

Read Aloud verses Shared Reading:  
The Effects on Vocabulary Acquisition, Comprehension, and Fluency

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The purpose of this study was to identify the effects of read alouds on eighteen second graders' vocabulary acquisition and comprehension when listening to stories with and without companion texts. Following each reading session, the students were required to complete a 100 word cloze comprehension test, as well as a brief vocabulary test based on five key words. The results of the study showed that there was a significant effect for order for both comprehension and vocabulary acquisition; students listening to the stories with companion texts outperformed students without companion texts on both comprehension and vocabulary measure when the companion text condition followed the non-companion text condition. Implications of results are presented.

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**Read Alouds**

What are Read Alouds?

As quoted by Wood and Salvetti (2001), Klesius and Griffith (1996) stated that read alouds are most often considered “lap reading” in which the child sits on an adult’s lap and listens to the story being read. Typically the two individuals interact in the form of questions, comments, predictions, connections, etc. Through these interactions, the text is comprehended with the use of scaffolding. Wood and Salvetti (2001) wrote that Bruner (1983) described scaffolding as it related to children maturing: children’s discussions became more multifaceted, the adult took part in less of the discussion, and the children comprehended higher skills such as temporal sequences, character motivations, cause and effect relationships, etc. In addition, Barrentine (1996) reported that Harste, Woodward, and Burke (1984) identified that read alouds also instructed how stories work, modeled page turning, demonstrated the reading process, expressed how to monitor ones comprehension, taught inflection, showed how language works, and presented written language. Barrentine (1996) stated that teachers read aloud for many reasons including the following: to express thematic content (Moss, 1995), to teach literature-based math lessons (Whitin & Wilde, 1992), and to demonstrate the reading process (Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984; Holdaway, 1979).

How often are teachers reading aloud?

Thirty to forty years ago, as quoted by Brabham and Lynch-Brown (2002), Austin and Morrison (1963) and Hall (1971) stated that less than half of the elementary teachers

read only a few times a week to their students. Ten to twenty years ago, quoted by Brabham and Lynch-Brown (2002), Lickteig & Russell (1993) and Lindholm-Romantschuk (1990) found that 76% of teachers read aloud on a daily basis. More recently, as quoted by Brabham and Lynch-Brown (2002), Jacobs, Morrison, and Swinyard (2000) found that 100% of elementary teachers read aloud several times a week. As evidenced by the research, throughout the decades teachers have been reading more and more often to their students.

### What type of books is read aloud?

Jacobs, Morrison, and Swinyard (2000) determined that picture books were read almost six out of ten school days, whereas children's novels were only read almost five out of ten school days. Informational books, however, were used by teachers in only three out of ten school days. Jacobs, Morrison, and Swinyard (2000) reported that Vardell (1991) said that recently, informational books have "emerged as a genre of literature that is very attractive, exciting, and popular" (p. 474). These books are no longer boring, but imaginative, detailed, interesting, colorful, and creatively presented. Readers of informational text can familiarize themselves with expository prose, text organization, and book design. In addition, Jacobs, Morrison, and Swinyard (2000) stated that Vardell (1991) believed that readers could learn to ask questions, to seek answers, and to potentially read more when reading informational books. In turn, teachers should read informational books more based on the fact that many literary skills can be learned during the reading process. Lastly, Jacobs, Morrison, & Swinyard (2000) stated that Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1985) found that unfortunately if teachers do not read informational books to their students, the students will not want to read the books nor gain the positive effects from reading them.

Regarding various grade levels, Jacobs, Morrison, & Swinyard (2000) reported that Austin & Morrison (1963) and Hoffman, Roser, & Battle (1993) found that primary grade teachers read to their students more often than intermediate grade teachers. Furthermore, Jacobs, Morrison, & Swinyard, (2000) also wrote that Ammon and Sherman (1996) and Cianciolo (1990) collected data that showed primary grade teachers read more picture books, as compared to novels. After second grade, however, children's novels were read more frequently until sixth grade.

In truth, however, Jacobs, Morrison, & Swinyard (2000) stated that Cianciolo (1990) noted some picture books have more challenging issues and ideas, provide many literary device examples, and at times their illustrations are more appropriate for older readers. As a result, Jacobs, Morrison, & Swinyard (2000) reported that Ammon and Sherman (1996) stated that picture books are in actuality for *all* ages and are, at times, more appropriate for older readers. As a result, read alouds should take place in all grade levels and in all types of classrooms. In truth, Hoffman, Roser, and Battle (1993), as quoted by Brabham and Lynch-Brown (2002), said that reading aloud "is not an integral part of the instructional day and may not be reaching its fullest potential" (p. 500). Based on this fact, students are missing out on critical learning experiences. As a matter of fact, Cosgrove (1988), as stated by Jacobs, Morrison, & Swinyard (2000), wrote that even fourth- and sixth-grade students showed attitudinal and achievement effects from read alouds.

Meyer, Stahl, Linn, and Wardrop (1994) and Meyer, Stahl, Wardrop, and Linn (1992), as stated by Brabham and Lynch-Brown (2002), determined that teachers felt that reading aloud was not an important part of the daily routine. Meyer, et al. (1994, 1992) reported that teachers felt reading aloud used valuable time needed for more productive

reading activities. Actually, the researchers found that teachers' oral reading and students' reading achievement were not positively correlated. According to these authors, in order to have positive comprehension results, teachers must create direct, meaning-centered interactions with the text, instead of simply reading aloud to their students.

### Meaning-Centered Interactions – Text Talk

Meaning-centered interactions include: previewing, brief during-reading interactions, and strategy demonstrations (Barrentine, 1996). In previewing a book, the teacher prepares the students for listening to the story by discussing the title, the front cover, the characters, the author's other works, and predictions about what the story will be about. In other words, the students' prior knowledge is being activated and they are allowed to be actively involved in the process. During reading, the teacher requests brief interactions about characters, perspectives, feelings, character dialogue, connections, altering predictions, etc. Too much interaction, however, can inhibit the aesthetic nature of the book. Over-analysis of the book can also negatively affect the read aloud experience. Harker (1988), as stated by Barrentine (1996), "found that when talk during read alouds shifts away from the story itself, comprehension is reduced. But drawing upon students' personal experiences builds story relevance" (p. 40). As stated by Barrentine (1996), Cambourne (1988) and Harste, Woodward, and Burke (1984) reported that these group interactions allowed all students to discover aspects of the text they might not have found reading on their own, to use reading strategies with the support of the group, and to internalize the information gained from the text.

Text talk is one technique to use during read alouds to help students create meaning of a text. During Text Talk, Beck and McKeown (2001) learned several important aspects to keep in mind during teacher-student interactions. First, students tend

to rely on illustrations to aid in their comprehension of a story. Unfortunately, the illustrations do not often depict all aspects of the text. Second, students tend to rely on their prior knowledge when comprehending the text. Regrettably, prior knowledge often causes the student to inadvertently ignore the text when attempting comprehension. Lastly, teachers often ask low-level cognitive questions to clarify content or vocabulary, as well as questions about what was just read. Alas, only brief answers are required by the students and do not adequately demonstrate their overall comprehension of the story.

In order to make better use of Text Talk, teachers must participate in augmenting “young children’s ability to construct meaning from decontextualized language (and)...not only promoting comprehension, but also furthering children’s language development” (Beck & McKeown, 2001, p. 13). In turn, Beck and McKeown (2001) suggested that teachers show the illustrations *after* the students have comprehended the text. Additionally, teachers should scaffold their students’ prior knowledge with the text in order to plainly demonstrate their relationships. Likewise, teachers should aid their students in answering higher level comprehension questions by repeating and rephrasing the students’ answers, using “generic probes” that require the students to explain their responses (such as “What’s that all about?” or “What’s that mean?”), rereading to assist students in finding answers in the text, allowing time for the students to learn these techniques, and explaining unknown word meanings. One creative technique to facilitate vocabulary acquisition is called the Word Wizard. Teachers create charts of difficult words and the students earn points for seeing, hearing, or using the words on a daily basis.

