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# The effects of interactive read-alouds on early reader's comprehension

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The Effects of Interactive Read-Alouds on Early Reader's Comprehension

By

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A Graduate Field Experience

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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This Graduate Field Experience

For Moira McCormack Paul

Has been approved for

Cardinal Stritch University by

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(Advisor)

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(Date)

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of using children's literature as a means to increase reading comprehension through interactive story telling with an emphasis on text selection, vocabulary knowledge, and language instruction with interactive activities. To increase comprehension, language, and vocabulary skills, five first grade students who participate in a reading intervention program engaged in this eight week study. During the study, the five participants met with the researcher one hour a day, four times a week for eight weeks. The focus during this small group instruction time concentrated on language development through dialogic reading, vocabulary development, and comprehension through text selection. The results suggested that overall the participant's demonstrated growth in comprehension, vocabulary, and language development.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

In this chapter, the context for this action research study is discussed. The first section describes my background as an educator, and my purpose for the topic selection. In the second section, connections to the research project are presented. Finally, a description of the school and an overview of the project in which the study took place, policies and procedures as well as staffing information are discussed.

### Background

My teaching experience has taken me from 30 years of kindergarten instruction to presently teaching reading to students, who show delays and deficiencies in language, vocabulary, reading, and writing. My current reading classes include kindergarten through grade five. It is due to my background in early childhood that I recognize the importance that early language has on developing good readers. After three years as a reading support teacher instructing students in kindergarten through grade five, I began to see definite connections in what should be taught to early emergent readers. The reading support children that I service in kindergarten and grade one, struggle in the area of comprehension. I saw how much time was being spent on phonemic awareness and phonics and very little devotion to explaining what the words actually meant in context. Successful progression of the comprehension process involves construction of meaning, cognitively, imaginatively, and emotionally. Within this construct at least five types of skills are emphasized which include study strategies, understanding sentences and learning to connect them, knowing how to organize and summarize a text, and elaborating and decoding. Above all, acquiring a classroom atmosphere that is rich in words will nurture the

progression of comprehension. (Irwin, 2007) This is also supported by several studies that found vocabulary needs to be woven into content areas that will match student's needs and purposes (Greenwood & Flannigan 2007; Cartwright, 2006). The children that I teach lack in these skills. Embedding strategies before reading activities (front-loading learning), and guiding comprehension during reading, will flow into consolidation strategies for application of new learning. In view of that, to teach, guide, and assess it is imperative to weave the processes of comprehension into our daily lessons explicitly. This was not being addressed. These processes will occur if we as teachers are cognizant that fluent reading requires flexible attention to the features which make-up the comprehension process and are sensitive to the diverse needs of all students (Buehl, 2009; Cartwright, 2006). It is in these statements and research that I saw deficiencies in reading lessons. To support my teaching beliefs, I began field notes when working inclusively in the classrooms which fueled my desire to incorporate the strategies that I have researched. Therefore, one of my intervention directions is that of vocabulary and word study. The acquisition of vocabulary is an obvious focus for any program aiming to enhance children's literacy, because of the strong, well documented relationship that vocabulary has to reading proficiency in particular and to school achievement in general. My observations also made me speculate on how much discussion time was being allowed during their reading class time to develop language skills. Many of the emergent readers in my classes seem to read for decoding purposes only, therefore ,when discussions about the story content took place, their comprehension was weak. When the curriculum became more complex with the grammar being taught, the children had a difficult time overall balancing decoding skills, word comprehension, and fluency. Story conversations and discussions were then minimal. To increase language



development, I felt it was necessary to provide rich texts to stimulate dialogue about the text. I found that my first grade students began to make text to self connections as well as text to text.

Therefore, my note taking began in the areas of reading, writing, and comprehension in order to track the patterns that I felt were necessary for improving language, vocabulary, and comprehension. My field notes showed a pattern on strengths and deficiencies. I saw that the children's concentration was heavy on phonemic decoding, with very little recall on main story events and the understanding of rich adjectives and verbs that were presented in the stories being read. Consequently, the children were reading for decoding purposes only, with fluency and comprehension failing. My goal was to implement an intervention study that would combine stories of interest with rich vocabulary to enhance comprehension skills, as well as support language in the form of dialogic text discussion. After much self reflection on how to reach the delayed reader with sound teaching strategies, I found myself continually reflecting on the emergent reader and the importance of language development in the early years of reading. My years of teaching in kindergarten and first grade left me wondering how I could improve the language development of my students. I have always believed that literature is the cornerstone to language development. Watching children interact verbally with storytelling, relating to the books with tangible items that represent the story, has convinced me that interactive teaching is imperative to increase comprehension. Narrative text typically follows a single general structural pattern. Conversely, wordless books and stories that follow the same theme yet are written with different vocabulary could stimulate the student's ability to comprehend, and understand higher level vocabulary introduced within the text. Ultimately, with these points in mind, comprehension may increase. Consequently, I decided to focus my action research on the topic of developing comprehension through targeting text selections, incorporating language

experiences with in-depth word study skills, while instructing through interactive read-alouds to emergent readers.

### **Connection to Research**

Research has shown that reading comprehension is significant for long term academic success and is dependent on language abilities that emerge in the early years of development (Dickenson, Griffith, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2012). It is a researched fact that the English language has approximately five million words. For students to learn a word it takes approximately 10 exposures to a word to comprehend its meaning (Asselin, 2002). Therefore, language learning depends on vocabulary exposure in the early years. Instruction of vocabulary at the onset of formal school instruction is crucial if a balanced reading program is to be implemented and developed throughout the grades. Beginning with the emergent readers, incorporating Tier Two Level Words (known to the early readers as sparkle, or wow words) will increase the student's repertoire of vocabulary, and enhance the student's word base if used in context with rich appealing text. These words are likely to appear in other contexts and require instruction in order for students to understand. Wide reading in a variety of texts emphasizing the belief that the more you read the more words you learn, along with multiple exposures and encounters with words, will increase student's comprehension ( Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 2012). Listening to Teacher Read Alouds, discussing and teaching new word meanings which is known as *Text Talk* with primary students, are also sound strategies that strengthen comprehension (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002). According to the Common Core Standards Continuum of Literacy Learning (Pinnell & Fountas, 2011), interactive read-alouds and literature discussions directly connect to thinking within the text. With emphasis on higher level high frequency words (generally adjectives) that children are

exposed to in literature and actively involved in within the story telling, students will have the opportunity to increase their comprehension skills in both narrative and expository texts (Santoro, Chard, Howard, & Baker, 2008).

According to the Common Core Language Standard Six (2012), student expectations for the acquisition of new vocabulary within the context of hearing fiction and nonfiction books will support the student's ability to express ideas clearly when using the language of the text. In consideration of the standards that direct our teaching, it is the role of the teacher to guide the students in developing their language learning through contextual vocabulary, and the availability of discussion time to utilize language with new words in meaningful discussions and conversations. Although understanding what is being read at the child's word level is essential for comprehension, it is also imperative that the design of the reading approach be inviting and meaningful to the developing reader to expand language skills through acquisition of new vocabulary (Santoro, Chard, Harvey & Baker, 2008).

Much research has examined the impact that interactive story reading has on the effects of teaching new vocabulary to expand language comprehension (Wiseman, 2012). Through the use of storybooks it was discovered that students can effectively learn new words and increase their comprehension of the new words through informal conversation and formal discussion formats of the texts (Anthonp, 2006; Justice, Meier & Wadpole, 2005; Kotaman, 2008).

Using this information that time should be spent on careful selections of appropriate texts which contain significant, flourishing vocabulary to add to language understanding, I designed my study to examine the impact of using children's literature as a means to increase reading comprehension through interactive story telling with an emphasis on vocabulary knowledge, language instruction with interactive activities, retelling, and story writing. Bearing in mind the

standards that guide instruction, my research is supported by studies that examine text selection with language, vocabulary emphasis, and interactive concrete components within the instruction to support comprehension with the aid of storybooks. Wiseman (2010) contends that interactive read-alouds provide readers with opportunities to respond to literature, build their strengths through interactive discourse, and broaden their knowledge through expansive vocabulary. In congruence with this research, Santaro, Chard, Howard, and Baker (2008), challenges teachers to actively involve their students in strategies such as interactive reading, to increase comprehension and word study skills. In this study, the researcher used comprehensive narrative texts and informational texts to teach comprehension skills to first grade children.

It is through the readings of these researchers that I formulated my intervention in the area of comprehension through interactive reading.

### **Overview of Project**

To test my hypothesis, based on the research mentioned and the research in the following sections to support my intervention, I conducted my study on my first grade reading support class at a private Catholic school in Southeastern, Wisconsin. This school services 3k- 8<sup>th</sup> grade students and strives to maintain excellent national and state standards. The school has a student population where approximately 98 percent of the student body represents white suburban children with a very low percentage of children needing financial support through the state, including lunch programs. Class sizes average between 18-20 students, with a total student population of approximately 350 students. Educators in the school community serve not only as teachers, but also as committee members, department members, and coaches for athletics and academic teams, summer instructors, and program directors to meet the needs of the student

body and school community. The students in this school take the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

These scores show that the school population performs above the national averages in all areas of literacy. In each reading and language arts component of the Iowa Test (2011-2012 school year) in grades 2, 3, 5,7 the students scored higher than 75% of the national percentile for their grade with exception of grade two which had a 69<sup>th</sup> percentile in spelling. In some areas, the students' scores were above the 85 percentile nationwide. With this information in place, I felt it was even more crucial to delve into the areas of language and reading comprehension with the challenged readers in my class in order to increase their literacy needs.

During the course of eight weeks, with two devoted to pre and post testing, the students will participate in storybook read-alouds , vocabulary activities, creative related activities, and writing in the form of creative story writing using Tier Two words, and ending with entries in a response journal. Each week begins with a vocabulary pre-test before reading the story, an anticipatory set to capture students' interest in the text, an engaging read-aloud of the story with props, guided instruction completing a vocabulary graphic organizer for each word, a story starter to expand on the main theme of the story relating text to self, and a response journal for the child to write their feelings about each story. On the last day of each story lesson the children are re-assessed with the same vocabulary administered at the start of the week. A story comprehension test is given on the last day of each story lesson. At the end of the study, a whole class assessment will be given to evaluate the student's knowledge on all thirty words learned throughout the study. Each child will also write a response in their journals about the stories they read, what they liked about each story, and why they liked the stories.

### *Key Terms*

#### **Anticipatory Set**

The purpose of the anticipatory set is to focus student's attention on the lesson, create an organizing framework for the ideas, principles, or information that is to follow and to extend the understanding and the application of ideas to be taught through the use of example analogue, or for the younger child, a hands-on, visual creation of what the lesson is about. An anticipatory set activity should continue only long enough to get students engaged and ready for the lesson, so the major part of instructional time is available for the achievement of the objective in progress (Hunter, 1994).

#### **Tier Two Words**

Tier two words are words selected based on frequency and relevance to students. These are words that are likely to appear in other contexts, and require instruction in order for students to understand. The second tier contains words that are of high frequency for mature language users and are found in most books to increase the verbal functioning of the reader.

Examples include *refreshed*, *imitate*, *launched*, and *ordinary*. Due to the large role they play in a language user's word bank, knowledge of tier two level words can have a powerful impact on verbal meanings and verbal functioning (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002).

In this chapter relevant research was examined, a summary of the action research project was given, and key terms pertinent to the study were defined. In the next chapter the discussion of the relevant and applicable research connected to the area of interactive read-alouds is expanded for future researchers.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Literature Review**

Research has consistently shown that teaching comprehension skills requires a plan to guide the reader. The first group of articles examines the relationships between text selections and instruction during storybook interactions. The next group of articles examines the use of read-alouds to promote language development. In the following section of articles, researchers examined articles to determine what literacy practices are taking place in classrooms of children who are emergent readers, to promote language through print when reading interactively with the emergent readers. The final articles concentrate on interactive word study using read-alouds to expose children to vocabulary and learn definitions of the targeted words.

Thus far, studies suggest that researchers used various terms to describe what they were studying: read aloud, book sharing, picture book sharing, reading informational books aloud, and the term active participation. However, one can see that these research studies speak to the same observable element: an adult reading aloud to children interactively, and how this approach will affect the child's comprehension in relationship to the text. Studies are presented that define a theoretical perspective of the deep understanding that teachers must have in regard to the importance of developing comprehension through targeting text selections, incorporating language experiences with in-depth words study skills, while instructing through interactive read-alouds.

### **Text Selection to Promote Literacy**

This first section will discuss four separate studies and the variety of techniques used to develop skills in reading, and encourage vocabulary acquisition. Several studies utilized storybook reading and embedded vocabulary explanations. Other studies focused on the findings from repeated exposure to key terms through read alouds.

The purpose of Ghiso and McGuire's study (2007) was to add to the research on children's comprehension through storybooks that contain limited text. In this study the researchers exposed the participants to storybooks with restricted text to enhance the reader's comprehension through text with limited words; strengthening comprehension through diversified strategies using text features and teacher mediation to guide cognitive literacy when exploring a near wordless text.

Picture books play an important role to the developing reader. When designing a plan for engaging young children in the reading process, it is important that researched practice leads the way. Instructional activities that inspire the young learner's imagination help picture what an author wants to represent in a story (Hoffman, Roser, & Battle, 1993; Morrow & Brittain, 2003; as cited in Ghiso and McGuire, 2007). Visualizing involves linking signals from the author's word with personal experiences as the young readers intellectually build their own scenarios of story events. Based on related research in this area, Ghiso and McGuire (2007) believe that early readers will increase their comprehension with sparse verbal text for the reason that the learner must draw from a range of strategies limited in print, and facilitated by the teacher, to discuss the organization of text features that are aesthetically complex. The authors refer to prior research to back up their convictions which claim that picture book read-alouds are executed texts with



numerous cueing systems conducted by the author, the illustrator, and teacher performance in the delivery of the text (Golden & Gerber, 1990; as cited in Ghiso & McGuire, 2007). The authors' hypotheses state that picture books with sparse written text can enhance a reader's comprehension if properly executed by the instructor. Their position on this topic include: 1) Students' exposed to wordless picture books, or books with sparse words, challenge the reader to read in a non-linear way. 2) Wordless books, or books with sparse verbal text, require increased importance of teacher mediation to increase cognitive awareness when little or no text is presented. 3) Teaching inference skills to emergent readers with teacher mediation is essential for comprehension (Ghiso & McGuire, 2007).

Ghiso and McGuire's (2007) study was implemented in an urban kindergarten classroom varying between 20 and 25 African-American children. The main objective in this study was to determine if picture book read-alouds with sparse verbal text will strengthen literacy development in young children. The independent variables were three types of sparse verbal picture book transcripts created by the teacher from audio-taped read-alouds. Transcripts, corresponding field notes, and classroom teacher interviews were used to access the study. Each picture book was examined for the determination of referenced text features, teacher interaction, and salient references to the author and illustrator's point of view. Percentages of teacher utterances by conceptual categories across the three read-alouds were recorded and then compared and contrasted. Following the study, details about the teacher's mediation approaches were categorized. Five types of mediation approaches were noted and analyzed during the study. The approaches of analysis include: 1) Developing visual analysis skills. 2) Mining available print by encouraging the children to reflect on text features. 3) Teacher guidance for underlying relationships in the picture books. 4) Connecting the stories to the reader's experiences.

5) Building a cohesive whole (pulling all the story elements together). In reference to the author's fourth point, picture books with sparse verbal text present opportunities for children outside of the emphasis on decoding the text. The books provide a chance for the emergent reader to read the words on the page as well as build foundational awareness about literature through teacher mediated discussions that foster connections to the readers own experiences (Ghiso & McGuire, 2007).

Through this study, Ghiso and McGuire (2007) found that teacher mediation of picture storybooks with limited verbal text can build introductory understandings about literature through rich discussions and connections mediated and guided by the teacher. The researchers also found that the opportunities were limitless if the creativity of the teacher was present. The analysis revealed the affordances that this type of text presented, implying that teacher mediation is significant in order to assist children in filling in gaps about the narrative, thus contributing to overall student comprehension. The study discovered that students gained the greatest number of words when they listened to a story along with an explanation of the vocabulary words. In the next study, students who listened to stories with explanations several times also learned more words compared to the students who were not exposed to the repetitions.

In the following section, two separate studies examine the relationship between interactive reading and text selection digging deeper into the literacy practices of oral reading. In the next study, students who listened to stories with explanations several times and participated in dialogic discourse also learned more words compared to the students who were engaged in traditional story reading led by the teacher with question and answer responses.

In their study Crawford and Hade (2000) deeply examined the way children allocate meaning to a variety of visual signs and prompts. The researchers state that the purpose of their study examines how children of various ages, ranging from pre-school to third grade, make sense of wordless books by using sense making processes similar to those used in print-based text. The authors of this study refer to prior research, (Golden & Gerber, 1990; Elster, 1998, as cited in Crawford & Hade, 2000) to reinforce their convictions that wordless books support language development contending the storytellers apply their experiences with both the word and worldly connections with the texts that they investigated with the participants. Conducting read-alouds in this way with intriguing forms of literature emphasizes the aesthetic stance of reading. Young children develop an appreciation for language through rhymes, songs and hands-on activities which interactive reading provides (Rosenblatt, 2005; as cited in Ruddell & Unrau 2004).

