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ABSTRACT

A study examined a reading strategy--story retelling--to determine whether it would enhance comprehension, vocabulary, and develop a sense of competency in students who lacked reading strategies. Subjects of the study were 10 learning disabled children, ages 12-14. The study was conducted over an 8-week period. Two samples were created using random procedures to establish control and experimental samples. A pretest and a posttest were administered. Results indicated no significant mean difference in performance between the samples on these reading achievement tests. Findings revealed that the control group performed better in the four reading achievement tests at the outset of the study and maintained this at the end, and the experimental group improved their score, but not significantly, on the word comprehension test. (Contains nine tables of data, eight references, three appendixes, and related research.) (Author/CR)

# STORY-RETELLING EFFECTS

BY
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ABSTRACT

This was a study of ten learning disabled children ages tweleve to fourteen, who lacked reading strategies. One reading strategy that was used in this study was story-retelling to determine whether it would enhance comprehension, vocabulary, and develop a sense of competency. A Pre and Post test were administered to all ten students. There was no significant mean difference in performance between the samples on these reading achievement tests. However, they appeared to develop a sense of self-worth, and to gain more confidence in their ability to re-tell a story in front of their peers and teachers.

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Story-retelling is the oral presentation of a traditional, literary, or personal experience story. It is not the presentation of a memorized script, but it is a story told in a natural manner. Storytelling offers natural opportunities for children to grow as language users. (Jackie Peck, 1989)

In addition, active participation in literary experiences enhances the development of comprehension, oral language, and a sense of story structure. (Blank, Sheldon 1971, Bower , 1976).

Brown's (1975) research indicated that children's story comprehension is facilitated when they are actively involved in the reconstruction of a story. Brown defines reconstruction as the children's thinking about the individual story events and arranging pictures of the story in sequential order. The child mentally reconstructs the events themselves and arranges pictures. Children build an internal representation of the story.

Story-retelling offers two distinct learning situations for students. For example, the teacher as the storyteller, the students develop skills of effective and critical listening skills. The other one would be the student as the storyteller. When students are the storytellers there are many opportunities for the development of oral expression. Oral language is a strong factor in the development of literacy. The storytelling process provides a meaningful purpose for oral language.

Preparing and telling stories help develop poise in the student, and a well told story builds the self-esteem of the teller.

As students listen to each other tell stories, they experience storytelling from the perspective of both teller and listener. Peck (1989) also said that listening to a variety of tellers, students learn to discriminate and evaluate storytelling styles, story genres, and the strengths and weaknesses of both. Effective listeners play an important role in the storytelling process by providing necessary feedback for the teller.

Children who hear stories develop a sense of story. They are assimilating the language and structure of stories which enable them to read more complex stories with greater understanding (Moss and Stott, 1986).

Mandler and Johnson (1977), Rumelhart (1975), Stein and Glenn (1979), and Thorndyke (1977) described story structures and grammars. According to these investigators, well-formed stories have structures that include a setting (time, place, and characters), a theme (a beginning event that causes the main character to react and form a goal or face a problem), plot episodes (events in which the main character attempts to attain the goal or solve the problem, and a resolution (solution of the problem).

Children who are not aware of story structure tell fractured stories with various elements missing, unexplained, or out of sequential order. (Bower, 1976).

In order to generate a story effectively, a child must first conceptualize a story schema including the characters, actions, events, and plans. Then, the child must systemically produce organized sentences within a coherent text so that a listener will be able to comprehend the story line.

Story-retelling can be utilized and applied to any classroom setting or learning environment. The reading skill enhances specific areas of oral communication and personal awareness. It has proven to be effective with normal and learning disabled children. Based on teacher observations, it would appear that children develop a sense of competency, and mastery in storytelling. Also, it appears to build and enhance comprehension, vocabulary, and most important, a child's character and self-worth.

HYPOTHESIS

Learning disabled children experience many academic and social problems. They exhibit a low level of competency and lack a lot of crucial reading and communication skills. These children need support emotionally in order to build up their confidence and pride. Teachers need to find a reading tool that can be utilized effectively and won't pose any threat to their self-esteem. One reading tool that won't be effective

with this population is Story-Retelling. It was hypothesized that story-retelling would not be effective in improving comprehension and vocabulary skills of a learning sample.

