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THE EFFECTS OF EXPLICIT STORY GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION ON THE NARRATIVE
SKILLS OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

A Dissertation

Presented to

The College of Graduate and Professional Studies

Department of Curriculum and Instruction and Media Technology

Indiana State University

Terre Haute, Indiana

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctorate of Philosophy

by

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December, 2014

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Keywords: preschool, preliteracy, narrative, story grammar, vocabulary

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of large-group, explicit, story grammar vocabulary instruction during shared storybook reading on the narrative retell skills of preschoolers. Two preschool classrooms in rural, southeastern Illinois participated in the study. The study examined narrative retell ability via the Test of Narrative Retell-Preschool. Scores were compared for the experimental group, who received instruction from the investigator, to the control group, who received instruction from their regular classroom teacher. The study also explored instructional practices during shared storybook reading through observational checklists of recorded sessions. The results of the study indicated that students who received experimental instruction showed significant gains in scores for character, setting, and emotion on the Test of Narrative Retell-Preschool, but these gains were not significantly higher than the control group students, who also showed significant gains in scores throughout the six-week study.

PREFACE

I love language—the fact that most humans learn to speak and communicate so easily while others have difficulty has always intrigued me. Through a decade of working in public schools with children with language-learning disabilities, I was amazed by the complexity of language skills required to be successful within both the social and academic environments. Noting the increased difficulty my students were having in school, I wanted to find a way to better meet their needs but still allows them to be “kids.” Reading to a captivated audience of young children is one of my favorite things to do. Assisting them in expanding their understanding and use of language through this avenue has always been rewarding to me. All of these factors combined to lead me here, hypothesizing, investigating, and analyzing how storybooks, language, and learning intertwine. I hope to add to the emerging literature regarding shared reading practices and enhancing learning in young children.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to everyone who supported me in the completion of the dissertation. I owe a debt of gratitude to my committee chair, Dr. Susan Kiger, who worked diligently to assure my successful completion. She provided guidance, advice, and assistance at just the right times and I knew that I could count on her assistance whenever needed.

I would also like to extend gratitude to my dissertation committee members, Dr. Vicki Hammen and Dr. Noble Corey, for their flexibility and willingness to provide guidance and suggestions, no matter what we had to “weather.”

I would also like to extend my warm and sincere appreciation to the participating students and staff for allowing me to get to know and work with you. Your cooperation and flexibility allowed me to successfully conduct this study.

I also owe a debt of gratitude and appreciation to my family, who allowed me to fulfill my dream. Your understanding provided a supportive network that helped me through the challenging balancing act of my PhD education. I owe special thanks to my husband, Matthew, and my children, Mason, Avery, and Hayden, for their patience, understanding, and sacrifice throughout my program.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Preschool children typically love to listen to and tell stories. Social and academic demands require narrative discourse to be understood and used efficiently for success. How best to provide instruction of age-appropriate vocabulary related to narrative structures and thus increase narrative skills remains a void in current literature regarding preschool preliteracy development.

Just as elementary schools work to adapt instructional practices and materials to meet the demands of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), preschools around the nation will predicatively require scrutiny of current curricula and related activities to address whether current programming will meet the more stringent expectations of kindergarten and beyond (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2013). Increased focus on early school experiences results from concern for accountability and performance brought to the forefront by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Preschool programs, in particular, must begin to align practices and materials that address the growing concern for variations in preliteracy skills, as these disparities heavily influence later reading and academic success (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Child Care Research Network, 2005).

As the educational transformation to integrate the CCSS occurs, many questions arise about instructional practices and materials used to meet these changing needs. Kindergarten through second grade, oft defined as the most critical school years for preventing future reading difficulties, focus on qualities of instruction and materials that promote foundational skills for learning to read (Coleman & Pimental, 2012). Key areas of concentration continue to include concepts of print, phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, syntax and fluency (Coleman & Pimental, 2012). While much kindergarten and first grade instruction focuses on the automaticity of phonological awareness and phonics skills, discrepancy in foundational vocabulary skills play just as an important role in building later reading comprehension abilities (Coleman & Pimental, 2012). Instructional materials and practices must systematically and increasingly target the apparent gaps in vocabulary that exist, especially at this early critical age (Coleman & Pimental, 2012).

While CCSS implementation focuses on the kindergarten through twelfth-grade population in today's schools, the preschool population warrants increased vigilance as well. Increased national initiatives in the last decade, such as *Preschool for All*, promote analysis of current trends in preschool programming across the nation (Barnett, Carolan, Fitzgerald, & Squires, 2012). At the same time, as understanding and use of CCSS in kindergarten becomes commonplace, preschool programs will be expected to rise to the challenge in preparing students to enter school with more developed and even skills.

As funding for state preschool programs continues to decrease, however, questions arise about the quality of instruction and materials for the 28% of four-year olds and 4% of three-year olds who were enrolled in these state-funded preschool programs, in 2011-2012 (Barnett et al., 2012). This does not include the compounded concern for those children eligible for preschool

who do not have access to these types of programs due to decreases in state spending for early childhood programs. For the first time in a decade, enrollment in state-funded programs, equal to 1,332,663 preschoolers, stagnated (Barnett et al., 2012). This indicates that early childhood education is being negatively impacted by lack of funding available to meet the needs of preschoolers. In fact, for the first time since the National Institute for Early Education Research began tracking state pre-K in 2002, funding per child has fallen below \$4,000 (Barnett et al., 2012). In 2012, total state funding for pre-K programs decreased by more than \$548 million across the 40 states that offer pre-K (Barnett et al., 2012). This disparity in funding and need comes at a crucial time in education as schools nationwide adopt and implement curricula and instruction tied to the CCSS.

The collection of foundational skills and habits necessary for competence in reading for kindergarten students include key components of the CCSS English/Language Arts (ELA) standards for literature. These standards include the ability to answer questions about a story, retell familiar stories and identify important details including character and setting (Coleman & Pimental, 2012). Given that these are just a few of the standards targeted and expected to be accomplished by the end of kindergarten, preschool programs and curricula would do well to consider the implications for the students they serve. Current preschool curricula, however, provide little direct instruction in these skills (Preschool Curriculum Evaluation Research Consortium, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

As this contradictory situation paints a dismal picture of our nation's reading abilities, preschool presents itself as an important starting point for building all preliteracy skills. With the short time-frame that teachers have students, coupled with the demands of attending to the basic

needs of three- and four-year old children, preschool teachers need a way to address growing academic demands within appropriate and efficient classroom-based activities. Little research regarding evidence-validated instructional strategies and practices exists. The current investigation utilizing large-group shared storybook reading seeks to address this need for foundational research to build a knowledgebase for best practices in preschools.

Purpose and Possible Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate current literature-based practices utilized in preschool classrooms, specifically large-group shared story-book reading, as a means to address deficits in general story structure knowledge and thus story comprehension and retell, skills required in kindergarten-level CCSS. Additionally, this study aimed to add to current literature regarding contextualized language learning as a viable means of instruction of specific skills and address the current substantiated need for research-based instruction within preschool practices.

Research Questions

This exploratory, quasi-experimental study addressed whether large-group, contextualized explicit story grammar vocabulary instruction increased the ability for preschoolers (3-5 years of age) to retell a story.

1. Research Question 1 (RQ1): Does explicit instruction of story grammar vocabulary (character, setting, emotion) in large-group, contextualized settings increase preschool children's ability to retell a story?
2. Research Question 2 (RQ2): Does explicit instruction of story grammar vocabulary (character, setting, emotion) in large-group, contextualized settings result in maintenance of increased skill level to retell a story?

Definition of Key Terms

Character: People and animals (real or cartoon) or imaginary entities portraying who a story is about. Key instructional words include: person, animal, toy, many, name (S. L. Gillam, R. B. Gillam, & Reece, 2012).

Contextualized: Use of specific teaching steps to train multiple linguistic targets or curriculum-related skills within activities that involve rich, meaningful, and coherent references to people, objects and actions (Ukrainetz, 2006). Modeling and elicitation of targeted language structures during functional and/or curriculum-related activities (S.L. Gillam et al., 2012).

Discourse: Larger units of language that can be conversational, narrative, and/or expository; can be oral or written; include differentiated and specific plans and features (Hughes, McGillivray, & Schmidek, 1997).

Emergent Literacy: The skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are developmental precursors to reading and writing. See also *Preliteracy*.

Emotion: The feelings a character experiences in a story through activities and events that occur as part of the story plot. May include, but are not limited to happy, sad, mad, scared, or surprised.

Large-group: Groups of five or more children, presumably near 10 children in each group.

Macrostructure: Framework of big ideas present in fictional narratives; tends to follow a similar pattern for academic culture with a complete episodic construct; may include character, setting, take-off, feelings, plan, action, complication, landing, wrap-up (Petersen, S. L. Gillam, Spencer, & R. B. Gillam, 2010). See also *Story Grammar*.

Narrative language: Relation of temporally sequenced experiences or events that convey some meaning; can occur within conversation or as a monologue; may be fictional or non-fictional (Hughes et al., 1997).

Preliteracy: The skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are developmental precursors to reading and writing. See also *Emergent Literacy*.

Setting: The physical and/or implied space(s) that a story takes place. Key words include place, city, time of day.

State-Funded PreK: In Illinois, the Preschool for All initiative focuses on providing high-quality educational programs for children who are determined to be at risk of academic failure. When funds are available, funding may be provided for programs serving families of low-to-moderate income whose children are not considered to be at risk academically and other families that choose to participate (Illinois State Board of Education, 2011). Funded preschools must have 80 percent or more of the enrolled children identified as at risk; prioritize at-risk students over non-at-risk students when making enrollment decisions; and have taken specific, proactive measures to ensure that parents of potentially at-risk children in the community are aware of the opportunity for preschool education through the program (Illinois State Board of Education, 2011). Preschool for All programs must serve only 3- to 5-year-old children who are not age eligible for kindergarten (i.e., age 5 on or before September 1 of the school year in which the Preschool for All program is to be implemented). Eligibility requirements are based on local need to identify children at risk of academic failure (Illinois State Board of Education, 2011). At-risk children are those who, because of their home and community environment, are subject to such language, cultural, economic, and like disadvantages to

be at risk of academic failure. A disproportionate share of all children considered to be at risk come from low-income families, including low-income working families, homeless families, families where English is not the primary language spoken in the home, or families where one or both parents are teenagers or have not completed high school (Illinois State Board of Education, 2011). However, neither a child's membership in a certain group nor a child's family situation should determine whether that child is at risk. Eligibility criteria may be established for Preschool for All to meet the needs of the programs and community (Illinois State Board of Education, 2011).

Story Grammar: Organizational pattern that outlines the significant elements in fictional narratives; may include character, setting, initiating event, internal response/emotion, plan, attempt, consequence, resolution. This structure is frequently favored in Western academic settings. Also referred to as macrostructure, this organization varies by culture, situation and information within the story (Petersen et al., 2010).

Summary

Shared storybook reading presents a viable means of addressing early literacy skills. Focus on phonological awareness in the beginning academic years results in little to no emphasis on early comprehension skills. By presenting specific narrative vocabulary during shared reading, preschoolers can be exposed to story structure that enhances comprehension. Being able to retell a presented story, a measure of comprehension, may increase as a result of this skill. This study sought to investigate these relationships.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Rationale for Designing a Preschool Narrative Vocabulary Study

Academic success relies on both reading and listening comprehension. This complex comprehension process, however, requires intake and understanding of multiple, varying sources of information. Children must understand basic story structure via the words read, make connections and inferences based on the pictures and text provided and relate the vocabulary and theme to their own lives to enhance understanding. The academic environment frequently requires understanding and production of narrative structures and children capable of these skills participate more effectively in the classroom and increase competence in both reading and writing skills over time (Green & Klecan-Aker, 2012).

Previous research denotes that as preschool children are read to via parent-child book sharing or teacher read-alouds, skills such as vocabulary, engagement with text, comprehension, and print concepts improve (Mira & Schwanenflugel, 2013). Oral language skills and vocabulary knowledge and use in young children tie closely to literacy success in elementary school and interventions targeting broad oral language skills, such as shared storybook reading, have been shown effective in enhancing these skills (Ruston & Schwanenflugel, 2010). For one, vocabulary development is enhanced during shared storybook time through incidental exposure to new words during reading. By providing a context for new vocabulary, coupled with direct

instruction on the meaning of new words encountered in the text, vocabulary instruction has been found to be effective in storybook reading (Loftus, Coyne, McCoach, Zipoli, & Pullen, 2010).

Preschool children typically spend reading time with parents, caregivers or teachers in a listening comprehension scenario. Though children who are 3-5 years old do not yet read, these interactions build the skills necessary for later reading comprehension as they work to listen to and comprehend stories presented to them. These skills provided when children are in the preschool age range are crucial to successful transitions into the academic demands of elementary school and reading (Wasik, Bond, & Hindman, 2006).

For typically developing children, vocabulary development, one of the five pillars that support literacy (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) forms through repeated exposure and practice of skills. An inherent sense of basic story structure and the ability to appropriately answer questions results from this increased vocabulary understanding and use. Children with appropriate reading abilities engage in meaningful reading interactions which build later fluency and comprehension skills. Meaningful interactions then result in increased acquisition of more varied knowledge through reading of complex vocabulary and language (Masseti, 2009). The stage is early set for the projection of whether a child can and/or will be successful in reading.

Children who are not typically-developing, such as children with language impairment, struggle with developing language skills appropriately in whole-group, classroom-based instruction. Language impairments compound the ability to both comprehend and use expressive language and thus, narrate effectively (Gillam, Fargo, & Robertson, 2009). Additionally, children from disadvantaged economic backgrounds have consistently been found to have lower levels of preliteracy skills that negatively influence later academic success (Masseti, 2009). The

typical demography of state-funded preschools, who work to serve children who are at risk, either developmentally or economically, results in a large portion of students requiring additional and varied instruction on key preliteracy vocabulary skills.

Given the relative newness of state-funded preschool (Barnett et al., 2012), the last decade has seen preschool “literacy” research focused primarily on a few distinct areas. Phonemic or phonological awareness, small group instruction and at-risk preschoolers have been the main focus of studies (Bailet, Repper, Piasta, & Murphy, 2009; Justice, et al., 2010; Zucker, Justice, & Piasta, 2009). Research focusing on the language components of early literacy at the preschool level have investigated increases in general word knowledge or focused on how shared storybook reading occurs at the classroom level (Justice, Meier, & Walpole, 2005; Zucker et al., 2009). This research itself is compounded by philosophical disagreements on how young children develop early literacy and language skills as well as the most effective teaching approaches for targeting these skills.

Narrative skills, specifically story retell, presents as a logical area of investigation for preschool preliteracy development as narration ties closely to reading comprehension and is important for social interactions. Because preschool teachers already have a limited amount of time with children to address pre-academic and thus, pre-literacy skills, typically a half-day, at most (Barnett et al., 2012), introduction to and instruction of story comprehension strategies can seem daunting and unattainable. Additionally, providing targeted instruction regarding specific skills for this age group presents a challenge in and of itself as preschool exists as the first experience to structured routine and expectations of academic life. The question remains as to the most effective and efficient way to build knowledge of the plethora of required preliteracy skills within a meaningful and useful means of instruction.

In sum, the ability to provide useful vocabulary instruction related to the specific structure of narrative literature as a means of increasing foundational literacy skills is vital. Providing the instruction within the context of already existent and utilized classroom themes and literature continues to address the need for efficient and adaptable materials to meet the demands of the ever-changing and challenging preschool classroom. Adhering this instruction to the expectations of kindergarten readiness and vocabulary-based preliteracy development, linked to the CCSS, provides a clear direction for meeting the diverse needs of all young learners.

Theoretical Framework of Preschool Literacy

Preschool Narrative Development

Development of narrative abilities relies heavily on cultural and home influences. Being read to by parents or siblings, the absence or presence of story-like structures experienced in the home (e.g., books, television, movies, radio, etc.) and general language use in the child's most common environment all influence narrative development as the child matures.

As young children acquire the ability to formulate simple sentences, after about 18 months of age, the initial forms of narration begin (McCabe & Rollins, 1994). By two to three years of age, children's self-focus results in narration of needs, plans and dislikes as well as understanding of basic narrative structures to respond to others' needs (Paris & Paris, 2003). Young children begin by developing story schema, the mental representation of the structure of the story, which guides development and understanding of narrative information (Hughes et al., 1997). Initially, these "narrative scripts" relate to description of events and sequenced routines. Narrative schemas emerge next and include main events of a story and conceptual understanding of time and cause/effect sequencing (Paris & Paris, 2003). While often assisted and prompted by adults, young children develop the ability to refer to past events and emerge as simple

storytellers, wanting to relay information about an injury or negative past event (McCabe & Rollins, 1994). Narratives increase in importance as they link children and adults through daily experiences and also as they link children to other children in thematic and symbolic play. A basic narrative structure, including a character in a goal-directed action, remains evident through all situations (Paris & Paris, 2003).

As children begin preschool, continued growth in conceptual and working memory capacities aid in establishing the “narrative mode” that allows children to learn meaning. The beginnings of perspective taking and understanding of internal response develop.

Simultaneously, executive function skills, such as theory of mind, must develop to increase narrative comprehension and use in more complex settings (Paris & Paris, 2003).

Comprehension and production of narratives requires both cognitive and linguistic knowledge, as the narrator and listener navigate memory for specific events, needs of the listener and appropriate grammatical and syntactical needs. Preschool children begin to internalize conventionalized knowledge based on experiences and expectations, realizing that variations may occur. These initial scripts function to reduce processing demands so that each experience does not have to be viewed as a novel situation and can be transferred to similar situations (Hughes et al., 1997).

Around ages 3 to 5 years, personal narratives, longer and more complex in nature, emerge as a primary means of social communication. Young children enjoy telling stories and hearing stories from others. These stories tend to relay real, personal narratives though additional types of narratives such as recounts of movies/TV shows, and fantasies are utilized as well (McCabe & Rollins, 1994). With the assistance of a sequence of pictures, four and five-year old children can become proficient at narrating action sequences and likely reflect temporal-

causal relationships. Conventional story vocabulary such as “once upon a time” and “the end” may also be included in their stories, reflecting their understanding of the beginning and end to a story (Hughes et al., 1997).

One particular characteristic of narratives in preschool populations includes what McCabe and Rollins (1994) termed “Leap-Frog Narratives” (p. 47). Typically developing preschoolers may relay information in a story out of sequential order, include unrelated or unimportant events or delete important details to the story. Children with language impairment demonstrate even greater difficulty, defaulting to more list-like scripts in an inappropriate tense or generating related events not present in the actual story (McCabe & Rollins, 1994).

Becoming proficient in narration occurs gradually with marked differences in complexity for both macrostructure which is the general organization of the narrative, and microstructure which is the complex linguistic features (Petersen et al., 2010). Narration, or storytelling, requires a child’s monologue to relay information or convey a message to a listener. Narratives, then, involve a complex internal, rule-based structure defined by expectations of both the listener and speaker. As an individual verbally relays an experience, it is temporally tied to a sequence of events and conveys some meaning for the individual. The speaker must accommodate and adjust for the listener’s needs for the narrative discourse to be successful (Hughes, et al., 1997).

Emergent literacy ties closely to many facets of language including phonology, syntax, morphology and semantics. Additionally, discourse ability, which encompasses ability to use and understand all areas of language in complex ways, must also be developed to aid literacy skills (McCabe, 1992). If a child demonstrates delays in any one area of language, difficulties in reading likely coexist. A study by Scarborough (1990) found associations of later reading disability with early language skills where reading difficulties in the second grade linked to

difficulties with decreased length, complexity and pronunciation accuracy at age 2 years, six months. Discourse-level difficulties, including story recall tie closely to later language, and thus, reading development, even as early as preschool (Bishop & Edmundson, 1987). Developmental accomplishments of language, play, storytelling, memory, listening and reading, all closely tie to narrative ability. Narration exists as an authentic and important experience in the lives of preschoolers.

