

THE QUANTITATIVE EFFECTS OF READ ALOUDS

The Quantitative Effects of Read Alouds for Primary Students

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Abstract

This researcher wanted to know the quantitative effects that reading aloud to students for 30 minutes; five days per week in a whole classroom setting would have on the Terra Nova Spring Testing scores of the class. The students tested were from a kindergarten through twelfth grade private school in Southeast Wisconsin. Reading comprehension skills and vocabulary were incidentally taught during this 30-minute reading aloud period. Many discussions between the teacher and students also took place during this time. This researcher was curious about the quantitative effects of this interaction over an eight-month period, using the already existing Terra Nova Reading Test Scores to measure the effects. Another second grade class in the school served as the control group. The Terra Nova Composite Reading Scores of the two groups were compared. The male composite reading scores from each class were also compared and the female composite reading scores from each class were compared. The researcher found that reading to students thirty minutes per day, five days per week did not significantly increase student-reading scores on the spring Terra Nova Test. However the research data analyses revealed a trend, toward significance. No gender differences were found in the data analysis.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Overview

There is an increasing demand on teachers to fulfill specific educational requirements to the exclusion of the more intangible, but memorable aspects of the school day or year. Long gone are the days when the teacher was expected to teach a little reading, writing, arithmetic, history and science. Today, there are extra requirements that squeeze time out of the day so that the teacher is left with little flexibility in the day or week. There are also increased student discipline and learning disability issues that take time to deal with and plan for. In addition to these things, the concern that all students perform at or above a proficient level on various tests that are required by the school, the district, or the state leaves teachers with the perception that there is no time to do what they, as educators, believe is truly important. For example, a teacher may believe that while reading to children is an invaluable activity, there may be no tangible test results from reading aloud to children. When a teacher reads to the class for the pure enjoyment of doing so in order to capture and broaden the imaginations of her students, there is no evidence that the result will elevate standardized test scores, so the “read aloud” activity tends to end up at the bottom of the priority list in a typical school day. After all, in today’s schools the responsibility of the teacher is often to prepare the students for testing, and meeting district and state standards, rather than foster a love for learning.

Problem Statement

Since there is limited time in a school day, limited interactions with students, and limited time in a school year, combined with more and more expectations placed on educators there need to be ways to promote the enjoyment of reading for reading's sake, as well as fulfill the requirements of the core curriculum or expectations of the school program. "Read alouds" can possibly be an answer to this dilemma. Children generally love to be read to and if the experience remains positive, yet purposeful, it can create an environment that fosters a love of reading, and can also fulfill other requirements in an alternative way. The research of Santoro, Chard, Howard, and Baker (2008), revealed that "read alouds" could be effective methods of teaching reading comprehension while providing a rich literacy environment.

- In this current study, the researcher investigated the results of using read alouds, not only to promote the enjoyment of reading, but as part of the comprehension and vocabulary block of reading instruction each day. A wide variety of reading materials were used including fiction, nonfiction, picture books, wordless picture books, and chapter books. Student choice was also a significant consideration when choosing which books to read. The students were exposed to as many genres as practical, while at the same time utilizing each book to its best advantage, whether to teach metacognition, vocabulary, folktale genre, language structure, science topics, or history. While many topics were covered in this program, the goal was to maintain a high priority on student interest and choice so that

the main purpose for reading was to promote an enjoyment in reading itself. This study utilized two, second grade classrooms; one was used as the control group, the other as the experimental group. The experimental group was the class read to after lunch every day for 30 minutes. The control group was read to sporadically. To collect the data the school's existing spring standardized testing scores were analyzed to determine if there was any difference between the control group and the experimental group in terms of reading scores. The scores were also disaggregated and analyzed according to student gender.

Questions that guided this study were:

1. Can reading aloud to students 30 minutes a day, five days a week, emphasizing the enjoyment of reading while incidentally teaching reading skills make a significant impact on student reading test scores?
2. Can reading aloud 30 minutes a day, five days a week, to male students, emphasizing the enjoyment of reading while incidentally teaching reading skills make a significant impact on student reading test scores?
3. Can reading aloud 30 minutes a day, five days a week, to female students, emphasizing the enjoyment of reading while incidentally teaching reading skills make a significant impact on student reading test scores?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to:

- 1) Compare the reading test scores on the Terra Nova Test of the experimental group (read to) and the control group (not read to) to study possible differences.
- 2) Compare the reading test scores on the Terra Nova Test of male students in the experimental group (read to) to the male students in the control group (not read to) to study possible differences.
- 3) Compare the reading test scores on the Terra Nova Test of female students in the experimental group (read to) to the female students in the control group (not read to) to study possible differences.

Hypotheses

This study involved three sets of null and research hypotheses.

- The first null hypothesis was that second grade students who are read to for 30 minutes a day will have less than or equal to the same reading test scores as those students who are not read aloud to for 30 minutes a day. The first alternative hypothesis for this study was that second grade students that are read to for 30 minutes a day will have higher test scores on their standardized reading tests than those who are not read to for 30 minutes a day.
- The second null hypothesis was that second grade male students who are read to for 30 minutes a day will have less than or equal to the same reading scores than those male students who are not read aloud to for 30

minutes a day. The second alternative hypothesis was that second grade male students that are read to for 30 minutes a day will have higher reading test scores on their standardized tests than those male students who are not read to for 30 minutes a day.

- The third null hypothesis was that second grade female students who are read to for 30 minutes a day will have less than or equal to the same reading scores as those female students who are not read aloud to for 30 minutes a day. The third alternative hypothesis was that second grade female students that are read to for 30 minutes a day will have higher reading test scores on their standardized tests than those female students who are not read to for 30 minutes a day.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study:

- **Read aloud** is defined as teachers actively reading to students (with discussion and interaction between the teacher and the students about the material) for 30 minutes every day, five days a week with the exception of school days off, or field trip days.
- **Students not read aloud to** refers to the control group where the corresponding teacher did not actively read to students every day. It was not intended to imply that the control group did not experience some read alouds.
- **(Reading test scores: Terra Nova Standardized Test used)**

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the concept that “reading aloud” consistently for 30 minutes a day to students could have an impact on the academic performance of a second grade classroom. The purpose of the study, the statement of the problem and definition of terms were also defined

Chapter 2

Review of Related Research

Purpose of Study

This literature review analyzed articles that are closely related to this study. This study examined the impact of reading to children 30 minutes per day, five days a week, for the main purpose of enjoying stories together, and secondary purpose of teaching reading skills to children have on the spring Terra Nova reading test. The studies contained in this literature review address the significant differences between reading aloud to children without explicit instruction and reading to children using explicit instruction in order to, among other things, measure comprehension and vocabulary growth. This researcher contends that a more practical purpose of this study, due to the recent common core emphasis, as well as pressure on teachers to produce quantitative results, is to measure the impact that incidental teaching of reading skills during the 30 minute read aloud can have on Terra Nova reading test scores. Doing so could justify and help to maintain the traditional read aloud in the classroom.

Read Aloud Impact on Comprehension

In “An Evaluation of an Explicit Read Aloud Intervention Taught in Whole-Classroom Formats in First Grade,” the study’s purpose was to find out if a read aloud intervention could improve comprehension and vocabulary of first-grade students. The objective was to teach explicit comprehension and vocabulary skills to first graders while “maintaining the enjoyable nature of the experience that teachers and students expect” (Baker, Chard, Fien, Park, & Otterstedt, 2013, p. 331).

Students participating were chosen randomly, by classroom from school districts

in the Pacific Northwest. In all, 225 students participated from 12 first grade classrooms with one class from each school and approximately 20 students per class. Two of the classrooms were used for comparison. The duration of the study was 19 weeks. All schools were demographically comparable. Students were given pretests to determine if they were at risk for language difficulties, reading difficulties, or both. Students who had average pretest scores below 25 % were deemed high risk. From these pretests, students were categorized into four subgroups:

- No language difficulties but reading difficulties,
- Language difficulties, but no reading difficulties
- Reading and language difficulties, and
- No risk in either category.