Interactive reading not only includes teacher creativity, but requires thoughtful consideration to the types of materials used in the lessons. Using in-depth related research, the authors selected independent variables as the types of storybooks chosen for the interactive reads, and the opportunity for the child to choose the particular story within a varied selection of wordless books. In addition, the listed dependent variables examined the results of video-tape discussions, verbatim transcripts, and document analysis of wordless picture books. The researchers discussed the establishment of the procedure which analyzed qualitative content involving a systematic review of data, coding, category construction and analysis reviewed and inspired by related research (Altheide, 1987; Hubbard & Merriam, 1991; Power, 1999; as cited in Crawford & Hade, 2000).

The study included three readers, two emergent, and one a beginning reader. All three participants were selected according to Purcell-Gate's (1998), criteria for being "well read to" (as

cited in Crawford & Hade, 2000). The parents of all three children work in related fields of education. Two of the three children were enrolled in the same private school with a holistic approach to reading and writing, and the latter child was not yet enrolled in school. The authors' extensive details on the selection of books, instructor's delivery and visual analysis maps, provide informative details within the study.

Twelve different wordless picture books were chosen and given to the three children to explore, read and then read the story aloud, sharing their impressions of the text. Each child read a total of three books. The children were assisted in their reading by two adults and one researcher. During the readings the children were offered invitations to read to an adult and converse with the adult about the story.

The study, which was broken into five categories revealed the following: 1) The children's selections were based upon their response to visual elements of the storybooks and connecting events to their lives after interest inventories were given. 2) The participants made sense of the visual cues in many of the same ways that readers make logical outcomes from printed texts. This was determined through the protocol used of qualitative content analysis. 3) Intertextual relationships were profound among all three readers. This was determined by the multiple perspectives the children used in the telling of the stories 4) Sense making through the incorporation of story language and story practice in each reading. 5) Sense making through active play- like responses and dramatic language as part of the readings.

The researchers concluded within their study that wordless books challenge the accepted belief that these are simple texts lacking complexity are served best for the very young child. Contrary to this belief, the conclusions show that readers of various ages benefit from transacting

with wordless texts. The authors contend that by viewing their readers through a semiotic lens and the more active of a role that young readers engage in the literacy transaction practice, the more meaningful language discourse will become (Crawford & Hade, 2000). Therefore, through the text choice of wordless books, students increased their language development and comprehension through interactive storytelling (Crawford & Hade, 2000). Just as Crawford and Hade (2000) discovered that text choice increased language development through dialogic opportunities guided by the teacher, the following study also indicated the need for early intervention to promote vocabulary for early readers, thus facilitating comprehension. However, this next study considers the need to approach vocabulary instruction through storybook reading; choosing books with appealing pictures to hold the interest levels of the emergent and early readers. The researchers discovered additional instruction time results in higher vocabulary learning; the following study also indicated the need for early intervention to promote vocabulary for early readers, thus facilitating comprehension. However, this study considers the need to approach vocabulary instruction through storybook reading; choosing books with appealing pictures to hold the interest levels of the emergent and early reader.

Based on research that implies that storytelling and story reading influence the language development of emergent readers, Isbel, Sobol, Lindauer, and Lowrance (2004), conducted a study examining the power that storytelling and story reading may have on language with children between the ages of three and five. While there have been numerous related studies of reading to young children, the authors contend through their research that storytelling research is sparse. The author's purpose in this study was to examine the difference between story reading and storytelling, and the rationale that each has worth and importance when engaging emergent readers in an array of diversified reading materials. Given the observational fact that storytellers

usually use an extensive amount of repetitive phrases, exaggerated sounds and gestures, both storytelling and story reading can add to a child's imagination by the creation of mental pictures. Therefore, with the support of related research in this area, the researchers' pursued this study.

The methods used to conduct this quantitative study included participant choice; 38 children from a preschool class were divided into two groups labeled A and B. Group A had all the stories read to them, while group B had all the stories told to them. The second method used in this study was the approach to reading and storytelling. The researchers used language transcripts for their analysis from the participant's re-telling and creating a story using the wordless books. The analysis of both pre and post tests concentrated on establishing similarities and differences in language complexity and story comprehension. Crucial to the analysis was the measurement portion of the study. Pre and post samples were collected by the researchers after the initial and final story readings and storytelling. These samples were transcribed using language sample measures which included mean of length utterances (MLU) focusing on fluency and vocabulary diversity. The researcher's selected measurement assessments were guided by investigated study tests that had been previously used in similar studies.

The researcher's primary focus was to observe the retelling of the stories within each group, focusing on the language development acquired by the students. According to Sobol (1992; as cited in Isbel et al., 2004), when a story is read to a young child, the principle reference being communicated is the text page. However, when a storytelling event takes place the words are not memorized but recreated through lively performances, listeners' participation, and energetic conversations. Literature choices along with supplementary materials provide depth to reading lessons. In this study, two groups of children participated in a 12-week study. The participants of the study were in the 3- or 4- year old class on a Tennessee University campus. The independent

variable was the type of instruction: storybooks used only for Group B versus stories told to Group A with no book. This article reports descriptive data over a 15 week period with in-depth data language transcripts from the participants' replies to retelling stories and creating a story using wordless books. Pre and post-samples from oral language audio-tapes were analyzed to establish similarities and discrepancies in language difficulties and story knowledge. The samples were transcribed and evaluated using language sample measures to determine length of utterances, fluency and vocabulary diversity. The analysis of this study was completed by using a computer software program to assist in the examination of the language transcripts.

The results of the study confirmed the researchers' hypothesis that the storytelling group performed better on retelling with rich, meaningful language. However, the story reading group performed better when creating wordless picture books, relying heavily on the illustrations to reconstruct the story. It was noted that the opportunity to view the illustrations made specific visual associations uncomplicated to verbalize with the latter group. When analyzing the storytelling groups retelling, the ability to create their own images with clarity, originality, and intricate detail surpassed the story reading group. Consequently, the researcher's study results determined that both story reading and storytelling are equally beneficial to the development of language complexities. Each approach supports comprehension in young children equally with diverse strategies. In accordance with this theory, Crawford and Hade (2000) state that picture books with little or no written text offer the readers and authors different types of experiences. In summary these articles suggested educators can encourage all participants to navigate grammar of the visual text in their own unique way with the instructor's guidance.

Throughout the previous studies researchers concluded that studies on interactive reading with emergent readers concentrate on the selection and delivery of the texts and corresponding

materials in relationship to instruction. Current emphases in classrooms concentrate on texts that teach decoding skills. Ghiso and McGuire (2007) state that teacher mediation of picture storybooks with sparse written text can build introductory understandings about literature through rich discussions that are essential to the development of understanding print as a language beyond verbal discourse. In accordance with Ghiso and McGuire's (2007) findings, Isbel, Sobol, Lindauer, and Lowrance's (2004), study which examined the power that storytelling and story reading may have on language development and story comprehension of young children between the ages of three and five, determined that both story reading and storytelling are equally beneficial to the development of language complexities. Each intervention showed significant gains in comprehension. The results seemed equal, even though the strategies differed. The second section of research in this chapter describes the connections between interactive reading and using print in diverse forms to create successful language that will develop extensive verbal communication.

### **Developing Language through Interactive Reading**

Instructors of emergent readers can provide opportunities for young children to play with language while acquiring the values of the sounds and meanings of words. Storytelling and story reading are two methods of interest that educational researchers have devoted recent attention to in congruence with the development of language in emergent readers (Isbel et al., 2004). Many researchers have delved into the language development which parallels the written word. When an emergent reader is exposed to print through interactive reading, rich language, and appropriate discourse, researchers contend that comprehension will improve.

The following studies use the same premise of investigating the effects of interactive reading with picture books; however these studies introduce contemporary books with successful written



text. Pantaleo (2007) suggests that instructors of literacy need to assist the emergent reader to develop language as a social form of developing cognitive awareness in relationship to the written text. Comparatively, Wiseman (2010) contends that interactive read-alouds provide readers with opportunities to respond to literature, build their strengths through interactive discourse, and broaden their knowledge.

The study conducted by Pantaleo (2007) investigates the effect of language use in young children during interactive read-alouds. Four excerpts are examined with grade one children. The purpose of this study was to look at the history of inter-discussion thinking that took place during the reading of picture books with Radical Change characteristics (Dresang, 1999, as cited in Pantaleo, 2007). Techniques were examined in relation to the reader's construction of knowledge when engaged in interactive read-alouds with contemporary picture books. The results of the study were compiled using field notes, recording students' comments, facial expressions, body language and journal responses. In addition, audio-recordings of each session were analyzed and used to assist in the evaluations. The sample consisted of 19 grade one students, 11 girls and 9 boys, of which two of the student's were non-participants and two were from non-English speaking homes. It was determined by the classroom teacher that the majority of the children were within the average range for grade one.

During the nine week study the children participated in heterogeneous small group read-alouds with group membership changing for each picture book. Whole group rereads of the same picture books were also conducted once a week. During the small group read-alouds the dynamics changed. The student's were able to learn how to participate in the particular context through social and discursive practices. Practices in connecting text to text and text to self enabled the students to relate prior life experiences through conversation and text discussion.

Through these discussions it was observed that the student's language and behaviors impacted one another, to the group as a whole, and their group reactions affected each individual's reactions to the stories. Consequently it was determined from these observations and field notes that individual and collective personality reactions during the readings were constantly changing, emerging, and adjusting to the new story information and outcomes.

Transcripts from the study revealed how the student's use of oral language collectively served a large number of functions including scaffolding understandings, extending comprehension, exploring variations, and constructing storylines. The researcher found that the nature of the literature used in this intervention project assisted inter-thinking during the read alouds. The field data acquired showed that the type of the discourse between the readers demonstrated both expressive and exploratory talk being consistent with Vygotsky's social cultural theory of development that individuals construct meaning as new information interacts with existing knowledge (Schwandt, 1998, as cited in Pantaleo, 2007). The teacher's role to facilitate this growth by providing texts rich in the ability to use language, will provide the opportunity for children to work collaboratively to problem solve, draw conclusions, and use verbal discourse for the growth in language comprehension. Just as Pantaleo (2007) discovered that student's use of oral language collectively served a large number of literacy functions, the following study also indicated the need for early intervention to promote comprehension, knowledge, and literacy by developing language through interactive reading.

Based on research that implies limitations on language acquisition during reading classes Wiseman (2010) conducted a study which investigates the effect of interactive read-alouds for emergent readers to construct knowledge and literacy simultaneously with an emphasis on language development. In this study, an urban Kindergarten reading program was selected.

Exploring a classroom environment rich in literature discourse, following the teacher's approach to facilitating interaction in the classroom as students are exposed to reading and discussing stories together (interactive reading), defined the purpose for the study. The author's interest in interactive reading through dialogue and classroom interfacing clearly projected the hypothesis that young children's experiences with interactive reading within the classroom can support and expand reading development. The independent variables in this study were the chosen books for interactive reading and the journal entries in which the children wrote their stories, reactions, connections, and feelings of the group story. The dependent variables in this study included field notes, observations and coding, using a software program that supports qualitative and mixed methods research, allowing the researcher to collect, organize and analyze data in documents, pictures, surveys, audio and video. This software program was used as an aid in developing, linking, and analyzing the research notes. In this 9 month study, a three person research team was developed to collect ethnographic data in the pre-selected kindergarten classroom. Five days a week the entire class was engaged in a 25-45 minute read aloud. The children were encouraged from beginning to end with teacher guidance to respond as a group throughout the reading time. The students also participated in peer discussions as partners at the end of each read aloud. With the encouragement and direction of the instructors' and researcher, the participants of the study were encouraged to ask questions to one another about the stories and verbalized their observations using word prompts such as *who*, *what*, *where*, and *why*. Interactively, questions were modeled by the teachers before the actual study began. Conversations were recorded by the researchers. The lesson concluded with journal entries relating to their read-aloud experience. The research team joined the classroom four times a week from October through May. The main researcher stayed for the entire school day three times a week during this seven month period. In

addition, 54 read alouds were audio-taped and transcribed. Journals were copied for secondary reviews. Informal conversations with teachers and students were added to the field notes. The researcher then divided the collected information into four major categories. The study describes the transactions of the read-alouds by providing the reader with samples of the transcribed notes from various book selections, along with methods of the research categorized into four segments: 1) Confirming the contributions of the students to discuss their book ideas. 2) Modeling by the teacher to promote comprehension skills. 3) Extending by the teacher to guide the students in to a deeper meaning of the text. 4). Building meaning through conversation. The author's discussion revealed the results in an ambiguous way. Although no concrete data was given in this article, the dialogue openly stated that there are persuasive reasons to approach emergent reading in an interactive method through literature. In this classroom, the researcher found that the literacy practice each day encouraged children to use each other as resources, connect personal and current background knowledge, understand how books work, and connect text to self and community. Ultimately, this led to higher levels of understanding noted through the analysis of the previously listed research categories. It is important to note that although the teacher verbally demonstrated thought processes while modeling the text, allowance was given for the children to discuss their feelings and observations as well. Dominance on the part of the teacher's contributions was not observed which is important to the art of storytelling. The careful balance of guidance, with opportunities for student contributions, led to valuable conversations. Therefore, when examining the student-centered approach to learning through conversational print awareness, the influence that interactive read-alouds have in engaging children in the reading process is a powerful tool for language comprehension (Pantaleo, 2007).

In nearly every emergent reading class, small voices can be heard adding to the words being read aloud by the teacher. It is this language (in relation to the books) that teachers of emergent readers' need to focus on for reading comprehension. In their study, Wasik and Bond (2001) provide educators and parents with an in depth view of their research on interactive book reading and the impact it has on language development. The value of planning and executing read-alouds is researched and discussed as a profound way of making gains in reading comprehension using vocabulary presented in books, and providing the context for valuable discourse between a child and an adult.

The Wasik and Bond (2001) study was administered to research the effects of a book reading method called interactive book reading which concentrated on the language and literacy development of 4 yr olds from low-income families. The teachers were trained on how to read books to children and to reinforce the vocabulary in the books by presenting concrete objects that correspond to the words. The students were also provided multiple opportunities to use the book-related words within the allocated lesson time. The teachers were trained to ask open-ended questions and to engage children in conversations about the book and activities. The goal was to give children opportunities to use language and learn vocabulary in a meaningful context. This quantitative study included two randomly selected teachers and 121 children from low income families ranging from age three-five, 61 of the children being in the interactive book reading intervention group and 60 in the comparison group. The researchers determined that the interactive story reading intervention group scored significantly better than children in the comparison group on Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test—III and other measures of receptive and expressive language. Consequently, it is the belief of the researchers that book reading and related activities can promote the development of language and literacy skills in young children.

For each intervention a teacher was given a box of materials relating to the theme of each book. Each box contained two trade books related to a similar topic or theme. Each box also contained concrete objects that represented the targeted vocabulary in each book, as well as materials to create related theme projects in center time. For example, if the books had a garden theme, then the box would contain a related book, seeds, a shovel, dirt, watering can and other related items. Each group read the same stories, however the control group did not have the props. The control group did engage in hands-on activities, but not related to the book theme after the book was read. Pre and post tests were given to all children in both groups using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test -111 (PPVT-111; Dunn & Dunn, 1998). In conclusion, the study's analysis provided significant information favoring the intervention group, with the results indicating that the students whose teachers provided frequent opportunities to interact with vocabulary words through book reading, story props, and extension activities, learned more book-related vocabulary, and scored significantly higher on a broad-spectrum vocabulary test compared with children who were exposed to just the books. Teachers who used the interactive method also noticed that the children in their classrooms were more at ease when asking them to explain a word they didn't know. Therefore, this study was significant in increasing comprehension through carefully selected text, targeted contextual vocabulary, and concrete items for the students to imbed words and their physical representation connections into their memory. Consequently, this led to quality language growth within discussions. As this study found that multiple opportunities to build language and literacy skills were appropriate, the next study inspected the importance of language development by examining the parental role of interactive storybook reading to investigate early reader's receptive and expressive language.

As reading and comprehension are the most important skills in academic achievement, Kotaman (2008) found studies that connected students who are struggling emergent readers at the onset of their school years, to continued struggles and delays in reading throughout their school years. Using these studies as groundwork, Kotaman (2008) researched the impact of parents' dialogical storybook reading on their children's receptive and expressive vocabulary, as well as their reading approach. Dialogical storybook reading encourages children to actively participate in the storybook reading process with rich book choices selected and guided by parents or teachers.

This study examined three, four, and five year old children and their parents in Bursa, Turkey. Forty parents and 40 children were selected from a private school to engage in this study. The 80 participants were then divided into a control group and an experimental group. Each group was comprised of students ranging from 3.2 to 5 years old. The parents participating in the study were mainly female with college educations and predominately from middle to upper middle income range.

The researchers in this study measured the children's receptive vocabularies and reading attitudes. The receptive vocabularies were assessed using the Turkish version of the *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test* (Katz, Onen, Demir, Uzlukaya, & Uludag, 1974). During this assessment, the children were instructed to point to the picture the examiner described. An additional measure, a Pre-School Reading Attitudes Scale, was used to review the student's reading attitudes by responding to 34 statements each with a picture representation. These 34 items were used by the researcher to measure the children's reading attitudes and were translated in print to Turkish. In this assessment the children were asked how they felt about certain ideas

presented in picture form, and were instructed to point to one of three smiley faces representing their emotions toward the picture. Each group received both assessments as pre and post tests.

