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A Case Study: The Effect of Repeated Read-Alouds of Complex Texts on the
Comprehension of a Preschool Student

by

Stephanie Cottrell

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A capstone project submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development of
The College at Brockport, State University of New York in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education

Abstract

The purpose of my research is to explore how the comprehension of a preschool student is impacted through being engaged in a total of twelve read alouds and discussions using complex texts in the form of a chapter book. During the conducting of this research, a preschooler participates in read alouds conducted by the researcher and engages in a post-reading discussion about the reading. Each read aloud is then repeated a second time followed by second post-reading discussion. My research seeks to answer to what extent can a preschool student retell and discuss content from a complex text? How does the use of repeated readings of complex texts impact the comprehension and vocabulary knowledge of a preschool student? The data is collected through the use of observations and comprehension rubrics.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards has increased expectations for students at each grade level from kindergarten to twelfth grade. Students are expected to read texts with higher complexity levels at earlier ages. Preschool is an early childhood education program in which children come to play and learn with other children, and it often serves as the first formal education for young children. Preschool classrooms often help to build the foundations for reading that young children require as they learn to read on their own. One common practice among preschool classrooms is the use of read alouds to model literacy behaviors, expose children to new vocabulary and teach print awareness. The text complexity of read alouds at the preschool level is typically simple. However, preschool teachers can use texts with higher complexity as read alouds to prepare students for the complex texts they will work with as they enter into elementary school.

Problem Statement

In 2010, New York State adopted the Common Core Learning Standards and fully implemented the standards in 2013. Throughout my experience working in elementary classrooms, and the NYS Common Core Learning Standards, I have noticed that students are expected to work with texts of higher complexity at each grade level. Introducing texts with higher complexity at each grade level has proven to be challenging for many students. The introduction of these rigorous standards has resulted in the need to prepare students at early ages

to begin processing, decoding and drawing meaning from complex texts. Though students need opportunities to work with complex text, most preschool classrooms still only share short stories and simple picture books with their students through read alouds. Read alouds are a common part of preschool education, and there has been a plethora of research published regarding the importance of reading to children and its effects on their literacy development. However, preschool read alouds typically involve picture books that have illustrations that closely match the text of the book. There is limited research investigating how a preschooler's comprehension and knowledge of textual content are impacted through the use of complex texts, such as chapter books, as read alouds.

Significance of the Problem

Read alouds are a commonly used in preschool education to enhance and enrich students' literacy learning and development. According to Cynthia B. Leung (2008), reading aloud to children helps them to hear new vocabulary and learn early literacy behaviors. Repeating the same read aloud text to preschoolers helps to expand children's understanding of vocabulary, increases their print awareness and their comprehension of the content within the texts. However, read alouds at the preschool level typically involve picture books that have illustrations that closely match the text in the books; consequently, preschool students rely heavily on pictures and illustrations to draw meaning from the text. As a result, preschoolers have limited exposure to complex texts. Even though several research studies have been conducted regarding the significance of read alouds for preschool students, there has not been a great deal of research investigating the impact of using complex texts as read alouds at the preschool level.

Text complexity standards have significantly increased with the adoption of the Common Core Standards; therefore, it is essential to expose preschool students to texts with higher complexity levels in order to aid students in their acquisition of the skills they will need to be effective literacy learners as they enter into elementary school. Using chapter books as read alouds with preschoolers has not been extensively researched, so it is essential to prepare preschool students for success while implementing chapter books as classroom read alouds. According to Karen J. Kindle (2009), repeated readings help to foster dynamic contexts for students to learn new concepts and vocabulary. Preschoolers' understanding of text content is essential; thus it is important to investigate whether incorporating repeated read alouds has a positive impact on the students' understanding of the text content in chapter books.

Purpose

The purpose of my study is to investigate the impact of repeated read alouds of complex texts on preschool students' comprehension of content and vocabulary in the text. The following research questions will be addressed in this study:

1. To what extent can a preschool student retell and discuss content from a complex text?
2. How does the use of repeated readings of complex texts impact the comprehension and vocabulary knowledge of a preschool student?

This study seeks to address these questions through an investigative case study with one preschool student.

In my study I conducted read alouds for each chapter in the books, *Mr. Putter and Tabby* *Walk the Dog* (1994) and *Mr. Putter and Tabby Take the Train* (1998) both by Cynthia Rylant.

A post-reading retelling of the text followed each read aloud. Within each post-reading retelling, Elsa discussed text vocabulary, character, setting and descriptive details. For the first three weeks, the Elsa and I used the book *Mr. Putter and Tabby Walk the Dog*. There are three chapters in the book. During weeks four to six, Elsa and I worked with the book, *Mr. Putter and Tabby Take the Train*. This book also has three chapters. On the first meeting of each week, the participant was introduced to a new chapter and engaged in a post-reading retelling of the text. On the second meeting of each week the participant listened to the chapter a second time and completed a post-reading retelling a second time. I met with the participant twice a week for six weeks at the home of the participant. Each meeting lasted thirty minutes.

After each read aloud, I guided Elsa through a post-reading conversation using a list of key concepts, vocabulary and events for each chapter of the books, *Mr. Putter and Tabby Walk the Dog* and *Mr. Putter and Tabby Take the Train*. I first asked Elsa to tell me what happened in that part of the story. Once Elsa explained what happened in the story, I asked why or how questions to the participant in response to her explanations if elaboration was needed. However, the goal of my study is to have the child lead the post-read retelling with their thinking around the text.

Rationale

Read alouds are an essential component of literacy education for preschoolers. Read alouds help preschoolers to enrich and enhance their knowledge of print awareness as the teacher models appropriate reading behaviors. Through read alouds, students are also able to learn vocabulary words, as well as new concepts. As a substitute teacher, I have observed primary students in several different school districts struggle to meet the Common Core State Standards for literacy using complex texts. Many of these students lack the skills needed to process, decode

and draw meaning from complex texts. I attribute this problem to the limited exposure these students have with complex texts. These students often do not have the background knowledge and experience necessary to successfully work with complex texts. As a result, I think it is essential to begin introducing complex texts in the form of read alouds in order to assist in student preparedness and readiness for future success with complex texts.

Definition of Terms

Complex texts often contain implicit, obscure or hidden meanings because it is assumed that the reader has life experiences that will contribute to their understanding of the text. They also frequently use figurative language and academic vocabulary that is domain specific. Complex texts often use unconventional literacy structures, such as flashback and multiple points of view (Elfreida Hiebert & David Pearson, 2013).

Print Awareness is the child's knowledge of environmental print, books, alphabet and the understanding that text contains meanings.

Read alouds are instructional strategies that teachers use to orally read texts aloud to students. Texts used as read alouds are typically above students' independent reading level, (Lester Laminack & Reba Wadsworth, 2006).

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey a series of twenty questions that are asked out to a child by an adult in regards to their feelings about reading in variety of different settings and circumstances. The child matches their feelings to pictures depicting images of feelings using Garfield the cat. Garfield is pictured with a big smile, slightly smiling, mildly upset and very upset. The results are then scored to evaluate how the child feels about both academic and recreational reading.

Summary

With the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards, the complexity level of texts that students are expected to use in each grade level has increased. As a result, it is crucial to begin to use texts with higher complexity levels during read aloud time with preschool students. This will help prepare for future success as they work with complex texts in the classroom. This study explores the extent to which a preschool student is able to comprehend content and vocabulary from chapter books. The use of repeated readings will ensure that the student is exposed to the text more than once in order to draw meaning from the complex text.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Proper reading instruction in classrooms is imperative to the reading process for students at each grade level in order for students to develop proficient reading skills. Students must have the skill to understand the text content, as well as be able to recognize text and process it cognitively. Proper reading instruction looks different at each grade level and can vary from classroom to classroom. Primary grades benefit from interactive read alouds to learn new concepts, vocabulary and develop print awareness. Elementary students begin guided reading and have opportunities to practice and develop their reading comprehension and fluency. However, at all grade levels students should have the ability to retell the story in their own words including text details such as settings, characters and sequence of events.