The researchers anticipated that students from the highest risk groups within each classroom would benefit the most from explicit instruction. Baker stated that there were four main components to this read aloud study: a) Lessons were organized around a model-lead-test approach using concepts from *Explicit Instruction* (Archer & Hughes, 2011). In other words, teachers orally modeled specific comprehension strategies that they wanted the students to eventually be able to implement independently. Next, in the study by Baker et al. (2013), teachers worked together with students to implement those comprehension strategies. Finally, the students were encouraged to implement those strategies independently, supported and encouraged by the teacher. b) Material increased in complexity as lessons progressed and students were able to work more independently. c) Teachers were trained on how to interact frequently with students on text, including a planned discussion before, during, and after oral reading. d) Regular feedback was

implemented by:

- 1) Specific encouragement when correct
- 2) Guidance back to text when a literal answer was needed, and
- 3) Teacher modeling by thinking aloud when inference understanding was needed.

Teaching strategies were implemented at specific times. Grammar elements were taught for narrative texts, and the text was read before showing related pictures. Charts or worksheets were filled out that helped to solidify who the story was about and what happened first, second and last. For expository texts, the illustrations from the book were shown while reading and K-W-L Charts (acronym for What I Think I Know, What I Want to Know, and What I Learned) were used. Additionally, the main focus of the listening comprehension study was on higher-level thinking so discussions and questions revolved around these issues.

Both the intervention (experimental) and comparison groups used the same narrative and expository texts in weeks seven and 17 and taught the same vocabulary words to better document read aloud instruction and fidelity across conditions (Baker et al., 2013).

Teachers in the comparison (control) group read to their students at least four times a week, 30 minutes per day using their normal read aloud procedures. Teachers in the comparison group also used either a narrative or expository text as a focus for each day and used their own methods for teaching comprehension for 30 minutes per day.

The researchers looked for improvements in the following categories: narrative retell (retelling a story), vocabulary, listening comprehension, and expository retell

(retelling what the student learned). The results were that the students in the experimental group scored an average of 16 % higher on the narrative retell measure, and 32 % higher on the vocabulary measure. There were no significant differences between the control and experimental group for listening comprehension or expository retell, although the expository retell measure approached significance. Low risk students in the intervention (experimental) group scored significantly higher than the other three categories in the experimental group, and low risk students in both the control and experimental groups scored higher than any of the at-risk students in either category. The researchers predicted that the intervention measures would impact the high-risk groups the most. The result was that all four groups were impacted, with the low risk group benefitting the most.

The researchers concluded that young children could benefit from read alouds in a deeper way that prepares them for future independent comprehension of texts. In other words, a teacher, using carefully thought out lessons can scaffold the comprehension process for young children, beginning with read alouds, which could aid in a child eventually being able to deeply understand text as he reads independently. The researchers also concluded that carefully planned read aloud lessons could be beneficial to teach higher-order thinking skills of comprehension and vocabulary. They also thought that it was beneficial to have discussions before, during, and after the read aloud to aid in comprehension.

This study was highly structured and lessons were very specific in nature. The researchers concluded that it would not be practical to have lessons as specific, with the amount of time it would take to plan these same types of lessons, on a regular basis.

However, they felt that the most important steps in order to use read alouds to teach comprehension and vocabulary effectively would be to use well thought out reading comprehension and vocabulary lesson plans. Their reason for this was that, “Thinking aloud to demonstrate comprehension monitoring, or teaching vocabulary explicitly for deep understanding is very difficult to do effectively unless teachers have reviewed or planned this instruction before the lessons” (Baker et al., 2013, p. 354).

In a very similar study, “Making the Very Most of Classroom Read Alouds to Promote Comprehension and Vocabulary” (Santoro, Chard, Howard, & Baker, 2008) the researchers wanted to determine if listening comprehension skills and vocabulary building lessons would be effective if taught in the context of the read aloud period of the day rather than taking place during the class period of reading comprehension instruction. They conducted a 10-week study wherein teachers in a first grade classroom implemented a specific regimen of listening comprehension skills during read alouds. This study was conducted with students in a classroom setting who were at risk, as well as those not at risk for reading difficulties.

Before this study began, books were carefully chosen so that text concepts could be reasonably identified. Then expository (nonfiction) texts were appropriately paired with narrative (fiction) texts according to subject and taught within the same time frame. In both the narrative and expository teaching time there was discussion of the type of story to be read (narrative or expository). Then textual observations and various comprehension checks were made before, during and after each reading. For example, there were discussions regarding the kind of book it was, followed by connecting that knowledge to the purpose for reading. The discussion took place so that children became

aware of the type of book (fiction or nonfiction) being read and why. If the story was narrative, there was discussion of story elements. If the reading was expository, a K-W-L chart was used to organize and clarify new knowledge. After the read aloud, teachers had the students retell what was read.

Vocabulary was also taught within the context of read alouds. Words were carefully chosen and explicitly taught within the context of the story, but also discussed and applied separately for deeper understanding. Two categories of words were used. The first category, which were referred to in this study as Tier 2 words, (Beck, 2001) consisted of words that were used frequently in the English language, but may not be familiar to children. The second category contained words that perhaps were not as frequently used, but were important to understanding and were referred to as Tier 3 Words (Beck, 2001). Many of the words in Tier 3 were scientific terms encountered in expository texts. After the read aloud, vocabulary was further discussed and applied to new situations. Finally, metacognitive processes were discussed, appropriately, throughout. Teachers in the control group were not to alter their routines for read alouds.

After the 10-week study, students showed improved aptitude in the ability to comprehend narrative texts as revealed in their ability to give more complete explanations in their retell of narrative text. However, there seemed to be negligible difference in a deeper understanding of expository texts. They did, however, demonstrate increased vocabulary knowledge. Last of all, the students communicated a greater understanding of metacognitive thinking in the reading process, which is believed to aid in greater comprehension.

The researchers found that when they used a specific plan, that was followed closely, read aloud time produced positive results. These researchers contended, "...read-alouds must be carefully planned if they are to affect student comprehension. Making the very most of read aloud time requires teaching students to recognize the differences between narrative and expository text structure, to know the meanings of target vocabulary, and to become active participants in purposeful discussions about texts" (Santoro et al., 2008, p. 407).

The Impact of Read alouds on Vocabulary

Elley, (1989) in "Vocabulary Acquisition from Listening to Stories," was interested in replicating a small study, which had been conducted with ESL (English as a Second Language) students in the South Pacific in 1983. These students, who were struggling to learn English as their second language, had showed significant improvement in vocabulary when picture books were read during their English classes. The researcher decided to conduct studies, with a larger population of children in New Zealand, to determine if there would be similar increases in vocabulary for students whose first language was English.

Method of First Study

Two studies were conducted. The purpose for the first study was to determine if reading the same story, multiple times, with no explanation of vocabulary words, would show a significant gain in vocabulary knowledge.

The researcher used seven classes of seven-year-olds for a total of 157 children in Christchurch, New Zealand for the study. Regular classroom teachers conducted the read alouds.

In the study, pretests and posttests were given to measure the relative gain in new vocabulary for the book, *Gumdrop at Sea* (Biro, 1983). This book was chosen based on collaboration between the researcher and the teachers. There were approximately 20 new vocabulary words within the book. An important aspect of this first study was how the vocabulary words were chosen for pretesting and post-testing. The words were chosen based on frequency of occurrence, pictorial representation, and contextual clues. Another important feature of the study was that the contexts of the vocabulary on the tests were not connected to the context of the vocabulary in the book, and the pretest was given seven days prior to reading the book. *Gumdrop at Sea* (Biro, 1983) was read to the students three times over a period of seven days. The educators read to the students with no particular explanation regarding vocabulary, but associated pictures were shown briefly during the reading. The same test, used as the posttest, was given two days after the third reading, so instead of using a control group, the researcher measured results by comparing pretests to posttests.

The mean increase in scores from pretest to posttest of the first study was 15.4 %, with each of the seven classes of seven year olds showing similar results. The mean range per class was a 13 to 21 % gain. Some individual words showed more gain while others showed virtually no gain. It appeared that the words that showed the most gain were frequent in occurrence, had associated pictorial illustrations, or helpful context clues. The study also revealed that students most at risk for literacy difficulties showed the most gain. The three highest performing groups showed little difference in gains.

In the second study, Elley had four purposes for conducting his investigation.