Preschool Curricula

As an early childhood professional, decisions regarding instruction, materials and activities in a preschool classroom focus on three principles: typical development and learning patterns; the interests, strengths and needs of the individual; and community and cultural influences (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Key areas of focus within these curricula are frequently positive social interactions between teachers and children and between children themselves with emphasis on family-classroom integration to promote emotional well-being and learning. Purposeful and constructive play is the means of addressing skill development. Today's preschool classrooms continue to reflect the social learning nature first presented by Dewey (Rushton & Larkin, 2001) and the necessity of social interactions to enable learning as postulated by Vygotsky (1978). The influence of Erik Erickson's psychosocial theory is also apparent, as preschool educators attempt to build autonomy and initiative within their daily routines, so as to increase levels of responsibility for and curiosity of the world surrounding students (Erickson, 1994). Adhering to developmentally appropriate practice, many preschool curricula promote instruction within contextualized or naturalistic interventions (Ukrainetz, 2007), allowing for specific opportunities to enhance language skills. Vygotsky's social-interactionist theory and Piaget's cognitivist theory both support the theoretical importance of

contextualized learning for preschoolers (Ukrainetz, 2007). Contextualized instruction allows for scaffolding, as explained by Vygotsky, where a more competent learner provides support as the more naïve learner moves toward independent skills (Ukrainetz, 2007). Because current research supports links between school success and social-emotional development, including behavior, focusing on these areas of development within preschool curricula make sense (Teaching Strategies, 2010). Where preliteracy fits into this already complex picture of needs and time remains a challenge.

In 2008, the Preschool Curriculum Evaluation Research Consortium published results of a large-scale study on 14 different curricula commonly used in preschool classrooms. Focusing on knowledge and skills found to be predictive of later academic success, this study included phonological awareness, early language, early mathematics skills, social skills and problem behaviors. The study investigated the impact of each curriculum on readiness skills, end-of-kindergarten-year outcomes, classroom quality, instructional practices and teacher-child interactions (Preschool Curriculum Evaluation Research Consortium, 2008). Results indicate variations in implementation and focus were as wide-ranging as the students within the classroom themselves.

Effective instruction addressing development of oral language skills, including preliteracy, impacts the long-term development of skills essential for school success. Lack of quality instruction can result in gross differences in children's language understanding and use before the child enters formal education (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Early childhood educators play a critical role in intentionally planning classroom experiences that inspire and enhance language and literacy skills, knowledge and attitudes (Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000). Key areas of focus within many curricula tie to later literacy development and have been

found to be strong predictors of later reading skills. Much research indicates links between phonological awareness and print awareness as key factors in increasing emergent literacy skills. Research-based curricula that include these emergent literacy components can be effectively used and delivered by preschool teachers to meet these needs (Masseti, 2009).

While many curricula focus on print and phonological awareness, less research and structured activities attempt to meet the complex language demands of comprehension. While some research has addressed these areas, supplements to the curriculum have often occurred outside of or in addition to a child's regular classroom activities (Masseti, 2009), leaving a gap in the literature regarding classroom-based supplements or interventions to address the comprehension area.

Targeted Literacy Skills

Though great variations in skill levels already occur as children enter preschool, focus of preschool programs is to better prepare students for academic life. School readiness involves learning skills and developing abilities that allow children to actively engage in learning in a structured environment with peers. To that end, preschool exists as highly social in nature within the context of leaving the home environment (for some, for the first time), meeting peers and learning about and accepting differences and adhering to general pragmatic rules. General suppositions regarding rules, routines and expectation also come to the forefront.

As preschoolers master all of these new skills, formalized reading-based instruction focuses primarily on phonological and phoneme awareness skills and print knowledge, thus enabling beginning readers to identify and decode words in text. Bottom-up processing of reading skills asserts that because comprehension is the primary goal of reading and comprehension is impossible without decoding to understand words, the focus on skills to enable

decoding makes sense and have been the center of many studies on later reading achievement. Chall's (1996) stages of reading development lay the foundation for this trend by her now infamous transitional phrase of *learning to read to reading to learn*, indicating that comprehension assessment should be implemented at later elementary grades. Additional theoretical support exists for viewing reading comprehension as occurring in succession behind decoding. While development of decoding skills clearly aids comprehension, sole focus on decoding may overlook the importance of developing comprehension of reading sources in young children (Paris & Paris, 2003).

For the relatively few years that state-funded preschools have existed, emergent literacy skills within the preschool classroom have specifically involved letter identification and naming, letter-sound correspondence, basic print awareness such as reading from left to right and the proper way to hold and read a book. These skills have been shown to be statistically significant in improving later reading ability and have been the focus of many research studies investigating the breadth and depth of these skills in preschool (Bailet et al., 2009; Justice, Kaderavek, Fan, Sofka, & Hunt, 2009; Zucker, Cabell, Justice, Pentimonti, & Kaderavek, 2012; Zucker et al., 2009). Clearly, areas of focus exist, as the National Early Literacy Panel (NELP) identified and supported focus on alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness and oral language within its 2008 report (Paciga, Hoffman, & Teale, 2010). The NELP postulates, however, that strong predictor variables, as noted in the report, did not delineate only focusing on the indicated skills. Because basic skills, such as letter naming, are easier to measure than more complex skills, such as oral language, empirical evidence has been more readily collected and distributed for evidence-based practices. The complexity of oral language assessment in relation to

developmental norms has possibly hindered a building of research in more abstract areas that are also related to later literacy achievement (Paciga et al., 2010).

More recently, literature is emerging on other aspects of preliteracy development in preschool including narrative skills and listening comprehension. These studies address narrative interventions within small-group settings and for children at-risk for language delays (Peterson, et al., 2010; Spencer & Slocum, 2010) as well as the impact of how stories are read on understanding (Mira & Schwanenflugel, 2013; Ruston & Schwanenflugel, 2010). Differential aspects on the classroom literacy environment are also coming to the forefront (Guo, Justice, Kaderavek, & McGinty, 2012). Understanding reading comprehension skills and strategies to diagnose and address early reading difficulties begins to span beyond simply decoding of words. The question remains whether decoding promotes understanding or increased comprehension positively influences decoding. Providing a balanced reciprocal program that focuses on both decoding and comprehension skills may be the answer (Paris & Paris, 2003).

While these newer aspects emerge, instruction continues to focus on phonological and print awareness skills as the primary means for preparing preliteracy skills. With implementation of the CCSS, additional required preliteracy skills continue to emerge.

Common Core Skills and Expectations

The CCSS provide a framework of skills, from kindergarten through twelfth grade, that prepare students for career or college readiness. Early foundational reading skills focus on prevention of reading difficulties through exposure to complex text via listening activities and increased experience with content area text. The English/Language Arts (ELA) standards focus on teaching children how to understand and learn from text and express their thoughts in writing through the integration of reading skills with language comprehension instruction. All students,

even those who struggle with developing reading skills age-appropriately, must work to meet these standards (Coleman & Pimental, 2012).

Vocabulary, one of the five pillars of reading, differs greatly as students enter school. Via guidance from the CCSS, materials and instruction should focus on early and systematically addressing of the evident vocabulary gap. Students who fall at the lower end of achievement are expected to read texts appropriately while demonstrating adequate language comprehension. The standards also encourage read-alouds so all students, regardless of reading ability, can continue to build vocabulary knowledge through guided exposure of more complex texts. Of equal importance, according to the standards, is exposure to grade-level texts regardless of reading skill level. Even lower-achieving students can and should be provided instruction with grade-level texts given the appropriate support and level of assistance. Effective instruction for struggling readers involves integrative and systematic scaffolding that allows for thoughtful participation within the reading context. Multiple readings of strong, rich texts are encouraged in the CCSS to allow for additional learning opportunities within a desirable and useful context (Coleman & Pimental, 2012).

Specific instruction and materials related to the CCSS must work to guide students through meaningful texts or narrative content to develop comprehension. Whether a teacher intends to read a text aloud or the text is intended for individual reading, careful consideration of quality ensures students will be exposed to well-written and possible richly illustrated texts. Before, during and after reading, students must consider what they will read or have heard and think about its relation to previous knowledge, other literature and daily life. Inferencing or predicting requires students to obtain evidence from the reading in consideration of what was read. Careful scrutiny of the text via questioning and activities causes students to view the text

and information through many angles as the teacher guides students through scaffolding strategies to address more complex portions. As students become more confident in comprehension via these scaffolds, increased confidence in reading more complex texts will occur (Coleman & Pimental, 2012).

The CCSS for ELA point to the importance of increased exposure to and comprehension of varied texts as well as meaningful and engaging materials and activities that promote critical thinking. The CCSS also suggest increased focus on writing as a means of addressing and assessing these skills, even at the earliest ages. Early elementary students are expected to know alphabetic principles such as using letters to form words and words to form sentences as well as writing to express through narratives, informative pieces and opinions (Coleman & Pimental, 2012).

The ELA CCSS focus on “developing proficient and fluent readers able to learn independently from a wide variety of rich texts” (Coleman & Pimental, 2012, p. 3). While this reference to curriculum and instruction appears eloquent and easily attainable, many challenges arise in obtaining and maintaining high-quality materials and practices that focus solely on this goal. For students to inherently internalize that simultaneousness of thinking and reading, much work by the student, teacher, administration, and community must be completed.

Assessing Preschool Language and Literacy Development

A significant body of evidence highlights the importance of developing oral language, phonological awareness and print awareness in the preschool years as a means to prevention of later reading difficulties. Increased knowledge and understanding of the relationship between reading success and failure through delineation of causes, correlations and predictors has resulted in increased implementation of programs and strategies to identify, monitor, and assist struggling

readers, particularly in early elementary school. A meta-analysis study conducted by the NELP in 2008 indicated specific skills in preschool as predictors of later reading outcomes of word decoding, reading comprehension and spelling: print knowledge (alphabet knowledge, print concepts), phonological processing skills (phonological awareness, phonological access to lexical store, phonological memory) and oral language (vocabulary, syntax/grammar, word knowledge).

While standardized and criterion-referenced measures are routinely utilized in early elementary grades, even as early as kindergarten, the focus of both theory and research rests primarily on decoding and other reading skills removed from the actual reading process (Paris & Paris, 2003). With benchmark tests focusing on processes for decoding and phonological awareness skills such as letter naming fluency, letter-sound identification, nonsense word fluency and rhyming, currently used assessment measures in early elementary do little to address comprehension and language development (National Reading Panel, 2000; Paris & Paris, 2003). If language-based skills are assessed in kindergarten, typical evaluative data reflect general vocabulary and print and book concepts. Any comprehension measures involve recognition and recall, typically at the word or sentence level. Little to no theory or research addresses the complex cognition required for understanding and production of narrative stories (Paris & Paris, 2003).

Due to the relative newness of theory and research-based information for preschool and early elementary children, practice lags far behind. As information regarding instructional practices and activities to promote early literacy skills become available, assessment of pre-literacy skills has yet to become a routine implementation in preschool classrooms. Limited time availability continues to be a difficult issue to overcome given the relatively short period of time

children attend preschool. Even informal assessment via observation of classroom performance can be difficult to compare due to a lack of standardized or concrete expectations. Other indirect assessments at this age include information regarding behaviors and general preacademic skills but generally lack specific expectations for preliteracy skill levels (Lonigan, Allan, & Lerner, 2011). Another possible contributing factor to absence of assessments available remains the fact that requirements on measuring and reporting progress via high-stakes testing have yet to trickle down to the preschool level.

With initial focus on improving preliteracy skills through targeted letter and word-level skills, little information exists regarding the effects of comprehension on overall literacy development. Early literacy assessments give unbalanced focus to decontextualized reading skills, exclusively assessing decoding and phonological awareness in the primary grades (Paris & Paris, 2003). Just as children use printed letters to make words and words to make meaning, children use similar cognitive processes when viewing pictures in and listening to a narrative story. With its roots in Piagetian theory, reading comprehension, a precursor to narrative retell, relies on a child's ability to use textual and pictorial information in books to make meaning of the story. New information presented compares to an expected schema for similar pictures and stories, assimilates with previous understanding of a predetermined story schema, and continues to build comprehension. Relationships among characters, actions and events in a story build that framework. Assumptions made, of course, that children possess previous exposure to literature by the time preschool starts. Additionally, children employ strategies to aid understanding such as inferencing, predicting, identifying main points and summarizing (Paris & Paris, 2003).

While a theoretical basis exists for addressing development of all preliteracy skills, assessment of preschool language and literacy development continues to be confined to letter-

based skills to aid in eventual decoding. These assessments are provided for the class as a whole or only administered to those children displaying severe deficits that impact obvious difficulties with access to the academic environment. Preschool presents itself, however, as appropriate for assessment of cognitive and verbal abilities important for early reading development as decoding skills have yet to be developed (Paris & Paris, 2003). As more literature emerges and practice follows behind, additional formal measures of skills will be needed to address this discord between need and instrument.

Empirical Background of Story Grammar Instruction

Contextualized Interventions

According to Vygotsky's (1978) social-interactionist theories, children learn language best while taking part in authentic communicative interactions during engaging activities. Further, optimal learning occurs with partners with increased skills who provide scaffolding and support. During these interactions, simultaneous learning of a multitude of language skills can occur. These "contextualized" learning opportunities provide similar circumstances to curriculum-based language interventions (S. L. Gillam et al., 2012).

As recommended by Ukrainetz (2007), school-age children with learning disabilities (LD) and/or specific language impairment (SLI) learn best in environments that present information and skills in meaningful, relevant and collaborative contexts. At the same time, however, children with LD and SLI also require specific instruction of skills that they need to generalize to other contexts, presenting a challenging means of attaining the correct balance of instruction for success (S. L. Gillam et al., 2012).

Decontextualized intervention, in contrast, provides instruction in discrete, separated activities led by the teacher. Decontextualized activities generally do not provide topic or

structural continuity and focus on differentiated but specific skills within short activities (S. L. Gillam et al., 2012). Current research on the effectiveness of differing types of interventions provides mixed results.

S. L. Gillam et al. (2012) discussed contextualized language intervention in literature-based programs related to content in children's storybooks for children with SLI. Previous research, though sparse, reflects targeted vocabulary, morphology, syntax, phonological awareness and narrative skills, and improvements in both general language and narrative skills. While decontextualized and contextualized language interventions both resulted in improvements of skills, contextualized intervention possibly adheres to academic contexts more naturally and can provide ways of implementing scaffolding interventions for children who struggle (S. L. Gillam et al., 2012).

Story Grammar/Macrostructure Interventions

Research to date regarding story grammar focuses on supplemental instruction via storybooks. The use of storybooks is frequently considered as they are readily available in classrooms and relatively inexpensive (Justice et al., 2009). Additionally, shared storybooks exist as authentic activities in the lives of children, allowing pictorial stories to bridge text to illustrations in familiar and fun contexts. As visual integration, reasoning and inferencing increases from four to eight years of age, the use of storybooks develops required cognitive demands, such as understanding of main story events and temporal and causal sequences (Paris & Paris, 2003).

Narrative intervention addresses story grammar or macrostructure within the context of storybooks or in more decontextualized settings using visuals and pictorial cues. Primarily, the students receive instruction on the important parts of a story, which generally follow a similar

structure, regardless of genre. Narrative intervention using story grammar frequently includes either telling or retelling stories which include at least one character, at least one setting, an initiating event, possibly a problem, feelings, plans or actions, and a conclusion (Spencer & Petersen, 2010).

Story grammar/macrostructure intervention includes multiple instructional strategies to deliberately teach the inherent pieces of a story including repeated retelling of narratives or narrative generation as well as focused stimulation, vertical structuring and incidental teaching techniques particularly useful for children with SLI (Petersen et al., 2010). Concrete story grammar concepts are modeled, prompted with questions, discussed and affirmed. While storybooks are the primary avenue for instruction, additional materials such as related pictures, icons representing story grammar parts and games have been included in intervention. Consistent and frequent feedback is needed, like any new skill, to solidify understanding (Spencer & Peterson, 2010).

Previous research on story grammar intervention focuses primarily on working with children with language impairments and working individually or in small groups. More literature exists for school-age populations than preschool. As focus increases on the response to intervention (RtI) model, even for preschool, macrostructure intervention has come to light as a possible viable means of addressing the multitiered model (Bradley, Danielson, & Doolittle 2005; Spencer & Peterson, 2010).

While literature regarding school-age research in regard to using story grammar is not as sparse as at the preschool level, more empirical evidence for addressing the use of macrostructure intervention in the early elementary years (e.g., kindergarten and first grade) is needed as well (Reese, Suggate, & Long, 2010). A disconnect continues to exist, even at this

level, between the demonstrated importance of acquiring and using proficient narrative skills and successful story grammar intervention.

Ukrainetz (1998) first introduced pictography as a means to improve the quality of written stories through drawing of pictures to represent important parts of a story. By focusing on chronology and simple drawing (stick figures), students provided a visual basis from which to retell a story. Qualitative studies support pictography's use as an individualized intervention for third- and fourth-grade children with language impairment.

A study completed by Klecan-Aker and Gill (2005) found that teaching the structure of language in narrative forms to a junior-high child with specific learning disabilities improved the narrative complexity of their stories during retell tasks. A positive correlation was also found between story organization in retell and reading comprehension. Again, however, single-subject design limits the significance of the study.

Green, Carthew, & Flanagan (2008) utilized a similar design and investigated the use of story grammar instruction on seven different participants in second through fifth grades. Following eight weeks of instruction, these students increased developmental story levels. A pilot study by Green and Klecan-Aker (2012) investigated the effectiveness of teaching narrative organization and macrostructure to 24 6-9 year old children with language learning disabilities in a small-group setting. Results indicate significant improvement in complexity of language use and general use of story grammar components in a story retell scenario.

In a study by Justice et al. (2010), classroom teachers were instructed in using the "Read It Again" program. During this intervention, narrative, as well as, vocabulary, print knowledge and phonological awareness skills were addressed during a 30-week, 60-lesson language and literacy curriculum supplement. This teacher-implemented instruction included an age-

appropriate storybook used for the weekly set of lessons and the storybook and activities were presented in whole-class, large-group settings. This quasi-experimental study found that grammar, morphology and vocabulary skills of students who participated in the supplemental program were significantly higher than controls when measured at the end of the school year (Justice et al., 2010).

S. L. Gillam et al. (2012) analyzed a story grammar intervention for children with SLI in contextualized and decontextualized settings in comparison to a no-treatment group. While a relatively small number of participants took part in the study, eight in each group, explicit story grammar instruction in both contextualized and decontextualized activities were found to improve children's sentence formulation and discourse abilities when compared with the control group.

Similarly, Spencer and Slocum (2010) assessed the effectiveness of a narrative intervention utilizing both story grammar instruction and scaffolded story retell activities. The five preschool participants who displayed narrative language delays were instructed in story grammar vocabulary using visuals and icons via games and structured story retelling to increase oral narration. The small-group intervention evidenced improvement in personal narrative generation immediately following intervention and at maintenance assessment, two weeks postintervention.

Most recently, a study by S. L. Gillam, Olszewski, Fargo, and R. B. Gillam (2014) explored effects of a classroom-based narrative and vocabulary instruction program. A speech-language pathologist (SLP) provided the instruction in a regular education, first-grade classroom. Identified as either high- or low-risk based on scores from a narrative pretest, students in the experimental group received instruction from the SLP for 90 minutes per week for six weeks

focusing on instruction of story grammar elements, story modeling, story retell, increasing use of complex narratives, story generation, and story comprehension. Results indicated clinically significant gains for the experimental classroom when compared to the control classroom, particularly for the children in the high-risk subgroup. Children in the high-risk subgroup were found to increase narrative skills significantly but not vocabulary skills, when compared to the low-risk group (S. L. Gillam et al, 2014). Implications of this study indicate increased need for further classroom-based research investigation.

