

THE EFFECTS OF THE USE OF RETELLINGS
ON THE LISTENING COMPREHENSION
OF FIRST GRADE STUDENTS

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effects of direct teaching of the use of retellings on the listening comprehension of twenty-two first grade students from a public elementary school in Western New York. The examiner administered the listening comprehension portion of The Bader Reading and Language Inventory to determine the students' listening comprehension levels prior to completing the treatment. The students were also asked to do a retelling, which was recorded on audiotape, prior to the treatment.

Each student spent two months participating in the direct instruction of the use of retellings. The procedure was modeled and the students were given many opportunities for practice doing their own retellings. At the conclusion of the two months the students' listening comprehension was tested again to obtain posttest scores. The students were also recorded doing a second retelling to be compared with the first in order to examine their use of the story parts in their retellings.

An independent t test for independent means at the .05 level of significance was used to determine the effects of the direct teaching of the use of retellings on the students' listening comprehension. The results revealed that the direct teaching of the use of retellings significantly increased students' listening comprehension. The findings, consistent with previous research, support the claim that the teaching and use of retellings in the classroom facilitate comprehension of text.

CHAPTER I

Statement of the Problems

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects direct teaching of the use of retellings has on the listening comprehension of first grade students' and their ability to retell a story.

NEED FOR STUDY

With many individual teachers and school districts moving towards the goal of more authentic performance based assessment of students' abilities, there is an increased need to gain more information about the use of retellings to evaluate a students' comprehension. As teachers begin using running reading records and retellings as assessment tools, they will need to explore ways to use retellings in their classrooms in order to make students aware of the reading strategy. If teachers are using retellings as a way of assessing student's comprehension, without training them in the techniques,

then they are expecting students to understand what their idea of the components of a retelling are without modeling and giving students the opportunity to practice. It has been found that some teachers feel retellings are too time consuming and are not beneficial enough to provide teaching and practice time for students. Having more knowledge of the information that can be gained from using retellings as an assessment tool may encourage teachers to use retellings as an assessment alternative.

It is important for teachers to explore a variety of instructional strategies to enhance students' comprehension. Investigating the effect of using training to improve students' retellings will help teachers to make decisions of how they wish to use the strategy in their classrooms. Teachers need to know more about what students might learn as a result of engaging in the process of retelling. Having more knowledge of how retellings can improve students' listening comprehension and understanding of the parts of a story can help

teachers when planning instruction to give students the opportunities they need to practice the comprehension strategy in the classroom. For retellings to be included in the everyday instructional program, research must be conducted to measure and demonstrate their educational value.

QUESTIONS

The present study was designed to answer the following questions:

- Is there a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest mean scores of listening comprehension of first grade students following the direct teaching and use of retellings?
- What are the effects of direct teaching on children's retellings of stories?

DEFINITION OF TERMS

In this study the following terms are used and are defined as follows:

Retelling: An active procedure which involves children in reconstructing literature. Students are asked to tell what they remember from a story to which they have listened. It requires students to construct a personal rendition of the text by making inferences based on the original text and prior knowledge. (Gambrell, L.B., Heathington, B.S., Kapinus, B.A., & Koskinen, P.S., 1988).

Story Structure: A general mental model of what stories are like and how they can be interpreted.

Listening Comprehension: The ability to understand and discuss the details of stories that have been heard.

Story Grammar: The description of typical elements found frequently in stories.

Story Schema: People's conceptions of how a typical story is organized from beginning to end.

Setting: Describes the time, place, and the central character.

Theme: A general overall statement of what the story is about, which consists of the initiating event and goal.

Goal: The major desire of the main character of the story.

Initiating Event: The event in the story which leads the main character to formulate his or her major goal and starts the sequence of actions and events.

Plot: Episodes by the character that lead to the attempts to achieve the goal or solve the problem in the story.

Resolution: The final consequence of the story, goal attainment or resolution of the problem.

Reactions: The reactions of characters to the events.

Personal Response: A student's personal feelings about the events in the story included in a retelling.

