THE EFFECT OF CREATIVE DRAMATICS ACTIVITIES
ON THE STORY RETELLINGS OF
KINDERGARTNERS

THESIS

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By

Deborah Fowler Weidner, B.S.

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The study was designed to determine the effect a dramatic play activity had on the content of a story retelling of kindergarten students.

Approximately 35 students were randomly sampled to form experimental and control groups. Both groups engaged in a read aloud activity, followed by brief discussion, and an independent illustration of the story. The experimental group participated in a creative reenactment of the story prior to the illustration activity. Students in both groups then retold the story to the researcher.

Retellings were transcribed and scored for: Story Retelling Analysis score (Morrow, 1988); percentage of characters recalled; percentage of plot episodes recalled; and the presence of story language, inferential statements, and a distinct beginning, middle, and end. Anecdotal data are described narratively.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Facilitating the development of beginning reading skills in young children is an area of great concern for teachers, researchers of early childhood development, and parents. This concern is evidenced by the vast amount of research being conducted in the areas of emergent literacy and reading comprehension.

The activity of reading aloud to children is emphasized by reading experts as a crucial component of helping children develop a love of reading as well as beginning comprehension skills. Holdaway (p. 39-40), Teale (p. 196), Trelease (p. 2) and many others believe that being read to has a profound effect on developing early reading skills, particularly reading comprehension. Both Piaget (p. 720) and Vygotsky (p. 16) have discussed their theories concerning the importance that experiences with the environment, particularly play, have in a child's cognitive development. More recently, Galda and Pellegrini(1982, 1989, 1991) have been researching the connection between dramatic play and language development.

Considering the importance placed on reading to children and reading by children, an examination of the
effect dramatic play activities may have on early reading comprehension would be a valuable addition to current research.

Statement of the Problem

Although volumes of research are being conducted and completed on emergent literacy, the specific consideration of the role dramatic play following read aloud may have on reading comprehension and story retelling ability has not yet been sufficiently studied. Investigation was necessary in order to determine the relationship between these two activities and the ability to retell a story.

Following read aloud time, an experimental group comprised of kindergarten students, engaged in a dramatic activity before illustrating the story that had been read to them, and retelling the story to the researcher. The control group did the same read aloud and illustration activity, but did not participate in the dramatic activity. The findings were used to determine the effectiveness of dramatic play as a comprehension-enhancing technique, and recommendations for instruction were made.

Specific Purpose of the Study

The specific purpose of the study was to determine the effect a dramatic play activity had on the content of a
story retelling of kindergarten students and to make instructional recommendations based on the findings.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in the following ways:

1. A correlation between the use of dramatic play following storytime and the content of story retelling may become evident as a result of this study.

2. Instructional implications for the design of reading programs for young children may result from the data gathered in this study.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide this investigation:

I. Does the use of creative dramatics following read aloud have an effect on the content of story retellings?
   A. Is there a significant difference in the content of retellings given by children participating in a creative dramatics activity as opposed to those not participating in creative dramatics?
   B. What parts of the retelling protocol show the greatest difference between the groups?
   C. Do the children participating in the creative dramatics activity include more "story language" in their retelling than the children not participating in creative dramatics?
Limitations of the Study

Half of the specific population chosen for this study were members of the researcher’s kindergarten class. There may have been some bias in the way that these students viewed the researcher, and there may have been certain types of social chemistry among the children of the class. In order to help decrease these possibilities, the participants in the experimental and control groups were determined by random sampling for each of the five data collection episodes.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions have been adopted:

**Aided recall:** A situation in which a respondent is prompted to recall certain specific material. This particularly relates to the story retelling protocol, and indicates that the researcher asked a specific question for the child to answer.

**Creative dramatics:** An activity in which participants in the study will be asked to reenact the story read aloud to them. Some dramatic activities may include the use of props such as masks, clothing, tools.

**Free recall:** This refers to a respondent’s unaided response during the story retelling protocol. The
participant did not require prompting to supply the verbal information given to the researcher.

**Read aloud activity:** This will include the "set" or opening directed by the researcher before the actual reading of a story, the reading of a story to the participants, and the "follow-up" or discussion after a story has been read. The read aloud activity for both experimental and control groups will be as similar as possible.

**Story retelling protocol:** As Morrow states (1988), story retelling is a technique in which "an individual recalls orally a text or story after having read or listened to it... retelling can indicate a reader's or listener's assimilation and reconstruction of text...according to personal and individual interpretations of the text."

These guidelines set up by Morrow will be followed in the use of this technique for this study.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Because participants in the study engaged in creative dramatics activities, studies that investigated the value of creative dramatics with regard to comprehension and language skills are included in this review. Comprehension was assessed using the story retelling of each particular subject. For this reason, a review of the use of story retelling as an assessment tool is included. These studies will also include some description of the procedure for using this instrument.

Creative Dramatics

Investigation in the area of creative dramatics has been increasing in recent years. Galda and Pellegrini have conducted many studies, together and separately, that report that creative dramatics has value for language development and the development of early reading concepts. (Galda and Pellegrini, 1982; Galda, 1982; Pellegrini 1984, 1985; Pellegrini, Galda, Dresden, and Cox, 1991)

Williamson and Silvern (1991) state that the rationale for using structured thematic-fantasy play (referred to in this study as creative dramatics) comes from two assumptions
about comprehension. Mental reconstruction, the first assumption, is thought to occur as children physically re-enact stories they have heard. As Pellegrini and Galda (1982) describe it, children must be able to recreate the characters and events when re-enacting stories, and this should lead to greater understanding of the story. The second assumption about comprehension concerns story schemes, which are developed during this process. A sense of story scheme includes an understanding that all stories have characters, that all stories have a beginning and an ending, and that things happen in predictable ways (Williamson and Silvern, 1991).

As cited by Pellegrini (1985), a number of theorists, particularly Piaget (1962, 1970) and Vygotsky (1967), have hypothesized about the positive relationship between symbolic play and social-cognitive development. Both of these theorists believed that engagement in symbolic play was an important influence on the social-cognitive development of young children.

Pellegrini maintains that the symbolic play of children reaches its peak between the ages of 5 and 6 years. Possibly for this reason, many of the studies conducted in this area use children of these ages.

Pellegrini and Galda (1982) conducted an experiment with 108 children in grades K-2. They set up three treatment conditions to follow a read aloud activity:
thematic-fantasy play, adult-led discussion, or drawing. The recall of the stories by the children was tested with a ten question test based on Bloom's (1956) cognitive taxonomy. Children were then asked to retell the story. The play group scored significantly higher than the discussion or drawing groups on remembering, understanding, solving, and analyzing questions on the criterion referenced test. As children got older (second grade), however, the difference between groups was not significant. It is Galda's hypothesis (1982) that activities requiring more verbalization (play and discussion rather than drawing) are more effective in story recall, possibly because participants became aware of aspects of the story they may not have noticed otherwise. Galda goes on to write that "to play about a story children must understand characters and their motivations, events as cause and effect, and logical order of beginning, middle, and end."

Pellegrini (1985) writes that a primary reason for interest concerning symbolic play and literate behaviors is the theory that both activities are indicators of children's representational competence (as written by Piaget, 1970), and both activities require similar mental processes. In Pellegrini's investigation, he wrote that the organization of decontextualized play may be similar to ways in which narratives are organized. "By enacting everyday events in a fantasy context children gain practice at analyzing and
reconstructing the temporal and causal structure of these narrative-like events. Children who enact a variety of events will, in turn, have well-developed schemata for those events" (p. 81).

Pellegrini (1984), expanding on a theory developed in a previous experiment (Pellegrini and Galda, 1982), worked with the idea that children's verbal reconstructions of stories in thematic-fantasy play may be responsible for their improved story recall. This idea was investigated using 192 children in grades K and 1 (96 girls and 96 boys) randomly assigned to one of four treatments: adult-directed play, peer-directed play, accommodation questions, or control. In order to limit the verbalizations of the control group, control participants were told only to draw pictures about the story and not to talk about the story with other children. The control group verbalized about the story only with the researchers.