This chapter describes the literature relevant to this study regarding read alouds in the preschool classroom and how read alouds impact literacy skills and development. This chapter is organized into four sections: (1) read alouds, (2) read alouds and vocabulary, (3) read alouds and text content, and (4) repeated read alouds. The first section, read alouds, discusses the importance of read alouds in learning and literacy development in preschool classrooms. The second section of this chapter, read alouds and vocabulary, includes an in depth discussion explain how read alouds help children to learn and understand new vocabulary terms. The third section of this chapter, read alouds and text content, explains how read alouds are beneficial for teach content to students. The final section of this chapter, repeated read alouds, explains how repeated read alouds benefit preschool children's understanding of text content. Each section of this chapter concludes with a brief discussion connecting the research within that section to my study.

Read Alouds

According to James Trelease (2006), read alouds serve many purposes for children. Read alouds entertain children and spark curiosity to pursue reading. Read alouds also inform children of new concepts and provides them with opportunities to bond with adults. As a result, exposure to frequent read alouds often leads to children associating reading with pleasure. Consequently, these children will aspire to pursue reading in their future (Trelease, 2006).

Reading aloud to preschoolers is an invaluable component of their literacy development and print awareness. Laura Justice and Amy Sofka (2010) suggest that read alouds provide teachers and other adults with opportunities to model how various elements of print work. Reading to children helps to establish their knowledge of book handling procedures, such as how to properly hold a book and turn pages. In addition to book handling skills, preschoolers also develop an understanding of the notion that print holds meaning through exposure to read alouds. Researchers have found that read alouds also have many other benefits in regards to preschoolers' literacy skills and development. Read alouds encourage preschoolers to use their listening comprehension skills, critically think about the text and make connections between text and their own lives (Gambrell, Morrow & Pennington, 2002).

In 2000 Jacobs, Morrison, and Swinyard designed a study to determine how frequently elementary teachers read aloud to their students and what types of books they are most likely to read. The study surveyed 1,874 elementary teachers across the United States. The results of their study revealed that teachers in primary grades conducted more read alouds with their students than teachers that taught intermediate grades. The study also indicated that primary teachers were most likely to read picture books aloud to their students, whereas intermediate teachers were most likely to read chapter books aloud. In addition, the study also demonstrated that teachers

rarely read informational or nonfiction texts aloud to their students. This study reveals the need for read alouds to be used at each grade level in order to support students' understanding and knowledge of content.

Read alouds are an essential component of literacy development in children. Therefore, reading aloud in preschool classrooms should be a common practice. It is essential that children develop print awareness and begin to understand that print and text hold meaning. This will enable students to start to understand how books work. As a result, read alouds can be used to teach preschoolers content. My capstone research project seeks to investigate how repeated readings of complex texts impact a preschooler's understanding of content and vocabulary. Therefore, it is important to consider how read alouds are beneficial to children's literacy learning and development.

Read Alouds and Vocabulary

Karen J. Kindle is an education curriculum and instruction professor at the University of South Dakota. In 2009, Kindle designed and conducted an investigative study to determine how primary students learn vocabulary through the use of read alouds. Kindle interviewed primary teachers and students from four different classrooms at an elementary school in the Southern United States. Kindle then conducted four read aloud lesson observations in each classroom. Her observations took place over the course of six weeks in order to collect the data for her study.

The results of the study indicated that teachers used several different instructional strategies within their read aloud lessons. The teachers provided definitions; synonyms and examples to help students understand vocabulary used within the text. Many teachers also used morphemic analysis to teach vocabulary. Other teachers questioned students and built upon student answers to provide students with more vocabulary knowledge. Kindle's study revealed

that teachers often used more than one instructional strategy during read alouds to teach vocabulary. The study also found that the use of incidental exposure embedded instruction and focused instruction, as vocabulary instructional approaches during read alouds were effective. However, the most effective vocabulary lessons occurred when teachers had target words for each read aloud or chapter. Kindle's study was unsuccessful in finding a best practice for teaching vocabulary, but did provide evidence that read alouds are effective tools for teaching new vocabulary to students (Kindle, 2009).

In 2008, Cynthia Leung designed and conducted a study to investigate the impact of repeated read alouds followed by hands-on related activities on the development of scientific vocabulary for preschool students. Leung conducted her study at a Young Women's Christian Association, in a preschool classroom with thirty-seven students from diverse cultural and economic backgrounds. All children were exposed to repeated interactive read alouds using scientific informational books. They were also given vocabulary pretests and posttests.

The students that participated in Leung's (2008) study were given a word recall test to evaluate their knowledge of the target vocabulary from the interactive read alouds. Students had the choice to orally explain the words or use gestures to demonstrate the meaning of the word. The findings of the study concluded that students who participated displayed a drastic increase in their scores from the pretest to the posttest. This research supports the belief that read alouds and repeated readings help to increase preschool students' vocabulary knowledge.

This section of my literature review, describes two separate studies that researchers have conducted to investigate the impact read alouds have on vocabulary acquisition. Each study explained several different evidence based practices used by teachers in order to engage their students in thinking about the vocabulary within the text. This research is significant regarding

this thesis because it is essential to understand how to assist the participant in thinking about the vocabulary in the text and to develop an understanding of its meaning.

Read Alouds and Text Content

Lester Laminack and Reba Wadsworth (2006), suggest that using books in the classroom helps students to acquire background information about a particular topic. Acquiring background knowledge is essential for students because they can use that knowledge to expand and better comprehend what they learn outside of the text. Read alouds provide students with the ability to make connections between texts, as well as to their own experiences. Students are also more likely to remember what they have learned if they can make connections to previously acquired information.

Natalie Heisey and Linda Kucan are both education professors at the collegiate level. In 2010, Heisey and Kucan conducted a study investigating the use of read alouds at the primary level to teach science concepts. Their study was conducted in the Northeastern United States, and their participants were first and second graders. Heisey and Kucan chose a science book and divided it into three sections, for which they prepared comprehension questions. They then divided the first and second graders in half randomly into two groups. The first group was the “during reading” group. These students were asked the comprehension questions after each section of the text was finished. The second group was the “after reading” group and these students did not answer the comprehension questions until the end of entire book. The results of the study revealed that the first group of first and second graders scored higher than the second group that answered all of the questions at the end of the book. Therefore, the authors concluded that chunking materials together during read alouds is useful to promote student understanding of the text content. Furthermore, the results revealed that both groups showed an in depth

understanding of the scientific concepts covered in the text. Students were able to use their learning from the text to make connections to their science class.

The research presented in this section is relevant to my study because it reveals that read alouds have a positive impact on students' content knowledge. Therefore, it is important to conduct read alouds at the preschool level to promote the development and understanding of content knowledge within the preschool classroom. The research also demonstrated that chunking text together and questioning throughout the read aloud both have positive impacts on the students' understanding of the text content. Therefore, it was essential to use both of these practices as I read aloud to the participant in order to help set the participant up for success as she engaged in reading comprehension activities.

Repeated Readings and Read Alouds

The aforementioned study conducted by Leung in 2008, further demonstrates that using repeated read alouds with preschool students helps to develop and deepen their comprehension of the text content and vocabulary. The results of the study revealed that students were able to retell the story with greater detail after repeated read alouds of the text; also, that repeated readings are an effective instructional strategy to help build and enrich students' vocabulary knowledge. Students demonstrated a deeper understanding of scientific vocabulary terms after engaging in repeated interactive read alouds.

Repeated read alouds provide teachers with opportunities to model reading strategies and scaffold vocabulary and concepts. Lea McGee and Judith Schickedanz (2007) suggest that reading a text three times increases the quality of children's analytical conversations during post-reading discussions. The first reading of the text should introduce new vocabulary and main ideas, followed by a "why" question that enables students' to expand and build upon their

responses. The authors further explain that the second reading should focus on enriching the students' understanding of vocabulary. Then conclude with inferential questions that permit students to think beyond the text. Finally, the third reading should consist of a guided retelling of the story while students share narrations, comments and descriptions. McGee and Schickedanz believe that repeated readings foster deeper understanding of text content and vocabulary among preschool and kindergarten students (McGee & Schickedanz).