SUMMARY

The present study was designed to further investigate the effects of the direct teaching and use of retellings on the listening comprehension of first grade students. Research supports the use of retellings to improve listening comprehension. It is necessary to investigate just how beneficial using retellings in the classroom can be for students. This form of performance based assessment is time consuming and requires teaching and practice time for students to familiarize them with the technique. Therefore, teachers need to be

convinced that this is a teaching and assessment strategy to which they can commit themselves and make part of their everyday instructional program.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect direct teaching of the use of retellings has on the listening comprehension of first grade students and their ability to retell a story.

History of Retellings

"Retellings of stories, having students write or tell you everything they can remember about a story, have been used for the past 60 years to gather data in an amazing range of language based inquiries" (Kalmbach, 1986, p 326). Piaget used retellings to examine children's conceptions of time in 1926. Retellings have also been used to study memory, differences between oral and written language, and even the ways people from different cultures tell stories. "In retelling a story the student must reconstruct the events

and major concepts presented in a textural passage rather than respond to pre-established questions which frequently contain clues to the expected response." (Hansen, 1978, p. 62). Story retellings can be used as an alternative to questioning techniques for evaluating children's ability to retrieve and integrate information obtained through reading.

"The past decade has marked an acceleration in the use of retellings in research studies and for assessment purposes." (Mitchell & Irwin, 1983, p 391). Much of the earlier research studied the use of retellings as an assessment tool of reading comprehension and oral language skills. Telfer (1987) states that there are several potential benefits to using story retelling. The first one that he mentions is an increase in students' comprehension. Story retelling can help to improve sequencing skills, summarizing skills, and the ability to identify important details all of which are skills related to comprehension. Retelling emphasizes the holistic nature of reading. It uses the story as a whole instead of breaking it into isolated parts. It increases students' ability to use language. Students increase their memory for the material read. Finally students can practice doing

retellings on their own outside of the classroom setting without the use of special materials or teachers to ask them specific questions. While retelling has played a large role in research as an assessment task, it has recently been suggested as an active instructional strategy for enhancing reading comprehension. More recent studies begin to look at the effect of the practice of retellings on students' comprehension.

Retelling As An Assessment Tool

In story retelling a teacher can tell or read a short story to students individually in a quiet setting or a student can be asked to read a short story silently. The child is then asked to tell the story and his/her version is taped and/or written down for later review. Retellings can provide evaluators with a variety of pieces of useful information about the reader. Retellings involves skills of comprehension, organization and expression. Retellings, not only can tell what the reader recalls from the story, but what the reader adds to or infers from the text, how the reader is able to organize the elements of a story, and how the reader can express the story using a variety of language skills.

Because students give retellings in their own language, retellings offer a perspective not available through other means of assessing comprehension, such as questioning or cloze procedures (Mitchell & Irwin, 1983, p. 391).

Kalmbach (1986) examined three approaches to the assessment of retellings. The assessments of recall compared retellings to an analysis of the original story. An analysis of the organizing strategies focused on how a retelling is organized as a text in itself independent of the original story. They are both concerned with analyzing the tests students create when they retell. Neither of these forms allow for consideration when the student digresses from the story to add his or her own comments or relate it to his or her own life. Students' digressions will often tell you more about their reading strategies than the reading itself will (Kalmbach, 1986). The third approach to retellings, called "whole readings", looks at retellings holistically, rather than analyzing minute details of the retelling. A holistic scoring continuum can be used to rate the retelling from poor to excellent. The ideal is a retelling that includes recall as well as generalizations beyond the text. Whole readings provide a good way

to compare large groups of retellings. They enable the retelling to go beyond the narrative to include evaluative statements, character analysis, and efforts to relate stories to the reader's life. Kalmbach (1986) notes that recall assessments and analysis of organizing strategies tend to be most useful with individual students to seek insight into their reading strategies and comprehension skills. Whole readings can provide a good analysis of a class as a whole, but provide little insight as to why individual students are scoring as they are. Each of these approaches to assessing retellings appear to have both strengths and weaknesses. No one approach to retelling will meet everyone's needs. Each teacher has his or her differing ideas of the kind of information he or she wishes to take from the assessment. A variety of approaches to assessing retellings allows the teacher to make a decision about which form of assessment is appropriate at the time for what he or she is trying to learn about the student.