Results of these studies show promise for story grammar intervention but also indicate need for further, true experimental research regarding use of programs that address narrative intervention in some way. Due to the complexity of language learning and comprehension, much more data are needed to validate these claims. Despite the apparent agreement on the importance of understanding and using macrostructure to improve narrative skills and the significance of telling and retelling stories in relation to improvement within the academic curriculum, much more research is needed to validate instructional practices and environments in regards to efficacy. Given the literature and data to date, advancing understanding of macrostructure remains possible.

Empirical Background of Narrative Measures

Availability of Standardized Narrative Measures

Language development, long studied at the word and sentence level, can and should be investigated at more complex levels via larger units of language, such as discourse. Hughes et al. (1997) provided an all-encompassing list of reasons to assess children's narratives based on literature and research to date. Producing narratives requires complex comprehension of language content, form, and use on multiple levels and occurs naturally in social situations

within and out of the academic setting. These narrative language skills tie closely to other academic skills and can be assessed both expressively and receptively. Adjustment of narrative language tasks in general can occur to meet the instructional needs of the child. In sum, narratives provide a multifaceted view of language in real-life tasks that greatly affect life skills.

Given the relative newness of assessment of narrative skills at the school-age level, it is not surprising that assessment of these skills at the preschool level lags even farther behind. In fact, existing formal assessments of narrative skills with normative data for preschool are almost nonexistent and results in inability to assess reading difficulties until children begin to experience failure in elementary school. More informal measures of narrative ability focus primarily on use of fictional stories and assessment of use of story grammar structure. Critics note that story generation in response to pictures differs greatly from narration of personal narratives and further research is needed to verify ties to academic success (McCabe & Rollins, 1994).

Because oral narrative skills are a key component of most school curricula and of increasing importance in regards to the CCSS, interest in assessment of these skills continues to increase for school-age populations. Oral language skills, though not typically assessed as such in the classroom setting, provide an avenue for academic success, as evidenced by children with language impairment and continued difficulties accessing the curriculum effectively. Standardized measures for the school-age population are limited, with the Test of Narrative Language (TONL; R. B. Gillam & Pearson, 2004) frequently utilized. This assessment measures the ability to answer questions about, retell, and create original stories in children ages five to eleven years. Other measures exclusive to narration are nonexistent.

One particular instrument with normative data for preschool children does exist: the Renfrew Bus Story (Glasgow & Cowley, 1994). With normative data for children age three years to six years, 11 months, the Renfrew Bus Story–North American (RBS-NA) edition utilizes narrative retell as a short assessment of receptive and expressive oral language for young children. Scoring components include the duration of the retelling, length of utterances, accuracy and completeness of information provided in retell, complexity of child’s speech and independence of retell (Glasgow & Cowley, 1994). This assessment is designed and touted to provide a clear picture of a child’s language development and correlates with other measures of language and later reading achievement. However, administration is time consuming in both administration and scoring processes due to the necessity of transcription and individual scoring component protocols. A larger pool of available resources would increase efficacy in preliteracy intervention.

Criterion-Referenced Narrative Measures

Criterion-referenced measures present promise but the complex process of acquiring human language compounded by the influence of a broader communicative context highly pinpoint the fact that “good” developmental data must be obtained for these to be considered informative for practice (Heilmann, Miller, & Nockerts, 2010). Oral narrative analysis, one type of criterion-referenced measure, provides for a detailed description of a child’s ability to organize a narrative and identifies whether a child meets developmental expectations. As opposed to standardized measures, criterion-referenced assessment of narrative skills allows for collection of detailed information on specific skills in contextualized language situations. Criterion-referenced measures additionally allow for specific delineation of strengths and

weaknesses within a child's pattern of language performance and allow a clear understanding of difficulties that may need intervention (Heilmann et al., 2010).

Criterion-referenced narrative measures, however, present difficulties with accounting for the multiplicity of aspects affecting language use at any given time in a child's development. Pragmatic skills may be more advanced than vocabulary and grammar, for example, resulting in greatly differing narrative characteristics than a same-age child whose strength is vocabulary and lacks pragmatic skills. Differing scaffolding and interaction techniques also highly influence narrative ability, as the communication partner can assist the narrator in producing a fluent story through questioning and repetition or leaving the disjointed story without resolution due to inability to follow (Heilmann et al., 2010).

Narrative measures for preschool populations, like intervention programs and protocols, continue to lag behind school-age children. Given the developmental trajectory and variations in oral language skills for children ages 3-5, effectively standardizing and measuring narrative skills continue to present large challenges. At this time, criterion-referenced measures targeting the preschool population are beginning to emerge, such as the Narrative Language Measure (Spencer & Petersen, 2012). Even this measure continues to be evaluated and updated as more data regarding narrative skills emerges in the preschool population.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate if specific instruction on age-appropriate narrative vocabulary positively influenced the ability of preschool children to retell stories as a means to address deficits in general story-structure knowledge and thus story comprehension and retell, skills required in kindergarten-level CCSS. Narrative vocabulary instruction will be presented during large-group, shared storybook reading.

Research Questions

This exploratory, quasi-experimental study addresses whether large-group, contextualized explicit story grammar vocabulary instruction increases the ability for preschoolers (3-5 years of age) to retell a story.

1. Research Question 1 (RQ1): Does explicit instruction of story grammar vocabulary (character, setting, emotion) in large-group, contextualized settings increase preschool children's ability to retell a story?
2. Research Question 2 (RQ2): Does explicit instruction of story grammar vocabulary (character, setting, emotion) in large-group, contextualized settings result in maintenance of increased skill level to retell a story?

Hypothesis

Based on the literature review to date, the following hypotheses are related to this study:

1. Given explicit story grammar instruction related to age-appropriate vocabulary, preschool children will improve story retell skills.
2. Given intense, short-term explicit story grammar instruction, preschool children will be able to maintain previously gained improvements in story retell skills over several weeks.

Design of the Study

This quasi-experimental study investigated explicit story grammar vocabulary instruction in preschool children, ranging from three years to five years, eleven months of age, provided in a large-group format. The instruction utilized a narrative story-book and a simple follow-up activity conducted at the large-group level. Target vocabulary was based on developmentally and age-appropriate expectations for preschool children.

Independent Variable

The independent variable in this study was the presence of explicit story grammar vocabulary instruction.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in this study was the story retell abilities of the children participating in the instruction.

Research Participants

Preschool children, ages three years to five years and eleven months, were the targeted population of this study. Children were attending a state-funded Prekindergarten program and had entered the program based on a criterion score from a preschool screening attended in the spring of the previous year. Specific criteria and at-risk scores were obtained from participating

districts. Due to the complex nature of language development indicated by developmental delays, exclusion criteria included a previously diagnosed language delay or diagnosed developmental delay (e.g., autism, Down Syndrome) accepted by the school district. Children with a diagnosed articulation or phonological delay were included in the study due to assumed lack of interference with language acquisition and use. Due to the limited time of instruction in this study, children had to also be available and present for the entire instructional period to be included in the study.

Participants were recruited from two state-funded preschools in a rural public school system in southeastern Illinois. Each preschool had two sessions, one morning and one afternoon that meet for approximately 160 minutes, five days a week. One teacher headed one morning and another teacher headed one afternoon class, for a total of two participating teachers. Consent for participation was collected from the teachers as well as appropriate administrative entities within the school districts.

Following consent, all participating children in the morning class of one classroom (teacher A) and all participating children in the afternoon class in one classroom (teacher B) were assigned as experimental groups of approximately 20 students each. Control groups were the afternoon class of teacher A and the morning class of teacher B, each with approximately 20 students. Each experimental group received the same instruction on the same days. The total anticipated number of participants was 80 children and two teachers.

Ethical/Human Subject Concerns

Any time children are involved in experimental research, careful consideration must be taken to assure that the children feel comfortable as participants. All instruction and assessment pieces were provided in as short of time as possible and adhered to expectations for

developmental norms. In addition to parental consent for participation, all children were provided an explanation of the expectations of the instruction and assessment in appropriately understood terms. Prior to participation in assessment, children were told that they were going to be told to listen to a story and then repeat it. They were simply asked if they wanted to hear the story and prompted to retell the story. A child could, at any time, refuse to participate and be removed from the study.

Instructional Materials

Target story grammar vocabulary during instruction were character, setting, and emotion within the context of shared storybook reading. Targeted vocabulary was based on CCSS expectations for kindergarten students. Appendix B provides the Illinois CCSS for kindergarten. By the end of kindergarten, students are expected to retell stories that include key details including character and setting. Emotion is targeted as a concrete concept to address events within the story. Kindergarten children are also expected to answer questions about a story and make connections between illustrations and the story. Developmentally appropriate activities targeted this foundational, specific vocabulary within the context of large-group gross-motor, fine-motor, and cognitive activities with scaffolding and modeling as needed.

The books utilized in this study were selected based on common classroom literature used in preschool settings to organize curricula and introduce relevant vocabulary. Specific consideration was taken to include a book with pictures related to main elements of the story that depicted salient targeted vocabulary (i.e., the book contains at least one strong character, at least one obvious setting and one obvious emotional component). Books used were *Clifford Keeps Cool* by Norman Bridwell (1984) and *Gilbert Goldfish* by Kelly DiPucchio (2011). Both books provided an evident narrative structure with main characters, a main setting, and an emotion.

The books chosen also reflected frequently utilized classroom themes present in preschool classrooms such as weather and pets.

The shared storybook reading included supported instructional strategies such as a picture walk (Paris & Paris, 2003) and referencing to illustrations within and during the story. Additionally, repetition of targeted vocabulary and specific salient features of each term were utilized. Follow-up instruction and activities included large-group categorization of pictures representing target vocabulary based on salient features (i.e., Clifford would be put into the “character” group, the river would be put in the “setting” group, and a happy face would be put into the “emotion” group). Gross-motor and fine-motor activities also addressed categorizing the salient features of each target vocabulary with repeated exposure and modeling by me. Children were expected to manipulate large pictures representative of the target vocabulary as well as use a marker or pencil to check off specific pictures in a scavenger-hunt activity. The third activity included gross motor skills of hopping, stomping, and turning around. Specific activities for each day are listed in Appendix A. Students who demonstrated developmental fine and gross motor difficulties were assisted to complete activities to the best of their abilities. Lack of fine or gross motor skills did not result in inability to take part in the instruction.

Design of the Instruction

Instruments

Each of the two classrooms involved in the project were rated using a modified checklist (see Appendix C) based on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R; Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 2005) to assess classroom and instructional equality in the two settings. This scale utilized observation of a program's environment, curriculum, schedule, supervision and interaction to assess process quality in an early childhood setting. Assessment

occurred for various interactions that go on between entities in a classroom: staff and children; staff, parents, and other adults; among the children themselves; children and the many materials and activities in the environment. Additionally, features such as space, schedule, and materials that supported interactions were evaluated. According to the field tests of the instrument, internal consistency of the Environmental Rating Scales at the subscale level ranges from .71-.88 while the total scale level is .92 (Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, 2013).

All children participating in the study were pretested using the Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals Preschool–Second Edition (CELF-P 2; Wiig, Secord, & Semel, 2006) to assess baseline language skill level. The CELF-P 2 is a standardized, norm-referenced assessment for identification, diagnosis, and follow-up evaluation of language deficits in children three to six years of age. Language abilities, in this context, include the ability to understand and use the standard rules of the English language and include morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics at a level similar to same-age peers. To obtain a core language score, the sentence structure, word structure and expressive vocabulary subtests were administered. General scoring guidelines and explanations are included in Appendix C. During the sentence structure subtest, the child points to a picture in the stimulus book in response to oral directions. In the word structure subtest, the child completes a sentence with targeted structure(s) in a closed procedure task. During the expressive vocabulary subtest the child identifies an object, person, or activity portrayed in the stimulus book (Wiig et al., 2004). Test-retest stability estimations using Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated across age groups. The average corrected stability coefficient for expressive vocabulary subtest was .90, for word structure ranged from .77 to .90 and was .78 for sentence structure. Additionally, the corrected stability coefficients of the composite scores (including sentence structure, word structure and

expressive vocabulary) ranged from .91 to .94. Internal consistency measures for the subtests utilized and the composite score ranged as follows: sentence structure, .78-.83; word structure, .80-.86; expressive vocabulary .77-.84; composite language score, .90-.93. Estimated administration time for the three subtests required to determine the Core Language Score is 15-20 minutes and varies by age and responsiveness of the child. The CELF-P 2 was chosen for this study based on the relative short period of time required to administer the required composite subtests as well as the importance of understanding sentence structure and expressive vocabulary skills to narrative ability. Data from this instrument was utilized to determine the proposed similarity of the control and experimental groups as a whole.

Pre- and postinstruction assessment included the Test of Narrative Retell – Preschool (TNR-P), a subtest of the Narrative Language Measures (Spencer & Petersen, 2012). The TNR-P assesses a child's ability to retell a previously heard story and is based on developmental patterns of narrative and linguistic structures. The TNR-P is a standardized, criterion-referenced measure designed for both benchmark assessment and progress monitoring. Administration time is expected to be six minutes for three stories with the highest score taken from the three stories when used in its full form. An administrative script is provided. Picture support is available for younger children and those with indicated delays and used at the discretion of the assessor. Picture support was not utilized in this administration. General scoring guidelines are included in Appendix C. Preliminary reliability and validity include bivariate Pearson correlation of .77, 91% fidelity of administration, 96% inter-rater reliability and criterion-related evidence of validity with the Renfrew Bus Story of .88 and the Index of Narrative Complexity of .93 (Petersen & Spencer, in press).

Implementation Procedures

Field Testing

Following consent for participation, a field study was conducted at a state-funded preschool in a similar geographic region as the intended study. The field study utilized one book and one week's activities. The anticipated number of participants for the field study was 20 children but only 10 students participated following consent to participate. Instructional design and the TNR-P pre- and postassessment measure were utilized in the same intended fashion to assess fidelity of instruction and measurement of skills. Adaptations to instruction and assessments were made according to data received in the field testing. Specifically, the scavenger-hunt activity was changed to provide a more individual or small-group effort in acquiring pictures of the targeted vocabulary to allow for better behavior management during the activity. Individual classroom differences were also anticipated based on the questions and interactions with the students in the field-tested classroom. Preassessment instruments of ECERS-R and CELF-P 2 were not utilized as these are standardized, frequently-used measures and not necessary in the single-classroom setting. No significant changes to the previously planned instruction or materials were made based on the field testing experience.

Main Experiment

Following consent for participation, approximately 80 students were assigned into control and experimental groups based on existing classrooms. The total number of participants in the control group was approximately 40 students (20 with each teacher) and the total number of participants in the experimental group was approximately 40 students (20 with each teacher). All children were administered the CELF-4 and TNR-P during the first week of the experiment. No instruction took place.

I provided all instruction during weeks two and three to all experimental groups. The experimental group was provided instruction in large-group settings during their regular preschool day. The control group did not receive the experimental instruction but were read the same book utilized for the study by the classroom teacher. The instructional session included reading of a classroom theme-related storybook with follow-up activities regarding the salient features of three specific vocabulary elements developmentally appropriate for preschool: character, setting, and emotion. One book was utilized to address all three vocabulary terms on all three days. Postreading instruction included developmentally appropriate whole-group activities to reinforce the salient features of targeted vocabulary. Instruction to the experimental group was delivered over six days for 45-minutes per day. Appendix A provides the scope and sequence of the lessons based on work by S. L. Gillam et al. (2012) and Justice et al. (2010).

Because instruction took place in the classroom, the teacher was asked to leave the room during the experimental instruction to decrease the likelihood that vocabulary and activities were carried over to control settings. Classroom aides were allowed to remain in the classroom during experimental instruction to aid students needing assistance and to meet state requirements for teacher to student ratio in prekindergarten classrooms. The classroom teacher was asked to read the same story to the control group/classroom in a manner typical to other, similar instruction. All children were exposed to the same story for the same number of days (three). Classroom teachers were not told specific vocabulary targets or question prompts that were to be used with the experimental groups. Classroom teachers were informed that the experiment was about story structure and asked to provide instruction as they normally would. Teacher reading of the story and any follow-up activities were video recorded to assess instructional strategies typically used in the classroom.

Total experimental instruction time was designed to be 45-minutes per day. Instruction began with introduction and description of story grammar vocabulary (character, setting, emotion) and associated icons representing these concepts. Salient features of the vocabulary were discussed in a conversational manner, allowing a few students to respond to each prompt. Answers were confirmed or corrected by me for benefit of the entire group. Appendix A provides the script and icons used during this segment. Introduction of story grammar vocabulary was estimated to last 10 minutes.

Prestory presentation on day one lasted approximately five minutes. Children were shown the book and covers and read the title and author. Children were asked to make predictions about what may occur in the story based on the title and illustrations on the cover; these predictions being based on prior knowledge. Children were prompted to predict who the story may be about (character), where the story takes place (setting), what may happen in the story, and how that would make someone feel (emotion). Subsequent days utilizing the same book provided a brief overview of these components due to repeated exposure. A couple of children were encouraged to answer each question so that prior to reading the story all children in the group would have had an opportunity to answer at least one question. Appendix A provides the script and icons for this instructional segment.

The story preview was estimated to take two minutes to complete. I took the students through a picture walk and discussed what was going to happen in the story. A script for the preview is provided in Appendix A. Following the preview, the entire story was read to the children. As the story was read, pauses were utilized to discuss and summarize targeted elements presented (character, setting, emotion). This was estimated to last 10 minutes. Following the reading, children were asked to verbally state the character(s), setting(s) and emotion(s)

presented in the days' story as a group. Another picture walk was made, if needed, so students could reference specific items in the story.

Following the story, a large-group activity based on the targeted vocabulary took place. All instructional periods were video recorded to assess fidelity and validity of instruction. Day one activity was a categorization activity. Each child held up his/her picture and determined whether it should be placed in the character box (with icon on it), the setting box (with icon on it) or the emotion box (with icon on it). Modeling and prompting were provided as needed. Children were asked to use target vocabulary to describe the picture they had once the correct category is established (e.g., "Clifford is a character."). Salient features of each vocabulary word were discussed repeatedly. This postactivity was expected to require 10 minutes of time.

On day two of the instructional week, the poststory instructional activity was a scavenger hunt. Clipboards with a paper listing, in picture form, different characters, settings, and emotions were dispersed to all students. Each child was given a marker to mark out the pictures. I led the children on a scavenger hunt to find pictures representing characters, settings, and emotions dispersed around the room. A script with prompting and instruction for this activity is provided in Appendix A. The scavenger hunt checklist is provided in Appendix A. This poststory activity was estimated to take 15 minutes.

The poststory activity for day three of instruction included vocabulary exercises. Various pictures of characters, settings and emotions were placed around the room. Music was played and the children were walking around the pictures (in a musical chairs type of activity). When the music stopped, the children stood on one of the pictures. If they were standing on a character, the children would hop five times. If they were standing on a setting, they must sit down, and if they were standing on an emotion they will complete five toe touches. Prompting

in the form of verbal and visual reminders was required to accurately complete this activity. Salient features were reviewed to reinforce accuracy throughout the activity. Adaptations to the gross-motor exertions were made as needed to meet the needs of the children. For example, if needed, the activity was adjusted so that when the music stops everyone must put their foot on any character. The next round would be a setting, etc.

Immediately following instruction, narrative retell skills were assessed using the TNR-P (Spencer & Petersen, 2012). Retell of all children, control and experimental, were recorded and assessed for inclusion of character, setting, and emotion.