Within the study, the control group did not receive any dialogical storybook reading training, whereas, the experimental group of parents were taught how to engage their children in rich dialogue. The experimental parent group was also trained for two hours on reading techniques and vocabulary development. Additionally, this group of parents had practice time to review their newly-gained knowledge. Throughout the seven week study, the parents in the experimental group were asked to track and record the amount of times they applied the reading techniques on a weekly basis.

The study concluded seven weeks after the program ended with results in place for review by the researchers. T-tests for both groups compared the means of the pre-test and post-test scores. Also applied to the results was a measure to determine how much two variables change together, how strong the relationship is between them, evaluating whether population means of a dependent variable are equal across levels of a categorical independent variable. The researchers then concluded through the use of dialogue during storybook reading, that the children in the experimental group scored higher on the *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test* (Katz et al., 1974). The results confirmed significant gains in the experimental group where the children, through quality storybook readings and well designed read-alouds with in-depth conversation, learned more concepts related to the storybook concepts. Therefore, it is the belief of the researchers that the selection of quality books with related activities can promote skills in young children.



### **Word Study through Interactive Reading**

According to the National Institute of Health and Human Development (2000), comprehension is the reason for reading and without the understanding of vocabulary, comprehension will not develop. As the decade has progressed and standards are changing, labels for academics are changing as well. The new Common Core standards need to be carefully incorporated in every day lesson planning. In primary education, the term *vocabulary* (which is used more often in middle and secondary grades) has been replaced with the term *word study*. Many components, such as print awareness, phonological awareness, decoding skills, and fluency comprise text understanding. To obtain solid and diverse comprehension skills, it is necessary that each of these components of literacy is thoroughly taught to emergent and early readers. With the emerging and early reader (usually ages three to eight), it is crucial to pay attention to the emotional development that directs the academic development. In this third section, three studies are summarized that examined word study through interactive storybook reading.

As reading is the single most important skill in academic attainment, the first summary of this section looks deeply into the topic of word study and its impact on student's comprehension of vocabulary when reading storybooks interactively. Santaro, Chard, Howard, and Baker (2008) designed a study for early readers (ages six to eight) which examined the use of narrative and informational texts to teach comprehension and words study skills during interactive read-alouds.

Read-alouds are crucial in developing and supporting reading instruction, as well as and increasing knowledge in additional curriculum areas including science and social studies.

Through read-alouds teachers are able to actively involve their students in strategies that will

increase comprehension and word study skills. In this study, the researchers used comprehensive narrative texts and informational texts to teach comprehension skills to first grade children through interactive read-alouds (Santaro, Chard, Howard, & Baker, 2008).

Two groups were examined in this study which encompassed a group using the read aloud curriculum determined by the researchers, and a group where the classroom teachers used their own read aloud texts and procedures for instruction. All the students involved in the study were assessed before and after the study using a researcher designed assessment. On each assessment the order of questions were randomly arranged. Through thorough examination of state and national standards, the researchers determined that using read-aloud texts that connect to science and social studies would be most beneficial for the students; these topics allow for text and life connections. Science topics began with general animal categories, and became more specific to insects as the study progressed. Social Study units focused on the Presidents, specifically geared towards Presidents' Day with discussions directed on George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. In all, there were 15 science and social studies units for the read-aloud intervention.

In each of the four lesson units, two narrative and two expository texts were used. Text considerations included topic, target audience, length, availability, diversity, and connections with additional first grade curriculum topics. Each read-aloud lesson ranged from 20-30 minutes. Word study words (vocabulary) were chosen based on function, meaning, repetition and story importance. The researchers chose four words from each text and used Beck, McKeown, and Kucan's (2002) criterion for word selection. Each lesson began with background building activities and visuals to prepare the children for active story listening. Simple definitions for each word study word were given to the students before reading the story. During the read aloud

children were actively involved in the text by the instructor through questions which engaged the children in predicting, drawing inferences and making connections to their own background experiences. Students were also given opportunities to discuss the book in small groups following each individual read aloud. Follow-up activities involved small group discussions with the teachers, retelling of the stories, and review and application of the chosen vocabulary words. In general, comprehension as measured by a composite of all the comprehension measures used in the study, the students who benefited the most were those in the read-aloud project. In the narrative text portion of the study, students in read-aloud classrooms had longer retellings than students from classrooms that did not follow read-aloud lessons and procedures. Additionally, the students in read-aloud classrooms also showed length and depth in their retellings as opposed to the children who were not exposed to read-aloud sessions. Furthermore, the study showed more production in text-based examples with complex statements with the students who received the read-alouds. Increased quality and depth of knowledge was also noted with this group when retellings were scored.

The results of this study led the researchers to conclude that read alouds with explicit comprehension, applicable artifacts, and active engaging discussions about the text, improved comprehension and vocabulary. The students in the read a-loud curriculum performed higher than the control group. The significance of this study relies heavily on the assessments which showed that through active engaging read-alouds, comprehension and key vocabulary words improved. Similarly, the next study continues with the movement of actively engaging children in well written texts with intriguing storylines and rich vocabulary.

The use of vocabulary instruction during storybook sharing sessions is critical in helping children use new language. In the following research study, Chu & Cheong (2011) explored the

effectiveness of anchored instruction (instructions to enhance children's vocabulary through phonics) meanings with letter-sound focus, and engaging children in to learn new vocabulary through interactive storybook reading sessions. The study was conducted to explore the importance of storybook reading to young students by helping them acquire new vocabulary within the reading experience. It is the researcher's beliefs that in addition to acquiring language and literacy skills, children also gain vocabulary growth in storybook reading through rich discussions and direct interaction with text features. According to the Childhood development Institute (2008), children by the age of five are able to use descriptive words naturally for nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. This data supported the researcher's interest of language acquisition in young children's ability to understand mature word learning through interactive storybook lessons.

The study was held at a child enrichment center based in Malaysia. Six female five-year old girls were selected to participate in the English Reading Program. However, only two girls participated due to the inconsistency of attendance with the other four pre-selected participants. The selected students joined the English Reading Program when they were four years old. The study samples are English as Second Language (ESL) learners and their primary means of communication at home is Mandarin.

As the focus of this study was on vocabulary learning during storybook reading time, two well-known picture storybooks were chosen for the purpose of this study. In each of the picture storybooks five target words were chosen. In determining their vocabulary selection, based on Beck, McKeown and Kucan's (2002) criteria for vocabulary selection, the researchers

established three criteria for teachers when selecting vocabulary from text. The three criteria were as follows:

1. Useful to know for understanding other texts
2. Related to concepts that children already know
3. Important to understanding the story

After considering the above criteria, the chosen words from each storybook were a mixture of adjectives and verbs. As the purpose of this study was to evaluate early vocabulary learning through read-aloud sessions, pre and posttests were created to assess the student's vocabulary knowledge. The pre and post tests consisted of four subsets; the picture, the relational and oral vocabulary subtests, plus word discrimination. Each pretest was administered one week before the storybook sessions. Following this pattern, the posttests were exactly the same as the pretests and followed one week after the sessions were completed.

The first session of the intervention plan concentrated on analytic instruction in which the focus was detailed and in depth into the children's understanding of the meaning of the targeted words. To explore the meanings of these words, the student's were asked to act out the meaning of the words. Concrete objects that related to the stories were also given to the children to use as props in their dramatization.

The second session of the intervention plan used anchored instruction which focused on phonetics (the sounds and formation of letters). In this phase, the children were prompted to concentrate on the beginning letters and sounds of the target words by associating the sounds with words that share the same letter sounds. Using the same premise, the children were also encouraged to use the strategy for ending sounds. To support the strategy, a word

detective game was implemented using a magnifying glass to search for the target words within the text of the storybooks.

Unlike other studies, this study was unique in its format. Two loop intervention plans were conducted. The first loop plan was divided into two sessions which focused on analytical instruction and anchored instruction. The analytical session focused on the meanings of the target words through body gestures to act out the meaning of the vocabulary words. The second session of loop one focused on phonetics. The second loop intervention plan conducted was the same as the first loop plan with two sessions once again focusing on analytical and anchored instruction.

A graduate student was used as an observer to formulate questionnaires that were divided between the intervention sessions. The observer then used the checklists to record responses and observations of both the teacher and the students. The checklists were formulated to coincide with the specific areas of intervention for each session. The observer's part in this intervention was crucial. The observer/trainer's role was to specifically take notes on the teacher's prompts, cues, and instructions, as well as comment on the overall read-aloud sessions for future improvements in class instruction for the school's reading program.

The findings of the study supported the researcher's three questions. The respondents were able to acquire new vocabulary through storybook reading sessions, as well as gain meaning and understanding of the target words through analytical and anchored instruction respectively. The pre and post testing, along with the field notes supported the researchers belief that establishing a form-meaning link (understanding the word and its formation) was especially successful for second language vocabulary learners.

It was concluded that it is important for teachers to highlight and teach the words to the children, yet at the same time, children should be exposed to reading and listening to the words in storybooks. Therefore this particular study showed that analytic and anchored instruction complement each other through the presentation of storybook reading.

From the previous studies it has been determined that literacy success is certainly supported through interactive reading. To take this interactive approach a step further, findings from Katz, Onen, Demir, Uzlukaya, & Uludag (1974), illustrated the positive effects that parent/child dialogical storybook reading and parent training in reading techniques has on a child's vocabulary acquisition; indicating that home literacy exposure has constructive effects on a child's long range reading success in the early school years. Just as Katz, Onen, Demir, Uzlukaya, & Uludag (1974), as cited in Coyne McCoach and Kapp (2007), presented the positive gains of parental reading involvement in their study in relation to language gains through interactive reading, researchers Coyne, McCoach, and Kapp (2007), decided to delve into the theory that suggests concentrated vocabulary instruction has a great impact on literacy growth in kindergarten students whose incidental language exposure was present at a very young age. Thus, indicating that literacy was present in strong forms in the home from early on.

Many studies have revealed that the level of home literacy exposure with young children will influence their literacy success in school. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to expose emergent readers to rich vocabulary and intriguing words that are represented in context. The researchers believed this could be done through incidental exposure or embedded vocabulary instruction. Coyne, McCoach, and Kapp (2007) examined the difference in achievement between extended vocabulary instruction, embedded vocabulary instruction, and incidental vocabulary instruction in kindergarten students. This study was split into two separate studies.

One study compared extended instruction of targeted vocabulary words to that of incidental exposure. The second study compared loaded, meaningful vocabulary instruction to embedded vocabulary instruction.

Three of the assessments employed in these two studies were examiner created, which allowed the evaluator to create assessments receptive to the targeted words that were taught. The first assessment concentrated on the expressive definitions where the students verbally stated their definitions of the word. The response in these assessments was recorded word for word. Zero through two points were given (with two being the highest), based on the accuracy of the answer. Separate assessments were also recorded for taught and untaught words. The second assessment tool utilized was the receptive definitions assessment. In this assessment, the students responded to questions with a simple yes or no answer. Each test consisted of six questions with one test using three taught words two times, and the additional test using the three untaught words two times. Each word again was used in a yes or no answer. The third assessment was the context assessment. Following the pattern of the first two assessments, yes or no questions were used corresponding to the correct or incorrect usage of the vocabulary word in context. The final assessment used was the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-111 standardized test (Dunn & Dunn, 1997). In this assessment, students point to the correct picture that corresponds to the word given by the examiner.

Participants in the Coyne et al study were selected from a small northwest town. A significant percentage of the students at this school were at risk based on demographics literacy exam performance. Fifty-five percent of the students receive free and/or reduced lunch, with the same percentage of the student being Hispanic 40 percent being Caucasian. A total of 32 students, 15 male and 16 female, were randomly selected to participate in this study between two



classrooms. All participating students listened orally to the story of *The Three Little Pigs*. Six significant words were chosen for the study due to their importance and relevance to the story, and not known to the kindergarten students. Two versions of the story were given to the students. In Version A, three words were taught using extended instruction and three words were taught using incidental exposure. Version B words were switched between incidental exposure and extended instruction. The students were randomly assigned to the A and B versions of the study, with interventions conducted in groups of three to four students. Each group met with assigned graduate student researchers three times a week for 20-25 minutes.

With the many components that comprised the lesson plan format, the graduate students were assigned recording tasks in a checklist format to assess the accuracy of the lesson. The extended vocabulary instruction lesson began with frontloading the vocabulary by having the students pronounce all three target words. The students were then instructed to listen for those words during the reading of the story, and to raise their hands when they heard a targeted word. Following this procedure, the targeted word was identified and then reread in the context of the story, followed by a simple definition given by the graduate student. The targeted word was then reread in context using the definition instead of the word. The students were once again instructed to pronounce the word. When the reading concluded, the words were then used in further discussion groups and in application activities.

The version B intervention of the study conducted by Coyne et al., concentrated on incidental exposure of the vocabulary words. In this format read-alouds were used; again the story of the three little pigs was read. The words in this lesson were found in the story, but were not given time for interactive discussion or instruction. The study collected data at three different times using a pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest. The pretest data was collected one week

before the intervention. The posttest was administered three to five days after the third reading of the story. The delayed posttest was given eight days after the first posttest. Each experimental developed measure was given at all three points of data collection: however, the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test 111 (Dunn & Dunn, 1997) was only given as a pretest.

Study One results showed the group receiving extended vocabulary instruction scored higher on the examiner created assessments. In study Two, the researchers compared extended vocabulary instruction to embedded vocabulary instruction. Time seemed to be the major difference between these two instructional methods. With the embedded vocabulary instruction, the students were given definitions of the targeted words within the context of the story. When reviewing the results of the extended vocabulary instruction, it was found that more time was needed as the words were exposed to the children within the story reading, followed by more encounters with the words in various contexts and activities. Therefore, extended vocabulary instruction required more time and preparation, but produced significant results that indicated growth on both the expressive and receptive assessments.

In the second study, the researchers compared embedded instruction to extended vocabulary instruction. Based on the demographic data and performance on state literacy examines, large percentage of the students at this school were at risk for reading. Fifty seven percent of the students received free and reduced lunch. While 67 percent of the students were Hispanic 25 percent were African American and six percent Caucasian. Thirty two kindergarten children were randomly selected from three kindergarten classrooms. There were 22 male students and 12 female students.

The same procedures were followed as in the Study One. Like the first study the students listened to three readings of the Three Little Pigs over one week. In the second study, three target words received extended instruction. The extended instruction was the same as in Study One. With embedded instruction, the researcher gave the students a sample definition of targeted words when the words occurred in the story. The sentence was reread but then replaced with the definition. All the assessments that were administered in Study One, which included expressive definitions, and context measures, along with the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-111 (Dunn & Dunn, 1997) were used in the second study. The three assessments all showed the students who received extended vocabulary instruction scored significantly higher than the embedded instruction group. Therefore, the Coyne et al. study concluded that additional exposure to words through various contexts results in higher vocabulary gains.

Just as Coyne et al. discovered additional instruction time results in higher vocabulary learning, the following study also indicated the need for early intervention to promote vocabulary for early readers, thus facilitating comprehension. However, this study considers the need to approach vocabulary instruction through storybook reading; choosing books with appealing pictures to hold the interest levels of the emergent and early reader.

This longitudinal study was conducted to investigate ways to capitalize on early literacy instruction and intervention for children who show signs of reading difficulties (Coyne, Simmons, Kame'enui, & Stoolmiller, 2004). The research is guided by two main questions; what are the most crucial components of early literacy instruction and how should time be distributed among these components? To what extent does explicit, systematic and strategic instruction meet the intensive literacy needs of children who are considered at risk for reading? The intervention study consisted of 108 half-hour sessions that were created to be compatible with 40

different children's books. Three vocabulary words were chosen from each of the 40 books to be taught explicitly to the children. The lessons were taught sequentially in 20, six day cycles with the intervention taking place over a six month period (November-May). Each cycle incorporated two storybooks. On Days 1 and 3 one book would be read, with the second book being read on Days 2 and 4. Days 5 and 6 focused on the integration and application of targeted words to generalized context. During the fifth and sixth days, the children were encouraged to use the targeted words during discussion and retelling time. Pre and post tests were given to the students to evaluate exact vocabulary growth. The researchers developed a 20-word instrument in which the students were called upon to generate word meanings or share anything they knew about target words. This study was composed of 96 children from seven different schools who were randomly placed in three different groups. One group received the storybook instruction, one group participated in the instruction meant to improve phonological and alphabetical skills, and the third group (the control), received a sound and letter component of a commercial reading program (Open Court; Adams, 2000). The study concluded that the storybook group outperformed the other two groups in a posttest developed to measure the explicit vocabulary taught. The phonological and alphabetic instruction group outperformed the other two groups in the vocabulary skills taught. Ultimately, the results imply that vocabulary development should be the focal point in early intervention, with target vocabulary explicitly taught within the context of shared reading. Specifically, the results concluded that vocabulary development should be a major focus for emergent and early readers to avoid intervention for students in later grades. The results also implied that explicitly teaching vocabulary within the context of shared story reading is an effective way to increase the vocabulary of young children, and lessen the risk of reading difficulties. A secondary analysis of the study did show that the storybook group demonstrated

greater knowledge and understanding of the targeted word meanings than the students in the control group. However, it was also noted that no difference was found between the groups when the students were assessed on untaught vocabulary. Therefore, the results of this research propose that storybook reading activities that depend on incidental exposure to unknown words make no impact in comprehension, and do not decrease the vocabulary gap. On the other hand, when the researchers delved further into the collected information, it was found that when teaching word meanings explicitly within the context of storybook readings, the results in vocabulary growth for the students who had lower vocabulary scores initially, resulted in the same amount of vocabulary growth as those who had initial higher scores. Therefore, direct teachings of the storybook words will minimize if not totally diminish the vocabulary gap.