Each reader's retelling is unique. It reflects the individual's personality and understanding. Retellings need to be assessed as a whole as a result of this. This causes the evaluation of individual retellings to be more difficult. It is believed that principles of holistic

grading can be used to evaluate retellings (Mitchell & Irwin, 1983). Checklists and criteria have been devised to identify characteristics of different levels of richness of retellings that can be used to compare various levels. Effective evaluation requires a standard set of criteria to evaluate the completeness of the retelling (Marshall, 1983). As a student orally retells the story, the elements of story grammar are scored. Mitchell and Irwin (1983) note that teachers need to be aware of several factors that may cause retellings to vary. The age development and proficiency of the reader may cause differences in the levels of retellings. Pickert and Chase (1978) note that children who are not read to perform poorly because they lack the experience of reconstructing a detailed sequence of events. It has also been found that children from different cultures believe they should provide imaginative interpretations of the story. Goodman (1982) found that the set of schemata and experiences which readers bring to their reading cause differences among readers' retellings. A student's level of understanding and knowledge of story grammar and text structure can affect his or her ability to reflect on the story as a whole text instead of various isolated parts.

Pickert (1980) cautioned that certain aspects of story retelling can make it a particularly difficult task for young children. Pickert's (1980) study included thirty-five kindergarten children from two private middle class schools in the Washington D.C. area and 28 first graders from the same school. The students were asked to retell a brief story to test for accuracy in character identification and event sequencing. After retelling the story they were asked to listen as a puppet retold the story again. They were told that not all that the puppet would say would be correct. If they heard him say something wrong they were told that they should stop him and make corrections. The puppet's version omitted all reference to character names, using pronouns instead. Children were then asked a series of open ended questions designed to assess their understanding of the storyteller's role. The most common errors among the kindergarten children retellings were found in meaning, organization and expression, with at least 70% making one or more errors. The first graders made the most errors in expression in their retellings. The most frequent error made by first graders, for example, was their use of pronouns without first identifying the character for whom they were speaking.

It appeared that most of the children knew the story, so they understood the puppet's version using the pronouns and were satisfied with it. "Only half of the kindergartners commented on the unidentified pronouns in the puppets version of the story, while three quarters of the first graders noticed this mistake" (Picket, 1980, p. 13). It was found that most students who did not recognize the puppet's pronoun errors made the same errors themselves.

Young children may have difficulty with properly identifying story characters. Young children who are asked to retell a story or answer comprehension questions immediately after hearing or reading a story may remember it so clearly that they do not see the need to include explicit details about it to others. Children may also believe that the teacher who is asking about the story already knows about the story. They must learn that even though the teacher knows the story, the retelling of it must be accurate and complete. These aspects of children's thinking are important to keep in mind when evaluating young children's retellings as they lack the skills necessary to be sophisticated communicators.

French (1988) examined the language arts program at Kendall Demonstration Elementary School and its use of story retelling for both assessment and instructional purposes. Evidence of the validity of story retellings as an assessment procedure was demonstrated through a high correlation between the retelling scores and such assessment procedures as SAT-HI reading comprehension and Language Proficiency level scores (French, 1988). A score sheet was developed for each story including the important parts of the story that the examiner should be evaluating when listening to a student's retelling. The students are asked to read a story silently to themselves, and then they are asked to retell the story. After the student is done, prompting through own open-ended questions is allowed. The assessment score sheets contain information about the characters and their development, the events, plot and theme of the story. Each category is allotted points according to the importance of the information in the story. The evaluator was allowed the flexibility to modify the scoring sheet to allow for information that the students included in their retelling that was not on the original scoring sheet. "After administering several retellings of materials at various levels, the evaluator should have a fairly valid assessment of the students'

level of comprehension, provided that materials have been selected that do not contain concepts, that are foreign to the students" (French, 1988, p. 221). Through their use of retellings it has been their experience that students at the elementary level may comprehend a story but be unable to summarize the plot or express the theme.

Finally, it is also very important for the evaluator to be aware of the text structure and content of the story he or she is using during evaluation. If a particular story does not include a part of the story grammar that is on the checklist being used to score the retelling, then the child can not be expected to include that in his or her retelling and should not lose points for failing to do so. "The retelling performance checklist assesses students' reading emphasizing comprehension as an integrated process rather than as isolated skills" (Marshall, 1983 p. 620). "By keeping in mind the differences that age, experience, culture, and individual learning styles have on children performance teachers can use this approach profitably to learn more about the language of the children in their classroom" (Pickert & Chase, 1978, p. 53).

