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The Effects of an Oral Narrative Intervention on
Kindergarten Students' Story Retelling

By

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Abstract

Oral narrative skills contribute to children's academic and social success and are, therefore, important skills to develop. This research examined the effects of a six week oral narrative intervention on kindergarten students' ability to retell picture books. The intervention integrated dialogic shared reading, story grammar interventions, and heterogeneous paired practice and included both whole-class and small-group instruction. Research participants represented a diversity of cultures, overall language skills, retelling ability, and reading ability. After participating in intervention, students included more story grammar elements and more appropriate character introductions in their retellings. The intervention had no measurable effect on participants' references to characters' emotional states in their retellings. The findings and recommendations of this study could be used to further refine and improve oral narrative interventions.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

At the start of this action research project, I was in my eleventh year of teaching five year old kindergarten and had also spent the last two years as a member of a district-wide team that was revising the literacy curriculum to align to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts (National Governors Association for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). My desire was to use my action research as an opportunity to investigate best practice on a literacy topic that was new to the kindergarten literacy curriculum, which I hoped would allow me to provide quality instruction to my own students as well as guidance to grade-level colleagues as they also worked to implement our new curriculum.

One of the most significant shifts that occurred as a result of aligning the district curriculum to the CCSS was that the kindergarten benchmarks now reflected more equity between foundational skills necessary to learn how to read and early development of comprehension skills that would allow students to use reading as a tool for learning. Students were expected to have greater knowledge of key ideas and details as well as the craft and structure of both literature and informational texts. Assessments were modified to reflect the greater emphasis on comprehension. Whereas teachers were previously only required to administer the decoding and comprehension questions portion of an informal reading inventory, retelling was now also a required component of the assessment. Of all the new topics in the kindergarten curriculum, I felt most unsure of the best approach to teach retelling narrative text. While I had taught this skill to individual students in an intervention setting, I had not used a systematic approach to instruct an entire class of students on retelling. I began my research for this project, therefore, with the broad topic of retelling narrative text.

Connection to Standards

As indicated previously, the CCSS were a major impetus behind my selection of an action research topic, and thus, the two are closely related. This research will focus on the expectation that students know about the key ideas and details of texts, which is part of the K-5 Reading Standards for Literature. More specifically, kindergarten students should be able to independently ask and answer questions about key details in a text. With prompting and support, kindergarten students should also be able to identify characters, settings, and major events in a story. Finally, kindergarten students should be able to retell familiar stories, including key details, with prompting and support.

Connection to Research

Given that retelling is part of most informal reading inventories and also explicitly stated as an expectation in the CCSS not only for kindergarten but many of the elementary grades, I was surprised as I began my investigation by the seeming lack of research in this area. What I soon discovered, however, is that more recent studies have moved away from using the term “retelling” in favor of “oral narrative skills.” This shift in vocabulary is significant in that it represents an ideological shift about what aspects of students’ oral stories should be examined. Whereas “retelling” tends to focus on the recollection of story grammar elements, “oral narrative skills” encompasses a wider range of content, the overall structure of the narrative, and the linguistic devices used by the student. Thus, I revised the focus of my action research to be oral narratives rather than retelling.

Since oral narrative skills are not stated as explicitly in the CCSS as retelling, I felt it was important to first examine how oral narrative skills contribute to students’ literacy development.

Two separate studies found correlations between students' oral narrative abilities and their reading comprehension (Cain, 2003; Griffin, Hemphill, Camp, & Wolf, 2004) while one of these studies also found correlations between students' oral narrative abilities and their later writing abilities (Griffin et al., 2004). Reese, Suggate, Long and Schaughency (2010) extended this research and found specific oral narrative skills that uniquely predicted students' later reading fluency. Across all of these studies, researchers analyzed many aspects of students' narratives—their ability to organize narratives, recognize cause and effect relationships, and use specific terms to relate events within narratives—not just students' inclusion of story grammar elements. It was these discrete skills that were found to correlate with later literacy abilities.

Recognizing the importance of oral narrative skills to overall literacy development, I then began to research how best to provide instruction in oral narratives. Based on what oral narrative abilities were correlated with later reading and writing skills, I felt intervention should develop students' understanding of evaluative devices, story grammar elements, and temporal and causal terms. When students use evaluative devices in their oral narratives, they make cause and effect connections and also explicitly state characters' internal thoughts and feelings. Story grammar elements are the traditional components of narratives such as characters, setting, problem, goal, attempts, and resolution. Finally, temporal terms are specific words used to indicate the sequence of events in a narrative such as *first*, *then*, *later*, while causal terms are used to indicate cause and effect relationships such as *because*, *so*, *as a result*.

Interestingly, although research has demonstrated that narrative quality—students' use of evaluative devices and temporal and causal terms—is more significantly correlated with other literacy skills than narrative content, the majority of oral narrative interventions still focus on story grammar elements. The few interventions that sought to develop students' use of

evaluative devices mostly employed dialogic shared reading methods. In dialogic shared reading, an adult reads aloud a high quality children's picture book with an emphasis on discussing the text with students, modeling language, providing feedback on students' attempts, and encouraging students to become the teller of the story. Such instruction increased students' references to characters' internal states, use of dialog, and facility with decontextualized language (Lever & Sénéchal, 2011; Zevenbergen, Whitehurst, & Zevenbergen, 2003). Only one study could be found in which students received explicit instruction in temporal and causal terms. Since this study was still in progress, it is not possible to determine its' effects (Dawkins & O'Neill, 2011). Although many interventions focused on story grammar elements, most had similar instructional components: explicitly teaching story grammar elements, the use of some kind of icon to represent each element, modeling of oral narratives by an adult, and student practice producing oral narratives. As would be expected, these interventions increased the overall length of students' narratives and the quantity of story grammar elements they included (Davies, Shanks, & Davies, 2004; Hayward & Schneider, 2000; Spencer & Slocum, 2010; Westerveld & Gillon, 2008). Finally, in some unique research by McGregor (2000), the role of peer modeling in developing students' oral narrative skills was investigated. Students who listened to the narratives of a more capable peer began to use new story grammar elements and demonstrated more rapid growth in their use of all story grammar elements (McGregor, 2000).

Research Question and Context

While the different types of interventions utilized in these studies contributed to improvement in different aspects of students' oral narrative abilities, all interventions shared the common traits of being administered in small groups led by a professional other than the

classroom teacher. Since such support is not always available, I was curious how the strategies used in these studies could be modified so a single classroom teacher could implement the instruction and whether or not this modified instruction would still result in improved oral narrative skills. Thus, this research attempted to answer the question “How does an oral narrative intervention affect the narrative structure and linguistic quality of kindergarten students’ story retelling?”

The research to answer this question was conducted at a suburban elementary school serving approximately 536 students. All 26 students in my 5 year old kindergarten classroom had the opportunity to receive instruction in oral narrative skills during the research. The class was comprised of 10 males and 16 females and was somewhat reflective of the diversity of the wider school population; 14 participants were Caucasian, 8 were Latino, and 4 were Asian. Two students were identified as having a speech and language disability by Individualized Educational Plans, and two students were identified as English Language Learners. For feasibility purposes, assessment data was collected on just ten of the students. Since I wanted to examine the effects of the intervention on a wide range of students, I considered students’ gender, culture, language skills, reading ability, and ability to retell stories prior to intervention when selecting assessment participants. Thus, the assessment population was reflective of the diversity of the entire class.

The study lasted for a total of eight weeks. The first week of the study was dedicated to pre-testing while the last week was dedicated to post-testing. The middle six weeks of the study were used for instruction. During week two, immediately after pre-testing, I explicitly taught the story grammar elements. For each of the remaining five weeks of instruction, students received instruction in two, 30 minute whole class sessions and one, 15 minute small group session.

Whole class sessions utilized instructional strategies from dialogic shared reading to familiarize students with the picture book being used for the week while small group sessions followed a gradual release of responsibility model and involved modeling, scaffolding, and practice in retelling the story presented in the picture book. The research began in late March, 2012 and ended in May 2012.

Conclusion

Oral narratives are just emerging as an area of interest in literacy research. The need for such research is heightened by the expectations of the new CCSS, which state that students across all primary grades should be able to recognize key ideas and details in literature as well as retell stories. Early research has shown correlations between students' oral narrative skills and their later reading comprehension, reading fluency, and writing abilities. Additional studies have investigated dialogic shared reading, story grammar interventions, and paired practice as techniques for enhancing students' oral narrative skills; however, particular interventions tended to target a narrow range of oral narrative skills. These studies were also limited in their applicability to most classrooms since the interventions were conducted in small groups by an outside interventionist. My goal, in this research, was to incorporate the most successful aspects of these prior interventions into a more comprehensive oral narrative intervention that could be administered to an entire class by the regular classroom teacher. In the whole-group, dialogic shared reading methods were used to enhance students' understanding of cause and effect relationships, characters' internal states, and story grammar elements. Small-group instruction used the gradual release of responsibility approach to increase students' ability to include story grammar elements and utilize pronouns, temporal terms, and casual terms when retelling stories.

Thus, I aimed to both replicate and extend the findings of previous research on the effectiveness of oral narrative interventions. Based on the positive results obtained in these studies, I hypothesized my more comprehensive oral narrative intervention would improve both the narrative structure and linguistic quality of students' oral narratives as measured through a story retelling task. Chapter 2 will review, in greater detail, the aforementioned previous research on oral narrative skills and oral narrative interventions that served as the foundation for my intervention and research.

Chapter 2

Introduction

Oral narrative skills refer to children's abilities to use oral language to convey information in a narrative format. These skills are the foundation for children to be able to relate their personal experiences, create fictional oral narratives, and retell stories and, thus, have implications for both children's academic and social development. The production of any type of oral narrative is a complex task because children must simultaneously develop the overall narrative, or macrostructure, while also conveying and relating ideas at the phrase and sentence level, also known as microstructure. In regards to macrostructure, children must understand cause and effect relationships as well as the story grammar structure of narratives. In regards to microstructure, children must develop proficiency with decontextualized language, temporal terms, and causal terms. Research has just begun to examine effective interventions for improving young children's oral narrative skills.

The goal of this study is to determine the effectiveness of instruction aimed at improving the oral narrative skills of kindergarten students. The literature review that follows sets the foundation for this research by establishing the importance of oral narrative skills to overall literacy development and summarizing the results of previous interventions for oral narrative skills. The first subsection, "Oral Narratives and Literacy," presents three studies that examined correlations between students' oral narrative abilities and their performance in reading and writing. The next two subsections review interventions aimed at developing aspects of macrostructure in students' narratives. "Interventions for Oral Narrative Evaluative Skills," the second subsection, summarizes three studies that investigated modeling and dialogic shared reading as intervention strategies while the third subsection, "Interventions for Oral Narrative

Structure,” reviews four studies that examined the effectiveness of story grammar interventions. The fourth subsection, “Interventions for Literate Language,” introduces the only intervention that addresses microstructure by explicitly teaching literate language. Finally, the fifth subsection, “Role of Peers in Oral Narrative Development,” examines how peers influence one another’s narratives during paired tasks as well as the effectiveness of peer modeling as an intervention strategy.

Oral Narratives and Literacy

While oral language has long been part of reading research, it has undergone a transformation of sorts. Historically, researchers viewed oral language simply as a variable to be controlled. More recent research, however, has examined the unique role of various aspects of oral language in contributing to children’s reading ability. One domain of oral language that is just beginning to receive attention as a potentially important component of literacy is that of oral narratives. In the following studies, researchers investigated correlations between children’s oral narrative skills and their abilities in reading or writing. These studies’ results support the notion that oral narrative skills are an important aspect of overall literacy development.

Research by Griffin et al. (2004) examined whether preschool children’s oral discourse skills are predictive of their later reading and writing ability. More specifically, the researchers looked specific correlations between children’s ability to produce fictional oral narratives and informative picture descriptions at age 5 and their ability to read and comprehend both narrative and expository text and write narratives at age 8. Griffin et al. (2004) hypothesized that preschool oral discourse skills would be predictive of later literacy abilities even when controlling for other aspects of language facility. The researchers further hypothesized that

particular oral discourse skills would uniquely correlate with either reading or writing but not with both literary domains (Griffin et al., 2004).

This research involved 32 Caucasian children with typical language development. The population included an equal number of males and females. At the first data collection point, children ranged in age from 5 years, 2 months to 5 years, 7 months; by the second data collection point, the same children ranged from 8 years, 2 months to 8 years, 9 months. 54% of participants were from middle class families and 46% were from working class families, but all students were considered to be receiving at least adequate support for literacy development in both their home and school environments (Griffin et al., 2004).

As previously alluded to, the procedures for this study involved testing the same population of children at two different ages: 5 years old and 8 years old. All assessments were conducted individually in children's homes with a parent present. The three tasks administered at age 5 assessed children's oral discourse skills. In the first, a play narration task, the researcher gave the child a set of toy animals, provided a story prompt, and encouraged the child to tell the remainder of the story. Children's play narratives were analyzed for number of clauses, textual evaluation, performed evaluation, character's states, and plot structure and elaboration. Textual evaluation examined children's use of adjectives and other words that "qualified the information reported" such as "great, big" or "a little bit" (Griffin et al., 2004, p. 128). Performed evaluation examined children's use of repetition, stress, or onomatopoeia to convey their feelings. Character's states refers to when children explicitly mention a "physical, cognitive, or emotional state" such as "thirsty," "thought," or "mad" (Griffin et al., 2004, p. 128). Finally, plot structure and elaboration refers to children's ability to use a narrative text structure. In the second task, a picture description task, children were shown a detailed picture and asked to describe it so that

another child who was unfamiliar with the picture would be able to draw it. Children's picture descriptions were analyzed for number of clauses, organization, and use of vague terms such as "that thing" (Griffin et al., 2004, p.129). The third and final measure, the Index of Productive Syntax (IPSyn), provided insight into each child's overall expressive language competence (Griffin et al., 2004).

When these same children were 8 years old, they participated in two tasks to assess their reading and writing ability. The first, the Gray Oral Reading Test (GORT-4) assessed children's ability to orally read and comprehend both narrative and expository text. In the second task, children were provided with three pictures depicting characters and a sequence of events that would be typical of a narrative and were then asked to write a story about the pictures. Children's narratives were rated holistically using a scale developed by Griffin et al. (2004). Papers could score from 1 to 4 with 4 being the highest score. The researchers developed their scale by having a population of 8 year olds not involved in the study complete the same, previously described writing task, selecting anchor papers for each level from this pool, and then writing criteria to describe each level based on the anchor papers (Griffin et al., 2004).

When Griffin et al. (2004) analyzed the collected data, they discovered several correlations of significance. First, children's use of textual evaluations and mention of characters' states in play narratives at age 5 was correlated with their reading comprehension at age 8. Children's ability to elaborate on picture descriptions at age 5 was also significantly correlated to their later reading comprehension. These correlations existed even when comparing children with identical expressive language skills and when comparing children who produced narratives or pictures descriptions of the same length. Different oral discourse skills

were found to correlate to later writing. Children's ability, at age 5, to use narrative text structure in the play narrative task and a typical expository structure in the picture description task were both correlated with narrative writing performance at age 8. Elaboration on the play narrative at age 5 was also positively correlated with later writing performance. Again, these variations in writing outcomes were evident even in children with identical expressive language skills. Both of Griffin et al.'s (2004) hypotheses—that early oral discourse skills are predictive of later reading and writing abilities and that particular oral discourse skills uniquely correlate with reading or writing—were supported by the results that were obtained.

The results of Griffin et al.'s (2004) research may have implications for how oral language development is conceived. The finding that particular sub-skills within oral discourse had a significant correlation to reading comprehension but not to writing or vice versa suggests that oral discourse supports later literacy in a differentiated manner. The ability to present robust information, use evaluative or qualifying terms, and verbally express characters' states was correlated to later reading comprehension while the ability to elaborate and organize both stories and information around text structures was correlated to later narrative writing. The fact that none of these correlations were affected by children's overall expressive language skills also indicates that such oral discourse skills "...may develop somewhat separately from other components of oral language" (Griffin et al., 2004, p. 144).

Griffin et al.'s (2004) research found significant correlations between particular oral narrative skills and students' reading and writing abilities approximately three years later. This study did have a significant limitation in that it did not control for other aspects of students' reading ability. Thus, Reese et al. (2010) conducted a similar study that controlled for students' decoding ability as well as vocabulary and also investigated the role of age in correlations

between oral narrative skill and reading ability. These researchers' goal was to determine if correlations exist between the quality of students' narratives and their concurrent reading skill or between the quality of students' narratives and their reading skill one year later. These correlations were investigated through two separate studies: one focusing on students who had received one year of formal reading instruction and the second focusing on students who had received two years of formal reading instruction. Reese et al. (2010) hypothesized that a correlation would be found between students' oral narratives and their reading fluency, which was the predominant measure of reading ability in this study.

The participants in both studies conducted by Reese et al. (2010) were students enrolled in two state primary schools in New Zealand. The schools serviced mostly families of middle to high socio-economic status. The first study involved 61 students with a mean age of 6 years, 1 month. The population was almost equally divided by gender, with 31 of the participants being male. In regards to ethnicity, about 85% of the students were New Zealand European while the remainder of participants were New Zealand Māori or of Asian descent. The second study involved 39 students with a mean age of 7 years, 23 of whom were male. Again, the population was predominantly New Zealand European (90% of the students) while the remaining 10% was New Zealand Māori (Reese et al., 2010).

Reese et al. (2010) used similar methods of data collection for both studies. At the start of each study, students were given both an oral narrative and a reading assessment. One year after the start of the study, students' reading skills were re-assessed using the same measure. To assess students' oral narrative skills, researchers read each student a picture book and asked him or her to recall as much information as possible from the text. First, narratives were scored for story memory: the child's ability to accurately recall the text. This score was derived by

comparing the propositions in the student's narrative to a list of 60 propositional statements from the picture book. Propositions that were accurately recalled were then analyzed for two measures of narrative quality. The first measure, narrative orientations, reflected the student's use of "character introductions, temporal terms, and causal terms" (Reese et al., 2010, p. 634). The second measure, narrative evaluations, indicated that the student evaluated an object or a person, used adjectives or adverbs, related dialogue, or reflected on a character's internal state. Data about students' reading skill was obtained by administering two subtests of the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS): Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) and Oral Reading Fluency (ORF). The only exception is in the second study involving older students; NWF was not administered one year later because it was no longer considered a relevant assessment for students of that age. In both studies, the form of NWF and ORF was adjusted at each administration in order to be appropriate for the students' current age. The second study also involved one additional assessment; the researchers administered the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test IV (PPVT IV) six months after the initial assessments as a measure of receptive vocabulary (Reese et al., 2010).

In study one, which focused on students with an average of 1 year of reading instruction, Reese et al. (2010) discovered some interesting correlations amongst the variables under investigation. First, oral narrative had a significant correlation to early reading performance. Second, the narrative orientations measure was found to have the strongest correlation to reading. Once students' decoding ability, as measured by the NWF, was taken into account, however, students' proficiency with narrative orientations did not predict their reading performance one year later. Analysis of data obtained from study two, which focused on students with an average of 2 years of reading instruction, produced somewhat different results.

Oral narrative had a significant correlation to students' reading fluency on the ORF, and narrative orientations was once again the measure most strongly correlated with reading skill. Unlike the previous study, students' facility with narrative orientations uniquely predicted their current reading fluency as well as their reading fluency one year later even when vocabulary and decoding were controlled (Reese et al., 2010).