### Three Read Aloud Styles

There are three types of holistic read aloud styles to aid in students' interactions with the text: interactional, performance, and co-constructive. Teachers who read with interactional style read and discuss the stories with their students, as well as keep their students involved in the reading process. As quoted by Dickinson (1989), Dickinson and Smith (1994) and Martinez and Teale (1993) stated that the interactional approach included: limited talk, group recall of highly predictable text, recall of recently read text, and a large amount of talk about the organization of the text.

Performance-style teachers simply read the text and do not encourage discussions or interactions between the students and the stories. As quoted by Dickinson and Keebler (1989), Dickinson and Smith (1994), and Martinez and Teale (1993) stated that the performance style included: an enjoyment of the performance, interruptions only if they were for important matters, and discussion either before or after the read aloud. Overall, teachers interpret the text based on their individual performance abilities.

Teachers who use the co-constructive style believe that reading is a time to enjoy being together. As a result, discussions of the text are very important. As quoted by Cochran-Smith (1984), Dickinson and Keebler (1989), Dickinson and Smith (1994), Martinez and Teale (1993), and Teale and Martinez (1986) stated that the co-constructive style included considerable talk during the reading and limited talk before and after the reading.

### A Comparison of the Three Read Aloud Styles

Brabham and Lynch-Brown (2002) quoted Dickinson and Smith's (1994) research based on the effects of the interactional, performance, and co-constructive read

aloud styles. Out of 25 preschool teachers, 10 teachers used the performance style (students took part in limited discussions during reading and lengthy discussions after reading), 10 teachers used the didactic interactional style (students responded, repeated factual information, and chorally recited parts of the text), and only 5 teachers used the co-constructive interaction style (students predicted, analyzed, generated word meanings, and made conclusions). The performance style students performed significantly higher on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test—Revised as compared to the interactional style, but did not score higher in comprehension. The co-constructive style also had a strong effect on vocabulary development, but only slightly predicted comprehension scores. As compared to the performance style read aloud group, higher vocabulary scores were found by Reese and Cox (1999), as stated by Brabham and Lynch-Brown (2002), in the interactional style read aloud group. However, comprehension scores were not shown to be greater.

Vygotsky (1986), as quoted by Brabham and Lynch-Brown (2002), would have favored the interactional and performance styles because they were based on scaffolding and the internalization of written language through the use of social interactions. As in Stahl, Richek, and Vandevier's (1991) research, as stated by Brabham and Lynch-Brown (2002), students learned more vocabulary from hearing stories read aloud than from reading stories themselves. Comprehension differences between reading styles were not determined, however. In turn, Morrow, O'Connor, and Smith (1990), as retold by Brabham and Lynch-Brown (2002), stated that "reading to a child is not sufficient for maximum literacy growth. It is the talk about books that surrounds the reading that seems to be the key" (p. 268). Brabham and Lynch-Brown (2002), in fact, found that just-

reading produced the smallest increases in vocabulary. Vocabulary acquisition, in turn, was greatest with interactional reading styles even in third grade.

Although all reading styles demonstrated pre- to posttest gains, the best results occurred with discussions before, after *and* during readings. In contrast, Dickinson and Smith's (1994) findings implied that teachers did not have to change their daily reading habits by stopping and discussing all aspects of a book. In fact, although talk before and after reading aloud is beneficial, the after reading discussion is the most beneficial. Nevertheless, as quoted by Brabham and Lynch-Brown (2002), Reese & Cox (1999) stated there is not "one 'best' style of reading to children" (p. 27).

### Oral Language Interactions – By Adults

Neuman (1996) found that adults used diverse patterns of book reading according to the type of text being read. Highly predictable books required a collaborative effort on the part of the adults and the students. All individuals were included in reading and reacting to the rhymes and rhythms of the text. Episodic predictable books had fewer repetitive phrases and therefore required less involvement of the adults and of the students. Narrative books required the adults and students to work together to determine the meaning of the text and their connections beyond the text. All in all, read alouds require very social interactions.

Neuman (1996) also determined that parents' own reading proficiency levels affected how books were read aloud. The researcher found that low proficiency parents required the children to chime and repeat text, as well as supplied feedback when necessary. High proficiency parents involved the children when recalling and "bridging" behaviors. Regardless of the parents' proficiency levels, the children still improved in

receptive language and concepts of print. Theoretically, other factors, beside proficiency levels, may have affected this increase.

In addition, Neuman (1996) wrote that Whitehurst, Arnold, Epstein, Angell, Smith, and Fischel (1994) suggested that the type of questions asked affected children's language and early literacy. The researchers stated that high cognitive questions such as "what" questions benefited children more than recitation questions. According to Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development, as quoted by Pellegrini, Brody, and Sigel (1985), adults taught and guided children through dialogue so that the children became self-directed. As children advanced in their abilities, the adults' scaffolding diminished. Pellegrini, Brody, and Sigel (1985), however, found this theory to be only partially true. The researchers determined that parents did not use more demanding strategies with older, more competent children who had no communication handicaps (such as diagnosed language impairments, communication disorders such as phonological problems or language production delays). In fact, parents on the whole did not ask inference or cause and effect questions. Consequently, they emphasized labeling and describing parts of the story which are low cognitive tasks. Pellegrini, Brody, and Sigel (1985) stated Huck's (1976) beliefs that this could have been a result of using texts with simple plots and clearly stated meanings.

Pelligrini, Brody, and Sigel (1985) also found that parents paraphrased more with children with no communication handicaps as compared to children with communication handicaps. In fact, Durkin (1966a), as reported by Pelligrini, Brody, and Sigel (1985), found that paraphrasing, an advanced teaching strategy, was used by parents of early readers. Parents of nonreaders simply questioned their children about the text (Pelligrini, Brody, & Sigel, 1985). Because parents did not assist children without communication

handicaps, Pelligrini, Brody, and Sigel (1985) believed that the parents were simply aware of the children's limitations. In this way, the parents inadvertently altered their interaction styles according to communication status, not the children's age.

Lastly, Neuman (1996) stated that Snow, Baines, Chandler, Goodman, and Hemphill (1991) determined that mealtime conversations were great opportunities for rich oral language. Neuman (1996) quoted Krashen (1989) as saying that this was especially true for non-English-speaking children. All in all, parent-child expressive language interactions are critical for forming children's early literacy.

### Oral Language Interactions – By Children

Sipe (2003) determined five types of expressive engagements used by students: dramatizing, talking back, critiquing or controlling, inserting, and talking over.

Dramatizing is when students imitate or replicate parts of the story. Talking back involves the students responding to the characters in the story, as if the characters' world is synonymous with the students' world. Critiquing or controlling means that the students suggest different plots, characters, or settings for the story, as well as commenting on the author and illustrator's ideas. Sipe (2003) labels this "I would" or "I wouldn't" talk.

Inserting involves the students or their peers taking on a character's role. Once again, the students have created a joint world for themselves and for the characters. Finally, taking over is when the students manipulate the text and demonstrate their own creativity in a comical or rebellious manner.

Students are actively engaged when they perform one or more of the aforementioned interactions. The students are altering the stories to suit their purpose and believe that it is their right to do so. Although some teachers might see these interruptions as disorderly, "another way of seeing them is as sophisticated expressive acts of literary

pleasure, in which the children treat the literary text as a playground. Instead of taking the text seriously, the children respond in a playful manner, a pretext for carnivalesque exuberance” (Sipe, 2003, p. 479).