Retelling as an Instructional Strategy for Comprehension

Researchers have studied the importance of allowing students to be actively involved in the reading experience to enhance the development of comprehension.

In French's (1988) study of KDES language arts program he found that retellings were used as an instructional tool as well as an assessment tool. Students participated in a group retelling of a story. They learned from each other the kinds of information that was important in retelling a story. They were encouraged to question each other for accuracy and details as they all contributed information. Teachers of younger students aided the understanding of a story by using pictures and props to discuss different parts of the story. Various instructional strategies were being used with older students. Story maps were used as a framework to the important components of a story. Diagrams were used to illustrate the important events in the story. Retellings were used while reading a long story by breaking it into parts, retelling it as it was read, and making predictions about what would happen next. Through much instructional practice of retellings students became familiar with which parts of a story were

critical to an understanding of the story as a whole. French (1988) noted that weaker students benefit from hearing the ideas of readers who comprehend the story and have good communication skills. Instructional retellings can provide the teacher with an estimate of the group's understanding. The information they provide can be used in planning appropriate follow up activities involving various aspects of the story.

Morrow (1985, p. 870) stated, "Retelling stories is another active procedure that may aid comprehension, concept of story structure, and oral language." Several researchers agree that young children do have their own ideas of what makes up the parts of a story. The number of story elements a child includes in his or her retelling seems to be determined by age. Children from preschool to the beginning of first grade generally include settings, beginnings, and outcomes in their stories (Johnson & Mandler, 1977). Johnson and Mandler (1977) found that students in the elementary grades will also include reactions, attempts, and endings. Researchers are still examining the impact of a student's understanding of a story structure on his or her ability to understand and retell a story. Whaley (1981)

found children who are not aware of story structure tell fractured stories with various elements missing, or out of sequential order. Page and Stewart (1985, p. 16) stated that "Children who are unable to understand stories may have difficulty reading and comprehending story based material, telling or writing stories, or simply recounting events that have happened."

Most children seem to develop story grammar naturally through repeated experiences with stories and story like events. Golden (1984) examined some samples of children's retelling in an attempt to learn more about children's sense of story. The study involved a group of first, second, and third graders. The teacher read and discussed a story with them. The children were then asked to retell the story individually. The retellings were looked at to determine which story elements the children drew upon. The first and second grade students' retellings were similar in that they had some sense of the original stories in terms of the main events and basic sequences. They both lacked the inclusion of story details. The third grade students focused on the turning point and ending of the story. Their retellings elaborated more specifically on some of the details and

character attributes in the study. This study suggests that as children develop their concept of story, they include more of the plot structure, the setting and the attributes and reactions of the characters in their retellings.

McConaughy (1980, p. 164) states that "incorporating story structure into teaching strategies may actually take some of the mystery out of reading for many children." In her 1980 study, McConaughy studied the difference between younger children's, middle age children's, and adult's story schema through analyzing the subjects' retellings. She identified three types of story schema, in her study. A simple story schema would be demonstrated by a retelling that included only the beginning and ending components of a story. It would include only details that were specifically stated in the story. As the reteller begins to make inferences about the story using his or her prior knowledge, he or she is using higher levels of comprehension. Adult retellings represent the use of the highest level of schema as they relate the story to their own personal social experiences.

Understanding the difference between children's and adult's story schema is important when making decisions about evaluating retellings and using story structure as a strategy for comprehension.

Retellings and Learning Disabled Students

The Hansen (1978) study compared the ability of average and learning disabled readers to retell orally read stories of different difficulty levels. The purpose of this comparison was to determine whether these children revealed differences in the amount or structure of their story retells. The retellings of both groups were also compared with comprehension scores obtained through direct questions in an attempt to determine the extent to which questions and story retellings were related.

The study included 34 fifth and sixth grade students from a suburban elementary school in Pennsylvania. One half of the student included in the study were identified as learning disabled and attended special education classes. The remaining students attended regular classes and were of average intelligence. The first, third, and fifth grade oral reading stories of the Durrell Analysis of Reading

Difficulty were used. The first grade story was used to familiarize the students with the task. The students were asked to read the passage orally and then retell the story in individual sessions. The retelling was recorded for later review. After the student retold the story, the examiner orally read the comprehension questions provided by the Durrell.