1. The first purpose was to “confirm the incidental vocabulary learning found in experiment one” (Elley, 1989, p. 180).
2. “The second purpose was to estimate the effects of teacher explanation of unfamiliar words, over and above the effects of story reading alone” (Elley, 1989, p. 180).
3. “The third purpose was to clarify further the contribution of the word-related and subject-related variables investigated in Experiment 1 to incidental learning from context” (Elley, 1989, p. 180).
4. The fourth purpose was to “investigate the permanence of any learning that occurred” (Elley, 1989, p. 180).

Method of Second Study

For the second study, eight-year old students from six New Zealand schools were divided into three groups. Group A (72 students) and Group B (55 students) were each read two books, *Rapscallion Jones* (Marshall, 1983), and *The White Crane* (Morimoto, 1983). Group C (51 students) was the control group for which no books were read.

For each book, a pretest and posttest were designed and administered, with an additional five random vocabulary words inserted into the pretest as a check to see if students might gain vocabulary knowledge from the pretest rather than the read alouds. These words were used as control words on the test and were not connected to the story. As in the first study, vocabulary words from the books were chosen based on frequency of occurrence, pictorial representation, and contextual clues. Again, as in the first study,

the contexts of the vocabulary on the tests were not connected to the context of the vocabulary in the books that were used for the read alouds.

For the first book, *Rapscallion Jones* (Marshall, 1983), the students in Group A were taught vocabulary during the read-alouds. Teachers were given options as to how they wanted to present the words. Students could be taught using: a) an explanation of target words, b) a synonymous phrase, or c) a pictorial representation of the word from the book being read. Group B students were read to without any explanation of vocabulary, but accompanying pictures were briefly shown. Students in Group C, the control group, were given the same vocabulary tests as group A and B, but were not read the stories. Posttests were given seven days after the third reading. After students finished taking the posttest for *Rapscallion Jones* (Marshall, 1983), the same procedure was used for the second book except Groups A and B switched roles. Group A was not given explanations for words, but Group B was. In both cases, another posttest was administered three months later to indicate whether the vocabulary that was learned was permanent.

The book, *Rapscallion Jones* (Marshall, 1983), which was read aloud to the students, produced similar results to those found in the first study. Group A, with explanation of vocabulary showed a vocabulary gain of 39.9 %. Group B, with no explanation of vocabulary, showed a 14.8 % gain in vocabulary. For Group C, the group not read to but just given the test, the vocabulary gain was only 2 %. The book, *The White Crane* (Morimoto, 1983) which was read aloud to Group A, with no explanation, showed a much smaller vocabulary increase of 4.4 %. Group B students, who heard the

same story, with explanation, showed a 17.1 % increase in vocabulary. Group C remained the same.

Elley observed the difference in vocabulary gains between *Rapscallion Jones* and *The White Crane*. The vocabulary gain for *Rapscallion Jones* with explanation was 39.9 %, but *The White Crane* showed a lower gain of 17.1 %. Similarly, *Rapscallion Jones* showed a 14.8 % gain when read without any explanation, contrasted with *The White Crane* which had a 4.4 % gain. Elley attributed the percentage difference between *Rapscallion Jones* (1983) and *The White Crane* (1983) to unfamiliarity with the subject matter. *The White Crane*, a Japanese folktale, from a different culture, had been translated into English. The researcher deduced that stories, like *The White Crane*, needed to have helpful verbal or pictorial context. According to the teachers, the students had not been as involved with the storyline, and Elley discussed the possibility that when children are emotionally connected to a story there may be a greater possibility of learning. He also stated that in order to have an effective vocabulary gain there needs to be multiple exposures to new words, and there appears to be an interconnection between frequency of exposure and the ability to retain the meaning of new words (i.e. each story was read three times over the course of a week). Elley concluded that children could increase their vocabulary using incidental exposure to read alouds when the vocabulary is embedded multiple times within the context of a story and when the story is read multiple times within a short period of time. The above criterion was met in the context of these two interesting read aloud stories.

In another read aloud study, “Teacher Read-Alouds with and without Student Companion Texts: Quantitative and Qualitative Findings” (Tracey, Rhee, & Abrantes,

2011) the researchers wanted to investigate if students' reading scores would improve if students followed along in the same text (*companion text*) as teachers were reading. This study was conducted in a school district with a majority of Hispanic speaking, Costa Rican students, with approximately 300 third, fourth, and fifth grade students. The New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) and the Development Reading Assessment, 2nd edition (DRA-2), were both routinely used tests from the school district and were administered as pretests and posttests. Following the pretests, teachers read grade level novels to the students while half of the students followed along using companion texts and the other students listened without the aid of companion texts. Teachers read to students approximately 20 minutes per day, three days per week for four months. The hypothesis was that the students who used companion texts would perform better on the same standardized tests used as a posttest, than the students who did not have companion texts.

At the conclusion of the four-month trial, there was no significant reading difference on either the NJASK nor the DRA-2 between students using companion texts and those who did not have companion texts.

The researchers concluded that greater success might have been realized with an extended trial.

In a study related to students who are dual language learners, Ricketts (1982) conducted a study in Fiji that investigated using read alouds to improve the English vocabulary learning of South Pacific students. In this study the researcher wanted to know if students who were not progressing in their English classes, could be helped from having stories read aloud in place of part of their English instruction. The study involved

three schools, an Indian school, a Fijian school and a multiracial school, with one class from each of the first two schools and two classes from the multiracial school chosen for the study. The researcher chose comparable schools and classes from those schools as a control group. In the study, both the experimental classes and the control classes were given reading and listening pretests and posttests. The researcher chose books that appealed to the interests of this age group of students. The experimental classes were read stories in place of part of the English period every day for the purpose of enjoying stories together. Approximately 16 storybooks were supplied to the teachers for reading each month. The students were allowed time to discuss and ask questions if so desired. The study lasted for approximately eight months and in those eight months students in the experimental classes showed significantly greater growth than all four of the control classes. The experimental classes improved an average of 11.6 % on the English reading test and 15.5 % on the listening test. Ricketts stated that “in both cases the experimental classes improved by more than twice the rate of the control groups” (1982). The researcher concluded that reading aloud to students could be used as an effective tool to increase English language learners’ reading and language aptitudes.

In another the study, *A Comparison of Intervention Tools for Improving Fluency, Attitudes about Reading and Parent Participation Through At-Home Reading for First Grade Students*, (C. P. Miller, Dryden, & Turner-White, 2008) whose purpose was to investigate if specific directions of paired/shared reading, introduction of new vocabulary, modeling of fluency by a mature reader, and repeated reading have a significant impact on the maturity of first grade students’ reading. In addition, the researchers wanted to determine if introducing materials using this specific format would

increase parental involvement with student reading at home and positively improve student attitudes toward reading. Finally, the authors wanted to determine if this approach would influence the number of books read or amount of time spent on reading. As a result, the researchers investigated the effect of specific read aloud techniques that the researchers wanted parents to do with their first grade children.

This was a large study involving four hundred families across four states. The study was conducted over a period of 10 weeks. In the study, parents, with no professional educational training, read to their children. The parents in the experimental group were given a written set of specific instructions to refer to when reading with their children, which included repeated readings, specific discussion questions, and paired/shared reading. Parents in the treatment group, with no professional training other than the written instructions, were doing the reading. The control group consisted of parents who read to their children with no specific plan of how that reading would be formatted.

The results of the study were that the children whose parents had a specific agenda to follow as set forth by the researchers, scored significantly higher than those students whose parents read to their children with no specific agenda (C. P. Miller et al., 2008).

School Impact of Text Talk

Looking at reading with a specific agenda, Muncy, (2011) in “The Effects of Word Instruction During Classroom Read-Alouds on the Acquisition of Vocabulary” wanted to determine if deliberate, specific teaching of vocabulary using “Text Talk” (Beck, 2001) would produce effective vocabulary instruction for rural Appalachia

kindergarteners. The reasoning behind this focus was that, according to the authors, impoverished children as a whole have a much lower vocabulary repertoire than children who come from non-impoverished homes. The authors based their research on previous findings that children benefit most from deliberate teaching of specific vocabulary. As a result, of these studies, Muncy conducted research using “Text Talk,” which was authored by Beck, (2001) as a possible method of increasing vocabulary “when embedded into read aloud sessions” (Muncy, 2011, p. 18).