Researchers Ofra Korat and Hila Blau (2010) designed a study in which they investigated the effect of repeated readings of an electronic book on the phonological awareness, word reading and vocabulary of preschool and kindergarten students. Students either read the book in five sessions, three sessions or followed the regular school program. The results of the study discovered that the group which read the book five times demonstrated greater progress than the students that read the book three times. Both the students that read the book five times and three times significantly outperformed the students that were part of the control group. Korat and Blau's findings demonstrated that repeated readings help students to gain a deeper understanding of text vocabulary, as well as increase their phonological awareness and word reading skills.

The research presented in this section of chapter two is relevant to my study because it discusses how repeated readings positively impact students' understanding of texts. This study seeks to investigate the impact that repeated read alouds have on a preschool participant's understanding of a chapter book that is not closely supported by pictures. Therefore, it is essential to explore other research that has investigated the impact that repeated readings has had on students.

Summary

Recent research has demonstrated that reading aloud to children fosters positive attitudes towards reading. Reading aloud to children also contributes to the students' literacy learning, development and print awareness. In the classroom read alouds are an invaluable tool for introducing and scaffolding new vocabulary and content to students. Repeating the same read aloud text leads to deeper understandings and in depth post-reading discussions. Several research studies exist regarding the benefits of read alouds; however, current research does not explore using complex texts as read alouds at the preschool level. Therefore, my study seeks to investigate the impact of using a chapter book as a read aloud text for a preschool student.

Chapter Three: Methods and Procedures

I designed this study to explore how the use of chapter books as repeated read alouds impacted a preschool student's text comprehension. In conducting this research I addressed specific literacy skills through performing read alouds and engaging a preschool student in post-reading conversations. In each post-reading discussion the preschool student made predictions related to the text, retold the story elements, made connections to the text and used text specific vocabulary.

Participants

I conducted my case study with Elsa. She is a four-year-old Caucasian girl from a middle-income family, and has a positive attitude towards reading. She is enrolled in a universal preschool program in Central New York. Elsa goes to school half days in the afternoon Monday through Friday. Prior to attending preschool, Elsa was enrolled in an education program for three year olds in which she attended school three times a week for four hours. Elsa is a talkative preschooler who often uses language considered socially mature for her age. She exhibits an expansive vocabulary. Elsa is the only daughter of her single mother, Anna, and her father is not present in her life. Elsa comes from a home that is surrounded by literacy. Elsa and her mother read at least twice a day together. She also has access to a large variety of books and magazines at home. Elsa loves the movie *Frozen* and she has many books and toys related to the movie. Besides her frozen books, Elsa's favorite book is the *Rainbow Fish* written by Marcus Pfister. Her favorite things to do are play dress up, go to dance class and go to school. Elsa's favorite things about preschool are taking the school bus, playing and story time. Elsa is a very social and confident child. She will try anything when she is asked, and will admit when she finds the task too hard.

I asked the student to participate in my study in order to observe and analyze to what extent the student is able to comprehend read alouds using a chapter book as a complex text. In addition, I conducted my research to discover how the student's comprehension of text context and vocabulary knowledge is impacted through the use of repeated readings.

Positionality of the Researcher

I am a twenty-four year old white female. I was raised in a middle class family in a suburban neighborhood. Starting at an early age, reading was a major part of my daily life. My parents provided a variety of literary texts in our home to use for both learning and play. We were encouraged to read whenever possible. Every night, my mother read stories aloud before my sisters and I went to sleep. Read alouds were an exciting part of our nightly routine in my family. I remember being excited to hear new stories, as well as ones I had heard before, and I could not wait until I was able to read books on my own. Fortunately, I learned to read as a preschool student and continued to read any book that I could get my hands on. As I entered into grade school, I still had a love of reading and I was placed in accelerated reading classes. I continued to read books on my own, but I still loved being read to. My favorite parts of the school day were the stolen minutes between lessons when the teacher would read books aloud to us in class. I grew up with a positive attitude toward literacy because I grew up in an environment that fostered and encourage literacy learning and development.

I graduated with my Bachelor of Science Degree in History in May 2013. I also obtained my teaching certificates in Childhood Education and Students with Disabilities grades 1 to 6 when I completed my undergraduate coursework. I began working towards my Master of Science degree in birth to twelfth grade literacy in the fall of 2013. At the time my study was

conducted, I was enrolled in the final semester of my graduate coursework and had been employed as a substitute teacher in several school districts in Western New York. The majority of my time is spent working with children grades 1 to 6 in both general education and special education. However, I have also spent time working in kindergarten and preschool classrooms, where I have observed early literacy behaviors and development take place.

As the researcher of my study, I understand the importance and benefits of reading aloud to children and exposing children to a variety of texts at a young age. For instance, exposing children to a variety of texts enables children to learn how different types of print work. Children also learn proper book handling skills; understand that text holds meaning and reading directionality through read alouds. Furthermore, read alouds also help children to become familiar with different text contexts and content, which helps children to expand their vocabulary and knowledge. I have a professional relationship with the participant of my study.

I believe that literacy development in young children is directly related to their literacy environment. An environment that fosters literacy development includes many different types of text for children to use on their own, as well as with guidance from a more experienced reader. A classroom that fosters literacy development is often student-centered, culturally responsive and designed to meet the needs of the current students within that classroom. A teacher should provide explicit literacy instructions, scaffold lessons and provide differentiated instruction to ensure the literacy success of all students. Read alouds provide opportunities for teachers to model literacy behaviors, use explicit instruction and scaffold lesson. Read alouds also provide

opportunities for children to hear new vocabulary and learn new concepts. Therefore, I believe that read alouds are an essential part of literacy instruction in preschool classrooms.

Procedures of the Study

First, the participant of my study was chosen from a preschool classroom. Once the participant was chosen I administered an Elementary Reading Attitude Survey in order to understand the participant's attitude toward both academic and recreational reading. The survey asked twenty questions around reading in a variety of settings and circumstances. The child then matched their attitude using pictures of Garfield to depict feelings of excitement, happy, mildly upset and very upset.

I met with Elsa twice a week over the course of six weeks in the privacy of her own home in order to complete this study. For weeks one to three, Elsa and I worked with *Mr. Putter and Tabby Walk the Dog* by Cynthia Rylant. During weeks four to six we used *Mr. Putter and Tabby Take the Train* by Cynthia Rylant. Each book consists of three chapters. On the first meeting of each week I performed a read aloud on one chapter from the text on the first meeting day of each week, which was followed by an oral retelling of the chapter by the participant. The second meeting each week consisted of a repeated reading of the same chapter followed by a retelling of the chapter by Elsa. Each post-chapter discussion was scored using a comprehension rubric (see appendix A). The results from the first reading and second reading of each chapter were compared and contrasted to each other to investigate the impact the repeated reading of each chapter had on the student's comprehension of the text content.

Data Collection and Analysis

Several data collection techniques were used in my study. Qualitative data was collected through observations using anecdotal notes regarding facial expressions, behavior and spoken language during each meeting with the participant. Quantitative data was collected during each post-chapter retelling and discussion of the text using a reading comprehension rubric (see appendix A). The data from each rubric was then compared and contrasted to determine the extent to which Elsa comprehended the content and vocabulary in the chapters from the first reading to the second reading.

Anecdotal Notes

Anecdotal notes recorded in a notebook during each post-reading discussion with Elsa. The notes contained written accounts of Elsa's post-reading discussion responses. Anecdotal notes were also used to record Elsa's behaviors and facial expressions throughout the lesson. The anecdotal notes were analyzed using the comprehension rubric.

