocabulary can be learned in the context of storybook reading or in listening to others, and instruction should actively engage students (NICHHD, 2000a, p. 14.). Regarding text comprehension, the NRP noted that readers need to be engaged in intentional problem-solving processes, to be able to relate text ideas to their own knowledge, and to mentally visualize from memory in order to comprehend the text (NICHHD). Finally, The NRP noted the importance of teachers developing two approaches to reading comprehension: direct explanation and transactional strategy instruction. In direct explanation, teachers help students view reading as a problem-solving task and to think strategically. In
transactional strategy instruction, teachers facilitate student discussions in which students work together to gain greater and deeper text comprehension. As with vocabulary and comprehension strategies, both teaching approaches were utilized during the storytelling activities.

Synthesizing the research on reading aloud and thinking aloud to students were additionally considered in the development of objectives for the storytelling activities. First, the more stories students are exposed to, the more opportunities they will have for hearing rich language, learning new vocabulary, grasping story structures, and developing a love of reading (Fisher & Medvic, 2003). Second, think-aloud strategies were explicitly used during the storytelling activities. A think-aloud involves verbalizing the thinking process aloud while reading orally. A key aspect of this technique is the intent to promote internal dialogue in students that good readers use naturally when they read (Allington, 2001). During the storytelling activities, the researcher demonstrated the thinking process when making connections from the story to self, to other stories, or to worldly events; asking questions to clarify incoming thoughts; and making inferences and predictions.

The investigation was conducted in a second grade classroom in a northwest Ohio school district. The class consisted of 21 students who received the treatment of oral storytelling activities. Following 11 weeks of treatment, the researcher obtained pre- and post-treatment reading comprehension scores for 14 of the 21 students who consented to participate in the study. The researcher chose The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) for the assessment since the DRA was the assessment tool used by the school system in which the study was conducted. The researcher gathered pre- and post-
treatment assessments for the case study participants. The researcher analyzed the scores based upon the criteria set forth in the DRA and categorized the data into four reading profiles: good decoders/good comprehenders, good decoders/poor comprehenders, poor decoders/good comprehenders, and poor decoders/poor comprehenders. Students reading below grade level DRA passages were categorized as poor decoders. Students reading at grade level were categorized as good decoders. The DRA has established a retelling score of 18 or above on the reading comprehension rubric as necessary to advance to the next reading level. Therefore, students who scored less than 18 on the reading comprehension rubric for retelling were categorized as poor comprehenders. Students who scored at 18 or above on the reading comprehension rubric were categorized as good comprehenders.

Conclusions

An overview of the case study results indicate that teaching the art of storytelling in a literacy-rich environment did not have an adverse effect upon the reading comprehension scores for any of the 14 participants and appeared, and with this population of students, storytelling may have had a favorable effect on reading comprehension. Comparison of the pre-and-post-treatment reading comprehension scores illustrated a gradual increase in scores, especially for participants who could adequately retell a literary tale before the treatment began. It, therefore, can be concluded that the treatment may have influenced the emergence of a more comprehensive ability to adequately retell a literary tale.

The subjectivity of the DRA reading comprehension rubric, however, may also have influenced a student’s reading comprehension score. Though the classroom teacher and the researcher discussed participants’ retelling responses and scores, the rubric was
open to individual interpretation since it provided descriptors that required scoring by their quantities, not by numbers. The two assessors could have construed words such as few, some, many, or most, differently.

The U. S. Department of Education (1986) noted that students with low motivation and weak academic skills are more likely to listen, read, write and put forth greater effort academically in the context of storytelling. Specific to the case study, two participants who showed the most increase in comprehension scores were students who struggled with reading at grade level and retelling a DRA passage with adequate comprehension. Throughout the 11 weeks of treatment, these two participants were actively engaged in the storytelling sessions. They accurately responded to the questions the researcher posed about the stories. Based upon the questions posed and answers given, these two students appeared to benefit from the visualization strategies presented during the treatment (Nessel, 1985). Additionally, the two participants readily volunteered to retell the stories to the whole class. Following the treatment, both students were able to read a DRA passage, though below grade level, and retell the passage with adequate comprehension. For these two participants the treatment appeared to be most effective. Therefore, continued exposure to storytelling activities that stress reading comprehension strategies may be beneficial in increasing reading comprehension of a literary tale for students who fall into this reading profile. However, caution should be noted when making a general statement about a population based on a case study.