Using the Text Talk (Beck, 2001) method for teaching vocabulary, the teacher/researcher discussed the cover of the book, made a brief prediction, then read and discussed the pictures and text of the story as it was read. After finishing the story, the teacher focused attention on sentences in the story that contained the target vocabulary words and led the children in discussions and questions on various contexts of each target word using pictures and examples.

This study used a targeted vocabulary focus as opposed to an incidental focus in order to have the greatest effect on the socio-economic status of Appalachian students (Muncy, 2011). In the study, the researcher/teacher wanted to teach specific vocabulary words within the context of read alouds. Students were given a pretest and posttest using tier-two vocabulary words, as described by Beck (2001), that were selected from carefully chosen, culturally relevant picture books. The researcher chose six books, three words from each book to share with each of three groups of children. The books were approximately two grade levels above students, and used a number of tier-2 words. The researcher used Dunn’s (2007) Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) as a template to develop a pretest and posttest specifically designed for this study. The posttest revealed

that deliberate, specific teaching of vocabulary using Text Talk did produce effective vocabulary teaching (Muncy, 2011).

In another story, the authors in “Teaching for Synthesis of Informational Texts With Read Alouds” (Cummins, 2011) were interested in helping students synthesize nonfiction texts, rather than merely observing and reciting back facts. The study had 29 third graders as subjects and was conducted over the period of one school year. In this study the teachers read informational texts to the students at least once every two weeks. Then students responded by not only discussing the text, but also writing or drawing their responses to the text. This technique, was utilized as a result of research which suggested that reading informational texts aloud to students might increase comprehension, help students become familiar with the sound of nonfiction texts, as well as help to increase student’s background knowledge.

This explicit teaching of how to read nonfiction text did result in students being able to do more than recall facts. Students showed improvement in being able to synthesize and analyze, and understand the overall context of what was being taught rather than merely recall facts (Cummins, 2011).

Read Alouds and Vocabulary Growth

In a study, “Not Just for After Lunch,” (Toth, 2013) the author wanted to teach vocabulary effectively in contextually relevant ways in order to increase vocabulary in kindergarteners. The study focused on vocabulary “that would not be taught in isolation, be embedded in regular classroom activity, and would build collaboration and communication skills between students” (Toth, 2013, p. 204).

The teacher/researcher used carefully chosen books that had rich text, unusual text

features, were rich in similes and metaphors, had many words outside of normal vocabulary, and had opportunities for making inferences from the text. The students were taught how to carry on meaningful discussions with assigned “thinking partners” (Toth, 2013), thus the story was not merely read, but one or two discussion times were planned for each story in order to facilitate a profitable interchange between students. Students were also “taught conversational behaviors” that would support the teacher/researchers’ “vocabulary work and improve social skills” (Toth, 2013, p. 204). Skills included having effective eye contact with their partner, asking questions, speaking loud enough to be heard, and being able to focus attention back on the class when appropriate. These procedures prepared an environment that enabled vocabulary to be taught within the context of discussion. The author found that this method of teaching increased vocabulary, enthusiasm, and motivation to learn new words, during discussion times, as well as throughout the day (Toth, 2013).

Teacher impact on Vocabulary Growth

Maloch and Beutel (2010) conducted another study dealing with vocabulary acquisition. In, “Big Loud Voice. You Have Important Things to Say: The Nature of Student Initiations During One Teacher’s Interactive Read Aloud,” (Maloch & Beutel, 2010) the researchers studied a second grade teacher’s interactions with her students during read alouds. The goal was to better understand how student’s initiated and responded to the text and teacher as she read, modeled comprehension strategies, commented, and encouraged student interactions.

Both the students and teacher were observed during interactive read alouds of fiction and non-fiction texts over a five-month period. In the first phase, data was

recorded and collected one to three days a week using various recording devices. The teacher served as a facilitator to listen, help clarify, acknowledge observations, and encourage discussion and questions. Phase-two involved carefully analyzing the data to see what patterns would emerge from the data collected. The teacher focused on avoiding IRE (Inquire, Respond, Evaluate) questions and instead, made oral observations, asked open ended questions, and encouraged questions and observations initiated by the students. She also helped to make the students aware of their reading prowess by orally observing what they were doing when they made observations, using interesting words, and connecting the text to their world or other texts.

The result was that “The teacher’s responses to students’ interactions suggested implications for how teachers might invite, accept, and build on student contributions in ways that shape literature discussions in important ways” (Maloch & Beutel, 2010, p. 20). The authors commented that the resulting atmosphere of the treatment was one of enthusiasm for new ideas and vocabulary, a growing curiosity, and even initiation in finding answers in other texts in the room. The authors also stated that the analysis of their study “...provides insight into how read aloud/discussion events may serve as context for apprenticing students into the complex thinking practices involved in constructing meaning around texts” (Maloch & Beutel, 2010, p. 28).

In a subsequent study, the researchers in “Vocabulary Intervention for Kindergarten Students: Comparing Extended Instruction to Embedded Instruction and Incidental Exposure” (Coyne, McCoach, & Kapp, 2007) wanted to investigate if deliberate, planned vocabulary instruction using read alouds could be effective for improving kindergartners’ vocabulary. They also wanted to determine if explicitly

planned vocabulary instruction would have long lasting results with kindergarteners, first compared to incidental exposure and second, to embedded instruction of vocabulary words. This study was conducted in a K-4 elementary school with 300 students in a small town in the Northeast. Approximately 50 % of the students qualified for free or reduced lunch and 55 % of the population was Hispanic. The students were divided into Groups A and B. Students were randomly assigned to the groups (Coyne et al., 2007). The teachers in the study used a method of vocabulary instruction, which involved teaching three words in the context of a read aloud. The target words chosen were considered important to understanding the story but were not likely known by kindergartners. In addition, the book was modified so that each target word was only used once. Graduate students who were trained to conduct the read alouds, read *The Three Little Pigs* (Marshall, 1989) a total of three times to each group.

The first study involved explicitly teaching three words with extended activities. Then three additional words were chosen, with no explanations given other than through the context of the story. There were two groups of students who were taught six words total, but each group was taught half of their words explicitly, and the other half of the words were incidentally taught in the context of the read aloud with no explanation. The groups had the same set of words, but their incidental words and explicit words were switched so that Group A's explicitly taught words were Group B's incidental words and Group A's incidental words were Group B's explicitly taught words.

The first treatment involved three 20 to 30 minute sessions over one week. The initial teaching began with the pronunciation of the three explicit words by the students, who were to listen and raise their hands whenever they heard one of the target words in

the story. The trained graduate students (referred to as interventionists) acknowledged the students' efforts when students successfully noticed one of the target words. Then the sentence that contained that word was read again. After this, the interventionist would read the definition for the word, then re-read the same sentence, but replace the target word with the definition. Finally, the students were instructed to pronounce the target word again, before continuing with the story. After finishing the story, the students again reviewed the word in the context of the story before beginning post-story activities. Some of the activities involved recognizing target words in different contexts, verbally choosing the correct usage from multiple choice answers, verbally giving examples of target words used in sentences, and finally, using multiple target words in the context of the same sentence. Open-ended questions and discussions were encouraged. These post reading activities were 15 to 20 minutes in length (Coyne et al., 2007).

The second treatment comparing explicitly taught words to embedded instruction was done with a group of 32 students. The same procedures were followed as in the first study. Three words were explicitly taught as described above and extended activities were also implemented. The embedded words likewise were identically taught, but without the extension activities at the end (Coyne et al., 2007).

The posttests were conducted right after the treatments and again six weeks later. They revealed that the words taught using extended activities had a significantly better retention rate relating to receptive recall than either the incidental or embedded words. However, after the eight weeks, there was deterioration in the ability to recall the full meaning of the words taught using extended activities. Another result was that when the researchers tested the students after eight weeks, the low risk students had better

receptive retention than the high-risk students. The researchers found that when deliberate, carefully planned vocabulary lessons were taught during read alouds, there was significant, lasting, receptive retention of those words, even though, without review, there was a forgetting curve. This study helped to give perspective on the effect of teaching vocabulary during read alouds and therefore, aid comprehension (Coyne et al., 2007).

