

A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS  
TO ANALYZE IF FOURTH GRADE  
STUDENTS RECOGNIZE THE BENEFITS  
OF BEING READ ALOUD TO  
BY THEIR PARENTS

MASTER'S PROJECT

Submitted to the Department of Elementary Education,  
University of Dayton, in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
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by

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

#### Purpose for the Study

Reading plays an integral role in a child's learning process. Many people including parents and teachers share in the responsibility of teaching children how to read. A parent can enhance a child's cognitive development by reading to them. Research has shown that by reading to children parents can improve the child's attitude towards reading, reading skills, and cognitive development.

One of the purposes of conducting this research is to demonstrate that reading aloud to children has a positive effect on the child's attitude toward reading. Becher (1985) cites studies by Henry, Hoskins, Romotowski and Trepanier which show that children who are read to by their parents at least four times a week for periods of eight to ten minutes per session exhibit more positive attitudes toward reading than do children whose parents do not read to them. Trelease (1982) contends that few children learn to love books independently; they need to be introduced to the world of books by someone else. These studies demonstrate that a mentor can influence a child's attitude toward reading.

The second purpose for doing this study is to discover if children recognize that being read to has a positive

effect on their achievement in reading. Parental reading is the most proven practice which leads to a child's reading achievement (Becher, 1985). Rasinski (1990) supports this contention when he states, "Reading to a child significantly increases the child's vocabulary, knowledge of story structure, literal and inferential comprehension skills, and background experience."

Another purpose for conducting this study is to see if children recognize the cognitive benefits of having their parents read to them. Reading is a cognitive experience not just a listening activity. Much cognitive development takes place while reading aloud and interacting with a book. Becher (1985) states that children who had significantly higher reading achievement scores and more highly developed and expanded concepts had parents who asked questions about the story before beginning the book, during the reading session, and as a follow up at the end of the session.

Research shows that reading aloud to children at a young age and continuing through the early years does have a positive effect on children's attitudes, achievement, and cognitive development in reading.

## Problem Statement

The purpose of this study was to analyze if fourth grade students recognize the benefits of being read aloud to by their parents.

## Assumptions

In order to carry out this study a Likert-type questionnaire will be used to measure students' attitudes toward being read to by their parents. The writer assumes that the instrument measures the attitudes that are intended to be measured. The writer also assumes the students will honestly answer the questionnaire.

## Limitations

The writer found several limitations effecting this study. One limitation of the study is the writer's limited sample size of 150 students. Another limitation is parents who never read to their child. The final limitation is the questionnaires were completed at the end of the year when students' attention is not as focused.

## Definition of Terms

Attitude is the student's positive or negative feeling towards a given topic.



## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter the review of the literature is presented in three major sections: the effects of being read to on attitudes, skill development and cognitive development in reading.

#### Effects of Being Read To on Attitude

When children are read aloud to, positive attitudes toward reading are fostered. Research has indicated that the time parents spend cuddling up with their child and a good book has significant effects on the child's attitude toward reading. Children learn that reading is a comfortable experience and that words and pictures must be good (Staiger, 1990). Reading to the child is the best known, most frequently recommended parental practice that is significantly related to positive attitudes toward reading (Becher, 1985). Hoskins (1976) found that prekindergarten children whose parents read to them at least 60 minutes a week, or on an average of 8 to 9 minutes a day, showed significant increases in attitude toward reading. In addition Cosgrove's (1987) study contends that reading aloud to children on a regular basis improves students' attitudes toward reading.

Being read to has a positive effect on attitude toward enjoying reading. As Trelease (1982) stated reading aloud has to be made enjoyable. If the experience is made pleasurable, then the child voluntarily will seek out the experience again. Parents need to promote the pleasures in reading and downplay the unpleasures. If the child is not interested in what is being read, the experience may become boring or without meaning. When a child becomes familiar with books due to pleasant reading aloud experiences, reading becomes enjoyable (Harkness, 1981). William's attributes children's enjoyment of reading toward being read to.