Participants were scored on three tasks: (1) a criterion-referenced test (similar to that used in the 1982 study), (2) total number of constituents recalled in an oral story retelling task, and (3) a story sequential memory score. In order to test for maintained recall, one week later participants were given another criterion-referenced test (the same one administered the first time) and were asked to retell the same story. The researchers found that adult guidance of the thematic-fantasy play of
It was also found, however, that fantasy enactment of stories seems to be an important element affecting children's immediate story recall, but not their maintained recall. Verbal reconstruction of stories and accommodation to peers' conflicting versions of stories seem to be important elements affecting children's maintained story recall. (p. 700)

Heath (1982) found a relationship between children who enacted a variety of dramatic play events and stories and their subsequent capabilities at school-based literacy tasks. She describes the structural similarities between school-based literacy tasks (e.g. skills required to understand narratives) and fantasy theme play (e.g. enacting Little Red Riding Hood). She attributes the correlation between the two activities to the similarity of their structure. Both narratives and play scripts involve story telling, suspending reality, and ascribing fictional features to everyday objects. From this research, she found that children who come to school with a variety of play scripts also usually have a well developed sense of narrative.

Christie (1987) critiqued several studies that investigated the relationship between make-believe play and story comprehension. After completing the reviews, he described trends that appeared to be prevalent in the
In discussing the mental reconstruction theory espoused by Pellegrini and Galda (1982), Christie specifies that the reconstruction "should lead to better recall of that particular story, a skill which will be referred to as specific story comprehension" (p. 36). Group-dramatic play, according to Christie, also requires cooperative planning. Disputes that arise between the children must be settled amicably, and children must learn to accommodate the perspectives and views of the other players. Growth of social skills is facilitated during this process, and also growth in the maturity of narrative story structure. The story schemata can facilitate comprehension and recall by encouraging predictions and by focusing attention on the most important parts of the story.

Thus, the story schemata generated through repeated group-dramatic play should not only lead to better comprehension of stories just enacted but also result in increased understanding and recall of stories in general, a skill which will be referred to as generalized story comprehension. (p. 36)

Christie determined that most of the studies investigating play and story comprehension could be classified as training studies, meaning that subjects were first divided into treatment groups and sometimes were given pretraining assessments. The subjects then received the experimental and control treatments. Following the
treatments, subjects were given posttraining assessments of story comprehension. The basic rationale underlying play training studies is that if subjects in the play treatment groups exhibit higher levels of posttraining performance than those in the control, the gains could be attributed to play. Most of these studies reported that play training subjects exhibited higher levels of specific or generalized story comprehension, which was interpreted as a positive relationship between play experiences and growth in skills related to story comprehension.

In examining these studies, Christie and Johnsen (1985) raised four issues that need to be addressed when considering play training findings. These four issues form the framework for Christie's (1987) examination of the evidence linking play training with story comprehension, and include: (a) context effects, (b) subject-by-treatment interactions, (c) durability of outcomes, and (d) effect sizes.

An important distinction between play texts (the play event itself) and play contexts (the physical and social environment in which the play occurs) must be made when discussing studies concerning play (Bateson, 1955 and Schwartzman, 1978 as cited by Christie, 1987). Since play activities can be influenced by the settings in which they take place, the possibility arises that play texts might have been confounded with play contexts. Adult involvement,
the process of solving disagreements with peers, and the familiarity of the stories could all have been the cause of the results rather than the actual activity of Thematic Fantasy Play (TFP). Findings have suggested that adult involvement with first and second graders does not effect the outcome of using TFP, but younger children seem to benefit from some adult intervention during TFP. The level of adult involvement was investigated by Silvern (1986, as cited by Christie, 1987), who found that "directive intervention appeared to be more effective with unfamiliar stories, while facilitative intervention worked better with familiar stories" (p. 40). As indicated by the limited amount of research in this specific area, Christie recommends further examination of the contributions of play contexts to story comprehension and TFP.

The subject-by-treatment category of research indicates that the effectiveness of play training varies, depending on such characteristics as age and social class. The studies of Pellegrini and Galda (1982) and Silvern et al. (1986) "suggest that thematic fantasy training was more effective with younger subjects than with older ones" (p. 40). This could be due to the fact that younger children had less developed concepts of story, and therefore had more to gain from play training than older children. Another possibility is that the developmental stage of the younger subjects was more accommodating to the impact of TFP on their cognitive
development. As Christie cites, both Vygotsky (1976) and Piaget (1962) believed that "make-believe play's main contributions to cognitive growth occurs during the preschool/kindergarten years. Both theories would predict that play training should be more effective with younger children than with primary-grade students" (p. 41). Christie found that the research concerning social class differences contained too many methodological flaws to be considered as conclusive at this point.

Only two studies included delayed testing to investigate the longevity of the effect of TFP on story comprehension. Pellegrini's (1984) study included specific story comprehension, and subjects were assessed both immediately after training and again one week later. The play group achieved higher scores than the accommodation questioning group and the control group, but only on the immediate testing. The delayed testing showed that the accommodation group had moved up to the same achievement level as the play training group. This seems to indicate "that the relative effectiveness of different treatments on story comprehension can change over time" (p. 41). Dansky's (1980) study of generalized story comprehension used one-week delayed assessment instead of immediate assessment. Scores of the play training group were higher than the other groups on this delayed test, which seems to indicate that play training has a long-term effect on generalized story
recall. Since no other study has addressed the stability of generalized story recall from play training, Christie recommends that generalized story recall be measured over a longer delay than one week.

The gains brought about by play training have been reported as substantial by most of the research critiqued by Christie. If further research indicates that these gains are stable over time, then, according to Christie, this type of training should be a valuable part of preschool, kindergarten, and first-grade language arts curriculums. Parameters that would need to be observed include all the conclusions described above, primarily that: training was more effective with younger children (preschool through first grade) than with older ones, and that the level of adult involvement should be adjusted according to the familiarity of the story and the age of the students.

Williamson and Silvern (1991) conducted three separate experiments, two of which are applicable to this research, that addressed the concerns of Christie (1987). According to Williamson and Silvern, research on the effect of play on cognitive development began as a result of a study completed by Smilansky in 1968. Smilansky conducted her study on the effects of play training on low socioeconomic status Israeli children. Smilansky trained the children to dramatically re-enact real life experiences, such as visits to the grocery store or to a doctor. Adults engaged in "inside"
intervention (taking an actual role in the play) or "outside" intervention (did not assume a role, but did address the children within the frame of reference of the make-believe theme; gave directions, clarified behavior, made suggestions). The results of the study indicated that the sociodramatic play training improved both the quality and amount of play in the subject group.

These positive findings encouraged further investigation of the effect of play on creativity, language development, logical skills, problem solving, and social knowledge. However, the body of research on play encompasses both observational and experimental data, as well as a variety of definitions and play paradigms. It is difficult to draw conclusions from a body of research that is not methodologically unified, hence Christie's critiques and recommendations, and the subsequent research of Williamson and Silvern.

All of the studies conducted by Williamson and Silvern used the thematic-fantasy paradigm, since it appears to be the most facilitative for cognitive outcome measures (as opposed to make-believe play or the informal sociodramatic training as used by Smilansky).

Study 1 (Silvern, Taylor, Williamson, Surbeck, and Kelley, 1986) was guided by three research goals:

1) to examine the effects of TFP when the experimenter served a less directive role, and children chose their own
roles and designed the play experience. The only responsibilities of the experimenter were to read the story and to help the children, if help was requested.

(2) to examine the effects of TFP on recall of stories not acted out (Christie's general recall), the assumption being that TFP training would transfer to the improved recall of all stories (or story schema in general).

(3) to investigate whether the effectiveness of TFP varies with age. It was predicted that younger children in the TFP group would recall more of the post-test story than would younger children in the control group, and that older children's recall would not vary significantly across the two treatment conditions.

In Experiment 1, the ages of the subjects ranged from five to nine years old, and included 505 children within a 70-mile radius of Auburn, Alabama. A pre-test was administered during week 1, and a post-test was given during week 8. No TFP activity was associated with either test; children listened to the stimulus story and immediately responded to the test items.