Story retell skills for each child were evaluated using the TNR-P following each week of instruction and again at the ends of weeks three, four, five, and six weeks postinstruction. The TNR-P was administered individually. The child was read three stories and asked to retell each. Specific administration and scoring guides were provided with the TNR-P. This evaluation was estimated to take six minutes per child. All assessment components were audio recorded and measured for validity and fidelity. Table 1 provides a descriptive timeline for the study for the experimental group. The control group was exposed to the same assessment timeline as well as the same story for the same number of days.

Table 1

Planned Timeline of Study

Week	Day	Target/Post-Story Activity
1	1	Pre-assessment using ECERS-R and CELF-P 2 and TNR-P
	2	Pre-assessment using ECERS-R and CELF-P 2 and TNR-P
	3	Pre-assessment using ECERS-R and CELF-P 2 and TNR-P
2	1(T)	Target Vocabulary in “Clifford Keeps Cool.” Vocabulary Categorization Activity
	2(W)	Target Vocabulary in “Clifford Keeps Cool.” Vocabulary Scavenger Hunt Activity
	3(R)	Target Vocabulary “Clifford Keeps Cools.” Vocabulary Exercises Activity
	4(F)	Post-assessment TNR-P
3	1(T)	Target Vocabulary in “Gilbert Goldfish” Vocabulary Categorization Activity
	2(W)	Target Vocabulary in “Gilbert Goldfish” Vocabulary Scavenger Hunt
	3(R)	Target Vocabulary in “Gilbert Goldfish” Vocabulary Exercises Activity
	4(F)	Post-assessment TNR-P
4	1(R/F)	Post-assessment TNR-P
5	1(R/F)	Post-assessment TNR-P
6	1(R/F)	Post-assessment TNR-P

Data Analysis

Quantitative

Preliminary statistical analysis of data was conducted. A nonequivalent group design was utilized to assess the similarities of the already intact experimental and control groups. To determine equivalency of the control and experimental groups, data was utilized to assess whether differences existed in the mean standard scores for the CELF-P 2 (Wiig et al., 2006). Data from the ECERS-based checklist was also analyzed for any differences in classroom and general instructional practices between the two participating teachers.

Using posttest data from the TNR-P (Spencer & Petersen, 2012), a dependent samples t-test was conducted using the mean scores of both experimental and control groups. Effect size was calculated. If differences in the means were significant and positive, then we could infer that the instruction provided had an effect on TNR-P scores.

Additionally, the TNR-P (Spencer & Petersen, 2012) was administered to all students at one week, two weeks, and three weeks postinstruction to assess lasting effects and maintenance of skills gained during the intervention period. A dependent samples t-test was again utilized to examine differences, if any.

Because analysis of pretest data revealed no differences in mean scores between control and experimental groups, an analysis of covariance was not conducted for scores on the CELF-P 2 (Wigg et al, 2006) and the pretest data from the TNR-P (Spencer & Petersen, 2012).

Summary

As increased focus on reading comprehension gains prominence in early elementary school classrooms, direct development of comprehension skills for preschool children will also expand. Preschool classrooms and curricula currently lack efficient means of addressing

growing demands for comprehension skills. The ability to retell a story links to comprehension and may provide insights into progressing skills. Developmentally appropriate instruction within an easily accessible context, such as narrative storybooks, may provide a viable resource for addressing such skills.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

By investigating current literature-based practices utilized in preschool classrooms, specifically large-group, shared, storybook reading, I was able to examine if shared storybook reading could viably address deficits in general story-structure knowledge, story comprehension and story retell, skills required in kindergarten-level CCSS. The purpose of this study was to investigate if specific instruction of age-appropriate narrative vocabulary (character, setting, emotion) positively influenced the ability of preschool children to retell stories. Narrative vocabulary instruction was presented during large-group, shared storybook reading. Additionally, this study aimed to add to current literature regarding contextualized language learning as a viable means of instruction of specific skills and address the current substantiated need for research-based instruction within preschool practices.

The results presented here explore the relationship between classroom demographics, teacher instruction and functionality of whole-group, classroom-based instruction of specific vocabulary on criterion-referenced story-retell activities. Two research questions were analyzed:

1. Research Question 1: Does explicit instruction of story grammar vocabulary (character, setting, emotion) in large-group, contextualized settings increase preschool childrens' ability to include targeted specific elements when retelling a story?

2. Research Question 2: Does explicit instruction of story grammar vocabulary (character, setting, emotion) in large-group, contextualized settings result in maintenance of increased inclusion of targeted elements when retelling a story?

Statistical analysis of these questions is reported following preliminary reporting on data preparation and exploration techniques. This chapter is divided into two sections. First, descriptive statistics comparing the control and experimental groups (preschool students) and the instructional strategies utilized by me and the classroom teachers are presented. The second section reports results from *t* tests and correlational analysis for the whole sample, as well as the experimental and control samples individually.

Student, Teacher, and Classroom Demographics

Student Participants

A total of 80 preschool students were recruited for participation in this study following consent for participation from teacher A of classroom A and teacher B of classroom B. The morning class for classroom A (20 students) and the afternoon class from classroom B (20 students) were assigned to the experimental group. The afternoon class from classroom A (20 students) and the morning class from classroom B (20 students) were assigned to the control group. Parental consent for participation was received for 79 students. Despite the number of students for whom parental consent was secured, the actual study involved 58 students because of the exclusion criteria and students opting out of participation. Specifically, students who were previously diagnosed with a language-based disability (e.g., language-based Individualized Education Program (IEP), Autism, etc.) were excluded from the study. For the four classrooms, 11 students were reported to already have language-based IEPs and therefore were invited to participate in the instruction, but were excluded from any further language

assessment or data collection. In addition to these students, 2 students scored significantly below peers on the CELF-P 2 (Wiig et al., 2006) and upon further evaluation, were currently unidentified students potentially in need of further language evaluation. Based on the low standard scores and teacher concerns, these two students were excluded from the study. Further explanation and justification for this procedure is provided in later paragraphs. To participate in the ongoing data collection of the study, students were required to be present for all days of instruction in both the control and experimental classrooms. Due to illness, four students were absent during instructional days and their data were not used in the current study. Additionally, four students refused to participate in assessments using the TNR-P (Spencer & Petersen, 2012). In contrast to the CELF-P 2 (Wiig, et al., 2006) that these students participated in, the nature of the story retell task in TNR-P (Spencer & Petersen, 2012) resulted in refusal to comment on the task. Although these students willingly left the classroom with me to complete the TNR-P (Spencer & Petersen, 2012), the four students refused to attempt a story retell during assessment and were therefore excluded from the data analysis. In sum, data from 58 students were analyzed for this study.

A total of 29 preschoolers participated in the experimental group. Approximately 45% ($n = 13$) of the students were male and almost 55% ($n = 16$) of the students were female. Four-year olds made up 56% ($n = 16$) of the student sample, while the rest of the students were five-year olds (48% or $n = 13$). No three-year olds participated in the experimental group. Socio-economic status was coded dichotomously as either low-income ($n = 6$ or 21%) or not low-income ($n = 23$ or 79%).

A total of 29 preschoolers participated in the control group. Approximately 62% ($n = 18$) of the students were male and almost 38% ($n = 11$) of the students were female. Only 7% ($n = 2$)

of the students were three-year olds, while four-year olds made up 45% ($n = 13$) and five-year olds 48% ($n = 14$) of the student sample. Socioeconomic status was coded dichotomously as either low-income ($n = 6$ or 21%) or not low-income ($n = 23$ or 79%).

Teacher Participants and Instruction

Two preschool teachers in a small, rural school district in southeastern Illinois agreed to participate in this study. Both work in the same school district but their classrooms were located in different buildings within that district. In addition, teacher A was employed by the school district while teacher B was employed by the Regional Office of Education. These two teachers do not collaborate and have very little contact with each other during the school year. A poststudy interview was conducted with each of the teachers to garner feedback on the study and to gain general opinions of their abilities to conduct similar instruction in their classrooms. Summary demographics for the teachers and instruction are provided in Table 2.

Table 2

Participating Teacher and Classroom Demographics

Teacher	Teacher A	Teacher B
Level of Education	B.S.	B.S.
Number of years teaching preschool	8	9
Curriculum used	Creative Curriculum	Creative Curriculum
Assessment use and frequency	Observation checklist Progress report 3 X per school year	Observation checklist Ongoing portfolio End of school year
Number of times use whole-group shared storybook reading per week	8-10 times per week	8-10 times per week
Number of minutes spent on shared storybook reading per instance	10	10

Both classrooms reported similar focus and goals, with instruction and activities focusing on the preschool learning objectives set forth by the governing school district. A list of these objectives is included in Appendix B. A postinstruction interview was held with each participating teacher.

Teacher A reported that she aims to use whole-group shared story reading at least once a day but often is able to read two stories per day. Teacher A stated that when reading in a large group,

my focus in the beginning of the school year is simply to expose children to the theme-related vocabulary for the week and introduce expectations for whole-group activities like sitting on the carpet with others and taking turns asking questions. As the school-year progresses, I focus on asking more comprehension questions and addressing print concepts like book and reading directionality. How long I read and what I accomplish depends on the make-up of the class and their attention that day.

Teacher A reportedly chooses children's books based on the theme of the week or any other special event relative to the students' lives (e.g., a book about why it rains when they have had to stay inside several days due to weather). In regard to the current study, Teacher A expressed that her experimental classroom "enjoyed and benefited from the stories and activities and the students looked forward to" me coming in to read with them. Teacher A also felt that the activities were "age-appropriate, but the amount of time spent on the story and activity (approximately 45 minutes per day) was too long to sustain on a regular, frequent basis." With specific requirements for preschool programs such as gross-motor play, fine-motor exploration, free play, and designated snack times, Teacher A noted that a daily activity that encompasses a large amount of time would require "leaving out our other usual activities, given the short period

of time that the children are in class each day.” Teacher A also reported that introduction and explanation of story grammar vocabulary, such as character, setting, and emotion, is a targeted task but “not consistently completed”; on average, introduction and explanation of story grammar vocabulary happens “once a week.”

Teacher B reported that she felt including instruction similar to what I delivered in the intervention was “too time consuming for the short preschool day” and that many children demonstrate “difficulty focusing for longer periods of time in that whole-group setting.” Teacher B also stated that whole-group shared reading is consistently utilized “twice per day” and books are chosen “based on our weekly topic or theme.” Furthermore, shared story reading is used as a means to teach “how to behave and what to do in a large-group setting” as well as to address vocabulary exposure, print concepts, and how to answer questions. Teacher B mentioned receiving the revised 2013 Illinois Early Learning Standards and noted that understanding and use of character and setting are listed among the standards. She stated intentions to utilize “shared reading and similar activities demonstrated in the study” to address these skills. Other than the length of the instruction, which she felt was “too long for the age of the students,” she felt the students “enjoyed the activities” and “learned a lot from your reading to them.”

Shared-Reading Instruction.

During this study, I provided shared-reading instruction to the experimental group students and the regular classroom teacher (Teacher A or Teacher B) provided shared-reading instruction to the control group students in their respective classrooms.

With whole-group, shared-reading experiences frequently used in preschool classrooms, determining the quality of the teacher’s reading style and influence on student participation plays

an important role in understanding child-adult interactions. Zucker et al. (2012) suggested measures of “extratextual” talk as one means of measuring the quality of the shared-reading experience. The frequency of teacher use of literal, inferential, and print/phonological references, adapted from the Systematic Assessment of Book Reading (SABR; Pentimonti, et al., 2012) was used to measure shared book-reading experiences. A copy of the extratextual talk measures and definitions is provided in Appendix D. Appendix D also provides the activity, definition, and frequency for extratextual talk of both classroom teachers and me during the initial reading of both children’s books used in the study. Only the initial reading was used as both classroom teachers reported difficulty maintaining student focus on repeated readings and, as Teacher B indicated, simply “read through it the second and third times,” indicating possible lack of knowledge related to sustained or increased opportunities for extratextual talk with subsequent readings, in congruence with findings in the Zucker et al. (2012) study. The following two tables, Table 3 and Table 4, provide summaries for instructional differences evidenced by the participating teachers and me.

Table 3

Teacher Summary for Use of Extratextual Talk

	<u>Investigator</u>	<u>Teacher A</u>	<u>Teacher B</u>
Extratextual Talk	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Literal	18 (21)	11 (25)	19 (37)
Inferential	69 (79)	31 (70)	27 (53)
Print Phonological	00 (00)	02 (05)	05 (10)
Awareness			

Total Instances	87	44	51
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Table 4

Teacher Reading Time for Targeted Books in Minutes and Seconds

	<u>Investigator</u>	<u>Teacher A</u>	<u>Teacher B</u>
Week/Book	Time	Time	Time
1/ <i>Gilbert Goldfish</i>	7:25	8:50	8:32
2/ <i>Clifford Keeps Cool</i>	10:30	4:40	7:30
Totals	17:55	13:30	16:02

As demonstrated by Table 3, I used inferential talk and questioning nearly 80% of the time. The classroom teachers also used a majority of their questioning to address inferential concepts, but in less than half the instances as compared with me. Table 4 indicates that I spent more time reading the stories to the students overall, allowing for extra time for the extratextual talk. The compared reading time demonstrated in Table 4 was measured only when the book became the main focus of discussion. Prior to opening the book and reading, I spent nearly five minutes (4:55 minutes in week 1, day 1 and 4:31 minutes in week 2, day 1) addressing targeted vocabulary (character, setting, emotion), asking inferential questions such as prediction, and making text-to-life connections. Teachers A and B did not partake in prereading activities and introduced the book with a title, beginning to read immediately.

Table 5 provides a numerical overview of the vocabulary exposure I provided during my instruction. I counted instances where the students or I were defining or describing the target vocabulary in terms of the story or other examples. Vocabulary instruction did not include follow-up activities, but rather time pre- and poststory discussion as well as reading of the story.

Table 5

Investigator Use of Targeted Vocabulary Words

Day/Book	Character	Setting	Emotion
1/ <i>Gilbert Goldfish</i>	15	13	14
2/ <i>Gilbert Goldfish</i>	12	15	17
3/ <i>Gilbert Goldfish</i>	14	19	17
1/ <i>Clifford Keeps Cool</i>	20	19	20
2/ <i>Clifford Keeps Cool</i>	22	23	23
3/ <i>Clifford Keeps Cool</i>	13	17	20
Totals	96	106	111

Classroom Environment.

The two preschool classrooms were both rated using a preschool environment checklist based on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) (Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, 2013). Each classroom was assessed on the following areas: space and furnishings, furniture for routine care, play and learning, furnishings for relaxation and comfort, room arrangement for play experiences, space for privacy, child-related display, spaces for gross-motor play, books and pictures, fine motor, art, music and movement, blocks, dramatic play, sand and water play, nature/science, math/number, use of TV, video and/or computers, promoting acceptance of diversity, safety practices indoor/outdoor. A copy of the checklist is

included in Appendix A.

Both classrooms rated similarly in terms of space and furnishings, including adequacy of space and furniture. Actual physical space within the school limited the classroom and furnishings, but it was found to be appropriate for preschool children. In other words, the classrooms were small, but arranged appropriately for adequate management of the preschool schedule. Room arrangement and organization allowed for a variety of play experiences, both quiet and active. Gross- and fine-motor play were encouraged and adequate space was made available. The classroom environment and schedule also allowed for adequate accessibility for art, music and movement, blocks, dramatic play, nature/science, and math activities. Both classrooms also met requirements for indoor and outdoor safety practices.

Specific consideration of the book and pictures section of the preschool environment checklist revealed that both classrooms contained a wide variety of books organized in a reading center that was easily accessible to the students. The books available addressed age-appropriate and curriculum-specific topics, and additional language materials were available including flannel story boards or puppet show stages. Overall, no major environmental differences appeared between the two classrooms.

In summary, teacher and classroom characteristics were found to be similar for both classrooms utilized in the study. Student demographics also appeared very similar. Teacher instruction during shared storybook reading did differ, as I, in my role as teacher for the intervention group, utilized more opportunities for extratextual talk while reading the story. Additionally, I spent more time engaging the students before and during reading of the stories.

Data Collection and Analysis

Following collection and scoring of the data, preliminary analysis was completed to determine similarity of the experimental and control groups. Additional analysis was then completed to investigate the following null hypotheses:

Ho1: There is no statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups on scores for the TNR-P Week 1, 2, 3.

Ho2: There is no statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups on scores for the TNR-P Week 4, 5, 6.

Initial Assessment Data

For the experimental group, a total of 29 preschoolers were evaluated using the CELF-P 2 (Wiig et al., 2006). Standard scores ranged from 81 to 114 ($M = 101.21$, $SD = 8.27$). The distribution was somewhat negatively skewed (-.78) and positively kurtotic (.845). Three of the students scored below 86, which explains the skew, and eight students scored 104, which accounts for the positive kurtosis.

For the control group, a total of 29 preschoolers were evaluated using the CELF-P 2 (Wiig et al., 2006). Standard scores ranged from 88 to 118 ($M = 103.24$, $SD = 9.55$). The distribution was somewhat positively skewed (.065) and negatively kurtotic (-1.27). Nine of the students scored above 112 which explains the skew and most scores only varied moderately from the mean, which accounts for the negative kurtosis.

As previously mentioned, two students were excluded from the study based on their performance on the CELF-P 2 (Wiig et al., 2006). Both students were in the same class and classroom and received a Core Language standard score of 75 or 77. For the CELF-P2 (Wiig et al., 2006), average scores ranged from 85-115, indicating that these scores were well below the average range and that these students may, in fact, demonstrate signs of a language disorder.

Upon further discussion with the classroom teacher, these students were deemed as “at risk” within the classroom environment and possibly not yet identified as having a language delay. This issue is further discussed in the limitations and implications sections of chapter 5.

An independent samples *t* test was conducted to determine if experimental-group students scored higher on the CELF-P 2 (Wiig et al., 2006) total language scores (TLS) and sentence structure (SS), word structure (WS), and expressive vocabulary (EV) subtests than control-group students. A more thorough description of the CELF-P 2 (Wiig, et al., 2006) can be found in Appendix A. Table 6 displays the mean comparisons. Kurtosis and skew fall within accepted limits of normality and all Levene’s tests for CELF-P 2 $>.05$, so I concluded the variances were equal.

Table 6

Comparison of Initial CELF-P 2 and TNR-P Scores

Assessment	Experimental	Control
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
CELF-P 2 Total Language Score	101.21 (8.27)	103.24 (9.55)
CELF-P 2 Sentence Structure Subtest	10.41 (2.06)	10.62 (2.44)
CELF-P 2 Word Structure Subtest	9.79 (2.23)	10.17 (2.41)
CELF-P 2 Expressive Vocabulary Subtest	10.03 (1.72)	10.76 (1.92)
TNR-P Week 1 Character, Setting, Emotion	5.00 (4.10)	4.03 (3.81)

There was no significant difference between the CELF-P 2 (Wiig et al., 2006) TLS for the experimental group students ($M = 101.21$) and the control group counterparts ($M = 103.24$), $t(56) = .87, p = .390$, two-tailed. There was no significant difference between the SS subtest

scores for the experimental-group students ($M = 10.41$) and the control-group counterparts ($M = 10.62$), $t(56) = .35$, $p = .729$, two-tailed. There was no significant difference between the WS subtest for the experimental-group students ($M = 9.79$) and the control-group counterparts ($M = 10.17$), $t(56) = -.62$, $p = .536$, two-tailed. There was no significant difference between the EV subtest for the experimental-group students ($M = 10.03$) and the control-group counterparts ($M = 10.76$), $t(56) = -1.51$, $p = .136$, two-tailed. In sum, no significant differences existed in total or subtest scores for the experimental or control groups for the standardized, norm-referenced CELF-P 2 (Wiig et al., 2006).