Impact of Socioeconomic Status

In “First-Grade Teachers Reading Aloud Caldecott Award-Winning Books to Diverse 1st- Graders in Urban Classrooms,” (Hall & Williams, 2010) researchers were interested in finding out “how students from low socioeconomic backgrounds approached reading aloud sophisticated picture books” (Hall & Williams, 2010, p. 298). The study had two purposes. The first purpose of the study was to discover how teachers in urban class settings engage their students in read alouds. The second purpose was to discover whether first grade students from disadvantaged backgrounds would engage in Caldecott Award winning books.

The study was conducted in a large, urban, city in the southeastern United States. The demographics of the school were 61% black, 12% Hispanic, 1% Asian, 4% mixed and 21% white. Ninety-one % of the students qualified for free or reduced lunch. The study involved two phases. In the first phase five teachers were observed reading to students two books, chosen by the researchers. After each reading, the students were interviewed to determine their reactions to the books read. The second phase of the study involved focusing on one teacher, observing her read aloud lessons and her student’s reactions and responses. As in the first phase, the researchers categorized what phrases

the teacher used to engage the students by calling them “descriptors.” They developed several descriptors: management, predictions, book focus, analysis, clarification, vocabulary, personal, and recall. The researchers recorded the number of each descriptors that one particular teacher used when reading *Snowflake Bentley* {Martin, 2013, *Snowflake Bentley*}, and *The Spider and the Fly* {Mary, 2002, *The Spider and the Fly*}. After reading the story, the students were asked a set of questions about their reactions to the stories read. Nearly all the students enjoyed both books, and were able to “retell the story and make connections” (Hall & Williams, 2010, p. 310).

These researchers found that the students did indeed enjoy the two books that were used, even though there was concern that the children would not relate to books that were not representative of the diverse population of students. The researchers stated that they thought the high quality of the pictures seemed to help the students engage so that they were able to effectively retell and make connections. This study used read alouds as a basis to teach vocabulary. However, there was no quantitative analysis to determine if reading to the students without explicit teaching of vocabulary was effective.

In a similar study, “Enhancing Teacher Read Alouds With Small-Group Vocabulary Instruction for Students With Low Vocabulary in First-Grade Classrooms,” (Fien, Chard, Williams, & Haria, 2011) the researchers wanted to “...evaluate the effect of small-group instruction on the vocabulary and comprehension of first-grade students identified with low language and low vocabulary skills” (Fien et al., 2011, p. 307). The researchers wanted to determine if pulling out at-risk students twice a week for 20 minutes per session, for 8 weeks, would have a significant impact on increasing student’s vocabulary. At risk students were defined, using Hamills definition: as those who tested

below 50 % on Hamill's Relational Vocabulary subtest of the Test of Oral Language Development-Primary-3 {, 1997, Test of Language Development-Primary 3}.

The study was conducted with 106 students, in 18 participating classrooms from nine Title One Pacific Northwest schools. The researcher studied the effects of using small group intervention for students not benefitting from whole class instruction for expository texts. There were 54 students who qualified for small group instruction and 52 students in the control group. This instruction was an extension of what was being taught during whole class instruction, which all students participated in. The 54 high-risk students met in small groups and instruction focused on understanding expository texts. The teacher provided "...targeted support in vocabulary instruction and discourse opportunities with expository content that was conceptually aligned with the expository texts used in the whole-class..." (Fien et al., 2011, p. 309). Students who were in small groups of between two and five students, received extra exposure to the same topic that was presented during whole class instruction and received supplemental information from the reading of an additional book. Students were evaluated based on their retelling of expository information they had encountered during the eight-week study. The students who received small group instruction were compared to the students from the control group who did not receive small group instruction. Students' responses were recorded, coded, and scored by an objective third party who was instructed on what criteria was pertinent to the evaluation. The results of the study were significant for vocabulary and expository retell. However, there was no significant difference for narrative retell (Fien et al., 2011). This was expected since the study focused on boosting needed expository comprehension. Researchers concluded that small group instruction to support whole

class instruction “appears to enhance the vocabulary knowledge and expository retellings of students identified with low vocabulary and language skills” (Fien et al., 2011, p. 315).

In a similar study, “A Synthesis of Read Aloud Interventions on Early Reading Outcomes Among Preschool Through Third Graders at Risk for Reading Difficulties” (Swanson et al., 2011) is related to the present investigation. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of read aloud interventions for at risk students from 1984 through 2008. This was “A synthesis and meta-analysis of the extant research on the effects of storybook read-aloud interventions for children at risk for reading difficulties ages 3 to 8...” (Swanson et al., 2011, p. 258). “Read-aloud instruction”...was “...examined using dialogic reading; repeated reading of stories; story reading with limited questioning before, during, and/or after reading; computer-assisted story reading; and story reading with extended vocabulary activities” (Swanson et al., 2011, p. 258).

Researchers used a comprehensive computer search using ERIC and PsycInfo to find studies between 1984 and 2008. Hand searches of the most recently published articles were investigated to locate pertinent articles. The reference list of each qualifying article was searched to locate any other applicable studies. Finally, a specific set of criteria was followed to narrow down the applicable pieces to 29 articles, 18 of which qualified for inclusion in the project. What the researchers discovered was that despite the wide ranges of intervention using read alouds, there was very little difference in the effects of interventions. Swanson (2011) acknowledged:

...while read aloud interventions are valuable for children’s literary outcomes, some of the specific features related to improvement have not been fully realized in the literature. Currently, the strongest evidence comes from dialogic reading

interventions suggesting that incorporating extended child-adult dialogue and questioning around storybooks is a valuable practice in educational settings (p. 272).

Narrative Texts Verses Expository Texts

In “The Effects of Read alouds of Expository Text on First Graders’ Listening Comprehension and Book Choice” (Kraemer, McCabe, Sinatra, 2012) the researchers wanted to investigate:

1. If students preferred expository texts or narrative texts
2. If students’ listening comprehension of expository texts might significantly improve if those texts were read aloud to students over a period of time.
3. If students’ listening comprehension aptitude was linked to their choice of either narrative or expository text.
4. If significant exposure to expository texts in the form of read alouds would help better prepare students in the upper grades.

In this four-week study, 77 first-grade students were chosen based on convenience, and in this demographic 97% were above the poverty level. There were two intervention classes with a total of 37 students, and two control classes with a total of 40 students. To discover whether students preferred expository or narrative texts, a pretest was given, which involved having students choose between narrative or expository texts. Next, because researchers wanted to know which kind of text students might test better on, students were evaluated to determine if they would score better on narrative or expository comprehension texts. Third, researchers wanted to know if students’ listening comprehension of expository texts might significantly improve if those

texts were read aloud to students over a period of time. Students were read an expository book, in a similar way that they were used to being read narrative texts.

Researchers also wondered if significant exposure to expository texts in the form of read alouds would better prepare students in the upper grades as more of students' reading requirements are aimed at informational texts rather than narrative. Therefore the last intervention was to have graduate students, who had been trained, read an expository book to the experimental group in a similar fashion that the students were used to being read narrative texts. Books were introduced and read with some discussion during the reading, as well as some discussion afterward, about what the students had learned. The read aloud session was conducted three times per week over a four-week period, with one book each time. Then students were tested.

For the pretest, 59 out of 77 students chose expository texts before any intervention occurred. When pretested to see if students scored better on narrative or expository texts, it was found that both groups scored significantly higher on narrative texts. At the end of four weeks, when asked, both groups still preferred expository texts to narrative texts. However, those who were read expository texts performed significantly better on expository texts than those who were not read expository texts. Students were again given the opportunity to choose whether they preferred narrative or expository text. Their answers were the same as the pretest. However, when given listening comprehension posttests for narrative and expository texts, the expository scores went up significantly, indicating that reading aloud nonfiction to students can aid in increasing ability to better understand that particular genre.

In this study, (Kraemer, McCabe, & Sinatra, 2012), students in both the

experimental and the control group were interested in expository text, and as they had experience in listening to expository text, their ability to comprehend these kinds of texts increased. Whereas the control group, who also was interested in expository text, but did not have the opportunity to be exposed to the reading of expository text had no significant increase in comprehending expository text. The researchers concluded that “exposure to expository texts in the early grades helps prepare young children for the informational, expository reading required in later grades” (Kraemer et al., 2012, p. 165).