One participant had adequate decoding skills but struggled with retelling a DRA passage with adequate comprehension. The classroom teacher noted that this participant struggled with expressing himself clearly when talking about personal events or academic
topics. Study results revealed that this participant was able to increase his post-treatment reading comprehension scores, though the increase was not enough to move him to the good comprehenders profile. Therefore, he remained in the poor comprehenders profile for both pre-and-post-reading comprehension. Due to this participant’s struggle to express himself clearly, his reading comprehension scores could have been influenced by his limited expressive language abilities.

The class demonstrated competence in describing the last five stories’ characters and events accurately without the assistance of the researcher sketching the scenes. Further, the class was at ease with the sequence of the storytelling activities, demonstrating maturity as learners. Therefore, maturation may have also contributed to the increase in pre-and-post-treatment reading comprehension scores.

In general, the participants’ positive responses to the art of oral storytelling indicated they were highly motivated to learn stories for the purpose of retelling. Sebesta (2000) states “…storytelling, by lifting the [retelling] experience to the level of transaction, gives comprehension a motive and significance” (p. 248). Additionally, when students have the opportunity to retell stories they have heard, they begin to develop a better understanding of themselves and their world (Hamilton & Weiss, 1990). Further, developing the ability to become increasingly adept in creating and communicating a story or narrative is important to academic success. Being able to create an effective narrative is a way to conceptualize experience and meaning, which is an important tool for learning (Bloome, Katz & Champion, 2003).

Though a concrete connection between oral storytelling and retelling a literary tale cannot be concluded from the results of the case study, a longer treatment, spanning a
school year may reveal more significant results. The more stories students learn and tell, the greater the opportunity for deeper understanding of story structure and comprehension occurs (Fisher & Medvic, 2003). Given 11 weeks of treatment, significant change in post-treatment scores would not be expected.

Recommendations

This study focused exclusively on teaching students the oral tradition of storytelling to strengthen their ability to retell a literary tale. A more comprehensive study would also include students independently researching and reading stories for retelling. Research that makes clear the connections between oral storytelling and retelling a literary tale for the purpose of strengthening reading comprehension is therefore needed.

A replication of this study could be completed using different grade levels providing treatment over a longer period of time. A longitudinal case study may provide more in-depth information between the connection between retelling an oral tale and retelling a literary tale.

Links between the Ohio Academic Content Standards (2001) and storytelling was another outcome that emerged naturally from the treatment. Storytelling is an activity that falls under the Ohio Academic Content Standard for communication, and it aligns with Standard 4, *Communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes*, and Standard 12, *Use spoken, written and visual language to accomplish their own purposes*, of the National Council of Teachers of English and International Reading Association’s Standards for English Language Arts. The communication standard is one of numerous content standards addressed during oral storytelling. Research linking the
Ohio Academic Content Standards and storytelling would provide classroom teachers with valuable information when making decisions about classroom practices.

Motivation toward literacy appeared to be strong in this case study, though motivation was not considered in the research question. During the 11 weeks of treatment, all 21 students were actively engaged during each of the storytelling sessions. Early in the treatment phase, one student who volunteered often during class discussions also volunteered to tell the whole class the oral tale she had learned. Her retelling was detailed and delivered with great expression. She engaged her classmates during the storytelling, personalizing her retelling by assigning classmates’ names to the story characters. This student’s storytelling served as a peer model for subsequent student storytelling.

Some of the students who struggled with reading grade level texts often volunteered with insightful inferences and predictions as well as ideas to expand the storytelling sessions to include writing scripts for readers’ theatre. One student requested the ISBN number from the book the researcher used for the storytelling unit, indicating a desire to search for and learn his own stories to tell.

Further, the classroom teacher prompted the students to write about their perceptions of the storytelling unit during a daily journal writing activity. Though this activity was not part of the storytelling methodology, the responses indicated the students looked forward to the storytelling sessions and enjoyed all facets of the unit. Additionally, the classroom teacher noted many positive responses from parents during parent-teacher conferences regarding the stories their children shared at home that were part of the storytelling unit. Finally, one parent included a letter in the parent consent
form noting that the family had been entertained and impressed with the comprehension
and attention to details their child included in each story told. Therefore, student and
parental responses to the oral storytelling phase of this study indicate a positive
connection between oral storytelling and reading motivation. Further research in this area
could examine whether a relationship exists between the art of storytelling and literacy
motivation.