A significant difference ($p < .01$) was noted only on the students' ability to relate main ideas. No significant differences were found between the groups on the supporting details contained in their retells. The correlations between the percentage of actual ideas included in the retellings and the scores on comprehension question were significant for both groups at each level of reading difficulty. The highest correlations were noted on the grade three story for average readers ($r = .77$) and learning disabled students ($r = .61$). It was found that students who were more fluent when retelling the story tended to obtain higher scores on the comprehension questions. Thus, this study suggests that learning disabled students' reading comprehension may be enhanced merely by encouraging them to retell a story more fully (Kalmbach, 1978). Specific instruction and practice in doing retellings, by differentiating between main ideas and

supporting details, may benefit these students. Examining the retellings of learning disabled students may provide insight into the specific comprehension deficits of the student.

The Effects of Practice of Retellings

Several of the studies examined the effect practice of retellings would have on the student's retelling ability and comprehension. The Gambrell, Kapinus, and Koskinen (1991) study investigated the effects of practice in retelling on the reading comprehension performance of proficient and less proficient fourth grade readers. After only four practice sessions in which students engaged in retelling, an improvement in reading comprehension performance for both proficient and less proficient readers was observed. Retellings allow the reader to rehearse the organization of the text information. The students in this study did not receive explicit teacher instruction in retelling. The study established that simple practice in retelling enhances story structure awareness and the quality of retellings for both proficient and less proficient readers. Thus, in this study the use of retellings affected how much was learned as well as what was learned.

Morrow (1985) found that young children in nursery schools and kindergartens were not being given the chance to retell stories after reading. A study was conducted to compare the effect of retelling after hearing or reading a story to illustrating pictures about the story. A significant improvement ($p < .05$) was found for the retelling group over the drawing group on comprehension test scores.

A second study was undertaken to determine if frequent practice in retelling with guidance might have a greater effect. The children were read eight stories over a period of eight weeks. The students in the retelling group were guided in their retellings by adults who focused on the stories' structural framework. Results of pre and posttests of comprehension were analyzed for responses to "traditional" literal, inferential, and critical questions, for responses to questions about story structure; and for total responses to both kinds of questions. Once again the retelling group made the significant improvement ($p < .001$). The study established that frequent retellings with guidance can produce greater improvement in comprehension (Morrow, 1985).

The study conducted by Gambrell, Pfeiffer, and Wilson (1985) also compared the effects of retelling with illustrating as learning strategies to improve comprehension. No directed teacher instruction was given for either the retelling or illustrating treatment groups. Children who engaged in retelling recalled significantly more than those who illustrated both immediately following reading and on delayed recall. "The results of this study suggest that retelling has direct, beneficial consequences on children's processing of text information" (Gambrell, Pfeiffer, & Wilson, 1985, p.219).

Morrow's (1986) study sought to determine if frequent retellings with structural guidance could improve kindergarten children's use of structural elements in retellings and increase the oral language complexity of the stories. After having a story read to them one group was asked to draw a picture about the story they had just heard. The other group was asked to retell the story on a one on one basis as if they were telling it to a friend. The retellings were evaluated using checklists to observe for story grammar elements. The results indicated that frequent practice and guidance in story retelling had a positive effect on improving children's oral dictation of

original stories. Morrow's study suggested that "retelling stories not only can enhance awareness of structural elements within stories that leads in turn to improved dictations of original stories, but also can improve ability to retell stories generally, to comprehend stories, and to nurture growth in language ability" (1986 p. 149).

CHAPTER III

Design of the Study

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects direct teaching of the use of retellings has on the listening comprehension of first grade students and their ability to retell a story.

NULL HYPOTHESIS

There will be no statistically significant difference between the mean pre and post scores of listening comprehension as measured by The Bader Reading and Language Inventory after completing the treatment.

METHODOLOGY

Subjects:

This study involved twenty-two heterogeneously grouped first grade students from a suburban, public elementary school in Western New York. The study began in the fall of first grade and continued into winter.