With vocabulary being one of the strongest predictors of reading achievement in students in today's society, researchers continue to address the effects of vocabulary instruction as one of the most powerful predictors of reading success for emergent readers. Many studies have looked at the effects of teaching vocabulary to students in grades three to eight, yet a modest amount of focus has been placed on emergent and early readers in this area of literacy development. In their pursuit to research and examine the development of vocabulary within storybook readings, Justice, Meier, and Wadpole (2005) examined the outcomes of at-risk kindergarten student's education of new word learning from storybooks. The researchers put forward the concept that students learn new words from storybooks through repeated exposures, and that more unfamiliar words are learned with the assistance of an adult. Furthermore, the researchers hypothesized that children respond differently to the opportunities presented to them for word learning.

Two groups of children were randomly assigned to either the control or treatment group. Fifty seven children from six different kindergarten classrooms were involved in the study which

took place in two schools in a Mid-Atlantic state. The 57 students were pretested to establish their familiarity of 60 targeted vocabulary words. Both schools were diverse in their ethnic population, with the majority at both schools being African American children. Students with limited English proficiency and special education students were not included in the study. Forty-eight of the fifty seven students were African American, five were Caucasian, and four were of Asian descent. The goals of the study were to determine the extent to which the kindergarten students obtained new vocabulary words during the storybook reading sessions. The second goal was to determine the extent to which meaning amplification and embellishment influenced the learning of new words. As a final goal, the researchers wanted to determine the extent to which a previous learned vocabulary skill influenced children's outcomes from non-elaborated and elaborated words.

The students were pretested using the *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-III* (Dunn & Dunn, 1998) and the *Expressive One Word Vocabulary Test* (Gardner, 1990) to establish starting vocabulary knowledge. Ten story books were chosen to use throughout the course of the study based on colorful illustrations, vocabulary words unlikely to be known, age-appropriate in length and structure, and narrative in text. Six words were chosen from each text with a total of 60 words used for the study. The 60 words were randomly presented on the pre and post tests, and the children were asked to give definitions of each word. Children in the treatment group completed 20 small group intervention sessions within a ten week period. The children in the control group received the normal kindergarten curriculum. During each 20 minute session with the treatment group, graduate students read two storybooks to the group. Of the total 60 words, 30 were determined to be elaborated through instruction and presentation, whereas the additional

30 words were to be learned through incidental exposure. The elaborate words were explicitly defined to the students by the reader within the context of the storybook.

As a result, the treatment group scored considerably higher than the control group on the posttests. Children in the treatment group with low pretest vocabulary scores made significant growth when compared with the children in the control group. These findings suggest that elaboration and direct instruction of vocabulary words is more beneficial to vocabulary comprehension than incidental exposure.

### **Conclusion**

The importance of developing concrete beginnings in emergent literacy skills is in the hands of the instructor. Daring to diversify the instructional approach through rich, creative, and unconventional storybooks is needed to open the young learners mind in relationship to literacy practices on a daily basis. Researchers continue to study best reviewed practices and methods that teachers can employ with current resources in concurrence with established learning sources. The ability to read fluently and comprehend story texts relies heavily upon the teachers who must become good orators so they can tell a story as they read it. With practice in reading aloud, teachers are more likely to become comfortable in their choices of materials to enhance the text, and their ability to use print as a language building tool (Crawford & Hade, 2000).

To reach cognitive awareness in literacy with global understanding, teachers need to know how to instruct comprehension, create a balance using instructional strategies, and find activities that will promote established learning goals. Gaskin (2003), states that knowing comprehension involves three elements - the reader, the text and the activity- the context of reading is essential and influenced by instruction. Educators need to improve on acknowledging

child dialogue and take the risk of teaching interactively. Based on the preceding studies, the strategies used in instruction proved to be beneficial in enhancing oral language acquisition, print recognition, vocabulary, and literacy knowledge with the emergent reader. Teacher mediated discussions are essential to the development of understanding print as a language beyond verbal discourse. The materials chosen to create significant discussions are crucial to the development of literacy. Diversified story selections can assist teachers in the design of the lesson, expand lessons, and support student's ideas within the classroom. Students who participate in interactive read-alouds have an advantage both in their understanding of texts and in their attitudes toward reading comprehensively through verbal expression, print exposure, vocabulary, and word study, along with teacher guidance. (Greene, Brabham, & Lynch-Brown, 2002 as cited in Wiseman, 2010).

In all the studies examined in this chapter, results indicated that text selection, word study, and language skills through interactive reading are beneficial. Studies completed in kindergarten and grade one classrooms examined various ways to strive towards teaching comprehension through text selections, language development through dialogic strategies, and implementing vocabulary through read-alouds with intense word study emphasis. The most significant study in relation to this action research project is the study conducted by Wasik and Bond (2001). Within their study each component of literacy was addressed with a very comprehensive look at interactive reading speaking to the directions that are necessary for early reader's literacy growth.

The reviewed studies indicate the importance of interactive reading with emergent readers to comprehensively delve into the strategies and methods that develop literacy; teaching



children language through carefully selected storybooks with rich vocabulary, and opportunities to converse about the texts with instruction.

To summarize, building emergent literacy skills is critical to children's future reading success. Interactive book teaching may provide an opportunity for building emergent literacy skills by engaging children and providing supportive behaviors to scaffold reading, language, and word study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

This chapter discusses the population, procedures, and data collection process of the action research study designed to determine the impact of children's literature as a means of increasing language and vocabulary through text selection to enhance comprehension skills in emergent readers. This study investigated how interactive read-alouds of developmentally appropriate literature influenced comprehension skills of five children who participate in a reading support program. The areas investigated in the study include: (1) text choice (2) language comprehension (3) interactive reading with concrete objects and discussions (4) target vocabulary relating to the stories (5) written retelling using the target vocabulary. Information about the design of the study, selection of subjects, materials, pretest and posttest assessments, and data analysis, are explicated following restatement of the research originally presented in Chapter One.

### Sample Population

To determine the impact of children's literature through interactive story reading, five first grade students at a private Catholic school in southeastern Wisconsin were participants in the study. All five students were Caucasian. These five children participate in the reading support class at this school four days a week. The school in which this research was conducted has an exemplary Resource Program. Four certified teachers support students who are delayed learners. These students are recommended for the program by teacher request. From the request list the students are given a battery of informal tests and formal tests. If the testing indicates delays in reading areas, a formal staffing is requested. This staffing includes the classroom teachers, the

support reading teachers, and the parents. Prior to the formal staffing meeting a pre-staffing meeting occurs between the teachers to put in place a plan of action that will be presented to the parents. An ESP (Educational Service Plan) is designed for the student who may be placed in the Resource Program. If it is the consensus of the resource team that the student's needs are beyond the resources that this school can provide, then a recommendation is placed for further testing by the public school district.

The resource program at this private Catholic School services reading students in kindergarten through grade four. The five students who were involved in the action research study participate in the resource program for reading four days a week. Each of the five families was given the parent consent form with all forms returned. The informed consent form is found in Appendix A. The student's ages ranged from 6 years old to 7 years old at the start of the study. Two female students and three male students completed. In the next section of this chapter the procedures of the intervention will be discussed.

### **Procedures**

Prior to the start of the study, the researcher selected seven storybooks; four books were renditions of one story, with different perspectives from singular authors. The books were chosen based on content, level of text, and vocabulary words within the text. The texts and selection of vocabulary words chosen were based on a storybook book list criterion for Tier Two words which correlate with the grade recommended texts (Beck et al., 2002). Tier Two words are selected vocabulary words founded on frequency and relevance to the readers. These words are generally adjectives and verbs. The selected Tier Two words are often found in other contexts and require direct instruction for total comprehension (Beck et al., 2002).

The seven narrative texts chosen for the study included *Caps for Sale* (Slobodkina, 1938), *Sam's Sandwich* (Pelham, 1991), *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, (Buehner, C. 2007), *Goldilocks and the Other Three Bears*, (Reading A to Z, n.d.), *Beware of the Bears* (McDonald, 1998), *Deep in the Forest* (Turkle, 1976). Appendix A contains a sample lesson plan for these books and the lesson materials. Appendix B contains a sample of the weekly vocabulary pretests and posttests. The vocabulary words taught each week are listed in the following tables. The tables start at week two and end at week seven. Week one and eight

Week Two: <i>Caps for Sale</i> ( Slobodkina,1938)		
ordinary	refreshed	imitate
disturb	finally	mischievous

were devoted to pre and post testing.

Week Three: <i>Sam's Sandwich</i> (Pelham,1976)		
squirm	zesty	flavor
crisp	contained	shriek
Week Four: <i>Where The Wild Things Are</i> (Sendak,1963)		
private	tame	frighten

rumpus	adventure	longing
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Week Six: *Goldilocks and the Other Three Bears*

Vocabulary from *Beware of the Bears* (McDonald, 1998) was used for this book with sparse vocabulary.

Week Seven: *Deep in The Forest* (Turkle, 1976) Vocabulary from *Beware of the Bears* (McDonald, 1998) was used for this wordless book.

Week Five: *Beware of the Bears* (McDonald, 1998)

burst	gleeful	launched
crept	grumbled	aim

For seven weeks each storybook and set of six vocabulary words was taught for four consecutive days, using an interactive approach. On the first day at the beginning of the session, the students were given a pretest on the vocabulary words. The pretest was orally given to the class. The students were to cut and glue the synonym or word meaning phrase, and place it under the vocabulary word. When the pre-test was completed, the instructor began with the anticipatory set to front-load the lesson. The purpose of the anticipatory set was to focus student's attention on the lesson, create an organized framework for the ideas, principles, or information that was to follow (see Appendix A). For example, when introducing the first

storybook, *Caps for Sale* (Slobodkina, 1938), a picture walk through the story was completed with the class. During this exploratory picture read, the children and the instructor discussed the pictures and text features, anticipated what was happening on each page, and what would take place on the next page. The targeted words were inserted verbally by the instructor, and read in an exaggerated voice at the appropriate times during this investigative story walk. From there, the children were directed to take their own story walk around the classroom where three stations were set-up with concrete items representing the main events in the story. Station one displayed colored hats, station two had objects such as a sun, a tree, houses, and pictures depicting sleeping people, Station three exhibited plastic monkeys hanging from trees . The students were encouraged to stop at each station, select one item from each station, and return to the story circle. The purpose of the stations and selection of items was to activate the students' thinking about the story. The story was then read aloud to the children. During the oral read-aloud, the students were directed to use the items as they appeared in the story read. The instructor subtly cued the students to do this by pausing at the exact time the objects were mentioned in the story. The students interactively participated with the corresponding items by either wearing the items or visibly showing the items to the class. Day One concluded with a pre-designed list on the smart board reviewing the events of the lesson. The targeted vocabulary words were placed on the chart board and reviewed as well.

Day two began with an oral reading of the story. Each targeted vocabulary word was displayed on the chart board. When the initial reading was complete, the researcher engaged the student's in an interactive word game. The researcher began reading the story again to the children, stopping when the targeted word presented itself in the sentence being read, not saying the word, but completing the text sentence. The instructor then held up a child's name. The

selected student was to choose the appropriate word from the chart to complete the sentence and give it to the instructor. The instructor then placed the vocabulary word on the designated page. This procedure continued until all the words were chosen and placed inside the book. Following this word game, the story was then reread to the group with the selected words from the chart inserted in the text. As the story was reread the instructor once again stopped at the targeted word which was inserted by the students from the chart board. The student who inserted the word gave an explanation as to why that word should be placed in that particular sentence. The group then gave their opinions, and the teacher revealed the correct word. Following this game, a review sheet was displayed on the smart board with the target words (see Appendix C). The target word sheet displayed the words with examples that would or would not match the definition. The children followed along with their own sheet as the instructor filled in the main sheet on the smart board. Discussions took place during this time with the researcher prompting the children to make text to self connections with the words and definitions. These sheets were recorded in the weekly field notes.

On day three, the instructor led the children in a center activity that related to the story. For example, in week three when using the book *Sam's Sandwich* (Pelham, 1976) an art center was arranged for the children to make their own paper sandwich with all the contents of the sandwich listed in the story. Because the theme of the story is about a brother tricking his sister by placing creepy crawlers in her sandwich, the student's were able to select a plastic insect and place it inside their sandwich. Following the art project, the children then went to the writing center to write about the creation of their sandwich following writing workshop rules of which were posted in the writing center. The target words from *Sam's Sandwich* (Pelham, 1976), were pasted in a pre-made book. The students then completed the book that represented the sandwich

being made in the story by selecting three of the target words and writing a story about the sandwich they made. A story starter was given, as well as the list of the target words pasted on the inside of the cover for guidance. The story was then read to the class. The instructor used the story with a writing rubric for the field notes, and to support comprehension conclusions. Appendix D displays a sample of the story starter and Appendix E the rubric. The session ended with reading the story in a dialogic fashion with the participants.

On day four, a review lesson was planned for the participants of the study. Each student was given a copy of the storybook and a whisper phone to read the story. A whisper phone is a hand-held, acoustical device that can be made from PVC piping. The device helps children and adults focus and hear the individual sounds of words more clearly as they learn to read, spell, and process language aloud. The participants of the study were also given word swatters to swat the target words as they read the story to themselves. A word swatter is a plastic device that resembles a fly swatter. It allows students to focus attention on words that are written on whiteboards, blackboards, and pocket charts. It also allows students to isolate letters, parts of speech, context clues and print concepts in literacy lessons. After the review, a posttest was administered exactly the same as the pretest given on day one. Appendix B contains a sample of the weekly vocabulary pretest and posttests. The students were also given a six question multiple choice comprehension assessment about the storybook. Appendix F shows the comprehension test for each lesson. The assessment was read aloud to the students. The students were instructed to highlight the answer they felt was correct. Upon completion of the posttests, the students were given response journals. Reading response journals are informal, written communications between two or more people about a topic the writer has read about. These journals can include personal reactions to, questions about, and reflections on what has been



read. Students can respond to what they've read, or to what has been read to them. The response journals listed all the target vocabulary words from each story. The participants were encouraged to use three of the words in their response journal each week and illustrate their entries.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection occurred several times throughout the study. The results from the Towre-2 Test of Word Efficiency (Torgesen et al., 2012), and the Qualitative Reading Inventory-5 (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011), were collected at the beginning and ending of the study. The Towre Test of Word Efficiency (Torgesen, et al., 2012) is a standardized test which measures an individual's ability to pronounce printed words (i.e., sight word efficiency) and phonemically regular non-words (i.e., phonemic decoding efficiency), skills that are critical in the development of overall reading ability. The QRI-5 (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) is an individually administered informal reading inventory (IRI) designed to provide information about conditions under which students can identify words and comprehend text successfully, and conditions that appear to result in unsuccessful word identification or comprehension (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011). The Towre-2 (Torgesen et al), and QRI (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011), were given as pretests on week one of the intervention to each student individually and as posttests on week eight. The Towre-2 Test of Word Efficiency (Torgesen et.al, 2012), is comprised of two lists. The first list uses sight words only; the second list uses non-sense words that are phonemically correct. The student has 45 seconds per list to read the words. The test is then scored using standardized measures to assess the students' ability to sound out words quickly and accurately, and to assess the ability to recognize familiar words as whole units or sight words. This test was completed on day one of the pretest week. Days two through four were dedicated to administering the QRI-5 (Leslie &

Caldwell,2011), which is used to provide appropriate information in identifying a student's instructional level, determining areas of reading in which the student is having difficulty, and to document growth based on a type of instructional program or intervention. This assessment is designed for the instructor to choose a grade level passage for the student to read. As the child is reading the instructor creates a running record to measure the student's fluency rate. After the student reads, the instructor checks for understanding and comprehension through explicit and implicit questions. This assessment can be used to determine grade level reading, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, and oral reading accuracy. In this intervention, the QRI-5 (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011), was used to assess comprehension and vocabulary.

Weeks two through seven concentrated on the collection of data. The purpose of the intervention was to assess interactive reading and its impact on language, and vocabulary through text selection. Each week a vocabulary pre and posttest was given to the participants of the intervention. Six words were chosen from the text. Both pre and posttests were read to the children collectively. The children were then directed to cut out the word definition (synonym) or phrase and glue it underneath the target word. The vocabulary testing format remained the same each week. Each word definition was assigned one point, with a total of six points for each weekly pre and post vocabulary test. The children were also given a weekly comprehension test on the story of the week (see Appendix F). This assessment was composed of six questions with the exception of the last story which had eight questions. The addition for this assessment was supported by the bundling of four books which are renditions of one story, with different perspectives from singular authors. Another component of the assessments was the recorded in-depth field notes taken by the researcher. These assessments reflected the student's strengths and weaknesses, as well as their ability to apply knowledge through activities that were presented in

the weekly lessons. Week eight was devoted to post testing. Post testing followed the same procedure as the pretesting given on week one. However, when testing the students with the QRI-5 (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011), the passages read differed with each student. The QRI-5 (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) is designed for fluid reading. Therefore, it is recommended by the authors to continue with the passages until a child reaches a frustration level. Consequently, the data reflects diverse readings from student to student, and differences in the reading passages from pretest to posttest. This is essential to note as it indicated if the student showed growth in the researchers area of concentration; fluency, comprehension, conceptual awareness, or vocabulary, as this inventory assesses all of the areas mentioned. In this study, the researcher was looking for growth in conceptual awareness, vocabulary, and comprehension.