A study dealing with Head Start students also related to the potential impact of read alouds. The purpose of this investigation, “The Effects of Read Aloud Extension Activities on Vocabulary in Head Start Classrooms” (Silverman, Crandell, & Carlis, 2013; Swanson et al., 2011) was to study the effects of using extension activities on vocabulary development in the context of read alouds. The second purpose was to investigate students’ existing vocabulary aptitude compared to the percentage of growth gained from extension activities.

This study was conducted in the Northeastern United States at eight Head Start Centers. Each Center had from one to eight classes. At the centers, 26 Head Start classrooms were chosen for the study. The 264 Head Start children chosen from those centers were divided into three groups. The study took place four days a week for 12 weeks. More than 75 % of the students were ESL (English as second language), and less than one-half attended full day kindergarten. All three groups were given pretests and posttests. For the first group, the teacher defined and repeated target words, asked analytic questions regarding those words, and encouraged students to use gestures to help remember meanings. In the second group, the teacher read to and presented students with

pictures of target words in different contexts. The third group was the control group, in which the teacher was given no instruction in regards to how to conduct read alouds.

In the first two groups, teachers read 28 books, and targeted 48 words. Each book was read twice per week. Researchers provided pre-scripted lesson plans for each book. The books were segmented into three themes with eight books in each category, four narratives and four informational. They also reviewed the same words, had drawing and writing activities, and used hands-on activities, which incorporated those words.

When tested, the students in the control group improved 5 %, students with the read alouds plus pictures and definitions intervention improved 11 %, and students using the extended activities improved 16 % (Silverman et al., 2013).

The results were similar to Coyne's research (2007) in that the students who already had significant vocabularies gained the most knowledge from the interventions, whereas the students with the lowest vocabularies benefitted the least.

Conclusions

This study investigated the benefits of incidental reading instruction during the context of teacher read alouds for primary students. This researcher was interested in whether reading to students for 30 minutes per day, five days per week, while incidentally teaching various reading skills including comprehension skills, metacognition, and vocabulary, would impact Spring Terra Nova Reading Scores. There was considerable research investigating the possible, tangible benefits of using read alouds to teach reading comprehension and vocabulary. The majority of research in this study indicated that in order for read alouds to have the most effective academic impact on students, there needs to be explicit, carefully planned lessons. Most studies indicated

that books used for reading aloud need to be carefully selected for student appeal, and appropriately leveled, so that useful, but more challenging vocabulary can be explicitly taught in the context of the story.

It was also thought that high interest read alouds benefit comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. There were various methods presented as effective ways to teach comprehension and vocabulary. Interactive read alouds, shared reading, and think alouds were investigated as possible ways to boost comprehension and vocabulary. Dialogic reading was presented as a method of teacher guided reading that uses scaffolding to guide the student so that reading comprehension gradually becomes an independent activity. The common thread in all of these activities was that these activities were implemented in the context of reading aloud to children in order to increase comprehension, vocabulary, or both.

Dialogic reading, interactive read alouds, shared reading, and think alouds in the context of reading high interest books to children are all possible topics for continued investigation into the mystery of what might help students in their journey to lifelong reading. It's indicated that explicit, planned vocabulary teaching in the context of a high interest read aloud, accompanied by extension activities, improves reading comprehension.

Chapter Summary

This study investigated the benefits of incidental reading instruction during the context of teacher read alouds for primary students. This researcher was interested in whether reading to students for 30 minutes per day, five days per week, while

incidentally teaching various reading skills including comprehension skills, metacognition, and vocabulary, would impact Spring Terra Nova Reading Scores.

In this chapter there was discussion of various methods of conducting read alouds for children. The concepts revolved around using read alouds to improve comprehension, to increase vocabulary, and to motivate students to want to read. The majority of the studies involved how to address the inequities in children's aptitudes for vocabulary, and discussed effective teaching methods to increase vocabulary strength through the use of read alouds.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether reading to students, 30 minutes a day, for the primary purpose of enjoying a book together and a secondary purpose of developing incidental reading skills, could result in a positive academic effect in reading test scores for students. If this strategy showed an improvement in reading test scores, then reading aloud in the second grade classroom for the primary purpose of enjoying reading together may be warranted for not only traditional reasons, but for academic reasons. This could reassure teachers that the conventional “read aloud” time is justifiable time spent in the classroom, despite the many demands on students’ and teacher’s time. The impetus for this study was a children’s literature course that the researcher was taking that prompted her to commit to read 30 minutes per day, five days a week to her students. The information from this undertaking provided the material needed to create a comparison study of students read to for 30 minutes per day, five days per week and the students not read to for 30 minutes per day, five days per week.

Sample

This research study used two-second grade classrooms in a mid-west private school. One classroom of 17 students was used as the control group. The other classroom was the experimental group with a class size of 16. This was a causal comparative research study in which standardized testing was conducted and reading data was used from the NCE (Normal Curve Equivalent) scores of the Terra Nova Standardized Test. A one-tail t-test was used to compare the second grade experimental

group and the second grade control group's reading scores. Reading Composite Scores were compared between the two classes. Also, reading test scores of males from the experimental group were compared to male scores from the control group. Furthermore, female reading test scores from the experimental group were compared to female scores from the control group.

Methodology

This was a quantitative study to compare two second grade classes wherein the control class continued to conduct read alouds as usual, but the experimental class read aloud for at least 30 minutes a day for 5 days a week from September through May. The purpose was to investigate if reading to students for five days a week, for 30 minutes per day, could significantly impact Terra Nova Reading scores.

The students were read a wide variety of material including, fiction, nonfiction, poetry, picture books, Caldecott and Newbery Books, wordless picture books, and chapter books. Some books were at the children's reading level to spark interest in reading more books in a particular series; others were written at several grade levels above the students. Some of the books students brought to share with the class. Some books were in units, such as a hero unit, where many historical figures were introduced by reading picture books or chapter books to the class and discussing them, or the tall tales and folktale unit, where many fables, folktales, Greek mythology, and tall tales were read aloud and discussed. There were animal units, science units, and author units.

The goal each day was to spend 30 minutes as a class enjoying, discussing, and reacting together to various texts that were read, and to incidentally, teach reading skills

and vocabulary as opportunities presented themselves. These incidental times of teaching focused mainly on comprehension skills, vocabulary, and metacognition.

Books were chosen by topic. The majority of the time the teacher had particular books to present to the class, but there was room for flexibility if a student brought a book in or if they had found a book in the classroom that they wanted read aloud. At times a poem was read, along with a fiction and a nonfiction book. Sometimes there were chapter books that the students were eager to listen to each day so more than one chapter would be read. There were also books ordered, so that when they arrived there was excitement to see what would be read next.

Before reading, the children were encouraged to read the title and the author, look over the cover, and make guesses about what plot of the book might be. If applicable, the artwork was discussed and compared to other illustrator's artwork. At times, there were also discussions on what materials the illustrator used to get the effect that he wanted. As the story was read, students enjoyed making guesses about what was coming next, which increased involvement in the story.

When expository texts were presented to the class, the teacher used the opportunity to teach about the purpose of headings and bold print in these types of books. The students would guess what kinds of things could be learned in such a book, and would be challenged to look at the headings to see if they could figure out where they might find the information they wanted. These kinds of books were frequently requested. The students were interested in sharing what they knew and learning more about nature, such as insects, animals, ocean creatures, and space.

In contrast to focusing on artwork and a simple plot line, when reading Richard Peck's *A Year Down Yonder* (Peck, 2002), there was much discussion and explanation about what that time of history was like and many words were introduced that were from an era that was unfamiliar to this group of children. There were Venn Diagrams drawn to compare past to present, there was lots of laughter when different jokes were played on various characters in the story, and there was a time of deep realization when the students realized that the main character was not who they originally thought she was. During a turning point in the story the children began raising their hands to share that "At the beginning we thought Grandma Dowdel was really mean and didn't care about anyone, but she really did. She just didn't show it." Then the children cited evidence throughout the book to back up their claims. This kind of interaction revealed that the students were deeply, emotionally engaged. They practiced syntheses without knowing the term. The character became real to them and they had analyzed the character of the story without knowing what analyze meant.