Based on these results, Reese et al. (2010) made several conclusions. First, the researchers emphasized that any analysis of children's oral narratives should include measures of both recall and narrative quality since narrative orientations, a measure of narrative quality, had the strongest correlation to other reading skills. Reese et al. (2010) caution, however, that orientations should not be viewed as more important than evaluations since the extent to which students use each could be affected by the assessment task itself. Based on the results of previous studies as well as this current research, Reese et al. (2010) also concluded that the extent to which oral narrative is correlated to reading is highly dependent upon children's age or reading level, with the strongest correlations existing during the preschool years and again after several years of formal reading instruction. Based on the result that oral narrative can uniquely predict children's later reading fluency after 2 to 3 years of reading instruction, Reese et al. (2010) also hypothesize that oral language becomes differentiated as children age, with vocabulary and oral narrative contributing uniquely to children's reading. This contrasts several previous models of oral language, such as that of Scarborough (as cited in Reese et al., 2010) which posit that oral language becomes more integrated as children age and gain facility in reading.

Both Griffin et al. (2004) and Reese et al. (2010) investigated correlations between students' oral narrative abilities and their skill in other literacy domains; however, Reese et al.'s

work was significant in that it controlled for students' decoding and vocabulary. This allowed Reese et al. (2010) to determine the unique contributions of oral narrative skills to concurrent and later reading fluency. One of the few other studies to investigate correlations between specific oral narrative skills and students' reading ability while controlling for decoding and vocabulary was conducted in Britain by Cain (2003). Cain's (2003) research examined the relationship between children's reading comprehension and their ability to produce structurally coherent and linguistically cohesive fictional oral narratives. It is important to understand that coherence refers to the overall organization of the oral narrative while cohesive refers to the use of specific words to relate ideas at the sentence level. Participants were divided into three groups for this study; thus, the independent variable was experimental condition: skilled comprehension group, same-age less skilled comprehension group, and comprehension-age match group. The dependent variables were story conventions (a measure of story elements), story event structure (a measure of coherence), and use of connectives (a measure of cohesiveness). Additionally, Cain (2003) investigated how the prompt used to elicit the fictional oral narrative affects coherence and cohesiveness.

Since group designation was the independent variable of this study, Cain (2003) used several measures to select participants and designate group assignments. Potential participants were first screened using a measure of sight vocabulary as a proxy for reading ability; students scoring either very high or very low were dismissed. Remaining students were further screened using the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability-Revised British Edition (NARA) (Neale as cited in Cain, 2003), which provides age-equivalent scores for both decoding and comprehension. Finally, to further confirm students' level of comprehension, several different NARA passages were used as a measure of listening comprehension. In the end, Cain's (2003) research involved

a total of 38 children from two different British schools serving “socially mixed” (p. 340) neighborhoods. The skilled comprehension group had 12 participants while the same-age less skilled comprehension group had 14 participants. Students in these two groups were 7 to 8 years old and were also matched on the basis of reading accuracy and sight vocabulary so that the only difference between the groups was comprehension ability. Students in the less-skilled comprehension group had comprehension age scores at least six months below their reading accuracy age scores. Finally, there were 12 students in the comprehension-age match group. Students in this group were chronologically 6 to 7 years old but exhibited approximately the same level of comprehension as the less-skilled comprehension group (Cain, 2003).

Procedures for this study were relatively simple. Each participant was asked to tell three original fictional narratives in response to three different types of prompts: topic, directed title, and picture sequence. For the topic prompt, students were told a simple title such as “The Farm” while in the directed title prompt, students were told a title that provided more plot information such as “How the pirates lost their treasure” (Cain, 2003, p. 342). For the picture sequence prompt, students were read a title and shown a set of six pictures depicting a complete story sequence (Cain, 2003).

Students’ narratives were then scored for three dependent variables: story conventions, story event structure, and use of connectives. For story conventions, a narrative could receive one point for each convention that was included: openings, establishing characters, establishing the scene, and endings. The story event structure was a holistic measure based on how the story was organized; students’ narratives could be classified as non-stories (no sequence of events), intermediate stories (temporally sequenced events), or complete stories (causally related events). Points were assigned to each classification with non-stories receiving one point, intermediate

stories receiving two points, and complete stories receiving three points. Similarly, connectives were also categorized into three groups: independent, temporal, or dependent. Students' use of connectives was reported out as a proportion of the number of occurrences of each connective type relative to the total number of clauses containing a connective.

Analysis of the data for all three dependent variables revealed some similarities across experimental conditions as well as some differences based on experimental condition. Data for the story conventions variable revealed no significant differences between students in any of the three groups. Results for the story event structure data indicated that students in the skilled comprehension group produced the most coherent narratives in response to all three prompt types. The narratives produced by students in the same-age less skilled comprehension group were significantly less coherent in response to topic prompts than either the directed title or picture sequence prompts. This trend was not observed in either of the other two groups. A similar significant difference was found for the use of connectives. Students in the same-age less skilled comprehension group used far fewer connectives in response to topic prompts than in response to the other prompt types whereas connective use was relatively stable across all prompt types for students in the other conditions (Cain, 2003).

Based on these results, Cain (2003) concluded correlations do exist between children's reading comprehension and their ability to produce structurally coherent and linguistically cohesive fictional oral narratives. Students with lower comprehension skills do not necessarily lack understanding of story elements as evidenced by the fact that students across all groups received similar scores on the story conventions variable; however, students with weak comprehension were less able to produce narratives with sophisticated, causally related events. Students with less comprehension skill also used fewer dependent connectives—those that show

causal links—in response to less supportive prompts. The fact that students in the comprehension-age match group outperformed students in the less-skilled comprehension group on both story event structure and use of connectives indicates that the ability to produce coherent and cohesive narratives is not a direct outcome of positive experiences with reading comprehension. Rather, “there may be a common basis for the underlying causes of poor reading comprehension and poor narrative production skills” (Cain, 2003, p. 349). Based on previous work by Trabasso and Nickels (as cited in Cain, 2003), the researcher hypothesizes that students’ “knowledge about story organization and goal-directed actions” (Cain, 2003, p. 349) may be this underlying factor.

Interventions for Oral Narrative Evaluative Skills

Research indicates students’ oral narrative skills are correlated to, and sometimes even predictive of, other literacy skills. While traditional measures of oral narrative skill often focused on narrative length or inclusion of story grammar elements, recent studies have shown the strongest correlations between measures of narrative quality and other reading skills. In particular, students’ abilities to use qualifying terms, report characters’ internal states, construct cohesive narratives, and use temporal and causal connectives were highly correlated with oral reading fluency or reading comprehension. Perhaps, as Reese et al. (2010) suggest, “...the basis of narrative skill is to understand actions and reactions, causes and consequences” (p. 642); a basis of understanding that may, as Cain (2003) suggests, also be integral to other literary skills. Given these findings and hypotheses, it seems as if any oral narrative intervention should develop students’ understanding of causal relationships and ability to effectively use the aforementioned evaluative skills in their own narratives. The three studies reviewed in this

section share these goals and examine modeling and dialogic shared reading as methods to increase students' use of evaluative devices in their oral narratives.

Some of the earliest research to focus specifically on evaluative components of children's oral narratives examined the influence of maternal modeling on children's use of evaluative devices. Harkins, Koch, and Michel (1994) hypothesized that children who hear their mothers tell a particular story would utilize more evaluative devices when they told the same story. The researchers further hypothesized this maternal influence would transfer to the children's telling of a novel, but similar, story. The independent variable for this study was students' experimental condition: simple imitation, simple transfer, complex transfer, imitation control, or transfer control. Children's narratives were analyzed for two dependent variables—number of clauses and frequency of evaluative use—to determine the effect of each condition on children's narrative skill (Harkins et al., 1994).

When considering subjects for this study, the researchers examined previous studies on narrative development. Prior research established that 5 year old children demonstrate much greater use of evaluative devices in their narratives than do younger children. Harkins et al. (1994) concluded that “the 4-to-6 year age period seems to represent an important phase in the child's acquisition of the evaluative aspects of narrative skill” (p. 249). As a result, the researchers selected 60 5 year old children, half of whom were female, as participants. Within gender, children were randomly assigned to one of the five conditions listed previously. 36 mothers of the children also participated in the study; all of the participating mothers were considered to be middle class (Harkins et al., 1994).

The procedures for this study were relatively simple with pre-testing and post-testing occurring only one week apart. During pre-testing, children from all conditions were asked to

look at a wordless picture book and tell their own story about the book to an unfamiliar listener. During the week, children in the imitation condition and the simple transfer condition listened twice to their mother tell a story about the same wordless text used in pre-testing. During post-testing, children in the imitation condition were asked to tell a story based on the same book used at pre-testing and by their mothers during the week while students in the simple transfer condition were asked to tell a story based on an unfamiliar wordless picture book featuring the same characters. In the complex transfer condition, children also listened to their mothers tell two stories: one based on the wordless picture book used at pre-testing and one based on an unfamiliar, but similar, text. During post-testing, children told a story based on the same wordless picture book used in the simple transfer condition. Finally, children in the imitation control and transfer control conditions did not participate in any story telling with their mothers during the week. At post-testing, children in the imitation control condition told a story based on the same wordless picture book used at pre-testing while children in the transfer control condition told a story based on an unfamiliar, but similar, text (Harkins et al., 1994).

Students' narratives were scored for two dependent variables: number of clauses and frequency of evaluative use. As the name suggests, number of clauses was calculated by counting the number of utterances that included a subject and a verb. The researchers also analyzed children's narratives for eight evaluative devices:

- a) reference to internal states of actors such as 'happy,' 'thinks,' 'wants'; b) reference to internal states of the story teller or listener such as 'does that make you sad?'; c) qualifying comments such as 'seems like,' 'almost'; d) quoted speech of an actor such as 'the dog says bow-wow'; e) reference to absent characters, events, or

objects such as ‘he was looking for the frog’; f) causal statements such as ‘because,’ ‘so that’; g) wh- questions; and h) direct questions.” (Harkins et al., 1994, p. 251)

The number of evaluatives in each narrative was totaled and was reported out as a percentage of the total number of clauses in that narrative (Harkins et al., 1994).

Comparisons of pre-test and post-test data across conditions were supportive of the researchers’ hypotheses. First, it is important to note there were no significant differences in the amount of clauses used or the amount of evaluative devices used when comparing the pre-test narratives of children across all conditions thus indicating the population of each condition was relatively similar at the start. Comparing children’s post-test narratives, however, children in the imitation and complex transfer conditions used significantly more clauses in their narratives than children who were in the imitation control and transfer control conditions, respectively. Again comparing children’s post-test narratives, children in the imitation and complex transfer conditions used significantly more evaluative devices in their narratives than children in the respective control conditions. Children in the simple transfer group, however, did not demonstrate significantly different use of evaluative devices than children in the transfer control group at post-testing (Harkins et al., 1994).

The results obtain by Harkins et al. (1994) indicate maternal story telling does influence children’s narrative ability both in regards to the length of their narratives and their use of evaluative devices. In order for children to transfer their use of evaluative devices to a similar but novel story, children had to listen to their mothers tell at least two different, but related, stories. Interestingly, when children’s data for evaluative devices was compared to maternal data for evaluative devices (as determined from audiotapes of the mother’s narratives), the overall frequency of evaluative use was similar between mother and child, but there were not necessarily

correlations between maternal use of specific types of evaluative devices and children's use of those same devices (Harkins et al., 1994).

This relatively basic study by Harkins et al. (1994) provided evidence that children's evaluative skills can be influenced by as few as two exposures to maternal modeling. The research is limited, however, in that it did not report out each evaluative skill individually and in that it used an assessment task that was highly aligned to the "instructional" task. The study also suggests only a vague direction for potential classroom instruction. These issues are addressed in research by Zevenbergen et al. (2003) who thought to try dialogic shared reading, a well documented strategy for expressive vocabulary development, as a method to improve the quality of students' oral narratives. Specifically, these researchers investigated what effects, if any, a dialogic shared-reading intervention would have on preschool students' inclusion of evaluative information in their oral narratives. Zevenbergen et al. (2003) hypothesized that students who participated in dialogic shared reading would provide more evaluative information in oral narratives than students who did not participate in such experiences. The independent variable in this study was students' oral narrative ability: pre-test versus post-test. Oral narrative ability was analyzed using two dependent variables: evaluative information and amount of content (Zevenbergen et al., 2003).

The students who participated in this research were part of a larger, more comprehensive study. The population for this research included 123 students with an average age of 52.67 months from four Head Start centers in Long Island, New York. The population was divided almost equally by gender with 53% of participants being male. The population was also diverse: 41% of participants were African American, 32% were Caucasian, and 27% were Latino. Of the 16 classrooms involved in the study, three were full-day programs while 13 were half-day

programs. Half of the classrooms (two full-day and six half-day) were randomly assigned to the experimental condition while the other half (one full-day and seven half-day) were randomly assigned to the control condition (Zevenbergen et al., 2003).

As mentioned previously, Zevenbergen et al. (2003) collected data using a pre- and post-test format over the course of one school year. Pre-testing was conducted during the months of September or October while post-testing was conducted during the months of May or June. Both pre- and post-tests utilized a version of the Renfrew Bus Story which was modified for American English (Glasgow & Cowley as cited in Zevenbergen et al., 2003). In this assessment, children are shown a series of 12 pictures while the administrator reads a story script. Children are then asked to retell the story with the pictures present. Students' narratives were analyzed for eight types of evaluative information:

1) reference to internal states of characters such as 'happy' or 'thinks,' 2) reference to internal states of the storyteller or listener, 3) qualifying comments such as 'seems like' or 'almost,' 4) use of dialog, 5) reference to absent characters, objects, or events, 6) causal statements such as 'because' or 'so that,' 7) 'wh-' questions, and 8) direct questions." (Zevenbergen et al., 2003, p. 6)

Students were given one point for each use of an evaluative device in their narrative. Students' narratives were also analyzed for amount of content according to the scoring manual that accompanies the assessment; two points were assigned to accurate recall of an information unit while 1 point was assigned for partial recall of an information unit. Finally, the Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (EOWPVT-R) (Gardner as cited in Zevenbergen et al., 2003), which was used to assess students' overall expressive language ability, was only administered once during either May or June.

The dialogic shared-reading intervention that was the focus of this study occurred over a 30 week period and involved both school and home components. Both teachers and parents received training in dialogic reading strategies through videotape and role playing with a trainer. In dialogic reading, adults utilize prompts to encourage children's use of language, scaffolding, and feedback to children on their language use. The ultimate goal of dialogic reading is to encourage children "...to become the teller of the story over time" (Zevenbergen et al., 2003, p. 4). The researchers selected 30 picture books—most of which were narratives—for use in the study and developed guides for each text to support adults in using dialogic reading. Zevenbergen et al. (2003) also placed "wh-" questions at specific places within each text and provided recall questions at the end of each book. Books were rotated amongst participating classrooms and were also sent home so that study participants were exposed to all 30 books at the rate of one text a week by the end of the 30 week intervention. Both teachers and parents were encouraged to read dialogically with participants at least three times every week. Classroom dialogic reading occurred in small groups of two to three students. The classrooms that were assigned to the control group continued to utilize the regular Head Start curriculum and instruction (Zevenbergen et al., 2003).

Zevenbergen et al. (2003) analyzed the data collected during this study in several different ways. First, the researchers examined what evaluative devices were present in students' narratives. Across both conditions, Zevenbergen et al. (2003) found only three of the eight potential evaluative devices were present in enough quantity to warrant further analysis: references to the internal states of characters, use of dialog, and causal statements. There were no significant differences between the experimental and control group's use of evaluative devices on the pre-test; however, on the post-test, the experimental group included significantly

more evaluative information than the control group even when controlling for overall expressive language ability. Specifically, students in the experimental condition made significantly more references to characters' internal states and utilized significantly more dialogue than students in the control group. There was not a significant difference between groups in students' use of causal statements. In regards to the amount of content included in students' narratives, Zevenbergen et al. (2003) found no significant difference between the experimental group and the control group on either the pre-test or post-test measure.

Based on these results, Zevenbergen et al. (2003) made several conclusions. The researchers found that relatively few of the potential evaluative devices were frequently present in students' narratives. One possible explanation for this outcome is that students' ability to use particular evaluative devices may develop over time; the preschool-aged students in this study may not have been mature enough to use some of the less-frequently observed evaluative devices. Zevenbergen et al. (2003) also suggest that the prompt or context utilized to elicit the narrative may affect the evaluative devices children use; in previous studies that utilized a different stimulus or a variety of stimuli with preschool children, different evaluative devices were observed. The researchers also concluded this dialogic shared-reading intervention had a positive effect on students' references to characters' internal states and use of dialogue in oral narratives regardless of students' overall expressive language ability. Students' increased use of evaluative devices was observed in a task that was different than the intervention task, which, Zevenbergen et al. (2003) emphasized, indicated students were generalizing their understanding of evaluative devices to novel settings and not simply copying exact verbalizations that adults had modeled. Overall, the researchers' hypothesis was supported; students who participated in a

dialogic shared reading intervention used more evaluative devices in their oral narratives than non-participants (Zevenbergen et al., 2003).

Zevenbergen et al. (2003) were the first researchers to investigate the potential of dialogic shared reading as a means of enhancing students' evaluative skills in oral narratives. A more recent study by Lever and Sénéchal (2011) aimed to both replicate and extend the research of Zevenbergen et al. (2003). Lever and Sénéchal (2011) investigated what effects, if any, a dialogic shared reading intervention would have on students' ability to retell stories and produce original fictional narratives. Both types of narratives were analyzed for four major categories of oral narrative skills. Based on the results of previous studies, the researchers hypothesized a dialogic reading intervention would improve kindergarten students' "...story structure, language complexity, cohesion, and [use of] decontextualized language..." (Lever & Sénéchal, 2011, p. 5). Since previous research indicated retelling tasks are easier for children than narrative production tasks, Lever and Sénéchal (2011) also hypothesized the effects of a dialogic reading intervention would be more apparent in students' retellings than in their original fictional narratives. The two independent variables compared in this study were, therefore, research condition: experimental versus control and narrative type: retelling versus original fictional narrative. Both independent variables were assessed using the same dependent variables of narrative structure, language complexity, context, and connectives (Lever & Sénéchal, 2011).

The population for Lever and Sénéchal's (2011) research were 40 kindergarten students from several schools in a large, Canadian city. The researchers selected schools that were identified as serving mostly low-income families; however, parental surveys revealed both a broad range of family incomes and parental education in the selected population. Although all study participants were considered "English-speaking," (Lever & Sénéchal, 2011, p. 5), 25% of

the children came from homes where another language was predominant. None of the children were receiving speech and language therapy. Groups of children from the same school were randomly assigned to either the experimental or control conditions. Each condition had about the same number of students and even proportions of boys to girls. The mean age of students in both groups differed by only one month: 5 years, 4 months as compared to 5 years, 3 months (Lever & Sénéchal, 2011).