### **Conclusion**

Conducting an action research allowed an educator the opportunity to select and implement strategies that have been studied and tested by researchers within particular fields of education. Knowledge of these research findings could be beneficial to a teacher's area of instruction, and overall range of literacy within the classroom. In this particular action research study, the focus was on determining the effects of interactive reading in the areas of language, vocabulary, and comprehension through text selection with early readers. This chapter discussed the sample population, the lesson and assessment procedures, and data collection process. The next chapter will summarize the results of the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Results

Does interactive story book reading develop comprehension through targeting text selections, incorporating language experiences with in-depth word study skills, while instructing through interactive read-alouds to emergent readers? This investigation was pursued to answer questions on how to develop literacy in early readers. This comprehensive chapter clarifies the results of the collected data, and gives explanation to what the data implies in relation to the action research inquisition. The assessments and evaluation of all data, including extensive field notes, explains how the investigator supported this research inquiry.

### Data Analysis

Data collection was extremely important in relation to this research question. Therefore, carefully selected pretests were essential in relation to the first direction of the intervention; appropriate text selection for the participants. The researcher vigilantly researched and investigated storybooks that would be appropriate for the participants of the action research study.

This research study consisted of the implementation of a six-week interactive storybook reading intervention. Prior to the intervention, students were administered the Towre-2 Test of Word Efficiency (Torgesen et al, 2012), to assess sight word recognition, as well as phonemic decoding abilities. In addition, students were administered the Qualitative Reading Inventory-5 (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) to assess students' conceptual understanding and passage comprehension. Each of the 5 students met with the researcher to be assessed individually for the Towre-2 (Torgesen et al., 2012), and the QRI-5 (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011).

On the Towre -2 pre-test (Torgesen et al., 2012); the students were assessed on two word analysis areas which consist of two word efficiency tests. The first section of the test was the Sight Word Efficiency (SWE) assessment, and the second section of the test was the Phonemic Decoding Efficiency (PDE) assessment. A scaled score is given in Figure 4.1 and 4.2 for SWE and PDE assessments. Scaled scores are standard scores which provide the clearest indication of an examinee's subtest and overall performance. The children who participated in this intervention study were struggling readers. The Towre-2 (Torgesen et.al, 2012) is a standardized test which provides a scaled score as well as a percentile rank. A total scaled score combining both sections of the test is also given. This test allowed the student to read as many words as possible within a 45 second time period in both the sight word section and the phonemic decoding section.

A *t-test* was used to test the hypothesis that students' sight word efficiency scores would improve on the posttest, compared with their pretest scores. Figure 4.1 shows a significant difference in the scores for the SWE pretest ( $M=89.8$ ,  $SD=9.2$ ) and the SWE posttest ( $M=96.8$ ,  $SD=10.1$ ). A descriptive analysis of each student's results, as illustrated in Figure 4.1 and 4.2 indicated that during the six-week study, each student improved their sight word recognition skills. At the beginning of the study in the SWE segment of the Towre-2 (Torgesen et.al, 2012); Student One earned an age equivalent score of 6.0 on the pretest and a grade equivalent score of 1.0 with a percentile rank of 35. On the posttest score Student One earned an age equivalent score 6.6, and received a grade equivalent score of 1.2 with a percentile rank of 37. Therefore, Student One increased by 10% in terms of her age equivalent score. Student Two earned an age equivalent score of 6.0, and a grade equivalent score of 1.0 with a percentile rank of 4 on the pretest. On the posttest Student Two earned an age equivalent score of 6.3, a grade equivalent

score of 1.2 with a percentile rank of 9. Therefore, Student Two increased his age equivalent score by 5%. Student Two's chronological age negatively impacted both scores. Student Three had an age equivalent score of 6.9, a grade equivalent score of 1.2, and a percentile rank of 30. On the posttest, Student Three earned an age equivalent score of 7.6, a grade equivalent score of 1.8, and a percentile rank of 48. Therefore, Student Three increased his age equivalent score by 9.2%. On the pretest, Student Four earned an age equivalent score of 6.3, a grade equivalent score of 1.0, and a percentile rank of 42. On the posttest, Student Four earned an age equivalent score of 6.9, a grade equivalent score of 1.5, and a percentile rank of 53. Therefore, Student Four increased her age equivalent score by 8.7%. On the pretest, Student Five earned an age equivalent score of 6.6, a grade equivalent score of 1.2 and a percentile rank of 45. On the posttest, Student five earned an age equivalent score of 6.9, a grade equivalent score of 1.8, and percentile rank of 63. Therefore, Student Five increased her age equivalent score by 4.4%. A comparison of the two scores indicated that each student progressed from pretest to posttest.

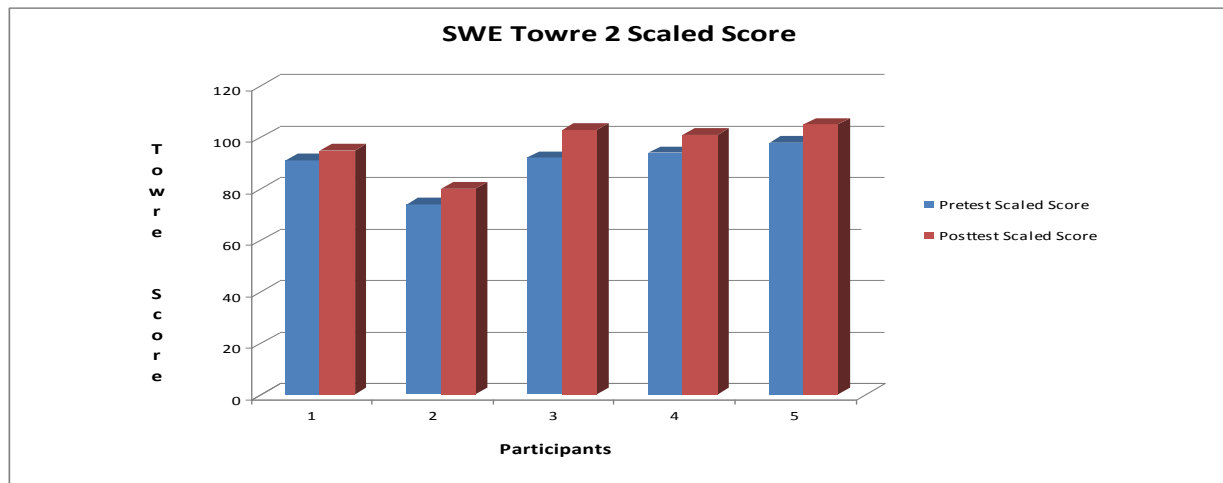


Figure 4.1 SWE Towre -2 Scaled Score

As with the SWE pre-test, a t-test was used for the PDE pretest to test the hypothesis that students' phonemic decoding efficiency scores would improve on the posttest, compared with

their pretest scores. As shown in figure 4.2, a significant difference is shown in the scores for the PDE pretest ( $M=92.4$ ,  $SD=6.5$ ) and the PDE posttest ( $M=94.4$ ,  $SD=10.7$ ). At the beginning of the study in the PDE segment of the Towre-2 (Torgesen, et al, 2012); Student One earned an age equivalent score of 6.0 on the pretest and a grade equivalent of 1.0 with a percentile rank of 19. On the posttest, Student One earned an age equivalent score of 6.3, a grade equivalent score of 1.2, and a percentile rank of 35. Therefore Student One increased by 4.8 % in terms of her age equivalent score. On the pretest, Student Two earned an age equivalent score of 6.3, a grade equivalent score of 1.2, and a percentile rank of 14. On the posttest, Student Two earned an age equivalent score of 6.0, a grade equivalent of 1.0, and a percentile rank of 5. Therefore, Student Two decreased by 4.8% in terms of his age equivalent score. On the pretest, Student Three earned an age equivalent score of 7.0, a grade equivalent score of 1.8, and a percentile rank of 47. On the posttest, Student Three earned an age equivalent score of 7.2, a grade equivalent score of 2.0, and a percentile rank of 53. Therefore, Student three increased her age equivalent score score by 2.8%. On the pretest, Student Four earned an age equivalent score of 6.3, a grade equivalent score of 1.2, and a percentile rank of 42. On the posttest, Student Four earned an age equivalent score of 7.0, a grade equivalent of 1.5, and a percentile rank of 53. Therefore Student Four increased by 11% in terms of her age equivalent score. On the pretest, Student Five earned an age equivalent score of 6.9, a grade equivalent score of 1.5, and a percentile rank of 42. On the posttest, Student Five earned an age equivalent score of 6.9, a grade equivalent score of 1.5, and a percentile rank of 50. Student Five's age equivalent score remained the same.

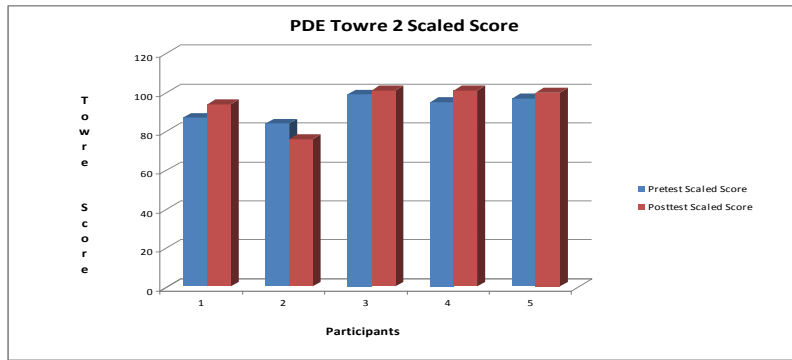


Figure 4.2 Pre-test and post-test results for PDE Towre 2.

The most reliable score for the Towre-2 (Torgesen et.al, 2012) is the TWRE index. This score is derived by adding the subset scaled scores and converting the sum to a total standards score. Figure 4.3 shows the combined index of both figure 4.1 and 4.2 scaled scores with the percentile ranks. As shown in figure 4.3, a significant difference is shown in combined scores for the pretest ( $M=89.4$ ,  $SD=9.2$ ) and the combined posttest scored ( $M=95.4$ ,  $SD=10.9$ ).

On the pretest, Student One earned a combined index score of 88, and a percentile rank of 21. On the posttest, Student One earned a combined index score of 94, with a percentile rank of 35. Therefore, Student One, increased by 67% in terms of her percentile rank. On the pretest, Student Two earned a combined index score of 74, with a percentile rank of 7, a combined posttest index score of 77, and a percentile rank of 6. Therefore, Student Two decreased by 14.8% in terms of his percentile rank. On the pretest Student Three earned a combined index score of 95, and a percentile rank of 37. On the posttest Student Three earned a combined index score of 102, and a percentile rank of 55. Therefore, Student Three increased by 48% in terms of his percentile rank. On the pretest, Student Four earned a combined index of 94, with a percentile rank of 35. On the posttest Student Four earned a combined index score of 101, and a percentile rank of 53. Therefore, Student Four increased by 51% in terms of her percentile rank. On the pretest Student Five earned a combined index score of 96, with a percentile rank of 39. On the



posttest, Student Five earned a combined index score of 103, and a percentile rank of 58. Therefore, Student Five increased by 49% in terms of her percentile rank. As the Towre-2 (Torgesen, et al., 2012) is a test for evaluating word skills, the next test selection concentrated on evaluating conceptual understanding and passage comprehension.

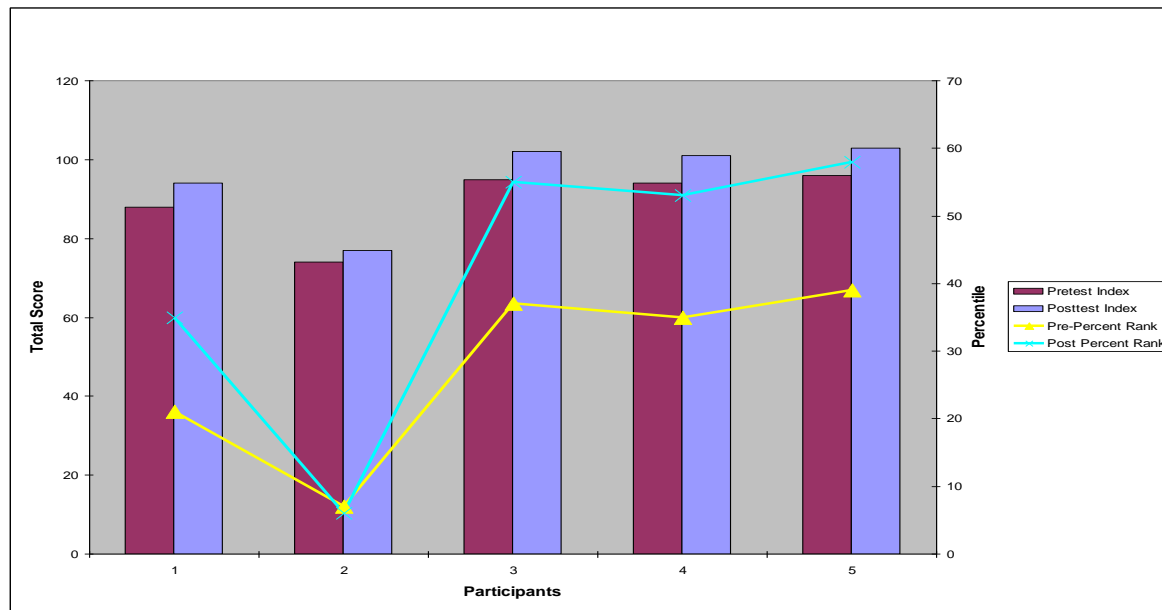


Figure 4.3 Pre-test and post-test results for Towre -2 Index and Percentile Rank

The QRI-5 (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) was selected as an assessment tool to evaluate the students conceptual and comprehension skills of a narrative passage. The QRI-5 (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) provides a clear explanation of the students readability level, conceptual understanding and comprehension of a given leveled text passage. On the QRI-5 (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) pretest, the students were assessed on two areas; conceptual understanding of passage topics and comprehension of narrative passages. Each child was given the Pre-Primer 1, Pre-Primer 2, and Pre-Primer 3, passage to read. Each narrative passage was the same for each pre and posttest. Using this assessment, the researcher scored and compared results of pre-test and post-test levels of conceptual understanding and comprehension. Prior to reading the

passage, the students were asked concept questions pertaining to the passage, which indicated their prior knowledge of the passage's topic. Each passage provided three concept questions worth 3 points each. The QRI-5 (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) text manual provides explicit instructions on scoring these questions. After reading aloud the passage, students answered explicit and implicit comprehension questions. Scoring was determined by comparing the acceptable answers on the scoring sheet provided with the passage, to the student's answers. The researcher scored the comprehension questions. A total number of eight questions were provided for each passage given to the students. A concept question percentage and comprehension question percentage was determined to compare students' pre and posttest scores. This same procedure was completed during the administration of the posttest.

When examining the results of the QRI-5 (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) pre-test for concept questions on the Pre-Primer 1 passage, Student One was not able to answer any of the questions correctly, and Student Five was only able to correctly answer 33% of the concept questions. Student Two, Three, and Four did considerably better with Student Two answering 56% of the questions correctly, Student Three showed 100% accuracy, and Student Four answering 78% of the Pre-Primer concept questions correctly. The mean of the Pre-Primer 1 Pre-test being 53.4%. Examination of the Pre-Primer 2 concept questioning showed that Student One answered 22% of the questions correctly; Student Two answered 44% correctly, Student Three answered with 100% accuracy, Student Four answered with 67% accuracy, and Student Five answered with 33% accuracy. The mean for the Pre-Primer 2 Concept Questions Pre-test was 53.2%. When examining the Pre-Primer 3 Pre-test concept questions, the examiner recorded scores from Student Three, Student Four, and Student Five only, as it was decided by the examiner not give the third passage to Student One and Two due to their level of frustration with the preceding

passages. This decision is in agreement with the QRI-5 (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) procedures of the continuation of administering passages.

However, Student Three and Student Five answered the concept questions for the Pre-Primer 3 Pre-test with 100% accuracy, and Student Four answered the questions with 60% accuracy. Figures 4.4-4.6 clearly illustrate the gains in conceptual knowledge when comparing the pre and posttest for each passage.