The findings of the study indicated that story recall increased with age, and that children in the play treatment performed better than did those in the control group. Although the recall of older children did not vary significantly between the treatments, significant contrasts were found for age groups through 80 months. Results
indicate "a 95% probability that children up to the age of 6.7 years benefit from the play treatment" (p. 75).

Additionally, children who were exposed to TFP performed better on the unfamiliar story recall task (without a dramatic activity) than did those in the control group.

In Experiment 1, there were problems concerning the voluntary nature of the play engaged in by the children. Although experimenters were told to be unobtrusive, they kept logs documenting that all parts of the stories were acted out by the children. This active participation of the adults made it impossible to determine if the effects were due to the intervention or the play itself (play context versus play text). Therefore, Experiment 2 was designed to control adult intervention, and to provide two experimental groups: directive intervention and facilitative intervention. If the amount of tutoring is the cause of the positive effects, then children in the directive group should perform better than those in the facilitative group.

Experiment 1 had used only books that were judged to be unfamiliar to the subjects. In order to control for possible story effects, subjects were assigned to either a familiar story treatment or an unfamiliar story treatment.

Subjects in Experiment 2 were aged from 4.7 to 13 years, and were representative of the sample described in Experiment 1. The same pre-tests and post-tests as in Experiment 1 were used in this experiment.
Data analysis indicated that there was no main effect for story type, but there was a significant interaction between story type and treatment condition.

Children who heard familiar stories performed better in the facilitative condition than in the directive condition, whereas children who heard unfamiliar stories performed better in the directive condition than in the facilitative condition (p. 77). These findings indicate that children need assistance when required to accommodate new information, and that children perform better on their own when working with familiar information.

As in Experiment 1, subjects in the play condition performed better on story recall than did subjects in the control condition. Children who are given the experience of acting out a story (TFP) recall an unfamiliar story (one that is not dramatized) better than does a control group. Therefore, TFP experience seems to provide children with knowledge about stories in general (metalinguistic knowledge), not just the ability to reconstruct story facts.

Study 2 (Williamson and Silvern, 1990) examined the possibility of a specific group of older children who could benefit from TFP; those who had not developed story schemes and for whom play might be facilitative. Since earlier studies had indicated that the benefit of TFP extended only through first grade (because of the metalinguistic story schemes already in operation in older children), the idea arose that TFP might be advantageous for some older children.
who had not had the opportunity to experience stories in a metalinguistic manner.

Subjects in Study 1 who were older than 80 months were used in this study, and a pre-test was used to identify the subjects most likely to have the least metalinguistic ability and experiences. A pre-test score of 5 (out of 10) or lower was accepted for potential subjects.

The results of the study seem to suggest that a "masking" effect may have occurred in earlier studies, whereby the average and above-average older students masked the possible beneficial effects of play for the least able older students.

When only children who are poor comprehenders are identified, however, thematic-fantasy play appears to make a significant difference in their ability to understand stories (p. 80).

**Story Retellings**

Morrow (1988) describes the use of retellings as a diagnostic tool for many aspects of comprehension. In a story retelling, the participant orally recalls a text or story after having read or listened to it. As Morrow explains,

because retelling can indicate a reader's or listener's assimilation and reconstruction of text information, it can reflect comprehension. It has at least one advantage over the more traditional practice of assessing comprehension through questions: Retelling allows a reader or listener to structure response according to personal and individual interpretations of the text. (p. 128)
Story retelling can be used instructionally or for evaluation. Among the guidelines Morrow gives for instructional retellings, she writes that participants should only be given verbal assistance as necessary. Prompts that Morrow identifies as acceptable include "What happened next?" and "What else do you want to tell me about the story?" Reluctant participants may require more frequent assistance in order to convey to them the form of response desired. Students also should be given a stated purpose for their reading/listening, so they should be told before the story that they will be asked to retell it later. Retellings used for assessment, however, should not include props or prompts. Children should merely be asked to retell the story as if they were telling it to someone who had not heard it before. Retellings can be used to assess comprehension, sense of story structure, and language ability.

In two 1985 studies, Morrow sought to determine if retelling a story immediately after listening to it would improve comprehension, and, in a related study, to examine the effects on comprehension of frequent practice and guidance in retelling stories.

Literature reviews that Morrow deemed pertinent to her studies included discussion of factors that improve comprehension, sense of story structure, and language development. According to Amato and Ziegler (1973, as cited...
by Morrow, 1985), retelling stories is another active procedure, like role playing and like picture sequencing, that will encourage children to interact with the story and to build an internal representation of the story. Retelling stories may aid in comprehension, sense of story structure, and oral language development. "Encouraging children to develop and use their schema for story retelling should help them learn what to expect in a story and how to decide what is important to remember" (Morrow, p. 648). Freedman and Owings (1978, as cited by Morrow) found that kindergarten children with greater language ability remembered more types of story protocols than children whose language ability was not as well developed.

Morrow's first study (Study 1) sought to answer two questions:

(1) Does the process of retelling enhance a child's ability to answer structural questions about a story?
(2) Does the process of retelling enhance a child's ability to answer literal, inferential, and critical questions about a story? (p. 649)

The 59 subjects participating in the study attended kindergarten in public schools with populations ranging from lower- to upper-middle class families, and below average to above average abilities. Subjects were randomly assigned to either the experimental or control group, and all were given a comprehension pretest to compare the two groups. There
was no significant difference in the mean pretest scores of the two groups.

The format for listening to the stories was the same for both groups. A brief pre-reading discussion included the title of the book and a few ideas concerning what the story was about. The post-reading discussion included comments on the favorite parts of the story. Following the discussion, the control group was asked to draw a picture about the story. The experimental group retold the story on a one-to-one basis to a researcher. No prompts were given other than "What comes next?" or "Then what happened?" A maximum of 10 minutes was spent with each child in the experimental group. The control group was given 10 minutes to draw their story. One half hour after the story had been read and the treatments completed, a one-on-one comprehension test was administered. The test was comprised of five traditional comprehension questions and five story structure questions. Tests were scored by two researchers who were blind to the treatment conditions. Each test was worth 100 points. This sequence of activities was repeated using a second story.

The results of Study 1 indicate some improvement of the experimental group, but the difference in scores between the two groups is only significant for the combined test (traditional and story structure sections together). Morrow hypothesized that "frequent practice in retelling might have
a noticeable effect on comprehension" (p. 652). She also observed that many children did not know how to approach a retelling task, and that sequencing the story seemed to be difficult for them. It appeared that children could improve their skills with guidance and practice in retelling, so Study 2 was developed to address this idea.

Study 2 provided children with frequent practice in retelling and with guidance in retelling, particularly with regard to the structural framework of a story. Study 2 utilized the same procedures as Study 1, but eight treatments were administered, and feedback was given to the subjects during their retellings, as needed.

The investigation sought to answer the following questions:

(1) Do practice and guidance in retelling stories improve a child’s ability to answer structural and traditional comprehension questions about stories?
(2) Do practice and guidance in retelling stories improve a child’s ability to retell stories by including more structural elements in the narrative?
(3) Do practice and guidance in retelling stories increase the syntactic complexity of children's oral language when retelling stories? (p. 652)

The subjects in the study had the same characteristics as those in Study 1, and there was a total of 82 children. This study took place in the fall, whereas Study 1 took place in the spring. Using a table of random numbers (separate for boy subjects and girl subjects), three boys and three girls from each classroom were selected for the
study and assigned to either the experimental or control groups.

The same pre-test was administered as in Study 1, and the same comprehension test, given on a one-to-one basis, was used for this study. In addition to the comprehension measure, retellings were scored for inclusion of story structure elements (setting, theme, plot episodes, resolution, and sequence) and for two oral language measures: the average length per T-unit and the syntactic complexity. The T-unit is described by Hunt (1965, as cited by Morrow) as "an independent clause with all of its subordinate clauses attached" (p. 653).

The Botel, Dawkins, and Granowsky (BDG) (1972, as cited by Morrow) formula of syntactic complexity was also used to analyze pre- and posttest story retellings. The BDG formula is based on:

(1) transformational grammar theory; (2) language performance studies indicating the frequency of usage of structures in the language of children; and (3) experimental findings indicating the difficulty children have in processing specific syntactic structures. (p. 653)

The research treatment was carried out by student teachers, following the same format for the story reading as in Study 1. Scoring was completed by six researchers that were blind to the treatment condition.