Lever and Sénéchal (2011) collected data prior to beginning intervention and two weeks after the conclusion of the intervention. During both pre-testing and post-testing, students completed a retelling and a fictional narrative production task. Both tasks utilized materials from the Edmonton Narrative Norms Instrument (ENNI) (Schneider, Dubé, & Hayward as cited in Lever & Sénéchal, 2011) which includes four black and white wordless picture books. The four books are divided into two sets; each set has a common theme and characters but one story is short and presents only one story grammar episode while the other is long and presents three complete story grammar episodes. The ENNI is intended to be used as a measure of fictional narrative production in which students are shown the picture books and asked to create their own story to accompany the pictures; however, Lever and Sénéchal (2011) also created story scripts to accompany each of the books so the same materials could be used for the retelling task. In this task, students were read the story script and were then asked to retell the story with the support of the picture books. During pre-testing, students were also given the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test III (PPVT-III) (Dunn & Dunn as cited in Lever & Sénéchal, 2011) as a measure of receptive vocabulary, which then allowed the researchers to control for this variable in further analyses (Lever & Sénéchal, 2011).

Students' oral narratives from both the retelling and production contexts were analyzed for the same dependent variables. The first dependent variable, narrative structure, was measured by awarding students points for the inclusion of story grammar elements: "formal beginning statement, informal beginning statement, character, setting, initiating event, internal response, internal plan, outcome, reaction of the character, formal closing statement, and informal closing statement" (Lever & Sénéchal, 2011, p. 7). Since one of Lever and Sénéchal's (2011) goals was to replicate the work of Zevenbergen et al. (2003), who found that dialogic reading increased students' references to internal states, internal responses and internal plans were scored separately as well as being included in the overall narrative structure measure. The second dependent variable, language complexity, measured the quantity of words, different words, and utterances used by each student as well as the length of students' utterances. This data was calculated using software called the Child Language Analysis (CLAN). The third dependent variable, context, measured students' abilities to use decontextualized language. In mature oral narratives, characters, objects, and places are first introduced using a name or appropriate title. The speaker may then use an appropriate pronoun to refer to back to the character, object, or place. ENNI (Schneider et al. as cited in Lever & Sénéchal, 2011) protocol provides scoring for this aspect of narratives; for each mention of a character, students can receive a score of 1-3 points based on their word choice in relation to the word's position in the narrative. The final dependent variable, connectives, examined students' use of words to connect two independent clauses, use of words to connect dependent clauses, and use of temporal terms. Again, CLAN software was used to compile this data (Lever & Sénéchal, 2011).

The dialogic reading intervention itself lasted for eight weeks and was based on the *Read Together, Talk Together* dialogic reading kit (Pearson Learning Group as cited in Lever & Sénéchal, 2011). Of the kit's 20 books, the researchers selected eight books that contained all the focus story grammar elements. The books were modified by placing elaborative questions relating to narrative knowledge selected from the *Read Together, Talk Together* pamphlets on the appropriate pages of each text. Interventionists were trained in dialogic reading through watching a *Read Together, Talk Together* video as well as through role playing that focused on six instructional techniques: asking wh- questions, expanding, repeating, helping, praising and encouraging, and following students' interests. Intervention occurred twice a week with each session lasting for 20 minutes. One book was read dialogically at each session, so each of the eight selected books was read twice during the course of the entire intervention. Groups were comprised of one to four students, depending on whether all students were present on a given day (Lever & Sénéchal, 2011).

Through analyzing the data obtained for each dependent variable, Lever and Sénéchal (2011) identified how their dialogic reading intervention impacted students' oral narrative skills. For the first dependent variable, narrative structure, intervention students included significantly more story grammar elements in both their retellings and produced narratives than students in the control group even when controlling for pre-test scores. Similar to Zevenbergen et al.'s (2003) results, intervention students also included significantly more internal responses and internal plans than control students in both types of narratives. In order to test if the exceptionally high use of these two particular story grammar elements skewed overall outcomes, Lever and Sénéchal (2011) compared students' use of all other story grammar elements. Once internal responses and internal plans were removed from analysis, the difference in story grammar

elements between the intervention and control group was only significant for the production context. Data for the contextual knowledge variable also showed significant differences between the intervention and control groups in the production context but not the retelling context. Students who participated in dialogic reading used decontextualized language more effectively when producing their own fictional narratives than students who were in the control group, even after pre-test scores and receptive vocabulary were controlled. Data for the last two dependent variables—language complexity and connectives—showed no significant differences between the intervention and control group for either narrative type. This indicates students in both groups utilized approximately the same quantity and variety of language as well as the same connectives. Finally, Lever and Sénéchal (2011) compared all students' retelling skills to their fictional narrative production skills to determine if narrative type has any effect on the dependent variables. The only results of significance were that students included more story grammar elements and more internal states in the retelling narratives than in the production narratives (Lever & Sénéchal, 2011).

Lever and Sénéchal (2011) made several conclusions based on these results. Foremost, the researchers felt their results provide strong evidence that dialogic reading enhances young students' narrative structure, both in retellings and in fictional narratives, by making them more aware of story grammar elements such as internal plans and internal responses that may not be part of most young children's narrative schemas. Lever and Sénéchal (2011) offered two suggestions as to why dialogic reading influences students' understanding of story grammar. First, the picture book context provides multiple sources of story grammar input: the book's text, the book's illustrations, and the conversation about the book. Second, most of the elaborative questions placed in the books focused students' attention on specific events related to

story grammar elements. Lever and Sénéchal (2011) also concluded dialogic reading is an effective intervention for improving young students' use of decontextualized language. The researchers observed that interventionists were more likely to recast students' statements with ambiguous terms than other narrative skills. Lever and Sénéchal (2011) hypothesize this higher level of feedback may have contributed to students' increased use of decontextualized language. Dialogic reading did not, however, have an effect on language complexity and cohesion. The researchers suggest that kindergarten-age students may not have the cognitive capacity to focus on all four narrative skills concurrently. Finally, students across both conditions demonstrated more proficiency with retelling than with narrative production: a result that replicates findings of previous studies. Many researchers have suggested retelling is easier than narrative production because students can "borrow" from the text for their story. It could also be possible, as Lever and Sénéchal (2011) suggest, that each task relies on a different skill set with retelling being more of "comprehension task" and production being a "construction task" (Mandler as cited in Lever & Sénéchal, 2011, p. 19).

Interventions for Oral Narrative Structure

Research has shown the strongest correlations between narrative quality, often measured by students' use of evaluative devices, and their other reading and writing abilities. In designing an intervention to increase students' oral narrative skills, it seems prudent, therefore, to include instruction aimed at improving students' evaluative skills. Modeling and, to a greater extent, dialogic shared reading have been found to enhance three discrete evaluative skills: references to characters' internal states, inclusion of dialog, and use of decontextualized language. Facility with evaluative skills alone, however, is not sufficient for the production of a complete narrative.

Most listeners expect certain elements, typically referred to as story grammar elements, to be present in narratives; therefore, an intervention to improve students' oral narrative abilities should also address students' understanding of the underlying structure of narratives. Although story grammar approaches have long been used to enhance students' understanding of narrative structure for the purpose of improving reading comprehension, explicit instruction in story grammar elements has only recently been investigated as a means of enhancing students' oral narrative abilities. The four studies reviewed in this section are some of the few to examine how a story grammar intervention influenced students' narrative retelling, narrative generation, and oral narrative comprehension.

Perhaps the first study to utilize story grammar as an intervention for oral narrative skills was conducted by Hayward and Schneider (2000). These researchers investigated the effectiveness of explicitly teaching story grammar elements to preschool students with language impairments. Specifically, Hayward and Schneider (2000) wanted to determine if a story grammar intervention would result in improved oral narrative production as well as determine if listener status affects the narratives preschool students produce. The researchers did not state their hypothesis for either of these objectives. The independent variables for this study were the narrative intervention program: pre-test versus post-test and listener status: familiar versus unfamiliar. The dependent variables were story information units, which measured the content of students' narratives, and "level of episode" (Hayward & Schneider, 2000, p. 264), which measured the quality of students' narratives.

This study involved 13 children between the ages of 4 years, 8 months and 6 years, 4 months. Eight of these children were male and five were female. All 13 children had moderate or severe expressive language impairments, and six of the children were also diagnosed with

either mild or moderate speech delays. Throughout the study, all of the participants were concurrently attending the Language and Learning for Kids (LINKS) program: an intensive language intervention conducted in small groups and led by a speech and language pathologist. While narratives are a central feature of the LINKS intervention, story grammar knowledge, in particular, had not been an instructional target (Hayward & Schneider, 2000).

Hayward and Schneider (2000) collected data on students' oral narrative performance using a pre-test, a post-test, and weekly probes. All three measures followed similar procedures. Individually, students were shown a set of five illustrations from a children's picture book and told to tell the story. The illustrations presented a complete story including all the story grammar elements that were the focus of this study. Four different stories from the same children's book were used; all featured the same main character, the same number of additional characters, and the same story grammar components. Two of the stories were used for pre-testing and weekly probes as well as for intervention instruction. The remaining two stories were used for post-testing and were, therefore, novel to the students. During pre-testing, post-testing, and weekly probes, students actually produced an oral narrative twice using the same set of pictures: once to a familiar listener and once to an unfamiliar listener. Familiarity versus unfamiliarity is in relation to both personal relationships and story knowledge; unfamiliar listeners were seated behind a screen so they could not see the illustrations presented to the student (Hayward & Schneider, 2000).

All of the narratives students produced were analyzed for two dependent variables: story information units and level of episode. The story information units score was calculated by totaling the number of story grammar elements in each narrative. The level of episode variable measured the overall structure of students' narratives and was thus reflective of narrative quality.

The researchers used a series of questions adapted from Hughes et al. (as cited in Hayward & Schneider, 2000) to determine a “level” of organization. Levels progressed from no particular sequence, to a temporal sequence, to a causal sequence, to a complete episode, and, finally, to multiple episodes (Hayward & Schneider, 2000).

The intervention that was the focus of this study occurred twice a week over a 12 week period. The researchers utilized two different baselines of 2 weeks and 4 weeks in order to determine the effect of the intervention versus other factors: a condition that was especially important given the narrative focus of the broader intervention in which students were enrolled. Hayward and Schneider (2000) conducted the intervention as a center with two to three students at a time. At the start of the intervention, students were explicitly taught verbal cues such as “when” and “who + what doing” (Hayward & Schneider, 2000, p. 281) as well as color-coded pictorial cues for each of the story grammar elements. During the remainder of the intervention, students were engaged in activities such as matching story illustrations to story grammar picture cues, re-enacting the story, identifying missing story grammar elements, and sequencing story illustrations and story grammar picture cues. Throughout the intervention, the clinician modeled the telling of the story. Again, only two stories were used throughout the entire intervention; each story was used one time each week (Hayward & Schneider, 2000).

Hayward and Schneider (2000) analyzed their results at both the group level and the individual student level. The researchers found, as a group, that students produced narratives with more story grammar elements as well as more structural complexity during post-testing than pre-testing. The familiarity of the listener did not significantly affect students’ narrative production. In regards to individual analysis, the researchers determined a difference of two standard deviations would indicate significant change. Although all but 1 of the 13 participants

included more story grammar elements during post-testing than pre-testing, six students included a significantly higher amount of content. The length of the intervention did not appear to be a factor in determining significant change in narrative content as the number of students was equally divided amongst the 2 week and 4 week baseline groups. Despite an overall trend toward higher episode rating, only 5 of the 13 participants demonstrated significant change from pre-test to post-test measures. Four of the students with statistically significant change were in the 2 week baseline group while only one was in the 4 week baseline group. Interestingly, there was no cross-over between students who demonstrated significant improvement in story grammar elements and those who demonstrated significant improvement in structural complexity (Hayward & Schneider, 2000).

Based on these results, Hayward and Schneider (2000) reached some conclusions about their intervention and offered suggestions for future research and practice. Overall, students' narratives improved after participating in a story grammar intervention; however, the length of the intervention did not appear to significantly impact student outcomes. The researchers hypothesized that conducting weekly assessment probes may have influenced their results by providing students with a lot of additional practice beyond the intervention itself. Hayward and Schneider (2000) suggested future research could investigate the effectiveness of repeated practice with oral narratives versus a strictly story grammar intervention. The finding that this intervention improved some students' use of story grammar elements while increasing others' structural complexity again highlights the importance of assessing students' oral narratives for both content and quality. Hayward and Schneider (2000) also found a few students produced narratives with dramatically different content and quality based on the illustrations they were shown, indicating that background knowledge of a particular topic or experience can

significantly impact students' narrative performance. Thus, the researchers suggested using more than one story to assess students' oral narrative abilities (Hayward & Schneider, 2000).

The results obtained in Hayward and Schneider's (2000) exploratory study seemed to indicate a story grammar intervention could positively influence young students' oral narrative abilities; however, their research was limited by a relatively small sample size and a specific population. Two more recent studies attempted to replicate and extend this initial research. The first of these studies, conducted by Davies et al. (2004), investigated how a story grammar intervention impacts the oral narrative skills of students with narrative language delays who are not identified as having broader language impairments. The goal of the intervention, which was implemented collaboratively by speech and language therapists, learning assistants, and classroom teachers, was to "...develop children's metacognitive understanding of story structure" (Davies et al., 2004, p. 283). Davies et al. (2004) investigated the effectiveness of the intervention on students' oral narrative skills as well as the effectiveness of the collaboration. Since the first outcome is most relevant to the current study, that will be the focus of this review. While the researchers reviewed Hayward and Schneider's (2000) positive results as well as other research that showed the effectiveness of story grammar interventions at improving reading comprehension, Davies et al. (2004) did not explicitly state a hypothesis for their study. The independent variable for this research was students' oral narrative abilities: pre-test versus post-test. Students' oral narratives were analyzed for several dependent variables: story grammar elements, propositions, connectives, episode quality, and story type (Davies et al., 2004).

Davies et al.'s (2004) research was conducted in England with 34 students who were in either "Reception" or "Year 1" classes (p. 277). At the start of the research, students' average age was 5 years, 11 months, so one could surmise the students were equivalent to kindergarten or

first grade students in the United States. The students attended six different schools, all of which served neighborhoods of “high social need” (Davies et al., 2004, p. 277). Subjects were recruited for the study through teacher recommendation; teachers were asked to identify, based on their observations or baseline assessment data, students who had difficulty conveying information in a narrative format. These recommendations were subsequently confirmed by pre-test data documenting students’ narrative skill deficits. It is significant to note that, despite having difficulties with oral narratives, none of the research subjects were identified as having a speech or language disability (Davies et al., 2004).

As alluded to previously, data was gathered using pre-testing and post-testing, the latter of which was administered three months after the intervention concluded. The same standardized tests were used for both pre-testing and post-testing: the information and grammar components of the Renfrew Action Picture Test (RAPT) (Renfrew as cited in Davies et al., 2004) and the Bus Story Tests (Renfrew as cited in Davies et al., 2004). The Bus Story Tests were designed as a measure of narrative content. Davies et al. (2004) utilized this measure but also analyzed students’ narratives for the number of propositions used, episode quality, the number of connectives used, the type of connectives used (additive, temporal, or causal), and story type. Episodic quality was rated by examining how many key story grammar elements students included in their narratives; narratives could be rated as having no episode, an incomplete episode, or a complete episode (Merritt & Lile as cited in Davies et al., 2004). The story type measure involved a comparison of students’ narratives to developmental levels that were labeled and described by Applebee (as cited in Davies et al., 2004).

Davies et al. (2004) provided a somewhat broad description of the intervention utilized in their study. Intervention occurred in small groups three times per week for 40 minutes for a total

of 8 weeks. Once a week, the speech and language therapist (SLT) led the intervention session while a learning support assistant (LSA) led the remaining two sessions. SLT's collaboratively planned with the LSA's so these individuals would understand the theory and language development underlying the intervention thus allowing LSA's to respond more effectively to students' needs and assist classroom teachers in modifying mainstream instruction. During intervention, story grammar elements were introduced individually at a rate of one element every one to one and half weeks. Similar to Hayward and Schneider (2000), Davies et al. (2004) used question words (who, where, when, what happened, why) and the term "ending" as verbal cues as well as color-coded pictorial cues to represent story grammar elements. Specific intervention tasks were selected from *Speaking and Listening through Narrative* (Shanks as cited in Davies et al., 2004) and included retelling familiar stories and producing original narratives and using puppets and role playing to act out both kinds of stories. Davies et al. (2004) also promoted students' metacognition by having them use the verbal and pictorial cues to analyze and discuss their own tape-recorded narratives. At the conclusion of the small group intervention, the same information and activities were presented to the entire mainstream class, and intervention students served as "experts" in introducing tasks and materials to peers. This "expert" role was again intended to enhance students' metacognition regarding story structure (Davies et al., 2004).

Davies et al. (2004) grouped data from the dependent variables into two broad categories—narrative content and narrative quality—to determine the influence of their intervention. Students' scores improved on all three measures of narrative content (RAPT-Information, Bus Story content, and Bus Story propositions); however, students demonstrated less growth on Bus Story tasks that involved multiple episode narratives. Students' scores also increased on all measures of narrative quality (RAPT-Grammar, episode quality, number of

connectives, type of connective, and story type) with significant increases on the RAPT-Grammar and connectives measures. Intervention participants' teachers also informally reported improvements in students' confidence and listening skills during mainstream classroom activities after the intervention (Davies et al., 2004).

This study's results confirm Hayward and Schneider's (2000) finding that a story grammar intervention can enhance the oral narrative skills of young children. Davies et al. (2004) note their population of 34 students was larger than Hayward and Schneider's (2000) population of 13 students and their effect sizes were also stronger; therefore, Davies et al.'s study provides more substantial support for the effectiveness of story grammar interventions. Davies et al. (2004) were also surprised that their intervention, which was targeted at improving students' understanding of story structure, had an equal or greater impact on the content and cohesion of students' narratives (Davies et al., 2004).

Hayward and Schneider's (2000) early study was also the foundation for a second, even more recent study by Spencer and Slocum (2010). These researchers utilized many of Hayward and Schneider's (2000) story grammar intervention components but extended the intervention to include practice with personal narrative production. Given that personal narratives are the most common form of narrative produced by young children, intervention aimed at improving personal narrative generation could support children in developing skills that are readily applicable to both social and academic aspects of their daily lives. Thus, Spencer and Slocum's (2010) research, while ultimately aimed at "improved personal narration" (p. 181), investigated the dual effects of oral narrative intervention on children's ability to retell stories and to generate personal narratives. The researchers also examined whether potential gains in either skill would be sustained two weeks after the conclusion of the intervention. Spencer and Slocum (2010) did

not explicitly state their hypotheses for either of these research objectives. The oral narrative intervention, which was the independent variable, was measured through three dependent variables: story retells, probed personal experience generations, and pre- and post-intervention personal experience generations (Spencer & Slocum, 2010).

This study was conducted in a Head Start classroom with 19 students. Although all 19 students participated in the intervention tasks, data was collected on five students who were determined to be “at risk” in regards to narrative skills. These students scored at least one standard deviation below the mean on the Renfrew Bus Story (Cowley & Glasgow as cited in Spencer & Slocum, 2010), a norm-referenced story retell measure, and they included less than four story grammar elements in a personal narrative, yet none were identified as having a language or cognitive disability. The selected population was culturally and linguistically diverse; two students were Caucasian, two were Latino, and one was American Indian. One student was bi-lingual while another was an English language learner. Four of the five participants were female (Spencer & Slocum, 2010).