Being read to has a positive effect on children's attitude towards interest in reading. Trelease (1982) states reading aloud to a child is the most important activity a person can do to encourage the child to be interested in reading. McCormick's (1977) study showed evidence of the direct relationship between reading to children and development of interest in reading. Rasinski (1990) also supports the finding that reading aloud increases the child's interest in books and reading.

In the above section the author stated research on the effects of being read to on attitude. In the following section the author will be talking about the effects of being read to on skill development in reading.

## Effects of Being Read To on Skill Development

When a child is read to, vocabulary acquisition is increased. Vocabulary growth in elementary school children is substantial. Much attention has been given to studying why the vocabulary growth is so substantial during that time. Wells (1986) found that the frequency with which children heard stories was positively associated with their vocabulary size. Elley's (1989) findings found that reading aloud to children is an excellent source for vocabulary acquisition and that additional explanation of the words can more than double such gains. Research repeatedly has indicated that continued exposure to books read aloud develops increased vocabulary (Teale, 1981; Rasinski, 1990; Trelease, 1982).

Listening skills are also improved when read to. Studies have shown that reading aloud regularly to students at the elementary school level produces measurable and sometimes significant gains in listening skills (Cohen, 1968; Elley, 1980, Elley & Mangubhai, 1983). Otto's (1994) research of reading aloud storybooks to preschool students supports that children's' listening skills improved and were noticeable during storytimes.

Being read to broadens the experience base of the child, therefore, increasing comprehension. In many studies

reading aloud to children has shown increases in reading comprehension. Becher (1985) cites Porter's research with inner city children, Feitelson's research in with children Israel, Cohen with disadvantaged students, Fearn with fourth graders, and many more studies resulted in higher comprehension scores following various read aloud studies. Rasinski (1990) states that by reading aloud to children their background of experience is increased, therefore, literal and inferential comprehension skills are increased.

Being read to also increases writing abilities. As Trelease (1982) stated in The Read-Aloud handbook, good writers write frequently, but they read even more. They watch how other people throw words around to catch meaning. The more a person reads and is read to the better the person's writing skills and writing style become (Trelease, 1982). Children copycat what they hear in their writing.

Research has been stated about the effects of reading aloud on attitude and skill development. In the next section the author states the effects of reading aloud on cognitive development.

#### The Effects of Being Read To on Cognitive Development

Being read to has positive effects on cognitive development in reading. Parents reading aloud plays a

crucial role in determining a child's cognitive development (Coleman, 1966; Jencks, 1972; Mosteller & Moynihan, 1972). Research repeatedly has indicated by listening to their parents reading aloud cognitive development is increased (Trelease, 1982; Staiger, 1990; Becher, 1985).

Interaction between the reader and the child while being read to has a positive effect on cognitive development. The more that both the parent and the child become involved in the activity, the higher the child's reading achievement. This finding supports the view that reading to the child is a cognitive or "thinking" activity not just a listening activity (Becher, 1989). Hoffman (1989) gave evidence of a strong correlation between how a parent shared a picture storybook with her child and measures of trust and cognitive development of the child. The more "expressive" the mother's language during the book experience, and the more encouraged the child was to be an active participant, the stronger the indicators of the child's cognitive functioning. Furthermore, Smith (1971) concluded that children whose parents discussed the book with the child exhibited more highly developed and expanded concepts.

Reading aloud to a child broadens the child's experience base having a positive effect on cognitive development. The more the child knows by being read to the

more the child understands. If a child is not familiar with a topic that is being read aloud, the less the child will understand. Therefore, by reading aloud children are gaining a great deal of knowledge on which to build on and grow (Trelease, 1982).