Morrow's hypothesis that frequent practice and guidance in story retellings would improve story comprehension was
confirmed. The experimental group made "large significant improvement ... in all comprehension scores" (p. 657). Based on the results of both Study 1 and Study 2, it appears that the improvement was due to the guidance and frequency in retelling as opposed to the review or rehearsal of a particular story. The structural elements and the sequential ordering of a story were emphasized during guidance and practice, and each time a story was retold, the child was actively involved in recreating the story. The interaction with adults also may have contributed to the success of the treatment.

The experimental group improved slightly over the control group in four areas of the retelling: theme, resolution, sequencing, and total story recall. No significant gains in either setting or plot episodes were evident. According to McConaughy (1980, as cited by Morrow), this may be because young children remember items that carry meaning more easily than those items that do not. Setting, theme, and resolution appear to carry the most meaning, while plot episodes seem to carry mainly details, many of which are not directly pertinent to the meaning of the story.

In both T-unit length and syntactic complexity, the experimental group scored higher than the control group. In comparing relationships between the dependent variables, Morrow found that:
children who improved most in comprehension also improved most in their retellings. This finding suggests that a common factor was responsible for both types of gains and is consistent with the argument that retelling experiences enhance a sense of story structure leading to both improved retelling accuracy and greater comprehension. (p. 659)

Teachers participating in the study also made some anecdotal comments. During free play periods, children in the experimental group seemed to indulge in storytelling more often than did those in the control group. Additionally, parents of the children in the experimental group reported that their children were eager to retell stories that had just been read to them at home. Although most children were hesitant and unsure about the retelling task initially, by the end of the study the experimental group demonstrated more confidence, poise, and ease in retelling. It is Morrow's recommendation that story retelling and story role playing need to be encouraged since so many skills are improved through its use.

Many educators suggest the use of story retellings for the benefit of teachers. Kalmbach (1986) advocates the use of story retellings mainly to see what point or points (if any) students see in the stories they read, and to see what kinds of organizational skills students have when retelling. He uses Labov's theory (1972) of why narrators structure stories the way they do, and also the vocabulary used by Labov to describe the elements of stories. From this information, Kalmbach recommends analyzing retellings for
these story elements to get a better picture of students' comprehension. Although he does not include an actual instrument of measurement, Kalmbach's main indicator is the overall quality of the retelling. "If a student structures a retelling to communicate a point, he or she has understood the story in some fundamental sense regardless of recall" (p. 331).
CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

Previous studies have investigated the relationship between dramatic play activities and literate behaviors. This study utilized dramatic play activities following read aloud to ascertain if there were any differences in the content of story retellings of the experimental group. Recommendations for the development of early reading programs and instructional strategies with young children were made.

The Sample

The population used in this study consisted of kindergarten students attending a public elementary school in a suburban school district. This population was chosen primarily because of easy access for the researcher, but also because it is an ethnically and socio-economically diverse group of children, somewhat representative of the population at large.

Approximately 30 kindergarten students were used in the study. They were randomly selected from two kindergarten classes, and for each separate data collection, the students were randomly divided into experimental and control groups.
Although half of the participants were in the homeroom class of the researcher, any bias or social chemistry within the class was lessened by mixing the two classes randomly together.

Data Collection

After the participants had been assigned to their group for a particular data collection, the activities began. The same sequence of activities was used with each research episode, with the appropriate group. All of the activities were videotaped in their entirety, and retellings were audiotaped as well. Transcriptions of the retellings were made following the data collection.

Several criteria were used to determine the stories from which the read aloud and dramatic play activities were developed. First, stories were considered for the interest they hold for kindergarten-aged students. Many stories that had been used in previous years of teaching were considered for use in this study. Second, stories were considered for their dramatic qualities: Would it be relatively easy for kindergarten students to reenact a particular story? Third, the stories were selected if they included the repetitive language or action that appeals to children in this age group. The potential for inference that each story offered was also considered at this stage. Finally, the stories were arranged in progressive order according to the
complexity of the plot and the level of sophistication necessary to dramatize them. Therefore, the story that was used for the first activity was much simpler than the story that was used for the fifth activity. The only exception to this was the fifth story, Lazy Lion. Although this story is more similar in plot structure to the second or third story used, the names of the characters in the story were very uncommon, and would not be at all familiar to a kindergarten child. For this reason, Lazy Lion was included at the end of the series rather than in the middle. The sequence of stories that were included in the study were as follows:

Episode 1: The Napping House by Audrey Wood
Episode 2: Hattie and the Fox by Mem Fox
Episode 3: Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock by Eric Kimmel
Episode 4: Chicken Little retold by Steven Kellogg
Episode 5: Lazy Lion by Mwenye Hadithi and Adrienne Kennaway

Two other titles were included as alternates. It would have been necessary to use an alternate text if children had already engaged in a dramatic activity with one of the scheduled texts, or if some unforseen technical problem (with the video camera, for example) necessitated the inclusion of a sixth data collection. The alternate texts
are both by Ezra Jack Keats, and are titled *Regards to the Man in the Moon* and *Goggles!*. It was not necessary to use the alternate texts.

The control group engaged in a read aloud activity, including an anticipatory set, the reading of the story, and some discussion of the story afterwards. Participants were told before the story began that they would be asked to retell the story following the read aloud. After the discussion, the participants were instructed to draw a picture depicting all of the things they wanted to remember about the story, or all of the things that they thought would be important to retelling the story. This art activity was included in order to help the participants organize information from the story prior to the retelling they were asked to give.

After collecting the papers, participants were asked individually to "tell the story to me and pretend I've never heard it before." The picture drawn by the subject was present, and helped most children focus on the task, and reminded them of their own thoughts about the story. In most cases, children looked briefly at their picture and then began their retellings while looking at the researcher or at some point in the room. In a few cases, children were describing the picture rather than retelling the story. It is possible that these children confused the task of retelling the story with giving dictation about a picture, a
frequent classroom activity.

Most of the time, the only prompts used were "what else do you want to tell me about the story?" and "what happened next in the story?" On some occasions, however, it was necessary to restate what the child had said. This was done either to regain the child's attention, to reestablish the train of thought, or to clarify an answer to the researcher. In a few instances, the child spoke so softly that it was necessary to repeat what had been said in order for the tape to record the response. The retelling ended when the subject verbally indicated that they were finished.

The experimental group engaged in the same activities, but a dramatic reenactment activity was added between the end of read aloud and the illustration activity. As much as possible, the same concepts and questions were addressed during the read aloud activity as with the control group. The dramatic activity was initiated by the researcher, and the parts were assigned by the researcher, but the subjects decided how to portray the story. Occasional direction by the researcher was necessary, but usually children corrected and encouraged each other during their performance. Small groups performed while the rest of the group was the audience. Each participant had one opportunity per data collection episode to be a member of a performance group. On two occasions one or two children had an extra opportunity to perform since the number of parts did not
always suit the number of performers. The illustration activity occurred after each participant had performed, and the retelling proceeded as described regarding the control group.

Procedure for Analyzing Data

Data was examined by quantitative, descriptive, and anecdotal procedures. After the retellings were transcribed, they were scored using Morrow's (1988) Story Retelling Analysis. These scores were analyzed by use of a t-test to determine any significant difference in scores between groups. Percentage scores of the number of characters and the number of plot episodes included in individual retellings were derived from individual Story Retelling Analysis profiles. Group mean scores were calculated and these scores were compared in tabular form and interpreted narratively.

Story retellings were also examined for the presence or absence of three additional components: inferential statements concerning the story, story language, and a story retelling structure consisting of a distinct beginning, middle, and end. These components were scored dichotomously and frequencies were computed.

Anecdotal notes were collected during the study and organized by topic. These were interpreted narratively.
CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF DATA AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The data presented in this chapter includes the quantitative, descriptive and anecdotal results of this study. The information gathered was intended to provide answers to the research questions stated in Chapter 1. The data collecting episodes were scheduled once a week for five weeks during the spring semester of kindergarten. Approximately thirty kindergarten students participated in the study, and these subjects were randomly sampled to determine which group they would be placed in: the group engaging in a dramatic activity, or the group not engaging in a dramatic activity. A separate random sampling was completed for each of the five episodes.