Spencer and Slocum (2010) collected data before, throughout, and after the intervention using three dependent variables. Personal experience generations were administered prior to intervention, immediately after intervention, and two weeks after intervention. In this measure, the examiner gave a first-person account of a common experience and then encouraged students to tell their own personal narrative by asking “has something like that ever happened to you” (Spencer & Slocum, 2010, p. 184)? Data was also collected on a daily basis during both the baseline and intervention portions of the research using two dependent variables: story retells and probed personal experience generations. In these measures, the examiner first read a story, then asked the student to retell it to a puppet, and, finally, prompted the student to provide a

personal narrative on the same topic using the previously stated question. All 40 of the assessment stories as well as all 10 stories used for intervention instruction were developed by Spencer (2010) and a speech and language therapist according to a template. This insured all stories were new to students, dealt with realistic preschool experiences, were of similar complexity, contained the five targeted story grammar elements, and had the same type and quantity of structural features such as causal language, temporal language, adjectives, adverbs, and dialogue. Students' retellings and personal narratives were all scored using a version of the Index of Narrative Complexity (INC) that was modified to be applicable to the preschool population of this study. Students' narratives were analyzed for 12 different components: "...characters, setting, initiating events, internal responses, plans, action/attempts, complications, consequences, formulaic markers, temporal markers, dialogue, and causal adverbial clauses" (Spencer & Slocum, 2010, p. 185). Each component was rated individually and these scores were also totaled to reflect the complexity of the narrative as a whole (Spencer & Slocum, 2010).

Spencer and Slocum's (2010) intervention, which was the independent variable of this study, utilized relatively simple procedures but was highly planned. Intervention was conducted in small groups of three or four students, with groups designed to be heterogeneous in regards to language ability. Each group met four times a week with an average session lasting 12 minutes. The intervention focused on the story grammar elements of character, problem, internal response, action, and consequence. Each session included six steps: interventionist reads the story and models the retell with pictures and icons, group retell with pictures and icons, individual retell with pictures and icons, individual retell with icons, individual generation with icons, and individual generation without visual support. "Pictures" refers to illustrations corresponding to each story while "icons" refers to visual referents for each story grammar

element. During individual retelling or generation tasks, the other students played a “story game” (Spencer & Slocum, 2010, p. 188) such as story bingo, story cubes, story sticks, or story gestures in which they used manipulatives marked with story grammar icons to identify story elements as they heard them being used. Steps were designed to decrease visual support and thereby build students’ independence with tasks. Instructors could also use verbal prompting, selected from a hierarchy developed prior to the intervention, to scaffold students. Prompts included “modeled responses with a request to imitate, cloze procedures, direct questions, and indirect questions” (Spencer & Slocum, 2010, p. 190). Students’ roles during each intervention session were determined by their seat location which rotated so that students alternated daily between retelling and generating narratives and so that all students participated in each of the individual steps (the last four steps) each week (Spencer & Slocum, 2010).

The results obtained in Spencer and Slocum’s (2010) research indicate positive results for two of their research interests and mixed results for another. All five of the targeted students demonstrated substantial improvement in their ability to retell narratives. During the baseline portion of the study, students’ retelling scores were consistently low. Throughout the intervention portion of the study, students’ scores were either consistently higher or showed a trend of increasing. The fact that students’ retelling scores were higher when assessed two weeks after intervention than they were on baseline measures also indicates students were maintaining the retelling skills they gained. In regards to personal narrative generation, three students’ abilities improved from pre-test to post-test while the other two students’ performance remained relatively stable. The researchers found students generated fewer personal narratives than story retells during assessment tasks but that the number of generations increased as the intervention continued. Spencer and Slocum (2010) attributed these findings to the fact that

generative tasks, more so than retelling tasks, rely on students' motivation to share, their comfort level with the listener, and their background experiences with the topic.

Considering the current research as well as previous studies, Spencer and Slocum (2010) concluded that oral narrative intervention is effective in improving preschool students' retelling skills and may have the potential to improve their personal narrative generation skills. Such intervention seems to be effective with students of varying linguistic ability, cultural background, and proficiency with English. Intervention can be effectively conducted in small groups when all students are kept actively engaged, such as these researchers did through the use of "story games" (Spencer & Slocum, 2010, p. 188). Given that the average intervention session lasted only 12 minutes, Spencer and Slocum (2010) also concluded that narrative intervention can be relatively brief and still produce significant gains. Finally, the researchers suggested that their six-step model could be differentiated to address more than just story grammar elements; characteristics of narrative quality such as use of causal terms, temporal terms, or dialogue could also be targeted to meet more individualized needs (Spencer & Slocum, 2010).

Similar to the three previously reviewed studies, Westerveld and Gillon's (2008) research also examines the effectiveness of a story grammar intervention. This study is unique, however, both for its' target population and the outcomes that were measured. Westerveld and Gillon (2008) designed their intervention for students with mixed reading disabilities: in other words, students who have persistent difficulties with both word recognition and listening comprehension. Based on an assumption that developing students' narrative schema should improve their ability to comprehend and recall narratives, Westerveld and Gillon (2008) evaluated how a story grammar intervention would affect students' oral narrative production, oral narrative comprehension, and reading comprehension. The researchers did not, however,

formally state any hypotheses for their study. The independent variable in this research was experimental condition: intervention group versus control group. The dependent variables were oral narrative skills, oral narrative comprehension, and reading comprehension (Westerveld & Gillon, 2008).

Westerveld and Gillon (2008) conducted this study as a follow-up to a longitudinal study of oral narrative development in students with mixed reading disability; all participants in this research were selected from participants in the previous research. The intervention group consisted of 10 students, seven males and three females, who ranged in age from 7 years, 11 months to 9 years, 2 months. Six of these students were of European New Zealand descent while four were of Maori descent. Although all intervention group students had a mixed reading disability, they scored in the average range on tests of non-verbal intelligence as well as overall receptive language skills. After determining the intervention population, Westerveld and Gillon (2008) selected 10 control group participants who matched on the characteristics of “age, gender, ethnicity, and year of schooling” (p. 35) but who demonstrated average reading skills.

The design of this study was rather complex. All participants—both intervention and control—were tested at the end of the previous research, and this post-testing served as pre-testing for the current study. The intervention group was then divided into two groups of five students based on school assignment. One intervention group received intervention for six weeks immediately following the end of the previous study. At the end of this six week time, this first group was given a post-test and the other intervention group was given a pre-test. The second intervention group was then given the same six week intervention. At the end of this time, both intervention groups and the control group were given a post-test (Westerveld & Gillon, 2008).

The same assessments were used for all pre-testing and post-testing, but each time the tasks were administered, different forms or materials were used. To test oral narrative production, students listened twice to an audio-recording of a story while looking at the text's illustrations. Students were then asked to retell the same story without the support of the pictures. Students' narratives were analyzed for the inclusion of seven story grammar elements, overall coherence, verbal productivity, verbal fluency, grammatical complexity, grammatical accuracy, and semantic diversity. Students also participated in two tasks to gauge their oral narrative comprehension. The first utilized the audio-taped text used for oral narrative production. After listening to the story once, students were asked ten comprehension questions based on story grammar elements. In the second task, students listened to an examiner read a story and then answered twelve comprehension questions. Finally, students' reading comprehension was measured using the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (NARA) (Neale as cited in Westerveld & Gillon, 2008) in which students read a leveled passage aloud and then answer comprehension questions about the text.

The story grammar intervention designed and implemented by Westerveld and Gillon (2008) has some unique characteristics. The intervention was 6 weeks in length and was administered in twelve 1 hour, small group sessions by Westerveld (2008), who is a speech and language therapist. All intervention was provided outside of the regular education classroom. Each intervention session included four "key points" to increase treatment fidelity: explicit instruction on or review of a story grammar element, a read-aloud of a portion of children's literature by the interventionist, identification of story grammar elements by students, and student retelling with feedback by peers. A story map and "story grammar labels" (Westerveld & Gillon, 2008, p. 39) were used as visual supports. Although all story grammar elements were

introduced during the first week of intervention using the familiar story of *The Three Little Pigs*, particular story elements were emphasized each week. During the last two weeks of intervention, students were also given opportunities to create original oral narratives based on pictures of problems or title prompts (Westerveld & Gillon, 2008).

Due to the design of Westerveld and Gillon's (2008) study, they were able to make both intra-group and inter-group comparisons. Since the two experimental groups received treatment at different times, the researchers compared the skills of students with mixed reading disability (MRD) who had received intervention to the skills of their similarly disabled peers who had not yet received intervention. In regards to oral narrative production, there was not a significant difference between groups in the inclusion of story grammar elements, overall narrative coherence, number of utterances, number of different words, or grammatical competence. MRD students who received intervention did, however, demonstrate significantly more "mazing behavior," which the researchers defined as "...any filled pause, false start, repetition, or reformulation" (Westerveld & Gillon, 2008, p. 38). MRD students who received intervention also scored significantly higher on both measures of oral narrative comprehension than their similarly disabled peers who had not yet had intervention (Westerveld & Gillon, 2008).

Along with the previous comparisons, Westerveld and Gillon (2008) also compared the skills of all MRD students to their typically developing (TD) peers. Comparisons were made at pre-testing to determine how, and to what extent, the groups differed initially as well as at post-testing to determine what effect the intervention had on closing the gap between MRD students and their TD peers. Comparing pre-test scores for oral narrative production, TD students significantly outperformed MRD students on grammatical accuracy and semantic diversity but differences in verbal productivity, verbal fluency, and grammatical complexity were not

significant. Post-test comparisons no longer showed a significant difference between groups for grammatical accuracy or semantic diversity; however, similar to the results discussed previously, MRD students demonstrated significantly more mazing behavior than their TD peers. In regards to the inclusion of story grammar elements and overall coherence of students' narratives, the TD group again significantly outperformed the MRD group on pre-test measures but there were no significant differences on post-test measures. Intervention students demonstrated the most dramatic changes in the area of oral narrative comprehension. TD students significantly outperformed MRD students on both pre-test oral narrative comprehension measures; however, MRD students significantly outperformed the TD group on the audio-taped story post-test measure. No significant post-test differences were found on the other oral narrative comprehension measure. Finally, in regards to reading comprehension, neither the TD group nor the MRD group demonstrated significant changes in this area during the course of this research (Westerveld & Gillon, 2008).

Based on these mixed results, Westerveld and Gillon (2008) concluded their story grammar intervention was effective at improving students' oral narrative comprehension but was not clearly effective in improving students' oral narrative abilities or reading comprehension. Reflecting on why there was seemingly little improvement in students' oral narrative production, the researchers questioned whether the measures of story grammar elements and overall coherence were sensitive enough to capture the growth that may have occurred. Westerveld and Gillon (2008) further speculated that increases in mazing behavior after intervention may indicate a "trade-off" (p. 48); as students focused on improving their overall narratives, they had less cognitive capacity to attend to sentence-level mechanics thereby explaining why other measures of oral narrative production also showed little increase. While there was significant

improvement in oral narrative comprehension, the data revealed little growth in reading comprehension. Westerveld and Gillon (2008) note that intervention tasks focused on comprehending material presented in a verbal, rather than a written, format. Students with MRD may, the researchers hypothesized, need intervention tasks more closely aligned with assessment tasks in order to demonstrate improvement, or they may need more lengthy exposure to transfer skills from one modality to another. Westerveld and Gillon (2008) also suggested an alternative explanation; assessment tasks that involve both decoding and comprehension may overwhelm the cognitive capacity of students with MRD such that they are unable to demonstrate the comprehension skills they acquired through intervention.

Interventions for Literate Language

Research has investigated the effectiveness of dialogic shared reading interventions to improve students' evaluative skills as well as the effectiveness of story grammar interventions to enhance students' understanding of the underlying structure of narratives. Both evaluative skills and narrative structure contribute to the macrostructure, or overall organization, of narratives. The microstructure of narratives—how ideas are related at the level of phrases and sentences—is also important. Some of the previously reviewed studies analyzed elements of microstructure, such as the use of pronouns, temporal terms, or causal terms, to determine the effects of their interventions; however, none of these studies included explicit instruction in literate language. The only intervention to provide such instruction is currently being tested as part of a broader study by Dawkins and O'Neill (2011) on the correlations between young students' oral narrative performance and their ability to write narratives. Even though these researchers have not yet

published the results of their research, the design of their intervention is so unique and so closely aligned to the goals of the current study that it was determined valuable to this literature review.

The ultimate goal of Dawkins and O’Neill’s (2011) intervention is to improve students’ narrative writing through improving their oral narrative skills. The intervention has a dual emphasis on providing explicit instruction in story grammar elements and decontextualized language and developing narrative-rich contexts. Explicit instruction begins by introducing all of the story grammar elements using the familiar text of *The Three Little Pigs*. Each subsequent week, a story grammar element is reviewed and associated literate language is explicitly taught. When reviewing the “problem” story grammar element, for example, students are also taught conjunctions to show causal relationships between events. Similar to previous interventions, story grammar elements are represented visually through “[a] laminated story map, story grammar labels, and color coded story strips...” (Dawkins & O’Neill, 2011). In regards to context, students have frequent opportunities to hear high quality children’s picture books, retell stories, and generate their own narratives. Students practice identifying story grammar elements and literate language in the books they hear read aloud and also provide feedback on one another’s use of story grammar elements and literate language during retelling and narrative production tasks. Finally, Dawkins and O’Neill (2011) address evaluative skills by having students identify causal relationships and characters’ internal states in read-aloud stories. The researchers hypothesize this intervention, which provides explicit instruction in story grammar elements and literate language as well as frequent opportunities to practice storytelling, will “create domain specific knowledge” (Dawkins & O’Neill, 2011, p. 304) that will aide students in writing narratives.

Along with including explicit instruction in literate language, Dawkins and O’Neill’s (2011) study is unique because of its’ structure and target population. Unlike all other previously reviewed studies, the explicit instruction portion of this oral narrative intervention is designed to be administered in three, thirty minute, whole class lessons per week for a total of 8 weeks. Dawkins and O’Neill (2011) also state that practice in retelling stories and generating narratives should occur often in both small group and whole class settings; however, they do not specify exact quantities of time or frequencies for such small group practice. Again, unlike all of the story grammar interventions which were targeted at populations with language or reading delays, this intervention is intended for use in regular education classrooms in Year Two or Year Three of the Australian schooling system (Dawkins & O’Neill, 2011).

Role of Peers in Oral Narrative Development

In nearly all of the interventions reviewed thus far—dialogic shared reading, story grammar interventions, and interventions that combined approaches—an adult led the intervention and provided the bulk of the modeling. Even when students were placed in an “expert” role, such as in Davies et al.’s (2004) intervention, this was preceded by explicit instruction and modeling by adults. Since oral narratives can vary in form and content amongst different cultural and linguistic communities, adults may find it difficult to effectively model oral narratives to a diverse population of students (McGregor, 2000). The study reviewed in this section examines how peers influence one another’s narratives as well as the effectiveness of using peer models in situations where the clinician and client do not come from the same cultural or linguistic community.

McGregor's (2000) research actually consisted of three separate, but related, studies all focused on the oral narrative skills of urban, African-American preschoolers enrolled in Head Start. The goal of the first study was to determine norms for oral narratives in this specific population. The second study then examined how these students' oral narratives were influenced by the oral narratives of their peers. The third and final study investigated the effectiveness of a "clinician-prompted, peer-mediated intervention" (McGregor, 2000, p. 56). Since McGregor's (2000) second and third studies are most relevant to this current research, they will be the focus of this review.

McGregor's (2000) second study investigated the short-term influences of peers on one another's oral narrative production. Specifically, the researcher examined the degree to which preschool students "borrowed" (McGregor, 2000, p. 60) from a fictional narrative told by their peer when telling their own fictional narrative about the same picture book. The researcher hypothesized students' narratives would be influenced by a peer's narrative after just one shared oral narrative experience. The independent variable in Study 2 was oral narratives: student one versus student two. This independent variable was analyzed using two dependent variables: story elements and lexical types (McGregor, 2000).

The participants in Study 2 were 26 preschool students enrolled in a Head Start program serving the Cabrini Green public housing units in Chicago. At the time of the study, 15 participants were 3 years old and 11 participants were 4 years old. A little over half of the population was female. Students were randomly assigned to pairs.

The procedures for Study 2 were relatively basic. Pairs of students were provided with a copy of the children's picture book *Corduroy* (Freeman as cited in McGregor, 2000). All students were familiar with the story through watching a video based on the book. One student

in the pair was instructed to tell the story in his or her own words while the other student listened and then the roles were reversed. Students' narratives were analyzed for nine story elements—main characters, feelings, settings, complicating action, dialogue, coda (ending), additive conjunctions, temporal conjunctions, and causal conjunctions—as well as four lexical types—nouns, main verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. McGregor (2000) used the data to make within-dyad comparisons as well as comparisons between dyads to control for similarities that may have occurred due to the overall similarity of the population and task.

An analysis of the data obtained in Study 2 revealed that the oral narratives of students who were in the same dyad were significantly more similar, both in terms of story elements and lexical types, than the oral narratives of students who were in different dyads. Thus, the researcher's hypothesis was supported (McGregor, 2000).

Based on these findings, McGregor (2000) designed a “clinician-prompted, peer-mediated intervention” (McGregor, 2000, p. 56) that aimed to utilize peer modeling as a means of improving students' oral narratives. McGregor (2000) investigated the effectiveness of this intervention in Study 3. She hypothesized the intervention would result in improved oral narrative skills, particularly inclusion of more story elements, for students who were identified as having low oral narrative skills prior to intervention. The independent variable in this study was participants' oral narrative skills, which were analyzed over time. The dependent variables used to analyze students' narratives were story elements, the number of different words, the number of total words, and the mean length of utterance (McGregor, 2000).

The population for Study 3 was selected from the larger population in Study 2. Study 3 involved 14 students: four of whom were selected for the intervention group while the other 10 students served as the control group. Of the four students in the intervention group, two were

designated as “tutees” and two were designated as “tutors” based on their performance on the *Corduroy* narrative production task described in Study 2. Tutees included fewer story grammar elements, fewer different words, fewer total words, and shorter utterances in their oral narratives than most of their peers while the tutors were some of the highest performing students.

Classroom teachers’ observations of these students’ communicative skills supported this numerical data. Students were paired so there was no more than 4 months age difference between tutor and tutee. Pair one involved a tutor aged 3 years, 7 months and a tutee aged 3 years, 4 months while pair two involved a tutor aged 4 years, 3 months and a tutee aged 3 years, 11 months (McGregor, 2000).

McGregor’s (2000) study consisted of three phases: a baseline period, an intervention period, and a maintenance period. Both tutees and tutors in the experimental group participated in assessment probes during all three phases: three or four probes during the baseline period, two probes every 7 to 12 days during the 8 week intervention period, and six probes one month after the conclusion of the intervention. During the probes, students were given 1 of 20 seven page, wordless picture books specifically created for the study. The student told an oral narrative based on the picture book to a classmate not involved in the study. During baseline, all of the books were unfamiliar to the students. For the two probes conducted at regular intervals during the intervention, one utilized a book familiar to the students from intervention and one used an unfamiliar book. Similarly, three of the six maintenance probes used a familiar book as a prompt while the other three used an unfamiliar book. This balance of familiar and unfamiliar texts as stimuli allowed McGregor (2000) to determine whether students were generalizing their newly acquired oral narrative skills to novel contexts.

McGregor (2000) conducted an additional assessment as a means of controlling for extraneous variables. A week prior to and a week after intervention, students in both the intervention and control groups told a narrative based on *Corduroy* (Freeman as cited in McGregor, 2000) to a classmate. These measures allowed the researcher to determine whether any positive effects in the intervention group exceeded those obtained in the control group and, therefore, controlled for conditions such as other classroom instruction and overall development.