### The Effectiveness of Read Alouds at School

As quoted by Vivas (1996),

“While reading the teacher can infuse the syntactic order of the written language with pitch, juncture, stress, and other paralinguistic cues that contribute to the interpretation of the passage. Imitation of sounds has a direct bearing on the increased vocabulary that is a result of hearing stories and poems. Hearing words in context not only adds to the number of meanings in a listener’s receptive vocabulary, but also gives the listener alternative ways to express him/her self.” (Hillman, 1975, p. 2-3)

Jacobs, Morrison, and Swinyard (2000) quoted Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1985) who stated the Commission of Reading’s conclusion that “the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children” (p. 23). Brabham and Lynch-Brown (2002) stated the following concepts are taught through read alouds: print and speech relationships (Feitelson, Goldstein, & Share, 1993), oral and written language (Cullinan, Jaggar, & Strickland, 1974), culture (Cazden, 1992), an understanding of literary notions (Sipe, 1998), content information (Leal, 1994), how to read texts independently (Cohen, 1968; Cosgrove, 1987; Morrow & Smith, 1990), and vocabulary words (Stahl, Richek, & Vandevier, 1991). In addition, Bus, van IJzendoorn, and Pelligrini (1995) wrote that Tannen (1982) found that through reading, students learned written grammatical rules as compared to speaking grammatical rules. Jacobs, Morrison, and Swinyard (2000) also stated that Chomsky (1972) showed that students who had been read to: increased their

linguistic development, improved their comprehension, told well-formed stories, and learned to infer cause-effect relationships. Finally, Jacobs, Morrison, & Swinyard (2000) told that Feitelson, Kita, and Goldstein (1986) showed that students familiar with books had a better understanding of letter/sound relationships. As quoted by Brabham and Lynch-Brown (2002), Clay (1991b) and Clay (1993) found the effectiveness of read alouds also depended on how adults read to children.

### The Effectiveness of Read Alouds at Home

In addition to the many benefits of reading to students in school, Bus, van IJzendoorn, and Pelligrini (1995), found benefits of reading to students at home as well. The researchers' meta-analysis maintained the hypothesis that parent-preschooler book reading was a major component in later language growth, emergent literacy, and reading achievement. However, as the students became older and more conventional in their reading, the effects of book reading decreased. Bus, van IJzendoorn, and Pelligrini (1995) quoted Cunningham and Stanovich's (1991) explanation of this occurrence. The researchers felt that the school environment and independent reading by the students may have compensated for limited reading at home during the preschool and earlier years. Nevertheless, the students' entrance into school was an easier transition if they were previously read to at home, especially if they were from a low socioeconomic status (SES). Consequently, Bus, van IJzendoorn, and Pelligrini (1995) determined that book reading was as strong a predictor of later reading achievement as phonemic awareness.

### A Comparison Study of Home-Based and School-Based Programs

Vivas (1996) investigated the effects of a systematic, story-reading aloud program on 222 preschool and first-grade students' language comprehension (the understanding of

syntactic structures and story comprehension) and expressive language (syntactic structures and sentence repetition) at home and at school. Reading at home and at school produced positive effects for preschoolers and first graders in story comprehension, memory of sequences, memory of narrative sequences and endings, syntactic understanding, context relationships, and expression. Listening to stories also helped create a habit of listening, focusing attention, and enhanced expression. Moreover, the researchers determined that there were no differences in gains between boys and girls. Finally, the preschoolers' SES was not pertinent until the students became first graders. At this point, the SES effects were slight in reference to their receptive language.

Overall, the first-grade students showed more positive effects from the program used in the study, perhaps because they were already learning to read. Nevertheless, the positive effects were not preserved over time. When comparing school and home results, teachers' assessments showed that following instructions, expressing opinions, comprehending, and verbally expressing were more effectively learned at home than at school.

### Social Interactions

Bloome (1985), Flood (1977), Heath (1982), and Ninio and Bruner (1978), as retold by Morrow and Smith (1990), stated that read alouds were beneficial because the adults and the students constructed meaning of the text together. Roser and Martinez (1985), as reported by Morrow & Smith (1990), declared that adults could take on one of three roles: co-respondents (initiate discussions, retell story parts, share reactions, form connections, and invite student responses), informers/monitors (explain, provide information, and assess comprehension), or directors (introduce the story, state

conclusions, and take on a leadership role). Rogoff (1990), Tharp and Gallimore (1988), as well as Vygotsky (1978), as stated by Neuman (1996), found that this social assistance supplied students with opportunities to participate beyond their reading ability, to internalize the interactions, to advance their language development, to think independently, and to problem solve.

The size of the social group can also affect learning. Morrow & Smith (1990) acknowledged that Klausmeier, Wiersma, and Harris (1963) found small groups of 2 to 4 students completed some reading tasks better than a whole group. Morrow & Smith (1990) also said that Allen and Feldman (1973) suggested in small groups, children used language and nonverbal signals that would not be detected in whole group situations. Finally, Morrow & Smith (1990) stated that Dewey (1916) found that students who participated in task-oriented discussions with their peers gained more comprehension as compared to simply listening to teachers' discussions of the text. In conclusion, Morrow & Smith (1990) quoted that Good and Brophy (1984) determined that primary-grade students learned better in small group settings when they were able to participate more often.

Reading to whole groups, however, is not without its own benefits. Morrow & Smith (1990) affirmed that Cohen (1968) and Feitelson, Kita, and Goldstein (1986) found that higher vocabulary achievement, comprehension, and decoding was attained in a whole group setting. Additionally, Morrow & Smith (1990) wrote that Morrow (1984, 1985) found that instructional strategies before, during, and after whole group reading positively affected comprehension. Despite its benefits, Morrow & Smith (1990) stated

that Bossert (1979) found that reprimands were more likely found in whole group activities.

### Book Talks and Book Swaps and other ways to Share Books

Book Talks introduce students to a vast number of books that the teacher otherwise would not be able to read aloud (Jacobs, Morrison, & Swinyard, 2000). Book Swaps are another way to share books. Jacobs, Morrison, and Swinyard (2000) stated that book swaps required students to bring in paperback books from home to swap with their fellow students. The Round Table (1988), as quoted by Jacobs, Morrison, and Swinyard (2000), reported that the class then discussed the books they brought in to swap. In addition, teachers can read excerpts, read books to introduce a theme or genre, and have students keep a reading response journal. Surprisingly, Jacobs, Morrison, and Swinyard (2000) found that although book sharing is more common in the early grades than the latter grades, it is not as common as they expected.

## **Shared Reading**

### What is Shared Reading?

In the mid-1960s, Don Holdaway asked New Zealand teachers to create a three-way partnership between the teacher, the author, and the student (Mooney, 1994). The New Zealand Department of Education (1985), as quoted by Button and Johnson (1997), stated that the main purpose of shared reading is for students to initiate “the riches of book language, and given shared opportunities to develop the strategies of sampling, predicting, confirming, and self-correcting for future independent use” (p. 58). When the teachers initiated shared reading, students showed greater enthusiasm and higher self-esteem in reading. As a logical next step, teachers began using big books. In this way,

books were shared, discussed, enjoyed, remembered, wondered about, explored, understood, and anticipated by the students in a whole group setting (Mooney, 1994). Even before children could read, they were able to become familiar with text and the act of reading (Button & Johnson, 1997).

Mooney (1994) suggested teachers begin shared reading with an introduction and proceed through the text with minimal interruptions. Once the teacher introduced the rhythm and rhyme of the text, the students participated in the reading process. In this way, their responses were confirmed and accepted. After the first reading, the teacher reflected on the text. Mooney (1994) also suggested making the book available for the students or providing an opportunity to make a class version of the story. All in all, the students were able to develop the necessary skills needed for literacy success.

Lonigan and Whitehurst (1998) stated that Stevenson and Fredman (1990) found a correlation between the frequency of shared reading with preschool students and the students' reading, spelling, and IQ scores as 13 year olds. Dickinson and Tabors (1991), as quoted by Lonigan and Whitehurst (1998), determined that shared reading, writing activities, as well as dialogues about the text, increased vocabulary, print concepts, and story comprehension skills. All in all, shared reading is a beneficial technique to use in advancing students' skills.

### Reading and Books in Low Socioeconomic Households

Lonigan and Whitehurst (1998) quoted a report entitled *Ready to learn: A mandate for the nation* by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1991). The report stated that 35% of students entering kindergarten did not have vocabulary and sentence structure skills. Unfortunately, the schools were requiring "too much" to be known before entering kindergarten and those children were already

“behind” even before starting school. Most notably, children with low socioeconomic status (SES) reflected these deficits.