Statistical Analysis

Story retellings were scored using Morrow’s (1988) Story Retelling Analysis. Scorings completed on the story retellings, as told to the investigator by each subject in the study, were compared using a t-test. The mean score of each group as well as the level of significant difference was obtained. From this instrument, percentage scores for the total number of characters and for the total number of

35
plot episodes included in the retelling were derived. In addition to this data, three items were scored dichotomously: the inclusion of a distinct beginning, middle, and end of the story; the inclusion of inferential statements about the story; and the inclusion of story language in the retelling. Frequencies were run on the dichotomous scores. Anecdotal comments and notes made by the investigator are included following discussion of the quantitative and descriptive results.

Presentation of Data

The problem of this study was to examine the effects that a creative dramatics activity had on the story retellings of kindergartners. Each of the six scored components on the profile sheet is discussed separately.

Story Retelling Scores

The story retellings were transcribed and then scored using Morrow's (1988) Story Retelling Analysis. These scores were then classified by group, Group 1 being the group of subjects without the dramatic activity and Group 2 being the group of subjects who did participate in the dramatic activity. For each data collection, Group 1 and Group 2 were analyzed using a t distribution. The data for the story retellings of all five data collections are shown in Table 1.
As is evident from the data shown, the mean score for Group 2 was higher than for Group 1 in four of the five data collections. This would seem to indicate that the dramatic activity did beneficially influence the content of the story retellings.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EPISODE 1</th>
<th>EPISODE 2</th>
<th>EPISODE 3</th>
<th>EPISODE 4</th>
<th>EPISODE 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GROUP 1-MEAN</td>
<td>5.6593</td>
<td>5.1420</td>
<td>3.1354</td>
<td>3.3780</td>
<td>4.5573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST. DEVIATION</td>
<td>2.115</td>
<td>2.391</td>
<td>1.725</td>
<td>2.293</td>
<td>2.036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GROUP 2-MEAN</td>
<td>6.4147</td>
<td>4.5210</td>
<td>4.5307</td>
<td>4.7900</td>
<td>5.5200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST. DEVIATION</td>
<td>2.338</td>
<td>2.350</td>
<td>2.391</td>
<td>1.799</td>
<td>1.999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F VALUE</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t VALUE</td>
<td>-.91</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>-1.75</td>
<td>-1.60</td>
<td>-1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEGREES OF FREEDOM</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23.62</td>
<td>16.73</td>
<td>21.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-TAIL PROB.</td>
<td>.1845</td>
<td>.264</td>
<td>.0465</td>
<td>.0635</td>
<td>.1215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGNIFICANT TO .05 LEVEL?</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the data was analyzed statistically, however, only one of the four data collections was designated as being significantly different (for p<.05). Mathematically interpreted, there is a 5% probability that the difference in the means is due to chance, and a 95% chance that the
difference in the means is due to the treatment condition of this experiment, the dramatic activity. The third data collection, therefore, has a probability of at least 95% that the difference in the means is due to the dramatic activity. Episode 4 has a 1-tail probability value of .0635, which is very close to being statistically significant.

Although the mathematical formulas demonstrated that only one of the five sets of data was significant, the difference in the means between the groups is instructionally significant from the viewpoint of an educator. In all but the second episode, the mean scores for the groups who participated in a dramatic activity was much higher than the mean score for the groups who did not participate in a dramatic activity. The average increase in mean scores for the groups with a dramatic experience was found to be 1.13135. Since the Story Retelling Analysis is scored on a 10 point scale, this indicates an average increase of over 10%. A 10% increase in the score of any measure is worth making an extra effort, so the dramatic activity did positively influence the retellings in an instructionally significant manner.

Recall of Characters

The percentage score for characters recalled was derived from the story retelling analysis. The total number
of characters recalled was calculated by adding the values in "b" and "c" of the Setting subheading. The value in "d" was added to 1 in order to obtain the total number of characters in the original story. The "d" value is the number of other characters, the 1 signifies the main character. The number of characters recalled was divided by the number of characters in the original story, and multiplied by 100 to reach the percentage for the characters recalled. Characters were noted as recalled if the student met one of three possible conditions. First, if the subject named the character exactly. Second, if the subject gave a name close to the original or with equal meaning (for example, "wolf" was frequently used in place of "fox", "that little bambi man" was used for "little bush deer" in Episode 3). Third, if the subject described the character thoroughly enough to convey, without a doubt, who they were talking about. In Episode 4, a child described Goosy Lucy and Gosling Gilbert as "the big one and the other one, he was little, 'bout this big, he got the glasses on. His mouth about this big."

The group mean scores for character recall in the five data collection episodes are shown in Table 2.

From this table, it is clear that for all five data collections, the group of students who participated in the dramatic activity included more characters in their story retelling than did the group of student who did not
participate in the dramatic activity. With an average increase of 13.51014 percentage points, this data indicated that dramatizing a story after being read to beneficially effected the character recall in the story retellings of kindergarten students.

Table 2
MEAN SCORES FOR PERCENT OF CHARACTERS INCLUDED IN RETELLINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EPISODE 1</th>
<th>MEAN SCORE WITHOUT DRAM.</th>
<th>MEAN SCORE WITH DRAM.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>85.5714</td>
<td>92.2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPISODE 2</td>
<td>59.2667</td>
<td>80.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPISODE 3</td>
<td>40.6154</td>
<td>58.2857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPISODE 4</td>
<td>35.4000</td>
<td>48.6154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPISODE 5</td>
<td>39.3636</td>
<td>48.6667</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recall of Plot Episodes

The percentage score for plot episodes was obtained directly from the story retelling analysis. In the Plot Episode subheading, the value in "c" was multiplied by 100 to calculate the percentage score. The group mean scores for plot episode recall are shown in Table 3.

As indicated by the data in this table, the mean scores of the groups of students who participated in a dramatic
activity were consistently higher than the mean scores of the groups of students who did not participate in a dramatic activity. The average increase between the groups was found to be 12.47234 percentage points. As with the character recall scores, it appeared that the dramatization activity did enhance the recall of the plot episodes.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MEAN SCORE WITHOUT DRAM.</th>
<th>MEAN SCORE WITH DRAM.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EPISODE 1</td>
<td>63.7143</td>
<td>70.8000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPISODE 2</td>
<td>40.0000</td>
<td>55.7000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPISODE 3</td>
<td>40.7692</td>
<td>51.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPISODE 4</td>
<td>27.1000</td>
<td>50.3846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPISODE 5</td>
<td>47.2727</td>
<td>53.3333</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inclusion of Beginning, Middle, and End

The descriptive data included here consists of the three items that were scored dichotomously. In dichotomous scoring, a value of "1" was assigned if the desired element was present in the retelling, and a value of "0" was assigned if the desired element was not present in the story
retelling. Frequencies were run on all dichotomous components.

This component is also partially present in the story retelling analysis. Letter "a" of the Setting subheading indicates the inclusion of an introduction, and "b" of the Resolution subheading indicated inclusion of the ending of the story. The difference, other than that of scoring, is that this dichotomous component was intended to indicate not only completeness of the story retelling but also the ability of the student to adequately organize information in order to deliver a coherent, meaningful sequence of events.

Table 4
FREQUENCY OF BEGINNING, MIDDLE AND END
Percent of students including beginning, middle, end

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EPISODE</th>
<th>WITHOUT DRAMATICS</th>
<th>WITH DRAMATICS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EPISODE 1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPISODE 2</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPISODE 3</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPISODE 4</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPISODE 5</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The frequencies with which the retellings included a beginning, middle, and end are shown in Table 4. The numerals given indicated the percent (out of 100) of subjects that did include a distinct beginning, middle and end in their retelling.

As indicated by the data in Table 4, four of the five sets of data show an increase in the percent of students who included a distinct beginning, middle and end in their retellings. Although the fifth episode frequency was higher for the group without the dramatic activity, the percentages are extremely close. The majority of the data suggests that the dramatic activity had a positive influence on the inclusion of a distinct beginning, middle and end. This possibly could be the result of the verbal rehearsal students engaged in as they performed their dramatic roles. By participating in the dramatics, the language used and the sequence of events that is critical to the story were emphasized to the student.