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PROCEDURES

The study was conducted in an eight week time span. A Pre and Post test was administered in the beginning and at the end of the experiment with all ten students in one class grouping . The name of the Reading test was the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised.

Two samples were created using random procedures to establish control and experimental samples. The experimental sample received one hour of daily sustained silent reading and the story-retelling activities which followed. The experimental sample orally presented their stories in front of the teacher and classmates. The control sample had the opportunity to read for one hour, but they did not participate in the story-retelling activity. The control sample listened as the experimental sample gave their presentations. After eight weeks, the teacher retested the students to detect if there were any differences in comprehension and vocabulary scores as a result of using the story-retelling strategy.

The Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests-Revised is a comprehensive battery of tests measuring several important aspects of reading ability. It contains six tests of reading

achievement. The examiner used four of these tests on the control and experimental groups.

A brief description of each test is indicated below. The first test was Word Identification. It required the student to identify isolated words that appeared in large type in the test book. The term "identification" implied that the student may respond correctly to a stimulus word even though he or she had no previous experience with the word.

The second test was Word Attack. This test required the student to read either nonsense words (letter combinations that are not actual words) or words with a very low frequency of occurence in the English language. The test measured the student's ability to apply phonic and structural analysis skills in order to pronounce words with which he or she may be unfamiliar.

The third test was Word Comprehension. The Word Comprehension test was comprised of three subtests - Antonyms, Synonyms, and Analogies. Each subtest measured the student's reading vocabulary at different levels of cognitive processing.

The fourth test was Passage Comprehension. This test measured the student's ability to study a short passage, (usually two to three sentences long) and identify a key word missing from the passage. The task was a modified cloze procedure requiring the student to exercise a variety of comprehension and vocabulary skills.

## RESULTS

Table I shows the results of the Pre-test for Word Identification. It can been seen that the Control group

TABLE I
(WORD IDENTIFICATION) Pre-test

| SAMPLES | MEAN | STD DEVIATION | t |
|---|---|---|---|
| EXPERIMENTAL | 467.600 | 17.0529 | -2.21666 |
| CONTROL | 469.400 | 13.8852 | |

scored higher than the Experimental group in this area. This difference was approaching significance at the .05 level.

Table II shows the results of the Pre-test for Word Attack. Again, the control group scored higher in this

TABLE II
(WORD ATTACK) Pre-test

| SAMPLES | MEAN | STD DEVIATION | t |
|---|---|---|---|
| EXPERIMENTAL | 483.00 | 14.92 | -2.08 |
| CONTROL | 493.00 | 8.07 | |

category. The difference, however, was not significant.

Table III shows the results of the Pre-test for Word Comprehension. The results indicated that the control

TABLE III
(WORD COMPREHENSION) Pre-test

| SAMPLES | MEAN | STD DEVIATION | t |
|---|---|---|---|
| EXPERIMENTAL | 475.800 | 10.66 | -2.92 |
| CONTROL | 490.400 | 3.36 | |

group again scored higher in this area. The differnce was approaching significance.

Table IV displays the results of the Passage Comprehension test. The Control group scored higher than

TABLE IV
(PASSAGE COMPREHENSION) Pre-test

| SAMPLES | MEAN | STD DEVIATION | t |
|---|---|---|---|
| EXPERIMENTAL | 478.000 | 13.02 | -2.11 |
| CONTROL | 491.400 | 5.59 | |

the Experimental group by .3 points, but this difference was not significant.

The Post-Test scores, as shown in Table V indicates

TABLE V
(WORD IDENTIFICATION) Post-test

| SAMPLES | MEAN | STD DEVIATION | t |
|---|---|---|---|
| EXPERIMENTAL | 436.600 | 28.73 | -1.64 |
| CONTROL | 487.800 | 16.22 | |

that the control sample did slightly better than the experimental group in the Word Identification test, maintaining the difference previously seen on the Pre-test. Each sample lost score points at post-testing over pre-test results.