I also utilized the TNR-P (Spencer & Petersen, 2012) to assess all students in the study in Week 1. During Week 1, and in each subsequent week of assessment, the students were given three stories to retell. Each student was individually read a short story and asked to retell the same story back to me. No picture cues were used. Each story was scored for inclusion of targeted story grammar components (character, setting, and emotion) on a 0-2 scale with 0 points being assigned for lack of inclusion of the component, 1 point being assigned for generic or vague descriptions, and 2 points being assigned for inclusion of story-specific descriptions. More specific scoring guidelines can be found in Appendix A. This study focused on inclusion of character, setting, and emotion, each of which scored as 0-2 points for each story. Thus, in one week, scores for character could range from 0-6 points, scores for setting could range from 0-6 points, and scores could range from 0-6 points for emotion. The combined score of these components, ranging from 0-18 points, were used for comparison in this study.

Both experimental and control groups were assessed preinstruction (Week 1) and again at the end of Weeks 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 using the TNR-P. Each child was read a short story and asked to retell the same story to me. This was repeated twice, for a total of three stories. Stories were

audio recorded, scored real time, and then rescored following transcription of the recorded stories to assure valid scoring.

An independent samples t test was conducted to determine differences in average scores for the initial (Week 1) pretest of the TNR-P (Spencer & Petersen, 2012). Table 6 shows the mean comparisons. Skew and kurtosis fell within normal limits for Week 1 and Levene's test for TNR-P Week 1 revealed equal variance. There was no significant difference between the TNR-P Week 1 scores for the experimental-group students ($M = 5.00$) and the control-group counterparts ($M = 4.03$), $t(56) = .93$, $p = .357$, two-tailed, $d = .25$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a small effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference 0.97 was -1.1 to 3.05.

In sum, initial comparison of the experimental and control groups revealed no significant differences for performance on the standardized language measure (CELF-P 2) or the criterion-referenced story retell measure (TNR-P, Benchmark 1), indicating similar skills at the initiation of the study.

Instruction in Week 2 and Week 3.

Following initial assessment in Week 1, explicit vocabulary instruction for the terms character, setting, and emotion was provided by me to the experimental group during whole-group reading of an age-appropriate story. Instruction included reading of the story and pre- and poststory discussion and activities. The same book was utilized for three days in a row during the instruction weeks. A script for the instruction is provided in Appendix A. Week 2 instruction included discussion and reading of *Gilbert Goldfish Wants a Pet* (DiPucchio, 2012) for a total of 135 minutes over three days. Data collection for the TNR-P (Spencer & Petersen, 2012) took place on the last days of the week. During Week 3, the experimental group

received an additional 135 minutes of whole-group instruction over three days, again focusing on explicit instruction for vocabulary terms character, setting, and emotion. The book used during this shared storybook reading was *Clifford Keeps Cool* (Bridwell, 1984). During the same time frame, the control group was read the same stories by the classroom teacher.

Experimental Group Repeated Measures *t* Tests

Week 1 (preinstruction) was compared to Week 2 (135 minutes group postinstruction) and again to Week 3 (270 minutes group postinstruction) for inclusion of targeted vocabulary, specifically character, setting, and emotion concepts in the narrative retell tasks in the TNR-P (Spencer & Petersen, 2012). A repeated measures *t* test design was utilized to compare the following data: Week 1 vs. Week 2, Week 1 vs. Week 3, Week 2 vs. Week 3. The independent samples *t* test was used to assess whether experimental-group students increased scores (ranging from 0-18 points) for inclusion of character, setting, and emotion concepts on the TNR-P (Spencer & Petersen, 2012) following differing instruction intensities.

Inclusion of specific vocabulary in Week 2 ($M = 6.21$) was not significantly higher than Week 1 ($M = 5.00$), $t(28) = 1.714$, $p = .098$, two-tailed, $d = .28$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a small difference. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference -1.21 was -2.65 to $.24$. However, inclusion of specific vocabulary in Week 3 ($M = 6.48$) was significantly higher after two weeks of instruction, as compared to Week 1 ($M = 5.00$), $t(28) = 2.24$, $p = .033$, two-tailed, $d = .35$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a medium effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference -1.48 was -2.84 to $-.13$. Inclusion of specific vocabulary in Week 3 ($M = 6.48$) was not significantly higher than Week 2 ($M = 6.21$), $t(28) = .56$, $p = .58$, two-tailed, $d = .06$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a very small effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference $-.28$ was -1.28 to $.73$.

To summarize, the experimental group showed significant gains in inclusion of targeted character, setting and emotion concepts following two weeks of specific, whole-group instruction.

Additionally, a repeated measures *t* test was utilized to compare the following data: Week 4 to Week 3, Week 5 to Week 3, and Week 6 to Week 3. An independent samples *t* test was used to determine if increased inclusion of targeted vocabulary concepts was maintained following cessation of the intervention. Inclusion of specific vocabulary in Week 4 ($M = 7.24$) was not significantly higher than Week 3 ($M = 6.48$), $t(28) = 1.31$, $p = .20$, two-tailed, $d = .16$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a small effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference .76 was -.43 to 1.94. This indicates the experimental group maintained score gains made in Week 3 in Week 4 on the TNR-P. Inclusion of specific vocabulary in Week 5 ($M = 8.69$), however, was significantly higher than Week 3 ($M = 6.48$), $t(28) = 3.60$, $p = .001$, two-tailed, $d = .46$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a moderately large effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference 2.20 was .95 to 3.47. Inclusion of specific vocabulary in Week 6 ($M = 8.07$) was also significantly higher than Week 3 ($M = 6.48$), $t(28) = 2.55$, $p = .017$, two-tailed, $d = .33$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a medium effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference 1.59 was .31 to 2.86. This indicates that inclusion of targeted vocabulary concepts was not only maintained, but also significantly higher two and three weeks after instruction ceased.

A repeated measures *t* test was also conducted to compare scores on the TNR-P during the maintenance period, Weeks 4, 5, 6. Inclusion of specific vocabulary in Week 5 ($M = 8.69$) was significantly higher than Week 4 ($M = 7.24$), $t(28) = 2.95$, $p = .006$, two-tailed, $d = .30$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a medium effect. The 95% confidence interval

for the mean difference 1.45 was .44 to 2.45. Inclusion of specific vocabulary in Week 6 ($M = 8.07$) was not significantly different than Week 5 ($M = 8.69$), $t(28) = 1.70$, $p = .101$, two-tailed, $d = .13$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a small effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference -.62 was -1.37 to .13. Inclusion of specific vocabulary in Week 6 ($M = 8.07$) was not significantly different than Week 4 ($M = 7.24$), $t(28) = 1.69$, $p = .102$, two-tailed, $d = .17$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a small effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference .82 was -.17 to 1.83.

Inclusion of specific vocabulary in Week 4 ($M = 7.24$) was significantly higher than Week 1 ($M = 5.00$), $t(28) = 4.65$, $p < .001$, two-tailed, $d = .49$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a large effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference 2.24 was 3.73 to .75. Inclusion of specific vocabulary in Week 5 ($M = 8.69$) was significantly higher than Week 1 ($M = 5.00$), $t(28) = 4.65$, $p < .001$, two-tailed, $d = .84$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a very large effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference 3.69 was 5.32 to 2.06.

For the experimental group, there was a significant increase in including character, setting, and emotion concepts during story retell in Weeks 3 and 5. The gains were maintained in Weeks 4 and 6 as well. Overall, inclusion of specific vocabulary in Week 6 ($M = 8.07$) was significantly higher than Week 1 ($M = 5.00$), $t(28) = 3.64$, $p = .001$, two-tailed, $d = .68$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a rather large effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference 3.07 was 1.34 to 4.79. Figure 1 demonstrates a graphical representation of this pattern.

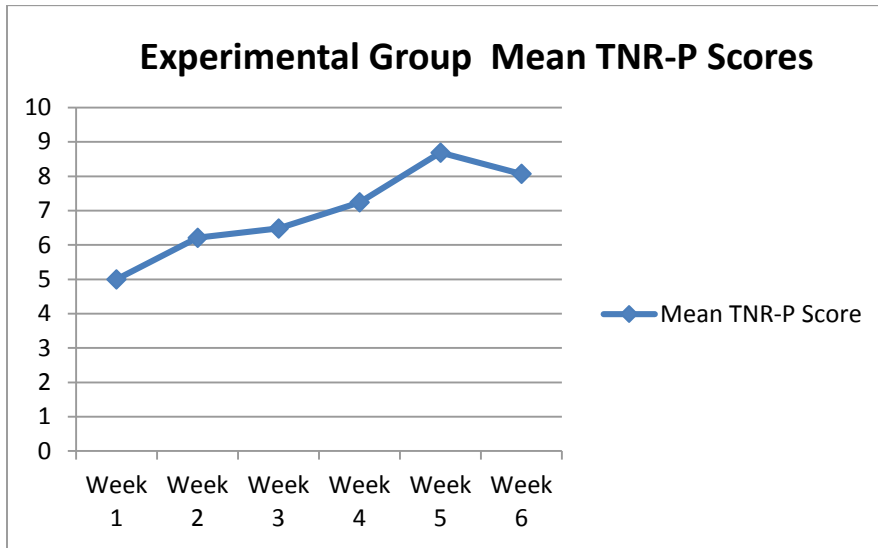


Figure 1. Experimental group mean TNR-P scores.

Control Group Repeated Measures *t* Tests

Students in the control group were also assessed at the end of each week in Weeks 1-6. A repeated measures *t* test design was used to compare gains on scores for the TNR-P (Spencer & Petersen, 2012) for the control group. Inclusion of specific vocabulary in Week 2 ($M = 4.76$) was not significantly different than Week 1 ($M = 4.03$), $t(28) = 1.37$, $p = .063$, two-tailed, $d = .19$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a small effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference $-.72$ was -1.81 to $.36$. Inclusion of specific vocabulary in Week 3 ($M = 5.10$) was not significantly different than Week 1 ($M = 4.03$), $t(28) = 1.94$, $p = .182$, two-tailed, $d = .30$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a medium effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference -1.07 was -2.20 to $.06$. Inclusion of specific vocabulary in Week 2 ($M = 4.76$) was not significantly different than Week 3 ($M = 5.10$), $t(28) = .58$, $p = .569$, two-tailed, $d = .09$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a small effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference $-.34$ was -1.57 to $.88$. Inclusion of specific vocabulary in Week 4 ($M = 6.14$) was not significantly different than Week 3 ($M =$

5.10), $t(28) = 1.76$, $p = .090$, two-tailed, $d = .26$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a moderately small effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference 1.03 was -.17 to 2.24. No significant changes in scores, and thus, inclusion of character, setting or emotion concepts were noted in the Weeks 1-4 for the control group.

Inclusion of specific vocabulary in Week 5 ($M = 6.66$), however, was significantly higher than Week 3 ($M = 5.10$), $t(28) = 2.56$, $p = .016$, two-tailed, $d = .45$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a moderately large effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference 1.55 was .31 to 2.80. Inclusion of specific vocabulary in Week 5 ($M = 6.66$) was significantly higher than Week 4 ($M = 6.14$), $t(28) = .88$, $p = .387$, two-tailed, $d = .12$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a small effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference .52 was -.69 to 1.72.

Additionally, inclusion of specific vocabulary in Week 6 ($M = 7.41$) was significantly higher than Week 3 ($M = 5.10$), $t(28) = 3.75$, $p = .001$, two-tailed, $d = .66$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a large effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference 2.31 was 1.05 to 3.57. Inclusion of specific vocabulary in Week 6 ($M = 7.41$) was not, however, significantly different than Week 4 ($M = 6.14$), $t(28) = 1.70$, $p = .102$, two-tailed, $d = .30$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a medium effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference 1.26 was -.27 to 2.82. Inclusion of specific vocabulary in Week 6 ($M = 7.41$) was also not significantly different than Week 5 ($M = 6.66$), $t(28) = 1.32$, $p = .198$, two-tailed, $d = .20$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a moderately small effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference .76 was -.42 to 1.94. To summarize, students in the control group demonstrated significant gains in inclusion of character, setting and emotion in Week 5 of the study. This was maintained in Week 6.

Additional repeated measures *t* tests were completed for comparison of Week 1 to Week 4, 5 and 6 for the control group to determine if repeated practice of the TNR-P (Spencer & Petersen, 2012) may have resulted in increases of inclusion of vocabulary of interest or regular growth through curriculum exposure. Inclusion of specific vocabulary in Week 4 ($M = 6.14$) was significantly higher than Week 1 ($M = 4.03$), $t(28) = 2.76$, $p = .010$, two-tailed, $d = .49$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a large effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference -2.10 was -3.67 to -.54. Inclusion of specific vocabulary in Week 5 ($M = 6.66$) was significantly higher than Week 1 ($M = 4.03$), $t(28) = 4.08$, $p < .001$, two-tailed, $d = .70$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a very large effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference -2.62 was -3.94 to -1.31. Inclusion of specific vocabulary in Week 6 ($M = 7.41$) was significantly higher than Week 1 ($M = 4.03$), $t(28) = 5.04$, $p < .001$, two-tailed, $d = .90$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a very large effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference -3.38 was -4.75 to -2.01. Thus, the control-group students began to show significant increases in including character, setting, and emotion concepts in story retell tasks on the fourth week of the study when compared to pretest (Week 1) scores. Figure 2 demonstrates the changes in means scores for the TNR-P for the control group.

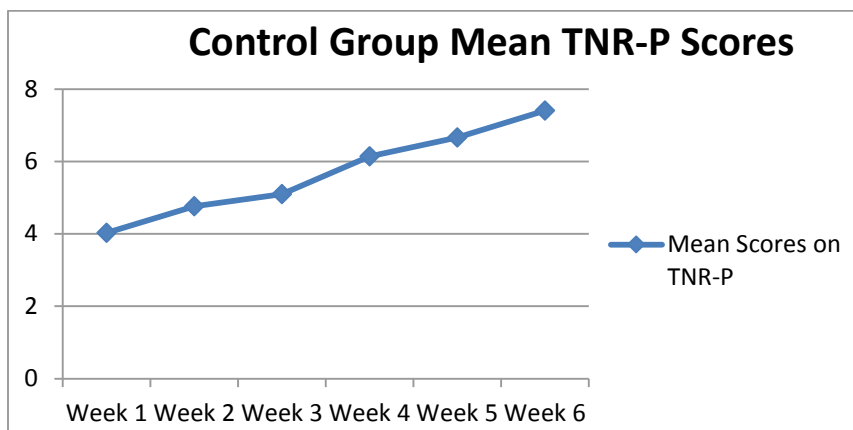


Figure 2. Control group mean TNR-P scores.

Comparison of Experimental and Control Groups

While both experimental- and control-group students demonstrated gains, whether these gains were significantly different was determined using independent samples *t* tests for each week. Comparisons were made to determine if, on average, the experimental-group students more frequently included character, setting and emotion (total) each consecutive week on the TNR-P (Spencer & Petersen, 2012). Skew fell within normal limits for all weeks (1-6). Kurtosis was outside normal limits on Weeks 2 and 4. Levene's tests for equality of variance were greater than .05 and that allowed for the assumption of equal variances for weeks 1-5. However, significance was found in Levene's test for Week 6; therefore, equality of variance could not be assumed. Table 7 provides detailed information.

Table 7

Mean Weekly Scores on TNR-P for Experimental and Control Groups

Assessment	Experimental	Control
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
TNR-P Week 1 Total Character, Setting, Emotion	5.00 (4.10)	4.03 (3.81)
TNR-P Week 2 Total Character, Setting, Emotion	6.21 (4.60)	4.76 (3.97)
TNR-P Week 3 Total Character, Setting, Emotion	6.48 (4.38)	5.10 (3.22)
TNR-P Week 4 Total Character, Setting, Emotion	7.24 (4.95)	6.14 (4.75)
TNR-P Week 5 Total Character, Setting, Emotion	8.69 (4.71)	6.66 (3.70)
TNR-P Week 6 Total Character, Setting, Emotion	8.07 (4.86)	7.41 (3.73)

There was no significant difference between the TNR-P Week 2 scores for the experimental group students ($M = 56.21$) and the control group counterparts ($M = 4.76$), $t(56) =$

128., $p = .205$, two-tailed, $d = .34$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a small effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference 1.45 was $-.81$ to 3.71 . There was no significant difference between the TNR-P Week 3 scores for the experimental-group students ($M = 6.48$) and the control-group counterparts ($M = 5.10$), $t(56) = 1.37$, $p = .177$, two-tailed, $d = .36$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a small effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference 1.38 was $-.64$ to 3.40 . There was no significant difference between the TNR-P Week 4 scores for the experimental-group students ($M = 7.24$) and the control-group counterparts ($M = 6.14$), $t(56) = .87$, $p = .754$, two-tailed, $d = .23$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a small effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference 1.38 was $-.64$ to 3.40 . There was no significant difference between the TNR-P Week 5 scores for the experimental-group students ($M = 8.69$) and the control-group counterparts ($M = 6.66$), $t(56) = 1.83$, $p = .073$, two-tailed, $d = .15$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a small effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference 2.03 was $-.19$ to 4.26 . There was no significant difference between the TNR-P Week 6 scores for the experimental-group students ($M = 8.07$) and the control-group counterparts ($M = 7.41$), $t(56) = .58$, $p = .57$, two-tailed, $d = .15$. Working from Cohen's (1998) guidelines, this is a small effect. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference $.66$ was $-.64$ to 3.40 .

While the experimental group demonstrated higher gains each week of the study, these gains were not significantly higher than the control group, thus retaining the null for hypotheses 1 and 2. Figure 3 provides a graphical representation of this data.

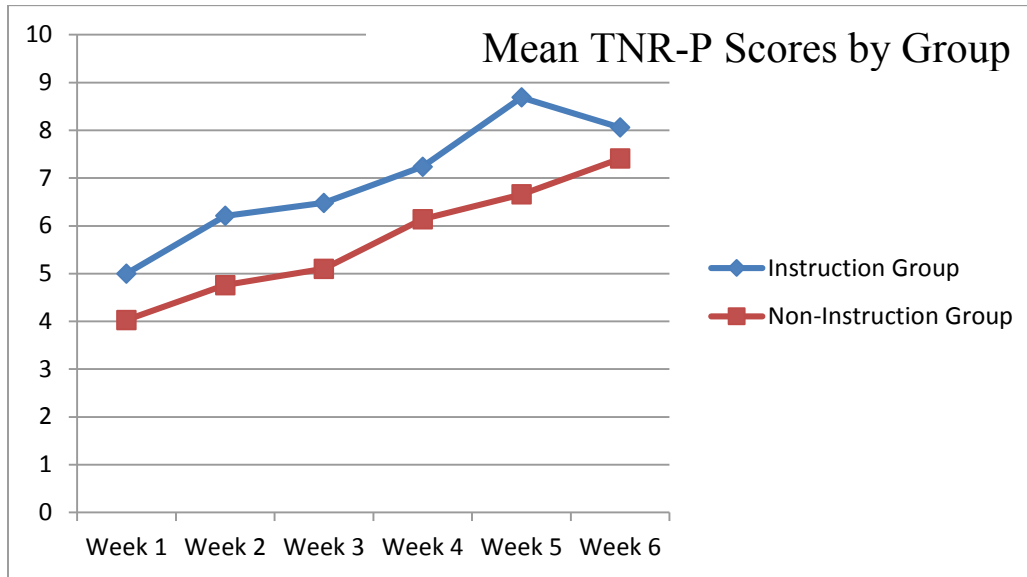


Figure 3. Weekly TNR-P means for both experimental and control groups.