Comprehension Rubrics

The comprehension rubric used in my study rates Elsa's knowledge of vocabulary, predictions, story elements and story connections on a scale of 0 to 5. A score of zero indicates that Elsa did not give a response for the topic addressed on the rubric in which she received a zero. A score of one indicates that Elsa provided a response, but it was an incorrect or off-topic response. A score of two on the rubric indicates that Elsa demonstrated some understanding of the topic in which he/she received a two. However, she includes inaccurate information in their discussion of the topic. A score of three on the rubric indicates that the participant demonstrates a general understanding of the topic on the rubric, but struggles to use details from the story. A score of four on the rubric indicates that Elsa displays an understanding of the topic, as well as

includes some details from the text to support their thinking. Finally, a score of five indicates that Elsa has mastered the skills addressed on the rubric. A score of five demonstrates that the Elsa is able to accurately express her thinking around the topic and is able to provide key details to support her responses.

Data Analysis

First, I preformed a read aloud on each chapter from the books. Mr. Putter and Tabby Walk the Dog and Mr. Putter and Tabby Take the Train both written by Cynthia Rylant. I then led Elsa through a post-reading conversation about the chapter, in which I recorded her responses and made notes about her behaviors. I then used the comprehension rubric to score Elsa's post-reading discussion in regards to her predictions, description of story elements, text connections and use of text vocabulary. I then preformed a second read aloud of each chapter and engaged Elsa in a second post-reading conversation. Again, I recorded her responses and made notes about her behaviors. I then scored her responses using the same comprehension rubric. Finally, I compared Elsa's comprehension rubric scores and responses from the first post-reading discussions to the second post-reading discussions in order to analyze how her understanding of the text was impacted after the repeated readings of the text. The data indicated that Elsa was able to make more reasonable predictions, recount the story elements with more details, make deeper text connections and more accurately use text specific vocabulary after hearing the text a second time.

Criteria for Trustworthiness

As a teacher-researcher I conducted my case study using unbiased and ethical procedures. My relationship with Elsa was strictly professional, which enabled the data collection in my study to remain unbiased. In order to ensure that qualitative data collected during my study was valid, I met the participant twice a week over the course of six weeks. The duration of each meeting was one hour. Each week during the first meeting, I performed a read aloud followed a post-reading discussion. During the second meeting of each week, I conducted a repeated reading of the same text followed by a post-reading discussion. Each post-reading discussion was scored using the same rubric, which ensured criteria for scoring the discussion was the same during each meeting. All post-reading discussions were also recorded to ensure that none of the information provided by Elsa was missed the first time around. The setting for each meeting also remained the same.

Limitations

The initial limitations to my study include student participation and the study duration. I do not have a classroom or access to large population of students. Therefore, my study was conducted using only one participant. Gathering information was challenging, and the results would be more reliable with a greater number of participants. The duration of my study was only six weeks long. A longer study would allow for more data to be collected and analyzed. As a result, my study will not display any long-term effects of using complex texts as read alouds with preschool students. My study only uses one type text of as a resource. The use of multiple types

of texts would allow for more significant data regarding using chapter books as read alouds with preschool students. These limitations should be taken into consideration while reading study.

Chapter Four: Findings

In this chapter I present the findings from the research I conducted with Elsa, a preschool student, through facilitating twelve read alouds using the books *Mr. Putter and Tabby Walk the Dog* (1994) and *Mr. Putter and Tabby Take the Train* (1998), both by Cynthia Rylant. The findings of my study demonstrate that Elsa has a positive attitude towards reading and illustrate how Elsa's ability to remember and retell details from the text increases between the first retelling and the second retelling of the book chapters.

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

Elsa and I completed an Elementary Reading Attitude Survey on our very first day meeting, in order to gain insight regarding her attitude towards reading in variety of settings and circumstances. The reading survey contained twenty questions related to reading and the child rates their attitude by choosing one of four images of Garfield. In the images Garfield is very happy, a little bit happy, mildly upset and very upset. Overall, the reading attitude survey revealed that Elsa has a very positive attitude toward reading both academically and recreationally. However, Elsa appears to enjoy reading recreationally more than for academic purposes, which demonstrated in her selecting all very happy Garfield's images for questions relating to recreational reading. She chose mostly very happy and slightly happy Garfield images for questions relating to academic reading. However, she indicated that having to read instead of playing made her very upset. Elsa also indicated that she does not like to read during her free time at school by choosing a very upset Garfield. In conclusion, Elsa loves to read in most

circumstances, but would prefer to play if that is also a choice. The reading attitude survey results were significant because they indicated that Elsa has a positive attitude towards reading, which suggests she will demonstrate a have higher level of engagement during each read aloud.

Mr. Putter and Tabby Walk the Dog

Elsa and I worked with *Mr. Putter and Tabby Walk the Dog* written by Cynthia Rylant (1994), for weeks one through three of my six-week case study. We met twice a week at the home of Elsa. I performed two read alouds for each of the three chapters entitled, “The Lollypup,” “The Nightmare” and “The Dream Dog,” from the text. A post-reading retelling led by Elsa followed each read aloud. Elsa’s post-reading discussions focused on story elements, predictions, vocabulary and making connections to the text.

Chapter 1: The Lollypup

Predictions

On our first meeting of week one, I introduced Elsa to text, *Mr. Putter and Tabby Walk the Dog*. We looked at the front cover, the title page, the table of contents and the first page of chapter one, “The Lollypup.” I then asked Elsa to make a prediction about the text. Elsa replied, “I think someone will give the dog a lollypop.” Elsa’s response is somewhat reasonable because she relates the word “lollypup” to a lollypop. Each of these words is visually similar and sound similar. However, the pictures in the text do not support her prediction.

On our second meeting of week one I read the text a second time aloud to Elsa. I then asked her to make a prediction about what she thought was going to happen next in the story.

Elsa responded, “Mr. Putter will take the Lollypup for a walk.” Elsa’s prediction is reasonable because the text content and pictures support her prediction.

Story Elements

I conducted the first read aloud using “The Lollypup” with to Elsa at our first meeting. While I performed the read aloud, Elsa appeared to be focused with no outside distractions. She intensely examined the pictures and text on each page as I read. Once I completed the read aloud Elsa began her retelling of the text.

Elsa: Mr. Putter told the woman he would walk her dog because she can’t walk.

She gave the man spinach and was worried something will happen to the dog.

Stephanie: What does the woman think will happen to dog?

Elsa: He might get hit by car or run away or something.

Stephanie: Where were Mr. Putter and Mrs. Teaberry in this part of the story?

Elsa: They were next door to each other and then they went to the doctors.

After the first reading of the text, Elsa was only able to briefly describe the story elements in the text. Elsa only recalled the name of Mr. Putter, but she did recognize that there was also a woman (Mrs. Teaberry) and a dog (Zeke) in the text. Elsa did not include Tabby the cat in her retelling of the text, despite her name being in the title of the text. Elsa was able to identify character feelings because she recognized that Mrs. Teaberry was worried about Zeke going for walks with Mr. Putter. However, when asked to elaborate about Mrs. Teaberry’s worries she supported her claim with information that was not included in the text. Elsa retold the story using very little textual details. Elsa also included extraneous information that was not supported by the text in her retelling.

On our second meeting during week one, I read chapter one, “The Lollypup,” a second time. Once again Elsa was focused on the pages of the text as I read. Once I finished reading chapter one Elsa began her retelling of the text.

Elsa: The old man was Mr. Putter and his neighbor was the old lady. Her name is Mrs. Teaberry. Mrs. Teaberry had a dog-named Lollypup and the man had a cat. Mr. Putter and the woman lived side by side and gave each other dinner and lunch. She gave him eggplants and he gave her kiwi for lunch. They liked living next door. The woman hurt her foot and can't walk the dog. She goes to a doctor and then Mr. Putter was nice and said he would walk Lollypup.

Stephanie: Is there anything else you remember about the characters or the story?

Elsa: I think it was sunny outside. Mr. Putter was happy and sad. The woman was worried her dog would be bad when he walked with Mr. Putter.

Stephanie: Why was Mr. Putter happy and sad?

Elsa: I think he was happy to walk the dog and sad because the woman was worried.