Table VI indicates the control group also performed

TABLE VI
(WORD ATTACK) Post-test

| SAMPLES | MEAN | STD DEVIATION | t |
|---|---|---|---|
| EXPERIMENTAL | 468.200 | 37.16 | -1.76 |
| CONTROL | 498.40 | 9.18 | |

better than the experimental group in Word Attack. There was no significant difference.

Table VII indicates a slight increase in the experimental sample's (word comprehension) results. The

TABLE VII
(WORD COMPREHENSION) Post-test

| SAMPLES | MEAN | STD DEVIATION | t |
|---|---|---|---|
| EXPERIMENTAL | 480.80 | 13.61 | -1.94 |
| CONTROL | 493.20 | 4.27 | |

difference was almost significant at the .05 level but the mean gain from pre to post test favored the experimental sample.

Table VIII shows the control group scoring slightly

TABLE VIII
(PASSAGE COMPREHENSION) Post-Test

| SAMPLES | MEAN | STD DEVIATION | t |
|---|---|---|---|
| EXPERIMENTAL | 485.000 | 15.59 | -1.32 |
| CONTROL | 494.800 | 5.63 | |

higher than the experimental group in passage comprehension. There was no significant difference.

Table IX indicated the Mean gain from Pre to Post tests in word comprehension. Again, there was no significant difference.

TABLE IX
(MEAN GAIN) FROM PRE TO POST TEST
WORD COMPREHENSION

| SAMPLES | MEAN | STD DEVIATION |
|---|---|---|
| EXPERIMENTAL | 5.0 points | 3.67 |
| CONTROL | 2.8 points | 1.64 |

CONCLUSIONS:

The control group performed better than the experimental group in the four reading achievement tests at the outset of this study and maintained this at the end of this experiment. Although, the experimental group did improve their score in the word comprehension test, there was still no significant difference.

It should be noted that the experiment only lasted eight weeks. If the study were extended, the improvement in scores for the experimental sample noted in both Word and Passage comprehension might have been greater and, possibly significantly different from the control sample.

The study was limited to only ten learning disabled students, which made it difficult to demonstrate results which were statistically significant. A wider sample might prove better and more reliable results.

# RELATED RESEARCH

Story re-telling has been recognized by educators as an important reading element. It promotes the development of language, literacy, and comprehension. These are essential skills that are significantly important and critical in reading.

Storytelling is an active reading procedure that educators utilize in order to build more interest in learning to read. In addition, children's comprehension is facilitated when they are actively involved in the reconstruction of a story. They mentally reconstruct events and arrange pictures to build an internal representation of the story. They develop a sense of competency and mastery when they are able to re-tell a story they have read.

These underlying factors are important to acknowledge and confront because reading should not be a chore, but an enjoyable learning experience.

Lesley Morrow, 1985, researched story re-telling and the impact it has on reading. Her investigations on story re-telling includes factors that improve comprehension, sense of story structure, and language.

Morrow's research was comprised of two studies. The first study was to determine if retelling a story after listening to it, without frequent practice or guidance in retelling, would improve a child's comprehension and recall of that story. After listening to the reading of a story, children in the experimental group retold the story individually. The control group were asked to draw a picture about the story. The study had two underlying questions to answer. 1. Does the process of retelling enhance a child's ability to answer structural questions about a story? 2. Does the process of retelling enhance a child's ability to answer literal, inferential, and critical questions about a story? Study one employed four Kindergarten classrooms with an average class size of fifteen children. The ability levels of the children ranged from below average to above average in all rooms.

The results of study one indicated some improvement for the experimental group over the control, but only for the total comprehension score was the difference significant. Morrow, hypothesized that frequent practice in retelling might have a noticeable effect on comprehension. This was apparent during the retelling, because many children did not know how to approach the retelling task. They had difficulty beginning stories, leaving out many details, and did not end stories. Also, sequencing was a problem. The children needed not only frequent retelling, but also guidance to help them learn how to retell.