Final Summary

Focusing on the art of storytelling to strengthen reading comprehension, this case
study described the storytelling treatment and the pre-and-post-treatment reading
comprehension assessment results for students in one second grade class in the Midwest.
The treatment included teaching eight stories to the class. The objectives of the
storytelling activities were based on theories and current research underlying reading
comprehension. According to both empirical and pre-and-post-treatment data, teaching
the art of storytelling may have a favorable effect on retelling a literary tale, which
ultimately strengthens reading comprehension.

Further research linking storytelling activities with increased proficiency in
retelling a literary tale would add to the pedagogical approaches available to teachers to
strengthen reading comprehension for all students. Additionally, research that seeks to
establish a relationship between oral storytelling activities and an increase in reading
motivation would provide valuable information to teachers who seek to engage students
in the process of becoming literate.

Finally, storytelling has a rich history and has been used as an educational
approach for centuries (Hamilton & Weiss, 1990). What was an effective pedagogical
approach in ancient societies appears to be an effective pedagogical approach in today’s classrooms.
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APPENDIX A

Visualizing and Verbalizing Concept Map
Language comprehension is the ability to connect to and interpret both oral and written language. It is the ability to reason from language that is heard and language that is read. Visualizing is how language and thought are processed. Imagery is a primary sensory connection in the brain.

**Figure 1.** Visualizing and Verbalizing Concept Map

This half of your brain sees a picture. This half of your brain sees a word.

When both the picture and the word blend together in your mind, that’s when you understand.

…and you can put a word to your thought.
APPENDIX B.

Reading Strategies Discussed During Treatment Phase
## Reading Strategies Discussed During Treatment Phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story</th>
<th>Reading Strategy</th>
<th>Sample questions to students</th>
<th>Sample comments to students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Crocodile and the Hen</td>
<td>Prediction</td>
<td>What do you think will happen to the hen when she walks up to the river for a drink?</td>
<td>Good readers predict while they read.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inference</td>
<td>How is the hen feeling when the story says “She looked Crocodile straight in the eye and said “Good Morning.””</td>
<td>Good readers infer as they read.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wise Old Owl</td>
<td>Text structure –</td>
<td>“What is the problem of the story? Is the sequence of when each animal appears in the story important?”</td>
<td>Good readers reread a section of text when they are confused and cannot follow the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pattern of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sequence, story</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>conflict</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Clever Gull Mother</td>
<td>Visualization</td>
<td>“What did the mountain look like?” “How far away did you picture the river from the gull’s nest? How was the fox moving as he ran down the mountain with the bag of baby birds n his back – slow or fast?”</td>
<td>Good readers picture the words of the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lapin and the Tar Baby</td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>“What kind of animal do you think a Lapin is? How did you know? You used your knowledge in the context of the story to figure it out, like what animal visits a garden, eats all the carrots, wiggles out from under the fence”</td>
<td>Good readers use a number of ways to determine what a word is they don’t know when they read. This is one way: use the words in the sentences around the unknown word to determine its meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Christmas Wreath</td>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>“What did the story mean when the Chief Elf said “I know the wreath did not look like this when I put it on the door? Oh well, it must be a Christmas miracle.””</td>
<td>Good readers question the author by asking “What was the message the author was trying to make?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C.

Pre-Treatment Reading Profiles
### Pre--treatment Reading Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poor decoders/ Poor comprehenders</th>
<th>Poor decoders/ Good comprehenders</th>
<th>Good decoders/poor comprehenders</th>
<th>Good decoders/ good comprehenders</th>
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<td>#1, #5, #10</td>
<td>#4, #6, #7, #8, #9, #11, #12, #14</td>
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APPENDIX D.

DRA Reading Levels
Data used to determine good decoders and poor decoders. Scores 18 and above fell into the good decoders category. Scores that fell below 18 represent poor decoders.
APPENDIX E.

Participants Comprehension Scores
Figure 3. Participants Comprehension Scores

Data used to determine good comprehenders and poor comprehenders. Scores 18 and above fell into the good comprehenders category. Scores that fell below 18 present poor decoders.
APPENDIX F.

Post-Treatment Reading Profiles
### Post-treatment Reading Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poor decoders/ Poor comprehenders</th>
<th>Poor decoders/ Good comprehenders</th>
<th>Good decoders/poor comprehenders</th>
<th>Good decoders/ good comprehenders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>#2, #4, #10</td>
<td>#1, #5, #6, #7, #8, #9, #11, #12, #14</td>
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