The intervention itself had a relatively simple design. Tutors and tutees engaged in ten 20 minute intervention sessions over the course of 8 weeks. During each session, the tutor selected a wordless picture book from the 20 created for the intervention. Tutors told a narrative based on their chosen book. Tutees then told their own narrative using the same book. Tutor and tutee took turns telling narratives with new books as long as time permitted. As one student told a narrative, the other student functioned as a listener while the researcher used questions and expansions to scaffold the narrator as needed. Scaffolding supported both the narrator's inclusion of story grammar elements and use of connectives but was always responsive to what the student spontaneously produced (McGregor, 2000).

Since this study involved numerous measures over time, McGregor (2000) reported most of the results in a graphic format; however, some general trends as well as specific gains can be presented in written form. Both tutees included story elements in their intervention probe narratives that were not present in any of their baseline probe narratives. Both tutees also continued to use some of these story elements in their maintenance probe narratives. Overall, the tutees demonstrated more rapid growth in story element use than peers who were in the control condition. On the *Corduroy* pre-test measure, both tutees' use of main characters, feelings, setting, complicating action, dialogue and coda was deemed "below average;" on the post-test,

however, one tutee's use of these elements was deemed "above average" and the other was deemed "average" (McGregor, 2000, p. 57). The tutees' use of additive conjunctions, temporal conjunctions, and causal conjunctions also increased but showed greater individual variability with one tutee increasing from "below average" to "low average" while the other increased from "below average" to "above average" (McGregor, 2000, p. 57). In regards to the other dependent variables, both tutees' narratives increased in length and complexity during intervention and these increases were maintained when assessed one month later. Tutors' narrative performance was also analyzed to examine whether these students would experience a negative effect from hearing the less-developed narratives of the tutees. Of the two tutors, one showed almost no change in narrative performance while the other's narrative skills increased at a rate faster than that of students in the control group (McGregor, 2000).

Based on the results that both tutees' skills improved and were able to be generalized to novel contexts, McGregor (2000) concluded peer modeling with verbal scaffolding from a clinician was an effective intervention for improving the oral narrative skills of preschoolers, given. McGregor (2000) hypothesized that modeling of oral narratives by a more accomplished peer may more closely align with tutees' zone of proximal development (Vygotsky as cited in McGregor, 2000) by providing a challenging yet accessible model. Yet, McGregor (2000) emphasizes it is not possible to determine whether peer modeling, clinician scaffolding, or the combination of both was the cause of the gains that were attained. It is also significant to note that, despite improvements in tutees' use of story elements and some tutors' consistent use of nearly all elements, story elements were used in very rudimentary ways that could be further developed (McGregor, 2000).

Conclusion

Oral narrative skills seem to be an important component of overall literacy development. In three studies, oral narrative skills correlated with other literacy abilities including, but perhaps not limited to, oral reading fluency (Reese et al., 2010), reading comprehension (Cain, 2003; Griffin et al., 2004), and writing narratives (Griffin et al., 2004). Some oral narrative skills were even predictive of current and later oral reading fluency after 2-3 years of formal reading instruction (Reese et al., 2010). The quality of students' narratives was more strongly correlated with other literacy skills than the content of their narratives, and the discrete skills involved in crafting a quality narrative seemed to contribute differentially to students' other literacy abilities. The strength of the relationship between oral narrative skills and students' other literacy abilities varied with age, with the strongest correlations occurring during the preschool years and after 2-3 years of reading instruction as students encountered more challenging texts. In contrast to prior models of oral language development, these findings suggest that oral language becomes more differentiated as children age with components such as oral narratives and vocabulary each contributing uniquely to literacy development (Griffin et al., 2004; Reese et al., 2010). In addition, students' overall expressive language skills were not necessarily reflective of their oral narrative skills (Griffin et al., 2004).

Given that measures of narrative quality were most strongly correlated to other literacy skills, improving the quality of students' narratives should be a primary aim of oral narrative interventions. In the research literature, the skills associated with narrative quality are often collectively referred to as evaluative skills. Children's use of evaluative skills is influenced by modeling; children demonstrated increased use of evaluative devices after as few as two times of listening to their mothers tell a story (Harkins et al., 1994). Dialogic shared reading is also an

effective instructional technique for increasing students' evaluative skills. In dialogic shared reading, adults read aloud high quality children's picture books, engage students in discussing the books, and utilize questioning, scaffolding, and responding to, elaborating on, or recasting students' attempts at using language to enhance language development. Students who participated in dialogic shared reading made significantly more references to characters' internal states, used more dialog, and demonstrated more sophisticated use of decontextualized language, such as correct use of pronouns, in their own narratives than students who did not participate in such experiences. Dialogic shared reading did not, however, have an impact on students' use of causal or temporal words in their own narratives (Lever & Sénéchal, 2011; Zevenbergen et al., 2003).

While an understanding of causal relationships and an ability to utilize evaluative devices is important, these skills alone are insufficient to produce a complete narrative. Students must also possess an understanding of the underlying structure of narratives, which is often represented as story grammar elements. Story grammar interventions have long been utilized to enhance students' comprehension of narrative texts, but such interventions have only recently been explored as a means of enhancing students' oral narrative abilities. Most of the reviewed story grammar interventions utilized explicit instruction in story grammar elements, verbal and visual cues for each element, practice in retelling stories, and practice in narrative generation. Other techniques were added to some story grammar interventions to meet particular goals; for example, some researchers included role playing or puppetry to enhance students' understanding of particular stories while other researchers included analysis of peers' narratives or students' own tape-recorded narratives to develop students' metacognition. All of the story grammar

interventions were conducted in small groups of less than five students and targeted students with documented language deficits or reading disabilities.

The results of the four reviewed studies presented a mixed picture of the effectiveness of story grammar interventions for oral narrative skill development. In research involving children with expressive or narrative language delays, students included more story grammar elements (Hayward & Schneider, 2000; Spencer & Slocum, 2010) and connectives in their retellings (Davies et al., 2004; Spencer & Slocum, 2010) and produced retellings with greater structural complexity (Hayward & Schneider, 2000) after participating in a story grammar intervention. Students with mixed reading disability, however, did not demonstrate any significant changes in retelling ability after such intervention (Westerveld & Gillon, 2008). In the one study that also examined students' narrative generation, only 3 of 5 participants demonstrated improvements after a story grammar intervention; however, students' motivation, background knowledge, and comfort with the listener may have influenced the results that were obtained. Interestingly, teachers qualitatively reported that students with narrative delays demonstrated better listening and participation in mainstream classroom activities after participating in a story grammar intervention (Spencer & Slocum, 2010).

While dialogic shared reading and story grammar approaches were each proven effective at increasing aspects of the macrostructure of students' oral narratives, no completed studies specifically aimed to improve the microstructure of students' narratives. Dawkins and O'Neill (2011) are in the process of conducting and evaluating a more comprehensive intervention that includes evaluative components and story grammar elements while also directly teaching literate language. This intervention includes explicit instruction as well as authentic experiences listening to and producing narratives. Unfortunately, since the researchers have not completed

their study, it is not yet possible to know the exact outcomes of this intervention (Dawkins & O'Neill, 2011).

While most interventions focus on how adults can influence students' skills, it is important not to overlook students as potential partners in the intervention process. McGregor (2000) found preschool students "borrowed" (p. 60) a significant amount of story elements, connectives, and specific words from one another's narratives during paired activities. In fact, preschool students with low narrative skills produced longer, more complex narratives with a greater number of story elements and connectives after a participating in an intervention that included modeling by a more capable peer as well as adult scaffolding (McGregor, 2000).

The studies just reviewed confirm that oral narrative skills are important for young students to develop and offer a variety of strategies for providing oral narrative intervention. With the exception of Dawkins and O'Neill's (2011) intervention, the effectiveness of which has not yet been substantiated, these interventions were predominantly carried out in small groups by an interventionist other than the classroom teacher. Since such support is often not available, it would be beneficial to examine whether the methods used in these studies can be altered for use in mainstream classroom settings and whether the same positive results are achieved. The next chapter will describe an oral narrative intervention I designed based on previous models and the methods I used to evaluate the effectiveness of this intervention.

Chapter 3

Introduction

Oral narratives are a literacy domain that has only recently begun to be researched. Previous studies investigated correlations between students' oral narrative skills and their abilities in reading and writing and also examined the effectiveness of several different interventions for oral narrative skills. Students must possess and integrate a variety of skills in order to effectively produce oral narratives; however, many previous interventions sought to develop only one or a few oral narrative skills at a time. These studies were also limited in regards to population and procedures; the majority of interventions targeted students with language or reading delays and were conducted entirely in small groups by an interventionist other than the classroom teacher.

The goal of this study was to integrate the most successful aspects of several prior interventions into a more comprehensive intervention for oral narrative development. This intervention was designed to be administered to an entire mainstream classroom of kindergarten students by the regular classroom teacher: a situation much more likely to be encountered by other educators. Unlike the narrower foci of past interventions, this intervention aimed to develop students' understanding of cause and effect relationships, characters' emotional states, and story grammar elements as well as improve students' ability to retell narratives. Data to measure the effectiveness of this oral narrative intervention was collected prior to intervention and after intervention through a story retelling task. This chapter describes in detail the participants, intervention procedures, and data collection procedures used in this study.

Participants

This research was conducted at a suburban elementary school serving approximately 536 students. In October, 2011, the most recent date for which statistics were available, 33% of the students in this school district qualified for free lunch fees while an additional 7% of students qualified for reduced lunch fees (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2011). The school itself was designated a Title One school, which means the poverty level was at or above 40%.

My entire kindergarten class of 26 students had the opportunity to participate in the oral narrative intervention; however, only a portion of the class participated in research assessments. Since the instruction provided during the oral narrative intervention addressed two skills identified in our district kindergarten curriculum—identifying story elements and key details and retelling stories—I felt all students had the potential to benefit from instruction and should participate in the intervention. It should be noted that one student missed the majority of the intervention due to an extended, overseas family vacation and, thus, is not included in the student data. Given that research assessments were conducted individually at a time when no other students were in the room, as will be discussed in the subsection “Data Collection Procedures,” it was not, however, feasible to include all 26 students in pre-testing and post-testing. The design of the intervention was a primary factor in determining the number of students to assess. For intervention, students were assigned to small groups of either four or six students, so I decided to collect data on 10 students to give me the potential to compare the effects of group size on intervention outcomes. After determining how many students to assess, I then selected individual participants. Since I wanted to examine how the intervention affected a diverse population of students, I chose individuals that were reflective of the cultural, linguistic, and reading ability diversity of the overall class. The 10 students who participated in both the oral

narrative intervention and the assessments for this research will be referred to as the participants of this study.

The entire class was comprised of 10 males and 15 females. At the start of the research, students ranged in age from 5 years, 7 months to 6 years, 6 months with a mean age of 5 years, 11 months. Based on information parents and guardians provided on school registration forms, 14 students were Caucasian, 8 were Latino, and 3 were Asian. Two students had Individualized Educational Plans (IEP) for speech and language therapy, and one of these students was also identified as being an English Language Learner (ELL). There was one additional ELL student in the class. .

As indicated previously, there were 10 participants in this research. This population was evenly divided by gender; 5 students were male and 5 were female. Of these 10 participants, 5 were Caucasian, 4 were Latino, and 1 was Asian. One student was considered an ELL and also had an IEP for expressive and receptive language delays. One student was an ELL but had no overall language delays. One participant participated in the pre-test and all intervention sessions but did not participate in the post-test due to an extended, and unplanned, absence until the end of the school year.

Along with gender, culture, and language skills, reading ability was another factor in selecting research participants. Students' reading ability was determined using running records from the *Rigby PM Benchmark Kit* (Nelley & Smith, 2000): an assessment that is part of the school district's kindergarten curriculum. For a running record, the student was provided with a leveled picture book and given a brief introduction to the story. The student was instructed to look through the book and then read it to the examiner. After reading, the student was directed to retell the story and then asked 3-5 comprehension questions about the text. The goal of the

assessment was to find a student's highest instructional level: the level at which the student could read a text with 90% or better accuracy and answer no more than one comprehension question incorrectly. Based on a comparison of participants' reading levels to the school district's expectations for kindergarten, two participants were meeting the expectation for March (the month the research began), two participants were meeting the end of the year (June) expectation, and six participants were exceeding the end of the year (June) expectation.

The final factor in selecting research participants was their ability to retell texts prior to intervention. My goal was to assign all students in the class to both small groups and heterogeneous pairs, in which one student was more capable at retelling than the other, within these small groups. Since data was collected on participants only, I wanted them to reflect the "ideal" of the study design. Thus, I selected students with significantly different retelling abilities to be both participants and partners during the intervention; it was not always possible to have such significant heterogeneity in non-participant pairs due to the make-up of the class. Initially, students' retelling ability was determined by their performance on the retelling portion of the running record described previously. These results were confirmed by the pre-test for this research which will be described in the subsection "Data Collection Procedures."

Intervention Procedures

This research was conducted over an 8 week period beginning in late March, 2012 and ending in May, 2012. Pre-testing was conducted during the first week of the study while post-testing was conducted during the last week of the study; these procedures will be described in the next subsection, "Data Collection Procedures." The oral narrative intervention itself was administered during the middle 6 weeks of the study. During week 3 of the study, the first week

of intervention, the story grammar elements were introduced during five, whole-class sessions that lasted approximately 20 minutes each. Each remaining week, the intervention included two whole-class sessions that lasted an average of 30 minutes each and one small-group session for each of five groups. Small-group sessions lasted an average of 15 minutes each. The schedule for the intervention is shown in graphic format below.

Week of Study	Activities
Week One	Individual pre-testing
Week Two	Introduce story grammar elements and icons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five, 20 minute whole class sessions
Week Three	Dialogic shared reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two, 30 minute whole class sessions Retelling instruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One, 15 minute session per group (5 groups)
Week Four	Dialogic shared reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two, 30 minute whole class sessions Retelling instruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One, 15 minute session per group (5 groups)
Week Five	Dialogic shared reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two, 30 minute whole class sessions Retelling instruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One, 15 minute session per group (5 groups)
Week Six	Dialogic shared reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two, 30 minute whole class sessions Retelling instruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One, 15 minute session per group (5 groups)
Week Seven	Dialogic shared reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two, 30 minute whole class sessions Retelling instruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One, 15 minute session per group (5 groups)
Week Eight	Individual post-testing

As alluded to previously, the first week of this intervention was unique from the rest. During this week, the six story grammar elements utilized throughout the intervention—characters, setting, problem, feelings, events, and resolution—were introduced. Many story grammar interventions use a term such as “response” rather than “feelings.” I selected the latter because I felt it was more understandable for kindergarten students, and the use of this term also drew more explicit attention to characters’ internal states: a characteristic of oral narratives that

was found to correlate to later reading comprehension (Griffin et al., 2004). Similar to some previous story grammar interventions (Dawkins & O'Neill, 2011; Westerveld & Gillon, 2008), I used the story *The Three Little Pigs* (Brenner, 1972) as an anchor text to introduce the story grammar elements. During the first session of the week, I read this text aloud with a focus on developing students' familiarity with and understanding of the story. On each of the following three days, I introduced two story grammar elements per day. Each time a story grammar element was introduced, students were given a verbal explanation of the element and were shown a pictorial icon for the element. These explanations and icons, which were utilized throughout the intervention, are in Appendix A and Appendix B respectively. After a story grammar element was introduced, I led the class in identifying that element in *The Three Little Pigs* (Brenner, 1972), re-reading the text when necessary. After the first two story grammar elements were introduced, each subsequent session began with a review of previously learned elements; students were shown each story grammar icon, asked to name the story grammar element, explain the element, and recall the element from *The Three Little Pigs* (Brenner, 1972). During the fifth, and final, session of the week, I reviewed all of the story grammar elements using the procedure just described. I then re-told the story of *The Three Little Pigs*, pointing to each story grammar icon as I included that element in my retelling. A volunteer student then re-told the story to the class as I again pointed to each icon as that element was mentioned. Finally, each student retold the story to a self-selected partner.

During the remaining five weeks of intervention, whole-class sessions followed more of a dialogic shared reading procedure. In dialogic shared reading, an adult reads aloud a high quality children's picture book with an emphasis on discussing the text with students, modeling language, providing feedback on students' attempts, and encouraging students to become the

teller of the story. The purpose of these whole-class sessions was to introduce the children's picture book that was the focus for the week and develop students' understanding of cause and effect relationships, characters' emotional states, and story grammar elements within that particular text. Books were selected based on three main criteria: inclusion of the six story grammar elements used in this intervention, a highly engaging plot, and quality writing. Three of the five books were used in Lever et al.'s (2011) dialogic shared reading intervention while the other two were texts I was familiar with from my own teaching experience: *Muncha! Muncha! Muncha!* (Flemming, 2002), *Bunny Cakes* (Wells, 1997), *A Pocket for Corduroy* (Freeman, 1978), *Blueberries for Sal* (McCloskey, 1948), and *Ira Sleeps Over* (Waber, 1972). The texts are listed in the order in which they were presented. Similar to previous dialogic shared reading interventions, I modified the texts by placing sticky notes with questions on particular pages of the book (Lever & Sénéchal, 2011; Zevenbergen et al., 2003). These questions directed students' attention to cause and effect relationships, character's emotions, and story grammar elements within that text. Each text was read two times. During the first session, I read the text and asked students the questions exactly as they were written. To encourage as much individual participation as possible, students first discussed their responses with a self-selected peer. Volunteers then shared their responses with the entire group, which provided opportunities for whole-class discussion as well as opportunities for me to evaluate students' understanding of the text. During the second reading of the text, students were given more opportunities "...to become the teller of the story over time" (Zevenbergen et al., 2003, p. 4). I used a variety of prompts to elicit such talk; for example, I showed students the illustrations on a page and said "tell a friend what happened in this part of the story" or I directed students to "tell a friend what happened next" prior to turning the page. If I had observed students having

difficulty with a particular question during the first reading, I used the second reading as an opportunity to ask the question again and clarify any misconceptions.

Along with this whole-class component, students were also divided into small groups for the retelling portion of the intervention. Since kindergarten students have limited independence and I was also meeting with guided reading groups each week, I determined I could only meet with each intervention small group once per week. Thus, I incorporated McGregor's (2000) idea of paired practice so that each student would have the opportunity to retell the entire text at least once each week. To facilitate partner work, each group had to consist of an even number of children. To optimize opportunities for participation and feedback, it would have been ideal to have groups of no more than four students; however, this again would have created more groups than I could logistically meet with during one week. To accommodate all 26 students in the class, I decided to divide the class into three groups with six students and two groups with four students. The process of assigning students to groups involved constant interplay between creating heterogeneous pairs such that a student with greater retelling proficiency was partnered with a student with less retelling proficiency and creating a balance between small groups in regards to gender, linguistic ability, and reading ability. For research purposes, one group of six students and one group of four students that would participate in assessment were formed first, and then, the remaining students were placed in pairs and groups. Additional details about these processes can be found in the "Participants" subsection. Once pairs and groups were formed, they stayed the same throughout the entire intervention; if a student was absent on a particular day, I assumed that student's role.