Morrow extended her investigation and continued with a second study. This study dealt with the effects on comprehension, and other related skills, after excessive practice and guidance in retelling. The children were being guided in their retellings by an adult who focused on the structural framework of a story.

Morrow's hypothesis, frequent retellings with guidance might have a larger effect, was confirmed and proven to be correct. The experimental group's, comprehension scores escalated in the second study because of constant practice in retelling and guidance from an adult. The guidance and practice offered during the frequent retellings emphasized structural elements of a story and sequential ordering. The results indicated improvement in both structural and traditional questions on the comprehension test.

Mandler, and Johnson (1977), Rumelhart(1975), Stein & Glenn (1970), and Thorndyke (1977) described story structures and grammars. According to these investigators, well-formed stories have structures that include the following.

1. Setting- Time, place, and characters.
2. Theme- A beginning event that causes the main character to react and form a goalor face a problem.
3. Plot episodes- They are events in which the main character attempts to attain the goal or solce the problem.
4. Resolution-The attainment of the goal or solution of the problem and the ending.

These researchers believed that children who are not aware of story structure tell fractured stories with various elements missing, unexplained, or out of sequential order. Encouraging children to develop and use their schema for story retelling should help them learn what to expect in a story and how to decide what is important to remember.

Jackie Peck, 1989, a professional storyteller,described the benefits of the storytelling workshop that she utilized in classrooms. First, she introduced and led a ninety minute student workshop that discussed story mapping and the significance of this structure. She led the class through story mapping.She reminded the students to think first of the setting and characters of their stories. She asked them to think of the beginning event, the problem, and attempts to solve it, and the solution. Having this structure in mind enabled students to tell their stories naturally without sounding memorized or dry. These were third grade students who were involved in this technique.

A memorized story can lack life in the telling, and tends to be like a recitation which is not vivid, or compelling.

She defines storytelling as an oral interpretation of a traditional, literary, or personal experience story. It is not the presentation of a memorized script, but a story told in a natural manner.

Peck believes that storytelling in the classroom promotes expressive language development. For example, speech and written composition. It also promotes receptive language development, reading and listening comprehension.

Storytelling offers two distinct learning situations for students. For instance, the teacher as the storyteller, the student develop skills of effective and critical listening. The students as the tellers develop oral and written expresssion. When students are the storytellers they develop oral expression. Oral language is a strong factor in the development of literacy. Preparing and telling stories help develop poise in the student storyteller, and a well-told story builds self-esteem.

Danielle Ripich and Penny Griffith, 1988. The purpose of this study was to compare narrative abilities of learning disabled and non-learning disabled students across four story difficulty levels and across three vocabulary age groups.

This study used a structure based model and studied narratives across three levels of analysis.

All subjects were Caucasian children enrolled in middle class suburban schools. Twenty-four students, five girls and nineteen boys were identified as having learning disabilities. Twenty seven children, nine girls and eighteen boys were in a group not having any learning disabilities. Three sub-groups were formed according to vocabulary age 7.0- to 8.0, 9.0 to 10,

11 to 12.5.

Each child was seen individually for 3-15 minute sessions. During each session, the child was presented with one of three stories and told to listen to, or listen to and look at the story, and to remember as much as possible in order to tell the story to another child.

The stories were classified to be simple in nature, but stories labeled easy, medium, and hard according to the number of events of the story.

In the fourth story children were shown a five picture sequence and they were asked to make up a story. Eight adults were also asked to generate the story based on the pictures. These stories were the same as a prototype for the childrens' versions. Following each story presentation a child listener entered the room, and the subject retold the story. The self generated fourth story was also listened to with the results audiotaped and transcribed in their entirety.

The present study measured the ability of learning disabled children ages seven to tweleve to retell stories that were read to them, and generate a novel story to accompany a picture sequence. In general, results indicated that children with learning disabilities did as well as non-disabled children, on the amount of information they recalled, and the amount they

included in their self-generated stories.

These results may have been due to the fact that the stories were shorten and less complex in nature. The study showed that reading a story was more difficult than retelling the story aloud. The study also indicated that there were fewer omissions as age increased which suggests that memory may improve with age.