Ninio (1980), as quoted by Lonigan and Whitehurst (1998), determined that mothers from lower SES groups performed less teaching behaviors and had smaller productive vocabularies. Lonigan and Whitehurst (1998) also reported that McCormick and Mason (1986) found that 47% of their public-aid parents had no alphabet books at home versus only 3% of professional parents. In fact, Lonigan & Whitehurst (1998) stated that Adams (1990) established that a child from a low SES family averaged 25 hours of picture book reading as compared to 1,000-1,700 hours in a middle SES family. All in all, Neuman and Roskos (1993) wrote that Neuman (1996) stated that there were large social class disparities in accessibility and use of print materials in child care centers. Additionally, there were large social class disparities in low and middle SES homes as well (McCormick & Mason, 1986). Unfortunately, due to a lack of materials and skills, the gap in abilities between low, middle, and high SES children becomes greater and greater.

### Dialogic Reading

Lonigan and Whitehurst (1998) stated that dialogic reading involves a shift in roles during the reading process; the students learn to become the storytellers. On the other hand, the adults actively listen, ask questions, add information, and prompt the students to increase their descriptions of the text. Through praise and repetition, the students' descriptions become more sophisticated and the adults have less and less of a role to play.

Whitehurst, Arnold, Epstein, Angell, Smith, and Fischel (1994), as quoted by Lonigan and Whitehurst (1998), conducted an experiment with 73 low SES students in a

child care program in Long Island, NY. There was one control group and two intervention groups which included small group readings with teachers as well as small group readings with teachers at school and parents at home. Prior to the experiment, the subjects scored significantly low on vocabulary and expressive scores. A posttest showed that both intervention groups increased their oral language skills and maintained the increased scores until the 6-month follow-up test.

Lonigan and Whitehurst (1998) performed additional research based on Whitehurst, Arnold, Epstein, Angell, Smith, and Fishell's (1994) findings. The researchers used a more disadvantaged group of students and wanted to determine the effectiveness of parent-only readings at home. Lonigan and Whitehurst (1998) determined that both child care teachers and parents positively affected low SES students' oral language and spontaneous speech samples after using dialogic reading. When looking at those centers who truly complied to the study, it was found that their students benefited the most from home and school reading as compared to just home or just school readings. Although the differences were not statistically significant, the effect size of home and school reading almost doubled as compared to just home or just school reading. Perhaps the reason for this increase was that home reading was more frequent than school reading. Unfortunately, however, only 60% of the home reading logs were returned to the researchers. Perhaps another reason was that home reading was one-on-one, whereas school reading was in small groups. In effect, the students in the small groups might not have been challenged efficiently enough and the students might not have gotten their questions adequately answered. In other words, in small groups, appropriate scaffolding might not have occurred (Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998).

Lonigan and Whitehurst (1998) wrote that Bryant, Burchinal, Lau, and Sparling (1994) concluded that the home environment had more influence on students' language skills and the classroom environment had more influence on the students' achievement and cognitive abilities. In turn, preschool-age interventions might not be sufficient to equalize the low SES students and the more advantaged SES students in oral language skills. Regardless, Lonigan & Whitehurst (1998) quoted Valdez-Menchaca and Whitehurst (1992) and Whitehurst, Arnold, Epstein, Angell, Smith and Fishel (1994) as finding that significant improvements could be made in center-based interventions.

## **Comprehension**

### **What Good Readers Know About Comprehension**

Pressley and Afflerbach (1995), as stated by Smolkin and Donovan (2001), reported that good readers are “constructively responsive” in that they constantly revise their comprehension as they read. The researchers stated that good readers also notice confusions, make inferences, form links, create summaries, and supply passion to the text. Cazden (1983), as stated by Smolkin and Donovan (2001), believed that adults interacted with students through modeling, scaffolding, and direct instructions. In truth, the only way a student can learn about comprehension is when the adults audibly perform the skills and strategies they are using.

### **What increases comprehension?**

Reading comprehension was concluded to be increased in many ways. Dickinson and Smith (1994), Elley (1989), Feitelson, Kita, and Goldstein (1986), and Morrow (1990), as quoted by Sipe (2000), stated that reading aloud to students increased listening comprehension. Rosenhouse, Feitelson, Kita, and Goldstein (1997), as reported by Sipe

(2000), found that reading aloud also increased decoding and reading comprehension. Cochran-Smith (1984), Harkins (1992), Mason and Allen (1986), and Morrow and Smith (1990), as reported by Dickinson and Smith (1994), established that discussions during reading increased students' recall and comprehension. In turn, as quoted by Dickinson and Smith (1994), Morrow (1984) found that discussions before *and* after reading moreover increased students' recall and comprehension. In fact, Dickinson and Smith (1994) also quoted Elley and Mangubhai (1983), Feitelson, Kita, and Goldstein (1986), Feitelson, Goldstein, Iraqi, and Share (1993), Morrow (1984), and Morrow (1988) as having stated that when intervention programs were initiated in the primary grades, an improvement of comprehension was attained. In conclusion, Smolkin and Donovan (2001) reported that Pearson (1996) stated that "what goes under the name of skill, strategy, or structure instruction is much more accessible, interesting, and sensible when it is embedded within a real problem, a real text, or a real body of content....The best way to help students develop highly transferable, context-free literacy tools is to teach these tools as if they were entirely context bound" (p. 271).

Jacobs, Morrison, and Swinyard (2000) found that comprehension was greater for passages that contained vocabulary previously read. The quantity of these passages seemed to make no difference, however. Sipe (2000) quoted that Wells (1986) wrote that the number of stories children heard during read alouds predicted the children's later reading accomplishments. Wells (1985), as stated by Lonigan & Whitehurst (1998), found that the frequency of one to three year olds listening to stories directly related to their reading comprehension at the age of seven. All in all, better vocabulary knowledge and frequent book reading lead to enhanced comprehension.

Morrow and Smith (1990) found that comprehension was higher in small-group settings as compared to one-on-one settings. In addition, comprehension gained in one-on-one settings was higher than that of whole-group settings. Additionally, they determined that students asked the most questions in one-on-one settings, posed fewer questions in small-group settings, and raised the least amount of questions in whole-class settings. Nevertheless, the whole-group and small-group settings were comparatively more verbally active, and yet the one-on-one settings offered more opportunities for participation.

### Home Component – Additional Motivation to Read

Koskinen, Blum, Bisson, Phillips, Creamer, and Baker (2000) designed an experiment for 162 students in 16 first-grade classrooms and studied literacy conditions as well as English-language proficiency. There was one control group in which teachers followed the regular language arts program. The three experimental groups contained: a small-group shared reading at school and rereading with audiotapes at home (SRS-BAH), a small-group shared reading at school and rereading books (no audiotapes) at home (SRS-BH), and a small-group shared reading at school (SRS). All small groups of children read instructional level text and were given teacher support before and during reading. Within the groups, as quoted by Koskinen, Blum, Bisson, Phillips, Creamer, and Baker (2000), Clay (1991a) found the students were able to actively engage and interact with the text. The teachers in the study noticed better comprehension and increased motivation by the three experimental groups' students. Moreover, in the experimental groups, there were more opportunities to hear fluent English for those students learning to speak the language.

Having a home component also benefited the students. The SRS-BAH and the SRS-BH students showed an increase in reading interest and achievement. More than 55% of the parents of these two groups thought the home component helped their children read a lot, as well as become more interested in reading. In fact, more than 60% of the students read at home every day. More than three-fourths of the students enjoyed reading at home and thought the extra practice helped them read more (Koskinen, Blum, Bisson, Phillips, Creamer, & Baker, 2000).