There was also an author study. David Weisner's book, *The Three Pigs*, was introduced, among many other wordless picture books, which created 30 minutes of discussion per book, as the children made observations and came to conclusions about the stories that were presented. The discussion was guided, but the students were intensely engaged as they examined the illustrations and created storylines based on what they discovered.

Finally, many values were discussed as the children were immersed in a unit on Heroes and another unit on Folktales. As the students became involved with various topics, there was emotional ingress to these students. The students made connections and

voluntarily shared those connections with the class. Several days after the Hero Unit had been introduced and there had been several books read on the topic, the teacher's 13 year old nephew, who had passed away from cancer, was brought up by one of the students who stated, "Your nephew was a hero, wasn't he."

During read alouds, vocabulary was discussed when students asked the meaning of a word, when the teacher was aware that the vocabulary was above the students, or when students appeared confused or lost. The teacher stopped and took time to explain. Sometimes a brief explanation was given and the teacher went on without checking for understanding from her students.

There were not only discussions surrounding the content of the texts, but also modeling and teaching regarding metacognitive processes. Students were taught to be aware of what their minds were doing while they read, in order to be sure they were thinking about what they were reading and aware when they were distracted. Students were also taught to ask themselves what they just read to be sure they were still connecting with the text. Additionally, students were taught that good readers are aware when their minds have wandered and give themselves permission to re-read missed portions of the text that they missed. The teacher modeled all of these processes through think alouds and discussions during the read alouds. Thinking aloud is a process where a teacher thinks aloud about what she is thinking when she is reading. It is done to help a child become more aware of what goes on in the mind as one reads.

During other parts of the day students were encouraged to share their thoughts about books they were reading and to read excerpts from their books with other students in their reading group or with the class. Students were also allowed to take books home

that had been read in class, which was also an important component in order to communicate the accessibility of all the books in the classroom to students and to foster the sharing of those experiences with parents and siblings. “The Book Whisperer,” (D. Miller, 2009) was the inspiration for the atmosphere that was encouraged in the classroom.

Data Analysis

A quantitative analysis was conducted using scores from the students’ spring standardize test scores for comparison. A one-tail t-test was used to analyze the data, using the Mean Scale Score (MSS) as the data to determine comparison between the two samples. The Reading Composite score was used as the comparison between the two samples. The two student groups were also divided by gender. The males from the control sample group were compared with the males from the experimental sample group and female sample groups for each class were compared also, using the reading composite scores.

Chapter Summary

The researcher investigated the impact of read alouds by a class of second grade students for 30 minutes a day, five days a week to a group of second graders who were not read aloud to. The purpose was to investigate the impact that enjoying read alouds together would have on student test scores

Chapter 4

Results

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether reading to students, 30 minutes a day, for the foundational purpose of enjoying a book together and a secondary purpose of employing incidental reading skills, could result in a positive academic effect on reading test scores. If this strategy showed an improvement in test scores, then reading aloud in the second grade classroom for the primary purpose of enjoying reading together may be rationalized for not only traditional reasons, but for academic reasons. This could reassure teachers that the conventional read aloud is justifiable time spent in the classroom.

Hypotheses Testing Results

The first null hypothesis for this study was that second grade students who are read to for 30 minutes a day will have less than or equal to the same reading scores as those students who are not read aloud to for 30 minutes a day.

The first alternative hypothesis for this study was that second grade students that are read to for 30 minutes a day will have higher test scores on their standardized tests than those who are not read to for 30 minutes a day.

A one-tail t-test found a t value of .996 while t critical of 1.70 was needed at the .05 significance level.

Since the t-statistic fell within the non-rejection area of the single tail t-test, null hypothesis one is accepted (See Appendix A). This means that for this particular sample, the null was accepted and the conclusion was that there is no statistical difference

between the class being read aloud to and the control class. However, the .996 reveals that there was an upward trend, and that there is a 74% chance that reading to the students 30 minutes a day, five days a week made a difference.

The second null hypothesis for this study is that second grade male students who are read to for 30 minutes a day will have less than or equal to the same reading scores as those male students who are not read aloud to for 30 minutes a day.

The second alternative hypothesis for this study was that second grade male students that are read to for 30 minutes a day will have higher test scores on their standardized tests than those primary male students who are not read to for 30 minutes a day.

Since a t test value of .829 was found where t critical of 1.86 was needed, the t-statistic fell within the non-rejection area of the single tail t-test, and the null hypothesis two was accepted (See Appendix B). This means that for this particular sample, the null was accepted and the conclusion is that there is no statistical difference between the males in the class being read aloud to and the males in the control class. However, again, even though this research result could not be considered significant 95% of the time there was an upward trend that showed a possibility of there being a significant difference 78.5% of the time.

The third null hypothesis for this study was that second grade female students who are read to for 30 minutes a day will have less than or equal to the same reading scores as those female students who are not read aloud to for 30 minutes a day.

The third alternative hypothesis for this study was that second grade female students that are read to for 30 minutes a day, five days a week will have higher test

scores on their standardized tests than those second grade female students who are not read to for 30 minutes a day.

Since a t-test value of .694 one tail was found when a t critical of 1.72 was needed, thus the t-statistic fell within the non-rejection area of the single tail t-test, and null hypothesis three was accepted (See Appendix C). This means that for this particular sample, null hypothesis three was accepted and the conclusion is that there is no statistical difference between the females in the class being read aloud to and the control class. However, once again, even though there is not a 95% chance that the results were significant, there is an upward trend towards significance that indicates that there is a 75% chance that the null can be rejected and there was a significant difference between those students read to for 30 minutes per day five days per week and those not read to 30 minutes per day.

Chapter Summary

The one-tail t-test score for all three categories of the control group compared to the experimental group revealed that the researcher accepted the three null hypotheses. The test scores did not reveal that reading to students, 30 minutes a day, for the foundational purpose of enjoying a book together and a secondary purpose of employing incidental reading skills, could result in a positive academic effect in test scores. However, even though the differences were not significant, they did show an upward trend in the anticipated direction.

Chapter 5

Discussions, Limitations, and Conclusions

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether reading aloud to students, 30 minutes a day, five days a week, for the foundational purpose of enjoying a book together and a secondary purpose of employing incidental reading skills, could result in a positive academic effect on reading test scores. If this strategy showed an improvement in test scores, then reading aloud in the second grade classroom for the primary purpose of enjoying reading together may be rationalized for not only traditional reasons, but for academic reasons. This could reassure teachers that the conventional read aloud is justifiable time spent in the classroom.

Discussion of Results

The first null hypothesis analyzed was that second grade students who are read to for 30 minutes a day will have less than or equal to the same reading scores as those students who are not read to for 30 minutes a day. The results showed that there was no significant difference between the students that were read aloud to 30 minutes a day and those who were not, although there was an upward trend in all categories toward significance. Thus the researcher accepted the null. However, there was ample research in the literature review chapter suggesting that using read alouds; not only for pleasure but also for explicitly teaching comprehension skills and new vocabulary can be significantly effective.

Qualitative Results

There were several qualitative results from reading to students 30 minutes everyday. One of the qualitative results of reading each day was that students eagerly looked forward to coming to school. References from read alouds and enthusiasm spilled over into other parts of the day. Students made connections from stories read together to other stories or to their own lives. There was an eagerness and excitement amongst the students about the next story to be read, or the next chapter and there were many days when discussions were meaningful and laughter was deep. Parents also began commenting about how their children came into the class at the beginning of the year with neutral or negative feelings about reading, but that something had changed during the year and now their children were eager to read. One particular parent, said she appreciated whatever the researcher was doing, because instead of going through the motions of “practicing her reading” every night, her daughter was now devouring books and sharing what she was reading with her parents. This same student had begun reading a challenging book on Greek mythology and took many opportunities to share with her reading group what she was reading.

Limitations of this study

Although there is a long standing tradition of reading aloud to children in the classroom setting, this study did not show any significant statistical difference between the classroom that made it a priority to read aloud 30 minutes a day, and the control group. However, it did show an upward trend on the Terra Nova reading test scores in the experimental group. The control group was not expected to reduce the amount of read alouds performed and there was not an objective method for measuring how much the

control group was read to every day. It would be a difficult task to find teachers who would be willing to completely discontinue reading aloud to their students in order to conduct a more accurate study. If it could be known that the control group had a tradition of never conducting read alouds then the results might have revealed a greater significance.