Materials:

Tape recordings of students' retellings before and after the direct teaching of the procedure examined. A modified retelling checklist was used to examine and compare the parts of story used in each student's retelling. (see Appendix A) The Bader Reading and Language Inventory was administered to each student to determine pre and post listening comprehension levels.

Procedures:

The teacher read the story "If You Give A Moose a Muffin" by Laura Joffe Numeroff to the group of students who were asked to do the retelling on that day. The students were called to do individual retellings that were taped to be analyzed later. The students were

asked to retell the story as though they were talking to a friend who had never heard the story. A retelling checklist was used to note how much information about the story the students included in their retellings. If prompts were needed to encourage students to continue their retellings, the teacher used prompts such as "Then what happened?" or "What happened next?" The teacher noted whether their retelling was prompted or unprompted when analyzing their retellings. This first retelling was examined and compared to a second retelling that was done following two months of direct teaching of the use of retellings. The second taped retelling was done using the same procedure with the book "There is an Alligator Under My Bed" by Mercer Mayer.

Prior to the beginning of direct teaching the teacher used The Bader Reading and Language Inventory to determine the listening comprehension level of each student. The teacher read a graded story to the student and asked the student to retell the story to determine the unprompted memories of the student. A checklist was used for each story to check off the elements used by the student in the retelling. Then the teacher asked the comprehension questions for the story to

determine the prompted memories of the student. The number of memories by each student was used to identify the level of listening comprehension. The students' listening comprehension was evaluated using the same procedure following the direct teaching and practice of the use of retellings at the end of the study.

During the direct teaching of the use of retellings, the teacher began by modeling the process of doing a retelling using a story with which most students are familiar. The teacher will retold the story of "Cinderella." The teacher will introduced the parts of the story and labeled them as the story was told. Each time a story was read the teacher modeled for students how to do a retelling. Fairy tales were used to give students practice with using story structure to recall and discuss the parts of a story. The students had opportunities to work in groups to find parts of a story. Students were taught how to use a story map to organize the information they need to remember from a story. After teaching all the parts that go into making a "good" retelling, the teacher provided the students with many opportunities to practice the procedure.

After two months of direct teaching and practice of doing retellings, the post assessment of the students' retellings was performed.

Analysis of Data:

The students' retellings were taped before and after direct teaching of the use of retellings. They were analyzed to determine similarities and differences in students' retellings. The results of the retelling checklist were calculated and compared to identify the parts of story students included in their retellings before and after the teaching of retellings. The results of the pre and post test of listening comprehension were compared to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the mean pre and post test scores.

LIMITATIONS

The limitations of this study are as follows:

- The sampling is small and includes an uneven balance of high, average, and low ability students.

- The study does not control for students with weak verbal skills.
- The initial retelling is recorded under conditions that are unfamiliar for the students, which may cause some students to be nervous or anxious, affecting their responses.
- The students may have heard the stories being used for the retellings before.
- The students' listening comprehension skills may have been influenced by other factors in the school day or curriculum during the time the study was conducted.

SUMMARY

This study was designed to investigate the effects of direct teaching of the use of retellings on the listening comprehension of a group of first grade students. The listening comprehension scores on pre and post tests of listening comprehension were compared to determine whether a statistically significant difference between the

two scores existed. A modified retelling checklist was used to identify the part of story grammar students included in their retellings' before and after the teaching of retellings.

CHAPTER IV

Analysis of the Data

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects direct teaching of the use of retellings has on the listening comprehension of first grade students and their ability to retell a story.

ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS

The following null hypothesis was investigated in this study:

There will be no statistically significant difference between the mean pre and post scores of listening comprehension as measured by The Bader Reading and Language Inventory after completing the treatment.

PRETEST FINDINGS

A pretest was conducted at the first grade level prior to the direct teaching of the use of retellings to determine a listening comprehension score.

Table 1 Pretest Listening Comprehension Scores

n	\bar{x}	s.d.
22	4.18	2.17

Note: Maximum Score 9

As indicated by the results of the listening comprehension test given at the beginning of the study, the mean raw comprehension score was 4.18, with a standard deviation of 2.17.

POSTTEST FINDINGS

A posttest was conducted with the same students at the end of the study to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the pre and post test scores.