**Inferential Statements**

In the retellings, any statement made by the subject that went beyond the explicitly stated text was counted as an inferential statement, and a value of "1" was assigned for that score. Inferential statements made by the students included references to the thoughts or emotions of a character in the story, description of cause and effect
relationships, interpretations from the illustrations, and comments that extended the story line past its explicitly written ending.

The frequencies for the inclusion of inferential statements in the retelling are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

FREQUENCY OF INFERENTIAL STATEMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WITHOUT DRAMATICS</th>
<th>WITH DRAMATICS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EPISODE 1</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPISODE 2</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPISODE 3</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPISODE 4</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPISODE 5</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In three of the five data collection episodes, a distinct improvement in the percentage of students including inferential statements was evident. Although the differences between groups were not quite as large as the differences shown in Table 4 concerning the beginning, middle and end, they are still great enough to merit consideration. It appears that the creative dramatics activity positively influenced the inclusion of inferential statements in the majority of cases.
**Story Language**

The story language component of this study is intended to determine whether or not students include language directly from the story in their retellings. This inclusion would seem to imply that accommodation or assimilation of the story had occurred to some degree. Repetitive phrases from the original stories, including dialogue, were those most often verbalized by the subjects (For example, "The sky is falling!"). Words that are uncommon to the vocabulary of kindergarten children were occasionally included (such as "nearby tree").

The frequencies for the inclusion of story language are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6**

**FREQUENCY OF USE OF STORY LANGUAGE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent of students including story language in retelling</th>
<th>WITHOUT DRAMATICS</th>
<th>WITH DRAMATICS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EPISODE 1</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPISODE 2</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPISODE 3</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>64.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPISODE 4</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>92.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPISODE 5</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>73.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While one data set scored a slightly lower frequency for the group without the dramatics, three of the five sets of data indicate a great increase in favor of the group with dramatics. The scores for the second episode were the same. Interestingly, the scores for the first episode regarding the inclusion of inferential statements (see Table 5) were also a little lower for the group with the dramatic activity. This could possibly be explained because this was the first experience in retelling, and also because it was the most simply structured book used in the study. These conditions may not be conducive to encouraging inferential thought. Because this book, The Napping House, is the only story that does not include dialogue, it may be that subjects did not see any reason to assimilate phrases from the text into their own retellings. However, the majority of the data do suggest that the dramatic activity positively influenced the subjects in their inclusion of story language in their retellings.

Anecdotal Data
Throughout the study, I noted many fascinating behaviors exhibited by the subjects, and many interesting comments made by them. This section of data consists of my observations during the study, and is described by topic. The artwork completed by the subjects before their retelling appeared to serve a variety of purposes for them.
Originally, the artwork was meant to act as an independent activity about the story, but I had not foreseen the value it would have to the subjects when it came time for them to retell the story. The subjects were told to draw any picture they desired about the story. They were told that it should be something that would help them remember the story so that they would be able to retell it to me later. Engaging in the art activity appeared to act as "cement" for the ideas that had been presented in the story: a certain event; a certain character; or, in some cases, several of both. The art activity seemed to solidify the important parts of the story, quite often it was the climax of the story that the subjects drew on their paper. I saw the art activity becoming an aid to help the subjects organize the information that had been taken in from the story.

Along with organizing the information, the artwork gave some insights to thought processes of each individual. Following the reading of The Napping House, two unusual pictures stood out, both completed by children who did not participate in the dramatic activity. The illustrations of the book are softly washed in a light blue color with some subtle yellow highlights added as the story progresses (to allude to the sunlight streaming in the window). One child completed his picture, then added a linear area of blue on one side of the picture, and a linear area of yellow on the other side of the picture. In his retelling, he told me "and
I drew a little bit of yellow and a little blue," which indicated to me that he had noticed the color scheme of the illustrations, and that the colors had impressed him enough that he interpreted them as important information that needed to be included in his drawing. In the same story, the last page has a faintly washed rainbow over the house, but the text did not say anything about the rainbow. One subject drew the napping house and added a rainbow similar to the one in the book. The child's rainbow was colored lightly with crayons, as it was in the book. She also told me in her retelling that there was a rainbow.

As I listened to the retellings and looked at the pictures drawn, it appeared to me that those subjects who had drawn more detailed pictures were giving more detailed retellings. Although this was very informally observed at the time, looking back through the pictures and retellings confirmed this idea. Perhaps those who spent the time to compose a complete picture also spent the time and thought to compose a complete story. Again, the organization required in a detailed picture may also be influencing the level of organization of their retelling. I also noticed that the amount of time spent on the drawing somewhat indicated how the retelling would be presented. Several times I noticed that children who completed their picture in one or two minutes were poorly prepared to retell the story. In a few cases, children who had spent too long on the
drawing also seemed ill-prepared. Possibly they were confused by the story or by the task requested of them, or they were busy playing instead of drawing, but one child spent 25 minutes on his drawing and then could not tell me anything about the story.

Generally speaking, the children did not focus on their drawing as they told the story. Most often they looked at a point in the room, sometimes at me, but the majority of children looked only briefly at their drawing, if they looked at it at all. On the few occasions when the picture was referred to by the subject, they tended to tell about the picture rather than retell the story. These subjects may have confused the retelling task with dictating about their picture, a common classroom activity. Often they would gesture to the picture as they described it, or otherwise interact with their artwork. Some of the subjects who relied too heavily on their drawing seemed to get off the track of retelling the story. Some children would begin their story with whatever event was on the page, so there were several cases where the retelling began at the middle or end of the original story, and then wrapped around to eventually include all of the parts.

The dramatic activity was not only beneficial to the story comprehension of the participants, but it was also highly enjoyable to them. The subjects were thrilled to perform for the rest of the class, and eagerly took part in
imagining the set of the story. When dramatizing Anansi, I found a brick covered with a barnacle-type material to use for the moss-covered rock. All through the dramatization, the child who played Anansi referred to it as the moss-covered rock, as did the other characters in the play. However, when it was time for Anansi to retell the story to me, he said "isn't this a strange covered brick?" I suppose that the concrete symbol (the brick) stayed with him more readily than did the abstract description of the rock. In the same dramatization, all of the animals walked to the rock with Anansi, even though the story explicitly described the actions of only three out of the seven. The remaining four animals were merely listed as victims of Anansi's wiles, and their trip to the moss-covered rock was not documented by the author. The actors spontaneously walked with Anansi to the rock without any direction from me, and almost all of the children in that group described the walk to the rock by all of the animals, not just the three that were described in the book. Again, it seems that the concrete representation stayed in their memory more readily than the abstract.

During the retellings, I noticed some verbalization patterns across the entire sample of subjects. The use of "uhhh" or "mmm" before the subject began retelling indicated to me that some type of organizational thought was ensuing before the actual verbal activity was begun. After the
speaker began his or her story, other speaking habits started to appear. Almost without exception, the speaker's voice faded away when they came to a part of the retelling they weren't sure about. Additionally, subjects who were very sure of themselves spoke more loudly and more quickly than the other subjects did. On a few occasions, the child spoke so quickly and inhaled so frequently that I had the impression that the child was trying to tell the story quickly before it was forgotten. The specific verbal comments of the subjects also gave some insight to their thought processes as they had drawn and were retelling the stories. During episode five, one subject had drawn the crocodile on his paper, and on two occasions he told me that he should have drawn the lion instead. I inferred that he had decided that the lion was more critical to the story than the crocodile, and had therefore changed his mind about what should have been included in his drawing. During episode three, a subject pointed to where he had drawn the moss-covered rock and told me "I could call it a house if I wanted to! It looks like a house to me. A strange rock house..." which demonstrated that he was integrating his own impressions and ideas into the story. It was not the same as the original story, but he was using his own originality to create a story that was more suited to his own imagination. For this subject, the original story merely provided the stimulus and the framework for him to use.
Subjects in this study seemed to make use of a "default" vocabulary system when they were unsure of the exact name of a character. I found this to be a good strategy, because it allowed the story to continue uninterrupted, and the meaning was the same in almost all cases. This strategy was also good evidence that the subjects were assimilating the story experience with their own experience. In dealing with characters, specifically animals, that had unfamiliar names or images that were similar to a frequently used name, subjects seemed to prefer the more familiar name to the less common one. For example, "wolf" was exchanged for "fox" many times in both episodes two and four. Looking back through the experiences of kindergarten students, many stories that they are familiar with contain a wolf, which is visually similar to a fox. In this same type of usage, Hattie the big black hen was referred to many times as a turkey. This surprised me, because a chicken would seem to be more familiar to the children. However, since Hattie was more darkly colored than most chickens and somewhat resembled a turkey, the confusion may have originated with that characteristic.