Being read to has positive effects on achievement in reading, therefore, increasing cognitive development. Research repeatedly has indicated that reading aloud to children increases their achievement in reading (Becher, 1985; Otto, 1994; Teale, 1981; Rasinski, 1990; Trelease, 1982). Reading to the child is the best known, most researched and most frequently recommended parental practice that is significantly related to reading achievement (Becher, 1985). Becher (1985) cites studies by Henry, Hoskins, Romatowski, and Trepanier which indicate that children whose parents read to them at least four times a week for periods of eight to ten minutes exhibit higher achievement levels in reading than do children whose parents do not read to them. Becher (1985) also cited studies by Henry, and Hoskins in which children whose parents were specifically requested to read to them daily for a period of three to six months scored significantly higher on reading readiness tests than children whose parents did not read to them.

Reading to a child significantly increases skill development, therefore, increasing achievement. Children's letter and symbol recognition abilities are increased, along with the length of spoken sentences, literal and inferential comprehension skills, writing ability, and view of reading as a valued activity (Becher, 1985). Reading aloud stimulates interest, emotional development, imagination, and the child's language. It increases the child's interest in books and reading, and it works to enlarge their vocabularies, improve knowledge of story structure, and vicariously increases students' background of experience (Rasinski, 1989).

Through research it has been proven that reading aloud to children provides many benefits including positive attitudes toward reading, increased skill development, and cognitive development.

## CHAPTER III

### PROCEDURE

#### Subjects

One hundred fifty-five fourth graders, eighty males and seventy-five females, were surveyed. The subjects ranged in age from nine to eleven. The students surveyed were from middle to lower middle class families. There were a variety of ethnic groups represented in the survey, Caucasian, African American, Asian American, and Latin American. One hundred and thirty-six of the subjects surveyed had parents that read to them before they entered kindergarten. Forty-four of the one hundred and fifty-five subjects surveyed have parents that still read aloud to them.

#### Setting

School. The school in which this study took place is the largest elementary school in the state of Ohio, consisting of grades kindergarten through sixth, and approximately 1,409 students. The school is unique in that it houses a great deal of children from the military base, therefore there is a continual flow of children moving into the district, and exiting the district.



Community. The community is a middle to lower class community consisting of approximately 31,300 residents. Many of the residents are employed by the military base as civilian or military workers. The community also consist of a variety of other professionals. The school system includes six elementary schools, one jr. high and one high school.

### Data Collection

Construction of the Data Collecting Instrument. A forced choice Likert-type questionnaire was used. The responses to each question were: strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree. The questionnaire was valid due to content validity which states that the questionnaire is valid because it tests the matter which conclusions are to be drawn. The questionnaire consisted of thirteen questions. It was pretested by a group of teachers, and by a small group of fourth grade students from another elementary school in the community of the same socio-economic status. The teachers that pretested the questionnaire were concerned about the pronunciation of the word "read" because depending on how the word was said the statements meaning would be taken different. The fourth grade students that pretested the questionnaire were

concerned about the word "parents" because both parents may not have read to the child.

Administration of the Data Collecting Instrument. The questionnaires were hand delivered to each fourth grade classroom and passed out by the writer. Each question was read aloud to the class by the writer. Students had approximately fifteen seconds to respond to each question. The questionnaires from each classroom were collected and placed in an envelope labeled with the class room number. The data was collected within a one week period of time. Out of the 155 surveys passed out there was a 100% return rate.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### Presentation of Results

The results were presented in three tables: all students, boys, and girls. The tables consist of a column for the question, the number of students who answered the question, and a column for each answer choice (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree). Refer to table one. The first column is the question which was asked to the subjects, the second column represents the number of subjects who answered the question, and column three, four, five, and six represent how the subject responded to the question SA: strongly agree; A: agree; D: disagree; SD: strongly disagree. A percent score was computed for each answer choice.