After the second reading of the text, Elsa was able to give a considerable amount of information regarding the story elements throughout her retelling of the text. Elsa was able to recall all characters in the text. However, she still did not refer to the cat by name. Elsa also recognized a characteristic of Mr. Putter when she explained that he was nice because he agreed

to walk the dog. Elsa demonstrated a better understanding of the characters feeling after the second reading. She recognized that Mrs. Teaberry was worried that her dog would behave badly and that Mr. Putter was happy he could help Mrs. Teaberry. Elsa further recognized that Mr. Putter was sad because his friend was worried about him walking her dog. Furthermore, Elsa was able to discuss events of the text in greater detail the second time; therefore, showing a deeper understanding of the text.

Vocabulary

After each read aloud Elsa was asked about vocabulary terms that she encountered during the read aloud. The text described Mr. Putter as having a soft heart. During her first retelling of the text, Elsa explained, “Maybe it means his heart was squishy or something.” However, during her second retelling Elsa was able to elaborate more on the meaning of soft heart. Elsa described, “I think soft heart means he has a nice heart maybe.” The differences between Elsa’s responses between the first and second reading demonstrate that hearing the phrase a second time helped to develop her comprehension of the phrase further. In the text, Zeke is described as a dream dog. During Elsa’s first retelling I asked her what she thought dream dog meant. She responded, “That Mr. Putter had a dream about the dog.” During our second meeting when asked about what she thought dream dog meant she explains, “That he is perfect.” Elsa’s definition of the phrase dream dog is completely different than after only hearing the term the first time. Her second response shows a deeper understanding of the text, which enables her to expand and elaborate on her thinking around the vocabulary in the text.

Connections

During both Elsa’s first retelling of the text and her second retelling of the text she was asked to make connections to the text using both her own life and other stories. After hearing the

story one time Elsa was able to make a connection to Mrs. Teaberry hurting her foot, but could not make a connection between books. Below is an excerpt of our discussion.

Stephanie: How is your life similar or like the characters' lives in the story?

Elsa: One time I hurt my toe and it was like the woman hurting her foot.

Stephanie: Do you know any books or stories that are similar to this book?

Elsa: I don't know any.

Stephanie: Do you know any books about dogs or next-door neighbors?

Elsa: Not really.

At the second meeting during week one, Elsa was asked once again to make connections to the text using both her own life and other stories.

Stephanie: How is your life similar or like the characters' lives in the story?

Elsa: Sometimes I walk my grandma's dog Rusty. He is bad and pulls me and he tangles his leash, and the woman thinks her dog will do that.

Stephanie: Do you know any books or stories similar to this book?

Elsa: Muddypaws is a bad puppy. He runs away and makes muddy paw prints everywhere. He is kinda like the Lollypup.

Elsa's connections to text show an understanding of the text content and demonstrate that she was able to make meaning with the text. Elsa's initially made a simple connection to the text (i.e. text to self) by using an example of when both she and Mrs. Teaberry were hurt. She did not elaborate with details. She was also unable to make a connection to another text or story.

However, after hearing the story a second time Elsa was able make a connection to walking a dog. She elaborates on details and explains how her walking Rusty is similar to what Mrs. Teaberry worries Zeke will do on his walk with Mr. Putter.

Furthermore, Elsa is able to make a connection between this text and the book *Muddypaws* (i.e. text to text). Although, neither text explains that the dogs' behavior is undesirable, Elsa comprehends that Muddypaws is not behaving correctly, and Mrs. Teaberry worries that Zeke will behave poorly also. After hearing the text a second time, Elsa is able to make stronger connections between her and the text and the text to other texts, demonstrating that Elsa understands the text more completely after a repeated reading. As a result, Elsa is able to think more critically about the text.

Chapter 2: The Nightmare

Predictions

During the second week of this study Elsa and I worked with chapter two, "The Nightmare," from *Mr. Putter and Tabby Walk the Dog*, by Cynthia Rylant (1994). On our first meeting of the week, we reviewed what happened in chapter one. Then we looked at the title for this chapter and the first page of the chapter. Then I asked Elsa to make a prediction about the text. Elsa replied, "I think Mr. Putter is going to have a bad dream about the dog." Elsa's prediction is reasonable because in chapter one Mrs. Teaberry worries that Zeke may behave poorly for Mr. Putter when he walks him. A nightmare is also a bad dream. Therefore, she can use textual evidence to support her prediction.

On our second meeting of week two, I read chapter two aloud to Elsa a second time. After I completed the second read aloud I asked Elsa what she believed would happen in the next chapter. I asked, "What do you think will happen next in this story?" She replied, "I think Mr. Putter might tell the old lady that he can't walk her dog because he is a bad dog." Elsa is using her own experience and knowledge along with the text to make this prediction, which makes it a

strong prediction. A good prediction uses information from a text and an individual's own personal experiences to foresee what is coming next in the text.

Story Elements

On our first meeting during the second week, I read chapter two, "The Nightmare" aloud to Elsa for the first time. During the read aloud Elsa was fixated on the text and pictures in the book. She was focused and listening intently as I read aloud and did not appear to be distracted. Once I completed the reading, Elsa began her first retelling of the text.

Elsa: Mr. Putter took Lollypup for walk. The dog pulled and chased. Big dogs chased Zeke too. Mr. Putter went home and drank milk. Oh and his cat went on the walk too!

Stephanie: Is there anything else you can tell me about this chapter?

Elsa: The big dogs chased Mr. Putter, the cat and Zeke.

After the first reading of chapter two, "The Nightmare," Elsa was able to provide an overview of the chapter events, setting and characters with very little supporting details from the text. She was able to include all of the main characters in her description, which is appropriate because this now her third time seeing them in the text. On the other hand, her description is lacking character details including their actions and feelings. She also does not provide a thorough depiction of all events that happened in this chapter of the text. Therefore, Elsa's retelling demonstrates that she understands the gist of the text, but requires more time working with the text to understand key details and enable a higher level of comprehension.

During our second meeting for week two, I read "The Nightmare" a second time aloud to Elsa. Elsa was focused on the pages of the text as I read. Once I finished reading chapter one Elsa began her retelling of the text.

Elsa: Mr. Putter, the cat and Zeke went for a walk. Zeke pulled them through houses, creeks and water. They went home drank milk, ate pudding and napped. Zeke wrapped around trees and Mr. Putter got wrapped into the tree. They went home drank milk and snack and took a nap. Zeke chased dogs and then the dogs chased Mr. Putter, the cat and Zeke. Then they went home and took a nap.

Stephanie: Is there anything else you can to add from this chapter?

Elsa: Well Mr. Putter was very tired of Zeke. Zeke was bad. They called Zeke a nightmare and Mr. Putter thought he was annoying.

After the second read aloud of “The Nightmare” Elsa was able to give a detailed description of the characters, events and key story elements within this chapter. She explains each major event in the story in chronological order and includes all characters present. Elsa is also able to make inferences regarding the text. She notices that Mr. Putter and Tabby are tired after walking Zeke. In addition, she also recognizes that Mr. Putter and Tabby do not like walking Zeke because of his behavior on walks and exclaims that Mr. Putter is annoyed with Zeke, which is not explicitly explained in the text. Elsa’s retelling demonstrates that she was able to comprehend the text at a higher level than she was able to after the first reading. It also shows that Elsa fully grasped all key story elements, which enabled her to analyze and critically think about the chapter.

Vocabulary

In “The Nightmare” the only one vocabulary word that Elsa encountered, in which I believed she might not have had background knowledge to know what they meant, was creek. After the first reading of the chapter I asked Elsa to describe what they word creek meant. She

explained, “I think it’s like a crack or something.” Although this is not the correct definition of the word creek, it does make sense in the text context. This reveals that she was using text details guide her thinking about the word. After the second reading, I asked Elsa to explain what the word creek meant again. Elsa asked, “Is it the water in the picture?” I replied, “Yes, it is the water in the picture. A creek is small stream of water similar to river, but a lot smaller.” Elsa’s response demonstrated that she was thinking about the word and where it was in the text. This enabled her to use contextual clues to determine the meaning of the word. After both readings, Elsa used the text to make meaning of the word creek demonstrating she understands that both the text and pictures work together to bring meaning to the story.