QRI Pretest and Posttests for Concept Questions		
Students	Pre Primer1 Pretest	P Primer1 Posttest
1	0%	78%
2	56%	44%
3	100%	100%
4	78%	100%
5	33%	100%

*Figure 4.4*

QRI Pretest and Posttests for Concept Questions		
Students	P Primer2 Pretest	P Primer2 Posttest
1	22%	100%
2	44%	33%
3	100%	100%
4	67%	100%
5	33%	89%

Figure 4.5

QRI Pretest and Posttests for Concept Questions		
Students	P Primer3 Pretest	P Primer3 Posttest
1	N/A	80%
2	N/A	33%
3	100%	100%
4	60%	80%
5	100%	100%

Figure 4.6

Upon completion of answering the concept questions for the QRI-5 (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) pre-test passages, the students were instructed to read each corresponding narrative. Eight comprehension questions per passage were then given to each student at the completion of each

passage reading. The questions were a mixture of explicit and implicit questions. The examiner then scored each comprehension section determining whether the student's comprehension for each passage showed an independent, instructional, or frustration level. Figures 4.7-4.9 show the pre and posttest comprehension comparisons. In the Pre-Primer 1 Pre-test Students One and Two answered the comprehension questions with 80% accuracy. Students Three and Four demonstrated 100% accuracy, and Student Five showed a frustration level with only 44% accuracy. The mean for the Pre-Primer 1 pre-test comprehension questions was 80%, while the mean of the posttest was 96%. Students Two, Three, and Four did not vary in their posttest comprehension scores; whereas Student One increased her score by 20% and Student Five increased her score by 60%. Following this same pattern for testing, the QRI-5 pre-test comprehension questions for the Pre-Primer 2 narrative showed Student One answering the pre-test questions with 60% accuracy. Student Two, Three, Four, and Five answered the pre-test questions with 100% accuracy. The Mean of this pre-test was 92 (92%). When comparing the Pre-Primer 2 pre-test to the Pre-Primer 2 posttest (Figure 4.8) Students Three and Four maintained 100% accuracy placing these two students at independent level for comprehension. Student one gained 20% in comprehension scores, earning a posttest score of 100% which is an independent level for comprehension. Student Five decreased in her comprehension score from 100% accuracy in the pre-test to 80% in the post-test.

The final pretest given to all five participants followed the sequential order of the narratives presented in the QRI-5 (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) narratives. On the Pre-Primer 3 pre-test narrative the examiner recorded scores from Student Three, Student Four, and Student Five only. It was decided by the examiner not give the third passage to Student One and Two due to their level of frustration with the preceding passages. Student Three and Five scored 100% and

Student Four had 60% accuracy. No mean is recorded for the pre-test as two of the five children did not read the narrative. When given the post-test for the Pre-Primer 3 comprehension questions all five children read the narrative. Student One showed 80% accuracy and Student Two showed 33% accuracy in the comprehension questions. Students Three and Five remained consistent with 100% accuracy, and Student Four increased her accuracy by 20%. The mean of the Pre-Primer 3 Post-test was 78 (78%).

QRI Pretest and Posttests for Comprehension Questions		
Students	Pre Primer1 Pretest	P Primer1 Posttest
1	80%	100%
2	80%	80%
3	100%	100%
4	100%	100%
5	40%	100%

Figure4.7

QRI Pretest and Posttests for Comprehension Questions		
Students	P Primer2 Pretest	P Primer2 Posttest
1	60%	100%
2	100%	80%
3	100%	100%
4	100%	100%
5	100%	80%

<b>QRI Pretest and Posttests for Comprehension Questions</b>		
<b>Students</b>	<b>P Primer3 Pretest</b>	<b>P Primer3 Posttest</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>80%</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>33%</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>80%</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Figure 4.9*

The previous section summarized the results from the pre-tests and post-tests that assessed the students' knowledge on conceptual understanding and passage comprehension. The next section will summarize and analyze the results from the weekly pre and post tests.

In week two, the text that was taught was *Caps for Sale* (Slobodkina, 1938). The students took the vocabulary pre-test prior to reading the text. Tier Two words (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002) were selected from the text. The post-test, which was given on the last day of the weekly instruction, included the same words as the pre-test but in a different order. On the pretest the mean was 70 (70%), on the post-test the mean was 77%, and the difference between the pre and posttest was 7% (see Figure 4.10). The following bar graph displays the student's scores from the pre and posttest as well as the singular comprehension assessment given the last day of the lesson. On the pretest, Student one scored 66% and 50% on the posttest, with a comprehension score of 100%. On the pretest, Student Two scored 33% and 33% on the posttest, with a comprehension score of 50%. Student Three scored 100% on both pre and posttests, with a comprehension score of 83%. Student Four scored 100% on both the pre and post tests and

100% on the comprehension test. Student Five scored 50% on the pretest, 100% on the posttest, and 83 % on the comprehension test.

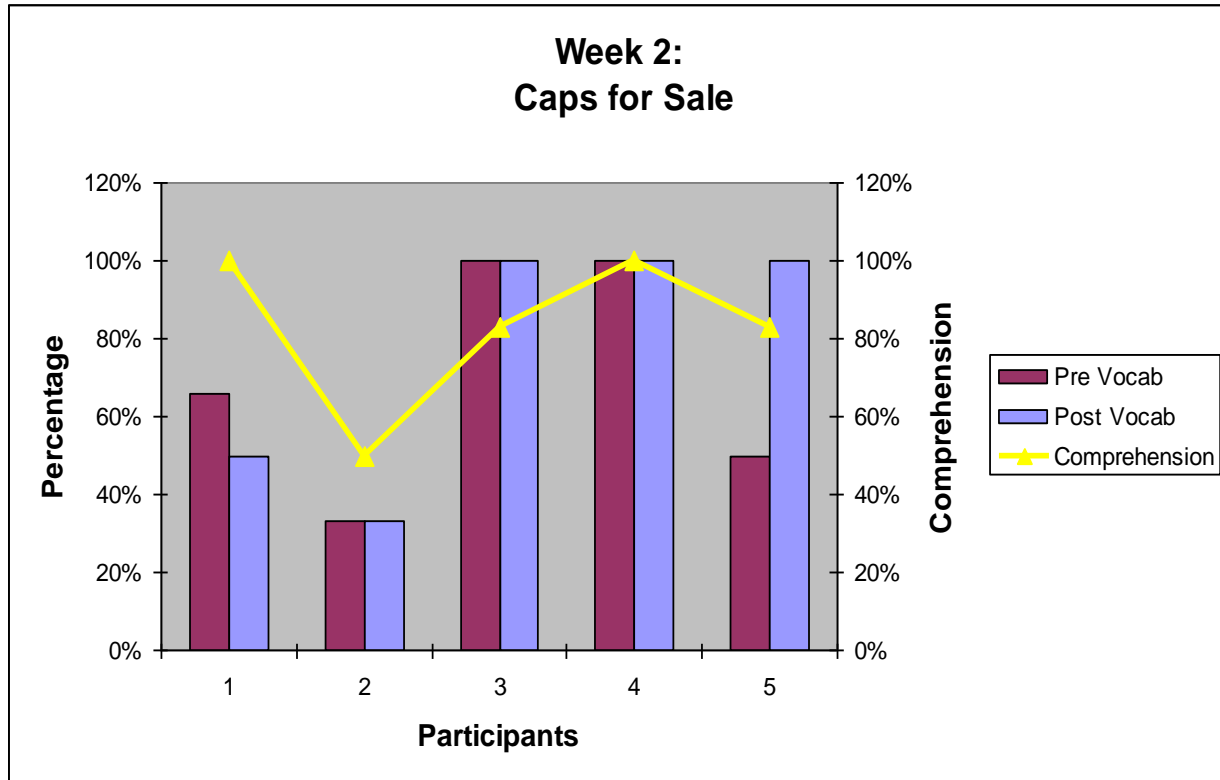
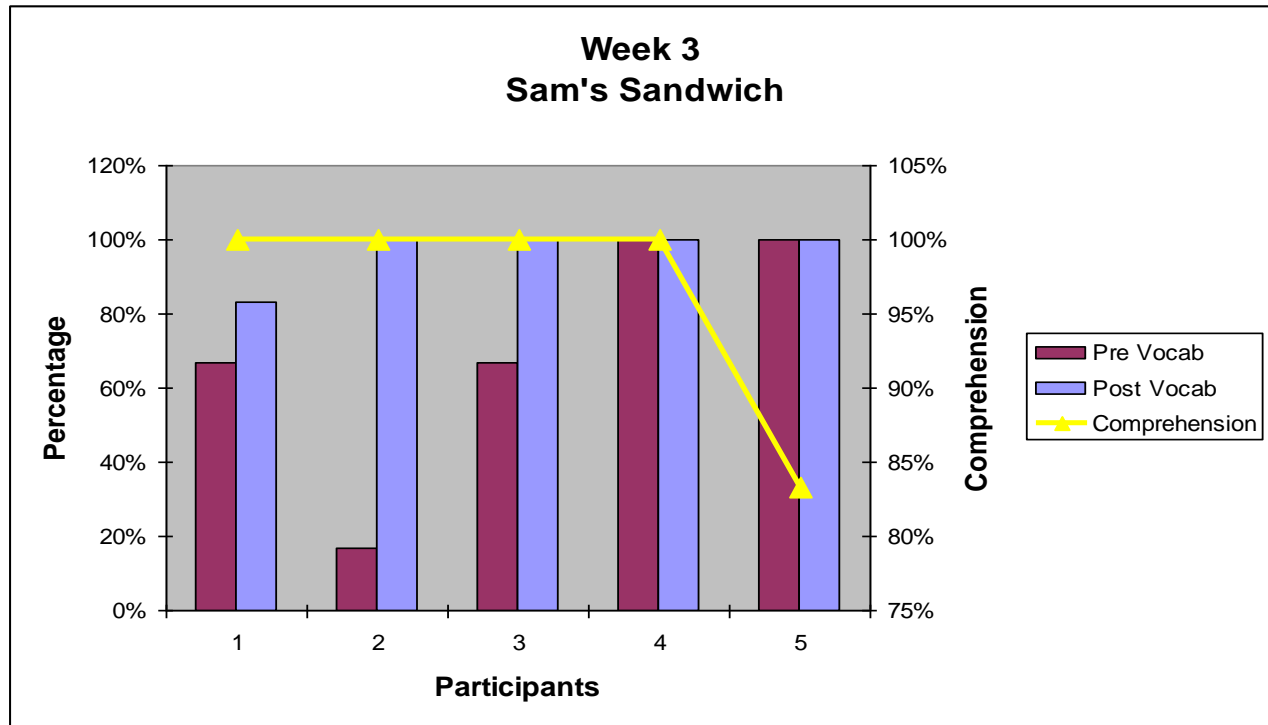


Figure 4.10

In week three of the intervention, the students were introduced to six additional Tier Two words (Beck et al, 2002) using the text *Sam's Sandwich* (Pelham, 1991) following the same format as week two. The mean of the vocabulary pre-test was 70 (70%), and the posttest mean was 97 (97%) leaving a difference of 27 (27%). The difference between the pre and post test suggest significant gains in vocabulary comprehension for this text (see Figure 4.11). On the pretest Student One earned a score of 67%, 83% on the posttest and 100% on the comprehension test. Student Two earned a score of 17% on the pretest, 100% on the posttest, and 100 % on the comprehension test. Student Three earned a score of 67% on the pretest, and 100% on the comprehension test. Student Four earned a score of 100% on all three assessments. Student Five



earned a score of 100% on both pre and posttest, and an 83% on the comprehension test. The comprehension assessment given to the students on the last day of the weekly lesson suggested that all but one student had a solid representation and recall of the story.



*Figure 4.11*

In week four of the intervention the student's Tier Two (Beck et al, 2002) word bank for the week was selected from the text *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1991). The mean from the pre-test was 93 (93%); the posttest mean was 100 (100%), with a difference of 7 (7%). The difference between the pre and posttest suggest a considerable gain in vocabulary understanding (see Figure 4.12). On the both pre and posttests, Student One earned a score of 100%, and 100% on the comprehension test. Student Two earned a pretest score of 67% and posttest score of 100%. Student Two earned a score of 100% on the comprehension test. Student Three earned a score of 100% on both pre and posttests, and a score of 100% on the comprehension test. Student Four earned a score of 100% on the pre and posttests, and 100% on the comprehension test.

Student Five earned a score of 100% on the pre and posttests, and 100% on the comprehension test. The comprehension test suggests that the participants clearly understood the context of the story.

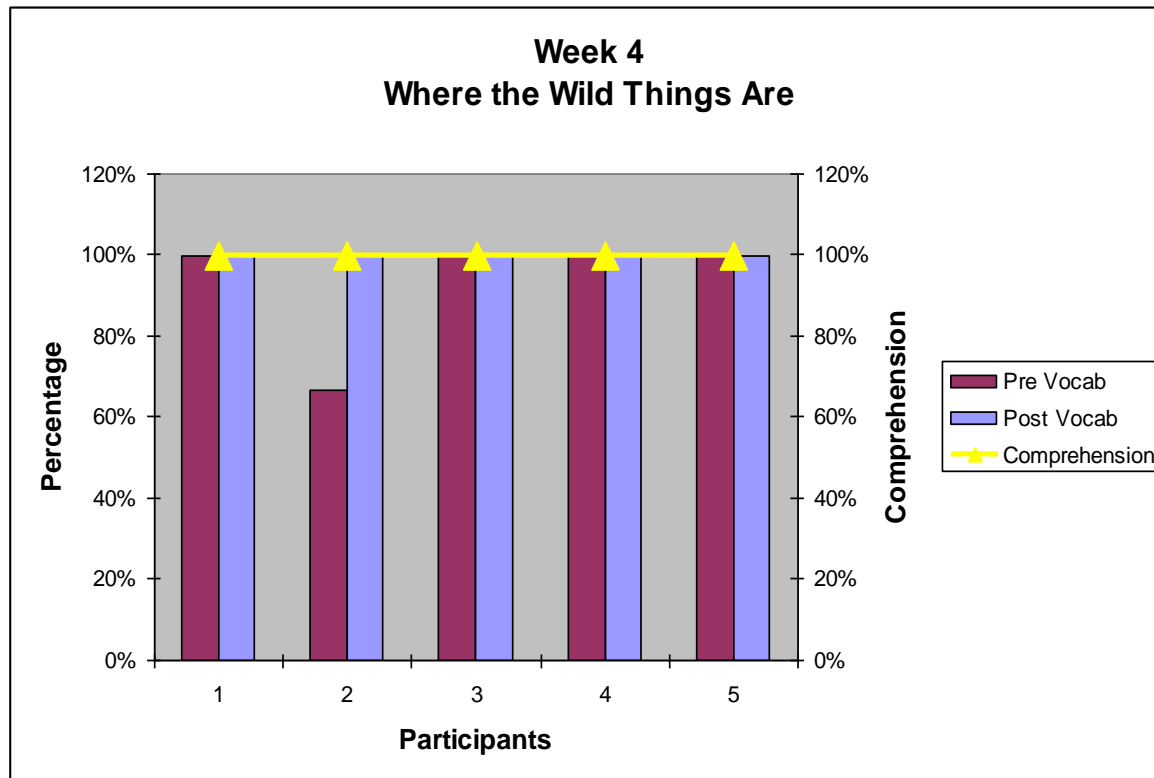


Figure 4.12

In week five, Tier Two vocabulary (Beck et al, 2002) was chosen from the storybook *Beware of the Bears* (McDonald, 1998). In week six, vocabulary from *Beware of the Bears* (McDonald, 1998) was used for *Goldilocks and the Other Three Bears*, a rendition of the classic story *The Three Bears*, but with sparse vocabulary. In week seven the researcher used the same vocabulary with the wordless book *Deep in the Forest* (Turkle, 1976) although the researcher used only the data from the *Beware of the Bears* (McDonald, 1998), field notes and anecdotal records from the *Goldilocks and the Other Three Bears*, and *Deep in the Forest* were

acknowledged as the researcher analyzed data. Chapter five addresses this segment of the intervention.

The vocabulary pre-test mean for *Beware of the Bears* (McDonald, 1998) was 80%. The mean of the post-test was 93%, showing a difference of 13% in the mean between the pre and post-test. Student One earned a score of 100% on both the pre and posttests, and a score of 88% on the comprehension test. Student Two earned a pretest score of 50%, a posttest of 67%, and 75% on the comprehension test. Student Three earned a score of 100% on all three assessments. Student Four earned a score of 83% on the pretest, 100% on the posttest and 100% on the comprehension test. Student Five earned a pretest score of 67%, a posttest score of 100%, and a comprehension score of 83%. From the data and bar graphs it can be summarized that the majority of the students were able to identify, use, and understand the vocabulary taught in the six week intervention.