Causes and Correlations

In an effort to explain the lack of significant differences noted between the groups, a number of comparisons and correlations were completed. First, independent samples *t* tests were completed for socioeconomic status (SES) and gender to determine if SES or gender significantly impacted performance on the TNR-P (Spencer & Petersen, 2012).

There was no significant difference for the TNR-P Week 1 between students rated as low income ($M = 4.00$) or not low income ($M = 4.65$), $t(56) = .51$, $p = .615$, two-tailed, $d = .17$. Additionally, no significant difference for the TNR-P Week 6 score was found between the students rated as low income ($M = 7.92$) and not low income ($M = 7.70$), $t(56) = .16$, $p = .876$, two-tailed, $d = .05$. As a result, based on this sample, SES did not appear to significantly impact a student's ability to perform on the TNR-P.

There was also no significant difference between boys ($M = 4.52$) and girls ($M = 4.52$) for initial TNR-P Week 1 scores, $t(56) = 1.16$, two-tailed, $p = .998$, $d = 0$. Additionally, no

significant difference was found between boys ($M = 7.13$) and girls ($M = 8.44$) for final TNR P Week 6 scores, $t(56) = 1.164$, two-tailed, $p = .249$, $d = .31$. Based on this sample, gender did not play a significant role in determining how students performed on the TNR-P.

Classroom, teacher, and time of day effects. Additionally, the experimental and control group means were compared by classroom/teacher and time of day. Independent samples t tests were completed for the initial standardized language assessment as well as Weeks 1, 3, 6 for the criterion-referenced story retell measure. For the experimental group, 14 students came from the morning group of classroom A and 15 students came from the afternoon group of classroom B. For the control group, 14 students came from the afternoon group of classroom A and 15 students came from the morning group of classroom B. Table 8 provides a summary of means comparing teacher/classroom for both the experimental and control groups.

Table 8

Within Group Comparisons for Standardized Measures

Group	Class/Time	Assessment	Mean	SD
Experimental	A, AM	CELF-P TLS	100.21	9.20
	B, PM		102.13	7.50
Experimental	A, AM	TNR-P Week 1	4.65	4.32
	B, PM		5.33	3.99
Experimental	A, AM	TNR-P Week 3	5.21	3.76
	B, PM		7.67	4.70
Experimental	A, AM	TNR-P Week 6	8.07	5.42
	B, PM		8.07	4.46
Control	A, PM	CELF-P TLS	105.71	9.98
	B, AM		100.93	8.84
Control	A, PM	TNR-P Week 1	3.29	2.33
	B, AM		4.73	4.79
Control	A, PM	TNR-P Week 3	4.07	2.40
	B, AM		6.07	3.65
Control	A, PM	TNR-P Week 6	6.57	2.71
	B, AM		8.20	4.43

Based on these results, there was no significant difference on the CELF-P 2 TLS between the experimental group morning class from classroom A ($M = 100.21$) and the experimental group afternoon class from classroom B ($M = 102.13$), $t(27) = .62$, two-tailed, $p = .542$. There

was also no significant difference between the classes within the experimental group on the TNR-P at Week 1, 3, or 6. TNR-P Week 1 classroom A, morning class ($M = 4.65$) scores were not significantly different than classroom B, afternoon class ($M = 5.33$), $t(27) = .45$, two-tailed, $p = .658$. TNR-P Week 3 classroom A, morning class ($M = 5.21$) scores were not significantly different than classroom B, afternoon class ($M = 7.67$), $t(27) = 1.54$, two-tailed, $p = .134$. TNR-P Week 6 classroom A, morning class ($M = 8.07$) scores were not significantly different than classroom B, afternoon class ($M = 8.07$), $t(27) = .003$, two-tailed, $p = .998$.

Additionally, based on statistical analysis of the control-group data, there was no significant difference on the CELF-P 2 TLS between the control group afternoon class from classroom A ($M = 105.71$) and the control group morning class from classroom B ($M = 100.93$), $t(27) = 1.37$, two-tailed, $p = .183$. There was also no significant difference between the groups within the control group on the TNR-P at Week 1, 3, or 6. TNR-P Week 1 classroom A, afternoon class ($M = 3.29$) scores were not significantly different than classroom B, morning class ($M = 4.73$), $t(20.61) = 1.05$, two-tailed, $p = .308$. TNR-P Week 3 classroom A, afternoon class ($M = 4.07$) scores were not significantly different than classroom B, morning class ($M = 6.07$), $t(27) = 1.72$, two-tailed, $p = .096$. TNR-P Week 6 classroom A, afternoon class ($M = 6.57$) scores were not significantly different than classroom B, morning class ($M = 8.20$), $t(27) = 1.18$, two-tailed, $p = .247$.

In sum, differences in teacher, daily curriculum, or time of day did not appear to significantly affect student performance on the standardized CELF-P 2 or the criterion-referenced measure TNR-P. This was true for both experimental and control groups.

Additional correlational analysis was completed to determine significant relationships among scores and participant variables. Table 9 provides a summary of this analysis.

Table 9

Intercorrelations Among Standardized Language Scores, Criterion Referenced Scores and Participant Variables

Variable	TLS	SS	WS	EV	Week1	Week3	Week6	Sex	Income	Class
CELF-P TLS	--									
CELF-P SS Subtest	.75***	--								
CELF-P WS Subtest	.67***	.36**	--							
CELF-P EV Subtest	.62***	.21	.23	--						
TNR-P Week 1	.12	.03	.30*	.02	--					
TNR-P Week 3	.13	.06	.27*	.06	.65***	--				
TNR-P Week 6	.05	.04	.07	.02	.52***	.67***	--			
Sex	.02	.08	.01	.04	.00	.02	.15	--		
Income	.16	.04	.28*	.28	.07	.19	.02	.04	--	
Classroom	.01	.01	.01	.15	.10	.28*	.04	.27*	.05	--

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. All tests are two-tailed.

The sample consisted of all 58 participating preschool students. Working from an alpha of .01, the distribution of each variable did not significantly differ from normal with the exception of Week 1 TNR-P, with the distribution being significantly skewed. Distribution of all variables with $p < .01$, two-tailed, was as follows: CELF TLS skew = .209, $t(57) = .666$, kurtosis = .507, $t(57) = .820$; CELF SS skew = .489, $t(57) = 1.56$, kurtosis = .272, $t(57) = .440$; CELF WS skew = .023, $t(57) = .073$, kurtosis = .942, $t(57) = 1.52$; CELF EV skew = .309, $t(57) = .984$, kurtosis = .403, $t(57) = .652$; TNR-P Week 1 skew = .922, $t(57) = 2.94$, kurtosis = .262, $t(57) = .424$; TNR-P Week 3 skew = .444, $t(57) = 1.414$, kurtosis = .165, $t(57) = .267$; TNR-P 6 skew = .059, $t(57) = .188$, kurtosis = .900, $t(57) = 1.60$. The value for t was calculated by dividing skew by the standard error of skew and kurtosis divided by the standard error of kurtosis, respectively. Examination of scatterplots revealed nothing to indicate non-linearity.

As noted in Table 9, scores on the word structure subtest of the CELF-P 2 were significantly positively correlated to scores on the TNR-P in Week 1 and Week 3. Additionally, income was positively correlated to scores on the word structure subtest of the CELF-P 2. Also of significance was the relationship between scores on Week 1 of the TNR-P with Week 3 and Week 6 of the TNR-P as well as the relationship between Week 3 and Week 6 scores of the TNR-P.

Summary

Based on the data, I failed to reject the null for Hypothesis 1. Mean differences illustrate significantly higher scores on the TNR-P for the experimental group following 270 minutes of instruction (Week 3), but these scores were not significantly higher than the control group during the same time period.

Additionally, based on the data, I failed to reject the null for Hypothesis 2. Mean differences illustrate maintenance of scores on the TNR-P for the experimental group following cessation of instruction, but the maintenance scores were not significantly different from the increase in TNR-P scores demonstrated by the control group.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The current study explored how large-group, explicit, story grammar vocabulary instruction in preschool classrooms in rural, southeastern Illinois affected narrative story retell skills, as compared to story retell skills of similar students who received regular classroom instruction. This study also explored shared storybook reading practices in preschool classrooms. In this chapter, the results of the analyzed data are summarized and presented.

Summary of Study Results

Teaching preschool presents a number of challenges, including meeting the basic and educational needs of children who are often experiencing the educational environment and expectations for the first time. Given the relative newness of national preschool initiatives, the last decade has resulted in increased examination of preschool practices and curricula (Barnett et al., 2012). Among these practices is shared storybook reading as a means to address preliteracy and early literacy skills that tie to kindergarten-level common core standards. Skills such as print and phonological awareness, answering questions about a story, retelling familiar stories, and identifying important details such as character and setting are foundational to success in kindergarten (Coleman & Pimental, 2012). Previous research has focused on early school-age phonological awareness with few studies addressing development of comprehension skills,

specifically story retell. Thus, this study worked to add to the dearth of literature addressing story comprehension skills in the preschool population.

The research sites were state-funded preschools serving at-risk children between three and five years old. I used whole-group shared storybook reading as a means to address the research questions, as this is a frequently used practice in these classrooms. Additionally, because previous research has supported small-group, specific, story grammar instruction for preschool and school-age children with language-impairment in improving comprehension skills (Petersen et al., 2010; Spencer & Petersen, 2010), I postulated that large-group story grammar vocabulary instruction would be a viable means of meeting some of the preliteracy needs of typically developing preschoolers. I also examined differences in instructional practices between the teachers and me, drawing on previous research regarding the importance of how stories are read to children (Mira & Schwanenflugel, 2013; Ruston & Schwanenflugel, 2010).

Research Question 1

Does explicit instruction of story grammar vocabulary (character, setting, and emotion) in large-group, contextualized settings increase preschool children's ability to retell a story? The study examined scores on the TNR-P (Spencer & Petersen, 2012) following one week (135 minutes total) and two weeks (270 minutes total) of explicit vocabulary instruction focusing on age-appropriate story grammar components of character, setting, and emotion. Scores were collected for the experimental group, that received the explicit instruction, as well as the control group, that received typical classroom instruction with the same book. The mean of all scores for inclusion of character, setting, and emotion concepts on the TNR-P was determined for each group, each week. Within-group mean comparisons indicated that the experimental group did, in fact, show significant gains following two weeks (270 minutes) of explicit vocabulary

instruction. The control group did not show significant gains during this same time period. Between-group mean comparisons, however, indicated that experimental-group differences were not significantly higher than the control group during the same time frame.

Research Question 2

Does explicit instruction of story grammar vocabulary (character, setting, and emotion) in large-group, contextualized settings result in maintenance of increased skill level to retell a story? The study also examined mean scores for inclusion of character, setting and emotion concepts during story retell tasks on the TNR-P following cessation of targeted instruction at one, two, and three weeks post instruction. Based on within-group mean comparison, the experimental group maintained gains from instruction one week following cessation of instruction (Week 4) and actually showed gains in scores two weeks post-instruction (Week 5) and maintained these gains again three weeks post-instruction (Week 6). During the same time period, control-group means indicated steady increases in scores through week four, though increases were not statistically significant. Mean scores were significantly higher than baseline for the control group starting in Week 5 and were maintained in Week 6.

Though not specifically investigated, observational analysis of instruction provided by the regular classroom teachers and me provided insights into different instructional approaches and quantitative differences in the types of questions asked during large-group shared reading. I spent approximately 45 minutes per day of instruction focusing on the book reading and a follow-up activity targeting the vocabulary concepts of character, setting, and emotion. Students in the experimental group were exposed to the vocabulary term character approximately 96 times, setting 104 times, and emotion 113 times during my two weeks of instruction. I also asked nearly double the amount of inferential questions to the students during the instructional

time. Classroom teachers rarely used the targeted vocabulary terms and tended to ask more literal questions regarding the vocabulary in the story. While inferential questions were utilized at times, they were used much less frequently than in my instruction. Classroom teachers expressed concern for the amount of time my instruction took during the short preschool day as well as the need for increased attentional capacity during the instruction.

Discussion of the Results

The current research was built on the principle of teaching story-grammar elements as a means to increase story-retell skills and, thus, story comprehension. Comprehension and production of narrative structures are key elements to academic success (Coppole & Bredekamp, 2009; Green & Klecan-Aker, 2012), as understanding the basic structure of typical literature aids comprehension. Current literature supports increases in story retell skills when story grammar vocabulary has been addressed in small-group settings and with students with language impairment (Peterson et al., 2010; Spencer & Slocum, 2010). Additionally, a contextualized setting, such as shared storybook reading, is a frequently used viable means of addressing the necessary academic skills in the classroom, particularly as a resource for supporting vocabulary development (S. L. Gillam et al., 2012; Justice et al., 2005; Zucker et al., 2009). A review of literature on dose, frequency, and intensity effects on vocabulary instruction for school-age children (Baumann, 2009) indicated great difficulty in determining the threshold level of effectiveness of vocabulary instruction on comprehension for children with and without language impairment. My study provided 270 minutes of vocabulary instruction over six days via shared storybook reading and related activities to typically developing preschoolers. This instruction falls within the low-average range for effectiveness in the studies analyzed by Baumann (2009). As a result of this study design, I predicted that typically-developing students who received the

intense, contextualized narrative vocabulary instruction would increase story retell ability of these concepts once story structure was known and understood. While the experimental group did show significant gains in including targeted concepts after 270 minutes of whole-group, storybook-based instruction, these gains were not significantly higher than the control group.

While I incorrectly predicted significant gains and maintenance of gains for the experimental group, understanding the complex relationship between vocabulary and language comprehension continues to be elusive (Baumann, 2009). While it could be predicted that “knowing” the targeted vocabulary words of character, setting, and emotion in the context of a storybook and in more abstract activities and examples would result in increased vocabulary skill, individual understanding and comprehension of the targeted vocabulary remains unmeasured. How the instruction affected each student, ranging from low average to above average in language skills, is unknown.

Additionally, the use of narrative instruction and shared storybook reading as a means to address specific academic targets is relatively new, particularly to preschool teachers and students. As the use of storybooks shifts instruction to the discourse-level instead of word or short-utterance level, as may be familiar in phonemic-awareness instruction, narrative-based instruction requires greater demands on abstract thought, language processing, and self-regulation (Hoffman, 2009). The short exposure to narrative instruction used in this study may not have allowed adequate time for students to adapt to the nature of this instruction.

Additionally, the teachers reported use of phonemic awareness instruction, presented in shorter utterances, but rarely used shared storybook reading as an instructional avenue for specific language goals previous to this study.

The complex nature of effective vocabulary instruction continues to require further investigation. Vocabulary learning requires multiple steps, with matching a new word and referent, imitation of the new word, and then use of the word spontaneously (Eisenberg, 2014). A student's ability to understand the formal language utilized in classrooms for both discourse and learning relies heavily on vocabulary knowledge, but effective vocabulary instruction in the primary grades lacks much empirical evidence. A few investigated methods exist including: incidental word learning where students are provided incidental exposure to words during storybook readings; embedded instruction where the teacher provides explicit embedding of word definitions within storybook readings; and extended instruction where students are engaged in interactive activities targeting word meanings (Zipoli, Coyne, & McCoach, 2011). While I utilized all three of these approaches in this study, little is known about the frequency or duration of instruction required to make a true difference in vocabulary learning. Research supports the notion that children with language impairment require nearly twice as many exposures to and use of vocabulary words to achieve comprehension than peers with typical language development (Eisenberg, 2014). The challenge in a preschool classroom, such as those utilized in the study, remains identification of children with language impairment when they have yet to be exposed to academic language and curricular language demands. In other words, it is possible that children who have low-average language abilities differ in their learning needs for vocabulary than those students with average to above-average language abilities. This differentiation, however, is often not exposed until early-elementary or even middle-elementary classrooms and, thus, differentiation of instructional practices to meet those needs does not typically happen in preschool. It is quite possible that my attempt at exposure to and use of new vocabulary words in this study was inadequate in number for successful learning of targeted concepts.

Additionally, instruction delivered at the whole-group level provides an additional compounding factor, as measuring individual responses to questions and prompts presents challenges. Even with recording of sessions, I could not specifically measure how well each student learned the targeted vocabulary despite the fact that every attempt to engage all students was made.

Use of the TNR-P may have also resulted in lack of significant gains in this study. Stories provided in the assessment piece, the TNR-P, were provided without visuals. This stands in contrast to the typical story reading experience of preschoolers, where the teacher presents a colorful display of pictures throughout the book while reading. The visual enhancement of the story provides memory and comprehension scaffolding during reading. The TNR-P stories required the children to attend, listen, remember, and retell without the assistance of visuals. Story retell in the context of the TNR-P presents a challenging auditory processing task. More specifically, the importance of developmental memory in the complex language task of story retell may have influenced scores on the TNR-P. According to Baddely's (2003) model, because working memory is required to hold multiple pieces of language information, such as story components, over time, until all meanings of language are clear, memory is integral to story comprehension. Working memory capacity and its effect on language-processing abilities in the preschool population may limit successful story retell without the assistance of visual information or familiarity with the type of story retell task required in the TNR-P. Additionally, declarative memory, important for developing flexible semantic and episodic relationships between novel and previous information (Kurczek, Vanderveen, & Duff, 2014), may have also influenced performance on the TNR-P. The brief stories provided in the TNR-P are intended to mimic frequently encountered scenarios for the preschool population (e.g., building with blocks

at preschool, losing a balloon, eating at a restaurant). It is possible that some students had not only limited exposure to these scenarios and were thus at a disadvantage to others who had, but also that their declarative-memory development limited their ability to make both semantic and episodic connections to enhance story retell. The influence of memory development in this study is truly unknown.

Limitations

Despite this study's contribution to narrative and classroom-based intervention literature, a number of challenges and limitations existed. Due to the limited geographical area and small sample size, concerns for external validity exist. All schools in southeastern Illinois present limited diversity in regards to race or ethnicity. Additionally, the particular district to be used in this study included a large percentage of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. These issues should be addressed by replicating the study in diverse populations and additional differing geographical areas. Further, because the current project addressed preliteracy needs based on classroom-based themes and activities, the results were dependent, in part, upon the preschool curriculum currently in use.

As can be expected, utilizing preschool children and classrooms as research subjects and environments presented a number of challenges. Influences of age-expected distractibility and rapport-building time were apparent. Additionally, some children in the study were more prone to speak quietly or unintelligibly.

I visited the classrooms prior to the start of the study to increase rapport. Rapport was, obviously, much higher with the students who participated in my instruction, as they interacted with me much more frequently than the teacher-led instruction. The control groups' interaction with me was limited to repeated weekly assessment. I got to know the students in the

experimental groups much more personally through our interactions, which likely influenced their comfort in the assessment tasks.

Child variables such as distractibility and motivation also appeared to inhibit or increase performance on assessment tasks. When a child was unable to attend to the entire story read to them or showed little desire to complete the task, scores on the TNR-P declined. These attributes were found to vary from week to week for the same student. In one instance, one child's scores for the targeted vocabulary on the three stories assessed for that week may have been 6, 0, 4, with the 0 points score occurring as a result of loss of attention or another unknown motivational factor. In other instances, the story prompt would remind the child of a personal experience and the child would discuss these details. When prompted to return to the story I told them, they had often forgotten the passage. Preschool students may not yet have the drive to please that often occurs in later academic years when tasks to measure skills are used. While a study by Gottfried (1990) found apparent intrinsic academic motivation in eight- and nine-year old children, little to no research exists on the intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors in much younger children, such as those in preschool. Studies that examined motivation in the younger population discuss importance of family influences and parenting styles in developing intrinsic motivation (Turner & Johnson, 2003). The impact of motivation in preschooler students is unknown.

Of particular challenge was the inclusion of those students with articulation or phonological disorders and the difficulty with which transcription and scoring occurred. By the end of the study, with repeated exposure, I was able to determine what students with speech-sound disorders were conveying and able to transcribe and score their stories appropriately. Real-time scoring of their stories was much less accurate than others students, however.