#### Discussion of the Results

One hundred and fifty-five surveys were handed out. One hundred and thirty-six students said their parents read to them before they entered kindergarten. Nineteen students reported that their parents did not read to them before kindergarten. Only forty-four parents still read to their child in the fourth grade. One hundred and eleven students

TABLE I  
RESULTS OF ALL STUDENTS  
TO THE READ ALOUD QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTION	#of students who answered the question	SA	A	D	SD
1. I like having my parents read to me.	155	21	30	28	21
2. Since my parents read to me, I like reading.	155	32	34	20	15
3. Since my parents read to me, I want to read more books.	155	28	32	28	13
4. Since my parents read to me, I know more vocabulary	155	33	39	19	8
5. Since my parents read to me, I am able to write better.	155	28	25	39	8
6. Since my parents read to me, my listening skills are better.	155	39	34	16	10
7. Since my parents read to me, I have learned about things I didn't know before.	155	48	32	17	4
8. Since my parents read to me, I understand things better.	155	34	45	19	3
9. Since my parents read to me, it has improved my ability to think.	155	32	40	22	6
10. Since my parents read to me and talked with me about books, I am able to relate that information to things that have happened in my life.	155	39	37	15	8

TABLE II  
RESULTS OF ALL BOYS  
TO THE READ ALOUD QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTION	#of students who answered the question	SA	A	D	SD
1. I like having my parents read to me.	80	18	31	23	29
2. Since my parents read to me, I like reading.	80	33	30	24	14
3. Since my parents read to me, I want to read more books.	80	34	24	29	14
4. Since my parents read to me, I know more vocabulary.	80	36	35	24	5
5. Since my parents read to me, I am able to write better.	80	25	25	31	19
6. Since my parents read to me, my listening skills are better.	80	38	31	20	11
7. Since my parents read to me, I have learned about things I didn't know before.	80	46	29	19	6
8. Since my parents read to me, I understand things better.	80	35	40	20	5
9. Since my parents read to me, it has improved my ability to think.	80	34	38	24	5
10. Since my parents read to me and talked with me about books, I am able to relate that information to things that have happened in my life.	80	43	29	20	9

TABLE III  
RESULTS OF ALL GIRLS  
TO THE READ ALOUD QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTION	#of students who answered the question	SA	A	D	SD
1. I like having my parents read to me.	75	24	31	32	13
2. Since my parents read to me, I like reading.	75	31	39	17	13
3. Since my parents read to me, I want to read more books.	75	25	35	27	13
4. Since my parents read to me, I know more vocabulary.	75	29	44	19	8
5. Since my parents read to me, I am able to write better.	75	32	23	36	9
6. Since my parents read to me, my listening skills are better.	75	44	43	13	0
7. Since my parents read to me, I have learned about things I didn't know before.	75	49	32	17	1
8. Since my parents read to me, I understand things better.	75	33	49	16	1
9. Since my parents read to me, it has improved my ability to think.	75	32	41	21	5
10. Since my parents read to me and talked with me about books, I am able to relate that information to things that have happened in my life.	75	35	47	11	8

responded that their parents don't read to them anymore. The writer was not surprised by this finding. Through the review of literature there was evidence that parents tend to not read as frequently or even at all after the child reaches elementary. The older the child gets the less the parents feel they need to read to the child (Trelease, 1993).

The students were asked if they liked having their parents read to them. The results showed that fifty-one percent of the students surveyed liked being read to by their parents while forty-nine percent disliked being read to. More girls liked being read to than boys (Refer to table 2 and 3). The writer feels part of the reason more students do not like their parents to read to them is due to their parents not reading to them as frequently or even at all now that they are older.

Research shows that by reading to a child a person can positively influence a child's attitude toward reading (Becher, 1985). Of the students surveyed, sixty-six percent liked reading because their parents read to them. Of the boys sixty-three percent enjoyed reading due to their parent, while seventy percent of the girls liked reading because their parents read to them.

Due to their parents reading to them sixty percent of the students felt it made them want to read more books.

Research states that by reading to a child a person can increase the child's interest in reading (Trelease, 1982.) The majority of the girls and boy felt they wanted to read more books because their parents read to them (Refer to table 2 and 3).

Research has indicated that vocabulary is increased substantially when children are read to. Of the students surveyed, seventy-two percent felt they knew more vocabulary words because their parents read to them. Of the boys, seventy-one percent and seventy-three percent of the girls felt their vocabulary was increased since their parents read to them.