Connections

Elsa was asked to make connections between her own life and those of the characters in the “The Nightmare” after both the first read aloud and the second read aloud of the chapter. After hearing the story one time, Elsa explained, “Well Rusty is really bad when I try to walk him just like Zeke.” After hearing the story a second time Elsa was asked to make a connection between her life and the characters’ lives again. Elsa explained, “Remember when I told you about my grandma’s dog? His name is Rusty and he is really really bad when I walk him. He pulls me and one time I fell and cut my knee on the road. He is not as bad as Zeke because he doesn’t chase other dogs.” After each read aloud of the text, Elsa related her life to Mr. Putter walking Zeke and her walking Rusty. However, the second time she used more details in her connection. I attribute this to the fact that she is more familiar with the story elements after reading the text a second time, which enables her to remember more details to relate to her life.

Elsa was also asked to make connections between “The Nightmare” and other stories that she is familiar with. After Elsa heard the chapter one time she was able to make several

connections between “The Nightmare” and other texts and stories. Below is an excerpt of our discussion.

Stephanie: Do you know any other books or stories that are like this book?

Elsa: *Clifford, Muddypaws* and *Dog with a Blog*.

Stephanie: How are those stories like *Mr. Putter and Tabby Walk the Dog*?

Elsa: *Dog with a Blog* is on TV, its not a story. They all have dogs in them.

Although Elsa made several connections between texts and stories, her connections were not strong. She simply stated that each of the books and TV show all had a dog. On the other hand, once Elsa heard the chapter a second time she made a very strong connection the “The Nightmare” to *101 Dalmatians*. Elsa explained, “Just like 101 Dalmatians, the dog pulls the guy through the park and doesn’t listen. The guy fell right into the lake off his bike. Zeke pulls Mr. Putter through the creek and doesn’t listen either.” This connection demonstrates a higher understanding of the text because Elsa uses text details to elaborate on her connection and further explain how the two stories are related. Again, I attribute Elsa’s more in depth connection between texts to the fact that she heard the text twice and is more familiar with the story elements and text details. As a result, Elsa is able to recall more information from the text to use while making her connections.

Chapter 3: The Dream Dog

Predictions

During the third week of this study I met with Elsa twice and we worked with chapter three, “The Dream Dog.” On our first meeting of the week we reviewed what happened in chapters one and two. Then we looked at the title for this chapter and the first page of the chapter. I then asked Elsa to make a prediction about what she thought this chapter would be

about. Elsa exclaimed, “Maybe Mr. Putter will train Zeke to walk good.” Elsa’s prediction draws on the text content and her own experiences to anticipate what will happen next in the story. Although her prediction is not correct, it is supported with text evidence and is a legitimate solution to the problem presented in the story.

Story Elements

Throughout the first reading of “The Dream Dog” Elsa was focused on the pages of the book for most of the read aloud. However, she was eating cookies and milk and that may have distracted her slightly during the read aloud. After I completed the read aloud, Elsa engaged in her first retelling of the text.

Elsa: They go home and the cat’s name is Tabby. Zeke didn’t wrap, chase or pull because he wanted a surprise from Mr. Putter.

Stephanie: Do you remember what surprises Mr. Putter gave Zeke?

Elsa: They were all different.

Stephanie: Is there anything else you can tell me about this part of the story.

Elsa: They had a party.

Elsa provided very limited information in her first retelling of “The Dream Dog.” She listed the important characters and recognized that the cat’s name is Tabby for the first time in her retellings of the text. She did understand that Zeke behaved on his walk because he wanted a surprise, but Elsa did not use text details to support her answers. Elsa did not recall a lot of the details from the text during the first read aloud. As a result, she was unable to provide a complete retelling of the text.

I conducted a second read aloud of “The Dream Dog” on our second meeting during week three. She was focused on the pages of the text as I read to her. After I finished the read aloud, Elsa engaged in a post-reading discussion of the text.

Elsa: At the end of the story Mr. Putter and Tabby had party because Zeke was a dream dog.

Stephanie: What else happened in this chapter?

Elsa: Mr. Putter made a deal with Zeke that he would get a surprise if he walked good. Zeke walked good because he wanted a surprise. He took Zeke to the zoo, fair and swimming. Then Zeke went home to the woman and Mr. Putter didn't bring her kiwis so she wouldn't trip.

After the second read aloud of “The Dream” Elsa was able to give a more detailed explanation of the characters, events and key story elements within this chapter. She explains each major event in the story using chronological order and includes all characters present. Elsa is also able to make inferences regarding the text. At the end of the chapter Mr. Putter brings Mrs. Teaberry pecans instead of kiwis. Elsa inferred that the reason he didn't bring kiwis anymore was because she tripped on a kiwi in the first chapter of the book, which resulted in Mrs. Teaberry hurting her foot. Elsa's retelling demonstrates that she was able to comprehend the text at a higher level than she was able to after the first reading. It also shows that Elsa fully grasped all key story elements and was able to analyze and critically think about the chapter.

Vocabulary

In the final chapter of the only word I anticipated that Elsa might have trouble understanding was the word deal. After the first read aloud of “The Dream Dog,” I asked Elsa to share her thinking about the word deal. Elsa explained, “Deal is when someone passes out the

cards in the game.” Although this is a correct definition of the word, it does not make sense in the context of the story. Her definition demonstrates her use of personal experience to define the word, but does not use any context clues. However, after the second read aloud Elsa was able to define the term in way that made sense in the story context. Elsa described, “Deal is like you say you will be good so you can get a surprise or present.” Her definition shows a new understanding of the word and demonstrates that she understands the use of the word in the story.

Connections

Elsa was asked to make connections between her and the characters in the text about both read alouds during week three. After the first reading, Elsa made the connection that she likes to get presents just like Zeke. Her connection is relevant to the text and shows an understanding of the text content. After the second read aloud, Elsa made an even stronger and more detailed connection to the text. Elsa explained, “At the store I am good so that I can get a happy meal on the way home and Zeke is good to get things that he likes too.” Both of Elsa’s connections to this chapter demonstrate that she able to fully comprehend this chapter.

Elsa was also asked to make connections between “The Dream Dog” and other stories and text that she is familiar with. After the first reading Elsa exclaimed that she could not think of any stories that were similar to the “The Dream Dog.” However, after the second read aloud, Elsa made connections between “The Dream Dog” and *Pinkalicious*. Elsa explained, “In this book Zeke likes to be bad but he agrees to be good so he can have treats. Pinkalicious loves the color pink and likes everything to be pink. Her parents have a baby and he’s a boy and things have to be blue so she compromises and says blue isn’t that bad.” Her connections between the texts demonstrate her understanding of the word “deal” used in “The Dream Dog.” Elsa uses text details from both books to develop a strong connection between both texts.

Mr. Putter and Tabby Take the Train

Elsa and I worked with *Mr. Putter and Tabby Take the Train* written by Cynthia Rylant (1998) for weeks four through six of this six-week study. I performed two read alouds for each of the three chapters, “An Idea,” “Another Idea” and “Taking the Train,” from the text. A post-reading retelling led by Elsa followed each read aloud. Elsa’s post-reading discussions focused on story elements, predictions, vocabulary and making connections to the text.

Chapter 1: An Idea

Predictions

Both meetings during week four were spent working with chapter one, “An Idea.” On the first meeting we looked at the front cover, the title page, the table of contents and the first page of chapter one. I then asked Elsa what she thought the chapter going to be able. Elsa explained, “I think someone might have an idea to go somewhere on vacation.” Her prediction demonstrated her use of background knowledge of trains to anticipate the topic of the text. On the second meeting I read “An Idea” to Elsa for the second time. I then asked her to predict what she thought might happen next in story. Elsa explained, “Mr. Putter and Mrs. Teaberry are going to take a train.” Elsa’s prediction is very reasonable because throughout the chapter Mr. Putter and Mrs. Teaberry discuss taking a train ride. Both of Elsa’s predictions took into account her background knowledge and the text content.