Results seems to indicate that students with learning disabilities were able to reconstruct stories as well as non-disabled students. However, there were significant differences that were shown between groups within each level.

Froma Roth and Nancy Spekman, 1986. The purpose of their study was to examine oral narratives of learning disabled students in three different age ranges in comparison to normally achieving, same age peers.

The term narration can refer to story telling within a fairy or folk tales or familiar or original stories, retelling of movie sequences, or the like and relating of personal experiences.

The study consisted of forty eight learning disabled students, and forty-eight normally achieving students with sixteen each in a group for the ages eight to nine, ten to eleven, and tweleve and thirteen. All students had normal I.Q.'s. The learning disabled students selected were taken from private schools for the learning disabled, and the normally achieving students were selected from area public and private schools.

The testing procedure consisted of each child placed individually in a quiet room opposite the experimenter. The experimenter introduced the task and asked the child to make up a story that might not be real. There was no time limit imposed.

Several aspects of the spontaneously generated stories were of interest including story length, number of episodes, episode integrity, structure story category usage, intereposidic relations, the use of story markers, and the need for prompts.

The results of the survey showed that learning disabilities students produced fewer propositions than the Normally achieving students. ALso, it was indicated their stories were shorter and contained fewer units than those of the normally achieving group. There were differences in the number of episodes in a story of both groups, but there were differences in episode integrity and episode structure between the two groups. In these cases the learning disabled students produced a smaller proportion of complete episodes compared to their counterparts.

The learning disabled students also showed a tendency to omit middle parts of a story. The L.D. students produced more propositions containing initiating event information which might indicate the L.D. children spends less time given story context information and a greater time relating those events that cause the protagonist to act.

The findings of the study suggest that there are quantity of information, differences between the L.D. and N.A. students

at the level of spontaneous story production. The L.D. students produced stories shorter in length. It seems that production of stories may differ according to content and length even if there were significant differences in the recall of the information presented.

Donna Merritt and Betty Liles, 1989. The present investigation describes some aspects of language use in non-impaired and language-disordered children as they genenerate originial stories and retell stories. The intent of this study was to determine if either story generation or story retelling proved to be more clinically useful in assessing the language of older children.

In order to generate a story effectively, a child must first conceptualize a story schema including characters, actions, events, and plans. Then the child must produce organized sentences so the listener may comprehend the story line.

Story generation and story retelling procedures were conducted with two groups of twenty children. Each group attended the same public school. All students were judged to be average in visual and audio sensitivity by their classroom teachers.

The generated stories were elicited by presenting story stems which included a protagonist and setting in order to make images of an adventure involving a series of goal based events.

After a demonstration each stem was presented and each child was asked to think what event would occur next and then relate

a story.

The two narratives selected for retelling were appropriate elementary collections of tales entitled "Buried ALive and Shipwrecked". The stories were re-written and shortened to shorten the presentation time. The children then practiced their story telling in front of video camera, and apply it as a self critique. Later they related their story to an examiner.

The pattern of similarities between story generation, and story re-telling for both groups indicated both tasks activated cognitive recognition or story schema. The finding in both groups produced more complete episodes in story retelling than story generation. This indicates the children were able to use their cognitive skills when retelling stories.

The results of this survey supports the conclusion that story generation and story retelling are both effective measures of narrative ability, and both systems activate a cognitive organiztion consistent with story schema. An addtional conclusion indicated story retelling is more clinically useful with older children for an assessment of story grammar ability than story generation. The retold stories were longer and contained more grammar components, and more complete episodes for both non-impaired and impaired students.

As a follow-up to story retelling, comprehension testing can be completed. This method promotes the use of comprehension measures which is turn leads to more detailed goal setting and language management.

The survey seems to indicate the usefulness of both tasks which would enhance the language usage of both groups which indicating the story retelling tasks to be more adaptable to clinical analysis.