The story retellings proved to be an invaluable source of documentation for the oral language capabilities of the students involved in the study. The vocabulary development is evident from the retelling, as is the capability of students to integrate new vocabulary into their own oral
vocabulary. Retellings also offer a picture of the capability of students' auditory memory. Since the stories were read aloud to them, the information they were able to give to the researcher indicated, to some extent, how much auditory input they were able to remember.

The book used for the fifth episode, Lazy Lion, was included at the end because of the more sophisticated vocabulary, specifically the names of the characters. When discussing the white ants or the weaver birds, subjects frequently referred to them only as "ants" and "birds," but the message was the same. This would be a good instructional opportunity to investigate the animals indigenous to the setting of the story, but it is admirable that the subjects used a similar name and went on with the story. When it came to the honey badger and the aardvarks, however, many subjects were baffled. All kinds of descriptions were given for these two characters. The most common description for the aardvarks were "pigs" that lived in the ground. Aardvarks do have a pig-type snout, so the visual characteristics encouraged that name. The honey badger was referred to as a "bear" a few times, but more frequently the character in that plot episode was referred to as "bees." Since the honey badger cleaned out a log filled with bees, the subjects most likely saw the bees and went with the familiar visual image when retelling the story. Several times children referred to the honey badger
as something to do with honey ("that honey thing") or as a "honey bear," again using the more familiar terms to name that character.

Quite a bit of information was gathered concerning the prompting that went on for the retellings. The initial statement given by me to the subject included either "tell me this story..." or "tell me what happened..." Amazingly, most of the time that I asked the subject to "tell me the story," I got a stunned facial response indicating panic, and often this was followed by the statement "I don't know the story." However, when I asked subjects to "tell me what happened in the story," the response was very different. Somehow children feel themselves more able to tell what happened, than to tell the story. This could possibly be because telling a story indicates a task of great magnitude to them, particularly since most kindergartners do not view themselves as being able to read. I think that since their most frequent story telling role model is their teacher, who most frequently reads the story to them, they connect telling a story with being able to read it.

Concerning the amount of prompting required by each child, I observed another pattern that emerged between the two groups. The subjects who had participated in the dramatic activity generally responded well to the prompt "what happened next?" while the group who did not participate in the dramatic activity seemed to require more
specific prompting. For example, if the last statement given by the subject was "lion fell down on the ground," these subjects required the specific prompt of "what happened after lion fell down on the ground?" rather than "what happened next?" Frequently no response at all was obtained from asking "what happened next," or the subject was not readily able to follow the storyline they had already established. This may be a result of having fewer opportunities to organize the information from the story before retelling it. Since the dramatic group did not seem to require as much specific prompting, it appears that they already had the story in their mind and only needed a slight stimulus to keep the story going. The groups who had participated in the dramatic activity also seemed to have fewer of the very long pauses during their retelling. Some subjects would let a pause last for at least one minute while they struggled with the sequence of the story, and most of these were in groups without the dramatic activity.

Some subjects paused quite frequently and seemed to require quite a few prompts from me. However, I observed several times that there seemed to be a point at which subjects began relying only on my prompts, and stopped attempting to retell the story. They were turning the activity into story recall instead of story retelling. In order to extinguish this behavior, I adopted two strategies. First, any remarks that I needed to have clarified waited
until the end of the retelling, rather than during the retelling. Second, if I felt that the subject was becoming too reliant on my prompts, I gave them one more strong prompt and then waited until they came up with something. I curtailed the amount of prompting after that and tried to just nod to keep the flow going. This second strategy had some limited success, which leads me to think that once I saw the subject using the prompts too much it was too late to turn the session back to the appropriate activity. If the retelling was more of a recall, it was removed from the study.

One of the most rewarding observations that I was able to make concerned the growth that almost all children made in their ability to retell a story. Episode one is filled with prompts for all of the children, and by episode five many of the children had progressed to only needing the initial prompt and maybe one or two prompts during the retelling. Not only did I find this research beneficial from an academic standpoint, but I also found it to be beneficial from a social standpoint. Many children seem to be more confident and participate more readily when we have class discussions, and they are thrilled to pick up the books that they've retold to me and retell them to each other or to a stuffed animal.

One subject was removed from episode two because he wanted to use the book to retell, but I saw such wonderful
things happening with him that I decided to include it in this section of the data. The child requested "let me see the book for a minute" when he was stumped about what the horse had said in the story. Not only did he realize that the printed words were the same words that I had read that carried meaning to him, he also turned to the correct page and pointed to the correct place to read and asked "is this where you read the horse at, right there?" He then said "I don't know if I can read," but he obviously thought that he would be able to find out what he needed to know by using the book. After looking at the page he made a guess about what the horse said, but must have realized that it was incorrect because his next question was "do you want me to say the letters so I can remember?" He spelled out the words and I gave him a hint to figure them out. I firmly believe that by retelling the story to me, he began to pay more attention to the text as a source of meaning, and has begun establishing some strategies that he thinks are valuable for getting the information that he needs. Any activity that promotes this kind of thinking in children is indispensable in their educational program.
CHAPTER V

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study was conducted in the spring of 1993 to determine the effect a dramatic play activity had on the content of story retellings of kindergarten students. Approximately thirty kindergarten students were randomly sampled and assigned to one of two groups: read aloud with the dramatic activity, or read aloud without the dramatic activity. Following the read aloud and dramatic activity (if applicable), all students were asked to draw a picture about the story, and then to retell the story to the researcher. This study took place once a week for five weeks.

Story retellings were scored using Morrow's (1988) Story Retelling Analysis. A t-test was used to determine if the mean scores for each group were significantly different. Percentage scores for the total number of characters and total number of plot episodes included in the retellings were collected. Dichotomous scores for the inclusion of a distinct beginning, middle, and end; for inclusion of inferential statements; and for inclusion of story language were assigned and frequencies were computed. The results were presented in tables and discussed.
Findings

Based on the data presented in this study, several findings were reached. Four of the findings directly address the research questions stated in Chapter 1. Other additional related findings are also presented in this chapter.

Does the use of creative dramatics following real aloud have an effect on the content of story retellings? In order to answer this question, three more specific research questions helped narrow the topic and gradually build up to the more general concern.

1. Research Question 1A: Is there a significant difference in the content of retellings given by children participating in a creative dramatics activity as opposed to those not participating in creative dramatics?

The statistical analysis of the scores between groups indicated that one group of data was significant to the .05 level. However, in four of the five groups of data, the group of subjects participating in a dramatics activity obtained a higher mean score than the group of subjects who did not participate in a dramatics activity. The average increase of the mean score between the two groups was found to be at a level that would be considered instructionally significant by educators.
2. Research Question 1B: What parts of the retelling protocol show the greatest difference between the groups?

The two scores that were derived directly from the retelling protocol were calculated as percentages. The first score derived was the percentage of characters included in the story retelling of each subject. The group mean scores for all five data collections indicated that the group of subjects who participated in the dramatization consistently recalled a higher percentage of characters than did the control group. In fact, the average increase between the groups was found to be 13.51014 percentage points. From this data, it appears that the inclusion of a dramatic activity had a positive effect on the recall of characters in the story.

The second score that was derived from the Story Retelling Analysis was a percentage score of the plot episodes included in the retellings. On all five data collection episodes, the groups with the dramatic treatment had much higher mean scores than the control groups. The average increase for this component was found to be 12.47234 percentage points. This data indicates that participation in dramatic activities positively effected the number of plot episodes included in the retellings.