Another limitation was the small sample size of 16 students in one classroom and 17 in the other. If this study could have been conducted on a much larger scale, using the same criteria, perhaps the significance would be greater. Also, if the classes could have been tracked over a period of several years with the same group getting read alouds while the other didn't, perhaps it would have revealed a greater significance.

Another limitation was the way the results were measured. Most of the studies that conducted pretests and posttests for the impact of read alouds were very limited in their scope. For example, researchers conducted pretests using targeted words that the students would encounter in the text. They explicitly taught the target words in the context of read alouds, and then conducted posttests on those same words. While it is understandable, that scores showed significant results due to explicit teaching of specific, explicitly taught words, it does not indicate long-term impact. A standardized test such as the Terra Nova, tests a broad range of reading skills and researchers do not know what words will be on the test. The students are not explicitly taught the words on the test because those words are not known ahead of time. In a metaphorical way, comparing the results from a study where words are explicitly taught and tested on to results from a study where there is no knowledge of the words on the posttest ahead of time it is like comparing apples to oranges.

For the classroom teacher to find books that contain important vocabulary or to find important vocabulary contained in a quality book, presents a challenge. One needs to determine what words are important for second graders to know. Until recently, there was not a standard list of vocabulary words that every child should know for each grade. Beck was the first to publish a book that categorized words that children need to know, into Tier 1 words (that everyone will encounter and learn), Tier 2 words (that students need to learn but will not hear in normal conversation, and Tier 3 words (that are scientific and specialized in nature, such as “obsidian” or habitat”). There are many important words children need to learn and to know which of those words are the most important for a second grader to know is at best, a subjective judgment.

This researcher also wondered if in teaching vocabulary and comprehension in the context of read alouds could potentially dampen the enthusiasm that children bring to the activity. In the research, there did not appear to be a focus on building a love for reading. It would be worthwhile to add a pre and posttest interest survey to see if student’s enthusiasm for reading increased or decreased as a result of using read alouds to teach explicit skills.

Implications for Future Research

The current study, with the primary focus on reading for enjoyment, resulted in observations of children who developed an enthusiasm for books and reading. As a consequence, these students read during their free time, and shared what they learned from books they were reading with their classmates and parents.

Future study could investigate the impact of teaching reading aloud to students for the purpose of enjoying a book together. This study could result in more books read by

students than they would have read by if they were not read to. A secondary purpose of the study could be to investigate the impact of reading comprehension skills and vocabulary using read alouds. These students could be compared to students who are read to for the purpose of explicitly teaching reading comprehension skills and vocabulary and a secondary purpose of enjoying a book together. The study would entail giving the students an interest survey before and after the intervention. The interest survey would be used to evaluate students' interest levels whether enjoying stories together as a class or being read aloud to with the purpose of explicitly teaching reading skills and vocabulary words. The null hypothesis would be, Students read to for the purpose of enjoying a book together, displayed less than or equal interest than students who were read aloud to for the purpose of explicitly teaching reading skills and vocabulary.

Elley's New Zealand research would be an interesting study to duplicate in this country, at this time. His research was one of the few that measured the effects of reading aloud without intervention, and then again, with embedding simple explanations of key words. He analyzed and gave values to each word, based on frequency of exposure, pictorial cues, and quality of verbal context clues. He also included three month delayed posttest data, which showed permanent, significant gains. His research revealed significant, contrasting results from the other researchers which could be a result of his careful consideration of which words to test on based on his three criteria of frequency of exposure, pictorial cues, and quality of verbal context clues.

Elley stated that three words per child per story was a positive effect for incidental vocabulary acquisition. One could argue that reading the story three times in one week

was a deliberate teaching of vocabulary instead of incidental. However, if the story was fun for the students, it would be natural to enjoy a book three times in a week. Elley's study is interesting because he was deliberate in finding stories that had target words repeated whereas researchers in other studies (Coyne et al., 2007) deliberately removed repeated target words as in *The Three Little Pigs* by James Marshall. If repetition, context, emotional connection and discussion are what can help retain vocabulary, then choosing fun books with repeated target words is wise. What was encouraging regarding Elley's study was the permanency of the acquisition.

In Elley's study the high-risk students gained more word knowledge than the low risk students which was opposite of the other researchers. Perhaps the book Elley chose was a book that the children strongly connected with. In perhaps a similar way, when the teacher in this present study was reading *George Washington Carver*, and discussed the definition of "legume" in the context of the story, one of the students some time later brought up the word in the context of another discussion. The students had emotionally engaged with this story as they came to understand the injustices inflicted on the black population of that time period. Another interesting study would be to study the effects that emotions may have on the acquisition of vocabulary.

It also would be advantageous to conduct a study with a larger sample size, which could result in greater reading score growth. It would be interesting to use a control group where there were no read alouds. In this proposed study, the amount the control group was read to would be a known variable, which could impact this study's findings. It would also be advantageous to conduct a study on the amount of time students read

outside of class based on the effect of being read to in class, and the long-term effect on test scores.

Chapter Summary

This study, examined the impact that reading aloud to second graders for 30 minutes per day five days a week could have on the reading scores of the Spring Terra Nova Tests. Many stories were read to students in this study. New words were introduced and discussed, and metacognition was a regular part of each week's discussions. However, the researcher for this study did not plan explicit lessons along with the read alouds. The disadvantage of this method was that there could be no pretest or posttest for specific concepts or specific vocabulary to measure student progress. The researcher wanted to determine if long-term effects would be significant as revealed on the reading portion of the Terra Nova Test. In contrast, researchers such as Santoro, Baker, Coyne, Muncy, and Elley had pretests. All but Ricketts and Elley had specific agendas for teaching specific words and concepts, and then posttests to measure student progress for those specific items. When compared to this study, which used standardized testing, the results are an inequitable comparison. Their research tested for a small number of words in a short-term study; this study was testing for effects in a long-term study for overarching effects. Perhaps an eight-month study might not be long enough to test for long-term effects. However, one result has been consistent throughout the research. The result of most of the researchers suggests that explicitly planned read alouds can have a significant impact on student development and comprehension skills. The commonality in all of the literature presented is that they all were using the impact of read alouds to teach reading comprehension skills or for vocabulary growth. Most of the

researchers used read alouds to explicitly teach concepts. Baker was the exception. He used read alouds to teach explicit concepts but then tested for general results.

A few, like Ricketts and Elley used read alouds to incidentally teach vocabulary, but then test on specific words that were found in the stories. This researcher also wanted to use read alouds to incidentally teach vocabulary, as well as reading skills. The data seemed to indicate that there was minimal quantitative benefit when compared to the other class, but since the other class's read aloud practices were an unknown, the results of this research are inconclusive. It would be beneficial for a future study to compare two classes where the read aloud routines of the control class were known.

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Appendices

Appendix A

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances

Appendix A**Table 1**

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances

COLUMN31 READ COMPOSITE

	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	72.4375	66.88235294
Variance	181.3291667	326.9852941
Observations	16	17
Pooled Variance	256.5065228	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	31	
t Stat	0.99580393	
P (T<=t) one-tail	0.163527631	
t Critical one-tail	1.695518742	
P (T<=t) two-tail	0.327055262	
t Critical two-tail	2.039513438	

Appendix B

T-Test: Two Sample Assuming Equal Variance

Appendix B**Table 2**

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances

COL 3 BOYS COMPOSITE

	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	67.4	59.2
Variance	107.3	381.7
Observations	5	5
Pooled Variance	244.5	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	8	
t Stat	0.829171612	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.215525248	
t Critical one-tail	1.859548033	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.431050496	
t Critical two-tail	2.306004133	

Appendix C

T-Test-Two Sample Assuming Equal Variance

Appendix C**Table 3**

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances

COL 3 GIRLS COMPOSITE

	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	74.72727273	70.08333333
Variance	210.6181818	298.8106061
Observations	11	12
Pooled Variance	256.8142136	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	21	
t Stat	0.694224702	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.247575179	
t Critical one-tail	1.720742871	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.495150357	
t Critical two-tail	2.079613837	