Additionally, assessment sessions were conducted in a variety of places within the schools based on the availability of space on a given day. Every effort was made to find a quiet, distraction-free area for assessment, but the reality of a school setting prevented consistency in that setting. For example, in one school, a small storage area was used for assessment. A table and two chairs were available and the door could be closed to decrease outside noise. Three weeks into the assessment, the storage area housed a new computer system that made a buzzing noise. This was distracting to some of the students as noted in their questions about the noise and stated inability to listen to the story. Another room utilized was isolated and quiet except when it was raining outside, during which time this room, located directly off the gym, echoed the shrieks and laughs of the kindergarten population present in this school. Every effort was made to find a distraction-free and relatively quiet space for each student, even if that meant moving to a different area during a specified time (for example, assessing in the preschool classroom, while the class was outside for playtime), but inconsistencies in environment occurred by the day and the student.

The TNR-P assessment also presented notable challenges. The developers of the TNR-P focused on time efficiency in development of the assessment so that practicing clinicians can administer a subtest in less than five minutes. Additionally, because the child is given three stories in one subtest, multiple opportunities exist to account for learning the expectations of the task (Spencer & Petersen, 2012). By design, no practice tasks exist for the TNR-P and the initial session appeared to take many students in this study by surprise. The children were clearly not familiar with participating in a story retell task. While preschool students frequently listen to and talk about stories, they are rarely asked to repeat the same story to someone else. The demands placed on the working memory, critical for language processing (Kurczek et al., 2014), appear to

have challenged the neurodevelopmental level of some of the preschoolers. Additionally, variations in narrative development were apparent as story retell included elements out of order, repetition of the ending first and then starting the story from the beginning, confusion of pronouns, forgetting of a character name and asking for it before starting the story, giving the story in first person, or completely disregarding details and focusing on the problem and solution only. While some students repeated the story easily, many others presented disjointed attempts that lacked the expected fluidity of a story, paused for long periods of time, or looked expectantly at me to comment on or question their story. The task often lacked the naturalness of conversation that preschool children may expect when telling a story because of the restricted prompting of the TNR-P. I also noted increased difficulty to produce or use names of characters that were not familiar to the students, such as Miguel and Carlos. When students were unfamiliar with the name, they tended to use a different name or only use pronouns to tell the story. Use of pronouns resulted in a lower score on the TNR-P. Additionally, in the scoring rubric for the TNR-P, the setting was scored as 2 points, if both the setting activity and location were included, 1 point was awarded for location or setting activity, and 0 points were awarded for no information about setting. On multiple occasions, students provided the time of the story (e.g. yesterday, last week, etc.). In some narrative instruction, this is included in the definition of the setting, but in the TNR-P, the setting was required to be much more specific to place and activity. Discrepancy exists in the instructional definitions and practices in current research and assessment procedures presented by the TNR-P.

The length of the study and the intensity and frequency with which the study was conducted also presented limitations. Due to the timing of the study on the academic school year, only seven weeks were available to complete the study. While it may have been beneficial

that students were very familiar with the preschool routine and expectations because it was the end of the school year and readily adapted to a new person taking the place of their teacher, a longer study would have allowed for further investigation of skills following potentially longer instruction or in the maintenance phase. As the students continued to show progress on the TNR-P assessment, continued monitoring of this progress would have been very beneficial. Additionally, given more time, spacing of the TNR-P assessment could have been more similar to the intended use of the instrument, with progress monitoring of skills taking place every few weeks instead of weekly. However, the preschool teachers and parents were willing to take part in the study, but may have not done so had the study disrupted several more weeks of their classroom environment.

Shared storybook reading was delivered in two separate classrooms at two separate times for the experimental group. While every effort was made to keep instruction (time spent reading, opportunities for answering questions, the types of questions used) similar, the nature of discourse during shared storybook reading resulted in differences in the actual instruction. For example, a student in one group shared a story about going to the river to canoe and swim. The other group discussed the same page and part of the story, but a specific text-to-life example was not produced by a student. Day-to-day lessons and instruction varied slightly based on the group dynamic and flexible nature of discourse.

Recommendations for Practice

With a background as a speech-language pathologist, my language focus and instruction during shared storybook reading appeared to differ from the general education classroom teachers. This was also confirmed in comments such as, “You just read a story differently than I do” during poststudy interviews. As the curriculum experts, teachers also address different, but

equally important, skills during these instructional times. As academic expectations continue to increase for both preschool and kindergarten students, a team approach to teaching literacy may provide the best and most thorough instruction for addressing the numerous skills needed for later reading success.

While addressing vocabulary or story grammar for longer periods of time, as was completed in my study, may not be conducive to daily instructional schedules, introduction of these concepts as well as how to address these skills in shared storybook reading is. The participating teachers stated interest in learning more about story structure, the relation to comprehension, and how to incorporate story grammar concepts into their instruction. As research literature regarding narrative-based instruction continues to grow in the field of speech-language pathology, collaborative efforts between speech-language pathologists and classroom teachers can enhance exposure to instructional materials and strategies to enhance comprehension. Starting the dialogue regarding story grammar concepts can be the initiation to increased literacy skills for preschoolers and early elementary students.

Because relatively little documented research regarding preschool instructional practices exists, we have much to continue to learn about how to address the academic demands infiltrating preschool and early elementary levels while still adhering to expected developmental guidelines. This study indicates that preschool children are ready and willing to learn story-grammar concepts and shared storybook reading provides an avenue to address skills. Because shared storybook reading is a frequent instructional practice, teachers should continue to explore additional ways to use shared storybook reading to scaffold discussions, introduce new concepts, and review previously learned material and vocabulary as opposed to focusing solely on vocabulary exposure. Through a continued concerted effort, curricular recommendations,

materials and suggested practices may begin to address the changing needs of preschool education.

Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendation 1

Experimental investigation could determine the influence of the types of characters discussed during instruction and in assessments. During my instruction time, the stories I used had characters that were animals (Clifford, Gilbert Goldfish). No animal characters were present in the TNR-P, with focus on children and parents. Much of children's literature utilizes animal and toy characters, often having a make-believe persona as the main character. Exploring the importance or difficulty of using these entities as characters may bridge the gap between exposure to literature and understanding and demonstrated knowledge of character concepts.

Recommendation 2

An additional area of interest that emerged was developmental syntax and grammar skills. I noted frequent and increased use of adjectives and adverbs presented in the TNR-P during student retell (e.g., She *quickly* ran to her mom. The *friendly* teacher helped him.) within the stories that the students heard the modifiers as well as in subsequent story retells. Additionally, the word use subtest of the CELF-P 2 was significantly correlated to scores on the TNR-P in the first four weeks but not significantly correlated in the last two weeks, indicating those children with lower syntax skills performed lower on the TNR-P for inclusion of targeted concepts but improved over time. While this study did not investigate syntactic complexity of the stories retold by the students, future studies may determine the influence of syntax skills on use of basic story concepts as well as the ability to increase complex syntax through story retell and simple repeated practice of retelling stories.

Recommendation 3

The specific individual learning effects from whole-group instruction in preschool continues to need investigation. This study focused on whole-group, classroom-level instruction as a possible efficient way to address academic needs in an already busy preschool schedule. Each classroom contained 20 students. While much story grammar and narrative research has focused on small-group delivery, further research is warranted in whole-group and large-group settings, such as those possibly seen in the RTI model and Tier II instruction.

Recommendation 4

As the instruction was contextualized in nature, further analysis of instruction using contextualized versus decontextualized activities for whole-group instruction is warranted. More research is needed to determine the efficiency of the contextualized nature of shared storybook reading in comparison to specific, targeted decontextualized instruction, particularly for preschool children and in relation to developmental milestones.

Recommendation 5

To enhance preschool instructional practices, understanding and consideration of the interplay of developmental, cognitive, and language skills in children ages three to five years necessitates continued research. Cognitive factors such as memory, attention, motivation, and language skills such as syntax/grammar development in the preschool population appeared important to this study and warrant further investigation in more controlled and replicable situations.

Recommendation 6

More information is needed regarding effect size calculations in real-life, classroom-based settings. The recent article published by S. L. Gillam et al. (2014) utilized effect sizes

from a study by Lipsey et al. (2012) that conducted a systematic review for whole-class instructional activities. The effect sizes used differed greatly from Cohen's (1988) guidelines. Whole-class instructional effect sizes were 0.18 for a medium effect and 0.59 for a large effect. Further investigation and agreement on the appropriateness of using Cohen's (1998) or Lipsey et al.'s, (2012) effect size guidelines is warranted.

Conclusion

I had two main goals in conducting this study. First, I wanted to investigate the effects of large-group vocabulary instruction during shared storybook reading as an effective and efficient means of addressing the learning needs of preschool students. The second goal was to gather more information about the nature of story retell skills in the preschool population and its relation to the Common Core State Standard goals for kindergarten. The results of the study showed that classroom-level instruction of developmentally appropriate story grammar vocabulary resulted in significant gains for the experimental group after only 2 weeks of instruction (270 minutes total). These gains, however, were not significantly higher than the control group scores on the same measure of story retell. In fact, all students in the study showed steady, significant gains in ability to include key story grammar elements (character, setting, and emotion) during standardized story retell tasks, indicating that the mere practice of retelling stories may be enough to increase comprehension skills in the preschool population or at least an early indicator of those students who may show comprehension difficulties in the future.

As schools ready to adapt instructional practices to meet the Common Core State Standards, this study provides promising results as brief, whole-group instruction of story grammar vocabulary and practice of narrative retell both resulted in skill gains for typically-developing preschool students in a relatively short period of time. Additionally, simple repeated

practice of story retell, a task not often targeted in real classrooms, assisted in improving memory of stories for retell and ultimately, comprehension.

Success in the school environment, both academically and socially, connects strongly to oral narrative abilities. Core curricula frequently target narrative macrostructure or story grammar and children who can adequately relay experiences and use stories in play develop appropriate social relationships. Inclusion of instruction that targets story comprehension appears as important as current phonemic awareness instruction to developing preliteracy skills and building bridges to later reading success. As language development continues to blossom in preschool children, purposeful and systematic language instruction can provide opportunities for skill growth that better prepares children for later academic demands (Dickinson, McCabe, & Essex, 2006).

While this study only begins to explore the nature of shared storybook reading, narrative vocabulary instruction, and whole-group classroom instruction for preschoolers, the importance of the findings point to potential significant improvements in educating preschool children. Building collaborative relationships among school personnel, utilizing shared storybook reading for pointed instruction, and introduction of age-appropriate narrative vocabulary appear to be places to start. Continued focus on the intertwining of developmental and academic expectations will allow for efficient and effective education of preschool children.

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APPENDIX A: MATERIALS FOR INSTRUCTION

Learning Objectives: Character, Setting, Emotion

1. To identify the character(s) of a story.
2. To identify the setting(s) of a story.
3. To identify the emotion(s) of a story.

Day 1 Instruction

Introduction of Story Grammar Vocabulary Icons and Definitions (10 minutes)

Script: “Today we are going to read a story and learn about three new words. The words are character (show icon), setting (show icon), and emotion (show icon). Does anyone know what a character is? (Pause and wait for answer, allow 1-2 children to speak.) Confirm or correct. Yes, a character is a person or animal or toy that tells us who the story is about. A story can have one or many characters. Does anyone know what a setting is? (Pause and wait for answer, allow 1-2 children to speak). Confirm or correct. Yes, a setting tells where and when a story takes place. A story can have one or many settings. Does anyone know what an emotion is? (Pause and wait for answer, allow 1-2 children to speak.) An emotion tells how someone feels in the story. Now we are going to read our book, *Gilbert Goldfish Wants a Pet/Clifford Keeps Cool*. See if you can figure out who the character (show icon), setting (show icon) and emotion (show icon) might be in our story.”

Pre-story presentation (5 minutes)

Script Week 2: “Let’s look at the covers to see if that helps us figure out what is going to happen in the story. Can you predict, or guess, what might happen in the story? Why would a goldfish want a pet? What are some pets that you could have? Can you guess who a character might be in the story? Do you think there will be more than one character? Who will the story mostly be about? Who will be our main character? Can you predict a setting in our story? What is one emotion we might see if the story?” A couple of children will be encouraged to answer each question so that prior to reading the story all children in the group will have had an opportunity to answer at least one question.

Script Week 3: “Where can we look to figure out what might happen in the story? Let’s look at the cover. Can you make a prediction about the story? What might Clifford do to keep cool? What do you do to keep cool that Clifford can’t? Can you guess who a character might be in the story? Can you predict a setting in our story? What is one emotion we might see if the story?”

A couple of children will be encouraged to answer each question so that prior to reading the story all children in the group will have had an opportunity to answer at least one question.

Story preview (2 minutes)

Children will be told what the story will be about via a picture walk.

Script Week 2: “Our book is a story about a goldfish named Gilbert. Even though he is a fish, which is a pet, he wants a pet of his own. He tries to find the best pet for himself. Gilbert and a dog are some of our characters (show icon). A fishbowl and house are some of our settings (show icon), and happy and sad are two of the emotions we will see (show icon) in our story. I will talk about these three important parts as I read.

Script Week 3: “The book is a story about Clifford, who is very hot. He travels to many different places and tries many things to get cool. Emily Elizabeth and Clifford are two of our characters (show icon), a park and swimming pool are some our settings (who icon) and happy and excited are two of the emotions (show icon). I will talk about these three important parts of the story as I read.”

Read the entire story (10 minutes):

As the story is read, pauses will be utilized to discuss and summarize targeted elements presented (character, setting, emotion). Questions for discussion will be as follows:

Gilbert Goldfish Wants a Pet

1. Why does the title of this book sound funny?
2. Can you predict who may be some characters in the story from the title?
3. Where might this story take place? Where will some of the settings be?
4. Does Gilbert have things to be grateful for?
5. What are some examples of pets that you could have?
6. Would a bear/elephant/monkey make a good pet for a fish? Would it be a good pet for you? Why or why not?
7. How does Gilbert feel when the dog first comes to his house? How does he feel later about having a dog for a pet? Why?
8. Why is Gilbert excited about the mouse? Would a mouse make a good pet for him? Why or why not?
9. How would you feel if you were Gilbert with the mouse? Why?
10. Would a fly make a good pet?
11. What might happen to a fly that is buzzing around inside a house?
12. How do Gilbert’s feelings change when he thinks he might have found a pet?
13. Based on the picture, what do you think might be the animal that is near his bowl?
14. How would you feel if you were Gilbert?
15. Did the book end the way you predicted?

16. How did the authors trick us into thinking the last pet was a cat?
17. How does Gilbert feel now that he has found a “pet”?
18. Who were the characters in our story?
19. Were there many settings in our story? What were they?
20. What different emotions does Gilbert feel? What about the emotions of the other characters?

Clifford Keeps Cool

1. What time of year/season does this story take place in? How do you know?
2. How does Clifford feel in this picture (first page)? How do you know?
3. Can you predict some ways that Clifford will try to get cool? What are ways people try to keep cool during the summer?
4. What do you think Clifford will do? Why is he looking at the pool?
5. Is it safe to ride on the top of a truck? Why or why not?
6. How do the people feel when Clifford jumps into the pool? How do you know?
7. What will they do now to keep cool?
8. Why is the arena a good place for Clifford to go?
9. What do you think will happen when he goes inside on the ice?
10. Why are the skaters mad?
11. How does Emily Elizabeth find him?
12. Where could she take him now to cool off?
13. How is the park in our story the same as the park in your town? How is it different?
14. What is happening on this page that has the mom and dad worried?
15. What do you think will happen to the kids in the boat?
16. How is Clifford a hero?
17. How does Clifford feel in the end?
18. Who were all the different characters in the story?
19. Who is this story mostly about? Who is our main character?
20. Can we name all the different settings in the story? Where did he go?

Post story presentation (2 minutes)

Children will be asked to verbally state the character(s), setting(s) and emotion(s) presented in the days’ story. Another picture walk will be made so students can reference specific items in the story.

Post story activity Day 1 (15 minutes)

Salient features of the targeted vocabulary word (character, setting, emotion) will be reviewed. In the large group setting, children will be provided pictures to represent the targeted vocabulary and will be asked to categorize and describe the pictures. Modeling and prompting will be provided as needed. For example, some children will receive a picture of a character others will receive pictures of settings or emotions. A child with a character will be asked to place the picture in a character box with the character icon. The child will be prompted to say “_____ is

a character in the story” or “_____ is a setting of the story.” The children will be asked to formulate a sentence using their vocabulary word in relation to the story, e.g. “Clifford went to a boat.” If they cannot formulate the sentence independently, the child will be provided a model to repeat.

Post Story Activity Day 2 (15 minutes)

Large pictures representing target vocabulary will be dispersed around the room. Children will be given a clipboard, marker and visual list with characters, settings and emotions listed in separate, color-coded columns. The children will be led on a scavenger hunt to find and check off the pictures on their lists. The salient features of the target vocabulary will be used to describe each one. For example, “Look, Avery found a picture of Emily Elizabeth. I know she is a character because she is a person or animal the story is about. She is “who” the story is about. So Emily Elizabeth is a (pause)? We know she is a character because she is (pause). Let’s see if we can find more characters.”

Post Story Activity Day 3 (15 minutes)

Large pictures representing target vocabulary will be placed in a circle in a large area of the room. Children will be told they are going to exercise while they are learning about characters, settings, and emotions. As the music is played, children will walk around the circle looking at each of the pictures. When the music stops, they will stop on one of the pictures. Children who land on characters will hop, children who land on a setting will sit, and children who land on an emotion will do toe touches. A visual representation of these expectations will be provided (icon and motion) for reference. An example exchange following the cessation of music would include: “Molly, you landed on a picture of a fish and you are hopping because it is a character! Did anyone else land on a picture that could be a character or who a story is about?” Children will be reinforced or corrected as needed. Other questions for the activity may include: “Why are you sitting? Did you find a setting?” or “James isn’t sure which exercise to do. Let’s help him decide. His picture is of a river. Is that a character, setting or emotion?”

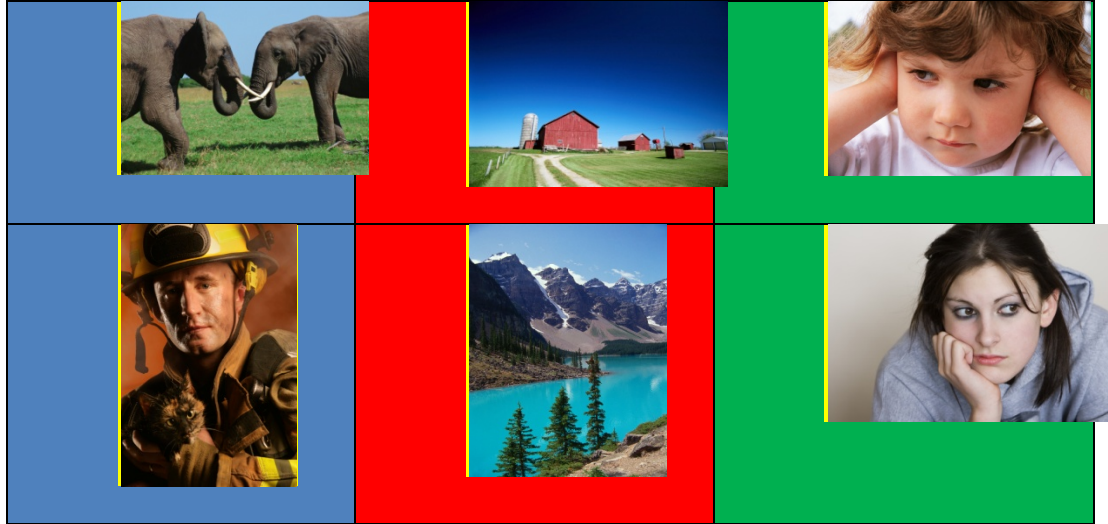
Visual Aides

Icons



Scavenger Hunt Checklist

 Character	 Setting	 Emotion
		
		
		
		
		



APPENDIX B: CCSS KINDERGARTEN AND PRESCHOOL-LEVEL OBJECTIVES

CCSS Reading Standards for Literature (Illinois State Board of Education, 2013)

The following standards offer a focus for instruction each year and help ensure that students gain adequate exposure to a range of texts and tasks. Rigor is also infused through the requirement that students read increasingly complex texts through the grades. Students advancing through the grades are expected to meet each year's grade-specific standards and retain or further develop skills and understandings mastered in preceding grades.