Story Elements

During the first read aloud of “An Idea” Elsa was focused on the pages of the book. Once I completed the read aloud she began to retell the story. Elsa stated, “Mr. Putter, Tabby, Mrs. Teaberry and Lollypup were all in the book again. They had an idea to go on a train and they

wondered if they could bring pets.” After I performed the first read aloud of the text, Elsa was able to provide an accurate, but brief overview of the text. She was able to list all characters in the text and all of the major events in the text. However, Elsa’s retelling of the text lacked details possibly indicating that she does not remember all of the details from the text. Therefore, Elsa would benefit from more experience with this text to gather more details.

While I read “An Idea” for the second time, Elsa was focused on the text and pictures in the book. After the read aloud was completed, she engaged in her retelling of the text. Elsa described the following regarding the aforementioned chapter:

“Mrs. Teaberry called because she wanted to go on a train. Mr. Putter was afraid to hear Mrs. Teaberry’s idea because she had weird ideas. He listened to her idea and was excited because he loved trains. He didn’t go on one for like a lot of weeks. Then they wondered if cats and dogs can go trains.”

Elsa was able to provide a more complete retelling of the text after hearing “An Idea” for a second time. She also made inferences as to how Mr. Putter was feeling throughout the text. She recognized that Mr. Putter did not like Mrs. Teaberry’s ideas, so he was afraid. Elsa also related that Mr. Putter was excited to go on the train ride because he loved trains. Overall, Elsa’s second retelling demonstrated that she has a deeper understanding of the text and pictures from the chapter. In return, Elsa was able to critically think about the text, analyze it and verbally express her understanding.

Vocabulary

In “An Idea” two key vocabulary words were idea and odd. After the first read aloud I asked Elsa what the word idea meant. She explained, “When you think about something you might do.” I felt this was an impressive definition for a preschool student. Elsa demonstrated that

she could use text clues to determine the definition of a word. I did not ask her this word after the second read aloud. I also asked Elsa to explain the meaning of odd and she admitted that she did not know. However, after the second reading Elsa described, “Odd means weird.” Her newly found definition for the word “odd” reveals that after Elsa became more familiar with the text, she was able to use text clues to determine the meaning of the word.

Connections

After each read aloud, Elsa was asked to make a connection between herself and the characters in the text, “An Idea.” During her first retelling Elsa explained, “I don’t think pets can go on trains because they will pee or poop. My aunt’s puppy poops everywhere and people would get mad.” At the end of the chapter, Mr. Putter and Mrs. Teaberry were wondering if pets could go on trains. Elsa used her personal experiences to explain why she thought that pets could not go on trains. After the second reading, Elsa made a connection to one of the pictures in the text, which depicted Mr. Putter and Mrs. Teaberry mashing blueberries with their feet. Elsa stated, “Mr. Putter and Mrs. Teaberry should not mash blueberries with pants on. Blueberries stain really bad. I ruined my princess dress with blueberries. My mom couldn’t even get the stain out!” Each of Elsa’s connections is relevant and demonstrates she understands key details in the text.

Chapter 2: Another Idea

Predictions

During week five of this study, Elsa and I worked with chapter two, “Another Idea.” On our first meeting of the week we reviewed what had happened in chapter one and reviewed the title of chapter two. I then asked Elsa what she thought this chapter would be about. She explained, “I think they are going to take the train.” Her prediction does correlate to the chapter

title, and does make sense with the story content because Mr. Putter and Mrs. Teaberry left off on chapter one explaining that they would take the train tomorrow. On the second meeting, I read “Another Idea” a second time and asked Elsa to predict what she believed would happen next. She exclaimed, “I think they might find another activity that pets are allowed to do.” Her prediction serves a legitimate solution to the problem in the story.

Story Elements

During the first read aloud of “Another Idea” Elsa was focused on the pages of the book. Once I completed the read aloud she began to retell the story. Elsa explained, “Mr. Putter and Mrs. Teaberry learn that animals can ride on trains. Mr. Putter is upset and Mrs. Teaberry tells him all the things they were gonna do on the train and the backpack was full of stuff.” After the first reading of the text, Elsa was able to describe some of the key story elements, but her description requires elaborate and more details to be complete. Elsa also explains that Mr. Putter is upset, but the text describes him as smiling. Therefore, I believe she is a little confused with the text content in this chapter.

While I read “Another Idea” for the second time, Elsa was focused on the text and pictures in the book. After the read aloud was completed, she engaged in her retelling of the text. Elsa explained the following scenario,

They are at the train station to get their tickets. Mr. Putter and Mrs. Teaberry find out pets can't go on the train. They are sad. Zeke had backpack to hold everything. There were lots of things, like binoculars and banana crunchies. Mr. Putter was sad because he wanted to go on the train ride with his pet. He had idea at the end.

Elsa's second retelling was a thorough description of the chapter. She included all important details and story elements. Elsa was also able to think beyond the text and describe the character's feelings. After being exposed to the text a second time, Elsa demonstrated a higher level of comprehension. As a result, she was able to think critically and analytically about the text and verbally express her understanding.

Vocabulary

Elsa struggled with the definition of positive after the first reading of the text. She explained, "I don't know what positive means. It might mean numbers." Her initial definition demonstrates that even though she believe she does not know the word, she has some experience with the word because positive is often a term associated with numbers. However, after the second reading Elsa described, "I think positive is like Mrs. Teaberry knows something a lot." Elsa was able to use text clue to figure out the meaning of the word positive in the text once she was able to revisit the text a second time.

Connections

After the first read aloud with "Another Idea" Elsa connected to Zeke's backpack for traveling. She explained, "I have a *Frozen* suitcase that I bring when I go on vacations. It's kinda like Zeke's backpack because they both hold a lot of things." After the second read aloud of the text, Elsa connected to Mrs. Teaberry. Elsa described, "One time my brought my and my cousin to the bounce house and it was closed like Mrs. Teaberry thought pets could go on trains and they couldn't." Each of Elsa's connections demonstrates her ability to make meaning with the text using her own experiences.

Chapter 3: Taking the Train

Predictions

During the final week of the study, Elsa and I worked with chapter three, “Taking the Train.” On our first meeting of the week we reviewed what had already happened in the text and looked at the first page and chapter title of the final chapter. Elsa predicted that that this chapter would be about Mr. Putter and Mrs. Teaberry taking the train without their pets. Her prediction is reasonable because the last chapter left off with the pet not being allowed on the train and Mr. Putter having an idea.

Story Elements

While I read, “Taking the Train” aloud for the first time, Elsa was focused on the text and pictures in the book. After the read aloud was completed, she engaged in her retelling of the text. Elsa described, “They got on the train and they looked different. They had animals in their bags! Only Mr. Putter and Mrs. Teaberry knew the animals were there.” Her retelling was very brief and to the point. I could not determine if Elsa understood that Mr. Putter and Teaberry looked different because they were disguising their animals in their bags. Elsa’s retelling demonstrated that she did not fully grasp all concepts and ideas in this portion of the text.

During the second read aloud of “Taking the Train” Elsa was focused on the pages of the book. Once I completed the read aloud she began to retell the story. Elsa explained,

They went home to get disguises. They got tickets and got on the train. They were wearing different clothes because they wanted to bring their pets. Mr. Putter had Zeke in his backpack and Mrs. Teaberry had the cat in the basket. The dog snored on the train and the cat banged the window. Only Mrs. Teaberry and Mr. Putter knew they were animals. It was the best train ride of their lives.

Overall, Elsa's second retelling demonstrated that she has a deeper understanding of the text and pictures from the chapter. In return, Elsa was able to critically think about the text, analyze it and effectively verbally explain her understanding.

Vocabulary

In this chapter Elsa and I discussed the meaning of the phrase "Mr. Putter was so happy he would burst," (Rylant, 2008, p. 32). After the first reading, Elsa explained, "You get so excited that you feel like you want to run." Based on Elsa's interpretation of the phrase, I believe she had an understanding of the phrase and explained it the best that she could. After the second reading, Elsa explained the meaning of the phrase very similarly. Elsa, Stated, "Mr. Putter was so happy he could just run around." Both of her descriptions demonstrated an understanding of the phrase.