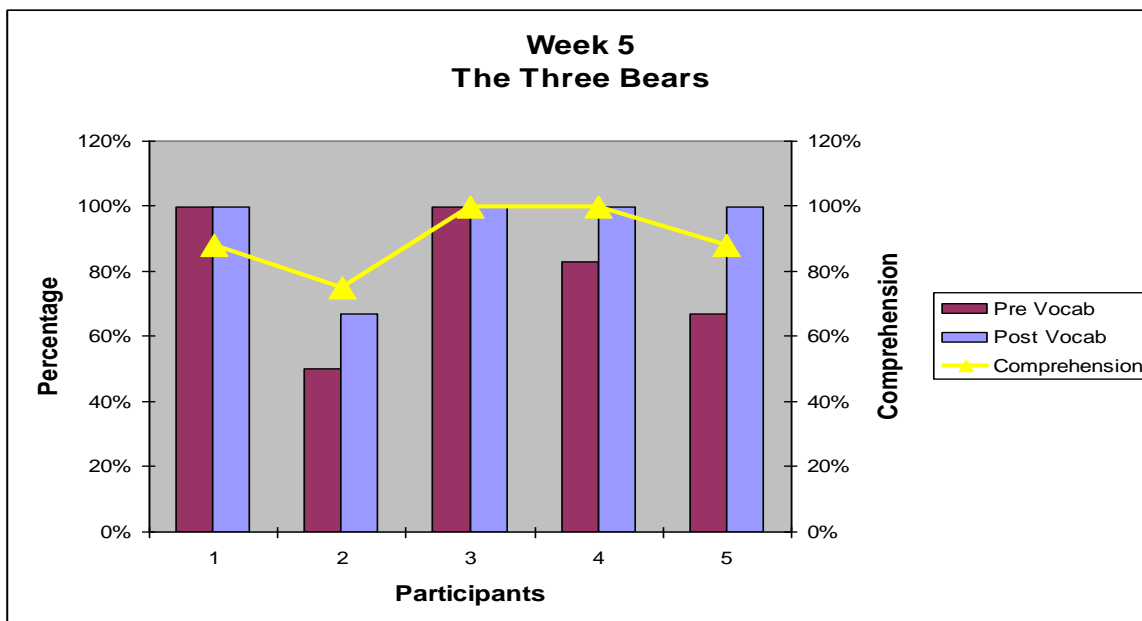


Figure 4.13

## Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, an explanation of the research data collected was explained. This data challenged and supported the action research question: Does interactive story book reading develop comprehension through targeting text selections, incorporating language experiences with in-depth word study skills, while instructing through interactive read-alouds to emergent readers? The data collection for this action research project through the use of pre-testing, post-testing, and field notes determined that the weekly, interactive storybook reading intervention suggested that there was an overall rise in comprehension, vocabulary, and language skills for the majority of the children. The weekly story vocabulary tests suggested that after the six week intervention, students increased their Tier Two (Beck et al, 2002) level vocabulary with in an interactive storybook reading lesson. Further, the weekly comprehension tests also suggested that the children understood the context and content of the stories that were read to them interactively. This concurs with the QRI-5 (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) concept question post-tests for all the Pre-Primer passages read by the students (figures 4.4-4.6) which showed a marked increase in all but one participant. The QRI-5 (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) post-test comprehension questions also suggested a noticeable increase in all three Pre-Primer passages. The final chapter of this action research project illustrates a complete examination of the data obtained in regards to best practice research related to interactive reading to early readers, a detailed examination of the results, various strengths and limitations apparent within the study, and the researcher's personal recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Conclusions

In the previous chapter the results of the pre and post tests were assessed and summarized. In this chapter the results of the interactive storybook reading study will be discussed to a greater extent. The first section will analyze the connections of the study to relevant research; the second section will explain the results of the interactive reading study. Following these two sections, the strength and weaknesses of the study will be examined. The final section will discuss future research needed in the area of interactive read-alouds with early readers.

The research conducted determined the effects of interactive storybook instruction on struggling first grade readers' comprehension, language, and vocabulary curriculum. Data collected over 15 hours of intervention suggested growth in the majority of students' reading comprehension. Scores from the pretests were compared to scores from the posttests to determine progress. The action research participants were first grade students attending a private elementary school in southeastern Wisconsin. The students were selected for this research study due to the fact that all students exhibited comprehension struggles in their classrooms especially within the area of reading instruction. The data collection suggested that the majority of students increased their language, vocabulary acquisition, and comprehension with the support of interactive reading. Chapter Five will connect this intervention to the Common Core Standards.

### **Connection to the Common Core Standards**

According to the Wisconsin Common Core Standards (2010), first grade students should be able to support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text with limited support by the end of the school year. The Wisconsin Common Core Standards (2010) also states that first grade students should be able to retell familiar stories while including detail. This indicates that starting at an early age children need to acquire the skills of reading including comprehension. There has been a large amount of research explored to identify the best way to instruct young learners' on the skill of reading comprehension. The one method that was most frequently discussed was read alouds. When it came time to designing the interventions used in my research study, the exiting research became very influential. According to Sobol (1992; as cited in Isbel et al., 2004), when a story is read to a young child, the principle reference being communicated is the text page. However, when a storytelling event takes place the words are not memorized but recreated through lively performances, listeners' participation, and energetic conversations. This information assisted me in the planning of this study. Although the storybooks in this study were read initially by the instructor, retelling, dramatization, and tangible items were used throughout the weekly lessons to support the context of the story for language acquisition and reading comprehension.

To become successful literacy learners Pantaleo (2007) suggests that instructors of literacy need to assist the emergent reader to develop language as a social form of developing cognitive awareness in relationship to the written text. Pantaleo's study (2007) investigated the effect of language use in young children during interactive read-alouds. In this study, the researcher used story book reading interactively to promote language literacy. The Common

Core State Standards for Language (2010) in grade one state that the student should be able to distinguish shades of meaning among verbs and adjectives differing in manner (e.g., *look, peek, glance, stare, glare, scowl*) and adjectives differing in intensity (e.g., *large, gigantic*) by defining, choosing them, or acting out the meanings. The language standards also state that students need to use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts. In the study that Pantaleo (2007) conducted, during read-alouds the student's were able to learn how to participate in the particular storybook content through social and discursive practices. Practices in connecting text to text and text to self enabled the students to relate prior life experiences through conversation and text discussion. In this study, a similar approach was used to promote language literacy through storybook reading. In accordance with the Common Core State Standards (2010) first grade students should be able to use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events. The study conducted by Pantaleo (2007) supports this standard by providing such opportunities through text discussions, and illustrations of the said text. In congruence with Pantaleo's (2007) intervention, this study provided similar opportunities for the students to experience a story come to life by retelling through reenactments and center activities referenced in Chapter Three. Through these discussions and activities it was observed that the student's language and behaviors impacted one another, and their group reactions affected each individual's reactions to the stories noted through field notes and completed activities. Consequently, it was determined from these observations and field notes that individual and collective personality reactions during the readings were constantly changing, emerging, and adjusting to the new story information and outcomes as seen in Panteleo's (2007) intervention as well.

The new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts (2010) have increased the rigor of literacy instruction and assessment at all grade levels. According to the CCSS, students are expected to achieve proficiency with some literacy skills at an earlier age than dictated by previous standards, and students are also expected to have a greater span of literacy knowledge. In order for students to meet these increased expectations, literacy educators must understand the new skills and concepts they are expected to teach, as well as develop a repertoire of research-based instructional practices that develop these skills and concepts.

Although the CCSS provided the initial impetus for this study, past research led to a refinement of this topic and also drove the design of this study's intervention.

### **Connections to Existing Research**

This study's intervention focused on interactive reading with storybooks to promote comprehension. Read alouds not only enhance acquiring language development and new vocabulary words, they are also beneficial to comprehension of text being read. The studies reviewed in Chapter Two support spending time selecting appropriate narrative texts, developing language, and teaching new vocabulary words to early readers through storybooks. Students participated in an interactive reading experience during this six-week study because past research found that allowing students to become verbally and physically involved with the text positively impacted comprehension skills, especially when connections were made personal for the students (Santaro et al, 2008). In this study, the students were actively involved in the weekly stories. The anticipatory sets for each storybook were key components for the interactive format. Setting the scene for each story brought personal connections to the students through active participation in the weekly literature (see Appendix A for lesson plan sample).



Interactive reading is particularly challenging because it requires skill, creative interdisciplinary planning, and the implementation of Common Core State Standards (2010) to both the language and reading strands of the standards. Multiple structures are used in interactive reading lessons: text choice, sequence of events, introduction of new vocabulary and the understanding of language components within the text. Teaching early readers interactively with storybooks may increase the knowledge they gain, thus promote comprehension and appreciation of literature. Connections to research related to language development and vocabulary awareness through interactive story book reading and text selection with the results of this action research study will be presented.

### **Text Selection**

Throughout the previous studies, researchers concluded that interactive storybook reading in early elementary classrooms promotes language and vocabulary skills. Research suggests that students in the primary grades are likely to be suitable candidates for interactive comprehension instruction of narrative texts with a rich literature base (Isbell et al., 2004). Picture books play an important role to the developing reader. When designing a plan for engaging young children in the reading process, it is important that researched practice leads the way. Instructional activities that inspire the young learner's imagination help picture what an author wants to represent in a text (Buehl, 2009). In a study conducted by Ghiso and McGuire (2007), early readers were introduced to storybooks with sparse verbal text to increase their comprehension. The near wordless books were chosen for the reason that the learner must draw from a range of strategies limited in print and facilitated by the teacher, to discuss the organization of text features that are aesthetically complex.

Similar to the results discovered by Ghiso and McGuire, the results of this action research intervention suggested that for students to understand language structure and meaning, early readers required a variety of narrative texts to support best reading and comprehension practices. In this study the researcher choose three versions of *The Three Bears*, one with a full text, one version with limited text, and one version with no written text. The vocabulary words chosen from the version with a full text were inserted by the children in the texts with sparse to no vocabulary. After the intervention, students still did not have a complete conceptual understanding of using words in different contexts; however the data indicated that foundational skills were beginning to form. Unlike Ghiso and McGuire's yearlong study, this intervention was conducted for a time period of only six weeks. The students in this study needed additional opportunities to interact with the vocabulary, text structure and text connections, in order to develop a deeper understanding of contextual language use. For example, students in this study demonstrated limitations when encouraged to use the vocabulary from one text to another. Extensive exposure to this skill was offered through the weekly centers. *Figure 4.13* in Chapter Four reveals the gains made in vocabulary and comprehension by using these texts. In a similar study relating to text selection to support early readers' comprehension, Crawford and Hade (2000) deeply explored readings of wordless books to discover the effect that semiotics have in connection to wordless picture books, and the way they allocate meaning to a variety of visual signs and prompts.

Just as Crawford and Hade (2000) discovered that text choice increased language development through dialogic opportunities guided by the teacher, the results of this study indicated similar results. As seen in *Figure 4.13* of Chapter Four, the majority of the participants of this study were able to insert vocabulary words into a wordless text with 93% accuracy, as

well as comprehend the text with 100% accuracy. Field notes, response journals and anecdotal records also indicated an increase in spelling conventions and language choices. In accordance with Ghiso and McGuire (2007) findings, Isbel, Sobol, Lindauer and Lawrence's (2004) study, which examined the power that storytelling and story reading may have on language development and story comprehension of young children between the ages of three and five, the second direction of this study described the connections between interactive reading and using print in diverse forms to create successful language that will develop extensive verbal communication.

### **Developing Language through Interactive Reading**

The interactive storybook reading intervention examined in this research utilized elements of dialogic shared reading, vocabulary interventions, and language acquisition. Previous studies support the results of this study, and have also found repeated interactive reading to be beneficial to language development, vocabulary, and comprehension gains. Interacting with narrative texts positively influenced comprehension and vocabulary learning (Justice et al., 2005; Pantaleo, 2007; Wasik and Bond 2001). In the study conducted by Wasik and Bond (2001), connections were drawn between researched studies to provide educators and parents with an in depth view of research on interactive book reading, and the impact it has on language development. Wasik and Bond (2001) carried out an intervention to research the effects of a book reading method called interactive book reading which concentrated on the language and literacy development of early readers with a hands-on approach. The successful study demonstrated that research focused on involving students interactively with storybooks improved their comprehension. Similarly, in this study, through interactive reading the students responded to the routine hands-on centers that were provided weekly for each selected story lesson. For

example, when teaching the lesson related to the storybook *Sam's Sandwich* (Pelham, 1976), the students made their own sandwich with the items referred to in the story. Appendix G contains a sample of the activity. At the writing center the students then used the vocabulary words related to the story and completed a story starter relating to the sandwich they made. The connections to the storybooks that were provided in each center appeared to make a significant difference in the participants' story comprehension when looking at the data results in Chapter Four as well as the field notes for each of the six lessons. The interactive procedure to expose children to rich literature is crucial for comprehension. It is critical that teachers explicitly teach language meaning within the context of the text, narrative or expository, for children to begin developing an understanding of different forms of literature. The way in which a text is written can help or hinder comprehension. For students' to gain, assess, and apply language derived from texts successfully, it is necessary that they understand how the genre is organized (Purcell-Gate's, 1998), criteria for being "well read to" (as cited in Crawford & Hayes, 2000). Wiseman (2011) pursued this line of research by conducting a study based on research that implies limitations on language acquisition during reading classes. The study investigated the effect of interactive read-alouds for emergent readers to construct knowledge and literacy simultaneously with an emphasis on language development.

The author's interest in interactive reading through dialogue and classroom interfacing clearly projected the hypothesis that young children's experiences with interactive reading within the classroom can support and expand reading development. In the study by Wiseman (2011), it was found that the literacy practice each day encouraged children to use each other as resources, connect personal and current background knowledge, understand how books work, and connect text to self and community. Wiseman's (2011) study is aligned with Panteleo's (2007) belief that

text connections to self and to other texts will promote reading comprehension. In this study it was also established that through expansive explicit readings and direct interactions with the plot of the storybooks presented, the students' dialogic discourse was active amongst one another. Center dramatizations, anticipatory sets and project sharing played an important role in text connections. Field notes and response journals noted that verbal interactions escalated throughout the course of the study.

In this study, the researcher's field notes aligned with the data indicating that dialogical storybook reading encourages children to actively participate in the storybook reading process with rich book choices selected and guided by parents or teachers. Each week the children were able connect the story to their personal life by aligning the story line with their perception of how the story related to their own experiences. This was carried through in the story centers provided during the six week study. During the intervention, tangible items were given to the students, with instructions at each center, allowing choices on how to create connections from the said story to their own lives. For example, on week three of the intervention the children interactively participated in the story *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1991). Each student wrote a story designing the context of the story around their own personal reactions (see Appendix H). As with the Wiseman (2011) study, the results of this action research intervention suggested positive gains. After the weekly story was read and the corresponding activities were completed, the data of the comprehension tests in this study indicated positive gains (see *Figures 4.11- 4.13*). In another study related interactive story book reading, Kotaman (2008), conducted an intervention through the lens of the parents' approach to dialogical storybook reading on their children's receptive and expressive vocabulary in a school setting. The researchers in this study measured the children's receptive vocabularies and reading attitudes using a picture vocabulary

assessment. The results confirmed significant gains in the experimental group where the children, through quality storybook readings and well designed read-alouds with in-depth conversation, learned more concepts related to the storybook concepts. In a similar teaching style, this interactive story book study actively involved the students in weekly story lessons with a heavy emphasis on dialogue to increase comprehension. The results of the QRI-5 (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) support the strategy used in this intervention which indicated great gains in the concept question segment of the assessment (see *Figures 4.4-4.6*).

### **Word Study through Interactive Reading**

The third direction of this study explored the effects that interactive storybook reading had on word study with early readers. In this study, students were introduced to new vocabulary words to promote word study skills through storybook readings and systematic lessons. Justice et al. (2005) found that reading storybooks to children is an effective way to introduce new concepts, new words, and also develop language skills. Many teachers feel that interactive read-alouds should be used in the classroom; however, the specifics on how to conduct an effective interactive read-aloud are unclear. In the study conducted by Santaro et al (2008), comprehensive narrative texts and informational texts were taught to increase vocabulary and comprehension skills to first grade children through interactive read-alouds. The researchers chose four words from each text and used the Beck et al. (2002) criterion for word selection. Each lesson began with background building activities and visuals to prepare the children for active story listening. In congruence with the Beck et al. study, this study provided simple definitions for each word study word given to the students before reading the story. The significance of the Beck et al. criterion for word selection relied heavily on the assessments which showed that through active engaging read-alouds, comprehension and key vocabulary words improved. In this study,

participation in activities related to stories read, solidified the connections of the targeted vocabulary to the story content. The students in this study also participated in activities that allowed them to use the words in many situations, complying with the Common Core State Standards for Language in grade one. In addition, the students were engaged in word activities that utilized the chosen words in a variety of contexts. During the word study portion of the lessons in this study, the vocabulary words were integrated in writing, word games, and dramatizations of the stories. In other studies, researchers also found success through repeated encounters with the words selected (Justice, et al. 2005). To allow for repeated encounters, in the Santaro et al. study, the researchers guided the participants through daily vocabulary activities that related to the interactive read-alouds. In the same way, this study focused heavily on repetition and interactive activities to produce clarity and understanding of the words in a variety of contexts.

The use of vocabulary instruction during storybook sharing sessions is critical in helping children use new language. Chu and Cheong (2011) explored the effectiveness of anchored instruction while engaging children to learn new vocabulary through interactive storybook reading sessions. The study was conducted to explore the importance of storybook reading to young students by helping them acquire new vocabulary, and understand the phonics elements of the words within the reading experience. According to the Childhood development Institute (2008), children by the age of five are able to use descriptive words naturally for nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. This also complies with the grade one Common Core State Standards for Language (2010). In accordance with study by Chu and Cheong, vocabulary learning during storybook reading time for this study was predominant in an interactive fashion. Respected, renowned storybooks were chosen for this study. In each of the picture books, six target words

were selected. The respondents were able to acquire new vocabulary through storybook reading sessions, as well as gain meaning and understanding of the target words through analytical and anchored instruction respectively. Chu & Cheong's (2011) study had a desirable impact on the researchers focus for this study. Combining a variety of methods to teach word study skills and new vocabulary, especially to struggling early readers, guaranteed some success from the perspective that all children learn differently, and each has their own meta-cognitive learning strategy. This study used hands-on approaches, as well as incidental phonetic approaches which seem innate in teachers of early learners (Coyne, McCoach & Kapp (2007).