Table 2 Posttest Listening Comprehension Scores

n	\bar{x}	s.d.
22	5.77	1.4

Note: Maximum Score 10

As indicated by the results of the listening comprehension test given at the end of the study, the mean raw comprehension score was 5.77, with a standard deviation of 1.4.

A t test of dependent means at the .05 level of significance was used to determine whether the difference between the mean of the pre comprehension test score and the mean of the post comprehension test score was statistically significant.

These data are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Two-tailed t test of Significant Difference on the Mean Comprehension Test Scores

Test	\bar{x}	s.d.	t	p
Pre	4.18	2.17	3.83	0.5
Post	5.77	1.41		

Note: degrees of freedom = $42(n1-1) + (n2-2) = n1 + n2 - 2$

The calculated t value was 3.83. For a two-tailed test set at the .05 level of significance, the critical value for 42 degrees of freedom is 2.02. The calculated t value was greater than the critical t value. The null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, there was a statistically significant difference between the pre and post test scores given in this study.

INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

The present study was designed to determine whether or not the direct teaching of the use of retellings significantly affects the listening comprehension of first grade students. An analysis of the data from the pre and post test indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean test scores. The null hypothesis was rejected. The evidence suggested, then, that the direct teaching of retellings significantly affected the listening comprehension of first grade students of varying levels of ability.

ANALYSIS OF THE CHECKLIST OF RETELLING BEHAVIORS

The results of the retelling checklist show that at the time of the first retelling the students would most often include the goal or problem in the story, attempts at solving the problem, and the resolution, without prompting. (see Appendix B) With prompting the students could usually name the characters in the story. When naming the characters without prompting it was observed that some of the students would often use pronouns to talk about the characters without identifying them first.

Even with prompting the students, at this time, either omitted or had difficulty retelling the theme, setting, reactions of the characters and their personal responses. Many of the students were timid at first and needed much prompting to get them started with the retelling. In examining the first retellings it was noticed that the students left out many details and often did not explain the events of the story in the proper sequence.

Improvement was seen in the inclusion of all story parts from the first retelling to the second. The majority of the students could identify the setting, characters, goal or problem, attempts, resolution and personal response on their own or with minimal prompting. There was an improvement in the number of students who could identify the theme and the reactions of the characters with prompting, however, many of the students still had difficulty identifying these parts of the story.

It was observed that the students were much more comfortable with the task of retelling a story during the second retelling. They would begin their retellings quickly without hesitation or teacher

prompting. The students began using the actual names to identify the parts of story that they were taught in class, during their retellings. The use of pronouns to label characters without identifying them first was not observed as often in the second retellings. The students were now retelling the parts of the story in the sequence they occurred in the story. The students' second retellings represented a more detailed, accurate understanding of what had happened in the story. The students appeared to have a better understanding of the parts of a story and how to do a retelling. This was reflected in the results of the retelling checklist.

SUMMARY

An analysis of the data from this study indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the pre and post test scores of listening comprehension. The results favored the use of direct teaching of the use of retellings to improve listening comprehension. Informal observations done through the retelling checklist also favored the use of retellings to improve a student's ability to understand and recognize the various parts of a story.

CHAPTER V

Conclusions and Implications

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects direct teaching of the use of retellings has on the listening comprehension of first grade students and their ability to retell a story.

CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of the data from this study indicated a statistically significant difference between the mean pre and post test scores of listening comprehension. These findings, consistent with previous research, support the claims that the direct teaching of the use of retellings facilitates the listening comprehension of students with varying levels of ability.

In addition, informal observations indicated that most the students had a better understanding of the parts of a story and how to do retelling with minimal prompting.

Following the direct teaching of retellings the students appeared much more confident in their ability to retell a story on their own.

The results of this study should provide some evidence to teachers who feel the teaching of retellings is too time consuming, that the direct teaching of retellings is a worthwhile productive teaching strategy that is easily incorporated into everyday classroom activities. Teachers can be motivated by the understanding that all children can benefit from using retellings.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Research supports the use of retellings to enhance a variety of skills in the classroom. Retellings can be used as an instructional strategy as well as an assessment tool to teach and evaluate a student's reading comprehension, knowledge of story structure, and oral language abilities.

Children of all ages should be surrounded by a wide variety of literature that they may read on their own or have read to them.