Connections

After the first reading, Elsa made connected to the fact that Mr. Putter and Mrs. Teaberry rode a train. She explained, "When I was in Florida I rode the Hogwarts Express, but that's not a real train. Pets were not allowed on that train either. I thought riding the train was fun just like Mr. Putter." Elsa used examples from the text and her own life to help develop a connection and make meaning with the text. After the second read aloud, Elsa explained, "I went on an airplane before. It is sorta like a train ride because it takes you on vacation. We had to bring snacks and games too." Again, Elsa uses her background knowledge and personal experiences to make meaning with the text.

Summary

Elsa's participation in this six-week study involving reading alouds using complex texts illustrated the importance of providing students with opportunities to work with complex texts more than once in order to enhance text comprehension. Each read aloud and post-reading retelling of the text provided literacy experiences that enabled the participant to gain experience working with complex text. Elsa demonstrated a deeper and more thorough understanding of the each text second time she worked with the text. She was able to think more critically about details within the text. Elsa was also able to analyze the text after a second reading, which enabled her to think beyond the text and about the text. Overall, the findings of this study demonstrated that Elsa's ability to remember, retell and relate to details from the text increases between the first retelling and the second retelling of the book chapters.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of my research was to determine how the use of complex texts (i.e. chapter books) impacted a preschool student's text comprehension. Furthermore, my research investigated how repeated readings influenced a preschool student's understanding of text content. I discuss below the findings from my research and the significance of the findings in promoting literacy development. My conclusion section will discuss how Elsa's comprehension of text content increased after hearing the text a second time. The first section describing the implications of my research will discuss how Elsa's positive reading attitude supported her literacy learning through this research. The second section describing implications will examine how providing students with multiple opportunities to work with complex texts leads to positive outcomes in regards to text comprehension. My recommendations section will explore additional questions that resulted from conducting my research and suggestions for further research. This chapter concludes with my final thoughts on how this research is significant to me as an educator.

Conclusions

Using Complex Texts is Attainable and Leads to Critical and Analytical Thinking

Incorporating complex texts into the six read aloud lessons that I conducted with Elsa resulted in significant literacy learning for her. The results indicated that using chapter books, as read alouds, with a preschool student is attainable and leads to critical and analytical thinking around the text. Elsa demonstrated her ability to retain text content that was not closely supported by pictures during each of her post-reading discussions. Elsa was able to make reasonable predictions, retell story elements including events, characters and settings, explain vocabulary and make connections to each chapter of *Mr. Putter and Tabby Walk the Dog* and

Mr. Putter and Tabby Take the Train. Thus, Elsa's discussions demonstrated her ability to comprehend and retain information from complex texts used as read alouds.

Repeated Readings Expanded Elsa's Text Comprehension

Furthermore, the results of this research demonstrated that providing students with opportunities to revisit complex texts leads to increased text comprehension. After the first retelling of each chapter, Elsa typically provided a brief, but accurate, overview of the story. However, her discussions usually did not include very many text details and did not demonstrate higher-level thinking. However, once Elsa was able to revisit the text a second time, her post-reading discussions became more in depth. She retold the story using key details from the text. Elsa also demonstrated a higher comprehension level of key text vocabulary and phrases after hearing the story a second time. Moreover, Elsa made in depth connections to the texts after revisiting the texts for a second time; thus indicating that students are able to comprehend complex text more in depth when they are able to work with the text more than once.

Implications for Elsa

Using Complex Texts as Repeated Read Alouds Expanded Elsa's Comprehension of the Text and Led to Deeper Thinking

Throughout this study, Elsa was enthusiastic about reading during each lesson. Reading aloud to Elsa created the opportunity for her to focus on the story and further develop her listening comprehension skills. Elsa is a preschool student that has a very positive attitude towards reading and loves to hear new stories. As a result, Elsa was fully engaged throughout each lesson. Therefore, Elsa was able to intently listen to the text free of distractions. This was key to her success in discussion the text content because the text in stories were not closely supported by pictures, as the text typically is in most books that are used at the preschool level.

Elsa was able to successfully make predictions about the text, retell the story, explain vocabulary and phrases, as well as make connections to the text successfully.

Implications for My Teaching

Conducting This Study Has Provided Me With Insight into the Benefits of Revisiting Texts

Conducting this study assisted me in developing an understanding of how providing students with opportunities to revisit complex texts can significantly impact literacy learning for students. The findings of my study suggest that the use of complex texts as repeated read alouds at the preschool level enables the students to develop a deeper understanding of text content. As a result, students are able to easily engage in post-reading discussions and leads to deeper thinking about the text. Providing time to revisit complex texts helps to guide students to success, which should be goal of all teachers and educators. In the future, I foresee the insights gained through conducting my study will assist me in providing literacy instruction that maximizes on the literacy learning potential of all students within my classroom.

Recommendations

Additional Questions for How Repeated Readings of Complex Texts Impact Student Learning

This study demonstrated that using repeated read alouds with complex texts enabled a preschool student to deepen her understanding of text content, as well as to think critically and analytically around the text. I wonder if using this method, repeated read alouds of complex texts, could be an effective method to introduce and teach content areas (i.e. science, social studies, etc.) in the classroom. Using this method to teach educational content to students could yield different results and would require further research. I also wonder if providing older students with opportunities to revisit the text on their own and reading independently would

enable students to have a deeper understanding of the text, or would changing the reading method yield different results.

Final Thoughts

The results of my study demonstrated that repeated read alouds of complex texts leads to a more concrete understanding of the text and enables deeper thinking in post-reading discussion. The Common Core Learning Standards call for an increase in text complexity at each grade level. Therefore, as an educator it is essential to assist students in decoding and making meaning with higher-level texts during the early primary years of learning to encourage and promote the development of those skills necessary for reading comprehension and critical thinking. Using read alouds and repeated readings at all grade levels is beneficial. Therefore, I will continue to use both strategies in the future in my own classroom in order to assist my future students in their literacy learning and development and to increase their chances of literacy success across subject content areas.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Comprehension Checklist

Student: _____ Teacher: _____
Date 1: _____ Date 2: _____ Date 3: _____
Circle One: Listening Comprehension Reading Comprehension

Vocabulary

Student identifies key story vocabulary.

0 1 2 3 4 5

Prediction

Student makes reasonable predictions and backs them up.

0 1 2 3 4 5

Story Elements

Student can remember important story characters.

0 1 2 3 4 5

Student can describe story characters, and connect descriptions to book pages.

0 1 2 3 4 5

Student can identify story settings, and show where they are in the book.

0 1 2 3 4 5

Student can identify feelings of main character throughout the book and refer to the book to support answer.

0 1 2 3 4 5

Text to Self / Text to Text

Student can connect own life to that of characters.

0 1 2 3 4 5

Student can connect elements between two stories.

0 1 2 3 4 5

Key: 0 = Not at all 1 = Beginning understanding 2 = Struggles
3 = Occasionally successful 4 = Often successful 5 = Mastered skill

















Comments:

Appendix B

















Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

School _____ Grade _____ Name _____

















Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

1.	How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?				
2.	How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?				
3.	How do you feel about reading for fun at home?				
4.	How do you feel about getting a book for a present?				

















Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

5.	How do you feel about spending free time reading a book?				
6.	How do you feel about starting a new book?				
7.	How do you feel about reading during summer vacation?				
8.	How do you feel about reading instead of playing?				













Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

9.	How do you feel about going to a bookstore?				
10.	How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?				
11.	How do you feel when a teacher asks you questions about what you read?				
12.	How do you feel about reading workbook pages and worksheets?				

Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

13.	How do you feel about reading in school?				
14.	How do you feel about reading your school books?				
15.	How do you feel about learning from a book?				
16.	How do you feel when it's time for reading in class?				

Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

17.	How do you feel about stories you read in reading class?				
18.	How do you feel when you read out loud in class?				
19.	How do you feel about using a dictionary?				
20.	How do you feel about taking a reading test?	