The small-group portion of the intervention focused on retelling the week's featured picture book. Small-group instruction occurred at a kidney table in a quieter corner of the

classroom while the remainder of the class was engaged in independent literacy activities. Prior to each small-group session, I laid out photocopied illustrations that depicted the story grammar elements from that week's text on the table where all group members would be able to see them. I then placed the corresponding story grammar icon above each illustration. Every small-group session followed the same four steps that were structured to gradually release responsibility for the retelling to individual students. First, I modeled how to retell the story using story illustrations as well as story grammar icons. As I talked about each element, I pointed to the corresponding illustration and icon. Second, the group retold the story using illustrations and icons. During this group retell, the student to the left of me told about the first story grammar element, the student in the second chair told about the second story grammar element, and this continued around the table until all elements had been included. Often students had the opportunity to tell about more than one element. During the third step, the student seated to the left of me retold the entire story with the support of the illustrations and icons. In the last step, students took turns retelling the story to their partner with the support of just the icons. The partner with more advanced retelling skills always went first to model for his or her peer. When students served as listeners during this last step, they used story grammar "bingo" cards to point to each element as they heard their partners include it in their retellings. This feature was intended to increase students' active engagement much like Spencer and Slocum (2010) used story games in their intervention. Also similar to Spencer and Slocum (2010), I utilized a rotating seating chart so students had the opportunity to talk about different story grammar elements during the group retell as well as at least one opportunity to be the individual to retell the text for the entire group in step three.

During the small-group, retelling portion of the intervention, my goal was to have an explicit emphasis on story grammar elements and an embedded approach to addressing literate language. Prior to administering any small groups, I wrote a retelling script for each text that included all six story grammar elements and modeled correct pronoun usage as well as the use of a variety of temporal and causal terms. I selected terms I felt best suited the events of a particular story. All of these retelling scripts are included in Appendix C. Since I wanted to sound natural when modeling retelling, I “told” the script rather than reading it; however, I had a copy of the written version out for reference. I also used a variety of verbal scaffolding techniques during the final three steps of the small-group intervention to support students’ inclusion of story grammar elements and usage of pronouns, temporal terms, and causal terms: indirect questions (“What happened next?”), direct questions (“Who were the characters?”), cloze statements (“At the end of the story,…”), and recasting students’ statements. I selected scaffolds for particular situations based on my knowledge of each student’s overall linguistic abilities and my observations of the current context.

Data Collection Procedures

In order to assess the effects of the previously described intervention on students’ oral narrative skills, assessment participants were administered a pre-test and a post-test. Both of these assessments followed the same procedure but utilized a different text. I tested students individually at a time when no other students were in the classroom to avoid distractions and to maintain the unfamiliarity of the assessment texts. To start, I informed students I would read them a story and then ask them to tell me the same story. I explained that I would be recording their retelling so I could remember everything they said. I then read the illustrated, leveled text

to the student. After reading, I prompted students to retell the story by saying “Tell me the same story I just read to you like I haven’t heard it before.” Students’ retellings were recorded using a hand-held digital voice recorder and later transcribed.

Several considerations were taken into account when selecting the type of text to be used for this assessment task. First, since the text had to be read to students individually prior to their retellings, it was important the texts were not too long. Second, since students’ familiarity with a text can influence their retellings, I needed texts that would be unfamiliar to all assessment participants. Last, and perhaps most importantly, I wanted the pre-test text to be similar to the post-test text in regards to narrative and language complexity so that any differences in students’ retellings could be attributed to their skills and not the text itself. Illustrated, leveled texts, which are typically used for guided reading, met all of these requirements. The stories are relatively short yet present a complete narrative, and the leveling process insures that stories at a particular level contain concepts and words of similar difficulty. These texts are rarely found outside the school setting and I knew which books students had read during guided reading, so I felt confident I could find texts that would be unfamiliar to students.

The process of selecting particular illustrated, leveled texts involved more considerations. In my classroom, I utilize the *Rigby PM Plus Series* (Rigby, 2001) for guided reading. Since these texts are not used in other settings in my school, such as grade level intervention groups, I could more likely insure the unfamiliarity of particular texts. Also, selecting books from the same series maximized the similarity of the texts. The highest level the school purchased in this series was level 12, which is just slightly less than one year ahead of students’ independent reading level at the time of pre-testing. This seemed to present a reasonable expectation for listening comprehension, so I began reviewing books at level 12. The most important criterion

in selecting a particular text was that it contained all six story grammar elements presented in intervention; however, many of the leveled texts did not follow a classic problem and resolution structure. Finally, I decided the inclusion of story grammar elements was more important than having texts at the exact same readability level since the difference from one level to the next is relatively small. Ultimately, I selected a level 11 text, *The Broken Flowerpot* (Smith, 2001), as the pre-test text and a level 10 text, *Brown Mouse Gets Some Corn* (Giles, 2001), as the post-test text. Even though *The Broken Flowerpot* is a higher level text, I selected it for pre-testing because it has human characters and a real-life problem situation as opposed to *Brown Mouse Gets Some Corn*, which has animal characters and a more fictionalized and complicated problem situation.

Conclusion

This study was conducted in a mainstream, kindergarten classroom that included both cultural and linguistic diversity. All 26 students in the class had the opportunity to participate in a 6 week oral narrative intervention that included both whole-class and small-group components, and 10 of these students also participated in assessments to gather data on the effectiveness of the intervention. Whole-group instruction utilized dialogic shared reading of high quality children's picture books to increase students' understanding of cause and effect relationships, characters' emotional states, and story grammar elements. In small groups, students practiced retelling the stories introduced during whole-class sessions. This instruction included modeling, gradual release of responsibility, and scaffolding to increase students' ability to use story grammar elements, pronouns, temporal terms, and causal terms in their retellings. The effects of this oral narrative intervention were measured through pre-testing and post-testing, both of which

involved students retelling an illustrated, leveled text that had been read to them. The results of these pre- and post-test assessments are presented in both written and visual form the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Introduction

Previous research in the domain of oral narratives built a strong case for taking a multi-faceted approach to both instruction in and analysis of oral narrative skills. Early oral narrative research predominantly examined story grammar elements and, thus, focused almost exclusively on oral narrative content. As detailed previously in Chapter Two, more recent research has established correlations between content not typically represented by story grammar elements—such as children’s references to character’s internal states— and students’ other literacy skills (Griffin et al., 2004; Reese et al., 2010). Measures of linguistic quality—such as students’ use of qualifying terms, temporal terms, and causal terms—were also correlated to students’ reading fluency and reading comprehension (Cain, 2003; Griffin et al., 2004; Reese et al., 2010). The results of these studies altered how recent researchers analyzed the effectiveness of oral narrative interventions; rather than using story grammar elements as the only variable, current studies examined how instruction influenced a range of oral narrative content as well as the linguistic devices children employed to convey this content.

Based on previous research, this study was purposefully designed to reflect a multi-faceted approach to oral narrative instruction and analysis. The goal of this study—to investigate how an oral narrative intervention affects the narrative structure and linguistic quality of kindergarten students’ story retelling—reflected a dual emphasis on both the content of students’ narratives and the linguistic devices used to relate this information. The intervention itself, which sought to enhance students’ understanding of cause and effect relationships, characters’ emotional states, and story grammar elements through whole-group dialogic shared reading as well as improve students’ ability to use story grammar elements, character introductions,

temporal terms, and causal terms through small-group practice in story retelling, addressed a wider range of objectives than nearly all previous oral narrative interventions. It followed, therefore, that the data analysis for this study needed to be multi-faceted as well. As described in detail in the previous chapter, research participants were pre-tested prior to the intervention and post-tested after the intervention using a story retelling task. Participants' retellings were digitally recorded and then transcribed and analyzed for two measures of narrative content as well as a measure of linguistic quality. The first subsection of this chapter, "Data Analysis Methods," describes how the three dependent variables of story grammar elements, references to characters' emotional states, and character introductions were chosen. This subsection also explains how participants' story retellings were analyzed for each dependent variable. Next, data for each dependent variable is presented in both written and graphic formats in the subsections "Data for Story Grammar Elements," "Data for References to Characters' Emotional States," and "Data for Character Introductions." Finally, the subsection "Qualitative Data" presents transcripts of one participant's retellings that illustrated effects of the intervention that could not be captured by quantitative data alone.

Data Analysis Methods

Data analysis began with the selection of dependent variables. As indicated previously, the oral narrative intervention examined in this study had multiple instructional objectives. I felt strongly that the dependent variables should be reflective of the range of knowledge I hoped students would acquire: knowledge about both the content of narratives and the linguistic devices speakers use to convey information in a narrative format.

“Story grammar elements,” which reflected participants’ inclusion of characters, a setting, a problem, feelings, events and a resolution in their story retellings, was chosen as the first dependent variable for two reasons. First, the identification of story grammar elements is part of the district kindergarten curriculum, so examining how the intervention influenced participants’ inclusion of these elements in their narratives would allow me to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention in meeting curricular goals. Second, since story grammar elements are utilized as a dependent variable in most studies of oral narrative interventions, using this variable in my study allowed me to compare my results to those of previous research.

Participants’ story retellings were analyzed for the dependent variable of story grammar elements through the use of two rubrics, which are presented in Appendix D. It was necessary to create two rubrics because the rubrics are text-specific; thus, *The Broken Flowerpot* (Smith, 2001) rubric was used to assess participants’ pre-test story retellings while the *Brown Mouse Gets Some Corn* (Giles, 2001) rubric was used to assess participants’ post-test story retellings. Many previous researchers assessed children’s inclusion of story grammar elements in a binary fashion: either the element was or was not included. Some of these researchers expressed concern; however, that rating story grammar elements in this way may not have reflected small changes in children’s understanding of story grammar, and consequentially, might have underestimated the effectiveness of the oral narrative intervention (Westerveld & Gillon, 2008). I attempted to create a more sensitive assessment for story grammar elements by designing a rubric that had three levels of proficiency for each element: not included, partially included, and fully included. This format was very similar to the format of the retelling rubrics provided in the *Rigby PM Benchmark Kit* (Nelley & Smith, 2000) to assess retellings that are done as part of a running record assessment. I created the criteria for the “Fully Included in Retelling” column

first by considering what a participant would optimally say about each story grammar element, and I then worked backwards to create the criteria for “Partially Included in Retelling” and “Not Included in Retelling.”

The actual process of scoring participants’ story retellings for story grammar elements was relatively simple and involved comparing the written transcriptions of participants’ retellings to the appropriate story grammar rubric. Each story grammar element received points: zero points if the element was not included, one point if the element was partially included, and two points if the element was fully included. The points from all six story grammar elements were totaled to yield an overall score for each participant on the story grammar elements dependent variable; therefore, the minimum number of points a participant could score on this variable was 0 points and the maximum number of points a participant could score was 12 points.

The second dependent variable I selected was “characters’ emotional states,” which reflected participants’ explicit mention of characters’ feelings in their story retellings. Past researchers have utilized the broader variable of “references to character’s internal states,” which reflected a child’s mention of a character’s “physical, cognitive, or emotional state” (Griffin et al., 2004, p. 128), and found significant correlations between this variable and children’s other literacy skills such as reading comprehension (Griffin et al., 2004). I felt limiting the variable to emotional states better matched the scope of this research as well as the instruction provided during intervention. Characters’ emotions were emphasized through questioning during whole-group dialogic shared reading and by using “feelings” as a story grammar element during story retelling practice. The dependent variable of characters’ emotional states was measured by isolating the score for the “feelings” story grammar element. The process of scoring this element

using the rubrics shown in Appendix D was described previously. Since only one element was analyzed for this variable, the minimum score a participant could attain was 0 points and the maximum score a participant could attain was 2 points.

The third and final dependent variable for this research was “character introductions,” which served as a measure of participants’ ability to use decontextualized language in their narratives. Although additional linguistic skills—such as children’s use of temporal and causal terms—were addressed in this intervention as students practiced story retelling, I limited the dependent variable to character introductions for two reasons. First, previous research on oral narrative interventions aimed at kindergarten students found greater increases on measures of character introductions than measures of temporal and causal terms (Lever & Sénéchal, 2011), and I wanted to examine whether or not the intervention under study could replicate those results. Second, children’s use of temporal and causal terms can be difficult to quantify without the use of language analysis software, which was utilized by most previous researchers who investigated this variable.

Similar to the second dependent variable, the final variable, character introductions, was analyzed through examining one story grammar element in isolation. The rubrics in Appendix D were designed such that the ratings for the “characters” story grammar element reflected various levels of sophistication in using decontextualized language to introduce characters. I utilized previous research by Lever and Sénéchal (2011) to determine the specific words that would indicate full introduction of a character, partial introduction of a character, and inadequate introduction of a character. According to these researchers,

... a specific indefinite noun phrase such as *an elephant* or a proper name is appropriate for the introduction of a character in a story, whereas the definite

article *the* preceding *elephant* or the pronoun *she* would be appropriate only for a second or third mention of the character later in the story (Lever & Sénéchal, 2011, p. 8)

Lever and Sénéchal (2011) also utilized a three-tier point system to rate character introductions in their research, and I modeled my ratings after theirs. In this past research, children received the highest number of points if they used a proper name or a label starting with the word *a*; thus, on the retelling rubric for *The Broken Flowerpot* (Smith, 2001), participants received three points if they used the names *Katie and Joe* or the label *a brother and a sister* in their retellings. Lever and Sénéchal (2011) awarded children the middle number of points for a label that included a definite article; therefore, participants in this research received two points if they introduced the characters as *the brother and sister*. Finally, if children used pronouns to introduce a character, Lever and Sénéchal (2011) gave them the lowest number of points possible. When participants in this research introduced characters using *he, she, or they*, the participants were given zero points. The same guidelines were used to create the rating levels for the “characters” element on the *Brown Mouse Gets Some Corn* (Giles, 2001) rubric. Again, because this variable involved just one story grammar element, the minimum score a participant could achieve for character introductions was 0 points and the maximum score a participant could achieve was 2 points. The data that were obtained for all three dependent variables—story grammar elements, characters’ emotional states, and character introductions—are presented in the next three subsections.

Data for Story Grammar Elements

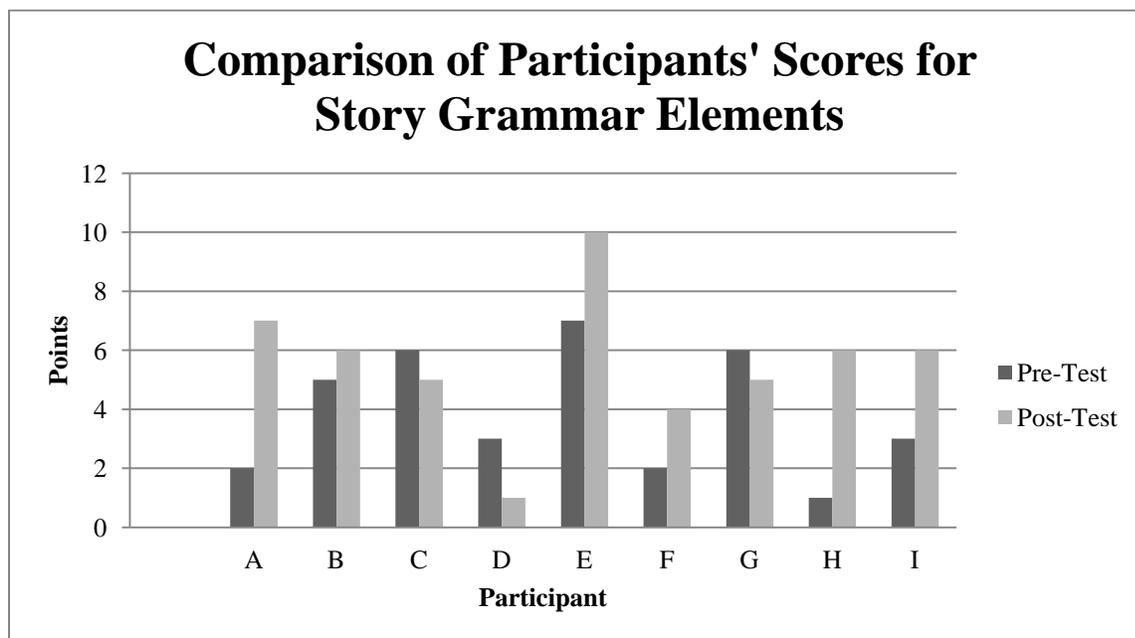
Pre-test and post-test scores for the first dependent variable, story grammar elements, were compared on two levels: individual participants and the entire participant population. In

this subsection, individual results will be reported first and group results will follow. As indicated in the previous subsection, “Data Analysis Methods,” all scores for the story grammar elements variable represent the total points participants received for the inclusion of characters, a setting, a problem, feelings, events, and a resolution in their story retellings.

Individual participants’ data for story grammar elements are presented in written format first and then in both table format and graphic format. Examining these data, six of the nine total participants had higher scores on the post-test than on the pre-test. Two participants’ scores improved by 5 points, which was the largest increase from pre-test to post-test. Again, the maximum number of points participants could score was 12. Three of the nine total participants had higher scores on the pre-test than on the post-test. Of the three participants whose scores decreased from the pre-test to the post-test, two participants’ scores went down by 1 point while one participant’s score went down by 2 points. On the pre-test, participants’ scores ranged from 1 point to 7 points while on the post-test participants’ scores ranged from 1 point to 10 points.

A secondary goal of this research was to examine the effect of intervention group size on participants’ oral narrative outcomes. In the table, participants who were in an intervention group of four students are marked with an asterisk. The remaining participants were in an intervention group comprised of six students. Three of the four participants in the smaller-sized intervention group had scores that increased from the pre-test to the post-test while four of the five participants who were in the larger-sized intervention group had scores that increased from pre-test to post-test. While these results are fairly similar, it is significant to note that both of the students who demonstrated the greatest point increase from pre-test to post-test were in the smaller-sized intervention group.

Participants' Scores for Story Grammar Elements			
Participant	Pre-Test Total Score	Post-Test Total Score	Did participant improve?
A*	2	7	Yes
B*	5	6	Yes
C*	6	5	No
D	3	1	No
E	7	10	Yes
F	2	4	Yes
G	6	5	No
H*	1	6	Yes
I	3	6	Yes



Through calculating the mean, median, and mode of all nine participants' scores, it was also possible to compare the pre-test and post-test of the entire population. On the pre-test, the mean score for story grammar elements was 3.89 points while on the post-test the mean score for story grammar elements was 5.56 points: an increase of 1.67 points. The median score for story grammar elements on the pre-test was 3 points while the median score for story grammar

elements on the post-test was 6 points: an increase of 3 points. Finally, the mode scores on the pre-test were 2 points, 3 points, and 6 points while the mode score on the post-test was 6 points.

This data is also presented in table format below.

Population Scores for Story Grammar Elements		
Measure	Pre-Test Total Score	Post-Test Total Score
Mean	3.89	5.56
Median	3	6
Mode	2, 3, 6	6

Data for References to Characters' Emotional States

Data for the second dependent variable, characters' emotional states, were analyzed at the individual participant level only. On the pre-test, only one participant explicitly mentioned the characters' feelings while on the post-test, no participants explicitly mentioned characters' feelings. Thus, eight of the nine total participants showed no increase in score for characters' emotional states from the pre-test to the post-test. One participant scored higher on the pre-test than on the post-test for this variable. Since there was such little data for characters' emotional states, the data are presented in table format only below and not in graphic format. Again, participants who were in an intervention group of four students are indicated with an asterisk in the table. Given that almost none of the participants included characters' emotions in their retellings, there were no differences to report based on intervention group-size assignment.