In conclusion, story-retelling is an enrichment skill that has proven to be very effective and helpful in learning to read. It has many advantages and positive factors that accelerate the reading process. The proceeding research, and investigations indicate that story-retelling is a valuable reading tool that works, and it needs to be encouraged and utilized more often. Also, parents should be encouraged to read to their children, and follow the same reading guidelines that are taught at school.

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APPENDICES

# APPENDIX A

RAW SCORES "W" SCORES
EXPERIMENTAL SAMPLE

| | PRE | POST |
|---|---|---|
| STUDENT I | | |
| WORD IDENTIFICATION | 450 | 454 |
| WORD ATTACK | 468 | 461 |
| WORD COMPREHENSION | 475 | 480 |
| PASSAGE COMPREHENSION | 467 | 474 |
| STUDENT II | | |
| WORD IDENTIFICATION | 450 | 425 |
| WORD ATTACK | 469 | 407 |
| WORD COMPREHENSION | 459 | 458 |
| PASSAGE COMPREHENSION | 467 | 464 |
| STUDENT III | | |
| WORD IDENTIFICATION | 488 | 503 |
| WORD ATTACK | 501 | 501 |
| WORD COMPREHENSION | 486 | 492 |
| PASSAGE COMPREHENSION | 494 | 500 |
| STUDENT IV | | |
| WORD IDENTIFICATION | 478 | 460 |
| WORD ATTACK | 495 | 489 |
| WORD COMPREHENSION | 484 | 490 |
| PASSAGE COMPREHENSION | 490 | 489 |

CONTINUED EXPERIMENTAL SAMPLES

| | PRE | POST |
|---|---|---|
| STUDENT V | | |
| WORD IDENTIFICATION | 472 | 476 |
| WORD ATTACK | 481 | 483 |
| WORD COMPREHENSION | 475 | 484 |
| PASSAGE COMPREHENSION | 472 | 498 |

APPENDIX B

CONTROL SAMPLE RAW SCORES

| | PRE | POST |
|---|---|---|
| STUDENT VI | | |
| WORD IDENTIFICATION | 494 | 482 |
| WORD ATTACK | 495 | 502 |
| WORD COMPREHENSION | 485 | 487 |
| PASSAGE COMPREHENSION | 489 | 490 |
| STUDENT VII | | |
| WORD IDENTIFICATION | 505 | 513 |
| WORD ATTACK | 512 | 506 |
| WORD COMPREHENSION | 491 | 493 |
| PASSAGE COMPREHENSION | 487 | 503 |
| STUDENT VIII | | |
| WORD IDENTIFICATION | 472 | 472 |
| WORD ATTACK | 493 | 485 |
| WORD COMPREHENSION | 492 | 493 |
| PASSAGE COMPREHENSION | 500 | 496 |

CONTINUED CONTROL SAMPLES RAW SCORES

| STUDENT IX | PRE | POST |
|---|---|---|
| WORD IDENTIFICATION | 498 | 494 |
| WORD ATTACK | 493 | 506 |
| WORD COMPREHENSION | 494 | 499 |
| PASSAGE COMPREHENSION | 494 | 496 |
| STUDENT X | | |
| WORD IDENTIFICATION | 478 | 478 |
| WORD ATTACK | 501 | 493 |
| WORD COMPREHENSION | 490 | 494 |
| PASSAGE COMPREHENSION | 487 | 489 |

APPENDIX C

WORKSHEET FOR WOODCOCK READING MASTERY TEST REVISED

| | R. S. | W | R | DIFF | COL | %ILE | SS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Letter Identification AE GE | | | | | | | |
| Word Identification AE GE | | | | | | | |
| Word Attack AE GE | | | | | | | |
| Word Comprehension AE GE | | | | | | | |
| Passage Comprehension AE GE | | | | | | | |
| Basic Skills Cluster AE GE | | | | | | | |
| Reading Comprehension Cluster AE GE | | | | | | | |
| Total Reading AE GE | | | | | | | |

Basic Skills

Word I.D. "W"
\+ Word Attack "W"
Total

2) Total

Reading Comprehension

Word Comprehension "W"
\+ Passage Comprehension "W"
Total

2) Total