### **Explanation of Results**

Overall, the results of this research suggested that after the interactive storybook reading intervention, the majority of students' language and word study skills, along with comprehension of narrative stories, improved. The eight week study was divided into two sections. The first and last weeks were devoted to pre and post testing, with the remaining six weeks used for instruction. The intervention targeted three directions: (1) targeting text selections (2) incorporating language experiences with in-depth word study skills, (3) instructing through interactive read- alouds.

Throughout the intervention, the researcher observed that the students were more comfortable working with the interactive format of storybook reading rather than being read to. Field notes and anecdotal records clearly noted the enthusiasm, verbal discourse, and parental feedback on the story choices. By the end of the intervention, students were able to independently use the Tier Two words in context correctly, as well as carry their understanding of the vocabulary book content to other subjects. However, students needed weekly refreshers



with the previous week's vocabulary and story content to recall information learned. All vocabulary words from each week were woven in to the weekly centers by having the preceding storybooks on display with the corresponding vocabulary words on a chart next to each book. The students were encouraged to take the vocabulary words each week and sort them according to the book they belonged to. Students were correctly placing the words, but not always using the words in sentences. Teacher modeling was often needed for this throughout the intervention. After explicit modeling, the students began to correctly use the word center. Further, the retelling of key ideas through activities, graphic organizers used collectively on the Smart Board, and writing response journals, progress was seen. The use of the centers in this study connected to the findings in the previous studies that were explored in Chapter Two.

Comparable to the findings in the Wasik and Bond (2001) study, the researcher of this study believed that when students were provided with real materials that relate to the story content, they were able to create a mental framework to organize the important details learned in the reading, therefore providing a more comprehensive retelling and understanding of the narrative. In this study, the weekly comprehension test results clearly indicated that the participants, with the exception of students two, had a solid representation and recall of the story. In addition, the posttest comprehension results of the QRI-5 (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011) suggested three of the five students comprehensively increased their pretest scores. Because the participants were struggling readers, the researcher believed that answering comprehension questions was an easier task for students than providing a retelling. In the researcher's experience, it was found that struggling readers often have difficulty conveying a retelling when they are not prompted with questions or ideas to guide them.

When examining the pre and posttest results of the Towre-2 (Torgesen et al., 2012), the SWE test indicated gains for all students. The PDE test indicated gains as well with the exception of one student. Student Two's score decreased in phonemic decoding efficiency (PDE). It is this researcher's belief that because the Towre-2 (Torgesen et al., 2012) was scored under the age-based criterion, Student Two's percentile decreased even though the student's actual score remained the same from pre to post testing. The data indicates that Student One and Two showed delays in sight word efficiency and phonemic decoding efficiency which may be another way to explain the lower percentages of words learned and retained over all for these two students in this study. This corresponds to studies that refer to the developmental understanding of concepts taught to early readers (Wasik & Bond, 2001; Wiseman, 2011). Bear et al. (2012), considers students' word efficiency levels as maturity levels, which may indicate why the participants in this study learned more words through interactive reading, indicating that their phase of learning was at a more sophisticated developmental level. Student's Three, Four, and Five exhibited strengths in the word efficiency levels in comparison to Students One and Two. The explanation for the discrepancy among the students is unknown as the chronological ages of the student's conflict with the developmental phases, thus indicating that further research in this area is recommended.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

Several strengths contributed to the improvements the students demonstrated throughout the study. The weekly intervention lessons were designed to be predictable for students. The students quickly understood the structure of the lesson and what would be required when a new storybook was introduced. For each storybook, the same lesson format was followed. After one

week, the students were able to anticipate what was coming next, thus requiring less time for directions and more time for the students to be working.

Another contributing factor to the success of the intervention was the relationship between the students and the researcher. All students were in first grade. Prior to the start of the intervention in January, all five students participated in the reading resource program and had been working with the researcher on comprehension strategies since the beginning of the school year. The relationship between the researcher and the students was comfortable and trustworthy. There were no questions about expectations or concerns with behavior as those were all established prior to the intervention. Additionally, the students were accustomed to the researcher's method of teaching and explicit modeling with gradual release to the student. This positive student-teacher relationship was a strength that added to the success of the intervention.

An additional factor that contributed to the success of this study was the timing of the intervention. The intervention occurred within the first hour of each school day. This created an optimal time for learning for the students because they were rested and ready to learn. Moreover, because the study was conducted with a small group of students, rather than an entire class, this had a positive effect. Students were provided with the attention to the comprehension demands. Students participated, shared their thoughts, and took risks in the safety of the small group.

Further, the researcher believes the success of the intervention could also be attributed to the various activities that were introduced in centers each week. Real items represented in each story added to the students' ability to make concrete connections. Completing graphic organizers, and writing in response journals all required students to reread the picture books, use the books as a resource, think about the text, and write about the text. Therefore, this allowed students to live the story through the weekly activities.

Limitations to the study must also be noted. When students' background knowledge was activated prior to reading the storybooks, the researcher's anecdotal notes suggested that students often had little to no exposure to rich literature outside the classroom. Their contact with classic children's literature seemed limited. This insight prompted the researcher to reread the study conducted by Kotaman (2008) whose study examined the impact of parent /child interaction with interactive reading and its impact comprehension. The study concluded that parent interaction and parent training in literacy, has a positive force in early literacy skills. In addition, in the study the students' ability to make connections from text to text, text to self, and text to community seemed weak. The majority of students came from middle to upper middle class families which led the researcher to surmise that limited time was spent building literacy skills in the home.

Another limitation was the choice of text placement during the intervention. Experience, along with research knowledge gained, has led the researcher of this study to reevaluate the sequence of story placement .The first story *Caps for Sale* (Slobodkina, 1938), seemed to be a challenging story for the students. Placing the more current stories first, and then gradually scaffolding the literature to the more challenging classic stories, could have produced comprehension gains more effectively. Although the content of the first storybook interested the students, the work that was required for comprehending the text was a discouraging task.

Furthermore, another limitation was the short time frame for the study. Six weeks is too limited to introduce and execute an extensive intervention with three directions to struggling readers. Also, the researcher's scheduled time with the reading class was limited to four days a week, intensifying the lessons for children with learning needs.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the results that were obtained as well as some of the strengths and limitations of this research, there are several recommendations I would make to enhance both the design of the intervention and the research itself. While the results of this study are encouraging, further research should be conducted. It would be recommended to anyone interested in this topic to familiarize themselves with the subject and explore the existing research. Although much research supports the use of interactive storybook reading and the positive effect it has on student learning, there is some research that does not support the data of increased comprehension through interactive reading. It is beneficial to see both sides of the topic so the most logical conclusions can be made. This particular study was done with a young group of participants. The results would most likely differ if the age level was different. It would be intriguing to conduct a similar study with an older group of participants. One could examine if interactive reading with content area learning paired with independent reading would produce better comprehension. Not only would it be interesting to change the age level of the participants, but also the diversity of the group.

The population for this study was predominantly white, middle to upper middle class. There was little to no diversity within this group. It would be interesting to investigate if the results would change if students were in a lower socioeconomic class, or of a different ethnic background. The strategies implemented in this study may not have been as effective if the population was more diverse. Future research that challenges this study for the above reasons would be crucial to see if changing these factors would have an effect on the results. However, when looking at the Wasik and Bond (2001) study with 121 students from low-income families, the results for increased comprehension were in favor of interactive storybook reading group.

Another recommendation to improve the vocabulary direction of this study would be to involve more writing. In this study the student's were encouraged to write in a response journal, and use a story starter related to the narrative to connect text to self. To assist the children in gaining a deeper understanding of the words, as well as model quality writing, the researcher of this study recommends writing a class story with the targeted words. Giving opportunities for the student's to use and become familiar with Tier Two words, the researcher also recommends the use of the strategies that are clearly stated in Beck, McKeown, and Kucan's (2002) publication.

Finally, the research conducted by Santaro et al. (2008) which explored the effects of genre on students' reading lessons in an interactive format, should be further studied. This study used both narrative and expository picture books to develop student language skills. As the Common Core Standards (2010) place a considerable emphasis on expository text in the elementary classroom, future studies exploring best practice for students' comprehension of expository text through picture books would be valuable. Students need to be prepared for the literacy demands that await them in their future schooling, and effective comprehension instruction is crucial for our young literacy learners.

## **Conclusion**

The researcher used several different methods for assessment throughout this study. The first was the Towre-2 (Torgesen et al., 2012). This assessment gave the researcher insight to the participant's sight word skills and phonemic decoding skills. The second assessment used was the QRI-5 (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011). This assessment gave the researcher insight to students' comprehension and conceptual understanding levels. The same assessments were used at the end of the interventions to see if any improvements were. The other forms of assessment

used were informal vocabulary tests and weekly comprehension tests related to the stories read throughout the intervention. Observations, field notes, and anecdotal records were also used for analysis. These assessments gave the researcher information on where the students were making gains and where they still needed modeling. Overall, these assessments gave the researcher insight on the effects that interactive reading has on comprehension. Based on an analysis of the data that was obtained, this intervention was deemed effective at improving participants' language, word study skills, and comprehension of storybooks through interactive reading techniques.

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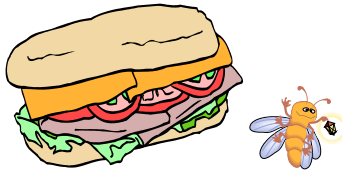
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## Appendix A

**Sam's Sandwich (Pelham, 1976)****Lesson Focus: Story Telling****Day 1**

- **Anticipatory Set**
  1. Set up a picnic scene.
  2. Discuss what we do at picnics...make a list.
  3. Spill plastic bugs out on the floor and talk about the consequences of insects at a picnic.
- **Read the story without attention to the vocabulary**
  1. Place the 6 targeted words on the chart board
  2. Recite the words explaining that they were in the story
  3. Give vocabulary pre-test
  4. Role play word meanings (last), with interactive items.

**Day 2**

- **Anticipatory Set**

1. Same as day one
  2. Each child receives a word with a prop.
  3. As the instructor reads the story the children will take their prop and act it out when the word is read in context.
- **Writing Component**
    1. The children will write a story given a story starter with the targeted words in a word bank. A story starter will be given.
    2. Stories will be edited and rewritten.

### Day 3

- **Anticipatory Set**
  1. Sandwich bread will brought in with the mixings to make sandwiches.
  2. With permission from parents each child will make their own sandwich with a gummy worm in the middle.
- **Activity**
  1. The children will make a paper sandwich with the same story ingredients.
  2. The child will follow their story as they make the sandwich.
  3. The child will follow their story as they make the sandwich.
  4. The child will follow their story as they make the sandwich.

### Day 4

- Re-read the story.
- Give comprehension and post vocabulary test to the students.
- Read the sequels of Sam's Sandwich (Pelham, 1976) to the children.

- Put children in pairs and let them read (shared reading) with each other.

## Appendix B

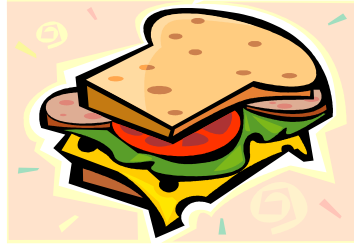
### Vocabulary Pre-Test/Post-Test



### **Instructor Directions:**

1. Conduct a picture walk through the story with the students.
2. Read the target words in context.
3. Read the target words to the students, as well as the word which gives a simple definition.
4. Direct the students to cut out the word that is their choice for the correct meaning.





Sam's Sandwich (Pelham, 1976)

Sparkle Words

Pre-Test /Post-Test

<b>squirm</b>	<b>zesty</b>	<b>flavor</b>	<b>crisp</b>	<b>contained</b>	<b>shriek</b>

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<b>wriggle</b>	<b>fresh</b>	<b>taste</b>	<b>crunchy</b>	<b>closed- in</b>	<b>yell</b>
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Appendix C  
Vocabulary Review Sheet  
Sample

**Private**

In the story Max sails away to the place where the wild things live. He sails on a private boat to get there. It is a small boat that was meant just for him to use with his name on it. Max's boat is private because it belonged to only him. Say the word, **private**.

Definition:

When something is private it is personal and not to be shared. You might have a place in your room that is private where you like to be by yourself and not share the space with anyone. Say the word that means to have something that is personal that you don't want to share, **private**.

Use in different ways

Let's think about things that are private. When you have something that is private, it means something that is personal that you do not want to share. If I say something that is private, say the word, **private**. If I say something that is not private, do not respond.

- your water bottle **private**
- a time when you were embarrassed **private**
- thoughts in a diary **private**
- a song that you heard on the radio **no response**
- your favorite place to go out to dinner **no response**
- a secret **private**
- a trip to the zoo **no response**

Discuss these questions with the class.

- Would you like to have a **private** boat like Max? Where would you go?
- Is school a **private** place? Why or why not?
- If you get a special toy for your birthday, is it **private**? Why or why not?
- Is the playground a **private** place? Why or why not?

Summarize:

What is the word that means something that is personal and not to be shared?

Appendix D

Sample Story Starter

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

What do you think the monkeys were thinking when they saw the Peddler on that sunny afternoon?

Use the words in the box above to help you write your story.



**Words to help.**

**imitate**

**refreshed**

**ordinary**

**disturb**

**finally**

**mischievous**

One sunny day a few monkey's.....

Appendix E  
Sample Writing Rubric

Beware of the Bears				
	Level 1 70 pts Poor	Level 2 80 pts Fair	Level 3 90 pts Good	Level 4 100 pts Excellent
<b>Ideas and Content</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Level 1</b></p> <p>Student can: -with support copy a sentence starter -with support copy ideas to add to the sentence starter (teacher generated ideas)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Level 2</b></p> <p>Students can: -copy with some difficulty a sentence starter -add words to the end of the sentence starter. Often the sentence is incomplete or does not make sense.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Level 3</b></p> <p>Student can: -copy a sentence starter -add original ideas to the sentence starter to complete the sentence independently.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Level 4</b></p> <p>Student can: -copy a sentence starter -add original ideas to the sentences starter to complete the sentence independently. -generate a simple sentence independently without the aide of a sentence starter.</p>
<b>Spelling and Word Use</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Level 1</b></p> <p>Student demonstrates: -very limited understanding of spelling -copying words off of the board, but rarely attempts words independently.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Level 2</b></p> <p>Student uses: -some inventive spelling for unfamiliar words. Beginning and ending sounds sometimes match the word, but not always. -sometimes uses personal and picture dictionaries for spelling, but often the word choice does not match the sentence. -sometimes uses classroom environment.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Level 3</b></p> <p>Student uses: -inventive spelling for unfamiliar words, paying close attention to beginning and ending sounds. -uses personal and picture dictionaries to spell previously used words -uses the classroom environment for vocabulary and word choice.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Level 4</b></p> <p>Student uses: -inventive spelling for unfamiliar words, paying close attention to beginning and ending sounds. She/he also includes some vowel sounds as well. -uses personal and picture dictionaries often to spell words or to add new vocabulary.</p>
<b>Punctuation</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Level 1</b></p> <p>Student demonstrates: - a very limited sense of punctuation</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Level 2</b></p> <p>Student uses: -sometimes uses periods and capitals.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Level 3</b></p> <p>Student uses: -periods and capitals properly most of the time.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Level 4</b></p> <p>Student uses: -periods and capitals properly. He/She is beginning</p>

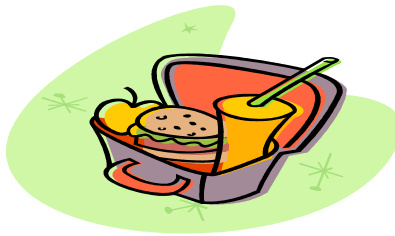
and rarely uses periods or capitals properly.

to use other forms of punctuation as well such as the question mark or exclamation mark.

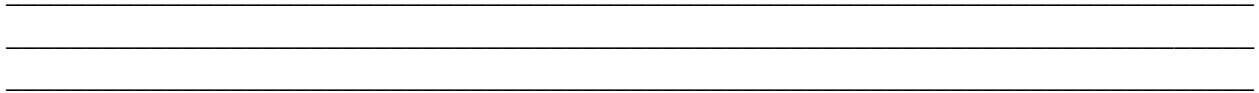
## Appendix F

### Story Comprehension Test

#### Sam's Sandwich (Pelham, 1976)



1. Why did Sam and Samantha decide to make a sandwich?
  - a) It was lunch time.
  - b) Samantha was still hungry after their brunch.
  - c) They just wanted something to do.
2. What was very **crisp** that Samantha put in the sandwich?
  - a) A carrot
  - b) Lettuce
  - c) Ketchup
3. Where did Samantha find her ingredients?
  - a) In the oven
  - b) In the garden
  - c) In the refrigerator
4. Which ingredient did Samantha **NOT** add to the sandwich?
  - a) Tomato
  - b) Spaghetti
  - c) Eggs
5. Why do you think Sam played a added the bugs to the sandwich?
  - a) He wanted to play a trick on his sister.
  - b) She likes to eat bugs.
  - c) He was doing what his mom told him to do.
6. What do you think happened at the end of the story?



Appendix G  
Story Book Center Project





Appendix H  
Writing Sample Sheet