Participants' Scores for Characters' Emotional States			
Participant	Pre-Test Feelings Score	Post-Test Feelings Score	Did participant improve?
A*	0	0	No
B*	0	0	No
C*	2	0	No
D	0	0	No
E	0	0	No
F	0	0	No
G	0	0	No
H*	0	0	No
I	0	0	No

Data for Character Introductions

Data for the third and final dependent variable, character introductions, were also analyzed just at the level of individual participants. Five of the nine total participants had higher scores for character introductions on the post-test than they did on the pre-test. Two of the nine total participants scored the maximum score for this variable—2 points—on both the pre-test and the post-test; therefore, their scores remained the same. Finally, two participants scored 1 point for character introductions on both the pre-test and the post-test. Since there was the potential for these participants' scores to increase from the pre-test to the post-test but the scores did not improve, these participants were rated as demonstrating no improvement. Pre-test and post-test scores for each participant on the character introductions dependent variable are presented in table format below. Since the point range of this variable was so limited, it was decided that a graphic representation comparing participants' pre-test and post-test scores would not be beneficial.

The data for character introductions were also analyzed based on participants' assignment to either a smaller-sized intervention group with four students or larger-sized intervention group

with six students. Again, participants who were in an intervention group of four students are marked on the table with an asterisk. Two of the four participants who were in the smaller-sized intervention group had scores for character introductions that increased from the pre-test to the post-test. Three of the five participants who were in the larger-sized intervention group had scores that increased from pre-test to post-test. The smaller-sized intervention group and the larger-sized intervention group each had one participant who scored the maximum 2 points on both the pre-test and the post-test and each size group also had one participant whose scores decreased from the pre-test to the post-test. Since the outcomes for character introductions were nearly identical between groups, intervention group size did not seem to have an effect on this skill.

Participants' Scores for Character Introductions			
Participant	Pre-Test Characters Score	Post-Test Characters Score	Did participant improve?
A*	0	1	Yes
B*	2	2	Same
C*	1	1	No
D	0	1	Yes
E	2	2	Same
F	0	2	Yes
G	1	1	No
H*	1	2	Yes
I	0	1	Yes

Qualitative Data

Quantitative data for three dependent variables of story grammar elements, characters' emotional states, and character introductions provided some indication of how the oral narrative intervention affected participants' oral narrative skills. As I compared transcripts of each

participant's pre-test story retelling to his or her post-test story retelling, however, I found the data alone did not fully represent the growth in some participants' oral narrative skills.

Participant H was an excellent example of this phenomenon. This participant demonstrated one of the greatest score increases in the research population on the story grammar elements variable; on the pre-test, Participant H scored 1 point while on the post-test this participant scored 6 points. Participant H's scores also increased on the character introductions variable, changing from 1 point on the pre-test to the maximum 2 points on the post-test. Similar to almost all other participants, Participant H did not receive any points for characters' emotional states on either the pre-test or the post-test. Based on these data alone, one could conclude Participant H had a better understanding of story grammar elements and how to introduce characters in a narrative after participating in the oral narrative intervention. A comparison of the retelling transcripts for Participant H—which are included below—provided greater insight into how the intervention affected this participant. In the transcripts, italicized words were spoken by the researcher; words in brackets were false starts by the participant.

Participant H (pre-test): *Can you tell me the same story? What happened?*

[The Sam... I mean] the ball was there. [And then] Then Joe hear it. And they just saw. And then crash. [And there] and then flower fell. And then they look at the a really upt there. And they saw a ball. It's over there. And the pot broke. And crash. And there's a hole. And there's a broke. And [uh] flower it die.
Anything else? No.

Participant H (post-test): *Tell me what happened.* [Um] The three little mice took the corn. And go to his home. And eat the corn. And the dog wake up and

get the cat. The cat ran away. And the [I for]... [/m/] The White Mouse says that ‘We can go outside to get the corn.’ And the [Gray /m/] three little mice went to get the corn. And, I forgot. *Anything else?* No.

In the pre-test story retelling, only one sentence has more than four words whereas in the post-test retelling, the shortest sentence has four words and the longest sentence has thirteen words. The longest sentence in the pre-test retelling would not be understandable to an unfamiliar listener, but the longest sentence in the post-test retelling clearly conveys a message. The longest sentence from the post-test retelling, “The White Mouse says that ‘We can go outside to get the corn.’” is also significant in that it included dialogue: an aspect of decontextualized language that was not observed in the pre-test. A comparison of the actual transcripts revealed, therefore, how aspects of Participant H’s linguistic skill beyond those measured in this research had improved from pre-test to post-test.

Conclusion

In order to produce quality oral narratives, children must possess a range of understandings and skills. The oral narrative intervention investigated in this study sought to develop a wide range of knowledge and abilities underlying oral narratives; thus, it was necessary for research assessments to examine participants’ understanding of narrative structure as well as their ability to use linguistic devices to convey information in a narrative format. Three dependent variables were selected for analysis: story grammar elements, characters’ emotional states, and character introductions. These variables represented information students were expected to know as part of the district kindergarten curriculum and were often included in other studies of oral narrative interventions, which allowed for comparisons between this

research and previous research. Text-specific rubrics were developed to analyze participants' pre-test and post-test story retellings. These rubrics were influenced by retelling rubrics that were used as part of school district assessments as well as the scoring methods utilized in previous research.

In order to determine the effects of the intervention, individual participants' pre-test scores and post-test scores for each dependent variable were compared. For the story grammar elements variable, six of the nine participants' scores improved from the pre-test to the post-test. Although the outcomes were similar between different-sized intervention groups, both of the students who had the largest point gains from pre-test to post-test were in the smaller-sized intervention group of four students. There was also sufficient data for the story grammar elements variable to allow for comparisons of the entire population's pre-test and post-test scores. Both the mean score and the median score for story grammar elements increased from the pre-test to the post-test.

Although the majority of participants demonstrated growth on the story grammar elements variable, this outcome did not apply equally to all story grammar elements; participants rarely included references to characters' emotional states, which was the second dependent variable, in their story retellings. Only one participant explicitly mentioned characters' feelings on the pre-test while no students talked about characters' feelings on the post-test. Since almost no participants made references to characters' emotional states, there were no differences in outcome based on intervention group size.

Participants demonstrated growth on the third and final dependent variable, character introductions. Five of the nine participants' scores increased from the pre-test to the post-test on this variable; additionally, two participants scored the maximum number of points on the both

the pre-test and the post-test for this variable. The outcomes for the character introductions variable were very similar regardless of whether participants were in an intervention group of four students or six students.

Transcripts of participants' story retellings also provided rich qualitative feedback on how the oral narrative intervention affected oral narrative skills beyond the dependent variables. A comparison of one participant's pre-test and post-test retellings revealed, for example, an increase in sentence length, use of dialogue, and understandability to unfamiliar listeners after the oral narrative intervention.

The next chapter will extend the discussion of the data that was just presented by comparing the results of this study to those of past research and offering possible explanations for the results that were obtained. The strengths and limitations of this study will be discussed, and based on these conclusions, suggestions for future research in the field of oral narratives will be provided.

Chapter 5

Introduction

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

This research was intended to address a gap between the new expectations of the CCSS and current teacher knowledge and practice. The CCSS indicate kindergarten students should understand the structure of narrative texts and use this understanding to retell such texts. Although I had taught narrative retelling in a small-group intervention setting, I was not aware of research-based strategies to present this content to an entire class of students. Thus, narrative retelling became the initial focus of this study. More information about how this research relates to the CCSS is presented in the first subsection of this chapter, “Connection to Standards.”

Although the CCSS provided the initial impetus for this study, past research led to a refinement of this topic and also drove the design of this study’s intervention. As will be discussed in greater detail in the subsection “Connection to Research,” recent studies investigated retelling as part of the broader category of oral narrative skills. Several of the skills included in this broader category were shown to correlate to proficiency in other literacy domains; thus, it seemed prudent to expand the topic of this study from retelling to oral narrative

skills. The subsection “Connection to Research” will summarize the aforementioned correlations as well as review the findings of research on oral narrative interventions.

While the majority of oral narrative interventions examined in past studies resulted in growth in students’ oral narrative skills, the interventions were limited in regards to the range of oral narrative skills they addressed and their applicability to most classroom situations. The goal of this study, therefore, was to combine the most successful components of these previous interventions into a more comprehensive oral narrative intervention that could be administered by the general classroom teacher. The effects of this intervention were measured through a story retelling task administered both prior to and after intervention. The results of these assessments were presented in Chapter 4; however, they will be analyzed further in the third subsection of this chapter, “Explanation of Results.”

Any study, regardless of how well thought out, will have strengths and weaknesses. The fourth subsection, “Strengths and Limitations” will discuss how this study adds to the research literature and offer cautions about the results that were obtained. Based on previous studies, the results of this research, and the strengths and limitations of this study, the fifth and final subsection, “Recommendations” will offer suggestions for future oral narrative research.

Connection to Standards

This research arose from the adoption of the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts; thus, the two are closely connected. Under the “Reading Standards for Literature K-5,” there is a broad expectation that students should know about key ideas and details in literature. The CCSS expand upon this expectation with more specific benchmarks. One benchmark addresses students’ understanding of narrative structure and states “with

prompting and support, [students should] identify characters, settings, and major events in a story” (National Governors Association for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, p. 11). In the intervention examined in this research, students’ understanding of story grammar elements was addressed during both whole-group dialogic shared reading and small group retelling. Story grammar elements was also one of the dependent variables used to measure the effects of the intervention. A second benchmark in the CCSS addresses students’ retelling ability and states “with prompting and support, [students should] retell familiar stories including key details” (National Governors Association for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, p. 11). In this study, students practiced retelling stories during the small-group portion of the intervention. Further, this research utilized a story retelling task to measure the effects of the intervention.

Connection to Research

While the initial impetus for this study was new expectations within the CCSS for literacy, previous research influenced both the topic of the study and the intervention design. Initially, based on a review of the CCSS, I thought I would investigate story grammar elements and retelling; however, a review of three correlation studies on oral narrative skills led to a shift in my thinking. “Oral narrative skills” encompass understandings about narrative structure, such as story grammar elements, as well as linguistic skills that students utilize to produce a variety of oral narratives including retellings. In the aforementioned studies, students’ abilities to use qualifying terms, report characters’ internal states, construct cohesive narratives, and use temporal and causal connectives were correlated with their oral reading fluency (Reese et al., 2010), reading comprehension (Cain, 2003; Griffin et al., 2004), and ability to write narratives

(Griffin et al., 2004). Given that oral narrative skills addressed the story grammar expectations set forth in the CCSS as well as other linguistic skills important to telling narratives and overall literacy development, I made oral narrative skills the revised focus of my study.

With a topic selected, I then examined previous studies of oral narrative interventions. Almost all of these prior studies shared two characteristics that limited their applicability to a typical kindergarten classroom. First, nearly all previous interventions targeted a specific population—children with language delays, children with reading disabilities, or children of low socioeconomic status—so the results could not be generalized to a more diverse population. Second, almost all of these interventions were administered by an adult other than the classroom teacher, so the duration, organization, or activities were not always practical for a classroom in which there was only a teacher and no support staff. Thus, I decided to take the most successful aspects of prior interventions and combine them into a more comprehensive oral narrative intervention that could be administered to an entire class of kindergarten students.

The oral narrative intervention examined in this research utilized elements of dialogic shared reading, story grammar interventions, and heterogeneous paired practice to address a range of oral narrative skills. Dialogic shared reading was deemed an effective technique for developing children's references to characters' internal states and use of qualifying terms, dialogue, and decontextualized language in narratives (Lever & Sénéchal, 2011; Zevenbergen et al., 2003). Thus, I employed dialogic shared reading procedures during whole-class sessions to introduce the picture books that were used for intervention. Story grammar interventions led students with language impairments to produce narratives with more story grammar elements (Hayward & Schneider, 2000; Spencer & Slocum, 2010), more connectives (Davies et al., 2004; Spencer & Slocum, 2010), and greater structural complexity (Hayward & Schneider, 2000). I

decided, therefore, to utilize a story grammar approach to scaffold students' retelling practice in small groups. Since I could only meet with each small group once a week, I was concerned students would not have sufficient opportunities to practice retelling. Based on the work of McGregor (2000), who found heterogeneous paired practice improved the narrative abilities of students with less narrative skill, I decided to incorporate such paired practice into the small-group retelling portion of this intervention.

In order to measure the effects of this oral narrative intervention, participants completed a story retelling task both prior to and after intervention. Participants' narratives were analyzed for three dependent variables: story grammar elements, characters' emotional states, and character introductions. Data for each of these variables were presented in detail in Chapter 4. Based on these data, there are three major conclusions that can be drawn in response to the research question "How does an oral narrative intervention affect the narrative structure and linguistic quality of kindergarten students' story retelling?"

First, the oral narrative intervention had an overall positive effect on the narrative structure of kindergarten students' story retelling. This conclusion is based on two results; first, the majority of participants' individual scores increased from pre-test to post-test on the story grammar elements variable, and second, the mean score and median score of the entire population increased from pre-test to post-test on the story grammar elements variable. These results are comparable to the outcomes of previous research on the effects of story grammar interventions for students with narrative language delays; students included more story grammar elements in their retellings after intervention (Hayward & Schneider, 2000; Spencer & Slocum, 2010). It is important to note, however, that participants who scored higher for story grammar elements on the pre-test tended to demonstrate less growth than students who scored lower. It is

also significant to mention that both of the students with the greatest increase in score for this variable were in a smaller-sized intervention group of just four students.

The second conclusion that can be drawn in response to the research results is that the oral narrative intervention had no measurable effect on students' references to characters' emotional states. This conclusion is based on the fact that none of the nine participants referred to characters' feelings on the post-test. Since "feelings" was a story grammar element in this intervention, references to emotional states were considered a reflection of participants' narrative structure. Thus, although participants' overall understanding of narrative structure increased, this increase was not evenly distributed across all story grammar elements. This result does not match the outcomes of previous research on either maternal modeling (Harkins et al., 1994) or dialogic shared reading (Lever & Sénéchal, 2011; Zevenbergen et al., 2003): both of which resulted in children making more references to characters' internal states in post-intervention narratives. Since participants made no references to characters' emotional states, it can be assumed that assigning children to a group of four students versus a group of six students had no effect on the outcomes that were obtained.

Last, it was concluded that this intervention had a positive effect on participants' ability to properly introduce characters, which is one of several linguistic skills important for retelling stories. This conclusion was based on the finding that the majority of participants' scores for the character introductions variable increased or remained at the maximum point value from pre-test to post-test. Lever and Sénéchal (2011) also found that kindergarten students were more likely to use an appropriate term when first mentioning a character in their narratives after participating in a dialogic shared reading intervention. The results for character introductions did not vary significantly by intervention group size; thus, it seems students who practice retelling in groups

of six students are just as likely as students who practice retelling in groups of four students to improve in character introductions.

Explanation of Results

While conclusions, such as those just stated, clarify the general effects of an intervention on student learning, it is important to examine potential factors that led to these outcomes. Such hypotheses often drive future research on a particular topic: in this case, oral narratives. In this subsection, I will offer suggestions as to why certain outcomes occurred. Since my intention is to build a foundation for future research, most of the discussion will focus on outcomes that have not been documented in past research or that were surprising in light of previous studies.

For the first dependent variable, story grammar elements, two outcomes seemed to be of particular importance. First, generally speaking, participants who received a low number of points for story grammar elements on the pre-test demonstrated the greatest increases on the post-test, whereas students who scored relatively high on the pre-test demonstrated only slight increases on the post-test. Two students who scored relatively high for story grammar elements on the pre-test actually scored 1 point lower on the post-test. One possible explanation for this discrepancy in growth is that a higher initial score leaves less room for improvement. Students who scored 5 or 6 points on the pre-test were already including several story grammar elements in their narratives prior to intervention; thus, in order for their scores to increase on the post-test, these students had to include one of the few elements they missed on the pre-test or provide greater detail about an element they had spoken of in more general terms on the pre-test. This refinement of skills may be more challenging and take more time to develop than gaining an

initial understanding of story structure, as was the case for students who received low pre-test scores.

Another possible explanation for this discrepancy in growth may have to do with the quantity of modeling different students received. During the small-group portion of the intervention, all students had the opportunity to hear my retelling of the text and the group retelling of the text: both of which were intended to provide a model that was within students' zone of proximal development. Since the intervention also included heterogeneous paired practice, students with low pre-test scores had the benefit of listening to their more capable peer retell the story and, thus, had a third model that was within their zone of proximal development. The student who scored higher on the pre-test most likely did not, however, experience peer modeling that was within his or her zone of proximal development since his or her partner had lower narrative skills. Although McGregor (2000) did not find that students' narrative skills were adversely affected by listening to the narratives of a less-skilled peer, my results could indicate that heterogeneous pairing does not support the continued oral narrative development of the more capable partner.

A second outcome that seemed significant in regard to the story grammar elements variable was that students who made the largest gains from pre-test to post-test were in a smaller-sized intervention group. As explained in Chapter 3, the class was divided into three groups of six students and two groups of four students for the retelling portion of the intervention to minimize the total number of groups and make it logistically possible for me to meet with each group once per week. Both of the participants whose scores increased by 5 points—the largest gains in the population—were in an intervention group with four students. In this smaller group, students had more opportunities to participate during the group retelling of the story and, I would

hypothesize, more opportunities to receive teacher scaffolding and feedback during paired practice due to the lower teacher to student ratio. If students receive more support and feedback during the learning process, one would expect greater growth on whatever skill is being targeted.

Unlike the story grammar elements variable, for which there was an abundance of data, almost none of the participants included the second dependent variable—characters’ emotional states—in either their pre-test or their post-test retellings. This outcome may have been due to the nature of this variable and the kind of thinking it required. As described in Chapter 4, the variable “characters’ emotional states” was measured using the “feelings” story grammar element. In both of the stories used for assessment, as well as most of the stories used during the intervention itself, characters’ feelings were implied rather than explicitly stated in the text; in other words, students had to make inferences in order to know characters’ feelings. When participants had only one opportunity to listen to a text, such as in the pre-test and post-test retelling task, they may have been utilizing most of their cognitive capacity to identify and recall story grammar elements that were explicitly stated in the text—such as characters, problem, events, and resolution—and did not, therefore, have the mental resources to simultaneously make and recall inferences about characters’ feelings.

This hypothesis about the influence of inferring on participants’ inclusion of emotional states in their retellings is supported by two additional observations. Neither of the texts that were used for assessment explicitly mentioned the setting of the story; thus, similar to feelings, participants had to make inferences about setting in order to include this story grammar element in their retellings. Similar to feelings, most students did not include the setting of the story in either their pre-test or post-test retelling. Since the common trait between these two elements is

their inferential nature, one could argue that the need to make inferences is what led both elements to appear with less frequency than other elements in students' narratives.

While neither of the assessment texts mentioned the characters' feelings in response to the problem, which was what was measured by the rubric for this research, both texts explicitly stated characters' feelings in response to the resolution. These feelings did not, therefore, require an inference on the part of the listener. On the pre-test, three students who did not mention the characters' emotions in response to the problem did mention the characters' emotions in response to the resolution: the feelings that were explicitly stated in the text. The same statistic was true for the post-test; again, three students who did not mention the characters' emotions in response to the problem did mention the characters' emotions in response to the resolution. The fact that more students included the characters' emotions when these feelings were explicitly stated in the text provides further support for the theory that the added cognitive task of having to infer may have negatively impacted students' ability to include this element in their retellings.