The students were asked if they felt reading increased their writing abilities. Out of the students surveyed fifty-three percent felt reading helped their writing, while forty-seven percent felt it did not help them in writing. The writer was surprised how many students did not see the reading-writing connection. It is proven that the more you read the better your writing and writing style (Trelease, 1982).

Otto's (1994) research supports that children's' listening skills improved and were noticeable during storytimes. Overwhelmingly the students surveyed felt having their parents read to them helped their listening skills (refer to table 1,2,and 3).



Of the students surveyed eighty percent felt they learned new things from having their parents read to them. The majority of boys and girls felt being read to helped them to learn new things. Research repeatedly has indicated that by reading aloud to a child his experience base is expanded, therefore, they learn and comprehend more (Trelease, 1982; Staiger, 1990; Becher, 1985). The results showed seventy-nine percent of all the students, seventy-five percent of all the boys and eighty-two percent of all the girls felt they understood things better since their parents read to them which highly correlates with the expanded experience base. The subjects also felt very strongly that by being read to their ability to think was improved and that they could relate what was read to happenings in their life.

CHAPTER V  
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION; AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Many people including parents and teachers share in the responsibility of teaching children how to read. A parent can enhance a child's cognitive development by reading to them. Research has shown that by reading to children parents can improve the child's attitude toward reading, reading skills, and cognitive development in reading.

The purpose of this study was to analyze if fourth grade students recognized the benefits of being read aloud to by their parents.

After a review of the related literature, an attitude questionnaire composed of thirteen likert-type questions was constructed. The questionnaire was completed by 155 fourth grade students, consisting of eighty boys and seventy-five girls. A percent score was computed for the responses for each answer for all the students, all boys, and all girls.

The results of the questionnaire revealed that most students recognize the benefits of being read aloud to by their parents. The majority felt by having their parents read to them their attitude, skill development, and cognitive development in reading was improved.

Out of the 155 fourth grade students surveyed, only 44 of their parents still read to them.

### Conclusions

The review of the related literature shows that reading aloud to children has significant positive effects on a child's attitude, skill development, and cognitive development in reading. After developing the questionnaire the writer concludes that the majority of students surveyed recognize the benefits of having their parents read aloud to them. Although amazingly a large percentage of students do not see the benefits of being read to. The writer believes parents need to instill the value of reading in children at an early age and continue reading aloud and promoting reading activities throughout their child's life.

### Recommendations

Based upon the results of this study the writer recommends that parents instill the value of reading in children at an early age and continue reading aloud and promoting reading activities throughout their child's life. The writer believes it is never too early to start reading to

a child and reading aloud should continue throughout life to any age as long as it is enjoyable.

Appendix A  
Questionnaire

DIRECTIONS: On questions 1,2 and 3 circle the word that matches your answer to the question.

1. I am a

BOY GIRL

2. My parents read books to me before I entered kindergarten.

YES NO

3. My parents read books to me now.

YES NO

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DIRECTIONS: On questions 1-10 circle the letter or letters that match your feelings toward each question (SA: strongly agree; A: agree; D: disagree; SD: strongly disagree).

1. I like having my parents read to me.

SA A D SD

2. Since my parents read to me, I like reading.

SA A D SD

3. Since my parents read to me, I want to read more books.

SA A D SD

4. Since my parents read to me, I know more vocabulary words.

SA A D SD

5. Since my parents read to me, I am able to write better.

SA A D SD

6. Since my parents read to me, my listening skills are better. (ex. picture things in your mind)

SA A D SD

7. Since my parents read to me, I have learned about things I didn't know before.

SA A D SD

8. Since my parents read to me, I understand things better.

SA A D SD

9. Since my parents read to me, it has improved my ability to think. (ex. organize thoughts, problem solve)

SA A D SD

10. Since my parents read to me and talked with me about books, I am able to relate that information to things that have happened in my life.

SA A D SD

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