### Audiotape Component – Additional Motivation to Read

Koskinen, Blum, Bisson, Phillips, Creamer, and Baker (2000) found that the teachers in the SRS-BAH group were more positive about the impact of reading on their students. The teachers more often reported that their students talked about books, took books home, and chose to read in their free time. The parents of the SRS-BAH group reported that their children talked about reading more frequently, actually read more, and read other books besides the ones brought home from school. Carbo (1996), Feitelson, Goldstein, Iraqi, and Share (1993), and Vygotsky (1978), as quoted by Koskinen, Blum, Bisson, Phillips, Creamer, and Baker (2000), reported that audio models are a form of scaffolding, help students read more difficult text, and focus on meaning. One student stated, “If I don’t know which word to read, I just put the tape on and they help me (know) which word it is” (Koskinen, Blum, Bisson, Phillips, Creamer, & Baker, 2000, p. 34). The additional help of the audiotapes were especially motivating for students receiving English language support services.

The book-rich classrooms provided additional motivation, increased familiarity with books, introduced choices, provided teachers as models, and established social interactions. Shared reading with parents, classmates, and audiotapes supplied scaffolding

opportunities. As a result, the students' comprehension and feelings of success increased. Finally, the students learned monitoring behavior when they reread a difficult word with the help of the audiotape. As a result, the aforementioned positive effects resulted in an increased comprehension.

### Diglossia

Feitelson, Goldstein, Iraqi, and Share (1993) researched the effects of read alouds in Arabic. Arabic is a prime example of diglossia, because the literary Arabic (FusHa) and colloquial dialect (Aamiyya) have very different styles of language. The written and spoken differ in vocabulary, phonology, syntax, and grammar. Rosenhouse and Shehadi (1986), as quoted by Feitelson, Goldstein, Iraqi, and Share (1993), reported that students were taught to read FusHa in school, while parents spoke Aamiyya at home. Furthermore, parents did not ever read books to their children at home. As a result, children were learning one language at home and were then required to learn a drastically different language at school.

The researchers introduced the reading of literary Arabic (FusHa), which in turn increased the students' comprehension, active use of language, and listening comprehension. In effect, reading to kindergarten students from FusHa texts effectively familiarized them with the literary language they were lacking. In addition, the teachers changed their attitudes about reading to their students. After the conclusion of the study, the teachers actually made reading a part of their daily schedule, made an effort to speak correctly, and modeled the proper use of FusHa (Feitelson, Goldstein, Iraqi, & Share, 1993).

## **Vocabulary Acquisition**

### How much vocabulary do children know?

Anderson & Freebody (1981) and Sternberg and Powell (1983), as quoted by Jenkins, Stein, and Wysocki (1984), reported that vocabulary knowledge is one of the best predictors of overall verbal intelligence. Although estimations of student's vocabulary size vary due to discrepancies as to exactly what constitutes a word, Carey (1978), as quoted by Senechal and Cornell (1993), estimated that 6 year olds know approximately 8,000 root words. Consequently, Jenkins, Stein, & Wysocki (1984) reported that Dupuy (1974), Smith (1941), and Terman (1916) agreed that students' vocabularies approximately doubled between third and seventh grades. This occurrence could have been the result of direct teaching, incidental and intentional learning from context, or a combination.

### Vocabulary Teaching Time

Some examples of direct teaching as quoted by Jenkins, Stein, and Wysocki (1984) are the following: keyword lessons (Levin, McCormick, Miller, Berry, & Pressley, 1982), synonym drill (Pany, Jenkins, & Schreck, 1982), classification, defining, and sentence production (Beck, Perfetti, & McKeown, 1982). Despite various ways to teach vocabulary, Jenkins, Stein, and Wysocki (1984) stated that Durkin (1979) documented only 19 minutes out of 4,469 minutes of reading instruction were being used to teach vocabulary. Logically, Nagy and Anderson (1982), as quoted by Jenkins, Stein, and Wysocki (1984), wondered how it was possible to teach the 88,500 distinct word families that are used in printed school English in that short of a time? Fortunately, Senechal, Thomas, and Monker (1995) stated that Senechal (1993) found some three year

olds can gain word meaning from simply listening to storybooks. Therefore, children must be read to!

### The Effects of Read Alouds With and Without Interventions

Vocabulary acquisition is significantly affected by read alouds and intervention strategies. Senechal, Thomas, and Moniker (1995) reported that rich narrative text and illustrations aided in vocabulary acquisition when labeling and pointing questions were asked. The researchers also found that when all students participated during repeated readings, vocabulary acquisition was positively affected. Dickinson and Smith (1994) determined that the performance approach of reading resulted in more vocabulary growth as compared to the interactional approach. Along the same lines, Dickinson (1984), Elley (1989), Flood (1977), Stahl and Fairbanks (1986), as reported by Dickinson & Smith (1994), determined that vocabulary gains were the greatest when key words were directly talked about and/or processed deeply. In Senechal and Cornell's (1993) study, the researchers determined that students were skilled vocabulary learners using different reading interactions such as: questioning (asking what and where questions in reference to the target words), recasting (rereading the sentence and replacing the target word with a synonym), word repetition (providing a second opportunity to hear the sentence with the target word), and verbatim reading (students listened to the story and were not asked to participate). In addition, Cermak and Craik (1979), as quoted by Elley (1989), stated that students learned and retained more if enjoyable stories were read aloud verses only working on vocabulary exercises. Overall, Dickinson and Smith (1994) quoted Elley (1989) and Stahl and Fairbanks (1986) as stating that intervention strategies to enhance vocabulary required frequent exposure to key words in the text, a deep processing of the meaning, and enough information to make the meaning clear.

On the contrary, Jacobs, Morrison, and Swinyard (2000) found that fifth graders acquired word meaning from context even when there were no explicit instructions to notice unfamiliar words. Senechal and Cornell (1993) also determined that context and illustrations were adequate in helping students learn vocabulary, even if the target words were only introduced once. Consequently, Elley (1989) researched the effects of read alouds with and without the provision of word meanings and/or explanations. In the “reading with explanations” group, teachers read stories and explained the meanings of specific words by providing a synonym, acting out the word, or pointing to an illustration. In the “reading without explanations” group, teachers simply read the story with no additional explanations of specific words. The researcher determined that seven classes of 7-year-olds showed a vocabulary gain of 15% without teacher explanations, three classes of 8-year-olds showed a vocabulary gain of 15% without explanations, and three classes of 8-year-olds showed a gain of 40% with explanations. In addition, the vocabulary gain proved to be relatively permanent and identical for both low- and high-scoring children in prior vocabulary knowledge. Along the same lines, Berlyne (1960) suggested the arousal theory helped students derive word meaning in context. In other words, the students’ attention levels were greatest when novelty, humor, conflict, suspense, incongruity, vividness, etc. were used in the text. Once again, it was proven that a word was best learned if it was frequently used in the text, depicted in the illustrations, and was used redundantly in the context. In conclusion, all students benefit from extra practice of vocabulary words regardless the presence of reading interventions (Senechal, Thomas, & Monker, 1995). Interventions, nevertheless, create the most significant increase in vocabulary acquisition.

## What Better Readers Do

Jacobs, Morrison, and Swinyard (2000) acknowledged that Beck, Perfetti, and McKeown (1982) suggested that better readers took more notice of unfamiliar words during reading. In turn, Jacobs, Morrison, and Swinyard (2000) wrote that Paris and Myers (1981) stated that poor readers were less likely to use external aids (dictionaries or ask questions) to establish an unfamiliar word's meaning. All in all, Jacobs, Morrison, and Swinyard (2000) found that fifth graders were determined to acquire vocabulary meanings during reading, but the process was not effortless nor did the students learn large amount of words.

## Areas of Agreement

The articles previously mentioned agree with the statement that read alouds, shared readings, and interventions benefit and augment comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. Through adult modeling and support, students can adequately learn and apply the interventions required for enhanced understanding. All in all, simply reading to and with children is not enough. Adults must enrich the lives of children so that the task of reading is a success.