Participants demonstrated much more growth on the third and final dependent variable, character introductions, than they did on the variable of characters' emotional states. The findings of this study, in which five of the nine total participants' scores increased from the pre-test to the post-test, are similar to the findings of Lever and Sénéchal (2011). In videotaped intervention sessions, Lever and Sénéchal (2011) noted that character introductions were recast with greater frequency than other linguistic skills. Given that students received more feedback on this skill, the researchers were not surprised by the outcomes they attained. As the person administering the intervention in this study, I agree that it is easier to recast and provide feedback on character introductions than other aspects of decontextualized language such as temporal terms or causal terms. As explained in detail in the subsection "Data Analysis Methods" of

Chapter 4, there are very specific guidelines as to what constitutes a proper introduction of a character; conversely, there are many possible temporal or causal terms that could be utilized with equal effectiveness when retelling a particular story. I would subsequently hypothesize that the more rigid nature of the “rules” for character introductions makes it easier for students to learn than the more flexible application of temporal and causal terms. Thus, interventionist feedback and ease of learning become mutually reinforcing, and students are able to demonstrate proper character introductions before other linguistic skills such as the effective use of temporal and causal terms.

The relative ease of recasting participants’ character introductions may also explain why there were very few differences in outcomes for this variable based on intervention group size. Unlike story grammar elements, which require an interventionist have more time to both attend to the story students are telling as well as recast their attempts, an interventionist can much more easily listen to the opening statement of students’ retellings and provide feedback on character introductions. Thus, for this variable, it was not as significant whether groups included four students or six students.

Strengths and Limitations

As is the case with almost any research, this study had its strengths as well as its limitations. One strength of this research is that it examined an oral narrative intervention designed to be administered to an entire, inclusive classroom of kindergarten students by the general classroom teacher. Nearly all previous studies of oral narrative interventions targeted populations with special factors such as low socio-economic status, language delays, or reading disabilities: the results of which may not be applicable to the more general population of

students most teachers have in their classrooms. The interventions in these prior studies were all led by outside interventionists who did not have the additional considerations of having to manage the rest of the classroom while administering the intervention. As a result, some of the logistics of these previous interventions were not readily applicable to a typical classroom situation. Since this research was conducted in a general education classroom setting, the intervention could be applied by other educators with far fewer modifications than past interventions. Thus, other teachers could more readily attempt to replicate or extend the results that were obtained.

While conducting this research in the general education classroom setting offered many benefits, it also presented limitations. Previous researchers strongly suggested that students' retelling skills be assessed with more than one text to reduce the effects of students having an "off" day or not having sufficient interest in or background knowledge of a particular text (Hayward & Schneider, 2000). Since participants had to be assessed individually at a time when no other participants were present, it was not possible for me to conduct more than one pre-test and post-test with participants. These same logistical concerns also led me to assess only nine students rather than the entire class. This was a small sample size which means the results of this study cannot be generalized. This is particularly true of the results that were obtained for how intervention group size affected outcomes; since there was only one group of four students and one group of six students, these results can be considered preliminary at best.

Another limitation of this study was that not all aspects of oral narrative skill that were targeted during the intervention were assessed and analyzed. In particular, it would have been beneficial to examine how the intervention affected participants' use of causal and temporal terms. These terms were informally addressed through teacher modeling and recasting students'

attempts, and it would have been informative to analyze whether or not this approach had any impact on students' performance. Unfortunately, most prior research that investigated these components of decontextualized language utilized language analysis software that was not available for this study, and as mentioned previously, the more flexible nature of temporal and causal terms made it difficult to design my own assessment for these skills.

Finally, this research may have been somewhat negatively impacted by the time of year at which it was conducted. The study began in mid-March and ended in May. By this point of the school year, students were used to certain routines as well as ways of responding to text, and I found it difficult to be introducing a topic as comprehensive as oral narrative skills so late in the year. Even more so, I had concerns about students' performances on the post-test as a result of when it was administered. In May, students participated in running record assessments of their reading skills as part of our district expectations as well as the post-test for this study. It seemed as if students were slightly overwhelmed by this much testing and began to rush to complete the assessment tasks. Post-test retellings may not, therefore, have reflected students' optimal performance.

Recommendations

Based on the results that were obtained as well as some of the strengths and limitations of this research, there are several recommendations I would make to enhance both the design of the intervention and the research itself. As alluded to in the limitations, oral narrative skills are comprised of a range of sub-skills that need to be developed over time. As such, future research should investigate how an oral narrative intervention such as this would affect students' oral

narrative skills if it was lengthened to span most, if not all, of a school year. Some previous oral narrative interventions were also conducted over one school year (Zevenbergen et al., 2003)

It would also be beneficial for future research to explore whether or not the addition of more gradual release of responsibility as well as some explicit instruction would affect student outcomes. After conducting the intervention, I realized students had very limited opportunities to independently identify story grammar elements. During whole-group dialogic shared reading of a text, these elements were identified collaboratively, and during small-group retelling practice of the same text, I assumed responsibility for recalling these elements as I provided a model retelling. If the intervention was conducted for a longer period of time, story grammar elements could be introduced more gradually as opposed to being introduced in one week as was the case in this study. After each element was introduced, students could practice identifying this element, as well as any previously introduced elements, in stories that were read aloud, shared reading texts, and guided reading texts. During this phase of the intervention, I would also suggest providing explicit instruction on the inferential nature of the “setting” and “feelings” story grammar elements as this was hypothesized to be a potential reason for participants’ lack of growth with the characters’ emotional states variable. If students were more metacognitively aware of how to extract these elements from a text, they may be more likely to include the setting as well as characters’ feelings in their oral narratives.

Just as students seemed to need more gradual release of responsibility in identifying story elements, more gradual release might also be beneficial in the retelling practice portion of the intervention. Based on the work of Spencer and Slocum (2010), the instructional steps for the small-group retelling practice followed the gradual release of responsibility model; in each session, I provided a model retelling using illustrations and icons, the group retold the story with

pictures and icons, an individual retold the story with pictures and icons, and then each student retold the story to a peer with the support of just icons. What I did not consider in designing the current intervention, however, was that over time, I needed to decrease my modeling and students needed to take more ownership of identifying the story grammar elements and then retelling the story. In other words, the steps within each session allowed for the gradual release of responsibility but, since the sessions did not change over time, responsibility was never fully transferred to students. Thus, at the time of the post-test assessment, students had to make a huge skill leap. Again, conducting the intervention over a longer period of time would allow for such gradual release of the retelling.

Another seeming shortcoming of the current oral narrative intervention was that it did not adequately support students who demonstrated some concept of narrative structure on the pre-test with continuing to develop and refine this understanding. I would suggest that future research add a component to enhance students' metacognitive awareness of narrative structure. Similar to the methods used by (Davies et al., 2004), this could include audio-taping students' oral narratives and then having children use the story grammar icons to self-assess their retelling: a task that may require some scaffolding from teachers. If students had a sheet with all of the icons and could mark which elements they included, they would have a visual representation of what was missing in their retelling as well as a visual reminder of their goal for their next retelling. Although this could be beneficial to students at all skill levels, it may be most effective with students who already have some narrative structure knowledge but consistently miss certain elements.

Finally, I would reiterate the recommendation made by Hayward and Schneider (2000) that, when logistically possible, researchers use more than one text to measure students' retelling

abilities. Although I, taking on the role of both researcher and classroom teacher, could not find adequate time to administer more than one pre-test and post-test assessment, I would have felt more confident in the results I obtained had I been able to look at trends in students' oral narrative skills across more than one text. If this intervention were conducted over a longer time period, per the first recommendation, a researcher could also acquire more data by assessing students mid-way through the intervention and again at the end of the intervention. From the perspective of a classroom teacher, results from this mid-point assessment could also be utilized to differentiate oral narrative instruction and regroup students based on common needs.

Conclusions

Despite being a relatively new area of interest in the field of literacy, one could make a strong case for the importance of oral narrative skills to children's literacy development. Facets of oral narrative skill, such as an understanding of narrative structure and an ability to retell narrative text, are identified in the new CCSS as literature benchmarks for kindergarten students. Prior research has also identified correlations between specific oral narrative skills and children's oral reading fluency, reading comprehension, and ability to write narratives.

Along with establishing the significance of oral narrative skills, past research also examined the effectiveness of various instructional techniques in promoting students' oral narrative abilities. Dialogic shared reading, story grammar interventions, and heterogeneous paired practice all positively impacted students' oral narrative skills; thus, elements from each of these techniques were utilized in this oral narrative intervention. Previous interventions were, however, limited by targeting a specific population as well as by their design: most interventions were administered in small groups by an outside interventionist. This research addressed these

limitations by having the general classroom teacher administer an oral narrative intervention to a diverse population of students.

The effectiveness of this more comprehensive oral narrative intervention was measured through three dependent variables: story grammar elements, characters' emotional states, and character introductions. Based on an analysis of the data that was obtained, this intervention was deemed effective at improving participants' understanding of story grammar elements. The extent to which this overall trend held true for individual participants was influenced, however, by participants' pre-test scores as well as the size of their intervention group. In general, students with lower initial scores and students who practiced retelling in smaller-sized groups made the greatest gains during the intervention. In both situations, students had the benefit of additional modeling and feedback from a more capable peer or adult, indicating that such interaction may be a key factor to growth in oral narrative skills.

Although students demonstrated a better overall understanding of story grammar elements after intervention, these gains were not equally distributed across all elements. This oral narrative intervention had, for example, no measurable effect on participants' references to characters' internal states, which was measured through the "feelings" story grammar element. It is hypothesized that the inferential nature of the feelings element may have made it more difficult for participants to identify this element in texts and, subsequently, include it in their retellings.

Similar to the findings for story grammar elements, this intervention had a positive effect on students' abilities to introduce characters in their narratives. There are clear "rules" as to what constitutes an appropriate character introduction and such recasting can be relatively brief; therefore, it is relatively simple for an interventionist to provide feedback on this skill. This

holds true whether a teacher is working with four or six students at a time, which may be why no significant intervention group size differences were found for this variable. Again, interaction between a student and a more capable narrator seems to be a key factor in student success.

This study has added to the research base on oral narratives by examining the effects of a comprehensive oral narrative intervention that could be replicated in other general education classrooms more readily than previous interventions. This action research design did, however, present limitations in regards to the quantity and type of assessments the researcher was able to conduct. The oral narrative intervention itself may also be enhanced through a longer time frame, the addition of more gradual release of responsibility, explicit instruction in the inferential nature of some story grammar elements, and more opportunities for metacognitive reflection, especially for those students who already have some knowledge of story grammar and retelling. By investigating how such modifications affect student outcomes, future research can continue to refine and improve upon the oral narrative intervention presented here.

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Appendix A

Verbal explanations of the story grammar elements

characters: who is in the story from the beginning to the end

setting: where the story takes place

problem: what gets in the way of the main character

feelings: how the main character feels

events: what happens that is connected to the main character's problem

resolution: how the story ends

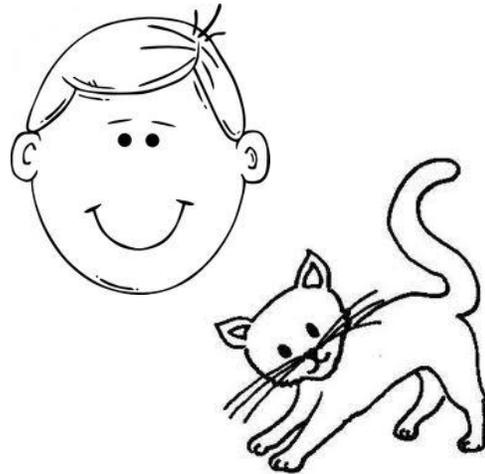
Appendix B

Story grammar icons:

(left to right, top to bottom): problem, events, feelings, characters, setting, resolution



1, 2, 3



Appendix C

Retelling scripts

Instructional steps for retelling:

1. Teacher models retelling using illustrations and story grammar icons
2. Group retelling using illustrations and story grammar icons
3. Individual retelling using illustrations and story grammar icons
4. Pairs of students take turns retelling using story grammar icons

Muncha! Muncha! Muncha! by Candace Flemming

This story is about Mr. McGreely and three bunnies. The story takes place in Mr. McGreely's garden. The three bunnies get into Mr. McGreely's garden and eat his vegetables. Mr. McGreely is angry about the bunnies eating his vegetables because he wanted to eat the vegetables himself. Mr. McGreely tries a lot of things to keep the bunnies out of his garden. First, Mr. McGreely puts a small wire fence around his garden, but the bunnies jump right over the fence. Next, Mr. McGreely builds a wall around the fence but the bunnies dig under the wall. After that, Mr. McGreely digs a trench around the wall but the bunnies swim through the trench. Last, Mr. McGreely builds a really big thing around his garden and the bunnies hop away. At the end of the story, the bunnies hide in a basket that Mr. McGreely is carrying into his garden, and they eat the vegetables he puts inside the basket. Finally, Mr. McGreely decides to just let the bunnies eat the vegetables and he eats with them!

Instructional steps for retelling:

1. Teacher models retelling using illustrations and story grammar icons
2. Group retelling using illustrations and story grammar icons
3. Individual retelling using illustrations and story grammar icons
4. Pairs of students take turns retelling using story grammar icons

Bunny Cakes by Rosemary Wells

This story is about Max and Ruby. The story takes place at Max and Ruby's house. Max and Ruby are making cakes for grandma's birthday. Max keeps spilling Ruby's ingredients. Each time something spills, Ruby sends Max to the store with a grocery list. Max wants Red Hot Marshmallow Squirters for grandma's cake. He feels frustrated because he doesn't know how to write the words on the grocery list. At the end of the story, Max draws a picture of Red Hot Marshmallow Squirters on the grocery list. The grocer finally understands what Max wants and gives him the Red Hot Marshmallow Squirters. Max feels excited.

Instructional steps for retelling:

1. Teacher models retelling using illustrations and story grammar icons
2. Group retelling using illustrations and story grammar icons
3. Individual retelling using illustrations and story grammar icons
4. Pairs of students take turns retelling using story grammar icons

A Pocket for Corduroy by Don Freeman

This story is about Lisa and her teddy bear named Corduroy. The story takes place at a Laundromat. Corduroy left the chair Lisa told him to wait on so he could look for something to make a pocket. Lisa felt worried when she couldn't find Corduroy, but she had to go home because the Laundromat was closing. Corduroy spent the night there. The next day, Lisa came back to the Laundromat and found Corduroy. When they got home, Lisa made a pocket for Corduroy. He felt satisfied because he finally got the pocket he wanted.

Instructional steps for retelling:

1. Teacher models retelling using illustrations and story grammar icons
2. Group retelling using illustrations and story grammar icons
3. Individual retelling using illustrations and story grammar icons
4. Pairs of students take turns retelling using story grammar icons

Blueberries for Sal by Robert McCloskey

This story is about Sal, Sal's Mother, Little Bear, and Mother Bear. The story takes place outside at Blueberry Hill. On one side of the hill, Sal and her mother are picking blueberries to take home and can. On the other side of the hill, Little Bear and his mother are eating blueberries to get ready for winter. Sal sits down to eat some blueberries and loses her mother. Meanwhile, Little Bear sits down to eat some blueberries and loses his mother. Sal ends up following Mother Bear and Little Bear ends up following Sal's Mother. The moms and children get all mixed up! Both mothers feel surprised and a little scared when they see the other child following them. At the end of the story, Sal's mother finds her and Little Bear's mother finds him.

Instructional steps for retelling:

1. Teacher models retelling using illustrations and story grammar icons
2. Group retelling using illustrations and story grammar icons
3. Individual retelling using illustrations and story grammar icons
4. Pairs of students take turns retelling using story grammar icons

Ira Sleeps Over by Bernard Waber

This story is about Ira and Ira's sister. The story takes place at their house. Ira is having a sleepover at his friend Reggie's house and he feels happy. Then, Ira's sister teases him about whether or not he will be able to sleep without his teddy bear. She tells him that Reggie will laugh at him if he brings his teddy bear. Now Ira feels confused; he isn't sure if he should take his teddy bear to Reggie's house or if he should leave it at home. Finally, Ira decides not to take his teddy bear. At the sleepover, Ira finds out that Reggie also has a teddy bear, so Ira goes home and gets his teddy bear.

Appendix D

Retelling rubric for *The Broken Flowerpot* (Smith, 2001)

	Not included in retelling (0 points)	Partially included in retelling (1 point)	Fully included in retelling (2 points)
Characters	Incorrect characters mentioned <i>or</i> He, she, or they	Either Katie or Joe <i>or</i> The brother and sister	Both Katie and Joe <i>or</i> A brother and sister
Setting	No setting or incorrect setting mentioned	Outside	In the yard by their house
Problem	<i>None of the following...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Katie kicked a ball over the fence. • The ball broke the neighbor's (Sally's) flowerpot. 	<i>One of the following...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Katie kicked a ball over the fence. • The ball broke the neighbor's (Sally's) flowerpot. 	<i>Both of the following...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Katie kicked a ball over the fence. • The ball broke the neighbor's (Sally's) flowerpot.
Feelings	No feelings mentioned	Sad or bad	Sorry they broke the flowerpot
Events	<i>None of the following...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They decide to make a new pot. • They got an old flowerpot out of the shed. • They painted the flowerpot. • They planted the flowers in the pot. 	<i>One or two of the following...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They decide to make a new pot. • They got an old flowerpot out of the shed. • They painted the flowerpot. • They planted the flowers in the pot. 	<i>Three or four of the following...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They decide to make a new pot. • They got an old flowerpot out of the shed. • They painted the flowerpot. • They planted the flowers in the pot.
Resolution	<i>None of the following...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They gave the flowerpot to their neighbor (Sally). • She liked her new flowerpot. 	<i>One of the following...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They gave the flowerpot to their neighbor (Sally). • She liked her new flowerpot. 	<i>Both of the following...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They gave the flowerpot to their neighbor (Sally). • She liked her new flowerpot.

Retelling rubric for *Brown Mouse Gets Some Corn* (Giles, 2001)

	Not included in retelling (0 points)	Partially included in retelling (1 point)	Fully included in retelling (2 points)
Characters	Incorrect characters mentioned <i>or</i> He, she, or they	<i>One or two of the following...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brown Mouse, White Mouse, or Gray Mouse <i>or</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mice 	<i>All of the following...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brown Mouse, White Mouse, and Gray Mouse <i>or</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three little mice
Setting	No setting or incorrect setting mentioned	In a house	In a house by some corn
Problem	<i>None of the following...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mice wanted to get (or eat) some corn. There was a cat by the corn. 	<i>One of the following...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mice wanted to get (or eat) some corn. There was a cat by the corn. 	<i>Both of the following...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mice wanted to get (or eat) some corn. There was a cat by the corn.
Feelings	No feelings mentioned	Mad or sad	Worried the cat would eat them
Events	<i>None of the following...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mice saw a dog sleeping outside. They jumped on the dog's tail. The dog woke up and chased the cat. The cat ran away. 	<i>One or two of the following...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mice saw a dog sleeping outside. They jumped on the dog's tail. The dog woke up and chased the cat. The cat ran away. 	<i>Three or four of the following...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mice saw a dog sleeping outside. They jumped on the dog's tail. The dog woke up and chased the cat. The cat ran away.
Resolution	<i>None of the following...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mice got some corn. The mice ate (or liked eating) corn. 	<i>One of the following...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mice got some corn. The mice ate (or liked eating) corn. 	<i>Both of the following...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mice got some corn. The mice ate (or liked eating) corn.