According to these data, both the character recall and the plot episode recall show a large increase in value as a result of the dramatization activity.
3. Research Question 1C: Do the children participating in the creative dramatics activity include more "story language" in their retelling than the children not participating in creative dramatics?

The inclusion of story language in a retelling was scored dichotomously so that a value of "1" was assigned if the story language was present in the retelling, and a value of "0" was assigned if it was not present. For three of the five data collection episodes, the percent of students using story language during their retelling was higher for the group participating in the dramatics activity. For one of the episodes the percent is the same for both groups, and for one episode the dramatics group scored slightly lower.

The majority of data suggests that dramatizing the story did have a positive effect on the subjects' inclusion of story language in retelling.

The remainder of the investigation does not address any specific research question other than the more general question of the effect creative dramatics has on story retellings.

The inclusion of a distinct beginning, middle, and end of the story as told to the researcher is an important aspect of the story retelling protocol. The ability to sequence the story appropriately was found to occur more frequently in the group who had participated in the dramatics activity. In four of the five data collections,
the dramatization appeared to positively influence the inclusion of a beginning, middle, and end. This item was scored dichotomously.

Subjects who included inferential statements in their retelling most often were members of the group who had received the dramatic activity treatment. In three of the five data collections, a distinct difference appeared between the two groups in favor of the group with the dramatic experience.

Taking into consideration all of this quantitative and descriptive data, the answer to the first research question is clear. The use of creative dramatics following read aloud does have a positive effect on the content of the story retellings of kindergarten students.

One further finding of this study concerns the value of anecdotal data. I was able to discern and document many thought patterns and language patterns by observing my subjects holistically rather than in the isolated circumstance of merely assigning scores. Information was derived from their artwork, behaviors, and language during the research episodes, and growth in many areas was evident over time. The anecdotal data offer some of the strongest profile information on the individual students.
Conclusions

The generalizability of this study is limited for several reasons. Since the investigator was also the teacher of half of the children in the population, different results may be obtained when the investigator is someone outside the classroom. Because of its ethnic and socio-economic diversity, the population of the school used in this study may not be similar to the majority of suburban public schools. Additionally, economic, social, and educational characteristics of the individual subjects may have effected the type of data obtained from the students. The following conclusions have been drawn based on the analyses and interpretations of data gathered for this study:

1. The preponderance of quantitative, statistical, and anecdotal evidence shows that creative dramatics does improve the content of story retellings of kindergartners.

2. Dramatizations following read aloud do not consistently show statistically significant differences in Story Retelling Analysis scores, but the scores do differ at a level that demonstrates great improvement from an instructional viewpoint.

3. Dramatizations following read aloud positively influence the recall of characters of a story.

4. Dramatizations following read aloud have a positive effect on students' ability to sequence a story in a lucid,
coherent manner. This was demonstrated by the data concerning the recall of plot episodes and the data concerning the inclusion of a distinct beginning, middle, and end.

5. Inferential thought is encouraged when students have had the opportunity to participate in a creative dramatics activity after read aloud.

6. Dramatizations following read aloud increase the frequency with which story language is incorporated in story retellings.

7. Art activities following read aloud help to solidify the parts of the story that the child viewed as important. Art activities help children organize the information that was taken in from the story.

8. Concrete representations of objects and involvement in dramatic activities help children remember stories more readily and more completely.

9. Retelling the stories afforded opportunities for children to develop strategies for successful storytelling. Children were observed modifying some vocabulary to fit with their background while attempting to tell stories fluently. Students were also observed making use of a short amount of time to prepare themselves for the retelling.

10. Retelling stories gives children the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in organizing information and conveying the important events and details of a story.
11. Retellings are a valuable record of the level of oral language development the child has reached. Retellings offer information on language patterns, vocabulary, and quality of speech.

12. Kindergarten-aged students often experience some anxiety when asked to engage in a task that they view as requiring them to read.

Recommendations

Based upon the findings of this study, several recommendations are being presented:

1. This study tested for the specific story recall of students following creative dramatics activities. Further testing is recommended for the general story recall aspect of comprehension. Through use of a pre-test/post-test format, information on the effect of creative dramatics activities on general story recall could be obtained.

2. The use of a stratified random sample with a study similar to this one is necessary to examine the effect of creative dramatics on the story retellings of groups whose variance is controlled.

3. The assignment to a group, either control or experimental, needs to be adjusted so that each subject remains in one group for the duration of the study. The use of this type of modification in a study similar to this one will offer even more information on the effect that
consistent and repeated participation in dramatic activities has on the content of story retellings.

4. Longitudinal studies of the effects of dramatization activities on the comprehension and achievement of individual students is recommended. If a student is given a certain number of opportunities to participate in dramatizations over time, will that student have higher levels of comprehension at the end of that time than students who have not participated in dramatizations?

5. Creative dramatics activities need to be used in kindergarten classrooms on a regular basis to help facilitate the development of good comprehension skills. By participating in creative dramatics, the students are able to make the story more realistic to their background and understanding of literature. More insightful observations will be made during classroom discussions, and students will be able to interpret the thoughts and actions of each character more thoroughly. In addition, students will be able to empathize with the characters in the books, and will be better able to predict what the actions and thoughts of a character would be in different situations. Dramatizing literature enhances the ability of young children to sequentially organize events and to verbally communicate these sequenced events in a coherent manner. As they communicate the events of a story, previous participation in a dramatization will help assimilate words and phrases from
the story into the students' personal vocabulary. The verbal rehearsal of the new phrases and words during the dramatic activity encourages students to remember and to utilize the new vocabulary.

6. Story retellings need to be used regularly in kindergarten classrooms for several reasons. First, instruction in the task of retelling a story models for children and guides them in formulating ideas into a sequence to form a story. Second, anticipated participation in a retelling encourages children to highlight the important parts of a story that need to be included in retellings. Third, retellings offer a wealth of information and documentation on the oral language development and the capabilities of the auditory memory of students.

7. Anecdotal records need to be used as part of the assessment of children during their years in school. This descriptive type of information offers more in-depth looks at the child holistically, and may give subtle clues that can be used to better serve the child's academic and socio-emotional needs.

8. Pressure for reading achievement needs to be removed from young children. Although reading is currently viewed as a "rite of passage" that should be achieved at a very young age, the anecdotal data presented in this study indicated that undue anxiety was imposed on children when they were asked to do a task that they viewed as "reading."
The value of the pre-reading behaviors exhibited frequently by young children needs to be reestablished in order to enable them to truly progress at their own rate.
APPENDIX A

STORY RETELLING ANALYSIS
Morrow's (1988) Story Retelling Analysis

### Sense of Story Structure

**Setting**
- a. Begins story with an introduction
- b. Names main character
- c. Number of other characters named
- d. Actual number of other characters
- e. Score for other characters (c/d)
- f. Includes statement about time or place

**Theme**
Refers to main character's primary goal or problem to be solved

**Plot Episodes**
- a. Number of episodes recalled
- b. Number of episodes in story
- c. Score for plot episodes (a/b)

**Resolution**
- a. Names problem solution/goal attainment
- b. Ends story

**Sequence**
Retells story in structural order: setting, theme, plot episodes, resolution.
(Score 2 for proper, 1 for partial, 0 for no sequence evident)

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<tr>
<th>Highest score possible</th>
<th>Child's score</th>
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<tr>
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STUDENT PROFILE

Student Name ________________________________

Scores:

Story Retelling Analysis ______
% Characters Recalled ______
% Episodes Recalled ______

Dichotomous Scores:

Includes Beginning, Middle, and End ______
Includes Inferential Statements ______
Includes Story Language ______
APPENDIX C

SCORE SUMMARIES PRESENTED BY

INDIVIDUAL DATA COLLECTION

EPISODE
## Episode 1 - The Napping House

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<th>With Dramatics</th>
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<td><strong>Inferential Statements Frequency = 1</strong></td>
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### EPISODE 3 - ANANSI AND THE MOSS-COVERED ROCK

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### EPISODE 4 - CHICKEN LITTLE

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**EPISODE 5 - LAZY LION**

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BIBLIOGRAPHY