## Areas of Disagreement

As quoted by Meyer, Stahl, Linn, and Wardrop (1994, p.69),

“Reading to children is to literacy education what two aspirins and a little bed rest was to the family doctor in years gone by. Students have an impoverished vocabulary? Read to them. Students struggling with comprehension? Read to them. Students beset with negative attitudes or lack motivation? Read to them. Reading to children has also been prescribed as a preventive measure: Want to ensure children's success in school? Want your children to read

early? Read to them” (Hoffman, Roser, & Battle, 1991, p.1).

Many past researchers have proposed that there is a correlation between shared reading and later literacy achieved. Bus, van IJzendoorn and Pellegrini (1995), Lonigan (1994), and Scarborough and Dobrich (1994), as quoted by Lonigan and Whitehurst (1998), discounted this idea. The aforementioned researchers believed the correlation is much weaker than was once thought.

### Contrasting Research on Parents Reading to Children

Many researchers support the idea that unaccounted factors can and do have a supplementary impact on children’s later literacy success. Scarborough and Dobrich (1994), as declared by Lonigan & Whitehurst (1998), believed that comprehension may be gained by read alouds. However, the researchers did not take into account students’ interest in books or parents’ behaviors. Similarly, Meyer, Stahl, Linn, and Wardrop (1994) declared that even though Durkin (1966b) found that preschool students who were read to at home were reading before they entered school, Durkin did not take into account other variables relating to the parents’ behaviors.

### Contrasting Research on Teachers Reading to Children

Along with contrasting research involving parents, research on the read aloud effects of teachers is also inconsistent. Teachers are told by researchers to read, read, and read some more. As a result, Meyer, Stahl, Linn, and Wardrop (1994) examined naturalistic studies of reading achievement for elementary teachers. Ironically, the researchers determined that there was a low-to-moderate negative correlation between being read to and reading achievement.

In addition, Meyer, Stahl, Linn, and Wardrop (1994) studied Meyer, Wardrop, Hastings, and Linn (1993) and Stallings and Kaskowitz's (1974) studies which used students in entirely English-speaking schools and documented the amount of time teachers spent in every activity of the day. As a result, the researchers found that activities relating to reading (letter-sound practice or word reading) positively correlated to student reading achievement. Unfortunately, the amount of time teachers spent reading to their students negatively correlated to student reading achievement. As a result, the farther "reading" activities are from actual reading, the less effect they have on reading achievement.

Lastly, once students attend school, the biggest effect on reading achievement is when the students are actually participating in the reading process. Meyer, Stahl, Linn, and Wardrop (1994) reported that Pikulski and Tobin (1989) found that the amount of independent reading that first-grade students did, not including time being read to, strongly affected later reading achievement at the end of first, second, and fourth grades. Nonetheless, it could be that these early independent readers gained more because they could read better than their peers, not because they took part in independent reading.

### There Is No Magic In *Just Read Alouds*

Meyer, Stahl, Linn, and Wardrop (1994) found that just reading did not create better readers. The researchers stated that teachers and parents alike must engage their students in print activities such as letter-sound practice and word reading. Once the students enter school, they must actively engage in reading to promote their achievement, instead of relying on read alouds. "Reading storybooks to children is not a reading program. It is part of a reading program" (Meyer, Stahl, Linn, & Wardrop, 1994, p. 83).

Meyer, Stahl, Linn, and Wardrop (1994) quoted Smith (1992) as saying,

“Children do not learn to read by osmosis (maliciously said to be a whole language belief) or by being left to their own devices. It may not be necessary to *instruct* children on how to read, but it is essential to encourage and assist them. Teachers do not abdicate responsibility when they embrace the philosophy of whole language...instead, they accept the responsibility of ensuring that every child joins the readers’ club, fully admitted into the company of authors and not left frustrated on the doorstep. It is the role of teachers...to teach...Children must learn from people: from the teachers (formal and informal) who initiate them into the readers’ club and from the authors whose writing they read...” (p. 441).

As this review shows, there is a good deal of research about reading with children as a read aloud or as shared reading. However, the research that has been conducted has not contrasted and compared the effects of both reading experiences. Therefore, this study is designed to investigate whether read alouds or shared reading experiences result in higher achievement in vocabulary acquisition, comprehension, and fluency.

## **Methodology**

### Subjects.

The participants in this study were eighteen second grade students in a northeastern New Jersey suburb. The school was predominately middle to upper class. The students ranged from seven years old to nine years old. Their reading levels ranged from level H to level N based on the reading levels of Fontas and Pinnel (1999). The students were randomly assigned to two groups, A and B, based on the class list. The first student was assigned the code A1, the second B1, the third A2, the fourth B2, and so on.

## Materials.

The data analyzed in this study were determined from two tests and two records. The first teacher-made test included a cloze vocabulary test (see example in Appendix A) of five key vocabulary words from the text. The students were required to choose a word from the Word Bank to complete the five sentences. The context of each sentence included the definition of one of the key words. The second teacher-made test (see example in Appendix B) was a cloze comprehension test. A 100 word excerpt was taken from the text and every tenth word was exchanged with a blank. No word bank was provided. The students were required to insert a word so that the sentence was syntactically correct. The inserted words did not have to be the exact words from the text.

For one student, in the lowest 15<sup>th</sup> reading percentile in the class, the time (in minutes and seconds) it took to read a 100 word excerpt was recorded. The researcher's watch was used to time the duration of reading (in minutes and seconds) for the 100 word passage. The timed excerpt differed from the cloze comprehension excerpt. A running record was also taken in order to document reading miscues such as substitutions, insertions, omissions, repetitions, and reversals (see example in Appendix C). Self-corrections and repetitions were not counted as miscues. Finally, a total of five to ten copies of six grade-level texts (including one teacher copy) were used. One to two stories were used during each week of the study.

## Procedure.

First, a letter was sent home to all parents of the second grade students used in the study (Appendix D). Parents were asked to respond only if they did not want their child's scores to be used in the study. Next, the students were assigned a code based on the

alphabetical placement of their last name in the class list. Each week either group A or group B had a companion text or followed along in the teacher's text. For example, in Week 1, group A had a companion text, while group B had no companion text. In the weeks thereafter, the groups alternated between having a companion text, and having no companion text. All in all, groups A and B had companion books for a total of three weeks and had no companion books for a total of three weeks.

At the beginning of each thirty minute testing session, the classroom teacher handed out 5-9 companion books to one group of students, depending on the testing week. These students were moved to one half of the Reading Rug area. The other 9 students sat directly in front of the teacher so that they could see the teacher's copy of the text during the read aloud. The groups of children were separated so that the group without companion books only had access to the teacher's copy.

During the read aloud, the teacher stopped at each of the five key vocabulary words and discussed its meaning with the class. The words were not written on the board, simply discussed orally. Immediately after the read aloud, the teacher handed out the vocabulary cloze tests and the comprehension cloze tests. The students completed the tests at their desks with privacy folders to limit the copying of answers. In addition, at a convenient time later that day, the teacher conducted a timed running record with the one student in the lowest 15<sup>th</sup> reading percentile of the class.

## **Results**

The raw data for this study are presented in Tables 1-7.

Table 1

<u>Student</u>	<u>Reading Levels</u>	<u>Books:</u> <u>Dates:</u> <u>Intervention:</u>	Blast Off! 1/4/2006		<u>Without</u>	
			<u>With</u> vocab	comp	vocab	comp
A1	M+		100%	100%		
B1	L+				100%	90%
A2	L		x	x		
B2	N				100%	80%
A3	M+		100%	100%		
B3	K				x	x
A4	L+		100%	90%		
B4	N				100%	90%
A5	O		100%	100%		
B5	O				100%	100%
A6	M+		100%	100%		
B6	P				x	x
A7	P		x	x		
B7	J				100%	70%
A8	L		100%	100%		
B8	N				100%	100%
A9	L+		100%	100%		
B9	L+				100%	90%
	B7					
		<u>Running</u>		3		
		<u>Record:</u>				
		<u>Time:</u>		1 min. 15 sec.		