Kindergartners:

Key Ideas and Details

1. With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
2. With prompting and support, retell familiar stories, including key details.
3. With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.

Craft and Structure

4. Ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.
5. Recognize common types of texts (e.g., storybooks, poems).
6. With prompting and support, name the author and illustrator of a story and define the role of each in telling the story.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear (e.g., what moment in a story an illustration depicts).
8. (Not applicable to literature)
9. With prompting and support, compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.

PreKindergarten Grade Level Objectives for Participating School District

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Self Concept

- Begins to show comfort with self as someone growing in skills and abilities.
- Shows some self-direction in actions.
- Takes initiative to begin an activity

Self Control

- Follows classroom rules and routines.

- Uses classroom materials purposefully and respectfully.
- Manages transitions.
- Moves easily from one activity to another

Approach To Learning

- Shows eagerness and curiosity as a learner. Asks questions.
- Chooses new as well as a variety of familiar classroom activities.
- Approaches tasks with flexibility and inventiveness.
- Persists in a task and seeks help when encountering a problem.

Interactions With Others

- Interacts easily with one or more children, beginning to play to work cooperatively.
- Interacts easily with familiar adults.
- Participates in the group life of the class.
- Sits quietly during story time
- Participates and follows simple rules in group activities.
- Show caring for others.

Conflict Resolution

- Seeks adult help when needed to resolve conflicts.
- Uses words to resolve conflicts.

LANGUAGE & LITERACY

Listening

- Listens with understanding to directions and conversations.
- Follows directions that involve a two- or three-step sequence of actions.

Speaking

- Speaks clearly enough to be understood without prompting
- Uses language for a variety of purposes (e.g., conversation, telling stories, naming objects, seeking help, etc.)

Literature And Reading

- Listens with interest to stories read aloud.
- Shows interest in reading-related activities such as dramatic interpretations.
- Predicts what will happen next in a story using pictures as a guide.
- Retells information from a story.
- Recognizes the association between spoken and written words.

Writing

- Uses scribbles, shapes, and letter-like symbols to write words and or ideas.
- Copies or writes own name.

MATHEMATICAL THINKING

Approach To Mathematical Thinking

- Shows interest in quantity and number.

Patterns and Relationships

- Recognizes simple patterns and duplicates them.
- Sorts objects into subgroups that vary by one or two attributes.
- Orders or arranges several objects on the basis of one attribute (e.g., color, size, shape, etc.)

Number Concept and Operations

- Shows curiosity and interest in counting and numbers.
- Rote counts to 20
- Counts objects to 10

Geometry And Spatial Relations

- Identifies and labels several shapes (square, circle, rectangle, triangle)
- Shows understanding of and uses several positional words (on, under, open, close, beside)

Measurement

- Shows understanding of and uses comparative words (more, less)
- Participates in measuring activities (full, empty)
- Begins to construct a sense of time (before snack, after center time)

SCIENTIFIC THINKING

Observing and Investigating

- Uses senses to explore classroom materials and natural phenomena.
- Uses tools for investigation.
- Makes comparisons among objects that have been observed.
- Seeks answers to questions through active exploration.

Questioning And Predicting

- Expresses wonder and asks questions about the natural world.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Human Similarities And Differences

- Recognizes own characteristics and begins to recognize those of others.

Human Interdependence

- Begins to understand family structures and roles.
- Describes some people's jobs and what is required to perform them.
- Begins to be aware of technology and how to use it

Rights And Responsibilities

- Begins to understand the consequences for rules
- Recognizes reasons for authority

People And Where They Live

- Shows interest in how people affect the environment.
- Expresses beginning geographic thinking, locates objects

THE ARTS

Expression And Representation

- Uses a variety of art materials for tactile experience and exploration
- Participates in group music experiences.
- Participates in creative movement and dance.

Artistic Appreciation

- Shows interest in the work of others.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Gross Motor Development

- Moves with enough balance and control to perform simple, large movements (balance beam, etc.)
- Coordinates movements to perform more complex tasks.

Fine Motor Development

- Uses strength and control to performs simple fine motor tasks (cutting, drawing, etc.)
- Uses eye-hand coordination to perform fine motor tasks.
- Shows beginning control of writing, drawing, and art tools. Correctly holds crayon and pencil

Personal Health And Safety

- Performs some self-care tasks independently (zips pants and coat, brushes hair, washes hands, buttons shirt)
- Follows basic health and safety rules (not talking to strangers)

APPENDIX C: SCORING GUIDELINES

Preschool Environment Checklist based on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale**Space and Furnishings**

- Adequate lighting, temperature control, and sound-absorbing materials
- Good ventilation, some natural lighting through windows or skylight
- Space is in good repair
- Space is reasonably clean and well-maintained
- Space for children is accessible to children and adults with disabilities
- Ample indoor space for children, adults, and furnishings

Furniture for routine care, play and learning

- There is enough shelving for toys and materials
- There are enough tables and chairs for the children
- Tables and chairs are child-sized (the children's feet touch the floor when sitting)
- All furniture is sturdy and in good repair
- Adaptive furniture permits inclusion of children with disabilities
- Cots/mats stored for easy access,
- Children use woodwork bench, sand/water table, or easel
- Cubbies placed for easy use by parents, staff, and older toddlers

Furnishings for relaxation and comfort

- Special "cozy area" with soft furnishings is accessible for much of the day, and softness is accessible in several other areas
- "Cozy area" protected from active play and is used for reading or other quiet play
- Other soft furnishings in addition to cozy area is accessible to children (area rugs, carpeting, cushions in dramatic play)
- Many soft toys accessible much of the day

Room arrangement for play

There are at least five different interest centers to provide a variety of learning experiences:

- Art Reading
- Blocks Nature/ Science
- Dramatic Play Manipulatives/Fine Motor

Centers are organized for independent use by children

- Labeled open shelves Labeled containers for toys (w/ pictures)
- Uncluttered shelves Accessible play space near toys
- Arrangement of room makes it possible for staff to provide visual supervision

There is sufficient space for several activities to go on at one time and traffic patterns do not interfere with activities

Areas for quiet and active play are separated

Additional materials are available to add to or change interest centers

Space for Privacy

There is space set aside for one or two children to play, protected from intrusion by others

There is more than one space available for privacy

Child-related display

Individualized children's work comprises more than 50% of the classroom display

Appropriate materials are displayed for the age of the children (Ex: photos of children, nursery rhymes, seasonal displays)

Three-dimensional child-created work displayed as well as flat work

Pictures showing diversity (people of different races, cultures, ages, abilities, and gender in non-stereotyping roles)

Many items displayed where children can easily see them

Photographs of children in the group, their families, pets, or other familiar faces displayed on child's eye level

New materials added or display changed at least monthly

Spaces for gross motor play

There is adequate space outdoors and some space indoors for gross motor play

Space is easily accessible to the children

Space is organized so that different types of activities do not interfere with one another

Both stationary (swings, slides, climbing equipment) and portable gross motor equipment (wheel toys, tumbling mats, jump ropes, bean bags, ring toss games, balls and sports equipment) are used

Equipment stimulates a variety of skills:

balancing climbing ball play steering

tumbling jumping throwing pedaling

Gross motor equipment stimulates skills on different levels (tricycles with and without pedals; different sizes of balls, both ramp and ladder access to climbing structure)

There is enough gross motor equipment so that children have access without a long wait

Gross motor equipment is in good repair

Most of the stationary equipment (75%) is appropriate for the age and ability of the children

Adaptations are made or special equipment is provided for children in group with disabilities

Book and pictures

A wide selection of books (at least 20 books for up to 15 children) accessible for a substantial portion of the day. Topics should include:

fantasy factual information animals

nature/science people of various races, cultures, ages and abilities

Books are organized in a reading center for children to use independently (all accessible books do not have to be in the reading center)

Books and language materials are rotated to maintain interest

Some books should relate to current classroom activities or themes
Additional language materials are available (posters and pictures, flannel board stories, picture card games, and recorded stories and songs)

- Books are appropriate for the age, development and abilities of the children in group
- There are no books that show violence in a graphic or frightening way

Fine Motor

At least three examples of each type of fine motor materials are accessible for a substantial portion of the day. The types of fine motor materials, including:

- small building toys (ex: interlocking blocks and Lincoln logs)
- art materials (ex: crayons and scissors)
- manipulatives (ex: beads of different sizes for stringing, pegs and pegboards, and sewing cards)
- puzzles
- Materials well-organized (similar toys stored together; sets of toys in separate containers)
- Containers and accessible storage shelves have labels to encourage self-help
- Materials of different levels of difficulty available
- Materials are rotated to maintain interest

Art

3 to 5 different art materials from at least four categories are accessible for a substantial portion of the day. Categories of art materials include:

- drawing materials (ex: paper, crayons, markers, pencils)
- paints (ex: finger paint, water colors, brushes, sponges)
- three-dimensional materials (ex: play dough, clay, wood gluing, or carpentry)
- collage materials (ex: feathers, buttons, yarn)
- tools (ex: safe scissors, staplers, hole punches, tape dispensers)

Music and movement

- Music center with music materials are accessible for children's use at least 1 hour daily
Enough musical instruments for at least half of the children to use at once
- At least 3 different types of music. (Ex. children's songs, lullabies, folk songs, classical, country western, jazz, popular, rap, reggae, rhythm & blues, rock, songs in different languages, music characteristic of different cultures)

Blocks (for toddlers 12 months and older)

- Block area set aside out of traffic, with storage and suitable building surface
- The block area is accessible for play for a substantial portion of the day
- Enough space, blocks, and accessories are accessible for three or more children to build at the same time

At least two types of blocks are accessible daily. The types of blocks are:

- unit blocks- wooden or plastic, including shapes such as rectangles, squares, triangles, and cylinders
- large hollow blocks- wooden, plastic or cardboard
- homemade blocks- shoe boxes, plastic containers, etc.
- A variety of accessories are accessible daily (ex: toy people, animals, vehicles, and road signs)
- Blocks and accessories are stored on open, labeled shelves.

- Some block play is available outdoors

Dramatic play

- Dramatic play center is clearly defined, with space to play and organized storage
- Dramatic play center accessible for a substantial portion of the day
- Many dramatic play materials accessible including dress-up clothes
- Props for at least two different themes are accessible daily (ex: housekeeping, and office)
- Materials are rotated for a variety of themes
- Props provided to represent diversity
- Props provided for active dramatic play outdoors

Sand and water play

- Provision for sand and water play provided either outdoors or indoors (preferably both if classroom size permits)
- Variety of toys accessible for play (ex: containers, spoons, funnels, scoops, shovels, pots and pans, molds, toy people, animals, and trucks)

Nature/science

Many developmentally appropriate games, materials, and activities from three categories accessible for a substantial portion of the day. The categories are:

- collections of natural objects (ex: rocks, insects, seed pods)
- living things (ex: house plants, gardens, pets)
- nature/science books, games, or toys (ex: nature matching cards, nature sequence cards)
- nature/science activities (ex: cooking, and simple experiments w/ magnets, magnifying glasses, etc.)
- Materials are well-organized and in good condition (ex: collections stored in separate containers, animals' cages clean)

Math/number

3 to 5 different math/number materials of each type are accessible for a substantial portion of the day. The types are:

- counting
- measuring
- comparing quantities
- recognizing shapes
- written numbers
- Materials are well-organized and in good condition (ex: sorted by type, all pieces needed for games are stored together)
- Materials are rotated to maintain interest

Use of TV, video, and/or computers

- All materials used are nonviolent and culturally sensitive
- Alternate activities accessible while TV/computer is being used
- Use of TV limited to 60 minutes daily
- Use of computer is limited to 20 minutes daily, it is offered as one of several free choice activities
- Materials used are limited to those considered "good for children" (these are materials that add much to children's development, such as to their vocabulary or understanding of the world)

- Most materials encourage active involvement (ex: children can dance, sing, or exercise to video; computer software encourages children to think and make decisions, and use creativity)
- Materials are used to support and extend classroom themes and activities
(Ex: video on insects adds information on nature theme; video on farms prepares children for fieldtrip)

Promoting acceptance of diversity

- Many books, pictures, and materials accessible showing people of different races, cultures, ages, abilities, and gender in non-stereotyping roles
- Some props representing various cultures included for use in dramatic play (ex: dolls of different races, ethnic clothing, cooking and eating utensils from various cultural groups)

General Test of Narrative Retell – Preschool Scoring Guidelines (Spencer & Petersen, 2012)

The TNR subtest is designed for real-time scoring. This means that while the child is retelling a story, the examiner can score the story simultaneously. Each story has an accompanying score sheet that reflects the content of the selected story. For children who speak very softly or quickly, the TNR may need to be scored from an audio recording or from a transcript derived from an audio recording.

TNR Score Sheets

TNR score sheets include the original text of the model story and a scoring form that includes key words or phrases with corresponding numerical scores (2, 1, or 0 points). The scoring form is divided into 4 different boxes. The largest box is used to score the ‘Story Grammar’ of the narrative (e.g., Character, Problem, etc.). A box labeled ‘Language Complexity’ is located in the upper right of the scoring form. This is where different linguistic features are scored (e.g., because, then, when, etc.). Directly below the Language Complexity section is a box that includes formulas for awarding points for episodic complexity. The shaded sections in the ‘Story Grammar’ box correspond with the letter formulas in the ‘Episode’ box. Thus, if a child retells a narrative with a 2-point Problem (P) and a 2-point Attempt (A), then the child receives a 2-point Episode score ($P+A = 2$). Scoring for episode components weights the inclusion of the main story grammar parts. The more complete the story is, with the most useful parts, the higher the score. The examiner records the TNR Total Score at the bottom, which is a sum of the Story Grammar Subtotal, the Language Complexity Subtotal, and the Episode Subtotal. While listening to a child retell a story, the examiner cues in on key words or phrases provided in the scoring form. When the examiner hears a key word or phrase that corresponds with the 2-point column, the examiner should circle the number 2 directly to the right of that word or phrase. When the examiner hears a key word or phrase that corresponds with the 1-point column, the examiner should circle the number 1 directly to the right of that word or phrase. If the child does not produce one of the key words or phrases, then the 0 should be circled. For example, if a child said “Sydney was skating in her driveway...”, the examiner would circle the 2 for Character and the 2 for Setting because the character’s name was produced (Sydney) and because the full setting information was provided (skating in driveway). When children say something other than the exact words and phrases contained in the scoring form, examiners should write in what they say. It is helpful to underline or write words and phrases as children say them and once the administration is complete, rate the words or phrases as 2, 1, or 0 based on the general scoring guidelines.

	2	1	0
Character	main character's name / any proper name that is the child's attempt to identify the main character	generic character description (boy, sister) NOT pronouns	only pronouns or only a generic character description of a secondary character (e.g. family, mom, sister, friend)
Setting	setting activity AND location	location OR setting activity	no information about the setting
Emotion	specific emotion related to problem	general emotion or behavior related to problem (e.g., didn't like it, cried)	no emotion or emotion behavior

Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals – Second Edition (Wiig, Secord & Semel, 2006) Scoring Guidelines.

Sentence Structure

The sentence structure subtest is used to evaluate the child's ability to interpret spoken sentences of increasing length and complexity. Repetitions of test items are allowed if requested by the child or when it appears that the child was not attending during presentation of the item. Understanding spoken sentences is believed to be important for developing conversational skills, participating in interactive storytelling and following directions. In regards to the curriculum, this subtest is intended to measure the child's ability to create meaning and context in response to pictures, identify context for spoken sentences, and understanding stories. This subtest includes 22 items that include understanding of prepositional phrases, verb conditions, modifiers, copula, infinitives, negation, passive voice, relative clauses, compound sentences, indirect requests and objects and subordinate clauses. The child is asked to choose one of four presented pictures. Each items is scored as 1 for correct or 0 for incorrect.

Word Structure

The word structure subtest focuses on morphology and is used to evaluate the child's ability to apply word structure to mark inflections, derivations, and comparison and select and use appropriate pronouns to refer to people, objects, and possessive relationships. In regards to the curriculum, this subtest is intended to measure a child's understanding of word use rules. Word structure also facilitates comprehension of a child's spoken message and intentions and children match word forms to pictures, make comparisons of characteristics and describing pictures and events. The word structure subtest includes 24 items that include production of prepositions, regular plurals, possessive nouns, verb tense, copula, pronoun, and derivational forms. The child is given a cloze form and asked to provide an appropriate word as it relates to

the presented picture. Repetition of test items is allowed if requested by the child or when it appears that the child was not attending during presentation of the item. Items are scored as 1 for correct or 0 for incorrect based on the provided scoring guidelines.

Expressive Vocabulary

The expressive vocabulary subtest focuses on referential naming as the child's ability to label illustrations of people, objects, and actions is evaluated. The ability to label and remember names for people, objects, and actions allows for expressing concise meaning in conversation, games, play and interactive story telling. The expressive vocabulary subtest includes 20 items that address labeling of verbs, food, social studies items, occupations/people, music/instruments, communication, science, sports, part/whole relationships, math, and health care. Each item is scored as a 2 if the targeted response is given, a 1 if the child's response is related to the targeted response or a 0 if the response is semantically inappropriate.

Core Language Score

The core language score is a measure of general language ability that quantifies a child's overall language performance and is used to make decisions about the presence of absence of a language disorder. The core language score is derived from combining the derived subtest scaled scores.

APPENDIX D: EXTRATEXTUAL TALK MEASURES

Frequency of use was assessed during the first day of instruction for each of the two books used.

Code	Definitions	Investigator Frequency	Teacher A Frequency	Teacher B Frequency
Literal Codes				
Label Nouns	Label objects, characters, or nouns in illustrations or text	5	5	8
Describe Nouns	Describe characteristics of nouns, including possession	4	5	7
Describe Actions	Label or describe story actions or verbs in text	4	0	1
Define Word	Simple definition of a word or purpose of object	3	0	1
Expansion	Teacher expands or extends child's utterance using child's own words	2	0	2
Inferential Codes				
Comparison	Discuss likeness or differences	3	0	0
Inference	Discuss inferences such as character, point of view, judgments	6	6	10
Prediction	Hypothesize or predict story events, including revisiting predictions	11	8	4
Explanation	Reasoning and analysis to explain conditions, cause and effect, or how or why	15	4	6
Rich Explanation	Rich discussion of word meaning to contextualize or dramatize word	0	0	0
Text-to-Life Link	Link to child or teacher's personal experience or to other texts	3	1	5
Pretend Talk	Dramatize story actions or use pretend talk with story characters	6	10	0
Emotions	Discuss emotion vocabulary or character's emotion	23	1	1
Follow Child's Lead	Teacher continues child's spontaneous topic with a contingent verbal response	2	1	1
Print and Phonological Codes				
Print Conventions	Book or print conventions such as author, title, book parts, directionality	0	1	5
Letter Sounds	Discuss letter-sound correspondences including letter pairs	0	0	0
Letters/Words	Discuss letters or words such as upper- or lowercase, word length	0	1	0
Phonological	Discuss sounds of words such as rhyme, syllables, or beginning sounds	0	0	0