They should be given opportunities to retell stories, they have listened to or read, daily.

When discussing stories teachers should model the technique of retelling a story using the names of the parts of a story to identify the story structure. Students can be guided when practicing their own retellings using these prompts once they have learned what the various parts of story represent. Teachers can guide students by using question prompts that require open ended thoughtful answers. They may also provide students with story maps that can be used as a graphic organizer to allow students to organize the parts of story in writing.

Allowing students to listen to other students do retellings can provide them with practice in recognizing and listening for the parts of a story. Students can work in small groups or with a partner and help each other by noting positives and giving suggestions of information that could be added to make the retelling more interesting and accurate.

Retellings can be used in classrooms to introduce and practice important comprehension skills, such as, identifying important details, summarizing, and finding the main idea of a story. They encourage higher level thinking skills and require the student to go beyond a one word answer to a question.

Children should be encouraged to write stories. Retellings can aid in their knowledge of story grammar and help them to see the connection between reading and writing.

Teachers can use retellings as an informal assessment tool. They may take the information gained through the retelling and use it to make instructional decisions. Follow-up activities may be developed using certain strategies to teach specific skills that are in need of reteaching. Teachers need to develop their own models of what a retelling should consist of and how to evaluate students' retelling prior to using them in the classroom, so that they can be consistent in their use of retellings in the classroom.

One of the most important classroom implications that using retellings can have is the reinforcement of the idea that reading is not just a task of calling out words. By discussing what they have read students begin to understand that there is a purpose to reading and that they should always be reading for meaning.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

Further investigations into the effectiveness of using retellings as an instructional strategy for improving listening and reading comprehension are suggested. The results to date indicate that having students use retellings has a positive effect on their ability to remember the events of a story and build their knowledge of story structure. It would be interesting to conduct longitudinal studies comparing students' comprehension levels who have used retellings throughout their reading instruction and those who have only used traditional questioning.

Further research needs to be completed to determine how retellings can best be used as an instructional technique in classrooms. It is also important that researchers continue to test and

examine ways that teachers can use retellings to assess students in their classrooms in a way that allows them to obtain useful data that can be reported to parents and administrators.

More research is needed to investigate whether retellings can be beneficial for proficient and less proficient readers. Most of the research used for this study focused on young students from kindergarten to third or fourth grade. Further research is needed on the use of retellings in intermediate and secondary classrooms. It would be interesting to study how the use of retellings affects students' interest in reading compared to students who do not use retellings.

Further research could also examine how the use of retellings affects students' ability to write stories. They may examine if there is an increased interest in story writing and whether their stories are more organized and reflective of good story grammar.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of the direct teaching of the use of retellings on the listening comprehension of first graders. Students in the study were evaluated prior to the direct teaching of the use of retellings to determine a listening comprehension pretest score. The students were then evaluated at the conclusion of the direct teaching to determine a listening comprehension posttest score. Analysis of the data revealed a statistically significant difference between the mean pre and posttest scores. These results are consistent with previous research.

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APPENDIX A

CHECKLIST OF RETELLING BEHAVIORS

RETELLING CONTAINS									
STUDENT NAME	DATE	THEME	SETTING	CHARACTER	GOAL/ PROBLEM	ATTEMPTS	RESOLUTION	REACTIONS	PERSONAL RESPONSE
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									
11									
12									
13									
14									
15									
16									
17									
18									
19									
20									
21									
22									
23									
24									
25									

LEGEND:

- + mentioned on own, no prompting
- o mentioned after question or prompt
- failed to mention after question or prompt

APPENDIX B

Appendix B Retelling Checklist Results

	First Retelling Results			Second Retelling Results		
	Did Not Mention	Unprompted	Prompted	Did Not Mention	Unprompted	Prompted
Theme	73%	9%	18%	41%	50%	9%
Setting	86%	14%	0%	5%	41%	55%
character	0%	36%	64%	0%	86%	14%
Goal/Problem	5%	59%	36%	0%	82%	18%
Attempts	0%	45%	55%	0%	68%	32%
Resolution	14%	41%	45%	0%	50%	50%
Reactions	45%	0%	55%	41%	9%	50%
Personal Response	27%	0%	73%	9%	5%	86%