Table 2

<u>Student</u>	<u>Reading Levels</u>	<u>Books:</u> <u>Dates:</u> <u>Intervention:</u>	This Is My House 1/10/2006			
			<u>With</u> vocab	comp	<u>Without</u> vocab	comp
A1	M+				100%	100%
B1	L+		60%	50%		
A2	L				100%	90%
B2	N		40%	70%		
A3	M+				40%	70%
B3	K		20%	80%		
A4	L+				60%	50%
B4	N		100%	70%		
A5	O				100%	90%
B5	O		60%	80%		
A6	M+				60%	100%
B6	P		x	x		
A7	P				100%	70%
B7	J		20%	10%		
A8	L				60%	40%
B8	N		100%	70%		
A9	L+				100%	80%
B9	L+		40%	60%		
	B7					
		<u>Running</u>				
		<u>Record:</u>	3			
		<u>Time:</u>	1 min. 45 sec.			

Table 3

<u>Student</u>	<u>Reading Levels</u>	<u>Books:</u> <u>Dates:</u> <u>Intervention:</u>	Fox Be Nimble 1/11/2006			
			<u>With</u> vocab	comp	<u>Without</u> vocab	comp
A1	M+				100%	90%
B1	L+		100%	90%		
A2	L				x	x
B2	N		100%	90%		
A3	M+				100%	100%
B3	K		100%	90%		
A4	L+				100%	80%
B4	N		100%	80%		
A5	O				100%	100%
B5	O		100%	100%		
A6	M+				100%	100%
B6	P		x	x		
A7	P				100%	100%
B7	J		100%	70%		
A8	L				100%	60%
B8	N		100%	70%		
A9	L+				100%	100%
B9	L+		100%	100%		
	B7					
		<u>Running</u>				
		<u>Record:</u>	3			
		<u>Time:</u>	1 min. 50 sec.			

Table 4

<u>Student</u>	<u>Reading Levels</u>	<u>Books:</u> <u>Dates:</u> <u>Intervention:</u>	Man Who Enjoyed Grumbling 1/19/2006			
			<u>With</u>		<u>Without</u>	
			vocab	comp	vocab	comp
A1	M+		100%	90%		
B1	L+				100%	90%
A2	L		100%	100%		
B2	N				100%	80%
A3	M+		100%	100%		
B3	K				100%	70%
A4	L+		100%	100%		
B4	N				100%	80%
A5	O		100%	100%		
B5	O				60%	100%
A6	M+		100%	100%		
B6	P				100%	90%
A7	P		100%	80%		
B7	J				40%	50%
A8	L		60%	80%		
B8	N				60%	80%
A9	L+		100%	80%		
B9	L+				100%	80%
	B7					
		<u>Running</u>				
		<u>Record:</u>		7		
		<u>Time:</u>		2 min. 10 sec.		

Table 5

<u>Student</u>	<u>Reading Levels</u>	<u>Books:</u> <u>Dates:</u> <u>Intervention:</u>	More About Dinosaurs 1/26/2006 <u>With</u> vocab	comp	<u>Without</u> vocab	comp
A1	M+				x	x
B1	L+		100%	70%		
A2	L				100%	100%
B2	N		100%	100%		
A3	M+				100%	90%
B3	K		100%	90%		
A4	L+				100%	100%
B4	N		100%	100%		
A5	O				100%	100%
B5	O		100%	100%		
A6	M+				100%	80%
B6	P		100%	100%		
A7	P				100%	90%
B7	J		100%	50%		
A8	L				100%	80%
B8	N		100%	90%		
A9	L+				100%	90%
B9	L+		100%	90%		
	B7					
		<u>Running</u>				
		<u>Record:</u>	2			
		<u>Time:</u>	1 min. 20 sec.			

Table 6

<u>Student</u>	<u>Reading Levels</u>	<u>Books:</u> <u>Dates:</u> <u>Intervention:</u>	The Hobyahs 2/1/2006			
			<u>With</u> vocab	comp	<u>Without</u> vocab	comp
A1	M+		x	x		
B1	L+				100%	70%
A2	L		100%	80%		
B2	N				100%	70%
A3	M+		100%	100%		
B3	K				100%	90%
A4	L+		100%	70%		
B4	N				100%	80%
A5	O		100%	90%		
B5	O				100%	70%
A6	M+		100%	90%		
B6	P				100%	100%
A7	P		100%	100%		
B7	J				20%	70%
A8	L		100%	80%		
B8	N				100%	60%
A9	L+		100%	50%		
B9	L+				100%	80%
	B7					
		<u>Running</u>				
		<u>Record:</u>	3			
		<u>Time:</u>	1 min. 50 sec.			

Table 7

<u>Student</u>	<u>Reading Levels</u>	<u>Books:</u> <u>Dates:</u> <u>Intervention:</u>	Amazing Panda Adventure 2/7/2006	
			<u>With</u> vocab	<u>Without</u> vocab
A1	M+		comp	100%
B1	L+		80%	100%
A2	L			90%
B2	N		70%	100%
A3	M+			90%
B3	K		80%	100%
A4	L+			60%
B4	N		90%	100%
A5	O			100%
B5	O		90%	100%
A6	M+			80%
B6	P		80%	100%
A7	P			90%
B7	J		60%	0%
A8	L			70%
B8	N		70%	100%
A9	L+			60%
B9	L+		80%	100%

  

B7		<u>Running Record:</u>	2
		<u>Time:</u>	2 min. 50 sec.

A series of Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Paired Sample *t* tests were used to analyze the data. An alpha level of .05 was used on all statistical tests. A Repeated Measure ANOVA was used to see if a student holding his/her own copy of text would influence vocabulary. There was no main effect for having his/her own text,  $F(1,16) = .617, p = .444$ . There was a main effect for order,  $F(1,16) = 52.781, p < .01$ . There was no interaction between having their own text and the order the test was conducted,  $F(1,16) = .584, p = .456$ . The means and standard deviations are represented in Table 1.

Since there was a significant difference found for order a series of Paired Sample *t* tests were performed to further analyze the data. Paired Sample *t* tests were performed to examine the difference between vocabulary scores in children with text and without text for both orders of presentation. There was a significance difference found in vocabulary scores of students with the text and without the text when presented with the text first,  $t(8) = -5.349, p < .01$ . As you can see by the means presented in Table 1 there is a significant difference between students presented with the text first for with text ( $M=13.11$ ) and without text ( $M=17.67$ ) suggesting that when students are presented without the text first they perform better with the text. There was a significant difference found in vocabulary scores of students with the text and without the text when presented without the text first,  $t(8) = 4.919, p < .01$ . As you can see by the means presented in Table 1 there is a significant difference between students presented without the text first for with text ( $M=16.33$ ) and without text ( $M= 12.67$ ) suggesting that when students are presented without the text first they perform better with the text.

Table 1

Group	With Text		Without Text	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
With Text First	13.11	2.42	17.67	2.06
Without Text First	16.33	3.57	12.67	2.69
Total	14.72	3.39	15.17	3.47

A Repeated Measure ANOVA was used to see if a student holding his/her own copy of text would influence comprehension. There was no main effect for having his/her own text,  $F(1,16) = .091, p = .767$ . There was a main effect for order,  $F(1,16) = 33.766, p < .01$ . There was no interaction between having their own text and the order the test was conducted,  $F(1,16) = 1.030, p = .325$ . Since there was a significant difference found for order a series of Paired Sample  $t$  tests were performed to further analyze the data.

Paired Sample  $t$  tests were performed to examine the difference between comprehension scores in children with text and without text for both orders of presentation. There was a significance difference found in comprehension scores of students with the text and without the text when presented with the text first,  $t(8) = -4.588, p < .01$ . As you can see by the means presented in Table 2 there is a significant difference between students presented with the text first for with text ( $M=24.22$ ) and without text ( $M=32.11$ ) suggesting that when students are presented without the text first they perform better with the text. There was a significant difference found in comprehension scores of students with the text and without the text when presented without the text first,  $t(8) = 3.694, p < .01$ . As you can see by the means presented in Table 2 there is a significant difference between students presented without the text first for with text ( $M=29.67$ ) and without text ( $M= 22.56$ ) suggesting that when students are presented without the text first they perform better with the text.

Table 2

Group	With Text		Without Text	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
With Text First	24.22	4.89	32.11	4.57
Without Text First	29.67	6.75	22.56	3.68
Total	26.94	6.37	27.33	6.35

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effects of read alouds and shared readings on vocabulary acquisition, comprehension, and fluency. Eighteen second-grade students were randomly split into two groups, Group A and Group B. During Week 1 of the study, the students in Group A had an individual copy of the text being read by the teacher. The students in Group B had no companion text and simply listened to the text being read by the teacher. In the subsequent weeks, the groups alternated between having a companion text and not having a companion text. In total, Groups A and B participated in each group a total of three times. Following each reading, all the children completed a cloze vocabulary test and a cloze comprehension test. A timed running record was also completed for one student.

There was no main effect for comprehension or vocabulary with students having their own text. However, a significant difference was found with regard to the order the text was presented to the students. Students presented without the text first, performed better with the text during the following week on both the vocabulary and the comprehension test.

These findings support Brahbam and Lynch-Brown's (2002) research, as stated by Stahl, Richek, and Vandevier (1991), that read alouds are very effective in promoting vocabulary. In addition, Bus, van IJzendoorn, and Pelligrini (1995), as documented by Tannen (1982), indicated that students also learn grammar rules through read alouds.

Perhaps, as in Vivas' (1996) research, listening to the stories during read alouds encouraged a habit of listening and focusing attention. Lastly, Jacobs, Morrison, and Swinyard (2000) stated that Chomsky's (1972) research showed that read alouds resulted in improved comprehension. In effect, this study further suggests that reading aloud *first* augments later comprehension and vocabulary acquisition.

As quoted by Sipe (2000), Dickinson and Smith (1994), Elley (1989), Feitelson, Kita, and Goldstein (1986), and Morrow (1990), established that reading aloud increased comprehension. This study had identical results in that students without texts first, had significant comprehension improvements when they later had a companion text. Moreover, Senechal and Cornell (1993) determined that context and illustrations adequately aided students in learning vocabulary, even if the target words were only discussed once. As in this study, the target vocabulary words were discussed one time when they were encountered in the text. The students without texts first, had significant vocabulary improvements when they later had a companion text.

There were several confounding variables during this study. First, students who took part in shared reading with the teacher generally had a better attention span and created fewer disruptions. For example, students who took part in the read aloud portion, often flipped through the pages of the book during the reading, whispered with other children, focused on the pictures and not the words, and did not turn the pages at the appropriate time. My interpretation of these behaviors is that when students had a text in their hands, they became very distracted. When students simply listened to the teacher's text, they had fewer distractions and were acclimated to this type of lesson within the classroom environment.

Second, this study was conducted on the reading rug where one group sat directly in front of the teacher for the read aloud and the second group sat on the other half of the rug with a companion text. Although the second group could not see the teacher's text, the students often looked up during the read aloud. Perhaps this is a natural reaction for students to watch the person reading aloud. In turn, when the teacher paused to discuss a vocabulary word, the students easily lost their place in the text and some students seemed to give up trying to find the correct place.

Third, several students were absent for quite a few weeks due to extended vacations and illness. There were no make-up sessions. In effect, the results could have been negatively affected.

Fourth, in the second week of the study, a difficult text was used. A vast majority of the students complained at its difficulty and some even put their heads down on their desks in frustration. A decision was made to repeat the test the following day with identical conditions; for two days in a row, Group A participated in the read aloud and Group B participated in the shared reading.

Fifth, noise was another confounding variable. Second-grade students tend to talk out of turn and during the reading of a story, as was the case in this study. After finishing the vocabulary and comprehension tests, despite warnings to keep a quiet classroom, some students began talking at various times which many have distracted those students still taking the test. As a result, the results could have been negatively affected.

Sixth, there was no way to monitor how much time and effort each student put into his/her performance on the follow-up tests, as well as his/her attention to the original story. Some student's attention spans wandered due to boredom, distraction, disinterest, frustration, or lack of understanding. Along the same lines, some students dominated the

vocabulary discussions. In effect, some students may have not even been paying attention when the definition being discussed.

Overall, it appeared as if the students listening to the teacher's text had fewer distractions. They displayed better attention perhaps because they did not have to worry about losing their place in the text, they had nothing in their hands to distract them from the read aloud experience, and they only had to focus on the teacher, not the teacher and their own text.

All of this contrasts sharply with the results I predicted I would find. I believed that the students who followed along in their own text would recall the vocabulary better through a visual connection with the word. In addition, I predicted that the effort of following along in the text during the read aloud would assist the students in their comprehension. By having a text in their hands, I envisioned that this group would outscore the shared reading group in both vocabulary acquisition and comprehension.

Future research would be recommended in a more controlled testing environment. Small groups would be ideal in order to limit distractions, to promote equal participation for all students, to offer opportunities for individual questioning and repeating of the vocabulary words, and to provide a suitable testing environment for all students. Overall, this study demonstrated that reading aloud *first* helps promote vocabulary acquisition and comprehension of the text during later readings. However, more research is suggested in order to determine if read alouds or shared reading experiences benefit students more and in what capacity. Unfortunately, within the parameters of this study, the benefits were not determined.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

# Blast Off

Vocabulary Test -- With Book -- Without Book

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### Word Bank

capsule	astronaut
controls	mashed
meteor	

1. You use the \_\_\_\_\_ to steer a ship.
2. A big ball of dust floating in space is called a  
\_\_\_\_\_.
3. An \_\_\_\_\_ is a person who takes  
trips into space.
4. You can use a \_\_\_\_\_ to keep  
things safe.
5. When you squash something, it becomes  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Appendix B

# Blast Off

Cloze Test -- With Book -- Without Book

Regina piled a few boxes on top of each \_\_\_\_\_.

Then she took an old trashcan that had been \_\_\_\_\_

in by the street cleaners.

"This will be my \_\_\_\_\_ capsule," she said.

Regina began to get excited as \_\_\_\_\_ worked on

her spaceship. She worked very hard. Would \_\_\_\_\_

dream of being an astronaut really come true?

At \_\_\_\_\_ the spaceship was ready for

blast-off. Regina sat down \_\_\_\_\_ the seat.

It felt great to be at the \_\_\_\_\_ of her

spaceship. She checked the controls and the

\_\_\_\_\_ began.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 BLAST OFF!

All of a sudden, Regina could \_\_\_\_\_ the ship

shaking around her.

Appendix C

# Blast Off

Running Records

100 words – 5 key vocabulary words

Subject \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ With Text Without Text  
Time \_\_\_\_\_

Regina leaned back in her seat and began to get a funny feeling in her stomach – the kind that comes from being alone. It looked as if the blackness of space would never end.

“It’s getting so lonely up here,” she said quietly. BANG

“What was that?” yelled Regina. “It shook the whole ship. It must have been a meteor or something.” BAM

“Help! My ship is being hit from all sides! It feels like it’s falling apart...” CRASH

All of a sudden everything was quiet again. Regina opened her eyes and slowly crawled out of the spaceship.

Rico and *Missy ran up to her. “Where have you been, Regina? We’ve been looking for you.”*

[The italicized words are not included in the 100 word excerpt.]

Appendix D

[to be printed on Kean University letterhead]

December 12, 2005

Dear Second Grade Parents,

In May 2006, I will be graduating from Kean University with a master degree in Reading Specialization. This semester I completed my literature review. Next semester I will be conducting my research in our classroom on the impact of oral reading on children's comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary development. I am working with several other students in my thesis class as well as the professor on this topic. I am very excited because we are going to try and get our study published, because we have not been able to find any other research on this topic.

I will not be using the children's names in my report, only their test scores. I will be more than happy to share my results with you at the end of my study, as well as my final thesis paper.

Please contact me if you have any questions or do not wish your child's scores to be a part of my study.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Dana Militante